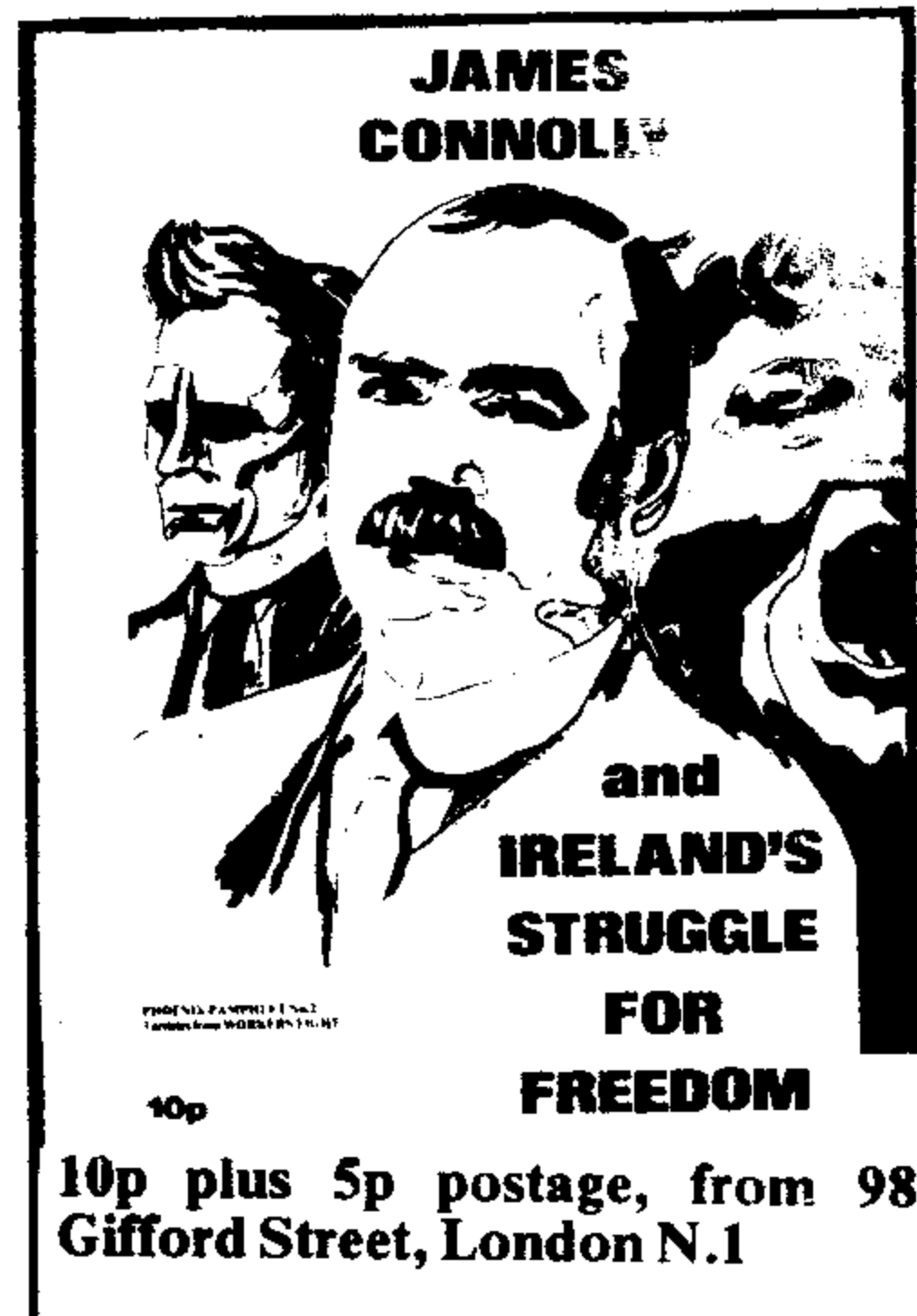


Workers' fight

3p

No.56 May 25th to June 1st 1974



OPPOSE THIS REACTIONARY STRIKE

IT IS difficult to assess how much the religious sectarian general strike in Northern Ireland is the product of intimidation and terror by the Orange para-military groups, and how much the product of the outrage of the Protestant workers at what they think of as a denial of their democratic rights.

Chris Myant in the Morning Star of May 23rd claims that on the previous day three quarters of the Northern Ireland workforce either worked or made themselves available for work by clocking on. We know from independent sources that workers — Catholic workers — in Derry attempted to break through the Orange street barricades to go to work only to be attacked in force by ... the British Army.

Nevertheless, this strike cannot simply be explained away as purely a product of

Orange terror. It is very probable that it has the active or passive support of the majority of the workers of Northern Ireland — the Protestant working class.

The Six Counties are now paralysed. The strikers are backed up by a massively armed force, the UDA, and the situation is such that the Ulster Workers Council has set itself up as a parallel power, that decides what happens in the area, what traffic moves, what shops or bakeries open. The degree of control is at least as high as it was in County Durham during the British general strike on 1926. In that area, which achieved the highest degree of working class mobilisation, strike committees took similar control, issuing permits to authorise the movement of traffic and goods.

If, in the period of struggle against the Industrial

Relations Act in Britain, the working class had reacted with half the vigour of the Orange workers' last ditch defence of the Northern Ireland sectarian puppet state of imperialism, there could have been a revolution in Britain.

But there will be no revolution in Northern Ireland. The events there are a ghastly parody of militant working class action: this is a reactionary, in fact a racist, general strike. It is directed first and foremost against the Catholic section of the working class. It aims to restore full Protestant supremacy — privileges in housing and jobs and the restoration of permanent one-party Protestant rule such as existed for fifty years — within the 6-County state.

This is a blind lashing out against even the token concessions made to the Catholic Northern Ireland population as an attempt by the British Government and the southern Irish Green Tories to buy off the Republican struggle for a united Ireland. These concessions, the 'power-

sharing Executive (bosses' power-sharing, that is) and the setting up of a Council of Ireland, were seen by the Catholic Republicans as a complete sell-out. Yet even these are seen as a major threat to the power and privilege of Orangeism.

Strikes and working class militancy are certainly a new departure for the Protestant working class (which incidentally played no part in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act). These workers are traditionally as docile towards the bosses as they are struttingly arrogant towards the Catholic section of the Irish working class. But the Orange cause, no longer actively supported by British imperialism or by the men of landed or industrial property, is reduced to working class action by the 'men of no property'.

It is a savage irony that this most powerful working class action in Northern Ireland's history is led politically by a right wing Tory like Craig, with an anti-trade union record, and aims not to settle accounts with the bosses, but

to put down a section of the working class.

It is attempting to use working class weapons for goals that are against the interests of the working class, British and Irish, Protestant and Catholic. What is wrong is not, as Labour leaders here have said, that it is a political strike. What is wrong is the reactionary politics that are its goal.

Tuesday's attempt by the TUC led by Len Murray to organise a back-to-work march, in which a few hundred left wing workers took their very lives in their hands in an attempt to break the power of the Orange bully boys, was a devastating failure. It showed dramatically the feebleness of the unions in Northern Ireland, which have maintained a worthless pretence of working class unity by evading the issues of sectarian job preferment for Protestants, and of the second class citizenship of its Catholic members. In doing so, it shirked the fight for real-working class unity, based on working class equality.

Continued on back page

SUPPORT THE CLAY CROSS CONFERENCE

LAST October the Labour Party conference took a clear decision to support the Clay Cross councillors in their fight against the Tory Housing Finance Act.

The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has called on the Government to abide by that decision.

The Government is still threatening the eleven disqualified ex-councillors with fines of £7,000 for unpaid rent increases. Solicitors for the ex-councillors' reckon legal proceedings could start on Friday 24th May.

But now the hand that feeds the Labour Party is clenching its fist to knock a few teeth into the greedy mouth of the Government. Many trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, tenants' associations, constituency Labour Parties and LPYS branches are supporting the conference called for 8th June by Clay Cross constituency Labour Party.

This will be the most

important working class conference for decades which is not controlled and stifled by full-time officials or MPs.

Workers' Fight urges all its readers and supporters to press their organisations to send delegates to the conference. It is vital that practical results come out of it in terms of plans for action in defence of the ex-councillors and the Shrewsbury 6, and on other central questions facing the working class — and also that some ongoing organisation comes out of the conference.

In the past, Labour governments have ignored conference decisions as a habit and a matter of course. They have been able to get away with it because between conferences there is not organised expression of the Labour rank and file. The annual conference is the only time when the Labour rank and file can think or act as a collective at all. If the idea of this conference catches on, it may not be such an easy ride for Labour governments in future.

MEETING CALLS FOR URGENT AID

SPEAKERS at a WORKERS FIGHT meeting in London on 23rd May called for urgent action to support the beleaguered Catholic community in Northern Ireland.

The Loyalist mobilisation faces them with a real pressing danger of civil war. Finbar O'Docherty and Fran Brodie told the audience at Conway Hall that already the strike is hitting Catholics very hard. The Unionist Workers' Council sees to it that Loyalist areas are supplied, but republican areas are not. As a result there is a grave shortage of food. Bread is rationed to one loaf per family each day, but many are not getting even that. Some people are trying to cook on fires in their back yards. Those who were unable to stock up with food are having to

rely on neighbours.

Both the speakers, who had spent the afternoon before talking on the phone to people in different areas of N. Ireland, said it was reported that tens of thousands of families had evacuated their homes, in the expectation of civil war. And there were more accounts of the British Army siding with the UDA in any clashes, where Catholic workers tried to get to work.

Finbar O'Docherty called for the immediate organisation of aid for the Northern Ireland republican communities. A meeting to plan such action will be held at 4.30pm on Sunday 26th May at the CLERKENWELL TAVERN, opposite Mount Pleasant sorting office (junction of Rosebery Avenue & Farringdon Road).

NURSES STEP UP ACTION

AS ANGRY nurses plan further action, their so-called leaders scurry around trying to discover ways of cutting dead the militancy which has been growing up in the hospitals. Albert Spanswick, General Secretary of COHSE, agreed to drop the proposed national strike after his meeting with Harold Wilson. But his plans turned sour as rank and file nurses forced the NEC of COHSE to back 'Industrial action' from Sunday 26th May.

Alan Fisher of NUPE is stuck with the same problem: how to end the action before it gets out of control. His solution is for a pact between the TUC and the Labour Government on wages, which would give the nurses a 'special case' line with which to end the fight.

Nurses themselves are everywhere planning demonstrations, rallies and strikes. Several areas are committed to overtime bans and work to rule. In Liverpool, Nottingham, Bedford, Cambridge and West Wales protests are organised for May 25th. In Manchester the May 25th demonstration (called by a mass meeting of 3,000 Manchester nurses last week) will be backed by ambulancemen, radiographers, health technicians, doctors, ancillary workers and many other workers. Next week nurses at Gartlock hospital, near Glasgow, are taking strike action; in Bristol, Hampshire, Cumbria and South Yorkshire there will be more demonstrations. As the momentum builds up, a one-day strike has been called for June 3rd — the day of the Whitley Council meeting.

Many of these actions are going ahead against the wishes of local union officials. The upsurge of action committees, linking nurses in different unions and hospitals, shows how the rank and file are shouldering aside the official dead-wood and taking a lead themselves.

One of their most important steps will be to organise support and win solidarity action from other workers. Yorkshire miners have promised help; their lead must now be followed by all other workers with interest in seeing the pay laws ripped up and an end to the attacks on our living standards.

TOM RAMSEY

INSIDE: The Nurses' Case



FOR YEARS nurses have been competing with hospital ancillary workers for bottom place in the wages league. Early in 1973 the ancillary workers finally got so fed up that they struck nationally, but the idea of 'service' and the reluctance to take direct action kept nurses out of the battle lines until a few weeks ago.

The last straw came with the 5% increase in lodging charges on April 1st. The implementation of the Phase 3 deal that gave nurses a poverty-line increase of 7% had been put off for two months. But not a minute was lost before the NHS rushed in to implement the rent increases, taking away with one hand what it wasn't yet giving out with the other.

Now nurses are striking, refusing to co-operate with agency workers, blacking work on private patients and taking other direct action all over the country.

Sick

Hospital wages, as the ancillary staff so aptly put it, make you sick. After the April 1974 pay scales are implemented, wages will range from £31.38-£40.33 for a Sister or Charge Nurse, £25.73-£29.83 for Staff Nurse (SRN) or £23.13-£30.40 for a State Enrolled Nurse, down to £20.25-£26.60 for a Nursing Auxiliary and £15.69-£21.75 for a Student or Pupil Nurse. Nurses in psychiatric hospitals get about £2 a week more.

The scales are clearly loaded against the trainees, who may have to live on less than £16 a week. Yet student and pupil nurses, like apprentices in industry, often do most of the work and they shoulder major responsibilities too.

One estimate puts the shortage of trained nurses at 46,000 nationally, and the NHS

NURSING A GRIEVANCE

The Health Service is short of up to 72,000 nurses. Not surprising with pay as low as £16, and when the hours can stretch to 80 a week. ED CONDUIT (Editorial Board, HOSPITAL WORKER) says nurses need to unite around a claim for a £30 minimum wage, a 35-hour week and the demand for immediate freezing of accommodation charges.

is also short of 26,000 untrained nurses. Shortages like this mean that first year student nurses sometimes get lumbered with a whole ward where there should be three nurses with an SRN in charge.

The shortage and the poor pay also mean that incredible hours of overtime are worked, especially away from the limelight of the teaching hospitals. In some mental subnormality hospitals near London nurses work double shifts six days a week on occasions — an 80-hour week!

While hundreds of millions are being spent on arms or Concorde, expenditure on the Health Service in real terms has been cut, and N.H.S. reorganisation, 'Salmon schemes' and the like are introduced to squeeze the last drop of work out of the existing employees by "modern management" and the like. With the Health Service collapsing about their ears, nurses are turning to strike action.

Unfortunately, nurses are not getting any clear leadership from the 12 organisations which represent them. The Royal College of Nursing has been making the running, with attempts to get the ear of Barbara Castle. The RCN has in fact consistently favoured trained nurses at the expense of trainees (in 1937 it actually opposed a wage increase to £40 for its members on the grounds that "account should be taken of the expensive training"). Its present activity can only be explained by the uncontrollable discontent of its Student Section and the Nursing Tutors' belated awareness of the disaster that

will occur unless wages are bumped up.

However, the tactic proposed by the RCN is extremely divisive: they suggest that nurses resign en masse and join nursing agencies, thereby putting up their own wages by 50%. But this tactic would only apply to qualified nurses, as agencies do not employ students. If the resignation tactic is carried out it will greatly strengthen the position of the private firms parasitic on the NHS and greatly weaken the position of those who stay as direct employees of the DHSS. A much better course is a straightforward pay claim backed up by sanctions and co-ordinated at a national level.

Unions have been making gains in membership among nurses recently, but the paid officials look like abdicating their responsibilities in the same disgraceful way that they did during the ancillary workers' strike.

While COHSE, the other large union, talked of a



Guerillas block Portugal's Africa plans

IN 1880 European occupation in Africa was limited to Algeria, South Africa and various coastal strips. By 1895 virtually the whole continent was occupied by one European power or another.

This massive colonisation was carried through by and on the urging of enterprising capitalist pathblazers such as Cecil Rhodes. The expanding capitalism of countries like Britain, Germany and Belgium took in Africa as a source of raw materials and a market for cheap manufactured goods.

Up to 1880, Portugal had been one of the most firmly established colonial powers in Africa. Portuguese forts on the coasts of Angola and Mozambique dated from the 16th century.

The Portuguese intervention of the 16th century had not been like the European colonisation of Africa in the late 19th century, a steamroller conquest by states equipped with massive economic superiority. On the contrary, the city states which Portugal conquered in east Africa formed "a world comparable, if not superior, in material culture to Portugal in 1500."

But Portugal had sufficient military force to gain control of export trade, and later to establish an enormously profitable slave

trade. In the last years of the slave trade, in the mid-19th century, over 20,000 slaves per year were being exported from each of Angola and Mozambique.

By 1880 the Portuguese settlements were in a state of neglect and decay. Portugal, by no means an economically advanced nation, was not able to introduce dynamic imperialist exploitation.

But then Portugal found

itself threatened with being squeezed out of Africa by the European capitalists' "scramble for Africa". Having been drawn into this race by Britain, which hoped to block German and French expansion by recognising Portuguese claims, Portugal managed through diplomatic manoeuvring to secure (on the map) its present territories. It was not until after the First World War that the territories were finally secured by military conquest.

The former leader of Guine-Bissau's liberation movement Amilcar Cabral (murdered under Spínola's direction while the latter was military governor of Guinea) summed up the nature of

Portuguese colonialism: "Some people talk about 'Portuguese imperialism', but there's no such thing. Portugal has never reached the stage of economic development that you could call imperialist. ... Since the beginning of the 18th century Portugal herself has been a semi-colony. ... The reason that Portugal is not decolonising now is because she is not an imperialist country, and cannot neo-colonise. Her economic infrastructure is such that she cannot compete with other capitalist powers. During all these years of colonialism, Portugal has simply been the gendarme, the intermediary, in the

exploitation of our people."

Portugal did develop the cotton industry in the colonies, importing the cotton as raw material for the Portuguese textile industry and exporting finished goods again to the protected markets of the colonies. But most industry in the colonies, as indeed in Portugal itself, depended on foreign capital — British, French, German, South African and American. The major holdings in 'Diamang', for example, which controls the Angolan diamond industry, are American, British and Belgian. The Angolan government holds only 11.5% of the capital.

Portuguese colonialism is not just some peculiar exception left behind in the general advance of civilisation. The profits from the super-exploitation which is maintained by Portuguese military force have helped to pay for that advance, that 'civilisation, democracy and wealth' as it exists in Britain or Germany

or America. Capitalist barbarity is only the backside of capitalist civilisation.

On 4th February 1961 insurrection in Angola struck the blow that started the death agony of Portuguese colonialism. Portugal immediately reacted with bloodthirsty and atrocious repression. Estimates of the numbers of Africans killed range from 10,000 to 30,000 — at least 150,000 fled the country. But the Portuguese claim of "success" at the end of this was no more than the claim that "only a fifth of Angola is held by the rebels." (28th May 1962)

The Lisbon government was not slow to realise how seriously it was threatened. A number of reforms were introduced, though mostly on paper, such as the abolition of forced labour and of the legal category of 'native'.

At the same time, enormous military resources were poured into

An economy based on forced labour

BEFORE the Angolan insurrection of 1961, forced labour was quite explicitly written into the legal codes of Portugal's colonies. Any able-bodied male African who could not prove that he was not "idle" was liable to forced labour. Such was the definition of "idleness" that an American investigator concluded that "less than 5% of the native, able-bodied males in southern Mozambique are legally entitled to remain within the confines of their homesteads."

The various systems of forced labour took over quite directly from slave labour, with this difference, that the employer of the forced labourer felt less responsibility to see that the labourer didn't starve than he did with a slave. (In the Cape Verde islands, more people have died from starvation than the actual present population

of the country.)

Figures for the 1950s showed about half the working population was under forced labour. With such conditions, however, "voluntary" labour takes on many of the features of forced labour, the fact that forced labour is the alternative permits employers to operate with minimal wages and conditions.

Compulsory

After 1961 forced labour was legally abolished. That didn't mean it ceased — forced labour had been abolished on paper before, as early as 1878. Eduardo Mondlane, leader of the Mozambique liberation movement Frelimo until his murder by Portuguese agents, reported: "In the northern areas of Mozambique, compulsory labour of all types

was practised widely up to 1964, when the war effectively put a stop to it by forcing the Portuguese to withdraw."

But forced labour continues. Mozambique sends 80,000 - 100,000 workers to South Africa per year to work in the mines. Wages are paid to the Portuguese authorities in foreign exchange or gold, the workers being paid only 18 months later and after various deductions have been made.

Generally the Africans in Portugal's "overseas provinces" are treated rather worse than beasts of burden. Their average pay is about 3% of that for whites. Infant mortality, though not adequately reported, is estimated at over 50% in some areas of Angola and Mozambique, and has been 80% in parts of Guinea. The education system can be judged from the fact that the illiteracy rate for Africans has

begun to climb down from 98 or 99% only as a result of the efforts of the liberation forces. Less than 500,000 out of the 14 million inhabitants of the three territories have the right to vote — a number only marginally larger than the total white population. In any case, no opposition parties were allowed under Salazar and Caetano.

'Assimilado'

Unlike South Africa, Portugal has always officially rejected racialism. Theoretically Africans who achieve a suitable educational level can become 'assimilados' and enjoy exactly the same rights as any Portuguese. (The Portuguese do not have to reach any educational qualifications, though 40% in the home country and 50% in the colonies are illiterate.)

Intermarriage between black and white is not legally prohibited — indeed, it is officially encouraged, and the fact that intermarriage was common in the early years of Portuguese settlement (simply because the settlers took few women with them) is celebrated as demonstrating Portugal's non-racialism. In fact, it demonstrates the Portuguese use of African women as yet another commodity to be appropriated.

These days, cases of intermarriage (on terms of equality) are very rare indeed. Rather less than 1/2% of Africans reach 'assimilado' status. Separate hospital wards exist for white and for black, and in general the tremendous differences in levels of wealth, if nothing else, separate white and black almost as rigidly as in South Africa.

M.T.

LESSONS FROM LANCASHIRE'S PAST FOR CHILE BLACKING CAMPAIGN

"THE holidays are coming up and the lads need the work. It's time Hugh Scanlon thought about us, not Chile, wherever the hell it is." — AUEW shop steward in Greenock, May 1974.

IN FEBRUARY 1861 the six Southern Gulf states of America declared their secession from the Union, and in April of the same year the Confederate general Beauregard attacked Fort Sumter in Charleston and thus started the American Civil War.

It was essentially a war between two groups in the American ruling class: the Southern slave-owning oligarchy and the Northern capitalists. The predominance of the latter was a precondition for the rise of America as a commercial capitalist power, but the other great significance of the war was the independent intervention of the working class, both in America and in Europe. In America the driving force of the Northern army came from the working class, who often enlisted a whole factory or a whole trade union at a time.

In Europe, and particularly in England, the working class stood in support of the North and in doing so diametrically opposed the interests of their own rulers.

It was this independence displayed by the working class which prompted Karl Marx to write: "The working men of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American anti-slavery war will do so for the working classes."

'Famine'

In England the most immediate effect of the American Civil War was the "cotton famine". The Lancashire cotton industry depended largely on slave-picked cotton from the Southern states, and one of the first acts of the Union was to blockade the Southern ports. At first the effects of the blockade were minimal, since there were high stockpiles of cotton, and demand was tailing off anyway due to overproduction in the preceding years. But by 1862, starved of cotton, the industry plunged into a crisis.

With no imports of raw cotton from America, and imports from India unable to make up the gap, over half the mills were idle, and of the remainder most were working short time. The effects on the Lancashire cotton spinners were catastrophic. The Factory Inspectors' report for October 1862 shows that 11% were working full time, 38% half time and 51% were wholly unemployed.

Wages fell drastically. The massive unemployment enabled employers to push down wages to a bare survival level. And the use of inferior fibres to substitute for American cotton decreased output and increased the number of fines and penalties exacted from workers' wages. One factory inspector remarked that in some cases wages were so low that it was better to be on poor relief than to be at work.

Agitation

On top of this, the Indian Shurt cotton that was used meant extra health hazards — with skin diseases, bronchitis and dyspepsia becoming much more common.

But despite these terrible privations and the reduction of a whole industry's workers to starvation level, the Lancashire cotton workers came out in strong support for the Northern states in the Civil War, and joined the rest of the British working class in unequivocally opposing any attempt by the British government to intervene on behalf of the South.

The initial content of the pro-Union agitation was pacifist, and simply against British involvement. But when in 1863 Lincoln declared abolition of slavery to be an aim of the war and called on the slaves to rebel against the Confederacy, the movement in Britain put anti-slavery at the centre of its support for the North.

Despite attempts by the mill

owners to foment "Friends of the South" societies, Marx wrote in a newspaper article that of all the many meetings that had been held in on the war, not one had been held in support of the South. On the contrary "Emancipation Societies" spread across the country and in particular in the North of England.

Many of the old leaders of the Chartists returned to political life to add their voices to the agitation. One of them, Ernest Jones, at a meeting in Ashton (near Manchester) put the case against the "right of secession": "I fully endorse the 'sacred right of insurrection'. It is not to be lightly used — but on good and adequate grounds insurrection is more than a right, it is a duty. ... Working men, I say the South is your enemy — the enemy of your trade, the foe of your freedom, a standing threat to your property. ... Slave labour is direct aggression on the free labour of the world. The key that shall re-open our closed factories is the sword of the victorious North."

Free Trade

And again: "Those who pat the slave-owners of America on the backs would like to be slave-owners in England too. ... I trust that we shall find that in establishing liberty universally throughout the American continent we shall be placing the crown's pinnacles on the edifice of freedom here as well."

Meanwhile, the mill owners and cotton merchants, placing their pockets first, started a campaign for the blockade of the South to be broken as an interference with the sacred principle of Free Trade. But for the ruling class as a whole, the issue was wider than cotton. Even in the 1860s they were apprehensive about the rise of America as a commercial rival, and they saw that the secession of the South, with its strong ties with Britain through the cotton trade, would cut off the emergence of America as an industrial nation. Both Tories and Liberals, and all the national press, were unequivocal in their support of the Southern secession.

With the hawks calling for Britain to break the blockade, all that was needed was an excuse to interfere. Such an excuse was provided by the Trench incident. The 'Trench' was a British ship which was stopped and searched by the North, and two Southern Commissioners on board arrested. The cries for war against the anti-slavery Union from the British ruling class reached fever pitch. Marx was in no doubt that what prevented a British intervention on behalf of the South was not the wisdom of the government, but the immense protest from the working class that would have followed such a move, coupled with a mass revolutionary movement in Ireland, ready to explode at a spark struck by such a war.

Black labour

The agitation in support of the North had none of the fire and revolutionary potential of the earlier Chartist movement, but nonetheless Marx was not mistaken about the significance of the Civil War, nor was Jones mistaken when he linked it with the advance of the working class in Britain.

In America, once the war was won the working class ended its alliance with the Northern bourgeoisie and in 1865 the National Labour Union was launched and the agitation for an eight hour day was running "with express speed from the Atlantic to the Pacific". Black labour came onto the scene as an independent force, 200,000 blacks having fought in the Northern Army.

Meanwhile in Britain the working class leaders of the movement gathered around the First International, and in the demand for the suffrage some of the spirit of the Chartists was reborn.

Above all, the actions and attitudes of the cotton workers remain to this day as a shining example of international class solidarity.

ANDREW ROBERTS

demonstration on Thursday 6th June at 1pm from Speakers Corner in London. Nurses Action Groups in Liverpool and Manchester are planning protests for June 3rd.

The press has not yet dared to openly attack nurses in the way that it does most workers in dispute. Instead, they are trying to trivialise the issue, and make out nurses to be pretty, but rather silly, young ladies. They are poking around, too, for 'outside agitators', "reds around the bed" — anything but the true picture, of years of frustration suffered by hundreds of thousands of people. The Sunday Times pins it down to two students at the RCN conference.... meanwhile in Maidstone plain clothes police have been photographing a nurses' demonstration.

Phase 3

But if the nurses and their spontaneous outburst of anger are the motive force, it is also true that one of the decisive factors in a nurses' pay claim is the sympathetic response of the rest of the working class. This will not be slow in coming: already Yorkshire miners, Blackburn busmen and others have threatened strike action. In 1962, Ford workers at Dagenham struck for the nurses, as did dockers.

It is a disgrace that Phase that Phase 3 is being used by a Labour Government to beat down the poorest workers, and those who are least able to defend themselves. Every worker must side with the nurses against phase 3.

HOSPITAL WORKER National Nurses' Meeting
12 o'clock Sat. June 1st.
Manchester University Students' Union,
Oxford Road, M/cr 13

apparatus at its services. The white minority in the Portuguese colonies is much wealthier than the black population, but in any other comparison it is economically very weak. (There is for example considerable white unemployment in the colonies.) 50% of the whites are illiterate. At present they do not have the support of the army, though without a doubt the fascist elements in the army will reappear given a chance.

All the odds are on the side of the liberation movements, if they can seize their chance. The words written by Basil Davidson six years ago will come about: "It may be one of history's greater ironies that help should come from where least expected: that it should be the people of the Portuguese colonies — longest colonised, most harried, least 'developed' — who are among those most effectively pointing the way ahead."

JOHN STIRLING

8% in 1972, followed by pay freeze and 7% under Phase 3, they now need over 50% to keep up with the inflation of the last few years. Flat-rate increases, with extra for people at the bottom, are what is clearly needed, so we come up with a figure like £12 across the board, and a minimum of £30.

Many workers in the same unions as nurses, e.g. local government manual workers in NUPE, have a similar claim in for later in the year. Ancillary workers in COHSE, NUPE etc have a £30 claim in for themselves. The strength of this claim could be enormously increased by calling for a national minimum wage of £30. Such a demand could attract several million low paid workers, and could be sure of support from higher paid workers.

Cut hours

A cut in hours to 35 from the present 40 would be a gain too, and a relief from the present six-day and shift working.

The attacks on living standards via the pocket should be stopped too. The rent increases should be frozen immediately. Hospital food, traditionally cheap, has been rocketing, going up by nearly 100% in two years as the DHSS throws more and more of its costs back onto its employees.

The explosion of action has taken many forms: strikes of varying duration, refusal to work with agency employees, picketing of nursing agencies, bans on private patients; and everywhere meetings, marches and demonstrations. The strikes, short though they have been, are the first ever in this country. But strikes of nurses have occurred with considerable effect in other countries, for instance Australia and Ireland. The national strike of Irish psychiatric nurses in November 1972 was partially successful in getting temporary jobs made secure, without greatly detrimental effect on the patients. It lasted 5 days, and involved 4,000 nurses in the IT&GWU and the Psychiatric Nurses' Association.

Though plenty will no doubt happen before then, it looks like the week starting 3rd June is going to be a Week of Action. There will be a National

neo-colonial set-up in Mozambique (especially in Angola — where there is much more at stake economically and the liberation forces are divided. But it is no more able to achieve this than it was before: if it attempts it now it is because of the complete failure of direct, strong-arm based colonialism. (In Guine, it looks as if Portugal will simply recognise the facts and 'grant' independence — an independence which is already recognised by 84 members of the United Nations; it is, however, likely that it will attempt to hold onto the Cape Verde Islands.)

The biggest assets of the new government in any attempt at a neo-colonial solution will be the co-operation of the imperialist powers, and particularly South Africa — and (in return for the Communist Party representation in the Portuguese Provisional Government) of Moscow. Already on May 15th, the GUARDIAN reports that

the dam is being built by a South African-based consortium, and South Africa is scheduled to be the customer for most of the power. Together with the hydro-electric project, Portugal has planned to settle one million Portuguese in the Cabora Bassa area within ten years.

Not being able to establish a neo-colonial relation of economic domination combined with political independence, Portugal banked on increasing its white settler base, and on closer integration with imperialism, particularly South Africa.

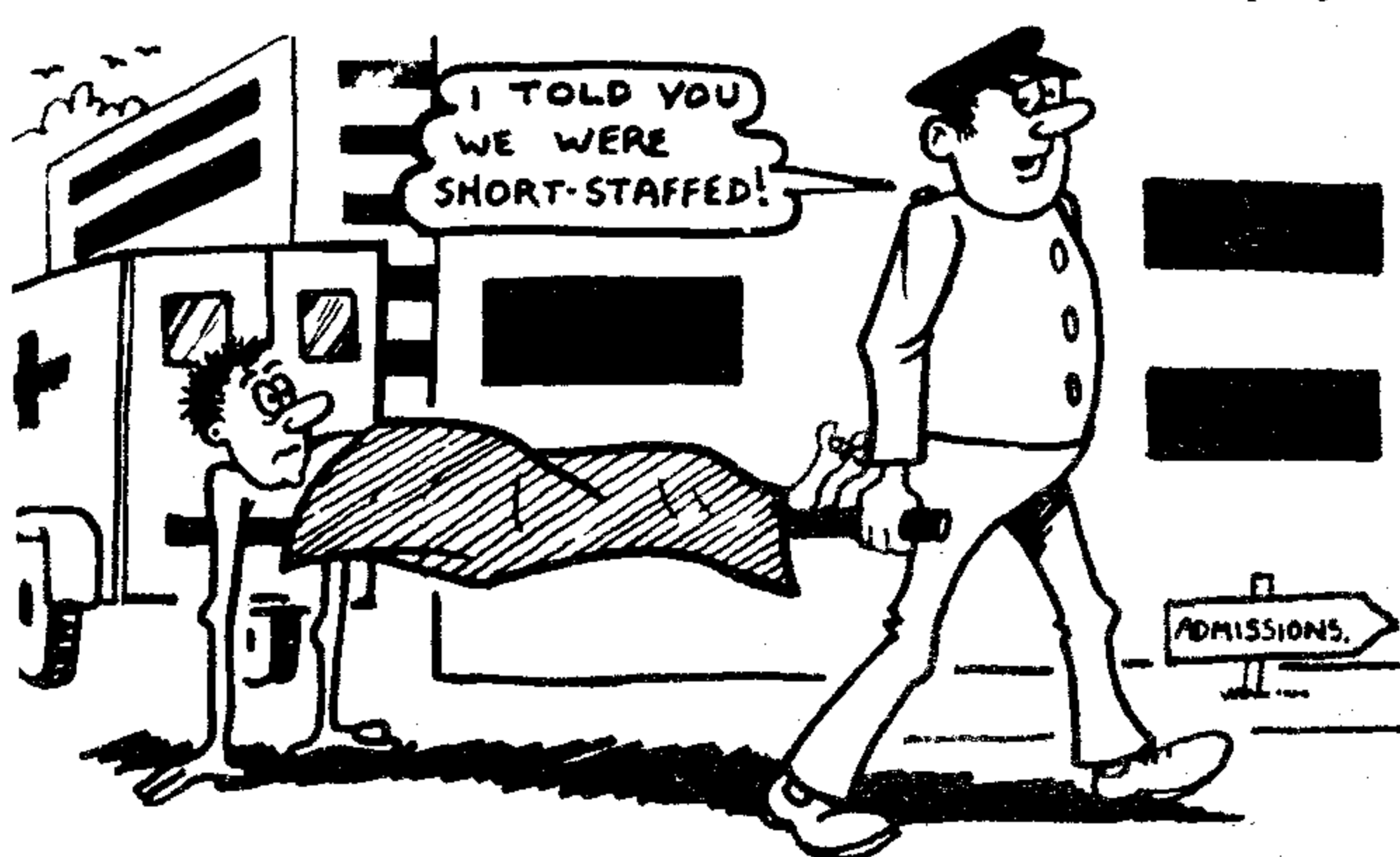
Obviously, the new Portuguese government is considering attempting a

"national strike", one of its paid officials in the North West called NUPE members who did stop work "lunatics". Meanwhile Alan Fisher of NUPE, star of TV and radio, contents himself with criticising COHSE as splitters.... while failing to give a lead to his own members. This total lack of leadership is already alienating nurses who have only recently joined.

Anticipating a sell-out by union leaders, the rank and file paper Hospital Worker is calling for a nurses' meeting to hammer out a claim, bring together national action by nurses (a national co-ordinating committee of nurses will be set up) and call for solidarity from other workers. (see below for details). A special issue of the Hospital Worker is being produced on the nurses' situation.

At present, no clear claim has come forward, and most nurses are asking for a 'Commission of Inquiry'. But nurses need to tell the government what to look for, rather than asking them to inquire. COHSE is talking of "£100 million on the table" which sounds good, except that it is probably loud talk by COHSE leaders designed to attract members, without having to follow through the talk.

In 1971, nurses were thinking in terms of a 25% rise. After



the colonies, consuming half of Portugal's annual budget. A policy of 'strategic hamlets', modelled on Vietnam, was put into operation.

The Government made efforts to step up white settlement. (The present figures are: Angola — 350,000 white out of 5,300,000 population; Mozambique — 200,000 white out of 7,500,000 population; Guine — 3,000 white out of 800,000 population.) Emigrants are promised 200 acres of fertile land and \$10,000 to get established.

Cabora Bassa

Foreign investments in the colonies have been encouraged and increased. The spearhead of the investment and settlement policy is the Cabora Bassa dam project. This project, costing \$300 million, financed by European and American capital (including the British bank Barclays DCO) is the fifth largest hydro-electric scheme in the world.

The dam is being built by a South African-based consortium, and South Africa is scheduled to be the customer for most of the power. Together with the hydro-electric project, Portugal has planned to settle one million Portuguese in the Cabora Bassa area within ten years.

Not being able to establish a neo-colonial relation of economic domination combined with political independence, Portugal banked on increasing its white settler base, and on closer integration with imperialism, particularly South Africa.

Obviously, the new Portuguese government is considering attempting a



AFTER six months of the most atrocious suffering and deprivation, two of the Republican hunger strikers, Marion and Dolours Price, have finally won a respite from the repulsive and degrading forcible feeding to which they have been subjected.

Although it seems that the Labour Home Office and Roy Jenkins were intent on continuing to torture the prisoners for the next 20 years rather than let them return to serve their sentences in the north of Ireland, indications are that the doctors carrying out the forcible feeding finally buckled under pressure.

Pressure from medical

colleagues protesting at the use of medical practitioners for blatantly political, repressive actions. And pressure from the two girls themselves, who in the final period of force feeding had stepped up their own resistance. As a result of this, the process required increasing violence to enforce. Their mouths were brutally forced open, which caused heavy bruising and tearing of their mouths and throats. Their hair was going white and falling out, and

their bodies emaciated despite the feeding.

In a letter sent from Brixton this week, Dolours Price says that on Saturday they were told 'this is your last feed.' On Wednesday the Home Office confirmed that the feeding had been stopped. But they made no mention of Gerry Kelly or Hugh Feeney, who have also been on hunger

strike for a full six months.

We must now step up our pressure for the transfer of these prisoners to Ireland. The refusal so far of two governments to do so is an action of pointless vindictiveness; such transfers have been quite common for other prisoners. Jenkins' statement that he would not transfer prisoners as a result of pressure sounds hollow against the fact that the four

other Winchester prisoners who have also requested to be transferred are all still in British jails, though they gave up their hunger strike after a short time.

JOIN THESE ACTIONS
PICKET Brixton Prison: Friday 24th May, 8pm onwards.
PICKET the Home Office, Whitehall, Saturday 25th May at 1.30pm.
MARCH & RALLY from Speakers' Corner Sunday June 9th 2.30pm. Speakers invited: Mike Cooley (TASS), Eamonn McCann, Richard Harris, Jock Dromey (NCCU) Bernadette McAliskey, Jack Collins (NUM). March to the home of Harold Wilson, Lord North Street.

WILL THEY GO HOME DEAD?

Fascists used in Giscard's campaign

THE result of the French presidential elections appears to be that a French equivalent of Anthony Barber has defeated a French counterpart of Harold Wilson. The appearance is largely correct... and that is why the facts published by the French magazine *Nouvel Observateur* in its 13th May issue are all the more alarming.

To steward his election meetings, Giscard employed 200 ex-members of "Ordre Nouveau", a group described as "racist and neo-Nazi" even by the former Gaullist government (which banned it). They were paid about £20 per day plus expenses, 25% of this going to "Faire

Front", an organisation which is really "Ordre Nouveau" under a new name.

The commander of the stewards was Pierre Sergent, who was previously at the head of the French section of the OAS, the extreme-right Algerian settlers' terrorist organisation.

At the public debate between Giscard and Mitterand, a press photographer was attacked because he had picked out Francois Brigneau, editor of the extreme-right paper "Minute", in the middle of Giscard's stewards. Even the newspaper "Figaro" (politically something near the Daily Telegraph in Britain) protested.

At Giscard's meeting in Rennes, a young man was taken unconscious to hospital with his skull fractured by a blow from a iron bar. At Brest, a Dr J-P Mahe who protested against the manhandling of hecklers was thrown head first against a wall and then pushed down the stairs. He ended up with his left forearm broken in four places.

Giscard is not a fascist. Anyone who thinks he is has missed the point. He is an ordinary, civilised, smooth-talking Tory politician. And his campaign shows what ordinary, civilised, smooth-talking Tory politicians will resort to when they feel it necessary. **Martin Thomas**

NATIONWIDE MOVEMENT NEEDED AGAINST FASCISM

THE Manchester Anti-Fascist conference of May 18th, though it was important as an initial step, showed that there is still a long way to go towards the formation of an effective and coherent anti-fascist movement of the necessary depth and scale.

This was highlighted by the fact

that at the same time as the conference was happening, a Young Socialist demonstration against racism was being held in Bradford, without there being any co-ordination or communication between the two events or groups concerned.

The organisation of the

conference itself was not good. The resolutions passed, including one from Workers Fight outlining a programme for fighting racism (see WF 54) were adequate on paper. The discussion, however, was not adequate, being confined to the last hour of the conference. Previously delegates had sat through six hours of long speeches. Some of the speeches were of interest, particularly on the relation between sexual oppression and racism and fascism, but the combined length of the speeches led to the planned workshop sessions being cancelled.

A speaker from Northern Ireland addressed the conference, which adopted a resolution supporting the aims of the Troops Out Movement, for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and the self-determination of the Irish people.

The resolutions must now be carried out through the building of local anti-fascist committees rooted in the labour movement and capable of routing the fascists and racists wherever they appear. These must also be united into a national movement which can decisively defeat the National Front and other fascist and racist organisations before they get the chance to attack us.

Len Glover

PALESTINIANS' EXPULSION COMMEMORATED

MAY 19th was a significant date for those who follow the events in the Middle East: the 26th anniversary of the founding of the Israeli state.

Since the 1940s many thousands of Palestinian Arabs have been driven from their homes by the racist settler state and are now forced to live in refugee camps in the surrounding countries. For a number of years now, a heroic struggle has been fought by the Palestinians in an effort to regain their homeland.

Over a thousand Arabs and their supporters, including a large contingent of Pakistani and Indian workers, demonstrated their solidarity with the Palestinian freedom fighters in their struggle against the Zionist forces.

With the killings at Maalot fresh in most minds, it was

particularly necessary for revolutionary socialists to be present to underline the basic issues, rather than being swayed like straws in the wind by the latest atrocity. Unfortunately, apart from Workers Fight supporters, the only visible revolutionary socialist representation was that of the Communist Party of England, Marxist-Leninist, a cranky Maoist group.

Needless to say, the Zionists had not forgotten the date, and a number of Zionist thugs were brought out of their holes by the demonstration. They attacked the demonstration a number of times, but the demonstrators held their ground and generally the Zionists received as much as they handed out.

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LOYALIST STRIKE

It also underlines the sheer day-dreaming irrelevance of those 'socialists' who avoid taking sides in the conflict in Northern Ireland as it really is — a Republican struggle against Imperialist domination and Orange supremacy. Instead they go on wishing the struggle was a straight class struggle, and exhort the Northern Ireland trade unions (the very same head-in-the-sand trade unions that have failed over all the years to oppose Protestant supremacy and privilege) to magically produce a non-sectarian 'third force' workers' militia to suppress sectarianism.

The real working class militia, the one that is actually fighting sectarianism by fighting to break the sectarian 6-County state, is the Irish Republican Army. The fact that a majority of workers are enrolled in the UDA (and in that sense it is the majority 'workers' militia' and even a trade union militia) only attests to the massive preponderance of Protestants in industry as a result of sectarian job preference, and to the deepening sectarianism within the Protestant working class.

Not only have the Northern Ireland trade unions refused to fight sectarianism in industry, but they and their British counterparts actively support the continued existence of the artificial 6-County state which is custom built to keep a Protestant majority in control — and so well built to that purpose that not even its imperialist puppet masters can, for now, control it. That state is a sectarian bear-pit, and can never be anything else. So long as it exists, bitter working class division will continue.

Yet the Labour Government maintains that state, making a few modifications which, so far, only make things worse and not better.

As WORKERS FIGHT has said before, if the democratic validity of the Northern Ireland state is accepted, if the 6 Counties and not all of Ireland is seen as the unit for majorities and minorities, then the Orange community has a powerful argument that, after the verdict of the general elections (when 12 hard-line Orange politicians were elected and only one Sunningdale supporter) they are being denied their democratic rights. The tinkering with the Northern Ireland state which was begun at Sunningdale will never solve the problems, or lay the ghost of the past. Yet the British ruling class dare not cut the Gordian knot by admitting the

democratic right of the majority of the Irish people to their own state. This would mean recognising that Northern Ireland has no right, and never had any right, to a separate existence, and could not have come into existence except as a pampered and protected spawn of Britain, aimed against the majority of the Irish people.

Thus they stagger from crisis to crisis. The blows from the revolutionary republicans and the reactionary Orange forces, locked murderously within the 6-County bear-pit, have brought the Sunningdale agreement and powersharing to the point of collapse. That is good! It only means that if they are forced back to direct rule, the realities will show, without camouflage.

The British Army will no doubt now appear as a true peacekeeper, separating murderous 'sectarian' factions. This is nonsense! The very military power of the Orange extremists was deliberately fostered by the British Army in 1972 as a counter-balance to the IRA. Britain is still playing a reactionary balancing game.

It would be dishonest to pretend that the probability of violent clashes would not increase if the Army were withdrawn. Nevertheless only the Irish people can solve their own problems. Britain has created

Ireland's problems. It will never solve them.

We must demand that the Labour Government recognises the right of the whole Irish people to self determination. Break the banks of the artificial 6-County sectarian bear-pit and help to create the precondition for working class unity!

TROOPS OUT!

We must demand the immediate withdrawal of the British troops from Northern Ireland. In the event of clashes between the Orange armed groups and the British Army, the British labour movement must refuse to take sides. Such a clash would be between two reactionary forces, between British imperialism playing ring-master and its anti-working class rebellious Orange stooges, now redundant for Britain's purposes.

The Orange general strike is a black comedy, parodying and mocking militant working class action. It deserves no support in any of its phases.

Recognising Ireland's right to self determination, and that the British government has no right in Ireland, we must give our active solidarity with the progressive forces fighting to drive the British Army out of Ireland the Irish Republican Army.

JOHN O'MAHONY

PAT ARROWSMITH GETS 18 MONTHS

As more British troops go to Ireland to bring the numbers there up to 16,000, Pat Arrowsmith has been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. Her offence was distributing a leaflet to troops which gave them advice on how best to go about deserting if they wished to.

As she was taken from the court, Pat Arrowsmith shouted out "Freedom for Ireland". The Irish Political Hostages Campaign decided on 20th May to take up her case.

Coventry's 'Centre Point' occupied

COVENTRY has a waiting list of 7,000 people needing accommodation.

In the city centre is Hillman House, a tower block with 25 flats. It has only three occupants.

Even if a homeless family should manage to get together the rent for a Hillman House flat (£11.75 per week for a two-bedroom flat, £6.25 for a bedsitter with bathroom and kitchen), they would be refused. The owners have applied to convert the flats into offices — that's why Hillman House is empty.

At 3.00 pm on Friday 17th May a group of 40 people, including three homeless families, entered Hillman House in an orderly fashion, through the lower floors of the flats, used as offices. They carried sleeping bags, food, and a heavy steel barricade, to cut off an empty office floor section immediately below the tower block. The three families barricaded themselves in no. 10 flat above, whilst the main body settled down to a 24-hour symbolic occupation of the lower office block.

Through leaflets and petitions the occupiers' protest mobilised support in the shopping precinct below. 2,000 signatures were collected, to be sent to the Department of the Environment. The petition calls for local authorities to

take over empty property for the homeless and for the housing bill now in Parliament to be amended so that local authorities would be forced to provide temporary accommodation for those in need.

At the end of the occupation, 3.15 pm Saturday, the crowd which had formed at the exit of the flats cheered the occupation force when they came out. A march of 250 people then made for the Council House to present the petitions to Cllr Tom McLatchie, chairman of the Housing Committee.

One of the homeless families involved has already been offered a flat.

Sid West

Attempt to split Loop line strikers fails

THE men on strike for the recognition of shop stewards on Liverpool's loop line construction have voted to stay out despite what strike committee member D. Mooney called "an effort to split the men up and lose them the support of wives and the public".

The men have been sent a letter from the employers, Nuttalls, claiming that the company is already meeting the men's demands — recognition of the shop stewards and payment for time spent on union duties.

Yet workers point out that management has refused to deal with the shop stewards collectively; and strike committee chairman Terry O'Neill has the following written on one of his time sheets. "Two and a half hours union duties, not to be paid. See Mirich's instruction". (Mirich is the general foreman).

Support is all the more urgent as the strike, despite local T&G backing, is still not official. Many of the strikers are out-of-town single men who get nothing from the Social Security. Already men are getting thrown out of their digs, and are still turning up for picket duty.

Liverpool Teaching Hospital and Ince Power Station sites are supporting the strike; but more is needed. Messages of support and donations to Nuttalls Shop Stewards Committee, T&GWU, 37 Islington, Liverpool L3 8EQ.

Cynthia Baldry

JAILED PICKETS-SUPPORT JUNE 19th LOBBY

The campaign round the six jailed Shrewsbury building workers has gained one small victory. Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson have been moved to an open prison at Sudbury. Previously they had been kept in an ordinary prison in Stafford.

It is of course still necessary to press for the release of all six and the dropping of all charges against the 22 building workers found guilty on charges arising from picketing. The next action planned in the campaign is a lobby of the Blackpool conference of the building workers' union UCATT, on 19th June.

Strachans blacking spreads

The workers at Strachans, Eastleigh, Hants., are continuing their fight against the closure that put 600 of them out of work with a public meeting at Eastleigh Town Hall on 22nd May.

Strachans van-building contract with Fords has been transferred to the Willenhall Motor Radiator Company, Wolverhampton. However, according to Mick Marshall, secretary of Strachans Joint Union Committee, "we have assurances from the trade unionists at Wolverhampton that they will not even consider doing this work without our OK".

Mick Marshall also stated that the Strachans men expect to secure an official blacking within a few days on the products of Strachans' parent firm Giltspur.

On 15th May, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins finally admitted officially that the Special Branch had been involved at Strachans. Jenkins' excuse is: "the police were concerned at the potential for serious disturbances at these particular factories". He didn't give any further explanation — so the excuse is one that could be used to justify police interference in any factory.

In fact, if they were really seriously concerned about the "serious disturbance" caused by cutting off the livelihood of 600 men, they would have been spying on the bosses, not the workers.

NALGO claim - national strike must be next step

Employers have refused to negotiate nationally on the local government workers' (NALGO) claim while the NALGO action in London continues. The union leadership is due to meet on 24th May to decide whether to make the only realistic reply: extending strike action nationally.

In London, 600 more workers have been called out, making a total of 24 boroughs affected by the selective strikes and overtime bans for the claim for £400 more London allowance. But union officials have tried to persuade Islington council staff, who have been on strike for seven weeks, to return to work. A meeting of strikers voted by a large majority to continue with their action.

MEETINGS

NOTTINGHAM Workers' Fight forum. Pete Radcliff on "The Chinese Revolution". 8pm, Wednesday May 29th. The Peacock, Mansfield Rd (near back of Victoria Centre).

LIVERPOOL Workers' Fight forum. Paul Barker on the Labour Party. 8pm, Wednesday May 29th. Stanley House, Upper Parliament St.

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