

WORKERS' fight

Support
the
Miners

3p

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IT'S A MINORITY LABOUR GOVERNMENT!

NOW SMASH TORY POLICIES!

THIS IS OUR POWER!

AT LAST the slogan of every major working class demonstration of recent years, "Heath out", looks like being made reality.

It is being made reality thanks to the miners and despite the Labour Party leaders. It was the miners' action which pushed the Tories into the situation where they felt things could only get worse for them, not better. Without the miners' action, the Tories might have salvaged Phase 3 and won themselves a better election situation.

It was the miners' struggle in 1972, and militant working class struggle since then, which has stopped the Tories reducing us to a cowed mass who wouldn't dare even mark a ballot box cross against the government.

But the Labour leaders constantly ran away from the issues of the election.

On wages — Not even the miners got an unequivocal 'Pay them the money' pledge. Instead of clear support for working-class struggle to defend living standards, placing the responsibility with profiteers and speculators, we had the preposterous invention of a mysterious 'social contract' — suggesting

that workers are to blame for price rises.

On the 'red scare' — instead of defending the right to picket and condemning the use of troops to strikebreak, the Labour leaders tried to outdo the Tories as red baiters.

Now they must not run away from the task of forming a government.

Before the election, Barbara Castle promised that a minority Labour government would form no coalition. It would go ahead with its programme, challenge the other parties on that basis, and if necessary call new elections on that basis.

Harold Wilson was less clear: but he, too, promised "no coalition".

Programme

That is what Labour must do. Its programme as it stands is the palest reflection of the urgent drive of millions of workers to reverse Tory policies. Labour was not elected to become the hostage of the Liberals. Labour politicians are accustomed enough to junking promises anyway, and we must not give them the extra excuse of "we can't afford to offend the Liberals".

Right now, we must press

urgent demands on Labour.

1. **No wage freeze.** The trick of letting the miners through as a 'special case' and then imposing an 'austerity package' mustn't be allowed to work. Labour must grant an immediate £30 minimum wage and equal pay for women now.

2. **Strict price control** was Wilson's promise. This can be made reality by having every Trades Council set up local committees of workers and housewives to monitor prices and organise action to stop any increases. If the big food companies and chain stores start squealing, they should be nationalised, without compensation and under workers' control. The "wide extension of public ownership" should start right there.

3. **Repeal the Industrial Relations Act and the Housing Finance Act** — and then end all government regimentation of the trade unions. **Free the jailed Shrewsbury pickets and drop all charges.**

4. **Work or full pay.**
5. **Repeal all racist Immigration Acts.**

6. **Unconditionally withdraw British troops from Ireland.**

A government fighting for that programme, and stymied by the Liberals and Tories, could win new elections overwhelmingly.

But while pressing for these demands, we must never rely on the government. To hold back on our demands in order to 'protect' a minority Labour government would do us no good.

On the contrary, we should press ahead with all our demands. We cannot take responsibility for the fact that working-class demands embarrass a Labour government. To do that would be to take responsibility for a government which is fundamentally a capitalist government.

per month. The wives are not even informed of their husbands' whereabouts by the authorities. The last three to be jailed, Arthur Murray, Mike Pierce, and Tom Williams, are still in jail and are likely to be moved this week; but their families have no idea where they are going. What's more, the threat of job blacklisting for all 24 is all the more real in an area which is difficult to organise like North



MINERS CRACK PHASE 3

AS we write, just before election day, almost universal opinion has it that the miners' strike will be successfully settled soon after the election of a new government.

Some miners' leaders, such as McGahey and Daly, have come out openly against the idea of a 'special case'. The miners, they insist, don't wish everyone else to remain walled in by Phase 3 while they are kindly allowed out through the gate — they want to knock the walls down.

And the fact that all parties now talk of paying the miners, even after only three weeks of strike and a very quiet level of struggle so far, shows that the miners — given adequate working class support — do indeed have the power to knock the walls down.

Wales. Whichever party wins the election, it is necessary to act to get the six released and the charges dropped.

The Appeal Court in London was lobbied when the appeal of the first six came up on 19th February. There will be a national demonstration in London on 20th March. Some preparation is going ahead for this. Liverpool Trades Council has already

booked a train. But as yet there is not enough being done in the way of active campaigning for support. If the action is seen as a one-off protest, tailored to getting the half-hearted support of the official trade union leadership, then it will not mobilise enthusiasm.

We must support the 20th March demonstration while stressing the need for a serious campaign towards extended

industrial action to free the

jailed men. Call meetings at work and get pledges for action on 20th March. Arrange transport. Demand active support from the Labour Party for 20th March and to get the charges dropped if elected. Send money to the Defence Fund [Mike Williams, 1 Eford Penire, Ocean View, Carmel, Holywell, Flintshire]

for a Solidarity Committee, to 7th March because of the election.

There is at least one serious danger in this situation. In the general high (Labour victory) or low (Tory victory) spirits following the election result, the miners will be palmed off with far less than they could get on their wage claim, let alone on other demands, such as one Kent NUM official's statement that they won't go back until the six Shrewsbury prisoners are freed.

However, the key point is that we should see any victory that the miners win as a signal to rush the ramparts of Phase 3, rather than a compensation for the rest of us buckling under.

D.R. 27.2.74

CYNTHIA BALDRY

SHREWSBURY 24: SUPPORT MARCH 20th DEMONSTRATION

The last ten of the North Wales 24 came up for trial on 26 February in Shrewsbury.

The Tories' election attempt to get a big mandate for union-bashing thus almost coincides with an important date in an important test case for them.

Charges of conspiracy, unlawful assembly, and making an affray, the use of photos of peaceful pickets to prove they were unlawful because minor damage was done to property, showing photos of the defendants to witnesses before they come into the witness box — all have been established as precedents in state prosecution of pickets.

Already 14 men have been found guilty on at least one of the charges (arising from picketing during the 1972

national building strike) and six are in jail. The 'conspiracy' charge against the first three to be put in jail has been confirmed by the Appeal Court. It is likely that the Appeal Court will confirm the verdict and sentences on the 'unlawful assembly' and 'affray' charges when it meets again in the week beginning 4th March. It is certain that the bosses' court in Shrewsbury, confident after the first two trials will try to put still more pickets in jail in the third trial. They are going ahead with the trial despite the fact that one defendant, Terry Renshaw, who lives over 50 miles from the court, has a badly broken leg.

The families of the 24 are being punished as criminals. The families of the six jailed men are allowed only one visit

A MILITANT IN DREAMLAND?

IN Workers' Fight no. 44 we called on militants to fight to pledge the Labour Party, if elected, to free the jailed Shrewsbury pickets. One reader argues that this demand would be a diversion and a dead-end for the Shrewsbury campaign. This raises the whole question of how socialists relate to the Labour Party.

IT IS very satisfying to write a satirical article about someone else's organisation, and Alice Carroll, whoever she or he is, wallowed in it in WF 44. The article was about the International Marxist Group and their 'Dreamland' policies. It finished up with a plea to those members of IMG "who have any respect for politics, Marxism, or even rational use of the English language" to shake their leaders into a realisation that working class politics are an "increasingly serious business" these days.

Stout stuff. And good advice undoubtedly. But the satire loses some of its string when we take the advice offered and apply it to the front page of WF 44.

Pickets

Armed with reason and respect for the English language, we read right at the top of the page "Pledge Labour to free these men" ("these men" are the Shrewsbury pickets). Now, as a worker who is genuinely worried about the Shrewsbury pickets, I ask myself "What does this slogan mean for me?"

Does it mean that on February 28th I vote Labour but write "Free the Pickets" on my voting slip? No, that is too absurd.

Does it mean, then, that I go round to the Labour candidate's house and tell him that unless he pledges himself to free the pickets I won't vote for him? No, it cannot mean this — WF tells me I must vote Labour at all costs to get the Tories out, therefore I can't put any conditions on my vote in case the conditions are refused.

Pledge

Does it mean, then, that I go to election meetings (if there are any) and ask the candidate to pledge himself to release the pickets? Perhaps this is it. But wait a minute, I wasn't born yesterday, I know all too well the sort of answer I will get... "not a matter I personally can resolve...", "fully sympathise but...", "...raise the matter in the relevant quarters...", "complicated processes of law...", "must prevent this sort of thing happening in future...", etc etc. I know from my own experience that Labour are past masters at dodging militants, and it's a cert that the candidate will successfully sidestep the demand.

So in practical concrete terms what does this demand mean? I combed the accompanying article for an explanation but there was none. We were however warned of

the danger that Labour in power would "renege" and "strive effectively [my emphasis] to stifle the real and vital expressions of the class struggle". So it seems that like me, WF think that Labour will sidestep the demand. How then are we supposed to pledge them, and, more important still, when we know in advance that they will do nothing, why should we bother to try? WF throw little light on the matter.

Alternative

In the following article (for the stalwarts who read that far) we get at least the shadow of an explanation — "we must build a socialist alternative. One part of doing that is to campaign within the trade unions and within the Labour Party for Labour to replace the Tories [I would have thought that this at least was taken for granted in the Labour Party] and carry out immediately necessary measures". A list of demands follows and then... "If Labour does carry out these measures, well and good. If not we have at least prepared as well as possible for workers to draw the lessons clearly and sharply".

From this we gather that we must join the Labour Party and work for left policies inside. Sounds like a bit of Communist Party advice. Once before we have managed to 'pledge' Labour to militant policies, over the Housing Finance Act. We learned a few sharp clear lessons then — how many more do WF consider we have to learn, and how many more times do militants have to plod the same weary circle?

Defeat

Nowhere in WF is there a clearly argued line. We are left to speculate what we are meant to do, and if reason or respect for the English language is present, then it is well hidden. WF seems to be saying "We don't expect Labour to pledge themselves to release these men, but have a go at bashing your head against the brick wall anyway. If you fail you'll have learnt something and if you succeed, all well and good".

The first bit of this smacks of the WRP (except that it is more clearly argued there). The last bit is Carrollian 'Dreamland'. Such a loose and sloppy formulation can only lead militants into defeat and demoralisation.

So all you WF members who "respect reason, politics, etc", speak up now and shake your leaders out of their "meaningless phrasemongering" (to use one of Alice Carroll's quotes). After all, working class politics are an increasingly serious business these days.

NEIL DUFFIELD, Bolton.

A REPLY

"ONCE before we managed to 'pledge' Labour to militant policies, over the Housing Finance Act. We learned a few sharp lessons then..."

Well — was the fight to pledge Labour totally useless? Didn't one Labour council — Clay Cross — actually standing firm against the Housing Finance Act? The Labour Party can't be judged as God promised Lot he would judge Sodom and Gomorrah — depending on finding within it a certain quantity of 'good men'. Nor does Clay Cross compensate for all

the scab councils like Bolton. Nevertheless, didn't the fight to pledge Labour result in some Labour Party organisations giving some help in the task of organising tenants? Didn't some people "learn a few sharp lessons"?

Of course, socialists had to say to tenants, above all, that they should not rely on anything but their own independent organisation and activity. But still it was a fact that many tenants looked for a political party to help them, and the party

PUTTING ON A FALSE FRONT

LESS than a year ago, many people were shocked when Martin Webster of the National Front polled 16% of the vote in the West Bromwich by-election.

In this week's elections, the National Front have fielded 54 candidates. They have been permitted to broadcast for five minutes on television, and their election material has been delivered free into thousands of homes.

In seven short years, the National Front has moved out of the backstreet gutters and into the daylight of 'respectable' party politics. They have stored away the Nazi uniforms and

regalia, and are more likely to be seen in canvassing T-shirts.

But the message is the same, and the men who ten or a dozen years ago were doing time for possessing illegal firearms and organising paramilitary training sessions are still at the helm of the National Front. And it isn't all in the past. Front members are commonly involved in strong-arm activities, and it has been strongly rumoured that links have been forged recently with the Ulster Defence Association. A UDA arms cache uncovered a couple of weeks ago in the north of England might have been, it's

suggested, not entirely unconnected with this liaison.

Some commentators have remarked on the 'contradiction' between the Front's openly Nazi past and what they call its present 'populist' position. But even now, behind the demagogic 'populist' facade, all the propaganda is designed as a direct attack on the working class. Under the guise of standing for the 'small man' and even the working class, they are laying tracks for bailing out capitalism if it is actually threatened by the working class.

The NF's most prominent policy is for "repatriation of all

coloured immigrants and their descendants".

By what strange word-twisting sending someone born and bred in Britain to Jamaica is 'repatriation', they don't say. Nor do they say what they would do about the collapse of essential services like hospitals and public transport when this 'repatriation' takes place.

The NF blame housing problems on black people rather than on property speculators, landlords, building industry profiteers, local authorities, and governments. The fact, however, is that probably the worst housing situation in Britain is in Glasgow, where the coloured population is tiny. Coloured building workers actually do help to improve housing, while financiers and big property-owners — almost all white! — make big profits out of housing shortages.

lethal

Under the more 'moderate' phrases of the election, there is a vicious, sick hatred. An article in the January 1974 issue of their paper 'Spearhead' cites this as the first feature of "present-day Holland, a sick society wallowing in its own sickness".

"Walk down the street in any Dutch town, no matter how small, and count the number of white girls arm in arm with their black mates, straight from the jungles of Java or Surinam..."

Second only to the NF's hate campaign against coloured people is their violent witchhunt of 'Reds'. Every militant working class action, in their eyes, is engineered by sinister reds "... the miners and the train drivers were merely the tools of sinister and unscrupulous elements in industry determined to foment chaos for political ends". In this way, the NF is a threat not only to the organisations of the left, but to any working class person who dares to stand up for himself.

This is quite clear from an article in February's 'Spearhead'. "We must seek a practical solution — one which will follow not only the Communists, but the proliferating Liberals into their holes, after the manner of ferrets. We must be sinuous, we must be lethal, we must be as merciless as the deadly creatures we seek to destroy." This raving is all the more alarming when you see that it is reprinted from a South African publication. 'Lethal' measures, in South Africa, mean quite literally shooting down strikers-

in this campaign, together with a few other groups not much bigger than ourselves. More influential bodies — Builders' Charter, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, Labour Party organisations, Trades Councils — stood aside. If we had allowed the campaign to continue like that, we could have felt ourselves very virtuous... but we would not even have made the Shrewsbury case well known in the labour movement, let alone got the charges dropped.

But we didn't just say "the reformists are irrelevant, they are bound to sell out". We campaigned for all labour movement organisation to help defend the Shrewsbury workers. And the result is that some of the more influential bodies (including some local Labour Party organisations) have done something. If we had just confined ourselves to putting pressure on the Labour Party, without any independent action, that would be worthless. But since there is independent action, pressure on the Labour Party can help.

Yes, Neil should go to election meetings and challenge the Labour candidates. Of course the candidate will try to dodge the issue. But should revolutionary socialists give Labour candidates a clear run just because they are good at debating tactics? Should we just give up? By refusing to challenge reformist politicians, Neil may feel that he



A National Front thug on a recent march

they looked to was the Labour Party. Not because they expected great things of the Labour Party... but because it was the party with the size, the influence, and the position to do something immediate.

Unless one really and genuinely looks to Labour for real leadership in an extra-legal struggle (and what socialist can reasonably do that now) then the real failure, including the failure to pin the Labour councils to a fighting position, was the failure of self-reliant self-organisation by tenants, led by an organisation of revolutionary socialists within it.

Would it have been better if socialists had simply said "ignore the fact that your council has promised to defy the Housing Finance Act" perhaps "ignore the fact that your council, so far, is defying the Housing Finance Act" — "all that is quite unimportant because we know that they will sell out in the end". Would it have been better if, when a fierce debate took place at the Labour Party conference over their attitude to councils like Clay Cross, socialists had just said "all this is of no significance at all".

Limited

That attitude would not have stopped tenants — especially the mass of tenants who remained passive during the struggle — placing some hopes on the Labour Party and becoming demoralised when labour sold out. Unfortunately, we, the revolutionaries, are not so strong that our propaganda could counter-balance the hard fact that some councils were making a limited stand.

In fact, an attitude on the part of revolutionary socialists of "pay no attention to Labour" would just have strengthened the position of the Labour sell-out men by

increasing the isolation of the revolutionary minority. The welters could more easily stand out as the 'realists' who were doing something there and then while the 'ultra-militants' cooked up wild schemes. They could more easily do a quiet 'realistic' sell-out without the embarrassment of having their own promises held up against them.

Important

The Housing Finance Act is just one example. When trade unionists are concerned about the Industrial Relations Act — when workers face large-scale redundancies — when dockers press for the nationalisation of the ports... they look to the Labour Party to play a role. Not because they always believe Labour's promises but because they know that what happens in Parliament and in local councils is important, and will continue to be important until we can replace Parliament and the councils by mass workers' councils because they know, if only instinctively, that they have to fight with the organisations they actually have, corrupt though their leaderships are, and the Labour Party is the political expression of the trade unions.

Our differences with Neil Duffield boil down to this question turning our back on the Labour Party will only make the work of those who make a profession of stabbing working class struggles in the back easier. It will make the job of building a socialist organisation much more difficult.

When it comes to replacing the hated Tory government, it is Labour that most workers see as the alternative. We could wish that they saw Workers Fight as the alternative but the fact is that they don't.

If demands and pressure on Labour leaders were on one side of

the world, and direct mass action on the other, with no connection at all between them, then things would be quite simple and Neil would be quite right. But it's not like that.

Take the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act. There was pressure on the TUC and Labour leaders to oppose the Bill. Those leaders organised meetings and demonstrations — not very militant, but immensely bigger than Workers Fight or Neil Duffield could have organised. At those meetings and demonstrations the call went up for the TUC to go for a General Strike. In July 1972 the Government jailed five dockers. Workers reacted immediately, without waiting for official leadership. Pressure built up on the TUC — and it decided to call a one-day General Strike. If the dockers had not been freed, and if the TUC's General Strike had gone ahead that Monday, then we can be sure that rank and file action would have continued the strike on the Tuesday. (The French general strike of May 1968 started off as a one-day official strike).

Waste paper

Throughout, of course, the fundamental element is the will of rank and file workers to fight for themselves. Without that, all the demands and resolutions in the world are just waste paper. But throughout, also, there is at every stage a close interweaving of action 'from below' and 'from above'. The action 'from above' is always sluggish, usually designed to let steam off or retain bureaucratic control but it is a real element in the situation.

Take the case of the Shrewsbury building workers. For a year now Workers Fight has been campaigning for direct action to defend these workers. For the first few months, we were virtually alone

AS every insect knows, insignificance is the best camouflage of all. And so it is with the Liberals... Their virtual Parliamentary and popular extinction for nearly 50 years has meant that most people have no idea what the Liberals stand for.

We could answer in a single word humbug. They are a party that talks about workers' democracy but voted for both the Industrial Relations Act and the Counter-Inflation Bill. Cut away the meaningless frills and they are simply Tories — but Tories without much big business backing.

Speaking in Parliament in January 1973, their spokesman on industry, Mr John Pardoe, a company director, said, "I have consistently supported a compulsory and statutory prices and incomes policy".

Some people have the impression that the Liberals have progressive policies that would benefit council and private tenants. Not so. On the contrary, despite voting against the Housing Finance Act, they supported Tory claims that rents would have to go up. With some of their leading members in the property business, including Thorpe himself, that was to be expected.

Because of the strong anti-apartheid current in the Young Liberals, there is a commonly held belief that Liberals are opposed to trade with the white colonialist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa. But Lord Byers, the Liberal Party

Liberals: how are the fallen mighty?



Jeremy Thorpe — speculator and Liberal leader

chairman, was for a few years also the chairman of the board of Rio Tinto Zinc; he is still a director. He is also a director of Rio Tinto's subsidiary Palabora Holdings which owns the hugely profitable Palabora mine in South Africa.

Whatever aspect of their political platform you look at you find the same thing, a puny

party trying to act like Tories with a human face. It is a party which, unlike the two main parties, has no organic relation to the fundamental social classes of British society. Its ideas about free trade and individual liberty are worse hollow humbug now than they were in the last century when they really did express the ideas

of the British bourgeoisie.

Ironically, it is its very distance from these fundamental social classes that the Liberals have tried to turn into a plus-point. The party of no backers touts as the party with no masters. In reality its freedom from any large social block is a reflection of its irrelevance to society.

And in the same way, voting Liberal often signifies escapism, and a vain desire to make the individual vote count rather than being swallowed in a big block.

When many workers vote Liberal rather than Labour, does the break from a traditional class allegiance mean a step backwards? Basically, yes. But the step backwards is not pure undiluted reaction.

A vote for Labour represents a working class loyalty. But it is a loyalty which usually means subservience to established bureaucratic leaderships and to a political programme which limits workers' struggles to the framework of capitalism. A step out of that stifling subservience towards more critical thinking is a positive step.

In that way, the Liberal vote is a warped reflection of the increased self-reliance of working people. That the reflection is so grotesquely warped is a situation which we, revolutionary socialists, must change by presenting a real alternative to both Labour and Tory leaderships.

JACK PRICE

The social contract

Wilson must be embarrassed at what has happened to his mention of "The Social Contract" between the trade unions and a future Labour government. Hugh Scanlon, President of the Engineers' Union, started off the confusion by denying the existence of this statement of intent, agreement, joint declaration, blank cheque, or whatever it was. And all for the trivial reason that he had not seen it — let alone signed it!

And then, even after the existence of the whatever-it-was had been proven beyond all dispute by Jack Jones' statement that it existed and Edward Heath's that it didn't, Scanlon took several days to confirm publicly that he had seen the King's new suit of clothes.

Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC, went one better (or worse) by telling Heath that not only did the suit of clothes exist, but additionally, that it was a three-piece suit with a reversible waistcoat (pink or blue).

David Basnett, General Secretary of the General and Municipal Workers' Union, in his desire to clear up the mystery, deepened it by boldly announcing that the existence of "The Social Contract" was beyond all doubt in fact he was surprised the Tories had not read it!

"...Damn that bloody Basnett", snarled Jean-Jacques-Henri Wilson as he peeled off his periwig, rising from his cramped writing desk to take his dog, Emile, the noble savage, for a brisk constitutional round the block before bed-time. "Thanks to that fool, I'm actually going to have to write this masterpiece of three. "It's a great title, 'The Social Philosophy'. He took another slug from his carafe of Wincarnis. "I'm surprised you haven't read it", he said, mimicking Basnett. "How naive can you get? What does he think

this 'Social Contract' is? A bloody book?"

He walked back to his writing table. "I might have been able to get something together in eighteen months, if 'hyena' Heath hadn't called this election. But now the strain that creative fiction puts on you, penning promises to the Paris poor all day, is just too much when you're supposed to produce a new social charter at the same time".

He ticked off the first three lines on the paper resting on the desk top. "More for the pensioners; yes. Doesn't cost much, and Jacques Jones'll be in my pocket then. Repeal the Industrial Relations Act; yes. Replace it with a voluntary agreement that means the same, Leon Murray will draft that for me. Schemes to help the lower paid; yes. Vague but sincere — a perfect combination."

He then put a cross against the fourth line, which read "Release the pickets imprisoned in the Bastille". "Silly idea", he muttered to himself, "I don't know what came over me".

"That'll have to do", said Wilson resignedly. "I'll see if I can't make some sort of statement out of this. But on one condition Jones, Scanlon, Murray and the others had better sell it to their followers."

"No problems!" cried the trio from the doorway without announcing their entry.

"You lot have got me in a pretty pickle, haven't you", said Wilson accusingly. "I've got to write this damn book now."

"Never mind", chorused the three. "It's a great title, 'The Social Contract'. In fact we've sold advanced rights on it already. The state publishing house is delighted..."

Alice Carroll

and 'Liberal', in South African terms, would include shades of British political opinion from the left right over to many Tories.

This policy is a policy for a police state, with no independent trade union activity. The NF's industrial policy includes

"a) to impose on industry a system of compulsory arbitration for a specified period.

"b) to assume powers of detention of any union leader who sought actively to sabotage the effort to get industry moving in the crisis." (Spearhead, January 1974)

The NF's attacks on 'international monopoly capitalism' are a standard part of every fascist programme, designed to try to win support from working people. Like every fascist movement, too, they claim that "all major movements of the political left in the modern world are supported by powerful moneyed interests, in particular, the international banks".

But in practice the NF's programme is a programme for rallying frightened middle class small men and confused workers — against the working class.

preserves his revolutionary purity but he doesn't stop those politicians befogging people with false promises, in fact he makes it easier for them!

Revolutionary socialists should try to get to every meeting where Labour Party leaders or candidates are speaking, and we should try to cut through the fog of vague promises of somehow, in some way, things being better under Labour, by pressing home sharp, definite questions about issue like the Shrewsbury jailings.

If we are Marxists, and we look at reality not as passive spectators but as people trying to change it, then we can't just leave the political arena to Labour to do their worst (which is every bit as bad as the Tories) while we curse them from afar. If curses were revolutionary, then the indignation of the first enslaved labourer would have made class society impossible. If curses could kill the Tories, then Heath would be a grinning skeleton by now, not a grinning automaton!

Opportunity

We can't say to workers you must fight militant struggles on day-to-day local issues, but when it comes to questions of the general running of society, questions decided by governments, then you can do nothing until we have a general strike and workers' councils and a workers' government. We must take



Photograph of a scene from 'Bloody Sunday' — from a pamphlet, "Blood on the Streets", produced by People's Democracy and Fight On.

As a graphic reminder of that Sunday afternoon on the 30th January 1972 when 13 Irish civilians were murdered in cold blood by the British Army, 'Blood on the Streets' is well worth buying. (From Rising Free, 197

Kings Cross Rd, London).

The first hand accounts by participants in the demonstration during which the murders took place are particularly moving, likewise the accounts of relatives of the dead. Probably the most interesting part of the pamphlet, however, is the introduction written by Peter Mullen — an ex-paratrooper who deserted three days before Bloody Sunday, after nine years of service in the British

Army. His parting gesture was a bomb planted in the Palace Barracks, Hollywood, Belfast, which caused considerable damage.

He describes in detail the training which paras undergo — a systematic, brutalising experience virtually guaranteed to produce a well-trained thug.

"To go into the British Army", he writes, "is to go into a slaughterhouse".

every opportunity — even the narrowest — of intervening to develop political consciousness.

"Join the Labour Party and work for left policies inside", to Neil, "sounds like a bit of CP advice". It depends. There is more than one way of "working for left policies" inside the Labour Party. There are those, like 'Tribune', who can be quite 'left' at times, but always jump back into line when the Labour Party top leadership cracks the whip. There are those, like the 'Militant', who push fine left resolutions about drastic nationalisations, but stop short at any militant action which might upset the Labour Party machine. The fine resolutions reveal themselves on closer examination to bear no relationship to action except action in a purely mythical ideal set of future conditions.

And there are those who carry out a clear fight for an active and principled policy and are not prepared to scrap their principles for the sake of peaceful coexistence with the top Labour Party officialdom. These last, we believe,

are doing a useful job in bringing revolutionary socialist ideas to people who would otherwise be left entirely in the hands of the reformists and the fake 'lefts'. Supporters of Workers Fight in the Labour Party do this, though Workers Fight retains its independence and refuses to spread illusions in the Labour Party.

If we could put conditions on voting Labour, saying that we wouldn't vote unless, for example, Labour promised to free the Shrewsbury pickets, that would be fine. Except that if we could say that many votes that we were in a position to impose our conditions on the Labour Party, then we would be running our own candidates and not voting Labour at all!

But we're not that strong at the moment. We must work to make ourselves stronger. And to do that we must use every opening we can find — not leave workers under the control of the existing Labour leadership simply because we have already seen the worthlessness of that leadership.

MARTIN THOMAS

LAWLESS — A CORRECTION

IN WORKERS FIGHT no. 33, last autumn, we commented on the witchhunt by the then SLL (now WRP) against the IMG and one of its members, G. Lawless.

During the bomb explosions then occurring in London, there was a great deal of confusion. Lawless, a freelance journalist, announced he had received a statement from the Irish Republican movement claiming responsibility for the bombings. In a confused situation, he appeared as the sole definite link between the Republicans and the bombings.

The SLL hysterically insisted that there was no possibility that the bombings were the responsibility of Republicans, but in fact the work only of British army provocateurs. Having a scandalous record on Ireland, their motive was plainly to avoid having to defend in principle the right of the IRA to fight imperialism on its own territory.

Our article indignantly denied and denounced the thinly veiled SLL charge that Lawless was a provocateur, working to create a witchhunt against the Provisionals in Britain.

At the same time we criticised Lawless for insisting, on the media, on the genuineness of the communication he had received, in the situation where no other explicit acceptance of responsibility had been issued by the Provos. This was legitimate protection of his own credibility as a journalist, but as

a revolutionary militant he had a responsibility to point out probable British government responsibility for at least some of the bombings, in a highly confused situation. Defending his journalistic credibility made that impossible, both for him and for the IMG.

This criticism is still entirely valid. However, our article said that "The Republican movement has denounced the alleged statements as a hoax". While a number of aspects of the affair still remain muddy we now know that no categorical repudiation of Lawless by the Republican movement occurred.

Obviously we should have checked our facts more carefully. It is clear in retrospect we did G. Lawless an injustice.

Gery Lawless is one of our political opponents. But politically serious people do not fight political opponents by distorting their positions or by spreading false and damaging information. Nor do we intend to.

Having inadvertently done so, in the one instance specified above, we think it is better to formally and publicly retract than to leave the atmosphere befouled. Inevitably and incontrovertibly such methods, used in Britain particularly by the SLL, have dirtied, poisoned, corrupted, and debased the atmosphere on the British left for a long, long time.

Save Salvador Puig!

The young Spanish anarchist, Salvador Puig, who was sentenced to death for his part in shooting a policeman, has lost his appeal.

Puig, along with his two co-defendants (who received 30 years and 5 years respectively) are members of the MIL (Iberian Liberation movement), a group which has engaged in various guerrilla activities.

The Military Court's decision last week to refuse the appeal has, however, put Spain's ruling clique in a tight corner. They must now confirm the death sentence and have Puig executed by firing squad — or else Franco must order a last-minute reprieve.

If they go ahead and carry out the sentence, it will please the hard-

liners in the Army and Police who, since the assassination of the Prime Minister Admiral Carrero Blanco last December, have been clamouring for more 'law and order', that is, repression. In the case of the 'Carabanchel 10', these hard-liners certainly got what they wanted. Ten trade union leaders of the banned Workers' Commissions were given sentences ranging from 12 to 20 years.

But the carrying out of a death sentence is a much more difficult matter, even for such a repressive regime as Spain's. In the Burgos Trial just over three years ago, when six Basque freedom fighters were sentenced to death, world-wide protests and the serious threat of 'internal disturbances' caused Franco to back down and order a reprieve.

But it cannot be assumed that a reprieve will easily be forthcoming for Puig. The present Prime Minister, Carlos Arias, despite a grim record of repression in the past, has promised "liberalisation and gradual reforms". He is under great pressure from the fascist groupings in the Army and Police to take a hard line, and if Puig is reprieved these people will push even harder for the removal of all the 'liberals' and a return to the old-style military rule.

Both the 'Carabanchel 10' and Salvador Puig have received a great deal of support from the Spanish working class. We must add our voice to that, and mount an international campaign to save Salvador Puig.

Clive Bane

...AND THE BEEF JUMPED OVER THE MOON

IF there is one election issue where Labour — with a clear policy — could have really routed the Tories, it is PRICES.

Food prices have risen 53% for domestic and 66% for imported produce since 1970. Overall they have increased by 2p in the £ over the last two weeks. Food company profits have also been boosted.

If Harold Wilson put forward some catchy slogan like "cut prices at a stroke" and backed it up with practical plans, the election would have been a Labour landslide. But did we hear anything of the sort? No.

SQUEEZE

Wilson's promise — he had to say something — was "strict price controls". Well, we're supposed to have had those under Phases 1, 2, and 3!

There is no good reason to suppose that Labour is actually likely even to try to control prices seriously any more than the Tories. But even if they tried some sort of Prices Commission they would run up against problems.

Firstly there are thousands upon thousands of prices to be controlled. That means thousands upon thousands of possible loopholes (slightly changing the description of the product, for example).

Secondly strict control of prices would squeeze profits hard. And for the wealthy minority who control the economy profits are their lifeblood.

Any government which wanted to do something serious about prices would have to face up to defying the bosses and organising the economy in a different way from the present private-profit basis.

How would a real socialist government deal with prices?

It would rely on control exercised by committees of workers and housewives — people who actually monitor prices every week when they do their shopping.

When big food companies and supermarket chains started complaining about their lost profits, the government would promptly nationalise them without compensation under workers' control. To small shopkeepers it would give the option of running their stores as part of the publicly-owned system while being paid a good wage.

CONTROL

The Tories claim that price increases in the shops are due to world price increases, and therefore beyond the government's control. (That is, they claim that when they're not saying that the price increases are due to wage increases).

What would a socialist government, if encircled by capitalist regimes, do about price increases on imports? It would bring in large subsidies to retail food prices.

Labour also talks about food subsidies — but basically for the benefit of rich farmers.

In fact, there is no reason, in a basically wealthy country like Britain, why food or at least basic foodstuffs, should not very rapidly be free. Everyone could simply have as much food as they need.

This is not generally possible under a private-profit system because every concern must show a proper 'return for its money'. But even today most people recognise that health services — or, for example, food specially required by pregnant mothers — should be free, and many can see the need for free public transport. Why

not food too?

And why not housing too? — once it has been nationalised, landlordism got rid of, and the big office blocks, mansions, luxury hotels, etc. divided up to accommodate the homeless?

Wilson's promise on housing is to stop the increases due under the Housing Finance Act and repeal that Act. The fact, however, is that the 'Francis Report' which laid the basis for the Act was produced and accepted under the Labour government. And Labour has put forward no proposals for curbing the big moneylenders in whose pockets most of the money paid out in rent and mortgage interest ends up.

A Labour government is not a real socialist government. So, while keeping up the pressure

on the Labour Party leaders, not letting them retreat easily from their promises, we can only rely on what action we can organise ourselves — as tenants found out in the fight against the Housing Finance Act.

Price committees can be set up now in localities to collect and circulate information and to organise protest activity against particular price rises. Workers can take industrial action as some did in a Glasgow food importing company which was hoarding lentils in order to sell them at a higher price.

And in the meantime, we must see to it, through industrial action, that wages do not fall behind prices.

MARTIN THOMAS

Police thuggery stepped up in Art Castings strike

ON Friday 22nd February two more pickets were arrested at Art Castings, Satnam Singh and Major Singh have been charged with 'breach of the peace', 'threatening behaviour', and 'conspiracy', after they had followed a scab truck.

This makes a total of 13 arrests so far. Four cases came



Open air meeting in Coventry rallies support for Art Castings

up in court on 26th February. Ten out of 14 charges and requests for sureties for good behaviour were dismissed, but the defendants received fines of £5 to £25 for 'assaulting a police officer'.

Speaking from the dock, Jack Sprung and Gwyn Jones defended the right to picket and exposed the bias of police who swooped on pickets while, for example, letting

scab trucks drive without proper lights.

Another of those arrested, Edward Jephcot, has put in an official complaint about the brutal behaviour of the police.

The Coventry and District Trade Union Action Committee have been active in organising support for Art Castings. On Saturday 23rd they held a rally immediately after a 2,000 strong "vote Labour" demonstration in Coventry city precinct, called by the local Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Action Committee speakers, including Jack Sprung, called for a Labour vote. But they also called for solidarity with Art Castings and with the miners, and condemned the official speakers' evasions.

Messages of support and donations to Strike Committee, 154 Churchill Ave, Coventry. D.S. S.W.

Parity issue at Massey-Ferguson

OVER the past two years there has been a severe attack on the relatively high wages of Coventry workers. The employers' victory in scrapping the Coventry Toolroom Rate, and the closing of the Triumph Meriden factory, which previously had the highest

basic rate in the area, means that every wage fight in the Coventry area is a fight to keep the conditions and wages gained over previous years.

On March 31st the Annual Wage Review is due at Massey Ferguson. So far the men have

refused to become involved in national negotiations on factory rates. The MF workers feel that one of the reasons for low rates at GEC and Courtaulds plants is that the basic is negotiated at national level.

The tactic that the MF bosses are considering is to count MF Coventry and Perkin Diesel Peterborough as one factory within the terms of Phase 3. They can juggle with the total allowed under Phase 3 to give Perkin Diesel a larger amount towards parity with Coventry. Obviously

Coventry will receive less. Thus they hope to set Coventry workers against Peterborough workers, and perhaps provoke a divided strike.

MF workers plan to cut across this scheme with a unifying demand — for parity with Toronto, Canada. S.C.

POLICE CALLED IN BY UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES

THE actions of students at Oxford University demanding central Union facilities have brought forth a concerted and brutal response from the University authorities and the police, skyballing for good the liberal face of the university and the notion that students at Oxford University are immune from the repression that is becoming normal in Britain.

It has been discovered that for the violent eviction of students occupying the university offices on Wednesday 13th February [reported in WF 44] the university not only hired building workers to do its heavy work, but also had the services of at least one civil

policeman, dressed in the garb of a university disciplinarian. The following Friday, police smashed into a protest demonstration. Their binge included five arrests and examples of violence like a girl being dragged along the pavement by her legs face down.

12 students now face charges in the civil courts and 19 in the university's disciplinary courts.

Appeals for support have been made to the local labour movement and to student unions nationally. A national demonstration has been called for Monday 4th March [2pm, The Plain, East Oxford], round the demands of no victimisation and a Central Students' Union.

Heffer fails to nail fascist vote

AFTER the successful counter-demonstration against Colin Jordan and the British Movement last June, Liverpool has seen little of the fascists. But now the National Front are standing a candidate in Walton, Eric Heffer's constituency.

Heffer has said nothing about the NF election campaign, and instead has reduced the term 'fascism' to an empty phrase by talking about the 'fascism' implicit in the Tories' policies. This denunciation of the Tories sounds very 'left', but in fact just blurs over the dangers of the National Front by presenting it as not qualitatively different from the Tories.

It has been left to the Merseyside Anti-Fascist

Committee to provide the only sustained active opposition to the National Front in Walton.

The Anti-Fascist Committee was formed about 12 months ago and is supported by most of Merseyside's socialist organisations and several trade union branches. They have been leafletting and fly-posting the area with anti-fascist propaganda and will be protecting polling booths from possible NF intimidation of black voters.

On Tuesday last the Anti-Fascist Committee picketed the National Front's headquarters on County Road, and although dispersed by the police, caused the Front to mount a permanent six-man guard from then on.

John Riley

"Work or full pay" issue in steel strike

GUARANTEED week agreements in the British Steel Corporation have been ended as from 18th February.

At the same time overall steel production is estimated to be down to 60% of normal. (The January figure was 76%).

The BSC have moved to the first of what could be enormous lay-offs if the miners' strike is not settled.

1,389 men have been laid off in Scunthorpe and Lancashire, 807 in Teesside and Workington, and 180 elsewhere. 2,000 workers at Shelton (Stoke on Trent) have been warned that the works will close when coke runs out.

At Llanwern (Monmouthshire), the 5000 hourly paid workers have been sent home, after 250 production workers in the slabbing mill struck.

The strike — like an earlier maintenance men's strike which also closed the works — was on the basis of the 2-day lockout. The workers protested against manning arrangements. The BSC had offered men alternative jobs — usually labouring jobs at lower rates — as an alternative to lay-offs.

More urgent than ever is a united working class stand for work or full pay. The bosses are responsible for the crisis and for the 2-day lockout — they should pay. Workers making a stand must be supported, with strikes and factory occupations if necessary.

28.2.74: The Llanwern strike is off. But the bosses say they will continue the lockout until "all employees have assured management that they will abide by disputes procedure in future".

NALGO members facing pay fight

WITHIN minutes of winning the election, the new government will begin to plan a settlement with the miners, and prepare to crush all other struggles coming up.

If the miners breach Phase 3, it should be a signal for further action for many workers so far inhibited by the limits.

Amongst these are local government workers, members of NALGO, who have put in a claim for "more than 20%" on the national scales. In London action is already under way in six boroughs for a £400 London Allowance. The first steps were to ban overtime and refuse to work with agency staff.

The NALGO national claim was discussed at a special conference where the report from the Local Government Committee calling for a 20% rise was accepted but no clear plan of action was decided by the conference. Many militants fear that the 20% claim will be presented, then forgotten while a deal within Phase 3 limits is worked out.

The London Allowance Campaign is so far meeting with some sympathy from the local authority employers. In Camden agency staff have been sacked. Camden has organised an initiative with the six boroughs affected at present by the NALGO action. The boroughs would like to see an offer of £250 now, and

£75 each year over the next two years, to give a London Allowance of £400. GLC have said they would like to pay £500, but cannot do so because of the Pay Laws. Thus before the national fight begins, NALGO members are having to confront the Pay Laws.

If Labour councils like Camden are to seriously continue support for NALGO, they must face the prospect of clashing with the law as Clay Cross Council has done. Their record on the Housing Finance Act should warn NALGO members that they can rely only on their own action.

Further action is planned, including extension of the overtime ban and the black on agency staff to 13 other London boroughs, while the six first hit will have selective strikes.

At present there are two other large sections of white collar workers — the civil servants (CPSA) and the teachers (NUT) — who have settled within Phase 3 but who are continuing a fight for a London allowance. It is important that NALGO should try to organise joint meetings with these sections for coordinated action.

T.R.

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THE WEEKLY WORKERS' FIGHT

AT the end of January, we closed our £400 crisis fund at £417.69.

Many readers and supporters have told us that they find the 4-page weekly Workers' Fight much more useful than the 8-page fortnightly. With the weekly, our response to events can be that much closer and that much more active.

And the crisis situation which was our original reason for going weekly is far from past.

This issue is appearing slightly late so that we have the election results before printing. We must and shall aim to keep the weekly going, although it puts a big strain on our resources.

So we are making a further appeal, for a £100 MONTHLY FUND to keep the weekly going.

Send contributions to The Treasurer, Workers' Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N1 0DF.

Phoenix pamphlets

THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT AND THE FIGHT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

11 important articles from Workers' Fight, with introduction and appendix. They form an invaluable collection on the history, experience and theory of the General Strike. 20p plus postage (5p) from 98 Gifford Street, London N.1

MEETINGS

SHREWSBURY 24 conference, organised jointly by UCATT and T&GWU. 16 March, Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, London. Credentials from UCATT, 293-5 Kentish Town Rd, London NW5, or from T&GWU, 137 Tooley St, London SE1.

CHILE Solidarity Committee — National Action Conference. 11 am to 5 pm, Saturday 23 March, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Credentials from conference organiser, CSC Committee, c/o Liberation, 313-5 Caledonian Rd, London N1.

LIVERPOOL Workers' Fight forum. Sean Matgamna on "After the Elections". 8pm, Wednesday 6 March, Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 8.

LONDON Workers' Fight. Clive Bane on "After the Elections". 8pm, Sunday 10 March, Golden Lion, Britannia St, Kings Cross.

OXFORD — demonstration against victimisation and for a Central Students' Union. 2pm, Monday 4th March, The Plain, East Oxford.

MANCHESTER Workers' Fight. Sean Matgamna on "Maoism or Communism". 8pm, Thursday 7 March, 'Mother Mac's', Back Piccadilly St, off Piccadilly, near Woolworths.

MANCHESTER Women's Liberation Group. International Women's Day demonstration. 2.30pm, Saturday 9th March, Mancunian Way.

RACIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS Produced to help in the campaign against racism, this 20 page pamphlet takes up the 'reasonable sounding' racist arguments and traces the history of working class racism.

Single copies 10p & postage; Bulk: 50p for 6, 80p for 12.

WORKERS FIGHT AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL Report of the Special Conference on the 4th International held in January 1973.

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