

WORKERS' ACTION

No.16 May 6th - 12th 1976 8p

ALL OUT FOR MAY 26th

The wisdom of the Woodlouse

WEEK after week the Sunday Mirror publishes the reactionary and often plain cranky views of Woodrow Wyatt. Wyatt is an A.1. ignoramus when it comes to trade union affairs, but he can't resist sticking his oar in.

His usual crusade is for "common sense". Anyone who hates Communists, or any other person on the Left, has got "common sense" in Wyatt's view. And why does he hate Communists? He hates them because they oppose privilege — and Wyatt is in favour of privilege. And he hates them because, he says, Communists don't care about democracy.

So this is how the Champion Democrat advised CPSA members in last week's election for union President:

"My advice to delegates who have not yet voted is simple. If they don't want their union to be a pawn of Communists, Trotskyists, International Socialists and so on, they should vote for the list of moderate or Right candidates which has been widely publicised. They should avoid voting for the group called Redder Tape and Left candidates.

"They should do this, however they were mandated, because their branches might not have understood the true position."

Very convenient! Never mind the mandate — the branch might be barmy! Evidently in the CPSA "common sense" does not abound amongst the membership, according to the Woodlouse.

Not so in the AUEW, of course. There the fact that right-winger Weakley is ahead in the voting for Assistant General Secretary allowed him to cheer: "The postal ballot... is allowing the ordinary common-sense members to get the representation they want".

The trouble is, if Weakley follows Wyatt's advice and ignores any mandate he may be given, the "common-sense members" of the AUEW will have no representation at all.

Our guess: it's just a matter of time before he does.

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Emlyn Williams

'WE ARE GOING FOR A HUNDRED POUNDS... My members are convinced of the justness and correctness of this claim. If the Government wishes to survive, it must pursue socialist policies. If it has a death-wish, it will not be the miners' responsibility.'

FOR £100'

So spoke Emlyn Williams, President of the South Wales miners and member of the Labour Party NEC, as his members were voting to join the Yorkshire and Scottish miners in pushing for £100 a week pay claim to be adopted by the NUM National Conference in July.

He did this despite the warnings of NUM General Secretary Lawrence Daly, who said that going for £100 would 'put the miners out on a limb'.

This week union leaders at four other union conferences were at pains to emphasise their rejection of Healey's 3% pay limit.

At the CPSA conference an emergency motion condemning the 3% was passed, while at the National Union of Seamen's conference, general secretary Jim Slater attacked the Healey offer as 'inadequate'.

And at the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers conference, their President Bert Hazell spoke out against the 3% as being too little for low-paid workers.

At the TASS conference, Ron Hayward, Labour Party general secretary, urged union members to recognise the achievements of the Government and give it the support it deserved... The TASS members didn't seem impressed; and their President, Barry Seager, followed up Hayward's appeal with a strong attack on wage restraint. Later in the week this conference is expected to confirm its long-standing opposition to any form of wage restraint.

But many of these angry protests are just part of the traditional shadow-boxing that accompanies wage negotiations. Far from most of these union

bargaining, they are simply out to get a better deal from the Government.

In his speech at the NUS Conference, Slater called for a 5% limit... Hazell pledged his support for any agreement between the Government and the TUC... The CPSA muttered vague warnings about the 3%, but offered no alternative.

Only the miners, and perhaps TASS, have given an indication that they might be prepared to come out with a claim that will shatter the Government's wage curbs. But does this mean they will be 'out on a limb', like Daly claimed? Not a bit. Their fight will be a rallying point for all the discontent over pay that has shown itself at this week's conferences, but which has been smothered by the manoeuvres of the leaderships and the TUC.

It will be a fight for all of us — and we must all support them.

Emlyn Williams summed it up well: "The Government is not intent on altering the distribution of income significantly, so we have to tackle the job ourselves."

Below: 1972, and the working class backed the miners to breach Heath's 7% norm. Will they rip up Healey's 3% the same way? Photos by Eric Harrison

Welsh miners



ARMY HANDING OVER TO LOYALIST THUGS

MAJOR ACTION is underway to modify the British Army role in Northern Ireland. Apparently the plan is to go as near to full withdrawal to barracks as possible, while relying on military police, the RUC and the UDR (locally-recruited auxiliary soldiers).

This is a recipe for a British-organised civil war.

East Belfast, the Protestant area, in which the murder gangs lurk and organised, is now clear of British troops and under control of the military police. Within the next two weeks, it is planned to move 500 soldiers from Catholic West Belfast, cutting the total presence by one-fifth. William Craig's Vanguard Party has raised the alarm in Orange circles that a complete withdrawal from the conflict by the British Army is planned.

Meanwhile London's control of the RUC is strengthened by the appointment of an Englishman as chief constable. The UDR is being expanded. With unemployment rocketing and now seriously hitting at Protestant workers too, there won't be any shortage of recruits. A batch of 500 recruits, the first in a series, is being given special training for its future role by the British Army in Cumbria.

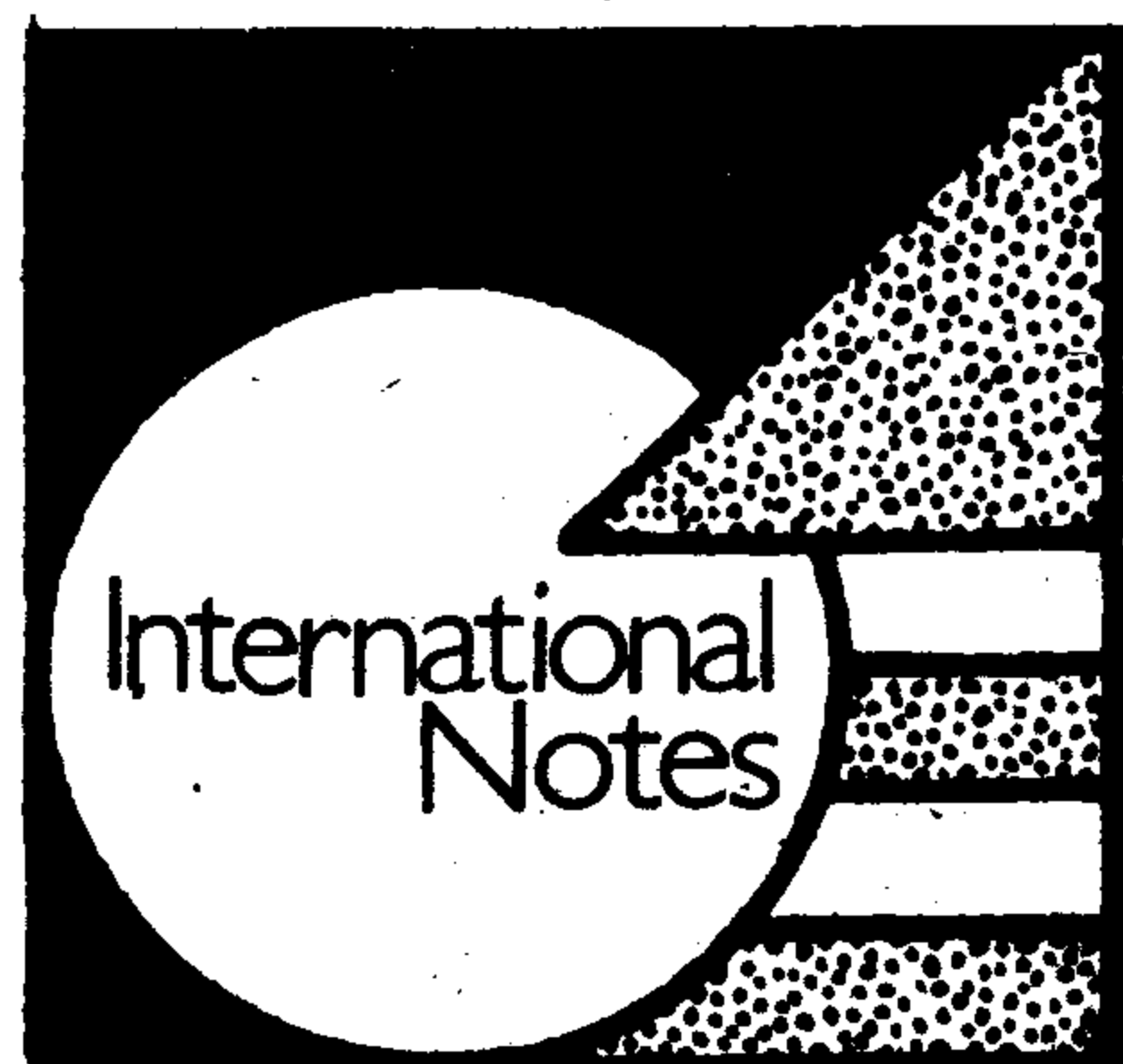
With the spluttering Catherine wheel that passes for political life in Northern Ireland more or less having burnt itself out, Britain appears committed to indefinite political direct rule from Westminster. The meaning of the troop movements is that Britain is now attempting to use direct rule as a political cloak for a new experiment in using one section of the Northern Ireland population to beat down the other. Of course, politicians like Orme and Rees probably believe that their political control will make the difference between using Orange tools and restoring Orange supremacy. They are living in dreamland.

'Ulsterisation', reliance on local forces, cannot in the actual conditions mean anything else than Orangeisation. Only a handful of the RUC and UDR are of Catholic background. These organisations are inescapably stigmatised with the mark of the Orange Order and the membership of at least the UDR is known to overlap seriously with that of the Orange para-military forces and murder gangs.

To put effective military control and power back into their hands is a diabolical proposition. It is either pie-in-the-sky day-dreaming by the Labour government, or else a cold-blooded army plan for organising a controlled civil war in Northern Ireland — or both.

It is the clearest answer possible to British workers who believe the government and army propaganda that the Army is fundamentally doing a peace-keeping job in Northern Ireland. If they were

Portuguese elections show the workers' will is not crushed



BY MIKE CARROLL

LAST WEEK's elections in Portugal showed that the limited counter-revolution since 25th November has not crushed the will of the Portuguese working class.

54% of votes were cast for parties claiming allegiance to the working class and to socialism. The Socialist Party declined slightly, and the Communist Party gained a small number of votes. The parties to the left of the CP received around 200,000 votes, about the same as in last year's elections for the Constituent Assembly. The avowedly Trotskyist groups, the LCI and the PRT, together won twice as many votes as the LCI did last year (when the PRT didn't stand).

Mario Soares, leader of the Socialist Party, which came out of the elections as the biggest party, has declared for a SP minority government with military participation.

While the workers of Portugal still want to find a way to change society, the parties to which they continue to give their allegiance want nothing more than to make sure of their places in a government administering capitalism. The Socialist Party has won much of its support on the promise of combining "socialism with democracy". Yet Soares expressly invites the military, whom nobody elected, into the government.

The SP has not denounced the constitutional position by which the Government is to be subordinate to a President, who can be instructed by the military Revolutionary Council to veto any legislation they dislike. Instead it pushes for its own preferred general, d'Azevedo, to become President.



Left to Right: Soares (Socialist Party), Sa Carneiro (Popular Democrats), Alvaro Cunhal (Communist Party), de Melo (Centre Democrats)

Some sections of the Armed Forces leadership may even press for the CDS ("Centre Democrats"), whose vote, at 15%, was double last year's, to be included in the government. The CDS is undoubtedly a haven for Spinoists and Salazarists, and any increased role for it will sharply raise the danger of forces amassing for a violent right-wing comeback.

And if the working class cannot mobilise itself to take power, economic conditions of 50% inflation and 20% unemployment will rapidly fuel that right-wing comeback.

Despite its blows against the left, the 25th November crackdown has prepared the way for a sharper class and political polarisation. For a long time after the overthrow of Caetano on 25th April 1974, the essential questions of class power were blurred over — even in the minds of many on the revolutionary left — by faith in the "Revolution", or the "People's Power" embodied by the Armed Forces Movement, and later by the 'military leftists' such as Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. 25th November was a sobering reminder of the dangers of relying on such people.

The CP's declaration in favour of a CP-SP government (which would command a substantial majority in the Legislative Assembly), and Soares' declaration that the Social-

ist Party will not form a coalition with the openly pro-capitalist PPD and CDS, undoubtedly reflect pressure from the CP's and SP's working class bases. The millions of pro-CP and pro-SP workers wanted their votes to ensure, at the very least, that the newly-confident Right of the CDS and the PPD was kept out.

Chaos

Revolutionaries in Portugal must take up this call for a CP-SP government. But they must couple it with the fight to build a clearly-defined revolutionary alternative to the CP and SP leaderships; for both the CP and the SP have shown themselves entirely willing to serve capitalism.

They have both participated in the 6th Provisional Government, which imposed a wage freeze enabling employers to renege on contracts extracted by workers in the autumn of 1975. Soares commented: "The suspension of contracts was the only realistic policy for dealing with the chaos that was threatening"; and the CP has sharply condemned the recent wave of strikes.

Revolutionaries must fight to align the working class for struggle against resurgent reaction and against the effects of Portugal's economic crisis. That means a consistent battle for united-front action on a

series of demands:— against wage freeze; for democratic rights; for defence of workers' control, of nationalisation, and of land reform; against sackings and for a programme of public works; and for a workers' militia.

That fight for united-front action is also the only way to win workers from the reformist CP and SP to revolutionary politics. The call for united-front action must include the members of the SP and CP, and, indeed, the reformist parties themselves.

To specifically exclude the CP as "social-fascist" (as the Maoists do) or the SP as "the main bulwark of reaction" (as the PRP — 'Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat' — does) is proof not of revolutionary intransigence but of sectarian stupidity. The SP may indeed for a period in 1975 have been the main bulwark of reaction, and it is certainly a main bulwark now; but it still commands the support of many workers who must be won to the revolutionary cause, and at present it is being pushed into mild opposition to the Right.

Unity

A United Front "from below only" is no united front at all. It amounts to saying to the reformist

workers — you can fight in unity with us revolutionaries only if you FIRST throw out your leaders. It thus attempts to leap over precisely the problem the united-front tactic grapples with — the continued allegiance of those workers to the reformist parties and leaders. It in no way puts Soares and Cunhal on the spot so that workers can test their worth in practice.

Power

Equally the revolutionaries should agitate for a CP-SP government to carry out policies adding up to a workers' answer to the crisis. Along those lines they would promise support against reaction for every pro-working-class action of such a CP-SP government.

Only these tactics, fought for in every workers' organisation — in the unions of the Intersindical, in the workers' and neighbourhood commissions, in the agricultural cooperatives and in the barracks — present the possibility of turning the tide of reaction and putting the question of workers' power firmly on the agenda again.

Violent

Despite its demagogic attacks against Stalinist bureaucracy, the SP was in the van of the repression after 25th November, when the press was censored, left wing military units were disbanded, and hundreds of political prisoners were taken.

But the generals will not like Soares' scheme. They will not want to tie themselves to any one party, however well it has served them. Instead they will most likely press for a new coalition, with military participation.

'Historic compromise' says Italian C P. Last time it was a historic betrayal

ITALY'S 38th government since the war fell last week when the Socialist Party voted against its emergency election plan.

But behind the collapse of the Christian Democratic minority government were the issues of the country's economic crisis and the weakening of the Church's hold.

The government was enfeebled and discredited by the paralytic corruption in the Italian state apparatus, recently highlighted in the Lockheed scandal. Like other governments based on the ramshackle Christian Democratic party — which has been in government continuously since the second world war, usually in coalition with smaller parties — it was unable to summon up the political will for an adequate rationalisation of Italy's economy and government bureaucracy.

Probably the most important factor undermining the Christian Democracy over recent years has been the increased willingness of Italians — and especially Italian women — to challenge the authority of the Church. May 1974's referendum on the divorce law resulted in a big left wing majority. In February 1975 a court ruled that the Italian anti-abortion law was unconstitut-

ional. Since then pressure has been building up for a referendum on the abortion issue, though the new general elections due on 20th June probably mean that the referendum will be postponed at least until 1977.

Since the early 1950s, when the Christian Democracy gained almost twice as many votes as the Communist Party (Italy's second-biggest party), the CD's lead has gradually declined. The sharpest shift yet came in last year's regional elections, when the CP got 33% of the vote as against the CD's 35%. That was a shift of about 4% as compared to the general elections of 1972 or the regional elections of 1970.

Helped to subdue the workers

In the coming election, 18-21 year olds will be allowed to vote for the first time, which should help the CP further. If the trends continue, it will be very difficult to form a government without including the CP. The CP is pressing for "the historic compromise" — a coalition government of CP and the Christian Democracy.

The nearest British equivalent to

the CD is the Tory party.... but the CP says it wants to appeal to all citizens "of a democratic orientation".

The Communist Party has been in government in Italy once before — at the end of the second world war. The CP helped to subdue the workers' upsurge which followed the fall of Mussolini, and to restore the shattered capitalist state. Once the CP had fulfilled those services, the bosses and the Christian Democrats brusquely kicked them out, and have not allowed them ministerial office again. Evidently they fear the boost which CP representation in the government would give to working class expectations.

But, as the problems of Italian capitalism become more and more intractable, the possibility of that CP representation is coming closer. The 'Economist' of 1st May put it like this: "If the communists came into power and were to push through a series of radical social reforms, union leaders say they would find it a lot easier to sell a policy of moderation and strike-restriction to their members. That is why some industrialists are not panic-stricken at the thought of the communists in power."



Kissinger feels Africa's 'wind of change'

"WE PLEDGE our support for self-determination, majority rule, equal rights and human dignity for all the people of Southern Africa".

This surprising declaration by Henry Kissinger in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, last week, has driven yet another nail into the coffin of the Rhodesian white supremacist regime.

Kissinger committed the USA to "unrelenting opposition" to the Rhodesian regime, and to strong support for the black African opponents of the regime. He spelt out ten points in his speech, including the pledge of 12.5 million dollars to Mozambique for closing its border with Rhodesia, and assistance to other countries which loose money by imposing sanctions against Rhodesia.

The USA itself will act to enforce sanctions against Rhodesia. Kissinger promised to urge congress to repeal the 1971 Byrd amendment, which prevents the US government from stopping imports of Rhodesian chrome. He stopped short, however, of offering military aid to the

Does all this signify that the USA has suddenly become the firm champion of oppressed peoples? Far from it. Kissinger's speech was intended reverse the process whereby the US attitude over Angola lost them influence in Africa and enabled the USSR to establish closer links with many African regimes. He also promised increased economic aid when he visited Kenya.

Influence

US government, Kissinger's declaration will strengthen the black guerilla struggle and further isolate the Smith regime.

Almost at the same time as Kissinger's speech, Smith was making yet another token gesture towards the black population, coopting four African tribal chiefs as full ministers in his government, and six others as deputy ministers.

But even Smith realised that this window-dressing with black stooges will not defuse the guerilla struggle. Last week the Rhodesian govern-

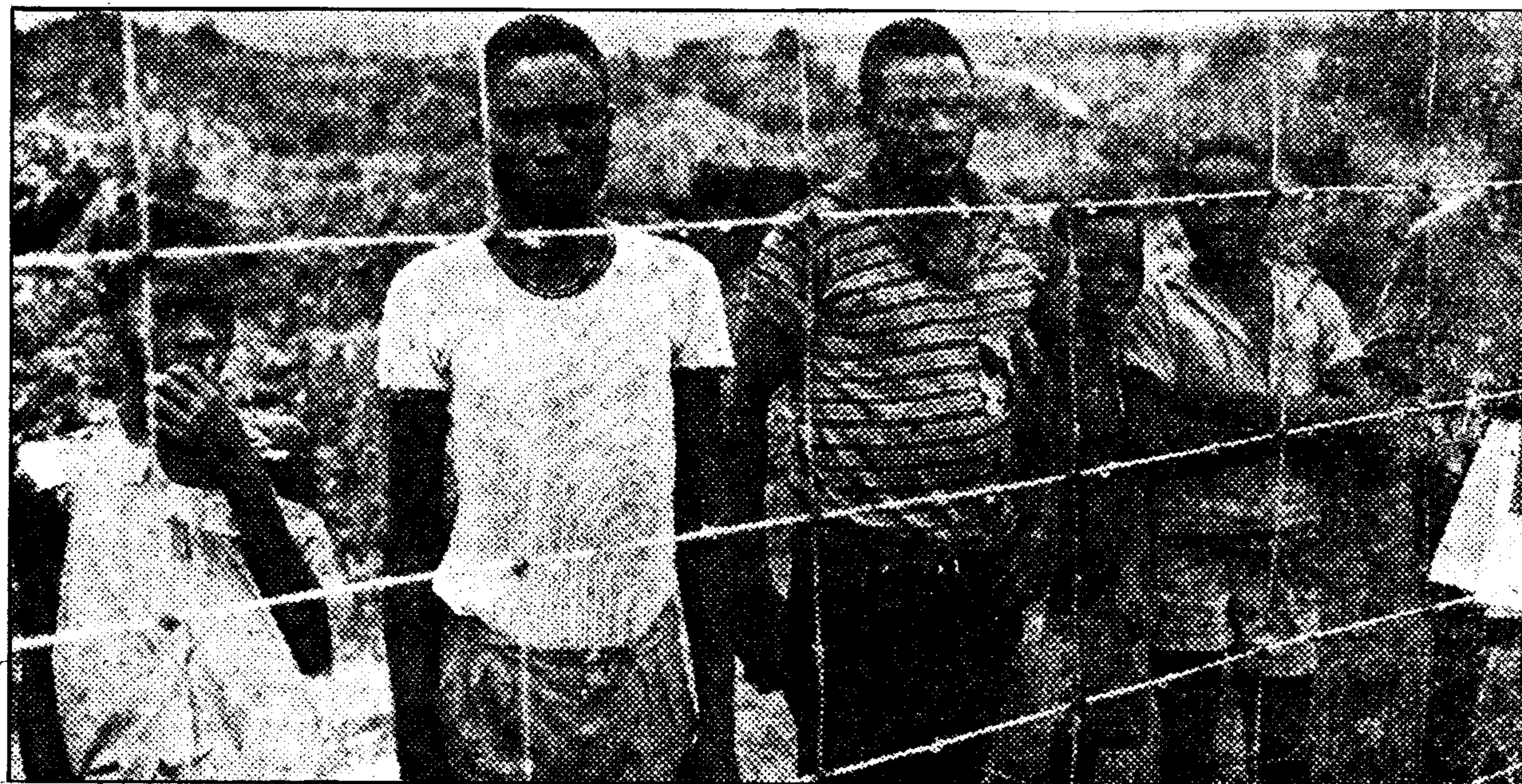


Kissinger

ment announced that from now on nearly all whites will be subject to conscription, and army operations will be increased.

Almost completely isolated, and facing growing black militancy, the white racist regime cannot hope to survive.

NEAL SMITH



Rhodesian regime makes Africans prisoners in their own village

Boycott and pickets greet Geisel

THIS WEEK Brazilian dictator Ernesto Geisel visits Britain for four days. The Labour government is laying on the red carpet, even granting him the special favour of being the first state visitor permitted to use Buckingham Palace to receive leading representatives of British big business.

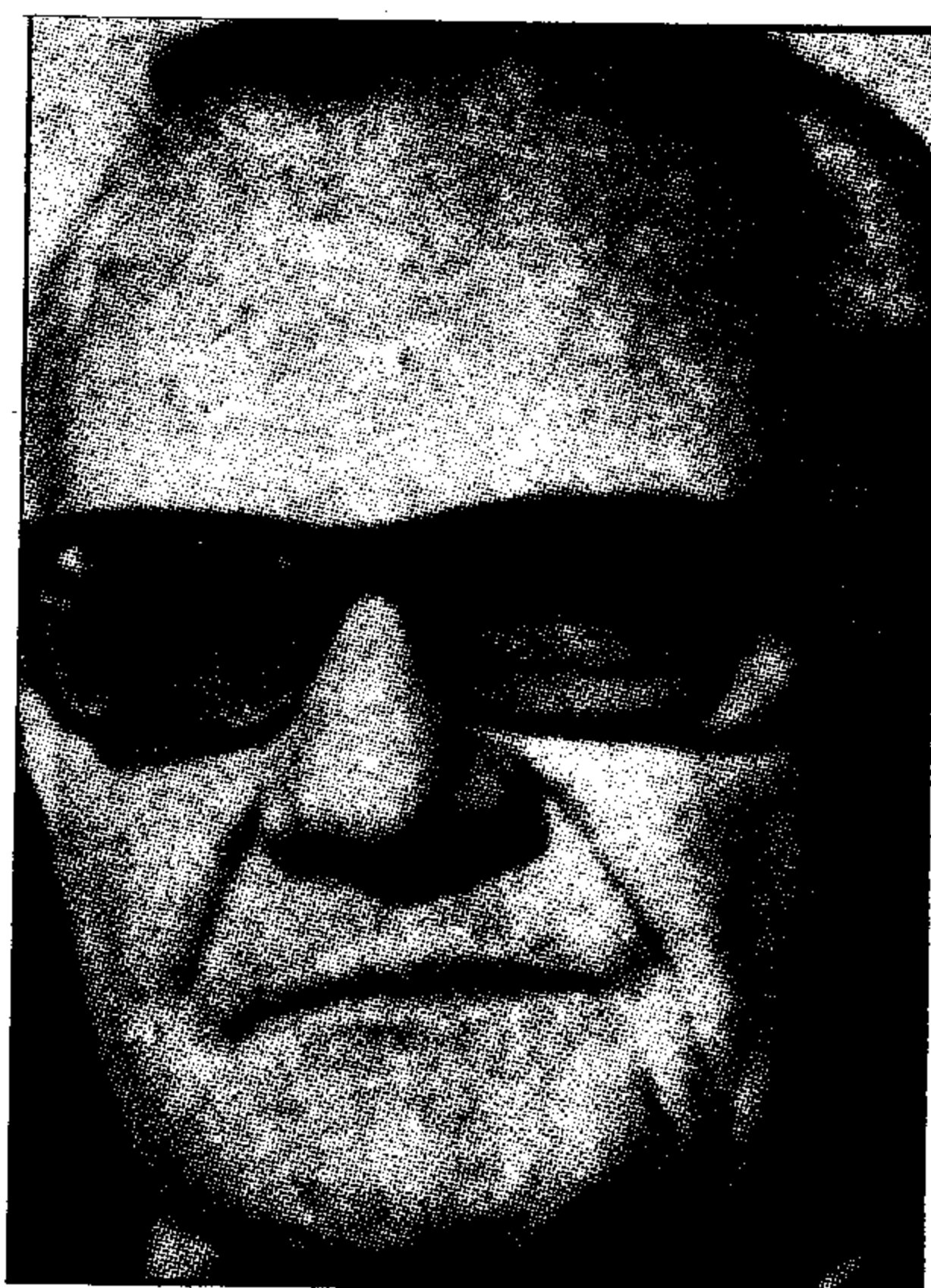
Geisel is trying to launch a large development programme for Brazil, and the Labour government is hoping to get a share in this for British industry, particularly in steel, railways, and oil.

Debts

Brazilian development programmes up to 1980 require funds of £23 billion. Already, though, the country has foreign debts of £22 billion. Geisel, for his part, is seeking foreign aid in exchange for lucrative contracts with European industry.

Yet already 40 Labour MPs have said they will boycott all functions connected with Geisel's visit, there will be pickets of receptions for him, and the Labour Party NEC has condemned the visit. Why?

The army came to power in Brazil through a coup in 1964. Immediately they launched a pogrom against the labour movement. They arrested union leaders, tightened the law mak-



Geisel — only a few hours in London but he had to face demonstrations and... a shower of tomatoes.

ing strikes illegal, and waged a systematic campaign of terror against trade union militants.

The labour movement was brought under the strict control of the state, and workers' living standards driven down to appallingly low levels.

Only last week Geisel cancelled

the political rights of three opposition Congressmen. Jose Cavalcante and eight other leading members of the Maritime Union were arrested last September by the secret police, and have since 'disappeared'. According to Amnesty International, all were tortured.

Paulino Vierra of the Metal Workers Union was one of 30 people arrested in north-east Brazil in July last year, held without any legal rights, and subjected to torture. He was finally brought to trial last month and sentenced to five years in jail, after he and other defendants had unavailingly protested that their statements had been extracted under torture.

Bloody

Another metal worker, Manual Filho, died, probably under torture, at an interrogation centre in Sao Paulo in January this year.

It is the head of this bloody regime that the Labour Government proposes to honour this week in London. Like any other capitalist government, they place good business relations above their duty to workers in other countries. Energy Minister Wedgwood Benn has announced he will be paying a visit to Brazil to discuss the possibilities of a contract for British oil.

On the altar of profit

Editorial

ONE MAN was killed last week and ten others injured when a gas bottle exploded in a tunnel being built for Newcastle's underground railway system. Five of the ten were seriously ill suffering from extensive burns. An investigation by safety experts has started.

Meanwhile the findings of another team of safety experts have been published: the Health and Safety Executive's report of its inquiry into the blast at the British Steel Corporation's Appleby-Frodingham works at Scunthorpe on November 4th last year in which 11 men died.

The verdict: it need never have happened. Senior management knew of the defects which led to the disaster, but did nothing. They didn't plan for any major disaster and they didn't implement the Steel Corporation's official safety policy.

This is the reality behind the mask of "good industrial relations" — a situation where human bodies become, quite literally, burnt sacrifices on the altar of profit. As 'The Economist' puts it with shameless honesty "Safety costs money".

The trade union and Labour leaders do their best to maintain the mask. They claim that workers and their employers have common interests. They go to Healey and commit us all to "standing by this country in its hour of need" and suchlike cliches. What a mockery these commonplaces are to the working people who lose eyes, hearing, limbs, lungs and skin, if not life itself, creating the wealth of this country, only to be told: if we can't make a profit out of you, you're redundant, if you're old, you can die of cold or hunger, if there's a crisis, take a pay cut.

Eleven men get killed and this, according to the press, is what the outcome will be: "BSC will be prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act and will probably plead guilty. In theory the maximum penalty is a jail sentence, but it is not planned to prosecute individuals in this instance."

The Nation they tell us to work and sacrifice and take pay cuts for doesn't exist. The 11 who died in the heat and molten metal of Scunthorpe reveal to us a capitalist society consisting of two 'nations' — the capitalists with their wealth, their power and their extremely precious lives; and workers who, it seems, have dozens of lives to throw away without the capitalists and their senior management stooges even being made accountable.

A recent case in France shows up by contrast this official indifference. There, breaking the hallowed customs of the capitalist courts, a factory owner was put on a murder charge after one of his employees was killed as a result of his gross negligence. He was jailed to await trial. The French bosses are, of course, all up in arms that some "young upstart of a judge" should take a worker's life so seriously.

The Scunthorpe deaths strip away the myth of class unity and class cooperation. The unions there had been negotiating for 18 months to try to get local BSC management to provide the right protective clothing! The four men who died instantly probably would not have benefited even if this huge concession had been wrung from the Corporation. But the seven who were skinned alive in the heat and died of burns shortly afterwards could have been saved.

18 months of haggling; seven more deaths. This is the hard, everyday reality of this society which they want our class to rescue from its crisis. When they want us to sign up for a wage cut, they hustle the union leaders in and out of Downing Street at record speed, and it's all sweet talk and brotherhood. When our lives are at risk, they shuffle and delay, look at their feet, stare at the ceiling, turn out their pockets and say "safety costs money".

Well, we have news for them: Healey's pay deals cost money — our money. And we can't afford them. Each class in this country has its financial priorities; for the bosses, our safety is a luxury they can't afford; for the working class, the bosses' system is a luxury we can't afford.

IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

An answer to inflation

BY ROBIN CAMACHO

In the 1960's, when inflation rates in most advanced capitalist countries hovered around 3%, the 'economic experts' used to argue that inflation was harmless, or even beneficial.

But in the '70's, with inflation ranging from 6% in West Germany to 600% in Argentina, the bosses and their experts were quick to change their tune. Inflation, they say, is the major problem facing society — and it is caused by workers fighting for higher wages.

They do not explain what made workers so much more 'greedy' in the early '70's to send inflation rocketing. In fact, the period of high inflation has been one of stagnant real wages, whereas in the '50's and '60's real wages generally increased.

The American economist, Simon Kuznets, studying price and wage variations from 1800 to 1935, showed that massive price leaps were never preceded by similar wage increases. Indeed, when prices began to lift off, it took a considerable time before wages began to catch up.

He also showed that since the turn of century prices have had only one general trend — upwards. But in the middle of the 19th century prices were falling while wages were increasing.

It is a fact that under monopoly capitalism wage increases do generate price increases. The big monopolies can and do pass on increased wage costs by pushing up their prices. However, this is not the fundamental factor in inflation.

Large-scale state expenditure, especially on armaments, and the credit system generate chronic inflation. And as the rate of profit declines, competitive investment becomes increasingly dependent on bank and credit supplies, or on state funds. More money is printed to grease the wheels of investment.

Over recent years, as capitalism has moved from slump to slump in unplanned processions, it has been impossible to maintain a balanced flow of materials for production. In periods of upturn and increased demand, like 1973, shortages and bottlenecks push up prices and there is the possibility of speculation in raw materials. This has led to a substantial strengthening of the bargaining position of raw materials producers, leading to big price increases. The most memorable example of this has been the leap in oil prices.

Inflation is a product of capitalist crisis. And so is the bosses' attempt to make workers pay the cost of the crisis, so as to relieve the effects of reduced profit rates and sharpen competition.

The labour movement is generally too strong for straight-forward wage freezes to work, except for very short periods. Thus, capitalist governments have devised other schemes: tying down the unions with laws like the Industrial Relations Act; the threat of unemployment; or incomes policy, both statutory and 'voluntary'.

Result

According to the Labour Research Department, the £6 limit will mean a cut of 4¼% in real take-home pay for a worker on £50 a week if he receives the £6 in February 1976. That 4¼% is a conservative estimate since it takes the Retail Price Index as a true index of the cost of living. It also assumes that Healey's promise of bringing inflation down to 10% will be realised. Other estimates have put the cut in real wages at up to 8% over the 12 months of the £6 limit.

And it is not true that the £6 limit has helped the low-paid worker. The Low Pay Unit has estimated that a worker earning £30 gross and receiving a £6 increase ends up with a 10p wage cut as a result of paying extra tax and losing rebates.

Meanwhile even the pretence — and it could never be more than that — of price control has been dropped. Already the Government has raised many items from the

Price Code in return for a guarantee from big business that goods covering some 15% of consumer spending will only rise in price by 10%.

'Free collective bargaining' alone is not enough to deal with current inflation rates. An increase of £5 can be soaked up by price rises in a matter of months. If prices are rising by about 20% a year, you will need an annual wage rise of 30% to keep up, since about one-third of the apparent value of any wage increase is lost in increased taxes.

Workers in many countries have come forward with demands for a more comprehensive, unifying response. On 21st February this year 30,000 men, women, and children marched through the city of Pamplona in northern Spain to demand not only the release of political prisoners and free trade unions, but also compensation for their rapidly rising cost of living.

Divert

In Cairo workers have also marched for wages rises to keep up with inflation. In Dublin, shop stewards and militants have recently elected a committee pledged to fight for increases of £1 for every increase of 1% in the cost of living index.

In Britain the idea of cost of living increases was actually introduced by the Heath government. Under Phase 3 the Tories allowed for 'threshold' payments of 40p for every rise in the cost of living above 7%. The role and purpose of the threshold scheme was to divert workers from struggles for straight wage increases, which might break the limits of Phase 3. The Tories also hoped that only one or two such payments would ever be made.

But the scheme backfired. In June 1974, 6,000 Plessey workers at Beeston, Nottingham, launched



Plessey convenor addresses workers

one of the biggest sit-ins since UCS. They were fighting against the employers' decision to put a capping of £1.60 on their threshold deal. The following months saw many similar struggles. These were followed by a determined effort by the new Labour government and the bosses to make sure that no threshold clauses would be included in the next round of wage deals.

In that situation, just to fight for large, annual wage increases (the policy of I.S.) meant abandoning the struggle already underway. It was necessary to argue for full and immediate compensation for inflation.

Today that demand is the back-

bone of a working-class alternative to the Healey-TUC schemes.

Normal wage demands necessarily differ widely from place to place, or from industry to industry. A demand for cost of living increases can be uniform and unifying for the whole of the working class.

It can also be extended to weakly-organised or unorganised sections of workers, and even to the unemployed, and those on state benefits. WORKERS ACTION argues for a sliding scale to apply to all wages, and also to state grants and benefits.

This scale should not be based on the government Retail Price Index. This is not a true measure of the changes in workers' living costs. It is based on a weighted average of certain goods and services. The average is taken for the whole population so that it takes less account of the high working-class spending on food and housing. It is just these items which generally rise faster than consumer durables, such as cars and fridges.

For example, the food weighting of the RPI is 23.2%, while the Child Poverty Action Group has estimated that households with less than £30 a week spend up to 45% of their budget on food.

What's more, as inflation rates go up, so also does the proportion of the working class budget spent on basic essentials. This increases the inaccuracy of the RPI.

"In practice, people change their pattern of spending in the course of the year in response to changing circumstances, but changes of this kind are not reflected in the movements of the RPI." (D.E. Gazette, October 1975)

In France the trade union federations have their own cost of living indices. The index compiled by the CGT (General Labour Federation), for example, shows an inflation rate of 15% as against the Government's figure of 10%. In Belgium trade unions have won the right to veto the official index.

Militants should argue for the TUC or individual unions to set up their own cost of living index. We should also demand that these be open to rank-and-file price-watch committees of workers and housewives.

Expose

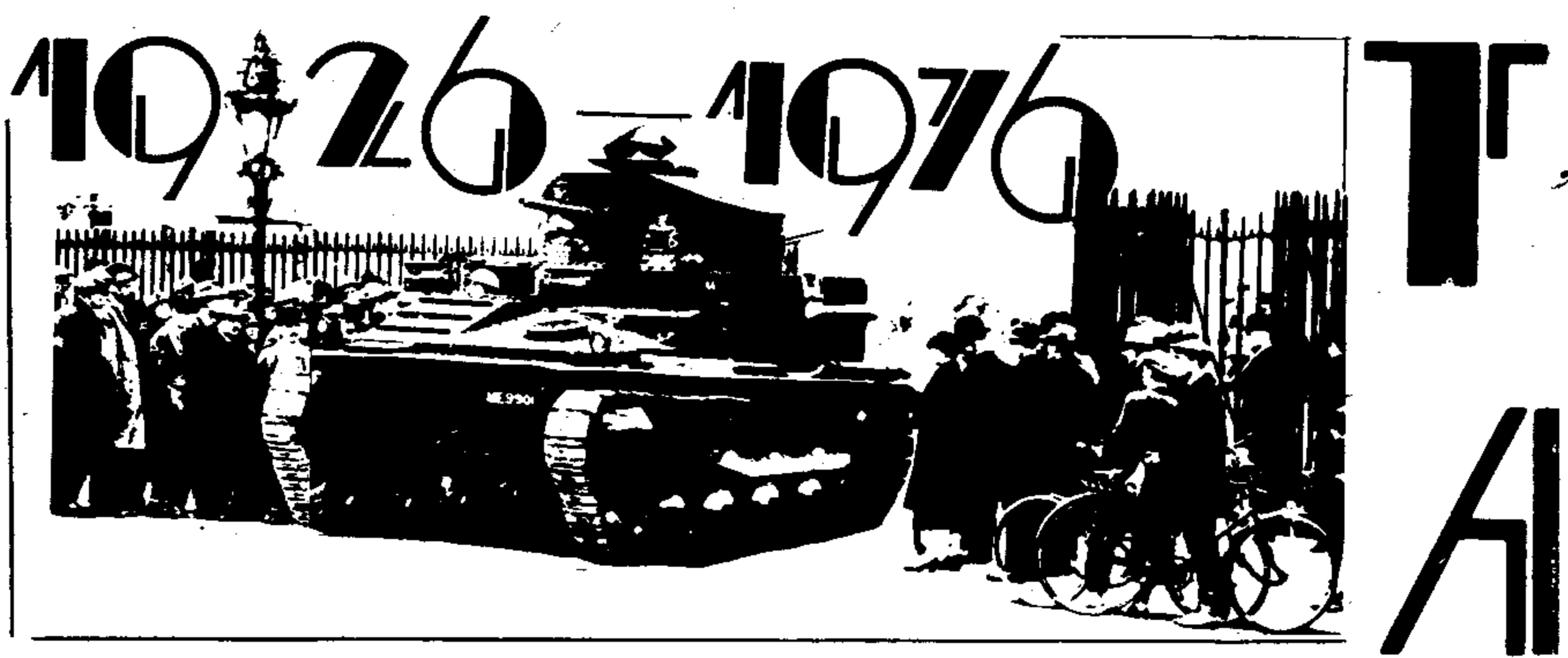
We should demand that these be open to rank-and-file inspection. The best variant is rank-and-file price-watch committees of workers and housewives. Such committees would draw housewives into the struggle alongside the labour movement, and prevent inflation being used as a wedge to split the working class. The committees could also expose, and take action against, hoarding, or price increases simply due to gross profiteering.

While we have only the official RPI to go on, we should demand increases of at least £1 for every 1% rise in the RPI. With a wage of about £60, you need about 75p to match a 1% increase in your cost of living.

It is important also to demand that cost of living increases are continuously consolidated into the basic rate, and that agreements are made open-ended so as not to rule out the possibility of fighting for straight wage increases.

Our demands can be summed up as:

- * No wage restraint under capitalism. Re-establish free collective bargaining.
- * Automatic cost of living increases. £1 for every 1%.
- * Straight lump-sum increases to make up for the backlog and to boost our living standards.
- * No 'time-bans' on wage agreements.
- * A national minimum wage of £40 to apply to all — employed, unemployed, or retired.
- * The minimum wage and all grants, pensions, and benefits to be protected against inflation by automatic cost of living increases.



GET ORG

THE EMPLOYERS and the government were engaged in 1920 onwards in a political and economic offensive against the working class. What was the condition of the workers' movement that had to meet this offensive?

J T Murphy, the leader of the Sheffield shop stewards, and a leading figure in the national shop stewards' movement which had emerged from the struggles in the war, wrote in 1917: "One of the most noticeable features in recent trade union history is the conflict between the rank and file of the trade unions and their officials".

The period during and after the war saw the consolidation of what was to be an enduring feature of British trade unionism, a conservative and privileged bureaucracy. A rank and file movement emerged in the workplaces, sharply opposed to them.

The rank and file movement was a natural extension of the pre-war syndicalist movement (the movement which had produced the unofficial reform committees among the miners led by figures such as A J Cook and Noah Ablett), of the war-time shop stewards' movement on the Clyde, and in Sheffield, and of the post-war movement in London which threw up leaders like Harry Pollitt.

Russia

It was also profoundly influenced by the Russian revolutions of February and October 1917.

The first influence was the Soviet, which seemed to British syndicalist militants to be a Russian form of their own factory committees. So strong was this impact that in 1917 a "Workers and Soldiers Council Convention" was held in Leeds at which Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, leaders of the Independent Labour Party and future prime minister and chancellor of the exchequer respectively, spoke. A resolution was passed with their support proposing the formation of workers and soldiers' councils.

In August 1920 the working class forced its leaders to act against foreign counter-revolutionary intervention in Russia, then at its height and spearheaded by Britain. Already the London dockers had refused to load the "Jolly George", a ship carrying munitions to the Polish army of intervention. A special TUC Congress was called, which set up a Council of Action to organise a general strike against the war. Local councils sprang up from the Trades Councils and Lloyd George, the Liberal Prime Minister, was forced to beat a hasty retreat.

The other lesson of the Russian revolution, the need for a revolutionary party, disciplined and centralised, roots in cells in the factories and the trade unions, was not so easily learned. For most of the rank and file militants, coming from a syndicalist and social-democratic background, politics and a political party were synonymous with Parliamentarism.

Power

It took the defeats of 1920 and 1921 to drive home the need for political party organisation. The surrender of the Triple Alliance of miners, transport workers, and railworkers (soon to be bitterly re-named "Cripple Alliance") and the defeat of the subsequently isolated miners in the lock-out of 1921, compelled militants to recognise the power of the State and the folly of concentrating exclusively on workplace democracy, leaving the national leadership of the unions

in the hands of treacherous bureaucrats like the rail leader J H Thomas.

A positive lesson came from the Bolsheviks through the newly formed Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions (formed in 1919 and 1920 respectively). J T Murphy summed up one of these crucial lessons:

"My experience in Russia... had shown me the real meaning of the struggle for political power. Instead of thinking that a Socialist Party was merely a propaganda organisation for the dissemination of Socialist views, I now saw that a real Socialist party would consist of revolutionary Socialists who regarded the party as a means whereby they would lead the working class in the fight for political power".

Dual view

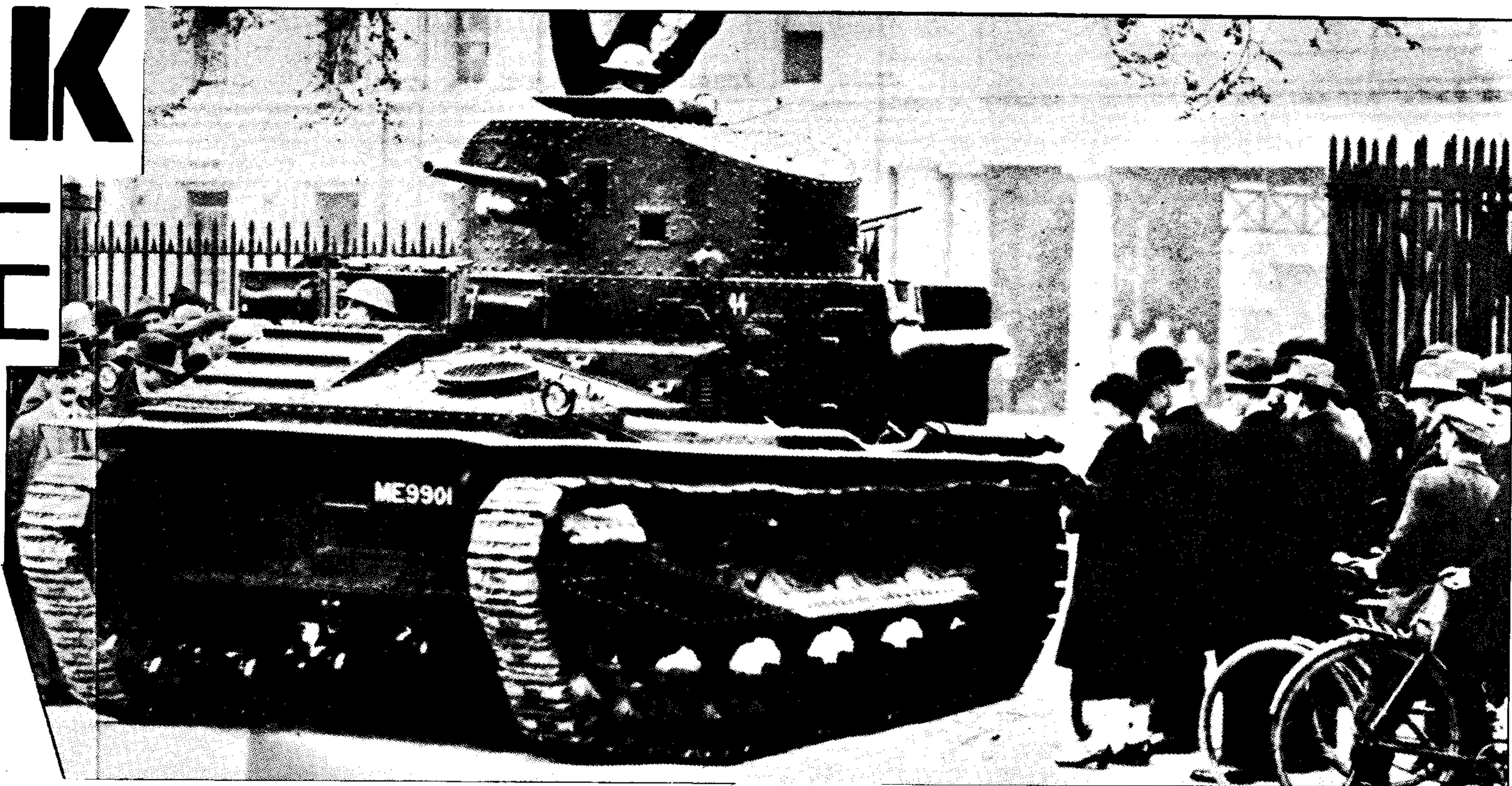
In 1920 & 1921 the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed. It was formed out of militants whose previous experience was that of syndicalism and the propaganda Marxism of the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party. The latter, under the influence of the American Daniel de Leon and of James Connolly, had a dual view of socialist activity — industrial unionism linked to a purely propagandistic party. Though de Leonism was a step forward from parliamentary and trade union reformism, its negative feature were sectarianism and passive propagandism.



Lenin, the man they all learned from

THE RANK AND FILE ANALYSED

by DAVE
STOCKING



Day 6 of the strike: a tank leaves barracks to move against the workers

In Moscow Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought these tendencies in the young British trade union militants. They urged them to recognise that the vast majority of British workers were still under the sway of the reformist leaders, that a Communist Party was necessary, that it should try to affiliate to the Labour Party, that in the unions the militants should open a struggle to win the official bodies and to capture the leadership.

The third Comintern Congress in August 1921 and the joint Manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions of 1st January 1922 launched the tactic of the united front. It outlined the need for communists to fight for limited and transitional demands alongside reformist workers, and if possible to drag their leaders into the struggle. These battles would enable communists to demonstrate in practice their firmness and trustworthiness, and the cowardice and treachery of the reformist leaders. If the latter refused, or broke the unity in action, they would stand condemned by the workers as the real splitters.

At the Fourth Comintern Congress in November 1922, Losovsky, the leader of the Russian Trade Unions, explained the specific application of these tactics within the British unions:

"As far as Britain is concerned, we see clearly that it would be disastrous if the party were content to organise its forces only within its little party nuclei. The aim here must be to create a more numerous opposition in the trade union movement. Our aim must be that our Communist groups should act as a point of crystallisation round which the opposition elements will concentrate".

Masses

In the spring of 1923 the central committee of the CPGB was invited to a special session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. There two tasks were outlined — the implementation of a "democratic centralist" party structure of factory cells, district aggregates, and a central committee capable of directing the party's work — and the elaboration of united-front work in the trade unions.

"The essential aim of the British Bureau [of the RILU] is not to organise independent revolutionary trade unions, or to split revolutionary elements away from the existing organisations affiliated to the TUC... but to convert the revolutionary minority within each industry into a revolutionary majority".

There was a strong and enduring tendency in the CPGB to take their strategy and tactics straight from the 'spontaneous' demands raised in the course of struggle and to add to these propaganda on the need for communism. Karl Radek, after talking to British delegates at the Third Congress of the Comintern, observed:

"To my question, what do you all the masses, what is your attitude to nationalisation? What is your attitude to the present concrete claims of the workers? one of the comrades replied: 'When I ascend the rostrum

at a meeting I know as little about what I am going to say as the man in the moon; but being a communist, I find my way along as I speak'.

"... We consider it our duty to say the following, even to the smallest CPs: you will never have any large mass parties if you limit yourselves to the mere propaganda of the Communist theory".

Two-edged

After the defeats of 1921, the CP organised a campaign around the slogans "Stop the Retreat! Back to the Unions!" In 1923, with a recovery of working class confidence under way, "minority movements" were organised in the various unions — most strongly the Miners' Minority Movement, based in South Wales and Scotland. A Metal Workers' Minority Movement was launched in May 1924.

These movements were coordinated into a national movement at a conference in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon St, on the 23rd and 24th August, 1924. Some 270 delegates met, representing between them 200,000 workers. Subsequent annual conferences saw these figures expand rapidly — in 1925, 613 delegates representing 700,000 workers and in 1926, 803 delegates representing 956,000 workers.

The Minority Movement adopted a programme of "immediate and transitional" demands linked to a strategy "for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from oppressors and exploiters, and the establishment of a socialist commonwealth".

Its immediate demands included a minimum wage, a 44-hour week, and no overtime. It committed itself to a struggle for workers' control of industry. It fought for a stronger General Council responsible for the Trades Union Congress. It set as its aim the creation of industrial unions by a process of amalgamation, and the affiliation to the TUC of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement.

The slogan of 'more power to the General Council' was a two-edged one, as the party and the Minority Movement recognised in 1924. J R Campbell in the Communist Review of May 1924 warned that the General Council might use this power to stifle rather than coordinate struggles. The answer was to strengthen the independence of the militant rank and file so they could exercise vigilance and control.

Leaders

When the strike waves of 1923-4 pushed to the fore a left-wing current in the TUC, and whilst the older leaders of the TUC, like Thomas, were involved in the 1924 Labour Government, a 'left wing' current emerged — leaders such as Purcell, Swales, Bromley and Hicks.

This left wing current, which culminated in the TUC Congress of 1925, was given a redder tinge to its natural pink by its relations with the Soviet Union. In November 1924 the TUC sent a delegation to Russia on which they were prominently represented — and which eventually led to the setting-up of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee. This left wing current reflected

the tremendous radicalisation taking place in the two years prior to the general strike, but it also presented dangers: for these leaders were precisely the most dangerous since militant workers had most faith in them.

At first the CP warned clearly against taking Purcell, Swales and co. at face value.

"It would be a suicidal policy, however, for the Communist Party and the Minority Movement to place too much reliance on what we have called the official left wing", wrote Campbell in the Communist Review. The real task was to transfer to the unions, to build workshop committees. "A left wing in the working class movement must be based upon the class struggle, or it becomes only a manoeuvre to con-

fuse the workers", wrote Dutt in Labour Monthly.

Yet changes were taking place in Soviet Russia and the Comintern that were to commit the CPGB to precisely this "suicidal course" and play into the hands of a "manoeuvre to confuse the workers".

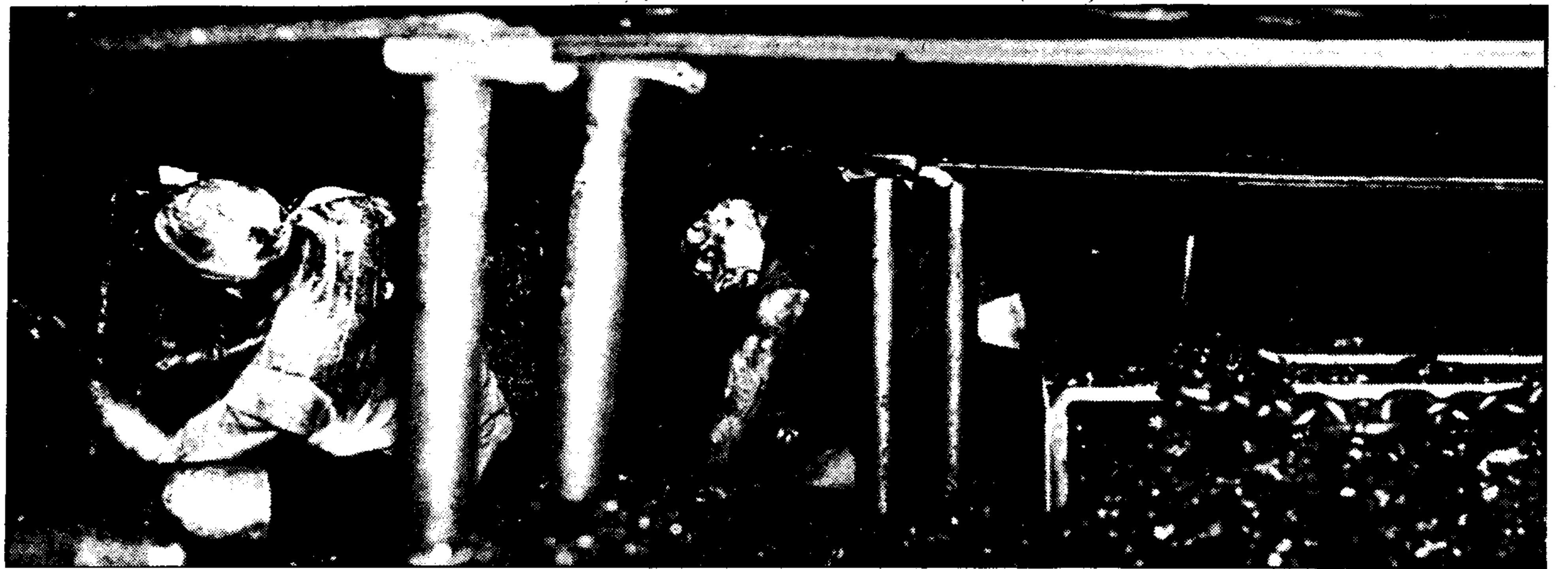
Syndicalism

The Minority Movement in the years 1924-5 marked an important step forward for British rank and file militants and revolutionaries. It overcame the syndicalist defects of ignoring political questions and posing rank and file organisation, the factory committee or the industrial union, as sufficient to overthrow

capitalism. At the same time it linked up with healthy anti-bureaucratic elements in the workplaces. It took up the task of forming militant caucuses in the unions and the trades councils, with the aim of transforming the unions by winning leadership at all levels. It elaborated tactics in the key issues facing workers — nationalisation, unemployment, trade union unity against the bosses and the government offensive.

The years 1925 and 1926 were the testing time for the Minority Movement and the Communist Party. It was a test they failed for POLITICAL reasons. Next week Workers Action will look at the influence of the Comintern and the policy of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee.

WHO BEARS THE COST?



The miners: their wages were cut and thousands were sacked

BRITAIN, alongside France and the USA, was one of the victor powers in the great imperialist war of 1914-18. Yet the history of the British economy during the 1920s was more similar to that of its defeated rival Germany than to that of its allies.

Whilst France and more dramatically the United States enjoyed an unprecedented period of expansion and boom, Britain staggered from crisis to crisis, suffering very high levels of unemployment and sharp class struggles. Why?

In 1914 Britain was the major imperialist power, with a population of colonial subjects four times the size of its nearest rival, France. But the British economy and Empire were old-fashioned, carrying the legacy of a structure formed in the period when it was the first 'modern' capitalist power.

Unlike Germany and the USA, British industry was not dominated by huge monopolies. There was not a close integration of the banks and industry. There was a huge banking sector — the merchant banks, clustered around the Bank of England. But these siphoned off investment, away from antiquated and relatively less profitable home investment, into investment in Europe, North and South America, and the British Empire.

The pound sterling — based on the gold standard, was the medium of world exchange — "as good as gold". The City of London was inextricably tied up with the state machine. Industry, starved of funds by for-

eign investment, fell further and further behind its American and German rivals in the 20 years before the war. The British balance of payments relied heavily on raw material export (mainly coal) and on materials produced with a low level of technology (such as textiles).

Labour was a high percentage of the costs of production in these industries.

The war distorted this already disadvantageous position even more. Coal and textile production was stepped up, the labour force swelled, but little modernisation or technological innovation took place. The post-war boom to meet the needs of the devastated European economies intensified this process.

Futile

To finance the war, the Government rejected the option of increasing taxation, and instead took the £ sterling off the gold standard and printed money. This led to inflation. By 1918 the pound was worth half its 1914 value. The pound fell against the dollar from the 1914 rate of 4.86 to 3.50 in late 1920.

This led to a depreciation of British capitalists' foreign investments and a worsening of the terms of trade for their exports.

The political dominance of the City of London determined the battle of the governments of the 20s to return to and then maintain the gold standard, to get back to the 'good old days' of their world hegemony. This was, however, a futile

task, for the war had seen economic supremacy, industrial and financial, pass to the USA. New York rivalled the City of London as the centre of world finance.

The industrialists of the new industries, motor cars, electronics, chemicals, precision engineering, would have preferred a policy of protection, abandoning free trade. But the financiers, the coal owners and textile manufacturers did not dare adopt such a policy. Already their rivals had high tariff barriers. Protection would invite retaliation and make things worse.

In order to return to the gold standard at the 1914 rate and in order to make their exports more competitive, workers real wages had to be cut. An offensive to reduce wages was launched when the post-war boom collapsed in the autumn of 1920. This policy determined the nature of the class struggle throughout the 1920s.

Added to this, as the Ruhr coalfield resumed production after the war, as the reparations in kind extracted from Germany by the robber treaty of Versailles flooded the market, Britain's coal-owners launched an especially vigorous attack to lower wages. This put the miners at the centre of the working class struggle. Millions of workers knew that if the miners were beaten, then a similar fate awaited them. The question posed was, who was to bear the cost of British capitalism's crisis — the working class or the exploiters?

THE 1973 'Yom Kippur' War was an important watershed in the affairs of the Middle East, particularly for Egypt and Syria. In a matter of months, these two countries saw their roles change quite radically.

Syria, from being the junior partner of the anti-Zionist alliance, became the leader of the Rejection Front which now organises the anti-Zionist bloc. Egypt, on the other hand, from being the leading Arab nationalist regime, made peace with Israel and extended a welcoming hand to Kissinger and Nixon.

A recently published book by Mohammed Heikal provides a detailed background to these events. Heikal was a close confidant of both Nasser and Sadat, and editor of Egypt's most important newspaper, Al-Ahram. From this vantage point his book (The Road to Ramadan, published by Fontana at 95p) gives an 'insider's' account of the preparation and conduct of the '73 War.

The shattering defeat of 1967 meant that the following years saw nearly all Egypt's economic effort poured into military reconstruction.

For the Egyptian workers and peasants, the years after 1967 were years of extreme hardship, as all the fruits of economic development were picked by the military.

Heikal observes that "in five years since 1967 Egypt spent £800-£900 million on the war effort. For the Egyptian people there had been a decade of sacrifice and austerity such as no people could be expected to put up with indefinitely. Since 1967 the credibility of the whole regime had been at stake."

In 1969-70, for example, military spending was £245 million — as against £55m on health and £4½m spent on housing and public utilities.

Nasser and Sadat had both promised early action against Israel. It was only by such promises that they could justify such an enormous military expenditure. Yet nothing happened...

Tensions

Before long, tensions inside Egypt were growing. Workers in the cities rioted demanding better wages, students occupied their colleges. The major theme behind all the disturbances was the demand for a new war against Israel.

Most Egyptians saw the '67 defeat as a great blow to their national prestige, and wanted to recover the lost territory of Sinai and the Gaza Strip. And they wanted to see the Palestinians regain their land, and hoped a new war would achieve this as well. These demands even began to produce dissatisfaction in the army, the pillar of the regime. Heikal gives the example "an occasion when a young lieutenant led a convoy of seven armoured cars into the centre of Cairo, went into a mosque and started denouncing the government".

The situation with regard to Egypt's Arab neighbours was little better. A few weeks before the '73 war began, Sadat explained to Heikal the reasons for it.

"Without a big injection of financial aid 1974 was going to bring a crisis. The only source of aid on the scale needed was some of the Arab countries and the Arabs were not going to give Egypt another penny unless there was some movement".

The movement they were interested in was against Israel. Immediately after the 1967 war, Nasser had received big loans from other Arab states, especially oil-rich Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States — but that aid later dried up.

It was against this background of looming economic crisis and mounting tensions at home that Sadat decided to go ahead with an attack on Israel. But his aim was described by Heikal as a "war deliberately limited in its objectives and duration". The war was to be fought not to liberate all the Arab lands, but simply to appease opinion at home and abroad by forcing Israel into making a few concessions. Having done that, Sadat could then rest on his laurels as the 'victor' of the war.

The course of the war itself did not go entirely Egypt's way. After a spectacularly successful crossing of the Canal and the establishment of defences in Sinai, the Egyptian advance was bogged down, mainly because of the timidity of its commanders. The Israelis were able to launch a counter-offensive, and

JL REVIEW

cross the Canal, penetrating even further into Egyptian territory than they had in '67.

Nevertheless, the Egyptians saw the war as a success, mainly because they had established a firm bridgehead on the far side of the Canal. Now they were in position to negotiate for the full return of the Canal to their control.

with its long-term intentions in the area. These were to open up Egypt and other Arab countries to American investment, and to ensure that the area did not slip completely into the Russian 'sphere of influence'.

Israel alone policed the area for them, but they wanted additional allies to maintain the stability of

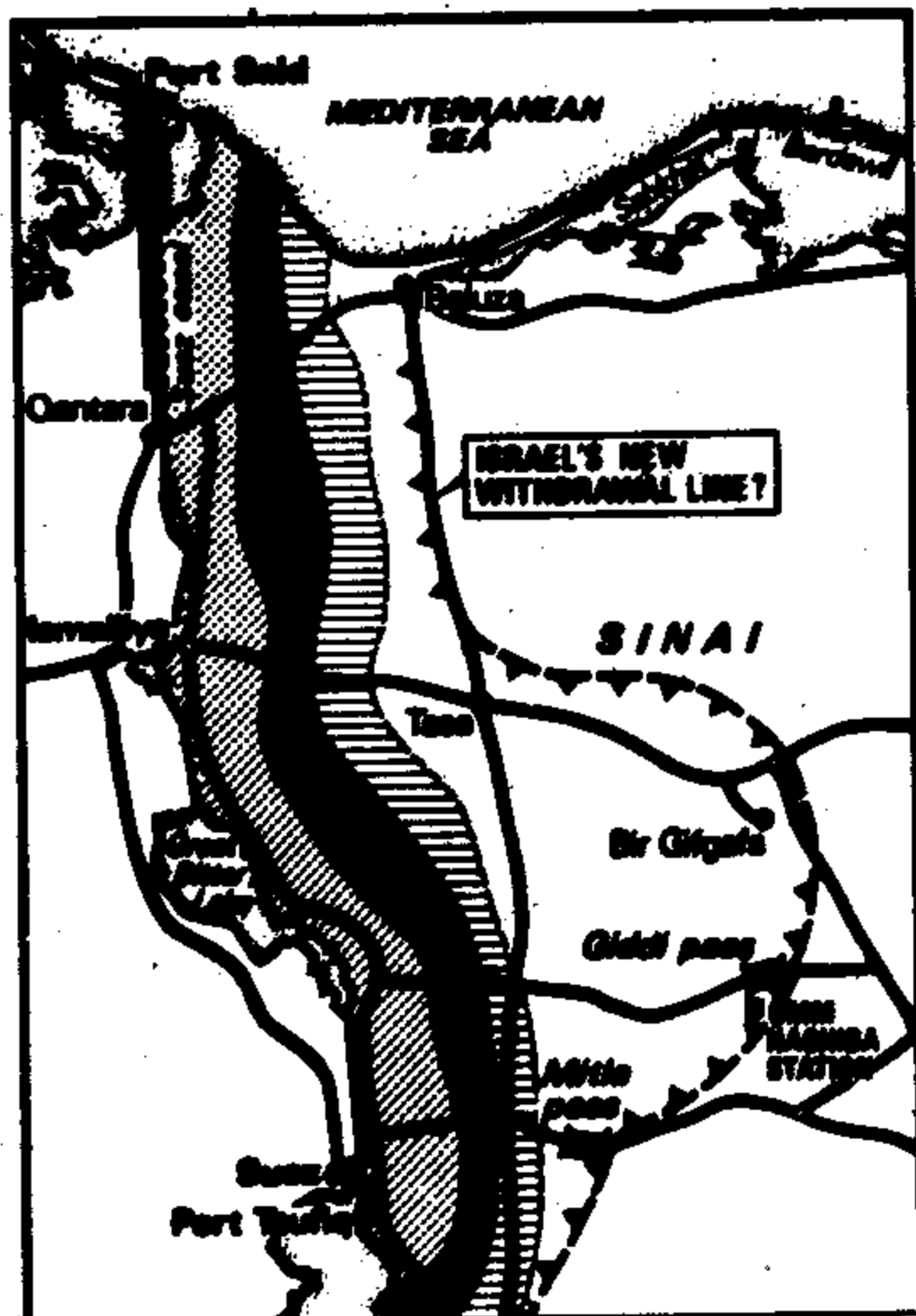


Mourners at Nasser's funeral

Immediately after the war it seemed that things were working out as Sadat had planned. Egyptians had rallied round the regime during the war and were proud that at last an Arab army had managed to match the Israelis. The war period saw Sadat's prestige at its highest, something reflected in the glowing praise in Heikal's book. "We have our troubles on the internal front, but once the first shot is fired these will disappear", Nasser had once remarked to Brezhnev.

But soon the situation looked very different.

This was largely due to the inter-



vention of the USA and the close collaboration that built up between Nasser and Sadat. Kissinger's aim was to produce a negotiated settlement which would not change the balance of power in the area but which would end the situation of perpetual simmering conflict between Israel and the Arab states.

Once this was achieved the US would be better able to proceed

the area and make it suitable for large-scale investment. And friendship with Egypt would give American warships and oil tankers the use of the Canal, and possibly in the future a base of operations in the south-eastern Mediterranean.

Sadat also wanted to end the "no peace, no war" situation so that he could open the country up to foreign investment and get the economy moving. This provided Kissinger with the perfect opportunity to move to a 'solution' by a 'step-by-step' approach. He would first of all get a settlement between Sadat and Israel, then use this to insist that the Syrians also came to an agreement with Israel.

But in Syria his diplomatic efforts were received with hostility. The Syrians had gone into the war for very similar reasons to Egypt. They wanted to establish a better strategic position by taking back the Golan heights. But by the end of the fighting they were in hardly a better position than when they started out, and any negotiated settlement with Israel would only have confirmed the borders as they stood, bringing no substantial gains for the Syrians.

The third component of the Arab forces fighting the '73 war — the Palestinian Resistance — likewise gained nothing from the war. The Israeli government made it perfectly clear that they would accept no agreement which related to the Palestinians. They were not even prepared to have the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in on the negotiations at Geneva. Like the Syrians, the PLO was not involved in the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, and viewed the settlement which emerged as a sell-out of themselves and their Syrian allies.

Shortly after the Geneva agreement, the Syrians took the initiat-

The war that was Egypt's watershed

NEAL SMITH REVIEWS MOHAMMED HEIKAL'S "THE ROAD TO RAMADAN"

ive in regrouping the militant anti-Zionist forces. Their first step was to establish a joint military command with Jordan. They then began to gather around themselves other anti-Zionist Arab regimes and groups, such as the PLO and Iraq. This bloc called itself the Rejection Front, signifying its opposition to the Geneva agreement and its determination to carry on the fight against Zionism.

The formation of the Rejection Front was a severe blow to Sadat. In the Arab world Egyptian prestige rapidly declined. Egyptian radio and press were full of vicious attacks on the former allies who had denounced the Geneva agreement; representatives of the PLO found themselves subject to barrasment in Cairo; and relations became severely strained between Egypt and Libya.

At home Sadat's hoped-for economic boom failed to materialise. The corner-stone of Nasser's brand of 'Arab socialism' had been the pursuit of economic development through massive state intervention in the economy. During the early 60s, most of the Egyptian economy, with the exception of the land, had been taken into a more or less complete form of state control.

Wealth

But these state controls were not favourable to increasing investment from other countries — investment which Sadat now desperately wanted. So he began to dismantle many of the state controls and some of the state enterprises themselves. This freed the wealth of the Egyptian bourgeoisie from the fetters imposed on by Nasser, but far from ploughing this into industry they still preferred to indulge in conspicuous consumption.

On top of that, foreign investment did not arrive in large enough amounts. The big businesses of Europe and the USA preferred to sink their funds into the economies of Arab countries like Saudi Arabia which, unlike Egypt, have enormous resources of oil.

Now the Egyptian economy is in a bad position with a soaring rate of inflation. The mass of workers and peasants are living on near-starvation diets, whilst the rich of Cairo and Alexandria squander their wealth on luxury goods.



Sadat talking to Arafat

This is hardly what the Egyptian masses had spent "a decade of sacrifice and austerity" for... a few miles of recovered territory and a rapidly declining standard of living.

Sadat desperately needs outside aid. So far, there are few signs this will arrive. The formation of the Rejection Front has pulled many Arab states away from collaboration with Egypt. After 1967, Russia supplied all the military equipment and tech-

nical expertise to rebuild the Egyptian army, and was the major country with which Egypt traded. However, Russia has even closer ties with Syria, and was bitterly opposed to the negotiations in Geneva, especially the increasing influence of the USA.

It is towards the USA that Sadat has turned. He began by building up a close relationship with Kissinger, ("my friend Henry") went on to ask the USA for arms, and ended by breaking off agreements with the USSR and appealing to the USA for aid. This shows the direction in which he wants to lead Egypt.

Dizzy

How successful he will be depends on the resistance he meets at home and whether the struggle of the Palestinians can be successfully 'restrained'. In Egypt there has been resistance to Sadat's schemes. Heikal himself, from being an enthusiastic supporter of Sadat, resigned from his posts and returned from public life because he objected to the relaxation of Nasserite 'Arab socialism'.

In recent months, there have been riots, strikes, and demonstrations by workers and students in Cairo and the textile and heavy industry towns of the Nile Delta. But so far this opposition, as in the past, has been shackled by the lack of any clear political direction and the lack of any truly independent organisations separate from the state.

But the Palestinians still struggle to recover their land. One of the major weaknesses of Heikal's book is that he pays little attention to this issue, being more concerned with the dizzy heights of big power diplomacy. Yet it is this issue which still dominates events in the area, and to which no 'peaceful solution' can be found.

For the Israelis and their American backers, the solution is to smash the PLO once and for all, and push the Palestinians into the hands of Hussein of Jordan. (It has been revealed that the CIA incited the Christian right-wing militias in Lebanon to begin a campaign against the Palestinians — a campaign that led directly to the present civil war).

Despite its lack of coverage on this most important issue, Heikal's book is the most interesting and readable account to have appeared

on the development of Arab politics in the period 1967-73. It covers many other issues, such as the Libyan revolution, tactics of warfare, power struggles inside the Egyptian regime, relations with the USSR, and so on. It is an important historical document which deserves to be read, closely but critically, by anyone interested in this very important part of the world

NEAL SMITH

CPSA Conference

Red basher out - but no fight on pay curbs

THE FIRST DAY of the CPSA conference saw a decisive rejection of Kate Losinska, the union's president, whose use of the courts against the union has been featured in previous Workers Actions.

In the elections for president, Losinska polled 87,718 to the 107,335 votes of the Broad Left candidate, Lever. The candidate of the CPSA rank and file group 'Redder Tape' got 13,400 votes.

There were rumours that Losinska may again turn to the courts to defend her position in the union, but that seems unlikely. Instead she will probably campaign for a postal ballot system.

The votes for the 'Redder Tape' candidate, Mike McGrath, were disappointing, representing only a hard core of support in the union for some form of revolutionary socialist policies.

In the debates of the first day, this weakness of the left was shown up further by the passing of Motion 1 - a composite put forward by the Civil Servants Executive Committee. This "reaffirmed" conference

support for the national pay agreement which came forward from last year's conference, and demanded "a government assurance that an orderly return be made to the full measure of the agreement at the end of the Incomes Policy".

This resolution committed the union to doing nothing about pay NOW, and was set against other motions calling for a sliding scale of wages or a big flat rate increase. As a result of passing motion 1, all these other resolutions automatically fell. What's more, motion 1 was used continually throughout the rest of the day to block any discussion on other issues connected with pay on the principle that 'policy had already been decided'.

The only upset for the National Executive Committee came when a motion calling for a London weighting claim to be put in by July '76 was passed. In a sense this was a sop to the consciences of people who had voted to motion 1. In voting for a London weighting claim, they believed that perhaps this could be

pushed through without infringing any of the pay codes of the TUC and the government. However, militants must take up this motion.

The other big victory for the union leadership came with the passing of the NEC Emergency Motion 1007. This welcomed the calling of a Special Conference of the TUC and opposed in vague terms the 3% pay limit proposed by Healey. Instead it supported "proposals more designed to safeguard living standards, to reduce unemployment, to fight the cut-backs in public expenditure". But it did not say what those "proposals" should be, and so it turned out to be just another vague resolution meaning all things to all men.

So far the left can gather little comfort from the progress of the conference. The defeat on the pay resolution showed us to be badly organised in arguing for support for a sliding scale of wages.

The defeat of Losinska should give us some comfort, but so far that is all.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

Stop your bosses attacking working class JOURNALISTS TOLD

AT THE ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING of the National Union of Journalists last week, motions were passed pledging the union to support abortion on demand and the Working Womens Charter. One motion called on branches and chapels to encourage the formation of womens committees to further these aims.

However, those victories for the left (won in spite of a SPUC member from the Leeds branch who displayed a preserved foetus as he delivered his speech) were not typical. The ADM voted to support wage restraint and to instruct the union officials to get the best deal they can under the new Healey-TUC package.

In relation to the introduction of new machinery and rationalisation, the union now accepts voluntary redundancy in principle.

The Left had more success in the central debates on Press Freedom. These focused round the action of the Barnsley branch in getting local labour movement bodies (representing 20,000 workers in the area) to refuse to give any information to four members of the scab 'union' IoJ, thus supporting the Barnsley Chronicle NUJ chapel (office branch) in their fight to maintain a 100% union shop.

The conference passed an emergency motion congratulating the Barnsley branch "on its courage in the face of attacks of hostile proprietors posing as defenders of Press Freedom", instructed "the NEC to

support Barnsley's commitment to Union policy by giving every possible assistance to chapels which decide to establish 100% membership by refusing to work with non-NUJ journalists". It finally called for "other branches and chapels to take similar action".

'Journalists Charter', the NUJ rank and file group, argued that the 'Barnsley affair' was a purely trade union issue. But Philip Williams, the Barnsley delegate, in his speech at the ADM, made it clear that political issues of control of the Press were involved:

"Do we, and you, deserve that kind of support from the same trade unionists we as journalists smear every day in our newspapers? What are you doing to fight news editors, copytasters, sub-editors, editors, and plump proprietors to make sure your copy is not turned into a despicable insult on working people?"

He should have gone even further. Even NUJ journalists can't be assumed to represent truly the case of other trade unionists in dispute. The NUJ must begin to campaign for the right of reply to attacks in the Press for labour movement bodies.

If journalists ask other trade unionists for solidarity, those trade unionists can ask journalists to return that solidarity, to give help in getting their point of view represented truthfully in the reporting of strikes and other disputes. Such action would undermine one of the bosses' major weapons against work-

ers in struggle.

A vivid illustration of the Press Freedom issue appeared in the Daily Telegraph report of Thursday's Conference proceedings, written by Blake Baker. Baker claims to have been a member of the NUJ for 25 years, yet is well-known for his anti-union views.

He condemned ADM's support for the Barnsley branch's action and implied that the IoJ should be supported in scabbing against the NUJ. Further he asserted that the "admittedly unrepresentative" conference was merely "a phalanx of the Left wing", and wrote of a "Russian-style" ovation. Baker concluded, "if the strong left-wing faction among NUJ delegates had their way, there would be no liberty left - only NUJ members approved and dominated by the left would be allowed to work for and contribute to newspapers".

The ADM passed a motion instructing the National Executive Committee to make a complaint to the Telegraph and if necessary to the Press council, and finally advising all delegates to institute further complaints with their own branches. Such complaints would carry more weight if the conference had asked the Telegraph NUJ chapel and the other print unions involved there to force the retraction of or right of reply to such scurrilous reports.

ROBIN CAMACHO

Support for May 26th 'out of order'

FIFTY YEARS AGO, on March 20th 1926, the National Minority Movement called a Special Congress of Action in London. Amongst the 800 delegates was Jack Munroe, the president of Manchester Trades Council.

He seconded a resolution on "the capitalist offensive", which urged "each Trades Council to constitute itself a Council of Action by mobilising all the forces of the working class movement in its locality". These were to include the trade union branches, the organised unemployed, the Co-operative Guilds, and the workers' political organisations. Special attention was to be paid to the organisation of young workers and women.

Half a century later almost to the day, a resolution was passed at the National Labour Assembly on Unemployment, also calling for the establishment of "action committees to campaign against unemploy-

ment based on Trades Councils, Trade Unions, factory groups, and political organisations".

This time, however, instead of the president of Manchester Trades Council backing such a resolution, the leadership of the Trades Council has tried to pour cold water over it. James Fitzpatrick, the Trades Council treasurer and a member of the Communist Party, did not even mention the resolution or the call for a day of action on May 26th in his report-back to the April Trades Council from the Assembly.

When the Trades Council's other delegate to the Assembly, Dick Day, tried to raise this, attempts were made to rule him out of order. Despite protests from many delegates, the president ruled further discussion out of order.

Earlier in the same meeting, a supporter of Workers Action had asked for the Trades council banner

to be taken on the Salford Trades Council May Day rally. Frances Dean, Trades Council secretary and Communist Party member, opposed this on the grounds that "it isn't our demo". Yet only a few months ago Salford and Manchester were one Trades Council....

In rounding off the meeting, Eddie and Ruth Frow read out extracts from their newly-published history of the Trades Council - "To make that future now". They recounted how thousands had marched behind the Trades Council banner on previous May Days. The irony was not lost on many of the delegates.

One thing these events show is that Communist Party members are often not even prepared to wage a serious fight for the policies which they themselves have initiated. If May 26th is to be a success we can certainly not rely on them.

JACK SUTTON

Press favourite ahead in AUEW poll

THE RESULTS OF THE AUEW Elections for the post of Assistant General Secretary were gleefully received by the Press.

"Moderates make new advances in AUEW poll" was the Financial Times' headline.

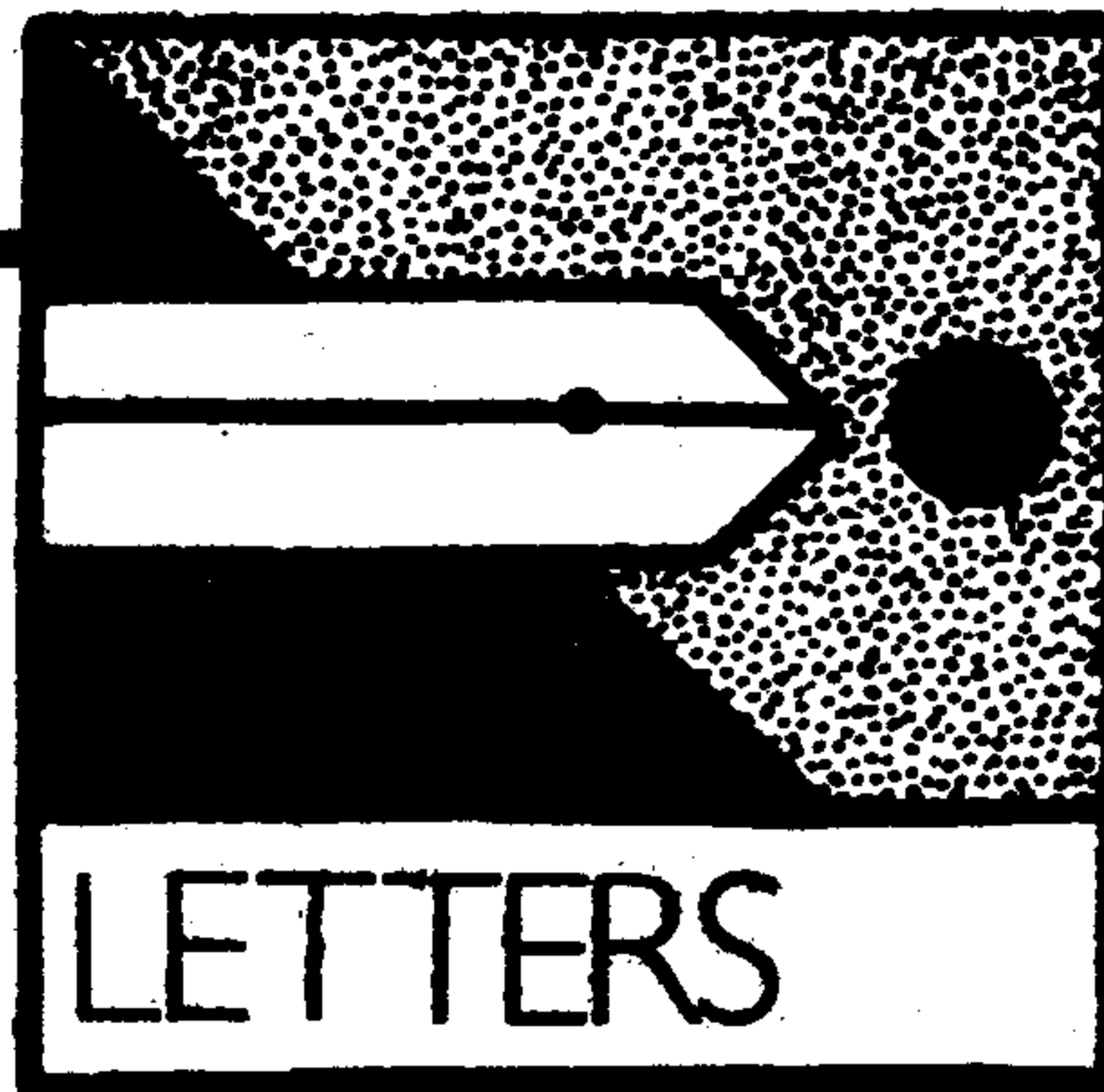
John Weakley, the 'moderate' candidate, gained 82,094 votes and led the 14-man field. The extent of Weakley's moderation can be judged from the very moderate way in which he took his own union through a series of legal actions last year. The outcome of this was the legal enforcement of a postal balloting system on the union.

Weakley knew what he was doing. The postal ballot system allows the greatest possible influence on election results by the Press and the rest of the media. Weakley duly got the support he expected. Proclaimed by the Press as the "commonsense candidate" (as Woodrow Wyatt called him in the Sunday Mirror) his chances of winning were greatly increased.

Nearly 20,000 votes behind Weakley came Bob Wright, the 'Broad Left' candidate. Although the Press campaign in favour of Weakley must have reduced Wright's chances, they weren't helped by his own record. Despite his Left wing reputation, it was Wright who oversaw the carve-up of Chrysler, which involved the loss of some 6,000 jobs. He also supported the Ryder report on "participation" in Leyland, which was designed to undermine the strength of the democratically elected shop stewards.

Len Blood, the candidate that Workers Action supported, received 7,684 votes. He was the only candidate who stood on a platform of outright opposition to the £6 pay limit and the secret ballot, and for a 35 hour week and the nationalisation of any firms declaring redundancies. The second round of the elections doesn't take place until October. A victory for Weakley then would be a great morale boost for the Right wing, who have already made several gains in the union. Workers Action therefore calls for support for Wright, despite his record.

STEVE McSWEENEY



Dear comrades,

Basing myself on the first press reports, I made an error in my criticism (last week WA) of the recent study by Dr Neville Bennet on teaching methods, which has been acclaimed by the press as demolishing 'progressive' education. I wrote: "success, in the report's terms, is restricted to academic success", and complained that the report does not take into account the influence of education on children's psychology and personality. But, although the press didn't mention it, Dr Bennet did in fact study the influence of different educational methods on "anxiety" and "motivation". Whether his study is adequate or broad enough, is another matter; but my statement was too sweeping.

IRENA HOLT.

THE UNIONS



EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Cannon St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Wednesday 5th May. Mass picket of Lord Mayor's banquet in honour of General Geisel of Brazil. 6.30 to 7.30 at the Guildhall, Gresham St, EC2.

Friday 7th May. Camden Trades Council defence committee open meeting. 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

Friday 7th May. Coventry Workers Action readers' meeting. Dave Spencer on 'The Fourth International'. 7.30pm at the Dyers Arms.

Friday 7th May. Picket of STC/ITT head office, 190 Strand, noon to 2pm, organised by North London Committee against Repression in Spain.

Saturday 8th May. All London Nurse's Campaign meeting. 2pm to 5pm at the Thos Coram Foundation Institute, Brunswick Square.

Saturday 8th May. Conference on 'the role of the troops in Ireland'. From 9.30 at Manchester Poly, All Saints. Speakers include Ernie Roberts, Mike Farrell, and debate between Sean Matgamna (Nat. Sec. International-Communist League) and Al Stewart (Vice-President, National Union of Students). Social in the evening with Irish Mist.

Saturday 8th May. Workers Action Day School on "Building a fighting LPYS". Discussion on which road to socialism, on Ireland, on the Working Womens Charter, on unemployment. 11.30am to 5pm at Sidney Stringer School, Coventry (near the bus station).

Tuesday 11th May. Mass picket of Camden Trades Council to demand admittance of all accredited delegates, whether or not they accept Rule 14. 7pm at 53 Doughty St, WC1.

Tuesday 11th May. Sheffield Workers Action public meeting. Michele Ryan on "Women, jobs and the cuts". 8pm at the Mailcoach, West St.

Tuesday 11th May. South London Workers Action readers' meeting on 'How to fight the Labour Government'. Speaker: Andrew Hornung. 8pm at Brixton Central Library.

Tuesday 11th May. Greater Manchester TOM meeting on 'The role of the Army in Ireland'. 7.30pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

Thursday 13th May. Nottingham Workers Action meeting. Keith Bennett on 'Terrorism'. 8pm at the Peacock, Mansfield Rd.

Monday 17th May. Teesside TOM organising meeting, 8pm in the Cleveland Hotel, Linthorpe Rd, Middlesbrough.

Tuesday 18th May. West London Workers Action meeting on 'The Working Womens Charter'. 7.30pm at Hammer-smith Town Hall.

Thursday 20th May. Birmingham Workers Action meeting on 'The May 26th Day of Action and the next step'. Speakers: Andrew Hornung and John Bryant. 8pm at the 'Wellington'.

WORKERS IN ACTION

Leyland militant still suspended as Leyland announce 'rationalisations'

CK SPRUNG has still not been reinstated at Leyland's Triumph plant at Canley, Coventry. He is suspended on full pay because he allegedly allowed three members of the Cinema Action group in to film recent work-in at the plant. His suspension came with no copy of the charges against him, and has been followed up by a vicious witch-hunt against him in the pages of the Coventry Evening Telegraph. The manager of which is a relative of Geoffrey Turnbull, a former Leyland director). A front page article in one issue of the Coventry Evening Telegraph took up the whole of Sprung's past

political record, even going so far as to accuse him of having connections with East German spies. These supposed 'spies' were the members of the Cinema Action group — Sprung's son, a West German, and a Portuguese...

The plant convenors voted to leave the matter of Sprung's suspension in abeyance until the next full plant conference. They have done nothing to mobilise the substantial rank-and-file support for Sprung, a leading militant steward in the plant.

Before his dismissal Sprung was pressing Leyland management to come clean on the whole future of the Canley plant. Last Friday Ley-

land announced that production of cars was to be transferred from Canley to Solihull, some 20 miles away. Canley is to be transformed into a components factory.

Management claim this will lead to no compulsory redundancies, and the shop-stewards committee has accepted the proposals in outline. But they are the first wave of the promised Leyland rationalisation scheme, and will probably lead initially to further rationalisations, with redundancies, of small Rover and Triumph components factories scattered around the Coventry area.

In the past week Leyland management have been issuing warnings about the need to boost production

and reduce the number of strikes in the company, coupling this with the threat to advise the Government not to put any more money into the firm unless 'industrial relations improve'.

But they can hardly talk about improving 'industrial relations' after their behaviour towards Sprung. Sprung has been left to fight alone and is considering legal action against Leyland and the Coventry Evening Telegraph.

But it is absolutely vital that a powerful rank and file response, through strike action, shows that Leyland workers will not allow militants like Sprung to be scapegoated. DAVE SPENCER

Local paper gives support to NF racism

THE NATIONAL FRONT are gaining strength and influence in Leicester. They are the fastest growing branch in the country.

This is thanks in part to the local paper helping to spread their racist filth. The Leicester Mercury is notorious for its racism and support for the National Front. Three weeks before the council elections in which the NF were fielding 48 candidates, there was the headline "Immigrants in Mafia rackets". The article told of how money was being extorted from black workers by other blacks in return for getting and keeping jobs.

In on the scene jumped George Bromley, the local T&G full-timer, saying that the Mafia racket must be stopped in the interests of black workers. Yet he is the man responsible for selling out the Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters. He is one of the people responsible for the lack of unionisation of black workers in Leicester.

The extortion of money does go on, but we should ask, why? Black workers face difficulty in getting work and jobs are insecure because they cannot rely on the support of white workers in their struggles to keep their jobs. Also the threat of being kicked out of the country hangs over many Asian workers because of racist immigration laws.

A week later after that article, the headline in the Leicester Mercury was — "Asian Factory Bosses flouting the Law". This article claimed that Asian bosses were ignoring industrial regulations. Where are the headlines exposing the building industry or other white bosses who put the lives of their workers at risk every day by flouting safety regulations? Of course black bosses exploit workers — but not because they are black. The answer is to organise black workers in the sweat-shops so that they can fight for better conditions.

Unemployment is rising in Leicester. Bentleys, the best-organised workforce, have just accepted 600 redundancies. Housing conditions are appalling. The ideas of the NF make sense to those looking for scapegoats.

It is possible that we will have the first National Front councillor in Britain. This points to the need for a well-organised Trade Union and community-based Anti-Fascist committee to be built to combat the National Front. Women's and gay organisations should be involved as fascism poses a threat to them, too. Black workers must be given support in struggle. Trade Unions should be called upon to organise schools specifically on organisation of black workers. The National Front will not be beaten unless we are well-organised and on the offensive. JANE BRUTON

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from p1 ARMY HANDS OVER TO ORANGE THUGS



Army sharpshooter

concerned to keep the peace, they would not now plan to hand control over to professional Protestant armed forces — control that can only provoke resistance from the Catholics.

The Army were never peace-

keepers, but agents acting in the interests of the British ruling class. First they attempted to back up moves for a political reorganisation, while directing all their considerable fire-power against the Catholics and their militia, the IRA. Now the political reorganisation plans have fallen through, they have switched tactics and begun to train and arm Orange forces to openly repress the Catholics.

Britain is arming one side for a future civil war. If their plans work out, it will be a controlled civil war in which the Catholics and Republicans are pulverised. If this be peace-keeping, pour petrol on a fire to put it out.

Britain is committed for now to maintaining the artificial Six County state, which is the framework within which religious sectarianism is nurtured and permanently reproduced. Tactics differ — the objective remains the same.

Now some of the 'peacekeeper' camouflage is coming off. It leaves even less excuse for believing the claims of the British government about what it is doing and has been doing in Ireland.

All the more reason, therefore, for the British labour movement to demand immediate troop withdrawal, not to barracks, but from Northern Ireland. All the more reason to understand that the only forces fighting in Northern Ireland for the conditions that will allow real peace — within a federal united Ireland — have been the Provisional Republican Movement. JOHN O'MAHONY

Edinburgh 'Broad Left' dampens student militancy

AT MORAY HOUSE College of Education in Edinburgh, most of the students finishing this year now know that, as a result of the education cuts, they have no job to go to. A couple of weeks ago cuts in student intake were announced: 24% in primary, 17% in secondary.

A 250-strong students' general meeting last Wednesday, 28th April, debated a call for an occupation round the demand that the Board of Governors immediately reconvene and publicly refuse to implement the cut-backs.

The motion was carried 146-87 with 26 abstentions. But there was no occupation. The student union Executive had inserted an arbitrary proviso that 10% of the total student body (that is, 250 students) must support the motion for action to follow.

But the essence of the Executive's tactics was political. They argued for an occupation only as an auxiliary to negotiations. This attitude generally reflects the politics of the 'Broad Left' in the NUS. The 'Morning Star' of 29th April, reporting on Moray House, failed to mention the debate on direct action at all.

In contrast, Socialist Society members including Workers Action supporters argued for direct action to help push forward a fighting campaign against the cuts and unemployment. They argued for enlisting the support of all college unions; calling on the EIS (the Scottish teachers' union) to organise all unemployed teachers and to campaign for reduced

Moray House was closed down by an effective occupation and strike, going out to persuade other colleges to join in action.

Socialist Society members will fight for this perspective again in another general meeting due for May 11th. BILL FORD

Camden TC campaign to lift the Rule 14 ban

CAMDEN TRADES COUNCIL defence committee is launching a campaign to oppose the use of Rule 14. They have produced a leaflet outlining the need for the campaign, which says:

A major attack is now underway, aimed at the democratic rights of the unionists. This threat goes under the title of "Rule 14", which the TUC is demanding that all trade councils adopt as part of their constitution. Rule 14 — slipped in at the General Council on the basis of a report from the Trades Council Consultative Committee and discussed by a trade union conference — instructs all trade councils to give any support to an organisation or initiative which opposes the policies of the Labour government and the TUC.

For example, it would have meant that no trades council could send delegates to the National Conference on Unemployment which attracted over 3000 delegates when held on March 27th: it means that

adopt the Working Women's Charter, which twelve trade unions have already adopted nationally.....

"At its AGM, Camden Trades Council voted not to accept Rule 14. The secretary of the Trades Council, a prominent member of the Communist Party and a supporter of Rule 14, then "suspended" the Trades Council, on his own initiative and without the support or even consultation of either its delegates as a whole or its Executive Council.

Delegates

"This arbitrary and unconstitutional manoeuvre was later supported by the TUC which was only too happy to get support from such self-appointed policemen. Now the same secretary, again without consulting either delegates or executive, has tried to reconstitute Camden Trades Council, calling a meeting at which only those who support Rule 14

are accredited delegates or not!

The Camden Trades Council defence committee is made up of Camden Trades Council delegates and members of the Executive Committee, and has been established to carry on the fight against Rule 14 and to represent majority opinion on the Trades Council, which has stated its opposition to the TUC dictate. Even now other trades councils which have thrown out Rule 14 are being lined up for attack.

"It is urgent to begin at once a coordinated fight against Rule 14, bringing together all trades councils and trade unionists opposed to the dictate. That is the purpose of our open meeting [7.30-7th May at Conway Hall] — to set up such a campaign and build support for it. As an immediate measure, we appeal for support for a mass lobby of Camden Trades Council at the meeting called for May 11th, (7.30pm at 53 Doughty St, WC1) to demand that all accredited delegates

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