

FIGHT TORIES

ON T.U. LEGISLATION

By ROB JONES (Wandsworth L.P.)
& TERRY HARRISON (Boilermakers Union)

With exultant braying from the big business press, the Tory Government presented their so-called "Consultative document on Industrial Relations". No compromise is possible, by any section of the movement, on the basis of the Tory proposals. They represent a vicious and blatant attack on basic trade union rights, dwarfing the Labour Government's abortive "In Place of Strife", which was its predecessor.

As Vic Feather said, the proposals of Carr and company are an attempt to turn the clock back a century. This is literally true. An important protection for trade unionists is deleted by the 'new style' 1970 Tory proposals, that dates back to 1871—the provision in Section 4 (4) of the Trade Disputes Act 1871, which prevents the Courts from enforcing directly an agreement between a trade union and an employers' association, would be repealed. This would pose a direct threat to shop stewards and shop floor organisation. The aim is clearly to set union leadership against the membership and to threaten those self-same leaderships with legal penalties if they object.

At least on paper, the proposals would enable the employers to ride rough-shod over the elementary trade union rights and defences. The Law Courts of the State would be wide open for employers' actions against organised labour... if the employers were to feel confident of winning the confrontation with the organised working class at this stage.

THE ROLE OF THE REGISTRAR

The whole of the legal shackles that the Tories mean to place on the trade unions is connected with their aim of 'registering' trade unions. A Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers' Associations is proposed, which would have extensive powers to supervise and intervene in the making and application of trade union rules.

What would a 'registered' trade union mean for its members?—

* Trade Unionists would be excluded from exercising full control over the rules of their own organisation. The Registrar could delete rules decided by the membership and intervene on its own initiative in the day to day running of a trade union. Trade union democracy is under attack!

* It would not be fellow trade unionists who would hear a member's complaint about his trade union, but the all-powerful Courts, helped by the Registrar. The authority of the union would be usurped by the Law Courts.

* The Registrar would have total authority over who a union has in membership, despite the wishes of the majority of the union members. Workers who scab, even on an official strike, which is deemed 'unfair' by the Bill, could not be "expelled, disciplined or discriminated against by the organisation, notwithstanding anything in its rules." Scabs will be fully cultivated by the Tories!

What would be the position of the unregistered union? The Tories are out to browbeat the Movement, so

it is not surprising that for these more genuine organisations of trade unionism they are preparing to marshal all their attacks. 'Unregistered' unions, like shop stewards and shop floor workers, would have a total absence of protection at law from crippling and unlimited fines and penalties for any action taken. This poses a direct threat for every worker. Although this is not spelled out, prison would be the outcome for workers taking action in defence of living standards.

The national Industrial Relations Courts and the new style Industrial Tribunals that the Tories propose would have such powers as would leave union rule books and funds at their mercy. It would be left to the legal fraternity to decide what would constitute 'unfair' industrial practices and action. Any worker can imagine what judgement these gentlemen would be capable of giving!

THE ATTACK ON THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Above all, the Tories attack the right to strike—even for elementary defence against reactionary employers. Their provisions as to what constitutes 'unfair' industrial actions—with appropriate and draconic penalties—are expressly designed to cripple the bargaining power of workers and their trade unions. Any employer can apply for "compensation" against trade unions and unionists for a wide range of supposed offences.

Some mention of the Tory idea of 'unfair' industrial action would give an indication to every trade unionist of the menace contained in this Bosses' Charter—

* Legally enforceable procedure arrangements can be imposed despite the views of the Trade Unions involved. What price the equivalent of the York Memorandum with the full weight of the law behind it?

* Sympathy strikes would be outlawed, as would blacking of goods to help workers in dispute with a particular employer—even if these workers are engaged in a 'fair' dispute. This could militate against attempts to apply effective sanctions on any employer—if the Tories get away with this one.

* Action to obtain a closed shop (now to be made illegal) or to prevent the employment of non-union labour would become 'unfair' and thus subject to legal action. This 'Consultative Document' is quite brazenly a charter for blacklegging. It sets out to smash workers' essential solidarity and organisation, while it places as a principle that "an employer should be free to employ anyone who has the necessary skills."

* Sacking due to redundancy or "the employee's conduct or capability" (which can mean anything or anyone) would be 'fair'—with the implication being that action to prevent this would be 'unfair' and thus outlawed. This is a blank cheque for

ON CUTS

By ROGER SILVERMAN (Barons Court L.P.)

Now that the glare of election lime-light has faded and the Tories' deeds can be measured up against their words, no worker can fail to appreciate their sinister intentions. If they get their way, even the lowest-paid of workers will get no real increase in living standards, and the workers' right to withdraw labour will be entangled in harsh legal restrictions. Unemployment now stands at 628,271—2.7% of the working population. According to Peter Jay, Economics Editor of "The Times" (22/9): "Without question it is going to be a hard winter... (Unemployment will reach) a national total—even after eliminating seasonal unemployment—above 700,000 by next spring... Output is unlikely to rise at more than an annual rate of 1-2%. Unemployment is likely to drift upwards, perhaps quite sharply. If price inflation slows down at all, it is only likely to do so very slowly... Consumers face a continuing hard time with rising prices taking most of their pay increases."

The workers, justifiably concerned at the threat posed to their standard of living, are moving into action. Five million working days were lost through strikes in the first half of 1970, as against an annual average of 2.8 million between 1963 and 1968. The total for 1970 will probably surpass the previous record of 8.4 million in 1957. Whole strata of the most downtrodden of workers are rising to their feet and fighting for a living wage.

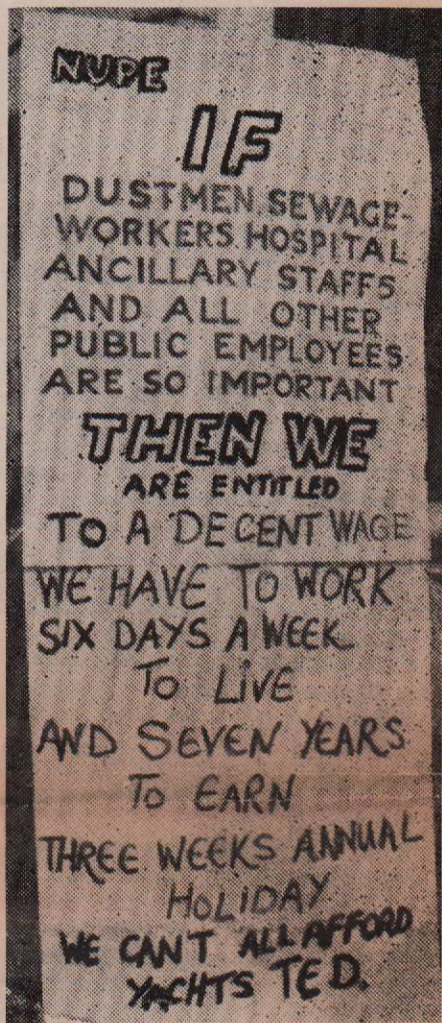
Against this wave of militancy, the Tories are preparing vicious attacks on real living standards, including savage cuts in housing, health, education and welfare services.

On October 27th, Barber announced massive cuts in public expenditure. The single grain of sugar—6d. off the standard rate of income tax—does nothing to sweeten the bitter mixture. The tax reduction—equivalent to a grand total of 3/- a week for a married man earning £20—will be swallowed up several times over in much dearer food, rents, fares, school dinners, health charges. Nothing could be more miserly than the abolition of free milk for children over 7, or the admission charges to museums.

Let the workers beware! By these measures, the Tories have "saved" only £330 million, barely a third of what they will need to pay for the promised extra "incentives" for the rich. It is calculated that only those earning over £3000 a year will gain overall from this package. And far worse attacks are in store!

WORSE TO COME

The most jarring note in the cacophony of knife-sharpening has been contributed by "The Times". This influential organ of Big Business recently published a series of authoritative articles giving detailed recommendations to the Government as to which victims should be picked for the slaughter. A glance at its calculated advice is enough to shake the faith of even the most gullible in the liberality and benevolence of the ruling class when it senses a threat to its privilege. Here are some samples of its less tasteful proposals. On 17th



Council workers' posters answer Tories (see page 3).

October, under the heading "Abandoning the Welfare State in Search of Economics", it suggested: "If sickness benefit were not paid for the first fortnight off work the gross saving would be £70m... If (unemployment) benefit were payable for whole weeks only... there would be a saving of probably something like £5 to £10m... If death grants were paid only to those living at or below supplementary benefit standard there would be an economy of about £8m. And about £5m could be saved if the widow's allowance was paid only for the first 13 weeks after the husband's death instead of 26 weeks as at present... Hospital boarding charges of £4 per person per week... might be expected to bring in £45m gross. A fee of 2s6d for visits to general practitioners could gather another £15m gross... If (prescription charges) were raised by a shilling, another £10 million could be raised. Dental and spectacle charges could be increased again... Some people have wondered whether it might not be better simply to remove these responsibilities (i.e. dental and ophthalmic services) from the National Health Service altogether... Short-term national insurance benefits are not subject to income tax. If they were... the Government would be better off to the extent of £140 m." On 13th October, the same paper argued persuasively: "If milk was turned off in primary as well as secondary schools about £10m would be saved... If (school dinners) were simply done away with and the children went home for dinner or ate sand-

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Canada: Social conditions behind Quebec explosion

By MIKE BARRY (New Democratic Party member)

The kidnapping of James Cross and the execution of Pierre Laporte, Minister of Labour in the Quebec Government, together with the proclamation of a State of Emergency by the Trudeau Government, has shattered the "democratic" and "humane" image of Canadian capitalism. Karelly has the nimby mask of democracy been ripped from the face of the capitalist state so rapidly. Unlimited dictatorial powers have been taken under the pretext of an "apprehended insurrection". The War Measures Act has never before been used in peace-time and includes powers of censorship and control of all Canadians. And already, at the time of writing, Montreal is under virtual martial law. 262 persons have so far been arrested.

The roots of the upheavals in French speaking Quebec lie in the terrible social conditions of the mass of the workers in the province, brought about mainly by the domination of the "English" and U.S. monopolies. Unemployment throughout the province is higher than that of the rest of Canada. For the youth the situation is even worse with over 14% out of work. At the same time there is a vast gulf between the English speaking workers' wages and those of their French Canadian counterparts. In 1961 the French speaking workers received on an average £7 a week less than the workers in the rest of Canada!

It is these conditions which have fuelled the discontent of the Quebec population. Because of the failure of the New Democratic Party and Trade Union leaders to give a clear class lead an increasing section of the population has fallen for the nationalist demagoguery of middle class capitalist parties such as Parti Quebecois. This party received one quarter of the vote in the last provincial elections, although it only received 7% of the parliamentary seats.

At the same time a section of the youth, mainly drawn from students, have increasingly turned to the terrorism of Front Liberation Quebecois, as a means of freeing the province from "foreign" capitalist domination. But as the history of the world Labour Movement has demonstrated, a handful of "heroes" cannot replace the working class and poor farmers organised and conscious of the need to change society. If individual exploiters are assassinated then the power of capitalism would still continue undiminished. What is worse is that the acts of individual terror only bring down further repression against the broad Labour Movement. Already the Canadian capitalists have utilised the "Emergency" to round up prominent Labour Leaders and Trade Union militants eg. Michel Chartrand, President of the Montreal Council of the Confederation of Trade Unions. The more vicious sections of the capitalist press are also demanding the restoration of capital punishment. "An eye for an eye... perhaps it should be revived in this country, at least to the extent of bringing back capital punishment" (VANCOUVER SUN).

SEPARATISM NO SOLUTION

Neither the middle class leaders of the so-called separatist parties nor the terrorism of the FLO show a way out for the Quebec workers. Their desire for real control of Quebec can only be solved on the basis of a Canadian Socialist Federation. The control exercised by the U.S. and "English" monopolies will continue even if Quebec were to separate on a capitalist basis from the rest of Canada. The oppression of the Quebec workers is rooted in capitalist society as is that of the rest of the workers of Canada. Quebec only mirrors in a worse form all the social ills which are being revealed in the rest of the country.

Since 1965 the average living standard of the workers has been cut by 3%. Unemployment presently stands at 7%, more than the level you have

in Britain (which is high enough in itself). While playboy Trudeau has flitted from Canada to Japan, Australia and Mediterranean his Government has operated vicious anti-strike and anti-picketing legislation against striking workers. At one point 75% of the organised workers in the province of British Columbia were involved in strikes or lock-outs! Those involved included public employees, bartenders, woodworkers and even the man from rent-a-car.

FOR MARXIST PROGRAMME

At the same time the small farmers have been hit by the economic crisis and are being squeezed off the land, 250,000 left between 1961-66 and many of those that remain exist on a bare subsistence wage (In 1966 59% of farms had gross cash receipts of less than £1,500 per annum; net income was roughly half of that). And while the Government subsidises the farmers not to sow their wheat Metis Indians starve. The farmers are not

even allowed to give the grain to the Metis!

The maturing crisis in Canada which is more and more affecting all sections from workers to the farmers will shake to its foundations capitalist society and its Government. The growing shop-floor militancy has begun to be reflected, in words at least, in the New Democratic Party, which is Canada's third largest and is based on the Trade Unions. Already a Left Wing has begun to take shape, around the Waffle (called thus because it wavers between a programme of piecemeal reform and a Marxist one). The "Waffle's" demands for more public ownership and nationalisation of the land has been received enthusiastically by the small farmers. However it stops short of a programme for the socialist transformation of Canada on a clearly worked out Marxist programme. But it will be this Marxist programme which will find a more and more eager response within the NDP in the stormy period

which lies ahead. The youth have already begun to rediscover the best fighting traditions of the Canadian Labour Movement, such as the mighty 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. It will be in like manner that the workers of Canada, including Quebec, will answer the offensive of the bosses. On the basis of a planned nationalised economy and the operation of a socialist plan of production by the workers and small farmers themselves it would be possible to end the misery and poverty which blights the lives of millions in Canada. It would also mean that the national aspirations of the Quebec workers would be fully satisfied, with an autonomous socialist Quebec part of a Canadian socialist Federation. Not by terrorism but by a patient and stubborn struggle to convince firstly the advanced workers and through them the mass of the workers is the way to end the grip of the capitalists and their replacement by the power of the workers and small farmers.

Bolivia: Break with landlordism capitalism!

By JULIAN SILVERMAN (North St. Pancras L.P.)

A mass uprising of the workers and peasants of Bolivia has resulted—in yet another general being pushed to the top, to form the tunc government within a week and the 100th. in the 144 years of "independence". Beneath the comic-opera succession of generals in coups and counter-coups lies the reality of poverty and repression. It was officially estimated some years ago that 98% of children have intestinal parasites ("worms"), that the calory intake was 1200 a day (minimum requirements are 2,500-3,000). The situation today is probably worse still, considering now the terms of trade have been swinging continually in favour of the powerful Imperialist nations during the last decade. Even in 1959, the USA invested \$200m. in Latin America, and took back \$575 in profits. Things are a hundred times worse than 10 years ago, when Simon Bolivar, founder of Bolivia, said: "The USA seems destined by providence to plague us with all kinds of evils in the name of liberty."

400,000 MARCH

Just over a year ago, General Ovando came to power with a programme of "Revolutionary Nationalism" to rid the people of this scourge. One of his first steps was the nationalisation of the U.S. Gulf Oil Company. He aroused the hopes of the masses and the fears of the right-wing military clique, trained in the USA. There was a "wave of popular disorders provoked by and in turn provoking military repression". Finally, on September 11th, he agreed to pay Gulf Oil \$78m. in compensation: snuffing out the last hopes of the masses and giving new heart to the reactionary generals, who ever since 1952 have been living in dread

of a repetition of the revolution at that time "when the army was defeated by a popular militia".

Ovando was overthrown, but the reactionaries' new regime, under General Miranda, lasted no more than two hours. It was sent flying in an instant, as the 400,000-strong Bolivian Workers Confederation seized the tin mines, ousted the special terror mining police, formed itself into a "political commando of the working class", tried to storm the prisons to release political prisoners, as the chief newspapers were transformed into "peoples cooperatives", and as a peasant army of 400,000 marched towards the capital, La Paz.

For the moment yet another general, Juan Jose Torres, has come to the top at the head of this movement. But he is already preparing the way to disaster by backsliding from the first moment. In his cabinet he has included four ministers from the Ovando government, and even two, also, from the dreaded Barrientos dictatorship which was overthrown by Ovando. He has 7 military nominees as against 9 civilians representing the old ruling party. There is not one representative from the workers, peasants or students even, who brought him to office by their determination and courage. He has declared for "Revolutionary Nationalism" in the same way as every regime since Bolivar, but big business is intimately tied to U.S. purse-strings, there is no big business which is independent. If he is not going to overthrow capitalism and base himself on the power of the workers, then he has to rely on the U.S.-trained generals. There is no intermediate layer in Bolivia, the poorest country of starving Latin America. Already he has declared that he, too, will pay the compensation to Gulf Oil, has sidestepped the

issue of nationalising the banks, and is merely considering negotiating with the workers who have been struggling for workers' democracy in the tin mines. All this so as not to "lose the confidence of the Western financial world".

Of course, it is true: Bolivia depends on exports, particularly of tin (60%). In that case a socialist government would put an end once and for all to the bribery, inefficiency and repression in the mines, would refuse to pay Gulf Oil its compensation and would immediately send out an appeal to the tin miners of Malaysia, the only alternative supplier of any dimensions to withhold supplies until the Imperialists accepted the inevitable: similarly to the oil workers of America, Europe and the Middle East. Such international action has been taken only this year with Britain's dock strike for example. There is no other force in the world capable of completing Bolivia's revolution than the industrial working class. Even the heroic Indian peasant armies will only be of real significance as long as they are united strategically and ideologically behind the demands of nationalisation of the economy and workers management, as the tin-miners have demonstrated the issue.

Not to give support to these demands will mean not only stagnation, misery and poverty, it will invite a terrible letting of blood, a repression against the workers who are threatening the tiny ruling class. In Latin America, as a whole—one-time "El Dorado" dreamworld of gold for European plunderers—5% of the population owns ½ the land (the most fertile at that), and 4% receive ½ the income. The whole continent is crying out for an international socialist lead based on workers' solidarity.

LEFT & RIGHT

You can't trust your own advisers these days

While Nixon stamps the hustings in the American Election campaign proclaiming success for his policy of "Vietnamisation", a secret report by the Central Intelligence Agency has given the lie to all his claims. This report, which was leaked to the New York Times, inevitably demonstrates the support which the NLF has at all levels of South Vietnamese society; not only amongst the workers and peasants but in the South

Vietnamese Army, amongst the civil servants and in the police.

The authors show that one NLF agent was 'President Thieu's special assistant for political affairs, who had taken part in the Paris peace talks'. ("Times" 20/10/70). They also show that 'one agent was the chauffeur for the commanding general of the Army corps. Another was a servant in another general's house'. Not only is the NLF penetration evident at the

lower levels of the army, but many of the top generals and army officers have taken out an "insurance policy" by secretly going over to the side of the revolution... Two more were army majors who had served in the section of the police force whose mission is to prevent communist infiltration!! And despite the unlimited police powers and intimidation by the rotten South Vietnam regime the mass of the soldiers refuse to expose the NLF: "during an 18 month period only 348 soldiers reported that they had been approached by the Vietcong although it was known that the Vietcong had made hundreds of thousands of approaches". This is further proof of the overwhelming support for the revolution against landlordism and capitalism.

Militant

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LEGISLATION

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employers to sort out militants, at a minimum cost to themselves. This is a gift to the employers and a threat to every worker.

* Even 'fair' strikes (in the extremely limited meaning given by the Tories) could be blocked by declaring a state of so-called 'National Emergency' (defined to mean anything) and 60-day cooling off periods and secret ballots could be imposed to give yet another weapon to the extensive armoury of the employing class.

This massive attack on basic bargaining rights does not only apply to shop floor organisations or 'unregistered' unions; anything they do is outlawed. All this applies to the 'blue-eyed' registered unions as well. If such unions do not enthusiastically enough discipline their members, they would be 'deregistered' and thus effectively outlawed.

It would not merely be those organisations or individuals who participate in such actions who would be liable to fines and possible imprisonment. Anybody who only advocates such action would be liable. This means shop stewards, rank and file workers, unions, Labour newspapers or Labour M.P.s. To support the employing class, the Tories are nothing if not thorough!

While dealing with such a heavy hand with trade unionism, the 'rights of the individual', so far as blacklegs are concerned, are carefully spelled out. This is the meaning behind the proposal for 'agency shops' rather than 'closed shops'. Action to deal with scabs would be outlawed.

NEED FOR NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

The Tory plans are designed to shackle virtually all the trade union activities and to smash the powers of the shop stewards and the basic shop floor defences. Already a section of the capitalist class is convinced of the necessity to confront organised Labour. Alarmed by the precarious position of British capitalism on the world market, and by the rising militancy of workers (including the lower paid), they are aiming to attack the trade union movement even at this stage.

They need to be answered with a national campaign by the trade union movement. The TUC has already rejected the proposals in their entirety, refusing to be committed to talks on 'details' (and thus accept the principles of the Bill) and is calling an emergency full scale conference of the TUC.

These are welcome signs. But the movement must be developed much further. The TUC must really give a lead, become a real 'Council of Labour' and cease to be an impotent 'middle-man' between Big Business, Government and the Trade Union Movement. A national campaign systematically organised at every level, must begin now. Total non-cooperation with the Government must be posed to give confidence to the Movement.

A pledge must be given by every trade union that, if this Bill is enacted, there will be no 'registering' or payment of fines. Every union must be committed to defend every other section of the Movement under attack—including 'unofficial' bodies.

This is basically a political fight. The Tories have now made it quite clear that industrial relations and the struggle on the shop floor involves politics. No blind prejudice against 'taking industrial action for political ends' can be maintained. The employers don't have such scruples! In this respect, the Australian trade

unionists have given a lead.

A 24-hour General Strike needs to be organised to really warn the Government in concrete terms, of the mood of the movement. Even in the course of a day, in such an action, basic lessons can be brought home to every section of the rank and file itself, if a real campaign is developed which clearly brings out the issues. Such a warning shot would be the focus for an intensive propaganda campaign.

The Labour Party, together with the trade unions, must give a lead. The Parliamentary Labour Party must be responsible to the rank and file, and support the struggle, while offering a clear cut Socialist solution. The way must be prepared for the downfall of this Tory, big business Government, and the return of a Labour Government, on a full Socialist programme of nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy. The real answer to the Tory offensive on organised labour is a mobilisation by the Labour and trade union movements against the Tory clique of monopolists who dominate the economy and who are responsible for this anti trade union legislation, which threatens the basic rights fought for by generations of trade unionists.

EDITORIAL: COUNCIL WORKERS STAND FIRM!

The Tory Government, joining battle with the entire Labour Movement, is staking everything on winning a test case against the local council manual workers. Determined to crush the revolt of the low-paid, it has thrown every available weapon against them: press hysteria, high-paid "volunteer" strike-breakers, gangs of down-and-out blacklegs, and Her Majesty's troops.

Dismayed at the swelling of public sympathy with the council workers, and the unabated spread of the strike even in its fourth week, "The Times" (20/10/70) vented its rage in unmistakable language. Spelling out in sinister terms the dangers of the current rate of inflation—including even an ominous reference to "some sort of authoritarian regime" if inflation reaches the rate of 50% (which it predicts will be reached by 1980, on current projections)—it goes on to enumerate what can be done to solve the problem at the workers' expense. The council workers' strike is "the crucial test", it states. "The first thing to do, and the simplest, is to start beating strikes. The local authorities should be given total support in refusing to make any further offer, even if the strike lasts for months. The next stage should be to make it a national rule that any strike is followed by the immediate withdrawal of all offers made before the strike." An explicit recipe for union-bashing.

The editorial recognises that "public opinion is a powerful weapon". Unfortunately for the capitalists, that weapon is aimed against them. Rarely has any strike conjured up such demonstrations of public solidarity, as that of the Bristol mothers, whose slogan was: "Open up, clean up, and PAY UP!"

In the letter-page of "The Times" itself, two days after the above editorial, not one correspondent supported its arguments. Even the exclusive readership of the "top people's" paper could not stomach its ruthless threats. Decrying the chosen "battle line" of 10% for all wage increases, every one of them stressed the irrelevance of percentage-points to the poor and the underpaid. "10% of damn-all," wrote one rather indelicate correspondent, "is damn-all!"

The leaders of the strike should harness and channel the public goodwill into a real counterweight to the hysteria of the bosses. Crocodile-tears about health risks and pollution have been spilt by the employers. The responsibility must be put squarely on their shoulders. This means that no concessions should be made, accepting blacklegging by "volunteers" or troops. All the 770,000 workers involved in the dispute should be called out, and appeals should be addressed to troops and civilians not to touch blacked work.

The working class must close ranks and stand full square behind the council workers. This test case must not be won by the capitalists. Next in the line of battle stand the 260,000 hospital workers, the waterworks manual workers, the miners, the teachers, the railwaymen, and ultimately every sector of the trade union movement. The Labour Movement must expose the deceptions of the capitalists, who blame the ills of the economy on the struggle of the workers to maintain their very modest and in many cases scandalously depressed standard of living. If the capitalists in 1970 are incapable of providing every worker with a job, a minimum wage of £25, a home, adequate leisure time, and certain other fundamental rights, then let them get off the workers' backs and allow them to run the tremendous resources of Britain and the world, in the interests of the working majority, instead of the parasitic profiteering minority.

CUTS

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wiches, there would be a saving of over £80m." Scrooge himself would have found it hard to choose which method of saving money suited his temperament better: stopping the children's milk and dinners, or pinching pennies from blind men's cups!

But these economies make up only a fraction of the £1400 million "savings" recommended. Among the other items are: the end of any attempt to improve the pupil/teacher ratio in schools—and for immediate results, "dismissals or denial of employment opportunities to intending teachers now in training"; cuts in expenditure on books, heating and equipment in schools, and on building improvements in higher education; cutting the ratio of teachers to students in higher education; "economic" tuition fees of an average of £1000 per student per year, to be paid personally by students through loans repayable at normal interest rates (for a "saving" of £450m); a withdrawal of the school transport subsidy of £22 million, used largely to help maladjusted and handicapped children; a "tightening up" on assistance to strikers' families, saving only £½m because grants are only at present forthcoming after a strike has lasted for more than two weeks; higher national insurance contributions (bringing in a total of £219m); a means test on council tenants, and on private tenants if the new selective rebate scheme is introduced; an

end to tax concessions to attract industry into the "development" areas; and many others.

"The Times" (17/10) admits that "it can hardly be suggested that too much money is spent on health and social security in Britain today. International comparisons suggest precisely the opposite." On housing and transport, "the nation has probably been under-investing... for years". (16/10). Nevertheless, the Cabinet of millionaires, Old Etonians and City whizz-kids is poised to make swingeing cuts in the flimsy structure of the Welfare State.

In addition, a wedge is to be driven into the very heart of the publicly-owned industries. Profitable sections of the Post Office, the state airlines, and British Rail are to be hawked out to private "enterprise" while the State continues to shoulder all the losses. Now it is proposed that "private capital can be reintroduced into state-owned enterprises" in order to trim public expenditure on transport (denationalising BR shipping, hotels, property, ports, bus and lorry operations). An officially-inspired leak confirms that speculators are to be sought on an equity basis in "any public concerns which can be made sufficiently profitable to attract private capital" ("Financial Times", 9/10).

Thus the Health Service is to be crippled; children abandoned to the dangers of malnutrition; the depressed areas left to rot; skilled labour forced to pay for its own training; welfare benefits severely curtailed; and nationalised industries partially dismantled. The old, the young, the sick and the poor are to pay for huge tax cuts for the rich. The millionaires are to be given generous "incentives" in the form of reductions in surtax, corporation tax, capital gains tax, etc. Meanwhile any pennies cut from the standard rate of income tax will be paid several times over in higher food prices (resulting from the abolition of food subsidies), Value-Added Tax, and sky-high profiteering.

But the Tories are haunted by the spectre of mass revolt. They are uncomfortably conscious of the power of the Labour Movement, which if properly mobilised could sweep them into oblivion. When their Australian counterparts recently announced a budget along the very same lines, they faced an immediate and spontaneous reaction from the workers, in the form of a one-day General Strike. Law or no law, the British Labour Movement can reply equally decisively to the Tories' attacks on every gain it has won in the last quarter-century.

Hugh Scanlon at the recent Labour Party Conference declared: "We will talk about a socialist incomes policy when we have the means of production, distribution and exchange." Let the Labour Party fight tooth and nail to bring down the Government of Big Business and announce its determination to take over the commanding heights of the economy. A Labour Government with a socialist programme could end poverty and exploitation forever and lead the way to a classless world.

FIGHTING FUND

The response to last month's appeal has been tremendous, and our circulation took a big step forward, a reprint of the October issue of 500 being necessary.

A Social in Liverpool raised £150 for the fund, making over £200 raised in that area in the last month. Comrade Roy Clarke from Southampton gave us a magnificent £100. Jeff Cuthbert from Cardiff donated £50, and Pete Jarvis of Hackney LPYS £5. We thank all supporters for their very generous response, and appeal for continued support of this kind, to reach our targets for a press and expansion of the paper.

Send donations, large or small to:
MILITANT,
197 Kings Cross Rd, London W.C.1.
(Make cheques, P.O.s etc. payable to Militant).

THE MINERS' CASE

By ROBERT SEWELL (Swansea L.P.)

As we go to press it is reported that the NEC of the Miner's Union has accepted the "revised" offer of the National Coal Board. The reaction of the miners themselves has not yet been indicated. In the national ballot 55½% voted in favour of strike action for the full claim. By overwhelming majorities South Wales, Scotland, Kent and the Yorkshire areas demanded national action to win the £5 increase demanded. The miners in these areas, who are the backbone of the industry, will not take kindly to acceptance of a figure which falls far short of the original claim. If Robens and the mandarins of the NCB were prepared to increase their offer at the mere hint of a strike, national action would certainly ensure the full claim.

The history of the mining industry is one of bitterness and strife. All along the line, the miners have been kicked in the face. Redundancy and low pay, together with the dangerous conditions under which they work, have all played their part in embittering the miners. They themselves are blamed for the pit closures and the uncompetitive nature of coal, and are frustrated when the Labour leaders fail to answer these scandalous accusations.

This bitterness and frustration has come to a head nationally. The miners are demanding a better deal. Their claim is for a rise from £15 to £20 minimum wage for surface workers and from £16 to £22 for underground workers. The S. Wales miners are also demanding a £30 minimum for coal-face machine operators.

The miners' bleak and insecure future has forced them into taking action. With one breath the miners are told they are to be reduced in numbers to 65,000 in the next 10 years, and with another they are told to step up productivity. Work in the pits has no sentimental value for the men—but they demand that if the mines are closed, alternative work is provided. In S. Wales the 'advanced' factories are left empty, while any job which might happen to be going is usually unskilled e.g. work in a shirt factory, which employs predominantly women. Unemployment in the mining valleys is already about 10 per cent, and over the past five years, there has been a decline of over 50,000 males' jobs in Wales alone. This clearly shows the bankruptcy of attempted "planning" on a capitalist basis. The MILITANT has always put forward the demand for work or full maintenance—good jobs for miners where they want them at rates of pay at least equal to those earned in mining.

The miners over the past 10 years have worked hard to increase productivity. A spokesman at the National Coal Board regional headquarters in Cardiff stated that, "The West Wales area in particular has achieved fantastic output figures in recent months... Management and men at the pits have made such strenuous efforts that the area has become the most improved of productivity in the whole of Britain."

30,000 JOBS LOST IN LAST 10 YEARS

All this, despite threats to close more pits. While the work force nationally has already been depleted with 506 pit closures over 10 years, face productivity has soared by 77%. As Eifion Lewis, lodge secretary at Blaenau colliery said: "We have always had pit closures hanging over our head. In recent years seven pits have closed in the Dulais Valley alone. We only have two pits in this valley now." It is precisely this, as well as the wages and conditions (in 1966, 145 miners were killed and 1001 were seriously injured), which the miners are angry about. Threats to "down tools immediately" have spread throughout the mining areas, especially in Scotland and S. Wales.

Commenting on this, Brother Rowley Thomas of Blaengwrach lodge explained, "we are told if we go on strike, we shall be responsible for closing pits and putting thousands of miners out of work (Lord Robens has warned miners many times about). On this question it is necessary to look at what has happened in the last 10 years.

"Apart from a token strike last year, we have not had a major strike in the mining industry yet, but in the last 10 years we have lost 30,000 jobs in mining, so the argument that strikes will lose jobs is a sheer myth.

"The miner is carrying a tremendous burden and other industries benefit at the

miner's expense. The NCB sell coal to the Electricity Board at 70/- to 80/- per ton. At this price the NCB makes a profit of £19 million or 5/- per ton, but the Electricity Board sell the ash from the coal after making electricity at 80/- per ton to the building industry, and the Electricity Board make a profit of £100 million!

"The NCB also sell coal at cheap rates to other industries, such as ICI (Cement) £6 per ton, Steel £6 per ton, Gas £5 per ton. Now let us come to the other poor victim, the housewife. The NCB sell coal to private coal merchants at £7 per ton, but the poor housewife has to pay between £16 and £20 per ton when she gets it.

"We have the burden carried by the miners in low wages and the housewife in high prices. The miner works in a dirty, dangerous job. One-third of his working life is in darkness. If it means increasing coal prices to give the miners a fair wage, we'll raise the price of coal to the industries that are making huge profits out of coal, not the ordinary housewife. She has already carried her share of the burden."

As MILITANT has pointed out many times, the reason for nationalising the coal industry on its present lines, was because the coal owners had ruined the industry by failing to re-invest their ill-gotten gains in coal. This scandalous state of affairs, which had bankrupted an essential industry, was ended by nationalisation by the Labour Government in 1947. Miners looked upon this as a victory for something they had been demanding for nearly two generations. However, the miners' hopes were disappointed by the way in which nationalisation was carried out.

Since 1919, the men have demanded workers' control. It was at this time that the Miners' Federation called upon the Government to implement their workers' demands, which included no compensation to be given, except in cases of proven need. It was not until 1947 that nationalisation was carried through, but not in the way advocated by the miners 48 years before. Instead, it was headed by a bureaucratic board composed of civil servants, ex-generals, ex-mine managers, ex-company directors, with a sprinkling of trade union officials on a part-time basis. (These last were two in number, one an area organiser and JP).

Lavish compensation was granted to the old coalbarons, like Powell Duffryn, which was profitably invested in oil shares. More than £250 million (worth about £500 million now) was paid out in compensation.

Now the miners are blamed for the deficit of the NCB. Yet its operating profit for the year was £8,800,000, but after the crippling interest charges paid out to the moneylenders, totalling £35,000,000, the overall result was a £26,300,000 deficit, the biggest since nationalisation in 1947 (Coal News, Oct. 1970).

Lord Robens and the Coal Board bureaucracy offer no solution to the workers' problems. Already Robens has told the miners how they could get their pay claim—15 minutes extra on all machines and 10% less absenteeism! It must be pointed out that this "absenteeism" includes the genuine sick, official rest days, and workers with disabilities which worsen in winter. Although what do they expect from workers? Of course miners take days off, but as Aneurin Bevan said, those who shout about absenteeism must think the workers have "brass lungs and wooden heads". It is because of the terrible working conditions that they take a day off at New Year—miners are not made out of synthetic material!

The solution of the miners problems cannot be divorced from that of the working class as a whole. The coal in-

dustry can only be integrated harmoniously when the whole of the fuel industry is nationalised and democratically run for the benefit of society. Industry should be geared to the interests of the many, not the profits of the few. At present, 80% of the economy is in private hands, and only 20% of the more backward, impoverished industries have been taken over by the State. In these circumstances, it is inevitable that the public sector will merely be used as a milchcow by the big monopolies.

The inefficient Coal Board democracy has shown its bankruptcy in practice. They are 'experts' in bungling and efficient in making thousands redundant. The demand for workers' control is more relevant than ever today. Those who have worked in the industry for years know the ins and outs of the set-up. At the moment, they have no material interest in improving production, risking their own and their brothers' jobs. If there is a need for some workers to change their job, then they should receive full pay while undergoing re-training.

The present wage offer by the NCB has been inspired by the Tory Government in its efforts to deal with the 'greedy' workers. Big Business considers all wage claims to be 'inflationary'. Today, miners have never seen a defeat for the last 25 years. A new generation of miners has grown up—they will not accept a reduction in their living standards, like before the war. The miners are confident of victory. As their banners in the London march in September pointed out, "Tories, don't try to get tough with us!" "£5 rise now or else!"

Of all the sections of Britain's workers, the miners have a record of service to the Labour movement which is second to none, and our debt to them is incalculable.

For the full claim now—not a penny less! No pit closures until a job is immediately available! For a fully integrated Socialist National Fuel Policy!

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EDITORIAL

Fight E.P.T.U. expulsions

On June 10, 4-6,000 electricians and plumbers in the E.E.T.U.-P.T.U. on Clydeside downed tools; and 2000 of them demonstrated in the streets—against an agreement signed by the Scottish E.C. representatives of the union which, by tightening up on qualification for the various grades, would give the employers yet another weapon in keeping wages low and threatening redundancy. 80% of the firms involved employ 10 men or less which leaves the electricians comparatively unprotected.

As a result of this massive strike against the union officials they have taken disciplinary action. Three have been expelled from the union for attending the demonstration; two full-time union officials have been disciplined for alleged "over-payment" of benefit to union members; most seriously, the only rival candidate to the present Scottish Regional E.C. officer in the forthcoming election has been expelled from the union for allegedly "attending an unofficial meeting" to select nominations for this post. But how was the present incumbent put forward? How is it possible to be put forward for nomination without meeting anybody? In fact Charles Montgomery has never made any secret of his demands for union democracy: for election of all full-time officials (none of whom, apart from the E.C. are elected at the moment), for the right to recall them at any moment when members feel they are not carrying out their duties etc. Nor has he hidden the fact that he stands for a socialist answer to the problems of the industry. He was chairman of his Constituency Labour Party, and has been chairman of his union branch for five years. The present officials at the top of the union, came to office after the famous ballot-rigging scandals. Now they are not ballot-rigging; they are preventing militants' names from even appearing on the ballot-papers!

The Glasgow Herald blurted some of the truth out in an interview with the chief witness against these men. This man, Edward Murphy, admitted that "the reason he gave evidence against his colleagues was that he believed he was fighting Communism"—and that, although he himself had helped to organise a similar demonstration in Edinburgh, "he had not been charged" and "he was told that... it was unlikely that he would be charged". At the same time he warned of action against less favoured members: "many more members would be appearing... on similar charges."

Montgomery, at the time of his expulsion, had at least 23 nominations from individual branches, probably more than those of the present executive officer, Blairford. Since his victimisation he has received sympathetic hearings from many branches who did not originally nominate him. All sections of the Labour and Trade Union Movement should rally round against such undemocratic procedures as these of the E.E.T.U.-P.T.U. which simply play into the hands of the Tories and the employers.