

# MILITANT

FOR LABOUR AND YOUTH

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SIXPENCE

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# LABOUR CONFERENCE MUST GIVE LEAD!

By RAY APPS (Brighton Kemptown Delegate)

The Labour Party Conference meets at a time when the bankruptcy of Tory capitalism reveals itself in the continued rise of prices, with wages falling behind. Big Business and their representatives the Tory Party are not interested in production for the needs of the people, but only in increasing their profits and power. Thus the pressure of Big Business to secure a "Balance of Payments Surplus" has forced the Government to tax the workers "in order to cut consumption" while subsidising the monopolists.

Meanwhile Big Business through its Tory hirelings and the capitalist press has been screaming that the working class is responsible for the deficits. At the same time they export hundreds of millions of £s of capital because they can make bigger profits abroad. They are not interested in "Backing Britain" only "backing" profitability. Despite this and an enormous expenditure on arms, which is still creeping up, (the main causes of the balance of payments crisis) a surplus of £100 million in the last quarter has been achieved. In whose interests?

Let the facts speak for themselves. At 580,000, unemployment in August was the highest for the month since 1940. The "National Institute" predicts 700,000 by the end of next year; although in a free-for-all capitalist society no predictions carry very much weight. While this prediction may be exaggerated, no one has suggested that unemployment will drop much below 2% in the next six months. Even the facts about homelessness seem impossible to obtain in this "Welfare State". The official figure is given as 18,689 while at the same time the authorities list 1,800,000 houses as "unfit for human habitat-

ion", and 3 million families who live in slums or impossibly overcrowded conditions.

In fact, Capitalism is working in the same blind and crude way that it has always done. Profits have been soaring ahead at an unprecedented rate: the "Sunday Times" revealed that profits had gone up 27.3% in the last year! The Labour Party's N.E.C. document, Strategy for the Social Services, gives the other side of the picture: 9.4% of male manual workers earn less than £15 a week: more than half the full-time working women get £11 a week OR LESS.

The Confederation of British Industry, in trying to persuade us that they cannot afford to pay a living wage to women, are forced to reveal just how much they are saving for themselves in the process: around £1,200 million a year!—or so they claim.

The C.B.I. is not being asked to wait 5-7 years before its profits will be allowed to rise. Nevertheless the C.B.I. propose 7 years before equal pay should be granted, Mrs. Castle proposes 5 years, and the TUC leadership is prepared to negotiate on the basis of 2 years.

Jack Jones was entirely right when he said that "the minimum wage should now be £16/10/0 and not £15 adopted two years ago," and when he spoke of "industrial action... to end this national scandal of low pay". The bosses should not be allowed to use youth, women and coloured labour as a threat to wage-rates generally. A campaign should go out to all these sections organised and unorganised, as from now, to recruit and fight. If the Labour leaders were to make themselves part of such a campaign Labour's prospects for the next election would be unshakeable. As it

is, having just been defeated on their anti-T.U. proposals. "In Place of Strife", by the united strength of the Labour Movement, they are still insisting that all wage increases must be held down, and that it should be the better-off workers who pay for equal pay with still more drastic tightening of the belt.

While the T.U.C. have replied to this by rejecting not only the Incomes Policy, but also its instrument, the P.I.B., they still officially accept the idea that it is alright for them, the TUC leaders, to browbeat intransigent workers into submission. The argument, as expressed by the T.U. leaders, has become one of "who can act most effectively in the interests of the bosses?—the Labour Government or the TUC leadership?" Even Hugh Scanlon chose to suggest that "if Mr. Wilson had stressed incomes policy less and the TUC's responsibilities more, he would have been given a real ovation..." at the TUC Conference.

What is needed is a real alternative to the present chaos. Bribing the capitalists does not pay off. Despite investment grants of £ millions Merseyside unemployment remains twice the national average, and there were 60,000 fewer jobs in Scotland last year than in 1964—a loss of output worth nearly £100 million. The millionaire G.E.E.C.-A.E.I. bosses lay off 16,000 workers, and still the national union leadership have not called for nationalisation. Yet, in Merseyside, Glasgow, the North East, South Wales, Northern Ireland, the misery and uproar will continue unabated until jobs and homes are found. And the capitalists will never be able to guarantee these minimum requirements. At the time of writing, half the car industry is at a standstill,



Wilson will probably get cherished Balance of Payments surplus, but who benefits?

and yet if half the car workers were able to buy cars themselves, the market could grow unimpeded, wages would be increased, hours cut and investment programmes could be carried out which would dwarf the present ones.

There are no short-cuts. The N.E.C. proposes a wealth-tax. But if this were to eat drastically into profits, it would simply lead to a refusal to invest on the part of the 5% who control 93% of the industrial wealth. Alternatively, it would simply drive yet more small businesses into the bankruptcy courts, who are already overloaded with work as never before,—and the victors would be, as always, the biggest monopolies. In any case Roy Jenkins has already laughed off such an idea, and is speaking, instead, of an increase in indirect taxation i.e. taxes borne "equally" by rich and poor!

Of course every section of the Labour Movement would welcome a wealth tax as a step forward. But the experience of the Labour Government itself shows that any measure

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Shelter report shows that slum dwellers—like these in Glasgow—are virtually homeless

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE  
MILITANT READER'S MEETING

"A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME  
FOR THE LEFT"

Speakers:

Ted Grant (Militant Editorial Board)  
Ray Appa  
(Delegate Brighton Kemptown CLP)  
Chairman: Peter Taaffe (Editor)  
Tuesday 30th. September—6.30 p.m.

At Queen's Head Pub, Queens Road,  
Opposite Brighton Station

# GERMAN WORKERS SHAKE EMPLOYERS

By GREG BENTON

GERMANY, for the capitalist press, both here and abroad, a "model" of "harmonious industrial relations"—has now become another European country hit by a terrific wave of industrial unrest. Like Italy, France and Great Britain, the German working class are impatiently demanding that some of the lush takings of Big Business—the fruits of their labour—come their way.

Beginning in the Dortmund steel industry, where the demands and slogans of the 1930's were once again taken up by the striking workers, the strike wave spread to other sections of industry. In a mere fortnight of strikes and demonstrations, the workers have set out on the long road to recoup forty years of their history. The movement surfaced in the Dortmund steel industry. Massed outside the offices of the management, sixteen thousand steel workers chanted "Exploiters out!" and taking the slogans of the thirties: "All wheels stand still at the workers' will!" The strike readily found expressions of solidarity. Among the first telegrams to arrive was one from the Young Trade Unionist group of the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (TUC), urging the Dortmund workers to get stuck in and not to stop at 14%—after all, "there's plenty more there for the taking!" Miners, shipyard workers, textile workers, iron and steel workers and others, followed this example and put in claims for 14% pay rises and an extra week's holiday. The strikes have encouraged other sections of the working class to fight for their share of the fantastic profits which the German employers have accumulated in the past few years.

## HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT IN 1966/67

The workers want a share in this wealth, they also want benefits from the German "boom". Ignoring the wage agreements of 1967/68—agreements negotiated when the Unions were in a weak position—the workers have taken the road of "unofficial" strikes. They have been further encouraged by Schiller, SPD Minister for Economics in the Grand Coalition, due to his frequent references to the enormous profits (24% between 1965 and 1969) made by German Industry.

The enormous profits are due to the boom which Germany is now experiencing, following the recession of 1966/67 which once and for all exploded the myth of the German economic miracle. The 1967 recession showed clearly that in spite of the claims of the capitalist press the German economy had, and has, basically the same cyclical character as the other capitalist countries. Up to now the cycles have been cushioned because of an unprecedented absolute growth in the German productive forces. The growth, determined by post-war reconstruction, American aid, a relatively small arms expenditure and other factors, enabled the Labour Movement to recover its former strength. Concessions were gained from the bosses and a relatively high standard of living achieved.

The 1966/67 recession, with its high unemployment figures, gave the bosses the opportunity to restore "discipline" on the factory floor. A falling off in the order books—overproduction—brought about a serious recession. The total unemployed reached as high as 1,200,000 if the 300,000 dismissed immigrant workers and the estimated 200,000 not registered as unemployed are taken into account. The union leaders, taken off guard, went on the defensive. With their ensuing weakened position, a number of set-term wage agreements were

negotiated, which the workers have now overridden. In 1968 the union leaders were so timid that they didn't even demand the increase recommended by the Minister of Economics! The present strike wave is set against this background, with the result that the strikes are taking place without the union leaders. In defiance of the official policy of the leaders of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), the workers have taken their own path to solve their problems. In fact the union leaders have been forced to intervene on the workers behalf to maintain their own positions.

## S.P.D. RANKS BEGIN TO OPPOSE COALITION

The SPD has been under pressure from its own rank-and-file. In 1966 it entered the grand coalition with the CDU/CSU, the German Tories. The S.P.D. leaders were pushed into office at a time of economic difficulty for German capitalism. The rank-and-file of the S.P.D. however began to oppose the coalition. A recent survey has shown that 69% of socialist voters are against it (S.T. 21/9-69). But even now the SPD makes no attempt to offer an alternative. The present election is being fought on the issue of who can run capitalism best.

The main political demand of the DGB (the German TUC) is for "Mitbestimmung" (joint-management)—a demand which even the CDU/CSU politicians support. The history of Mitbestimmung should have taught the DGB a lesson. It was introduced into the Montanindustrie (iron and steel) in 1950—and these are the very industries in which the present strike wave first erupted. The miners know from 1966 when thousands were declared redundant and the red flag was raised in a massive demonstration, that joint-management is a fiction as long as industry remains in the hands of the bosses.

During the last two weeks the leaderships of the DGB have been bypassed by their own rank and file. The leaders were formerly satisfied to maintain and pursue the role of a social partner—the other partner being the bosses! In two weeks the workers have gained more than they did during the SPD's participation in the government. Due to the workers actions the SPD called on "all members and friends" of the party to support the unions in their demands, and on the employers to meet them (F. T. 12/9/69). The swing to the left has now begun in the unions, which "will have to take a much more militant line than in the past in order to re-

gain the loyalty of the dissatisfied workers" (F.T. 11/9/69).

Severe struggles still lie ahead for the German labour movement, for in spite of the protests of the DGB leaders, the wage rises, as in France after May 1968, will probably be eaten away by inflation. The coal industry has already announced a 10% rise in coal prices, to make up the increased wage-costs.

Given these conditions, the question now arises about the way forward for the German labour movement. There is opposition to the present leadership within the SPD, especially in its youth organisations. In a recent poll conducted by the Springer magazine *Twen* it was discovered that, if they had the vote, young people would vote 34% for the SPD and a staggering 31% for the Communist Party's front organisation, the ADF. The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) and the movement amongst the students are further signs of a swing to the left. This movement has, until now, bypassed the workers organisations because of the control on policy exercised by the bureaucratic leaders. The pressure of the rank and file has now forced these leaders to sit up and take notice. The SPD and the DGB should be giving a lead to the dissatisfaction of the workers. With a correct socialist policy, the German youth who have rejected the sick values of capitalism, could be won to the labour movement to help effect a change in society.

The press promised a stormy autumn in Italy and France. Against all predictions the storm broke first in the hitherto strongest and most stable country in Europe. With the Common Market floundering, due to the conflict of interests of each national capitalist class, the real community of interests in Europe—the Europe of the embattled workers—has raised its head. The workers themselves have shown a way forward to the socialists in the German labour movement—a return to the postwar slogan of the SPD itself of a United Socialist States of Europe!

## U.S.A. "Govt. is run by the rich"

Despite the revolt of Afro-American poor and the nationwide student upheavals, according to most capitalist commentators, one section of the American people has remained quiescent and satisfied with the "American Dream", the white working class. But in the last few months this myth has been exploded. In a survey on the cost of living, the authoritative magazine *LIFE* (September issue) has revealed the extent of the seething revolt of this section, a majority of the American people.

This survey revealed that "skilled wage earners and property owning middle income white respectable, suburban and small town... are convinced that big business and the rich are getting away with murder in exploiting tax loopholes and subsidies". The fuel to this fire has been galloping inflation, which, last year, was the highest since the Korean War. "For those families on fixed incomes, the result has been disastrous; a "middle class" family with an income of £6,000 in 1959 had £5,215 left after taxes. With the same income today its real (1959 dollar) disposable income is \$3,890—only 555 above the government's definition of poverty"! And a majority were quite clear just what, and who, was responsible; 78% of those questioned, blamed the Vietnam War! No wonder then that *LIFE* worryingly adds "Today it is hard to find any part of this country which is not deeply disturbed about some major aspect of our national life." This is given flesh by the replies of individual workers alone, quoted by *LIFE*. A Baltimore housewife declared "I don't like them taking money away from little children who need food and having it shot to the moon". A New York housewife complained "We have to cut down on entertainment and take short vacations. My husband gets four weeks a year, but what good is it when you don't have the money to go anywhere". But a foreboding for the American ruling class could be found in the reply of a San Francisco worker... "The government is run by the rich. You've never heard of a poor politician. I'd quit paying taxes tomorrow if there was someone to lead the revolt!"

The extent to which a section of formerly privileged workers has seen its standards reduced is given in *LIFE*'s feature on an insurance salesman with an income of \$8-13,000 a year. "The highlights of the Mracks weekend; indeed sometimes their week", is to hunt for cheap food at six neighbouring grocery stores! "By waiting until late in the afternoon Franck Mrack is able to take advantage of sudden, unadvertised mark-downs made by store managers". The haggling of the market place in the richest nation in the world! Is it little wonder then that *LIFE* warns the capitalists "the working man is finding the same that the Negro discovered in the early '60's and the radical students a few years later: The system may be working for somebody, but it sure isn't working for me." It is this feeling which has already led to shifts to a more militant mood inside many unions. The alliance of the Automobile Union and the Teamsters in the campaign for higher wages is one indication. At a certain stage the inchoate revolt of the American workers will be given an organised lead. Today their frustration with the system takes all kinds of forms; a section expresses its resentment against the two capitalist parties by falling for the racist demagogue of Wallace. But with the big class battles, which the American ruling class cannot stave off, they will increasingly look for a way out through the Unions. In turn the differentiation inside the Unions will lead on to the demand for an American workers mass party, to a Labour Party. It is this and only this weapon, which can provide the "lead" demanded by the worker quoted above, which can show a way out of the economic catastrophe, which looms for American capitalism in the future.

## MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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## Northern Ireland

By PAUL JONES (Derry Labour Party)

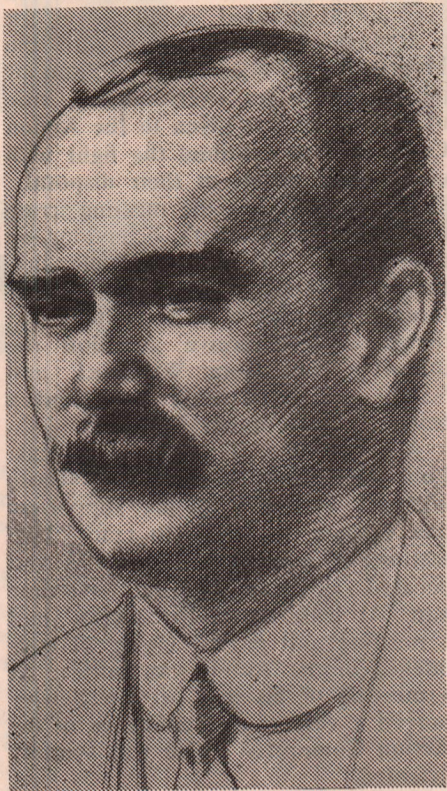
The barricades, hastily erected in the heat of the August battles, have begun to come down in Belfast and Derry. But the struggles of the homeless, the jobless and the deprived continue. The question now posed before the working class of Northern Ireland is, what now?

Chichester Clarke's "normalcy" has not returned. Indeed there is a determination amongst the Catholic youth in particular, that there can be no return to the old positions. No longer are they going to accept the "normal" discrimination of the Unionist machine. There are still huge areas of Belfast and Derry representing 150,000 people, one tenth of the population of the North, where the "guardians of the peace," the custodians of "law and order", dare not enter. In these areas the Unionist writ does not run.

In an attempt to defuse the situation, Chichester Clarke has dished out promises to implement the same package of reforms as O'Neill outlined in November 1968. It is as well to recall that the "liberal" image of these two "reforming" Unionists is only of recent origin. As even the capitalist press has now revealed, O'Neill's wife not so long ago advertised for a PROTESTANT domestic help! One of Chichester Clarke's mentors, former Premier "Lord" Brookeborough, once declared that Catholics should not be employed, as they are enemies of the State! His son is a Minister in the present Chichester Clarke Cabinet. The Unionist tiger has temporarily sheathed its claws. They are desperately playing for time to broaden their base by shedding the more open religious discrimination in order to safeguard their system in the North. But all the "reforms" will not touch the power of the big capitalists, without which no lasting solutions can be found. For Protestant as well as Catholic, the dole queues, the Rafterman slum homes abound. Even in so-called "Free Areas" all there is for sections of the youth is the living death of the dole queue and the street corner.

### UNITED ACTION

In this situation, a balance sheet of the last year is vital both for the Civil Rights Movement and the Labour Movement. Absolutely essential though it is to continue the campaign for full democratic rights this must be imperatively linked to a programme for reaching the Protestant workers and small farmers. Class action is the only force which can cut across the religious divide. On both sides of the barricades it has been clearly revealed just how stark are the class divisions. In Derry, leading positions have been taken on the Defence Association and in the Civil Rights Movement by Green Tories. On all occasions they have reacted viciously to any attempt to reach the Protestant workers. Just before the August 12th. parade and subsequent battle for the Bogside, here in Derry, a delegation of Protestant workers from the poor Fountain area requested negotiations for joint action against hooligan attacks. This was not taken up by the Defence Association. A common Defence Force, organised through the Unions, would have laid the basis for action against the landlords and capitalists. For this reason also they have reacted with hostility to the attempts of the Derry Labour Party and the Young Socialists to raise the issues of joint Protestant and Catholic working class action against the common enemy the Green and Orange Tories. As reported in the



James Connolly (above) with Larkin opposed religious sectarianism

last issue of MILITANT the Young Socialists have been the only force in the Bogside and Creggan area of Derry to raise the political issues consistently, to hammer home the lessons of the events in the past months to large audiences, particularly of young workers in the area. The idea of joint action has begun to be accepted.

In East Belfast, it has more than been discussed, it has been acted on. As even the capitalist press in England has emphasised "... (In East Belfast) a guard of selected Protestant vigilantes, kept watch over a mixed Protestant-Catholic home that had been attacked" SUNDAY TIMES 21/9/69. This unity has been achieved purely on the basis of a common fear of the hooligan Paisleyites and the B. Specials. The Green Tories, the Orange capitalists, and particularly the Paisleyites realise that once the lessons of East Belfast were applied on a mass scale it could become the starting point of joint political action. It was for this reason that Todd, a Protestant sheet metal worker vigilante was probably murdered, not by Catholic elements as the press has indicated, but by the Right, the Paisleyite sections. This Protestant worker was shot down in Alloa St., Belfast, after having just discussed with Catholic vigilantes the possibility of joint Protestant and Catholic patrols. This fact was substantiated both in the press and in an interview on television with Todd's fellow Protestant vigilante, who was with him when he was murdered.

These small incidents are in themselves answer to both the so-called "moderate" wing of the "Civil Rights" Movement, and those "Marxists" who have written off the Protestant population as one reactionary mass. The former have condemned any "political" demand other than the purely Civil Rights programme as "alien interference"; they wish the movement to remain "non-political" i.e. an umbrella for Green Tories, "liberal" capitalists, Catholic slum landlords and their victims, Catholic workers and slum dwellers. But the denial of Civil Rights to the Catholic population was a cold calculated "political" decision by British Imperialism and its hangers-on the Unionists. So also the decision to press for

## Unemployment causes riots

By PETER DOYLE (Gateshead CLP)

Unemployment in the North East has been the highest since the end of the war. It is twice the national average in North Shields and the pundits wonder why there are riots!

The whole region is depressed with low wages in the face of a rising cost of living. Unemployment has reached 7.5% in Blyth, 9% in Sunderland—20% amongst school leavers—and no hope of the problems being solved in the near future.

It is as if the "authorities" were trying to provoke the youth of the North East into riot, and once it happens their only solution is fines and prison sentences, plus a constant barrage of abuse about louts, hooligans and organised spivs. There is not a mention of the brutes of capital who force them to work long hours in soul-destroying jobs for £10 and £11 a week or who kindly give them £4/10s a week dole money to live(?) on when they cannot find a job. Even the Tory Mayor of North Shields, admitted that prison was no solution to what was essentially a work problem. "Most are willing to work, but they're frustrated by lack of opportunity and low paid, dead-end repetitive jobs" (Sunday Times 21/9/69).

If the system insists on cramming 40 or more children into classes in understaffed, under-equipped schools to be 'educated', force their families to 'live' in cramped and insanitary homes and then offer them jobs, if any, that only a machine should do, then of course they want to kick—and kick they will.

In North Shields this resentment has flared up and "authority", most blatantly in the form of the police, has been flouted. In certain instances the police were more than zealous in their attempts to control a situation. The Sunday Times (21/9/69) looked back to the unemployment riots in North Shields in the 30's.

As yet, however, North Shields has not seen riots comparable with the unrest that is to come. What has taken place is an outburst of despair, but it is also a fore-taste of things to come, if something drastic is not done to solve the unemployment and hardship in the area. After 25 years of relatively good living standards, the youth and workers will not put up with unemployment as in the 30's; they will not wait in long queues for a bowl of soup as their fathers did.

The Labour Government has, as yet, offered no solution to the problems. Massive 'incentives' to private industry do nothing, but drain the workers' pockets still more (to the tune of £2½ million a day). While the mines, shipyards and heavy industry decline, the new industry that does come to the North East requires less and less workers. The widely hailed Alcan factory being built in Tynemouth, for example, in spite of its cost and size, will employ no more than 800 men.

It is up to the local Labour Parties and Unions in the North East to give a lead in the demand for real socialist direction of industry, based on the nationalisation under workers' control of the monopolies that dominate the economy. On this basis a crash programme of house and school building could be carried out, and jobs made available for all. With the shortening of the working day, and the provision of ample facilities, all forms of study and recreation could be carried on with ease, energy and enthusiasm. Hooliganism, drunkenness and boredom would give way to an active participation by all in the culture and decision-making of society.

reforms is a "political" decision aimed at maintaining the position of British Imperialism in the area. The demand for Civil Rights, at bottom, was a demand for jobs, housing, education, social services etc., problems which affect all workers, but the Catholic workers even more. This was shown by Newry, one of the towns which saw clashes on the Civil Rights issues, where 25% of the male population was unemployed, but had a Catholic controlled local council.

On the other hand the position of those who have for ever condemned the Protestant workers to be tied to the coat-tails of the Unionists criminally ignores all the experiences of the past year and the vital lessons of Irish history. They do not take into account that many Protestant workers have acquiesced to the attacks on Catholics out of fear, and because no class lead has been given by the leaders of the Labour Movement. But the experience of the 1930's shows that class unity can cut across religious divisions. In 1932 a few months after some vicious sectarian rioting both Protestant and Catholic unemployed in Belfast went on "strike" and faced the guns of the R.U.C. and the B. Specials together in solidarity. This unity was not given permanent form, because not since Larkin and Connolly have the leaders of the Labour Movement sought to break down by mass action, the religious barriers. This would only be possible on the basis of a clear socialist programme.

The suggestion that a mere Civil Rights programme can provide any lasting solution is to dupe those workers looking for a way out from the present impasse. Nor will the hope that salvation lies in action by the Fianna Fail regime in the South answer the problems.

It is time for the Labour Movement to clearly raise its voice as the only vehicle for Protestant and Catholic workers. Throughout the past year the leaders have prevaricated and

played around with slogans instead of advancing a bold lead. The Northern Ireland Labour Party in particular with its backing from the Trade Unions should have provided this lead. Instead the leadership have reluctantly followed events, clamouring for "full British rights". Only in certain areas such as Derry and parts of Belfast have the ranks magnificently raised the class issues. The temporising must end! To this end the Derry Labour Party has demanded a recall Labour Party Conference to assess the events of the past year and to formulate a programme which can weld Protestant and Catholic workers into one force. Not a minute must be lost in drawing up and acting on a clear socialist programme, taking up the day-to-day issues affecting the workers, and linking them to the need for taking over the big monopolies.

British troops, in the service of the ruling class, and to guard their profitable investments, have been able to cajole the population of Belfast and Derry to take down the barricades. But the problems remain, and will lead to more upheavals, unless action is taken now. Even if the aim of British Imperialism to replace the present Unionist Party with a "liberal" Tory one were to be achieved, leading to the granting of full Civil Rights, no long term solution to the workers problems will have been found. British troops cannot provide lasting protection to the Protestant-Catholic workers. The workers defence is in their own ranks mobilised for action. A common Trade Union Defence force is still needed as the murder of Jackie Todd and the sniping on Catholic areas has shown. It must be demanded as an immediate step. Tied to the kind of socialist programme, which we have explained in detail in previous issues of MILITANT, it will lead to the ending of sectarian strife and unity of the workers in action.

# G.E.E.C.; Lessons for all workers

By KEITH DICKINSON (Liverpool Sept. 20th)

The Tory Press issued whoops of glee following the factory gate meeting outside the English Electric, East Lancashire Road, Liverpool, which carried a motion against the takeover of the factories on Merseyside by the G.E.E.C. Combine workers.

This reflected the relief which the Boss Class, as a whole, felt at the failure of this section of workers to carry out what the employers considered was a major threat to their "authority". "The Economist" (20/9/69) summed the employers attitude up by referring to it as "the happiest industrial story of the week".

The defeat of the Action Committee's proposals was due mainly to the vicious campaign and the manoeuvres of the bosses in the weeks leading up to the takeover. Every dirty trick in their very murky book was used to distort the shop-stewards intentions.

To begin with the management distributed a photostat copy of two Trades Council advertisements from the "Liverpool Echo", one calling all Merseyside shop stewards to a meeting to be addressed by G.E.E.C. stewards and Frank Johnson, A.E.F. District Organiser. The other calling for support for a memorial rally for Ho-Chi-Minh, to be addressed among others by Frank Johnson. This was part of the attempt to raise the "Red Bogey". Frank Johnson has given his personal support to the whole campaign and at the meeting in August in the Liverpool Stadium was the speaker who raised the question of the takeover. By the Wednesday morning prior to the proposed takeover the management had things prepared for the mass meeting outside the English Electric East Lancashire Road, factory. This is the only factory of the three that it is proposed to keep open, and it employs more than twice as many workers as the other two combined. Even so, at least 300 of the 8,000 are to be made redundant. The meeting was held at 11 a.m. during working hours. A number of the less well organised sections of women and girls didn't want to go out to the meeting, but the management urged them to go to the meeting, and they found themselves walking to the meeting behind banners bearing slogans against the takeover and condemning the Action Committee. These banners had been made throughout the morning with factory material and encouraged by the management! As could be seen from the pictures in the "Daily Mirror" the following day, members of the management led the demonstration and Bill Bewley, a right wing steward, who spoke admiringly of management's 'co-operation' took over the platform, claiming later that it was all spontaneous hostility to the Action Committee. He arrived at the front of the crowd with a loud-hailer (which one worker cynically commented was not standard equipment for an engineer) shouting into the microphone and drowning the voice of Convenor Wally Brown. That is how "spontaneous" the demonstration against the Action Committee was!

It should be remembered that it was only a small vocal minority, well organised, who disrupted the meeting, which was prevented from hearing the case of the Stewards and the Action Committee, and had no arguments put to it against the takeover either by Bewley or anyone else.

But having said this it is still obvious that if the workers in the three factories had been thoroughly prepar-

ed by the shop stewards beforehand and a clear direction given to the workers anger at the redundancies then the management would have been decisively defeated at the Wednesday September 17th meeting. The confusion which existed on the question of the takeover gave the bosses the chance to exploit many workers fears, particularly with regard to redundancy pay, the "legality" of the proposal etc. But the original takeover proposal was in turn accepted by the stewards, because the workers themselves had tried almost all other measures and were frustrated by the lack of leadership by the official union leaders. They considered "that it is time for action". It was in this situation that the false ideas of the Workers Control Institute played a disastrous role in completely confusing the issue. It is a hallmark of those Left elements around this organisation that they draw no clear distinction between workers control and management. Worker's control in essence involves the opening of the books, the right to hire and fire and a certain regulation in the factory. Worker's management is not fully possible until there is a nationalised planned economy. And even then it would not be individual sections of workers managing their own industry; if the miners were to manage the mines, the railwaymen to manage the railways etc. chaos could result from this kind of fragmented economy. But in a socialist economy fully democratic management would be vested in the workers councils representing all sections of the workers with the full involvement of the workers in the individual factories (See MILITANT pamphlet "FOR REAL INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY" for a fuller explanation). Isolated to three factories the takeover would have been of a very limited duration and instinctively the workers understood this. Moreover, a measure was being proposed, which went further than even the workers in France went in May 1968. The French workers staged factory sit-ins, but only in one or two instances did production continue. A clear proposal for a sit-in leading to support nationally would, many workers claimed, have got support. In fact two successful short sit-ins had already been organised in the weeks leading up to the takeover.

But in the confused situation which existed the bosses neatly exploited the workers fears.

The Press posed the scare of the legality of the takeover of the bosses property by the workers, then the alleged "legal effects" on Redundancy Pay was another bogey. The reaction of the majority of stewards to these taunts was a reflection of the timidity of the campaign for the takeover as a whole and an apparent failure to understand the implications of the action.

When challenged by workers on the "legality" of the takeover some replied that they were unsure of the position, but had their legal advisers working on it! But if the workers had been fully prepared, they would have scoffed at the arguments of the employers. The experience of the workers here, in America, in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and numerous other countries shows that the laws of the employers are powerless against a united and determined workers movement. So too in this case. Any attempt to interfere with Redundancy Payments, if it would have come to that, would have only hardened the worker's resistance. Only a few stewards, notably in the Netherton factory, explained this. This was shown by the reaction of the workers at this factory. Here the management pushed their luck too far. They immediately called a meeting of the Netherton Factory workers for the Thursday morning in the canteen. The shop stewards on hearing about this took over responsibility for it. At the start of the meeting a few management hacks

attempted to shout down the platform, but were told "shut up, we are not having any of that here" by the workers around them, and the meeting was conducted in a very serious manner with a good discussion lasting 1½ hours. The outcome was that although the Stewards Committee pushed for them to go it alone and still take over the factory, the majority of 2 to 1 rejected this mainly in the light of the other two factories decisions. An alternative proposal to take over for a limited period, i.e. just until the Monday was rejected by a similar majority. But an **overwhelming vote of confidence was given to the Action Committee to continue the fight with every other means at their disposal.**

The workers left the meeting irate with the management's behaviour on the previous day and confident that they had shaken them with their threat to take over; to the extent that they were to receive attention the following day from Wienstock and Scamp, and Wedgwood Benn and a bevy of Government Ministers.

Also on the Thursday the East Lanc's Road, workers realising whose interests Bewley and his supporters had worked in, began to react. Two sections of women had meetings and decided to re-impose the overtime ban. At least one other section had a meeting and passed a vote of confidence in the Action Committee. **At a meeting of his own section Bewley moved a vote of no confidence in the Action Committee which was soundly defeated.**

When Wedgwood Benn actually visited the factories on Friday 19th September, instead of meeting a docile labour force, as pictured in the capitalist press, the workers in Netherton

and Napier virtually staged a takeover in any case. Supervisors actually threatened to resign, because they maintained that the stewards had control in the factory.

From this it is evident that all the plans of the GEEC bosses to thwart the fight against redundancy have not, as yet, been successful. A new determination amongst the workers has set in as a result of the events of the past few weeks. But the shop-stewards and above all the national union organisation must learn the lessons of the past few weeks. The AEF District Committee has already declared that they are not prepared to see one man go down the road. Hugh Scanlon also stated in an interview in the "Morning Star" that his union would not tolerate sackings and came out for "Work or Full Pay". This is a step in the right direction. But threatening noises will not defeat the GEEC bosses. Action on a national scale is absolutely necessary. The AEF and T&GWU must take the initiative in calling on the other unions for a national strike. If action is not taken now management's axe will fall on other areas very soon. The mass redundancies must be stopped now. Every section of the Labour Movement should come to the assistance of the Merseyside GEEC workers. The Leylands shop stewards alone offered £250 to the Joint Action Committee to assist them. In particular the Government should be inundated, at the Labour Party Conference, and through every CLP, and every union branch for the nationalisation of the monopoly combines in the engineering industry, especially G.E.E.C. A.E.I. immediately.

## Labour Conference must give lead!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

which merely clips the fingernails of the capitalists will meet with furious resistance. As with the Corporation Bill a Labour Government, if it remained within the confines of the system, would be subjected to a vicious campaign in Parliament, the Press, the Radio and the Television. As a result of the baying of the capitalists the Corporation Bill was watered down with 130 amendments until it was a mere caricature of the original proposals and was then entirely "acceptable" to the ruling class. So too would the proposed wealth tax meet with the same fate if the Labour Government continued to operate the capitalist system.

**What is needed, in any case, is not merely a palliative—even though a wealth tax might be an improvement—but a real alternative programme capable of carrying out all the urgently needed reforms, of developing the economy to the point where it can use the talents and energies of the workers and satisfy demands as they arise.**

**This could never be possible on a national basis alone. There are U.S. industries which stretch out over continents. The interests of one locality are subordinated to those of the big shareholders at home. The Common Market was supposed to grow into a rival to U.S. monopoly-capitalism. As the "Financial Times" put it: "In the international environment God is on the side of the big battalions". But, as the same article points out, "...for all the enthusiasm, there is a notable dearth of practical results. So far, there is no example of a merger... involving companies from Britain and the Continent." They show that there is only one example even within the Common Market itself: Agfa-Gevaert. "It is still unique", and comparatively unimportant. "In France, the government made determined efforts to prevent the Italian Fiat from acquiring effective control of Citroen. In Germany the government succeeded in preventing the Compagnie Francaise des Petroles from securing 32% of the country's last remaining sizeable in-**

**dependent oil company, Gelsenberg, and in Britain the IRC stymied the Swedish SKF's ambitions in the ball bearing industry". In the Common Market national vested interests still come before any international utopias, and the same applies within EFTA.**

That is the situation as far as big business is concerned. While no country can survive independently, they are still not able even to begin to co-operate in any serious industrial enterprise. The effect of their incompetence manifests itself in a massive strike wave across France, Italy and now Germany too, often bypassing the traditional workers leaders.

The wave of unrest arises out of the "revolution of rising expectations", the unwillingness of the workers of Europe, including Britain and Ireland, to tolerate massive exploitation, unemployment and hardship any longer.

Last year's L.P. Conference came within about 100,000 votes of passing a resolution calling for the "taking into public ownership" of "the 300" (now under 270!) "monopolies, private banks, finance houses and insurance companies now dominating the economy", "...a positive national plan anchored to socialist production... democratically administered, involving the trade union and co-operative movement, shop-stewards' and housewives' committees, scientists, teachers, technicians, doctors and the whole spectrum of the working people of Britain... followed by a world conference of socialist organisations in order to plan the unity of the world's workers against the power of capitalism and imperialism.

"It would mean an end to social problems of housing, employment, education and health, and bring about a standard of living the majority of people in Britain only dream about".

**3 million voted for this resolution last year. The workers of Britain and Europe have shown that they are ready to receive such ideas and prepared to fight. A campaign should go out on these lines through all labour organisations.**

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