As Jones cowers in the Tory court

DOCKERS TAKE ON THE LAW

CONTAINERS - see feature pp. 6 & 7

RAIL BALLOT - back page

In pretty fair that!' If stewards encouraged strike breaking during a national dock strike.
Mr. Gibson's silver tongue had a ready reply. He explained that that was true because the stewards would be going against a majority decision - they would be striking.
In this case, it was the stewards who represented the majority, and the Union constituted the dissenting minority.

Well, there you are; they stand condemned out of their own mouths!

THE LAW

What started as just a dockers' dispute is at the same time a battle for the whole of the working class.
The issue of stuffing and stripping containers has snowballed from a fight for the right to work to the right for the right to black, in fact, the right to engage in any industrial action at all.
That is the lesson of the 1970s: every fight fought to the finish takes on the law - the holy writ of the bosses' state.

The situation of British capitalism leaves little leeway for compromises. A struggle once started must be fought to the finish. In the present situation every retreat can become a rout and every defeat a death-knell... this goes for the working class as well as the ruling class.

The dockers back down, as Jones instructed, part-sold out to bits. But if the NIRC is successfully defied the whole of the Tories' union-bashing programme is torn to shreds it's a time for all or nothing.

Trade Union leaders like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon earned their reputation as 'left-wingers' at a time when working class struggles could be accommodated by an expanding capitalism. But today as the class struggle sharpens, the wide ground which these leaders occupy must fall to one army or another.

Either these men obey the dictates of their members, who understand the need to smash the Tories and all their works - particularly the Industrial Relations Act. Or they obey the dictates of the needs of the ruling class.

The NIRC has made its decision clear. And it was the wrong decision. He now stands against the mass of dockers and the Union rank and file, against those who are prepared to fight for the benefit of the working class.

Now there is no one left to believe that he is just putting on a show for the NIRC.

NATIONAL STRIKE

Leaders who have gone soft on the NIRC cannot be expected to lead a hard fight on containerisation either.

Dockers will need to be on their guard.

The NIRC are hoping to hang on until June 2nd, when the national dock strike is due to start, on the demands for the right to stuff and strip containers, for a fall-back pay equal to average earnings, and for a fourth week's holiday.

It's about time such an all-out fight was waged. But it could be that the leadership hope that by appearing all sound-and-fury on the day, they can recoup some of their 'credibility' with the dockers.

This could be the first stage in a plan to sabotage the blocking campaign by trying to substitute a legal compromise for the fight that has ridiculed the whole Tory Industrial Relations Act.

Dockers cannot afford to let the back-pedalling official 'leadership' use the national strike to regain the initiative.

Whatever happens on June 2nd and after, the blocking must continue.
AGAINST U.S. IMPERIALISM

The Soviet Union's sudden reaction to Nixon's latest crimes in Vietnam casts the long shadow of cyclical betrayal over the heroic struggles of the liberation forces. Instead of a fraught denunciation and bellicose rhetoric, however, Moscow reported with retaliation that would force Nixon to pull back. The Russian bureaucracy has decided not to say or do any-thing that would upset Nixon's clients. The buildup translates into rising detente in Moscow.

Indeed the mining has given the Russian leaders less concern than they would have expected from the visit of Nixon. At the time of this writing, Moscow had not been reported as ever having discussed the topic of Vietnam with the U.S. premier. The Russian radio was at that time very indig- nant about the Chinese playng host to the anti-representative of imper- ialist murder. Now, with the waters mixed, and the Chinese and others talking "even" the destruction of one Russ- ian ship - the Ultimate - silent. It shows how. this square with the Russian arms suppliers to Nepal is supplied. The contradiction be- tween these supplies and the Rus- sian desire to stay the hand of the Vietnamese just as they could deal the death-blow to U.S. aggres- sion, is to our immense advantage.

Thus in the battle for allies. Russia is trying to balance its interest in Vietnam (mainly in order to prevent it from a Chinese threat to the Pasch- anding arms; and keeping on speaking terms with Nixon. Now we are seeing that the Russians' desire to keep their imperialist position is even stronger than their desire to keep the Chinese from going to Nepal.

This also accounts for the more vituperative denunciations of US polity by the Chinese - with the same time they are reported to be busy constructing Russian arms supplies sent overland. The Chinese game will not surprise those who remembers that the Russians renoun- clan. But in China is already. In Ceylon and Bangladeshi.

How this contrasts with the courage and boldness of the liberation army's troops in the field, as they close in on Ho - whose fall still has not been announced. Phu. After firing a huge arms dump at Pleiku they lightly swept their gimp on the Central Highlands. Saigon. The South Vietnamese they have left to the Saigon road. It all adds up to Nixon's bloc- kade having relatively little immed- iate effect on the war in the South. It's a clear achievement has been to show the cyclical back-stage peddling of principle in the so-called "Communist" countries are party.

...AGAINST BRITISH IMPERIALISM - FOR THE I.R.A.

Thousands of miles away the guns boom. The crack of gun fire and the terrorised faces of the bomb- blasted people are flicker-taped and telegraphed from over half the world. And slowly, witnessing courage and clarty welded into victory after victory, the mass of British people turn to supporting the National Liberation Front in Vietnam.

But the very same basic struggle is going on in Ireland. Oppressed and deprived by the British ruling class and those bound hand and foot to it either by class position or ideology, the Ulster Catholic minority has thrown up its own popular militia. It has come from the mass roots of this community and from the ranks of the traditional and long hardly active army of Irish liberation, the I.R.A.

Not only the same basic struggle but the same basic reasons for our support. Here are people trying to throw off the oppressor from inside and consolidate national unity. To do this they fight against the army of imperialism.

This imperialist army is our class enemy's army, its club and gun. This imperialist army is as little our army as the very latest class of computerist is to America as its army. We do not lend aid according to blood-relations or geographic accidents. We must be on the side of the workers and oppressed nations against imperialism.

Different people have different ideas at different stages of development, e.g., the ruling class as everyone knows has its army, but we do not have the very latest class of computerist for ideological sophistication in society. And our army? Our army is the class enemy's army, and to the extent that the I.R.A. is the I.R.A. as in the battle of the I.R.A. as in the battle of the I.R.A.

The I.R.A. That is the army, the people of a oppressed people who are fighting the army. We're going to have to fight someone day soon. A blow struck by the I.R.A. against the British army is a large stroke in the struggle of the British working class.

Of course the I.R.A. - both wings - are not the only people struggling in Ireland against imperialism. But they are the most effective and only truly popular military force. There are more clearly socialist and revolutionary organi- sations - politically closer to the policies of sag this paper. But to express support for them rather than the I.R.A. would be dodging the issue of who actually is doing the fighting.

We have criticisms of both the Official and the Provisional I.R.A. - we have, for that matter, criticisms of the Vietnamese policies too - just as we frequently have criticis- mes and differences with certain U.S. officials including those we may be in. But all that does not mean that we do not stand up and say which side we are on which side we want to win.

Because it is our "blood relations" and co-workers who have joined the I.R.A., the oppressor, army the British army - and because of a rational approach recognizing the to all other nations, the British working class manages to push into the back of its mind the claim that it needs more clearly on the Vietnamese war. The development of a movement of solidarity with all those fighting the British army for (at least) 32 counties. Ireland is as a result very difficult.

Two wings of this movement of solidarity have developed: The anti-imperialist League (AIL) and the Irish Solidarity Campaign (ISC) - both supported by all the revolutionary organisations as well as both wings of the I.R.A. is the I.R.A. is in close contact with more links with working class organisations. The I.S.C. supported chiefly by the T.U.S. and Workers' Fight is a smaller but unlike the I.R.A. states clearly in its slogans its support for the I.R.A.

At a recent meeting of the AIL (AIL members are usually also I.R.A. members too). I.R.A. supporters attempted to reconfirm the differences. They proposed that the movements be unified with the AIL adopting a position of 1. support for the demand for the self-determination of Ireland and 2. support for those fighting against imperialism including the two wings of the I.R.A.

The first of these was passed and this clearly constitutes a real step forward towards a unifica- tion and clarification of the so far clearly movement. It gives the freedom of all Ireland as the reason for the need to withdraw British troops - rather than "saving them from harm". But the second resolution met with considerable opposition and was defeated. The main arguments against it were not forced by cer- tain I.S. members, who demanded deleting 1 mention of the I.R.A.

These arguments are quite false - as follows: the I.R.A. is only one group, we wouldn't pick and choose; in any case the I.R.A. doesn't want us to raise this slogan because they realise that a movement based on these slogans cannot attract much broad support as one based on the basic slogan of Withdraw British Troops.

These arguments are quite false - indeed quite dishonest. If we want to argue for support for the struggle in Ireland against British Imperialism we cannot avoid explicitly stating our support for the I.R.A.

Any chunking from this to that of a broad unity means broad unity on a false, liberal basis.

The I.R.A. doesn't support the slogan of support for the I.R.A. is not as strange as it seems. As we have, we say that the I.R.A. and the N.L.P. in Vietnam. One of these differences (not the main one) is that they do not under- stand the tasks of solidarity in the here and now of imperialism.

The comrades from I.S. know this. They argued - rightly - that even if the I.R.A. were to adopt the slogan of "peace" they would not. It was a liberal slogan. Every aggressor is the same aggressor, who claims peace to be the real intent - lation. The I.S. group did not do what the N.L.P. wanted - and they were right not to.

The same applies now. We support support the I.R.A. But we disagree with them on the tactic to be adop- ted by a solidarity movement in Britain. We claim to have some understanding of conditions here and how to fight her and consequent- ly whole British imperialism is the I.R.A. we don't take our cues from them.

Basically what the I.S. argue, though, is that because the great energy of a movement of British imperialism has driven deep roots into the working class, it must be fatal for the British. We do not start out with victory over this nationalism. The mass of people, because of it, will not support us: that is precisely the fight.

If you begin with large numbers as a priority you inevitably take up those whose support you scarcely scare away some supporters. But this means taking up a lower common denominator among the masses that are already quite widespread. Unfortunately these are not princi- pali revolutionary ideas; those have to be sought higher.

The depths that you can sink to if SEIZE the moment is shown by Chris Harman a leading (I.S.) member when he said that he "would be proud to vote against a resolution which expressed solidarity with the Republican Socialists, because it would be "alienated" by the pass- ing of such a resolution! If anyone is "alienated" by the resolution we suggest that they join Amnesty International - but keep out of a movement against imperialism.
BONN: BARZEL LOSES OUT

The ostensible issue was whether in arriving at new agreements with Moscow the German government (a Labour-Liberal coalition) should go beyond a trade agreement to an internationally valid agreement on the "acceptance" of the boundaries of East Germany and Poland. For weeks upon weeks. The government and opposition wriggled and squirmed to find points of difference so as to delude the electorate into thinking that there was any choice on this question. The fact is, however, that apart from a few extreme right-wing CDU-CSU politicians who draw their support from the "refugees" from East Germany, Poland and the Sudetenland there was no one who was going to vote against the treaties in any case.

Then why did the miserable Barzel and the other CDU-CSU leaders encourage opposition to the vote? Simple: they hoped to snare the Social Democrats with the SPD-SPD pact. They hoped to put up a sham fight of opposition to convince the electorate that Brandt was "selling out their kin to the commies" or something similar without "selling" their hands with it and being kicked out when Brandt-Schmidt government. The ostensible issue was the boundary of East Germany and Poland. For weeks upon weeks, the government and opposition wriggled and squirmed to find points of difference so as to delude the electorate into thinking that there was any choice on this question. The fact is, however, that apart from a few extreme right-wing CDU-CSU politicians who draw their support from the "refugees" from East Germany, Poland and the Sudetenland there was no one who was going to vote against the treaties in any case.

In this way the German situation is rather like the British with the party roles reversed. Here it is a question of the Labour Party (close kin of the SPD) being able to mount a campaign against the Tories on the Common Market question because they are in the long run bound to exactly the same policies. What chiefly divides the parties is their way of attacking the working class. In both countries order books are down, unemployment is up and there are dangers of rampant inflation (cost of living went up the new industrial policy is for inflation estimates in every sector. The second the report of the Brussels Commission showed that Germany was doing worse than Britain in the productivity stakes. This means that the German working class who massively voted for the SPD and who spontaneously came out onto the streets in support of the ratification of the treaties until they were told they were embarrassing the government will get it in the neck. Government spending will be curtailed drastically so as to freeze the ruling coalition to back down on its all too meagre promises of social reform. The working class who in certain sectors like steel and chemicals have pushed forward to protect themselves against the erosion of their standard of living are now going to be forced to what amounts in fact to a united sterling bloc against them.

In Bonn despite appearances there will be a détente "grand coalition" or Rietzel parliamentary charade will be a real struggle - not between parties but directly between social classes with the working class taking the offensive in a more massive scale than ever before.

In CEYLON under the present State of Emergency regulations, all democratic rights, such as the right of trade union activity, the right to organise politically, and the rights of assembly and free speech, have been suspended. The armed forces have powers of arbitrary arrest. There are 16,000 political prisoners detained in jail without trial and without access to legal aid. Torture has been widely practised on anyone thought to have been involved with the JVP-led uprising last year. Solidarity actions are being organised. For details of the campaign and for more information, contact: Ceylon Solidarity Campaign c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N1.
Many readers have quoted our call for the big last strike of workers" strike for a general strike to smash the industrial relations act. The general strike, led by the Trade Union Congress, was called to protest against the government's proposed Industrial Relations Act, which was seen as an attempt to weaken the power of trade unions and workers. The strike was intended to be a coordinated national effort to disrupt the economy and force the government to back down.

The strike was a massive event, with millions of workers participating across the country. It was one of the largest strikes in British history, and it had a significant impact on the economy. The government was forced to negotiate with the TUC to avoid a complete paralysis of the country. The strike lasted for several days, and it ultimately failed to achieve its main objective of preventing the passage of the Industrial Relations Act. However, it did demonstrate the strength of the working class and the importance of collective action in the struggle against exploitation.

In the aftermath of the strike, the government made some concessions, but it did not abandon its plans for the Industrial Relations Act. The strike was a major event in the history of trade unions and workers' rights in Britain, and it remains a symbol of the struggle for solidarity and collective power.
why we raise the call STRIKE

fore see the call for such a strike as deeply irresponsible: as if we were calling for revolution, to be led by Vic Feather.

But what we say, and must we believe, is that the eventual general strike, and meanwhile we have to take action, is that we have a mass revolutionary party, and we ourselves the leadership of any general strike which occurs. Thus once again the general strike becomes a synonym for the revolution. (Moreover, all the talk about "preparation" is a dangerous allibi for the Union leaders' inactivity.)

Such pedantic cơrrections usually rely on the question of money, from which they dig out Trotsky's 1905 warning to the Independent Socialists Party, threatening to call a general strike - as a means of obtaining the ruling class in the event of war.

Yet they ignore Trotsky's very important appreciation of the 1906 strike in France and its effects on the working class. It is a commonplace to称赞 the experience of 1906.

"The strike has everywhere and in every place pushed the most thoughtful and fearless workers to the fore. To them belong the success. They are still acting cautiously, feeling the ground, and all that. But the vanguard detachments are marching not only across the road, but also as to not to isolate themselves. The electric telegraphers are the one hindmost ranks to their call give them new.

The roll call of the class has become a fact ubi-servitisation. The proletariat was no longer a demand of this demonstration of its strength. The practical successes won however great they may be, cannot fail to raise the self-confidence of the masses on a new, particularly among the most backward and oppressed strata. That leaders have been forced in the industries and in the factories is the least of the matters I have to say. The elements of local and regional still have not been created. The masses know that they can stop a strike. The leaders of the Red revolutionaries will seek contact with them.

Thus the first self-mobilisation of the masses has been outlined and in part brought forward to the existing leaders of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred, ready to give support to the whole colossal class organisation. The old, organisational has to have no means dropped away. On the contrary, it still remains its bold, self-sufficient, and under the new its already sizable.

ULTIMATE WEAPON?

In essence the attitude of the anti-union revolutionary is a variant of the old west European Social Democratic (SDP), trade unionist, and the well-orchestrated ultimate weapon concept in the working class. It is not a conception of the self-mobilisation of the working class.

In this case the solution makes the general strike impossible, or only a prelude to betrayal, it follows for them that the slogan for a General Strike can be used.

I agree with the experience of the mass strikes of which 1906 is the most important: they were still completely uncoordinated as much as against the labour bureaucracy though not necessarily consciously) as against the system.

Since this is the major experience of the mass strike and of the general strike throughout most of its history, to ignore it is to ignore the real history of the working class, and thus tantamount to preventing the revolutionary organisation from understanding that history, in the form of propaganda, to the working class in this country.

It is flinging the mass strike and the general strike and the struggle for the general strike, can play a major role in shaking and ultimately smashing the bureaucratism of the labour movement, and in helping to build the revolutionary movement - without which there will never be a full and final victory over the capitalists.

Thus it is the job of revolutionaries to make propaganda for the general strike, to organise and propagate for a mass strike and for the anti-strikers on every level.

We therefore say that a general strike can smash the Industrial Relations Act. We advocate it as a tool of this limited pool. It is in the present situation to win such a goal. We raise the demand that the labour movement is not to organise, to prepare and call a general strike. Even when we used the mass strike as a tool for limited gains, the general strike still implies the basic question: who rules in society and what are the specific goals of the general mobilisation. Its logic and its potential in the struggle for state power.

This is not merely a concept of the ultimate weapon, but a very practical logic. A general strike necessarily paves the creation of an organisational committee of the class and of new organisation and administrative plans to bring the workers forward, councils and trade union now existing.

It is necessary the creation of broader workers' committees, street and area committees and rallies to establish the workers' self-defence organisation in the class and struggle with scale and state personnel. This is the task of the question of the elaboration of the revolutionary organs of a potential working class state.

The workers' councils would be decided as a struggle between two perspectives within the mobilised working class - the reformist and the revolutionary. All the events of the strike, the very fact of the strike, the potential into action, would favour the revolution any perspective, as does any real mobilisation of the working class into self-awareness.

In 1906 the strike was initiated by rank and file militans or by the official leadership. The revolutionary perspective would have been sought for, and a series of concrete immediate steps elaborated to take the class consciously.

WORKERS' COUNCILS

Revolutionaries would populate the idea of workers' councils of self-administration, to organise the life of the country and begin to build a counter-state leading to dual power as in Russia between February and October 1917.

The starting point would be the fact that police and military units, which in many cases would already be taking decisions not normally taken by workers. These would be generalised into regional, and finally a National Council of workers' representatives - thus opposing an enfranchising workers' state to the bourgeois state.

A revolutionary organisation would advocate that workers who have taken over factories, services etc. should begin to run them, under the control of the workers' councils, enabling services to be restored to the workers and their organisations, while the 'owners' were still excluded. Thus the bosses' property, instead of merely being 'rent-secured' and used, would be seized increasingly against them, giving the workers an increasing store of power.

The revolutionary party would urge the workers' militias, initially involving many of its own cadres, in drawing in militarily educated all the factory guards, stationing the workers for an uprising to demand and suppress the parasitic organs of bourgeois power and establish the workers state. A revolutionary party should be in any case aware and work for this in advance of such a situation. But even in the middle of the strike such a programme of action would polarise the workers and could at least lead to a period of dual power.

Finally, revolutionaries in such a situation would raise the idea of workers' government as the immediate objective of the strike and to co-ordinate and consolidate the tissues of workers administration and defence into a counter-state which would challenge and decisively smash the bosses' state and replace them.

Such a prosecution of the strike movement by a party with a mass working class following could have taken a situation like that of May-June 1905 in France to state a dual power from there to the revolution.

But even a struggle that does not end with the working class taking power can be an invaluable experience. New leaders and offer new forms of organisation. For these: etc; even if the movement is not the rule the rule it is not required serve the class in future.

This was true of the Soviets of 1905 and the First International was ended in 1914 and the communist of the Easter Rising of 1916.

It is in this sense that Trotsky and Lenin thought of the 1906 revolution as the 'dress rehearsal' for 1917.

And it is in this sense that all the strategies above must be put forward in any general strike situation, so that we can seize the final showdown before the new leaders will be more confident and able to accelerate the movement.

"Workers' leaders", Britain 1926: Smith, Cook and Richardsons

In addition there are objections to the general strike call by people who consider the whole question of "making calls to action" and putting "demands" on leaders as false, divisive and irrelevant. Thus the International Marxist Group in its new period of massuni, mass-based, passive-propagandist politics. (Calling for a general strike, they say, won't make one happen, nor even help prepare for it - only a "deepening of the struggle" will do that. And we don't affect that either. If a general strike does come it will happen. If not, you are either born a genius or you are not a genius at all - so who needs to go to school.

This article is based on a meeting of Lenin on agitation and propaganda in what is to be done, where Lenin argued that the following:

Marxtown had added an additional category (b) of calls to action to the Marxist Plekhanov's categories of Propaganda and Agitation. Lenin insisted on an organic unity between theory, programme, propaganda and agitation. He therefore rejected the notion of "calls to action" being a separate category - something that doesn't strike organically either from agitation or from propaganda (which are in turn governed by theory and principle), i.e. Marxtown's" schemes these "calls to action" did not flow from the body of Marxist theory.

As Lenin sarcastically put it, Marxtown had "referred Plekhanov more than once.

The IMC theorists go against this not only by simplification, but also by calling "calls to action" slogan. Perhaps that way they hope to avoid the kind of unthinking agreement of the agenda and agitproped by the International Socialist Group in 1969, where they made abstract propaganda against the British troops in Northern Ireland, but refused to call for their removal.

Where Marxtown dislocated the peaceful "calls" providing out of the body of Marxist theory, the IMC proposed to chop them off and save them from being dislocated. (See Red Mole, Supplement to No.45)

Each view the party is not a merely sided entity with organs analogous to a brain to cope with and an active body to organise and administer.

Rather, the party can have no administrative function. It is a brain and a voice" - no more, says the Red Mole, blushing in the blinding light of new "principles", which lead to practice it could be seen in the following Red Mole's front cover carried the slogan "No to the NBC" and established a new NBC. This was published right after the TUC policy of "no-recognition" had led to capitulation to the NBC.

The Red Mole, depriving itself of calls to action which give direction to the struggle (including demands on office holders as well as the public) which can gather, organise, and lead itself, was left still struggling against the useless sham policy of the TUC.

Not to make demands on Feather or calls to action to the class, meant sticking Feather's old policy just as it was.

Not only were the awesome bureaucrat classes of the incapable of rendering Plekhanov's "calls to action" slogan, the modus operandi of one of rendering "Feed even more stupid"
THE MODERNISATION WAR – and how to WIN it

The world's first containerised cargo, as I remember it, was the Trojan horse. Once inside the walls it created havoc amongst the workers. And it's no different now!

If registered dockers accept that the "stripping" and "stuffing" of containers can be done by non-dock labour they will have let the Trojan horse into their camp.

The containers swallow up more and more "traditional" dock work all the time. Thus it has already been an enormous reduction in the number of dockers compared with the pre-Devlin period. Now the number is only 4,200 registered and 1,000 on the unattached register. This obviously affects the main body of container traffic. Why should not all dockers re-employ the benefits made possible by mechanisation in terms of shorter hours, better pay and, easier, cleaner and safer work?

For a docker who has sweat and bled, burned his soul in salt and sputtered in the thunderbolt of intense concentration, containerisation could be a massive step forward. But not so long as the bosses control the ports.

TEN FOLD FACTOR

The increase in efficiency that has been gained through the various forms of container handling is obvious. It has been known by some as the "ten fold factor".

On average containers can be handled in one tenth of the man-hours of non-packaged cargoes, and in some cases the figures are even more dramatic! To every three men engaged in the job by the unloading of timber, only 4 are needed for packaged timber.

Or again - a Manchester Liners container ship can be turned round in 48 hours with only 10 men (400 man-hours), as against 200 men taking 14-15 days (approx. 25,000 man-hours).

There is no doubt that the efficiency of container traffic is, in whose interest is this efficiency used. (Down my way they've been using couriers, efficient foremen, efficient bailiffs and efficient judges. But what on earth is all this directed against my mates?)

It's all to be in the interests of the private profit takers. Every bit - since the Labour Government hived off the then nationalised docks to private profit vultures.

Of course, it isn't only on the docks that methods mean less jobs. You only have to think of the massive redundancies that are bound to happen in the dockers' industry to see that capitalisation is always trying to push up the rate of exploitation.

The bosses try to get more value out of us as against what we put in, there's a big drive on to keep labour costs down.

A number of factors affect this. Immediate undercutting of competitors is only one factor.

INVESTMENT

On the docks, new techniques have cost a great deal of money. The fact that the money was in the first place produced by dockers' labour (though some came from Government handouts) doesn't make the port employers any more inclined to use the new methods to ease the dockers' life. No! Money isn't something the ruling class let go of without expecting a return. In fact, port investment in 1965 was £24 million and in 1970 it was £36 million. This enormous sum has involved the dockers in considerable problems - given that they have to show a 'good return', which for them means not safer work, not shorter hours, not longer holidays, but simply one thing - profit.

One problem is that, while the investment has allowed for a tremendous increase in the size of ships passing through the docks, the dockers trade has actually declined. As a result port charges, which were supposed to have been cut due to containerisation, have actually been increased.

Also, as plant becomes more sophisticated and investment in new plant gets more costly, so the forward planning of that investment becomes more crucial to the capitalist class. They therefore attempt to eliminate the variable, unpredictable elements of production costs, replacing them with the more or less constant and foreseeable elements.

Of course this creates a vicious circle, because the more they invest, the more they need to plan. But the more they need to plan, the more they have to limit investment to those aspects of spending that are not affected by fluctuation.

REDUNDANCIES

The massive bout of redundancies (however disguised) can be seen as an attempt both to increase the rate of exploitation and to reduce the operations of capitalism from the dictates of labour. But that's where they come unstuck: they can't free themselves from labour, because of course they, the capitalists, don't do the work.

But if the ruling class can't free itself from the working class, it tries to free itself from the dictates of the most militant, the best organised and the most politically advanced sections of the working class.

The plans on this score are at the heart of the present situation.

First, in order to cut costs, some shippers began to invest large sums developing facilities in ports like Felixstowe which do not come under the National Dock Labour Board. They felt that this way they could save money by having complete control of hiring and firing, and at the same time deal a blow at the N.D.L.B.

Second, we all know that while registered dockers already provide the labour force at a few inland clearance depots, at most others they don't. Here we see an important effect of containerisation's land link.

LAND LINK

Dockers traditionally handled local traffic and traffic for local delivery. Many ports in fact grew up in direct response to inland industries as they developed. (Manchester with the cotton trade, Cardiff with the coal trade, and so on.)

But with the more flexible land link provided by containers, goods can be shifted around very easily; goods which, say, usually go to Hull, can be transferred to, say, Bristol. And so on.

Or, more crucially, they can be transferred to a non-registered port.

It's not difficult to see how this could be a new weapon of the employers against isolated or isolated port action. If cargoes are being blacked at one port, they can be switched to another - preferably to a port not noted for its militancy.

II follows from this that the Bristol definition of port work in purely geographical terms is completely inadequate and in any case is riddled with loopholes.

While it is true that some operators are setting up just beyond the Bristol boundaries, using non-registered labour, of course, it is also a fact that some very big depots are being established deep inland. And these are just as dangerous.

DEFEND JOBS!

To read the profits, the port
THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Containers have been used in many ports ever since the War. But they really got a boost with the Vietnam War. The US army, being fed up with the passage of military cargo, found the containers were a lot easier to handle.

The first British port to use containers on a big scale was Liverpool. But by 1967 the 1729 containers handled there were nearly equalled by the 105,575 units passing through the port of London.

By 1970 when Liverpool was handling 137,729 units and Preston was handling only 114,539 units it was clear that the bigger ports were being equipped for big-scale container traffic.

Overall, container traffic has grown from 9 million tons in 1968 to 12 million in 1969, to 16 million tons in 1970. Now there are some 2,000,000 containers passing in and out of this country, representing over one-third of the total amount of general cargo handled.

All the time, the nature of containerisation was changing. Early on, the container traffic was limited to the shorter routes. The sea routes between Britain, Scandinavia, Europe and Northern Ireland were the established container routes. You can see the pattern by looking at some figures. In 1968 the Britain-Scandinavia ran accounted for 3.5 million tons of containerised cargo, while the British-North America run carried only 0.7 million tons.

But that was in 1968. By the end of this year, the Far East, Australia, Europe and North and South America will all be linked up by the container route.

Last month the Hapag-Lloyd lines said it would use Tilbury as its UK container base for North American routes. Only last week Mr. John Lunck, Director General of the Port of London Authority, said that Tilbury would soon have facilities to handle West African trade, raising its capacity from 200,000 tons to 300,000 containers per year.

Reporting Lunck's speech to the Anwerp Port Authority last week, the Financial Times said: "When the Tilbury container port was fully extended, it would have an annual capacity of between 5 and 8 million tons, which the Authority hopes to reach by about 1974-5."

Evidently in container ships themselves will soon make the present 'metal boxes' seem old fashioned.

Ships are being built that will take 500 barges of 700 tons capacity, and 100,000 units per ship. These ships are already in operation at some ports, for instance, the port of Sheerness, where the Marden Lines has been operating a container service. These ships are being built in Denmark.

The modular barges of 700 tons capacity are now under construction in a number of the larger ports. They are being built by the BACAT (Barge on a Container) company, which is being built in Denmark.

Thus not only road and rail, but also river cargoes are now included in the container scheme.
IRO Strike Committee leader
JOHN BYRNE
talks to WORKERS’ FIGHT

IN BOOTLE, near Liverpool, a number of electricians on the Island Revenue Office site have been out on strike since October, in a dispute that in fact goes back even further.

In an attempt to break the strike, which has halted all effective work on the building, every ploy has been tried. The latest is the disciplining by the JIB of the strike committee leader, John Byrne.

John Byrne talked to Steve Corish about the IRO strike, about the JIB, and about the struggle for democracy in the EPTU.

The question is of vital importance to all building workers. There is a real possibility that the system of union-employer collaboration which has been viciously effective in cutting sparks’ earnings, is going to be introduced and used against other workers in the construction industry.

In 1970 the National Economic Development Office published a report entitled “Large Industrial Sites.” On the working paper producing this document was a trade unionists from the AEU-CFETU, the Federation of Construction Trade Unions and ASW. One of the proposals was for the setting up of a Joint Industry Board similar to the Construction JIB.

S.C.: Can you tell me something of the background to this strike?
J.B.: In September 1970 the building workers were given £1 per hour. We were given 50p an hour at the time. We came out for 3 days in October, but then we tried to get the JIB to talk at a site recognised as a special site. Nothing happened. So we went on a go-slow in November to February.

When we got a go-slow I mean a go-slow on the site, we picked up all the books on safety, welfare, and scaffolding. And we went to town on it for 4 months.

But what triggered the strike was that the building stewards at a meeting promised full support if we went out of the gate. This strike came off on February 11th last year.

It lasted for roughly 6 months. While it was going on Chapple came to an agreement with the employers, James Scott & Co., that there was no dispute on the site. In response they organised what was called “snatch squads”.

We went round all the ETU stewards on Merseyside and we put it to them that if we gave them an hour’s notice they would send men down to picket. This worked. The employers could not get local men on.

We spoke to the unemployed at Bootle dole and told them it was a trade dispute. James Scott tried to get men in from Newcastle. But we met them, told them the facts and they said they were not prepared to break the strike; though they had come from Newcastle and were getting 14 guineas over and above what we were getting.

Following this there was a strike provoked by MacAlpine’s. 37 men were made redundant. MacAlpine claimed that the sackings were nothing to do with the electricians, but the men were chosen not on a last to come-first to leave basis, but just seemed to be anybody. The men picked, however, were the most militant. So the building workers came out.

J.B.: I was in hospital. A week after this, Scotts brought men in from Glasgow. They were booked into a hotel in St. Helens and brought back to the site. In Bootle, in a taxi, we were told to go over to them explaining the strike, and surrounded the site with 150 electricians.

The men were against the JIB and despite the local official’s attempts, they left.

The following week MacAlpine sent letters to all building workers, sacked 120 men, blaming the electricians’ strike, and threatening the real. This split the builders right down the middle. Then the NFTBO officials moved in. They blamed us, and the strike collapsed. A total number of 150 men went out to the wall, and there was a terrific amount of hostility towards us.

The other factor was that this got round to other sites and financial support was withdrawn.

So we went in, dismantled the circuit breaker and put the site in darkness. The officials panicked and every man was given his notice.

But MacAlpine decided to call a meeting to discuss our problem. We went back, but when the meeting up Scotts refused to see us. Eventually they sacked us, and we had to re-establishment by getting support from the building stewards.

During the time we were sacked we heard about the Alcan strike, which was a direct result of our own strike. FLASHLIGHT circulated a leaflet about our strike all over the country and Alcan got to hear of this.

We went up and spoke to Alcan. They’d come out in solidarity with the strikers on 30th July. They then decided that they should stay out for 1 hour.

They eventually won the concession of 3½ an hour above the rate. This was a breakthrough there.

Well, we decided, “Blow it”, we’ll come out for £1 an hour. I don’t think that our demand is still for £1 an hour.

S.C.: So you have been out on strike since when?
J.B.: Since 25th October. At the present stage they haven’t sacked us as they did last time. They have used a penal clause in the JIB, which they cannot use if they sack us. They can use it because technically we can be outside the Industry if we were sacked.

S.C.: What has been the attitude of the ETU officials?
J.B.: Right throughout the strike our official has tried to bust it wide open. He tried to get a compromise that was the first stage. In this stage he has not even tried to negotiate or get an agreement with the firm.

He has worked hand in hand with the firm and the JIB to get us split. This is the local official. We have reached the stage where it is not worth bothering with them.

We have just received a letter from the ETU telling us to go back to work so they can carry on to discipline us!

DISCIPLINE

S.C.: Why were you disciplined?
J.B.: My opinion on this is that Scotts are using the JIB to break us. They say that if we break through here, we will break through the whole JIB set up, covering over 80,000 electricians. They are the biggest lot in the Employers Association on the JIB side. They are the biggest of the lot - James Scott.

So if you break the biggest one, there is nowhere to go but much more for us with the smaller firms. This is their situation.

Now I have broken the rules, because you are not allowed to take any unofficial action. That is one of the objects of the rule books. They have not done me on that one. Where they say I have broken the rule is that one where you agree to abide by the rates of pay, agree to abide by the conditions and agree to abide by the decision.

This is part of the JIB set up. So there are certain rules I have broken, I am not denying that. This is why they have not sacked us. Scotts thought - go do discipline line, expel them, I am dumb. They are after my head. I think it was to make an example.

I mean, they have never used it against a rank and file member, never. There are other things in this. We have seen the solicitor (it was "c?", while seeing the C? = 2 because he is all for the industry, 2 because it was that it was a legally binding agreement - that is, the JIB agreement.

Well, when an official signs an agreement, it becomes a compulsory agreement covering all his members. But this is not binding. But when an agreement is put to the member then it becomes a legally binding agreement between that member and whoever he signs with - in this case the JIB.
The J.I.B. is a pioneering model of labour control, which combines illegally binding agreements with scab union officials to homestaking rank and file militancy. The purpose of the Industrial Relations Act is to extend as many of its features as possible throughout industry.

S.C. - What is the JIB set up?

J.B. - The JIB set up came out of the 1966-69 agreement. And it first came into operation on 1st January 1967. There was a massive campaign against it. Thousands of electricians refused to sign. There were demands on school and college training schools, 2,000 electricians marched through the city centre. And there was a national conference in Newcastle which was to decide whether to continue the agreement. When you see that there were only 12,000 in attendance, you can see that the campaign was quite a large percentage.

The agreement was never put to the vote, never put to the membership. At the conferences of 1969 and 1970 it was rejected. These are the Industrial Conferences which are attended by all the officials. There are no official conferences. At area conferences all contracting stewards elect delegates to the national one. Our recent local one passed a motion condemning the use of penal clauses and calling for their withdrawal.

S.C. - Where did the JIB come from?

J.B. - Ray Gunter, Minister of Labour in the last Labour Government, was one of the people who set it up. Before the JIB emerged the ETU and the Employers Association negotiated nationally for certain conditions, eg national minimum wage, and the ETU was getting some of the conditions accepted. The JIB negotiated nationally for certain conditions, eg national minimum wage, but stewards could still negotiate. And these were not negotiated at site level and they could not set up local agreements in certain areas. The JIB was designed to stop this.

So when the JIB came in, everything was set up at national level. As far as I am concerned, the JIB is a joint company organisation. It is a right wing gang up of union bosses to cut out strikes and make profits.

It openly states that its whole object is to make profits, increase productivity and "get a better deal" for its members. But the latter is only put in for a bit of window dressing.

The JIB was made up of 11 members of the Executive Council of the ETU, 11 representatives of the Employers Federation and a chairman who is supposed to be independent, Mr. J. A. Johnston - he is "independent" - like hell. He is a Barrister of law earning thousands of pounds a year independent of the (working class) all his life.

The way that they negotiate increases is that when the full board meets there must be 75% agreement to give a wage increase. What the union has to do is win over half the employers. There is no chance that strike action will be used. Because if there was any strike action the EC would go right back to the object of the JIB.

Certain sites, such as those covered by the Petro-Chemie sites, are exempt from the JIB and they can negotiate their own site conditions and rates. Most of the sites where the JIB does not operate are on a minimum of £1 per hour. Some go as low as 7s, 6d, or at least 10s above the rate.

So we have a situation where the ETU does not operate where we find electricians on at least 10s extra an hour.

S.C. - What has been the effect of the JIB?

J.B. - One of full support, because they are part of it. I mean if it's your officials you find that the JIB rules overrule the Union rules.

THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP of the EPTU were appointed to 10 years ago by a High Court Judge, after the notorious bollard- rigging case. The right wing gang of renegades led by Cannon and Chapple were put in control of the Union in the name of alleged malpractice by the Communist Party leadership of the then quiet Republican Union.

Since then the leadership has systematically set out to destroy Union democracy. A virtual reign of terror against the militants was the service which the Chapple-Cannon gang gave the employers and their Courts in return for putting them in control of the Union.

They did not disappoint their masters, who have now set up the NBR, as a regular Court to intervene directly and regularly at their own whim in the affairs of the whole trade union movement.

Their goal is to whip the Union leaders into line to do the bosses' job on the rank and file of the whole trade union movement that the Chapple Mafia have done in the EPTU.

Today, as a result of the intervention of the High Court in "favour" of "democracy" within the EPTU, militants are facing the job of drawing up a Bill of Rights and to organise the battle to restore democracy.

* To democratise the Union by restoring the control of conferences, regaining the right to elect all officials and to sack them if they rat.

* To smash the leadership imposed by the capitalist High Court.

* To break up the JIB, the straitjacket which the Union scabs and the employers and the last Labour Government put on contracting sparks.

S.C. - Can you explain what FLASHLIGHT is?

J.B. - It is a paper set up by rank and file electricians to fight for democracy in the Union and put forward policies for the benefit of the rank and file members on the basis of which to fight for changes. We are excluded from making decisions. Democracy is a farce. As far as I am concerned it doesn't exist. Conferences are being overruled and time and again. There are no elections now. The only ones we have now are for the EC, General Secretary and President.

We have just had a case recently where Cannon, the General Secretary, and Charlie Montgomery, won an election. Chapple won an election at the same time. They both agreed that there had been interference in both elections, but Chapple was allowed to stand while Charlie had to run again. Then a third candidate stood who had not stood before, and Charlie Montgomery was defeated.

We have a "heads I win, tails you lose" situation.

S.C. - What sort of strategy is a rank and file body going to have to adopt inside the Union?

J.B. - This is a tricky one, because of the situation inside the construction industry where only a third of the men are organised, is representated, by stewards. It is a very casual industry and it needs to be decasualised, with its members committed to the industry. But this will produce problems for areas like Merseyside. Traditionally electricians have floated in a rotation between shipbuilding and construction, and maybe sometimes into engineering.

The common platform has been £1 per hour. This has been the slogan for the last 2 years. I think electricians can get organised to fight on this.

Another demands and our strike committee supports are: the right to negotiate; and an end to the blacklist.

Blacklisting is blatant. We have signed in black and white by our manager that he is going to stop certain people coming.

We have also got to fight for Union recognition and the standard for the implementation of conference decisions. The National Industry Standards Board has got to be decided, and all negotiations on terms should be based on its decisions. These are the democratic expressions of the rank and file.

The only way I feel this could really be the trick is to get some form of National Committee which could overrule any decisions of the EC as regards negotiations. It would have to ratify agreements the EC put forward.

We are not yet capable of calling a national strike. We are not able to lead the whole 68,000 because we do not control that many. We do not know how many we influence. I think that we have to adopt guerrilla tactics to fight for these demands.

We should go for the areas where we are strong and build up and break through the agreement.

"SPECIAL SITES"

There is also another factor here - the "special sites" agreement. This is a development of our struggle and the Alcan struggle.

The JIB was facing up to a situation where it could not continue to force the industry when the EC and agreements in the old way. They have now provided themselves with an escape clause which enables electricians to get cash but with strings tied to it: there is to be no messing with one or two contractors or the money is taken off you, the position is much better every 6 months. It is a national award and there are no negotiations. What I feel about this is that the only sites who will get it are those where they think there is going to be a strike. And not only a small strike, but a successful one.

Something like ours and the Alcans where we organise, take on the employers and batter them. If they feel that you are not capable of breaking through the employers then I think they will refuse the award under the "special sites".

We have had two cases that show this. One is on the Fazackerley site where the electricians was refused an award. On the site there is little unity, and the electricians are isolated. But the employers could be under-estimating the resources available on Merseyside to support the Fazackerley sparks.

The other site is the Teaching Hospital site near the centre of Liverpool. The site unity is strong. The NFIB stewards are well organised. And the firm knows that if the electricians come out they will have to contend with up to 1,000 building workers. The employers were aware that the site would end up like the IRO.

The talks on this site got their award.

The other factor in the Special Sites agreement is that if the firm says you do not get the money then you don't get it, regardless of the result.

So I think the best method is to work through the special sites. When the award is rejected then the local situation must be examined. If there is site unity and there is support in the local area then you should consider taking strike action or any other action to break through.

"SUPPORT THE IRO!"

Contact John Byrne at 41 Smiley Road, Bootle 26, Lanes.
It's a LOCKOUT!

The pickets call on other employe
es in the area to black the company's products.

Two points to workers.

The Industrial Relations Court fines the Union £20,000. The Union pays.

Two points to management.
The firm's goods are blocked throughout the country. All dockers refuse to handle the company's exports.

Workers, two points.
Financial aid pours in from all over the nation.

Workers two points.
Shop stewards defy the Union and refuse to lift the blacking. The homes of management are picketed. Shares fall, managerial heads start to roll.

The men begin to discuss workers control of the factory. The company is beaten, the workers have won.

Not! Wait a minute. It's not over yet.

The management are using the Jokers.

Yes, they have called in the Union Official, he has advice for the men. "Proceed with caution."

He continues, "Remember, the Industrial Relations Act is the law of the land. We are workers, not landlords."

He goes on, "We must now have a cooling off period to enable management and Union to come together.

The game is in the balance. His voice is grave as he continues, "I am confident that at the end of the cooling off period you will have all come to your senses, and that the result of the secret ballot will prove this."

And so, after teetering on the very brink of defeat, the company wins the day.

A word with the Company Director Sir William Blakister. "Did you think the game was lost Sir William?"

"Not at all."

"You were always confident of a victory!"

"Certainly, I have large pockets."

"Large pockets, sir?"

"Yes, I have a Chief Constable, a Member of Parliament and a Union Official in every one of them."

In the Durham coalfield, the death of the pit is the death of the village. Once there were 300 pit villages in the County - now there are 50.

As brutally as capitalism accumulated capital, it now assassinates whole communities.

The B.B.C., deciding to cash in on the recent strike, moved a camera crew into Shotton. The documentany they produced, entitled "A Month of Sundays", was screened on May 2nd.

The moral of their story was that the death of Shotton Colliery is inevitable, indeed natural - just one of those things. Consequently, much of the film centered on the local church and on the Salvation Army. The strike was dealt with as something external to the miners, a futile attempt to defend a dying livelihood.

The depth of the conflict only showed through in the words of the miners themselves and their wives.

At this point the issues were clear. Miners showed that what was in dispute was not just a question of wages, for more was at stake - a whole mode of life.

CONNED

Here was a vital section of the working class sensing its power, flexing its muscles and seeing right through the capitolics at Story and Labour propaganda as it had not done for a long time.

Pit closures had been tolerated - now they would not be. As a miner put it: "We've been conned by both governments. This industry has a hell of a sting for an industry that is not needed."

A new spirit was abroad. And so, was the old bitterness which had lain dormant in the face of the massacre of the coal industry.

Despite the efforts of the B.B.C to muffle it, the conflict broke through. And old miner talked about World War 1, and described how he 'had fought for his country in an imperialist game.'

The wives, too expressed their hatred of the conditions under which their men labour. One woman described how her husband "had bronchitis and an enlarged heart, he's 58 and still down the pit. "We pay dear for cool with boxes and blood" said another. And this is in an industry where miners' lives have never counted for much with the bosses, in an industry where Tony Furenes were assamed by sending children scrambling for coal and in an industry nationalised in order to provide other branches of industry with cheap fuel.

Here once again the contradictions revealed. Miners who crawl through the gutters of the earth in filth to dig coal found themselves without it during the strike and were forced to pick sea-coal from the beach.

PRODUCTIVITY

The rate of work has been intensified by NCB productivity schemes emerged in an interview with an old miner. He could not envisage many miners lasting out until they were 65 as he had done. "Work down the pit is hell" was his verdict.

Despite the desire not to lose a way of life they had carved out in solidarity against terrible hardship, the miners showed they had little love for a job which placed their lives at constant risk. They did not want work as a future for their sons.

Yet there was little future for the youth of Shotton either, with the North East an unemployment black spot.

But to the B.B.C, the village and its life and its living conditions were little more than 'good material' for an essay on materiality and nostalgia. The complications with teenagers illustrated the hopelessness of their future. Most of the boys saw the Army as the only way out.

It is against this background that the NCB's lust after productivity had meant not only harder work, but a quicker death for the village.

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AS SCANLON

DUCKS FIGHT
FOR SHORTER
HOURS

THE DETERMINATION of several thousand Manchester engineering workers is all that stands between a slight reverse and a grand rout.

After over thirty sit-ins, after a massive development of fighting spirit by the rank and file, the miserable AUEW 'generals' and their local captains have copped out of one of the most important parts of the fight.

The 'leadership' announced that they were recommending that settlements might be negotiated which did not include a cut in the working week. Of course, as a face-saver, they said that after the men had returned to work they would still press for this demand.

But that's after they return to work.

At the mass meeting of CSEU stewards, John Deacon (a Ruston-Paxton shop steward) moved an amendment which would have meant keeping the demand for the shorter working week as a condition for settlement, but this was defeated.

The original demands were for a substantial pay increase (on the CTU, more for women as a step towards equal pay, an extra week's holiday a year, and five hours off the working week.

This last demand was probably the most important of the lot. It is precisely this demand that has prompted the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) to its closest ever opposition.

For instance, when workers at Mather & Platt settled for a straight money deal Mr. Michael Puller, director of the local employers' federation, gloated - "We have always said that the majority of workpeople in Manchester agree with us that conditions, hours of work and holidays should be properly negotiated nationally. On the other hand they are primarily interested in their pay packets...

But so confident were the employers of this opinion that they felt it necessary to bar union officials from the factory. Bernard Punter, a local AUEW official, had to address the men from the other side of the factory fence with the gates firmly locked against him.

In any case, in a period of massive unemployment any refusal to go for a substantial reduction in hours is telling the men in the dole queue to eat dirt.

There are still plenty of workers working class. Unlike increases in pay these are permanent gains not constantly being whittled away by inflation.

And in any case, in a period of massive unemployment any refusal to go for a substantial reduction in hours is telling the men in the dole queue to eat dirt.

There are still plenty of workers working class. Unlike increases in pay these are permanent gains not constantly being whittled away by inflation.

The Trafford Park situation is nothing new, it's old all hat and was known years before the strike ever got started. In any case, it is a betrayal of the struggle of the mil lions to impose the "common denominator" of the weakest sections.

After all, the Beedbur men and their kind are the leaders - not stooges like Brennan!

STORM

Wait then has happened in the A.E.P. Basically it is that men like Scanlon and Wright who seem to be "left wingers" when the fight isn't too sharp are totally incapable of giving leadership in a period like this.

Room leadership isn't so difficult. But we're out of the fine weather days, through the dolrains and into the storm. The sump-day-socialists of the trade union movement have simply got no belly for a serious struggle.

Just listen to the weak-toned whining of Scanlon and Conway in their recent circulars to districts committees and union branches. They complain that the E.F.P. is causing "total industrial unrest", that it has adopted "a policy of maximum possible escalation when faced with industrial action on the basis of making the action as costly to the unions as possible, as quickly as possible."

Well, what do you damn-well expect: a sitting duck? The whole point is that as any engineer knows, the situation in the industry nationally (even internationally) forces the employers to be tougher and better organised.

In Manchester, for instance, the bosses are paying out benefits to help each other through the dispute. The E.F.P. is disciplining - even expelling - members who do not toe its line!

The message is clear: this isn't the fifties, it's the seventies. And if there isn't a real fight put up now it may as well be the thirties.
FACED WITH MORE REDUNDANCIES
WORKERS FIGHT FOR BETTER BASIC PAY

RAIL MEN: YES!

Not content with forcing a secret ballot on the railwaymen the national Industrial Relations Court has also done what amounts to fining the union; it made it pay a share of the costs of appearing before the court! But this is just adding insult to injury; the main damage was done when the railway unions' leaders first decided to recognise the decisions of the bosses' NIRC and put the future of their members in the hands of the 'Tories' very own appointees.

Having forced the union to hold a secret ballot the court has in fact doubled the length of the cooling off period. Now it hopes that with their contracts 'renegotiated' to make overtime compulsory, with their 'leaders' crumbling before the law and their collective resolve atomised by the technique of the secret ballot the railwaymen will give up the fight.

A massive landslide majority in the railway action strike, however, will show the Tories the quickly and force the penny pinchers to think about their offer about being 'fair'.

If anyone says '12½% is a fair offer', or 'they deserve a rise', 'as long as they don't lose their job', they should be reminded of a few points:

The basic wage for a single man living has been cut at over 10% a year. A good proportion of any wage increase thus appears straight away in taxes and lost means-tested welfare benefits. According to the careful calculations of Labour MP Michael Meacher, the miners' 30% money rise would result in real increases of between 27% (J) and 30.5. A 12½% rise is an offer of a cut in real wages.

Many railway workers have a basic rate of £7.20 a week. They have to work an average of 50 hours a week to make a living wage. The union's full claim amounts to an average of £20 a week. It's quite true that British Rail had a deficit of £18 million last year and that's just the interest. If the bosses are unable to run industry so as to ensure a decent standard of living for all, then their system stands condemned. It's certainly not true that the 'country can't afford it'. Those who refuse 15½ million to the rail workers would be nearly a tenth of a million pounds on the white elephant Churchill called a nationalisation. Over recent years the profitability of British industry has increased and international competition has sharpened. The urgent need of the British employing class is to get through the radical improvement in profits, by keeping down wages. The Tories have used the railway strike to show workers - post office workers, power workers, miners, and now railwaymen - as test cases. But they want a very much smaller one than the small victories they have won so far which have not stopped the strike. They want a really decisive, short, sharp victory, which will break the spirit of the labour movement. They hoped to cash a major victory with the miners' strike. But the miners defeated the Tories. It was the miners' achievement that forced the British Railways Board to agree even as high as 12½% on their offer. Otherwise the offer would have been at the level of the miners' agreement - 7½% "norm". The Tories have set up a new confrontation, over the Industrial Relations Act 68. The railway union leaders have consistently played down the significance of the confrontation. Just a matter of a couple of percentage points on the offer, they say. But in fact the real issue was a few pounds less for them, but also fresh strength and confidence for the Tories in the trades, union rights, social services, jobs and wages. What is at stake is the success or failure of the employers' attempts to push us back to the 1930s. The Tories are attacking the same fronts - wages, jobs and Industrial Relations Act. The unions are responding on, at best, centrist, fronts, wages. They are like an army that goes into a major battle prepared only for a casual training exercise. So far rank and file discontent has not reached the point of being able to force the Industrial Relations Court independently of the union leaders, or being able to link the wages issue with the redundancy issue. But no other perspectives will work. If they do not employ the workers are being conceded a victory on the side.

320,000 jobs have been lost on the railways in the last 15 years. A main factor in accelerating the loss of jobs over the last few years has been the Pension Pay and Productivity Agreement of 1968. Under this arrangement, some 80% of railway men have been brought into incentive bonus and work-study schemes. As well as productivity schemes, the result has been redundancy for many and increased intensity of work for those remaining.

Plans to cut 4500 to 5000 office jobs in British Rail were announced on 23 April. 20,000 more redundancies are threatened by the British Railways Board for the next five years. British Rail have recently frozen these redundancies, with the clear aim of separating the redundancy issue from the wages issue. The NUR, meanwhile, has confined itself to demanding increased superannuation payments, and voluntary redundancies and normal wastage in place of forced redundancies. In a period of one million unemployed, this is not enough. It is important that the demand raised by the strike and file committees for a 30 hour week with no overtime should be taken up and used to push through the claim, in order to reverse the trend on redundancies. Additional funds should be raised for pensions and redundancy to make the community pay.

Anything less than complete victory for the railwaymen will be a loses all for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed facing redundancy and for the other victims of Tory Britain.

The common interest the working class has in the railwaymen's victory must be recognised in strict enforcement of black and in getting the strike to close down the power stations down. The railwaymen helped the miners do just that - now they can do it on their own account. The National union of Mineworkers has stated that "the battle is won and the struggle in any way possible". Other unions must follow.

Martin Thomas

curve-up

BOGH AT STAFFORD AND AT KIDGREGOE the struggle against redundancies is approaching a turning point. At Stafford, 455 redundancies were announced on 12th January. GEC then made a modest retreat, in view of a union overtime ban. But in this tactical retreat the em- ployers conceded little of substance. Forced redundancies have been postponed, first for a month and now indefinitely, while voluntary redundancies and redeployment are gone through.

The employers have managed to wind down the resistance to redundancies - the overtime ban has been relaxed - without actually cutting down the numbers of the redundancies. In fact, the total number of planned redundancies, at GEC Power Engineering, GEC Measurements, and the Nelson Research Centre, has reached 800.

Effectively, the balance sheet is that GEC have so far managed to get rid of around 400 employees. What happens when the flow of voluntary redundancies dries up?

In a situation where there are one million unemployed, it will be necessary for trade unions to make a decision: 1) That any loss of jobs, even through vol- untary redundancies or redeploy- ment, is any sort of victory; and 2) The miners not immediately affected can confidently sit back and say "it's none of our business!" The later a determined stand is left, the more difficult it is. At GEC Elliott, Kidsgrove, manpower - around 2555 redundanc- ies on 5th April - over a third of the workforce. Only last year GEC got rid of 3500 workers. In this case the situation was that there were 50 to 100 men who would like nothing better than to collect their redundancy pay and get out. They had been given one chance to become a Joint Committee to establish a common policy. The Joint Commit- tee first submitted a plan to save the jobs. The plan depended on transferring some areas of work which it doesn't cover at present to the Industrial Controls division. This approach, we think, is dan- gerous - it comes down to arguing with the bosses, who desires to turn the employers' offer of 12½% into 7½% 'norm'. The agreement was at the level of the miners' agreement - 7½% "norm". The Tories have set up a new confrontation, over the Industrial Relations Act 68. The railway union leaders have consistently played down the significance of the confrontation. Just a matter of a couple of percentage points on the offer, they say. But in fact the real issue was a few pounds less for them, but also fresh strength and confidence for the Tories in the trades, union rights, social services, jobs and wages. What is at stake is the success or failure of the employers' attempts to push us back to the 1930s. The Tories are attacking the same fronts - wages, jobs and Industrial Relations Act. The unions are responding on, at best, centrist, fronts, wages. They are like an army that goes into a major battle prepared only for a casual training exercise. So far rank and file discontent has not reached the point of being able to force the Industrial Relations Court independently of the union leaders, or being able to link the wages issue with the redundancy issue. But no other perspectives will work. If they do not employ the workers are being conceded a victory on the side.

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