

WORKERS' FIGHT

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As Jones cowers in the Tory court

DOCKERS TAKE ON THE LAW

CONTAINERS - see feature pp. 6 & 7

RAIL BALLOT - back page

IN THE NAME OF 'defending' his Union Jack Jones the T&GWU leader, now stands poised to murder his Union. What else is it when he is on the verge of withdrawing credentials from any steward with the guts to fight the Industrial Relations Act and the NIRC?

To demand that dockers stop blacking containers in support of their right to stuff and strip them is to order militants to take their place in the dole queue. After all, seven years ago there were 65,000 dockers. Now there are only 42,000. Of these 1,000 are in the pool on a meagre allowance of £20, and in June another 1,500 are scheduled to join them from the London docks alone. This comes to a drop of 27% in the number of dockers since 1967.

And of course, this is at a time when there are over one million unemployed throughout the country.

The same rationalisations that have taken place all over the country have hit the docks. Jones knows this - after all he is Deputy Chairman of the National Ports Council.

Now at last when there is a real fight on to stop the rot, Jones tries to sabotage it.

He calls it defence. We call it murder. That's how the Tory laws stand everything on its head!

The NIRC heard on May 17th of how the T&GWU was doing its level best to get the blacking called off. This evidence was offered in the Union's Defence against the claim by two Bradford companies Panalpina (Services) and Panalpina (Northern) that the Union and Walter Cunningham, Chairman of the Hull Shop Stewards Committee, were responsible for the blacking of Panalpina containers.

While the Union wriggled and squirmed apologetically Walter Cunningham did not even show up. No apologies from a true representative of the rank and file!

After all, as far as he is concerned they have been blacking containers in Hull since the middle of last year. If it served the dockers then, it does now, the Court makes no difference as far as Walter Cunningham is concerned.

He and the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee, of which he is a member, have laid it straight

on the line for the Government:

"We have no intention, either in the long term or in the short term, of removing the blacking. We consider the unregistered labour situation in and around the ports of this country is threatening the very existence of the registered dock-worker, and therefore nothing short of our registered men working in these unregistered depots will persuade the Committee to lift the ban."

No half measures here!

MASS PICKETS

In fact, as the State steps up its action through the Courts the dockers have stepped up their campaign too. Dockers in London's Royal Group of docks decided to continue their blacking of several Hays Wharf group companies, and endorsed shop stewards' recommendations to extend the ban to the Chobham Farm depot at Stratford and to stage a mass picket at the Dagenham Cold Store complex (part of Hays Wharf).

But in the Court the Union couldn't stop apologising. - and not to its members, either. Squirm as they might, the Union could not get out of admitting they were scabbing. Mr. Gibson (for the T&G) said that withdrawing stewards' credentials would cause trouble because the dockers would only elect the same stewards over again or at least some others with the same ideas.

Sir John Donaldson, however, didn't think much of that excuse. He thought the Union would "move

in pretty fast" if stewards encouraged strike breaking during a national dock strike.

Mr. Gibson's silver tongue had a ready reply. He explained that that was true because the stewards would be going against a majority decision - they would be strike-breaking. But in this case, it was the stewards who represented the majority, and the Union constituted the dissident minority.

Well, there you are: they stand condemned out of their own mouths!

THE LAW

What started as just a dockers' dispute is at the same time a battle for the whole of the working class. The issue of stuffing and stripping containers has snowballed from a fight for the right to work to the fight for the right to black, in fact the right to engage in any industrial action at all.

That is the lesson of the 1970s: every fight fought to the finish takes on the law - the holy writ of the bosses' state.

The situation of British capitalism leaves little leeway for compromises. A struggle once started must be fought to the finish. In the

present situation every retreat can become a rout and every defeat a death-knell. This goes for the working class as well as the ruling class.

If the dockers back down, as Jones instructs, they get smashed to bits. But if the NIRC is successfully defied the whole of the Tories' union-bashing programme is torn to shreds.

It's a time for all or nothing.

Trade Union leaders like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon earned their reputations as "left-wingers" at a time when working class struggles could be accommodated by an expanding capitalism. But today as the class struggle sharpens, the middle ground which these leaders occupy must fall to one army or another.

Either these men obey the dictates of their members, who understand the need to smash the Tories and all their works - particularly the Industrial Relations Act. Or they obey the dictates of the needs of the ruling class.

Jones has made his decision clear. And it was the wrong decision. He now stands against the mass of the dockers, against the Union rank and file, against those who are prepared to fight for the benefit of the working class.

Now there is no one left to believe that he is just putting on a show for the NIRC.

NATIONAL STRIKE

Leaders who have gone soft on the NIRC cannot be expected to lead a hard fight on containerisation either. Dockers will need to be on their guard.

The T&GWU are hoping to hang on until June 2nd, when the national dock strike is due to start, on the demands for the right to stuff and strip containers, for a fall-back pay equal to average earnings, and for a fourth week's holiday.

It's about time such an all-out fight was waged. But it could be that the leadership hope that by appearing all sound-and-fury on the day, they can recoup some of their 'credentials' with the dockers.

This could be the first stage in a plan to sabotage the blacking campaign by trying to substitute a legal compromise deal for the fight that has ridiculed the whole Tory Industrial Relations Act.

Dockers cannot afford to let the back-peddling official 'leadership' use the national strike to regain the initiative.

Whatever happens on June 2nd, and after, the blacking must continue!



Walter Cunningham

AGAINST U.S. IMPERIALISM

THE SOVIET UNION'S muted reaction to Nixon's latest crimes in Vietnam casts the long shadow of cynical betrayal over the heroic struggles of the liberation forces.

Instead of a forthright denunciation of this aggression, coupled with retaliation that would force Nixon to pull back, the Russian bureaucracy has decided not to say or do any-

thing that would upset Nixon's delicate stomach during his forthcoming junketing in Moscow.

Indeed the mining has given the Russian leaders less concern than they showed over the visit of Nixon to China last February. Moscow radio was at that time very indignant about the Chinese playing host to the arch-representative of imper-

alist murder.

Now, with the waters mined, and the dykes and cities bombed (and 'even' the destruction of one Russian ship) - the Stalinists are silent.

But how does this square with the Russian arms supplies to North Vietnam? The contradiction between these supplies and the Rus-

ians' desire to stay the hand of the Vietnamese just when they could deal the death-blow to US aggression, is governed by international alliances.

Thus the Russia leaders try to balance between keeping influence in Vietnam (mainly in order to prevent Chinese influence there) by sending arms; and keeping on speaking terms with Nixon. Now we are seeing that the Russians' desire to compromise with imperialism is even stronger than their hostility to China.

This also accounts for the more vituperative denunciations of US policy by the Chinese - while at the same time they are reported to be busily obstructing Russian arms supplies sent overland. This double game will not surprise those who remember the aid rendered imperialism by China in Indonesia, Ceylon and Bangla Desh.

How this all contrasts with the courage and boldness of the liberation army's troops in the field, as they close in on Hue - whose fall could signal a second Dien Bien Phu. After firing a huge arms dump at Pleiku they tighten their grip on the Central Highlands. While at An Loc they have still been able to stop the US-led Saigon army from taking the Saigon road.

It all adds up to Nixon's blockade having relatively little immediate effect on the war in the South.

It's chief achievement has been to show up the cynical back-stage peddling of principles to which the so-called 'Communist' countries are party.

- FOR THE N.L.F.



... AGAINST BRITISH IMPERIALISM - FOR THE I.R.A.

Thousands of miles away the guns boom. The crack of gun fire and the terrorised faces of the bomb-blasted people are ticker-taped and telegraphed from over half the world. And slowly, witnessing courage and clarity welded into victory after victory, the mass of British people turn to supporting the National Liberation Front in Viet Nam.

But the very same basic struggle is going on in Ireland. Oppressed and terrorised by the British ruling class - and those bound hand and foot to it either by class position or ideology, the Ulster Catholic minority has thrown up its own popular militia. It has come from the grass roots of this community and from the ranks of the traditional but long barely active army of Irish liberation the I.R.A.

Not only the same basic struggle but the same basic reasons for our support. Here are people trying to toss out the oppressor from outside and consolidate national unity. To do this they fight against the army of imperialism.

This imperialist army is our class enemy's sword, its club and gun. This imperialist army is as little our army as that of the Americans is our army. We do not pick sides according to blood-relations or geographic accidents. We must be on the side of the workers and oppressed nations against imperialism.

Different people have different armies at different stages of development. The ruling class as everyone knows has its army complete with the very latest piece of technological sophistication in machinery. And our army? Our army is the picket line, the ranks of militants in the trade union and revolutionary movement. It is as yet on a very low level of development unorganised in the main falsely led, unarmed yet potentially massive.

And the I.R.A. That is the army, the popular militia, of an oppressed

people who are fighting the army we're going to have to fight some day soon too. A blow struck by the I.R.A. against the British army is a blow struck for the struggle of the British working class.

Of course the I.R.A. - both wings - are not the only people struggling in Ireland against imperialism.

But they are the most effective and only truly popular military force. There are more clearly socialist and revolutionary organisations - politically closer to the policies of say this paper. But to express support for them rather than the I.R.A. would be dodging the issue of who actually is doing the fighting.

We have criticisms of both the Official and the Provisional I.R.A. - we have, for that matter, criticisms of the Vietnamese policies too - just as we frequently have criticisms and differences with certain strike leaders including strikes we may be in. But all that does not mean that we do not stand up and say which side we are on: which side we want to see win!

Because it is our 'blood relations' and ex-neighbours who have joined the imperialist, the oppressor, army - the British army - and because of a national arrogance with respect to all other nations, the British working class manages to push into the back of its mind the class

duties it senses more clearly on the Vietnamese war. The development of a movement of solidarity with all those fighting the British army for (at least) a 32-county Ireland is as a result very difficult.

Two wings of this movement of solidarity have developed: The anti-Internment League (AIL) and the Irish Solidarity Campaign (ISC) The AIL (supported by all the revolutionary organisations as well as both wings of the I.R.A. is the larger and the one with more links with working class organisations. The I.S.C. supported chiefly by the I.M.G. and Worker's Fight) is smaller but unlike the AIL it

states clearly in its slogans its support for the I.R.A.

At a recent meeting of the AIL (ISC members are usually AIL members too). ISC supporters attempted to reconcile the differences. They proposed that the movements be unified with the AIL adopting a position of 1. support for the demand for the self-determination of Ireland and 2. support for those fighting against imperialism including the two wings of the I.R.A.

The first of these was passed and this clearly constitutes a real step forward towards a unification and clarification of the solidarity movement. It gives the freedom of all Ireland as the reason for the need to withdraw British troops - rather than "saving them from harm".

But the second resolution met with considerable opposition and was defeated. The main arguments against it were put forward by certain I.S. members, who demanded deleting all mention of the I.R.A..

These arguments run roughly as follows: the IRA is only one group - and we shouldn't pick and choose; in any case the IRA doesn't want us to raise this slogan because they realise that a movement based on those slogans cannot attract such broad support as one based on the basic slogan of Withdraw British Troops.

These arguments are quite false - indeed quite dishonest. If we want to argue for support for the struggle in Ireland against British imperialism we cannot avoid explicitly stating our support for the IRA. Any flinching from this in the cause of "broad unity" means broad unity on a false, liberal basis.

That the IRA doesn't support the slogan of support for the IRA is not as strange as it seems. As we said, we have differences with the IRA and with the NLF in Vietnam. One of these differences (not the main one) is that they do not understand the tasks of solidarity in the heartlands of imperialism.

The comrades from I.S. know this. They argued - rightly - that even if the Viet Cong wanted them to raise the slogan of "peace" they would not. It was a liberal slogan. Every aggressor on the earth's surface claims peace to be the real intention. The I.S. group did not do what the N.L.F. wanted - and they were right no to.

The same applies now. We support support the IRA. But we disagree with them on the tactics to be adopted by a solidarity movement in Britain. We claim to have some understanding of conditions here and how to fight here and consequently while we readily lend an ear to the IRA we don't take our cues from them.

Basically what the ISC argues, though, is that because the great enemy, the national arrogance of British imperialism has driven deep roots into the working class, it must be fought tooth and nail. We do not start out with victory over this nationalism. The mass of people, because of it will not support us: that is precisely the fight.

If you begin with large numbers as a priority you inevitably take up those slogans only that will not scare away some supporters. But this means taking up a lowest common denominator of the ideas that are already quite widespread.

Unfortunately these are not principled revolutionary ideas: these have to be fought for.

The depths that you can sink to if SIZE is your priority was shown by Chris Harman (a leading IS member) when he said that he would be prepared to vote against a resolution which expressed solidarity with Republican and socialist movements in Ulster, if anybody would be "alienated" by the passing of such a resolution!

If anyone would be "alienated" by the resolution we suggest that they join Amnesty International - but keep out of a movement against imperialism.



Refugees' from the East demonstrate with Fascists against the Bonn-Moscow treaties

BONN: BARZEL LOSES OUT

The question of the ratification of the Bonn Moscow treaties has given rise to one of the most nauseating exhibitions of tired trivialities, horse-trading and shallow trickery in recent German parliamentary experience.



Willi Brandt

The ostensible issue was whether in arriving at new agreements with Moscow the German government (a Labour-Liberal coalition) should go beyond a trade agreement to an internationally valid agreement on the "acceptance" of the boundaries of East Germany and Poland. For week upon time wasting week the government and opposition wriggled and squirmed to find points of difference so as to delude the electorate into thinking that there was any choice on this question. The fact is, however, that apart from a few extreme right wing CDU CSU politicians who draw their support from the "refugees" from East Germany, Poland and the Sudetenland there was no one who was going to vote against the treaties in any case.



Rainer Barzel

There's nothing new after all about the CDU-CSU making agreements with the Warsaw Pact countries. In both 1958 and 1962 Konrad Adenauer the then chancellor and CDU-CSU leader had sought to get Russia to agree to a ten year moratorium on the border question. And this was perfectly in line with de Gaulle's "detente-entente" policy and with Johnson's "peaceful engagement" as well as, on the other side, Moscow's yellow sell-out of "peaceful co-existence".

Then why did the miserable Barzel and the other CDU-CSU leaders encourage opposition to the vote? Simple: they hoped to put up a sham fight of opposition to convince the electorate that

Brandt was "selling out their kin to the commies" something they would never countenance. All along though they wanted the treaties to be passed. But their plan of having the treaties passed without "soiling" their hands with it backfired when the Brandt-Scheel government couldn't ensure a majority.

Consensus politics contains its own hazards. In this case the hazard of the government losing a majority through a couple of right wingers defecting to the opposition camp forced the opposition itself to defect to the government's position on this issue. The height of parliamentary absurdity!

The fact is that while the CDU-CSU want to get into power they don't want to commit themselves to any policy on Eastern Europe other than the SPD-FDP policy. They want to get into power so that they can operate a more stringently anti working class policy.

In this way the German situation is rather like the British with the party roles reversed. Here it is a question of the Labour Party (close kin of the SPD) not being able to mount a campaign against the Tories on the Common Market question because they are in the long run bound to exactly the same policies. What chiefly divides the parties is their way of attacking the working class.

In both countries order books are down, unemployment is up and there are dangers of rampant inflation (cost of living went up 5.2% in 1971 and is forecasted on doing the same in 1972). Last month the starkness of the Federal Republic's position was brought out by two reports. The first of these showed that inflation had meant that government spending had exceeded estimates in every sector. The second the report of the Brussels Commission showed that Germany was doing even worse than Britain in the productivity stakes.

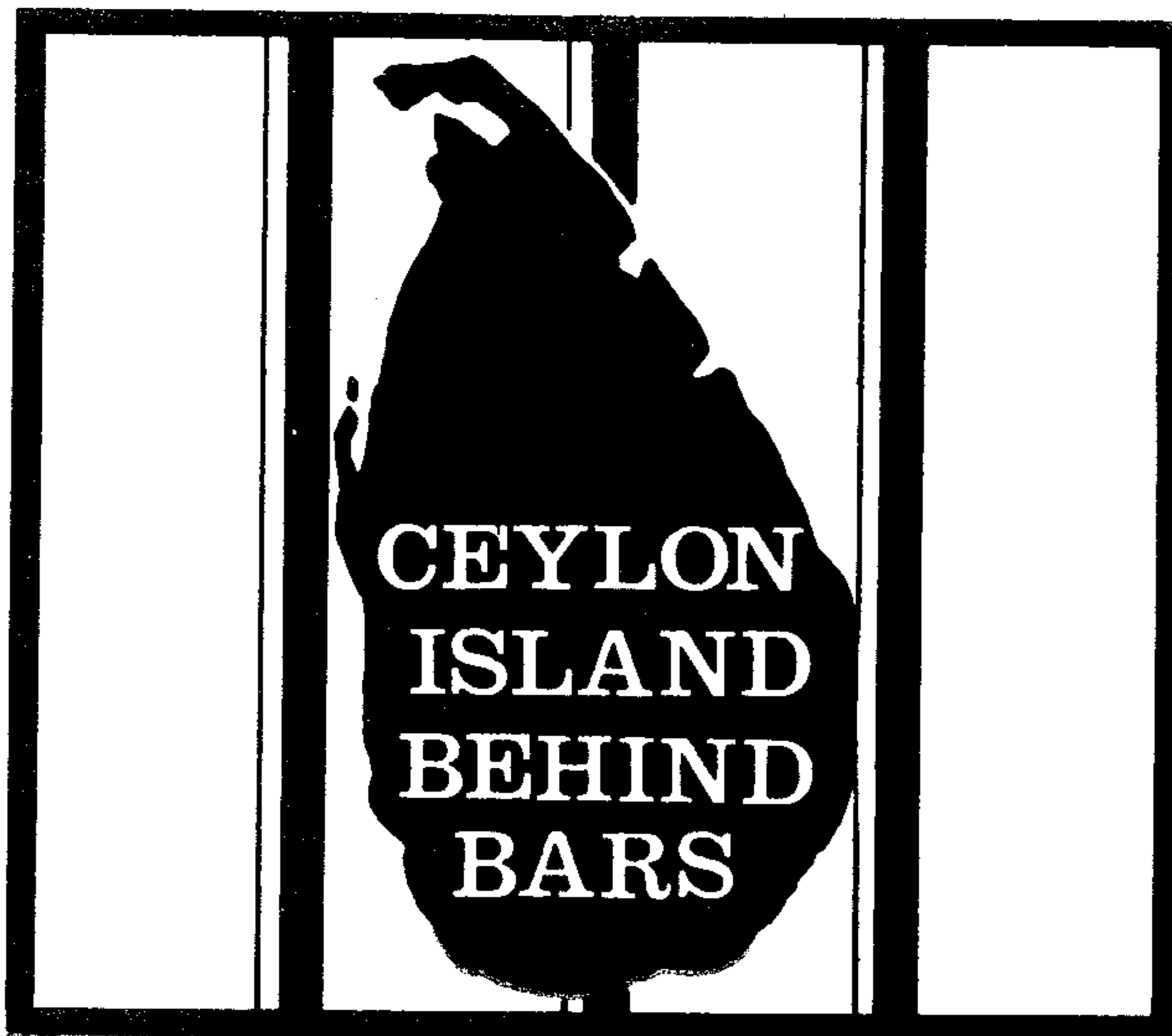
This means that the German workers who massively voted for the SPD and who spontaneously came out onto the streets in support of the ratification of the treaties until they were told they were embarrassing the government

by
Jack Price

will get it in the neck. Government spending will be cut drastically so as to force the ruling coalition to back down on its all too meagre promises of social reform. The working class who in certain sectors like steel and chemicals have pushed forward to protect themselves against the erosion of their standard of living are now going to be forced to what amounts in fact to a united ruling class bloc against them.

In Bonn despite appearances there will be a defacto "grand coalition" Replacing the phony parliamentary charade will be a real struggle - not between parties but directly between social classes with the working class taking the offensive in a more massive scale than ever before.

RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS



CEYLON SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

In CEYLON under the present State of Emergency regulations, all democratic rights, such as the right of trade union activity, the right to organise politically, and the rights of assembly and free speech, have been suspended.

The armed forces have powers of arbitrary arrest. There are 16,000 political prisoners detained in jail without trial and without access to legal aid.

Torture has been widely practised on anyone thought to have been involved with the JVP-led uprising last year.

Solidarity actions are being organised. For details of the campaign and for more information, contact:

Ceylon Solidarity Campaign
c/o 182 Pentonville Road,
London N.1

SOME READERS have queried our call in the last issue of Workers Fight, for a general strike to smash the Industrial Relations Act. (*)

The dead weight of 1926 lies heavily still, half a century later, on the British labour movement. The bitter memories of that defeat and its consequences still haunt the minds of many workers. Many have tried a deep disabuse of the idea of the general strike weapon. It appears as a great pitched battle and a great defeat — which indeed it was. And the conclusion in many people's minds is that the workers should avoid pitched battles.

But 1926 is not the only general strike that ever occurred. There is a very rich arsenal of Marxist thinking on the general strike and an even richer experience up to the present time. Here we attempt no more than a brief discussion of some of the issues raised by the immediate situation of the working class in Britain today.

The Tory Government grows bolder with each failure of the Union leaders to react to its challenge. Faced with the escalating legal sanctions, only a counter-escalation by the workers' side could hope to smash the Industrial Relations Act.

The only immediate response possible is generalised economic action — that is, a 'general strike' use of the social and industrial strength of the working class. (The perspective of a Labour Government to repeal the Act in the long term — if that: remember In Place of Strife — means acquiescing to the bosses NOW.)

Only the continuation of the fight to mobilise on the industrial front, at the sharpest point of the struggle, while all the time striving to generalise the industrial action, can now be an alternative to abandoning all hope of smashing the I.R. Act.

THE GENERAL STRIKE

A general strike means a head-on collision between the practical power of the bosses and their state, and the usually latent social and economic power of the working class. The collision could lead to a passing over from a

limited mobilisation of the class for limited goals (such as the smashing of the Industrial Relations Act) to a full scale political confrontation in which the workers' struggle is extended into a conscious struggle against the state and capitalist society itself, ending either in serious defeat or decisive victory.

Such a contest is always implicit in a general strike.

Clearly then: the general strike is not a weapon to be played with, and the call for it is not a slogan to be raised light-mindedly. If a strike, especially a sit-in strike, poses the question of power in a single factory, the general strike poses it in the whole country. If a strike can lead to limited clashes with the police, then a general strike can lead to full scale confrontation and civil war.

The idea of the general strike was first conceived in Chartist times, in the 1830s, as the ultimate weapon of the working class. The Great Holiday, as it was called, was to be the full scale proof of the ultimate dependence of society on the working class.

The idea entered the arsenal of the Social Democratic parties at the end of the nineteenth century. It was then seen as the ultimate threat the labour movement could make to be used to stop wars, force a general franchise, etc.

And it was used, for example in Sweden in 1893.

History shows us two basic types of general strike or mass strike: those called by the official leaders of the workers' organisations, and those which well up spontaneously.

THE PLANNED STRIKE

The period of the decisive domination of the labour movement by the reformist or Stalinist bureaucracies has seen a series of strikes organised from above.

A) Strikes for reformist goals, in which the leadership is genuine in its adherence to the stated goals, and maintains control of the working class. The best examples are the series of general strikes from the 1890s to World War I in Belgium, which won universal manhood suffrage.

B) Token strikes for the purpose of

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Jackie Cleary explains FOR A GENERAL

demonstrating some point or protesting, with, once again, the reformist or Stalinist leadership keeping rigid control.

The French Communist Party was infamous for playing this game way before 1968 (when it got more than it bargained for) by holding one day general strikes, half day general strikes, and even half-hour general strikes on all sorts of issues.

C) Strikes in which the leadership or a large section of it agree in advance with the bourgeoisie to play the Grand Old Duke of York and to head off militancy — so demoralising the working class and dissipating its energies that the workers are led to defeat.

The most notorious example of this is the 1926 British General Strike.

The result depends as usual on the relationship of forces. In areas like Durham, for instance, the movement almost got out of the hands of the TUC. If the young Communist Party had not naively supported the T.U. traitors "from the left" the strike might have escaped TUC control entirely.

SPONTANEOUS

History also of course shows us spontaneous mass strikes of the working class, mass self-mobilisations, usually drawing in much larger sections of the class than are organised at the beginning.

For instance in Russia, as the revolutionary workers' movement took shape at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, the organised socialist movement helped and supported the mass strike wave with which the working class fought Tsarism. But, for all that, they were largely spontaneous: what Rosa Luxemburg called the elemental form of the self-movement of the working class.

Sometimes the class mobilises spontaneously or half-spontaneously to meet some threat, getting at best grudging after-the-event endorsement from a reformist leadership.

In 1920 the right-wing Kapp took power in Germany for 3 days by means of a putsch. But this aroused, and was defeated by, a semi-spontaneous general strike.

In Spain the revolt of the fascist generals in 1936 was stopped by strikes, mobilisations and self-arming of the workers after most of the official labour movement and the Popular Front government had virtually caved in to the fascist demands.

Lastly there is the situation where the class, whose leadership proclaims socialism but does nothing about it, grows frustrated and impatient. The militants initiate direct action, drawing massively greater sections of the working class into the movement — indeed, often being propelled forward by these fresh sections.

The factory seizures in Italy in 1919 were a conscious challenge to the rule of the bourgeoisie. But they failed to find a comparably revolutionary leadership in the sphere of politics. The indecisive left-talking Socialist Party failed the working class and left it wide open to being smashed later on by fascism.

Thus the 1936 general strike in France. And thus, too, 1968, where the French working class, long frustrated by the misleadership of the Communist Party and the CP trade union, the CGT, long tired of low wages, sham fights and half-hour general strikes (with the CGT bureaucrats attempting to conduct the working class and its movements like a well-disciplined orchestra) suddenly rose and seized control of France.

In this situation of course the 'lead-

ing' bureaucrats of the labour movement ran to catch up with the movement, straddled it and stopped it from smashing the bourgeois state — although the bourgeoisie was forced to give massive concessions.

AFTER A STRIKE

After a general strike there is a variety of possible situations.

There might be a period of quiet with the bourgeoisie generally on top, having clearly defeated the working class.

Or there might be a new equilibrium, based on there being an expanding economy, enabling the granting of concessions to the working class, with the reformist leadership still in control.

Alternatively, the strike can be an episode in a continually explosive situation: after it the bourgeoisie mobilises, goes on the counter-offensive, and the struggle continues — as in Italy after 1919. This obviously depends on the objective possibilities — the background and relationship of forces, the role of the labour leadership and its ability to control and to manipulate the working class.

Further permutations are of course possible based on these possibilities.

1926 EXPERIENCE

The experience of 1926 in Britain was an example of the first variant above. Most of the leaders were renegades, agreeing in advance with the Conservatives to head off the strike and betray it. It was growing in strength and determination. More men were out on the last day than on the first.

Calling it off was an outright betrayal of a magnificent mobilisation of the working class by a leadership which with some honourable exceptions (like A.J. Cook) did not even have reformist goals for the strike.

The defeat resulting from the betrayal was serious but not catastrophic. But its effects were soon compounded by the heavy follow-up blow to the working class of the Great Depression with its mass unemployment.

If the Depression hadn't come so soon after; if the revolutionary socialists of that time, the young Communist Party, had been able to use the renegacy of the leaders of labour to discredit them and gain working class leadership for itself — then the outcome could have been very different.

Neither the outcome of the strike itself nor even the effects of betrayal and defeat were anything like inevitable.

Today a general strike could do to the Tories' Industrial Relations Act what the miners and their allies did three months ago to their 7% pay Norm. Such a strike could smash the Act. And in the process of mobilising, the class would begin to create and toughen its sinews and muscles in preparation for the battles — intense and bitter — that would surely follow any partial defeat of the capitalists by the workers.

REVOLUTION ?

Those 'revolutionaries' who argue that the general strike demands so much serious preparation that it is impossible to advocate it unless and until there has been "adequate preparation" are caught in a vicious trap. They have learned little from recent, particularly French, experience.

They see the General strike as a synonym for the revolution, leading always either to decisive defeat or decisive victory. With the labour movement helplessly bureaucratized, they there

Renault, 1968: listening, thinking . . . and arguing



TO FIGHT!

why we raise the call STRIKE

fore see the call for such a strike as deeply irresponsible: as if we were calling for the revolution, to be led by Vic Feather!

Therefore, they say, we must simply make long term propaganda about an eventual general strike, and meanwhile wait until we have prepared, until we have a mass revolutionary party, and are ourselves the leadership of any general strike which we call for. Thus once again the general strike becomes a synonym for the revolution. (Moreover, all the talk about 'preparation' is a heaven-sent alibi for the Union leaders' inactivity.)

Such pedantic comrades usually rely on the quotation mines, from which they dig out Trotsky's 1935 warning to the Independent Labour Party, who were threatening to call a general strike - as a sort of punishment to the ruling class in the event of war.

Yet they ignore Trotsky's very important appreciation of the 1936 strike in France and its effects on the working class. (Not to mention the experience of 1968)

"The strike has everywhere and in every place pushed the most thoughtful and fearless workers to the fore. To them belongs the initiative. They are still acting cautiously, feeling the ground under their feet. The vanguard detachments are trying not to rush ahead so as not to isolate themselves. The echoing and re-echoing answers of the hindmost ranks to their call gives them new courage.

The roll call of the class has become a trial self-mobilisation. The proletariat was itself in greatest need of this demonstration of its strength. The practical successes won, however precarious they may be, cannot fail to raise the self-confidence of the masses to an extraordinary degree, particularly among the most backward and oppressed strata.

That leaders have come forward in the industries and in the factories is the foremost conquest of the first wave. The elements of local and regional staffs have been created. The masses know them. They know one another. Real revolutionaries will seek contact with them.

Thus the first self-mobilisation of the masses has outlined and in part brought forward the first elements of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred, revitalised and regenerated the whole colossal class organism. The old organisational shell has by no means dropped away. On the contrary, it still retains its hold quite stubbornly. But under it the new skin is already visible."

ULTIMATE WEAPON?

In essence the attitude of the pedantic revolutionaries is a variant of the old west European Social Democratic conception of the general strike as the well-orchestrated ultimate weapon controlled and directed from above. It is not a conception of the self-mobilisation of the working class.

Since their conception makes the general strike impossible, or only a

prelude to betrayal, it follows for them that the slogan for a General Strike cannot be used.

This ignores the experience of the mass strikes of which 1968 is the most important: welling up from below, directed as much against the labour bureaucrats (though not necessarily consciously) as against the state.

Since this is the major experience of the mass strike and of the general strike throughout most of its history, to ignore it is to ignore the real history of the working class. It is thus tantamount to preventing the revolutionary organisations from bringing the lessons of that history, in the form of propaganda, to the working class in this country.

It ignores the fact that the mass strike and the general strike and the struggle for the general strike, can play a major role in shaking and ultimately smashing the control by the bureaucrats of the labour movement, and in helping to build the revolutionary movement - without which there will never be a full and final victory over the capitalists.

Thus it is the job of revolutionaries to make propaganda for the general strike, to promote and propagandise for a mass strike and for immediate solidarity strikes on every level.

We therefore say a general strike can smash the Industrial Relations Act. We advocate it as a tactical weapon for this limited goal. In the present situation it could win such a goal. We raise the demand that the leaders of the unions prepare and call a general strike.

Even when used as a tactical weapon for limited gains, the general strike still implicitly raises the basic question: who rules in society? Whatever the specific goals of the general mobilisation its logic and its potential is the struggle for state power.

This is not merely an abstract logic but a very practical logic. A general strike necessarily poses the creation of organising committees of the working class and of new organisational and administrative responsibilities for those stewards, councils and trades councils now existing.

It makes necessary the creation of broader workers' committees, street and area committees and councils; and of workers' self-defence organisations in the event of clashes with scabs and state personnel. That is, it would pose the question of the elaboration of the rudimentary organs of a potential working class state.

The outcome would be decided as a struggle between two perspectives within the mobilised working class - the reformist and the revolutionary. ALL THE EVENTS OF THE STRIKE, the very fact of the working class moving into action, would favour the revolutionary perspective, as does any real mobilisation of the working class into self awareness.

Whether the strike was initiated by rank and file militants or by the official leadership, the revolutionary perspective would have to be fought for, and a series of concrete immediate steps elaborated to take the class continually forward.

WORKERS' COUNCILS

Revolutionaries would popularise the idea of workers' councils of self-administration, to organise the life of the country and begin to elaborate a counter-state leading to dual power as in Russia between February and October 1917.

The starting point would be the factory committees thrown up by the strike, which in many cases would already be

taking decisions not normally taken by workers. These would be generalised into local, regional and finally a National Council of workers' representatives - thus opposing an embryonic workers' state to the bourgeois state.

A revolutionary organisation would advocate that workers who have taken over factories, services etc. should begin to run them, under the control of the workers' councils, enabling services to be restored to the workers and their organisations, while the 'owners' were still excluded. Thus the bosses' property, instead of merely being immobilised and held, would be turned increasingly against them, giving the workers an increasing store of power.

The revolutionary party would begin to form workers' militias, initially from among its own cadres, drawing in militants from all the factories - thus arming the workers for an uprising to disarm and suppress the paralysed organs of bourgeois power and establish the workers' state. A revolutionary party should in any case advocate and work for this in advance of such a situation. But even in the middle of the strike such a programme of action would galvanise the workers, and could at least lead to a period of dual power.

Finally, revolutionaries in such a situation would raise the slogan of a workers' government as the immediate

objective of the strike and move to coordinate and consolidate the organs of workers' administration and defence into a counter-state which could challenge and decisively smash the bosses' state and establish a workers' state.

Such a prosecution of the strike movement by a party with a mass working class following could have taken a situation like that of May-June 1968 in France to a state of dual power - and from there to the revolution.

But even a struggle that does not end with the working class taking power can be an invaluable experience. New leaders and often new forms of organisation are thrown up. These can - even if the movement is for the time being repulsed - serve the class in future struggles.

This was true of the Soviets of 1905 which really came to the fore in 1917. It was likewise true of the Irish Citizen Army which was created in the strike movement of 1913 and became the cornerstone of the Easter Rising of 1916.

It is in this sense that Trotsky and Lenin thought of the 1905 revolution as the "dress rehearsal" for 1917.

And it is in this sense that all the strategies above must be put forward in any general strike situation, so that even if it is not the final showdown, the best lessons will be learnt.

"Workers' leaders", Britain 1926: Smith, Cook and Richardson



* In addition there are objections to the General Strike call by people who consider the whole question of "making calls to action" and putting "demands" on leaders as false, diversionary and irrelevant. Thus the International Marxist Group in its new period of maximalist, passive-propagandist politics.

Calling for a general strike, they say, won't make one happen, nor even help prepare for it - only a "deepening of the struggle" will do that. And we can't affect that either. If a general strike happens - it will happen. If not - not. You are either born a genius or you are not born a genius - so who needs to go to school.

This approach is based on a misreading of Lenin on agitation and propaganda in What is to be Done, where Lenin attacked Martynov the "Economist".

Martynov had added an additional category (that of calls to action) to the Marxist Plekhanov's categories of Propaganda and Agitation. Lenin insisted on an organic unity between theory, programme, propaganda and agitation. He therefore rejected the notion of "calls to action" as being a separate category - something that doesn't arise organically either from agitation or from propaganda (which are in turn governed by theory and principle.). In Martynov's scheme these "calls to action" did not flow from the body of Marxist theory.

As Lenin sarcastically put it, Martynov thus "rendered Plekhanov more profound."

The IMG theorists guard against this sort of dislocation by simply eliminating "calls to action" altogether. Perhaps that way they hope to avoid the kind of unprincipled separation of propaganda and agitation exemplified by the

International Socialist Group in 1969, when they made abstract propaganda against the British troops in Northern Ireland, but refused to call for their removal.

Where Martynov dislocated the practical 'limbs' growing out of the body of Marxist theory, the IMG proposes to chop them off to save them from being dislocated. (See Red Mole, Supplement to No 40)

In this view the party is not a many sided entity with organs analogous to a brain to cogitate and an active body to organise and administer.

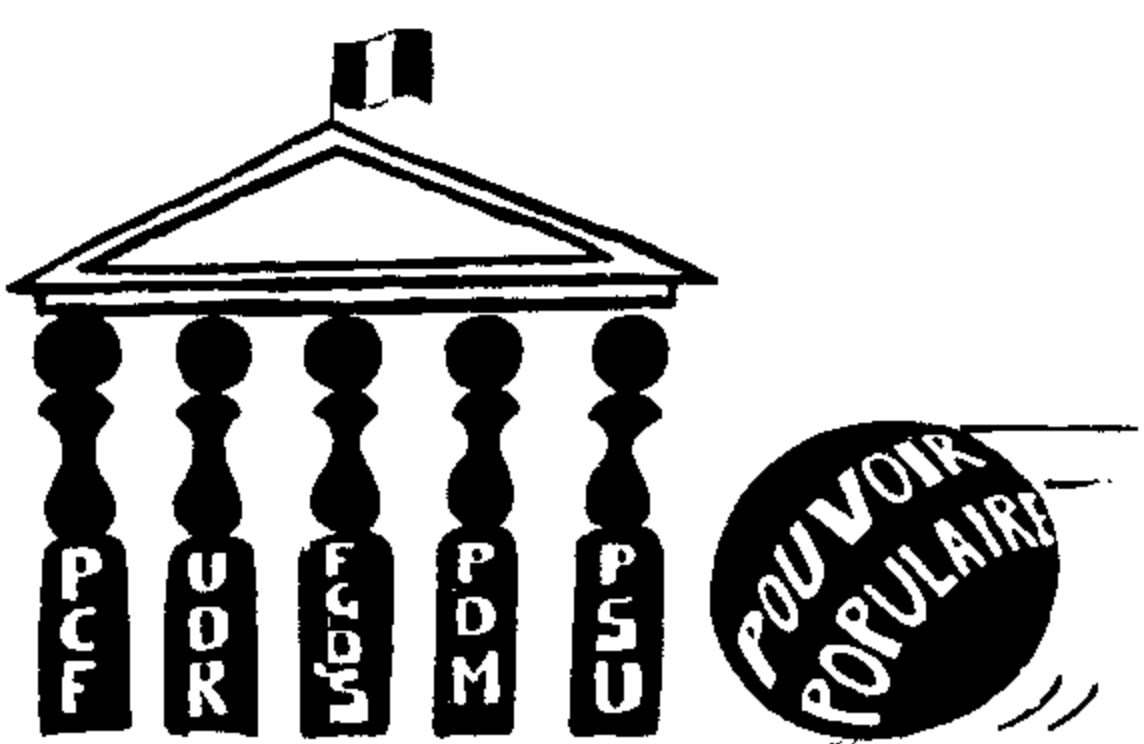
Rather, the party can have no administrative function: "it is a brain and a voice" - no more, says the Red Mole, blinking in the blinding light of new 'insights'.

What this leads to in practice could be seen in the following Red Mole. Its front page carried the slogan NO RECOGNITION (of the NIRC). This was published right after the TUC policy of "non-recognition" had led to capitulation to the NIRC.

The Red Mole, depriving itself of calls to action which give direction to the struggle (including demands on official leaders, around which militants can gather and organise), was left still mumbling the useless sham policy of the TUC.

Not to make demands on Feather or calls to action to the class, meant mimicking Feather's old policy just as it had demonstrated its bankruptcy.

Not only were the awesome theoreticians of the IMG capable of rendering Plekhanov more profound. But they quickly topped this feat with the even more dizzying one of rendering Vic Feather more stupid!



French poster, 1968: workers' power threatens Establishment. Among its preps, the 'Communist Party'.

THE MODERNISATION WAR — and how to WIN it



The world's first containerised cargo, as I remember, was the Trojan horse. Once inside the walls it created havoc amongst the defenders. And it's no different now!

If registered dockers accept that the "stripping" and "stuffing" of containers can be done by non-dock labour they will have let the Trojan horse into their camp.

The containers swallow up more and more 'traditional' dock work all the time. Thus there has already been an enormous reduction in the number of dockers compared with the pre-Devlin period. Now the number is 42,000 registered and 1,000 on the unattached register. This obviously is the main bone of contention in the container issue: Why should not all dockers reap the benefits made possible by containerisation in terms of shorter hours, better pay, and easier, cleaner and safer work?

For a docker who has sweated with hoof meal, burned his eyes with sulphur or ached shifting broken copper or loose timber, containerisation could have been a massive step forward.

But not so long as the bosses control the ports.

TEN FOLD FACTOR

The increase in efficiency that has been gained through the various forms of container handling is obvious. It has been known by some as the "ten fold factor".

On average containers can be handled in one tenth of the man-hours of non-packaged cargoes, and in some cases the figures are even more dramatic: to every 63 men engaged in the piece by piece unloading of timber, only 4 are needed for packaged timber.

Or again — a Manchester Liners container ship can be turned round in 48 hours with only 10 men (480 man-hours), as against 200 men taking 14-15 days (approx. 25,000 man-hours).

There is no point in denying the efficiency of container traffic. The question is, in whose interests is this efficiency used. (Down my way they've got efficient coppers, efficient foremen, efficient bailiffs and efficient judges. But so what, when all this is directed against me and my mates?)

It is all to be in the interests of the private profiteers. Every bit — since the Labour Govern-

ment hived off the then nationalised Freightliner service to the private profit vultures.

Of course, it isn't only on the docks that new methods mean less jobs. You only have to think of the massive redundancies in every sector of industry to see that capitalism is always trying to push up the rate of exploitation of workers.

The bosses try to get more value out of us as against what they pay us. Now there's a big drive on to keep labour costs down.

A number of factors affect this. Immediate undercutting of competitors is only one factor.

INVESTMENT

On the docks, new techniques have cost a great deal of money. The fact that the money was in the first place produced by dockers' labour (though some came from Government handouts) doesn't make the port employers any more inclined to use the new methods to ease the dockers' life. No! Money isn't something the ruling class let go of without expecting a return. In fact port investment in 1965 was £24 million — and in 1970 it was £40 million. This enormous sum has involved them in considerable problems — given that they have to show a 'good return', which for them means not safer work, not shorter hours, not longer holidays, but simply one thing — profit.

One problem is that, while the investment has allowed for a tremendous increase in the flow of goods through the ports, world trade has actually declined. As a result port charges, which were supposed to have been cut due to containerisation, have actually been increased.

Also, as plant becomes more sophisticated and investment in new plant gets more and more costly, so the forward planning of that investment becomes crucial to the capitalist class. They therefore attempt to eliminate the variable, unpredictable elements of production costs, replacing them with the more or less constant and foreseeable elements.

Of course this creates a vicious circle, because the more they invest, the more they need to plan. But the more they need to plan, the more they have to limit investment to those aspects of spending that are not affected by fluctuation.

REDUNDANCIES

The massive bout of redundancies (however disguised) can

be seen as an attempt both to increase the rate of exploitation and to free the operations of capitalism from the dictates of labour. But that's where they come unstuck: they can't free themselves from labour, because of course they, the capitalists, don't do the work.

But if the ruling class can't free itself of the working class, it tries to free itself from the dictates of the most militant, the best organised and the most politically advanced sections of the working class.

Their plans on this score are at the heart of the present situation.

First, in order to cut costs, some shipowners began to invest large sums developing facilities in ports like Felixstowe which do not come under the National Dock Labour Board. They felt that this way they could save money by paying the men less, by having complete control of hiring and firing, and at the same time deal a blow at the N.D.L.B.

Second, we all know that while registered dockers already provide the labour force at a few inland clearance depots, at most others they don't. Here we see an important effect of containerisation's land link.

LAND LINK

Dockers traditionally handled local traffic and traffic for local delivery. Many ports in fact grew up in direct response to inland industries as they developed. (Manchester with the cotton trade, Cardiff with the coal trade, and so on.)

But with the more flexible land link provided by containers, goods can be shifted around very easily: goods which, say, usually go to Hull, can be transferred to, say, Bristol. And so on.

Or, more crucially, they can be transferred to a non-registered port.

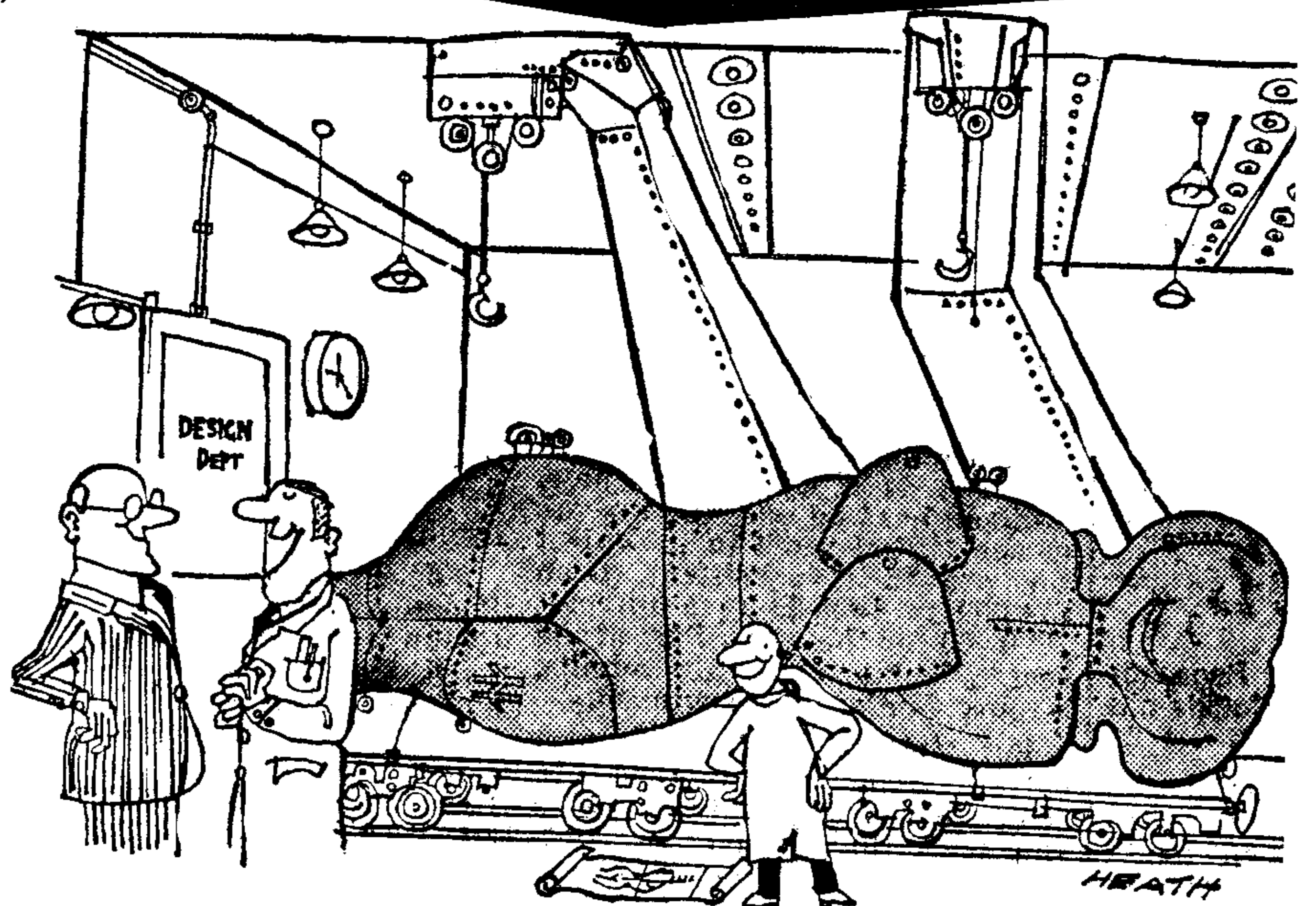
It's not difficult to see how this could be a tremendous weapon of the employers against individual or isolated port action. If cargoes are being blacked at one port, they can be switched to another — preferably to a port not noted for its militancy.

It follows from this that the Bristow definition of port work in purely geographical terms is completely inadequate (and in any case is riddled with loopholes). While it is true that some operators are setting up just beyond the Bristow boundaries, using non-registered labour, of course, it is also a fact that some very big depots are being established deep inland. And these are just as dangerous.

DEFEND JOBS!

To reap the profits, the port

Big joke for Sunday Times — not so funny for dockers



I think we've designed a container that everybody will be happy to have

Where the containers go



employers must -

1. Regain the control of hiring and firing which they lost in 1947, so that they can be free to sack dockers wholesale. Their first step is to put large numbers of men on the unattached Register.

2. Make sure that the container depots continue to employ non-registered men and remain outside the N.D.L.S. It's no use getting rid of dockers and then facing the same problems all over again at the container depots.

3. Ensure smooth handling through the ports of all containers, and establish their right to ship containers packed by non-registered labour.

Dockers must stand and fight back now. This is the crunch, and the coming fight is going to be fought on all the fronts. There is more at stake for the bosses than dockers can win with token actions.

1. The fight against redundancies centres at present on defence of the NDLS and around the 9-point charter formulated by the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee. (See p.8)

2. Fight to bring ALL container ports and depots, and also those sections of large factories where containers are packed, under the control of the N.D.L.S., at dockers' wages.

The T&GWU and other unions involved must campaign for this, bringing the workers in these depots into the fight. This way we'll foster working class unity, and at the same time work to destroy any advantage the employers gain from moving "stuffing and stripping" away from the ports.

3. Spread the blacking! Dockers can and must stand by their right to refuse to handle work that does hundreds and thousands out of jobs.

Above all, unity of dockers from port to port must be forged.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Containers have been used in many ports ever since the War. But they really got a boost with the Vietnam war. The US army needed to speed up the passage of military cargoes, and this led to a tremendous development of ideas and techniques in the field of handling.

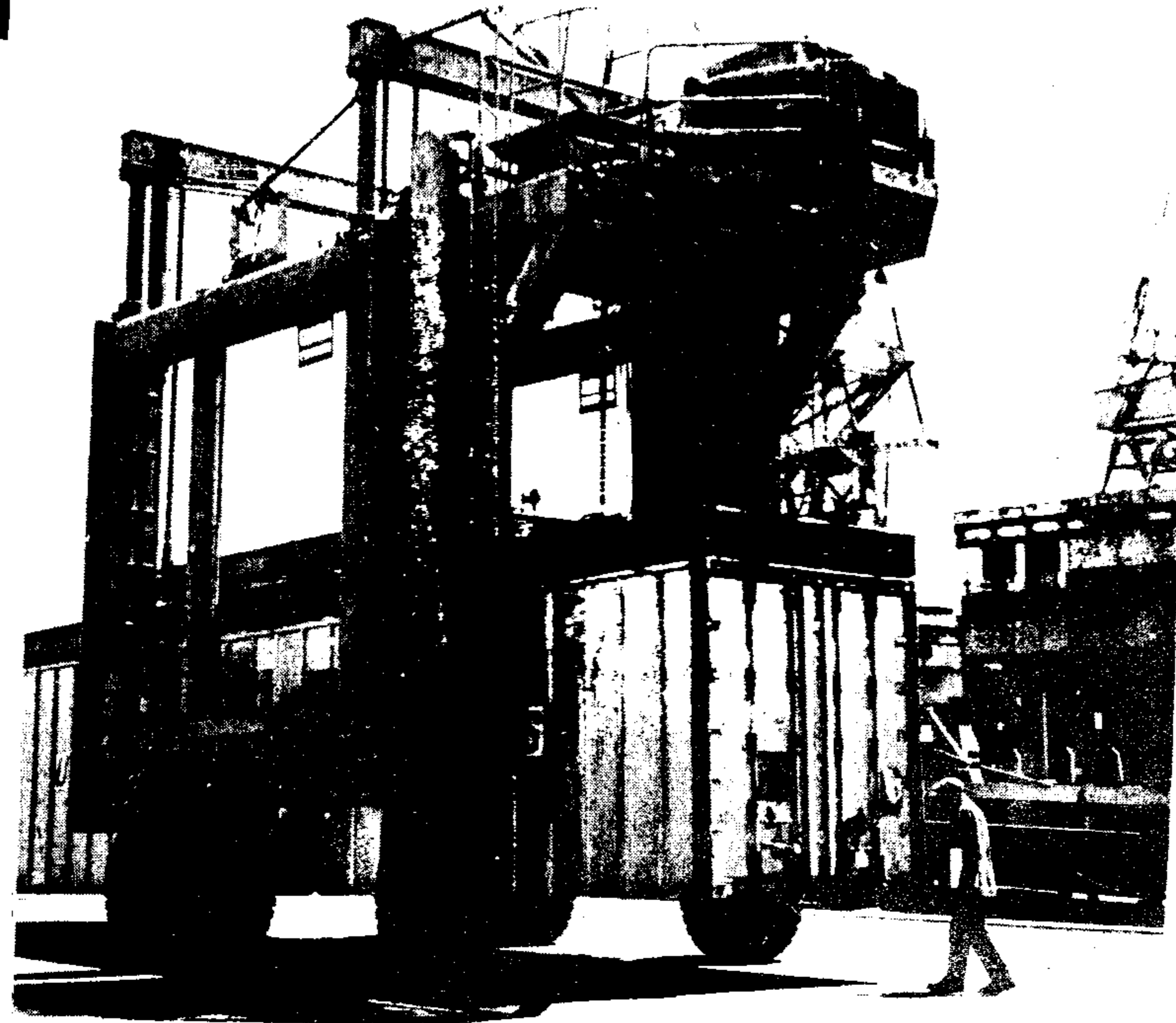
The first British port to use containers on a big scale was Preston. But by 1968 the 172,924 units (weighing 1,437,000 tons) handled at Preston was nearly equalled by the 103,575 units passing through the port of Liverpool.

By 1970 when Liverpool was handling 127,729 units, and Preston was handling only 114,259 units, it was clear that the bigger ports were being equipped for big-scale container traffic.

Overall, container traffic has gone up from 9 million tons in 1968, to 12 million in 1969, to 16 million tons in 1970. Now there are some 2,000,000 containers passing in and out of this country, representing one third of the total amount of general cargo handled.

All the time, the nature of containerisation was changing. Early on, the container traffic was limited to the shorter routes. The sea routes between Britain, Scandinavia, Europe and Northern Ireland - these were the established container routes. You can see the pattern by looking at some figures. In 1968 the Britain-Scandinavia run accounted for 3.5 million tons of containerised cargo, while the Britain-North America run carried only 0.7 million tons.

But that was in 1968. By the end of this year, the Far East,



Australia, Europe and North and South America will all be linked up by the container routes.

Last month the Hapag-Lloyd lines said it would use Tilbury as its UK container base for North American routes. Only last week Mr. John Lurch, Director General of the Port of London Authority, said that Tilbury would soon have facilities to handle West African trade, raising its capacity from 200,000 to 300,000 containers per year.

Reporting Lurch's speech to the Antwerp Port Authority last week, the Financial Times said: "When the Tilbury container port was fully extended... it would have an annual capacity of between 4 and 5 million tons, which the Authority hoped to reach by about 1974-5."

Developments in container

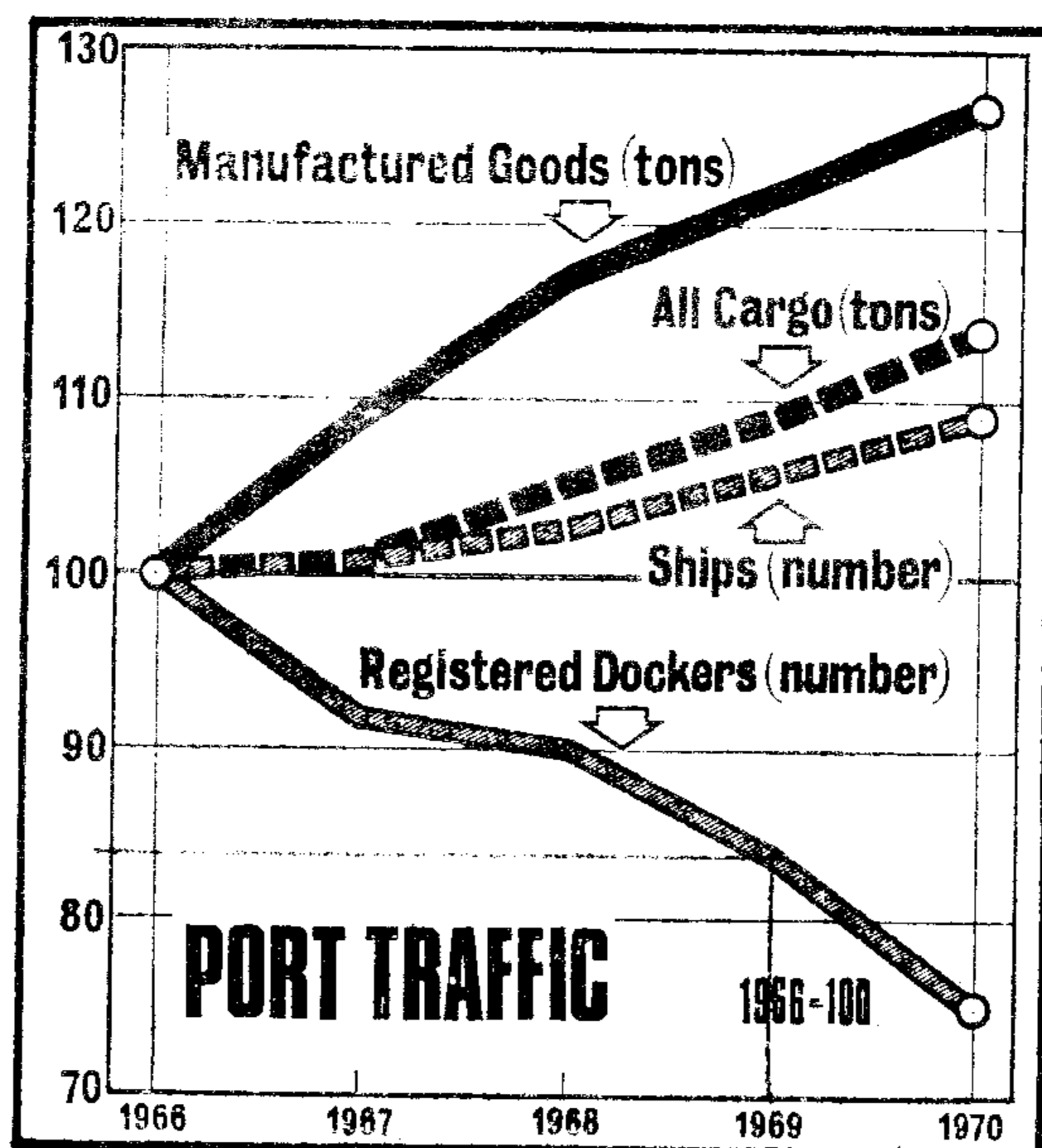
ships themselves will soon make the present 'metal boxes' seem old fashioned.

Ships are being built that will take whole barges, with all their contents, aboard, without any of the cargo being shifted in port.

The LASH (Lighter Aboard Ship) will take 70 barges of 300 tons capacity. SEABEES will take 40 barges of a capacity of 800 tons each. These ships are already in operation at some ports, for instance Lashes are operating from Sheerness.

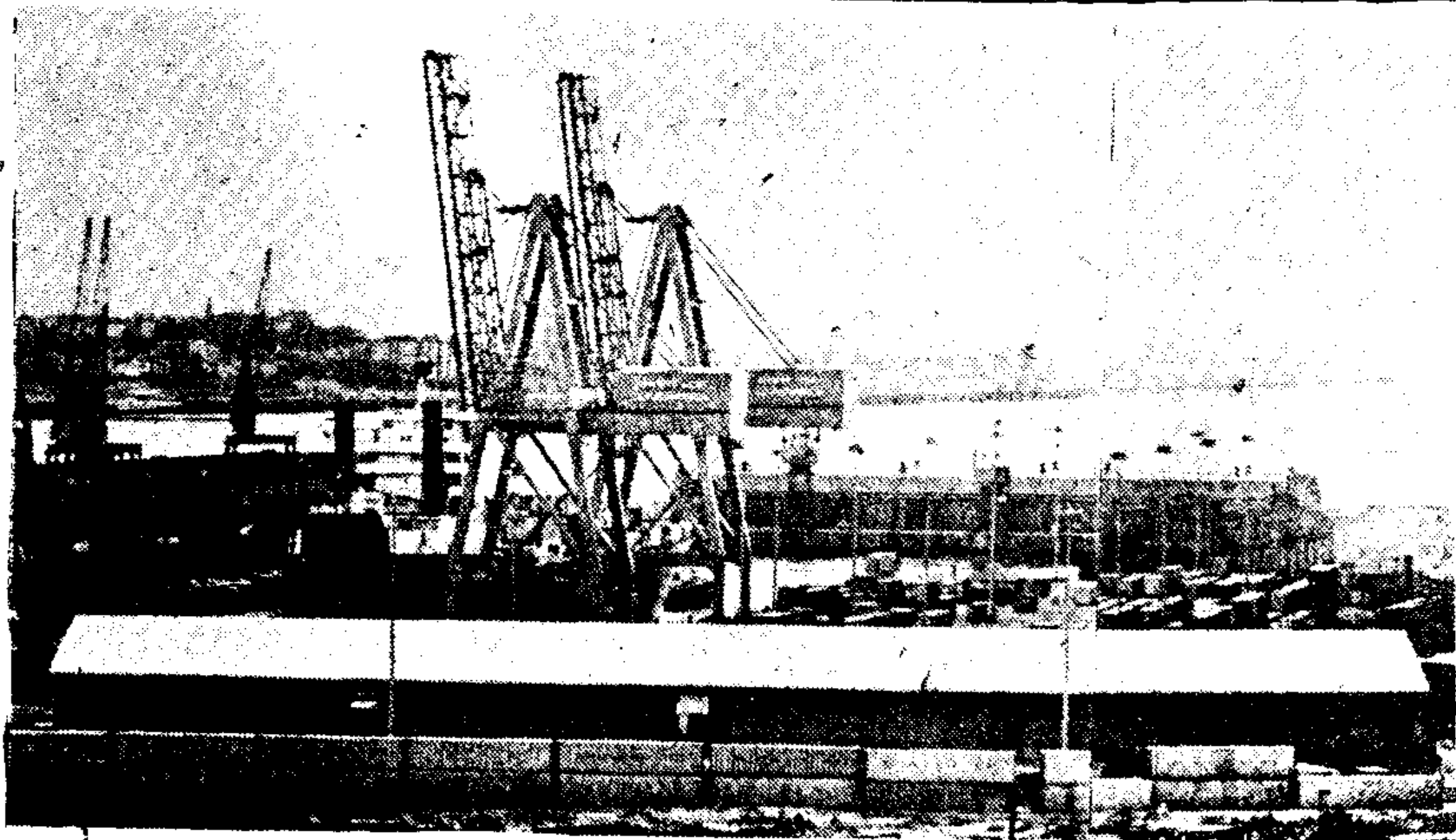
Modular barges of 700 tons capacity are now under construction. These can be loaded onto the BACAT (barge aboard catamaran) motherships, which are being built in Denmark.

Thus not only road and rail, but also river cargoes are now included in the container scheme.



This is all the more important now that the land link depots give the employers the ability to bypass a militant or 'difficult' port, and perhaps eventually to effect a lockout of such a port.

It is up to the T&GWU, the major Union in the ports, to organise such a network for co-ordinated action. But rank and file dockers cannot afford to wait. The fight is on now. We must go into battle as a united force.



Seaforth bulk cargo and container terminal.

Danny James

I.R.O. Strike Committee leader JOHN BYRNE talks to WORKERS' FIGHT



IN BOOTLE, near Liverpool, a number of electricians on the Inland Revenue Office site have been out on strike since October, in a dispute that in fact goes back even further. In an attempt to break the strike, which has halted all effective work on the building, every ploy has been tried. The latest is the disciplining by the JIB of the strike committee leader, John Byrne.

John Byrne talked to Steve Corbushly about the IRO strike, about the JIB, and about the struggle for democracy in the EPTU.

The question is of vital importance to all building workers. There is a real possibility that the system of union-employer collaboration which has been viciously effective in cutting sparks' earnings, is going to be introduced and used against other workers in the construction industry.

In 1970 the National Economic Development Office published a report entitled "Large Industrial Sites." On the working party producing this document sat 4 trade unionists from the AUEW-CEU, the T&GWU, ETU and ASW. One of the proposals was for the setting up of a Joint Industry Board similar to the Contracting JIB.

* * *

S.C. - Can you tell me something of the background to this strike?

J.B. - In September 1970 the building workers were given £1 per hour. We were only on 58p an hour at the time. We came out for 3 days in October, but then we tried to get the local union official to get our site recognised as a "special site". Nothing happened. So we went on a go-slow from November to February.

When I say a go slow I mean a go slow. We bought all the books on safety, welfare, and scaffolding. And we went to town on it for 4

months.

But what triggered the strike was that the building stewards at a meeting promised full support if we went out of the gate. This strike came off on February 11th last year.

It lasted for roughly 6 months. While it was going on Chapple came to an agreement with the employers, James Scott & Co., that there was no dispute on the site. In response we organised what we called "snatch squads".

We went round all the ETU stewards on Merseyside and we put it to them that if we gave them an hour's notice would they send men down to picket. This worked. The employers could not get local men on.

We spoke to the unemployed at Bootle dole and told them it was a trade dispute. James Scott tried to get men in from Newcastle. But we met them, told them the facts and they said they were not prepared to break the strike: though they had come from Newcastle and were getting 14 guineas over and above what we were getting.

Following this there was a strike provoked by MacAlpines. 37 men were made redundant. MacAlpines claimed that the sackings were nothing to do with the electricians, but the men were chosen not on a last to come-first to leave basis, but just seemed to be anybody. The men picketed, however, were the most militant. So the building workers came out.

This was last June. A week after this, Scotts brought men in from Glasgow. They were booked into a hotel in St. Helens and brought to the site, in Bootle, in taxis. We threw leaflets over to them explaining the strike, and surrounded the site with 150 electricians.

The men were against the JIB.

and despite the local official's attempts, they left.

The following week MacAlpines sent letters to all building workers, sacking 120 men, blaming the electricians' strike, and threatening the rest. This split the builders right down the middle. Then the NFBTO officials moved in. They blamed us, and the strike collapsed. A total number of 150 men went to the wall, and there was a terrific amount of hostility towards us.

The other factor was that this got round to other sites and financial support was withdrawn.

So we went in, dismantled the main circuit breaker, and put the site in darkness. The officials panicked and every man was given his notice.

But MacAlpines decided to call a meeting to discuss our problem. We went back, but when the meeting up Scotts refused to see us. Eventually they sacked us, and we had to win reinstatement by getting support from the building stewards.

During the time we were sacked we heard about the Alcan strike, which was a direct result of our own strike. FLASHLIGHT circulated a leaflet about our strike all over the country and Alcan got to hear of this.

We went up and spoke to Alcan. They'd come out in solidarity with the IRO on 30th. July. They then decided to stay out for £1 per hour. They eventually won the concession of 3/- an hour above the rate. This was a breakthrough there.

Ourselves, we supported the claim which was submitted by the ETU officials at this stage, presumably with the full knowledge of the Executive Council and Frank Chapple. The claim was for £2 per hour, £1 basic and £1 bonus.

But the claim was then rejected by Chapple, by the local official, and by the firm.

Well, we decided, "Blow it", we'll come out for £1 an hour. I must stress that our demand is still for £1 an hour.

S.C. - So you have been out on strike since when?

J.B. - Since 25th. October. At the present stage they haven't sacked us as they did last time. They have used a penal clause in the JIB, which they cannot use if they sack us. They can use it because technically we would be outside the industry if we were sacked.

S.C. - What been the attitude of the ETU officials?

J.B. - Right throughout the strike our official has tried to bust it wide open. He tried to get scabs in. That was the first stage. In this stage he has not even tried to negotiate or get an agreement with the firm. He has worked hand in hand with the firm and the JIB to get it settled. This is the local official.

We have reached the stage where it is not worth bothering about them. We have just received a letter from the officials telling us to get back to work so they can carry on to discipline us!

DISCIPLINE

S.C. - Why were you disciplined?

J.B. - My opinion on this is that Scotts are standing by the JIB. They see that if we break through here, we will break through the whole JIB set up, covering over 60,000 electricians. They are the biggest employer in the Employers Association on the JIB side. They are the biggest of the lot - James Scott & Co.

So if you break the biggest one, there is not going to be much bother for us with the smaller firms. This is their situation.

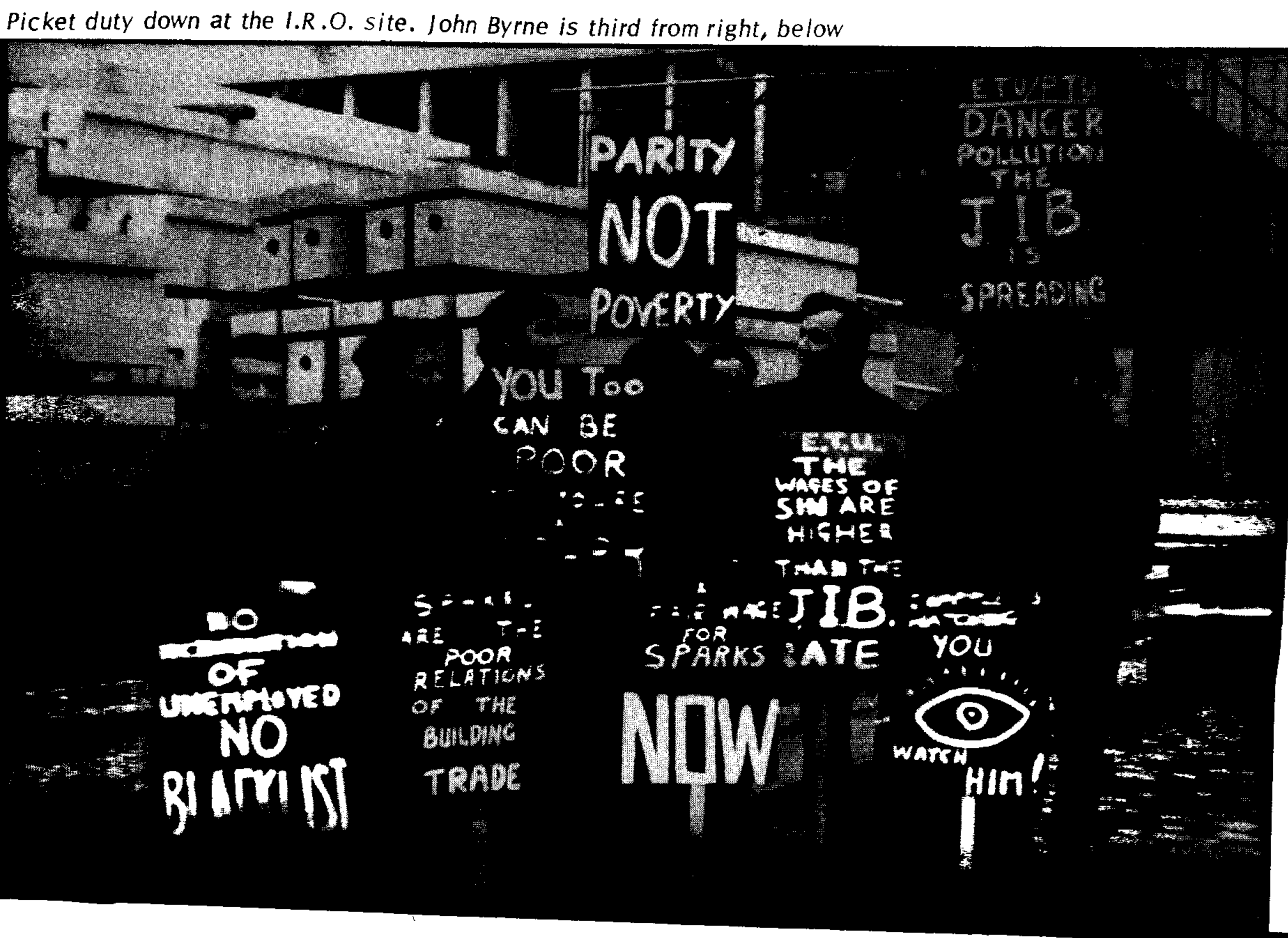
Now I have broken the rules, because you are not allowed to take any unofficial action. That is one of the objects of the rule book. They have not done me on that one. Where they say I have broken the rule is that one where you agree to abide by the rates of pay, agree to abide by the conditions and agree to abide by the decision.

This is part of the JIB set up. So there are certain rules I have broken, I am not denying that. This is why they have not sacked us. Scotts thought - go down, discipline them, expel them. I am damn sure they are after my expulsion. I think it was to make an example.

I mean, they have never used it against a rank and file member, never. There are other things in this. When we saw the solicitor (it was not worth while seeing the solicitor because he is all for the JIB set up) the first thing he said was that it was a legally binding agreement - that is, the JIB agreement.

Well, when an official signs an agreement he signs a comprehensive agreement covering all his members. But this is not binding.

But when that agreement is put to the member then it becomes a legally binding agreement between that member and whoever he signs with - in this case the JIB.



What is the J.I.B.?

The J.I.B. is a pioneering model of labour control, which combines illegally binding agreements with scab union officials to hamstring rank and file militancy. The purpose of the Industrial Relations Act is to extend as many of its features as possible throughout industry.

S.C. - What is the JIB set up?

J.B. - The JIB set up came out of the 1966-69 agreement. And it first came into operation on 1st. January 1967.

There was a massive campaign

against it. Thousands of electricians refused to sign. There were demonstrations in Liverpool when 2,000 electricians marched through the city centre. And there was a national one in London with 10,000 marching against the agreement.

When you see that there were only 60,000 electricians in contracting it was quite a large percentage.

The agreement was never put to the vote, never put to the membership. At the conferences of 1969 and 1970 it was rejected. These are the Industrial Conferences attended by all stewards. These are official conferences.

At area conference all contracting stewards elect delegates to the national one. Our recent local one

passed a motion condemning the use of penal clauses and calling for their withdrawal.

S.C. - Where did the JIB come from?

J.B. - Ray Gunter, Minister of Labour in the last Labour Government, was one of the people who set it up. Before the JIB emerged the ETU and the Employers Association negotiated nationally for certain conditions, eg national minimum pay. But stewards could still influence wages. They could negotiate at site level and they could still go and set up local agreements in certain areas. The JIB was designed to stop this.

When the JIB came out, everything was set up at national level.

As far as I am concerned, the JIB is a joint company union. It is a right wing ganging up of union and bosses to cut out strikes and make profits.

It openly states that its whole object is to make profits, increase productivity and "get a better deal" for its members. But the latter is only put in for a bit of whitewash.

The JIB is made up of 11 members of the Executive Council of the ETU, 11 representatives of the Employers Federation and a chairman - who is supposed to be independent. He is 'independent' - like hell. He is a Barrister of law

earning thousands of pounds a year. Independent of the working class is all he is.

The way that they negotiate increases is that when the full board meets there must be 75% agreement to give a wage increase. What the Union has to do is win over half the employers. There is no chance that strike action will be used. Because if there was any strike action the EC would go against the whole object of the JIB.

Certain sites, such as those covered by the Petro-Chemical sites agreement, are exempt from the JIB, and here stewards can negotiate their own site conditions and rates.

Most of the sites where the JIB does not operate are on a minimum of £1 per hour. Some are on 25/- an hour, or at least 10/- above the rate.

So we have a situation that where the JIB does not operate we find electricians on at least 10/- extra an hour.

S.C. - What has been the record of the ETU inside the JIB?

J.B. - One of full support, because they are part of it. I mean if you go to one of our officials you find that the JIB rules overrule the Union rules.

EPTU - Police-State union

THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF the EPTU were appointed 10 years ago by a High Court Judge, after the notorious ballot-rigging case. The right wing gang of renegades led by Cannon and Chapple were put in control of the Union because of alleged malpractice by the Communist Party leadership of the then quite democratic Union.

Since then the leadership has systematically set out to destroy Union democracy. A virtual reign of terror against the militants was the service which the Chapple-Cannon gang gave the employers and their Courts in return for putting them in control of the Union.

They did not disappoint their masters, who have now set up the NIRC as a regular Court to intervene directly and regularly at their own whim in the affairs of the whole trade union movement.

Their goal is to whip the Union leaders into line to do the hatchet job on the rank and file of the whole trade union movement that the Chapple mafia have done in the EPTU.

Today, as a result of the intervention of the High Court in "favour" of "democracy" within the EPTU, militants are faced with the job of drawing up a Bill of Rights and to organise the battle to restore democracy:

* To democratise the Union by restoring the control of conferences, regaining the right to elect all officials and to sack them if they rat.

* To smash the scab leadership imposed by the capitalist High Court.

* To break up the JIB, the strait-jacket which the Union scabs and the employers and the last Labour Government put on contracting sparks.

S.C. - Can you explain what FLASHLIGHT is?

J.B. - It is a paper set up by rank and file electricians to fight for democracy in the Union and put forward policies for the benefit of the rank and file members on the basis

of which to fight for changes.

We are excluded from making decisions. Democracy is a farce. As far as I am concerned it does not exist. Conferences are being overruled time and time again. There are almost no elections now. The only ones we have now are for the EC, General Secretary and President.

We have just had a case recently where a 'left winger', Charlie Montgomery, won an election. Chapple had won an election at the same time. They both agreed that there had been interference in both elections, but Chapple's was allowed to stand while Charlie had to run again. Then a third candidate stood, who had not stood before, and Charlie Montgomery was defeated.

We have a "heads I win, tails you lose" situation.

S.C. - What sort of strategy is a rank and file body going to have to adopt inside the Union?

J.B. - This is a tricky one, because of the situation inside the construction industry where only a third of the men are organised, ie represented by stewards. It is a very casual industry and it needs to be decasualised, with its members committed to the industry. But this will produce problems for areas like Merseyside. Traditionally electricians have floated in a rotation between shipbuilding and contracting, and maybe sometimes into engineering.

The common platform has to be - £1 per hour. This has been the slogan for the last 2 years. I think electricians can get organised to fight on this.

Other demands and ones our strike committee supports are: the right to negotiate; and an end to the blacklist.

Blacklisting is blatant. We have it signed in black and white by our manager that he is going to stop certain people coming on.

We have also got to fight for Union democracy, and one demand is for the implementation of conference decisions. The National Industrial Conference has got to become binding on the Executive Council, and all negotiations on terms should be based on its decisions.

These are the democratic expressions of the rank and file.

The only way I feel this could really tie the Executive is to get some form of National Committee which could overrule any decisions of the EC as regards negotiations. It would have to ratify agreements the EC put forward.

We are not now capable of calling a national strike. We are not able to lead the whole 68,000 because we do not control that many. We do not know how many we influence. I think that we have to adopt guerilla tactics to fight for these demands.

We should go for the areas where we are strong and build up and break through the agreement.

"SPECIAL SITES"

There is also another factor here - the "special sites" agreement. This is a development of our struggle and the Alcan struggle.

The JIB was faced with a situation where it could not continue to control the industry with the old agreements in the old way. They have now provided themselves with an escape clause which enables electricians to get cash but with strings tied to it: there is to be no messing with 'unconstitutional' action or the money is taken off you. The position is reviewed every 6 months. It is a national award and there are no negotiations.

What I feel about this is that the only sites who will get it are those where they think there is going to be a strike. And not only a strike, but a successful one.

Something like ours and the Alcans where we organise, take on the employers and batter them.

If they feel that you are not capable of breaking through the employers then I think they will refuse an award under the "special sites".

We have just had two cases that show this. One is on the Fazackerley site where the electricians were refused an award. On the site there is little unity, and the electricians are isolated. But the employers could be under-estimating the resources available on Merseyside to support the Fazackerley sparks.



"Chief-Inspector" Chapple

The other site is the Teaching Hospital site near the centre of Liverpool. The site unity is strong. The NFBTO stewards are well organised. And the firm knows that if the electricians come out they will have to contend with up to 1,000 building workers. The employers were afraid that the site would end up like the IRO.

The sparks on this site got their award.

The other factor in the Special Sites agreement is that if the firm says you do not get the money then you don't get it, regardless of the JIB.

So I think the best method is to work through the special sites. When the award is rejected then the local situation must be examined.

If there is site unity and there is support in the local area then you should consider taking strike action or any other action to break through.

**SUPPORT
THE I.R.O.!**

Contact John Byrne at 44 Sidney Road, Bootle 20, Lancs.

JOE ATKINSON REVIEWS THE BBC FILM —

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

THE VILLAGE OF SHOTTON in South East Durham is one of the oldest pit villages in Durham. It is also a dying village, being slowly murdered by the capitalist system.

The pit at Shotton was sunk in 1833. Now it is nearing the end of its life. Ten years ago the population of Shotton was 8,500, with 1,600 working at the colliery. Now it is down to 5,000, with only 800 working down the pit.

In the Durham coalfield, the death of the pit is the death of the village. Once there were 300 pit villages in the County — now there are 50.

As brutally as capitalism accumulated capital, it now assassinates whole communities.

The B.B.C., deciding to cash in on the recent strike, moved a camera crew into Shotton. The documentary they produced, entitled 'A Month of Sundays', was screened on May 2nd.

The moral of their story was that the death of Shotton Colliery is inevitable, indeed natural — just one of those things. Consequently, much of the film centred on the local church and on the Salvation Army. The strike was dealt with as something external to the miners, a futile attempt to defend a dying livelihood.

The depth of the conflict only showed through in the words of the miners themselves and their wives. At this point the issues were clear. Miners showed that what was in dispute was not just a question of wages. Far more was at stake — a whole mode of life.

CONNED

Here was a vital section of the working class sensing its power, flexing its muscles and seeing right through the crapology of Tory (and Labour) propaganda as it had not done for a long time.

Pit closures had been tolerated — now they would not be. As a miner put it "We've been conned by both governments. This industry has a hell of a sting for an industry that is not needed."

A new spirit was abroad. And so, now, was the old bitterness which had lain dormant in the face of the massacre of the coal industry.

Despite the efforts of the BBC to muffle it, the conflict broke through. And old miner talked about World War 1, and described how he "had fought for his country in an imperialist game."

The wives, too expressed their hatred of the conditions under which their men labour. One woman described how her husband "had bronchitis and an enlarged heart. He's 58 and still down the pit." "We pay dear for coal with bones and blood" said another. And this is in an industry where miners' lives have never counted for much with the bosses, in an industry where Tory fortunes were amassed by sending children scabbling for coal and in an industry nationalised in order to provide other branches of industry with cheap fuel.

Here once again the contradictions revealed themselves. Miners who crawl through the guts of the earth in filth to dig coal found them-

selves without it during the strike and were forced to pick sea-coal from the beach.

PRODUCTIVITY

The way the rate of work has been intensified by NCB productivity schemes emerged in an interview with an old miner. He could not envisage many young miners lasting out till they were 65 as he had done. "Work down the pit is hell" was his verdict.

Despite the desire not to lose a way of life they had carved out in solidarity against terrible hardship, the miners showed they had little love for a job which places their lives at constant risk. They did not want this as a future for their sons.

Yet there was little future for the youth of Shotton either, with the North East an unemployment black spot. Interviews with teenagers illustrated the hopelessness of their future. Most of the boys saw the Army as the only way out.

It is against this background that the NCB's lust after productivity had meant not only harder work, but a quicker death for the village.

But to the BBC, the village and its life and its living people were little more than 'good material' for an essay on inevitability and nostalgia. The commentator stressed the statement that "the first day of a pit's life is also the first day of its death."

But inevitability is true only in the sense that the rationale of the irrational social system of capitalism determines and necessitates it, without reference to the human needs of the miners.

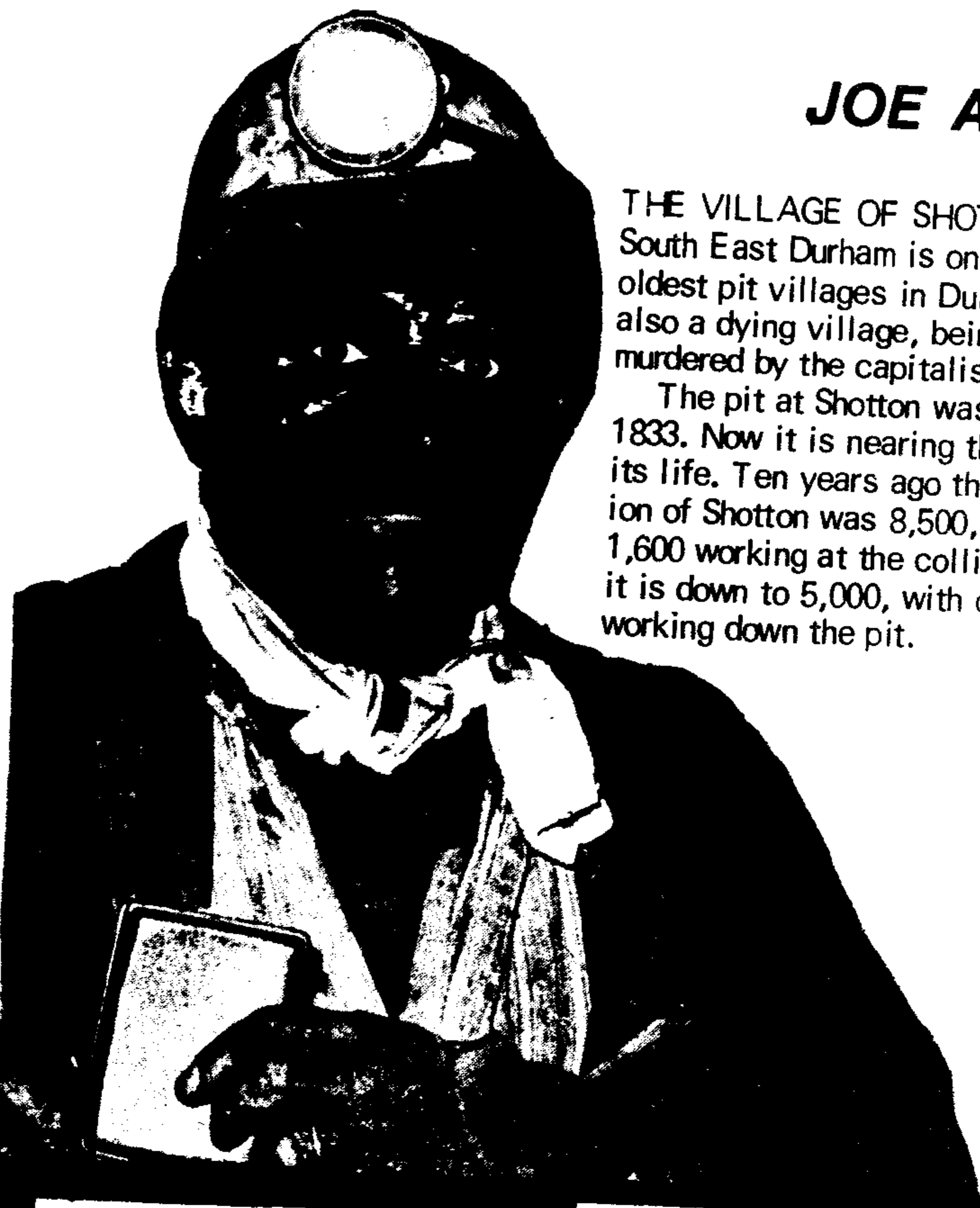
To have centred the film on the real relations of production and upon their reflections in the conditions of labour would have produced a different documentary. Then, the cultural aspects would have been seen clearly as a manifestation of the solidarity needed to defend wages and conditions.

And in turn, the strike and the solidarity would have been understood as having been born out of the twin struggle against nature on the one hand, and against the employers on the other.

But this was lost on the film's makers, who concentrated on seeking to reconcile the classes, consciously or otherwise, by attempting to render the conflict futile.

Consequently, despite the intentions of the producers accurately to portray the life of a miner and his family and their environment, the film ended up as an ideological exercise which more or less said "Don't fight boys, it's useless."

The miners, however, did not see things like that. They fought and won.



Dave Brodie

It's a LOCKOUT!

WELCOME ladies and gentlemen, to another game of 'It's a Lockout'. This is your genial lunatic, Eddie Blaring.

Most of you know the rules of the game But for those of you who don't, here's how it goes.

We have two sides competing. One management, the other workers. The first manoeuvre of the management is to lock the workers outside the factory, after a demand for reduction in hours and an increase in the basic rate.

The employees then become pickets.

Two points to management.

Both sides are allowed to call on anyone prepared to give them assistance.

The management can call on the police, the army, the courts, press and television, and as a last resort the Joker.

Who is the Joker? We shall have to wait and see.

For their part the pickets can call on other workers who will help them in their struggle with the company.

These workers will then be fined for a breach of the Industrial Relations Act.

Another two points to the bosses.

The game warms up as employees, colloquially known as 'scabs', attempt to enter the factory.

The company call in the police. Several pickets are taken to hospital with head injuries.

Two points to management.

The pickets call in help from other districts. Three thousand workers man the gates. The police are powerless.

The workers score two points.

The press and television churn out propaganda against the pickets. Mob rule! Anarchy! Hang'em! Flog'em! Jail'em!

Brigadier Oliver Naisby-Smitherington ret. of Bournemouth Hants, suggests that three workers be chosen at random and executed by firing squad.

Dame Elizabeth Mainwaring asks "Who is running the country, the Government or the Unions?"

A director of the company runs down a picket with his car. No charge is brought.

Management, two points.

The pickets call on other employees in the area to black the company's products.

Two points to workers.

The Industrial Relations Court fines the Union £20,000. The Union pays.

Two points to management.

The firm's goods are blacked throughout the country. All dockers refuse to handle the company's exports.

Workers, two points.

Financial aid pours in from all over the nation.

Workers two points.

Shop stewards defy the Union and refuse to lift the blacking. The homes of management are picketed. Shares fall. Managerial heads start to roll.

The men begin to discuss workers control of the factory. The company is beaten, the workers have won.

No! No! Wait a minute. It's not over yet.

The management are using the Joker.

Yes, they have called in the Union Official. He has advice for the men. "Proceed with caution."

He continues, "Remember, the Industrial Relations Act is the law of the land. We are workers, not lawbreakers."

He goes on. "We must now have a cooling off period to enable management and Union to come together. The game is in the balance.

His voice is grave as he continues. "I am confident that at the end of the cooling off period you will have all come to your senses. And that the result of the secret ballot will prove this."

And so, after teetering on the very brink of defeat, the company wins the day.

A word with the Company Director Sir William Blather. "Did you think the game was lost Sir William?"

"Not at all."

"You were always confident of a victory?"

"Certainly. I have large pockets."

"Large pockets, sir?"

Yes, I have a Chief Constable, a Member of Parliament and a Union Official in every one of them."

AS SCANLON
DUCKS FIGHT
FOR SHORTER
HOURS

UNION OFFICIALS

RUSH TO SETTLE

THE DETERMINATION of several thousand Manchester engineering workers is all that stands between a slight reverse and a grand rout.

After over thirty sit-ins, after a massive development of fighting spirit by the rank and file, the miserable AUEW 'generals' and their local captains have copped out of one of the most important parts of the fight.

The 'leadership' announced that they were recommending that settlements might be negotiated which did not include a cut in the working week. Of course, as a face-saver, they said that after the men had returned to work they would still press for this demand.

But that's after they return to work...

At the mass meeting of CSEU stewards, John Deason (a Ruston-Paxton shop steward) moved an amendment which would have meant keeping the demand for the shorter working week as a condition for settlement, but this was defeated.

The original demands were for a substantial pay increase (on the CTR), more for women as a step towards equal pay, an extra week's holiday a year, and five hours off the working week.

This last demand was probably the most important of the lot. It is precisely this demand that has prompted the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) to its toughest test opposition.

For instance, when workers at Mather and Platt settled for a straight money deal Mr. Michael Fuller, director of the local employers' federation, gloated - "I have always said that the majority of workpeople in Manchester agree with us that conditions, hours of work and holidays should be prop-

erly negotiated nationally. On the other hand they are primarily interested in their pay packets..."

But so confident were the employers of this opinion that they felt it necessary to bar union officials from the factory. Bernard Panter, a local AUEW official, had to address the men from the other side of the factory fence with the gates firmly locked against him.

working class. Unlike increases in pay these are permanent gains not constantly being whittled away by inflation.

In any case, in a period of massive unemployment any refusal to go hard for a substantial reduction in hours is telling the men in the dole queue to eat dirt.

There are still plenty of workers

The Trafford Park situation is nothing new, it's all old hat and was known years before the strike ever got started. In any case, it is a betrayal of the struggle of the militants to impose the "common denominator" of the weakest sections.

After all, the Bredbury men and their kind are the leaders - not stooges like Brennan!



Broadheath men vote to keep up the fight

Now that Panter, along with fellow officials (and Communist Party members) Tocher and Regan and their ilk are going along with Scanlon they may as well not have bothered - and while they are eating their words they could make a meal out of that megaphone too.

INFLATION

Clearly the demand for shorter hours is of tremendous importance. Shortening the working week without productivity deals can be a real blow against the exploitation of the

in Manchester who realise this. They have also realised that you can't rely on the local union leadership, as WORKERS FIGHT pointed out in its report in February. Unlike George Harrison, the convenor of Ruston-Paxmarls (and ironically a fellow member with Bro. Deason of the International Socialist group) we cannot say that we can rely on the local "captains".

Workers who realise this are still carrying on the struggle for the full slate of demands. Typical of these workers are the real trail-blazers, the men at GKN-owned Bredbury Steel works, who started the whole sit-in movement.

These people, those who voted against the local leadership, those still sitting in with no intention of being shifted or giving in to threats of closure - these are the real leadership.

Of course there are excuses and alibis galore. The most often heard excuse is that the 3,500 workers at GEC-AEI at Trafford Park (as well as the Mather and Platt workers) settled without a shorter working week and thus forced the Union to drop this demand as a condition of acceptability.

Who is going to swallow that? The fact is that everybody has known for years that the dominant force in the huge Trafford Park works is the convenor, Brennan.

Brennan is a yellow sell-out merchant who is paid by the firm to stay on past retiring age... because he is so good for "industrial relations"! More than that, "Bro." Brennan O.B.E. has actually been decorated by the State for his good services.

STORM

What then has happened in the AUEW? Basically it is that men like Scanlon and Wright who seem to be "left wingers" when the fight isn't too sharp are totally incapable of giving leadership in a period like this.

Boom time leadership isn't so difficult. But we're out of the fine weather days, through the doldrums and into the storm. The sunny-day-socialists of the trade union movement have simply got no belly for a serious struggle.

Just listen to the weak-kneed whining of Scanlon and Conway in their recent circular to district committees and union branches. They complain that the E.E.F. is causing "total industrial unrest", that it has adopted "a policy of maximum possible escalation when faced with industrial action on the basis of making the action as costly to the unions as possible, as quickly as possible."

Well, what do you damn-well expect: a sitting duck? The whole point is that as any engineer knows, the situation in the industry nationally (even internationally) forces the employers to be tougher and better organised.

In Manchester, for instance, the bosses are paying out benefit to help each other through the dispute! The E.E.F. is disciplining - even expelling - members who do not toe its line!

The message is clear: this isn't the fifties, it's the seventies. And if there isn't a real fight put now it may as well be the thirties.

our 'master's' voice

Anyone mildly interested in that absurd phoney-fight game called "All-in wrestling" will have heard of a heavyweight by the name of Ted Heath.

No doubt it was with this in mind that Maurice MacMillan, the "employment" Minister, last week decided to title Vic Feather "the wild man." Clearly Supermac's son knows that any fight between Ted Heath and "the wild man" will be well and truly in the tradition of the phoney fight game.

* * *

Just in case you couldn't make it to Perth for the meeting of Scottish Conservatives we reproduce a slightly cut version of Mr. Heath's speech for your consideration

"The Indust-

rial Relations Act has many purposes, but the chief of these is the protection of the community as a whole. ... What we have to do is to find a way in which the interests not just of the employers or the unions, but of the consumer and of the community as a whole, are properly protected. ... No government worthy of the name can abdicate its responsibility to make sure that the consumer and the community as a whole are protected. ... That is why this government cannot and will not allow the interest of the community as a whole to be ignored and forgotten. ... All I ask (of the trade union leaders) is that they respect as legitimate our concern as a democratically elected government for the interests of the community as a whole."

Single minded determination is one thing, but this is ridiculous!

FACED WITH MORE REDUNDANCIES WORKERS FIGHT FOR BETTER BASIC PAY

RAILMEN: VOTE YES!

Not content with forcing a secret ballot on the railwaymen the national Industrial Relations Court has also done what amounts to fining the union: it's made it pay a share of the costs of appearing before the court!

But this is just adding insult to injury: the main damage was done when the railway unions' leaders first decided to recognise the decisions of the bosses' NIRC and put the future of their members in the hands of the Tories' very own appointees.

Having forced the union to hold a secret ballot the court has in fact doubled the length of the cooling off period. Now it hopes that with their contracts "re-written" to make overtime compulsory, with their leaders crumbling before the law and their collective resolve atomised by the technique of the secret ballot the railwaymen will give up the fight.

A massive landslide majority in favour of further industrial action however, will shake the Tories to the quick — and force the penny-pinchers to stop their nonsense about their offer being "fair".

If anyone says "12½% is a fair offer", or "they deserve a rise, but the money just isn't there", they should be reminded of a few points.

The cost of living has been rising at over 10% a year. A good proportion of any wage increase disappears straight away in taxes and lost means-tested welfare benefits. According to the careful calculations of Labour MP Michael

Meacher, the miners' 20% money rise would result in real increases of between 27p (!) and £1.30. A 12½% money offer is an offer of a cut in real wages.

Many railway workers have a basic rate of £17.20 a week. They have to work an average of 50 hours a week to make a living wage. The union's full claim amounts to a basic of £20 a week.

It's quite true that British Rail had a deficit of £18 million last year. So what?

If the bosses are unable to run industry so as to ensure a decent standard of living for all, then their system stands condemned. It's certainly not true that "the country can't afford it". Those who refuse £3 million to the railmen have spent nearly a thousand million pounds on the white elephant Concorde.

Over recent years the profitability of British industry has dropped and international competition has sharpened. The urgent need of the British employing class is to push through a radical improvement in profits, by keeping down wages. The Tories have used public sector workers — post office workers, power workers, miners, and now railwaymen — as test cases. But they want more than the small victories they have won so far which have not stopped the drive for higher wages. They want a really decisive, shattering victory, which will break the spirit of the labour movement.

They hoped to gain a major victory with the miners' strike. But the miners defeated the Tories. It was the miners' achievement that forced the British Railways Board to go even as high as 12½% on their offer. Otherwise the offer would have been at the level of the Government's 7% "norm".

The Tories have set up a new confrontation, over the Industrial Relations Act. The rail union leaders have consistently played

down the significance of the confrontation. Just a matter of a couple of percentage points on the offer, they say.

But in fact a defeat for the railwaymen would mean not just a few pounds less for them, but also fresh strength and confidence for the Tories in their attacks on trade union rights, social services, jobs and wages.

What is at issue is the success or failure of the employers' attempts to push us back to the 1930s. The Tories are attacking on three fronts — wages, jobs and Industrial Relations Act. The unions are replying on, at best, one front — wages. They are like an army that goes into a major battle prepared only for a casual training exercise.

So far rank and file discontent has not reached the point of being able to defy the National Industrial Relations Court independently of the union leaders, or being able to link the wages issue with the redundancy issue. But no other perspective will do. If they do not, the employers are being conceded a victory on the side.

320,000 jobs have been lost on the railways in the last 15 years. A main factor in accelerating the loss of jobs over the last few years has been the Penzance Pay and Productivity Agreement of 1968. Under this agreement, some 80% of railwaymen have been brought into incentive bonus and work-study schemes. As with all productivity schemes, the result has been redundancy for many and increased intensity of work for those remaining.

Plans to cut 4500 to 6500 office jobs in British Rail were announced on 21 April. 20,000 more redundancies are threatened by the British Railways

Board for the next five years. British Rail have recently frozen these redundancies, with the clear aim of separating the redundancy issue from the wages issue.

The NUR, meanwhile, has confined itself to demanding increased severance payments, and voluntary redundancies and natural wastage in place of forced redundancies. In a period of one million unemployed, this is not enough. It is important that the demand raised by some rank- and file committees for a 30 hour week with no overtime should be taken up and linked with the wages claim, in order to reverse the trend on redundancies. Auxilliary demands which should be raised are for retirement on full pay at the age of 60 (the present retirement age is 65) and for adult pay at 18 (in most cases the adult rate is not paid until age 21 at present).

Anything less than complete victory for the railwaymen will be a stab in the back for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed for those facing redundancy, and for the other victims of Tory Britain.

The common interest the working class has in the railwaymen's victory must be recognised in strict enforcement of blacking and in solidarity action to close the power stations down. The railwaymen helped the miners do just that — now they can do it on their own account. The National Union of Mineworkers has stated that "We shall back them in their struggle in any way possible". Other unions must follow.

Martin Thomas

G.E.C. CARVE-UP

BOTH AT STAFFORD AND AT KIDSGROVE the struggle against redundancies is approaching a turning point.

At Stafford, 453 redundancies were announced on 12th January. GEC then made a tactical retreat, in view of a union overtime ban. But in this tactical retreat the employers conceded little of substance. Forced redundancies have been postponed, first for a month and now indefinitely, while voluntary redundancies and redeployment are gone through.

The employers have managed to wind down the resistance to redundancies — the overtime ban has been relaxed — without actually cutting down their schedule for redundancies. In fact, the total number of planned redundancies, at GEC Power Engineering, GEC Measurements, and the Nelson Research Centre, has reached 800.

Effectively, the balance sheet is that GEC have so far managed

to get rid of around 400 employees.

What happens when the flow of voluntary redundancies dries up?

In a situation where there are one million unemployed, it will be necessary for trade unionists to decisively reject two ideas: 1) that any loss of jobs, even through voluntary redundancies or redeployment, is any sort of victory; and 2) that sections not immediately affected can complacently sit back and say "it's none of our business".

The later a determined stand is left, the more difficult it is.

At GEC Elliott, Kidsgrove, management announced 555 redundancies on 5th April — over a third of the workforce. Only last year GEC managed to push through over 200 redundancies at Kidsgrove, helped by lack of unity between white collar and shop floor unions.

This time the unions have formed a Joint Committee to establish a common policy. The Joint Committee first submitted a plan to save

the jobs. The plan depended on transferring some areas of work which it doesn't cover at present to the Industrial Controls division.

This approach, we think, is dangerous — it comes down to arguing with the bosses on the bosses' terms, of profitability, competitiveness and so on, rather than putting first the workers' right to a livelihood.

However, the plan was rejected outright by GEC. The Joint Committee has now called an overtime ban and work to rule. They have also called for voluntary redundancies.

In general, voluntary redundancy is a dangerous tactic, as the Stafford experience shows. In this particular case, the situation was that there were 50 to 100 men who would like nothing better than to collect their redundancy pay and get out. They had been relying on overtime and bonuses to bring them up to a living wage — when they were reduced to basic, they were no better off working than they would be on

the Social Security.

The long term lesson of this is that the fight for a decent basic rate is an essential part of the fight against redundancies. But in the short term the Joint Committee felt they had to "clear the decks".

If GEC are to push through the redundancies, they must aim to split the unity of the workforce. They must not be allowed to chip away at the union resistance bit by bit. They can be defeated if any sacking is met by decisive action. And why stop short at an overtime ban or work to rule? Many factories recently have shown the value of the sit-in strike tactic.

M.T.

Editors' Note: We apologise for errors in the article on GEC in the last issue of Workers' Fight. These occurred in the editing. The above article should set the record straight.

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