

WORKERS' fight

3p

No.44 — February 16th - 23rd, 1974

Pledge Labour to free these men!

THREE more jail sentences have been handed out at Shrewsbury Crown Court to building workers convicted of the 'crime' of picketing in an official strike.

Bill Pierce, Arthur Murray, and Tom Williams now join Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson, and Mackie Jones behind bars. At the same time another five men were given four month terms suspended for two years on the ridiculous cover all charge of 'unlawful assembly'.

This is the Tories' promise of 'firm government' — a promise being fulfilled by the police on picket lines even before the elections!

And they are not the only ones.

Teja Singh and Gurlam Singh have been arrested by police for their part in the Art Castings strike at Nuneaton. The possibility arises of deportation, linking two of the Tories' most reactionary pieces of legislation.

Scabbing

Meanwhile the Tories' special patrol groups and other police and army antipicket squads, both official and freelance, are gearing up for a major assault on the miners' picket lines.

As a class we can defeat the Tories' plans. But to do this we need to stand together and exert all our forces, placing as many men on a picket line as is necessary to stop scabbing.

The law has shown its face for all to see at Shrewsbury and in the other picketing cases elsewhere.

If that law must be broken for the miners' strike to win, for workers to secure their demands, then so be it.

To act as Joe Gormley has one, giving in to the pressure of Labour's "most moderate of men" campaign, and limit the picket lines to six is a capitulation to the laws of the very society that robs the miners, jails their building worker brothers, jailed in 1972 their brothers the dockers, who are now blacking coal imports — a law, finally, that

Foretaste of Tories' "Firm Government"

3 MORE PICKETS JAILED

sought to jail Longannet pickets in the last strike and that will be used against pickets in this strike.

It is a law that neither saved Fred Matthews — the miner killed on the picket line by a scab lorry — nor was invoked against his killer.

Buckling under the pressure

of the Tories' threats transmitted into the Labour movement through the mealy mouthed cowardice of the Labour Party — Gormley now gives credence to the Tories' attacks on 'extremist violence' as well as undermining the chances of his own members' success with

his six men on a picket rule.

A lodge committee member in one area told WORKERS FIGHT that his instructions were to have only six — first come first served — on the picket, and to isolate any other so that they could be picked off by the police all the easier.



William Pierce (top) and Arthur Murray — jailed for 6 months at Shrewsbury

Kent miners in London for picket duty — many staying at student unions in the London area — are angry about Gormley's ruling. It appears that there is picket money for only 70 to 80 of the 180 men in the capital. The dispute between the Kent men and the National Executive of the NUM is an indication of the fact that many miners will not be prepared to see their claim subordinated to Labour's electoral sloganising.

The meaning of this election can largely be summed up in terms of the picketing issue. On the one hand we have the Tories with their threat of 'firm government' determined

to annihilate the right to strike effectively. On the other hand we have Labour's inability to stand and fight Toryism, and the serious danger that in power, as now, it will strive effectively to stifle the real and vital expressions of class struggle with the cry "don't rock the boat".

We, who support the miners, who place the direct open class struggle before the institution of elections, call for a vote for Labour and a stepping up of every kind of self organisation to fight Labour's inevitable renegacy. The pickets are an aspect of this self reliance, and that is why they are being attacked.

VOTE LABOUR — SUPPORT THE MINERS —

THE BATTLE to be decided on 28 February — important though it is in itself — is like a skirmish in the obscurity of night to gain favourable positions for the full scale combat at dawn. And the skirmish is launched by army with less than full control of the situation.

The Tories hoped, by calling an election, to persuade the miners to call off their strike. That hope failed. Their purpose, however, was to create a room for attacks on pickets, strikers' unions and workers generally.

The Tories' strategy of election and agreements under Phase 3 was based on the gamble that the Tories would win the election and Phase 3 would be implemented. The Tories' strategy was to force the miners to accept wages, bound to be lower than those of the rest of the working class, and to be paid on a cost-plus basis.

BUILD SOLIDARITY COMMITTEES

Their downfall is coming from the crazy logic of their system, the capitalist system. All signs now are that we are entering a serious world recession, a period of economic crisis, where production drops, not because it is not useful, but because it is not profitable. The British ruling class faces the class confrontation it feared last year — only later, and in a sharper form.

It is possible that even a re-elected Tory government would settle with the miners. But already there is talk of welching on the threshold clauses. The bosses' lifeblood and priority is profit — and to pay out on the threshold clauses would hurt profits too much.

Militant direct action

Industrial Relations Act — Incomes Policy — redundancies — every page in the book is torn and dogeared except the use of the physical force of the state to suppress workers' struggles.

The strength of the miners — the vanguard of the whole working class now — and the extent of solidarity with them, is an infinitely more important factor in protecting and forwarding the interests of working people than are the vague promises of a future Labour Government. If the miners are allowed to go down to defeat, who will rise victorious? Quite probably it is true that the miners, in continuing with

strike action, are harming Labour's chances in the elections. Nonetheless, they are absolutely right to remember 1964/70 and not to abandon action now for promises later. They are right to rely on their own strength, on what they themselves can do, rather than relying on MPs who, once elected, are out of our control.

For all that, WORKERS FIGHT entirely supports voting Labour. We do not believe that a new Labour government would fundamentally reverse the attacks on working people which are necessary for any government committed to maintain the rickety structure of capitalism. But Labour is more vulnerable to the pressure of the working class than the Tories.

That fact is of no use unless we maintain the pressure of independent working class action. To abandon militant direct action for the sake of helping Labour would be to submit to the 'other side' of a Labour Government — the fact that the working class is more vulnerable to pressure from a Labour Government than from a Tory Government.

To be able to replace Labour we must build a socialist alternative. One part of doing that is to campaign within the trade unions, and within the Labour Party, which is

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"Starve them out" is Tory election threat to strikers

THE MOST VICIOUS, anti-working class element in the Tories' manifesto is undoubtedly their plan to cut off Supplementary Benefit to strikers' families.

Even as a proposal, without being implemented, it is a weapon against the working class, a demagogic appeal to the backwoodsmen, to the scabs, to the disgruntled and self-righteous who think they are the only people who pay taxes, to the servile types of backward workers who pride themselves on doing a 'fair day's work' for their 'fair day's pay', and whose eleventh commandment is 'Never Strike!'

The very proposal is a justification to the ultra-right press and the near-fascist Tory MPs like Jill Knight, who demands that the government should "stop this extraordinary charade of helping the enemies of the state" (Daily Telegraph 29.1.74)

These people present the payment of supplementary

benefit to strikers' families as a generous charity, financed entirely by a long-suffering populace of "moderates". "Subsidising strikes" is their favourite catch phrase, as if strikers' families were being singled out for especially generous treatment.

But anyone who's tried to get hold of this "generous charity" will have a different story to tell.

First, of course, no-one other than the recipients themselves pays for it. If anything, most workers retrieve only a small proportion of the contributions they have to pay out every week of their working lives. The only thing that's 'charitable' about it is the mean, humiliating and disgustingly tight-fisted way in which it's paid out.

Far from it being a special favour to strikers, they are penalised compared with other recipients of supplementary benefits. The male striker gets nothing for himself. If he is single, he is left penniless. If his wife works, he gets nothing

strikers



Sir Keith Joseph

either. Only a non-working wife and children get benefit.

But the real charade is that, although there is a pretense that the man is being cut off and left to fend for himself, he is in fact expected to live on the amount given to keep his wife and children fed. For, since the Tories revised the law on this in 1971, if he gets anything at all himself in tax rebate or union strike pay pay, all but £1 is deducted from what his wife receives for herself and her children. Thus the DHSS

makes sure that strikers' families are £5-£6 worse off than anyone else qualifying for supplementary benefit.

In the past, the Tories have not gone along with the demands of their followers that they should starve strikers' families. At the 1973 Tory Party conference, even Sir Keith Joseph, millionaire boss who runs the DHSS, said "This Conference would be the first to howl if we really did have pictures on television of children going hungry for lack of benefit — perhaps because their striking fathers were on low pay and had not been able to save."

Yet now the Tories are threatening that if they are re-elected we will see just that. They're obviously very much in need of something that will rally round them the ranks of the "Hang'em, flog'em & starve'em" brigade, particularly at this moment when they may be wavering after the defection of their darling, Enoch Powell.

But there is much more to it than that. If implemented, it will add another serious weapon to the bosses' armoury. And like many of their other recent weapons, it is designed for a two pronged attack.

The first prong is the obvious

one to weaken and demoralise workers in struggle, and use the suffering of their families as a bludgeon to force them back to work or deter them from striking in the first place.

The second prong lies in the provision to make the unions bear the cost of maintaining their striking members. Already the Industrial Relations Act has opened up the possibility of civil actions against union funds to recover commercial losses caused in certain strikes. This new measure would be a further threat to bankrupt the unions. And any such threat would mean giving more power to the union bureaucrats in their pressures to settle struggles and cook up sellout compromises.

CRIPPLING

Thus it is planned that the militant worker will be caught in a crippling vice, with the immediate problems of his family on one side, and the union officials of the other side pushing harder than ever for a quick and easy settlement.

If the last three and a half years were not good enough reason for rally round and kick out the Tories, the threat of a deep dark age of Tory rule for 5 more years certainly is.

TOR LICEI

ON THE face of it, there's been only one tiny change in the law on picketing while the Tories have been in power — the change which specifies that a person's HOME may not be picketed. Yet there have been massive changes in the legal restraints that pickets face, and in the enforcement of the various laws that the bosses' courts can use against pickets.

These changes have been brought about in 4 ways — and every one is being held up now to try and put the skids under the miners' strike.

1. Intimidation of pickets. This is the purpose of the Shrewsbury trials, where every law in the book has been thrown at 24 building workers who took part in mass flying pickets in the 1972 strike. These 24 between them have been

Some black primary school children, when asked to draw a picture of themselves, will produce a figure with a white face. So strong is the pressure of racialism that they deny their own skin colour.

With another minority in our society, this process of self-negation is more dramatic. The members of that minority will try, painfully, throughout their lives to appear 'normal'. And not without cause otherwise they may risk imprisonment, electric shock treatment from 'helpful' psychiatrists, losing their jobs or houses, or being beaten up

IRRATIONAL

This is the homosexual minority. Despite appearances to the contrary, it is a very large minority, far larger than many people think. According to Kinsey's surveys, 4% of men were exclusively homosexual 10% had been so for 3 years and more 19% of men aged 20 years were bisexual or predominantly homosexual 37% of men had had some homosexual experience going as far as orgasm. About 4% of women were exclusively homosexual from the age of 20 to 35, and 13% had had some homosexual experience to orgasm.

It can hardly be argued that the oppression of homosexuals is as important a factor in society as racialism. Nonetheless it is a question which Marxists must take a clear stand on. As Marxists we are in favour of the most radical democracy and against all irrational prejudice. As far as we are concerned, people's individual sexual preferences are a purely private matter and the state has no right to interfere. "Everyone", as Marx put it, "should be able to attend to his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in."

CONSENTING

It is simple enough. Yet all the existing 'socialist' states (including Cuba) oppress homosexuals to one degree or another. And in the writings of Engels we can find reactionary sentiments on the question of homosexuality.

In Scotland, homosexuality is still illegal. In England and Wales, the 1967 Act which legalised homosexuality between 'consenting adults in private' stipulates an age of consent of 21 (instead of 16 for heterosexuals). Recently a man in Southend was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for sleeping with a boy aged 19.

HOMOSEXUALS-A SILENT MINORITY



A Gay Liberation demonstration in the U.S.A.

'Soliciting', holding hands in public, etc., can be prosecuted under common law.

It is obviously necessary to campaign against this oppression. It is therefore also necessary to answer the prejudices which create and perpetuate it.

What are the prejudices which back up reactionary attitudes to homosexuals?

* 'Homosexuality is unnatural biologically'. At best, this argument is just about on the level of 'if God meant us to fly, he would have given us wings.'

Obviously, all civilisation is 'unnatural' — but are we against civilisation? A certain amount of heterosexual activity is — or, at least, until very recently has been — 'natural' in the sense of being necessary for the continuation of the species. But that doesn't mean that homosexuality is unnatural at all.

Two anthropologists surveyed 76 primitive societies about which information was available. In 49 of them homosexuality was considered normal. D.J. West, a writer who describes homosexuality as a

'perversion', 'deviation' and so on, nonetheless writes "Exclusive preference for the opposite sex is an acquired trait, and involves the repression of a certain amount of homosexual feeling which is natural to the human being." In this sense, it is the person who is totally non-homosexual who is 'unnatural'.

All the indications are that in a society with a minimum of repression, most people would be to one extent or another bisexual and it would be the people who were attracted only to one sex who were unusual.

STEREOTYPE

* 'Homosexuals are effete, affected people. (Pansies etc.) Homosexuality is associated with decadent cliques of degenerate scions of the ruling class (Oscar Wilde, Bloomsbury etc.)'

One might as well argue that all Jews are like Fagin. In fact, homosexuality is known to be especially common among, for example, the armed forces and prisoners — none of which can be described as effete. The stereotype of the 'pansy' is not at all the average homosexual;

lavatories, every lavatory in the country would be choc-a-bloc! It is only desperation brought about by the fact that the great bulk of 'normal' social life in our society is designed to exclude and shun homosexuality that leads a tiny few to loitering in lavatories.

The average homosexual is no more inclined to child-molesting than the average heterosexual. In fact violent and aggressive child-molesting is almost exclusively heterosexual. (Despite this, homosexual teachers, for example, run grave dangers of victimisation.)

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PREJUDICE

COVERED OVER

Nearly all socialists would feel ashamed to come out clearly with obviously prejudiced remarks about homosexuals. Yet the prejudice is often there, covered over

"The most common reaction of comrades who have discovered that I am gay has been one, not so much of hostility as of embarrassment mingled with an uneasy tolerance. Yes, of course, you're oppressed and we sympathise but really the best thing to do is to work for the overthrow of capitalism... No doubt if such comrades encountered an obscure minority like one-legged green men from the Cayman Islands, they would say something similar." (Bob Cant in 'Gay Marxist' No.2)

UNBEARABLE

But Homosexuals are not an obscure and irrelevant minority. Of around 25 million working men and women in Britain, something like two and a half million must be more or less active homosexuals. The sort of pressures involved are indicated by this statement from a homosexual mechanic at Alvin works in Coventry "All the time I have to pretend to be what I'm not. I have to make up

girl friends that don't exist and even tell anti-queer jokes. Sometimes the strain gets unbearable." (Quoted in 'Gay Marxist' No.1).

Will this worker come to the forefront as a militant — or will his embarrassment make him try to stick timidly to private life? If he were to join a socialist organisation, would he be able to work harmoniously in that organisation, or would he feel a constant strain there too?

OPPRESSION

Above and beyond the strain on the homosexual minority, prejudices against homosexuality link up with the ideologies which express the oppression of women.

Homosexuality is regarded as 'abnormal' because, by separating sexuality from the begetting and upbringing of children, it cannot fail to challenge the sanctity of the



'It's about time you chap'

Accidents

AT A time when the British miners are being accused of selfishness and a lack of patriotism, it will do no harm to consider a few facts and figures about them and their industry.

- Since nationalisation in 1947, over 7,000 miners have been killed in the pits.
- Since nationalisation, over 40,000 men have been seriously injured in the pits.

Add those two figures together, and you come up with the population of a town the size of Lancaster, or Hereford.

THE LAW IS SCABS'

INFORMATION by RON VANDY

facing over 100 charges, some of them ancient laws including conspiracy. Three of them have been in jail since before Christmas, serving long sentences for conspiracy to do something which in itself carries a maximum sentence of 3 months jail of £20 fine. For this 'conspiracy' (i.e. planning and organising a picket) they've been jailed for 3 years, 2 years and 9 months respectively. Now 3 more have been jailed for 6 months each.

existing law has been re-defined. In one case the Law Lords ruled that, although the law is supposed to permit the peaceful communication of information (in fact that's about all it does permit) pickets do not have the right to stop people in order to tell them what the strike is about. They found that a UCATT District Organiser, Bro. Broome, was breaking the law because he stood in front of a lorry holding a placard and, in this way, made it stop for 9 minutes.

This way the law, without being formally changed, has been made meaningless. You can't argue with a 30 mph lorry!

That this case was seen as a precedent was clear when only five weeks later a similar case came up to the High Court. Peter Kavanagh, a leading building trade militant in London, had broken through a police cordon at St. Thomas' Hospital site in order, so he thought, to exercise his legal right to communicate with the driver of a truck carrying scabs onto the site.

He claimed that the police cordon was an infringement of the legal right to communicate information. The learned Judge, citing the Broome case, thought otherwise.

Criminal

3. Although the Industrial Relations Act made only a small change in the section on picketing itself, it defines a whole array of circumstances in which legal action can be taken against unions to recover losses caused by picketing (or blacking, solidarity strikes, etc).

Among these is 'any industrial action to induce a breach of commercial contract by someone who is not a party to the dispute. Picketing in these circumstances is not in itself in breach of



criminal law, but it isn't protected by the normal rights to picket — so that all sorts of charges can be brought (like obstruction of highway or police etc.) and the normal defence that such acts were committed in furtherance of legal picketing is swept away by the Industrial Relations Act.

4. To enforce these laws, to hold back and break up picket lines and drag off hostages into the spiders' web of the bosses' courts, enormous resources have been expended to strengthen the police. Special computerised information centres, flying squads of picket busters trained in all the latest techniques the Army has perfected in the north of Ireland, armed Special Patrol Groups, horses, dogs, helicopters — all have been marshalled for use against the working class.

These preparations have not been made merely to irritate and

harass workers — though they're certainly having that effect. They were made so that in a major confrontation which would have important repercussions on the class struggle, the government would have extra weapons to try to intimidate workers into peacefully allowing their living standards to be cut.

Such a struggle is the miners' strike that began a week ago. Even before it started, the Tory government made it clear that all the legal precedents, all the police preparations, and all the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act are being held in readiness.

First, Robert Carr started by warning that pickets could not (however peacefully) stop anyone for any period of time in order to talk to them. No doubt police around the country received the same instruction. They certainly

received instructions never to assist pickets by stopping vehicles for them — which, for the sake of keeping things 'peaceful', they have sometimes been known to do.

The police arrangements themselves were set on the alert.

Newspapers which had largely ignored the Shrewsbury case for the past year weighed in to the intimidation campaign they suddenly thought it necessary to publicise the fact that 3 men were in jail for picketing.

At the same time, the Attorney General Sir Peter Rawlinson made a long statement summing up what the Tories see as the law as it stands now. He warned that "Unions and their funds, the moneys contributed by their members, may be at risk if the leadership of the unions organise interference with supplies and the parties damaged by this interference seek to enforce a remedy." And he said that unless the narrowest reading of the law was kept to, pickets would be liable to criminal prosecution. He couldn't imagine how "so-called mass picketing can be lawful."

These weren't the kind of warnings they gave when they introduced the Industrial Relations Bill — so beneficial, they said, to all 'moderate' trade unionists!

Discourage

And now the Central Electricity Generating Board has taken its cue from Sir Peter Rawlinson and sent 'cautionary letters' to the T&GWU, to ASLEF, to the NUR and the NUM, saying that under the law it would be entitled to compensation for losses it suffered if contracts were broken as a result of these unions' industrial action in connection with the miners' strike.

So while the police line up outside the power stations with their dogs and their walkie talkie radios, the Industrial Relations Act — the Act we were all told was 'on ice' — is being used behind the scenes to undermine and discourage solidarity action.

All these facts about the blows the Tories have prepared to strike at the working class could intimidate the less resolute trade unionist into keeping his head down and sticking within the bosses' law into fighting the class struggle against the bosses and the bosses' government according to the rules they make up as they need into allowing himself to go into the ring in the coming bitter battles with his hands tied behind his back.

It is the intention of the Government and its legal servants that workers should be so intimidated.

And there is good reason to take the present legal situation

seriously. For what will it mean if we are intimidated by the legal tightening up? It means they will beat us down, savagely cut our living standards and make us pay for their crisis. If they make their new, harsher laws and precedents stick they are sure to follow up with yet tougher legal action against militancy.

No self-respecting worker will chose to bend his neck under this Tory legal yoke and play along with it.

No worker who has experienced the power of direct action in the last couple of years of struggle can doubt that, if the working class mobilises and fights back — as it fought against the jailing of the 5 dockers in Pentonville in 1972 — then the Tory laws can be rammed down their throats. A mass campaign of direct action can still free the Shrewsbury victims.

In every struggle there are victims. No-one wants to go to jail — but they can't jail the whole working class. Those already victimised will be best served by stepping up the struggle. Without callousness, it is true to say that in Britain for a long time the struggle has been soft and easy. It will not be so in the future.

Either we hit back now, or we allow them to push us back to pre-war conditions.

We simply have no choice except to fight or surrender. That means organising mass picketing, ignoring their laws, using the necessary force against both scabs and scab-herding police. That's the only way to make their laws meaningless.

IRANIANS PROTEST AT STATE TERROR

AT THE END OF last month, simultaneous hunger strikes by Iranian (Persian) students began in a number of European cities and in the United States.

Their protest has been directed against the Shah's military-police dictatorship and in solidarity with those in Iranian prisons who, even there, continue to wage a struggle against state terrorism.

The "rule of law" in Iran today is the rule of the military tribunals. These 'courts' have sentenced 130 people to be executed in the last 2 years alone. Hundreds have been sentenced to life imprisonment and the torture that is the inevitable accompaniment of jail sentences.

Where the regime doesn't wish to rely on even these courts, assassination at the hands of SAVAK, the state secret police, are commonplace.

When Amnesty International tried to investigate the facts of this terror, its official's interpreter was kidnapped by SAVAK and then sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

Now a further gag has been placed on many of those nations who might otherwise have played a role in exposing at least the worst of these atrocities. With the threat of an oil embargo, everything will be swept deeper under the carpet.

The massive intensification of Iran's internal terror is the civil counterpart of its massive army, navy and air force build-up. They serve a common purpose. The internal terror provides — like the situation in Greece — for that extinction of popular expressions of all kinds that imperialism needs in order to impose on a living society the regime of a military garrison.

As this week's clashes with Iraq suggest, imperialism is building in Iran a super-fortified garrison against any progressive development in the Middle East. But its aims are not limited to this the naval build-up is imperialism's way of policing the Indian Ocean, whilst Iran's position bordering Russia makes it ideal for imperialism's missile and air force bases.

Information

The idea of this is to put the fear of God into anyone else who takes any sort of leading role in a flying picket, or even just goes along on it.

2. In two recent court cases, the bourgeois family. Men who see manliness as defined by acquiring women must condemn as 'queer' those men who opt out of that race for acquisition.

Most strikingly, female homosexuality is simply ignored. (There are only the literary-sounding words like 'lesbian' and 'sapphic' to describe female homosexuals no common terms of abuse like 'queer', 'pouf', 'fairy' or 'pansy'.) If sexuality is seen as a matter of men acquiring women, then the very idea of women having a sexuality which doesn't depend on men can hardly be recognised — even as a perversion'.

Homosexuality as such is a matter of individuals' private preferences. The oppression of homosexuals, however, is a public and political matter, on which we must take a clear stand.

MARTIN THOMAS
TONY BROCKMAN



tried a little self-sacrifice'

Dust Disease

Pneumoconiosis — the "dust disease" — is contracted by being exposed to dust underground. It is incurable.

- Since 1954, more than 16,000 miners have died from "the dust".
- At the moment, more than 38,000 men — some of them still working at the pits — are receiving benefit because they suffer from "the dust".
- Each year, more than 600 new cases of "the dust" are medically confirmed.

Productivity

When the pits were nationalised in 1947, there were more than 703,000 miners working in 958 collieries. Their productivity rate, which is measured in output per manshift (o.m.s.) was 21.5 cwt.

In 1973, with 268,000 miners working in 281 collieries, the output per manshift was 45.8 cwt — an increase of more than 100 per cent in productivity. A record of productivity increase with which no other British industry can compare.

SETTING THE SCENE IN THE LAND OF DREAMS

TO BUTT IN while someone else is talking is bad manners. No doubt it is even worse manners to butt into someone else's private dream — even if it is only to tell him that he is talking in his sleep and making a fool of himself.

Still, someone writing in RED WEEKLY is making these dreams public. So perhaps we may comment after all.

The lead article in the 8th February edition of RED WEEKLY begins with a fact — that "the election is a political manoeuvre" — and ends with a fact — that we should vote Labour but rely on our own struggles.

Well yes, every night begins with dusk and the next day starts with dawn. But oh, the dreams that fill the in-between time!

The scene is Dreamland. Or maybe the world that Alice discovered when she fell through that rabbit hole. In the midst of a miners' strike an election has been called. There is a danger therefore, (says Red Weekly) that "the struggles will be suspended, workers will return to the normal routine of home and job." (In this Dreamland, you see, workers in struggle do not live at home... Perhaps they spend 24 hours a day in mass meeting or maybe they all have tied cottages the home goes with the job, no job, no home!)

The miners have a whole series of potential allies able to launch mass struggles in Dreamland (where.

DREAMS

unlike Britain, the Fourth International has a substantial branch capable of running affairs to order). The engineers and the students are both poised to escalate their struggles — they only need the word from an organisation whose working class members are at most a couple of dozen.

"General Strike to bring down the Tory Government" shouted the Red King. "Off with their heads!"

"Off with their heads?" asked Alice. "You've been saying that all year."

"So what" snorted the Red King. "Off with their heads!"

"You mean you're not just going to dismiss them by voting them out. You're going to have an insurrection?"

"Who said anything about an insurrection?" huffed the King. "That would be premature. There are still fourteen general striking days to the election."

"Yes, but why bother to strike when there's going to be an election anyway. If you don't want an insurrection to defeat the Tories, what's wrong with voting them out?"

"Yes, well we're not stopping at those kinds of things."

"Quite. That's why I say that you must mean an insurrection. Isn't

that the thing that goes beyond the outcome of an election. I heard you say that was what we needed."

"Now you listen here. We're not ultra-lefts. After all, the best situation for an election would be a general strike."

"You mean the Tories would be much more likely to be defeated?"

"Uh, no. It's just that these elections aren't real workers' elections."

"Oh, I know that" said Alice, "but what ARE real workers' elections?" "That's enough from you, miss" said the Red King. "You mark my words. 1917's going to be a great year for strikes and elections. I feel it in my bones. There will be one government down and one to go. That one will only be toppled by a general strike or an insurrection. Then there'll be another election...."

To get back to the world WE live in. Some time soon the political juvenile delinquents who run the IMG will have to wake up or sober up. Members of the IMG who have any respect for politics, Marxism, reason, or even rational use of the English language have the responsibility to shake them awake. Working class politics in Britain now is an increasingly serious business. 'Serious' is one word it is not possible to use to describe the IMG in its current phase of fundamentally meaningless ultra left phrasemongering.

Alice Carroll

continued
from front page

Vote Labour and prepare to fight!

organically connected with them, for Labour to replace the Tories and carry out immediately necessary measures
Immediately release the six trade unionists jailed at Shrewsbury

Repeal the Industrial Relations Act and compensate its trade union victims

End all government interference with the trade unions

No Incomes Policy under Capitalism! Demolish Phase 3 and the 'Counter Inflation' legislation of which it is part

Bring in a guaranteed £30 minimum wage tied closely to the cost of living

Scrap the Housing Finance Act

Enforce equal pay for women now

Abolish all racist Immigration Acts

Unconditionally withdraw British troops from Ireland.

If Labour does carry out these measures, well and good. If not, we have, at least, prepared as well as possible for workers to draw the lessons clearly and sharply.

To vote Labour is the only way we can support the miners at the ballot box. It is likely — though not certain unless the pressure of direct action is kept up! — that a future Labour

government would be quite unable to retreat from its promise of paying the miners.

But the miners need — and must go out to get — more support than just crosses on ballot papers. We must build SOLIDARITY COMMITTEES — broad committees of labour movement, community, and student organisations, which will organise publicity and funds, assist in organising whatever coal distribution the miners think desirable, and build support on picket lines. We need new Saltleys — this time, prepared for in advance!

If the Labour and trade union leaders were serious socialists, they would be organising solidarity committees. They would be calling out workers with outstanding claims, and workers on short time, alongside the miners, to shatter all wage curbs. They would be campaigning for WORK OR FULL PAY, with factory occupations if necessary.

In sum, they would be doing the precise opposite of what

Wilson and ASLEF have agreed! The smooth talkers may call it stepping back in favour of the miners. We call it leaving the miners — and the working class as a whole — in the lurch.

Even now the urgent need of the struggle is for workers to fight alongside the miners. And if and when, at any one of the flashpoints of the coming months, the Government (Tory or Labour) imposes wage freeze or jails pickets, the working class has a response, ready to hand if only it is willing to use it — GENERAL STRIKE.

If we had been able to launch a strike the Shrewsbury six would now be free. But they are still in jail — not because we have been defeated in an attempt to free them — but because, shamefully, we have not fought for them.

This situation can still be changed. If, for example, the government dares to jail picketing miners, the miners will not react so sleepily. They could form the nucleus of a general strike action which would draw in other layers of workers, making the mobilisation of July 1972 over the Pentonville 5 dockers seem small. Then the gates of the capitalists' jails would open quickly enough!

Workers' Councils

Five years ago, 'General Strike' was an apprehensive memory of 1926. July 1972 laid that ghost. A series of battles over recent years has brought new sections of workers into struggle, has united the working class in hostility to the system (without, as yet, any clear socialist alternative) and has hammered home the necessity of solidarity.

The bosses are seriously preparing to use the full forces of their state. We must seriously prepare to use the full forces of our class. There is no other way to get rid of measures like the Industrial Relations Act or wage freeze in the hands of a determined ruling class.

The miners' Solidarity Committees, by bringing militants together and developing links, will help prepare for a general strike. A spirit of urgency and boldness must also be infused into established bodies — Trades Councils, combine committees, factory shop stewards' committees. They must be extended and revived.

For a general strike paralyse society. And the working class must be prepared to take the running of food supplies, of fuel supplies, of transport, of printing, of security, into its own hands.

The committees to undertake such tasks would almost certainly come from the extension and linking up of established factory committees. There is no point preparing action committees with an artificial vision seeing them as embryo workers' councils, rather than practical alliances for the here and now. "The Councils represent an organisational form, and only a form. There is no way of 'preparing for' Councils except by means of a correct revolutionary policy applied in all spheres of the working class movement....", as Trotsky put it.

But "a correct revolutionary policy in all spheres of the working class movement" must explain clearly the nature and dynamics of the general strike. It must resist all attempts to subordinate general strike action to parliamentary considerations. To the extent that genuine workers' councils developed, and revolutionaries gained influence in them, the real possibilities of workers' power would be open.

Also we must see clearly that now, today, when we don't have a general strike, the immediate question of government is not general strike and a workers' government based on workers' councils, but Labour versus Tories — and take a stand on that, without painting anything as other than what it is.

**SUPPORT THE MINERS!
BUILD SOLIDARITY COMMITTEES!
DEFEND THE PICKETS!
VOTE LABOUR AND PREPARE TO FIGHT!
PREPARE THE GENERAL STRIKE!**

Oxford sit-in busted by University's cops

ANYONE taken in by the idea that Oxford University is any less uncompromising in its attitude to student militants needs only to look at its disciplinary system.

The University has its own police force to enforce its own statutes. This is led by the proctors — academics who play the combined role of judge, jury and executioner.

This was shown particularly clearly when on the 13th February over 70 students occupied a university building in protest at the university's refusal to undertake serious negotiations on the question of providing a central students' union. (This follows a previous occupation on the same question in November)

The University's response to this was quite unambiguous. Firstly one of the proctors smashed a window with a hammer to allow a photographer to take pictures of those inside. Then, having gathered a select band of their thugs and got into the building, they first tried to identify people by such means as pulling their hair to make them turn round, and then they pushed

those inside towards the front door.

The occupiers agreed to leave if they could do so together. But, pushed from behind, the occupiers were forced out of the front door to find two more proctors pointing out to police who to arrest, and themselves attempting to hand people over to the police. One student who was thrown down the steps and was unable to avoid banging into one of the proctors, was pointed out as the perpetrator of an assault on him. Another was arrested by three policemen, thrown against the back of their van, and was later charged with breaking the light on it and with threatening behaviour.

In all there were 8 arrests and one person was taken to hospital as a result of a kick in the stomach from a proctor.

Almost immediately, 600 students demonstrated demanding the freeing of those arrested, no victimisation, and an end to the proctor system and its university police.

What this incident demonstrates is simply that Oxford is one of the most backward and barbaric examples of the methods used by the university authorities to try and control the political activities of their students.

MANCHESTER Students at the University held a very successful boycott of the refectory on Tuesday 12th in support of the campaign for higher grants and as a protest against high refectory prices. They demanded a 15% reduction in prices.

The same day, Manchester Polytechnic students completed a 24-hour occupation of the administration building in support of the grants campaign.

Militant teachers fight N.U.T. sell-out

THE National Union of Teachers special conference which will or will not ratify the teachers' pay settlement under Phase 3 meets on 16th February.

Many local NUT Associations which have met to discuss the settlement have voted for rejection, particularly those in the London area. But still the odds are weighed against the Conference rejecting the settlement. Beside the big city Associations which will meet and vote, there are dozens of smaller Associations where a small group of senior teachers decide among themselves who would like a weekend in London.

Moreover, all that is possible at the Special Conference is to vote for or against the Executive's motion to accept the settlement. No amendments, no alternative resolutions. The feeling that it is better to have cash down, even though not enough, rather than nothing for now, has been powerful enough to push even outer London Associations like Hounslow into accepting the settlement.

If the Conference rejects the settlement, clearly the only way forward is towards a national strike for the full claim.

North London and Wandsworth Associations have passed resolutions calling for an Interim Award campaign if the settlement is accepted. Clearly this must be supported — and if Labour wins the general election, the NUT should push the full 25% claim straight back in again under the "Reopener Clause".

But even more important right now is that the crisis in education, and militancy building up among sections of teachers, does not simply hang fire, waiting for an Interim Award campaign or a Labour government.... while the miners pursue their struggle. If a wage freeze is allowed to prevail over the miners, the chances of doing anything about teachers' pay or education cuts will be drastically reduced.

Routine solidarity is necessary (Haringay NUT has voted to offer assistance to miners' picket lines). And on top of that, for London teachers to launch extended action, including strikes, over the London Allowance, would be the best immediate way to help both themselves and the miners.

Militant teachers are organising a lobby of the NUT Special Conference, from 9am on 16th February at Central Hall, Westminster.

M.T.



Art Castings picket line — firm against threats

ART CASTINGS, NUNEATON

CONSPIRACY CHARGE AGAINST PICKET

POLICE harassment of the pickets in the Art Castings strike at Nuneaton has now stepped up and been added to by threats from local fascists.

On 5th February, Teja Singh was arrested for "breach of the peace". Leading shop steward Gurmial Singh, who had earlier been carried yards on the bonnet of the General Manager's car, was arrested on 11th and charged with "breach of the peace" and "actual bodily harm" for an alleged incident on the picket line a week before.

Now Gurmial Singh has had another charge slapped on him — conspiracy.

The police, after claiming that more than four pickets constituted an "intimidation by force of numbers", have now tried a new trick. They claim that because management has

sacked the strikers they have no legal right to picket the factory as it is no longer their place of work!

This was because all the strikers have been sent dismissal notices by the management.

Now, added to the police harassment, the use of dogs against the pickets, and the criminal proceedings, comes a new threat.

Threat

One worker has received a disgusting and threatening letter from a member of the National Front, Britain's largest fascist organisation. It says, "Get out of this country, you curry-faced swine — this green and pleasant land of ours is no place for your caste. Remember the stoning of British soldiers in Calcutta. We shall have you

watched, and any more trouble, look out."

There have, however, been important acts of solidarity with the strike, which was sparked off by the sacking of a worker who refused to submit to an arbitrary speed-up demand.

The strike has been made official by the T&GWU. Fords have blacked all Art Castings products, as has Massey Fergussons. Drivers from A.L.Dunn (Newbridge), the parent firm, have been sent home after refusing to cross the picket.

Local militants have also made this strike a focal point for all those oppressed by the anti-picketing and anti-immigrants crusade of the Tories. There could also be a need for these workers to organise defence of those threatened by the fascists.

Labour movement support for miners' strike

HACKNEY TRADES COUNCIL is to adopt a pit and help finance the miners there during their strike. On Monday February 11th a special committee to "assist the miners' strike" met to decide which colliery to adopt.

This decision was taken at a packed meeting on the occasion of the 74th Annual General Meeting of the Trades Council. Gerry Ross, a veteran member of the Trades Council, stated, "If every borough followed our example by adopting a pit, it would bring millions of people into the struggle on behalf of the miners. ... Twinning with one of the collieries would be a way of bringing real brotherly assistance to the miners."

To help the flying picketing a decision has been taken to see to it that homes in Hackney are made available to miners on picket duty in London.

The same meeting pledged its support of Labour in the elections. But it is clear that Hackney understands the importance of keeping up and stepping up the industrial struggle.

GREENWICH

KENT MINERS took part in a 200-strong march through Greenwich last Saturday. The march, called by the Greenwich Labour Group, was both in support of the miners' claim and a Labour victory in the election.

The theme of the speeches seemed to be "Just get the Tories out and Labour will do the rest". But marches like this one are proof that direct action needs to be taken by the Labour movement if it is to secure its demands.

Joe Burke, a speaker from the Kent miners, who attacked the anti-Communist witchunt, said that he worked with Communists in the coalfield but that the 81% strike vote showed that it was the vast mass of pitmen whose wishes are being expressed by the strike.

Other speakers were Guy Barnett, Labour MP for Greenwich, and Jimmy Hill, a local trade unionist.

S.K.

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