

Workers' fight

3p

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PICKETS LAW

LABOUR KEEPS TORIES' CUDGEL



"Industrial Peace" — but N.I.R.C. STILL AT WAR

THE eyes of many trade union leaders and employers were on the meeting of the National Committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers in Worthing last week.

The very important speech of Michael Foot was the main focus of their attention. This speech outlined the new 'socialist' philosophy of the Labour government — a policy of "industrial peace and intelligent settlements".

Or, more crudely, wage curbs policed by the trade union leaders.

The call by Foot to the AUEW National Committee that it should go to the National Industrial Relations Court and plead its case did not come as a complete shock to the members, since Scanlon had already hinted at a "legal manoeuvre" to prevent complete seizure of the union funds. Foot softened the retreat by a promise on tax concessions for the union.

Following this appeal from Foot to give in over the NIRC, the NC then agreed to — but this time on the claim. Scanlon was granted "authority" to negotiate the claim, i.e. settle it. The claim,

originally for a £10 increase in the craftsmen's rate, and a cut in the working week to 35 hours, will probably be settled for little more than the latest Engineering Employers' Federation offer.

The offer is a two-stage deal which will give £3.50 to the craftsmen on the minimum rate, and £3.50 next year. Women and other grades will get a pro-rate payment of £2. This is only slight progress towards equal pay (another part of the original claim).

After the failure of the 1972 claim at national level, many strongly-organised factories managed to get reasonable local increases, but weaker sections ended up with increases around £2, far from keeping pace with the cost of living. This time, too, many stronger factories have already settled locally above the national claim. The NC's decision leaves weaker factories in the lurch, and in the longer run threatens to isolate militant factories.

Such is the first big victory for the Social Contract.

Stephen Corbishley
Back page — Andrew Roberts on the lessons of 1972's struggles.

IT TOOK only a few growls from the employers' organisations to bring about a quick backtracking by Labour on one of the few useful things they's promised to do.

They were, they said, going to change the law on picketing to reaffirm the right to picket. And it was even hinted that this old right might be extended. This was to be done post haste, alongside the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act on May 1st.

It wasn't that Labour is particularly concerned about pickets. Michael Foot wants "a year of industrial peace and sensible settlements." You don't need vigorous picketing for that!

But the Tories and their courts in the last three years have been so aggressive in their crusade against pickets, that the trade union leaders were getting worried. Worried about too many of their members involved in court cases which might put the officials on the spot. Worried about demonstrations and demands that they support members victimised in the courts. Worried about confrontations like that which got the Pentonville 5 released in July 1972.

Penalties

The Tories had indeed been aggressive. First, the Industrial Relations Act defined a whole array of circumstances in which legal action can be taken against unions to recover losses caused by picketing (or blacking, solidarity strikes, etc). In many of these circumstances the traditional defence against all sorts of charges (like obstruction) based on the right to picket in an industrial dispute, was swept away.

But under the Tories, things didn't stop there. In two cases, the Appeal Court judges and the Law Lords respectively ruled that pickets don't even have the right to stop people and tell them what a dispute is about. Bro. John Broome, a UCATT District Organiser, was found guilty of obstruction of the highway because, for a total of 9 minutes, he stood in front of a

lorry holding a placard.

But the Tories weren't content with new laws on paper. They set about, quite deliberately, to show that they meant business, and proceeded to haul 24 building workers into court at Shrewsbury, and jail 6 of them on vague, cover-all charges of conspiracy and affray. And at the same time, they were busy setting up special, extra-tough mobile police units to deal with mass pickets.

So far, after two months of Labour Government, there's been no change at all. The repeal of the Industrial Relations Act will be a major gain — if one can talk about simply restoring the pre-1971 situation as an advance at all!

But the changes that were to reverse the Lords ruling will now "have to wait".

In Jail

Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson, John McKinsie Jones, Arthur Murray, Bill Pierce and Tom Williams will also have to wait. In jail.

And the anti-picket squads are also to stay. Of course, they'll be needed...for ensuring that "year of industrial peace and sensible settlements."

The labour movement was built around the ideas of the solidarity of those in struggle, and the rightness of actions against working class traitors and scabs. "We'll catch the throat and break the spine of the dirty blackleg miner", sang the Durham miners. Scabs from 1926 were treated like lepers for the rest of their lives.

The labour movement must assert that pickets, and not scabs, are still its heroes. We must demand the release of our brothers in jail, and organise to back up that demand with strike action. We must demand the dismantling of the special police units, and the disclosure by the Labour Home Secretary of the full scope of police plans against the working class.

And we must press Labour for immediate changes in the law, both to establish in the clearest possible way the rights of pickets to defend themselves against scabs, and to abolish the whole legal

concept of such vague charges as conspiracy, affray and unlawful assembly. (The 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, incidentally, is not to blame for conspiracy charges: the first part of that Act in fact abolished some kinds of conspiracy, and if that Act were repealed, as some people are demanding, many many strikers could be charged with conspiracy.)

But, while it's important to get changes in the law in workers' favour, our best defence will always be our own strength and organisation. And here there's even more to achieve than in the dusty backrooms at Westminster where the laws are drafted.

In a spontaneous outburst of indignation, the five dockers were freed from Pentonville after only 6 days. But it's been 4 months since the first of the Shrewsbury victims were jailed, and 2 months since Murray, Pierce and Williams were shut away. It is a salutary lesson that we have a long way to go and a lot of work to do before we can give a clear assurance to ourselves, or serve clear notice to the bosses and their state, that we will not permit such judicial victimisation of our brothers in struggle.

YES! THE ARMY MUST GO!

"PRESSURE is mounting on the mainland to pull out the troops. Equally, demands are being made to set a date for the withdrawal." — Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Defence, 24 April.

It is quite true.. more and more people in Britain want to get the army out of Ireland. They pay £80 million in taxes to support that army. They have their sons and husbands forced into the army by unemployment and sent to risk their lives defending the interests of British imperialism in Ireland. They see in the Littlejohn and Lennon cases that army brutality in Ireland cannot fail to spill over into attacks on democratic rights in Britain.

Many people think, nevertheless, that the troops should stay in Ireland, and others support their withdrawal on a totally reactionary and racist basis, saying "let the Irish kill each other". People holding both these opinions share the basic belief that the troops are "keeping the peace" in Ireland.

Mason later said, when his speech met with uproar, "As long as there is a job for the troops to do there, then they must stay there".

But what is the "job" that the troops do in northern Ireland? They terrorise the Catholic community, up to and including cold-blooded murder of civilians. They serve as the mainstay of the sectarian, artificial northern Ireland state. They serve to maintain the division and exploitation which is at the root of the fighting in Ireland.

As long as Ireland is oppressed and exploited by Britain, there will never be peace in Ireland. The troops are not keeping the peace, they are blocking the only long-term road to peace in Ireland — the creation of a united and independent Ireland.

contd. back page

MAY 5th.
ALL OUT FOR CHILE

NOT A PENNY, NOT A GUN FOR THE CHILEAN GENERALS!

OPEN THE DOORS TO ALL POLITICAL REFUGEES!

LABOUR MUST BREAK ALL DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY AND TRADE LINKS NOW!

RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHILEAN RESISTANCE!

Demonstrate, 2pm, Sunday 5th May. Speakers' Corner.

SPEAKERS
Ken Coates
Jack Collins
Paul Foot
Tariq Ali

British and Irish workers have not been the only ones to suffer the Labour government's determination to continue with Tory policies. The workers and peasants of Chile, who are now struggling against a military regime which has banned trade unions and outlawed working class political parties, will draw no comfort at all from Labour's decision to go on helping the Junta.

Although Foreign Secretary Callaghan announced a fortnight ago that the Chilean dictatorship would not receive financial aid, he also declared that a £65 million contract to provide the Chilean Navy with four frigates would be fulfilled.

The Chilean military rulers won't be playing games with the warships the British Labour government is intent on sending them. They will use them as part of their repressive apparatus. Because



Batista van Schouwen — social leader tortured by Chile junta

of Chile's long coastline, the navy is continually used to deal with working class unrest in far off towns such as the

MAY 5th.

ALL OUT FOR CHILE

mining centre of Lota. With the frigates, the Junta can land marines and, if necessary, shell rebellious workers' centres into submission.

Referring to his decision, Callaghan commented that governments "often have to do things they don't like". But why does Labour, which is supposed to represent the interests of the British counterparts of the Chilean workers, aid a regime which in the words of Dennis Skinner, MP "has murdered, tortured and imprisoned tens of thousands of trade unionists, democrats and socialists"?

So far, Chile has been the major issue which has caused

conflict within the ranks of the Labour Party. Callaghan no doubt thinks it is just a "fuss" about nothing. After all, the coup in Chile is just part of history, and now it's time for 'business as usual'...

Others in the labour movement and in the Labour Party, on the contrary, regard it as their duty to go on defending their Chilean class brothers, rather than aid their oppressors.

Eric Heffer has been the only member of the government to date to reflect the feelings of the Labour rank and file about the Government's violation of conference decisions on Chile. But Heffer's opposition is an opposition in words only.



The working class can and must act to deny the Chilean murderers any aid whatsoever. We must first of all show our firm opposition to Labour's present policy by marching on May 5th in support of the demonstration called by the Chile Ad Hoc Committee.

Secondly, decisions about

the supply of arms to the Junta must be taken out of the hands of the Labour government which is incapable of carrying out the majority wishes of the labour movement. The frigates must not be finished or dispatched from British shipyards. All goods coming from or going to Chile must be blacked.

JOHN O'MAHONY WRITES ABOUT IRELAND AFTER THE ELECTIONS

FOUR months ago the British government seemed to have made a major breakthrough in its battle to keep control in the north of Ireland.

IRA activity had declined, and that organisation seemed not far from a clear-cut defeat. A power-sharing coalition government (Faulkner Unionist-SDLP) had a stable overall majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly and the prospect of years of rule ahead of it. It could plan to push through some serious social and economic reforms paid for by the British government as the price of 'stabilising' the north of Ireland.

And the whole arrangement had been blessed by the Anglo-Irish (26 County) Sunningdale Treaty, under which the Council of Ireland was to be thrown as a small sop to those demanding a united Ireland.

Unratified

Today almost everything is changed. The Sunningdale treaty remains unratified and the Council of Ireland is probably a dead letter. The very survival of the power-sharing Executive, the keystone of British strategy, is in the balance. The architects of the 'new model' Ireland are now fighting desperately to preserve the feeble life of the Assembly or rather to resuscitate it.

The IRA is hitting the British Army of Occupation in a vigorous military offensive. That would have been unthinkable only a couple of months ago — especially to people who said "The IRA cannot win".

The turning point, of course, was the election which was forced on the Tory government by the miners' strike. It occurred at the worst possible moment for the survival of Britain's Northern Ireland policy, when the situation was still fluid and the Assembly hadn't had more than a few weeks of unproductive if rowdy life (see *Workers Fight* no. 45).

Panicky

Supporters of power-sharing and of the Sunningdale Agreement received a shattering defeat in the elections for the London Parliament. 11 out of 12 seats went to men standing on a platform of bitter opposition to the recent 'settlement'. Gerry Fitt, leader of the SDLP, was the sole exception, and he only scraped in. As a result, the cohesion of the coalition in the Assembly is itself in grave danger as, panicky and demoralised, the Faulkner Unionists openly argued for scrapping that part of the Sunningdale Agreement setting up the Council of Ireland — the

one tiny 'gain' that their coalition partners, the SDLP, could boast of by way of satisfying the desires of its supporters for a united Ireland.

The Provisional IRA has seized the opportunity to follow up the blow of the election results by intensifying its own military campaign. The Catholic Republican population yet again has displayed tremendous reserves of strength in this, the fifth year of the current war for Irish liberation.

The British government is now combining manoeuvring with intensified military repression. Nothing but repression remains open to it, because without repression it cannot beat down the Republicans and thus it cannot hope successfully to manoeuvre or to preserve the power-sharing executive in even its present feeble state. The revelations of Kenneth Lennon give British people some idea of

substitute for internment 'without trial' are of course a mockery even of bourgeois justice, without juries, and dependent upon the evidence of witnesses who remain masked throughout the proceedings.

Thus they hope to salvage the power-sharing Executive, while ditching the Council of Ireland. They believe the Executive is more 'acceptable', or, in any case, far more essential to Britain's policy of



Orangemen — still defending Ascendancy

what Irish people have known and experienced for years — just what this military repression means.

The promise of Labour's Merlyn Rees to phase out internment without trial is not a 'liberal' measure. It is an attempt to give the SDLP a "success", so that it can go along with dropping plans for a Council of Ireland. Thus Rees and Orme are functioning as no more than a left face for the heirs and pupils of the notorious Brigadier Kitson.

In any case, the 'trials' of suspects that they propose to

remodelling Northern Ireland to make it more flexible, more stable, and less archaically sectarian.

Here, of course, logic is entirely on the side of the hardcore Orangemen. It is generally claimed by both British governments and Orange politicians of all stripes that the Northern Ireland state must remain in being until a Six County majority wants it otherwise. The SDLP accept this, and so now does the 26 County government. It should therefore follow, as the Loyalists claim, that

democracy demands that there should be majority rule within the Six County state, the alleged democratic validity of which all sides, bar only the Republicans, now publicly accept.

By majority rule, of course, the Orangemen mean Protestant Ascendancy, the right of the 6 County Protestants, backed by fascist-type terror and pogroms, to lord it over the 40% Catholic population of the Six Counties.

The unquellable revolt of the Catholic minority has forced the British government to withdraw sanction from this sort of logic which dominated 50 years of Northern Ireland's existence as a separate state. Now they try to maintain this state — while breaking from its logical basis, Orange sectarianism.

Injustice

Britain cut the Six County state artificially out of Ireland by its very existence it has denied the right of the Irish people to self-determination. Now, ironically, the built-in injustice of the 6 County state acts against the control and the policy of Britain. Everything they try to do by way of manipulation is militated against by the power of the Protestant majority inside the artificial 6 County state — even though that state was deliberately created by Britain in the first place to give them that power.

Now the election results have made the argument used by the Orangemen about democracy within the 6 County state unanswerable. The British ruling class's fundamental problem is that Britain's policy of doing a deal with the Southern Irish bourgeoisie, and trying to placate the Catholic revolt in the north by ending crude Ascendancy rule, has resulted in the alienation of the vast majority of Protestants, while at the same time the British ruling class thinks it best to operate within the 6 County framework, explicitly designed to realise and perpetuate the desires of the Protestant majority.

Thus every act is a delicate balancing effort, and an event

like the election which the miners forced from the Tories can bring a crashing disaster..

As so often in the past, Britain's attempts at reform from above are too feeble, too late, too timid, and too conservative. The 6 County state structure, left in being though modified, is thus jacking up against its British imperialist architects. The Official Unionist Party, a party of patronage and sectarian rule, has proved unreformable despite all the efforts of the British ruling class over a number of years. Even the durable, if indeed colourless, unprincipled, and not very talented Faulkner, may soon buckle under the delayed shock effect of the election results.

Neither Britain nor the 'liberal' Unionists (in reality these 'liberal' Unionist scum were the architects of internment without charge or trial!) have dared challenge fundamental Unionist assumptions. In reality that would mean challenging the very right to existence of the 6 County state.

Dublin

Nevertheless they are forced permanently to outrage those assumptions and prejudices which they don't dare challenge. The Faulkner Unionists are a weak tool for Britain in Northern Ireland because Britain's policy is an ambiguous and temporising attempt to modify the sectarian structure, not to abolish it.

Britain's policy demands from the Dublin government that it assumes equal responsibility for repressing the Republicans. Certainly the 26 County government wants to — since May 1972 nearly 400 people have been hauled up before the Southern courts charged with 'Republican' offenses. But the conservative-Labour coalition government in Dublin doesn't dare use the draconian measures Britain demands. The mass reaction of the Trade Unions to the "Offences against the State" Act scared the rulers in Dublin too much to proceed with the programme Britain wants and needs. Instead, they have launched a blitzkrieg inside the 26 County state against nationalist and Republican consciousness and culture.

Salvage

The Orange backlash, the IRA, and the weakness of the Southern government — these are the elements of the crisis which now faces the British government in the north of Ireland in the aftermath of the elections.

Almost certainly their strategy now is to salvage the Executive by ditching the Council of Ireland. Meanwhile they massively step up the pressure on the Republican population. And because there is a new Labour government, they present this apparently more liberal approach.

Socialists should not be deceived by gestures and tokens. Nor should we be affected by Loyalist workers talking of a General Strike. If such a strike occurs it will be the equivalent of an anti-black strike in Britain by white workers. But it is unlikely to occur. The methods favoured by the leaders and the militants of northern Ireland's Protestant workers are the methods of assassinating Catholic workers picked at random for no reason other than that they are Catholics. They have never been militant with working class weapons — even for reactionary goals.

Inheritors

It is tragic but nonetheless a fact that the Orange working class are the inheritors of the racist Ascendancy tradition, the Protestant bourgeoisie having come into line with Britain's objectives in Northern Ireland, just as the Catholic working class are the inheritors



Powell — in a dreamworld

of the tradition of revolutionary politics epitomised in Irish history by the Jacobin Republicans, the United Irishmen and the Fenians, and by the revolutionary socialist James Connolly.

Enoch Powell's attempt to intervene in Northern Ireland ignores these facts. Powell may live in a dreamworld where he sees himself as a new Lord Randolph Churchill, exploiting Irish problems for British political gains. He may indeed succeed in making Northern Ireland a much bigger internal issue in British politics than it has been so far. It is a certainty that he will not make it a fundamental divisive issue among the British ruling class.

For us in Britain, who cannot transform Irish politics by direct intervention, our main task is this: to get the British army out of Ireland. Now! Immediately! Unconditionally! Until their withdrawal, the Provisional IRA is entitled to the support of the British labour movement against "our" government.

Until the British army is withdrawn and the British ruling class is forced to stop intervening in Irish affairs, the Irish people will never succeed in solving their problems.

Private parasites on an unhealthy Service

Private practice within the N.H.S. by Sohn-Rethel and Carrier, published by the Socialist Medical Association

THE SETTING up of the National Health Service by a Labour Government in 1947 was without doubt a great gain for working people, replacing the previous contributory schemes or, for some, no health care at all. Yet many compromises were made with existing interests. The consultants were allowed to continue to run teaching hospitals as small empires. The professions with a monopoly, such as dentistry, were able to make good deals for themselves on piece-work rates. But the compromise that has had the biggest and most continuing effect on the NHS as a whole was the continuance of private practice within it and at its periphery: the provident schemes for the better off were allowed to co-exist with socialised medicine inside the NHS.

Private practice largely operates through the insurance schemes, rather than patients paying direct cash. The British United Provident Association, with about half a million subscribers, is easily the biggest; others are the London Association of Hospital Services and the Western Provident Association.

In 1964, there were about 1% of the 465,000 hospital beds allocated to private patients. The authors include that the advantages to the private patient consist in two things: privacy and queue-jumping. Queue-jumping certainly does occur, as shown when private patients at the Middlesex Hospital in Central London were pushed to the head of the NHS waiting list while the operating theatres in the private wing were being serviced. They do not believe that private patients get any better treatment; but the successful diagnosis of a vague ache in the stomach depends largely on the time, interest and energy of the doctor who deals with them. Doctors will make time for fee-paying patients more readily.

Here lies the most insidious part of this private practice. Faced with an inadequate and declining health service, many people on middle income see insurance schemes as a way of getting a bit more attention. Whether it is true or not, it greatly weakens the Health Service by furthering cynicism and the division between 'special' and 'ordinary' treatment. Senior doctors at the Medical School in Bristol actively campaigned for UPA among academic staff; if these people contract out of the NHS, they no longer have a

personal interest in putting their knowledge and skills into advancing socialised medicine. Even some union leaders advocate health insurance!

The other pernicious effect of private practice is the way it lives parasitically off the NHS. Private patients in nursing homes requiring a heart-lung machine will be transferred by their doctor into an NHS bed, rather than the nursing home having its own expensive equipment. Further, all the private fees go to the consultant: if he asks for x-rays or blood tests, he does not give anything to the DHSS, or to the people who do the tests. The resentment this causes prompted heart-lung technicians at Guy's in London to black all private patients unless they got an increase in their wages and a cut in hours (some work over 100 hours of overtime a month!). Meanwhile, the surgeon was pocketing £500 to £1,000 a time.

In a situation where there is very little socialist writing on medicine, this pamphlet is moderately useful, though it has some significant gaps. It hardly refers to the most glaring example of 'private practice' in medicine — the production of drugs by companies for huge profits, with the State as their major customer. It merely talks of the need for salaried pharmacists, thereby tackling the question at the level of distribution, not production.

How do we set about removing private practice and replacing it by a single, uniformly high system of health care? The SMA authors have a blueprint: central planning, health centres, community services. It's OK as a blueprint, but does not take account of the social forces involved. Money spent on the NHS is not being increased to meet increased costs, which means, in effect, cuts in standards. The current reorganisation of the NHS has still not touched the vested interests, but merely made the hierarchy tighter than ever. And they have nothing to say about direct action: in Portsmouth and Lewisham the unions, spearheaded by ancillary workers, have carried out quite effective bans on private patients recently.

The SMA tend to see things from well up the pile, wanting to do the right thing for those down the bottom of the pile. They do not have a conception of mass movements from below to carry out the 'blueprint'.

Thus the main failing of this pamphlet, though a useful source-book, is that it doesn't see private practice in the total picture of the class struggle, and thus it is no guide to action.

Ed Conduit

EDITORIAL

WHAT IS LABOUR TRYING TO DO?

For almost four years now, the main slogan at every workers' rally or demonstration was: **KICK THE TORIES OUT!**

Finally, the miners' action made that a reality. And not a minute too soon, either. But what now? What is the record of two months of Labour government?

- **Labour promised the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act.** But the National Industrial Relations Court is still with us, and promises to confiscate the whole assets of the AUEW on April 29th. Instead of freezing the operations of the NIRC and returning all fines previously exacted, Employment Secretary Michael Foot just offers a tax concession to the unions in return for silence on the Industrial Relations Act! And now he has the nerve to tell the AUEW, the only union that has stood out solidly against the NIRC, to go and plead its case in this bosses' court.

- **Thousands of workers demanded that Labour should free the six pickets jailed at Shrewsbury.**

But the Shrewsbury 6 are still in jail. What is more, it is clear that the groundwork for further police action against militant workers is still going ahead. Only last week it was revealed that the Special Branch had been keeping an eye on militants at Strachans engineering works near Southampton. The Labour government has taken over the whole apparatus of Police anti picket squads. It refuses to reveal the extent of the Tories' plans for physical warfare against pickets, and shows no signs of dismantling them. The promised changes in the law on picketing are being shelved.

CLAY CROSS RENTS UP

- **Labour promised strict price control, and the repeal of the Housing Finance Act.**

The Government has frozen rents. But in Clay Cross, they are still attempting to put up rents, and collect the unpaid backlog of increases.

Any serious attempt to control prices would start with the nationalisation of the big food monopolies. But all the government has done is to grant a few paltry food subsidies.

- **Last year, Labour spokesmen attacked Tory wage restraint.** Now, Labour is upholding Phase 3 (with TUC support, which is even worse than under the Tories). And it is refusing to allow the payment of the wage increases which local government workers have fought for, to defend themselves against rising prices.

- **Last year, threshold agreements were proposed as a con-trick by the Tory government.** The idea was to avoid workers going in for large straight wage increases. Instead workers were meant to depend on the government granting a sop to safeguard them against inflation.

The Tories hoped that price rises would slow down. But they didn't. And now it is going to be a fight to make sure that Labour doesn't welch on the threshold agreements signed under the Tories!

Obviously, we must demand full payment of these

threshold agreements. In this situation, also, the demand for automatic cost of living increases (with 0% threshold, with lump sum increases, with consolidation of the cost of living increases into the basic rate, and with a cost of living index worked out by the unions) makes sense.

We should make it part of wage demands, and also demand that the government makes it law (to apply not only to wages, but also to pensions, state benefits, and grants). Right now, such a demand for cost of living escalators is not a government sponsored diversion from direct wage struggles, but something which could genuinely advance workers' interests.

Of course, we must be clear that cost of living increases cannot be a substitute for straight wage increases — they must be an addition. And we must be clear that self reliance and direct action is the only way to secure any real defence of living standards.

- **Labour attacked the Tories' record of 1,000,000 unemployed.** But right now in Teesside, the government owned British Steel Corporation is planning to sack 1,000 workers, starting in a few days' time. The clear demand, on Labour as it was on the Tories, must be: **WORK OR FULL PAY!**

RACIST IMMIGRATION ACT

- **The AUEW conference last June demanded that Labour should repeal the racist 1971 Immigration Act.** But far from repealing any racist laws, the Labour government is continuing to operate the 1971 Act, which makes black workers entering this country since 1971 liable to deportation if they take militant action at work; they can be deported for very minor offences, so that if, for instance, they were to be picked up on a picket line, they could lose their job and home and be deported overseas without even the right of appeal or legal representation. They can be deported also if their work permit isn't renewed: this means that their employer can put pressures on them not to step out of line, or they will lose their work permit.

- **Labour has not withdrawn the British army of occupation from Ireland.** The government even refuses a public enquiry into the Lennon and Littlejohn statements about Special Branch provocation activities in the Irish Republic and in Britain.

- **In opposition, Labour attacked the Tories for agreeing to send warships to the fascist military junta in Chile.** Now the Labour government rejects demands to stop those warships!

WHAT IS the Labour Government trying to do? It is granting a few good looking but inexpensive reforms, like the increase in pensions, to try to improve its position for a new election soon. In fundamentals, though, it is **building on the Tories' work.** With the slightly different tactic, that of the "social contract", it is pursuing the same aim as the Tories pursued for four years — making the working class pay for the crisis of capitalism.

Every responsible socialist, inside or outside the Labour Party, must recognise this fact.

Already we are hearing calls for workers to stop militant action in order not to harm the government: we are told we should wait for the government to do something for us, instead of **acting now** to defend our interests.

But the more we wait, the bolder the Government will become in carrying out Tory policies. If it comes to it, we should prefer to continue militant action and risk Labour losing a new election because of its vacillating attitude to such militant action. That would be **better than accepting the "social contract"**. The labour movement is the tens of millions of ordinary working people who make it up; Wilson and his colleagues simply abuse the title 'Labour'.

Thus we should press our demands to the full. We should call on the TUC to break from the "Social contract".

CAPITALIST POLICIES

And while still pressing our demands, we must recognise quite coldly the fact that the government is not poised in mid air, hesitating over whether to adopt socialist or capitalist policies. **It is carrying out capitalist policies right now.**

And the TUC is cooperating in those capitalist policies right now. Under the Tory government, the TUC leaders did at least keep some independence. Now they are crawling quite openly.

The need for an organised rank and file alternative in the trade union movement could not be clearer. The Rank and File Delegate Conference in Birmingham on March 30th was a start, though not as strong as it could have been either numerically or politically. Through the papers sponsoring that conference, militants must press for further steps: for an organised rank and file grouping in each area, not just periodic rallies; for a clearer policy; and for the involvement of more rank and file groupings.

The Shrewsbury 6 defence campaign, under Communist Party influence, has muted its voice since Labour was elected. But anyone who thinks that big strikes like the building workers' strike of 1972, or the miners' strike, or even a general strike, are ruled out under a Labour government, is quite wrong. The defence and self defence of pickets is still a vital issue. If the Labour government is quite happy to leave the six in jail, it will be just as willing to see more workers jailed. Whatever changes it eventually makes in the law (assuming it does do so) pickets will still be vulnerable to prosecution under a variety of laws which the police might dig up — if they feel that they can get away with. The longer they get away with keeping the six in jail, the stronger they will feel about dragging other pickets into their courts. Certainly, a Labour Government in itself is no defence: already under this government we have seen one mass arrest of pickets — at Essex University.

The experience of Chile shows that socialism cannot be brought in even by a well intentioned government "over the heads" of the mass of working people. Still less can a government like the present one, whose intentions are thoroughly suspect, take steps towards socialism for us. The task of serious socialists, inside and outside the Labour Party, is to use the experience of this Labour government to point up the contrast between a genuine socialist programme and traditional Labour policies, and to help educate the working class in self reliance.

Army report confirms Mozambique massacres

Portugal lashes out as Frelimo advances

REPORT compiled by dissident army officers and smuggled out of Portugal points to a serious escalation of the struggle for independence of Mozambique. It also confirms the Wiryamu massacre, and several others like it.

In the last year, Frelimo fighters have established bases in the central and south of Mozambique, attacking and mining the crucial Beira-Rhodesia and Beira-Malawi railway lines, one of which had to be closed when railway staff refused to work because of the attacks. The fast extension of insecurity to areas until now regarded as safe, has created a climate of nervousness among the settlers which reached hysteria in the towns of Beira and Vila Pery... After two white settlers had been killed in one attack, the white farmers were armed with arms, and these "defenders" promptly went out and ordered at least 60 Africans.

If the interests of these settlers are the only thing at stake in Mozambique, then the struggle for FRELIMO would be a relatively simple task, especially given the uncertainties within the Portuguese army. Already the former colony of Portuguese Guinea has declared its independence as Guinea-Bissau, and so far has won recognition as a nation from 74 other nations.

But Mozambique lies between Rhodesia and the sea, and its northern area borders South Africa. James MacManus writes in the Guardian. "A hostile black government in Mozambique would be a Rhodesia untenable in its present form and would certainly bring widespread war to South



Portugal's marauders

Africa's North Eastern borders." (23rd April 1974)

Portugal has almost no local basis for a compromise in Mozambique. The settlers are relatively small in number and intransigently determined that Mozambique should remain an "overseas province of Portugal". The smuggled report describes Portugal's attempts to set up a 'neo-colonial' model base: "The most recent political operation by the Portuguese Government has been

to try to obtain at all costs, by personal pressure and material corruption, the support of a handful of black intellectuals. Since the three or four black Deputies are too docile, the net result of such efforts has been the support of Dr. Miguel Murrupa and Dr. Domingos Arouca (ex-Frelimo) and Miss Joana Simeao (ex-Coremo), of a scheme for the autonomy of a multiracial Mozambique within a Portuguese 'commonwealth'.

Maxine Landis

"Such people have been allowed to criticise mildly some of the most retrograde or racist features of the colonial system, in exchange for promises of privileges and important Government positions.

The operation has been doomed to failure because it has come too late (the Frelimo struggle has been popular among the mass of Africans for the last 10 years) and because it has been undermined by powerful colonialist forces which are not prepared to accept any change, however fictitious."

Now the Portuguese security forces, together with South African mercenaries and Rhodesian units, are pursuing a policy of increasing repression and mass slaughter. As in Vietnam, "strategic hamlets" have been set up, into which the rural population is herded in an attempt to isolate it from the political influence of Frelimo. Outside of these, crops are burned or poisoned with herbicide sprays, cattle and animals confiscated or slaughtered.

Various units have a 'licence to kill' — they are ordered to take no prisoners and, at least on 3 occasions specified in the report, have wiped out the entire human population of a target area. Among these units are Rhodesian airborne groups, whose operations "consist of speedy paratroop actions in specified areas and the liquidation of any human lives." One of these targets was a Frelimo hospital, where helicopter borne troops, in November 1973, killed everyone they found, included the sick and wounded and all the staff.

Thus imperialism and its settler offsprings fight a desperate and bloody rearguard battle against a people determined to reclaim their own country for their own use, under their own control.

Support the hunger strikers! Stop force-feeding! 2.30pm, Sunday 28th April, Speakers' Corner.

STOP THIS TORTURE!



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Sit-in workers evicted

THE 6-week occupation at Strachans Engineering, in Eastleigh, near Southampton, ended with a raid by 50 policemen at dawn on 19 April. The previous afternoon, the occupying workers had decided to remain in the factory until the police forced them out, and also to continue a picket outside the factory gates once they were evicted.

The workers were occupying to defend their jobs. The parent company, Giltspur (controlled by Maxwell Joseph), built and equipped the factory only a year ago, at a cost of two and a half million pounds. But they saw it as a way to try to make big money quickly, by doing everything on the cheap and expecting the workers to put up with it.

They demanded an increase in the number of vans being produced — when the men were spending hours every day waiting to use the few tools available. As one man told me, "It was like a

pantomime".

The men showed that even so they could produce 10 vans a day, more than the 8 per day which the management set as the break-even point. But apparent incompetence on the part of management (with three production managers, and two personnel managers sacked, in one year) meant that by the end production was down to 15 vans per week.

The dispute has been made official by three out of the five unions involved — Sheet Metal Workers, ASTMS, and EPTU the AUEW and the T&GWU are still sitting on the fence. The workers have received money from local factories, including Fords, and stevedores on the Southampton docks have said they are prepared to stop work if asked. £500 has been collected on the Clyde, and support has also come from the 'Rank and File' conference in Birmingham on March 30th (see WF 50).



Police enter the factory

When some of the stewards went to their local labour exchanges, officials refused them benefits on the grounds that, since they were picketing, they were not

available for work. The dole manager even turned up at the factory and took lists of picket duties.

Most significantly, Strachans management have admitted that they have been working with the Special Branch to spy on certain workers. On one occasion, a Special Branch detective went round the plant pretending to be a commercial traveller so as to spy on one worker.

Strachans management justify this spying by a "red scare" against members of the International Socialists. Southampton International Socialists have issued a statement emphasising that "This dispute started when workers involved independently decided to occupy the plant to resist mass redundancies". IS have given assistance to the workers when requested, but all their activities have been quite open.

A statement by Strachans joint union occupation committee confirms this. "We deny most emphatically that there is, or at any time has been, any political intrigue..."

Cynthia Baldry

Weak response to steel lay-offs

The reaction of the Teesside labour movement to the news that 1,000 jobs in the steel industry are to be scrapped has been very weak.

Last night the Trades Council passed a resolution asking for a government inquiry! Given the newness of the Labour government, this is understandable, but still extremely naive. Labour will run steel according to the needs of the capitalist system. Only pressure from the working class can make it act even marginally otherwise. That requires action, not plaintive cries for help.

Such cries didn't help the miners, who lost hundreds of thousands of jobs under the last Labour government.

Reaction on Teesside has been weak so far because men expect redundancy payments, and as yet no-one knows who is to be made redundant. Also workers count on jobs being available in the steel complex now being built. In fact this is nonsense. The new steel complex is highly automated. 'Redundancy' is built into it the number of new jobs will be less than those now lost. And redundancy pay doesn't last that long, as many dockers who accepted the Jones-Aldington offer can tell you.

General unemployment is expected to increase within the next six months, and Teesside has more than its 'fair' share anyway. It is certain to be one of the hardest hit areas in any slump. Many more workers even than now will face the choice of living on the dole or joining the army!

Fight

It is thus in the interests of the whole labour movement to fight the redundancies. So far no lead at all has come from the labour movement. The unions have said that they won't hassle with the bosses over who should go. Fine. But they should fight to make sure no-one goes, not sit around making sheep's eyes at the Labour Party.

A government enquiry may decide that redundancies are 'necessary' from their point of view. For steelworkers, jobs are necessary!

The workers of UCS, Plesseys and Fisher Bendix have shown what we can do. In the final analysis we can control and dominate the steelworks. If we don't we have learnt little from recent events in the working class movement.

The fight starts now. There must be a total overtime ban. It is a scandal that massive overtime is worked when 1,000 men are facing the sack. Either we stand together now, or it will be a serious defeat for the whole working class on Teesside. We are entitled to work or full pay, and every steelworker should fight to make sure that not a single one gets his cards. It is essential that a mass meeting be called immediately.

TONY DUFFY
24-4-74

REAL STEEL NEWS

Meeting to discuss the fight against the redundancies.

Speaker Tony Duffy
Princess Alice pub, Newport Rd, Middlesbrough. 8pm, Friday 3rd May.

'Kitchen power' at Cowley, 'good sense' or set back for workers?

"12 BRAVE MEN", said the Sun of the drivers at British Leyland, Cowley, who decided to scab on Wednesday.

For the Sun, 12 men who go crawling before the bosses, against the majority decision of the drivers to strike, are "brave". The remaining 140, who are protesting against British Leyland breaking an eight-year-old lay-off agreement, and defending their democratically elected representative, Alan Thornett, are not.

But the applause given to the 12 men by the bosses' press has been nothing compared to

their enthusiasm about the 250 wives (out of several thousand) who demonstrated last Monday against the drivers' strike. This one demonstration has got far more publicity than the actions of thousands of wives in support of the miners' strike in 1972, or for that matter women striking on their own accord.

For once, the people who would normally oppose any women's demonstration and insist that "a woman's place is in the home", the people who would normally dismiss women as incapable of a serious opinion on any

subject, are applauding "kitchen power".

That phrase "kitchen power" (the Daily Mirror's) really says it all. The whole purpose of the women's liberation movement is to get women out of the kitchen, where they are isolated, where they are easy prey for press and right-wing manipulation, and into the labour movement and political activity.

Former Tory Minister James Prior has applauded the action of the 250 wives as "a victory for good sense". The press contrasts the 'sensible' women to the 'strike-happy' and 'work-shy' men.

The wives surely want decent living standards yet they oppose industrial action in defence of the right of workers to choose their own representatives. There is about as much 'good sense' in this as there is in wanting water to come out of the tap, but protesting against rain.

The women's liberation movement, in organising women to fight for their own interests, and in that way to learn about the true nature of capitalism and the importance of defending collective organisation, is combatting Tory "good sense" in the best way possible.

Essex pickets stop hearing

600 students, from as far afield as Stirling, took part in a NUS picket at Essex university today, protesting at victimisation by police and university authorities of students involved in the grants campaign. Over 100 students have been arrested at Essex.

The pickets occupied a building where a disciplinary hearing was scheduled to take place, and stopped the hearing.

At the rally, NUS president John Randall called for support for the NUS demonstration against victimisation to be held in London on 12 May. Mick Blank of Colchester Trades Council also spoke.

FUND

We still only have £59.87 towards our £100 monthly fund for April. The £100 fund is not an "optional extra" for us. It is essential to keep our heads above a sea of debts so that we can continue to provide a regular socialist coverage of events.

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

MEETINGS

ENFIELD College Trade Union Society — conference on the Shrewsbury pickets. 6.30pm, Tuesday 30th April, Enfield College, Queensway, Enfield. Speakers a member of the London defence committee John Llywarch and a legal expert. All trade unionists welcome.

Abortion women's right. Demonstrate against SPUC anti-abortion march. 12.30pm, Speakers' Corner, Sunday 28th April.

Constituency Labour Parties' conference to support Clay Cross. Saturday 8th June. Central Hall, Westminster.

TEESSIDE — meeting to set up a local branch of the Troops Out Movement. 8pm, Monday 29th April. Teesside Polytechnic.

LONDON Workers' Fight. Roy Ratcliffe on "The Triple Alliance". 7.30pm, Sunday 28th April. Golden Lion, Britannia St, Kings Cross.

TROOPS OUT Movement. 10.15 to 6pm, Saturday 11th May. Collegiate Theatre, 25 Gordon St, London WC1. Speakers will include David Boulton, vice-president of Scottish area NUM, Mike Cooley, ex-president of TASS. Credentials from T.O.M., 28 Lammas Park Rd, Ealing, London W5.

from Page 1.

The IRA are fighting for that solution. That is why they deserve the support of all working people in Britain. As long as we do not force the British government to get right out of Ireland, the working people of both Britain and Ireland will continue to bear the cost.

Assault

Thirdly, and most important, a national claim must be seen as part of the national struggle of the whole working class. Paradoxically the present industrial action would have been ten times more effective during the three day working week, since the engineers would have combined with the miners in a general assault against Phase 3. Even now, Scanlon should stop pleading that the claim is within Phase 3, and declare instead that it is part of a war against Phase 3.

If the mistakes of the last time are not repeated, if the national action is stepped up, then the claim can be won. Unlike 1972 the order books are full as a result of the three day week — a national strike now would hit the employers hard and fast. A long drawn out overtime ban can only lead to demoralisation, local defections and the memories of 1968 and 1971 reasserting themselves.

The need is to learn from history — not to repeat it.

ANDREW ROBERTS

ENGINEERS CLAIM: THEN AND NOW

IN AUGUST of last year the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions lodged a claim on the Engineering Employers' Federation. The claim, for a £35 a week minimum for skilled workers, equal pay for women, a 35 hour week and four weeks annual holiday, covers two and a half million engineering workers and has now led to the first industrial action by the CSEU since 1968.

It is, however, no secret that the fight has got off to a shaky start. The EEPFU and the T&GWU have refused to co-operate with the overtime ban, and in the Midlands many AUEW convenors have applied for dispensation not to operate it in their factories. Meanwhile TASS (the staff section of the AUEW), who have put in a parallel claim upon the EEF, have abandoned it as a national claim, with the wet let out of calling for plant by plant bargaining.

Fiascos

But the main factor militating against a serious struggle is memory of the two previous national claims, in 1968 and 1971, which turned into fiascos. It is these defeats which colour the thinking of many militants.

Yet the CSEU represents the most powerful alliance of workers in the country — there is no reason why the engineers should not, like the miners, shake Phase 3 to the core. The point is to learn and understand the mistakes of 1968 and 1971 & '72.

One indication of the failure of the 1971 claim is the fact that apart from the cash, it was exactly the same as the current claim. Three quarters of the current claim (the hours, the extra week's holiday and equal pay) are leftovers which should have been won three years ago! What then were the mistakes and weaknesses which have meant that workers in the engineering industry have effectively been marking time for three years?

The 1971 claim was lodged in March. In reply to the cash demand for "a substantial increase" the EEF offered an insulting £1.50, with no concessions on hours, holidays or equal pay. The CSEU leaders eventually broke off negotiations, but instead of organising national action they called for plant by plant bargaining.

This complete abdication of any leadership in fact amounted to

jetisoning the claim altogether. Plant by plant bargaining means disunity between well organised workers and weaker ones, and disunity between various unions in the absence of nationally agreed coordination.

But the employers were united. The EEF is an exceptionally strong bosses' 'trade union', which does not hesitate to have a national line on what to accept and which can pour money into its weak links to help keep up a solid front.

The willingness of the CSEU leaders to accept defeat without a fight angered many rank and file militants. Although the 1968 debacle had made them suspicious of national claims, they weren't prepared to let matters lie there. In District 29, which covers the Manchester region and from which both Scanlon and Bob Wright both originated, this feeling even permeated the local Communist Party dominated AUEW leadership.

District 29

They called a meeting of Confed shop stewards and the meeting decided that all the firms in District 29 would put in 'carbon copy' claims. The hours and holidays parts of the claim were to be as in the national claim, the "substantial increase" was translated to mean not less than £4, with more for women workers as a step towards equal pay. It was agreed that the claim should be backed with a ban on overtime and piecework and a work to rule, and if the claims were rejected then this was to begin on March 26th, 1972.

But it was the employers who struck first. At GKN Bredbury the management started stockpiling, and workers replied by implementing the sanctions two weeks before they were due to start generally. The management responded by threatening a lockout, and to prevent this the factory was occupied.

Between 16th March, when GKN occupied, and 26th March, the date

set for the sanctions, other workers followed GKN and occupied, in reply to threatened lockouts. Clearly the EEF had already worked out standard tactics.

Three days before the 26th March — three days before the struggle was supposed to have started — the first settlement took place! Scraggs, a weak link in the employers' chain since they were one of the few with full order books, settled for £3 on the consolidated rate, 3 days more holiday and a 38½ hour week. This was well below the claim, especially on the hours and holidays, but above the norm which the EEF had set themselves.

The reaction of the employers and unions to the Scraggs deal provides a useful indicator to the solidarity of the two sides. Although the settlement was well below the claim, although it took place before the fight was supposed to have started, the local AUEW leaders claimed the Scraggs settlement as a victory — thus lowering the sights of those about to embark on a struggle for more than that.

The EEF, however, didn't kid themselves. Determined to keep their solid front and refuse to compromise, they instantly expelled Scraggs.

Other settlements followed. The unions kept the details a secret, supposedly to protect defecting employers from the wrath of the EEF. They claimed that the number of settlements showed that the employers were weakening. In fact it was exactly the opposite, and it soon became clear that the settlements were bad; many of them were cash only settlements and the hours and holidays parts of the claim were being ignored.

By April 1st, 11 factories had been occupied and 14 settlements had been made. In the following two weeks another 12 factories were occupied and on 16th April the sit-ins spread to Sheffield and Aberdeen. Meanwhile at national level pressure was being put on the local AUEW leaders to drop the hours and holidays part of the