

FAKE BOOM HIDES ATTACK

TORIES TEST OUT LEGAL MACHINE

Pickets from building sites, trade union branches and trades councils will be outside the Shrewsbury Court next Friday, 18 May, for the next stage in the committal proceedings of the 24 building workers charged for offences during picketing last summer.

These will include delegations from the Cowley car plant, Oxford Trades council, Birmingham, London and South Yorkshire building sites as well as delegations from Liverpool and Manchester. But despite the good response to the picket it is evident that many sections of the labour movement have still not understood the vital need to defend these workers.

CONSPIRACY

The use of the conspiracy laws against some of the 24 brings home the truth that there are good laws and bad laws. All present laws are good for the ruling class and bad for the workers' movement. The Tories introduced the Industrial Relations Act as a 'scabs' charter and a law to serve the interests of the employers. But the massive movement that welled up against the arrest of the Peatonville Five showed the ruling class that it was not possible to implement the Act against the resistance of the working class.

It took five months to bring these charges against the Shrewsbury men. During that period the prosecution spent an estimated £65,000 preparing the case which involved a carefully compiled photographic file. There is no doubt that there has been a conspiracy - the never-ending conspiracy of the Tory government and the state against the working class. But that is a conspiracy charge which will not be accepted in the capitalist courts.

These charges have been brought against workers carrying out official union policies. They have two aims. One is to attack picketing, the other is to force the union to discipline its membership and act as a policeman for the employers. So far, none of the unions involved has issued an official circular about the case. Not one official action has been organised. No attempt has been made to mobilise the membership to fight the charges.

BIRMINGHAM

The Shrewsbury case coincides with the use of the new anti-picket police squads against the Hull dockers, the arrest of the London dockers on last week's May Day march, and the summonses just served on five Birmingham building workers. These last allege that on 7 February, 1973, these workers and an ATV camera crew 'did conspire together with other persons unknown to enter the premises of the SOS Employment Bureau.'

As Peter Carter, chairman of the Birmingham building workers' shop

stewards committee, says: 'Our action was intended to expose the operations of the SOS which works in total violation of the rules of the building industry. We proved that the building employers were using this agency in violation of the agreement that the trade unions have with the employers.' The men are due to appear in the Magistrates Courts, Corporation Street, at 10 a.m. on 22 May when a picket will be held.

This flagrant violation of the general interpretation of the picketing laws shows that the police are quite intent on setting new precedents. Five electricians who are witnesses for Kavanagh have been asked to appear specially in court and it is understood that the police are trying to get an order to 'bind them over for one year.' This is despite the fact that they took no steps whatsoever to approach the lorry drivers.

This stepping up of attacks on individual militants follows the return of the hospital workers and the decision of the miners not to strike. It seems fairly clear that in the next period most struggles will be local, short and bitterly fought. The next big pay claim of the engineering



Paul Davidson, one of the arrested Birmingham workers and a member of the IMG.

workers does not come up until the autumn. The present attacks on pickets, the use of conspiracy laws and police frame-ups are all designed to take advantage of the lack of big national struggles and set the scene for any future confrontations. The Tories are testing out their legal machine knowing Shrewsbury could be the shape of things to come if they can secure a favourable verdict there.

Every socialist and militant must take up the cases of victimised workers. Shrewsbury assumes particular importance in that respect. Financial aid is urgently needed to help with the mounting legal costs and meetings for these workers should be arranged in every area.

In London, well-known building worker and CP member Pete Kavanagh is up on charges of causing a 'breach of the peace' after incidents on the St. Thomas's Hospital site picket. He protested to police that four pickets were being prevented from standing nearer than shouting distance from the path of strike-breaking lorries, but on moving over to peacefully remonstrate with the drivers he was arrested.

The press, government and employers have all united in a great confidence trick to fool the unions into going along with Phase Three of the incomes policy when it is introduced in the autumn.

They have been crowing about a 6 per cent increase in production, but neglect to mention that the balance of payments is in a state of absolute chaos. World food prices went up by 56 per cent last year, and the *Economist* calculates that home prices will soon be up by at least 10 per cent more.

British capitalism has been able to increase its exports over the last year only because of the expansion of the world economy. Worsening inflation in the USA and Germany means cut backs in their economies and this is happening throughout the capitalist world.

The British economy, already weak, will therefore be operating in a stagnant world market. In this grim situation the British capitalist class can only survive by tightening up its incomes policy and starting the biggest attack against working class living standards since the war.

On the wages front the situation is getting worse. In 1972 the tremendous struggles of the miners and other militant sections of the working class meant that many groups of workers got increases in the region of 15 per cent. These advances have over the last year enabled people to

stave off the worst effects of inflation. But since the trade union leaders abandoned any pretence of a struggle over Phase Two things have gone rapidly downhill.

The Phase Two formula of £1 plus 4 per cent means in practice a ceiling on wage increases of eight per cent. After tax and deductions this means a paltry six per cent. Since last November when the 'freeze' was introduced prices have gone up by eight to ten per cent. The acceptance of the wages 'freeze' by the union leaders has not just stopped wage increases; it has resulted in a significant cut in living standards. Such is the realism of the TUC.

This can only be stopped by a massive campaign inside the unions to put a stop to the negotiations between the TUC and the government. Look at Scanlon. Three weeks ago his union's national committee decided by an overwhelming majority to press for a

£10 wage increase. Before the ink has dried on the resolution he is engaged in negotiations which will sell this claim down the river. TUC 'realism' obviously goes hand in hand with certain conceptions of union 'democracy.'

The alternative to the TUC talks is already being given in the fight-back by the working class. Every attempt by the employers and the government to use their victories so far as a basis for new attacks must be stopped. This means a massive campaign of support for the Shrewsbury workers and all other victimised militants. The engineers' pay claim and those of other workers due to come up in the autumn must be united into a great battering ram to put an end once and for all to the Tory government and its policies. This is the way that the working class can solve its problems, not by cosy chats at Downing Street.

Attack on May Day Scabs

Workers at the Raleigh Industries factory in Nottingham are threatening to take action against two women who went in to work on May Day and refuse to give their day's wages to charity. The district secretary of the women's union, the National Society of Metal Mechanics, which has 3,000 members among the 6,000 workforce at the plant, stresses that 'our members feel strongly about this and it could escalate into a full-scale strike.'

Similar action over May Day scabbing has already been taken by members of NATSOPA and the NGA who work on the *Yorkshire Evening Press*. They are demanding the removal of cards from two men who continued to work, as well as the sacking of an AUEW supervisor who not only worked against union instructions but broke the printers' closed shop and crossed their picket lines to do their work. The paper, one of the most reactionary in the country, failed to appear last week as a result of this action.

Such actions show the determination of those who struck on May Day and their understanding of the need to present a united face to the ruling class whatever the differences and failures within the movement.



The picket that closed Oxford bus depot on May Day

Particularly important were the types of local initiatives which took place. In Oxford, for instance, the Trades Council held a meeting beforehand of all shop stewards and workplace representatives in the area to plan and co-ordinate action. On the day itself there was an extremely successful flying picket, which among other places closed the bus garage after the drivers there had voted to work but not to cross picket lines. After police attacks on the picket lines had been beaten off, the picket voted to allow, out special buses to

pick up nurses and handicapped children. Thanks to the sabotage of the trade union leaderships, we can hardly claim that May Day was a great victory for the working class. But the actions of sections which in many cases struck against the orders of their executives - miners, electricians, post office workers, etc. - showed the way forward in the coming period. Inaction can no longer be so easily justified on the grounds of 'caution' when that inaction opens the door to confusion and enemy attack.

LESSONS FOR TEACHERS IN CONFERENCE SET-BACK

Militants in the National Union of Teachers suffered a severe set-back at the union's Easter conference in Scarborough after a series of manoeuvres by the Executive and president-elect Max Morris, a member of the Communist Party.

ASSOCIATIONS

The major defeat was the passing of a resolution removing the right of the local Associations (District Committees) to take independent strike action. This right has existed since the beginning of the century, but was seldom used until the recent London strikes when several Associations took independent action after the Executive's failure to extend the campaign for the London allowance and to combine it with



New NUT president Max Morris

a fight for the union's national claim. It was the failure of the Executive to lead any serious fight and to link up with other workers in struggle which subsequently led to the scenes at a union rally in Central Hall, Westminster, at the end of February, when hundreds of angry teachers took over the platform from the Executive. The Executive has reacted by leading a witch-hunt of members of Rank and File in the Wandsworth Association.

More recently, several Associations in the London area have taken other independent initiatives to develop the struggle. A number sponsored the recent London Conference Against the Freeze and the Government, although the executive tried to stop this by

UPSET FOR EPTU RIGHT

Motions to discuss May Day at last week's conference of the Electrical and Plumbing Trades Union were voted down in line with the aim of EPTU leader Frank Chapple and the right wing to use the conference to push for a deal with the Tories over the summer.

Chapple used the occasion to renew his attacks on the TUC, garnishing them with anti-Communist cracks: 'I find it difficult to understand why a TUC General Council can send a delegation half-way across the world to visit a Russian trade union organisation - a satrap organisation - and yet will refuse to go to Downing Street, a bus ride away, simply because this is a Tory Government we don't like.'

Chapple's contempt for the working class movement is coupled with cynical bureaucratic abuse of his own members. Motions to make him take up the presidency of the union which he won last year, so leaving the post of General Secretary open for election, were defeated under the pretext that no elections for such posts should take place while the possibility of a merger with either the AUEW or the GMWU existed.

After the delegates had spent a good half of the conference discussing constitutional questions - during which they voted themselves an 80% increase in conference expenses - the question of the Industrial Relations Act came up. Here there was an upset for the right.

circulating a letter to all London Associations claiming that it was against the 'aims and objectives' of the union. And five Associations voted to strike on May Day in defiance of official NUT policy.

The Executive, however, held two trump cards: the fact that the conference is dominated by the less militant rural branches, and the failure by the militants to prepare the mass of teachers for the struggle after the introduction of Phase 2, so that even London teachers were ill-prepared for the sell-out when it came. The Executive was therefore able to rally the bulk of conference behind its attacks on the militants.

In this it was aided and abetted by leading members of the Communist Party. Max Morris led the way in his presidential address with attacks on those whose activities were 'foreign to genuine trade unionism'. And even the one CP speaker who opposed the Executive's proposals, Joe Finch from Lewisham, used most of his time to attack the 'maverick ultra-leftists' who had 'wrecked' the Central Hall meeting.

This open alliance with the right is however producing certain strains within the ranks of the Communist Party teachers, who are torn between defending their electoral gains on the Executive and their credibility as rank and file militants. The pressing need now is for a united front on the question of local association autonomy and union democracy, particularly in defence of the Wandsworth teachers and any others who may be victimised for actions such as taking part in the May Day strikes. Failure to take up these questions will pave the way for a complete bureaucratic takeover as in the EEPTU - and CP members must be well aware of the likely consequences of this.

COMING STRUGGLES

The left has not been decisively defeated, although it has met with a serious set-back. The union will soon be commencing negotiations over the 1974 pay claim, and the mistakes made this time by the militants must not be repeated.

In preparation for the coming struggles two campaigns are essential, a campaign against the repressive measures being taken within the union and in solidarity with other groups of workers facing repression from other areas such as the State (Shrewsbury building workers) and a campaign on the question of the size of classes, including mobilising teachers to take action on this question and taking it into the working class.

By taking up these two campaigns it should be possible to show teachers that their interests lie with the rest of the working class movement and not in some panacea of participatory schemes.

Rank and File Teacher is well placed to provide this lead but it needs to prove to many militants that it is not simply a front organisation of the International Socialism Group. To this end it would do well to reverse its decision not to co-opt members of the IMG, whose document received the support of one third of the R&F annual conference, onto the leading bodies of the organisation.



EPTU leader Frank Chapple

Chapple wants the TUC to endorse registration, but to do this he has to avoid any hasty registration of the EPTU. When his own base presented motions calling for a ballot which they thought they could fix in favour of registration, Chapple tried to get conference to pass both these and others supporting a tougher line against the Act, so leaving him with a free hand. But only those opposing the Act were carried. Still, not to worry. Chapple explained afterwards that 'the EC still has to govern the union' and a ballot could not be ruled out.

STUDENT RENT STRIKES FACE LEGAL THREATS

Although rent strikes in support of the national Grants Campaign are still continuing in over 40 colleges, the lack of central co-ordination and leadership by the National Union of Students is beginning to have its effects.

In a number of colleges students are now facing legal and other forms of intimidation from the Vice-Chancellors, those people who were put forward by the NUS leadership as students' allies in the campaign. At Reading the administration has attempted to withhold grants from those still on rent strike, although the Students Union is challenging the legality of this through the High Court and some of the students affected are trying to obtain a writ of *mandamus* with the backing of NUS to enable them to 'seize' their grants. At Dundee, things have gone further with an attack on the autonomy of the Students Union through the suspension of its constitution.

The effects this intimidation can have were clearly shown at Keele, where the threat of legal action brought about a rapid end to the rent strike on a motion from the Communist Party last Monday week (30 April). At Kent too a motion to drop the rent strike in face of legal threats was narrowly pushed through with CP support last Monday after Digby Jacks of NUS had personally intervened in favour of it. On Tuesday, however, realising that this move had left them absolutely naked and powerless to do anything to push forward the campaign, there was a rethink and it was decided to withhold this term's rent while paying in last term's. But such confusion can only open up the way for an all-out national attack on the rent strikes.

LEADERSHIP

The NUS leadership has so far shown no signs of coming to grips with this situation and giving a lead in action to defend those militants under attack. One way forward was shown in practice this week by students at the North-Eastern Polytechnic in London who organised a 48-hour occupation-strike of the admin. block at their Barking precinct. Their aim was to use the occupation as a focus to explain the purpose of the campaign to the mass of the students, to force their governors and Academic Board members to take a public stand on the campaign, and to show the NUS that occupations and similar actions can be used to take the campaign forward.

It was in order to begin to centralise such experiences that the IMG took the initiative at the end of last term in calling for a national Grants Conference. The conference should attempt to provide some definite series of measures which can be co-ordinated by NUS and taken up by all militants in the Grants Campaign, in order to provide a sharp generalised defence of the rent strikes and the campaign.

The NUS Executive is sending along two consultative representatives to the conference, which takes place in London this Saturday, 12 May. The International Socialists are backing the conference, and a number of CP students are expected to attend as delegates. The conference will be open to delegates elected from students' unions or Grants Action Committees, and to non-voting observers, and will take place in the Old Theatre, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2. Registration begins at 10.00 a.m. and the conference will end at 5.00 p.m. All correspondence to: Andre Gros, Thames Polytechnic Student Union, Wellington Street, London S.E.18 (01-854 3162).

LAWRIE SWIFT

CURRENT ACCOUNT



Trade Deficit - a warning!

From the Tory government's point of view the nastiest resurrection this Easter was that old spectre, the balance of payments problem. The March trade deficit of £197 millions was the worst ever.

Of course, as Ministers always say, you can't prove much from one month's figures. The trouble is that the longer term looks little better. There are no particular excuses for these catastrophic figures; they are simply the continuation of two years of steady and massive deterioration in the balance of payments. The 'current account' (trade in goods and services plus overseas profits) showed a £1,000 million surplus in 1971, more or less broke even in 1972, and in 1973 is careering towards a deficit which those trusted economic astrologers, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, currently forecast at £800 million.

PRICES

The main cause is not the amount of goods being imported and exported. Industrial expansion is pushing up the amount of imports, especially industrial raw materials. But the volume of exports is also climbing, and British capitalists in recent months have just about clung on to their share of world trade. The main trouble is prices.

In the months of monetary turbulence since June 1972, sterling has got devalued by about 12 per cent. This means that, though some exporters have pushed up their profit margins, most British goods are now cheaper in foreign currency; the complement of that is that prices of British imports in sterling have risen. But the major cause of soaring import costs is the world-wide explosion in the prices of raw materials, especially wheat, wool and copper. Raw material prices have gone up over 60 per cent since January 1972 (more than in the famous Korean inflation of 1950-51) and are still climbing. Aside from the trade situation, the balance of payments is aggravated by a continuing haemorrhage of capital overseas.

If the Tories can't solve this problem, they face another major sterling crisis. The weapons at their disposal, however, are very limited. Direct import controls or tariffs are virtually outlawed by Common Market rules. Against a speculative attack on sterling the gold and foreign currency reserves, if the Tories used them, might not last long: during the June 1972 crisis, which led to the floating of the pound, nearly one third of the reserves disappeared in a single week. A further devaluation, or downward float, would probably encounter fierce resistance from other capitalist governments, each struggling to maintain an exchange rate which permits its exporters to make profits at competitive prices, and could well ignite the next world monetary crisis. In addition, by forcing up import prices, it would mean a further politically provocative squeeze on workers' living standards.

WORKING CLASS

But in any case the Tories cannot solve the problem without sharpening the economic attack on the working class. Another way this could happen is through deflation - reducing imports by cutting back (through credit controls and higher taxes) the present growth in production and raising unemployment again. The Tories must try to avoid this since it is only growing production, along with Phase II wage control, which gives any latitude for restoring some of British capital's still hard-squeezed profitability.

With so little room for economic manoeuvre, the Tories will be forced to answer the balance of payments problem largely in the way they answer the profitability crisis from which it derives - by maintaining direct legal control of wages in an effort to keep down costs, keep up competitiveness and reduce purchasing power over imports.

The astoundingly bad trade figures, therefore, are no aberration. They result from ongoing economic trends, and they should serve as a clear warning to the working class of the Tory government's intentions for Phase III of its attack on wages.

/ Michael Price

Next weekend the Anti-Internment League is holding a conference on the rôle of the troops in Ireland. Here GERY LAWLESS looks at the latest

ARMY PANIC MOVES

THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE BRITISH ARMY IN IRELAND*

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn tube), Saturday 19 May. Details from Anti-Internment League, 88 Roslyn Road, London N.15.

British Army recruiting is expected to maintain a fall over the year of more than 30 per cent. This is despite the expenditure of an additional £5½ million since the beginning of the year to boost it, as well as the pensions increase announced on 2 May, which raises some benefits to ten times their previous level.

When the recruitment figures for November 1972 showing a fall of 43% were assessed at the Ministry of Defence, panic action was taken in an attempt to arrest this decline by the month of May 1973.

May was picked with the hope of pulling off a major morale boost. It is traditionally the best month for recruiting in the British Army; for example, in 1972, despite an overall reduction over the year of 33%, Army recruitment went up in May by 17%. The British Ministry of Defence hopes to repeat this for May 1973.

THREE AREAS

The extra £5½ million allocated for this purpose was directed to three main areas.

Firstly it was intended to increase the number of potential officer recruits to balance the serious fall in this type of recruit, and the even greater fall in re-enlistment figures. The services of a senior Management Consultants firm to advise on the attitudes of university undergraduates to the army were employed; on their advice, massive one page advertisements have regularly been placed in all the quality newspapers.

The object of this exercise is not so much that the adverts themselves should gain more recruits, but that the placing of the adverts should encourage a more "responsible" attitude by the press. In plain English, they are a "bribe" to the newspapers to play down the "problems" affecting army recruiting, the rôle of the British army in Ireland.

A quick perusal of the quality press, weeklies and dailies, reveals their new responsible attitude.

The second main use for the extra money was



The 'Glorious' Gloucesters march through Bristol last year in an attempt to boost flagging recruitment and morale.

in a campaign in selected off-centre areas of Britain to entice Career Masters and Youth Employment Officers to take a more positive attitude. This drive is being reinforced in even more carefully selected areas by using Boy Scout, Outward Bound Schools, and Church Youth Clubs — including Roman Catholic Church Youth Clubs — to orientate their youth towards an Army career.

The third use was in a massive advertising campaign in, and a PR job on, the local press in certain areas.

WIVES

Side by side with this, inside the Army, great efforts are being made to uplift the morale of serving middle-cadre elements, and particularly the morale of the wives in married quarters of NCOs, and long serving soldiers. This included the setting up of special counselling services in all married quarters to deal with the problems of Army wives, and establishment of wives' clubs, with pressure on officers' wives to join these clubs and slum it with the Other Ranks' Wives.

The new pension boost announced on 2 May by Ian Gilmour, Minister of State for Defence Procurement, is also aimed mainly at servicemen's wives. *To spell it out, the wives are being given a financial interest in the possible death of their men.*

MORALE

Despite the endeavours of Procurer Gilmour, however, morale inside the British Army continues to plummet. In particular, the strain on the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Parachute Regiment has led to the return to action in Ireland of the 3rd Battalion. Previous Army policy had been to organise the regiment so that all doubtful morale or security cases were placed in the 3rd Battalion, which was not intended to return to Ireland.

But before going, replacements had to be found for some 40-odd NCOs who were already in the process of buying their way out.

The replacements for such a crack unit could only come from another crack unit if they were not to dilute the *esprit-de-corps*.

The reinforcements were found from the Special Air Service. In many cases they were withdrawn from Oman and seconded to the Paras; this followed one month's "valley" leave during which the officers, but not the Other Ranks, were given an extensive course on the history, politics and social structure of Ireland. The Other Ranks, denied this orientation course, have been behaving as they were trained to behave in Oman, i.e. any suspect IRA man, or someone who looks like a suspect IRA man, has been shot on sight.

The effect of this has been further to muck up Whitelaw's policy, reinforce public support for the IRA in the areas concerned, and harden resistance to Whitelawism; it has therefore made the task of the British Army much more difficult. This has led in turn to the possibility of an even further decline in the morale of the British Army, and certainly to a spread of the problem from the regular troops to units like the SAS.

The effect of this can be seen in some pubs in the Herefordshire area, where members of the SAS, who heretofore have displayed an almost Puritan attitude to drink and associated problems, are now being banned from pubs for misbehaviour. Many too are under threats from their wives that either they leave the SAS or their wives will leave them.

BLACK PROPAGANDA

In an attempt to arrest this potential disintegration of a crack regiment, British Army Irish Command is bringing its Black Propaganda experts to play on any journalist who as much as asks questions about the SAS.

When the *Irish Times* on the 24th April published a factual article on the morale of the SAS, Army HQ in Lisburn attempted to get the Ministry of Defence to issue a denial of the story. When the Ministry of Defence failed to

do this, that old friend of the British Army, Brigadier W.F.K. Thompson, defence correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, pitched in with an attack on the *Irish Times* article. He amalgamated this with a photograph of a British soldier, which he claimed was a fake because it showed the soldier carrying an Armalite rifle. This claimed the brave Brigadier was not a British Army rifle.

However the British Army admitted in the early summer of 1971 that the Royal Green Jackets were now training with the Armalite rifle. Moreover, less than a week later, the British Army issued a statement admitting that a Thompson sub-machine gun which a Para Officer had been charged with using in an attempted murder case was 'officially held and accounted for as an item of Army equipment'.

The willingness of the Brigadier to put his credibility at stake and of his Army friends to bring it into question only a week later is directly connected with the desperate attempt by supporters of the British Army in Ireland to turn the tide and stop the fall in army recruitment. Much has been staked on achieving a similar upturn in recruitment figures in May 1972 as was achieved in May 1972. If this can be pulled off, then the possibility exists for building on this to stop the haemorrhage in the British Army's ranks.

CLEAR LESSON

The lesson from this for opponents of the British Army in Ireland is clear. All measures necessary must be used in this crucial month and beyond to bring home to the British labour movement the full implication of the rôle of the British Army in Ireland. By these means it will be possible to surround the Army in its present rôle with a sea of hostility which can further contribute to the decline of Army recruitment and hence aid objectively the Irish national liberation struggle.

This underlines the importance of building the Anti-Internment League conference on 19 May on the rôle of the troops in Ireland.

NEW CHARGES FOR COVENTRY 6 ?

The six people held since the police raids in Coventry on Friday, 13 April, came up again in court on Monday for their fourth remand. Almost 300 people, the largest number yet, mounted a picket outside.

At their previous appearance, on Monday 30 April, the police prosecutor indicated that further charges, possibly including possession of explosives might be preferred against the six. It seems unlikely, however, that three weeks after the arrests the police have suddenly realised that they found explosives.

At the same time, the police are continuing to intimidate Irish people in Coventry, particularly those active in defending the six. Nine more people have been arrested, eight of whom are out on bail. The police at first attempted to use conspiracy charges here too, but they have now been dropped.

WHITE PAPER

These attacks have come just a few weeks after the publication of the Government's White Paper on Ireland, which while it will change nothing may for a short period confuse the catholic population in the North and, more importantly, people in this country. This breathing space is being used by the Tories to physically intimidate Republicans and socialists in this country and at the same time to increase public hysteria against the Irish struggle.

But there is also another side to the raids and arrests. The economic crisis of British imper-



Part of the picket on Monday.

alism has deepened over the past five years. This forces the ruling class into attacking the working class through all possible means. The Coventry trials are also part of this process.

Jailing Irish activists is possible at a time when to jail trade unionists would provoke a mass response. Coventry is an ideal setting because of the IRA bomb in 1939 which killed five people. In this sense there is a real trial going on in Coventry. But it is not a trial of the six prisoners — it is a trial of Irish militants and the revolutionary left. Failure to mount an effective defence of the six can only open the way further for a massive attack to isolate and smash all political opposition in Britain.

DEFENCE COMMITTEE

A defence committee has been set up with the support and participation of many of the relatives and friends of the prisoners. The aim is to get the widest possible publicity for the case. Regular bulletins are being issued explaining the political nature of the trial and getting support for pickets outside the court every time the six come up. A speaker from the defence committee also spoke at a meeting of over 100 people last Friday in Manchester, where arrests have also followed the police raids. There too defence activities including a picket of the court are being arranged.

The Coventry Prisoners Defence Committee can be contacted at 27 Paynes Lane, Coventry (0203 58991).

BELFAST 10

The weekly picket outside Brixton prison in support of the ten people arrested after the London car bombings is having a 'positive effect' on the morale of those inside, reports the Belfast Ten Defence Committee. The pickets are held every Saturday from 2 to 4 pm.

Describing the pickets, the committee says: 'We assemble outside the entrance to the main gate and distribute leaflets and display placards with the names of the ten, who are held inside in solitary confinement without the usual facilities accorded remand prisoners. Three of the ten are women; this is the first time in history that women have been held in Brixton.'

They add that: 'Usually the picket ends up in a march round the prison to the back, where we usually shout slogans and sing songs and say a few words to the people inside. We get them shouting back, and last Saturday they asked us not to go away.'

On Sunday 20 May, the day before committal proceedings for the ten start, there will be a special rally at Clapham Common at 2 p.m. followed by a march to the prison. That evening there will be a folk concert at the Swan public house, opposite Stockwell tube station, in aid of the defence committee.

All enquiries, donations, etc. should be sent to: Belfast Ten Defence Committee, 88 Roslyn Road, London N.15.

In the last two or three years the British labour movement has increasingly been brought face to face with an old truth of working class politics: that forms of struggle and organisation which seemed adequate to achieve the immediate aims of the workers for many years quite quickly become insufficient through a new turn of events, a sharpening of the social crisis or an escalation of the forms, of attacks by the capitalist class.

Where the working class is involved in struggles against individual groups of employers over pay and conditions of employment, especially in periods of economic boom, the trade unions are very effective instruments for successfully carrying out the fight. But in periods of acute social crisis like the present, strikes for higher pay involve a struggle with very much more than employers. All kinds of institutions which in times of social peace may have appeared quite neutral in the working class's fight for a decent standard of living suddenly become the main obstacles to victory: the government, the capitalist press, the police, the courts and legal system, even the army. And correspondingly, organisations based upon bargaining over the price and conditions of sale of labour power — trade unions — though still vitally necessary, become inadequate to the tasks of defending the interests of the working class, even on the pay front. Still wider forms of organisation have to be established.

CRUCIAL LESSONS

In essence these problems are not at all new for the working class movement. The workers in other countries have many times faced and overcome the inadequacy of relying upon normal official trade union organisations and social democratic political parties to successfully carry forward the class struggle. And even the historical experience of the British working class movement — though much more backward than that of the Russian, Spanish or German workers — provides many crucial lessons for today.

In his annual report to the Dockers' Union conference of 1912, Ben Tillett summed up a situation not very different from the one we are entering today:

'The sequence of events for 1912 followed the usual course: claims for increases and recognition followed by refusal and consequent strikes, efforts at mediation, negotiation and conciliation; Board of Trade effort, police intimidation, coercion, brutality, imprisonment; Parliament dumb and acquiescent, Labour Party impotent where not indifferent, struggle and end of same, in some cases with industrial gains ... In the 1912 strikes we had to fight Parliament, the forces of the crown, the judges of the law ... We had the Press of both parties and the capitalists against us; the police were incensed by the employers and rewarded for every act of violence, the imported police being as usual the worst of the brutes ... Capitalism is capitalism as a tiger is a tiger; and both are savage and pitiless towards the weak.'

In the strikes of that period, and in the years after the First World War, the working class began to develop new weapons for hitting back against the many sided attacks from the capitalist class and the state machine. And in the General Strike of 1926 sections of the labour movement demonstrated that when it came to a showdown between the classes, whatever the bourgeoisie had to throw against the workers could be returned a hundredfold when the labour movement was united and effectively organised.

BASIC ISSUE

Increasingly today, working class militants are viewing every pay strike as part of a general struggle between the capitalists and the workers, which will only be resolved when one class decisively defeats the other. In 1926 it was very clear to class conscious workers that the General Strike was just such a decisive struggle. The basic practical question posed by the strike was whether, and how, the labour movement could defeat the entire apparatus of the state, which was being thrown against it. A local 'plan of campaign' adopted by the Durham Trades Council just before the strike started put the issue in a nutshell. It declared:

'Objective — we must defeat the Civil Commission and all his strike breaking apparatus. That is to say, these will be concentrated against the strikers in the Region the whole of the Civil and Military institutions that are under central control; and also the civil institutions usually classed as Local Government.'

To win, the whole of the working class had to be mobilised in united action. And yet throughout the strike the General Council refused to make this call. It even spent its time urging the demobilisation of those who had stopped work. Its bulletin, *The British Worker*, announced:

'The General Council suggests that in all

districts where large numbers of workers are idle, sports should be organised and entertainments arranged. This will both keep a number of people busy and provide amusement for many more.'

And in case this had not sunk home, the bulletin added these choice remarks:

'Keep smiling ... Refuse to be provoked. Get into your garden. Look after the wife and kiddies. If you have not got a garden get into the country, the parks, the playgrounds. Do not hang around the centre of the city.'

This was indeed sound advice for someone wanting to sabotage the strike. For its outcome was precisely being decided in 'the centre of the city,' and every available worker had to be mobilised for action there.

The first task was to establish central organisation in every area to direct the entire operations of the working class. In general, this work had to be done from scratch, through local improvisation. The only national force which had some notion of the type of organisation required was the Communist Party. Even its grasp was marred by a wrong understanding of the political problems facing the movement in the General Strike. Nevertheless, in the preceding months it had campaigned for workers to draw on the experience of 1920 and form Councils of Action in every town. At the start of the strike, the most advanced sectors of the movement followed this line of action and were thereby able to most effectively push the movement forward towards victory. Without such organisations the activities of the strikers were hopelessly fragmented and wasted.

FOOD AND TRANSPORT

Where all-embracing organisation existed, the enormous potential power of the workers could be felt almost overnight. In Durham, the local Council of Action made its first priority the fight over food and transport. It passed a resolution stating the following:

'Whoever handles and transports food, the same person controls food; whoever controls food will find the "neutral" part of the population rallying to their side. Who feeds the people wins the strike ...'

The correctness of this was shown dramatically within two days. A member of the Council reported:

'After 40 hours of the general stoppage, Sir Kingsley (the state official in charge of the whole region for the government) came by night to negotiate personally with the committee. Sixty hours after the strike began, Sir Kingsley, accompanied by General Sir Kerr Montgomery, were once more at strike headquarters making a plea for "dual control" of the transport of food. This proposal was immediately rejected by the committee — "we cannot agree to our men working under any form of dual control" ...'

This was merely one of the first of thousands of humiliations which the generals, knights and other slave drivers of the capitalist class had to suffer at the hands of the Councils of Action as the strike movement rolled forward.

Some of the most effective organisation to control transport was achieved in London. For example, in West Ham and Poplar all motor traffic on streets was prohibited by the local Councils of Action except for transport bearing the sign 'By Permission of the TUC'.

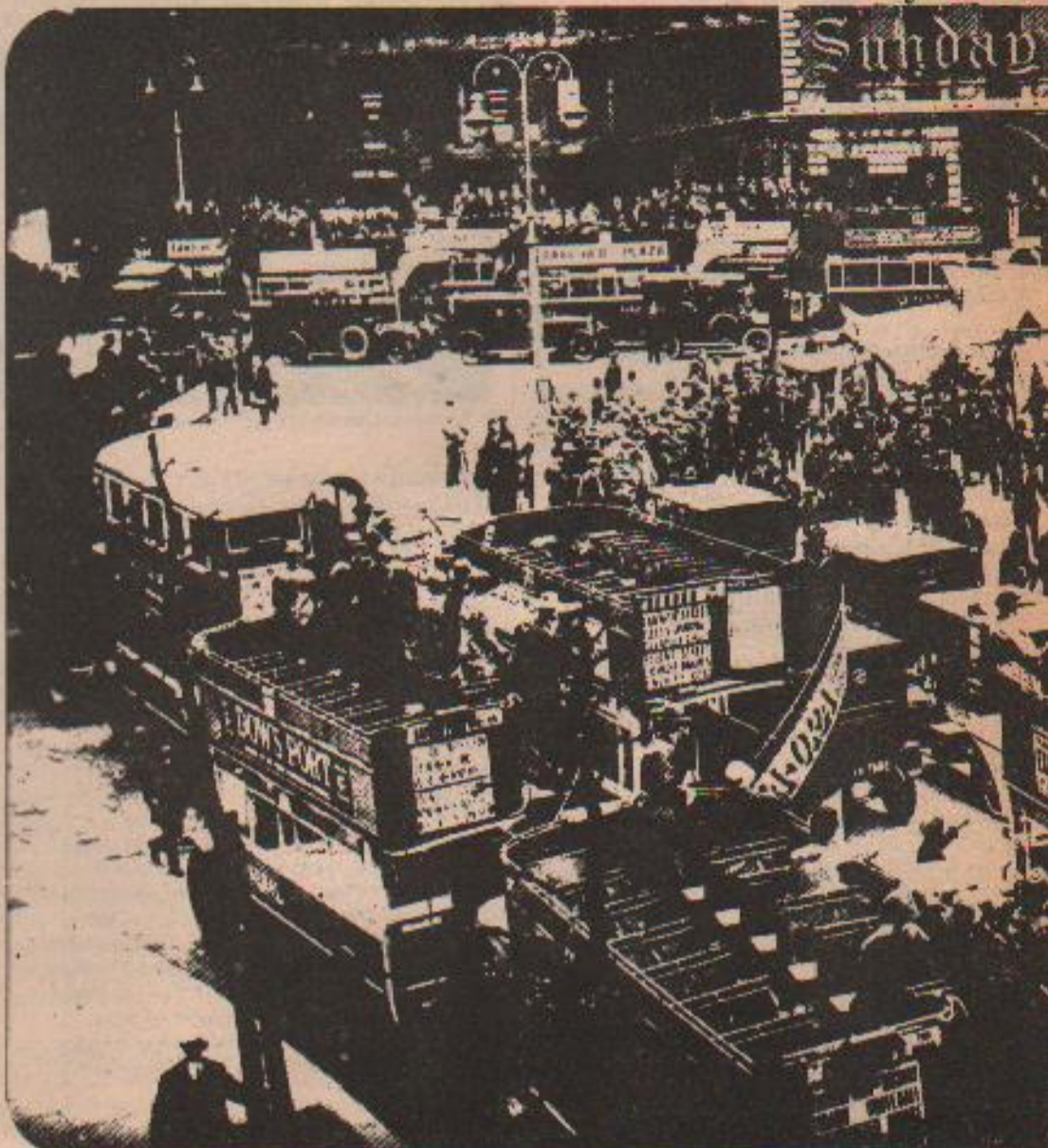
But the Councils of Action did not restrict their work to passively blocking the use of transport facilities. They actively mobilised all possible vehicles and organised their use at the

COUNCILS OF

This article is the first
Further articles will include detailed material on the ex

by Oliver

Sunday



service of the strike movement. In Bolton the Council controlled 57 motorcycles, in Coventry 9 cars and 60 motorbikes, and at Methil in Fife, 3 cars and 100 motorbikes. An even more urgent problem in many areas than that of food and transport was the organisation of mass picketing to crush the blacklegs organised by the government. This work could not possibly have been carried through effectively if left to the individual unions. In some areas the Councils of Action achieved miraculous feats of mass picketing. For example, in Bolton, the Council organised no less than 2,280 pickets over a period of two days, while in Doncaster a force of 1,000 was continuously operational on the picket lines, each man doing a stretch of four hours on, 20 hours off.

But it was in this field that the strike movement faced one of its most crucial tests: police attacks against the strike. In Doncaster, for example, the picket was kept going but at the cost of 85 arrests during the strike. In some areas the police were trying to crush the movement with armed violence.

The attitude of the trade union bureaucrats to the question of workers' self-defence was the same during the General Strike as it has been today in, for example, the building strike or the hospital strike: a policy of trying to avert their gaze where possible and capitulating outright to the state where necessary. During the General Strike, the TUC declared that the idea of a Workers' Defence Corps was 'both unwise and impracticable.' This view was not, however, universally shared by the Royal Constabulary. In Methil, Fife, in particular, the police learnt to respect the Council of Action's Workers' Defence Corps. A member of the Corps reported:

'After police charges on mass pickets, the Defence Corps, which 150 workers had joined at the outset, was re-organised. Its numbers rose to 700, of whom 400, commanded by workers who had been NCOs during the war, marched in military formation through the town to protect the picket. The police did not interfere again.'

In Middlesbrough, the Council of Action became so authoritative during the strike that it

THE FIRST COUNCILS: WORKERS DEFEND RUSSIA

Following the October revolution and the creation of a workers' republic in Russia in 1917, the British ruling class and those of the other main imperialist powers began to organise military intervention to crush the Russian workers' state.

In 1919 'Hands Off Russia' committees had been established throughout the Labour movement, and the working class was watching every move by Lloyd George, Curzon and Churchill towards war. Unable to launch a full-scale British military invasion of Russia, the government tried to push forward aggression via the Polish regime, which attacked the Soviet Republic in April 1920. As the *Daily Herald* proclaimed on 4 April: 'The marionettes are in Warsaw, but the strings are pulled from London and Paris.'

On 10 May, London dockers loading a ship called the *Jolly George* bound for Poland discovered crates of munitions and other war material, and realised that the cargo was intended as aid for the Polish invasion of Russia. They immediately struck and refused to allow the ship to sail.

At first the Poles advanced rapidly, taking Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, on 12 June. But by the end of June the Polish armies had been thrown back into headlong retreat. During the summer the Red Armies chased the Polish forces right to the gates of Warsaw — arousing tremendous enthusiasm throughout the European working class movement.

At this moment the serene silence of the British government was broken and Lloyd George's real policy became clear. On 12 July he sent a Note to Russia saying the British government 'would feel bound to

assist the Polish nation to defend its existence with all the means at their disposal'. When dockers in Danzig struck, refusing to load munitions for the Poles, British troops from the Baltic fleet were sent in to crush the strike. On 3 August, Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, sent an ultimatum to the Soviet government threatening war. On 5 August, government posters appeared outlining military and naval preparations and announcing that a call was to be made for 200,000 volunteers. The *Daily Telegraph* declared that Britain was once again at August 1914.

But there was one important difference between Britain in 1914 and in August 1920: the working class movement was ready to launch crushing mass action against any war move.

WHAT ACTION?

What could the working class do to stop military intervention? There was a clear choice: whether or not to accept the bourgeoisie's political rule book and allow the matter to be sorted out in Parliament — the option of writing letters to MPs, lobbying Parliament, holding some protest demonstrations and hoping that Lloyd George and Churchill would 'be reasonable' and accept the feeling of public opinion. In other words, to obey the law, respect parliamentary democracy and thereby allow the interests of the international working class movement to be trampled under foot as happened in 1914 and many times since.

But in 1920 the working class movement decided to kick aside the whole fraudulent paraphernalia of

Photo: Russian workers defend new gains

ACTION: 1926

several on dual power.
ence of dual power in France, Spain, Italy and Russia.

MacDonald

Below: May Day, 1926



secured the withdrawal of all mounted police and special constables from the streets of the city 'in the interests of order'!

The crucial feature of the Councils of Action — whatever the particular names that they went under — was the fact that they possessed an all-embracing character, with the authority to speak for the entire working class movement locally, irrespective of trade or political standpoint. The sole common denominator was support for the strike itself. Just how mixed the composition of the Councils could be was shown in the one at Blaengarw, Wales. The Secretary was a member of the Communist Party and it had representatives, not just from the unions and the co-op, but from the British Legion, and even the local Conservative Club!

The exact organisational forms of the Councils of Action were rarely identical in any two places. A number consisted of little more than the members of the previous Trades Council, but in most cases the sheer scope of the organisational work made them very much broader. Nevertheless it was unusual to find one which was constituted on the basis of elected

representatives of strike committees, let alone on the basis of mass elections by the strikers themselves. Both the traditions of the official labour movement and the extreme haste with which they were formed tended to make them weighted on the side of local dignitaries of the unions.

But what made the Councils of Action a revolutionary break from the past was precisely the combination of their all-embracing character and the nature of the functions pushed upon them by the tasks of the General Strike itself. The main functions have already been outlined above, apart from the crucially important job of producing local strike bulletins, organising mass meetings and other propaganda activities. In addition, in different areas a whole host of other tasks were taken up: prisoners' aid, collection of finances, intelligence work. In Dartford, the Council of Action set up a special committee to check local prices. In St. Pancras a special sub-committee was set up to conduct special meetings and propaganda for women. In many areas special entertainment committees were set up.

parliamentary democracy; the issues at stake were too important to be sorted out in any parliamentary pantomime. On Sunday 8 August a special issue of the *Daily Herald* appeared, with a banner headline summing up the stand of the working class movement: 'Not a Man, Not a Gun, Not a Soul'. Months of broad agitation by the 'Hands Off Russia' Committees were rapidly bearing fruit, and on that day hundreds of meetings took place throughout the country organised by Labour Parties, Trades Councils and other trade union bodies. Earlier in the summer at the June Labour Party Conference a motion by the left had proposed the immediate summoning of a national conference 'having for its object the organisation of a general strike that shall put an end once and for all to the open and covert participation of the British Government in attacks on the Soviet Republic'. At that time, in June, the motion was heavily defeated, being opposed by, among others, Ernie Bevin. But by August the demand for such action could no longer be resisted by the Labour leadership.

On 9 August a special meeting of the TUC Parliamentary Committee, the Labour Party NEC and the Parliamentary Labour Party passed a resolution which stated that war was being prepared against Russia and declared that 'such a war would be an intolerable crime against humanity... the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war; the Executive Committees of affiliated organisations throughout the country must hold themselves ready to proceed immediately to London for a National Conference; they are advised to instruct their members to 'down tools' on instructions

from the National Conference; and a Council of Action should be immediately constituted to take such steps as may be necessary to carry the above decisions into effect.'

A fifteen man Council of Action was organised immediately and in a matter of days some 350 local Councils of Action had been formed throughout the country. On 13 August the National Conference, with 1,044 delegates, met in London and passed a resolution instructing the Councils of Action to remain in readiness until the government had clearly backed away from aggressive plans.

Lloyd George immediately backed down in the face of this threat of crushing mass action. He tried to claim that the government had never intended intervention and that the working class was making a fuss about nothing. The capitalist press was outraged, with the *Observer* sneering: 'The methods of "Labour" and its Councils of Action, are bombastic, hysterical and ridiculous. What they threaten is to make a revolution in order to force an open door.' For a brief moment the Labour right was carried away by the great movement, with Ramsay MacDonald declaring for once correctly: 'There was no open door till Labour appeared before it.' And J.H. Thomas was even moved to make the following accurate statement: 'During the past few weeks we have gone through what is, perhaps, the most momentous period of the Trade Union and Labour Movement in our long history; a period which found for the first time a united and determined working class effort to challenge the existing order of parliamentary government.'

In a number of areas, local cinemas were taken over for the holding of mass meetings. In Stepney, where Labour had a majority on the local borough council, the Council of Action took over all municipal buildings and used them for the strike.

As the strike developed increasing efforts were made to link up the local Councils of Action on a regional level. On the fourth day of the strike a conference was held in the north east at Gateshead attended by 28 Councils of Action, fifty-two strike committees, four Labour parties and three Trades Councils. Similar moves took place in the East Midlands, Kent and the London area. But the strike was called off before any national link up could be established.

In every town the Councils of Action operated in more or less continuous session, meeting at least every day, with emergency committees frequently operating during the night.

DUAL POWER

As the strike progressed, the local capitalists were increasingly forced to recognise the authority of the Councils of Action. The start was being made towards a complete overturning of the established relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie. This experience was put in a nut-shell by a sheet metal worker member of the Council of Action in Ashton. He reported:

'Employers of labour were coming, cap in hand, begging for permission to do certain things... Most of them were turned empty away after a most humiliating experience, for one and all were put through a stern questioning just to make them realise that we and not they were the salt of the earth. I thought of the many occasions when I had been turned empty away from the door of some workshop in a weary struggle to get the means to purchase the essentials of life...'

This issue — which class is to go cap in hand to which — is the central one in the class struggle, but in the General Strike, it became the burning practical question of the day. Was the working class to assert its rule over the capitalists, or was capitalism going to emerge victorious and strengthened out of the General Strike?

Then as now, the bourgeoisie tried to obscure the issue by calling for the defence of parliamentary democracy against an unrepresentative minority. But for all save the blind, the General Strike placed the institutions of 'British Parliamentary Democracy' for once in the light of day. The Durham council of action took the trouble to list them one by one:

- (1) Local and national Government officials.
- (2) The organisation for the maintenance of supplies. (OMS).
- (3) Various other strike breaking bodies, composed mainly of middle-class persons.
- (4) The Fascists, one of whose organisations has entered into an arrangement with the OMS.
- (5) The Special Constabulary, in which it is likely many of the Fascists will enrol.
- (6) The Special Civil Constabulary, a body of armed men with steel helmets organised solely for the purpose of coping with the strike.
- (7) The regular County and Borough police forces.
- (8) The Army, the Navy and the Airforce, equipped with tanks, machine guns, submarines, torpedo boats and aeroplanes.'

We could agree that this list is not entirely complete. The forces making up the camp-followers of Parliamentary democracy would

also have to include the judges, the prison administration, and some thousands of individual capitalists and their families. And we might also mention, last but not least, Jimmy Thomas, Ramsay MacDonald, and the other Feathers and Wilsons of the Labour leadership of the 1920s.

Those were the real forces of the Parliamentary democratic state in the General Strike, as they are today. And they were straining every sinew in those nine days to crush the action of millions of working class men and women struggling to defend their living standards. In this context, the Councils of Action took on a new significance, well beyond the immediate practical tasks of organising the strike for which they had been created: in however improvised and partial a way, they alone could claim to represent the interests and needs of the millions of working people.

And every day the strike lasted, they came to fulfil this role more and more. They were coming into existence totally independently and outside the control of any of the established institutions of society, including those of the official trade union channels. It was this more than anything else which led the TUC leadership to call off the strike. Some of the leaders were frank enough to admit this. Dukes, leader of the General and Municipal Workers, declared:

'Every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, and were wrecking the movement from one end to the other.'

These men with 'no authority, no control' who were nevertheless taking control of the movement were none other than the mass of the strikers themselves, organised in the strike committees and Councils of Action up and down the country. Thomas, the chief architect of the General Council's betrayal, spelt out his own motives equally clearly in the House of Commons on 13 May, the day after the strike had been called off:

'What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this: if by chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened.'

How topical these thoughts must seem to Vic Feather and Co! How well they must have summed up his feelings as he trotted in and out of Downing Street during the last months of industrial confrontations, political strikes and flying pickets!

A BEGINNING

The all-embracing organisations thrown up locally in the General Strike were only first, improvised steps towards fully fledged organs of working class power. In some areas they were little more than very active Trades Councils. Some of them were made up largely of the local union and Labour Party officials, while the more advanced centres like St. Pancras deliberately invited representatives of the strike committees to form the Council of Action, thereby turning it much further along the road towards democratic workers councils like those created by the Russian workers during the revolution.

In general, even among the militants there was very little understanding of the potential of the Councils of Action as embryos of class power. The idea of regularising democratic representation of the mass of workers on the committees was not generally grasped. An indication of this is given in a militant's report of the mass democracy practiced in one of the most advanced areas — Mansfield. He wrote:

'In a town adjacent to Mansfield a perhaps novel method was employed to get a strike committee functioning. A mass meeting of strikers was called, and a strike committee elected by it, care being taken to have each section of workers represented. Whatever may be said about this method, it certainly secured representation of the rank and file.'

The crucial political importance of such democratic involvement of the mass of workers was grasped by a Communist Party militant organising on Tyneside when he outlined the plan of campaign in that area:

'The intention was that the setting up of the councils of action would enable the whole theatre of war from Tweed to Tees to be covered with a network of local councils. From these would arise a more revolutionary leadership, as things developed, than was possible from the ranks of local or district officials of trade unions (who however, found themselves constituted as the leaders of their members called out on strike).'

The experience of the Councils of Action in the General Strike provides vital lessons for the working class movement today, helping it to find a path forward out of the reformist dead-end which the present leaders are still offering as they did in 1926.



Leeds Conference on 'The Family'

Cries of 'poofs' and 'get back to the kitchen' greeted several revolutionary socialist men and women when they got up to speak at the recent conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. These jibes revealed very clearly some deep-rooted ideas about the family, ideas holding back otherwise very politically advanced militants.

A good illustration of these ideas was a picture on one of the Yorkshire colliery banners at the Wakefield Miners Gala. It showed a family — husband, wife, son and daughter — mounting hand in hand a flight of steps on which were written Family Allowances, Pensions, etc. At the top was an archway, inscribed with the word 'Socialism', beyond which a green and pleasant land awaited the family.

washers, and there is no place for homosexuals in this small tightly-knit unit. The family unit is to be defended and improved, not challenged and analysed. Even the Communist Party sees the family as a boat sailing across the choppy seas of capitalism, propelled by the breeze of a rising standard of living and expanding welfare services into the safe harbour of socialism (see *Women: the Road to Equality and Socialism*, by Rosemary Small, a CP pamphlet).

But this cosy picture has been shattered as the economic crisis has led to cuts in state welfare provision, rocketing prices, and forced more women to go out to work. It is at such times, when the 'safe vessel' of the family begins to spring a few leaks, that the forces of reaction rally to its defence. An example of this was the big anti-abortion demonstration in



Recent anti-abortion rally in Manchester drew close to 50,000 people.

This sums up an understanding of socialism which dominates the British labour movement — that there will be a gradual, steady, peaceful progress until capitalism is somehow finally legislated out of existence. The family is seen as playing an essential role in this process; in this view the place of women is in the kitchen, however well equipped with fridges and dish-

Manchester a few weeks ago, organised by supporters of the Festival of Light and other similar right-wing advocates of the Christian family and the 'joys of motherhood'.

In reality, it is the unpaid work of the wife in the home — cooking, cleaning, bringing up the children — which provides the capitalists with a labour force, the husband, and a future labour force, the children. The capitalist takes no responsibility for the provision of the labour force he exploits, for whenever the economy runs into problems it's the family that carries the burden; through increased prices, lower wages, cuts in social expenditure, bad housing, unemployment, etc. Through the family, the economic dependence of women on men gives rise to the myth that women are inferior, to the sexual repression of women, and to their frequent conservatism (which the employers and the bourgeois press are quick to use against men on strike), not to mention the various aspects of the oppression of children.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

A socialist revolution opens up enormous possibilities for change in this pattern. After the Russian Revolution, for example, women were given full political and legal equality. Even more important, the first steps were taken to free women from the 'shut-in petty enterprise' of the family. Nurseries, creches, communal laundries and restaurants for all were set up, releasing women from the treadmill of domestic labour. Great advances were made in providing abortion facilities, etc. But most of those gains were taken back in a short while by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The bourgeois revolution that freed peasants from their plot of land and granted them democratic rights has still not been fully extended to women, either in capitalist countries or in the workers' states. Domestic labour remains a cottage industry.

Many questions about the exact role of the family have yet to be fully answered. What is the relationship between domestic labour and wage labour? Between the family and the State? What changes have occurred in the family in societies where capitalism has been overthrown? The Leeds conference on the family this weekend, 12/13 May, will not provide easy answers to these and other related questions. But it can play a vital role in developing an ongoing discussion of what is one of the essential props of capitalist society.

VAL JONES



CONFERENCE ON THE FAMILY LEEDS POLYTECHNIC UNION

SATURDAY 12th May

HISTORY OF THE FAMILY

Sheila Rowbotham and Linda Smith

THE FAMILY UNDER CAPITALISM

Margaret Coulson, Lee Sanders-Corner

SUNDAY 13th May

THE FAMILY IN POST-CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Meria Lortus

Each session will be followed by workshop discussions and plenary sessions. Final plenary session with panel of speakers and closing discussion.

Papers will be duplicated for distribution at the conference if submitted on A4 stencils by May 1st, to the address below.

There will be facilities for children (a creche) as long as we are given numbers. The conference is organised by Leeds Poly. Women's Lib, but is aimed at all those female and male who see the importance of this subject to our political understanding.

Details from: Val Jones, 69 Bagby Rd., Leeds 2
Phone: 0532-27777

Reviews

WORKERS' CONTROL UNDER CAPITALISM?

Workers' Control by Ernie Roberts (George Allen & Unwin, £4.25 hard, £2.25 paper) / Alf Jennings

'Workers' Control' is a subject much shrouded in mystery, and the term is used to mean many different things. Attempts at clarification are therefore extremely welcome. But unfortunately Ernie Roberts' book fails in this respect. Rather than attempt to give a precise answer to the problem of what exactly workers' control might be, it evades this crucial theoretical problem by a simple device: every step forward in the class struggle is 'workers' control'.

The fight on the shop floor, the struggle to democratise the unions, the fight for international trade unionism, worker directors, the accountability of the Parliamentary Labour Party to conference, the battle against redundancies, occupation tactics, and the very existence of the shop stewards movement — all this and much more is 'workers' control'.

FIGHT IN INDUSTRY

The most concrete sections of the book are those dealing with the fight in industry. Roberts examines some of the many workers' control schemes which have been put forward over the years in various industries — cars, aircraft, steel, mines and the docks. The common demand is 'worker participation in management at all levels in the process of decision-making'. But this raises the question: don't the interests of the management and the interests of the workers conflict?

The way Roberts deals with this problem is highly unsatisfactory. For example, he readily admits that the worker directors in steel are a fraud. But according to Roberts the trouble is that they are not directly elected and accountable to the workers. Leaving aside some curious remarks — slips? — elsewhere in the book (p.175) that worker directors should receive the same salary as other directors (not guaranteed to go down well on the shop floor), Roberts believes that direct election will save the worker directors from 'corruption':

'Workers should have the right to withdraw their representative if he fails to protect their interests to the full extent of his powers as a director.'

But don't his 'powers as a director' mean that regardless of his wishes he will come into conflict with the shop floor?

This problem is neatly sidestepped by linking workers' participation with demands for nationalisation. Because then, as the BEA workers believed (p.175): 'the workers are the Corporation, and their interests must coincide.'

Nationalised industry is somehow immune from the capitalist mode of production, and in such a neutral arena 'industrial democracy' and 'workers' control' can flourish. But this doesn't solve the dilemma at all, as miners and steelworkers have discovered to their cost.

Proposals for workers' co-management are attempts to substitute something called 'industrial democracy' for the class struggle. To sanctify this as 'workers' control' only helps the enemy. The democratic facade hides the real problem: which class really controls which?

The Hull dock-workers group who published the *Hamberside Voice* in 1965 had the right idea. Roberts describes how they believed 'no workers could remain uncorrupted, once elected to a place on the board.' Following this healthy instinct, they shaped their proposals in such a way that they avoided the trap of co-management, despite simultaneously demanding nationalisation of the ports. They demanded the establishment of Portworkers Councils with power of continuous supervision over the National Port Authority at both national and local levels. These Councils would have no direct representation on the NPA, but would have access to meetings, minutes, accounts, etc. and power to report to Parliament their criticisms of the NPA.

Now Roberts objects that this scheme is insufficient because it offers 'no say for the dock-workers in the original formation of decisions' (p.177). But the dockers understood very well that working class power could not be found in the management office. It lay elsewhere. Before they could exercise effective power over capital and its operations, they understood the need to organise the abolition of the secrecy surrounding the NPA's affairs. To get access to the affairs of the NPA they needed legal powers. In other words, in order to prepare the ground for any really effective and lasting control over the operations of capital, certain preconditions in the state had to be met. They could only get access by legal authority, and could only exercise effective control by means of a state apparatus which would intervene directly in the decisions of the NPA following their discoveries. The error the dockers did make however was in thinking that the existing capitalist state could be used to break through the class authority of the capitalists.

DUAL POWER

Lenin and Trotsky, whose excellent work on this question we recommend to Bro. Roberts, linked workers' control to dual power in the state. The legal authority for access to the books, the state force needed to intervene against the bosses, bankers and financiers, the commissions which would work out the elements of an economic plan across the entire economy — these things would not be granted by the capitalist state.

The working class should take advantage of any laws passed by a Labour Government relating to commercial secrecy, factory councils and so forth. But to make control a reality, the workers would have to create their own state authority to take these steps: soviets, workers councils, etc. These organisations would take the workers from a position in which they simply react and protest against changes in capitalist organisation (by strikes, etc.) to a position of control. This is the heart of the matter.

It will be interesting to see the reaction of the Institute for Workers Control, of which Roberts is a leading member, when and if the British bourgeoisie introduce the co-management schemes developed in Germany: under the banner of 'workers' control' of course.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL IS NOW OUT. INTERNATIONAL Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1973) is the first issue of a greatly expanded theoretical journal of the IMG which will be appearing quarterly from now on.

Contents include a major article by Ernest Mandel on workers' control and workers' power; the document on building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe passed by the December 1972 International Executive Committee of the Fourth International; a survey of the opposition currents within the Soviet Union today; a historical study and refutation of the doctrine of 'two Irish nations'; and an examination of the different variants of 'state capitalist' theory put forward since the 1920s to explain the nature of the bureaucratic regime in the USSR. There are also illustrations.

Ernest Mandel
WORKERS CONTROL

EDICH FALL
State
Capitalism
Revisited

Ted Harcourt
OPPOSITION
CURRENTS
IN THE USSR

James Conway TWO NATIONS DOGMA

**The Building of
Revolutionary Parties
in Capitalist Europe**

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: £1.50 for a year (make cheque/P.O. out to 'Internationals').

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to: International, 182 Pentonville Rd., London N.1.



Palestinians Under Attack

Prime Minister Amin al-Hafez resigned on Tuesday as the Lebanese Army continued its drive to crush the Palestinian resistance movement. This is the third time that the Army has ignored agreements between guerrilla leader Yasir Arafat and the Prime Minister. The only effect of these was to lull sections of the Palestinian movement into a false sense of security.

The present fighting in Beirut is the heaviest since 1969. After the huge demonstrations which marked the assassination of guerrilla leaders in Beirut by Israeli commandos, the Lebanese regime again acted to weaken the influence of the Palestinians. Provocations were organised, culminating in the seizure of five militants from the most radical group — the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. When the DPFLP responded by seizing two Lebanese soldiers the army surrounded the Sabra refugee camp — the main DPFLP base — and began a bombardment which spread rapidly to other camps.

The nationalist regimes in the other Arab countries, who attempt to use support for the Palestinians as a safety-valve for the political and social discontent of the masses, are heavily embarrassed by the fighting. But they have failed to intervene in support of the Palestinian forces, while Tel Aviv radio has made clear that this would not in any case be tolerated by Israel.

So far the resistance has been limited to defensive military operations from the refugee camps, and this will undoubtedly continue to be the case until the Palestinian forces are transformed into a revolutionary movement openly challenging the Lebanese ruling class for the support of the Lebanese masses.

Franco's Regime Prepares New Wave of Repression Against Workers' Movement

On May 1 a policeman was killed in Madrid in an attack on a left-wing demonstration. Well over 100 demonstrators were immediately seized and are still held in detention, while reaction has come to a head among the police and army. There have been mass demonstrations of police and fascists in the major cities, directed against the Minister of the Interior and the Opus Dei organisation, and calling for the unrestricted use of firearms against the 'reds.' Already by 4 May the government had to retrieve its position, by promising to supply the forces of 'law and order' with all the means they require for the 'defence of society': the licence to kill is restored.

The May Day events followed a new upturn in the class struggle during the previous month after a worker had been assassinated by police in Barcelona during a strike organised by the FECSA Workers' Commission. The response was a strike movement

Test for Campora in Argentina

'If a member of parliament votes for the freedom of an assassin, I should think everything possible should be done to get that member of parliament put behind bars.' This statement, by Rear Admiral Horacio Mayorga, notorious for his defence of the Navy's conduct in the massacre of revolutionaries at Trelew last year, is the clearest declaration of war against the advocates of amnesty for the political prisoners in Argentina. This is the question which is becoming the first open test of the relations between the military and the incoming Peronist regime.

Negotiations between the military and the Peronist President-elect, Campora, continue prior to his inauguration on 25 May. Campora's statement last week — to the effect that the military must be subordinated to the civil authorities — is evidence of the pressure he is under, especially from the powerful army garrisons of the interior and from the navy. Following a number of activities by left-wing guerrillas — including the execution of Admiral Quijada by members of the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) — the government has introduced a State of Emergency in Buenos Aires and five other provinces, with the right to use the death penalty.

According to some press reports, Campora may have been warned that the military will use the remaining time before his inauguration, if not to stage a coup, at least to launch a manhunt for revolutionary militants, in particular members of the ERP. Not daring to denounce the activities of the guerrillas for fear of losing mass support, Campora has so far chosen to remain silent.

Meanwhile Peron himself has been busy on the diplomatic front. He has flown to Paris to meet President Echeverria, whose regime added to its record of butchery of Mexican workers and youth by murdering two students in Puebla on May Day. Visits are planned to Mexico, Chile and even Brazil, with the announced aim of developing 'united anti-imperialist action.' Among the first countries to extend an invitation was the People's Republic of China.

throughout the country and especially in the Barcelona area, where workers demonstrated in a massive display of solidarity, defended by the use of strong pickets. This kind of self-defence is more than ever necessary in the face of the new wave of repression now being prepared by the regime, and in particular by the police and army.

The prospect of 'social peace' held out by the Opus Dei organisation, which requires capitalist 'stabilisation' and strengthened links with Europe to safeguard the figure of capital in Spain, grows increasingly remote for the Spanish regime in the face of workers' struggles to which it cannot afford to make concessions. And the perspective of a 'Pact for Freedom' with sections of the bourgeoisie and armed forces, offered by the CP, is more and more clearly revealed as treacherous illusion for the workers' movement.

Madrid: fascists link arms with plainclothes police in demonstration urging regime to step up repression.



GUARDS BEAT UP WOMEN IN LONG KESH

Two women detainees in Armagh Jail in the north of Ireland were badly beaten up by guards on 25 April during a hearing at Long Kesh internment camp.

The incident started when Margaret Shannon, who is 18, appeared before the commissioners and was told that an informer had claimed that she was a member of the Provisional IRA. The alleged informer started to speak from behind a screen and she recognised the voice of a Lieutenant Ball of the Royal Green Jackets, a man notorious in the Andersonstown area of Belfast. She then attempted to pull down the screen and confront her accuser.

A letter sent to *Red Weekly* by one of the other women prisoners in Armagh Jail takes up the story: 'Immediately a male prison warden pulled her to the ground then dragged her out of the room down a long corridor. The warden had her in a stranglehold and she was unable to breathe. Ann Walsh heard the com-

motion and she ran out to aid Miss Shannon. More prison wardens rushed onto the scene and Miss Walsh was flung against the wall and one of the wardens banged her head against it a number of times. At this time Miss Shannon was lying on the ground unconscious.

'When both of the girls arrived back at the prison they were not allowed to enter the wing in case they upset the rest of the girls'. Eventually when they did get up the rest of the women prisoners found them in a state of severe shock. Medical attention did not arrive until a few hours after.'

The letter concludes: 'This is not the first time anything of this nature has taken place. Our women have suffered constant harassment each time they have been taken to Courts. This was one of the most recent and terrifying examples of British tyranny in the north of Ireland.'

BELGIAN DOCKERS APPEAL FOR SOLIDARITY

By ROBERT MOSSGAIL

The striking dockers of Ghent and Antwerp have opened up a new period of class struggle in Belgium.

Originally starting in Ghent over questions of wages, hygiene, lack of medical facilities and so on the strike rapidly spread to Antwerp. At first under the leadership of the CP the struggle has escalated, even forcing the Belgian Socialist Party to give £5,000 to the dockers strike fund. The strike is rapidly becoming a test of strength between the workers and the reactionary union bureaucracy.

While in Ghent the strike is completely solid, in Antwerp conditions have been more difficult because of the split between the casual and the regularly employed dockers, and because of the greater weight of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. When on two occasions the workers demonstrated at the union headquarters for the strike to be made official they found not simply that the doors were shut but also that police had been called to guard the building.

Instead of support the bureaucracy declared that they couldn't act because the strike wasn't solid and, in any case, it had been provoked by outside professional agitators! The bureaucracy then proceeded to attack the police for not protecting the 'right' of dockers to scab on the strike.

In this situation the importance of solidarity action and of organising a strong struggle against the bureaucracy is vital. The Ligue Revolutionnaire des Travailleurs, Belgian section of the Fourth International, has intervened both to gain solidarity for the strike, publicising it on the traditional May day demonstrations and raising funds, and in the strike itself to establish strike committees and General Assemblies. In Ghent a strike committee and a twice weekly assembly has been established but in Antwerp the reactionary actions of the bureaucracy make any developments more difficult. The Ligue is also promoting, through the sections of the Fourth International, the distribution of material such as that below, calling for international support for the strike.



Leaflet for international distribution put out by LRT

Comrades, In the Belgian ports of Ghent and Antwerp the dockers have launched unofficial strikes.

- They are demanding:
- A rise in wages (wage increases in Belgium as in all other countries are falling behind the increasing cost of living).
 - A change in the conditions of employment (dock work is still on a casual basis).
 - An improvement in safety conditions (the tempo of work at Antwerp is one of the fastest in the world, with a record number of industrial injuries).

So far the union leadership has not supported the strike — it considers itself bound by the contracts with the bosses. The strikes are therefore being run by strike committees in the ports. The bosses are attempting to avoid the effects of the strike by diverting ships to other ports.

The dockers of Belgium need your solidarity!
BLACK THE SHIPS DIVERTED FROM GHENT AND ANTWERP!

Ly Van Sau, a representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, leads the way in last Saturday's demonstration to the U.S. Embassy and then to the Cambodian Embassy. Although rallying only about 700 people the demonstration, called by the Indochina Solidarity Conference (ISC), succeeded in drawing at least minimal support from groups like the NUS, CP Student Committee, the British Peace Committee, IS, etc. Future initiatives must seek to transform what is often only token support into a sizeable movement which can take effective action.



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(British Section of the Fourth International)
182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG.

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Occupation:

The Watergate Affair

THE FLOOD GATES OPEN

As the Watergate affair reverberates through American society her capitalist allies gaze with dismay as bourgeois democracy and morality takes one hammer blow after another.

But Watergate itself is now small change. The real issue is the exposure of the crooked dealing between Nixon and his aides with American big business.

HARD CASH

Edward Nixon, brother of the president and former Attorney General, John Mitchell, were both involved in raising \$200,000 from Robert Vesco, head of the Investors Overseas Services Ltd. This donation delivered in hard cash was in return for the dropping of legal charges against Vesco and 41 associates who are accused of 'milking' \$224 million from their company. Only the threat of a massive scandal stopped the deal and made the Nixon group hastily return the money.

Murray Chotnier, a close friend of Nixon and one of his longest-serving aides, collected over one million dollars from Las Vegas gamblers and the Teamsters Union. The money was paid over to stop a pending law suit being taken out by the Justice Department challenging loans made by the Teamsters officials to the mafia controlled Nevada gambling industry.

At a conservative estimate over \$10 million was raised by CREEP - The Committee for the Re-election of the President - for 'special purposes funds'. This money was so dirty in origin that it had to be sent to Washington via a 'laundering' operation in Mexico.

EARMARKED

This money was earmarked for definite political purposes. Liddy and Hunt, the former a White House aide, the latter a \$100 a day CREEP consultant were paid from this fund to organise the burglary of Lewis Fielding's office, psychiatrist to Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg was the man responsible for publishing the Pentagon papers which blew the 'gaff' on the debacle of US policy in Vietnam. The purpose of the break-in was to try and find dirt which could be used to discredit Ellsberg. Ehrlichman, one of Nixon's right-hand men and acting on his superior's instructions, then offered Judge Byrne who is presiding in the Ellsberg case the directorship of the FBI.

Determined that the 'silent majority'

should speak out CREEP officials forged hundreds of telegrams in an attempt to demonstrate a 'spontaneous' support for Nixon's mining of Haiphong harbour last May.

by Jeff King

CREEP officials also bought 3000 copies of local papers in order to load a TV poll in Nixon's favour. Phoney telephone calls were organised, letters from friends arranged, all backing US imperialism's genocide in Indochina. Another Nixon man, Jeb Magruder, operated a private cache of CREEP money which paid the wages of spies, stool-pigeons and provocateurs operating in radical and revolutionary groups.

OLD HAND

Nixon is of course an old and practised hand at vote-stacking and the dubious use of funds. As TV commentator Sandy Van Whipnade remarked: 'Nixon has been in public life for over a quarter of a century. He has been a walking encyclopedia of malodorous political practices. He ran nine sleazy campaigns - in 1946, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1956, 1960, 1962, 1968 and 1972.' The economist Robert Graph caustically remarked of donations to CREEP: '35% went to TV ads; 15% for headquarters expenses; 15% for spying and sabotage; 10% for fake telegrams and advertisements; 8% for entertainment of milk producers, Teamsters Union, Vesco and other campaign contributors; 6% for hush money to the Watergate Seven; 5% to Mexican lawyers for "laundering" illegal campaign funds; 5% for bogus committees and hired pickets; and 1% for guards to keep Martha Mitchell quiet.'



'1 per cent to keep Martha quiet'

Neither is Nixon a deviant as far as US presidents go. Harry S. Truman was a creature of 'Boss' Tom Prendergast, who had a monopoly on all the crooked politicians in the State of Missouri. Prendergast backed Truman in his early political career and the grateful president thereafter ensured his immunity from government investigating committees and racket-busting commissions. John F. Kennedy, great 'white hope' of world liberalism and hero of British social democracy owed his 1960 election victory to massive vote fiddling in Chicago's Cook County.

COVERED UP

But before, the corruptness and chicanery of the various presidents and governments has always been covered up by a united front of the politicians of the capitalist parties who have had a vested interest in maintaining the myth of democracy. The general unanimity of the ruling class has however been shattered by deep differences on the conduct of the war in Indochina and Nixon's economic policies at home. Important sections of the ruling class are deeply concerned that the President's policies are endangering the stability of American capitalism and are therefore prepared to take advantage of the Watergate disclosures.

The affair has, however, begun to get out of hand. Most of Nixon's opponents wanted to strike at Haldeman and Ehrlichman, Nixon's two chief aides who gained a reputation for arrogant insularity and were considered too unpolitically sophisticated by the old-time politicians. Watergate seemed an ideal opportunity to do this, but once the floodgate had been opened the whole rotten edifice began to crumble. Splits began to take place at the White House and Nixon chose to side with Haldeman and Ehrlichman against the Mitchell-Dean grouping who face likely prosecution. Determined not to 'carry the can' Dean has now openly implicated Nixon himself and claims he was aware of what was taking place.

The problem now for the American ruling class is how best to clean up the mess: whether to protect Nixon against his associates or to clean out the whole gang and present it as a triumph for the 'free press' and American democracy. That will depend on how much more dirt comes out in the next few days.

Engineering Workers Barricade Factory

Bason's convenor Monty Hulze (centre) and other occupying workers



From BOB CLEAVER and PAUL YOUNG

Workers occupying the heavily barricaded factory of Bason's in Stockport are currently awaiting the arrival of bailiffs empowered to 'repossess' the factory by the High Court.

The occupation started on 13 April after attempts to break the workers' 100% AUEW union organisation. This first took the form of dismissal notices to six workers, including two shop stewards. After a hostile reaction there was a change in tactics, with redundancy notices being served on 11 men, including the original six and another steward. Suggestions were then made by some of the workers about work-sharing schemes or voluntary redundancies, but the employers made it clear that they were out to attack the union by insisting that the 11 men must go. The men then voted for an indefinite strike and occupation.

Bason's was occupied for no less than 18 weeks during last year's engineering sit-ins in the Manchester area, emerging with a settlement well above the average. As a long-standing union stronghold in an area where relations between the union and the Engineering Employers Federation have been very tense since last year's strike, what is actually involved in this struggle is a confrontation between the might of the EEF and the

AUEW as a whole. A victory for the Bason's workers would greatly increase the strength and confidence of all engineering workers in taking on the employers again in another hard fight over this year's claim.

MORALE HIGH

So far morale is high, with workers from other engineering plants including Gardiner's, as well as Stretford refuse workers (both also in dispute) reinforcing the occupation. No bailiffs will evict the men if such reinforcements continue and a round-the-clock mass picket is mounted on the gates.

But two incidents already show how the state is looking to take advantage of their potential isolation. The judge hearing the application for 'repossession' granted the order immediately - once he had been told that only 40 men were involved. And the Social Security, who last year made a whole number of payments under pressure from thousands of strikers, have so far refused this time to make a single payment.

In any long-drawn out dispute the threat of isolation will become greater and greater. But action now by other workers, particularly at the other engineering plants in the area, can ensure a quick and overwhelming victory which will strengthen the hand of all workers in the coming disputes.



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OXFORD & DISTRICT COUNCIL OF ACTION: Public conference on 'The way forward for the working class'. Speakers from Trades Council and local trade union branches. Saturday, 12 May, from 2-4 and 4.30-6.30 p.m. at the Clarendon Press Institute, Walton Street, Oxford. Entrance by 10p ticket. Enquiries to Oxford 772656.

RELEASE THE STOKE NEWINGTON 5: March and protest meeting to support the appeals on Saturday, 12 May. Assemble Speakers Corner, 3.30 p.m. then march to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Meeting 7.00 p.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. (Holborn tube). Details from Solidarity Committee, 54 Harcombe Road, London N.16.

CENTRAL LONDON A.I.L.: Forum on the British troops and repression in Ireland. Friday, 11 May, at 8pm in the General Picton, Caledonian Rd., Kings X.

'AFTER MAY DAY - WHAT NEXT?': Hull Red Circle on Thursday, 17 May at 8pm in 'The Rose', Beverley Road.

DEFEND THE SHREWSBURY WORKERS! Public meeting 13 May at the Mill Inn, Deal, at 8pm. Speakers: Paul Smith, Paul Davidson (IMG).

LEEDS A.I.L.: Public meeting, Friday 11 May, 8pm at the Trades Club. A recently released internee speaks on Internment and the British Army in Northern Ireland.

TRADE UNIONS AND RACISM: Conference called by Mansfield Hosiery Mills strike committee, to be held at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham, on 2 June, 11am to 6pm. Delegate credentials from: B. Bunsee, 20.03 Victoria Centre, Nottingham (tel. 463071).

'THE NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS': Merseyside IMG public meeting. Speaker: Bob Pennington. Weds, 16 May, 7.45pm in the Warrington Co-op Meeting Hall (Small Room).

CONNOLLY COMMEMORATION MEETING: 'The Irish Situation and the British Left', Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham, 3pm, Sunday 13 May. Speakers: Eamonn Smullen, Pete Carter and Keith Braithwaite. Other speakers invited. Organised by Clann na h'Eireann.

SOUTHERN AFRICA CONFERENCE: University of Kent, Canterbury (Rutherford College) on 19 May, 10.30am to 6.30pm. Speakers from ZANU (Rhodesia), PAC (South Africa), SWAPO (Namibia), UNITA (Angola) etc. plus films.

IMG RED FORUM: Series of introductory discussions for those in the London area on the politics of the Fourth International. Every Tuesday, 8pm, at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (5 mins walk from Kings X tube).

