

# WORKERS' FIGHT

No 23

March 10th - 23rd

4p

## Turn protest into GENERAL STRIKE

THE SPECIAL T.U.C. CONGRESS TO DISCUSS THE WAGE FREEZE could have decided on one of two courses. Either to plan the detailed organisation of aid and solidarity action to gas men, hospital ancillary workers, civil servants and other sections taking on the Government. Or to organise a full scale confrontation with the Government, pitting the giant strength of the working class against it.

Its "decision" to "invite" a day of protest action against the freeze is neither one nor the other. No plans were made to act, and generalise the various sectional struggles. The Day of Protest - so reminiscent of that famous day of 'action' against the Industrial Relations Bill two years ago (which led to nothing) will mean anything the TUC General Council interprets it to mean, from a possible general one day stoppage to feeble token actions.

The resolution is not binding on any of the member unions - as Vic Feather carefully pointed out.

Meanwhile the "scapegoat workers" such as the gas men and hospital ancillaries fight on - amidst hysterical abuse from a lynch mob press.

And meanwhile, too, the Industrial Relations Act remains on the statute books - to be used when and however the Government dares. The TUC has in fact accepted it.

Just before the Conferences, Feather had this appeal to make: "Mr. Heath should jettison the worst features of the Industrial Relations Act, and get us all back to talks at Chequers or Downing Street - and those talks should be conducted with an open mind around an open agenda".

These 'leaders' will not lead the working class in the fight against the Government and its policies. Any initiatives they do take must be given 100% support. But we can't rely on them. That is the message of the Special Conference.

Those workers fighting the freeze can only rely on direct action initiated by the rank and file militants. We can only rely on ourselves.

Rank and file militants must take the initiative into their own hands. The "Day of Protest" can and must be transformed into a General Strike. But only if the rank and file start an organising drive NOW to prepare.

### N. Ireland: Assassins were..... Soldiers

SOCIALISTS AND REPUBLICANS IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE ALWAYS claimed that the British Army has its own plain clothes murder squads operating in cities like Belfast and Derry. They say that it uses killer groups to manipulate the Catholic and Protestant communities by terrorism.

(see letter from Andersonstown on p.3). There was no clear proof. UNTIL NOW.

Last weekend a man was waiting in a car for his wife, in a Catholic district. A small car pulled up beside him and he saw two men in plain clothes waving a gun. He drove off very quickly and the men in the mini car opened fire on him.

Local people managed to get the mini's number and it was passed to the British authorities. Soon after it was stopped at a road block and the two men were arrested.

They were found to be British soldiers!

Now an "investigation" has been ordered: to be carried out ... by the British Army.

It's high time the British working class itself 'investigated' what that army is doing in Northern Ireland. And not just the 'James Bond' aspects.

Plain clothes or khaki, this army (which is sold to the British working class as keeping the peace) is an army of occupation, whose immediate job is keeping down the Republican minority. It has no right to be in Ireland. The Republican people have every right to drive it out of Ireland.

## 18 ARRESTED FOR PICKETING

**ALL OUT 15 MARCH!  
DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT**

18 BUILDING WORKERS, OF THE T&GWU AND UCATT, ARE BEING charged with 'offences' relating to incidents which occurred while picketing during the building strike last September. The Contractors' Shop Stewards Committee at BSC Shotton are calling for a strike to support the 18 on March 15th - and are preparing for a longer stoppage if necessary. A meeting of the Building Workers' Charter in Liverpool decided to support the call, and the builders' union UCATT is being urged to add its support. The Committee has produced a special leaflet, which we summarise below.

The charge reads as follows: "That you on the 6th day of September at Shrewsbury on a building site known as Kingswood, wrongfully and without legal authority intimidated divers people with a view to compelling those people to abstain from their lawful work, contrary to section 7(1) of the conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875 as amended"

Make no mistake, brothers, we are being tried for picketing, for defending our living standards and

for daring to stand up to Heath and his bully-boys!

We were picketing because some men were on labour only jobs, with no Insurance Cards &c, or they were told by their employers that the strike was unofficial and would do them no good. Let us make it clear to everyone that by picketing we were carrying out official Union policy.

If the bosses and the Tories are allowed to get away with this, they could use the same tactics on ANY picketing workers.

### THE CASE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

"Well, the government is fixed, you know. They either get this policy off the ground or they pack up as a government. The period of running away, taking hidings, is over now. It really must get its policy going".

That was Harold Lever, millionaire right-wing Labour politician, talker to the 'Observer', Sunday 4 March.

Naturally, Lever wants the country to be 'governed' - even if it means by the Tories. That means making the wage freeze stick.

Why do the Tories have to get their policy off the ground? Because intense pressure from international competition gives them little room for movement, except an offensive move against the working class, to hold down our wages, shackle the Trade Unions to the State more tightly than ever before, and destroy hard-won trade union and civil rights.

All the great victories of the working class in the last year have not smashed the Industrial Relations Act, have not stopped the Tory offensive in its tracks. And now Phase 2 faces the working class with the need for a

general mobilisation if it is even to maintain its living standards.

#### T U C

If the TUC was seriously concerned to even pretend to be 'leading' the working class, it would make preparations for a general strike to smash the Industrial Relations Act and all government attempts to interfere with the affairs of the working class movement.

But it won't. It prefers instead to allow sectional struggles against the Freeze and to look to a Labour Government to remove, at least partly, the Industrial Relations Act.

Vic Feather and Harold Wilson enact a public comedy in which they both pledge eternal peace between the Trade Unions and any future Labour Government - a pledge which no-one takes seriously.

Instead of fighting against this government now running capitalist Britain, they serve up silly fantasies of a blissful peace - with the next (they hope) Labour Government - which will also, like the last Labour Government, be running capitalist Britain!





Workers Fight

# If the leaders won't lead, the rank & file must

Continued from p. 1

In fact they play a very dangerous game. They cannot control the rank and file of the unions, and therefore they cannot do the sort of deal many would like to do with the Tories. But they refuse to organise decisive action. They won't go forward and can't go backward.

In this situation, the government can mobilise a great deal of support against the apparently pointless anarchy of strikes and conflict - much of it opinion that could be mobilised on our side if there was a clear, decisive leadership within the working class. There is a serious possibility that the Tories might win an election, with the massive indifference to the Labour Party shown in recent by-elections.

In the event of an election it would be in the interests of all workers to return Labour. But waiting for an election means giving in now.

The Trade Union leaders shuffle uneasily and mumble excuses. They are unable to face up to the prospect of a stand up fight, relying on the direct industrial and social strength of the working class to beat back the government and the employers.

Masses of working class militants, on the other hand, whose wages and living conditions are more closely tied to the normal wage bargaining process under capitalism than are those of Trade Union officials, have had to fight back.

With no channels of action open to the working class within this supposedly democratic system, and with precious little control over the official Trade Union movement, the masses of militant workers have had to rely on direct action according to the logic of class wide struggle, developing from the fight against the Act and the Freeze. To put forward the tactic of a general strike to smash the Act - the spearhead of the bosses' offensive - that is a key responsibility for socialists.

As the working class, fighting with the tactics and the means it has to hand - those of direct industrial action - develops and broadens its struggle - so the slogan of a general strike can fuse with the developing action in an all-out strike which will rip up both Act and Freeze.

The fight against the Freeze has already brought up the need for United Front working class alliances and prepare systematically on the basis of the lessons of the last year's struggles. Conferences are planned or have taken place, to organise coordination and solidarity - to multiply the fighting strength of all those in the front line battles and to ensure that no section of the working class is left alone to fight the bosses and their state.

## KICK TORIES OUT

The debate between the "wait for a Labour Government" line and the line of using our strength here and now will become sharper and more crucial in a general strike situation. The first resort of the employing class, if the going gets hot, will be to dissolve the Government, call an election, say "you've made your

point, now you have a chance to decide the question through the democratic process" - and wait for a return to work.

It is dangerous and wrong to say that kicking out the Tories is the central aim - an aim which includes the smashing of the Act and the Freeze as parts of a whole. To focus in Parliament, in the half-light of Labour - Tory wrangling, and not in the massive, explosive confrontation on the industrial front, is upside down. If we break the Act and the Freeze, then the Tories will surely fall. But the opposite isn't true. It is quite possible that the employing class could sacrifice the Tory Government without releasing the shackles with which the labour movement is being tied to the State.

## GENERAL STRIKE

When we first started to campaign for a general strike in Workers Fight, last May, we wrote:

"We ourselves - the militants, the socialists - must organise at local level now. A General Strike will be won by the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and betterment of the working class; stewards' committees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories".

That is still true. The work of building alliances is an extension of that network beyond its previously habitual and regular field. It is the major actual preparation militants can make for a general strike. It is the only way to be ready for immediate direct action, without waiting for an official call. (Which may never come - last July it was the militants who acted, not the top officials).

We call for a general strike as the rank and file response if the Tories use the law to beat down trade unionists - whether or not the Trade Union tops respond. But the demand that the TUC calls a general strike is also an important part of the campaign. It can be a weapon for militants to use against the trade union bureaucrats. If the TUC calls a general strike, it would probably only do so to keep the initiative or to "let off steam" from working class anger. But if, last July, a one day official strike to free the Five (called by the TUC to keep control of the movement) had occurred, it would have deepened and broadened tremendously the experience of almost the whole of the working class in a struggle that linked them with the militant minority that acted - swiftly, decisively and successfully - to free the Five.

There is no guarantee (and the TUC leaders know it very well) that a strike once called would remain under their control: they almost lost control in some areas in 1926. To the degree that the militants are organised and prepared the chances of the class going over the heads of the bureaucrats would be increased enormously.

Therefore the demand that the TUC call a strike is a major weapon, provided it is seen as an instrument in the hands of militants and socialists to compete

with, expose and break the influence of the bureaucrats, and not as a waiting on them or, under any circumstances, a voluntary surrender or delegation of the initiative to them.

## UNITED FRONT COMMITTEES

The building of militant United Front alliances is the burning task now. Or it may depend on victory or defeat in the coming battles. We must work for a stable rank and file leadership which is not erratic, nor lacking in continuity so that it can build up its experience. Different sections in

combat against the Freeze must come together in joint committees. And these committees, once formed, must be extended, to bring in other sections who could give support - other trade unionists; students; housewives; unemployed people; tenants' associations.

Side by side with the campaign of preparation and organisation for the general strike must go a campaign for a national rank and file organisation of militants and socialists, a democratically organised and structured national movement based on a working class programme. Neither the campaign for a general strike nor that for a national rank and file movement is raised arbitrarily, as someone's bright idea. Just as the slogan of the general strike arises out of the logic of the class struggle here and now, the campaign for a national rank and file movement grows out of the conditions of that struggle too, and of the relationship of forces between the union bureaucrats and the working class.

It is the already existing network of rank and file organisations - some official, though rarely acting through official channels only, and some unofficial - that must be supplemented and knit together. This network has been, for two decades, the foremost leader of the industrial struggle of the working class. Now, as the struggles must be linked, so the network must be organised as a permanent, regular structure with clear aims.

The old slogan "if the leaders don't lead, the rank and file must" has taken on a note of urgency as the working class shapes up for battle - and most of the so-called workers' leaders are good for nothing but exchanging mild abuse with Heath and cuddling Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle.

## MINORITY MOVEMENT

There must be clear aims: commitment to overthrow capitalism; support for every workers' struggle; democracy in the unions; against all state interference in the unions; for 100% trade unionism.

Once, there was such a movement, with mass influence inside the Trade Unions. Its name: the Minority Movement. It was a rank and file movement within the trade unions - not a breakaway or anti-union movement, but an attempt to transform the unions from within.

The Minority Movement was organised by the Communist Party - then (in the '20s) a revolutionary party and not as now a second shadow for the 'left' trade union tops.

Today the Communist Party dominates the Liaison Committee

for the Defence of Trade Unions. The Liaison Committee is not a self-controlling, democratic body, with local and industrial organisations. It is a series of conferences, strictly controlled from the platform, without even the possibility of resolutions being taken from delegates. The Communist Party keeps it in this shadowy state because its policies today call for collaboration with left Trade Union leaders. Any rank and file movement with real life would inevitably and unavoidably emerge as an opposition to the half-hearted official leaders.

Nothing better than the LCDTU exists, and certainly it is necessary to support its conferences. But the fact is that the Communist Party's policies here act as a stopper on the development of a real rank and file movement.

A sudden growth of alliances and rank and file activity, coupled with socialist propaganda and initiative around the idea of a new rank and file movement, will create the possibility for shifting or bypassing the Communist Party roadblock.

## PERSPECTIVES

For the last year, since the miners' strike, the working class has entered into an escalating conflict with the bosses and their Tory government. It is urgently necessary that we enter a new chapter in that fight, the chapter of the general strike. Necessary, because the whole logic of the struggle has led up to it; necessary, because the general strike is the weapon we need to break the Industrial Relations Act.

How will that chapter end? No-one can say, right now. One enters into battle, and then one sees, as Napoleon said when asked for the guiding rule of his military tactics. The important thing is to start the fight; otherwise we concede victory to the bosses' offensive by default.

A mass strike, once started, is open-ended; it raises the question of power in society. At each stage in the strike, socialists would argue for further steps - depending on the consciousness of the class and the relation of forces - with the ultimate aim of workers' power and a workers' state. But it is useless to speculate just how far along that path we might get: the point is to be ready.

We must prepare. In a general strike, the normal functioning of society would be paralysed: food supplies, communications. For the strike to move forward, local workers' committees would have to see to food supplies; to operate printing works and transport services under workers' control; to organise mobile pickets.

And the charges being brought against 18 building workers in Shrewsbury are ample warning that the Tories will not hesitate to use the full resources of the police against pickets if they feel threatened. Increasingly the working class must think seriously about the need for self-defence.

Even the most modest acts of preparation are important. Every opportunity to give support to those already in struggle, and to link the struggles, must be taken - pickets, demonstrations, meetings, even messages of support.



# THE 'UNION' VERSUS ASCENDANCY

The Tory Government's imminent "solution to the Irish problem" (in the form of a White Paper expected shortly) has given rise to a flurry of political activity, especially in the Loyalist camp.

Craig's 'Dominion of Ulster' speech, in the aftermath of the Loyalist one day general strike, and his approaches to the SDLP, gave rise to flood of "new breakthrough" type headlines in sections of the British press.

Two events seem to have led Craig to make his Ulster Hall speech in which he put forward his 'Dominion of Ulster' idea - independent, but linked (though in different ways and degrees) with both Britain and the Irish Republic - and proposed talks with Catholic politicians.

First, the general strike. Craig has always seen himself as the successor of Sir Edward Carson, who, in the period 1910-14 threatened and organised for armed rebellion against the British government. (The Unionists of the North East of Ireland wished them to remain as part of the UK and not come under a 'Home Rule' parliament in Dublin). Fifty years ago all sections of Protestant opinion supported Carson - he received full backing from big business, the Protestant churches, the Press and the British Conservative Party.



Taylor (left) and Craig (right) look out over the mainly working class Unionist crowds.

## DREAMWORLD

Today, Unionism is a poor shadow of its former self. The middle class elements are now virtually lined up behind the British government and are willing to accept what the British will give them. This is the position of both Faulkner & Paisley - still the most popular Unionist politicians.

Craig's dreamworld of 1912 was radically shaken after the strike he supposedly called. (He had in fact attempted to get it called off, but was forced to support it in order that he might not lose face with the more militant Protestant groups such as the UDA) After the strike, Craig was for the first time really lambasted by 'respectable' Unionist opinion.

Faulkner declared he no longer thought of Craig as a "Unionist". The Belfast evening paper ran the headline "Strike costs £3 million" and the rest of the press and sundry church leaders attacked him for doing more harm to Ulster in one day than the IRA did in three years.

## CONTRADICTION

Fundamentally this expressed the contradiction between the methods of action, like striking, which are organic to Orangeism's mass working class social base, and the interests of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois leaders of the movement.

Secondly: for several months John Taylor, a former hardline Unionist bigot, had been talking to Catholics attempting to find a 'solution' - without the help of the British government. Taylor's activities posed a threat to Craig's position as leader of militant loyal-

alism. Taylor had in fact seen where Craig's politics were taking him some time before Craig himself had realised the implications of his Loyalist opposition to the British government. Thus Craig came up with the 'Dominion of Ulster' idea at the Vanguard rally in the Ulster Hall, four days after the strike.

Craig's motives and the actual social content of his independent Ulster are clear. His opposition to trade unions and his general right wing Tory views are well known. His proposal was nothing but an attempt to restore the old Protestant ascendancy. Knowing the British would not give it to him, Craig realised the need to go it alone. (Protestant Sinn Feinism, as Paisley calls it).

What was novel in his idea (and positively revolutionary within Loyalist political thinking) was his recognition of the Catholic minority community and its aspirations for a united independent Ireland. Craig seemed, in suggesting a common Ulster loyalty for both Catholics and Protestants, to be radically attacking the main pillar of Unionism - the British connection.

Craig is willing to sacrifice the Union if it will restore the Protestant ascendancy. His carefully worded speech was an attempt to woo the Catholics, in the form of the SDLP, onto his side. He went part of the way in accepting the SDLP's fundamental thesis that a 6 County state is inherently unstable because of the refusal of the Catholic minority to be ruled by the Unionists - only to propose a new 6 County state which would be distinct from both the Republic and Britain.

Despite the source of the 'Dominion' idea and its politically reactionary and economically rupt structure, anything which further widens the gulf between the British and the Loyalist rank-and-file opens up new opportunities for the anti-

From a Reader in Belfast

## BRITISH ARMY MURDER GANGS

Dear comrade,

With regard to the article on the Six Counties which appeared in no. 22 of your paper, let me first say that your reporter Austen Morgan gave a pretty fair analysis of what is happening here.

I would just like to point out that the Orange murder gangs have not alone been responsible for the assassinations of Catholics. British army murder squads in civilian clothes have been guilty of some of the most vicious atrocities committed against innocent civilians. It is the wish of the British army terrorists to blame the protestant population for all of these murders, but the recent massacre on the New Lodge Road in which three unarmed Provisional volunteers and three defenceless civilians died leaves no doubt as to British army involvement in sectarian murders.

Their strategy seems to be two-fold:-

1) to eradicate the IRA as a threat through the use of internment and murder;

2) to force support for themselves among the Catholic people by putting themselves forward as the only force capable of preventing the assassinations they themselves are carrying out under cover.

To help this process along, the British army have encouraged protestant fascist organisations to murder Catholics (by turning a blind eye) and have done so themselves when the Protestants have not instilled enough fear in the Catholic population or when they have felt that another unsolved murder would serve the purpose of their imperialist masters in Whitehall.

Yours fraternally,  
M. McC.  
Andersonstown, Belfast.





# 'REMODELLING' IRELAND BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

Irish politics north and south of the border is dominated by the British government's search for a new political 'settlement' of 'the Irish question'. The British Government's white paper is due shortly, with proposals for a settlement in Northern Ireland, and the politicians and pressure groups are frantically moving, splitting and regrouping in an effort to synchronise their own interests with those of the British government — which in turn is desperately searching for political instruments through which to work within the 6 County political cockpit.

In the South the search of the Lynch government for stability to meet any ructions after the White Paper has led to a defeat for Fianna Fail and a limping coalition government.

There is a major contradiction between the privileges of the Protestant Ascendancy within a 6 County state dependent on Britain, and the fact that the British government no longer wants that Orange Ascendancy. Britain has a strategy of reintegrating the whole of Ireland very fully into its economy and sphere of influence, within the Common Market.

## House-trained

The attempt to square this (for the Protestant supremacists) vicious circle, has led former fire-eating professional bigots like Ian Paisley to turn, overnight, into house trained 'moderates' subservient to the British — though still of course talking big against the Catholics.

It has led pillars of the Union (which was seen as the basis of the 'prosperity' of Northern Ireland) such as William Craig to become advocates of, first, 'UDI', and now a form of Independence based on agreement with both Britain and the Irish Republic.

But the circle won't be squared. The old Orange Ascendancy broke down violently, catastrophically and, for the ruling class, dangerously, in 1969 and after. Britain will probably restore an 'Assembly' — but not with the powers of Stormont.

## Remodelling

In the South the bourgeoisie long ago made its economic and political peace with Britain, and is now in all its sections 'reconciled' to a perspective of 'national unity' at the end of a process of drawing together within the EEC.

Meanwhile they rely on Britain to remodel the Northern Ireland superstructure so that eventually there can be 'painless' reunification. They don't want unity now, these leaders of the "age long fight for Irish freedom", these itchy-palmed gombeens who give their parties grandiose names like "The Soldiers of Destiny" (Fianna Fail!)

They have once again undertaken to hold down even that minority in the South who are eager to join in or aid the fight to drive the British out of Ireland in a revolutionary way, rather than waiting for the British to 'go' at their convenience and the convenience of the gombeen Tories in the South. They passed a Bill recently to jail anyone on the mere say so of a senior police officer before a special court.

That was their contribution to keeping the patient quiet on the operating table while British imperialism attempts to complete its

## IRISH POLLS

of Britain at the end of the last century, with an independent structure because of proportional representation and its own traditions.

It too will have a hard line in repression of the Republicans. Its spokesman on the North is a gentleman called Conor Cruise O'Brien, one of the most committed (and sophisticated) pro-imperialist spokesman in Ireland

## Struggle

The tragedy of the Irish working class was shown, when after decades of political activity, and the creation of a Labour Party to fight for its interests in Parliament, it faced the elections with nothing but Hobson's choice — that is, no choice.

North and south of the border the Irish working class is still paying in blood, disunity, and political and social impotence for the failure of a whole series of groupings of socialists and republicans to build a revolutionary socialist organisation of the Irish working class — to fuse both the struggle for national independence and for workers' power with that class.

Any socialist in Britain who uses criticisms (however 'correct') of the Republican struggle, or an appreciation of its limitations, as a cop-out from active solidarity with the IRA's military fight, shares in the responsibility for that disunity. By setting 'socialism' destructively against the Republican struggle, he helps to perpetuate the sterile separation of socialism and Republicanism.

Active solidarity with the fight for self-determination for Ireland is a hundred times more useful to the Irish working class than any number of lectures on unity and non-sectarianism.



Fine Gael's Cosgrave & Labour's Conroy

delicate remodelling job.

It is against this background that the fight of the Northern Ireland Catholic minority erupted and continues to beat against the military might of the British army. The problem for Britain and its Irish clients and collaborators is whether it can keep that battle isolated, placating the Protestants, and keep the South quiet. So far they have succeeded.

The election campaign in the South pursued only 26 County local issues, as if to prove that the gombeen politicians really do accept the idea that the 26 County population has no right to interfere in the North. The Belfast Newsletter, a Protestant Ascendancy daily, was moved to comment:

"The election tactics adopted by their advisers and comforters at Leinster House must have come as a slap in the teeth for the militants of the Ulster minority..... amounts to a bigger disillusionment than that suffered a year ago by the Protestant majority here at the hands of the Heath Government"

The narrow defeat of Lynch by the coalition of Fine Gael and 'Labour' will mean little or no change in policy. They are committed to the same policies as Fianna Fail, perhaps more so. Fine Gael is traditionally marginally the more

conservative of the two main bourgeois parties, strong on law and order, and a party which was first cobbled together in 1922 (when the Irish middle class wanted to do a deal with Britain) and then cemented with the blood of republicans who refused such a deal: 70 and more of them were shot out of hand, though in fact they were prisoners of war.

The Labour Party is very much the junior partner, with about one quarter of the seats, just big enough to fit comfortably in Fine Gael's pocket. It is a right wing party, based on the trade unions but entirely subservient to the politics of the bosses. In reality it is an equivalent of the Lib-Lab

## CEASEFIRE SHAKY IN LAOS



bombing on the pretext of 'aggression' by the liberation forces.

In this respect, the situation in Laos is similar to that in Vietnam. There is an important difference, though, between the cease-fire agreements. Both agreements project elections to decide the political regime. (Whether the elections will ever take place is another matter.)

But in Vietnam the agreement, for now, leaves Thieu and the Provisional Revolutionary Government each controlling the areas they presently occupy. The Laos agreement involves the formation, within 30 days, of a coalition 'government of national union', before the elections.

Now clearly a revolution cannot be carried out in coalition with the very people you are fighting against! It is thus doubly necessary for socialists to condemn the agreement forced on the Laotian fighters by US imperialism, and to unconditionally support the military struggle of the liberation forces, even and especially in breach of the agreement.

ON 22 FEBRUARY, A CEASE-FIRE agreement was signed for Laos.

On 24 February, B52s were bombing Laos.

On 1 March, truce was re-established and negotiations continued. But there's no doubt that, if the US wishes it, they can at any time resume

## workers fight

WORKERS' FIGHT LITERATURE available from 98 Gifford Street, London N.1:

- \* 'Permanent Revolution' no. 1 25p plus 5p postage.
- \* The Left and the July Crisis. 10p plus 3p postage.
- \* The General Strike and the Tory Government — an open letter to the International Marxist Group. 2½p postage.

### OUT SOON:

- \* Workers' Fight and the Fourth International (reprint from WF22). 3p plus 2½p postage.
- \* The General Strike, the Industrial Relations Act, and the British working class.
- \* 41 Theses on the Fourth International. 20p plus 5p postage.



# Double Terror Act Shows Zionism's True Face

by **ARYE  
BEN SHEMUEL**

The simple stunning savagery of the shooting down by Israel of a Libyan airliner over an Israeli occupied part of Egypt has drawn the attention of hundreds of millions to the blunt fact of Zionist aggression. Whether Israel meant to shoot down this airliner carrying 104 civilians or not, such terrorising of the Arab people certainly is the normal face of Zionism.

Nothing proves this so much as the fact that this outrage has been used by the pro-Zionist news media to cover up the simultaneous raid deep into Lebanese territory. While front pages recorded Golda Meir expressing regret (but insistently "no apologies") about the airliner victims, the inside pages of some papers pictured a gleeful General Shadek, the paratroop commander whose forces are said to have destroyed seven Fedayeen bases, killing (according to a Palestine news agency) 31 Palestinians — 18 guerrillas and 13 civilians, including women and children. In the raid schools and hospitals were also destroyed.

## ANTI-IMPERIALISM

This renewed terror by Israel comes at a time when Egypt's President Anouar el-Sadat has proclaimed a "world wide diplomatic offensive". The stated objective of this policy, according to Sadat's advisor, Mr Hafiz Ismail, who has been touring the capitals of the super-powers of late, is to find a peaceful solution to the Middle East situation.

When this policy was officially announced at the end of January, wide sections of the Egyptian people reacted against the plan — foremost among them the students and certain intellectuals within the Arab Socialist Union (the ASU is Egypt's only legal party).

Sadat's reaction was to launch a mass campaign of repression against them and to back this up with purges of the intellectual notables of the ASU.

But, if this process revealed the degree to which Sadat is "in the driving seat", having disposed of some of his rivals, the announcement of the 'war budget' on February 11th showed the degree to which the popular anti-imperialism of Egyptian society has narrowed his room for manoeuvre. The budget did succeed in isolating the dissenters. In line with this, Dr Sidqi, the Egyptian PM, stressed Egypt's need to "mobilise its entire economy for the battle".

All the while, however, the

strains of the peace overtures of Foreign Minister Zayat could be heard. This after all represents the wishes of the Egyptian rulers.

Those parts of the Arab world which are unambiguously in the pocket of imperialism and better able to control the masses have been able to advance further along the road to co-operation with Zionism. This can be seen by glancing at recent Israeli business news.

Wreckage of the airliner Israel shot down over the Sinai desert.



## ISRAEL ARRESTS ANTI-ZIONIST MILITANTS IN 'RED FRONT'

"Thus far the police have arrested twenty Israeli Arabs from the Northern part of the country and four young Jews, some of whom are members of Matzpen. Further arrests of Jews and Arabs are expected."

This was the announcement of the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz on December 8th last, under the headline 'Arab-Jewish spy ring uncovered.... They trained in terrorist base in Syria'.

And in one thing it wasn't exaggerating: within a short time the number of arrests grew. By the beginning of January regular sweeps by the Shin Bet (the Israeli secret service) had trawled another 36 Arabs and two Jews into 'detention'.

Although many have speculated that this alleged breaking of a Syrian spy-ring was a frame-up to cover the Shin Bet's disastrous 'failure' in the Munich affair, and their failure to break the Black September

There one reads (as confirmed by the Sunday Times of 18 Feb.) that an Israeli shipping line, Maritime Fruit (run by two extreme right-wing Zionists) has ordered £600 million worth of ships.

The most interesting of these orders are the six tankers to be built by Harland and Wolf. The oil carrying capacity of the six 333 000 ton super-tankers is several times greater than Israel's paltry oil production (even including that extracted from the occupied zones). It may be inferred from this that Saudi Arabia has already reached agreement with Israel on the use of the pipe-line which connects the two countries.

Sadat is not ignorant of this — but at present he cannot do likewise. The whole shift of policy

within the Egyptian ruling class since about six months before Nasser's death has, however, been in this direction.

Israel would like to make use of such an agreement: it would provide a method of expansion without the international and national problems of overt militarism. At present Golda Meir needs to do two things to pave the way for this. Firstly, an elimination of those elements, militant anti-Zionists within and without Israel, who are a thorn in her side, and, when explicitly socialist, a thorn in the side of the Arab regimes. Secondly, she needs to appease the growing right wing within Israel who wish to see the Arabs not just beaten but totally humiliated.

group, the real importance of the arrests lies elsewhere.

Firstly, the fact that Jews have been arrested has shaken many people — particularly as one of the chief suspects, Ehud Adiv, is a kibbutz dweller (now a student), and the kibbutzniks, far from being the socialists that Israeli propaganda makes them out to be, are the most militantly Zionist section of the population.

Secondly, one of those arrested was Rami Livne, whose father is a member of the Knesset (Parliament). More concerned about his son's well being for the moment than protecting the image of Israel, Knesset member Livne has exposed the torture his son has been subject to.

Thirdly, the whole affair has drawn the attention of people — partly through the hysterical outpourings of the Israeli press (curiously not reflected by the Jewish press outside Israel) — to the dev-

elopment of circles of opposition to Zionism inside Israel.

Ehud Aviv, for instance, was a student at Haifa university at the time, a university whose union was dominated at its last election by a Jewish-Arab left grouping called 'Yesh'. He and Dan Vered, a teacher from Tel-Aviv who has been arrested, are said to be the founders of the 'Red Front', a tiny splinter from Matzpen, the fragmented but dominant anti-Zionist group in Israel.

Of course, the Israeli government are trying to use this spying story to discredit all the parties to the left of the government, and to step up arrests of socialists and other repressions, censorship and the like. Such repressions would suit Golda Meir, of course, in trying to outdo the extreme rightist bloc for electoral allegiance.

Paramilitary police, plain clothes police and their usual accompaniment of thugs armed with clubs, knuckledusters, and knives, waded into 1000 students demonstrating at the Athens Polytechnic Engineering School.

As a result, 11 students were arrested and accused of 'insulting the authorities'.

The move was yet another stage in the confrontation between the extreme right wing regime of the Greek colonels and students. The series of confrontations — whose roots really go back to 1967 when the NATO and US backed junta took power was sparked off again when a new Am-

## MASS ACTION BY STUDENTS IN GREECE

erican college opened in Athens. The students protested at their not being consulted over the rules and regulations of the college, which was further seen as a physical embodiment of the US's domination of Greek affairs.

Quite soon the slogans of the demonstrators changed from purely academic liberty to cries of 'Down with the Junta'. The junta itself replied with ordering conscription for those found guilty in the disturbances. As this brought renewed waves of demonstrations and protests, so the repressions

and arrests were stepped up.

Last Friday, in just such an attack by police and their paid thugs, three demonstrators, two in Athens and one in Salonica, were murdered. More arrests have been made. And still the demonstrations go on... courageously in the face of martial law and semi-fascist terror.

On 23rd February about 2000 Greek and British students gathered outside the University of London and marched to the Greek Embassy to protest against the

repressions.

More of such demonstrations and protest meetings are required to bring home to workers and students here the situation in Greece. It is important for revolutionaries to take part in these actions, which so far have been dominated by liberal spokesmen advocating a return to the 'normality' of pre-1967 Greece.

But that was only 'normal' in that there were not trade union elections, few civil liberties, a notoriously reactionary police force and a removal of the Prime Minister with his place taken by a stooge.



# The Scapegoats Fight Back

As the hospital workers' struggle moves forward, the Tories' concern for the lower-paid turns into hard-handed meanness. NEAL SMITH spoke to JACK SUTTON, a Manchester hospital porter, about how the hospital workers can win, with solidarity from other workers.

Jack Sutton is secretary of his union branch and secretary of the National Alliance of Stewards in Health. In the last 2 years his branch has increased union membership from 150 to 850 and organised shop stewards and branch meetings, which didn't exist before. Jack Sutton is also a member of Workers Fight.

**NS:** Could you firstly just outline the stage the claim has reached in negotiation?

**JS:** The last offer made by management was £1.88 per week for men and women, or £2 for men and £1.80 for women. This was to become operative on March 14th and the next stage of equal pay for women (80p per week) was to be introduced in October.

This offer was rejected by the four unions involved (NUPE, T&GWU, G&MWU, and COHSE), who decided to campaign by means of industrial action for the full claim of £4 a week, a 35 hour week, and four weeks' holiday.

The unions decided to pursue this claim by means of selective strikes, a ban on overtime, non-cooperation, and other forms of industrial action.

**NS:** Is the claim adequate?

**JS:** £4 a week won't even bring us back to last year's living standard, the way price rises are. A number of branches, such as London and Bristol, have called for a straight £8 claim. But obviously we must join in a united fight for the existing claim.

**NS:** Didn't the ballot of union members call for all-out strike action?

**JS:** December 13th strikes and demonstrations showed tremendous militancy. And yet all we get is photos, a pat on the back, thanks for the impressive turn-out, and still no leadership.

After the announcement of the NUPE and COHSE ballots, people thought that here was a chance to say what action we should take. In reality, the union leaders' aims were quite different. The ballot was an attempt to upstage the other unions and an attempt to play for time.

They've been dragging on negotiations — probably in the hope of getting some exemption for hospital workers as a 'special case'. The ballots called for all-out strike action — but there has been no action since December 13th. All this confusion and delay just tends to demoralise the membership.

**NS:** What action has been planned by the union leaders?

**JS:** Selected grades, such as laundry staff, are to be called out. Recently, a decision has been made to go for 1 to 3 day strikes in as many hospitals as possible. In the ten major hospital regions, one large hospital will come out on full strike. For example, in this area, it is to be us, the United Manchester Hospitals.

These selective tactics will confuse the members. Some will argue "why should we strike when others don't". It certainly cuts into the solidarity we have had.

Hospitals in Staffordshire, United Manchester Hospitals, London NUPE, and Bristol have

## IT'S NOT US ENDANGERING LIVES. IT'S THE TORIES

all called for all-out action.

In any case, UMH will be called out on March 1st. This was decided by the branch committee, and we will hold a mass meeting and call for a solid all-out strike lasting at least a week. We will also ask for strong pickets to be maintained and for assistance from trade union and student bodies.

**NS:** What has been the role of the National Alliance of Stewards in Health?

**JS:** NASH and its local alliances have always held to the tactic of an all-out strike. At the last national conference of NASH, the original claim of £8 per week, a 35 hour week, 4 weeks holiday, plus equal pay for women now, was reiterated.

We called on the unions involved to fight now for the claim. In addition, we called for the setting up of public sector alliances on a rank-and-file basis. This has already been achieved in Manchester at the February 18th 'Freeze' conference, in London, and, I think, East Kent.

We also hope to produce a NASH broadsheet for all hospital workers outlining our position.

**NS:** Here in UMH, you were one of the two hospitals in the country to come out in support of the Dirty Jobs strike, and the first to have a mass meeting to support the Bristol hospital workers, with a half-day strike and demonstration. In Pentonville Five week you held a mass meeting in the yard to hear a docker explaining the issues.

What do you have planned right now?

**JS:** I've already mentioned coming out and picketing. In addition to this we will issue leaflets. One will call on local trade unionists to support the gas and hospital workers by participating in the united front committee that has been set up.

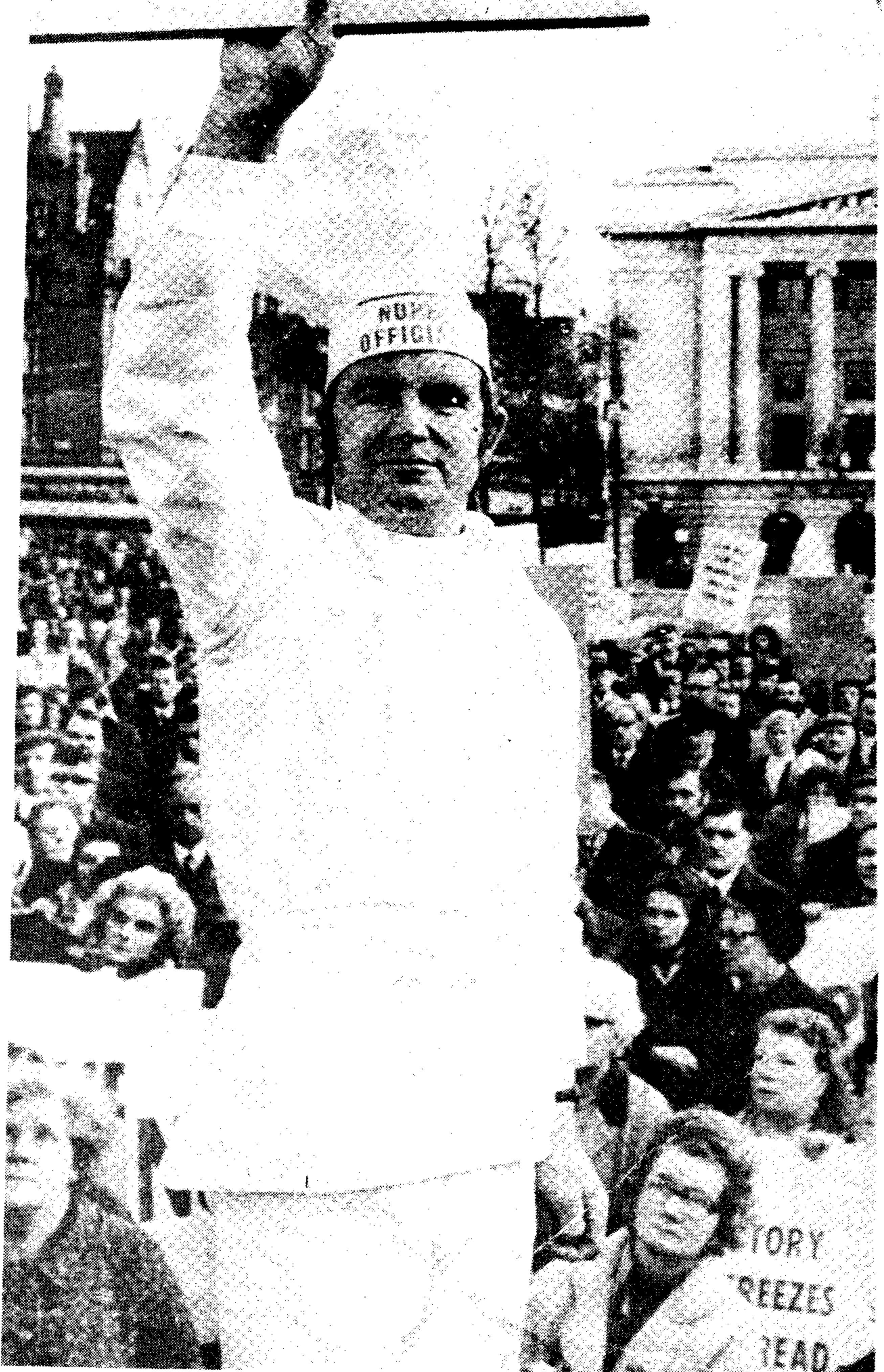
Secondly we will distribute our open letter in reply to Keith Joseph. In the last pay packet a letter of his was sent to all workers advising them not to disrupt hospital services and calling on them to accept the offer.

The reply will reject the notion of an incomes policy, and describe the £2 as nothing more than a wage cut. We will condemn the hypocritical Tory claim to be concerned with the lower paid.

**NS:** How will you counter the hostile press propaganda which you must be expecting?

**JS:** We must make it clear that it's not us endangering lives, it's the Tories. If they are genuinely concerned for the lower paid and for the patients, let them pay us

# NATION'S UNDER PAID EMPLOYEES



Colin Simm, a Nottingham cook, states his case at a mass meeting in Nottingham's Old Market Square.

the full claim.

We have agreed to let into the hospitals during the strike food, mail, flowers, and blood supplies, etc. However, if there is an attempt to bring in 'volunteers', then further sanctions will have to be considered.

We are prepared to assist in any emergency providing that representatives of the strike committee are allowed into the hospital to assess the situation for themselves. We are also permitting one telephonist on each switchboard.

On behalf of the bosses and their plans to cut our wages, the Tories are trying to stampede people into making us the scapegoats for the death of the sick, the gas men scapegoats for the death of the elderly, and no doubt the car workers also for any fail-

ure in the economy. But they are the real criminals, not us workers.

**NS:** What about the 'special case' argument?

**JS:** We must reject the idea of being a 'special case'. The Freeze is directed against all workers and affects all. It is in the interests of the whole of the working class that the gas and hospital workers smash the Freeze.

If this doesn't happen, we are allowing the Tories to make us pay for the present crisis, their crisis.

We should campaign for a united front of all workers against the Freeze, the setting up of united front committees, and raise the call — both at rank and file level and at the TUC — for a general strike. If we use the full strength of the working class, we can win.

THE



# FIGHT AGAINST THE FREEZE

WHO'S A GREEDY PARASITE?

## FORDS

In the week of the big fight-back against the Freeze, a company that raised its prices four times over the last year and a half holds up its itchy palms and shrugs: "We can't afford to pay your wage increase".

In April 1971 listed prices of Fords cars went up 6.6% in December of that year they went up another 3.3% with the purchase tax reduction of the following April not being passed on, Ford cars in reality increased by a further 4%, which was overhauled by 5% more last November. In that period, as the Trade Unions' Joint Claim at Fords makes clear, output at Dagenham, the main production centre, was up 25% on 1971.

With all this evidence of their ability to pay thrust under their greedy snouts, the management of Ford of Britain still hold the livelihoods of about 53000 workers to ransom.

And this is Fords, the firm whose sales receipts for 1973 are expected to reach £900 million (that is, £12500 per employee), whose profits in the second half of 1972 increased by £12 million due to the floating of the pound alone.

The struggle, though, is not one to prove that Fords have got the money. The point is to get it from them — everyone knows it's there. Not that one should hold back on a claim if profits were lower.....

go on an overtime ban) and indeed small tell-tale signs have appeared. But much of this is a lack of confidence in the ability of the men to smash through Fords arrogance as well as the Freeze. Determined tactics of mass and flying pickets will help reassure some of these.

What is vital though is that the union leaders do not employ divisive tactics. The lack of uniformity in the timing of the strike is bad in this respect. Also, the lesson of 1971's disastrous ballot must be made absolutely clear — the ballot divides, mass action unites.

Some trade unionists have indicated that this claim is the one to watch. The fact is that it is the one to have **active solidarity with** — and not just watch. The fact is that if Fords are forced to concede on this — and they are quite capable, as the extension of a huge multinational empire, of scomfully tearing up Heath's Green Paper and all the other Freeze-type recommendations — then a massive breach will have been opened in the policies the Tories are piloting for the boss-class.

The most immediate task in solidarity action is not allowing any of this "greedy beggar" rubbish to go unanswered. Higher paid or low paid, the working class has now more than at any other time an **immediate vital need for unity against the Tory freeze.**



"The lower paid, I can see they've got a case: but these carworkers... I wouldn't mind getting their wages"

That's the sort of argument that's often used to justify indifference or hostility to carworkers' wage claims- And it's true that carworkers do have higher wage rates than most workers.

But the ones who are really doing well are not carworkers — or workers at all. They are the top managers, the shareholders, the money-lenders, the stock market speculators. With them, it's not a matter of perhaps £40 or £50 a week got through long hours of overtime and gruelling work. It's £400 or £4000 a week, for producing absolutely nothing.

If the carworkers held back on their claim, would it help the lower-paid? No, it wouldn't: it would help the rich parasites. For the carworkers to **go ahead** with militant action is the best way to help the lower-paid; that is the way to smash the Freeze and open the road for lower paid sections to obtain their demands.

And how did the carworkers get their higher rates? **By fighting for them.** The way we'll get improvements for all is by other sections fighting side by side with the carworkers, and not sniping from the sidelines or going along with the profiteers.

Men at Fords Dagenham vote to strike: 1st February 1971.

## How would you like to be a Battery hen?



Men coming out of the Halewood plant in Liverpool.

"People seem to go mad about the conditions of battery hens, but they don't seem to care about work conditions. You go to Fords, we've got our battery hens there, except they're human beings".

That's how one T&GWU official working on the Fords claim described the work conditions there. He was referring in particular to men who have to work in a glass dome. This dome, which protects against lead poisoning, is completely enclosed, air being passed through a line. Men work in the glass dome on an 8 weeks on, 16 weeks off (on some other part of the line) rota.

Those are the battery hen conditions. But how would you like to be working on the overhead cam-

shaft section, with engines coming at you every 28 seconds, that is, 128 per hour for eight or nine hours. Or perhaps you'd prefer the paint-spraying section where 36 cars an hour are sprayed. You'd certainly have to be athletic because, covered entirely in protective clothing, goggles and boots, you would in the temperature of at least 72°F, have to touch your toes about 1400 times in a shift.

These are just a few of the facts that come out of any survey of work conditions at Ford production plants. These and worse conditions were most completely documented during the "269 dispute", which was brought about by management trying to increase the pace

of the line from 263 units per shift to 269

Such high speed production work involves such humiliations as having to put up your hand to go to the toilet and then waiting for the (appropriately named) 'relief' to take over from you. You may have to wait 20 minutes.

The International Labour Organisation recommends 12% 'allowance time' for arduous work involving unusual postures. The British car works all hover around or a little under this mark. At Fords the 'allowance' is 4% with an extra 2.2% for tea breaks.

It is not thought that Fords shareholders are restricted to 2.2% for their tea breaks

## DANGEROUS

The official claim says: "We ask here quite clearly and specifically for a commitment by Ford of Britain to a major sales effort in the Common Market, including a substantial emphasis on car exports."

Now, to back up a claim by reference to profit figures or possible production figures is OK — but it can be dangerous. Here it clearly implies a policy which puts other car workers — German, French, Japanese, American, etc — out of a job, and thus weakens the working class solidarity which is the Fords workers essential weapon against the bosses.

The other danger of this line — not immediately present — is that you are saying that if the firm did not have the money you wouldn't be claiming. Thus you give priority to Fords' 'right' to make a profit.

## SOLIDARITY

The one thing that Ford says they won't shift on is the question of the shorter working week. But this demand is both a real improvement in itself and a blow against unemployment.

The press has been hooting and applying at signs of weakness within the workforce (like the decision at the time of writing of the 900 adventurous men not to strike but to



The embers of 1968 could be lit again. The outcome of the French elections is doubtful – but there is a serious possibility of the votes of the working class giving the Left Union a majority.

President Pompidou has said that he will not recognise that majority.

What forces would enter into struggle in the crisis provoked if Pompidou carries out his threat? On these pages we review the strategy of the French ruling class, the French working class and its organisations, and the groups of the French revolutionary left.

## Gaullism after de Gaulle

FRANCE 1968: ten million workers on strike, workers' councils in some areas, barricades in the streets.

The French ruling class has still not recovered from the blow of 1968. They have not been able to damp the workers' continuing militancy, expressing itself in strikes and factory occupations.

The ruling class is looking for a changed political solution. From post-war to 1958, France operated under the proportional representation, parliamentary 4th Republic constitution. With the Communist Party out of government after 1947, there was serious political instability as the numerous parties based on various layers of France's large middle class produced a series of government combinations.

These weak governments could not settle the independence war in Algeria – and in 1958 de Gaulle came to power on the basis of a revolt by the Army and the racist, violently anti-independence French settlers in Algeria.

A new constitution was brought in – the 5th Republic – giving almost dictatorial power to de Gaulle as president. The popular base of de Gaulle's regime was not a normal political party structure, but the demagogic Gaullist movement, based on loyalty to the 'leader' and a vague ideology of nationalism and corporate statism.

The French ruling class faces two main problems:

France has probably the most outdated social structure of any major country in Western Europe. Fewer big industrial giants, more small firms, hundreds of thousands of small shopkeepers and small farmers. As world competition sharpens, it is vital for French big business to modernise.

And they want to modernise the political structure. They want to junk the mystical personality politics and the delusions of France being a great power. They want to restructure the Gaullist political 'bloc', the Union for the Defence of the Republic, and get a more rational, flexible political party system, within a presidential constitution.

In 1969 de Gaulle went. Later that year, the government put forward a programme including various social reforms, but centred round industrial rationalisation, and 'contrats de progres' (a sort of productivity deal).

They aim to get the bureaucracy of the workers' movement better integrated into the state and used to police the working class more closely.

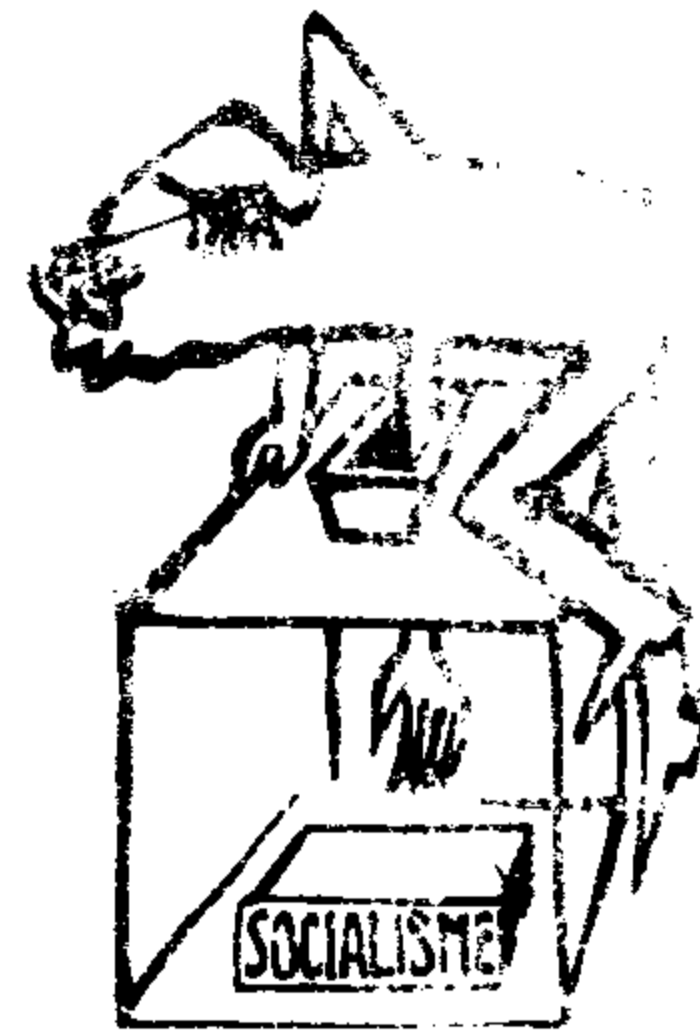
## THE FRENCH ELECTIONS

# THE BALLOT

# BEFORE THE

# STORM?

by MARTIN THOMAS



POMPIDOU

Politicians are jockeying for position in the forthcoming regroupment. The crucial stage looks like being the 1976 presidential election.

The ruling class don't want to change too much, and they want to change it gradually, carefully. The worst fear of the ruling class is that the workers' wish to get rid of the old regime will erupt, beyond electoral limits, into a repeat of 1968.

The bosses do not fear that the CP leaders will destroy their power. In France, in 1945-47, and more recently in Finland and in Iceland, CP leaders have shown themselves able and willing to serve as loyal ministers of the ruling class.

But the employers do not want to give even the limited reforms promised by the Left. And they do not want to take the risk of Left

promises and workers' expectations fuelling a rise in workers' militancy beyond bureaucratic limits.

So it is only as a last resort that the bosses will have the CP in Government.

Pompidou has said that he will not recognise a Left government even if the Left has a majority. Thus he hopes to scare people off voting for the Left, and, if it comes to a majority, to provoke a crisis which will split up the Left and open the way for a non-CP government.

## The Common Programme

The Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the left Radicals have come together on a Common Programme of weak reformism. The programme is similar to the promises the Labour Party makes while in opposition: 13 nationalisations (with compensation), 'progress towards' a 1000 Fr (about £80 per month) minimum wage and a 40 hour week, more 'industrial democracy'; meanwhile the new Left government will remain within the 1958 constitution and within NATO.

The programme is supposed to lead, not to socialism, but to an "advanced democracy", where the power of the monopolies has been broken and the transition to socialism is easier. Just how big the chances are of the Union of the Left breaking the power of the monopolies, is shown by their reaction to Pompidou's defiance. They have issued no call for working class action; instead, they complain that Pompidou should obey democratic legality. If it comes to a serious showdown with the mono-

polies, they will do no better than they did in 1958, when the only action they organised was a demonstration two weeks after the coup.

Besides, the Common Programme is not even adequate for the most immediate needs of the working class. 1970 figures showed three-quarters of French workers under 1500 Fr (£110) per month – and food prices are higher in France than here. Half a million are unemployed. The 40-hour week and the 1000 Fr (or more!) minimum wage are immediate necessities. The French working class is heavily split by racialism directed against 1½ million immigrant workers, many of whom are illegal immigrants and thus have no legal rights at all. The Common Programme proposes maintaining curbs on immigration, thus inevitably perpetuating this racialism.

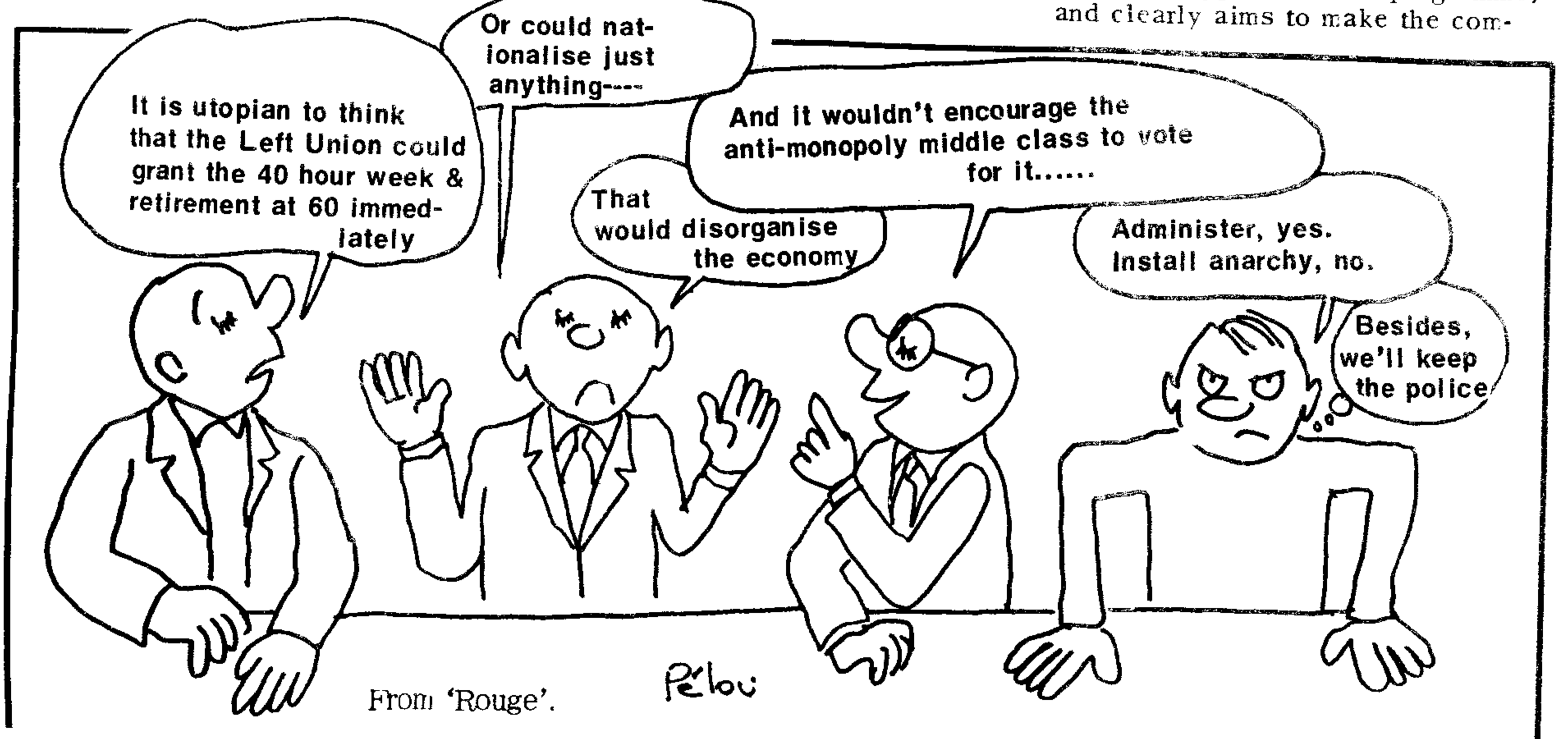
The French police are notorious for their brutality – as are the armed guards employed in some factories, one of whom was recently sentenced to just four years for killing a young Maoist worker. If the Union of the Left were serious about breaking the power of the monopolies, they would propose the disbanding of the armed police and the arming of the workers.



MITTERAND

## The Parties of the Left

The SOCIALIST PARTY suffered disaster in the 1969 presidential elections – their candidate got just 5% of the vote. A new turn was necessary. Under a new leader, Mitterand, the party refounded itself in 1969, dropped even talk of 'class struggle' from its programme, and clearly aims to make the com-

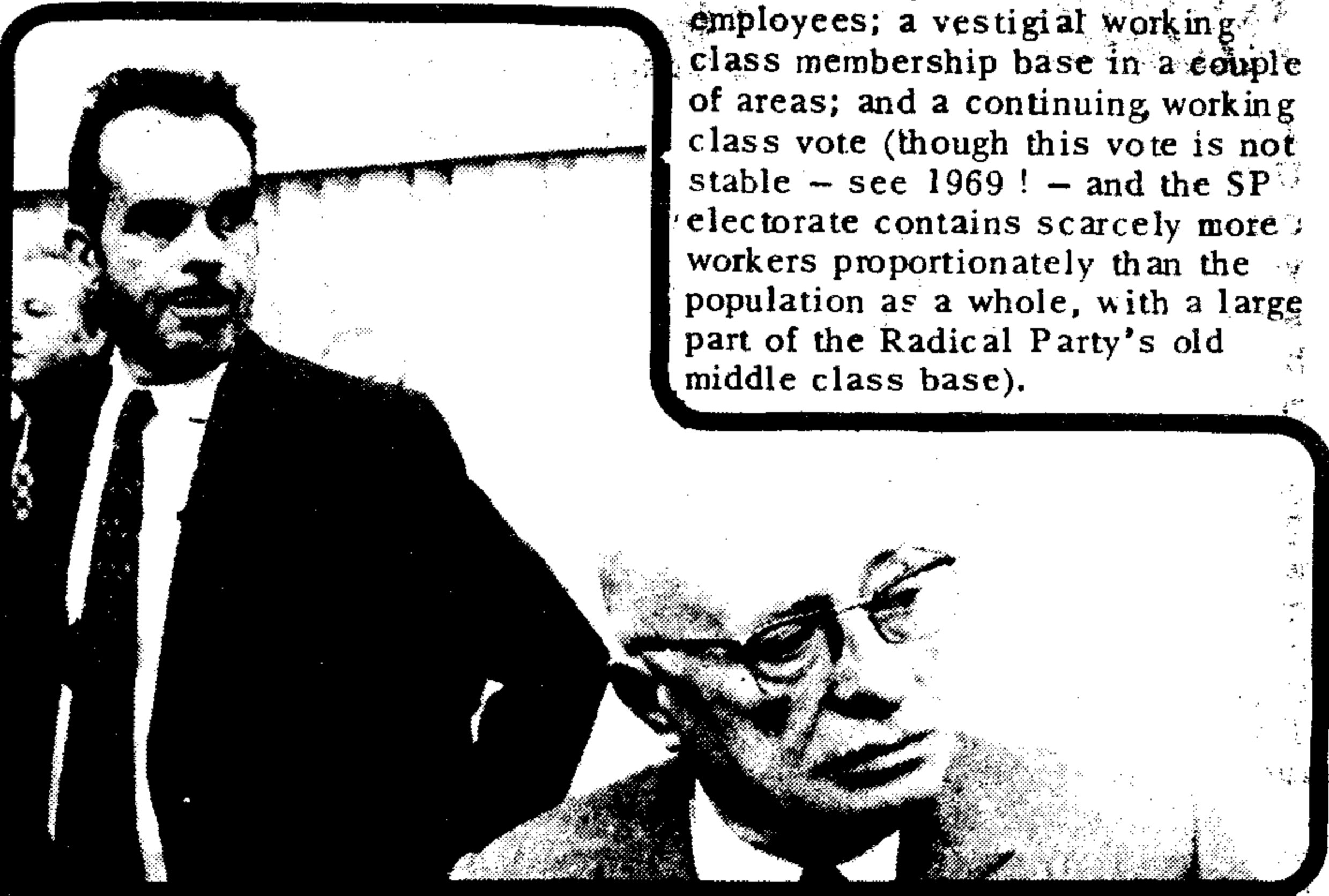




ing election a springboard for Mitterrand to offer a 'technocratic reform' Wilson/Brandt-type candidacy at the 1976 election.

If Mitterrand can gain votes from the CP's electorate, and show to the ruling class his ability to domesticate the CP, then he has a good chance.

And so far he has done well. The SP has had a massive electoral boost, and will probably end up with nearly twice as many National Assembly seats as the CP. If the CP proves an embarrassment to him after the election, he can and will double-cross them, and form a coalition with the Centre or the Right. (No less than 62% of the electorate, according to an opinion poll, think that the Union of the Left will split up in the case of an election victory.)



C.P. Gen. Sec. MARCHAIS (left), with former C.P. Candidate DUCLOS

The Mitterrand operation indicates an attempt to continue and rationalise this development, with the SP probably projected to be the core of a new big 'centre-left' party.

The **LEFT RADICALS** are a small parliamentary rump, who have decided that they can best vie for position in the coming bourgeois regroupment by hitching their fate to Mitterrand's star. They signed the Common Programme without changing a word, and are putting up a common slate with the SP.

The **COMMUNIST PARTY** certainly is a working-class party. Its politics do not reflect the interests of the working class; and its hold over the relatively poorly organised French working class is nowhere near as solid as the Labour Party's hold over the British working class. But it is the only party based in the working class — 80% of its members and 70% of its voters are workers, and it controls the major trade union federation, the CGT.

It is the working class activists of the CP who make up the grass roots strength of the Union of the Left — meetings, canvassing, etc. The CP leaders are prepared to allow the militants' efforts to be directed into boosting Mitterrand — the Left Union has gained many votes for the SP, none for the CP. Working class enthusiasm for the Left Union is largely confined to the wish to get rid of the old regime.

Like other Western Communist Parties, they are going through a process of transformation, loosening the links with Moscow and turning the CP into a straightforward reformist party. Thus, the Union of the Left is important to them as a step towards being accepted by the employing class as a possible government party.

Its other important function is to domesticate the class struggle

for a while. Some weeks ago, the Ligue Communiste organised a Vietnam solidarity demonstration which ended in clashes with the police. The CP was furious ..... at those who could be so reckless as to organise a demonstration "within six weeks of the election"!

## The Revolutionaries' Unity and The Union of the Left

The ruling group and the Union of the Left are not the only forces on the field. Since 1968, there is a growing revolutionary left in France

The two Trotskyist groups, Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste, are fielding 263 candidates together (171 LO, 92 LC). This is an important achievement — not because the Trotskyists are likely to win any seats, or because it would make any difference if they did, but because the electoral platform gives them an excellent opportunity to make revolutionary ideas known at a time when popular interest in politics is high.

But, after the first round, candidates getting a low vote are ruled out and a second poll takes place. What attitude should the revolutionaries take at the second round? And what points should they stress in their agitation around the elections?

The main point is that the real choice is not between "advanced democracy" and Gaullism — the only real way forward for workers is socialist revolution. But socialist revolution clearly requires the support of the majority of the working class — and the most important forces of the working class are at present mobilised behind the CP.

Thus revolutionaries must seek to relate their programme of socialist revolution to the consciousness of the reformist workers. They must map out the urgent, necessary tasks of the working class: immediate 40-hour week and 1000 Fr minimum wage; expropriation of the major monopolies and all businesses making workers redundant; workers' control over hiring and firing, etc.

## 'Lesser Evil'

Then they say to the CP workers: "These are the measures which we think are necessary. We believe that they can be realised only through the revolutionary direct action of the working class, certainly not through elections. However, we are prepared to join with you in the most modest steps towards even part of these measures. We will vote for your candidates at the second round of the elections. We call on you to demand of your leaders that they mobilise your organisations for these measures, and that they carry them out if they come to government".

A revolutionary vote for the CP only at the second round would be a vote for independent working class action and against the subordination of the Communist workers to the SP/Left Radical Parliamentarians.

Taking this approach, we have to be critical of the positions of the various French revolutionary groups. The numerous Maoists and anarchists are simply boycotting the elections, thus depriving themselves of an important opportunity for political intervention.

The OCI, a wretched left-reformist sect calling itself 'Trotskyist', concentrates its main effort on boosting the CP and the SP as "the great workers' parties" (!)

Lutte Ouvriere stresses three

points in their campaign:

1) They denounce the CP, SP, and the left Radical politics on the basis of their past record.

2) They stress that all 171 of their candidates are workers, while very few of the other parties' candidates are;

3) When they criticise the Common Programme, it is usually in terms of asking why this or that company is not on the list of nationalisations, or why the minimum wage is to go up to only 1000 Fr and not 1500 Fr.

There is nothing wrong with these three things in themselves. But they leave out the main political questions! A criticism of the CP which simply denounces its leaders' past and outbids it on the reformist stakes can only seem like nit-picking to the CP worker. It is far better, and helps much more to present the real differences between reformists and revolutionaries, if revolutionaries concentrate on mapping out urgent tasks now, in order to help the CP workers to test their party's politics in struggle.

LC calls for a vote for CP or SP candidates on the second round. They argue that "The SP can still be talked about as a working class party only because of the electoral influence it still has in the working class in some parts of the country" — but the Democratic Party in the US, absolutely not a working class party, has considerable working class electoral support — "and above all, because of the SP's traditional origin that makes the workers still consider it as a working class party" — but surely we are concerned not with outdated 'traditions', but with the reality of whether the party is organically linked to a mass of workers mobilised for class action?

The Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International), outlines three axes of their campaign:

1) "an intense campaign of anti-capitalist denunciation";

2) "a campaign of demystification of the common programme and of the Union of the Left"... "In developing propaganda and action for self-organisation... revolutionaries will prepare the conditions for combative sections of the working class to go beyond the Union of the Left";

3) "to challenge the bureaucratic concept of 'socialism'".

And that much is done excellently. But the emphasis is on 'explaining' the situation, rather than attempting to focus the activity of the working class round demands to change that situation.

They analyse the Union of the Left as a "global reformist alternative of the traditional workers' movement", seeing it as a relatively solid bloc in which the CP has the upper hand. Thus they call for a vote for all Union of the Left candidates at the second round.

But the Union of the Left is not an organic unity of working class forces: it is a brittle electoral alliance at the top. To argue that the CP is no less reformist than the SP and the left radicals is totally beside the point. Revolutionaries do not vote for the CP because this or that reform is in its programme; their vote is grounded on the fact that the CP has the working class forces necessary to carry out the urgent tasks of the class, and combined with a call to carry out those tasks.

The LC position ends up choosing a 'lesser evil' between the Union of the Left and the Gaullists. It's not that the LC believes in parliamentarism — clearly it does not; but it will confuse the workers who do have that belief. And by supporting the whole Union of the Left, the LC does not help in preparing the working class for the independent class action which may erupt following the election.



# VITAL CONFERENCE FOR BUILDERS CHARTER

ON MARCH 10TH, MILITANT building workers from all over the country will be meeting in Birmingham for the 4th annual conference of the Building Workers' Charter.

The Building Workers' Charter is a rank and file organisation which started in 1969 and has since grown in size and influence to such an extent that it played a major role in building up the militancy and fight which led the strike in 1972.

This annual conference will be the most important the Charter has ever had since its formation. It is now almost 5 months since the end of the building strike last September. Despite some very real gains made during the strike there has been a period of decline since.

The registration, required by law, of labour-only subcontractors, seems to have shown over 450 000 workers. If we include the number of workers on the 'lump' but not registered, the total probably reaches over 600 000. In the period since the strike, there has been an overall decline in union membership, despite gains in some areas. The money gains are being rapidly eaten away by rising prices.

The worst thing that could happen is that the Charter conference becomes a back-slapp-

ing ceremony. It is vital that there is discussion and debate.

What of the way forward? Firstly, it is necessary that the Charter changes from being a pressure group on the union officials (mainly UCATT) to posing itself as an alternative leadership for the rank and file. Unless this is done, the official leadership will be able to destroy militancy by delaying, stonewalling, misleading, after, if necessary, putting on a temporary 'left' look to gain credibility.

And, secondly, a national strategy to fight the lump is needed. It must not be left to individual area shop stewards committees to fight on a "do your own thing" basis. And purely protest actions can be dangerous, in that they will be seen to be achieving little and will thus lead to demoralisation.

The Charter's 12 points must be revised, bringing in the question of workers' control, in relation to registration of all workers, organised regional pools of registered workers, and site committees fighting to control hiring and firing. (For full discussion, see WF14) And Charter must develop the lead given by areas like Birmingham, in actually beginning to organise the workers and being just a paper.

Paul Adams

## SUPPORT INTERNED BELFAST GIRL

Liz McKee is the first woman to be detained in the Six Counties during the present phase of the national liberation struggle. She is only twenty years of age. She was arrested by British troops over the New Year weekend and detained on January 1st under the so-called 'Detention of Terrorists Order', which was introduced last year as a means of ending the internment of those whom the British imperialist authorities wished to detain but were unable to bring any charges against.

Under current regulations those detained under the Detention Order must have their case referred to the special Commission within three weeks. So it was

that Miss Elizabeth McKee became the first girl to be detained indefinitely by Whitehall's special court - again, entirely on suspicion and nothing more.

Miss McKee is at present in Armagh Jail, where she has been joined by another young woman, Miss Theresa Holland, who had been detained on February 16th.

We are sure that both these young women would appreciate letters of sympathy and encouragement, and we therefore invite all our readers to send letters to

Liz McKee & Theresa Holland,  
HM Prison,  
Armagh,  
Co Armagh,  
Ireland.

## TEESSIDE POLYTECHNIC SIT-IN

AS PART OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS GRANTS campaign, decided on by last year's NUS Conference, Teesside Polytechnic students have been campaigning for a drop in refectory prices.

The Teesside protest started with a demonstration on the 21st February. At the meeting which concluded the march, support was pledged from the strong local Pensioners' Committee, an Executive member of TASS and Councillor Sutherland, the Mayor of Teesside.

Resolutions of support were also received from Middlesbrough Trades Council, AUEW Redcar no. 2 branch, and the Port Clarence staff branch of

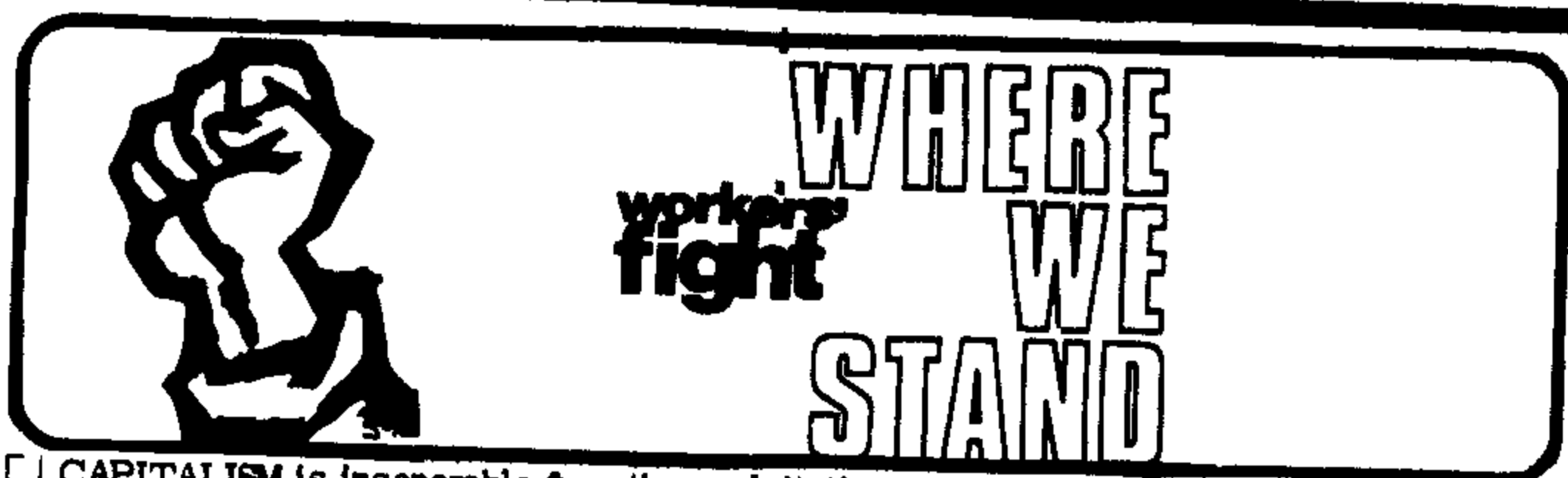
the G&MWU.

From that point on a boycott of the refectory was imposed, with pickets manning the doors. The boycott has been almost 100% effective - with only about 10 people a day breaking the line.

Feeling that this was not biting hard enough, the students decided to take over the offices of the Polytechnic director. They stepped up their action by a further occupation of the office of the assistant director and then a third office.

As the campaign goes on, students will find direct action of this type more useful than messages of support from the Mayor.

John Bryant.



CAPITALISM is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the colonies and neo-colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, at the same time as it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health: in reality the boom was like the flush on a sick man's face. Already economic expansion has given way to creeping stagnation.

TODAY the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world, of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world, and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

THE ONLY WAY OUT is for the working class to take power and to bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan, in place of the present unplanned and blind private profit system. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

The working class has created political parties for this purpose - LABOUR PARTIES, COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.

The task is therefore to build a socialist party which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class. WORKERS' FIGHT is a group of revolutionary socialists, aiming to build that party: a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.

The basis of our activity is the scientific theory of MARXISM, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change.

Although they cannot organise the struggle for workers' power, THE TRADE UNIONS are indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. We fight for the independence of the unions from all state control, and within the unions for militant policies and for democracy. We see the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Its life and work-situation is quite different from that of the working class. Lacking a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, or any fundamental historical interests of its own, its general tendency is to work with the bosses and their state against the working class.

Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries and guided by the ideas of revolutionary Marxism can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.

We fight against the INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, against any incomes policy under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.

We fight against UNEMPLOYMENT: for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining.

We fight to extend the power of workers to control the details of their own lives in industry

Editorial Board: Sean Matgamna (Editor); Andrew Hornung (Design);  
Martin Thomas; Rachel Lever; Bas Hardy.  
Business Manager: Tony Brockman

here and now. We stand for the fight for WORKERS' CONTROL with the understanding that it can be made a serious reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' 'participation' in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

We believe that the 'PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM' is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully; no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine (army, police, civil service) which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic Workers' Councils.

THE LABOUR PARTY is a capitalist party in its ideas, its policies, and in its record in government. At the same time, the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions, support and finance the Labour Party. There is an 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the Unions, allowing the possibility of large scale active working class participation in the party.

We relate to the Labour Party, therefore, not by simply denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the particular stage in its own development - ideological, political and organisational - represented by Labourism.

We fight for full and equal rights for WOMEN, for female emancipation from the male domination which has co-existed throughout history with class society and which has its roots in such society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our own class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves".

We fight against RACIALISM and against immigration controls. We fight for the integration of immigrant workers into the labour movement and for a united front against capitalism, whilst supporting the right of black minorities in Britain to form defence leagues or independent political organisations.

We give unconditional support to the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against IMPERIALISM, and to their organisations leading the fight.

British workers have - fundamentally - more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We see the fight for socialism as a world-wide struggle, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party, such as Leon Trotsky founded the Fourth International, in 1938, to become. We consider that the mainstream of Trotskyism surviving from the 1938 Fourth International is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International but that this organisation in some of its theories and much of its practice (for example that of the British section) represents a degenerate form of Trotskyism. We fight for the regeneration of the Fourth International.

We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of THE U.S.S.R. and the other countries called 'communist' which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social regime of the different bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone with real communism. At the same time, we defend the nationalised economy in these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally: that is, irrespective of the selfish, usually anti-working-class and anti-revolutionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies.

There are OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS which have generally similar aims, but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider all these groups to be seriously - sometimes grossly - inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these groups where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences.

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# The Steel White Paper:

REAL STEEL NEWS  
Militant Steelworkers' Paper  
Available from  
3, Heather Close, Stockton on Tees

## Nothing to offer but the dole queue!

In one simple sentence free of statistics and technical jargon, the Government sums up what it calls its "strategy for the modernisation and expansion of steel production" in its recent White Paper: "BSC estimates that full implementation of the new developments and closures in the strategy should more than double average labour productivity and reduce manpower by about 50000".

### FIGHTING AT TEACHERS' MEETING

The militant mood of London's teachers was clear on February 27th when over a thousand attended the ILTA Action meeting at Central Hall.

Right from the start, it was clear that the great majority of those attending thought the union executive's leadership was inadequate, and speaker after speaker from the floor spoke of local NUT branches' proposals of militant action which had been squashed by the executive. Instead of bringing the whole of London's teachers out on strike, the executive had chosen only a number of schools, thereby making the strike far less effective than it could be.

And many floor speakers asked "why hadn't other workers involved in struggle been invited?"

Wandsworth, Lambeth, Hackney, and Southwark NUT Associations had submitted a motion to the executive a week before, with a 500-strong petition calling for the right of union members to discuss its ideas.

The resolution called on the NUT Executive "in association with other unions similarly affected, to evolve a joint plan of action to break the Freeze".

At the meeting, the overwhelming majority of the meeting showed by a show of hands and an outcry from the floor, that it wanted the motion discussed. But the platform, led by Communist Party member Max Morris, refused, without explanation, to have it read or debated.

At this point, Eric Porter, editor of the left-wing teachers' journal 'Rank and File', got up and started reading the motion. He was given a loud hailer - a few minutes later an attempt was made to snatch it from him, resulting in an exchange of blows.

The meeting broke up into total disorder, people walking out, others rushing down from the galleries into the Main hall.

The platform walked out, lights were turned out, and the meeting was warned that the police had been called.

But, with at least 800 remaining, the motion was read out by candle-light and overwhelmingly supported.

After this shameful behaviour by the NUT leadership and the Communist Party, a great responsibility falls on 'Rank and File' to lead forward militant teachers.

An essential next step is to support the call made by the East London Teachers' Association for an All-London Conference of workers fighting the Freeze.

MARION KAVANAGH

The Government hopes that output can be increased and labour cut by a massive injection of capital - to the tune of £3000 million over the next ten years.

In order to accomplish their aims, the BSC intends to embark on a scheme of 'rationalisation' to go with this investment. The forms of this 'rationalisation' include: relocation of plant (in particular location of crude steel producing plants near deep sea ports for ore importation), technological development (like BOS - basic oxygen process), and, of course, what goes with this, closures and redundancies.

In short the drive for profits dictates a restructuring of the whole pattern of the industry: "The use of rich foreign ores transported in large bulk carriers, of large modern blast furnaces, and of large scale steel plant employing basic oxygen process all offer major cost savings."

The White Paper puts it plain and pat: "In considering these factors, the Government, like the Corporation, recognised that BSC operates in a World Market: its prices will be determined by international prices. Attempts to charge more would result in lost market share ... and Government subsidies to offset poor financial performance cannot be given under ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) rules."

### 'Viability'

So that's it! All the arguments about 'viability' hinge around the all-pervading influence of the World Market which exists as long as capitalism exists. The choice is to fight the dictates of that capitalist World Market, or to accept them. Arguments about the viability of single plants just don't come near the problem.

We can at least thank the White Paper for making that clear. Perhaps now we will hear the tread of marching boots on demonstrations and steelmen's voices in discussion, instead of the clink of aldermanic chains of office and the petitions of councillors and MPs more concerned about the narrow interests of the local small business community than the general interests of working class people.

But by the same token a real challenge is thrown down to steel workers: this National Plan for steel demands a reply in the form of a National Struggle for Jobs led by a National Action Committee (with the emphasis on the Action rather than the Committee)

What is the general line of the Government's and BSC's attack on us? "The concentration of bulk steelmaking at a few main sites will reduce total manpower and create difficult problems

by  
Andrew Hornung

for some communities dependent on the smaller works which have to close. These problems might be lessened by redeveloping some smaller works so as to attain the same total capacity with less concentration".

In other words, some plants will be scrapped altogether, some will have certain sections scrapped, and some will be 'rationalised' and have production expanded

Any fight back must be able to unite workers threatened by all three kinds of development.

### Decay

Firstly, we have to define our attitude towards technological developments. There's nothing very wonderful about the present conditions steelworkers work in; and, in any case, socialists should look to higher labour productivity as one of the most important developments laying the material basis of socialism.

It is clear from the White Paper proposals and the debate in Parliament that followed its publication, that, the way they want to bring these changes in, the workers will lose.

The central point is that we must insist that **if there's progress, the working class - the vast majority who produce the wealth - should gain.**

The decades-long campaign, through Labour Party resolutions and trade union action, has, always, so far, taken it for granted that the nationalisation is by the present, capitalist state. Thus, it has meant that the bosses get the compensation and interest payments, and they also get the cheap steel with subsidised prices. The workers, through taxation and exploitation, bear the financial costs of improvement and the social costs in the form of redundancies, communities torn apart, and general urban decay.

For the bosses, nationalisation means accepting that the steel industry is a 'social responsibility', and can't be left to the jungle law of private profit. Our campaign must proclaim that we will not leave ourselves and our fellow workers to that jungle law.

If there is good cause for subsidising the price of steel, how much better cause is there for subsidising the livelihood of steelworkers! Especially as a 'subsidy' from the Government would amount to ..... returning to working class people a portion of the wealth taken from us in taxes, and exploitation

### Cut hours

If steelmaking needs less time or fewer men than before with the introduction of new plant, then we must demand a cut in hours without loss of pay. That way we get, in the form of leisure, some of the benefit; and still hold off redundancies by sharing out the work.

The bigger problem comes where whole sections or whole

plants are to be closed down. There we have to say: **not a single redundancy until the government accepts that we get either work or full pay.**

We must reject all talk of redundancy payments to "tide over" until the next job. What other jobs are there in North Wales, round Workington, in the South Wales valleys, in Stanton and Hartlepool? We need nothing short of full pay, increasing as the struggles of steelworkers push wages up.

If the Government can provide the jobs to go with the pay, then we'll work. If it can't, then we'll just take the money. **BUT WE WILL NOT TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THERE NOT BEING WORK! WE WILL NOT BE THE SCAPEGOATS FOR THE BOSSES' SYSTEM!**

Policy, fighting talk and blazing resolutions are of not the slightest use unless we know how to act. Because the problems can not be solved locally, a National Steel Action Committee must be built.

This call has been put out consistently by the steelworkers' paper REAL STEEL NEWS. But RSN does not have the copyright on it. In many places workers are coming to the same conclusions as our comrades round RSN.

One such group is the Shotton steelworks action committee. It has put out a call for a delegate conference on **APRIL 13th** (not 30th, as wrongly stated in WF22) to set up such a committee. This call must be supported - the more so since the unions will do nothing: they have already accepted the redundancies on their members' 'behalf'!

**NATIONAL STEELWORKERS' DELEGATE CONFERENCE - details from the Secretary of the Shotton Action Committee, K W Monti, 25 Chester Clo., Shotton, Deeside, Flintshire**

### CIVIL SERVANTS CHEER THE NEWS

Civil Servants held a rally, 3000 strong, on February 27th in Central Hall.

The audience was made up of pickets from most central London government departments and large contingents from Glasgow and Newcastle central offices. It was the culmination of a one-day national strike.

During the back-slapping speeches of the top union officials, news of the virtual closing of London Airport was announced. It was greeted by spontaneous cheering with people jumping up and down on their seats.

Then a speaker from the floor asked: "What about future action?" The platform replied..... "Brother don't let's destroy the unity we have forged this day".

What is needed is an alliance at both local and national levels of all Unions fighting the Tory Government's Phase 2;

▲ a campaign within the CPSA for an all out national strike in conjunction with the other unions confronting the Freeze;

▲ and if the other unions won't move, a national strike of indefinite length by the CPSA.

Steve Woodling.



In July 1972 there were 42000 registered dockworkers in Britain. Now there are less than 35000. 8533 dockers applied for severance pay under the scheme worked out by the Jones/Aldington Committee last July. Now there is an acute labour shortage in many ports, and a new attack on the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The report by Lord Aldington and union leader Jack Jones was designed to bail out the Government and the union leaders. Dockers had refused to accept a 'pool' of unemployment within the industry. They triggered off the biggest crisis since 1926 with their militant picketing of container packing depots. By transferring work from the ports to these depots, the bosses were by-passing the high rates of pay and solid practices for self-protection which the dockers had built up with the National Dock Labour Scheme since the end of the war.

The employer/Government strategy then was of:

A) diverting work from ports to container packing depots outside dockland;

B) making increasing use of the small ports not registered with the National Dock Labour Board;

C) a drive to scrap the NDLS

## LIVERPOOL: 35 HRS FROZEN

Last October Liverpool dockers wrung a 35 hour week from the employers, while still looking for an increase on the basic rate. In December the Liverpool shop stewards' committee signed an agreement giving registered dockers the work in the Aintree container base and at the same time cutting the hours there to 35. All this has been frozen by the Tory pay laws.

Since the beginning of the freeze sections of dockers have come out against the pay freeze. In Hull, there was a one day stoppage on January 22nd to hold a mass meeting. This meeting declared against the Freeze, and also planned to extend the number of groupage warehouses employing registered dockers in the Hull area.

And last Saturday the National Port Shop Stewards Committee met for the first time this year and passed a resolution calling for unity of all trade unionists in fighting the freeze.

The London dockers may meet this week to consider the third, but still insulting, offer of £2.60 made by the Port of London Authority in reply to their demand of £9.50. As yet the tally clerks, and the riverside men have agreed to accept the offers made to them; thus leaving 8000 enclosed dockers to consider a fight.

It is to be hoped that the dockers in the London enclosed docks will take a stand on their employers' offer, and, in solidarity with the gasworkers, hospital workers, and Ford workers, move to smash through the freeze.

Vigilance and mobilisation are also necessary in relation to the most dangerous threat dockers face: the increasingly vigorous attack on the National Dock Labour Board. Having sweated out 8000 men, the employers are looking for a quiet period of consolidation.

Stephen Corbishley

# DOCKS:

## For a 30 hour week OPEN THE REGISTER

on the grounds that the growing unemployment within it and the cost of the £1K back pay to the employers made it unworkable.

Jones/Aldington seemed to

mean a new approach — severance pay for unfit dockers and men over 55 was raised to a maximum of £4000. Now this too has rapidly developed into a new threat to the NDLS.

Previously the employers' cry was — "we can't afford the full back pay for the unemployed pool". Now the cry is — "we are short of labour".

But they resist the demand to employ new registered dockworkers, and insist on recruiting men only to the temporary (supplementary) register. The situation changes — the employers' determination to break open the dock labour scheme remains constant. They want to shrink the work force to probably not much more than half the present 35000. But not all at once — they want flexibility — to hire, fire, deploy, and generally control the docker.

The situation is as follows.

In Manchester 200 took severance pay.  
In Preston 130 (over 50%)  
Tyne and Wear, 200.  
London, 2500. In 1972 a total of 4000 dockers left. Efforts

seem to have been made to get as many as possible to take severance pay: the docks labour office was kept open on 4th February to allow as many men as possible through before the deadline.

2000 dockers, 600 are on the temporary register. The employers want another 1000 temporary men but refuse point blank to make them up to full registered dockers when the standstill finishes.

Hull and Goole, 360.

Bristol, 150.

In Liverpool 2809 took severance pay. There has been a daily shortage of 1000 men (on February 7th, the shortage was 1470 men, with 8 ships idle and 18 undermanned!).

Jones/Aldington expected between 2000 and 3000 to apply for severance — drawing old dockers out of the industry and reducing the pressure on the employers of having to pay men on the Temporary Unattached Register. The estimated cost was £10 million. It has actually cost £30 million, with over 80% of those thought eligible to apply doing so.

The labour shortage allows the employers to bring increased pressure for temporary men. Thus they hope to split the dockers, weaken their position and lead to higher productivity and a lowering of the rate for piece work jobs.

The key fight now is the defence of the NDLS. All conditions and wages are tied in with the existence of the NDLS. A fight to bring containerisation under dockers' control will be through the use of the NDLS; a fight for a national wage agreement will be possible only with the NDLS in existence.

A key point in this struggle will be the demand for a 30 hour week.

TOM RAMSEY

## 15 March, ctd.

Since the end of the strike the police have been making intensive inquiries into the strikers who were involved. Men have been taken to police stations at various times and questioned, often for hours at a time. One classic statement made to one of our members by a guardian of the law was that his charge sheet would read the same as that of the Kray twins, i.e. "Demanding money with menaces". This was because we collected money during the strike!

All the 18 have been charged with intimidation, some have also been charged with assault — a vague term which can mean anything a policeman wants it to be. These charges have been trumped up. None of the men ever committed such offences.

No-one was arrested or cautioned at the time of the so-called incidents. Why did the police take 5 months to bring charges?

The 18, many of them leading militants, are having CRIMINAL charges brought against them. This can only be a tactic to try and divide the working class and also as an attempt to cover up the REAL nature of the 'offence' — PICKETING.

The flying picket tactics, first used by the miners, were employed with devastating success by the building workers; the bosses and the Tories see the need to smash this idea before other sections of workers take it up.

The fantastic response of thousands of workers to the Pentonville Five showed the strength of the working class when it is roused. We must prepare for a repeat of this action if just ONE of the 18 is jailed!

We are therefore calling on your support. We are calling for a nationwide stoppage on March 15th when the men appear in court, and for as many as possible to get to show themselves at Shrewsbury to demonstrate their solidarity. Should the charges not be dropped on that day, we ask you to prepare for further action.

The case will cost us money and we are in need of funds. Please send all donations to: **Building Workers' Social Fund, c/o The Treasurer, MR Williams, Ifford Centre, Ocean View, Carmel, Holywell, Flintshire.**

## CLAY X COUNCILLOR SPEAKS

Last Sunday, London Workers' Fight launched a new series of public meetings with Councillor David Nuttall of Clay Cross Council speaking on Clay Cross's continuing struggle against the Housing Finance Act.

Cllr Nuttall first described what is most likely a unique Labour council: 11 working people, all trade unionists, who see themselves as fighters and not administrators. "We don't wear chains of office, or anything like that" — and one felt that to all of them these symbolised quite another sort of chain.

This is a council that takes the part of workers on strike, helping out openly with financial and practical aid. In an area of 16% unemployment, they have doubled the number of Council manual workers, and when the Freeze came in, quite deliberately put up everyone's wages by 25%.

Long before the Housing Finance Act became law, the Clay Cross council knew that they would have a fight on their hands, bigger than any they had yet fought. And yet, to hear it described by Dave Nuttall, all the complexities and confusionisms of the Act are reduced to one very simple thing: complete and absolute refusal to compromise with carrying it out.

This is what has saved Clay Cross from going the way of Merthyr and Conisbrough, and the other 'no implementation' councils that went so far, only to fall into the trap of "not such a big increase" or "let a Housing Commissioner

come in and then the fight's over" of "get up to a Fair Rent, and then we'll refuse to co-operate any further". In Clay Cross the rent is £1.50 — and £1.50 it will remain.

Cllr Nuttall had no illusions about being immune from being disbarred, surcharged, or jailed. But he stressed that Clay Cross's main lines of defence were also those of attack. Firstly, self-reliance and action by the tenants themselves, who are on total rent and rates strike and — even though a bit late — organising into Associations and street committees to stop evictions.

And, second, massive industrial action on the lines of Pentonville Five week if the Government tries to bludgeon Clay Cross into submission.

Meanwhile, they are fighting a guerrilla war: for instance, when the Government cut off the grant and subsidies due, the Council replied by stopping repayment of its £20000 debt to the Public Works Loan Board. And all the time they are trying to spread word of their fight, and spread the fight itself. For if Clay Cross can revive the tenants' resistance when the new increases come in April, the Tory Government may not after all get away with its rackrenting Act.

NEXT MEETING — Sean Matgamna on THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL. 7.30 pm, Sunday 11 March. Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road (near Kings Cross).