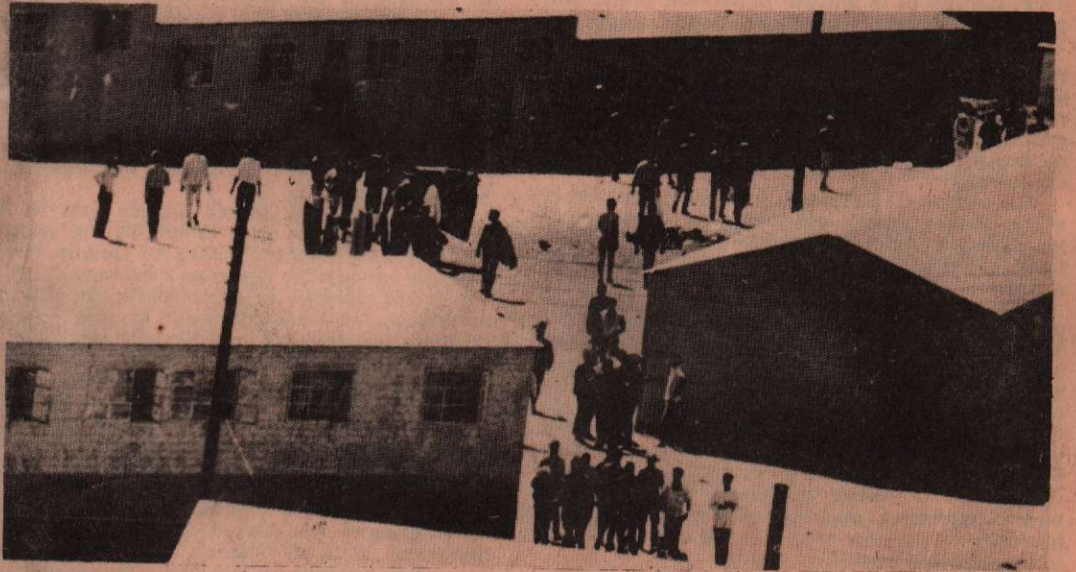
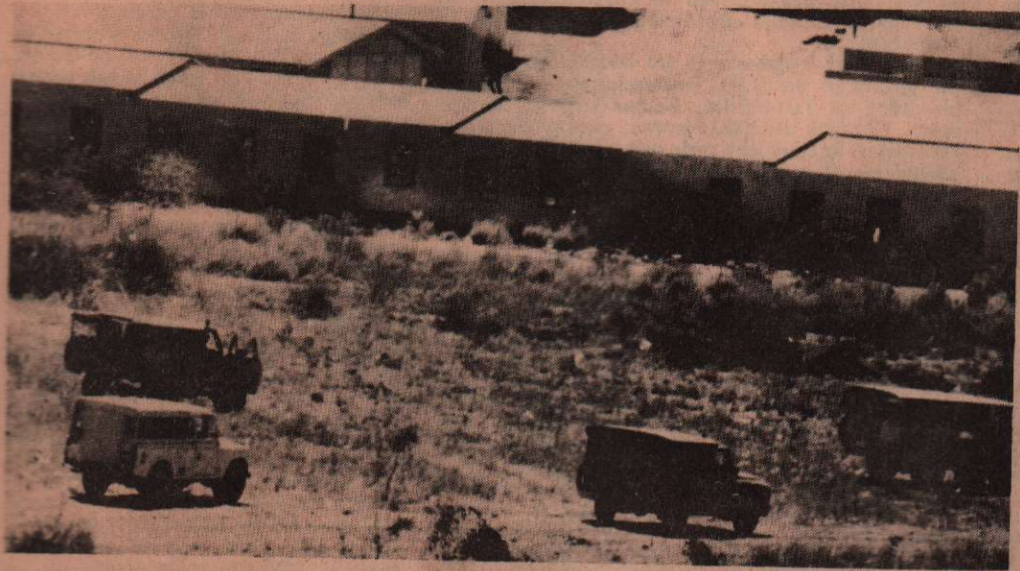


Socialist Worker

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Exclusive: strike pictures smuggled from S.Africa



THESE pictures have been smuggled to Britain by the South West Africa People's Organisation. The area is occupied by the South African apartheid police state, now being shaken by a magnificent illegal strike by Ovambo and other black workers against the near-slavery conditions. In spite of massive police and army attacks

and the arrest of strike leaders, latest information indicates that the strike is still spreading. Left-hand picture shows police vehicles moving in on the Katatura compound for Ovambo contract workers, one of the main centres of the strike. Right-hand picture shows workers in the sealed-off compound. STORY: PAGE 2

PAY, RENTS, JOBS, UNION LAWS - CRUCIAL BATTLES AHEAD

SW Political Correspondent

THE SMALL MINORITY who own the wealth of Britain and control the lives of the rest of us have been toasting the happy prospect before them. They have lifted their champagne glasses to welcome the New Year to gleeful talk of 'turning the corner' into a period of 'new prosperity'.

The Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Anthony Barber, summed up their guarded optimism when he wrote in the big businessmen's own daily newspaper, the Financial Times, of 'a unique opportunity before us.'

But it is not an optimism that can be shared in the homes of millions of working people in Britain. The 'unique opportunities' do not extend that far down.

They will be of no benefit to the million on the dole—or to the several hundred more unemployed who do not count in the official figures.

Even the government's own official advisers do not expect more than a very limited improvement in the jobless situation in the next year or more.

SCRIMP

And the average wage earner will not benefit from the 'economic improvement' the Tories are boasting of. In the last few months, wages have been rising more slowly than prices. And lower paid groups of workers, like the council and hospital workers, have been forced to accept wage increases of only 6 per cent while prices rise at 10 per cent a year. As they scrimp and save on necessary spending they know that the most meagre of welfare measures designed to protect the health of their children, the provision of free school milk, has been done away with.

Nor is that the end of the tale. In April council house rents will shoot up by an average of more than 50p a week—with more to come next year.

All these facts add up to one

thing: The months ahead will be ones of hard and bitter struggle if working people are going to even begin to hold their own.

As we go to press the miners are due to strike against the meagre pay rises the Tories are permitting them, and power and engineering workers will have to think of similar action.

Council tenants throughout Britain are starting to discuss ways of preventing the rent rises.

And the struggle against unemployment expands as workers fight or prepare to fight redundancy on Clydeside, in Alexandria, in North Wales, in Newcastle and in many other places.

The organised working-class movement has the strength to win all these battles. No force could be successful against the united efforts of 10 million trade unionists and their families.

But in recent months such success has not been forthcoming.

The chief reason is that those who direct the strength of the labour movement have not been prepared to fight. The leaders of the steel workers, the council workers, the teachers, to name but a few, sacrificed their members' living standards in order to avoid conflict.



BARBER: unique opportunity

The miners and power workers' leaders would like to follow suit. Only last week the Engineering Union sent its members at Rolls-Royce, Bristol, back to work after nine weeks' strike without any gains.

Call for mines-power pay unity

ON THE EVE of what could be the first national mines strike since 1926, miners in the militant Yorkshire area have called on their leaders to link their pay claim with that of the power workers'.

They feel that a united front of both sections would be the most effective way to beat the Tory government's plans to drive down wages in the public sector.

And in the past few days union officials have been trying to persuade Fine Tube strikers in Plymouth to abandon their historic 85 weeks' old strike for basic trade union rights.

LESSON

The official political 'representatives' of the working class have a record that is even worse. Not one Labour council in the country was prepared to defy the Tory law in defence of the welfare of working-class children.

The lesson is simple: Working-class organisation can beat the Tory government, but only by unity at rank and file level for

militant and co-ordinated action, without reliance on those above who refuse to fight.

Such a development will not take place on its own. It has to be argued for in every shop and every factory.

Militants have to draw together into a revolutionary organisation in which they share their experiences, learn the lessons of the past and prepare for action for the future.

Only in this way can they begin to show the possibility of defeating the Tories and resist any tendencies towards defeat and demoralisation.

The Yorkshire miners are anxious to avoid a repetition of last year's power dispute when the workers were isolated, witch-hunted by the press and television and finally saddled with a miserable increase below the rise in the cost of living.

One leading militant, John Martin of Brodsworth pit, Doncaster, said this week that the

NUM should turn their paper The Miner into a weekly if the strike goes ahead, in order to answer the inevitable lies and slanders of the bosses' press.

Other suggestions being made to the NUM executive include calls for demonstrations in every area to intensify the feeling of solidarity and for frequent mass meetings

THE MINERS' CLAIM: FULL ANALYSIS CENTRE PAGES

WORLD NEWS

BRIEFING

American dockers fight to save their jobs

LAST OCTOBER, after President Nixon's personal intervention, the Federal Court issued an injunction ordering 15,000 striking West Coast dock workers back to work. This broke the first nation-wide dock strike in US history. Six weeks later, East Coast and Gulf longshoremen were victims of a similar injunction under the Taft-Hartley laws.

from Richard Boyden
American International Socialists

Committee, chaired by Harry Bridges, has left it to the union branches to negotiate the question of steady men on a port-by-port basis. Bridges has publicly said that he has no faith in the ILWU's ability to win on this issue, and has acted at most times as though he actually favours steady men.

An important factor in the hard line taken by the employers is the ineffectiveness of the last strike. By September most of the big shipping lines were operating the large majority of their ships at a profit—despite the strike. This situation developed because the union decided to allow lines to continue carrying military cargo, and because union members had mistakenly assumed that longshoremen in Canada and Mexico would refuse to work any American ships diverted to their ports.

Today on the West Coast, as the 80-day cooling-off period draws to a close, the issues of the strike are as alive as ever. Members of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) still face a grim future of long-term unemployment as the employers step up 'modernisation' and containerisation at the expense of jobs.

The employers and the ILWU have tentatively agreed that the problems of unemployment and containerisation will be dealt with by a 'work guarantee'. This would guarantee all longshoremen 36 hours work or pay each week. Workers on the B-list (second-class citizens in the industry and the union) will be guaranteed 18 hours a week.

Now many longshoremen are taking a hard look at the quality of the ILWU leadership. Faced with the invocation of Taft-Hartley, Bridges tragically backed down. The rank and file, however, were prepared and determined to carry out their part of Bridges' original programme of resistance. In Seattle, in the first week after the injunction, 200 longshore gangs were fired from their jobs for low productivity. But without support from the ILWU leaders they were unable to carry on. Bridges flew to Seattle, called a meeting (excluding B-men), and persuaded the men to return to their normal work speed. Much the same happened in other ports and the go-slow fizzled out.

The employers' main target is the hiring hall system, which ensures equal opportunity for work to all longshoremen. Among an otherwise fragmented workforce, the hiring hall principle protects union organisation and prevents favouritism or victimisation.

As a local union branch bulletin puts it: 'The employers would like us to believe that the guarantee will solve all problems—including job security. But the way they propose the guarantee it becomes a trap. We may get the guarantee and other goodies, but when they are through, the number of men in the industry will be cut to less than half, and the guts will be torn out of our union. The way they want it, they'll have full control of manning, size of gangs, and jurisdiction at the end of the next contract.'

Here in Los Angeles 350 out of 400 steady men refused to report to their jobs and instead chose to be dispatched from the union hiring hall on an equal basis with their union brothers. The employers retaliated by locking out the entire port. For 10 days the docks remained shut, until a court order forced the men back to work. Already the employers had been diverting cargo from Los Angeles to other ports. Without backing from the International Union, the branch and its members were at the mercy of the government—with individual members subject to fines of £40.

Throughout the negotiations the employers have been unshakable on their right to hire 'steady men'. The 'steady men' are not hired in equal rotation, but instead work permanently for a single company—at a time when the average longshoreman has been working only 3½ days a week. Containerisation would ultimately reduce man-hours on the docks by 90 per cent. For the employers this would mean the elimination of all 'unneeded' men from the industry, leaving a small docile force of skilled 'steady men'. The hiring hall method provides a possibility of reducing hours and increasing pay, so that even with full containerisation all longshoremen would have security.

In addition the guarantee is limited to 5.2 million dollars, which would mean the worker could not collect more than about £160 a year—hardly enough, given the amount of unemployment in recent years.

Yet despite these setbacks there is no doubt that, with a united rank and file under a militant leadership, victory is possible.

On this issue there is a vast gulf between the feelings of working longshoremen and their local leaders and ILWU officials. The union's Coast Negotiating

THE RECENT presidential election in Italy, beamed on TV to every home, revealed the deep divisions within the Italian ruling class. It also dealt a blow to the already battered image of Italian 'democracy'. It took 23 ballots over 11 days before a candidate received the required majority.

The majority in the largest party, the Christian Democrats, wanted to elect the strong man, Fanfani, the right-wing president of the Senate, in the hope that he could unite the Italian capitalist class in a programme of law and order and the modernisation of Italian society.

Fanfani is closely linked to the state monopolies and large firms which are pushing for reforms. When he was unable to win a majority, a compromise candidate, another right-wing Christian Democrat, Leone, was elected as President, the decisive votes being cast by the fascist party, the MSI.

Leone's election is likely to widen the split in the centre-left coalition government as the Socialist Party will be under extreme pressure to leave a government headed by a right-wing President.

DOM MINTOFF, the Maltese Prime Minister, is clearly justified in doing his best to wring a bit more money out of the British government. Malta has not done very well out of its long association with Britain.

The island suffers from high unemployment and low wages and as a result every year more Maltese have to leave the island. One of the financial grants Britain has given is £50 million assistance to an emigration programme—hardly the way to help Malta to be more economically viable.

Since 9000 out of Malta's 100,000 workers are employed by the British forces, British withdrawal will mean more unemployment. Malta also provides a cosy home for retired well-to-do British who enjoy low prices (because of the low wages) but they get preferential income tax—2½ pence in the pound against 32½ pence paid by Maltese workers.

Whether Mintoff can get anywhere on a different matter. In terms of modern warfare Malta is of little strategic value and it has no raw materials. Mintoff has been cultivating the friendship of Colonel Gaddafi of Libya, who has already given him one million pounds.

But Gaddafi is a fanatical Communist: in a speech last August he said: 'Let us beat with an iron fist those who speak of communism'. So he is unlikely to be pleased at Mintoff's recent agreements with Russia.

WHO is the new President of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto? A rich landlord and Western-educated intellectual, in 1968-69 he put himself at the head of a popular discontent which, by strikes and riots, led to the fall of President Khan.

His Pakistan People's Party called for civil rights, land reform and nationalisation and became the biggest party in Pakistan in the first general election in December 1969. But overall victory in the election went to the Awami League, the popular party of East Pakistan.

Bhutto immediately swung into a hearted support of President Yahya Khan and his generals in their campaign of murder and oppression in the East, showing how little he cared for the interests of the oppressed peoples of Pakistan and much for his own career.

Now that Pakistan has been defeated by India and Bangladesh is 'independent' Bhutto has reached the peak of his power as president in place of the defeated and disgraced Yahya. He still aspires to rule the masses, especially to whip up popular hatred against India and Bangladesh, and comes to power as the heir of Yahya Khan and his generals, not as their overthrewer.

Black strike wave shakes

S.African racists

by W. Enda

FIFTEEN THOUSAND Africans have just given white South Africa a hefty slap in the face by going on strike in South West Africa, which is illegally occupied by the racist regime.

The workers are members of the 300,000 strong Ovambo people, who are confined to a reserve in the North, which, with the aid of collaborating chiefs, has been chosen to become a model Bantustan, that is, a black stooge nation providing labour for the white areas.

The strikes are the culmination of a series of protests against the labour contract system. On 10 November the army moved in to crush a rebellion in the enormous Ovambo location called Katatura in Windhoek, the capital city. The workers had torn down several half-constructed guard towers designed to make white policing more efficient. Police cars were stoned and turned over. The army arrested hundreds.

Panic

On 13 December, fish factory workers, railwaymen and dockers numbering 3126 in Walvis Bay, the major port, announced they would strike in two days' time for removal of the contract labour system and a raising of the minimum wage.

The authorities panicked. The government in Pretoria demanded the immediate evacuation of strikers back to Ovamboland, the usual strike-breaking tactic. Since the Ovambos run the railways a special force of 85 white railway police were flown in from Johannesburg to beat up Walvis Bay strikers and to protect scabs.

In Windhoek the 6000 workers on strike crippled the city. Half of the African police force were sacked for supporting the strikers. White armed police surrounded Katatura and locked the gates.

Inside the workers built three-yard-high brick walls waiting for an assault. They were not armed. They also destroyed the muck their bosses called food by trampling it into the ground and started a hunger strike.



African miners forced to live in slum accommodation

THE CONTRACT LABOUR SYSTEM IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

- 1 No Ovambo to leave Ovamboland without a contract with an employer.
- 2 Recruitment of labour by the South West Africa Labour Association. On recruitment, workers pay a £12 fee.
- 3 Workers sign up for one year to 18 months. At the end of this period have an enforced nine months leave in Ovamboland.
- 4 Workers are graded at recruitment (A, B, C) according to strength, or as 'piccanin' child, and wear a bracelet recording grade.
- 5 No choice of job. Once contracted, cannot change or leave job if dissatisfied with pay. This would be a criminal offence.
- 6 Accommodation and board given for single men in company compounds. Minimum cash wages £3-£4 a month.
- 7 Families stay at home in the reserve and try to support themselves by subsistence farming.

Meanwhile the strike had spread to the valuable copper mines at Tsumeb (3700 strikers) and Klein Aub (640). The tiny scab white force was unable to keep a single smelter going.

As the racists gained time, reverses took place. In Walvis Bay protests against a speech by a black clergyman imploring the men to go back led to the arrest of 14 militants. It seems, though information is sketchy, that by Christmas Eve most of the striking Ovambos had been shipped out via secret railway sidings to the North.

They went after the arrest of their leaders, and demoralisation and starvation

in the face of armed siege. SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation), believes that they are being kept in detention camps for screening in Ovamboland and are not being allowed back to their families.

They will never be allowed back into the urban areas again. The whites will attempt to solve their loss of a quarter of their labour force by recruiting labour

which has not been infected by rebellion.

But the stooge chiefs in Ovamboland must be shaking in their shoes with 10,000 unemployed and angry workers confined to their reserves. Many will no doubt swell the ranks of the SWAPO freedom fighters who have stepped up their efforts in Ovamboland itself, which could prove to be the weakest link in South Africa's racist system of domination.

Happy Xmas—Nixon style

by Ian Birchall

PRESIDENT NIXON's contribution to the Christmas spirit of peace was a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam.

In five days more than a thousand bombing raids were made, and new weapons, including a more vicious type of fragmentation bomb specially designed to damage people rather than property, were used. North Vietnamese sources claim that schools and hospitals were bombed, and that there were scores of civilian deaths.

Yet in military terms the bombing was not very successful. If the aim was, as alleged, to break the 'Ho Chi Minh trail', to prevent supplies being brought to South Vietnam, then it failed completely. The trail is reported to be more efficient than in previous years. It would have needed several weeks' bombing to put it out of action, and that was politically impossible.

Throughout Indochina the US and her allies are suffering setbacks. In Laos, Communist forces have recaptured the Plain of Jars, and in Cambodia Communist victories have led to demoralisation among the population and increasing discontent at the antics of the corrupt ruling class.

Yet the US is unable to make any serious response on the ground. The US troops in Vietnam are in a state of total demoralisation. They are riddled with drug addiction and protection rackets, and mutinies are frequent. Violence against officers is so widespread that in many units firearms and hand-grenades are removed from the troops at night.

This is why the US is trying to make the war more and more into an air war, where the forces can take advantage of their technological resources, especially electronic devices for spotting enemy forces. Ideally, with these, the war could be waged with land forces confined to Saigon or even Thailand.

It is also clear that the US will not be able to solve the Vietnam war simply by making an agreement with the Chinese. As a North Vietnamese daily paper commented on Nixon's proposed visit to China: 'Nixon's policy also consists in trying to achieve a compromise between the Big Powers in an attempt to force smaller countries bow to their arrangements.'

The resumption of bombing was denounced by Democratic senators, even by the New York Times and Washington Post. The US ruling class is deeply divided on the question of tactics to use to disentangle itself from the catastrophic situation in Vietnam.

It is more than ever important that the anti-war movement should be involved in ruling-class squabbles. It is more than ever important to stick to the demands for total immediate US withdrawal and unconditional support for the National Liberation Front.

Socialist Worker

For Workers Control and International Socialism, 6 Cottons Gdns, London E2 8DN

Violence condemned —by the men who unleash violence

OVER THE new year we have had yet another government condemnation of 'the use of force for political ends', this time from Home Secretary Maudling. As he was speaking the government's American allies launched a massive, brutal air offensive against North Vietnam. According to US Defence Department spokesmen more than 1000 attacks were made in the course of a week.

The attacks were launched because the North Vietnamese have recently been able to interfere, to some degree, with the regular large scale, indiscriminate area bombing of parts of Laos and Cambodia that the US Air Force mounts practically every day. The North Vietnamese managed to shoot down a couple of US aircraft over Laos. For this impertinence they have been severely punished.

Now any honest or even half honest man who was really concerned about political violence would be energetically condemning Nixon and the Pentagon. But not Maudling, not Heath — and not Wilson. The violence they talk about is that used by the IRA.

No protest

The sheer impudent hypocrisy of NATO-supporting Tory Ministers and front bench Labour Party spokesmen on this issue takes the breath away. More bombs were dropped on Vietnam between 1964 and 1968 than on the whole of Europe during the whole of the Second World War. Since that time the bombing of Laos and Cambodia has actually been intensified. Far more high explosive is dropped on these countries in one day's attacks by the US Air Force than has been used by Irishmen in the whole period since gunpowder was invented. Men, women and children are killed and mutilated wholesale.

There is not a murmur of protest from Heath or Wilson because they actively support this slaughter. They defend the US war against Indo-China. And not only Indo-China. As committed supporters of NATO they are involved in the use of force to maintain the status quo all over the world.

Heath's government is stepping up another nasty little colonial war in Arabia. Their puppet Sultan of Muscat and Oman could not last a month without British arms, British officers, British pilots and now British regular troops as well.

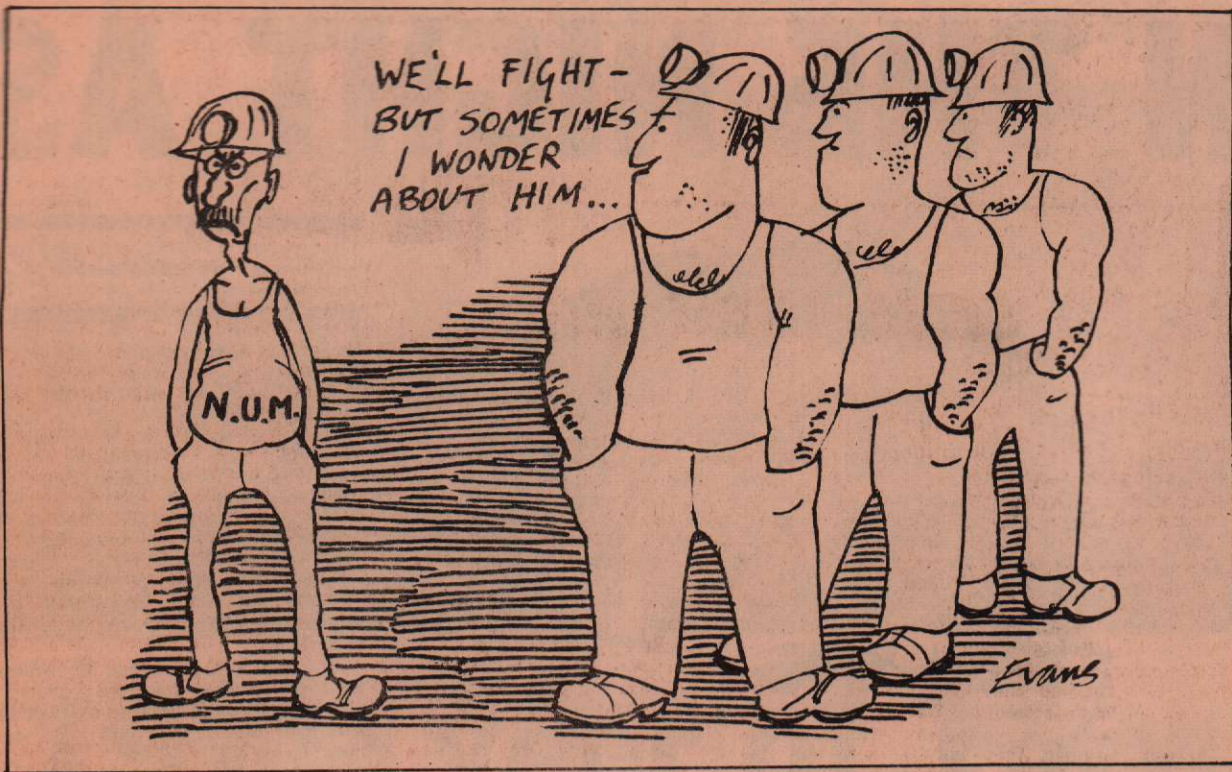
This little known war is a text book example of neo-colonialism. Way back in the fifties British forces intervened to impose the rule of the Sultan of Muscat upon Oman. The people of the territory happened to prefer the rule of the Imam of Oman. That gentleman, however, was a client of the King of Saudi Arabia and hence of the Aramco — the Arabian American Oil Company. He was not acceptable to Shell-BP and so he had to go.

Military intervention

Today the crumbling Sultanate is important to the British oil interests mainly as a base from which the quite artificial and unviable Trucial Sheikdoms can be supported. These were maintained by direct British intervention for more than a century. Now that is so provocative and expensive as to be counter-productive. Hence the current stepping up of British military intervention — 'the use of force for political ends' — in Muscat and Oman. What is at stake is not oil as such — there is plenty of oil to be bought: it is profits, the profits of Shell-BP.

There are people, not many but a few, who genuinely and wholeheartedly oppose the use of force for political ends. Unlike the Heaths, the Maudlings and the Wilsons they are entitled to the respect due to consistency. But they are fundamentally wrong. The mentality of peace at any price is a slave mentality. The man who condemns equally the violence used by a Hitler or a Nixon and their opponents is certainly also, no doubt against his will, an accomplice of the gangsters.

All political life — all social life — in class societies is based, in the last resort, on force. Armies and police forces are organised instruments of force. Whether or not the use of force is justified in any particular case depends on the political aims of those who use the force. We oppose the use of force for reactionary ends, for colonial wars, for the suppression of working class interests. We support the use of force, where necessary, for progressive ends. We are revolutionaries, not pacifists.



COTTONS WARS

Royal debagged

A BUSY CHRISTMAS for Prince Philip. After appearing on a BBC television programme on the need to save the world's wildlife, Phil the Greek hurried off to the Royal estate at Sandringham to slaughter a small portion of the said wildlife.

It was His Highness's annual pheasant shooting holiday, though the 1971 shoot was a trifle disappointing. In 1970 the Royal party disposed of a record 'bag' of 15,500 birds but thunderstorms last June killed 20,000 chicks on the estate and so cut down on the numbers for Phil and co to bang away at.

If he turns his attention to saving human life, head for the hills...

Vote altared

CAPITALISM works in a mysterious way, its horrors to perform. British workers on the RB 211 engine at Rolls-Royce may like to know that their jobs were saved last year by an American wedding.

E S Bishop, MP, writing in the December issue of Plant Engineer, says that when Rolls-Royce went bust, the future of the firm hung on the American government agreeing to bail out Lockheed, similarly bankrupt, who were making the TriStar that was due to be powered by the RB 211.

Bishop discussed the problem with an American Congressman shortly before the vital Congress debate. He was opposed to the government helping Lockheed. If the firm couldn't get funds from private sources, the government shouldn't help, he said.

Bishop says the Congressman was unimpressed by the threat to British jobs posed by the collapse of Lockheed.

In the ensuing debate, the decision to subsidise Lockheed was carried by a cliff-hanging 49-48 vote. When Bishop saw the Congressman again, he asked him how he had cast his vote. The American said he would have voted against if he'd been there, but he had had to attend a family wedding instead. If he had used his vote, it would have been a 49-49 tie and the motion would have fallen,



REID: praise from the top

with a catastrophic result for jobs in America and Britain.

Ironic that workers' jobs should be saved by such a derided institution as the middle-class family.

A RED SETTER named Amber jumped into the River Goyt at Marple in Cheshire and came out... white. The papermaking firm of J J Makin was fined £200 after admitting five charges of allowing polluted water into the river.

The dog didn't die. It just needs dying.

Ship mates

BY FAR the most fascinating analysis of the 'work-in' at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders has appeared in the management journal The Engineer. Two reporters say that while managements up and down the country may have doubts about the UCS experiment, managers at the yards 'have no doubts at all. They like it.'

Say the reporters, 'Communications between management and labour are better, morale is high and... when supplies allow it... productivity is up.'

It seems strange that in a situation claimed by the workers' leaders to be a desperate battle to save men's jobs, one manager, John Cowan, can say, 'There's not the same ruthlessness in yards as before; the hostility has disappeared.'

The report adds that 'managers and workforce are experiencing a brand-new community of interest and attitudes which shows up in the relaxed working atmosphere, the sharp improvement in discipline and the monolithic united front which UCS employees are presenting to the outside world.'

Cowan told the reporters that the managers had fully entered into the

spirit of the work-in tactic in which workers declared redundant carry on working on ships. 'If I was made redundant today, I'd still be in tomorrow as usual... the men would still take our orders and work with us.'

The report singles out for praise shop stewards' leader Jimmy Reid as the main motivator of the new worker-management set-up. He certainly wasn't lying when he described the 'work-in' as having nothing to do with workers' control.

LABOUR MP Alfred Morris has recently got through parliament a Bill designed to aid disabled people, including a provision for free parking for those who get a special orange permit from their local council. One local council is already attempting to scupper this small, humane step forward. It told a blind woman that she couldn't have an orange permit so her husband could park free because she wasn't the type of disabled person covered by the Bill. Just how disabled do you have to be?

KO at the PO

A LEEDS reader, anxious to get boned up on the Common Market, went to his local Post Office to get some of the so-called Fact Sheets on Europe—the thinly-disguised Tory propaganda churned out by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

'Sorry,' said the postmaster, 'they've been withdrawn.' 'But,' said our astonished reader, 'the government doesn't usually withdraw pamphlets.'

'Aye,' said the PO man, 'but what do this lot want them for now? They've got into the Common Market so they don't need to persuade anybody any more.'

As the Tories might say, let the facts speak for themselves—but not once the vote has been taken.

THE LABOUR PARTY has announced that it is setting up a party museum. We understand they are negotiating with Madame Tussaud's for space in the Chamber of Horrors.

More in sorrow

ON BBC2's Late Night Line Up last week television critics announced their awards for the best programmes of the year. Prize for the best documentary of the year went to Max Ophul's brilliant programme on the French occupation, The Sorrow and the Pity, banned from French television but shown twice on BBC2.

There was one dissenting voice. 'I very much object. It's a foreign programme. We should be promoting programmes made in Britain.'

Who was responsible for such nauseating chauvinism? None other than Mr Stewart Lane, telly critic of the Communist Party's Morning Star.



ARRESTS IN THE NIGHT AS

CRISIS SHAKES TITO

by CHRIS HARMAN



Tito: his secret police cannot solve the problems that are tearing the federal republic apart

YUGOSLAVIA has been going through a major political crisis for the last month. President Tito has spoken of the dangers of 'counter revolution'. In Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, one of the most important of the six republics that make up the federal state, more than 500 people have been arrested, many dragged from their beds in the early hours of the morning.

The leaders of the Croat government have been replaced. There have been repeated clashes between police and students in the streets. Only three weeks ago there was a 10-day long strike by 40,000 students.

The central Yugoslav government has been taking these actions in response to what it sees as the threat of increased national feeling among the various national groupings that make up the population. In the past these feelings were very intense, as in the Second World War when Croat fascists, the Ustache, murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs and Serbian fascists murdered large numbers of Croats and Muslims.

It was because it alone resisted these divisive and murderous attitudes that the present ruling group in Yugoslavia was able to come to power at the end of the war.

But now, after 25 years, the old nationalistic hatreds seem to be coming to the surface. And not only in Croatia. There are reports of similar unrest among the million people of Albanian origin who live in the southern republic of Kosovo.

To understand why this is the case, it is first necessary to have a clear idea about the real nature of Yugoslav society.

Tito's government claims that Yugoslavia is a 'socialist' state where 'workers' control' exists. Many people in the West accept this claim. But it is far from being true.

Real political and economic power in Yugoslavia lies in the hands of a small minority ruling class, just as much as in the West or in the 'orthodox communist' countries.

ARRESTED

At a 'congress of workers' self-managers' called last year the head of the trade unions was able to declare that 'Yugoslavia has one of the highest income differentials in Europe'.

Nor are those who benefit from this state of affairs tolerant of fundamental dissent. When left-wing Belgrade students began to criticise the government in 1969, their leaders were arrested and their paper, Student, banned.

And there is an extensive secret police network, always ready to strike, as the arrests in Zagreb show. In 1966, when the former police chief, Rankovic, fell from power, it was revealed that his men had files on one in four of the population, that is, on one member of each family. In Croatia alone the police had files on 1,300,000 people out of 4,228,000.

Meanwhile, for those at the bottom, life is tough. There is a permanent pool of unemployed of 400,000 or 10 per cent. And



another 800,000 workers have to go abroad chiefly to West Germany, to get jobs. In other words, one worker in three cannot get a job in his own country.

The aim of the ruling group in Yugoslavia is the same as that of private capitalists of the West and the state bureaucracies of Russia and Eastern Europe

—to force up production and to hold down wages in order to continually expand industry. The aim of the operation is not to improve workers' living standards but to enable the different rulers to compete with one another.

The appearance of 'workers' control' was introduced in the 1950s. At that time the scale of industrial development and the degree of its misorganisation was such as to vastly outstrip the country's resources and to threaten economic collapse.

Tito therefore introduced a whole number of reforms. In the countryside, collective farms were disbanded and peasants were allowed to produce freely for the market. Individual factories were allowed a greater degree of control over their own affairs and more independence from the central government in Belgrade. And 'workers' councils' were told they would be running the individual factories, in competition with one another.

But there was a big limitation on the powers of the councils. They had to pay most of the funds obtained by the enterprises to the government in the form of taxes or to the banks as interest.

In 1962, for example, it was calculated that the workers' councils disposed of only a mere 16 per cent of the total funds of the enterprises. Workers' control did not extend to the other 84 per cent. Today it is estimated that the central banks, in which there is not even the pretence of workers' control, control more than half of Yugoslavia's industrial assets.

With so little real power, it is not surprising that most workers cannot be bothered to waste their time worrying about the affairs of the councils.

The workers' councils are under very

strong external compulsion even when it comes to spending the small portion of funds over which they have control. If their firm cannot survive in business by producing goods more efficiently and cheaply than other firms then it will go out of business and they will lose their jobs joining the vast ranks of the unemployed.

So the funds in the hands of the councils need to be spent on continually expanding production, not on improving workers' miserable living standards.

It is not surprising that Yugoslavia has a higher proportion of its national income spent on investment (33 per cent in 1964) than in most other countries, and a lower proportion going to wages (39 per cent).

Again, competitive pressure means that workers' councils have every incentive in not using the expansion of industry to provide jobs for the unemployed. The Yugoslav economist, Todorovic, who supports the system, has written that 'workers find it in their interest that the working collective number as few as possible... because they must share the joint product...'

The situation is developing now in which the more successful enterprises are actually buying up the less successful ones, so that some workers seem to be exploiting others. All this creates continual divisions between the workers of one enterprise and those of another. Meanwhile the managers and the central bureaucrats walk off with the cake.

It is because such divisions exist that some of the workers have been ready to respond to the slogans of local nationalism.

Within Yugoslavia there are immense differences between the levels of development of the different parts of the country. While Macedonia, Montenegro and Herzegovina are very backward, Croatia and Slovenia have a fair amount of industrial development.

BEHIND

The republic from which the central government is run, Serbia, stands somewhere between the two extremes. The national income averages twice as much per head in Croatia and three times as much in Slovenia than in Macedonia, Bosnia and Montenegro.

The state takes a considerable portion of the wealth produced in the advanced areas and uses it, so the government claims, to help the backward ones. However given the organisation of industry in the interests of competition, not raising living standards, this in fact has done little to help backward areas — indeed, in some ways they are even more behind than they used to be. Life for the workers and peasants of the backward republics is increasingly miserable.

At the same time the Croat and Slovene workers themselves face miserable conditions. The majority of those forced

leave their families and go abroad to find work are from these areas.

It is easy for them to blame the workers of the other republics for 'stealing' their wealth and their job opportunities. They also claim that funds are not being used to help the backward regions, but rather to build up Serbia, where the central government resides (there is some evidence this has certainly been done).

All this is combined with a natural resentment against the people who run the central government — the police, the army, the central banks and so on — who tend to be Serbians.

However, it has not been the feelings of the Croat workers that have produced the recent crisis, but a growing trend towards national divisions within the ruling bureaucracy itself.

The managers and the government officials in Croatia feel that their power and prestige would be raised if that of the central government in Belgrade were weakened. They also know that their own particular, local economic difficulties would be eased a little if they were free to plough back into Croat industry all of their export earnings from trade with the West, instead of having to pass a large portion over to the central government.

So, for example, when the banking system was reorganised at the beginning of last year, there was a bitter fight for its assets between the governments of each republic and those bureaucrats continuing to run banks based in Belgrade. Each republic is beginning to favour its own industry and to see the other republics as foreigners.

BITTERNESS

The students in Zagreb have supported the local bureaucrats and gone further than them. The students think that if the local republican government has more power, then more of the plum jobs will go to Croat ex-students in Zagreb and fewer to Serbian ex-students in Belgrade.

In the pool of mutual bitterness that is being created, various powerful interests are fishing. Some Western big businessmen think that any weakening or even fragmentation can only make it easier for them to bring the area under their full economic control.

And the Russians also hope that the growth of Croat nationalism will weaken Yugoslavia and make Russian control over the rest of Eastern Europe easier. Indeed, the Kremlin has now gone so far as to give encouragement to the Croatian emigre fascists, the Ustache.

Tito and his hatchet men cannot solve the problems that are tearing the country apart. Police measures can only increase Croat bitterness. After all, it is Tito's regime that has failed to prevent mass unemployment and emigration. It is his regime that has failed to develop the backward regions.

On the other hand the nationalism that is developing can only lead the workers of the various republics into blind alleys. Croat nationalism blinds the Croat workers to the large and privileged Croat bureaucracy that lives off their backs. It prevents them from seeing that the 'red bourgeoisie', of which some of them speak, lives in Zagreb as well as Belgrade.

SMASHING

The only real way forward for the Yugoslav workers is to begin to see their common class interests, regardless of which of the republics they come from. Their interests are above all in smashing the present Titoist regime and its replacement by a system in which there is real workers' power, where workers' delegates control the whole of the country and its economy and are not restricted to a marginal influence on firms that compete with one another.

That would mean using the wealth not to build up industry for its own sake but to satisfy the needs of the mass of the people—to supply them with jobs, decent homes and a decent livelihood.

Meanwhile, Tito's regime is in crisis. The dream of establishing in one of the most backward regions of Europe a stable regime that can compete internationally is proving illusory.

The Yugoslav workers and peasants must become part of a revolutionary development on an international scale, using wealth at present being wasted in advanced countries to help backward areas like Montenegro or Kosovo.

Tito has always rejected such a position. He rejected it in 1945 when he supported Stalin's discouragement of revolution in France and Italy.

He rejected it in 1950 when he gave effective support to the US in Korea.

He rejected it in 1946 when he agreed to the putting down of the Hungarian revolution by Russian tanks.

Now, if his own regime cannot survive, he has only himself to blame.

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TUC LEADERS SURRENDERED IN FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-UNION LAWS



21 February: tough speeches but no action

1971: year of Tory

1971 WAS JUST 20 days old when the postal workers' strike began and right from the very beginning it was clear that the outcome of that dispute would be vital.

Ever since the Tories had taken power in 1970 they had demanded that wages should be forced down below the staggering increases in the cost of living. The postmen's strike gave them the best opportunity to publicly demonstrate their determination to do so and they grabbed it without a moment's hesitation.

Opposed by all of the government's resources, the postmen responded magnificently. They braved tremendous hardship and difficulties and fought for seven long weeks. But finally courage alone wasn't enough and, with their union exhausted and heavily in debt, the strike collapsed.

The defeat of the postal workers was a major triumph for the Tories and a serious blow to the living standards of millions of working people.

For in the months that followed, the memory of that defeat frightened the trade union leaders, demoralised sections of the working class and led to a sharp decline in the level of militancy and the size of wage increases.

So much so that by August Employment Minister Robert Carr was jubilantly boasting that the number of strikes had been almost halved in the first seven months of the year compared to the same period the year before and that those strikes that were still taking place were lasting considerably longer.

In such a situation wages inevitably suffered. The Central Statistical Office published some of the facts on 7 October. These showed that between January and June personal disposable incomes (that is, after tax, National Insurance and so on) rose by only 3 per cent while prices shot up by 4 per cent.

Fallen

But even this proven wage cut was not enough for big business. Flushed with success, the Financial Times greedily insisted on 11 November:

'Even though the going rate for wage settlements seems to have been brought down below 10 per cent, however, another round of claims is just getting under way and it is of crucial importance to ensure the average level of settlements is brought down still further, despite the fact that retail prices are nearly 10 per cent higher than they were a year ago.'

By the end of the year the average level of national pay settlements had been driven down to between 7 and 8 per cent and, in particular, the living standards of both public sector and lower paid workers had fallen.

The enormity of this fact was shown by a shock November report of the Industrial Relations Review which revealed that a £20 per week minimum wage existed in only six of the 124 negotiating groups they had studied and that at least one and a half million adult male workers were earning less than £20.

January 1971 also saw the continuing fight against the introduction of the Industrial Relations Bill. The details of the proposed anti-trade union laws had been published in October 1970.

The early months of last year were crucial to the fight against the Bill. Right from the very beginning, the purpose of the Bill had been clear.

It was a deliberate effort by the Tory government to strengthen the power of the employers by simultaneously reducing the effective functioning of rank and file trade unionism. The Bill's major proposals included:

1 The imposition of 60-days 'cooling off' periods and government-ordered secret ballots.

attack and union weakness

by ROGER ROSEWELL SW Industrial Correspondent

2 The outlawing of unofficial strikes, sympathy strikes, blacking and closed shops.

3 The introduction of a National Industrial Relations Court that could fine large trade unions up to £100,000 for every offence and jail those that wouldn't pay.

4 The establishing of a new Registrar who would be empowered to demand alterations in the democratically decided rule books of those trade unions that register with him.

The TUC decided to oppose these proposals and organised a giant demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 21 February. 250,000 workers marched through London on that day and their spirit was one of fighting confidence.

Potential

Many of those who came to London felt their strength, declared their solidarity with the postal and Ford strikers and realised they had the potential to smash the Tory laws once and for all.

But the success that was possible was not to be. The cause was identical to that which had allowed the Tory victory over the postmen and led to the wages rout. It was the role of the trade union leaders.

Despite the intensity of the Tory offensive and in part even because of it, the TUC bosses surrendered before every challenge. They refused to organise strikes against the Bill and consequently offered no serious resistance to its finally becoming an Act of Parliament on 5 August.

As a result of this more and more parts of the Act have since come into operation and from 28 February it will be fully working and ready to prosecute any worker who defies it.

The TUC special conference on 18 March rejected strike action and adopted an alternative policy of non-co-operation with the Bill once it became law.

But it didn't take long for the next wave of retreats to appear and by the end of the year some 25 unions had announced their intention to register, while both the General and Municipal Workers and the Electricians were openly debating whether or not to disobey the TUC and submit to the Tories.

It was in an attempt to prevent these anticipated sell-outs that the Paper Workers submitted a resolution to the September conference of the TUC demanding the immediate expulsion of any union that

registered or co-operated with the Act.

As was to be expected in an assembly where principles are jettisoned annually, it was overwhelmingly defeated by a combined vote of so-called right and left wing trade unions. But in an attempt to head off the Paper Workers' challenge, Congress decided to instruct unions not to register, instead of merely advising them not to.

The refusal to really fight the Industrial Relations Bill was connected with the trade union leaders' cowardice over wages and the government's efforts to cut them. The postmen's strike was defeated through lack of cash. They urgently needed money and although the trade union movement had the capacity to give it, the TUC deliberately refused to do so.

This was because they understood, as did the Tories, the significance of the dispute. While not wanting it to be utterly smashed, they nevertheless had mixed feelings about it being an obvious success. For they knew that if the postmen won, then millions of other workers would be encouraged to expect higher wages and would be prepared to fight for them.

The union leaders, despite their Trafalgar Square speeches, desperately wanted to avoid a showdown with the government and the postal workers suffered as a result.

Betray

This contradictory attitude also led Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon to personally intervene and betray the Ford strike. The union leaders refused to build a fighting alliance of public sector workers and negotiated cosy settlements while prices rose by 9.3 per cent during the year.

But this refusal to resist the government brought no concessions from Westminster. On the contrary, recognising their advantage, the Tories intensified their offensive by cutting social security benefit for strikers and deliberately increasing unemployment as yet further weapons in their campaign to boost profits at the expense of wages.

Throughout the whole of 1971 unemployment steadily rose and the November figures of 970,022 people out of work were the highest since 1939. The trade union leaders made their protests but even as they did so they went on with the very policies that were partly responsible for the longer dole queues.

This was best shown in their attitude towards the fight for shorter hours and

the continuation of productivity dealing. Not one hour was reduced from any working week and despite the fact that productivity deals cause unemployment, both left and right wing trade union leaders refused to ban them.

The fight against unemployment and sackings dominated the latter half of the year and on 30 July the UCS workers took a new step in resisting redundancy. They were followed by the occupation of Plesseys and the creation of a new mood of struggle.

But UCS gave only a glimpse of its possible potential. The shipyard workers' reliance on the trade union leaders and craving for respectability lost them the initial advantage they had so imaginatively captured.

For one group of workers, however, 1971 ended as it had begun. At Fine

Tubes in Plymouth the strike of 49 engineers for trade union recognition carried on throughout the year.

As the labour movement confronts the tasks of 1972, the inspiring example of these men stands in stark contrast to the timidity of the union leaders.

1972 will be a decisive year. The Tories are determined to pursue their anti-working class policies and will be further aided by the injustice of their Industrial Relations Act.

Only a real fight can defeat them and if our movement can equal the guts of Fine Tubes and unite around a fighting programme then 1972 need not be a year of defeat.

This month is already full of battles. The miners, engineers and power workers are all facing the government. We must not let them stand alone.



Postal workers were left to fight alone

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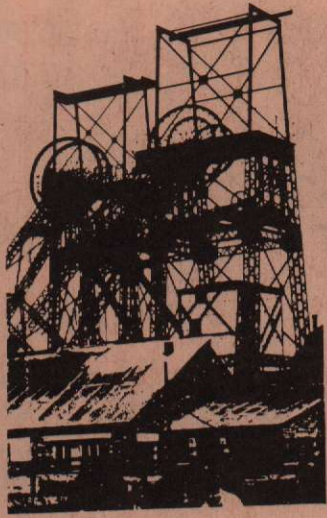
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ANGER IN THE PITS AS COAL BOSSES DENY A LIVING WAGE

What the union wants

88,000 men in the mines today (one third of the total workforce) earn less than £20 a week, before tax and deductions. They are officially classified as in 'dire poverty'.

The National Union of Mineworkers' claim is for £8 a week extra for surface workers, £9 for underground men and grades A and B in the national day wage structure. The claim also seeks a new power loading rate (for the men who dig the coal) of £35 for the whole country. This claim, if granted in full, would raise the miners to the average industrial wage.

The NCB is offering £1.90 to all grades of workers with the exception of the most lowly-paid surface men, who are being offered £2 a week. This offer, made just before Christmas, was made with the condition that the union put it out to ballot.

Three weeks' holiday was also claimed. The NCB said they would consider introducing the third week in November 1972 if the union would accept the wage deal.

BLED DRY BY MONEYLENDERS

	NCB profit or loss after payment of interest £m	NCB profit before payment of interest £m
1948	+ 2.5	+17.6
1949	+17.8	+31.2
1950	+11.5	+26.2
1951	+ 3.8	+18.5
1952	- 7.4	+ 7.5
1953	+ 5.6	+22.7
1954	- 1.9	+16.2
1955	-19.3	+ 2.0
1956	+17.8	+39.7
1957	- 5.3	+19.9
1958	-13.5	+19.1
1959	-24.0	+13.1
1960	-21.3	+20.2
1961	-13.8	+28.6
1962	+ 1.4	+45.4
1963	+19.6	+72.5
1964	+ 0.1	+42.8
1965	-24.8	+ 0.2
1966	+ 0.3	+28.5
1967	+ 0.4	+34.6
1968	- 8.9	+28.6
1969	-26.1	+ 8.8
1970	+ 0.5	+34.1

Productivity Dealing and the Miners' Next Step



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LAURIE FLYNN ON THE FIRST CRUCIAL PAY CLASH OF 1972

THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD has had considerable difficulty for some years in recruiting enough people to man Britain's highly-mechanised mining industry. Now at last, thanks to unemployment, they can get enough miners, men who will go down shafts into the bowels of the earth, clear the way for the cutting machines, service them, dig the coal, get the coal to the surface and organise its distribution.

The very people who are going down the pits now, to work on their knees or on their stomachs in a two-foot ten-inch high seam, often with water lapping round them and in very high temperatures, are the same people who a couple of years ago would have catcalled when the NCB recruitment films were shown in their local cinema. They would have laughed because they know that the talk of a secure future in the pits was a lie, a lie compounded by the lousy wages that accompany the worst conditions of any industry.

But miners who have been in the industry for some time are neither laughing nor crying at their plight. There is a strange, bitter mood abroad that takes each NCB or government remark about the necessity to keep wage increases down to 7 per cent and the board's 'shaky financial state' as a slander in addition to a lie.

Miners have seen their ranks cut by nearly two-thirds since 1956. Whole villages have left been to die and increasingly the people with them.

Those who are left have very nearly doubled their output in the same space of time.

CREAMED OFF

The rotting industry the coal owners left behind as they calculated their compensation and lived off it, has been mechanised on the miner's back and out of his pocket.

Every year since 1948, the industry has turned in an operating surplus, often quite gigantic before the government and the owners creamed off their cut. Once that had been taken, the NCB were only too glad to tell the men that there was nothing left in the kitty to pay a living wage.

For years they said it and for years the national union accepted they were being told the truth.

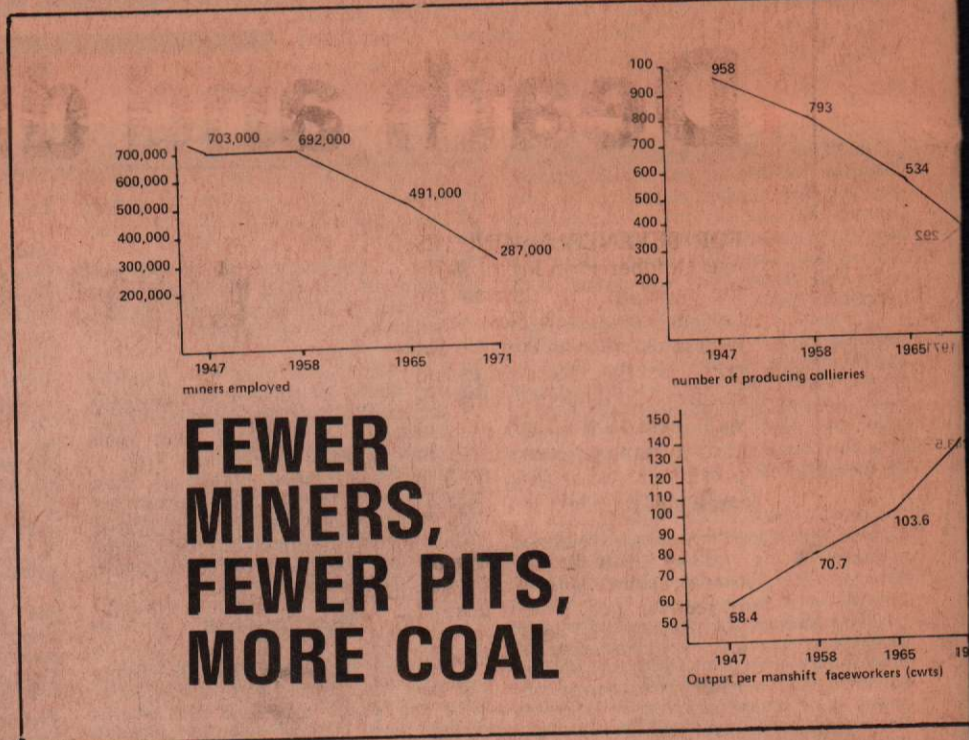
And for those same years the policy of the National Union of Mineworkers was to strive to maintain the size of the industry. The success of their leaders can perhaps be judged by a fall in the numbers employed in the mines from 700,000 to less than 300,000 in the years since nationalisation. There will be fewer yet if the NCB has its way.

SLIPPED

The union held back on wage increases in the 'national interest'. As a result miners have slipped from being the top-paid industrial workers in the 1950s to a position today where they are worse off than almost any other organised industrial worker. The union's policies guaranteed that both wages and workers declined.

The situation now is nigh on desperate. Since the National Coal Board was converted from piecework to a 'day wage' system, (mainly in order to fight off the gains the Doncaster miners were making by their local militancy) whole sections of the membership have suffered wage reductions.

While it is true that the piecework system was desirable only for the very best of the men, the fact is that



FEWER MINERS, FEWER PITS, MORE COAL

and caused untold deaths and injuries, the new dawn of the day rate has been bleak indeed.

The miserable wages paid in the areas where it was most difficult to mine coal (Scotland and Wales) have been pushed up to meet Yorkshire and Nottingham in a miserable 'parity'. Yorkshire has ended up paying for Scotland's gains, not the NCB.

As a result all miners are now robbed in more or less equal measure, one of the more notable achievements of 'nationalisation'.

Over the past three years, a new and bitter mood has been produced along with the coal. The men can see that they are being robbed and their wives can provide accurate figures about just how much.

They know that they have been cheated largely at the hands of their own union, by docile policies, supported by apathy and despair. They have been sacrificed on the altar of the national interest once already. Once is more than enough.

The very cornerstone of the present miners' wage claim is an attempt both to recoup some of the wage reductions experienced in the areas where it is 'easier' to dig coal thanks to the rock conditions, and to reduce the fantastic differentials that still exist among the many grades and trades in the mines.

Any abandonment of the claim's

terms would mean a splitting move to buy off some sections of the union at the expense of the advancement of all.

The present claim seeks some change in the situation of the many men who simply cannot do facework, and who when they come off it see their earnings plummet. At the same time as narrowing differentials, the last two NUM conferences have taken the decision that the NCB should pay, not higher paid miners forking out for the worse off.

REDUCE

But those on their executive who are locked into the system of negotiation and bartering have other conceptions of progress. Some of them are ever ready to do a deal and further reduce the numbers in the mines in return for another (but larger) self-financed wage increase through extra productivity concessions.

The new NUM president, Joe Gormley, has a vision of the future with half again fewer miners, but each on £60 a week. It seems that the NCB is unable to oblige. It just wants to go on with the situation where they can run down the labour force and keep on paying out miserable wages.

Even if the miners win their

whole claim this year, the last year that £5 a week man, they would have for the same again year.

Kent area of the last year that £5 a week just to get back to where in three years.

And the Coal Board have their own 'fair' move. If you're Wales or Scotland, mines you now live with a controlled rent a week including rate

But the NCB is massive subsidies to cover the cost of. These are reliably per week per hour

It is seeking to be decontrolled and to £3.85 per week away with it. And out of any increase.

Add on tax an increase in the cost past two years plus the miners have to. to even think of sta

And standing still the miners. For 15 been shrinking in harder, producing and earning less than comparable jobs.



MEN FOOT BILL FOR STATE TAKEOVER

WHEN THE MINES were nationalised after the last war, there was a feeling that the new day had dawned at last. The hated coalowners had been disposed of.

It mattered little in the mind of the mining communities that the coalowners had been lavishly compensated for 'their' industry which they had left in a shambles. It mattered little that their years of neglect, their debts, their worked-out collieries were handsomely paid for.

It was not clear who would pay the debt. It is clear now who has paid it: the miners.

It didn't take long for the men to discover that the NCB meant business as usual and perhaps even worse than usual at the point of production. But rising wages after the war atoned for that for a while.

Then the coal boom disappeared, and the NCB turned on the men. Its chairman at the time was a former NUM official.

The board was stocked out with trade union leaders. The labour force was decimated and those who remained were driven ever harder to produce more.

The whole nature of the mining industry was transformed from 2.4 per cent mechanised when the state took over to 92.2 per cent this year.

In the mid-1960s the NCB turned against piecework, the system it had inherited from the employers. It agreed a day wage structure and the union sold all its local forms of bargaining for the second promised land.

Though sweet in parts, the deal has turned as sour as socialists and militants warned

As the productive workers produced more in ever fewer numbers, so supervisory staffs swelled. Work discipline increased and less and less could be settled at the point of production. Everything was settled in central London, an area not famous for its collieries.

MASSIVE

And through all this time, the industry was turning in massive operating profits. Not once since 1948 has the industry been in the red before the owners were compensated, before the bankers were paid their slice for putting up the money to pay the owners

and install the machinery.

Often the operating profits are really massive—£7 million in 1963. But in this system of society it is only the money to pay the men who actually do the work which cannot be found.

The coal industry is compelled by law to borrow money from the five big merchant banks at very hefty rates of interest. These five made £125 million profits last year. A nice chunk of it came from the exertions of Britain's miners.

The National Union of Mineworkers estimates that £2000 million has been milked out of the industry and paid to the government to service the debts incurred to compensate the owners and pay the interest on the money borrowed to mechanise the industry.

REMARKABLE

It has been a marvellous gravy train for private industry, with big firms getting power rather cheaper than the old age pensioner with a slot machine.

When there was a coal shortage after the war, the NCB was compelled to import coal from abroad and sell it at 50 shillings per ton less than it paid for it. The total loss incurred in this subsidy to private industry was £74.1 million between nationalisation and 1959. And then of course that debt had to be serviced.

The NCB is a truly remarkable scheme for taking an industry out of the hands of the barons that ran it, reconstructing their rotting mines, paying them for those that were closed, and making the mineworker pick up the bill for the whole operation in lousy wages and 'higher productivity'.

PLANNING

In a shaky sort of way, the NUM recognises that this is a political problem. It has pamphlets about the lack of a national fuel policy.

Conference after conference passes resolutions about the need for a planned economy, for a social solution to a social problem.

In 1964, the NUM supported a Labour government and an incomes policy in the vain hope that Labour would do the job. What it did was run the mines down ever faster, giving generous financial assistance to push miners on to the rapidly growing dole queues.

The wages of those who remained in the industry declined still further.

Resolution after resolution is of no avail until miners go into their own communities and the labour movement as a whole and fight for a solution that would set society free from the death and disease, the robbery and the sadness that is the mining industry.

Death and disease stalk the coal fields

FOR SEVENTEEN MINUTES one October morning in 1970, the men on the way to the face in Yorkshire's New Stubbing mine were hanging on for grim death. The skip had suddenly upended, ready to spill them to the shaft bottom and to injury, even death in pursuit of less than £30 a week before tax and deductions.

They were saved, brought to the surface and went home to recover from a fairly normal incident in the coal industry. Next morning as they presented themselves for another shift, they asked the management to pay them for the shift they had lost as a result of the incident.

Shock

Management refused, and there was a week-long strike of the men involved in support of their demand. 8000 tons of the NCB's beloved production was lost to avoid paying the £90 the men demanded.

Any and every one of the men could quite legitimately have had weeks off from shock certified by a doctor as due to the upending of the cage. This would have given them the standby day wage.

They did not do this. Instead they asked the management to pay.

The only conceivable explanation for this situation is that the NCB at top level felt that if the men were paid that shift, it would be tantamount to an admission of liability for the incident and the miners might have a legal case.

When it comes to reckoning the real price of coal, it is these incidents which never make the Coal Board's annual report and accounts that tell the



true history of coal mining.

Since nationalisation, 6494 miners have been killed in industrial 'accidents'. During the most intensive period of mechanisation, in the mid 1960's, the accident rate soared 60 and 70 per cent above previous averages. Only this year is it back down to the 1950 figures.

Negligence

And last year alone 595 men died from the dust disease, pneumoconiosis, contracted in the coal mining industry. It is estimated that nearly one-tenth of the present 300,000 men left in the industry have a basis for a claim against the NCB for pneumoconiosis caught thanks to the NCB's negligence.

In fact so closely was the union integrated into the NCB machine at local and national level throughout the 1950's that

miners' health was traded in the vain hope that there would be less pit closures.

Last year an ex-miner called Pickles sued the Coal Board with the assistance of his new union, the AUEW. Outside the court an offer of £3275 from the NCB was bumped up to £7500 within 10 minutes. This was accepted and the appalling facts of the NCB's disregard for health and safety never reached the light of day. It was this case that unleashed a flood of smaller claims in the NUM.

Afterwards, Donald Boydell, NCB chief insurance officer, had this to say:

'It would be foolish to deny that we were surprised at the absence of claims since 1963 (when the Limitations Act made it easier for such actions to be taken) but why should we tell the union?'

Quite possibly some NCB accountant could put an accurate figure on how much the Coal Board has made by not worrying about dust, and not paying compensation. And in any case it is generally cheaper to pay up now and again than solve the problem. The NCB was in the enviable situation of doing neither.

And as the accident rates spiralled upwards, Lord Robens ranted ever more often about absenteeism. This comes to about a third of the days lost through injury and sickness.

But it costs money to prevent sickness and injury. Ranting about absenteeism is free.

Destroyed

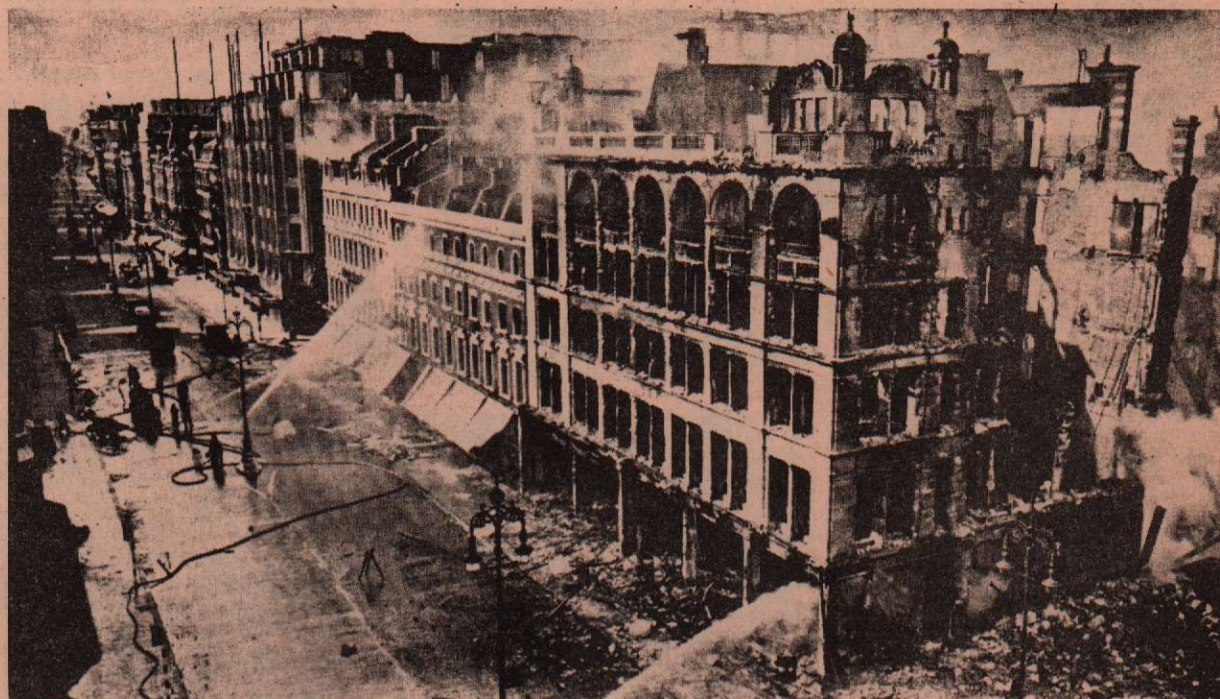
What is important is to keep the new machines going. It matters little that as they work faster more dust is poured out and more lungs destroyed.

There are methods to counter this situation. The NCB is 'experimenting' with them. But it is 'impracticable' to introduce them right away.

The price of coal can be reckoned in human lives. It is a high toll. And while it is true that fewer miners are killed than before, new and unseen dangers are arising which will continue to kill and to maim.

As the mineworkers of Virginia sang at the turn of the century, so too in Britain 1971: 'For mining royalties you too must pay. And when you pay, pay us.'

World War Two: why 'victory' spelt



The 'Blitz': London's Oxford Street devastated by bombs

defeat for workers in Britain...

IN THIS MODERN, well-managed and media-satiated society, very few books or programmes seem capable of provoking genuine, deep-felt anger. Picture after revolting picture of hundreds of deformed corpses somehow conspire to deaden our legitimate emotions.

It is therefore with great relief that I can wholeheartedly recommend Angus Calder's book *The People's War* (Panther 90p) as one that will almost certainly arouse the anger of any readers of this paper. Anger first of all at the amazing myths that have grown up about Britain during the Second World War but anger even more, if like me, you were ever deceived by these myths or part of them.

For the fact is that the Second World War is the most legend-infested event of British history. It is not yet far enough in the past for historians to be able to lay bare the facts in great detail, but it is sufficiently long ago for most people's memories to have dimmed and for a whole generation to have been brought up on the myths that have been generated around it.

How does the legend run? It starts in 1939 with the dastardly and ungentlemanly Herr Hitler unexpectedly invading Poland, thereby forcing the amazed British government to go to war in support of their brave ally. It goes on to speak of 'Britain's finest hour' when nothing but a handful of fearless airmen and the example of that demigod of all the English virtues, Winston Churchill, stood between certain Nazi occupation of Britain.

Grudging

This is the core of the myth because even for the legend-makers, history becomes well-nigh impossible to manipulate after this. It is grudgingly accepted that it was the Russians who broke the back of the Nazi armies, but it was really the 'Few' that turned the whole course of the war. But then... perfidy. To their undying shame in 1945, the British people rejected their great war-time hero and elected for their first peace-time Prime Minister the nonentity, Clem Attlee.

So runs the myth as taught in schools, colleges and in most books and programmes about the period. Angus Calder's excellent book gives the lie to this version of history in exhaustive detail.

The most crucial point probably concerns the start of the war itself. The nature of the war was determined here and it never changed in its six years' duration. The fact is of course that Hitler had given crystal-clear proof of his intentions in the years preceding 1939. The re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, the Spanish Civil War and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938 were merely the most obvious examples of his policies.

But each of these actions went unresisted in the West. Those despicable little rabbits who made up the English and French governments hoped and manoeuvred desperately that Hitler could be persuaded to march East against Russia. To facilitate this they did nothing to resist him. Indeed, Chamberlain asser-



Bevin and Attlee: from war-time coalition to power in 1945

ted that he had achieved 'peace for his lifetime'.

Thus, the Nazi invasion of Poland should have come as no surprise to anybody and in fact, it didn't even surprise large numbers of our 'rulers'. This group of people are best represented in the person of Winston Churchill, ageing and arrogant ruling-class militant, remembered notably for his monumental blunders at Gallipoli, in South Wales and during the General Strike. Nevertheless, he was capable of foreseeing the consequences of Nazi re-armament. His warnings went unheeded until May 1940 when the threat of national disaster forced even the sleepy troglodytes who constituted the House of Commons to oust Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

Churchill took over and the Labour Party joined a national coalition. Some kind of belated victory for sense, one might think, but Chamberlain was retained in the new cabinet along with four or five of his old pals. Such was the great change in leadership. Predictably the Labour Party concurred without protest.

The situation facing Churchill was desperate in many ways. The Allied armies had just received shattering defeats in Norway and worse was to follow at Dunkirk. Yet, a month earlier in April 1940 the Chief of the General Imperial Staff, General Ironside, had confidently stated, 'Our army has at last turned the corner... We're ready for anything the enemy may start.'

After Dunkirk then it was scarcely surprising that people began openly to talk of revolution. John Lehmann wrote of the Dunkirk survivors, 'A more effective army of revolutionary agitators, penetrating to the furthest villages couldn't have been imagined' and the public opinion survey Mass Observation reported that by November, 'In the last few months it has been hard to find, even among women, many who do not regard this war as in some way revolutionary or radical.'

In fact, there were now quite clearly two wars being fought. There was the war of Lady Oxford and her ilk, who wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* on the subject of war economies, 'Since most London houses are deserted there is little entertaining... in any case, most people have to part with their cooks and live in

hotels'. And then there was the war of the working people.

This was perhaps best illustrated by evacuation. In 1940 the infant mortality rate in Jarrow was 114 per 1000; in Surrey it was 41 per 1000. Evacuation suddenly gave bare statistics like this life. In March 1940 there were still one million people unemployed and evacuated children could write home to their parents, 'They call this spring, Mum and they have one down here every year' and 'The country is a funny place. They never tell you you can't have no more to eat and nobody sleeps under the beds.'

Little wonder that George Orwell thought that 'The war and the revolution are inseparable... either we turn this war into a revolutionary war or we lose it and much more besides. This is goodbye to the Tatler and the lady in the Rolls-Royces. There is no question of stopping short, striking a compromise, salvaging 'democracy', standing still. Laissez-faire capitalism is dead.'

Profiteering

This is the background against which we must consider the legend of the Few who saved Britain from the Nazis. Certainly the pilots in the Battle of Britain were both gallant and hard-working. But so were the factory workers who built their planes and worked shifts of 36 and sometimes 48 hours. This 'productivity' was spurred on by one of Churchill's long-time friends, Lord Beaverbrook.

As Minister of Production, one of this megalomaniac's brighter ideas was to produce a bomber which normally took two months in just 48 hours. The bomber was produced at the cost of disrupting the factory's whole production for months. The plane took off and when the bomb-hatch was opened over Germany, two members of the night-shift fell out.

At the same time, profiteering was rampant. Whilst the East End was being savagely blitzed, night clubs and posh hotels continued to do a brisk business. This led to grisly scenes at times. When the fashionable Cafe de Paris was bombed, gold rings were looted off the fingers of the dead and wounded.

The provision of air-raid shelters was another example of class preference. Some areas provided animal's shelters—

not in the East End, where up to 16,000 people huddled together in filth and cold under the Tilbury railway arches at Stepney. The favourite individual shelter was the Anderson shelter designed to be erected in a garden. Unfortunately, only one-quarter of Britain's houses had gardens. The result predictably was chaos and terror.

Crowds virtually broke down the gates into tube stations and eventually upwards of 177,000 people used the tube as a shelter. Some families never even surfaced for air and the queues began as early as six in the morning to get places in the tube. Others were not as lucky and many thousands camped out in Epping Forest, and a high percentage of Glasgow's working population was forced to similar solutions.

Stirring

Predictably, morale sank very low. A favourite comment was 'No wonder the Germans aren't bothered—they've got shelters over there.' But through all of this, the starving, the homeless and the fatherless were offered the comfort of Churchill's stirring speeches. As Nye Bevan said, 'If speeches could win wars, the war would have been won long ago.'

But they couldn't and particularly the kind such as that of November 1942 in which Churchill said, 'You mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire'. He firmly resisted any mention of specific war aims and tigershly resisted American efforts to launch a Second Front to relieve the battered Russian armies.

Neither was he in much touch with what he liked to call 'his' people. As his wife told his doctor, 'You probably don't realise that he knows nothing of the life of ordinary people. He has never been in a bus and only once on the Underground.'

But when anyone was critical he moved like lightning. J B Priestley's talks were estimated to have been listened to by over 30 per cent of the population, but he was removed from the BBC because he was being too 'political'. Churchill was fighting to preserve old England as he knew it. The working masses were fighting for a new Britain and between the two there could be no compromise.

Lukewarm

An idea of the spirit can be gained from this quotation from Bermondsey heavy rescue workers asked to nominate some of their number for medals: 'Medals? We don't want no bloody medals. The whole borough deserves a bleedin' medal'. This was not the language that Churchill could even begin to fathom.

And this remained the picture throughout the war. As it became more and more obvious that the Allies would win the war, more and more thought began to be given to the future reconstruction of society. The Beveridge Report on the re-organisation of the social services was enthusiastically welcomed and five out of six people called for its speedy implementation. The Tories welcomed it lukewarmly and then attacked it when it eventually became

legislation in 1948.

By-election after by-election showed the people's feelings. Churchill asked one of his army commanders casually whether he might count on the votes of his men in a general election. 'No sir' came the reply, '80 per cent of them will vote Labour'. Churchill much displeased said, 'Well at least that will give me 20 per cent'. 'No sir', came the doleful reply, 'the other 20 per cent won't vote at all'.

Yet the Labour Party only reluctantly accepted a general election and there were many, including the Communist Party, who called for a continuation of the coalition after the war. In the event, Labour was brought to power in a smashing victory, a decisive rejection of all that Churchill and his ilk stood for. Yet, as Mark Abrams later wrote, 'From an examination of the campaign literature it was difficult to discover any basic conflicts separating Labour from the Conservatives'.

Gallup discovered that a majority of people wanted Labour to introduce nationalisation and sweeping changes instead of just 'governing along existing lines more efficiently'. The people's hopes were to be wretchedly and dismally disappointed.

It is a sad, indeed a tragic tale. A whole people genuinely accepted the war as a war against fascism and for a new society. Landed with an inter-imperialist war by the abject cowardice and folly of their 'leaders', the masses transformed the war into a 'People's War'. Never again were they going to be fooled. But tragically, damnably tragically, what Herbert Read had written of his World War One experiences remained true in 1945. He called his poem 'To a Conscript of 1940':

'But the old world was restored and we returned
To the dreary field and workshop, and
the immemorial feud
Of rich and poor. Our victory was our defeat'.

How many more sick-joke victories does the working class need before once and for all we make victory and defeat meaningless concepts?

Martin Tomkinson

ASSEMBLY TO ASSEMBLY

compulsory prayers
for a young lad at school
theres a class that works
and one
that does rule
they supervise you
praise the lord
later they supervise you at ford
from religious assembly
to assembly lines
you eat dirt
whilst they drink wines
for religion never has you
faltering
in the belief
that you not they need altering
D R Brown

Union panic sinks R-R workers

BRISTOL:—7000 Rolls-Royce workers voted to end their nine weeks' old strike last week. They had shown tremendous fighting spirit throughout the whole dispute, despite their lack of militant traditions and a continual press campaign against them.

But fighting spirit alone did not stop them from finally being sold out.

SW Reporter

The strike began after the management had rejected a £5 a week cost of living claim and had offered instead £1.50, with the strict condition that 50p of this should be taken off any national increase negotiated in the engineering industry. The strike ended with virtually the same offer being accepted.

Ever since Rolls-Royce was taken over by the government last spring its new board has ruthlessly attacked trade unionism.

They have announced huge redundancies. In Coventry they tried to sack militant local leaders of the draughtsmen's union. They also played a crucial role in the recent toolroom dispute by locking out more than 1200 men. Throughout the country, Rolls-Royce managers have been instructed to fight the unions. Bristol

proved no exception to this.

The management first provoked the strike and then refused to settle it, except on the basis of a trade union surrender. The trade union officials panicked in the face of such clear determination. Although they had declared the strike official and paid dispute benefit, they nevertheless devoted all their energies to trying to end it, regardless of the terms.

Bill John, the right-wing engineering union executive member for South Wales,

spoke at the mass meeting where the return to work was accepted. He said that although there were to be further discussions on the question of offsetting the 50p against the national agreement, no one would lose a single penny.

But when the local evening paper asked the management whether or not they had agreed to drop this condition, the answer was a categorical 'no'. It was on the basis of this sort of deception that the return to work was achieved.

The management had two special reasons for wanting to defeat the strike.

First, the Rolls-Royce workers are the highest paid in Bristol and any increase won by them would inevitably influence other workers to demand the same. The government appointed board of Rolls-Royce were clearly under orders to prevent any such example.

Second, the Bristol management want to introduce productivity bargaining. This will mean, as one of the engineering union convenors Ray Bromley told me, 'a large reduction in the workforce, especially in Development, where the prospect of a productivity deal could force redundancies.'

Bristol is already suffering from high unemployment. A productivity deal at Rolls-Royce will only make it worse.

Despite this defeat the Rolls workers must carry on the fight. An important part of this is the building of an effective combine committee that can organise national action against the company and the Tory government which stands behind it and pulls the strings.

UCS DEMAND PLEDGE ON JOBS BEFORE LAUNCH

SW Reporter

GLASGOW:— Workers at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders have declared that the ship due to be launched on 20 January will not be allowed to leave the yard unless progress has been made towards guaranteeing the jobs of the workforce and keeping all the four shipyards open.

The shop stewards' committee has announced this plan publicly in an attempt to force government activity over the protracted negotiations that are still taking place. Clyde tugmen, members of the Transport Workers Union, have already declared that they will refuse to handle the newly-launched ships if UCS stewards give the lead.

But so far the UCS stewards have made the mistake of allowing the struggle to be drawn out and enthusiasm for it to subside.

Unemployment in Glasgow (10.7 per cent) is now even higher than in Northern Ireland (10.2 per cent) and the need for a campaign against unemployment is obvious.

The UCS stewards have failed to link their struggle to the broader question. This is explained by their anxiety to not antagonise the official leaders of the labour movement.

From being a struggle that was seen as a fight on the overall question of redundancy and unemployment, it has been reduced to a series of considerations over which the employers and the stewards can cooperate. Shop stewards' spokesman Jimmy Reid has even gone so far as to say, at a mass meeting at John Brown's yards, that it would be necessary to accept a wage freeze for 18 months to two years 'to get our industry back on its feet'.

Logic

Both he and Jimmy Airlie have spoken of 'harnessing the skills and, in some cases the genius, of the workers' for building ships for the company the Tories have established, Govan Shipbuilders.

Such statements are not temporary brainstorms. They flow logically from the stewards' policy of avoiding real confrontation and from their 'hang on and something may turn up' strategy. But this has forced them to accept the Tories definition of what is 'reasonable' and to make concessions to potential employers.

In fact the workforce has not been kept intact. There are now 7100 workers compared to 8500 last June.

It has become so obvious to everyone that the government has been spinning out negotiations and 'feasibility studies' that the stewards have been forced to threaten some kind of action.

Even at this late stage, and even after all the opportunities that have been missed, it is still possible that a really militant programme at UCS could become the focal point of a massive working-class fight against the ever-increasing toll of sackings



Loving up to labour leaders means watering down militancy: (l to r) McGarvey, Scanlon, Airlie, Benn and Reid on a UCS march

Tories plan new attack on students and teachers

SW Education Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT'S Department of Education and Science is planning further attacks on conditions of teachers and students. It is trying to increase the numbers of students per teacher in polytechnics and other colleges running degree and Higher National Diploma courses.

This is the meaning of recent proposals from the Pooling Committee, made up of representatives of local education authorities. At present the staff-student ration in a typical London polytechnic is 1:6. The new proposals will increase this to about 1:8 for engineering subjects and 1:10 for humanities subjects.

And ratios will be made even worse in the case of day students doing sandwich courses. In future such students are to be counted as requiring only two-thirds of the attention of a full-time student.

The result of these proposals is bound to be a deterioration in teaching standards. Small group tutorial periods will be replaced by mass lectures, and what little time there is for staff to keep up with new developments in their fields will be curtailed.

The plans are expected to come into effect in September, and it is vital that a campaign against them gets off the ground. The DES is trying to prevent protest by refusing to disclose details of the measures to the lecturers' union, the ATTL.

The response of the union executive has been far from satisfactory. It has not informed its members of this serious threat to their working conditions. But this issue is even more important than the question of salaries.

Salaries are re-negotiated every year but if this measure comes into effect it will be permanent. It is possible that the union will try to accept the policy by the back door by trading acceptance of it for a salary rise. Any such approach must be opposed.

The lack of publicity given to the proposals has meant that opposition to them so far has been limited. But the Inner London division of the union has called upon the executive to publicise the proposals and to prepare for action against them. In other areas the fight must begin to force the executive at the annual conference in May to stand firm.

Shedding light on anti-union corporation

WOLVERHAMPTON:—Men working in the street lighting department of the local corporation are mounting a campaign against a refusal to recognise their union, the Electricians'.

The men were formerly employed by the Midland Electricity Board, which was under contract to do street lighting maintenance for the council. But when the contract ended, the men were taken on by the corporation to do the same work.

The changeover meant a £12 cut in pay, substantial loss of holidays and an end of sick pay and superannuation schemes. In addition, 12 men now had to do the work previously done by 20.

The corporation is refusing to recognise the men's union because it thinks it can get more work from fewer men at cheaper rates. But the men, backed by the local ETU branch, are determined to stop this happening.

They are calling upon the local trades council, Wolverhampton Labour Party and local union branches to back them in their struggle for a decent wage at the corporation.

Electricians demand united action on pay claim

by Ron Brown

RANK AND FILE representatives of workers employed by the South of Scotland Electricity Board in Edinburgh have set up a committee to coordinate their activities. The committee, which includes shop stewards and works committee members, as well as branch officers, called for full support for the men's current claim — for £35 a week, for the 35 hour week and for an extra week's holiday.

It also demands that the full united strength of the power workers' unions should be used to push this claim and that any settlement be ratified by the rank and file.

It calls for a 'united struggle combined with engineering workers, mine workers and other sections of workers who are at present challenging the oppressive policies of the employers and the government.'

This call for a power worker/engineer/miner alliance is seen by the committee as an answer to the retreats of the union leaders. Only rank and file organisation can prevent a repetition of the situation last year when the union leaders sold out the whole working class, not just the power workers, by accepting the Wilberforce inquiry's recommendations for attacks on conditions and jobs.

POWER MEN BACK MINERS

ADVANCE, the militant rank and file power workers' paper, is publishing a national leaflet that argues the mine workers' case to workers in the electrical supply industry. It points out that the government must not be allowed to isolate the mine workers as it did the power workers a year ago. Copies are available from Advance, 68 Fountains Road, Stratford, Lancs.

IS STUDENT CONFERENCE

Saturday 15 January—10 a.m.

Lecture Theatre, Union Building,
Aston University Guild, Gosta Green,
Aston Street, Birmingham 4.

Delegates needing accommodation phone 021-422 0502

Dockers meet

SHOP STEWARDS from docks throughout Britain are meeting this Saturday the response to attempts by the employers to place men on the unattached register. If the employers are successful, a large number of dockers will find themselves in a no-mans-land between regular work and redundancy, forced to subsist on a mere £20 a week. Full report next week.



I would like more information about the International Socialists

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Socialist Worker

Welshmen stage round-the-clock sit-in 120 WORKERS OCCUPY PLANT

IN A BID TO SAVE JOBS

by Steve Emms

WORKERS at the Allis Chalmers works at Mold, North Wales, took over their factory on Monday. They are now occupying it 24 hours a day in an attempt to prevent its planned closure on 28 January.

Most of the management have left the factory and the company flag is being flown at half mast. Allis Chalmers is one of the largest American combines, producing farming and earth moving machinery. Many times since it took over the Mold farming machinery, 10 years ago the men have been promised that 'You won't ever go without jobs'.

But in the last 12 months the workforce has been reduced from 230, and now the remaining 120 have had notice to quit. Unemployment in the area is already high and redundancies are rising. Only 30 per cent of those sacked in the last 12 months have succeeded in getting another job.

Latest figures for the company show an average profit of £1220 per worker. And of the £937,000 trading profit almost one third went to the American parent company for 'interest charges'.

As Hugh Hughes, the AUEW convenor told me, 'If we had come out on strike and the management had locked the gates, then we would be out for good. That is the reason for the sit-in.'

PERSUADE

Allis Chalmers has sold the manufacturing rights to Bandfords, another farm machinery producer in Uttroxteter, who plan to move the machines at the end of the month. Until the sit-in, work was continuing on a sub-contracting basis.

At present the workers hope that the sit-in will persuade Bandfords to keep the factory open. The local AUEW district official is pressing for official recognition for the sit-in and attempts are being made to contact unions in the USA.

While I was talking to the pickets on the gate on Tuesday morning a telegram arrived reading 'Congratulations on your stand. Plessey occupation workers, Scotland.'

The Mold workers have joined the growing number of workers who are refusing any longer to accept redundancy. They are beginning to see that while the bosses and the government make pious statements about the evil of unemployment, more sackings are prepared and more lives shattered. Only determined and militant action can smash such measures and those who put them into effect.

Messages of support to Hugh Hughes, AUEW Office, 17 Ash Grove, Shotton, Deeside.

Backing for Parson's jobs fight

NEWCASTLE: Workers waging a militant campaign against redundancy at C A Parson's giant engineering works have received backing from the Tyne and Blyth district committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering unions.

Parson's want to sack 650 staff and 300 hourly-paid workers and has met with a united campaign to introduce four-day working to stop any redundancies. The co-ordinating committee of staff and shop floor unions has refused to discuss the firm's 'trading position' with management until redundancy notices are withdrawn.

Six weeks' parity fight on Tyneside

by Jim Hutchinson

THREE HUNDRED insulation workers on Tyneside have been on strike for six weeks in support of a demand for parity with Scottish workers who do the same work but get 16½p an hour more.

Although even the bosses organisation the Northern Area Thermal Insulation Contractors Association, admitted that the men have a case, they have been forced into a long battle without the support of their union, the General and Municipal.

While the bureaucrats who run that union sit in their plush offices, their members still work under extremely hazardous conditions. The Ministry of Health and Social Security lists their occupation as liable to health risks from the killer diseases pneumoconiosis, silicosis and asbestosis. Life expectancy for the workers is reckoned to be only between 48 and 54 years.

On 8 December determined action by the men stopped work at the Langannet power station in Kincardine in retaliation for the use of scab labour at the Blyth power station in Northumberland. So anxious was the electricity board to break the strike that it had meals brought in for the scabs and made them sleep on the site. But local shop stewards have since sent the scabs packing.

The strike committee has been disappointed at lack of support from Hartlepool's insulation workers, but they hope that workers in the London and Birmingham areas in particular, who may not yet be aware of the fight that is going on, will give them backing.

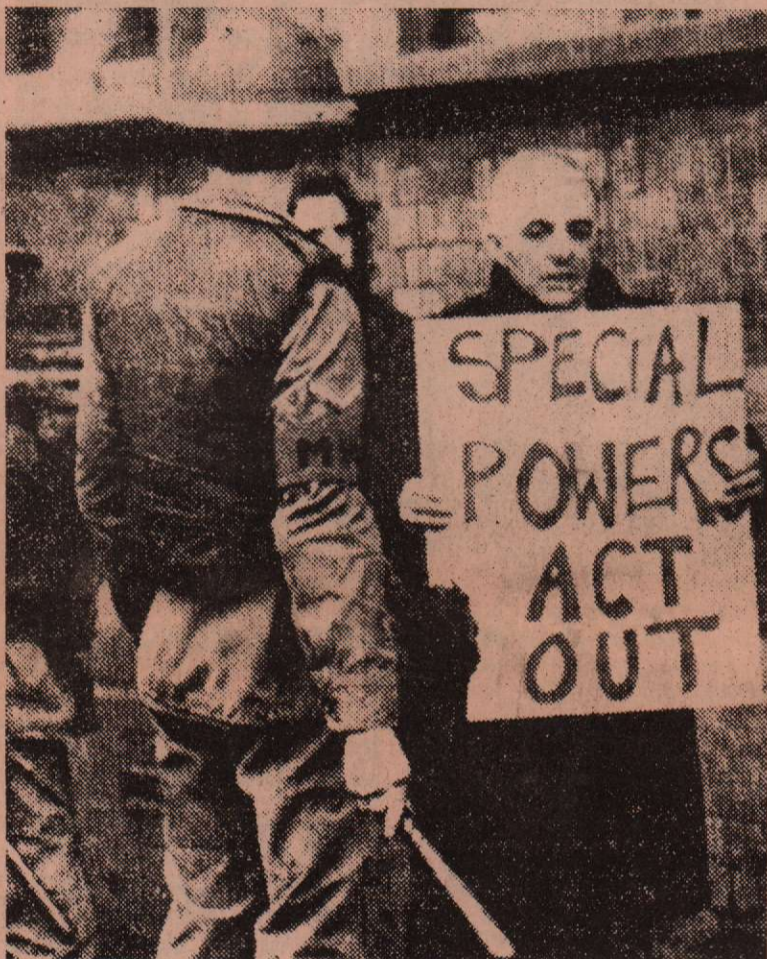
The committee welcomes support from all sections of the trade union movement. Donations to: D Southern, 1 Roman Avenue, Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne 6.

Building militants on frame-up charges

THE FEDERATION STEWARD and three other workers on the Gascoigne Road housing scheme for the London borough of Barking have been sacked following frame-up charges of industrial misconduct.

This follows an intensive campaign against the use of the self-employed (lump) labour system on the Carlton site. Carlton is a subsidiary of the giant Trafalgar House Investments organisation.

Management has pursued a stop-at-nothing policy to get rid of trade unionists with organising ability on the site. They have gone to fantastic lengths to provide a basis for the dismissals by downright lies and phoney accusations.



Marcher and soldier confrontation on Sunday's march

Pressmen's leaders break union policy on local deals

SW Reporter

DESPITE unprecedented unity in the ranks of provincial journalists for strike action and support from the other print unions, the executive of the National Union of Journalists is now holding a ballot of the membership on the latest wage offer from the Newspaper Society, the provincial press barons' organisation.

The terms of the new offer are in

fact worse than the first offer which was overwhelmingly rejected, with the union agreeing to strike in support of the full £7 a week claim.

But the employers have come up with a revised offer which proposes 25p-35p a week more this year than the first. In return journalists are being asked to sign away their rights to negotiate house agreements.

House agreements are local level deals which militant journalists have fought for to supplement whatever scant concessions were gained at national level.

These have not only brought about significantly higher wages and better conditions but have led to a much greater involvement of the union membership.

In defiance of a conference decision, the leaders of the union have decided to ballot an offer which will trade the right of the grass roots to determine their wages and conditions in return for a measly increase in the cash offer.

The new agreement is due to last for two years. Since it only envisages 20 per cent cash increases over this period, it is in effect a wage reduction because of the impact of taxation and the rising cost of living on any wage award.

Feeling is running high against this betrayal and for the first time journalists are organising on a national scale at rank and file level to have the offer rejected in the ballot and for strike action.

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Empty talk from soft left in N. Ireland

by Eamonn McCann

'IF FITT OR HUME or anybody else does sit down and talk with the British government before the last internee is released from Long Kesh we will campaign across Northern Ireland to expose them and call on the people to reject them,' Independent MPs Bernadette Devlin and Frank McManus told a Christmas Day rally outside Belfast.

This warning was very much in the minds of the reformist leaders who spoke at another demonstration in Falls Park, Belfast, on Sunday. 7000 people had turned up, as much to warn the Civil Rights Association and the moderates of the Social Democratic and Labour Party against any sell-out as to support the bogus Civil Rights demand of a 'Bill of Rights.'

Such a measure would merely reform British rule in Northern Ireland, without in any way ending the system that condemns hundreds of thousands of workers, Catholic and Protestant, to unemployment, low wages and miserable housing conditions.

But as Gerry Fitt of the SDLP and Reginald Maudling of the Westminster Tory government study the political map together to find a way round the 'road block' to investment, the mass of people are making it clear that they will not stop this side of a conclusive victory over British imperialism

Illusion

Many of the younger activists are turning towards the Civil Resistance Campaign, organised by a committee including members of Peoples Democracy and the Provisional IRA because of the Civil Rights Association's blind insistence that 'all we are looking for are the same rights as enjoyed by the people of Birmingham'—as if Birmingham was some sort of social paradise.

Whatever criticisms we make of the Provisionals, it is clear that they have realised—as every teenager in the Ardoyne has realised—that Northern Ireland cannot operate democratically and that to demand 'democratisation' is to choose to believe in an illusion. If the Communist Party and the Official Republicans, who jointly dominate the CRA, continue along this course they will succeed only in embittering the people who follow them.

Across the border the clash between the Irish security forces and supporters of the Provisionals in Ballyshannon is a harbinger of things to come. In 1972 the repercussions of the Northern crisis will shake the Southern regime to its foundations.

The urgent task for republicans and revolutionary socialists must be to see to it that, North and South, the struggle is stiffened with socialist politics and that this time the people are not led to defeat.

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The Conference will be held in Manchester on Sunday 30 January.