

**NOTTINGHAM  
WORKER**

**2**

**Solidarity Forever!**

**STANTON WORKERS  
FIGHT TO SAVE  
JOBS!**

**5p**

The Labour movement in Britain is now at the cross roads - the attempt of the Government to jail 5 dockers, the further rise in the level of unemployment, rocketing prices and a vicious piece of legislation going through parliament against tenants compel us to soberly examine the lessons of the past and try to analyse the present situation realistically, if we are to go forward with success.

Every trade unionist knows that in bargaining with the employers, it is strength which really counts - and the organised working class is potentially immensely powerful. The miners showed this when they brought the Government grovelling to its knees. The dockers and those acting in solidarity with them have shown it again. In the early 1950's dockers were also arrested, this time by a Labour Government. These dockers too had to be released after strike action. What has been shown is that it is struggle that decides - not the law. The prime function of the law is to safeguard the property of the ruling class. The law is not sacred and when it is particularly bad, then it must be broken. The dockers have shown that it can be broken.

In response to the attacks of the employers and the Government, there has been a growing realisation that militant direct action is the way to get things done. It has been found, for instance, that factory occupations are more effective than simple strikes. Nothing but good comes from this militancy and the spirit of self confidence that it engenders - but on its own it is not enough. Real progress now depends on the emergence of a political force, which will fearlessly project the aspirations of ordinary working people. The Labour Party and the T.U.C. can obviously not fulfill this role. There have been 6 Labour Governments and all of them have, in one way or another, kicked the working class in the teeth. Barbara Castle may speak against the Industrial Relations Act, but it was her who introduced 'In Place of Strife' - a document very similar to the present Industrial Relations Act. It was the Labour Government too, that started unemployment climbing upwards and which engineered wage freezes and devaluation, both of which hit working class living standards. If the Labour leaders had really been concerned to fight the present Tory Government then they would have broken off all relations with the Government and the employers and would have refused to participate in parliament, whilst workers leaders were in jail. The General Council of the T.U.C. has also shown its true colours. When the dockers were in jail, the most that the T.U.C. leaders were prepared to do was to call a one day strike. This would have been a mere protest that the Government could have treated like an extra bank holiday.

The game that the Labour leaders and the T.U.C. General Council are now playing is especially dangerous for the working class. Having failed so far in direct confrontation against the working class, the employers' next strategy may be to try to do a deal with the T.U.C., 'to sit around a table' and get the T.U.C. to accept an incomes policy of some kind. Then, instead of the Government and employers trying to break the working class head on, the trade union leaders would themselves curb the militancy. Already the T.U.C. General Council has agreed to arbitration procedure to look into strikes of national importance. This kind of arrangement with the trade union leaders would suit a future Labour Government and would be the kind of strategy that such a Government would operate.

With the existing so called leadership of the working class eager to offer an alternative strategy for the employers, it is clear that no political force yet exists to fulfill the role of leading and giving coherence to working class struggle. For this reason, the existing left groups and all trade union militants must seek maximum unity in action, wherever this is possible. By working and fighting together

we will have a much better basis for political unity in the future, through shared experiences and lessons. In this way we shall be going towards what is really necessary - a struggle to bring the Government down, in which the working class organises to suppress the authority of the employers, who are at present trying to take away the most basic rights of working people - like the right of a job and the right to take industrial action.

LONG EATON STRIKE CONTINUES.

About 80 English and Pakistani workers have been on strike for almost a month, against the dismissal of a shop steward, Mahmood Ahmed, at the textiles firm of Jones Stroud Co. Ltd., Long Eaton.

Wages and working conditions at Jones Stroud are similar in many respects to those existing at Crepe Sizes, Lenton (these were described in the last issue of Nottingham Worker) and form a part of an all too familiar pattern in the textiles industry of the East Midlands region. At Jones Stroud, the rate of pay for a 40 hour week for a skilled man is £14 - £16. Most workers have to work at least 60 hours a week for a total pay of between £21 and £23. Extra payments for night shift work are meagre in the extreme. Sanitation and first aid facilities also leave a great deal to be desired.

Recently, in an effort to gain assistance in improving these conditions, the workers joined the Transport and General Workers Union. Mahmood Ahmed played an important role in this unionisation drive, a role which was noticed by the management. Shortly afterwards, the management dismissed him on the grounds that he had damaged a machine he was working on. The falaciousness of the management's case is best indicated by the fact that the damage to the machine was done at least two months prior to the dismissal, which is obviously nothing more than a blatant attempt by the management to break the Union organisation in the factory, through a process of victimisation and intimidation.

A daily picket line has been in operation and the Nottingham Solidarity Committee (formed initially over the Crepe Sizes dispute) has given what assistance it can, particularly with regard to collecting money and giving some publicity to the men's case. The Nottingham Claimants Union have represented men at the Social Security Offices, with a view to getting benefits paid. On the 24th. July, the Solidarity Committee held a public meeting in support of the men, at the Labour Club, Long Eaton. The speakers included branch officials of trade unions in the Long Eaton area, representatives of Black People's organisations and a representative of the I.M.G. One speaker, Ron Richards of the E.T.U., gave details of the history of the Jones Stroud company. Many years ago, before the company started to employ immigrants on a large scale, it used to employ large numbers of young workers, who would then be given the sack when they came on to the adult rate of pay. One very positive feature of the meeting was the large attendance of workers from the Crepe Sizes factory. A large proportion of the total collection of £40.34 was donated by Crepe Sizes workers.

The struggle at Jones Stroud is now at an important stage. The workers are determined to stay out. Unfortunately, however, the T. & G.W.U. has still not given the strike official backing. This lack of official support disrupts picketing in that lorries which would be turned back if the strike was official are continuing to cross the picket line, under police protection. Also, a minority of T. & G.W.U. members have remained at work waiting for official union

direction. Once again, the T. & G.W.U. bureaucracy is letting down members of its own Union, who are engaged in a struggle for very basic trade union rights.

The best way in which workers who are not directly involved in the dispute can help the strike is by donating money, for which there is an urgent need, and by getting resolutions through their Union branches, calling upon the T. & G.W.U. to make the strike official. The Long Eaton branch of the General and Municipal Workers has already done this. Money should either be given directly to the men themselves or should be sent to 'The Solidarity Committee', B.P.F.M. Offices, 126 - 128, Derby Road, Nottingham.

Brian Simister.

#### STANTON AND STAVELEY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST STEEL REDUNDANCIES.

If you get off the train at St. Pancras, you are bound to have seen the enormous girders that support some of the largest glass rooves in Britain. Look at some of the girders more carefully and you will see 'Stanton and Staveley 1869'. Different generations of Ilkeston workers have been producing iron that long. Yet, if the British Steel Corporation's proposals are implemented, this tradition will be ended. The 1,500 redundancies which have been announced, taken together with the pit closures, would turn Ilkeston into a ghost town. But how could it happen? To understand this, it is necessary to examine what the B.S.C.'s plans are for the British iron and steel industry as a whole.

The fact is that British capitalism is inefficient and old fashioned compared to its international competitors. Nowhere is this seen so obviously as in Iron and Steel, where for many years past employers have been content to make easy profits, without adequately modernising their equipment. While the British steel industry still relies mainly on the old Bessemer or Open Hearth processes, foreign competitors have gone over to the oxygen injection or L.D. process. The L.D. process has the accuracy of the open hearth process but a cycle time of only 45 minutes, as compared to 8 to 12 hours for an Open Hearth converter. The technological difference has meant that in 1967, British steel had an average output of 90 tons per man year, American steel 210 tons per man year and Japanese (the most modern) 250 tons per man year.

It is essential to British capitalism that the Steel industry is efficient and cheap. It was nationalised just for that purpose, but with the added advantage that the taxpayer would subsidise the investment that was necessary. A series of things flow from the need to modernise. The new L.D. plants produce on a larger scale and therefore fewer plants would be needed to produce the same quantity of steel as is at present being produced. For example, the Bethlehem Steel Company in the U.S.A. produces the same tonnage as the whole British industry with 100 units, while the B.S.C. inherited over 240 Open Hearth and converter units and roughly 50 electric arc converters. Also, the B.S.C.'s plans envisage that the converting, rolling and working, using L.D. units, will be integrated. By 1976, the plans are that 85% of British steel should be produced by the L.D. process, that the industry will be concentrated in 5 centres as opposed to 30 at present, and that redundancies over the next five years will be in the region of 80,000.

These plans pose a severe challenge to the Labour movement. It is intolerable that the workers should be made to pay for the management negligence of the past. It is intolerable that in the interests of

of what the bosses call rationalisation, people who have spent a working lifetime in the iron and steel industry should have their livelihoods threatened and that whole working class communities should be ripped apart. If the British iron and steel industry is to be modernised, then it should be modernised in such a way that it benefits the workers. If fewer man hours will be needed, then working hours should be reduced, without any loss of pay, and without any redundancies. If the industry is to be concentrated into fewer centres, then the bosses should be made to pay for all the expenses and inconveniences of people having to move their homes. And with regard to the latter, there is much more involved than the B.S.C. paying compensation for losses on house sales, or paying removal expenses, etc. These are just the minimum requirements. When families move, the continuity of the education of children must be considered; along with the severance of past friendships, past traditions and everything else that goes into the making of a community. The workers themselves should be able to determine whether or not the plant is closed, whether or not they move, where they move to, and the type of community that they wish to have created, if in fact they do consent to move.

Failing the B.S.C. and the Government agreeing to such demands, then every closure of an iron and steel plant should be rigorously opposed; and in such opposition, iron and steel workers deserve the help of all sections of the labour movement. In defense of their livelihoods, and in defense of their community, the workers of Stanton and Staveley have organised a march on Saturday, August 5th, starting at 11.30. a.m. at Cotmanhay and proceeding to Hallam Fields. All those who can do, should show their solidarity by marching with them.

Julian Atkinson.

#### NOTTINGHAM BUILDING WORKERS STRIKE.

At the time of writing, three Nottingham building sites are out on official strike. The first site to come out was the Victoria Centre, which was pulled out by the Union (U.C.A.T.T.) on the 10th of July, as part of its strategy of selective strikes. This dispute is over a claim for £30 for 35 hours for craftsmen and a pro rata increase for labourers. On the 25th. of July, the workers at the Lenton Hospital site came out following the suspension without pay of three men by the firm (Taylor Woodrow) over their refusal to use hand powered tools. The shop steward had previously informed the firm of the Union ban on the use of such tools (as part of its industrial action to get the wage claim). Later on in the week, the Mitchell site, near the Odeon cinema, came out over much the same thing. There are also many sites in Nottingham operating an overtime ban.

The present basic wage for building workers is £17 for labourers and £20 for craftsmen. Compare these figures with the following:

1. The value of Wimpey's shares have increased by 500% over the last ten years.
2. Macalpine gave £32,350 to the Tory Party in 1969 - 70, roughly £3 per worker they employed.
3. Taylor Woodrow had record profits last year, for the tenth year running. In the first six months of 1971, their profits rose by 60% from £1.7 million to £2.7. million.
4. In Liang's the managing director gets a paltry £17,000 per year,

nothing compared with the £35,000 per annum Taylor Woodrows 'man on the spot', gets. But every cloud has its silver lining; Liang's directors have got a pay rise of between 35 - 38%.

Therefore, two contradictions exist: Firstly, the incredible profits of the property business, compared with the present appalling housing situation. In 1972, 20,000 families are homeless, 1,200,000 live in slum conditions, 200,000 families are on Council waiting lists, 3 million live in unfit homes and a further 200,000 homes will become unfit this year. Of course, building more houses would keep prices down, according to the capitalist law of the market.

The second contradiction is that in this booming industry, the workers are liable to be laid off for long periods, despite the urgent need for more houses, and are paid low wages. The employers have so far only been able to offer wage increases of £2.40 this year and £2.60 in February, 1973 for craftsmen, and £2 this year and £2 in 1973 for labourers. This offer would, of course, increase the wage differential, as well as being totally inadequate.

During the 1960's, the building workers had been left behind many other workers, with regard to wage increases. Three year wage agreements of 6d to 9d an hour were signed by the Union. This meant a gradual lowering in the standard of living of building workers, since their wage increases did not keep pace with the rise in the cost of living.

One of the main reasons for the past weaknesses of organisation among building workers, has been the existence of thousands of sub contractors, who are still caught up in the entrepreneurial spirit of the nineteenth century. Also, many of them have nineteenth century attitudes towards trade unions.

However, a new wave of militancy has spread through the building industry and has led to this strike. Building workers are fed up with low wages for irregular work, often on sites where scant attention is paid to safety and general working conditions. They are, also, fed up with the way they are treated by managements.

It is, therefore, essential that the trade union movement gives full support to the struggle of the building workers. Donations should be sent to U.C.A.T.T. offices, Carlton Street, Nottingham.

Doug Knott.

#### RACISM IN THE FACTORY.

/The following is part of an article, which appeared in the B.P.F.M. Weekly, one of the journals of the Black People's Freedom Movement/.

Over 200 Black workers at the Mansfield Hosiery Mills factory in Loughborough are faced with the threat of being dismissed because white workers object to them being employed. The black workers, of Indian origin went on strike on the 16th of June, because the high paying knitting section of the factory refuse to employ black workers. The Indian workers have now taken the matter to the Race Relations Board.

The story of the Black workers at the factory is one of constant struggle against racial discrimination by the white workers, the Union and the management. The factory employs about 1,000 workers...

In 1969, after facing several years of all sorts of discrimination, the workers approached the management about employing them in the Knitting section where wages and conditions were much better. The average wage (standard) in the Knitting section is about £33, while the average wage of the Indians in the running on section is about £18. But the management would go no further than employing a few Asian bar loaders (i.e. assistant knitters). This provoked a strike from the white workers in the Knitting section. They went on strike for two weeks and the strike was made official by the Hosiery Union after three days. The white workers succeeded in their strike but the Indian workers did not give up the struggle against the blatant discrimination and fought through the Union itself.

In December, 1971, a vacancy occurred in the Knitting section and the black bar loader instead of being employed in the vacancy was actually demoted. The shop steward, Mr. Nlak, approached the management about this and he was told that Blacks could not be employed because there was an agreement to that effect with the Union. Subsequently, there was a meeting with the Union Secretary, Mr. Carter, who told them that Blacks could not be employed as knitters because there was an agreement. The workers asked to see the agreement... (The article details prevarications lasting many weeks, until finally an agreement was produced which said nothing about employing Black workers in the knitting section.)... But the workers' persistence in struggle forced Mr. Carter to side with them and consequently, when a vacancy occurred in the knitting section, he advised them to apply for it. But instead the management employed two whites as assistant knitters. They had absolutely no previous knowledge of textile work....

When the Indian workers met the Union President, Mr. Predergast, he told them that outside trimmers (who happened to be white) from Hinkley, and who had been out of work for a long time, should be given preference. They reminded him that their applications were even longer. Then they went on strike.

The management was forced to concede the demands of the strikers and even though they wanted to keep out the so called trouble makers they were eventually forced to take back all the strikers. During the strike, the white workers in every department worked on and some even took work home in an effort to break the strike. The management itself tried to create division among the black workers, visiting them at their homes and trying to dissuade them from striking. The firm even tried to get cleaners to work the textile machines.

Black workers in the factory face discrimination generally. White cleaners, for example, get paid more than Black ones, who receive £2 less and it is believed that Asian women are paid less for the same job than their white counterparts....

#### Our Comments:

Every true trade unionist should support the struggle of the Indian workers against discrimination, which has been described above. Such support should be given not just because of humanitarian considerations, but also because of the long term interests of the Labour movement in Britain, and, also, it may be added, in the long term interests of the white workers of the Mansfield Hosiery Mills factory, whose bigoted stupidity produced such disastrous results. Only a united working class is capable of inflicting real defeats on the bosses. Where workers are divided on racial or religious lines, as in the Southern States of the U.S.A. or in Northern Ireland, the usual result is a low standard of living for most workers, which helps nobody but the exploiters.

Luddism in Nottingham

In the early part of the nineteenth century, a large proportion of Nottingham workers were frame-knitters. Times were difficult; there was a long trade depression, new machines were cutting down the work available, shoddy work was being produced at low prices and several employers used these conditions to lower wages. The unions tried to improve conditions in "normal" ways but these same trade unionists also decided to employ other methods to defend their rights.

On the 11th March 1811 the framework knitters met in the Market Square to protest against the lowering of wages and to decide how to take action against the employers who were doing this. The response of the authorities was to bring in the troops and to break up the peaceful meeting. The reply of the workers to this display of force was to break up the machines of the offending employers that night. In the next three weeks some 200 frames were smashed. No evidence could be found to identify the workers involved. This was in spite of the fact that a large section of the workers knew exactly who was involved and that both police officers from Bow Street and the Royal Lancashire Militia were brought in.

By the Autumn regular groups were operating, from about 6 to 60 members, under the control of acknowledged leaders who were styled "General Ludd". A local journal described an attack that took place at this time. "...a party of men assailed the house of a person of the name of Hollingworth, of Bulwell, who had rendered himself obnoxious to the workmen, but who from timely information, had removed a part of his frames to Nottingham, and had provided seven or eight persons, armed with muskets, to protect the seven frames remaining in the house. Notwithstanding the formidable nature of this defence, which was well known to the attacking party, the assailants, after eighteen or twenty shots had been exchanged, forced their way into the house, and when in the act of entering in the room in which the frames stood, the first man received a discharge in his abdomen, which in a few minutes deprived him of his life; but who had just time to exclaim-'Proceed, my brave fellows, I die with a willing heart!'. His companions conveyed his dead body to the borders of the Forest and then, with a fury irresistible by the force opposed to them, again attacked the house, and in about an hour and a half fully completed the object of their attack".

The next week the dead Luddite was buried. Around a thousand workers turned up at the funeral, but so did the Sheriff, six magistrates, police, a company of dragoons and a detachment of infantry. During the funeral the soldiers beat the regimental drums, then the Riot Act was read and, as the coffin was being lowered, the troops went in and drove away the mourners. But the frame breaking went on although both the Royal Horse Guards and the Berkshire Militia were brought into Nottingham. The presence of the troops was even used, when some Luddites were able to carry out a daring raid in the middle of the Lace Market dressed as soldiers.

In January of 1812 the national treasury made an enormous grant from secret service funds of £2,000, an enormous sum in those days, to pay for information. But the solidarity of the workers was such that, even though they were literally starving, no Luddite was denounced to the authorities. A contemporary writer, hostile to the aims of the workers, was forced to write: "In spite of all their errors, and crimes, it is impossible to withhold admiration from the stern integrity of purpose which thus led a number of poor men to withstand the tempting offer of bribes of from one hundred to three hundred guineas, and, in one instance, of £500 to turn informants against their fellows and thus betray the cause in which they had engaged".

Some Luddites were caught. Sentences of fourteen years transportation were imposed and even the death penalty. The Luddites discovered, however, that it was even possible to challenge the "rule of law". On the 9th June 1816, some Luddites smashed the frames of a Radford owner for lowering wages. Two of the



workers were recognized, arrested, and brought to the County Hall on the 3rd August. The body of the hall and the surrounding streets were occupied by the workers. The judge was periodically insulted by Nottingham workers. Considerable numbers of the crowd both inside and outside the hall were armed and waved their guns in the air. The jury, under these circumstances, very quickly decided that the men were not guilty and should be acquitted. The roar of delight on hearing the verdict, according to one source "shook the building itself". It was after this display of working class power that the assizes were, for a period, moved from Nottingham to Newark.

The Luddites did not, for all their courage, stop the employers from attacking the rights of working men. They did not understand that it is necessary to defeat the united power of the employers and to replace their state with a new society based on the ownership of the industries by the workers themselves. They did however realize-a very important thing in these days when shop stewards are being sent to prison- that the law is not some sacrosanct mystery presided over by witch doctors in false hair but is just the relationship of forces between the employers and the workers.

A.Jenkins.

#### NOTTINGHAM TENANTS ORGANISE AGAINST THE HOUSING FINANCE ACT

On Thursday 13th July a meeting of tenant's associations and local labour organizations was held at the Albert Hall Institute in Nottingham to organise opposition to the government's so-called "Fair Deal in Housing" that has taken shape in the Housing Finance Act. As is well known this piece of legislation will enormously increase the rents of council and private tenants and is as "fair" as the government's "Fair Deal at Work" legislation that was used to jail the dockers. The government's intention is apparently to 'save' more than £200 million a year at the expense of the tenants and the money saved will be divided between the local authorities and the central government. It will probably be used in the same way that the Tories have used their other 'savings' from cuts in the social services - i.e. to cut taxes on profits or to boost other handouts to the employers. The effect of the government's measures will be to organise a round about wage cut. In the Nottingham area estimates from the Department of the Environment suggest that the average council rents could go to well over £5 a week by 1976.

For the Nottingham area a number of ideas were put forward as to how to deal with the legislation. It was felt by a large number of people that it was worthwhile trying to pressurize local Labour Councillors not to implement the Act- Labour Councillors from Mansfield pledged that they would not implement it. To this end John Peck of Bulwell Tenant's Association (and the Communist Party) proposed that a petition be got up for presentation to the Council. There was, however, a certain distrust with the Labour Party at the meeting - and not without reason. One tenant pointed out how the Tory's Bill actually grew out of changes initiated by the Labour Government. The 1965 Rent Act was the precedent. This Act established rent assessment committees, who decide what is to be a fair rent; needless to say the Tories will not hesitate to use these to great effect. It was also the Labour government that brought in the rent rebate scheme. (One is reminded how "A Fair Deal at Work" grew out of and was similar to the Labour government's "In Place of Strife"). Of course if the Labour Party really does support the tenants then their support should be welcomed - but it is necessary for them to prove their support by sticking their necks out like the tenants themselves. For instance they should refuse to evict tenants that go on rent strike. In Nottingham the utterances of Alderman Foster do not seem too hopeful in this respect. He is reported to have spoken against militant action on the grounds that the law must be obeyed and that the tenants should wait for the return of a Labour government. The point here is simply that where the law is unjust then it must be broken. As one of the tenants pointed out - if our forefathers had obeyed the law then there never would have been a Labour Party. The danger of relying on the Labour party are vividly illustrated by the rent strike at St Pancras in 1960. After failing to prevent the eviction of one of their leaders the tenants were persuaded to

give in and work for the return of a Labour council in the 1962 elections. This achieved nothing at all and the tenants were beaten.

There was not, in fact, much discussion of what would happen if pressurising the Council failed to do the trick. This is a pity since this is unlikely to be successful unless backed up by militant action. Posters comments showed this. Moreover the Tories will not take the side of the tenants as the Chairman thought. In this context further action has to be thought about very seriously. The implications of a rents strike were discussed at the meeting briefly and the variant of withholding the increase in the rent was also mentioned. The militancy of the tenants near Derby was brought up too - they were reported to have threatened to set up a "No-Go" area in their own defence should the need arise. Such militancy has worked in the past. In 1938 the Birmingham tenants organised a rent strike against rent increases and the introduction of a means tested rent rebate scheme. No one could enter the estate without the authority of the strike committee. Rent collectors were followed when they went round by hundreds of women banging pots and pans. Workers in the Council Estate Department went out on strike. In June 1939 the Council backed down by cancelling both the rent increase and the rebate scheme.

The meeting ended with the passing of the following resolution:  
 " Throughout the East Midlands a number of local authorities, and many representatives of local Labour Parties, Trade Unions and voluntary organisations, have studied the Government's pending Housing Finance legislation and have come to the conclusion that its effect will be to promote considerable hardship among many Council tenants, together with a great sense of injustice.

Many Tenants' Associations in the East Midlands have announced that their members will consider the holding of a rent strike if the new measure becomes law, and is implemented by the local authorities.

Some authorities have already announced that they will refuse to implement the new Act. Others are considering various proposals for frustrating its intentions: up to and including wholesale evasion of its main stipulations. In many authorities whose elected representatives have agreed to implement the Act when it becomes law there has been widespread protest from their political supporters.

In order to co-ordinate the various types of resistance which will undoubtedly break out, the undersigned believe that a large conference of delegates representing interested parties from all over the East Midlands should be convened in Nottingham in September 1972. This conference should provide for the possibility of exchange of information and the organisation of links of mutual support. "

A committee consisting of representatives from the various tenants associations was set up to organize this meeting.

N. Rothschild.

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