

# CHARTIST

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**T.U.C. — PREPARE FOR THE GENERAL STRIKE!**

# SMASH THE

# INDUSTRIAL

# RELATIONS ACT!



April 20 1972. National Industrial Relations Court writ being delivered to Sid Green at Unity House

**T**is at stake. Every week and every day that the Industrial Relations Act remains in force will deepen the danger to our very existence as a class. If we have not the right to strike — or even work to rule — except when the Tories decide we have, then we have nothing. ALL our bitterly fought for democratic rights — freedom of assembly, universal suffrage, press freedom and the rest — become mere words once that fundamental right is withdrawn.

**O**ur leaders — in the rail unions, the Transport and General and above all the TUC — have submitted to coercion and surrendered wholesale to the enemy. But the battle is not lost yet. On the contrary, it has just begun. And one thing is certain: whatever our leaders may be doing, the railwaymen, the T & G dockers, the Engineers and the 10 million-strong ranks of the unions are going their own way. They are quite confident of their strength, aware of the Tories' mounting difficulties and determined in saying: we are NOT surrendering our basic rights to anyone.

**A**s we go to press, the railmen in the South-East, while back at work, are refusing to be forced to work rest-days or overtime. In Liverpool the dock members of the T & G, despite the massive fines imposed on their union, are rightly continuing to defend their jobs by blacking containers. And the struggle of the engineers — with their un-precedented wave of factory-occupations — is inexorably building up to its climax.

**I**t is absolutely clear, to all but the blind, that we stand now historically on the very brink of a violent social explosion in this country which

sense, Michael Foot, who warned the Tories that their Act could spark off just such an explosion, is right. But far from fearing this and trying to escape from the prospect, as Foot does, we should start now consciously to prepare for it with all our strength.

**I**t would be absolutely disastrous to think now that a General Strike can be avoided. It may be postponed

it would be rash for any of us to bank on it). But come it will. Even if they wanted to, Heath and his cabinet could not back down now. Not personal inclination but class-interest is the decisive factor in the actions they take. The employing class in Britain has its back to the wall and must fight for its very life. Unless it can succeed in its plan to cut our real wages, force up prices and — with the profits saved — modernize ind-

petitors, it knows it will stare economic catastrophe in the face. To hope for the ruling class to change its mind in this situation would be folly. They will show no mercy and our struggle will be hard.

**B**ut, great as they seem, the difficulties are not insuperable. The Tories are not fully prepared for a

( continued on page four )

## THROW OUT THE LABOUR SPLITTERS!

by **Jon Pickering**

**A**s we get nearer to the most decisive confrontation with the ruling class since 1926, it is no accident that the Tories in our own party are taking fright and beginning to desert the movement. Roy Jenkins, leader of the crew who voted with the Tories on the Common Market in October, has now quit the Shadow Cabinet in order the more freely to help keep the Tories in office.

**J**enkins has been rewarded by having the praise of the Tory press heaped on his head for his "courage", "integrity", and so forth, while his supporters in parliament parade their "consciences" and "faith in Europe" around the place. In their zeal for the cause of "Europeanism" — that is, for monopoly capitalists linking hands across frontiers and narrow seas to gang up against the workers of all member countries — the Jenkinsites are blatantly contemptuous of the democratic decisions of

the Labour Party Conference and TUC.

**N**ow they realise that they have no basis of support, and are on the run. Jenkins' removal from the Shadow Cabinet represents for the working class a step forward. The real meaning of the "desertion" of Jenkins & Co. and their miserable attempt to split the Party is that these traitors are being forced out by the upsurge of the movement.

**A**t this time, when the Tories are hitting at the working class with all the force of their laws — and being met by determined resistance from whole sections of the movement — it is imperative that the Labour Party leaders in parliament should be sparing no efforts to get this government out. The despicable Jenkins clique, however, isolated themselves from the movement in October when they crept over to Heath's side in answer to his challenge of an election.

**U**nlike the situation in 1931, when, following a whole series of workers' defeats, Ramsay MacDonald was able to decimate the Labour Party, today we in the labour movement are feeling our strength and will have no truck with such treachery. Jenkins' disruptive splitting move has failed: there has been no retreat from the TUC and Labour Party Conference positions on the Common Market, and there is no backing for the coalitionist tactics of Jenkins — except from the ruling class.

**Y**es, this is a step forward. The Labour traitors have been squeezed out of the Shadow Cabinet. But let us take no chances. There is no place in our ranks for these supporters of the Tory government. We must campaign for their expulsion from the party now, to strengthen the movement as we advance into the crucial class battles that face us.

As labour and the trade unions increasingly confront the whole apparatus of the Tory state, 'Parliamentary democracy' itself is beginning to be called into question. In this article, Chris Knight discusses the alternative and asks

## WHAT ARE SOVIETS?

EVERY WORKER KNOWS THAT THE Russian Revolution created soviets. Many know that "All Power to the Soviets!" was one of the main slogans of the Bolsheviks—the party which led the working-class to power in October 1917.

But fewer people know what the Russian "soviets" actually were. This article will try to explain that. It will also attempt to put in perspective the relevance of the idea of "soviets" to the labour movement in Britain today.

It may help us to visualize the Russian soviets if we imagine them in the context of our situation in present-day Britain. Imagine, for example, that in the course of some national or local conflict with the Government or employers the working-class of Liverpool this summer struck and took over their docks and factories. Imagine the whole Merseyside area falling under the power of the labour movement, with overwhelming numbers of pickets swamping and in wide areas replacing the police, and carrying out communications, traffic-control, food-distribution, transport and other essential services themselves. Suppose also that the action had to be wholly "unofficial" — no trade union or established labour movement organisation was prepared to lend it its weight, so that the workers themselves, starting from scratch, factory by factory, dock by dock had to elect representatives (e.g. one per thousand workers) to a central committee to co-ordinate action throughout Liverpool. If all this were done, the resulting committee would be "the Liverpool Soviet". If it were really democratically-controlled, if each of its members could at any time be recalled by the factory-group which sent him and replaced before the next session, if it united workers of ALL shades of opinion (cutting across all party distinctions) and had a large share of the local power in its hands, so that it could act "governmentally" within its own area — then it would be a Soviet on exactly the original Russian model (the Russian Soviets were destroyed under Stalin and now exist only in name).

The Russian Soviets were the most democratic organisations to have appeared anywhere on the face of the earth. Paradoxically, they appeared spontaneously in this form above all because of the lack of democracy in Russia under the Tsar. The tsarist dictatorship did not allow trade union or "Labour Party" organisations to exist legally. It stamped them out, sent the leaders to Siberia or into exile, forbade strikes — and, with few exceptions, left the working masses only police-controlled "unions" as legal forms of organisation. This meant that in "normal" times, the working-class struggle was very much suppressed. But it meant also something else. Whenever a general strike situation did develop (as happened in 1905 and again in February 1917) it exploded all the more powerfully because no traditional legal "leadership" of conservative, fat and comfortable "labour bureaucrats" of the kind familiar in Britain or Western Europe was in existence to 'moderate' and restrain the strikers. The workers had no ready-made equivalent of Britain's TUC or Labour Party NEC to stand at their head and speak in their name. Not only had they no "Parliamentary Labour Party" — they had not even a Parliament to put one in! They had to form their own organisations, starting from scratch in the heat of the struggle itself. And having formed their "Soviets" (the word in Russian only means "Council") and thrown the forces of the Tsar back, they

could not wait for the middle-classes to get around to setting up a "Parliament" within which the Soviets—in the manner of Britain's Labour Party—could fight for seats and "influence". The Russian middle classes were weak and afraid of "democracy" in general and the workers made sure that their Soviets took the place of a "Parliament" and got down to action without delay. The Soviets themselves were Russia's "parliament": the most democratic—because working-class—form of parliament history has seen. Small wonder that in this situation the workers, aware that their class-organizations possessed a real share of political power (even before they seized full power in the October revolution) never for a moment thought of encumbering themselves with "leaders" whom they would pay a fat salary and let "get on with the job" behind their backs and beyond their control! Small wonder that they insisted they were in charge of their class-organizations right from the start!

The British TUC and Labour Party bodies are, in many ways, the very opposite of Soviets. Not only are they — in any comparison — extremely undemocratic (it often takes years to unseat a useless trade-union or Labour Party leader, and even then it is difficult to put a good militant in his place, or to keep control over him once he is elected). They have also never fought for real power. It is not difficult to see why this contrast has been so.

Here, instead of a weak middle class and no parliament, the businessmen and industrialists have ruled through their parliament longer and more powerfully than in any other country in the world. Less than any other capitalist class have the British (until recently) had to fear "democracy": so rich were they that they could afford certain concessions and "buy off" (directly or indirectly) even a Labour majority in Parliament! So the labour movement here has grown gradually, almost "under the supervision" of the capitalists themselves. Right from the beginning it has been encumbered and encrusted with a greasy layer of privileged bureaucrats battenning on it, betraying it at regular intervals and always looking to their 'social superiors' for rewards (such as a seat in the Lords, or the Chairmanship of a nationalized industry board). Our organizations, in their official pronouncements, have never even thought of taking power independently of parliament. Instead of forming soviets, in fact, we workers in Britain have as a class developed politically an organization—the Labour Party—which sees a parliamentary majority almost as its supreme aim. And even when we have attained the sought-after majority, any real power with which to govern the country has been withheld from us. The capitalists have always retained what matters—the economic power, the armed forces (under the Crown) and the whole state machine. They have always, in the final analysis, proved the masters of every Labour Government, and dictated its economic and foreign policies.

But having said all this, it would be a mistake to go too far. It is untrue that Russia's "Soviet" and Britain's "Labour" organs have nothing in common at all. Neither are 'political parties' in the strict sense of the word, the Labour Party being almost as broad and amorphous as the Soviets. The Soviets in 1917 were not at the top wholly democratic (the E.C. before October was virtually self-appointed); neither is our labour movement wholly undemocratic (compared with, say, the U.S.

trade unions or the French Communist Party). And—like the Soviets—the vast apparatus of the TUC and Labour Party would be quite capable of forming against the "Queen in Parliament" an alternative state machine. As soon as a general strike situation develops in this country we will see that this is so. The conditions which have prevented the development of soviets will fall away. The ruling class will become paralysed. The authority of the Crown and Parliament will evaporate. Our strength as workers will multiply a million-fold overnight. All over the country we will find our trades councils, trade union meetings, and even Labour Party GMCs transformed into seething and mighty popular forums and taking on the functions of government on a local level. Many of the 'white-collar' workers and even the soldiers—once they are convinced we mean business and are likely to win—will move towards us and become 'un-reliable' in the eyes of the state. As we find ourselves becoming as a class the real power in the country, there will be nothing to stop us convening an emergency TUC and Labour Party Conference for the purpose of formalizing the assumption of full state power. Nothing, that is, except our leaders. In such a situation, the ability quickly to replace our leaders will become a matter of life and death. That is why, to prepare for the coming general strike (which could take us by surprise within the coming year or so) we must now step up our fight not only for the construction of a revolutionary party (if possible affiliated to the Labour Party as was the old I.L.P.) but also for the fullest democracy within our mass organisations themselves. Nothing short of the democracy attained within the Russian soviets can suffice if we are to unite the whole of our class under Labour's banner and conquer power.

### Republican Conference

(from page four).

of the provos. Rory McShane from Newry accepted the main political thrust of the document, but rejected the idea that entry into the EEC would end the struggle. He quite rightly stated that his British comrades would still fight on, pointed to the recent struggles of the French and Italian workers inside the EEC, and stressed that though entry would be a defeat, the struggle for a socialist Ireland in a socialist Europe would continue. Despite demagogic attacks on these comrades from the Andersonstown and Crossmaglen delegates who called them "ultra-left purists" the Derry delegates moved reference back of the document. The move was defeated by 180 votes to 60, but only after the Chairman promised to remove the piece on the EEC.

The other contentious item was the resolution on sectarianism. This was just a string of platitudes and was even historically incorrect. Ronnie Bunting, a Protestant republican just out of Long Kesh, stated clearly that sectarianism was a class question and that the only way to win comrades from the Protestant working class was to campaign on material issues—jobs, housing, women's rights etc. He then moved an addendum condemning the sectarian bombings of the Provisional Alliance. The democratic nature of the Convention was shown when Bernadette Devlin MP was allowed to speak though she was not a delegate, and she proceeded to attack Ronnie Bunting's addendum. She lectured the audience as though she were a schoolmistress and said many provisionals were just as good socialists as were many officials. She then cited the shooting of the Orange Tory Senator Joe Barnhill, as proof that the Officials also carried out attacks on non-military targets. Despite her frenzied pleading, the Conference correctly condemned the sectarian actions of the provos and the addendum was passed nem con. The original document was also attacked by Rory McShane who said that the mass trades union power of the Ulster Vanguard was not something to condemn. "We want this power behind us. United, we could sweep Toryism out of Ireland for good", he declared. He then cited the mass strike against the Heath Government during the fight to kill the Industrial Relations Bill, superbly supported by the Protestant workers. The document was finally accepted.

The Conference closed with Tomas Mac Giolla urging the delegates to stand firm and to build a non-sectarian workers' organisation to throw out the Tories of Dublin and Belfast. The Convention then observed a one minute's silence for Joe McCann, brutally shot by the British Army a week before. Finally, the Chairman thanked the fraternal delegates for their attendance and everyone left the hall past armed IRA guards who were there to ensure there was no interference from the Army.

# LABOUR PARTY YOUNG SOCIALISTS CONFERENCE 1972

220 DELEGATES AND A THOUSAND visitors assembled at Scarborough for what was undoubtedly the most important Labour Party Young Socialists Conference ever held.

Coming at a time following the tremendous victory of the miners, when the class conflicts in society had sharpened to an intensity unparalleled in over a generation, this Conference had tremendous responsibilities on its shoulders to formulate a clear strategy which could — over the years — become embraced by the whole labour movement facing the mighty battles that lie ahead.

And to some extent, it succeeded. The Majority document "Nationalisation and Workers' Control", overwhelmingly passed by Conference, quite rightly pointed out that all the failures of previous Labour Governments were a result of having left the economic power of the country in the hands of a tiny clique. Only by nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control could a Labour Government begin to build a socialist society.

On housing, too, Conference gave an important lead by backing those Labour Councils who have stated their intention to defy the Tory "Fair Rents" Act.

What came over on a whole number of issues was at least some form of comprehensive programme from the majority, in complete contrast to the right-wing of the YS who were unable to put up any fight at all.

But having said this, we Chartists, as will be clear to all those who were at the Conference, are seriously disturbed at the very real weaknesses and limitations of the YS which manifested themselves all too clearly at the weekend.

It is not sufficient for us merely to pride ourselves on the correctness of our ideas, and on the validity of our programme. Our



by **Graham Bash**

delegate, Brent East LPYS  
(seen speaking above)

ideas must become more than a mere set of demands; they must be a guide to action, and become a power in the movement. It is not a matter of "preaching" our ideas at the movement, but articulating a clear strategy for the struggles ahead and linking our programme to a plan of action for their implementation.

Looking at some of the resolutions, listening to some of the speeches, one could not help but be struck by a certain air of unreality about the whole thing, as if somehow the fact that we in the labour movement are about to come into a massive confrontation with the ruling-class had not quite seeped into the consciousness of those present at Conference. Only the composite

resolution from Harrow and Norwood seemed in any way to correspond with the urgency of the situation:

This Conference views the continued existence of the Tory Government as an intolerable threat to the bitterly fought for rights of the working class.

The Tory onslaught—with over a million unemployed, the Industrial Relations Act now on the statute book, rising prices, attacks on the social services, entry into the Common Market, and vicious repression in Ireland—must be seen in the context of the worsening crisis of world capitalism, as an attempt to solve the problems of the British ruling class at the expense of the working people.

The Tory government has staked its whole political survival on these policies. These are political attacks demanding political solutions. Conference realises therefore that the immediate and central question facing the Labour Movement is how to get rid of this Tory government and its industrial and financial backers.

Conference therefore calls on the Labour Party and T.U.C. leadership to demand a General Election now and to back up this demand with concrete preparations for a General Strike.

Conference affirms that a General Strike is implicit in the whole situation of conflict between Labour and Capital at the present time, and recognises the enormous dangers of entering into such a situation unprepared. A General Strike poses the question of power: in such a situation either the Labour Movement takes the entire industrial, financial and state power of the country into its hands, or it must suffer a severe defeat. If we are not prepared for a social revolution then we are not prepared for a General Strike.

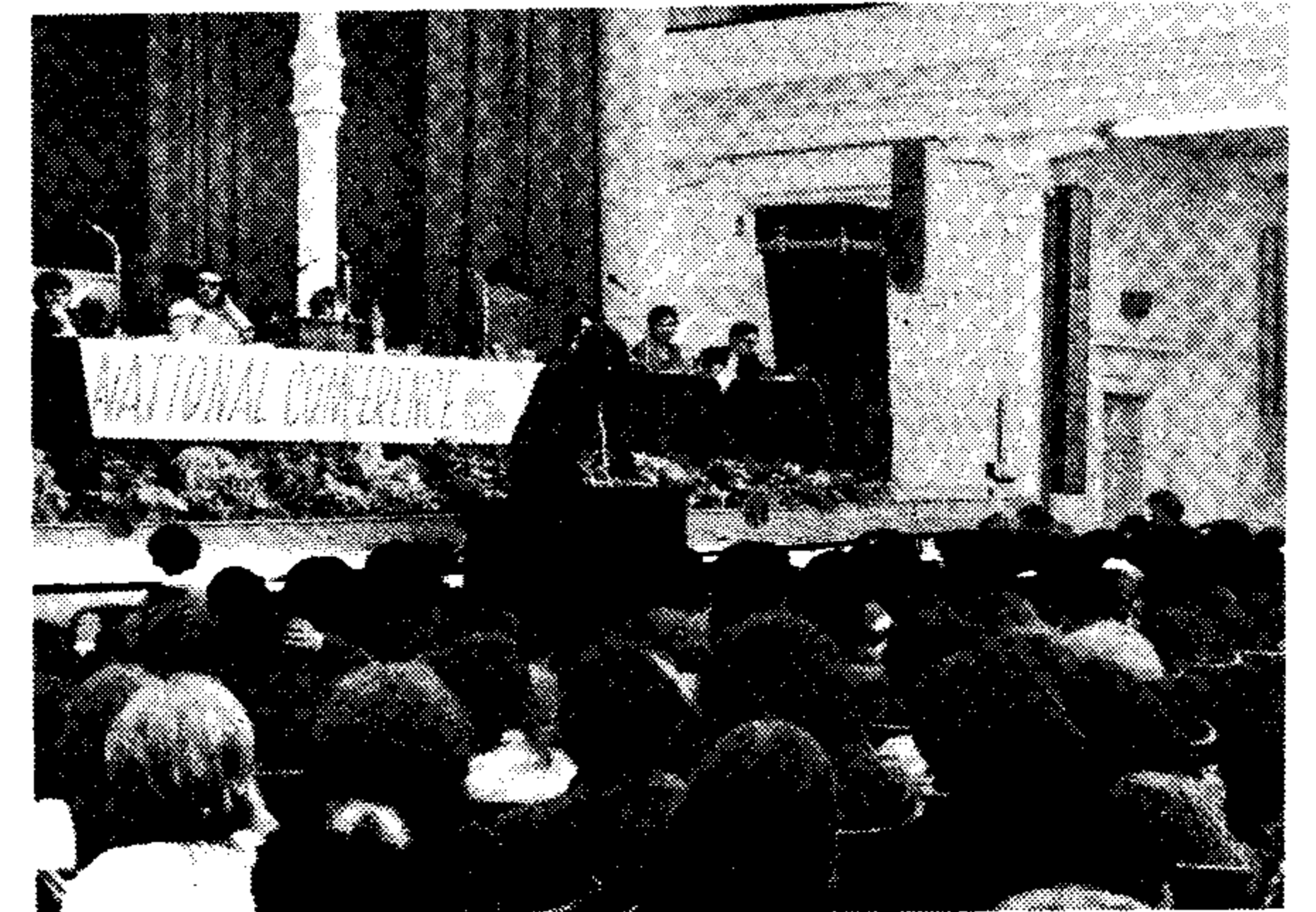
Therefore Conference calls on the Labour Party's National Executive Committee and the Trades Union Congress—

(a) To link the growing demand for the removal of the Tory government with the programme for social revolution contained in the resolutions adopted by this and previous Conferences;

(b) to ensure that before a General Strike situation has developed, the whole Labour Movement has been politically prepared for the actual taking of power.

Conference instructs the Labour Party Young Socialists National Executive to campaign on this basis under the slogans: 'Trades Union Congress—Prepare for the General Strike', and 'Labour—Take the Power'.

Unfortunately, this resolution was amended out of existence. The main argument seemed to be that since the miners strike, the possibilities of a General Strike had receded, because the Tories had abandoned their tactic of confrontation. Events since the Conference are an adequate reply! The truth is disgracefully that were it not for the Chartist delegates, the whole issue of the General Strike would not have been on the agenda.



Again the rather abstract manner of presenting the "socialist programme" was apparent when the majority opposed the call from Paul Moore (Norwood YS) to launch a campaign to expel the Labour traitors who voted to keep the Tories in office over the Common Market. "We must attack ideas, not leaders" they said, as if we can attack bourgeois ideas within our movement without attacking those who put them forward! "Wilson is just as bad as Jenkins", they said, failing to recognise that the demand is above all a demand against Wilson, since it could not be carried through without a real earthquake in the Labour Party.

On Ireland, too, while correctly pointing out that the hold of British Imperialism cannot be finally broken except by the force of the Irish labour movement, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers, Conference seemed to use this as an excuse for avoiding coming out in unconditional defence of the IRA in the military struggle with the British Army. Indeed, a disgraceful resolution equating the UVF and the Provisional IRA was actually passed.

On a whole number of issues — its failure to support the Soldiers Trade Union Rights Movement, or to give even critical support to the NLF in Vietnam, for instance — the YS again showed its abstract manner of putting its positions.

In conclusion: we once again adopted a revolutionary programme of demands, but put forward no strategy for its actual implementation in real life. There are real dangers here. We in the YS are a part of the labour movement and the opportunities for our growth are — in this period particularly — almost unlimited. But to seize them we must ensure that our programme is not something to ease the conscience, but a guide to revolutionary action, unfolding a bold struggle to challenge the whole basis of Tory rule, take state power and actually carry out the nationalisation of the "200 monopolies" under workers' control.

## NO TO DIRECT RULE!

The entire Parliamentary Labour Party, without a moment's hesitation, voted for the Tories' imposition of direct rule in Ireland. The "Tribune" group had in fact been calling for this since 1969.

Almost alone of tendencies in the Labour Party, the Chartists have consistently warned: direct rule can offer no solution to the problems faced by the Irish people. Indeed, nothing a British Government can do can assist the Irish — as long as the capitalist class in this country remains in power. So far, what results has direct rule brought?

- Last month's cold-blooded murder by Paratroopers of Official IRA militant Joe McCann — shot dead un-armed as he walked through the Markets area of Belfast.

- NO reforms for the Catholic minority whatever (the proposals for "proportional representation", "community government" etc., abandoned, and all the old Stormont laws still in force).

- The much-publicized release of 70 internees followed immediately by the internment of another 59.

- And Heath's public announcement of his intention to invade the "No-Go" Creggan and Bogside areas of Derry (with speculative comments in the British Press as to the number of soldiers needed).

Small wonder that this Tory attempt to split and weaken the "Catholic" workers has, on the contrary, only further angered them and united them in their resistance.

Most British workers are heartily sick of the bloodshed caused by the seemingly endless "Irish problem". The oppressed Irish workers too—men, women and children—are

themselves no less angry about this war which is imposed upon them, from which they feel that have suffered enough. But let us be clear. The actions of our "Labour leaders" in Britain do nothing to end the war. On the contrary, by assisting the Tories to impose direct rule, they further deepen the conflict and (however unwillingly) prolong the carnage.

The only way forward is to struggle to win this war against our class-enemies (as all other wars against them) and use it as an added lever by which to bring this Tory Government down. Only by organising ourselves as a class, breaking the power of Britain's bankers and employers and taking the state and the armed forces into our own hands could we raise ourselves into a position to assist our class brothers (Catholic and Protestant) in Ireland.

End unemployment, low wages and the housing scandal in the North of Ireland! Only by fighting on class-lines can we assist the Republican workers to win their Protestant brothers from the Tories. The Protestants' fears of the Catholics (whom they see as competing with them for the few jobs, houses and meagre wages which are available) can only be eliminated by a force capable of guaranteeing them full employment and decent living standards come what may. But that means fighting the Tory and Unionist exploiters, landlords and employers. Acquiescence in Direct Rule means just the opposite — the strengthening of rule by British imperialism and the Tory Government (which can only worsen living conditions in the North) and the further alienation of the Protestant workers, driving them nearer to sectarian despair.

## SMASH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT!

(continued from page one)

show-down. In February the mere threat that the miners' dispute was becoming general made them back down in a panic. They are right to fear our movement at this time. They know that, objectively, all the means for seizing the advantage of a General Strike to take power are available to us. They see that the working class is confident, the unions are strong, the students are mainly on our side (as are large sections of the middle class); and they know very well that most of the Army—overstretched as it is—would quickly become exasperated and split on class lines in any confrontation with a really popular working-class upsurge. The only thing they can rely on, in fact, is the 'moderation' of our leaders. The Tories know as well as we do how much our leaders fear a General Strike. Fear not only that they might lose it—but also that they might win, and in the general upsurge be swept from their bureaucratic positions by their members!

Just before the National Industrial Relations Court ordered the railmen to work rest days, overtime and ignore their rule book, at a moment when thousands of anxious workers were awaiting a lead... Jim Callaghan was warning trade-union MPs in Parliament not to "appear to be defending breaches of the law". Can there be more despicable betrayal than this? Do these people know nothing of the history of our movement? Of the Combination Acts? Of the Tolpuddle Martyrs? Of the revolutionary Chartists fighting for "One Man, One Vote!"? Do they not know that we owe our movement's very existence to courageous "breaches of the law" by the early pioneers?

Let us take some recent examples of acts of "leadership" we have been given. As we reported in our last issue, TUC General Secretary Vic Feather was remarking as recently as March 16, that "no firm of any size or any sense wants to touch the Industrial Relations Act or any part of it". This was his justification for doing absolutely nothing to warn or prepare his ranks for what lay in store. The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, when the Act came into force, issued a circular to all members. Instead of

warning and preparing them for what was coming it urged them: "ignore the Act"! It read:

"Wherever possible we must encourage employers to ignore the Act and treat the whole thing as one big party political irrelevancy. Best advice - know about the Act, but ignore it and continue to operate trade union activities as before".

It is precisely because of their consistent history of such ostrich-like attempts to evade the reality of the class-struggle, their quivering refusal to face up to the question of power and brace themselves and their members for a General Strike, that now—at this crucial moment when the Act meets its first test—they find themselves unprepared to resist in any way whatsoever and are just sitting paralysed, eating mouthfuls of their former words about "non-co-operation" and handing thousands of pounds and much of our movement's credibility into the Tories' hands.

Of course, once we rule out the methods of General Strike and social revolution, we ARE compelled to surrender meekly to be slaughtered. The leaders of the Railway Unions COULD NOT have defied the National Industrial Relations Court without "going all the way"—calling a full strike, appealing to all other unions for support, swinging labour's ranks behind them, spreading the dispute into a General Strike and, with the whole working class, seizing into their hands the railway network, key communications, all industry and the power of the state. To that extent, within the limits of their reformist premises, they acted the only way they could. Those who simply shout "Don't pay!" or "resist!" at union leaders faced with massive fines are—if they leave it at that—making things sound too easy. Under the prevailing balance of power the Tories are on top and one is forced to pay or submit to the sequestration of assets.

Now is the time for a violent change of course. As long as they are unprepared for a full-scale General Strike and social revolution, our leaders will—whether 'reluctantly' or not—be dragged into the Tory courts, wrapped and bound in a thousand legal threads and used as direct agents of the Government against their members. As workers we must make clear: if our leaders will not fight, we'll throw them out and replace them. The survival of our movement is at stake.

# VIETNAM: VICTORY TO THE NLF!

by Bill Thompson

As we go to press, a battle rages around An Loc for control of this provincial capital. This battle shows all the signs of becoming the "Dien Bien Phu" of the US Army.

The massive offensive of the North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front troops launched over Easter has driven the final nails into the coffin of the bogus "Vietnamisation" policy of President Nixon. Now the White House is faced with a war it cannot win, an army it cannot trust and a puppet army of "South Vietnamese" who are defecting in ever larger numbers to the insurgent forces. The hopes of the US President that he could retrieve at the Paris conference table what he has lost in the shanties and cities of Indo-China have been shattered. Despite more explosives than were used in World War II, despite millions of dollars of "aid" to a whole string of puppet dictators, and despite the wholesale complicity of the leaders of the American labour movement, the US government has proved unable to defeat this heroic struggle of thirty million workers and peasants of a tiny Asian country.

The new offensive, which even outstrips the "Tet" offensive of 1968, has clearly shown how far this war has developed since its beginning. What was once an indigenous rising of peasants in the south of Vietnam has now involved not only the North but even China and the Soviet Union in the supply of arms. True, the quantities sent have been pitifully small. But now the liberation forces, for the first time on a large scale, have been able to use massed infantry battalions, tanks and anti-aircraft batteries as an integral part of their attack. It is partly because of this limited outside assistance that even today's massive pounding of the liberation forces by B52 bombers has so far not beaten back the offensive, so that the expulsion of American imperialism from Indo-China is now only a matter of time.

The other factor which has come to the aid of the Vietnamese workers and peasants and led to the debacle which Nixon now faces is the enormous growth of resistance to this war actually inside the US Army. The young GIs now view the war as a personal disaster. The troops who are not hopelessly dispirited and drug-ridden have turned to just trying to stay alive. They are forming political discussion-circles in many units, and mutinying on an ever wider scale. According to the conservative estimates of the US magazine 'Saturday Review', 363 officers have been "fragged" (assaulted with fragmentation grenades) by their own men in Vietnam since January 1970, 45 of them killed. No wonder a US Senator has accused his country's army of being "a worse menace than the Vietcong"! Faced with this situation, Nixon has no choice but to withdraw his land forces, leaving the "South-Vietnamese Army" (ARVN) to face the NLF on the ground alone. Now that the ARVN has proved unable to fight, the whole charade of "Vietnamisation" has been blown sky-high and the victory of the NLF is on the agenda. It is a victory which will prove an enormous step forward for the people of Indo-China and for the revolutionary movement throughout the world, and it will be a victory despite the cowardly compromises (e.g. the Geneva agreement of 1954 and the Paris Peace talks since 1969) of the leaders of the world "Communist" Movement, (aided and abetted by the Stalinist leaders in Vietnam itself). While we must recognise the terrible political limitations of the bureaucratic Stalinist state which will emerge—isolated, its economy shattered by the war and deprived of the vast economic resources which would be made available by a working-class conquest of power in the West—it would be suicidal for us to refuse to support the NLF militarily against the forces of American imperialism. As far as workers and our movement throughout the world are concerned, the victory of the NLF will, in the not-so-distant future, turn out to be a truly crippling blow to the dominance of US Capital over the globe—and hence a victory for us all.

# REPUBLICANS DEFY WHITELOW

A Report of the Official Republican Convention held in Divis Street, Belfast on Sunday April 23.

by CHRIS TAYLOR, Chartist Special Correspondent at the Convention.

one of the most wanted men in the Six Counties as Chairman, and he duly arrived in Divis Street and opened the Conference.

The first item on the conference agenda was a vote on whether to admit the press and TV. The organisers felt that they should be allowed in to establish the open character of the meeting. Many of us felt, however, that the audience should not be photographed and after it was voted to admit them, some people covered their faces with papers or left the hall when cameras were pointed at them.

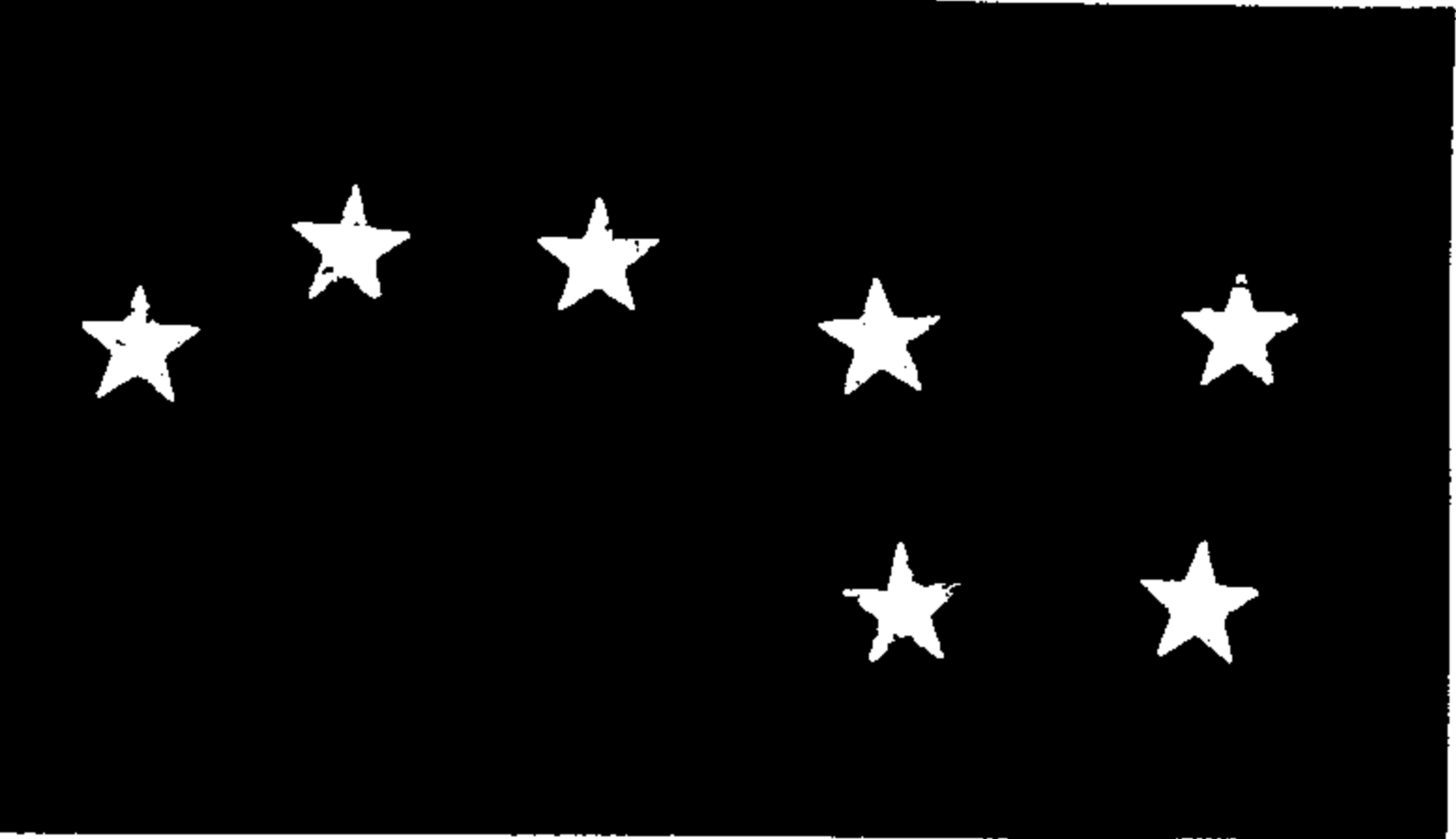
The Convention then heard telegrams of greeting from Canada, the USA and Australia. Altogether some twenty telegrams were read, and these were followed by speeches from the fraternal delegates who were present. Delegates from three Clann na hEireann cumannans in Britain gave short speeches, and then Keith

behalf of the CHARTIST. Comrade Veness stressed the unity of the struggle waged by republicans in Ireland and socialists in Britain. He declared that the only force in Ireland that had the power to expel imperialism was the Irish working class, while the tasks facing the British labour movement was to prepare for the General Strike that was coming in Britain. "The enemy is the same—the same Tory government and its capitalist backers. Only a revolutionary party can lead the class to success in Britain or Ireland." He ended by saying that "We don't support the republicans' struggle for moral reasons but because your fight is the best practical aid you can give us, and our fight against the Tories is the best aid we can give you."

This was followed by a short non-political speech by Chris Harman of the International Socialists, who said he supported this Convention

The big controversy centered around the main political resolution. This document was very woolly and had a number of glaring political errors. It spoke of fighting for "democracy" in the North and even stated that "If entry into the EEC were to succeed, it would destroy the basis of the struggle against British Imperialism".

The main opposition to this centred on the Derry Clubs. The speaker from the James Connolly club of Derry gave an excellent speech in which he attacked the popular-frontism of the document and poured scorn on the idea that "democracy" could be achieved by appealing to the Westminster Tories. "The democracy we believe in is the democracy based on the working class". A girl from the Gerry Doherty cumann of Derry stressed the need for a clear break from the liberals of NICRA and the sectarian attacks



The Chartists who attended the Convention had an early taste of what the Irish working-class faces daily when they were stopped and searched on the road from the airport to the town centre. Luckily, their accents saved them from too thorough a search.

The aim of the Convention was to establish the right of the Republican Clubs to meet openly and to act as a legal political party. This Convention was held in the teeth of Whitelaw's directives, and despite the heavily-armed patrols of the British Army passing up and down outside.

The Conference Arrangements Committee elected Tomas Mac