

Workers' fight

3p

No.57 — June 1st — June 8th 1974

SAVE THE HUNGER STRIKERS

FIVE Irish political prisoners in British jails are very close to death from starvation. The two Price girls, Dolours and Marion, together with Hugh Feeney, have been on hunger strike since being sentenced to twenty years' jail last November, and have been force fed for most of that time. M. Caughan and Frank Stagg have been on hunger strike since March 30th.

When the authorities stopped force-feeding Dolours and Marion Price it led to the hope that they would soon be transferred to Northern Ireland to serve their sentences — which was the aim their hunger strike was meant to secure. At the time of writing it looks as if the force feeding was stopped because doctors refused any longer to carry it out and the Home Office, under the benevolent rule of 'liberal', 'human' Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, is instead prepared to let them die.

It will be a miracle if these five

can live for much longer than another week unless the strike is called off immediately. But that will only happen if they are transferred to northern Ireland. In a letter to their parents, the two girls have said, and not for the first time, that "it will be either the 'ultimate' or a return to northern Ireland".

Hugh Feeney, who is in Gartree, was reported as being "weak and taking no exercise" by Thursday's Guardian. Mrs Isobel Kelly was refused access to information about the condition of her husband, Gerard Kelly, the other hunger striker, when she phoned Wormwood Scrubs. He, too, has been on hunger strike for over 200 days.

Like the Price sisters, Kelly is, as from a few days ago, no longer being force fed.

The Home Office issued a statement on Tuesday saying that the condition of the two girls was "giving concern" to the medical staff at Brixton, though only 24

hours earlier they had said that they were in no danger, but an intensive care unit was standing by.

Claire Price, elder sister of the two hunger strikers, said at a press conference over the weekend that her sisters had requested and received the last rites on Sunday. The Home Office denies this, saying that what they received was in fact "benediction for the sick".

The latest news we have is that the Price sisters are now too weak to do anything for themselves, they have to be washed and they cannot get out of bed.

Stagg and Caughan have been on hunger strike since March 30th, according to newspaper reports they have been fed "intermittently by artificial means", but the prison authorities and the Home Office have refused to comment on whether force feeding has been used or whether it has been abandoned.

Stagg's physical condition is appalling, he now weighs only six stone and when his sister visited him he had to be brought to see her in a wheelchair as he is unable to walk. Probably of all the hunger strikers Stagg is in the worst condition.

ACT NOW!

All supporters of the hunger strikers' demands must now mobilise as much support as possible for these demonstrations and pickets:

JUNE 1st: 2pm, Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.

Sunday 2nd June. Protest rally, Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park; 2.30pm, followed by march to Roy Jenkins' home.

Wednesday 5th June. Picket at Brixton Prison, Jebb Avenue, where the two Price sisters are being held.

Sunday 9th June. Rally and March. Speakers' Corner, 2.30 pm.



As we sit today, physically we are pretty worn out. Even to walk to the loo drains us and the least movement leaves my heart pounding like a big drum.

We've been told by the nurse not to sit or lie for too long in one position or we just get bed sores.

Each day passes and we fade a little more, but no

matter how the body may fade, our determination never will. We have geared ourselves for this and there is no other answer.

Let it be on the conscience of the politicians if they have any conscience left. We don't ask for the earth, but maybe what we will get will be infinitely greater.

"Every time I turn in bed I stab myself with my bones . . ."

"The Home Office say we are not near to death

Well, if a couple of weeks isn't near enough for them, I don't know what will be."



NORTHERN IRELAND RACISTS TRIUMPHANT AS WILSON DITHERS

THE power sharing Executive in Belfast collapsed because the British government was not prepared to back it with the necessary force.

At the beginning the Ulster Workers' Council had to use large scale intimidation to drag on the masses of northern Ireland workers into taking strike action, though there can be no doubt that the objectives of the Ulster Workers' Council had mass working class support right from the start. As the sectarian general strike consolidated, and the power of the Ulster Workers' Council to decide what happened in the north of Ireland swelled to the proportions of a provisional government, the confidence of the Protestant workers grew.

The British government did nothing against them — indeed, there are a number of cases of the British Army attacking Catholic

workers who naturally refused to support a reactionary strike aimed at restoring them to complete second class citizenship.

Wilson dithered. He made a "hard" speech on television, calling the northern Ireland workers "spongers" — and one result of this piece of imperialist arrogance was that right wing Tory leader Harry West publicly reminded the 'socialist' Wilson that Britain draws more from the north of Ireland in profit than it pays out in social service and industrial subsidies.

Finally, after 15 days, Faulkner's Unionists resigned. Panicky and demoralised since their crushing rejection in the February Westminster elections, they proved the weakest prop of British Imperialism's new regime in the north of Ireland.

The British government is

trying to keep its options open by combining direct rule for four months, with the maintenance of the Constitution Act of 1973. It is not ruled out that some new 'coalition' can be patched together.

The Orange Tory politicians like West are jubilant at victory over Faulkner. But they are, certainly, unhappy with how it was won. This may make them amenable to pressure for 'compromise', and a new attempt at a power sharing Executive, if the SDLP can be persuaded to let the idea of a Council of Ireland recede further into the distance, or drop it altogether.

The immediate danger now in the north of Ireland is that the Orange religious bigots, flushed with victory and with a new confidence in their own strength, may turn with renewed sectarian energy towards organising anti-

Catholic pogroms. They are determined to restore their old ascendancy over the 40% of the northern Ireland population who are Catholics. When they demand elections they have no other goal but that in mind.

During the strike the Ulster Workers' Council practised blatant discrimination against the Catholic areas. They may now decide to go on a new offensive, a new binge of sectarian assassinations. These are the people who showed the world the difference between the 'economic warfare' bombing campaign of the IRA and real terrorist tactics by setting off bombs in Dublin and Monaghan, without warning and calculated to slaughter and maim as many as possible. 31 have so far died.

Their psychology is shown by the fact that even a 'respectable' bourgeois paper like the 'Belfast Newsletter' reported the carnage in Dublin almost gloatingly.

The Catholic victims of British Imperialism's partition of Ireland

can only rely on their own militia — the Irish Republican Army. The British Army has terrorised them, never protected them.

The collapse of the power-sharing Executive proves the impossibility of remodelling the Six County state. Sectarianism is built into it, working class division and impotence is programmed into it. It will always remain a sectarian bearpit. It cannot be remodelled, only destroyed.

British Imperialism has just shown that it lacks the nerve even to energetically fight for its own programme, of a remodelled Six County State, in the face of the anger of its redundant Orange stooges. And when, at the end, it seemed finally to have nerved itself for a showdown with what was in fact the sectarian Provisional Government of northern Ireland (the UWC), its political instrument — the Faulknerite Unionists — broke in its hands.

In the next four months British

Imperialism will manoeuvre and manipulate, trying to salvage what it can, and perhaps looking for new strategic approaches, faced as it will be with an enormously strengthened and uncompromising Protestant community.

Only the Irish people, Protestant and Catholic, can solve their own problems. Continued British intervention is one of the problems, not part of the solution. Socialists in Britain must demand the immediate withdrawal of the British Army of occupation.

Support the right of the whole Irish people to self-determination in a 32 County united Irish republic, with as much autonomy for the "Loyalists" as is compatible with the right of the majority — republican — community to independence from Britain!

PORTUGAL AF

AFTER 48 years of brutal dictatorship in Portugal, the workers' parties, the 'Socialists' and the 'Communists', are working might and main to convince the bourgeoisie it was all really unnecessary. The social and political slavery of the working class and of the people of the African colonies, the thousands of martyrs jailed, tortured, or hastened towards untimely death, the savage repression for the last 13 bloody years of the colonial war — all is forgotten and orgiven in a delirium of celebration for the new 'democracy' bestowed by the Army mutineers on the people, and the leaders of the working class join the new government.

Weak link

The regime was not overthrown because Spínola, old Salazarist and professional butcher in Portugal's colonies, had a sudden conversion to the religion of liberalism. It snapped and broke down

because it was one of the weakest links in the European capitalist chain.

The bourgeoisie found it impossible to go on in the old way. Because the half-century of dictatorship had pulverised and destroyed all political activity, leaving little outlet for discontent, and therefore little leeway for the ruling class itself to openly thrash out its problems, depriving even them of any democratic rights, the need of the bourgeoisie for political change found its expression in the army, which was the only institution possessing both power and a relative independence.

The army was also best placed to judge the impasse which Portugal's colonial wars had reached. Nearly half Portugal's annual budget went on the wars, hundreds of thousands of Portugal's labouring population emigrated to escape conscription into the bloody attempt to beat down the African territories. After 13

years of slaughter, using NATO-supplied weapons, Portugal's army bosses were no nearer victory.

The Americans had proved unable to win militarily in Vietnam (as had, earlier, the French in Algeria) and had to rely on a combination of military terror-bombing and political pressure, using Moscow and Peking to spell out, underline, and politically enforce the message written in fire and blood all over the villages, towns, dykes, and fields of Vietnam. Sections of the military began to understand the need for a similar approach in 'Portuguese' Africa.

Sheer force

But the regime, even after Salazar had gone, was firmly and inflexibly dedicated to military victory. Increasingly it appeared to those whose lives were devoted to the use of armed force that sheer force

was impotent in the face of the roused people of Africa.

Thus a section of the Army took the lead in toppling the feeble dictatorship. Hollowed out like a long-dead tree trunk, it found itself friendless and without defenders, making the coup bloodless. The Army, which continues to butcher the Africans, did not even shed the blood of the overthrown dictators, sending them into luxurious retirement instead.

There has been a great explosion of mass activity as workers demonstrate, strike, discuss, and formulate their demands. The Generals have taken the cork off the bottle and the genie that has emerged wears the overalls and boots of a Portuguese worker; the strikes and demonstrations

have already shown that it is conscious of its class character.

For the ruling class the question now is this: can it control the mass movement unleashed by the coup, channelling it into bourgeois-democratic forms, and can it extricate Portugal from the African wars without accepting total defeat in the form of full, untrammelled independence for the African 'provinces'.

The government offers to negotiate with the freedom fighters, hoping for an agreement such as France made with Algeria, the Evian agreement (though because of Portugal's own economic backwardness it could not hope for neo-colonial dominance over a formally independent 'Portuguese' Africa at all

comparable to the 'influence' France still keeps in Algeria). In Mozambique, at least, the freedom fighters reject discussion on such an agreement, insisting on full independence. Very probably Portugal will attempt therefore to continue the war, using Moscow to put pressure on the freedom movements to compromise.

Feb. 1917

What it can attempt in Africa naturally depends on its controlling the situation at home. It is here that the 'workers' parties have come to the rescue, especially the Communist Party, which is strongest, having maintained an underground organisation through all the Salazar years.



PORTUGAL CHALLENGE THE LI

SHIPYARD workers, metro workers, textile workers, Renault car workers, bank and insurance employees, miners, telephonists, lorry drivers, construction workers, postmen, bus drivers, bakers — those are some of the sections of the Portuguese working class which have moved into struggle for their demands.

Claims have included the 40-hour week, wage increases with a guaranteed national minimum, sick pay and free medical treatment, retirement at 60, removal of managers particularly connected with the Salazar/Caetano regime, and restitution of workers sacked for political reasons. Secondary school students have also come out on strike for the reform of the educational system.

Renault have refused to negotiate, despite a demonstration of Renault workers outside the French embassy in Lisbon and a telegram of support to the Portuguese Renault workers from Renault workers in Billancourt, France. But generally employers have been conceding large parts of workers' claims after relatively short strikes. On 25th May, the government announced a minimum wage of 3300 escudos and a total freeze on prices and rents.

Defence

The employers have not wanted to provoke confrontations because they know that confrontation could well lead to them losing not just a portion of their profits, but the whole of their power. The employers' main defence is in fact provided by the 'Communist' Party. (Though the army is not unwilling to use armed force eventually — "We shall make short shrift of the bad use which is being made of the liberty offered to the people of Portugal", said General Galvao of the Air Force on 28th May.)

The CP line is simple. Workers should be moderate in their demands and their strike action, or else they will wreck the economy and let the right in. To put it in other words — they have set their aim as saving the capitalist economy.

That is how they understand the lessons of Chile: "To maintain the unity of the forces favourable to

Threshold agreements backfire on bosses

by Chris Reynolds

THE Tory worm of threshold agreements finally turned last week. In a massive leap, the government controlled Retail Price Index jumped 3.4% (that's equivalent to 40% per year!) — and the threshold was crossed.

For nearly 6 million workers the payout on the threshold agreement means that they will receive, every week until November 17th, an extra 40p for every rise in the Retail Price Index. The latest jump in the RPI thus gives a payout of £1.20 per week.

Gift?

But what is it worth? Like many gift horses this one has pretty rotten teeth. Extra tax, higher National Insurance contribution, and, for some, graduated pension, will all take a slice. Some experts say that between 15p and 25p will be taken from every 40p by the government. This will leave only about 20p out of the 40p to meet the increased cost of living.

Yet the bosses and the government see this breach of the threshold as dangerous. Dennis Healey is known to be opposed to threshold agreements. He is worried that the cost of paying out will be too much for an already weak capitalist economy, entering into a recession.

Some experts in the Confederation of British Industry forecast the total wage increase on the wage bill by the time the payouts end

will be the equivalent of £600million per year — that is, about the same amount of money allocated for the total of wage increases under Phase 3. Certainly if the RPI carries on rising at anywhere near the present rate, some workers may end up getting more than they won under Phase 3.

What worries these leaders of capitalism even more, as it worries the trade union leaders, is the effect on the autumn wage struggles. Many workers, once their attention is drawn to inflation by the threshold clauses, may look to a big increase in the basic to protect properly against price rises. The threshold increases may serve to fuel militancy, not to damp it.

Eager

Certainly the sections like builders, engineers, electrical workers, etc who are not covered by threshold agreements, will be eager for a fight to gain real increases to combat inflation. The low paid workers who received very little under the wage control policies of Tory and Labour are itching for a fight. The nurses are the first so far, but ancillary workers and local government manual workers seem prepared for struggle too.

The Union of Post Office Workers, not the most militant of unions, recently

declared itself financially in the black after their big strike in 1971, and Tom Jackson has been making militant noises.

Alongside the low-paid workers stand the white collar unions, many of them having



Tom Jackson — noises

members in the low pay bracket. These include bottom scale civil servants, local government workers, teachers, technicians, etc.

The success of the miners will provide inspiration this year as it did in 1972. Even the Relativities report due out in June could be undermined by the heat generated through the long struggle of NALGO for a higher London weighting.

At the moment most of the 22 million workers who are entitled to threshold payouts have made no agreements. Most of the 22 million are not in trade unions, and are not likely to become organised to force the legal concessions

from their bosses. But many of those who are in the unions will try to get the threshold payout. There is, at present, a strike at Wickmans in Coventry, and Plesseys in Nottingham are coming out for one day on Tuesday 4th June. The Engineering Employers' Federation is taking a 'hard' line, recommending negotiations on payouts at every point at which the RPI goes up, i.e. a struggle every month.

Despite these coming struggles for Phase 3 threshold agreements, the ruling class faces a more difficult problem. If they try to prevent any payout, then a massive wave of action could explode. But if they continue paying out, the threat to their profits and the weak state of their economy is intensified.

They have some ideas of how to hit back without taking away the payout. One is to raise taxation, and with the increase in taxes maybe help out hard-pressed employers. Another is to let the payout go ahead, not interfere in any way, and begin a big campaign to make the 'social contract' work.

This would mean an all-out effort to attack the militants and intimidate the rank and file. Dan McGarvey of the Boilermakers has already given some help to such a campaign by attacking the white collar unions (which include those like CPSA and ASTMS who rejected the social contract at recent

conferences). "We do not ask for free collective bargaining", he said, "in order that sections of white collar workers can obtain for themselves a relative improvement at the expense of millions of manual workers...". Naturally, he offered no evidence that white collar workers' increases are "at the expense of" manual workers.

For the bosses, large-scale inflation is a major problem — it upsets trade, hits at profits, and forces workers to fight against them. For workers, inflation is a major problem — it undermines our wages.

Zero%

There is a need for threshold agreements to safeguard wages from inflation — but the 'threshold' should be set at 0%. That is, for every rise in the cost of living there is an automatic compensation. This compensation should become part of the basic through consolidation. In this way a sliding scale of wages can be established which will protect living standards.

But in the meantime we must fight for big increases in basic wages this autumn. The Economist, a journal of advice for capitalists, points out that a 20% increase will get real wages back to the level of 1973.

TER THE COUP

In Portugal there is not — as there was in Russia after the February revolution in 1917, with which events in Portugal so far have a striking parallel — a tradition of working class democracy. In Russia there was the tradition of the workers' councils of 1905 — direct workers' democracy, with recall at any time, and without manipulation by bosses' politicians and state bureaucracy. In Portugal there is no such tradition. After so many years of naked dictatorship it is only to be expected that the mass of workers will have, or be easily captivated by, illusions in 'democracy', which all parties tell them means **parliamentary democracy**. No party, least of all the so-called 'Communist'

Party, has explained in its propaganda the need for the direct democracy of workers' councils.

In fact the working class needs not a government with neutered Socialist and 'Communist' ministers in it. It needs to develop its independent political activity, to become conscious of itself as a class that can, must and will rule society, that can and should form a common front with the African freedom fighters against its own rulers.

It needs not to wait for the parliamentary elections which the military junta promises for a year from now — it needs, immediately, to cover the country with a network of workers' councils which can challenge the right of the

bourgeoisie to rule. The strikes and demonstrations show that that is the thrust of the spontaneous drive of the working class.

But the workers' parties say differently. They rush to join the government, they tell striking workers groping towards a **working class Portugal** to return to work. The Communist Party, tied to Moscow, will do its best to help the junta solve its African problems, at the same time as attempting to bind the Portuguese working class to the interests of Portuguese capital (and to international capitalism which largely controls it).

Karl Marx once wrote that great historic events usually occur twice, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. His example was the two French Bonapartist dictators, Napoleon and Napoleon III. In the great Russian revolution of 1917, ferment among the people (strikes in St Petersburg, not as in Portugal colonial war) led to a 'palace coup' against the reigning Tsar, which in turn unleashed a great popular movement.

The response of the workers' movement was to accept and defend the new 'democratic' bourgeois regime. Even the Bolsheviks, led in Russia by Stalin and Kamenev, joined in the delirious carnival of celebration of a 'democratic' regime which was not really

democratic and was anyway totally unstable, destined, inescapably, to give way to either a restored reactionary dictatorship or to working class rule.

The Mensheviks never sobered up, but Lenin, linking up with the revolutionary drive and potential of the working class masses and of the Bolshevik Party rank and file, reorientated the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik Party went on to build upon working class independent political action through workers' councils — Soviets — and took state power in the October Revolution.

State power

The opening of the revolution with the farce of working class 'democratic' cretinism gave way not to 'tragedy' but triumphant working class revolution, the first and only time the men and women of our class have conquered direct state power. It was indeed to prove tragic in its subsequent isolation and degeneration, but the Russian revolution is nevertheless the greatest event so far in human history.

Ever since, in the mid-'20s, the Stalinist bureaucracy gained political power in Russia and control of the international working class revolutionary movement, defeat has followed defeat. The pattern, tragedy then farce, that Marx outlined, has been reversed.

Throughout the world farcical re-enactments of the Menshevik role in 1917 has been the fate of the Communist Parties which call themselves

the followers of Lenin. In China in the '20s, in 'Popular Front' France and Spain in the '30s, France and Italy in the '40s, Indonesia in the '60s, Chile — the list is long. The repetition is farcical; tragic is the fact that in all these countries opportunities of proletarian revolution were lost, and in many of them tens and hundreds of thousands of workers and communists have paid with their lives for the neo-Menshevik policies of the Stalinist parties. Read again the accounts of the rivers and ditches of Indonesia in 1965, choked with the bodies of dead Communists — in a country where the mass C.P. (a 'Maoist' party to boot!) could have overthrown capitalism as effortlessly as Spinoza overthrew Caetano, but played the Menshevik role instead.

No programme

In Portugal today the working class can take power. If the Communist Party were a real **communist** Party it would take power, linking up with the freedom fighters in Africa. Instead a period opens which will probably see an increasing polarisation in society. The C.P. shows all the signs of repeating the policy of the French C.P. during the popular front of the '30s, when it failed even to support the right of France's colonies to independence.

A year from now it is more likely that there will be either a restored, if renovated, bourgeois dictatorship, or the rule of the working class — rather than the promised Parliamentary elections,



towards which the workers' parties turn their faces hopefully, helplessly, stupidly — without a working class programme, without even a working class memory which recalls the one great working class triumph and the very numerous avoidable working class defeats.

John O'Mahony

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democratisation and not to yield to leftist outflanking". Already **Pravda** is denouncing the "shabby role of ultra-left groups".

The CP's reaction to the Chilean army's massacre of workers is to say that the working class should bow still lower before the officer caste. It is the attitude of a slave who reacts to a whipping by pleading and fawning on his master. In reality, if the Portuguese workers mobilised themselves now, they could dispose of the threat of right-wing coup readily enough by dispersing the officer caste, breaking up the army, and replacing it with an armed workers' militia.

Pawn

The provisional government at the moment is a pawn in the hands of the army. On 22nd May the military junta shipped several leading figures of the Caetano regime off to Brazil. The Socialist Party and Communist Party ministers were reduced to protesting that the government should at least have been consulted before the decision.

But on the 24th May, at the Lisbon Coliseum, several revolutionary socialist groups — mostly sprung up since the coup — held a joint meeting. They called a demonstration for the 25th, attended by over 4,000 people, in favour of immediate independence for the colonies and the release of a Cuban captain arrested when fighting with the liberation forces in Guine. A warning against such demonstrations followed from the army — but the point had been made: a political force does exist in Portugal to the left of the CP.

Angola

In Angola, as in the other colonies, Portugal is so far as it can keep a tight grip. Public propaganda by the liberation movements is forbidden as long as they keep up the armed struggle, and demonstrations have been banned by the commander-in-chief of the armed forces after protests in front of the Governor's palace on 26th May.

It is in Angola that Portugal is pressing most firmly for a 'neo-colonial' solution. The country is (potentially) rich; the white

population is larger than in the other colonies, and the liberation movement is split between three groups: MPLA, FNLA (heavily supported by Mobutu, president of Zaire) and Unita.

Mozambique

On 27th May a seven-day strike on the construction of the huge Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique ended. The strikers obtained a doubling of their wages but not their other demand, for the dismissal of three South African foremen.

There have been many other strikes in Mozambique, and at least one massive demonstration (for higher wages) of 200,000 black workers, which was charged by mounted police.

A number of the white population (less than half of whom were born in Mozambique) have already left the country, and all alternatives to the liberation movement Frelimo are looking increasingly pale.

Moscow, however, is known to be putting pressure on Frelimo to compromise with the new Portuguese government, and the French paper **Le Monde** on 25th May reports some currents in Frelimo are now in favour of changing the movement's position of no negotiations without independence.

Guine

So far as any claim to the mainland of **Guine-Bissau** is concerned, Portugal has little chance. The PAIGC liberation movement holds most of the country; in the capital, Bissau, where the Portuguese have their strongest hold, there have been demonstrations in favour of recognising the PAIGC government; Portuguese army units have demanded repatriation.

(In Portugal itself, an amnesty has been offered to those who have skipped military service — estimates say over 200,000 people are involved — but with the condition that they must go through or complete their full term of military service.)

Talks between PAIGC representatives and Portuguese minister Soares have been going on in London since 25th May, but the stumbling block seems to be the Cape Verde Islands. The PAIGC regards them as inseparable from Guine-Bissau, but Portugal wants to keep them — especially as they are of military importance to the USA.

John Stirling

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

BRITISH TROOPS AND THE LOYALIST STRIKE

WITH troops going in to break the Loyalist strike in the North of Ireland, it is necessary to make clear exactly where socialists should stand.

The strike in the north was, as we said last week, an utterly reactionary sectarian strike. Its aims were to oppose the Sunningdale agreement, the present expression of British imperialism's plans for Ireland. British imperialism's interests lie in a long-term strategy for a 'cold' unification of Ireland under the domination of the British capitalist class.

Britain once used the Orange descendants of Protestant English and Scots 'planters' as its super-loyal garrison in Ireland. Then Britain used partition to keep a stranglehold on Ireland. Now, with the Empire gone and the military-strategic importance of Ireland virtually nil in a nuclear age, Britain no longer needs to use the old-fashioned sectarian Orange state. It wants, in alliance with the Green Tories of the south, to 'normalise' Northern Ireland and ultimately phase out partition, reorganising all Ireland as a neo-colony.

The strikers, led by the Ulster Workers Council, wanted to revert to the days of the Stormont regime, as they see in British imperialism's plans an erosion of their privileged position over the Catholic population.

Like white workers' strikes in South Africa who demanded "Workers of the World unite for a white South Africa", like the anti-Arab strikes of the Zionist Histadrut trade union in Palestine which demanded "Jewish labour only", this strike in the Six Counties was dedicated to the strengthening of a racist oppression, the "Ascendancy" of the Protestant workers over the Catholics.

The fact that it was undertaken by workers, by trade unionists, the fact that they were using the methods of militancy, the fact that it was a general strike, prepared to a large extent to take on the forces of an imperialist state... all this does not inspire our support. It only serves to make

grimmer the black irony of the whole situation.

The strike deserved only the bitterest opposition by Irish and British workers alike. **Every working class offensive** against this strike deserved our support, whether it took the form of breaking the stranglehold of the blockade to relieve the anti-unionist areas, or directly breaking the strike.

No socialist and no class conscious trade unionist advocates strike breaking in normal circumstances. But these are not normal circumstances. Here the strike did not seek to coerce the employers; it sought instead to regain an old position of dominance from which to increase the oppression of a section of the working class.

If sectarianism were a chink in an otherwise progressive and militant character, as was the racism of the London dockers who marched in support of Enoch Powell in 1968, then certain tactical considerations might somewhat affect our judgment. But this is not the case here. Sectarianism was the banner of this strike and it is **the banner the Loyalist population live under.**

Our opposition to imperialism's intervention in Ireland and our support for the self-determination of all the Irish people means that now as always we call for the withdrawal of the British troops from Ireland. In that sense we are against the sending of more troops to Ireland during the Loyalist strike **not because they go to strike-break but because they have no business to be there at all.**

Just as in the case of clashes between British Imperialism and Zionist forces in Palestine in the 1940s, in the case of clashes between British troops and Loyalist ultras we are neutral.

We neither make common cause with the troops because, like us, they act against the strike, nor do we make common cause with the Loyalists because, like us, they want to see Sunningdale broken.



ON FRIDAY 31st, coachloads of mainly Asian workers will lobby Jack Jones at the headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Most of them are from Imperial Typewriters in Leicester, where nearly a thousand workers out of a workforce of 1600 (with 1100 Asians) have been on strike since May Day. They will be demanding that the strike be made official.

The strike was sparked off as a result of the introduction of Measured Day Work. The firm had been paying the workers bonus on about 160 machines a day, when they had actually been turning out about 200. The black workers (mainly from East Africa) walked out when they discovered that they had been cheated off this extra bonus for several years. They also raised their long-standing grievances about racism in the factory and in the union.

White workers had frequently been promoted over the heads of at least equally skilled black workers who had been working there longer. In addition black shop stewards had been refused recognition by... the convenor, Reg Weaver, a local Justice (!) of the Peace.

ASIAN STRIKERS FIGHT RACIALIST OFFICIALS AND BOSSES

This was only part of the filthy picture of collusion between the firm (part of the US-based international combine Litton Industries) and the union, which had led to open racist discrimination, discrimination against women workers, low pay, bad conditions, and redundancies.

The union's main concern was to whine about the unprofitability of the factory — taking little account of the fact that the "loss-making" British plant is part of a vast and profitable international set-up. Indeed, the work-force of Leicester has been doubled (and output more than trebled) since 1968.

The strikers' demands are for higher bonus payments, a move towards equal pay for women, an end to discrimination in promotion and the right of elect

their own shop stewards.

This last demand relates to the racism of the local T&GWU district secretary George Bromley who operates a "rule" (not in the rule-book of course) that says you have to be in the union for two years before you can be elected a steward. He used this "rule" to refuse credentials to democratically elected stewards who might rock his right-wing and racist boat, appointing stewards himself when he chooses. There is only one black steward (who wasn't elected) and several departments with no representation at all.

This racist swine who with Weaver rules the roost in the area has done everything to break the strike. In particular, he has used the threats from the locally very strong fascist National Front as an excuse, saying that he fears "a racist backlash". He has

refused to meet the strikers or their representatives, but he did urge Tom Bradley, the local Labour MP, to encourage the workers to call off the strike. "I do not avail myself!"

Last week Imperial Typewriters' management counter-attacked by sacking 370 of the strikers (they had previously threatened to dismiss all the strikers); but far from producing a reaction from Bromley it has simply given him and Weaver a further cover for not talking to the strike committee — after all, they can now claim that they are no longer employees of Imperial

This strike must be given the utmost support both as a struggle against low pay and bad conditions and as a struggle against racism. The Transport and General Workers' Union,

kept up a constant and spirited guard on the factory. Asian workers from other plants have visited the picket and a massive demonstration marched through the Asian area of Highfields the other week. So far, morale is good. But there have been a number of arrests on the picket line. The concerted efforts of the management, union and police need to be answered by British workers, too.

Send messages, donations, etc. to Strike Committee, 33 Hartington St, Leicester.

Jack Price

Clay Cross conference goes ahead

"There's no question of the Conference being called off", Dave Nuttall, of CLAY CROSS Labour Party, states, in response to rumours that the N.E.C. of the Labour Party was trying to put a stop to the conference called for June 8th which will bring together various organisations in the labour movement that have supported the militant stand of Clay Cross against the Housing Finance Act and the Pay Laws.

The Labour Party's central hatchet men have in fact said that the conference is 'unconstitutional' in view of the fact that it will include delegates from organisations not affiliated to the Labour Party. And there was a threat of a witch-hunting circular going out to enforce a 'blacking' of the conference.

But the conference has now gathered so much support and momentum that no doubt Transport House realised that they would only fall flat on their faces if they made such an attempt to stop it.

Growing trade union support for nurses claim

BARBARA Castle's offer of an enquiry has not put the brakes on the nurses' campaign on pay, despite 11 of the 12 nurses' organisations at top level accepting the Halsbury enquiry.

An enquiry was as much as the RCN, a professional organisation for nurses, was asking for. COHSE, one of the unions, has now stolen the limelight with a national campaign of sanctions which are being carried out by most of the union's 75,000 members. While Allan Fisher of NUPE calls strikers "amateur adventurers", and the G&MWU leaders criticise it and do nothing, COHSE has given effect to the desire of many nurses to do something, and not wait for the

enquiry. COHSE has been a right wing union, registered under the Industrial Relations Act, and pushing bonus schemes, but general secretary-elect Spanswick started talking about "National Strike". He stopped talking about it after seeing Harold Wilson, but the members had taken him seriously and were taking action so now non-cooperation and overtime ban are official policy.

After the big nurses' demonstration in central Manchester a couple of weeks ago, 1,000 hospital workers marched again on 25th May. In Liverpool 250 nurses, mostly in NUPE, marched to the Pierhead, where speakers included docks shop steward Jimmy Symes and three Labour MPs.

In Nottingham almost 1,000 nurses marched with other trade-unionists, including Calverton branch of the NUM.

In Hertfordshire delegates from five trades councils are planning a mass motorcade through local towns and have set up a Committee for the Prevention of the Breakdown of the NHS. Meanwhile nurses from local psychiatric hospitals filled

St Albans on market day, 29th May.

Even the COHSE executive demand is only for £5 across the board. With the 7% already won, this might cover inflation in 1974, but it will not touch the losses of 1973, 72, 71.... Militant nurses who support the paper **Hospital Worker** are calling for £12 across the board, £30 minimum, 35 hours, and the fixing of canteen prices and rents. A mass meeting of nurses called by **Hospital Worker** is taking place on SATURDAY 1st JUNE

Here this claim will be discussed and unified action planned.

Actions planned now by nurses in various towns include:
1st June: Mass motorcade, St Albans, Hatfield, Stevenage, Watford, Barnet, Welwyn.
3rd June: Stoppages in Liverpool and Manchester.
6th June: Mass rally in Hyde Park, London.

Feeling is growing among other low paid workers for joint action. At Hammersmith Hospital ancillary workers are

planning a stoppage and asking for their claim to be brought forward.

Many workers in industry are prepared to take sympathetic action. 4,000 struck for an hour on Tuesday at C.A. Parsons, Newcastle upon Tyne. Busmen have stopped, and miners and engineers have promised sympathetic action.

The nurses must be supported against Labour's Phase 3 Incomes Policy, and postmen, ancillary workers, local government manual workers and others should make joint cause to see to it that nurses are not just treated as a "special case".

Ed Conduit

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

CPSA dispute comes under pressure

PRESS and trade union leaders are attacking clerical workers in the Department of Health and Social Security because their industrial action is holding up payment of the increased pension rates.

Their union, the CPSA, is supporting the DHSS staff, but on Friday the General Secretary and fulltime officials of the CPSA have been called to see Len Murray, and it is expected that they will receive a 'dressing down' for not ending the dispute.

The dispute arose from the government's wish to introduce the increases within 13 weeks, when the normal time for such changes is 26 weeks. This meant a 50% speed up for the clerical workers, at a time when the staffing is 20% short. The workers are demanding £50 compensation.

Those who rush to blame the DHSS workers for the pensioners not getting the money should think about a few questions first. Why can't the government pay out the £50 compensation?

Why can't the government reallocate more DHSS staff from other jobs onto the pensions work? Why can't the 400 "sex spies" do pensions work?

Why all the paper work, anyway? Why all the mean little deductions if the pensioners have a few pounds saved, or a pension from work, or a little from a part time job? Why can't the money be paid straight out, without waiting one single week, let alone 13 or 26?

Published by Workers' Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1 Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

CLIVE BANE

NUT 'Action Committee' decides on no action

OVER 300 London teachers, angry and frustrated at the NUT Executive's total inaction over the London Allowance campaign, occupied the NUT headquarters, Hamilton House, on Thursday May 23rd. Originally a Lobby had been called by Rank and File, the socialist teachers group, in an attempt to put pressure on the Executive's (mis-named) "Action Committee", which was meeting that afternoon.

Already the Executive had refused to announce the results of the London teachers' strike ballot and postponed a decision on action.

When the teachers, some of whom had been on unofficial strike for the day or had left school early, started to arrive they were met by a strong police cordon on the doors, and an announcement from the "Action Committee" that it was not prepared to meet a delegation from the lobby.

This was the final straw. Entering by a side door, some lobbyists got in and opened up the main entrance. The mass of teachers then occupied a large hall inside, and began a meeting to prepare action of their own.

The "action committee" was invited down to the mass meeting. Now they agreed to send a delegation, but only after they had met and on condition that there was to be no "to-ing and fro-ing" — i.e., no questions! In other words they would first decide on what action (if any) they would take, based on the (still secret) results of the Strike Ballot.

Fascists prevented from speaking

ATTEMPTS by the National Front to establish a working base in Preston met with a severe setback when a 150 strong anti-fascist picket prevented them from holding a public meeting. The meeting, due to be held in a local pub, was to be addressed by two leading members of the Front: Martin Webster, NF 'Activities Organiser', and Kingsley Reed, recent NF candidate for Blackburn in the General Election.

Well before the handful of fascists arrived for the meeting, the picket had completely blocked off the entrance to the meeting place, and after standing firm for 20 minutes against vicious attempts to force a corridor for the NF, the police gave up and the fascists slunk home.

One of the main reasons for the success of the picket was the work of the four anti-fascist committees in the Lancashire area. The Preston Anti-Fascist Committee had anticipated the NF's planned meeting weeks before, and was able to contact anti-fascist committees in Lancaster, Manchester and Merseyside. These committees brought in much needed coachloads to swell the Preston ranks.

It is essential, if the struggle against fascism is to be successful, that such committees are supported and extended.

One unfortunate feature of the evening's events was the arrest of 3 comrades during the struggle with the police outside the pub. These comrades were initially refused bail, and if convicted may face heavy fines. Such arrests are an attempt by police to inhibit actions like these, but we can counteract any such effect by standing by those arrested. Financial aid is both a matter of solidarity and a contribution to the political struggle against fascism. SEND DONATIONS to the Defence Fund, 138a Ribbleson Lane, PRESTON, Lancs.

JON RILEY

NOTICES

LONDON Workers Fight forum. Andrew Hornung on "The Second International, the mass strike, and revisionism". 7.30pm, Sunday 9th June. Golden Lion, Britannia St, near Kings Cross.

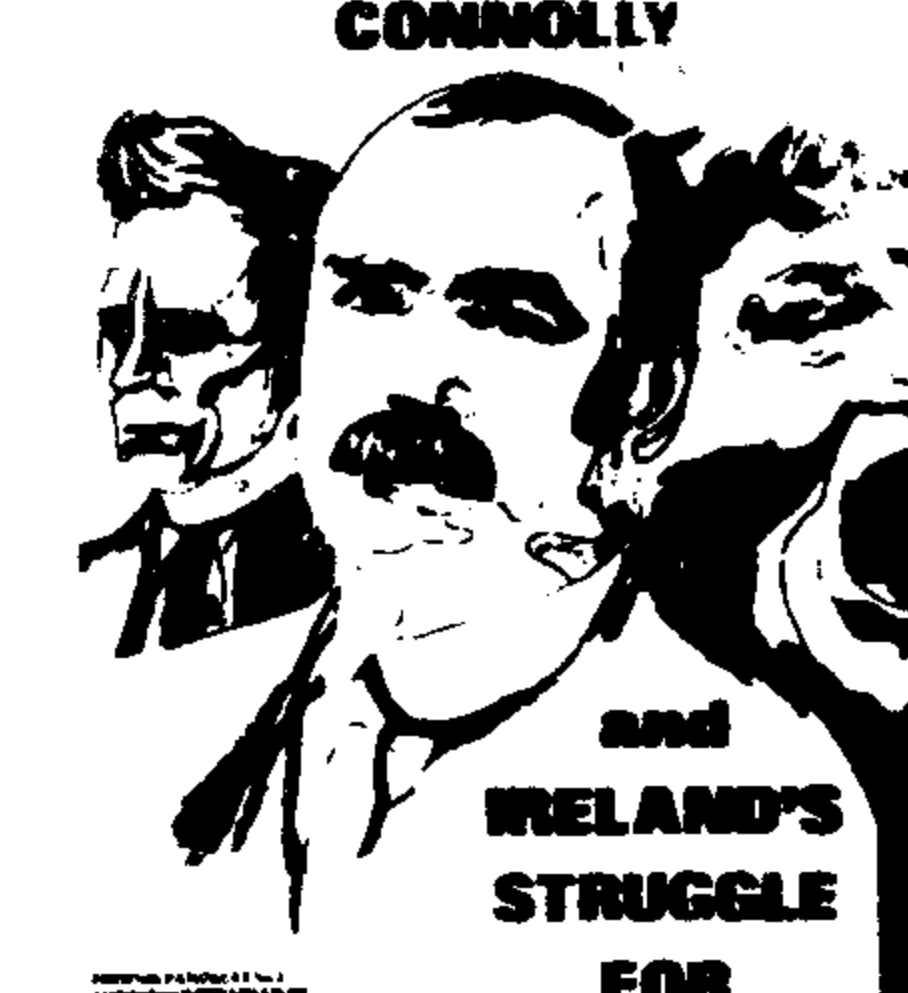
LIVERPOOL Workers Fight forum. John Bloxam on the General Strike. 8pm, Wednesday 12th June. Stanley House, Upper Parliament St.

NOTTINGHAM Workers Fight forum. Pete Radcliff on the Chinese Revolution. 8pm, Wednesday 12th June (postponed from 29th May). The Peacock, Mansfield Rd (near back of Victoria Centre).

MERSEYSIDE Anti Fascist Committee Chile Solidarity Campaign. Joint Public Meeting: "The Dangers of Fascism". Speakers — Rene Plaza (Chilean TUC), Tariq Ali (IMG), Barry Williams (Liverpool Trades Council). 7.30pm, Wednesday 5th June. AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool.

MANCHESTER Workers Fight forum. "Women's Liberation". 8pm, Tuesday 4th June. The Castle, Oldham St.

JAMES CONNOLLY



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