

Decimal price rise will slash wages

THE OPENING of the £1,250,000 propaganda whitewash campaign for decimal currency is little more than a Tory confidence trick.

Petrol rise 'rounded up'

SHELL and BP petrol costs 2d a gallon more from today—the third rise this year. The company yesterday announced a 1½d increase, but retailers were expected to round this up to a 2d rise. An increase in the price of petrol, a basic material, is a sure indication of inflation eating into the value of wages. Last summer most garages added 1d to a gallon and repeated this only last month.

The trend is clear for all to see. A company spokesman said 'it would be prudent to expect more rises'. The Shell and BP move covers all grades of petrol, derv, gas oil, burning oils and fuel oils. Spokesmen for Esso and Total—who usually quickly follow a competitor's price rise—said the situation would be considered and a statement made later.

Backlash from Dutschke tribunal

THE TORY government is wasting no time in oiling up the state machine for continual surveillance and repressive measures against all militants and the working class as a whole.

The appeal tribunal hearing into Rudi Dutschke's request to remain in Britain has deepened anxiety on this score. The tribunal's decision will probably not be made known until next week, but more and more questions have been asked about its procedure. One of its most disturbing features was the denial of Dutschke's right to know the central case against him and the power to cross examine witnesses making accusatory evidence.

With just a few changes in the law, such rights could be denied to anyone under the orbit of the government's security services.

After all, organizations declared 'subversive' and hounded during the McCarthy witch-hunts in the United States were denied the right to know the evidence against them or even the right to a hearing. 'The Economist' says that the new machinery for immigration appeal was set up so that agents of a foreign power could not gain knowledge of security techniques by deliberately involving themselves in an immigration appeal and then cross examining security men. 'But no-one', the journal comments, 'has ever suggested that Mr Dutschke is the agent of a foreign power.' A second major question is also raised by 'The Economist': 'One of the nastiest undercurrents at the hearing was the suspicion that the authorities had attempted to build up their case by the use of telephone tapping. If this were indeed so, it would be interesting to know how the

Home Office could justify this action in view of the 1957 Birkett report. This made clear that in security cases telephone tapping would be carried out on a warrant signed by the Home Secretary.

Justification But the main justification was that major subversive or spying activity was involved. Or at least substantial grounds must always be present.

'The Economist' is emphatic: 'In this case, there were clearly no such grounds.' Is telephone tapping now authorized on a vast scale, with the Special Branch being given a free hand to pry where it wishes?

The Socialist Labour League is no stranger to not-so-secret state tampering with mail, telephones and telegrams. In 1967 the SLL fought a campaign to force the Labour government to admit that a warrant had been issued for the opening of its mail after information had strongly suggested that this was regular practice.

But the Labourites replied it would be contrary to established practice to give information of that kind.

Implication The implications of the Dutschke case make it unmistakably clear that the fight to defend him is inseparable from the struggle to defend the basic rights of the working class against the Tory government and increasing state repression.

There can be no doubt that D-Day—Monday, February 15, 1971—will be the signal for general price rises, coupled with an all-out effort by employers to 'round down' hourly wage rates.

As expected the Tories, and the Wilson government before them, have done all in their power to keep the working class ignorant about the real nature of their plans. The employers have received a continuous stream of material from the Decimal Currency Board to prepare them for the changeover and to encourage them to take advantage of these measures to accelerate rationalization and productivity schemes.

'Soft soap'

For millions of workers who are already facing the increasing onslaught on their living standards there is to be six weeks of propaganda 'soft soap' to convince them that all is well. Nothing is further from the truth.

There is an ominous absence of all but a passing mention in the DCB's lavish campaign material of the two vital issues of prices and wages.

Yesterday's newspaper reports on Tuesday's DCB

Headed by the Socialist Labour League banner demanding the release of the Burgos 16 and no recognition of the Franco regime, demonstrators on the march to the embassy shouted demands for the freeing of the 16 and the blacking of Spanish trade.

As the march swung into Belgrave Square, marchers sang 'The Internationale' as they joined pickets who have maintained a continuous vigil outside the embassy since the sentences were announced. Despite the bad weather 200 people attended a meeting in the Conway Hall which launched the march on the embassy.

The meeting, fixed at a few hours' notice, heard Young Socialist's national secretary John Simmance, Workers' Press editor Mike Banda and Inaki Behotegi, representing ETA (the Basque nationalist organization).

Determination

John Simmance emphasized the revolutionary determination of the six young revolutionaries condemned to death in Burgos. Their courageous statement from jail voiced the determination of Spanish youth and youth all over the world to fight to the end against imperialism, he said.

'These death sentences are part of the world offensive of imperialism against the rights of the working class,' he said. He recalled the cases of Angela Davis, threatened with the gas chamber in California, the imprisonment of Geismar in France, and the execution of Tran van Dong in Vietnam.

Stressing the need to fight the Tory government in Britain, he said that Heath's election victory in June had strengthened Franco. 'Our task in Britain is to fight to force the Tory government to resign. This is the best assistance we can render the Spanish workers.'

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Free Burgos 16! Black Spanish trade! — YS

YOUNG Socialists were joined by Basque, Catalan, Galician and Spanish exiles on Tuesday night when they braved snow, sleet and slush to march on the Spanish embassy in London demanding the release of the 16 Basque revolutionaries held in Burgos jail.

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Airport ban on Spanish goods?

Cousins might call action

AS DICTATOR Franco prepared a nationwide television statement on the Burgos death sentences yesterday, a T&GWU official threatened that Spanish goods might be blacked at airports.

This would be the first action apart from protest by British trade unionists since the Burgos trial began. But there appear to be no plans to place a black on Spanish goods in and out of British docks.

'I've been thinking about this ever since these evil sentences came through two days ago,' John Cousins told Workers Press.

'I think such a ban is quite likely if the sentences are not commuted tonight. That's certainly my view and probably would be shared by the activists at the airport. I shall recommend it if there is no change in these appalling death sentences.'

Reactions from other union officers varied from complacency to outrage, however. The TUC said they knew of no plans to 'black' Spanish cargoes.

NO ACTION

'We're certainly not taking any action,' he said. 'They didn't take any action when these people (the ETA) murdered that police chief. I happen to be a Christian and I don't want to see anyone killed.'

'As for the French and Belgians who have taken action over this trial, you should tell them to get their tin hats on. There won't be any action here I can tell you that!'

The executive of the smaller Watermen's and Lightermen's union was meeting last night, but had no plans to discuss 'blackening' Spanish goods.

'There's been no call for it, and in any case we've only got one item on our agenda—that's January 12,' a spokesman at their London office said.

Stalinists whitewash the Devey affair

SHEFFIELD Stalinists are now attempting to whitewash the men responsible for the now notorious affair of Terry Devey—the ex-convenor who ended a key reinstatement strike when he accepted a £3,000 cash pay-off.

BY STEPHEN JOHNS

At their latest meeting on Tuesday, the Sheffield district committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundryworkers passed a resolution admitting that 'mistakes were made' and that the Devey settlement was 'wrong'.

But beyond this the committee will not go. They want to bury this murky episode, which has shaken the AEF on both sides of the Pennines, and they will certainly not attempt to discipline district secretary and leading Communist Party member George Caborn for his part in negotiating the pay-off.

Because of the important issues of principle involved, the All Trades Unions Alliance lost no time in supporting Devey's fight for reinstatement.

Workers Press was first to expose later events at Batchelor's with our report of December 24—for the same reason. The fact that the AEF district committee is dominated by Communist Party members and sympathizers indicates that it is they who are now leading the rearguard action to cover what has been one of the most shocking retreats in the city's industrial history.

At Tuesday's meeting, only one man voted against the whitewash resolution—and he was not a Party member. Feeling in the Sheffield Communist Party is that their 'dirty linen should not be washed in public', and the least said the better, hence the tight-lipped silence from those members who played a leading role in the Devey affair.

Yet despite all the re-primations and counter-primations, the facts of the case are a clear and damning indictment of all the forces involved. In October, Terry Devey, then a leading CP member and a convenor at Batchelor's Foods, Sheffield, was fired for holding a meeting with outside contractors which extended into working hours.

An official seven-week strike for his reinstatement began and factories in the Sheffield area were levied to support the Batchelor's men. After weeks of deadlock AEF district secretary George Caborn made an approach to the Leeds office of the Department of Employment to conciliate in the dispute.

This was early in the week beginning December 6. Within seven days, a proposed settlement had been worked out between the unions, the DEP and Batchelor's, whereby management agreed to pay Devey £2,000 if he left the firm.

This was put to the strike committee at Batchelor's on the evening of Monday, December 14 and on the following Tuesday morning. There is some doubt as to whether Devey voted for or against the settlement, but the strike committee did agree to it, with one vote against, after management had come forward with a further £1,000. That same evening the AEF district committee met.

This was the key stage of the dispute, and the committee could still have condemned the pay-off and recommended against acceptance. Such a condemnation could have had a crucial effect on

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