

Workers' fight

3p

No.78 Nov. 23rd to 30th 1974

BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS

WITHDRAW BRITISH TROOPS! DEFEND CIVIL RIGHTS!

THE explosions in two Birmingham pubs last Thursday night were probably the work of Irish republicans. They were deliberate and presumably calculated acts of indiscriminate slaughter of civilians — people in no way directly connected with the war in Ireland.

Revolutionary socialists, especially those who solidarise with the IRA, have a duty to denounce and condemn this indefensible and senseless slaughter.

WORKERS FIGHT has consistently supported the Irish republican struggle, including the right of the IRA to strike at military targets in Britain. We continue to side with the republicans. We defend their right to fight to liberate their country from the terror regime imposed by the British ruling class and its army in Northern Ireland.

But last Thursday's explosions are simply indefensible on any grounds — military, political or moral. Unless they were the result of a ghastly series of miscalculations, they signal an entirely new departure. So far, civilian casualties have been by-products of attacks on military or economic targets, never the objective. Random slaughter of civilians, with bombs and bullets, has been the work of the Orange bigots protected by the British Army, and sometimes the work of the Army itself and its undercover SAS units.

Self-evidently, the Birmingham explosions have no military value to the republican cause. Even the bombings at Guildford, however horrifying, hit at British Army personnel who would soon have been terrorising the Northern Ireland Catholics. And most of the bombings in Northern Ireland have had the rational military objective of striking at the economy of Northern Ireland.

But the Birmingham bombings are of no such character. The Birmingham bombings are indefensible politically, too. In fact they are politically very stupid. They may have

been intended to help create mass feeling in Britain for British army withdrawal. But they are far more likely to consolidate opinion behind the government. They have already led to a mushrooming growth of the extreme right, the British allies of the UDA. As long ago as the Second World War, it was shown that civilian populations are not swayed by a bombing blitz, even such obliteration bombing as the RAF carried out on Dresden.

Because such methods are militarily and politically futile and indefensible, they are also morally indefensible. Is it really necessary to match the barbarism of the ruling class in its callous slaughter of civilians?

The republican attitude is the product of years of brutalisation by the British Army. They live amidst Army terror, torture, concentration camps, and sometimes straight random murder by the Army. The criminal indifference of the British people to the Army's murderous jackboot rule in Northern Ireland is part of the process of brutalisation. But even if we understand the cause, we cannot approve the result.

Explain

We cannot expect or demand that the IRA trim its attacks on military or state targets to what the British working class would "understand"; all the more so as the British working class has signally failed to understand or sympathise with the republicans' struggle.

Nevertheless, the Labour movement is potentially an ally, even a decisive one, of the republicans. To explain to militant British workers why the IRA has a right to fight the British Army and to attack it in Britain — that is part of the battle to emancipate British workers from chauvinism and make them into allies of the republican struggle. That is the job of British revolutionaries, whatever the difficulties. And it is possible. But it is impossible to 'explain' or justify indiscriminate and senseless slaughter such as in Birmingham. Such slaughter can only, needlessly, push the potential allies of republicanism into the arms of the British ruling class. Subjected to random attack on the basis of their nationality, their chauvinism is re-inforced.

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MINERS GIVE A LESSON TO TUC



Arthur Scargill, Yorkshire miners' president

THE OVERWHELMING vote of the miners to reject the Pay and Productivity proposals of the National Coal Board points the way forward for the whole labour movement. It shows a proper working class contempt for the claptrap with which both the Labour Government and the trade union leaders have attempted to 'sell' the Social Contract as the answer to working class problems in this crisis-racked, inflationary British capitalism.

The yelps and growls from the bosses' press alleging ballot rigging in Wales are proof that the bosses and their stooges know its significance very well.

ROUSE

The Social Contract depends on the working class being willing to be conned into accepting cuts in their living standards, and pretending not to notice. The miners simply refuse to play ball.

If the miners go forward to fight, as they did in 1972, for a massive wage increase, they can rouse large sections of the labour movement to challenge, fight and defeat the bosses in their attempt to cut our living standards.

ASSET

But while the miners show the militant face of the rank and file, the TUC, including its 'left' leaders, shows the other face, the face of the official labour movement — its docile, slavish, and stupid face.

So far this Labour Government is proving a strong asset to the bosses. It hopes, with the help of the trade union leaders, to line up whole sections of the labour movement in support of the 'social contract'. Its policies are not what the employers would like — given a free choice. They are certainly squealing and protesting against them. They may not be adequate, in the long run, to the bosses' needs. But they are certainly the best the bosses can get, unless they manage to break the

strength of the working class.

Since the Tories failed with the bludgeon, Labour tries its hand with conman's patter. No Tory Government could hope for collaboration like this, and right now such collaboration is the best the bosses can get or hope for.

STANDARDS

The TUC Circular to affiliated unions of 20th November sums up the policy, the attitude, and the prostration of the official labour movement to the Labour Government, with a frankness for which we are grateful, because it shows them in their true light.

Expressing full confidence in the Government's acts and plans, it "accepts" that wages can only hope to maintain working class living standards in the period ahead. The TUC in this way lends its authority to the fraud carried out for the bosses by the Labour government. They said the same one year ago. Burying their heads in the sand, they repeat it today — "we can only maintain living standards" — when official publications show a 3% drop in living standards over the last year.

The November 20th Circular is the main TUC response to the last budget. By his budget blackmail, Dennis Healey made it plain that if wages can't be kept well down then the only option of a Labour Government running capitalism will be to resign itself to, or even to stimulate, mass unemployment. Either way, living standards will fall.

INFLATION

Just to maintain living standards, with the prevalent rate of inflation, demands annual wage rises of 30%. But the TUC not only pretends that wages won't fall seriously in the period ahead, it pretends they haven't been falling in the last year!

Praising the policy of so-called price control, the TUC is willing to pay for this miserable, by a pledge not to use the giant strength of the labour movement to main-

tain and better its standards. The circular even 'emphasises' that TUC policy for a £30 minimum wage is only a "target"; in other words, settle for less now.

Union leaders, of course, can afford to be complacent in this field. Who ever heard of a full time official on £30 a week?

The TUC's presentation of the Social Contract is doubly dishonest in that it ignores the attacks on the Social Security, on the National Health Service, and on welfare generally, which is a massive additional attack on workers' living standards. The social contract isn't just a double cross — it is a prize example of that thing known to readers of spy stories as a double double cross!

The miners will have none of this — they have put in a claim for £30. The rank and file miners have spoken. All the red-bating and the witch-unting of the paid liars of the Fleet Street press, or of "Crawling Joe" Gormley, can't change that. The inactivity and sabotage of the trade union leaders can't change that. The rank and file of other industries must speak out too — and prepare to act as well.

CUT HOURS

To protect living standards effectively: a sliding scale of wages (zero thresholds, at least 60p for each 1% rise in the cost of living, continuously consolidated and based on a working class cost of living index).

To stop unemployment: cut hours, not jobs. A sliding scale of hours; share the work.

Where unemployment is threatened, occupy the factory! Workers must refuse to pay with wrecked lives and grinding poverty for the outmodedness of the present bosses' system. If we cannot prevent the development of mass unemployment, the linking of employed and unemployed workers to fight for work or full pay must become the major concern of revolutionary socialists.

Tom Ramsey
John O'Mahony

Mass lobby on 28th to free the Pickets

IF prevarication and postponement could free men from prison, the TUC General Council members would be known as ace jailbreakers.

As if Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were sunning themselves at the seaside, the 'statesmen' of the TUC at their meeting on November 20th set in motion the only kind of action they know — delayed action!

The organisation of a national lobby, first scheduled for November 21st and then for the 28th, has now been put in the hands of the TUC's construction Committee. This is a disgrace. The case of the Shrewsbury pickets was and is an issue for the entire working class movement, not just one section of it. The TUC General Council, which should itself have taken an immediate initiative and called mass official action to free the pickets, has passed the buck back to this committee of building trade union representatives, asking THEM to fix a date for a lobby of Parliament.

But, as Len Murray has pointed out himself, no date will be fixed until AFTER the Lords decide whether or not to grant Warren and Tomlinson leave to appeal. And that's not due until December 3rd... provisionally.

And if the Lords give the go-ahead for an appeal, the matter will drag on and on. The TUC's statement seems to expect this, talking of the Construction Committee preparing "contingency plans for a Parliamentary lobby to be held if necessary..."

This is scandalous! The TUC's decision was tantamount to that body itself writing an order to extend Des and Ricky's time in jail. For the trade union movement is strong enough to free them and quash all the charges against them. If it exerted its power AS IT PROMISED at its last full Congress meeting, the prison gates could be open in double quick time.

The TUC, after doing nothing for nearly three weeks, are now trying to hide behind the application for another Appeal. They always were sticklers for procedure! But that's no excuse. After all, they turned down Clive Jenkins' proposal to urge the two to drop the application. In any case, if the TUC were doing its job and calling its members out, Des and Ricky wouldn't need to be wasting time putting in an appeal to the Law Lords — who, in all their recent judgments on picketing, have come down heavily against any rights for pickets.

Our task, the task of rank and file trade unionists, and the task we have to force on the trade union leaders, is to go ahead and make November 28th OUR date for a massive lobby, accompanied by stoppages and demonstrations. If there is to be any action later, its effectiveness will depend largely on what we do NOW. And a massive demonstration of the rank and file's feelings on the 28th should give the trade union leaders this clear message: concerted strike action is our strongest weapon.



JACK PRICE draws the lesson of some past struggles against unemployment and suggests a programme to fight the impending threat.

THE RIGHT TO WORK

NOTHING better expresses the helplessness of the reformist trade union leaders in face of unemployment than their own confused words: "There are many ways in which we can influence unemployment. We can pressure the present government or indeed any other government which seeks deliberately to encourage unemployment or lower the standard of living of our members, by seeking taxation changes, higher investment, aid to underdeveloped areas or direct assistance to firms in dire financial troubles such as Rolls Royce and UCS."

'Not profit but social welfare'

"The right to work is a basic right of all working men, and the decision of the UCS workers to continue working is an example which can be copied throughout industry."

"We can work towards a policy of nationalisation and long term planning in industry. The aim must be public ownership where the chief concern is not profit but social welfare and the advancement of living standards. We must encourage a collective approach among trade unionists to current employment problems. This would involve fighting redundancies or, at the very least, demanding higher redundancy payments, longer notices, earlier retirement with adequate pensions, a shorter working week, greater control of overtime, longer holidays and so forth."

These were the words — with emphasis added — of George Doughty (General Secretary of DATA, now

called AUEW-TASS), writing in the Communist Party magazine Labour Monthly in September 1971. For all that it represents the most advanced policies of the left trade union leaders, it is still incredibly muddled and contains a number of reactionary implications.

The key to the helpless paralysis and confusion of the left trade union leaders in the face of unemployment lies precisely in those words 'the right to work is a basic right of all working men'. On the one hand it is so basic that it must at all costs be protected. On the other hand, the freedom to throw people out of work whenever the capitalists deem it necessary is so basic to the system that to tamper with this bosses' right means tampering with capitalism itself.

And not just fiddling with its collar, but fiddling with its throat!

A miserable pious wish

In his account of the events in France between 1848 and 1851 entitled *The Class Struggles in France*, Karl Marx brilliantly expressed the explosive, revolutionary/insurrectionary character of this paradox: "The first draft of the Constitution made before the June days" he wrote "still contained the *droit au travail*, the right to work — the first clumsy formula wherein the revolutionary demands of the proletariat are summarised. It was transformed into the *droit à l'assistance* — the right to public relief...and what modern state does not feed its paupers in some form or another? The right to work is, in the bourgeois sense, an absurdity, a miserable pious wish. But behind the right to work stands the power over capital; beyond the power over capital, the appropriation of the means of production, their subjection to the associated working class, and therefore, the abolition of wage slavery, of capital and of their mutual relations. Behind "the right to work" stood the June insurrection."

Anyone who seriously poses the right to work must realise that it is a contradiction: either it means a submission to capital — allowing it to gorge itself on us directly or via the state treasury so that we may then get a few crumbs; or it means a call to action by the working class to throw out the employers and control industry collectively according to its own principles and needs.

While George Doughty talks of "working towards" the latter, all he actually proposes is the former: "taxation changes, higher investment, aid to underdeveloped areas or direct assistance to firms in dire financial troubles."

Not that the left trade union bureaucrats don't care. But they only ever consider fighting when there is a "position of strength", that is, in their language, a "good

bargaining situation". The threat of redundancies, the existence already of a substantial number of unemployed workers and a shortage of investment funds is by definition a "bad bargaining position". Consequently fighting against unemployment in any way other than accepting wage restraint (wage cuts in an inflation situation) or demanding government subsidy, seems to them like spitting in the wind.

But a policy and a struggle is possible: a policy which depends on the activity of the rank and file themselves and aims at their unity. That this activity can be forthcoming is amply evidenced by the work-ins and sit-ins of the past four years and the development of traditional picketing methods into the beginnings of a workers' self defence force.

We must oppose all redundancies, lay-offs and short time working whatever the reason — bankruptcy, automation, "rationalisation", fall off in trade, etc. — and demand a reduction of hours to guarantee full employment with no loss of pay. Workers must be kept on the payroll at full pay. This situation would be eased by a general reduction in the working week. There's nothing sacred about 40 hours!

The tendency in recent years has been towards a marginal increase in the basic working week and an increase in the number of hours actually worked. We should demand a 30-hour week, and no overtime, without loss of pay.

A workers' inquiry

To the demand for parliamentary, employers' government or 'independent' inquiries into proposals for redundancies or closures, we counterpose the demand for a workers' inquiry. We demand that the books be opened to the workers' directly elected representatives who should expose publicly the operations of the capitalists, not just in one branch of industry or one firm, but in all their financial and state connections.

"Business secrecy", after all, is largely not a secret pact between one group of capitalists and another, but between the capitalist exploiters as a whole and the working class.

We oppose the handouts to the bosses, whether such handouts are dressed up as being "with control" or are brazenly flaunted as "unconditional"; and whether on a short term basis or long term, directly or by means of tax and other concessions.

Instead, whilst recognising that workers' control cannot exist on a serious and stable level while profit remains the chief regulator of the economy, we demand nationalisation without compensation of companies "unable" to satisfy workers' demands for work or wages. (If compensation would get the exploiters off our backs for good, it might be worth considering. But it won't have that effect. Compensation, on the contrary, means that the capitalists can stay on our backs and drag us down even after they have relinquished direct control and legal ownership of an industry.)

Nationalisation must be fought for, but it will not mean that industry ceases to be run in a capitalist way; in the interests of the capitalists or by their representatives. It is the working class's task to fight for nationalisation



Photo Workers Press

under workers' control. But by this we don't mean some phoney "participation" scheme or "worker directors" as in the steel industry. We are opposed to all such schemes where workers take responsibility for maintaining profitability and capitalist conditions of production.

In particular, where whole branches of industry are nationalised (e.g. shipbuilding and aircraft) we should prepare this move, undermining its bureaucratic nature, by trying to get conferences of employees at a local and national level to plan the control of these industries.

But most of all, we recognise that without using the most militant tactics, in particular factory occupations, all such schemes and demands are pious.

Coming unstuck in steel

THE REACTION of steelworkers to the British Steel Corporation's announcement of massive redundancies early in 1973 was, as the BSC no doubt predicted, confused.

In many of the works where the stewards did not expect any of the 50,000 redundancies to take place, there was no more reaction than a deep sigh of relief. For many of them, unemployment was something they had faced in the pits before coming into the steelworks, but with no fight back. They were just grateful to have been spared this time round.

Thus the big South Wales works at Port Talbot and Llanwern did not move a muscle to help their brothers at East Moors (Cardiff) or Newport Tubes. And most of the big Sheffield works and Scunthorpe plants turned their backs on their brothers in the Midlands, in Scotland and the North West.

The only works which was both marked down for a large slice of the planned investment and a participant in the fight to stop the steel redundancies was the Lackenby Works on Teesside.

This limited the possibilities from the start. But there were other things which divided one works from another. The main

trouble was that a number of works, even while combining in the National Action Committee which was sponsored by Shotton Steel Works in North Wales, also tried individual solutions.

It was not long before Ebbw Vale was sending coach-loads of local dignitaries, shop floor workers, church leaders, trade unionists and lords of the manor, led by convenors, mayors, councillors and representatives of local businessmen, to London to lobby glib MPs in a bid to keep steelmaking in Ebbw Vale.

East Moors, in turn, was not to be out-done. Steel was to be kept there too.

Finally even Shotton, the initiators of the combined action, sent their delegation down.

Tragi-comedy

Divisiveness was the mark of all these proceedings. Down to the tragi-comedy of a meeting in Connah's Quay which was addressed by the local Labour MP, the nearby Tory MP, and the local Plaid Cymru aspirant.

The Labour man blamed the redundancies on the Common Market countries; the Tory blamed them on the Japanese; and the Plaid Cymru repres-

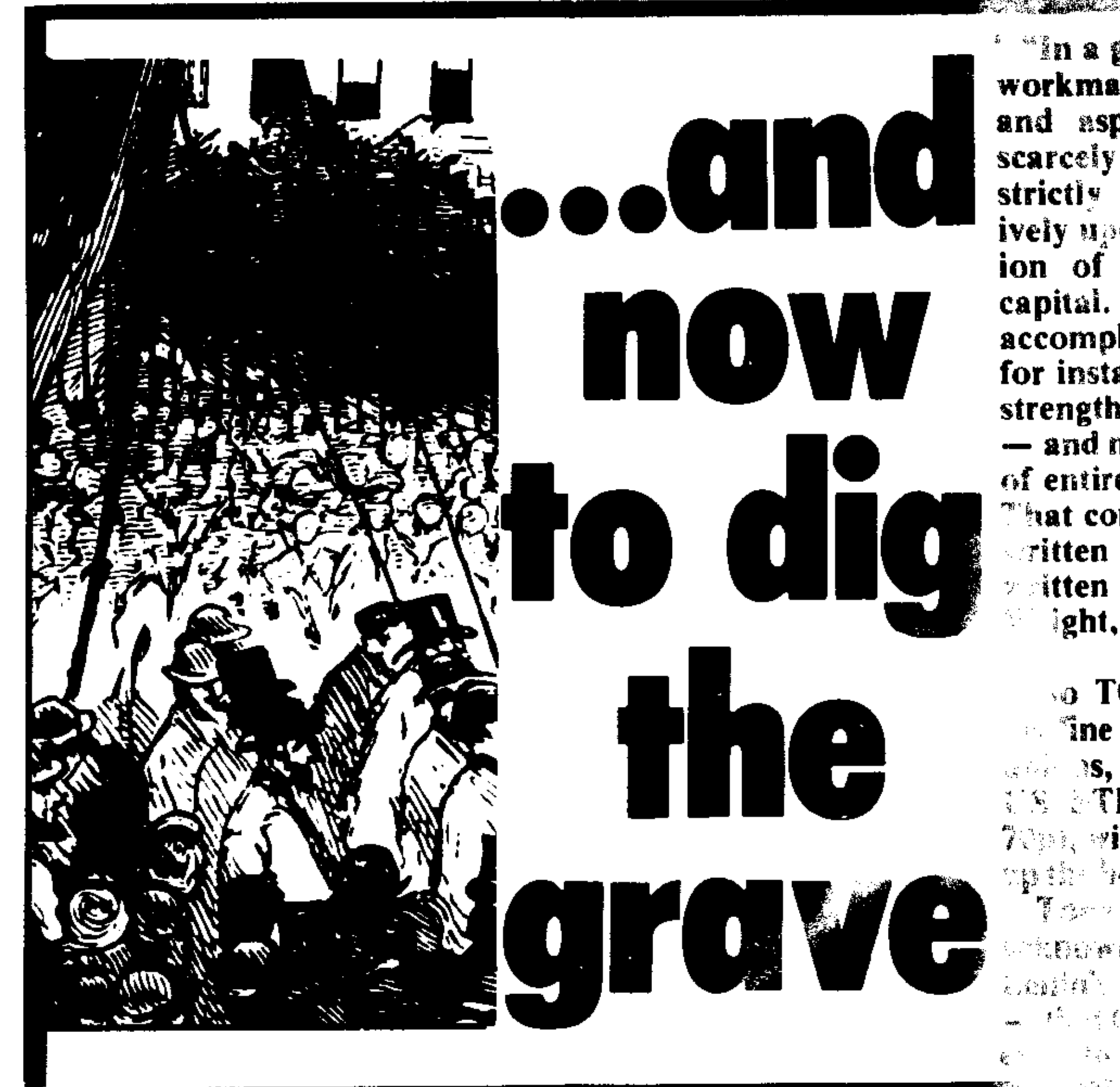
entative thought too must investment was going to the North East of England!

Viable

The real source of the weakness of the National Action Committee, though, was that it accepted the viability argument. Those who participated in the Committee were constantly at pains to stress that their works was viable (the others might have to go, but their works made money...). They didn't stick to the basic principle of workers' struggles: **LET THE BOSSES FOOT THE BILL.**

The fact that these events took place in a nationalised industry is important. It demonstrates that nationalised industry, because it is as much a part of capitalism as private industry is, not only provides no guarantee against redundancy, but operates by the same basic laws as private industry.

Co-operation with the boards of nationalised industries is no different from collaborating with the bosses of private industry. As long as the working class is not in control of the state, workers must protect the independence of their organisations, their struggles and their representatives.



...and now to dig the grave

"In a g... workman... and asp... scarcely... strictly... ively ap... ion of... capital... accompl... for insta... strength... — and n... of entire... that con... written... ight."

TO... the... S... T... 7... with... 7... — the... — the...

1956 - the lessons of 'the Big Six'

IT WOULD be the easiest thing in the world to find scores of tributes to the novelty of the tactics of the UCS workers. The break with the stolid strike - and - stay - away method of most struggles has inspired thousands upon thousands of workers all over Britain.

But it is almost as if the very brilliance of this novelty has dazzled observers to the point where they have lost sight of the fact that the UCS action and many of those that it inspired not only made a break with the tactical side of previous struggles - but also with the political content of earlier fights against redundancy.

And though the tactical break was largely positive - with some qualifications - the political break was completely negative.

The lack of a revolutionary party rooted in the working class imposes upon us a condition of semi-amnesia, so that the lessons of one series of struggles are hardly remembered a decade later.

The break appears all the sharper as the big anti-redundancy struggles of the 'fifties were fought, in some cases, under slogans more appropriate to the situation of the late 'sixties and early seventies.

"In September 1955 some 300 shop stewards of the motor and allied trades met at Oxford at a conference called by the 'Big Six' Motor Commit-

tee" recorded Harry Finch, the convenor of Norton Motors, in his pamphlet **The Fight against Redundancy**. "This Committee" he continued, "was set up in the spring of 1955 to represent a rank and file movement covering the main motor firms and ancillary trades.

"The conference was called to decide a policy towards automation, and a resolution was unanimously agreed which declared: that we would not allow automation to drive workers out of work, that we would oppose all sackings and that we would fight for a 40-hour week without loss of pay, to be progressively shortened to prevent mass sackings due to new techniques, and that where automation did displace people, they should be retained and retrained by the company on full wages."

Of course, the finest resolutions butter no parsnips, as it were: as Harry Finch pointed out in that 1956 pamphlet, "what is possible or not possible is entirely dependent on the relationship of forces engaged in the battle." Still, it is worth remembering that though there were failures, the strikers at A.P.V., Crawley, "won a substantial victory in their redundancy settlement precisely on the above lines. They were the following:

"1. Consultation. This shall consist of the shop stewards and the management discussing all alternative methods if redundancy is threatened. These shall include transfers within the factory or short time working.

"2. If this fails and redundancy is still insisted upon, then redundant workers shall be retained on the payroll of the company until such time as they have found alternative employment."

Sackings

Ironically, therefore, in this situation of capitalist boom it was easier to raise a slogan of **WORK OR FULL PAY** - a slogan to combat unemployment on the scale of the 'thirties - than it is today. (Though here, perhaps, the exception proves the rule: "the Crawley workers' agreement was vital to them because Crawley is a new town, and if there is no work there it would entail over 20 miles' journey to Brighton or London to find other jobs, in addition to paying the high rents of the Corporation houses.")

The principles of these struggles from the fifties are as relevant today as they were then. The essential principle underlying all others was **MAKE THE BOSSES PAY, NOT THE WORKERS**. And because that underpinned their defence of their jobs their actions weren't channelled into deputations together with mayor and local councillors, members of the Chamber of Commerce, all political parties ... and a brass band.

They were not sidetracked into endless visits to London, endless presentation of a "good" - that is, a **capitalist** - case for keeping the works open, and they were not driven into the cul-de-sac of proposing "alternative" cuts, either to their wages or to someone else's jobs.

While the generally favourable employment situation meant that it was harder to galvanise a workforce into a fighting unit, as hundreds of workers left to get jobs elsewhere as soon as the threat of redundancy was raised, it also meant that a surplus workforce retained on the payroll would not be there long before finding alternative work.

Slogans

When it comes to the Shrewsbury 24, it's a different case. The 2 are not in jail because a particular law has been passed or re-discovered, but because of a political policy of 'throwing the book' at pickets as part of a campaign by the police and the bosses to intimidate militant pickets, particularly mass and flying pickets. This makes getting them out the important thing.

However much we press for changes in the law, the British police and courts will always

IRELAND - IS IT A WAR?

YOUR front page article in WF 76 "Shot down in cold blood" hits on a question which is obviously quite a problem for the British authorities.

Their success in presenting the aggression and repression in Ireland to the the British working people and labour movement has depended crucially on how the 'conflict' was classified.

As long as it's not called "war" then their opponents are terrorists, not soldiers; the internees are 'suspected criminals' not prisoners of war; the killing of spys and informers is murder, not a recognised act of war, as is retaliation against military and civilian targets in this country; and those caught are treated as common criminals, not nationalist partisans.

In point of fact, Britain manages to operate a double standard, whereby the north of Ireland is at war, and Britain is at peace - despite the claim that Northern Ireland is an integral part of Britain. This allows for justifi-

ication of everything that the British troops do to the Irish (especially in the Republican "enemy" areas), whilst denying any 'act of war' justification to the other side's (the Irish Republican Army's) operations in Ireland or Britain.

The Ministry of Defence has actually stepped in now to stop the names of dead British soldiers being added to war memorials. It is, they say, "inappropriate". And even the **Sunday Telegraph**, arch-chauvinist scion of the right wing press - which one would have expected might object - was able to take the hint. In a brief editorial comment entitled "Pro Patria", they say "the Ministry of Defence is probably right to advise the citizens of Alford, Lincolnshire, to erase from their war memorial the name of a young soldier recently killed in Ulster...there is no reason to give the IRA the satisfaction of seeing its crimes recorded in stone."

What it really means is that to do so would remove the killing of British soldiers

from the category of a "crime".

The worthy citizens of Alford, Lincs, appear to remain unimpressed by such sophistry. And the foster father of one of the dead soldiers said "I cannot understand the Ministry's argument that what is happening in Ulster is not war."

Evidently, though they're fond of digging it out of their 'Book of famous quotations', the British ruling class don't subscribe to the definition made by Clausewitz that "war is the continuation of politics by other means". Rather, like Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon on Vietnam, they insist on the aggressor's right to define whether it is engaged in war or in "peacekeeping".

Workers Fight is quite right that it is for the Irish to decide whether or not their country has been occupied by British troops who have no right to be there, and whether or not the struggle to kick them out is made more legitimate by being called war.

Bill Blake
Sheffield.

Free the 2! And further?

WHEN FIVE dockers were jailed under the Industrial Relations Act, Workers Fight quite rightly called for a "General strike to Smash the Act"; merely to say "Free the Five" would have been a cop-out.

But with two pickets in jail you're saying "All out to get them out" - i.e. "Free the Two". That makes the slogan "Defend the Right to Picket" meaningless - unless freeing Des and Ricky is in itself the main aim, the big victory in

defence of picketing that must be won.

Surely the paper should be demanding that Labour quashes the charges (all mention of this has been dropped recently) and fulfils its promise to give pickets legal protection. Workers' direct action counts for more than any law "defending" our rights, but we don't scorn to fight for reforms. Especially in this case: let's put Wilson on the spot instead of letting him off the hook. We don't want to

see the Official Solicitor again, we want all anti-union laws smashed. And if we can mobilise workers around the "quashing" and "legal protection" demands, we'll go a lot further than just getting our brothers out of nick.

OK, so the going's heavy, but let's not be disheartened by the lack of a response as immediate as that over the "Pentonville Five".

Fraternally,
Alan Theasby
Middlesbrough.

CONFUSION OVER CONSPIRACY

have laws available to use against workers - if they dare. So it's not a case of depriving them of a particular law (though we're not against that at any time) but of saying: "Don't you dare to use the courts and the laws you have against workers for doing what any trade unionist should be doing".

In fact, in attempting to divert attention from the fight to get the lads out to repealing or changing this or that law, the Union officials (and the Communist Party too) are trying to dampen down the here-and-now struggle. Instead of a show of strength and anger, the struggle then changes into one of whispers and nudges in the committee rooms of 'power', and is taken out of the hands of the rank and file. Meanwhile, the lads stay in jail, and the courts retain all their nerve and are able to continue to come down on pickets without fear of having to let go their victims.

In doing this, those who have stressed getting the law changed have also been dishonest. They have got people fuming against the 1875 Conspiracy Act, and have tried to imply that it was an earlier breed of Industrial Relations Act.

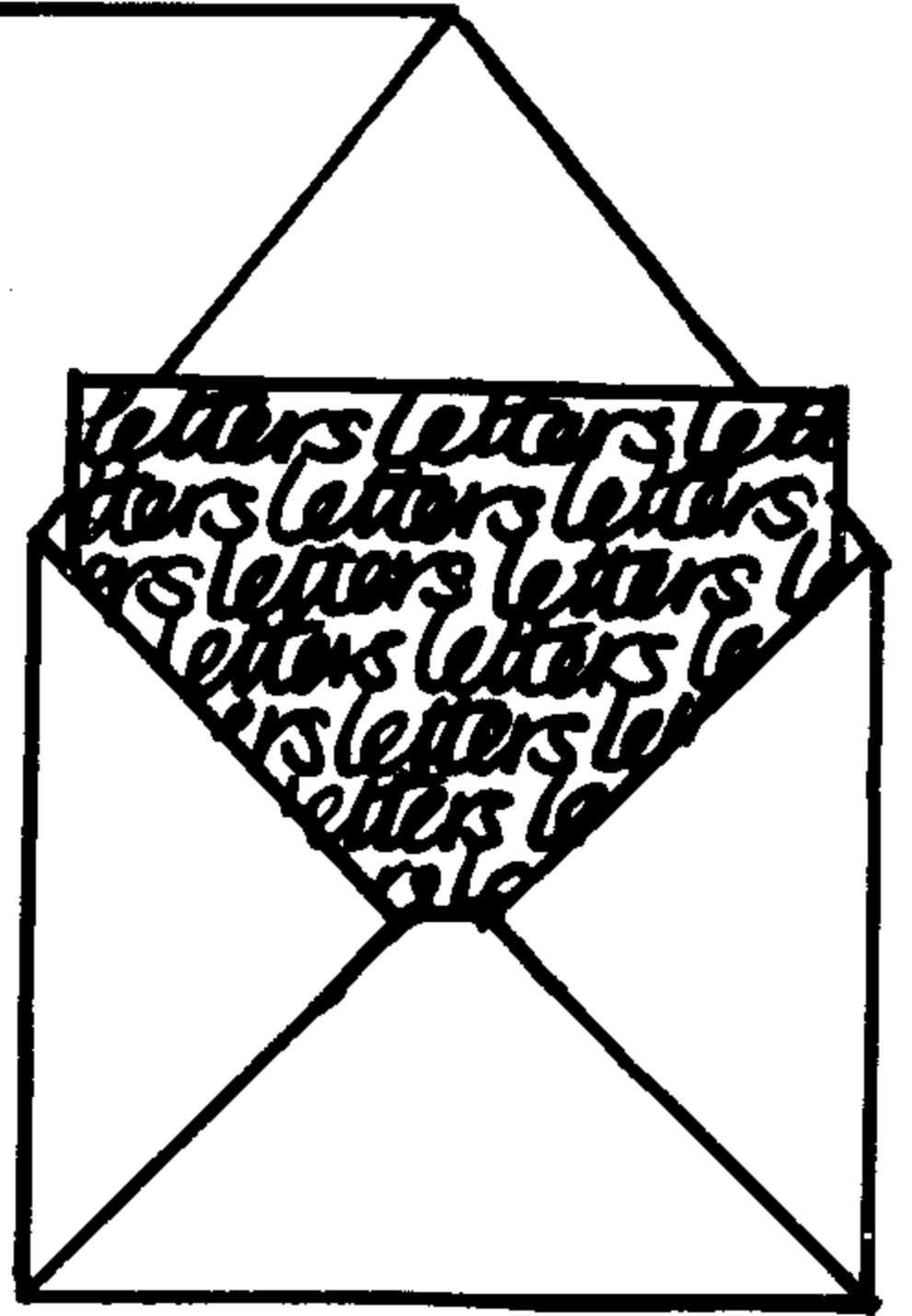
But it was nothing of the sort. As Ron Vandy has written several times in WF, the 1875 Act actually abolished the crime of conspiracy in relation to strikes. It was a major step forward for trade unionism, and its repeal would have very serious consequences for

trade union action, and would make every striker liable to prosecution for conspiracy. (The abolition of the sections on intimidation and so on would of course be welcome, but they are in any case amply covered in other laws, and any that aren't already so covered, very soon would be.)

These organisations such as UCATT, that have been making a lot of noise about this law, have very well staffed legal departments and know what nonsense they are talking. So what they are doing is quite deliberately playing on workers' lack of knowledge of the law to create a diversion from any industrial challenge to the power of the courts.

WF has of course mentioned the need to get changes in the law on picketing and the law of conspiracy. But if we haven't placed these things uppermost it is because, unlike July 1972, to do so would be to limit and stifle the most important struggle.

Finally, we still think that the demand to quash the charges is important. (And, unlike A.T.'s letter, we wouldn't bracket it with changing the law, but rather with getting the lads out - i.e. as an immediate task.) But it's a very optimistic demand to make: in real terms, it will either happen as part of a massive movement to get the lads out, or it won't happen at all. Thus, in concentrating all the attention onto the need to get the lads free, we are calling for the only action that has a chance of also achieving the quashing of the other charges.



PRENTICE SUED...

WITH THE prospect of new cuts coming up in education, a look at what these mean for just one area should highlight problems that those involved in education are going to be facing all over the country soon.

The East London Borough of Newham is recognised by the Department of Education and Science (DES) to be, the most socially deprived area in Britain. The schools are old, grim and grossly overcrowded, with mobile huts as makeshift classrooms in their playgrounds. There is an acute shortage of teachers, and most kids are getting only part-time schooling. And there's a chronic lack of cash available for modernising the schools and providing much needed facilities.

Things are due to get worse as the effects of Labour policies (cuts in education and social services, higher education mergers and the reduction of trainee teacher places) begin to bite.

At the moment, over 100 Newham parents have children who can't get school places at all. One mother, Pauline Brown, plans to sue Reg Prentice, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, for not ensuring that her 15 year old son Peter could go to school. The Newham Rights Organisation is also likely to sue Prentice for failing to fulfil his obligations under the 1944 Education Act.

It must be said however that legal arguments alone won't get the parents very far, and certainly can't solve the grave social problems of Newham or anywhere else. Parents, teachers and, most important, the kids themselves, should form an Action Committee ready to use all methods, including school strikes and picketing of the Education Office.

Such a committee, if it were formed, would of course come up against all the bourgeois crap about "the normal channels" etc. But at least there won't be too many people stupid enough to suggest writing to the local MP for support - for he is none other than Reg Prentice himself!

However, the local Labour ward parties and LPYS should have the guts to actively support any action that parents, school students and teachers take.

Dan Hollis,
West Ham

... way [the British historic struggle between labour chapter ('The General Strike

... tells the story of the book') Lane

... "Since the

... reformist political continuity of

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... leader Fritz Tarnow.

... "Are we



BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS

From P.1

The carnage in Birmingham has not merely brought the full horror of war into Britain. It also threatens to bring into the British working class the deep divisions and communal hatreds that have crippled and poisoned the Northern Ireland working class.

Revolutionaries in Britain have never had any reason to support the IRA bar one — it, and it alone, was leading a war of liberation against 'our own' ruling class. The talk common in sections of the left about 'Provo-fascists' was and is slanderous or ignorant nonsense. Nevertheless their politics are not our politics. Support has meant support against our own ruling class and its army: it did not imply political support.

Now, conversely, opposition to the apparent new turn towards hitting civilian targets does not imply or necessitate any basic change in our position of solidarity with the republican struggle: they are still fighting a just war against 'our own' imperialism.

We condemn; we do not change sides.

CAUSE

Any soldier fighting in an army to whose cause he is totally committed might utterly object to some tactic or action and find it indefensible — without abandoning his cause, and certainly without joining up with the enemy. It is in that spirit that we say: we condemn the Birmingham bombing; and we remain fully committed to the cause of an independent socialist Ireland, and in solidarity with those now leading the fight for Irish independence.

In the final analysis, the British government and ruling class are responsible for the bombings in Birmingham, as they are directly responsible for the terror in Northern Ireland. Britain simply has no right to be in Ireland; the IRA is fighting a just war to get it out. Either the IRA will win that war and unify Ireland, or the republican population will be beaten down for now. But there will doubtless be a new uprising after an interval — as there always has been following Britain's bloody victories over the Irish in the past.

There is only one solution: a united, independent Ireland with internal autonomy for the Protestant minority.

DUTIES

The duty of socialists in Britain is clear:

- a) Firmly dissociate from any bombing campaign aimed at the civilian population.
- b) Maintain and fight for a position of continued solidarity with the IRA.
- c) Defend civil liberties in Britain. Emergency powers against the IRA will be used against the whole working class. Police power to hold 'suspects' for 7 days at their mercy will apply not only to IRA 'suspects' but to militant pickets, demonstrators, etc in the class struggles that are imminent.
- d) Stand against the inevitable backlash which will hit the pro-republican left and probably the whole Irish community in Britain.
- e) We must point out the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies and the double standards. Workers in the Midlands have struck and demonstrated over the Birmingham explosions, but they never turned a hair over the slaughter of 19 unarmed civilians in Derry; nor the hundreds of sectarian murders (almost entirely of Catholics, and over two dozen in past month alone) made possible by British Army action to suppress the Catholics' self defence; nor over the concentration camps existing within the "UK" for 3½ years; nor the British army terror in

Belfast, nor the monstrous injustice of the Orange state, which has been the pre-condition for all these horrors.

The ton and smashed bodies of kids in a discotheque pub are terrible to contemplate. But are they more terrible to contemplate than the mangled bodies of children smashed by British armoured cars in Belfast, women blinded by rubber bullets fired in their faces, babies or old people choked with CS gas, or unarmed people shot down in cold blood by the British Army? Only if viewed through nationalist spectacles.

The problem for the British left is to cut through the instinctive nationalist reflexes which are now producing a pro-government and anti-Irish backlash. The past cowardly evasions of the left over Ireland, its outright capitulation to chauvinism over the Common Market (and the previous indifference of the labour movement to anti-colonial struggles) are now catching up with it — wearing 7-league boots. Fascist organisations like the National Front are growing and able to enlist large scale support on the Irish issue.

We must insist on the ruling class's responsibility for the war and all its consequences, and continue to stress the fundamental justice of the republican struggle. This is the only possible basis on which to hope to stand against the present hysteria.

Finally, we must demand and campaign for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, and oppose British support for either the Orange para-military forces, or for any future 6 County state.



Asians strike for victimised white militant — RACE

DIVISION FAILS AT INTEX

SHIFT workers at Intex (ICI) at Ashton under Lyne are out on strike against the victimisation of one of their mates.

Bro. Dave Hallsworth was sacked for not transferring against his will to another section and grade of work. This sacking came at the end of weeks of pressure against Bro. Hallsworth by the management.

The sacking was also preceded by Bro. Hallsworth being arbitrarily expelled from his union, the Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers. This expulsion was only verbally notified and without any open meeting or prior notice. He received by hand a letter from the union Executive, dated 14th November, notifying him that he had been expelled on the 8th November!

The local District Secretary has tried to discourage the strike against his victimisation, by arguing that trade unionists should not support a "non-union member". But the local branch committee of the union has dissociated itself from the expulsion attempt. A leaflet put out by the strike committee says: "We shift workers have shown by our action our opposition to such underhand

dealings by our union officials. As far as we are concerned, Dave Hallsworth is a principled trade unionist. Indeed, that is one of the reasons the management have victimised him."

But, the strike committee claim, that is not the only reason for the sacking. They feel it is a calculated attempt by the management to divide and weaken the shop floor. A few weeks before the sacking, a member of junior management approached one of the Asian workers, telling him there would be a "white man's strike", and that if he persuaded his fellow Asian workmates not to join the strike, the management would "show their gratitude."

This crude and degrading attempt to divide the shop floor on racial lines failed, and the Asians are out solidly in support of their white brother.

The secretary of the strike committee, Bro. Shabir Ahmed, told WORKERS FIGHT that they're getting stronger and will stay out until the case is won.

Messages and donations to the Secretary, Intex Shift-workers Strike Committee, 186 Kings Road, Ashton u Lyne. JACK SUTTON

'THE MANAGEMENT WAS WALKING ALL OVER US' say T & H strikers

WORKERS at Tillie & Henderson in Leigh (near Bolton), members of the Tailors & Garment Workers Union, began an unofficial strike on Monday November 18th., over a bonus scheme.

The 300 or more strikers, mostly women machinists, have organised round the clock pickets, and have shown they mean business by sticking out long hours in the cold and fog. Pickets have also gone down to another T & H plant in nearby Golborne, where two men were suspended for coming out to show their support. The

Golborne management drew the blinds and kept the girls inside to protect them from contact with the 'subversives' from Keigh.

The dispute has been caused by the women's feeling that their traditional passivity has done nothing but let the management walk all over them. One picket said "We've been just all talk. But now we've had enough and we've come out and they are really shocked!"

Things came to a head last week, with the refusal of management to concede the workers' demands over a new

engineering scheme. Over the past few months they've been doing what they call "re-engineering" — that means, installing new machinery, setting time and motion men with stopwatches to stand over the girls as they work, and forcing up productivity.

They are offering an increase of 3p an hour to operate the scheme (making up the grand total of 80p in all...) if they reach 100% of the production target.

The workers' claim is for an increase in basic fall back pay from £21.80 to £25. Modest enough, you might think, but apparently not modest enough to Tillie & Henderson.

The strike is already hitting hard, and if organisation gets off the ground with a strike committee to prepare collection sheets and send pickets further afield, it could well escalate, especially since the Leigh plant contains the cutting room for all T & H shirt and blouse factories in other parts of England as well as Ireland, North Wales and Scotland.

The strikers are already thinking along these lines: the 24-hour picket is not so much aimed at stopping supplies going in (for which they've had encouraging support from most transport drivers) but mainly to make sure the cutting room equipment isn't moved out.

SPREAD

The Golborne works is already, after two days, short of cloth for making up, and this effect could spread rapidly.

The strike has also brought other issues to the workers' attention. The one UCATT member involved impressed upon fellow strikers the importance of the imprisonment of the Shrewsbury pickets.

As yet, the strikers are still trying to get the strike made official. But even at this stage, they are confident they've given the management a real fright, and proud of having given a lead to workers in other plants.

Scotland-Teachers fight to defend standards

OVER 300 Scottish teachers were joined by teachers from all over England in a march through London on Wednesday 20th. They were calling for a £15 a week flat rate increase, backdated to May 1974, to be implemented now.

This action is the latest move in the campaign initiated in Scotland to put pressure on the Houghton Committee of Inquiry into teachers' pay, which is due to report at the end of November.

Working conditions in Scotland are appalling, with 11,000 secondary teachers and 7,000 primary teachers needed to bring schools up to full strength. It was the threat to withdraw designation payments (extra payments to teachers in understaffed schools as a bribe to keep them there) in exchange for improved working conditions that sparked off the first unofficial action committee. Response to the committee's initial demands was so overwhelming that soon there was a national campaign around immediate implementation of the proposed Houghton payment of 30% increase for all teachers.

But how this 30% is paid out is crucial. If the 30% increase held out by Prentice as a promise and a bribe to wait for Houghton was applied to the 'global sum' currently being paid to all teachers, and if this increase in the global sum was divided equally among all teachers, this would result in a flat rate increase for all of £15 per week. This is how the figure of £15 has been arrived at.

But the Teachers Panel proposals to Houghton are very different: they are for each teacher to receive roughly an increase of 30% of their own present earnings, and would mean that head teachers will be getting an increase greater than the proposed new starting salary

for young teachers!

Questions currently being asked are: why is Houghton taking so long? Why has Ross, the Secretary of State for Scotland, refused even the official Scottish Union's claim of £10 a week (a claim the union was panicked into putting in an attempt to buy off the militancy of Scottish teachers). And what is this mysterious "something on account" that is supposed to be appearing in either our December or January pay packets?

Chained

As the Houghton inquiry drags on, it becomes increasingly clear that, far from being an interim award on our next salary claim, it will constitute the claim itself! And we shall then have to wait until April 1976 for our next annual salaries award. (This is a view supported by the education correspondent of The Times.)

The reason why Ross is holding out on the £10 per week claim is that he knows the Houghton award will be so low that it won't even rise to that paltry level. The current economic crisis will be used as an excuse to keep teachers chained to worsening living standards, and what little they are offered will be taken away by taking the salary increases out of the overall education budget: which means further deterioration in working conditions, with schools running out of even supplies of pencils, books and paper.

Current educational expenditure is falling at the rate of at least 15% per annum in real terms.

The "something on account" (rumoured to be in the region of £100) is a one-off lump sum payment designed to put a damper on

the pressure from rank and file teachers which is building up around Houghton. If Houghton doesn't cough up in the month following the lump sum payment, it will disappear and teachers will actually find themselves taking home less the following month.

This shows up the abject capitulation of the NUT leadership in dropping the demand for an extension of the threshold payments. Since last April, thresholds have given us more money than our 1974 salary claim, so the claim by the NUT Executive that the lump sum payment will be more than we would have got from the thresholds for that month can be answered with "so bloody what?" Thresholds are at least a continuing (if inadequate) protection against inflation, whereas any one-off lump sum is of little or no consequence in the present economic climate. It is nothing other than a sop.

Campaign

The immediate task is to inform teachers about Houghton and its implications, and to break all illusions among those teachers who have gained a distorted view of it from the bourgeois press — including the NUT journal 'The Teacher'.

The key question for classroom teachers in the continuing campaign of solidarity with the Scottish strikers — currently being organised by Rank and File — is: "Do you expect to gain £15 a week from Houghton? Then support the Scottish strikers, for if they don't get it, then we won't."

Ian Hollingworth 21.11.74

Manchester Martyrs March

IN 1886 three Irishmen named Allen, Larkin and O'Brien took part in a rescue bid to release the top leader of the republican Fenian movement, who was imprisoned by the British. They attacked a police van in Manchester which was carrying the prisoner, and in the course of shooting off the lock, accidentally killed one of the police guards.

Allen, Larkin and O'Brien were publicly hanged by the British state, and ever since, though the name of the Fenian leader they rescued has all but sunk into obscurity, the three have been remembered as the "Manchester Martyrs".

Though there have, tragically, been hundreds upon hundreds of Irish republican martyrs since then, murdered, tortured and imprisoned by Britain and its agents, somehow songs are still sung about "the boys that smashed the van". And every year republicans have honoured their memory with a march to Moston Cemetery in Manchester.

Earlier this year, the traditional commemoration was, quite unexpectedly, brutally disrupted and attacked by the thugs of the National Front, who had whipped up a few local residents to a lynch-mob fury of revenge following on the M62 coach bomb, in which a Moston family was killed.

This attack proved to be the start of what has now become an official policy of harassment of Irish republican funerals and commemorations held in this country, of which we have witnessed the latest in the past week.

On NOVEMBER 24th, another Manchester Martyrs commemoration will be held. And in reply to all the witch-unting and harassment, there should be a massive turnout in support from the British left.

The least we can do is show which side we're on.

Mass picket at Prebbles

IN DEFIANCE of the High Court injunctions against picketing outside the offices of Prebbles Estate Agents in Upper Street, Islington, a large crowd gathered for the regular picket the very next Saturday. The police in response proceeded to cause several breaches of the peace, finally arresting four of the pickets. The rest of the picket then marched to the police station to demand their comrades' release, and were joined en route by quite a large crowd of sympathetic Saturday morning passers by.

The next picket will be on DECEMBER 7th, and it is hoped that a big turnout will let the High Court judge know what it thinks of his view that no picket of any sort is legal unless it is connected with an industrial dispute.

MEETINGS

LONDON Workers Fight forum. "Racialism and the Working Class". Speaker: Joe Wright. 8.30pm, Sunday 1st December, at the 'George', Liverpool Road, N.1.

MIDDLESBROUGH Workers Fight meeting. "Free Warren and Tomlinson!". Speaker: Ian Heyes (UCATT convenor). 7.30pm, Tuesday 25th November, at the 'Princess Alice', Middlesbrough.

MIDDLESBROUGH Workers Fight forum. "Pacifism and Socialism". Speaker: Alan Briston. 7.30pm, Friday 29th November, at the Settlement, Newport Rd, Middlesbrough.

COVENTRY Workers Fight

meeting. "What Fascism is and how to fight it". Speaker: Andrew Hornung. 7.30pm, Friday November 29th, at Tudor House, Spon St.

BOLTON Social to raise funds for demonstrators arrested on anti-NF protests. Folk song and disco. 8pm, Monday 2nd December, at Derby Ward Labour Club.

NOTTINGHAM W.F. Public meeting: "The case for revolutionary regroupment". Speaker Andrew Hornung. At the White Hart, Glasshouse Street (behind Victoria Centre). Sunday 24th November at 8pm

Published by Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1 Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.