

The Red Mole

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IRELAND: THE WAR WILL CONTINUE



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

BUILDING THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN BRITAIN

RANK AND FILE MINERS CONFERENCE THE BUDGET
ENGINEERING WORKERS OCCUPY PLANTS
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT USED N.U.S. CONFERENCE
PEARCE COMMISSION OPEN LETTER TO I.S. ON IRELAND

A PANIC BUDGET?...BUT NO REAL CHANGE

The latest budget represents a defeat for the ruling class. Naturally it does nothing for the poor, the pensioners, etc., but what it does do is attempt to expand the economy in a situation in which not merely have the trade unions not been defeated, but on the contrary have scored a victory in the miners strike. There should be no doubt but that this is a recipe for disaster for British capitalism. As we have noted many times, Heath had intended to expand the economy, in order to raise productivity for entry into the Common Market, after dealing with the unions. He could then possibly have hoped for 3-4 years of growth with a fair chance of winning the next General Election. Now we can predict with relative certainty that the first signs of real trouble will begin to appear long before that is over.

From the budget it now appears that Heath may actually be going to try to make a shift to acting as leader of that section of the ruling class which wishes to try to do a deal with the trade unions. It is unclear whether he actually wants to do this, still less whether he will be capable of it, but it should be understood clearly that this bourgeois strategy will fail. In those circumstances the Heath government will drift without a policy. The crisis of the ruling class will intensify. Already, as we noted in our editorial after the miners' strike, the Labour leaders have been able to move out of their peripheral position in British politics and go onto the offensive. The response of Labour M.P.s to the Tories' announcement on the re-adoption of Labour's regional policies shows that they are now convinced they are on the offensive. Wilson, with his negotiations with Sinn Fein, is already beginning to take up his 'gimmicks' strategy. Providing that Jenkins can be neutralized, Harold Wilson must be feeling more confident than he has done for the last two years.

As regards the real actors on the stage, that is to say the working class and its 'leaders', and the employers, the situation is as we described it in our editorial at the end of the miners strike. The rank and file of the trade unions have been encouraged by the miners victory. The occupations in Manchester are the best signs of this. Sections of the ruling class are now going to see clearly that if Heath has decided to make a change in policy it is not going to work. All that will probably now occur is that the section of the ruling class represented by *The Economist* and other such publications will now change its policy over the next year from "Support Heath" to "Dump Heath". If the section of the ruling class which wants to adopt the policy of doing a deal with the trade unions has succeeded in gaining the

upper hand over that section which wants a confrontation then all that signifies is that they will become discredited more completely in the next few years when it is revealed once again that integration won't work.

What we may be in for, is a little musical chairs amongst the representatives of the ruling class. Wilson post 1966 model, who must now be thinking how he can make it up with the bourgeoisie over the Common Market, will probably move back to trying to look like Wilson 1964 model.

Heath will try to look like Wilson in his post 1966 model, and Powell, who has been made to seem exceedingly quiet by the first two years of Tory Government, will now probably try to emerge as a souped up Heath. A few people may be expected to become confused and take up odd positions. Grimond of all people, in a bizarre gesture, has returned from the dead to call for a hard line. It is all really of no interest which side the individual actors take up. The basic forces remain as before.

The main threat within the working class movement still remains the moves to an agreement on incomes policy between Wilson and the trade unions. As for the TUC and the trade union leaders, a few may now have illusions about a deal with Heath. Certainly sections of the TUC want it, if for no other reason than that the TUC is largely an irrelevance if the trade unions are not doing business with the government. Indeed the TUC's main role has become errand boy between unions and government. On the other hand Jones and Scanlon still must feel they have little to gain from an incomes policy. Even if Heath has decided to retreat to a policy of integrating the unions, it is by no means certain he will succeed at all, even in getting verbal agreement (see editorial in the last issue of *The Red Mole*).

In short, what does this budget represent? It represents (as someone once described a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical) sound, words, music and signifying *nothing*. All it means is that Wilson will now, at least for a period, have the whip hand against Heath. In that particular contest the working class has no real interests at stake, except that it would help to destroy a few Labourist illusions if Wilson were once more in power. In any case the change in Tory strategy, if there has truly been one, will fail. The confrontation policy was the only one with any chance of succeeding. In a few years time we could be back to the 1970-72 strategy, only this time with more venom. The basic slogans corresponding to the situation remain the central ones we advanced at the end of the miners strike.

**FINISH THE JOB THE MINERS STARTED—SMASH!
THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPTS TO IMPOSE A
WAGE NORM!**

**NO TO ANY FORM OF INCOMES POLICY!
NO COMPLIANCE WITH THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, NO UNION REGISTRATION, FOR IMMEDIATE SOLIDARITY STRIKES IN DEFENCE OF VICTIMS OF THE ACT!**

Given that in at least the best organised sections of the working class the 7 per cent norm is taking a beating, the central slogans remain the second and third. On this basis, if these types of slogans are taken up by the whole of the working class, it will be possible to fight both any reversion to integrationism by Heath, to get up ahead of steam in the more favourable conditions for trade union action created by an economic expansion, and most importantly of all, to fight any new manoeuvres by Wilson. The issue which now assumes even greater importance than before is that of Ireland.

If Heath is going to fail in the long-term with his economic strategy, his Government can well and truly suffer political defeat in Ireland in the coming few months. The greatest defeat for British capitalism (and, therefore, a victory for the working class) would be a victory by the IRA against the British army. Already a really drastic manoeuvre has been forced upon the Tory Government by the mass struggle—social and military—of the nationalist minority in the North of Ireland. Whilst some confusion may be caused in the short-term and methods of struggle may alter, nothing indicates that the Catholics are likely to be bought off by the sops they have been offered.

So far the British working class has virtually destroyed the bourgeoisie's economic strategy. It has not succeeded in destroying its political credibility. This blow is now on the agenda in Ireland. As so often in the past, the key to the contemporary stage of the British revolution is in Ireland. Despite their complete unity in "the national interest" on the question of direct rule neither Heath nor Wilson has an answer to British imperialism's Irish problem. This time, however, it would be good, for a change, if the British working class didn't leave the Irish working class to do its fighting for it. This makes the campaign in solidarity with the Irish struggle against British imperialism an extremely important question for British socialists—and a good focus for this is the coming ISC conference in Oxford (for details see elsewhere in this issue).

THE BUDGET MEASURES

The Budget will do little to reduce unemployment. Its measures are mainly intended to speed up the capital intensification of industry.

The analysis of the current situation carried in the editorial of *The Red Mole*, 37, has been vindicated by the Tory Government's Budget. All the Government's measures are determined by the fact that it realises that it has to go for expansion and an investment boom, before it has inflicted a decisive defeat on the trade unions. This is extremely dangerous but is forced upon the Government by the failure of its previous endeavours to get investment going, and in light of Britain's coming entry into the Common Market. Unless British industry can be quickly modernised and made competitive, entry itself is extremely risky from the bourgeoisie's point of view.

It is this which has determined the lines of the Budget and the economic strategy it represents. The Government must appear to be acting to reduce unemployment drastically (to sweeten the TUC, to get its cooperation for restraint) but without taking real measures along these lines before the power of the unions is emasculated. One has only to pose the problem to see how difficult the Government's situation is; even if it does get

the cooperation of the TUC bureaucrats (by no means certain) it has no guarantee that this will have much effect on the level of wage settlements. This is a policy doomed to failure and the measures of the Budget are a desperate attempt to buy time.

The first thing to note is that the budget gave only a derisory pension increase (and that not till the Autumn either) to the pensioners. Coupled with this is the fact that there was absolutely nothing in it for those who earn so little that they do not pay tax.

Next we come to the rise in personal allowances. All those who pay tax will pay £1 a week less tax. This is to keep the demand on the home market at the level it is now at. Let nobody be under the illusion that they are actually going to be better off. The £1 a week will easily be swallowed up in the near future by Increased Graduated National Insurance, by the operation of the so-called "fair rents" scheme, by the increases in coal and electricity, and by a whole host of other increases.

There were a few proposals to keep those with plenty of money happy on a personal level. The first was the restoration of stock options. This is a scheme whereby senior executives can obtain shares in their own companies cheaply and sell them at profit later. After a series of speculative scandals the previous Labour Government made the gains liable to Income Tax and Surtax, but this budget reverses the previous legislation. Next came no estate duty payable on the first £15,000 of an estate, or first £30,000 if handed on to your spouse. Thirdly came the announcement that next year those with investment income will not have to pay extra tax on the first £2,000 of it (unlike at the moment where all investment income is chargeable to at least 15 per cent more tax). And lastly we come to the question of dividends paid by corporations. For some time now it has stuck in the throats of the bourgeoisie that these are taxed twice (first by corporation tax and then by the shareholder's own Income and Surtax). As from next year the budget is reducing this to one lot of tax.

However, all of the above was merely flirting around with various sections of the ruling class who needed to be kept happy. The key to Heath's economic strategy for the immediate future lies in the new way in which the depreciation of machinery will be treated in future, together with the way in which grants will be given out for building factories and the like (depreciation is the way the financial consequences of a machine wearing out are dealt with in company accounts). The old way of working out depreciation of machinery was to allow part of its loss of value each year until it became effectively worthless. With the new proposals companies will be able to set the whole of the cost of new plant and machinery against the profit for the year in which the machine was bought. A numerical example will bring out the consequences of this policy. Let us suppose that a firm buys a new compu-

ter for £10,000. They would be able to set off the whole of this against their profit for that year, and thus if the rate of corporation tax is 40 per cent (as it is now) the firm would be getting tax relief of £4,000. This means that the cost to the firm is in fact only £6,000, i.e., only three fifths of the machine's actual price. In addition to this if the firm was in a development area it could obtain a regional development grant of 20 per cent of the cost, another £2,000. The cost to the firm has now come down to £4,000 for a £10,000 machine, in other words the firm is only paying two fifths of the cost of the machine itself!

As was said earlier it is these measures that are crucial to Heath's economic policy over the coming period. *These measures are clearly intended to speed up the capital intensification of industry, and, if the goods can be sold, expand the economy without more than marginally reducing the unemployment.* That this budget will only marginally affect unemployment was noted by the *Financial Times* when it stated "... their (the government's proposals) tendency is to encourage capital-intensive investment, while the problem in the regions is often a pool of unemployed labour..." (Editorial, 22 March). The key is, of course, the question of selling the goods and it is here that Heath is taking a major risk with this new economic strategy. It would seem to be highly likely that Heath is looking to the E.E.C. for a market and looked at in this light the fantastic rush to get the British Tax system in line with that of the E.E.C. makes some sense. One need no longer be surprised that the rate of Value Added Tax has been announced so soon, for not only will it, as proposed by Barber, redistribute wealth against the interests of the working class, but the nearer that our tax conforms to the E.E.C.'s the less paper work is involved in exporting to the E.E.C. and the easier it becomes.

Paul Petrie

SUPPORT "THE COLLIER"

The recent miners' strike is only the first of a whole series of battles to come in the mines.¹ By the time the 16 month period of the new agreement has come to an end most of the wage claim will have been eaten up by inflation. In addition the National Coal Board will have had 16 months to think up new productivity schemes, and the government 16 months in which to prepare to defeat any new strike. It is therefore vital that the militancy and political understanding created during the latest struggle are not allowed to go to waste. For this reason we welcome the initiative of the International Socialists in calling a rank and file miners' conference in Barnsley on 26 March, although we think it a pity that the conference was called on the same day that thousands will be demonstrating against British imperialism's policy in Ireland.



We understand that there is concern amongst some rank and file miners who support the conference and the new paper *The Collier* at lack of full consultation about the contents of the first issue and the timing of the conference. We trust that these are mistakes caused by pressure of work and a desire to get things going. It is especially important to avoid any appearance of manipulation or schematism. The right wing draws its strength from the lack of democracy in the union and will be on the look out for ways of disorienting the new rank and file movement. Anything which smacked of organisational schematism would play right into their hands.

We completely support the initiative of calling the conference on the clear understanding that all mineworkers who support the general aims of the rank and file move-

ment will be accorded full democratic rights.

As regards the programme put for *The Collier* we agree with most of its provisions but think that the way the questions are dealt with is incorrect. Firstly, the fact that 'Workers' Control of the Industry' is only the 31st in a series of 32 demands indicates a failure to understand the nature of this slogan. At present all the other demands are put forward as demands to be granted by the management. But the essential feature about a revolutionary policy in the trade unions is not that it demands this or that concession from the management, but that it demands that the workers' organisations themselves should have the right to decide what is in their interests and what is not. By ignoring this the programme falls back into simple 'militant' trade unionism.

Secondly, the programme creates a split between trade unionism and politics by not taking up the question of the Labour Party. As we have explained on many occasions, what characterises social democracy is the fact that it divides up politics and trade unionism in such a way that the struggle in the factory, or in this case mine, is not seen as part of a struggle concerned with government and the state. A worker who carries on the factory struggle without linking it to the question of government and the state, or who simply sees politics as an adjunct of the factory struggle is just as much a Social Democrat as someone who works in the left wing of the Labour Party. I.S.'s failure to understand that 'doing your own thing' in the trade unions and ignoring the question of the Labour Party is to be a social democrat here trips them up again.

The programme I.S. have put forward falls precisely into this mistake and is therefore a Social Democratic programme. Certainly it is perfectly principled to work within a united front with those who believe that the Labour Party can achieve socialism (we leave it to the struggle and our propaganda to sort that one out) but it is absolutely incorrect not to point out that the demands for workers' control are *only* achievable through action at the level of government and are therefore merely empty words unless placed in the context of a struggle for a workers' government. What we say to members of the Labour Party is "You believe Labour can adopt and come to power on a socialist programme. We do not. We will at all times point this out. Nevertheless let us agree on at least one thing. We will struggle together for this programme. If we continue together on this, and do not compromise, then we will see in practice who is right on the Labour Party". However this approach, which is the basis of the United Front, is a million miles from I.S.'s failure to raise the question of government. On the contrary the United Front approach takes its *starting point* as the struggle for a *government* which will defend the interests of the working class i.e. for a workers' government.

Nevertheless, because the rank and file conference and the establishment of *The Collier* represents a positive step forward towards a rank and file movement in the NUM, the

International Marxist Group will continue to support *The Collier* and any organisations it sets up as long as these remain freely open to all members of the NUM who accept the policy of the newspaper. IMG members and sympathisers in the NUM will therefore be supporting the newspaper, participating in the conference, and starting a discussion round a draft basic type of programme for the newspaper *The Collier*. In order that the political differences may stand out clearly and not get bogged down in trivia we have basically used the demands of *The Collier* plus a few vital ones omitted. The political context is however entirely different.

N.B. This article went to press before the conference met. A full report of the conference appears on another page.

1. Already the discussion has started about the next wage claim: Kent has sent a resolution for the NUM conference in July calling for £40 a week for face workers, £32 for other underground and £30 for surface workers; Yorkshire and Scotland are demanding a six-hour working day; and Yorkshire wants afternoon and night shifts to be paid at time-and-a-third. The right wing wants to avoid the fixing of exact targets—they want room to manoeuvre.
2. One of the big debates at the NUM conference this year will be around the demand by Yorkshire that there be proportional representation in the unions's leadership—the present system works to the advantage of the right wing because the bigger areas are the most militant.

Suggested Basic Programme for Discussion at the Rank and File Miners Conference

1. *The Collier* recognises that there is no solution to the problems facing miners as long as the mines are producing in an economy dominated by privately owned industry, and democratic socialism has not been achieved. The task of the NUM must therefore be to fight for Socialism and to defend all interests of miners against the NCB and attacks by employers' governments.
2. As wages are only one of the chief issues facing the miner the aim of *The Collier* is to fight for workers' control of the mines. This must include the right to ensure that mechanisation, increased output per man, developments in working practices are used to benefit the miner and not the NCB and the profits of other industries.

A. Productivity and Profits

(i) As long as the mines are operating in a privately owned economy, and as long as there is not generalised workers' control and production is for profit and not for need any management of the mines will always be forced to act against the interests of the miners. For this reason the NUM cannot accept any responsibility for the running of the coal industry. For this reason it rejects all forms of workers' participation in management and all forms of productivity bargaining.

(ii) Nevertheless the NUM can and should struggle to prevent the nationalised mining industry from being used to boost artificially the profits of private enterprise. We therefore demand an end to all payments to previous owners, an end to all interest payments, an end of cheap coal to private industry and the immediate nationalisation of all distribution outlets and any unnationalised mining operations of whatever type.

B. Wages

(i) Existing wage levels must be protected against inflation. All wages agreements to have a built-in automatic cost of living increase. The cost of living index to be determined by the union.

(ii) No payments systems to be introduced unless agreed by the men concerned at properly convened branch meetings, after full information has been made available.

(iii) An immediate move to a wages structure of £30-£35-£40: no loss of pay on regrading; all DISS benefits to be in addition to full wages; special rates negotiated by the men concerned for dirt, discomfort and hardship; wage agreements to run for no more than 12 months (November to November); full pay at 18.

(iv) Free housing and travel to work.

C. Shift working and overtime

(i) An absolute and unconditional right of the union to reject any form of shift working. In particular a complete rejection of 'continental' shift working.

(ii) An absolute right of the union and men concerned to reject any amount of overtime, including weekend working. Travelling, washing and changing times to be counted as hours of work.

D. Modernisation, safety and benefits

(i) The right of the union and men concerned to reject any new equipment which is considered by it to harm the interests of the miners. No reduction in manning levels.

(ii) An unconditional right to reject any new method of working payments system or machinery which it is considered will run

contrary to the safety interests of miners. Rank and file safety officers on every shift to ensure the observation of all safety requirements.

(iii) Full wage pensions, with union rises as negotiated, for any miner disabled through an industrial accident.

(iv) A lowered retirement age for miners and free supply of coal to old age pensioners and retired miners.

E. Redundancy and job loss

(i) An absolute and unconditional right for the union to ban any loss of jobs. Any suggested redundancy to be met with the demand for a reduction of the working week with no loss of pay, or with the demand of full maintenance for men forced to leave for geological, safety or other reasons. An immediate reduction of the working week to 30 hours with no loss of pay.

3. In order that these policies can be fought for, and in order to ensure that any gains made are operated in the interests of the rank and file miners, changes are needed in the structure of the union.

(i) Yearly elections, with right of recall, of all full time officials.

(ii) All national agreements to be voted on by the whole membership with a simple majority vote to decide striking and all other issues. All local agreements to be voted on by the men affected.

(iii) Replacement of chargemen with elected stewards. Involvement of stewards in any local negotiations. Loss of working time to be financed by the union.

(iv) Voting on all issues to be at properly convened branch meetings with adequate prior notice given. Every branch to be entitled to communicate with every other.

(v) Fully lay executives at all levels with no full time officials having voting rights.

4. Democracy in the union is only meaningful if the union itself is free to defend its members' interests. Therefore:

(i) Complete opposition to the Industrial Relations Act. No registration; no use of any bodies established by the Act; no observance of cooling off periods; no payment of fines imposed under the Act; full support by any means necessary, including industrial action, of all victims of the Act.

(ii) Complete rejection of any form of incomes policy.

5. We recognise that it is impossible for one single trade union to obtain these demands against the resources of the employers and their governments, and therefore, while struggling for these demands in the mines, *The Collier* campaigns for the NUM to put forward these and similar demands for adoption by other unions, by the TUC and within the Labour Party and campaigns for a government to guarantee the carrying out of these policies. As a first step towards this we campaign for an alliance of all unions within the 'public' sector of industry. We believe that any Party or government, and particularly of course the Labour Party, which was truly acting in the interests of the working class would carry out the policies we have described and therefore the NUM must continue to struggle for these policies until a government is achieved which will implement them. *The Collier* calls on all miners, whatever other trade union or political views may divide them, to unite together in a common struggle for the policies we have described.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT - A TEST CASE

A partial victory has been won by the workers at Ideal Casements (Reading) Ltd., in a test case on the use of the Industrial Relations Act. This was the first time the Act had been used against individual workers.

Mr James Wallace, Chairman of the Company, had alleged that the three shop stewards in the factory were engaging in an "unfair Industrial Practice". But despite the fact that the Industrial Relations Court (I.R.C.) upheld Wallace's allegations, he was forced to back down the following day after 11 hours of talks.

BACKGROUND TO THE DISPUTE

Workers at Ideal Casements have had a lot of trouble with management over the last six months. Last August they submitted a claim, the main item of which was a 15 per cent wage demand. Management refused to negotiate, so an overtime ban was imposed. Management then sacked 12 men (claiming they were 'redundant') and all 550 men came out on strike. They demanded both the re-instatement of these men and the settlement of their full claim (for further analysis see *The Red Mole* 30).

The strike was ended by a settlement which re-instated the sacked men but only gave an 'interim' pay rise of 50 p per week. A full "review of wages" was to follow at the end of November. Because the Union negotiators fell for these delaying tactics by the management, a certain disillusionment with the Union set in. This undoubtedly became a factor in the ensuing events.

For at the end of November, management, relying on it being too near Christmas for the workers to mobilise for a strike, played for even more time. They offered a further 50 p 'interim' pay rise with negotiations for a full settlement to follow "at the end of February". This was rejected by the most militant sections of the factory but no action could be taken immediately. Then at Christmas the management added insult to injury by trying to break part of their own 'interim' agreement over holiday pay. The Union threatened Court action to force them to honour it!

Once Christmas was over, the Union members began seriously to look to their defence. In order to maintain the Union's credibility (and even its membership) in the factory, it had to be seen to stand up to management. The first step was unilaterally to end the working agreements then in existence in the two most militant sections of the works, together with all the personal contracts of service. Wallace replied with vague threats of using the Industrial Relations Act and gave every employee a copy of the Department of Employment's condensed version.

With this intimidation and still no new negotiations, the Union then gave notice of terminating its Procedural Agreement with the company. They did this on February 25th, just in time to prevent it from becoming a "legally binding agreement", with the coming into full force of the Industrial Relations Act, on February 28th.

Wallace replied by saying that with the termination of the Procedural Agreement he no longer recognized the Union or its shop stewards. He also announced that he was referring the matter to the Department of Employment. Faced with such utter intransigence, the shop stewards had no choice but to give notice of strike action. The strike was to begin on 20th March.

WALLACE USES THE ACT

At this point Wallace asked the N.I.R.C. for a restraining order against the three men, preventing them from calling the strike. Despite criticising Wallace's tactics as "unhelpful" (!) and "legalistic", the court granted this injunction on the grounds that Wallace had referred the question of recognition to the Department of Employment. For Section 54 of the Act makes it an "unfair industrial practice" to organise or threaten to organise a strike while settlement of a question is "pending".

The Court arranged for the two sides to meet the next day under Department of Employment chairmanship. At this meeting, which lasted 11 hours, Wallace was at last forced to back down in the face of the complete deter-

mination of the Union negotiators. Clearly he was under pressure from the N.I.R.C. not to press the matter through the Court; and by now, through its renewed militancy the Union had regained much of its lost position. There was complete solidarity amongst the workers. Everyone knew that if a satisfactory conclusion was not reached, 550 workers in a small factory would have defied the Act by striking and everyone knew that if that had happened, then trade union militants all over the country would have had a focus around which to rally opposition to the Act.

Wallace therefore was forced to agree to:

- Recognise the Union.
- Abandon his plans for non-Union 'Joint Consultative Committees'.
- Start negotiations on a new Procedural Agreement (to be completed by 31st March) with the old agreement in force in the meantime.
- Withdraw his N.I.R.C. action.

This case illustrates one particularly dangerous facet of the Industrial Relations Act. Although on this occasion the relationship of class forces prevented it from being fully implemented, it is now clear that any employer can make use of the Act to make it illegal for his workers to take strike action during the re-negotiation of a procedure agreement.

These events show the way in which the new 'Industrial Relations' machinery works—to the advantage of management. But two further points must be made here. The first is that, in the negotiations conducted after the Court ruling, the strength and determination of the workers was decisive in securing the gains that were made. Secondly, the attitude of the Court chairman to Wallace clearly demonstrated that the Industrial Relations Act was not legislated to sort out relatively minor industrial disputes such as the one at Ideal, but to deal with whole sections of the working class which the ruling class needs to defeat. Ideal Casements may have been an important test case in legal terms (and of course for those involved in the dispute), but the real struggles are yet to come.

- Dave Bryant
- Lawrie White

BUILDING WORKERS STRIKE AT HEYSHAM



Strike meeting at Heysham

Since February 29th, over 400 workers have been on strike at the Taylor Woodrow site at Heysham Nuclear Power Station. The dispute arose because Taylor Woodrow refused to recognise the union of the men's choice—the Construction Engineering Union—and would not allow the senior shop steward time to carry out essential union duties. In pursuit of their demand for union recognition the 206 C.E.U. members staged a half day strike. Taylor Woodrow retaliated by selecting eighteen men and sacking them. The excuse for this action was based on an unwritten agreement that men do not leave concreting operations once started. In fact management had been told that a workers' meeting for union recognition would be held, and it was recommended that no concreting operations should begin that day. Despite this, Taylor Woodrow carried on normal working, and the men walked out for the meeting. When they re-

turned, eighteen (picked at random) were told they had been sacked. Then the strike began.

The craft trades on the site held a mass meeting and agreed to come out in support of the C.E.U. men. This meant that the strike was 100 per cent solid. As the strike continues more men are being sacked through the post. The total is now over 30, and likely to increase. The men's attitude to this is that they can sack as many as they like—but they won't go back until every single man is re-instated.

Support is coming in from workers and students throughout the north west. A mass meeting of the Student's Federation at Lancaster University voted unanimously to support the strike and to organise collections for the strike fund. Members of the Shop Stewards Committee at Heysham have visited building sites in the Merseyside area

and have been offered support. Lancaster I.M.G. has been active in supporting the strike along with the local I.S. branch, and Lancaster Socialist Woman group has produced leaflets for the strikers' wives asking them to support their husbands.

It is essential that this strike is won. Not only for the Heysham workers but for trade unionism in this area as a whole, and for the development of organisation in the building trade nationally. For this they need your support.

Please send donations to: W. Hives,
Intack Caravan Site,
Nether Kellet,
Nr. Carnforth,
Lancashire.

-Owen Hockey
-Paul Salvesson

Potential Rents Strike in Cumbernauld

In order to combat the proposed rent increases here in Cumbernauld when the Government's rents bill becomes law, the local Trades Council has swung into action and held a public protest meeting in conjunction with the . . . Town Council (S.N.P.)*

The position here is that the Cumbernauld Development Corporation (who own the houses), a body as far removed from ever-bourgeois democracy as Archangelsk is from Vladivostok, are intending to up the rents on May 29th in anticipation of the bill becoming law. On 9th March (3 days before the first public protest meeting) the C.D.C. sent out letters to most of the tenants demanding the payment of rates, in some cases demanding up to £70 immediately, if not sooner. As was to be expected, the rates office was besieged by a crowd of angry tenants all demanding to know the reason for the letters. One of the bureaucrats in the rates office, smiling sardonically, directed them to other sardonically smiling bureaucrats in the Town Hall. It was discovered (eventually) that the letters were a new way of hastening the prompt payment of arrears. If the arrears were not paid within 10 days then the person in arrears would be faced with a bill for the sum total of the rates up to the end of the financial year, also to be paid within a stipulated time or else "court action" (a synonym for eviction).

The first meeting (12th March) opened at 2.30 p.m. and on the platform were speakers from the Trades Council, the various tenants associations, and a representative of the Town Council, who is also an S.N.P. member, who is also the town's Provost, who was also the meeting's chairman. The first speaker was the chairman (S.N.P.) representing the Town Council, who, after boring everyone with 45 minutes of his own particular brand of bourgeois nationalism, very generously offered the other speakers from the Trades Council etc. . . 5 minutes to expound their views on the subject! After that the meeting was to be thrown open to questions, then statements, then resolutions.

After the other speakers had said their piece the meeting was thrown open to the body of the Hall. The C.P. ran true to style with statements such as "We don't want anybody making political capital out of this", and, "This isn't a political issue". Various other tendencies were voicing the same sentiments, amongst them the vice-president of the NUS (Scottish Area) who read out a resolution which contained in it, among other things, the demand for an Independent Enquiry to be set up to look into the nature of the bill.

The meeting ended about 5 p.m. and the only concrete decision taken was to hold a similar meeting the following Sunday.

At the second meeting (20th March) various resolutions were taken, read out, and voted on. It was decided to form an action committee consisting of two representatives from each of the groups (political, trade union, tenants, claimants, etc.) involved and 12 people from the body of the hall. After much heated argument, the motion for a total rents strike was sadly defeated and the principle of withholding the increase only was accepted. The meeting also decided to seek representation on SCOTA (Scottish Council of Tenants Associations) which is attempting to coordinate the opposition to the bill nationally, and generally employing reformist tactics, i.e., protesting to Scottish MPs, sending delegates to London to lobby MPs in Parliament. The I.M.G. comrades on the committee will be pushing, along with the IS, for a total rents strike and for holding mass meetings of strikers. Things are still a bit hazy as to what is actually going to happen and yet another meeting was called which is to be held on 23rd March. More detailed information on the nature of the opposition to the bill in Scotland will be published in *The Red Mole* as soon as it becomes clear what is actually going to happen.

-Colin Dougall

* S.N.P.: Scottish Nationalist Party.

MANCHESTER ENGINEERS OCCUPY

Engineering workers in the Manchester area have already occupied several plants in pursuit of their current wage claim.

On 16th March, 1000 workers at GKN's Bredbury steel plant near Stockport occupied the factory after the management threatened a lock-out. This threat came after the workers at Bredbury decided to ban piece-working and overtime in advance of the target date set by Manchester area engineers to put the same measures in force across the region. This regionally co-ordinated action is in support of their claim for a £4 across the board increase and a 35 hour week. As we went to press several other plants had followed the example of the Bredbury men. These actions will be the prelude to mass occupations in several hundred firms if the employers carry out their threat of mass-lock-outs when 200,000 engineers ban piece-work from Monday, 27th March. The prospect of a confrontation on this scale has already frightened some of the weaker members of the employers associations federated in the Engineering Employers Federation. Six or seven plants have already caved in and conceded increases ranging from £3.00 to £5.50. The EEF has responded to this lack of employer solidarity by expelling at least one of the firms involved.

The Bredbury occupation is a very important development. It may well be the first occupation in support of a wage-claim yet seen in Britain. Within the next few days dozens more may follow. The EEF are caught in a very effective vice. If they carry out their threat, they may well face one of the most serious struggles they have had to deal with so far; on the other hand to allow the men to proceed with their tactic would cost them millions of pounds. The tactic of refusing to operate the piece-work system is extremely effective. While workers would still be receiving their basic pay, the refusal to work the piece-rate system cuts out production in short to nothing. The employers must therefore capitulate or provoke a massive reaction which would alter the whole balance of forces in the region. These remarkable developments are the fruits of decisions taken in both the Manchester and Sheffield regions to fight all the plant claims in engineering in a co-ordinated way. This represents an attempt by engineering workers to break out of the policy imposed on the membership in January by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions following the breakdown of national pay talks with the EEF at the beginning of the year.

The policy of waging a national struggle at plant level is the result of the reluctance of the CSEU and particularly the AUEW, the largest union in the CSEU, to fight the EEF head on. We have analysed this before (*The Red Mole*, 34, January 1972). This goes back to the annual conference of the AUEW in April 1971. At this conference, the militants made a determined effort to break out of the traditional pattern of wage bargaining in the industry. This pattern has been as follows. Traditionally, national negotiations have been concerned with such things as minimum rates, length of holidays etc. There has also been a tradition of three-year deals. Real earnings of engineering workers however are made up of a large proportion of piece-rate, bonus, and overtime working. Thus the minimum rate for a skilled engineer is £25, but earnings in many areas, especially in the Birmingham and Coventry area, can be double this figure. The strength of the engineering workers is on the shop floor. However, the recession into which British capitalism has plunged since early 1970 has made it extremely difficult for engineering workers to push up their earnings by the traditional method of bargaining on piece-rate at plant level. There are several obvious

reasons for this. The fall in the volume of work in the capital goods sector means that many engineers are on a short week. The appearance of significant unemployment (even in Coventry) undermines their bargaining power. Thirdly, the lack of demand for capital goods means that employers can afford long strikes and take a very tough line with the shop floor. The re-appearance of lock-outs in the industry last year is a very ominous development. Face with these adverse conditions on the shop floor and with rampant inflation, engineering workers sought some way out of the situation. The militants put forward demands for straight across-the-board increases, to be backed up by national action if necessary. Scanlon argued against this policy and defended the traditional pattern, but was forced to accept the demand in diluted form. The EEF have since adamantly refused the engineers' demands for a 'substantial increase' in addition to rises on the basic rates. The talks finally broke down after the EEF refused to offer more than £1.50 (from next July!) and the CSEU instructed its members to negotiate the claim at plant level.

The CSEU has called no national action to back up its demands. National engineering strikes have not occurred for half a century.

Such an event would, of course, create a crisis for the ruling class at least as great as that caused by the miners strike. This course was not adopted in 1971, neither was there any action which would have had a similar effect without exhausting the union's weak financial reserves, such as national overtime and piece-work bans etc. Nor has such action been taken on the other major issue of the industry—the York procedure agreements. These agreements—in which all disputes were settled by virtual panels of employers from district to national level, a long pipe line into which disputes and demands disappeared for months—were cancelled by the unions in 1971 after several years of negotiations in which the unions demanded more 'adequate' plant procedures. The industry is now without procedure agreements, which the men are also having to re-negotiate at plant level. Hence two million engineering workers are now struggling in isolated plants to gain from the employers that which was refused at national level, trying to use their shop floor strength which the present economic situation has undermined. This policy has had its successes and its failures. In British Leyland for instance, the demand for the 'status quo' and 'adequate' plant procedures has been conceded. British Leyland can no longer initiate changes on the shop floor without going through procedure (the aim of this concession is actually to shift the balance of power away from the mass meeting to the procedure). The other side of the picture of course is the use of the Industrial Relations Act on the more isolated groups of workers in the industry who are fighting the claim in their plants—the court injunction on Kaymet workers in South London is one such example.

If significant concessions are won by the better organised workers then the CSEU will take the claim back to the EEF who, the AUEW hopes, would be less united and less able to present a monolithic face. In the process however, many of the weaker groups of workers will have taken a battering, the Act will have been used on numer-

ous occasions, and the length of time spent negotiating the claim overall will be so long as to render a £4 increase meaningless from the point of view of workers' living standards. Furthermore, the ruling class, so far completely unable to solve the crisis which the trade union offensive has created for them, will have been let off the hook. The most powerful trade union in Britain will not have been mobilized for an offensive. This is not accidental. The 'left' bureaucracy knows that it must do a deal with Wilson on some form of incomes policy if the Labour Party is ever to appear as a credible enough alternative bourgeois leadership to Heath. Another victory like that of the miners makes this much more difficult. The 'left' bureaucracy are also under the thumb of the right in the TUC. For the TUC the present offensive is extremely dangerous and threatens to sabotage their hopes of 'growth' in the British economy, by further undermining the confidence of investors.

The EEF may be the toughest employers organisation in the country, but they rely on the structural weakness of the Confederation (which represents some 18 unions) and the political weakness of its leaders. In the 1967 CSEU claim, the EEF managed to stall the negotiations for 18 months. The mere threat of national action in late 1968 was sufficient then to make them cave in. Although in the present recession such a cave in would be more difficult to provoke, Scanlon's credibility in the AUEW has suffered from the failure to mobilize the union nationally on the demands made at last year's conference. The events in Manchester and Sheffield, however, reverse some of the negative aspects of the AUEW policy, and if these regional offensives are followed through they will speed up the process of winning a victory over the EEF on a national scale. The leadership of the AUEW has so far had no option but to endorse the actions of the men.

Manchester IMG

More detailed analysis and interviews will appear in the next issue of *The Red Mole*.

REGROUPMENT IN FRENCH T.U. MOVEMENT

Of the three main trade union federations in France, the Communist dominated CGT, the social democratic CFDT, and Force Ouvriere, the last has always been the weakest and least significant. It was formed in 1947 as a right-wing breakaway from the CGT, and the split was organisationally and financially assisted by the AFL-CIO (trade union federation in the USA), which at that time was acting in the direct interests of American imperialism and had close links with the CIA. Today FO still reflects those origins: its leadership has drifted even further to the right and hardly bothers any more to conceal its role as the bosses' agent in the workers' movement. It is in this context that one must see the recent merger of the Chemical Union of the FO, Fedechimie, with its counterpart in the CFDT. The leaders of Fedechimie could see only too clearly that the only future which lay ahead for Force Ouvriere (and thus for them while they remained within FO) was one of increasing rejection by militants and increasing distance from the real centres of decision-making in the workers' movement.

Fedechimie's departure from FO was supported by a relatively radicalised base within the union (Fedechimie militants were active in the events of May '68). The union sees itself as continuing the traditions of revolutionary syndicalism and as the inheritor of the Charter of Amiens. It is anti-Stalinist but also anti-communist; however, it distinguishes between the bourgeois anti-communism of the leaders of the FO and revolutionary libertarian anti-communism (its own brand). Despite the confused and reformist politics of its leadership, Fedechimie's break with Force Ouvriere was made on quite a positive basis. The leader of Fedechimie, Labi, drawing a balance sheet of the union's experience with Force Ouvriere, wrote as follows: "Its daily practice... (was charac-

terised by) an ever increasing frequenting of the corridors of political and managerial power, the systematic refusal of all unity in action and almost of all action".

This regroupment in the French trade union movement has been carried out, needless to say, from the top. The leaders of Fedechimie decided upon the change without instituting any thoroughgoing discussion among the rank and file union membership of why the change should take place. In particular, alternatives such as federation with the CGT were scarcely mentioned, let alone discussed. However, simply to say that the leadership have not instituted a discussion on the political questions involved in this realignment does not mean that such a discussion does not continue among the mass of workers.

Since the split of 1947, the French trade union movement has experienced many splits. The present regroupment is the first step toward fusion to take place for a very long time. Although limited in extent, it does at least pose before the trade union movement the burning and imperative problem of unification in the struggle against the bosses' offensive. The Fedechimie and the chemical union of the CFDT raised the problem of unification in their joint statement, with the perspective that their fusion "is also a stage in the construction of a democratic unified organisation of unions which will embrace the entire working class". However, it is not enough just to pay lip service to trade union unification. What is necessary is to determine the concrete steps that must be taken to achieve it.

The division of the unions is neither a necessary nor an inevitable evil. The struggle for union unification is linked with the struggle against the bureaucrats, for workers' and union democracy, for the right of expression of currents and tendencies organized on a national scale and their participation in open discussion within the unions.

Bergeron was quick to respond to Fedechimie's split. It was necessary to show that Labi took only a small group with him and block any other attempt at departure. On 12th and 13th February with the faithful minority of the Fedechimie he organized a conference which

declared itself to be a constitutive conference of a continuing FO federation.

The comrades of *Lutte Ouvriere* representing some small FO sections that they control participated in this. Did the *Lutte Ouvriere* comrades realise the enormity of what they were doing? By participating under such auspices in the creation of a continuing FO federation, they cut themselves off from all that was living in the workers' movement, to attach themselves to a dead branch, the most reactionary and anti-communist wing of the workers' movement.

Lutte Ouvriere in its issue 179 replied in advance to these criticisms: "Bergeron the old... Maire the new... Labi changes boss but not politics". For *Lutte Ouvriere*, the CFDT and FO are one and the same. But LO added, defending in advance the hypothesis which Bergeron wished to have accepted: "It would be wrong to make a fuss about union unification. If words are to mean what they say, the operation is restricted to the adhesion of Labi to the CFDT". And here is the crux of the argument: "As for the working class, it neither loses nor gains from this manoeuvre. Its objects have no more in common with such as Labi than they have with Seguy, Maire or Bergeron".

Clearly for LO it is a question of an internal affair among bureaucrats which is of no concern at all to the workers. Bureaucratic fusion, they say. But what prevents them from struggling to transform it into a democratic fusion at the base in the plants where they control FO sections? What prevents them from fighting for democracy from top to bottom in a unified federation?

Lutte Ouvriere represents an important current of the revolutionary left. It is particularly serious to see it turning its back on the battle for union unification in the struggles of the working class and masses. It appears, alas, that the comrades of *Lutte Ouvriere* prefer to preserve FO minisections in the unions in order to use them as mouthpieces.

The above is a condensed version of material which appeared in *Rouge*, paper of the Communist League (French Section of the Fourth International).

The imposition of direct rule over Northern Ireland from imperialism in Ireland rather than a solution to that challenges for the Irish people as a whole, and the mir itself into the tasks before the vanguard of that minor



People's Democracy sit-in



Internees' relatives picket House of Commons



Marchers flee on 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry

IRELAND: THE WA

THE BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of this year, the struggle of the minority has increased by leaps and bounds. The rent and rates strike is solid and has shown no sign of a let-up. Combined with this, the mass demonstrations in defiance of Stormont's laws showed the depth of the resistance. The meaning was clear—internment had failed, the repression that followed internment had failed too. Even the brutal murders on Bloody Sunday in Derry could not stem the tide of rebellion.

This mood amongst the minority protected the military actions of the IRA, and these too developed tremendously. In fact during the period between the ending of the Provisional's 72 hour truce and the ending of Stormont, the number of British Army casualties had almost reached the total number of casualties during the entire period of the previous IRA campaign of 1956-62.

Heath finally had to face up to the fact that the IRA could not be defeated without separating it from the mass of the Catholic minority, but any proposals for concessions were blocked by Stormont. Faulkner & Co. understood that the base of support for the Unionist government within the protestant population had been eroded, and the mass rallies of the Ulster Vanguard gave notice that no concessions could be made by the Unionist Party if it wished to retain its support. Heath had also to contend with the problem of the 36 Tory MPs who have been bought by the Unionist Party; together with the votes of the Unionist MPs at Westminster they pose a threat to the

government's majority as the voting over the EEC showed.

All of these factors dictated the delay in Heath's initiative but they also meant that when it came Heath would brook no opposition. He had made an assessment of the effects of the resumed Provisional campaign, and was well aware of the likelihood of a major offensive in the near future. When finally Heath proposed his measures, the Unionists overplayed their hand, leaving Heath with no alternative to direct rule other than an indirect escalation of the crisis situation.

AN HISTORICAL CRISIS

The crisis in Ireland flows from basic historical factors which cannot be abolished as easily as Faulkner's comic opera "parliament". The intervention in Ireland by British imperialism in the past relied on using the Protestant population of the North East as a bridgehead against the entire Irish people. Thus the 1801 Act of Union which followed the defeat of the United Irishmen in 1798, by means of free trade between Ireland and Britain insulated the developing industry of the North East from the rest of the Irish economy, giving it access to the British market, and keeping the rest of the Irish economy as a backward agricultural reservoir for Britain. In order to bolster their position, they supported the institutionalisation of religious sectarianism in that part of Ireland. This was given state form by the partition of Ireland, and the setting up of the Northern Irish state in 1920. This state could only survive through the continuous oppression of the one-third Catholic minority within its bound-

aries, and the distribution of patronage and privilege to the Protestant majority in order to maintain their reliance on the reactionary myths of the Orange Order.

When in the mid-sixties, British imperialism began to change its policy, and turn to rapprochement with the 26 Counties, (whose economy had become very important for Britain) the whole structure of British relationships to the two Irish states became redundant. However this was the beginning, not the end of Britain's problems with Ireland. The Northern state proved incapable of reform. It staggered from crisis to crisis, and was only just rescued in August 1969 by the intervention of British troops.

When these troops began to move against the Catholic areas they met a mass revolt; this revolt was not put down by internment, and has grown with each attempt to destroy it by repression. This intractable crisis will not be solved by a few decrees from Downing Street, but only by the elimination of the deep historical contradictions within the state.

FAKE PROPOSALS

Even if this were not so, even if the crisis did not have such historical roots, the proposals tendered by Heath will have no deep or lasting effect on the minority. The "phasing out" of internment is a concession, and the people of the ghettos will be glad to see even a small number of men freed. But they are well aware that a large proportion of the internees are detained precisely so that they can later be released as a 'concession', and Heath has made no mention of the 300 or so convicted political

prisoners held in Crumlin Road jail under the notorious Public Order Act. The promise of a referendum on the border offers no immediate hope of change, and is cunningly designed to split the minority; their struggle has been against the repression they have suffered in Northern Ireland, not a positive affirmation of a desire to be part of Lynch's gombeen "Republic". The lower standards of welfare benefits and other social drawbacks will be used as propaganda to confuse the less politically conscious, and the resultant relatively low vote in favour of unification will be taken as positive backing for the existence of the Six County State.

But the most important factor will be the maintenance of that state. All the reforms are promised within that context. Thus the minority will remain prisoners, dependent on the good grace of Heath's local overlord. The basic contradictions remain, the vast bulk of the internees will remain, the political prisoners will remain, the murdering British Army will remain, the State will remain. All that has been removed is the superstructure of Stormont. For all these reasons, we can expect no solution to the crisis, but that, on the contrary, the struggle will flare up in new, and more developed forms.

The minority is not the same naive mass which gave the soldiers tea in August '69; they have learnt many bitter lessons since that time. They are not likely to relax their vigilance, or to give British imperialism the benefit of the doubt. While they will most likely want to wait and see, before launching into any mass resistance, it is most unlikely that they will accept

Westminster is an expression of the depth of the crisis of
 sis. The coming weeks and months will pose new
 ility in the North in particular. That challenge resolves
 and those who support it in the 26 Counties and in Britain.



Loyalist rally outside Stormont

Photo: This Week IRA training manoeuvres

Photo: This Week

R WILL CONTINUE

Heath's promises as good coin. Having suffered so much and fought so hard, they will not easily be fooled again as they were in August '88.

It is significant that direct rule has been followed by a press campaign to try to create divisions between the people and the IRA. This is the

meaning of the stories about a "split" between the IRA in the North and the South. They are saying to the people: "That IRA man around the corner who protected you from the military is OK, but these ones in Dublin are a different matter altogether". They will find it hard to gain credence for their propaganda.

THE ORANGE TORIES

It is almost certain that there will be a lull in the situation. The Unionists, and the well-heeled leaders of the Ulster Vanguard realise that they have overplayed their hand; their defiance of the government was not designed to go as far as armed insurrection (there are no Carsons in latter-day "Ulster"), but to pressurise the British government to resist concessions to the Catholics and to let them hang on to their sectarian little province for a while longer. They have little stomach for taking their defiance much further, and will not be likely to plunge their legions into the immolation of a final confrontation with Britain.

It is not excluded however that the propaganda which they have so cynically used to create a mass movement of protestant workers could be taken seriously by those workers. In a situation where Britain is seen as threatening the basis of their beliefs, they could well turn round and

vent their frustrations on the Catholic minority, persuaded that 'great' men were behind them. The responsibility for such bloodshed would be on the heads of the politicians of the Ulster Vanguard, and the Tory Government which has strung the Protestants along with the pretence that their traditional privileges would be maintained.

THE GREEN TORIES

It is of course inevitable that sections of the leadership of the Catholic minority should give credence to the idea that the battle is over. Some of the SDLP politicians have been itching for some kind of power for a very long time. They were unable to take office under Stormont and survive politically, but they could use the confusion in the minority to justify taking office under Westminster. Another political figure who has openly welcomed the change of British policy is 'Union Jack' Lynch; it is certain now that he will try to convince the people in the South that a victory has been won, to justify repression against those who will not rest satisfied while British imperialism holds any part of Ireland.

IN BRITAIN

Just as the new situation multiplies the complexity of the situation it means that resistance to imperialism and its collaborators in Ireland will take place at a higher political level. In turn this means that the movement in Britain must be at a higher level, and that its demands should reflect the continuing problems of the Irish people. There is still plenty to fight for, and there must be no let up in the demands for the ending of internment, the release of polit-

ical prisoners, the withdrawal of troops etc. But every demand must be placed firmly in the context of the principle of self-determination for Ireland. We must fight in such a way that we illuminate the principle that it is necessary to oppose not the way in which Britain rules Ireland, but the fact that Britain rules Ireland. Only by fighting in such a way can we cut through the mystifications which will abound amongst British and Irish exile workers.

This means that a campaign on the basis of the two limited demands 'End Internment', and 'Withdraw British Troops' cannot tackle the job adequately. The only kind of movement which can do the job is one which is firmly based on Self-Determination, and which puts forward demands and slogans which correspond to the sharpest point of the struggle; thus while the military struggle of the IRA against the British Army is an essential aspect of the struggle it is necessary to be clearly in solidarity with the IRA. What is of primary importance is not the precise slogan or formulation used, but the method involved in building the movement.

Indeed in the light of some possible developments in the situation it is necessary to give a clearer formulation to slogans. In the previous period the slogan for the Victory of the IRA against the British Army was the key one. Now however, it is by no means excluded that this may assume a secondary role to fighting between Republican and Orange factions. This would undoubtedly produce new failures on the British left. Those who are just about, two years late, coming to accept the principle that

in Ireland the armed struggle has been decisive, and to support the attacks on the army, will doubtless be totally confused if it comes to the killing of one section of the working class by another. Those unable to distinguish between politics and sociology will throw up their hands in horror. It now becomes necessary to make clear that support of the IRA is *not* simply against the Army but also, if it comes to it, against anyone, including Orange workers, who defends the maintenance of British state rule in Ireland

For the above reasons the forthcoming conference of the Irish Solidarity Campaign is important. Exactly what slogans reflect the need for further political clarification will be thrashed out there. At this conference there will be full and free discussion, not only on the new situation in Ireland, but also on the problems confronting the movement in Britain.

—Bob Purdie
 —Gery Lawless

The second conference of the I.S.C. will be held over the weekend 29/30 April in the Buxton Hall, Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford. It is open to all those who support the struggle of the Irish people and their armed vanguard, the IRA, and stand uncompromisingly for the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland.

For details of the conference, please contact: Gus Fagan, 116 Summertown House, Banbury Road, Oxford. Tel. 0865-57883. Or Bob Purdie, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. Tel. 01-278-2616.



Lord Pearce returns to London after his 'test' of opinion in Rhodesia

THE PEARCE COMMISSION

Having completed its test of opinion in Rhodesia, the Pearce Commission is expected to report next month on its findings. We examine here the likely outcome.

To anticipate the outcome of the Pearce Commission's deliberations on the Rhodesian settlement it is important to understand its function. Grand commissions and inquiries have been the stock in trade of British capitalism. As a method for delaying or deflecting altogether public demands; preparing the timing and extent of reforms; or as in this case, providing a formula for investigating and settling some tricky dispute in a favourable way for the ruling class; they have over two centuries become an essential part of the administrative and ideological apparatus of the state.

Pearce's original function was to provide a pure rubber stamp for the settlement. The confidence of both the British government and the Smith regime was such that the settlement was completely concluded before the 'test' of opinion, in the belief that the Africans would be docile and submissive. But the response of the Africans has upset the strategy of the imperialist partners and has raised difficulties for the Tories. It should be remembered that such state commissions are not always guaranteed to deliver the goods.

In 1959 for example, Pearce's predecessor Lord Devlin's inquiry in Nyasaland was obliged to expose the absurdity of the 'plot' charges against Africans, and also the repressive role of the then Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland government. Sometimes unfortunately for the ministry of the day, the long term 'credibility' of a bourgeois institution itself must come before the immediate expedient, and the government has to face the more embarrassing alternative of rejecting the view of an 'impartial' and trusted servant of the state, as was the case with Devlin's 1959 report.

On the other hand, the situation today is somewhat more acute. While Pearce has to keep in mind the overall difficulties of the state, the immediate need for a united front in the ruling class is pressing—in this area the Widgery tribunal has the difficult but absolutely essential task of credibly whitewashing the massacre in Derry. Therefore while there is some possibility that the Tories will have to withstand further divisions in their own class over the Rhodesian settlement they have by

no means accepted this outcome as a foregone conclusion.

THE COLONIAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

However, we must ask how it was that the Tories and Smith completely misjudged the mood of the African masses. Above all it was Smith's responsibility to know the political climate in the African peasants and workers. It was no accident that he didn't. The Smith regime is not the simple custodian of imperial interests. The white classes in Rhodesia have roots and interests which go back to the settler conquest of the 1890s and which are independent of their imperialist backers. These interests are not finance capital, but the land, and the fantastically privileged standard of living enjoyed by the white working class and petty bourgeoisie. This is the reason why the Rhodesian whites have travelled the long road to apartheid in the footsteps of South Africa. To stifle all economic competition from the Africans who outnumber them 21-1 a strict segregation of all economic and social conditions is essential, including land, wages, jobs, education, investment, and civil liberties. Consequently, the whites know nothing of the social and political life of the Africans. The white's racist arrogance leads him to regard the Africans as at best a subspecies. Few whites—even the government African District Commissioners—have any grasp of the native tongue Shona. The last three months have thrown this contradiction of an imperialist alliance in its most reactionary phase, into sharp relief. It has exposed a fundamental weakness in the settler regime which the Africans were able to exploit.

THE AFRICAN WORKERS AND PEASANTS

The tremendous display of unity between the African workers and peasants completely surprised British imperialism and the white regime. The African working class which emerged after 1945 is an insignificant number in the African population—less than 200,000 in a total of over 5 millions—but has a disproportionately large political weight. They are feared by the white working class because of their competitive threat in the labour market, and by the whole white population as a physical threat surrounding as they do all the major cities. Thus, the growth of the black proletariat has been stifled by racist legislation excluding blacks from most jobs and restricting their numbers in manual jobs. In addition black workers in industry are only paid one-twelfth of white wages. These conditions have produced a black working class which, far from having severed its roots in the peasantry, maintains them more strongly because of the common super-exploitation of all blacks, and thus emerged in the January days as the embryonic class-conscious vanguard of the whole black masses. Thus while the upsurge against the Home-Smith settlement was most violent and heroic in the townships and mining towns of the midlands, the peasantry were able to respond in complete unison. While the history of those few weeks has still to be deeply analysed there is little doubt that the relationship between the town and the country was one of complete unity in an enormous spontaneous anti-imperialist protest. Doubtless the key to the success of the future struggle lies in the political maturity of this alliance.

IMPERIALIST LEGACY

The eighty odd years since the colonial settlement of Rhodesia has been a period of steady and increasing exploitation of the black Rhodesian masses. The period of bloody warfare to drive the peasants from the rich land in 1890s was followed by the growth and consolidation of a racist capitalist state which reduced the Africans to a state of semi-destitution. Their conditions did not improve but worsened under the post war 'liberal' regimes. Contrary to liberal myths UDI was not the decisive turning point in the conditions or prospects of the Africans. UDI accentuated the decline of the Africans' position, mainly through the shifting of the burden of sanctions onto the Africans—25,000 African jobs were lost in the first two years. But the loss of legal rights and the application of repressive measures came after the Rhodesian Front government came to power, as a coalition of the frightened petty bourgeoisie, white working class and settler farmers who could not even stomach the possibility of any mild reforms which liberalized the economy. In all this

time nothing was done about the conditions of the Africans. Nor was it for the preceding decades of colonial rule. British imperialism has on the contrary nurtured the settler regime it spawned when the adventurer Rhodes secured Rhodesia as the first step in an unfulfilled dream to build a white empire from the Cape to Cairo.

THE REALITY OF SANCTIONS

Further liberal myths surround the sanctions question. When UDI was declared in November 1965, Prime Minister Harold Wilson claimed that the 'rebellion' would be ended 'in a matter of weeks rather than months'. So determined was Wilson to crush the racist regime that it took over two years before he would permit the UN to apply general mandatory sanctions. The hypocritical phrasemongering of Wilson was above all designed to give a cover to the deliberate policy of allowing the Rhodesian whites to prepare for the more widespread sanctions that were likely to follow eventually under pressure from the colonial countries. By piecemeal action and by leaving plenty of loop holes open Wilson paved the way for the present deal. We must add that Wilson also tried hard to get a settlement. According to the independent analysis of Wilson's 'Tiger' proposals made by Dr. Claire Palley of Belfast University the date envisaged for majority African rule would have been 2004 AD! Today Wilson and the Labour Party are making 'leftish' noises about the interests of the Africans. As Trotsky once said, for the Labour Party leaders questions of foreign policy were the line of least resistance (only, we should add, when they're out of office).

Sanctions were, of course, not designed to bring the Smith regime to its knees economically; still less were they imposed in the interests of the African majority. They were specifically designed to return the Rhodesian government to *legality* in its dealings with Britain and the rest of the imperialist world. In applying sanctions, the British government above all was at pains to do nothing that would upset its relations with South Africa—the home of massive British capital—and Portugal, whose fascist regime the Tories are today trying to help get into the EEC. Both these regimes backed Smith politically and in the case of South Africa, economically and militarily as well, during the course of UDI.

THE MEANING OF A SETTLEMENT

There is little likelihood that either party to this dirty deal will turn back at this late stage, for there are good reasons for both to accept it. Many businessmen have been inconvenienced by sanctions—though naturally assets have only been frozen, not confiscated, and can again be used freely together with accumulated dividends when sanctions are lifted. There are mounting pressures also on the Tory leadership from the psychopathic racists in the ranks who are no longer able or willing to contain themselves. Most important though the United States has set the pace in reestablishing normal relations with the regime and has already shipped cargoes of chrome out of Rhodesia. For strategic reasons British capital can now hardly fail to rejoin the competitive struggle for the Rhodesian import market and investment opportunities.

Despite the fact that the whites have been able to shift the main material burden of sanctions onto the blacks the growing manufacturing bourgeoisie will be most relieved by a deal. Above all they hope to enjoy a boom of capital investment and access to export markets of which they have been starved since UDI.

However, the attempt to revamp the stagnating economy of Rhodesia will raise the deep and underlying contradictions to the surface once again. The contradiction of capitalist development in a racist superstructure, which underlines the crisis of the last decade has in no way been solved. The process of absolute impoverishment of the rural masses in order to maintain white domination has closed off the possibility of long term growth by the expansion of the internal market. Similarly, the retardation of the growth of a black proletariat has the same effect. Here is the deadly contradiction in Rhodesian society, for which there can be nothing but the most short lived temporary solution under capitalism.

Ben Joseph

IRELAND: An open letter to I.S.

Dear Comrades,

As you are no doubt aware we have had considerable differences with you over the question of Ireland, both in terms of an analysis of the situation there, and in terms of how to build a solidarity movement in this country. Now however, a change in your policy appears to be taking place which makes it seem possible that some closer measure of joint action could be reached. In the student field your comrades have adopted, as a basis for solidarity work, a position of unconditional, but obviously not uncritical, support for the IRA and various of your branches have supported the slogans of 'Victory to the IRA', or 'Solidarity with the IRA'. Despite our complete disagreement with the way you handled the Aldershot explosion these other actions we completely welcome.

As far as Marxists are concerned, the absolutely central question for revolutionaries in an imperialist power is that of defeatism. In a colonial war carried out by an imperialist power, they must be unequivocally for the defeat of the forces of their own bourgeoisie, and for the victory of the other side. There is no question of compromise on this issue. All sorts of people are prepared to rant on about 'peace' and an end to 'violence', 'justice' etc. but it is the question of defeatism which is decisive. Within this general framework of course tactical differences as regards slogans etc. can exist. However at all times the revolutionaries must clearly support the victory of the other side. This brings us to the question of the Anti-Internment League.

The objection which the IMG has to the platform of the AIL is that it is not clearly defeatist. Its programme is ambiguous enough to be capable of acceptance by all sorts of chauvinist, racist, 'paddy bashing' elements. While we are able to accept the two demands of the AIL, and are therefore prepared to work within it, we only do so on the basis of trying to change its programme to a defeatist one. This we have already tried on at least one occasion (with the I.S. voting against). It is this question of defeatism which we regard as decisive. Naturally we have our own ideas as to the exact slogans the AIL should raise (this is dealt with below) but we would be prepared to accept, as the basis of a principled United Front, any slogans which were explicitly defeatist.

At various times in history of course Marxists have been too weak to initiate large scale campaigns on a clear cut defeatist position. For a long time, for example, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign had to act as a pressure group within the C.P. controlled 'peace' movement. With regard to the AIL, it might therefore be the case that this organisation was so massive and strong that revolutionaries had no option but to carry out propaganda work within it, and would be incapable of running an independent campaign on a clear defeatist position. In those circumstances at all times the revolutionaries would raise defeatist slogans for the victory of the other side (something the I.S. has conspicuously failed to do) but would be unable to change the demands of the main campaign. This, however is very definitely not the position as it at present exists. We are no longer in the days of 'movement' and 'do your own thing' politics and the left can now mobilise people independently of the C.P. Obviously the AIL and the ISC can draw in larger forces than the membership of revolutionary organisations, but when it comes to the actual ground work of propaganda, setting up branches, holding meetings, etc. it is the initiative of the revolutionary groups which is necessary to 'start the ball rolling'. The I.S. are perfectly well aware that if the I.S. changed its line in the AIL instead of backing the present position, there would be a considerable chance of the adoption of a clearly defeatist position. Even if this were not possible it would be the task of the I.S. to attempt to get such a change adopted instead of trying to prevent it.

SLOGANS

In the few words available for a slogan it is of course impossible to completely express the whole content of an analysis. Trotsky for example points out that the Stalinists were even able to twist the apparently impeccably revolutionary slogan of 'A Workers and

Peasants Government' until it was actually used to prepare the massacre of workers and peasants by the bourgeoisie. A slogan has to sum up an entire analysis but it cannot do so perfectly. Nevertheless of course it is possible to have varying degrees of 'goodness' in a slogan. Let us therefore be clear as to the main elements of the analysis.

Firstly what is the basis of the struggle in Ireland. On this we have a clear position. The basis of the struggle in Ireland is the domination of that country, both direct and, in the South, indirect, by British imperialism. Furthermore the hold of British imperialism over Ireland cannot be broken as long as capitalism exists in Ireland. Until this point the imperialist economy of Britain will continue to dominate and exploit Ireland. Within this general framework however there are several possible outcomes. For example it is by no means ruled out in theory that British imperialism could impose a federal solution in Ireland. It may be unlikely in practice, but it is not theoretically excluded in the sense that the ending of imperialist domination without the destruction of capitalism is. Similarly it is not excluded that even bourgeois or petit-bourgeois movements can secure formal independence for their countries. Algeria is a case in point. Clearly however such an event is no real solution to the national question. Algeria today is still dominated by French imperialism.

The immediate political task that flows from this analysis is to determine the attitude of revolutionaries in Britain and Ireland to the present struggle. Quite clearly the position of revolutionaries in Britain is that they consider the securing of even legal independence under bourgeois rule of all Ireland from Britain to be in the direct interest of the Irish and British working classes. In consequence they are clearly for the defeat of the forces of the British state even if an 'independent' Ireland was a bourgeois state. Even a slogan of the simple type 'For the defeat of the British Army in Ireland' would convey this and we would be prepared to accept this as a principled slogan. However, clearly far more educative slogans can be developed, in particular in regard to the actual forces leading the struggle in Ireland. However it must be clearly understood that it is not the primary task of British revolutionaries to criticise these leaderships in agitation. In propaganda we naturally make a detailed analysis, but the main weight of agitation is the defence of these organisations against imperialist and chauvinist attacks. The *Workers Press* 1 per cent support and 99 per cent condemnation line is in fact a betrayal of the revolution in Ireland. In slogans it is therefore necessary to give support to the armed vanguard of the Republican population—that is to say to the IRA. Nevertheless clearly within this general provision it is also necessary to educate the British vanguard in the nature

of the various organisations in Ireland and this can be expressed in slogans. This leads on to a theoretical examination of the present struggle in Ireland and the nature of the I.R.A.

In the case of Ireland therefore we have to sort out several points. Firstly does either wing of the IRA have a programme capable of destroying the hold of British imperialism in Ireland. This in fact boils down to the question of whether the IRA can destroy capitalism in Ireland. The answer to that is clearly NO. The Provisional IRA is ideologically linked to the Southern bourgeoisie, and the Officials' stages theory means in practice that they are incapable of linking their explicit socialism to the national struggle. Therefore any slogan which states that the IRA can destroy British imperialism is completely incorrect. Any Marxist who holds to the theory of Permanent Revolution must accept this. Nevertheless this is entirely different to saying that the IRA cannot defeat the British army. Here in practice we may think it unlikely but it is not theoretically excluded in the same sense as is the IRA destroying British imperialism. There are many examples of struggles in which imperialist armies have been defeated without capitalism being destroyed and thereby destroying imperialism. We have already noted Algeria and the case of the FLN; Aden and Cyprus are other examples. Quite clearly, for example, whether the IRA could defeat the British army could be affected by what revolutionaries do in Britain. A massive solidarity campaign might lead to the bourgeoisie being forced to abandon the struggle because of fear of the internal repercussions of continuing its policy.

If we therefore summarise the points of this argument we may say the following. To educate the British working class in the nature of the struggle in Ireland it is necessary not merely to raise a clear defeatist slogan, but to relate this to the struggle of the actual armed leadership in Ireland. There are two slogans which suggest themselves on this, and both have some slight drawbacks. One is 'Victory to the IRA' and the other is 'Solidarity with the IRA'. The danger of the 'Victory to the IRA' slogan is that it can be interpreted in the sense of 'Victory to the IRA against British imperialism', i.e. implies that the IRA can destroy imperialism in Ireland. However this danger is far less than the drawbacks of the 'Solidarity with the IRA' slogan. This is used to justify positions such as that support can only be extended to the IRA in defensive activities. This is the position put forward by, for example, sections of the Communist Party and has been used by them with 'success' in the NUS. This is of course fully in line with their 'who fired the first shot' pacifist approach to solidarity campaigns. It attempts to reduce politics to geography. We therefore hold that the slogan which most fully gets the political point across is

'Victory to the IRA' provided that it is explicitly understood that this refers to the armed forces of the British state, not to imperialism itself. However we would not fetishise such a point if the I.S. were prepared to come out with any clear cut defeatist slogan such as 'Solidarity with the IRA', 'Unconditional but not uncritical support to both wings of the IRA', or any such similar formula. Indeed, in order to achieve a common platform within the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions, we have already agreed with cdes. in I.S. a position of 'Unconditional but not uncritical support to both wings of the IRA'. As we have already said, within the essential principle of adopting a clear cut defeatist position we would not allow differences on slogans to come in the way, and these become of secondary importance.

WE THEREFORE MAKE THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL TO THE I.S. LEADERSHIP' IF YOU INTEND NOW TO ADVANCE ANY CLEAR CUT DEFEATIST POSITION WITHIN THE AIL, NATURALLY COUPLED WITH THE DEMAND FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, WE WILL SUPPORT THIS. FURTHERMORE, WHILE CONTINUING TO FIGHT FOR OUR OWN SLOGANS, IF YOU PUT FORWARD ANY DEFEATIST SLOGAN WITHIN THE AIL WE STATE IN ADVANCE THAT WE WILL VOTE FOR THAT SLOGAN AND FIGHT A CAMPAIGN FOR ITS ADOPTION.

At present the I.S. appears to wish to use organisational arguments to justify its position in the AIL. It claims the ISC is sectarian. Unfortunately the reality of the situation is that IS is maintaining a diffusion of forces in solidarity with the struggle in Ireland by having no consistent policy (see the last issue of *The Red Mole*) and by refusing to come out clearly for a defeatist solidarity campaign. As long as this situation continues we will continue to try to create a defeatist campaign. It is for this reason that we are supporting the Irish Solidarity Campaign conference in Oxford on 29-30 April. We would greatly welcome a chance to unify in one organisation all forces working in solidarity with the struggle in Ireland. This however can only be done on a clear basis of revolutionary defeatism. The choice is up to the leadership and membership of I.S. Either a continuation of slogans and policies open to any sort of pacifist or chauvinist interpretation, or a campaign on a clear cut defeatist basis. We have made our position clear. We await your reply in hope and with interest.

—The Political Committee of the I.M.G.



Photo by George Snow



The coming Easter NUS conference at Birmingham will probably prove to be the liveliest for years. The left is now of sufficient strength in the NUS to throw off the suffocating strait-jacket imposed upon it for a whole period by the CP. This year there is every possibility that real politics will come out of the narrow confines of the left caucus and provide the major focus on conference floor itself. The possibility is of course not reality and the CP (not to mention the right) will do all in their power to prevent any political discussion of the crucial issues affecting student militants both inside and outside the colleges. The way will have to be charted through bureaucratic manipulation and demagogic red herrings to get the key issues debated. But the discussion around the elections in which the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions is offering a slate, the continuing pressure of the autonomy issue and the struggle in Ireland will offer sufficient openings for this. Of course, if we are to make maximum use of this opening the left militants around the LCDSU will have to be crystal clear where it is and where it wants to go.

SECOND PHASE OF THE STATES ATTACK

We are now in the second phase of the State's attempt to reintegrate students unions and NUS. The impact of the first phase was primarily ideological. At one blow the State focussed attention on its main enemy in the student field, the revolutionary student, and identified him for college authorities and moderate students alike as the main problem. At the same time the way forward was outlined for college authorities. In both these enterprises the State has registered a certain success. The leading representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), at LSE and Northern Poly in particular, are now applying this message ruthlessly and in a more or less coordinated way. In this they have been assisted by their ideological success, although their initial disarray somewhat lessened this. But the mobilisation of the 'moderates' at a number of colleges (N. Poly, Aston, Reading, etc.) and the move of some backward colleges to withdraw totally from the NUS because it is too left wing (sic) e.g. City Poly, is indicative of this.

The Red Mole has of course argued right from the very beginning that this struggle at the local level was quite as important as any mobilisation against government proposals and was one of the major reasons why we took the initiative in founding the LCDSU and why this was one of the major planks of this body from the start. However, given the recommendation of the CP and thereby the NUS leadership to seek collaboration with these same college authorities many students have remained blind to their true role. This second phase of the State's attack has thus found most students, even relatively politicised ones unprepared. It will be our task at this conference to sort this one out.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN THE COMING PERIOD

What has to be spelt out to all the delegates at this conference is the national importance of all local struggles. College authorities treat every struggle at local level as merely an element in the general campaign. This appears clearly in the organisational coordination which is exhibited in these struggles. So we see that the tactics of fund freezing and so on indulged in at Northern Poly and LSE are repeated in even the smallest most out of the way colleges. At Newport College of Art for instance this is precisely what happened. As a matter of fact, in this case, resolute action by the students involved (occupation) resulted

in their funds very quickly being unfrozen. Each local struggle is in fact a crucial part of the whole campaign: a defeat in a local college sets back the whole national struggle. Quite clearly, therefore, this conference must pledge its full support to all mass action in the colleges on the autonomy issue. Last conference in passing the amendment demanding full political, constitutional and financial autonomy, was a first necessary step in getting the campaign on the right footing. This must now however be spelt out in concrete terms: verbal commitment is worse than useless. Next term is an inevitably quiet period in the colleges, but events in a number of places will nonetheless come to a head next term. Certainly, the beginning of next session will see massive struggles.

A PROGRAMME FOR THE NEW LEADERSHIP

The strategy that has been decided upon by college authorities seems to have two main strands. On the one hand the invocation of 'the law of the land', and on the other the

NUS CONFERENCE

The next NUS conference marks a crucial stage in the campaign for full student union autonomy. The intervention of Liaison Committee militants here will be decisive.

freezing of funds. Both of these must receive a sharp reply.

1. It is argued by college authorities that a constitution free from their interference is an impossibility because this breaks the law of the land. Indeed college authorities are quite prepared, as at LSE, to take the whole issue to the courts. This is no reason for the fight to cease. It is obvious to even the most apolitical student that many of the legal prescriptions which are now being invoked were only dug up in the present period. Their implementation is a quite clear political act and has to be fought as such. But, as socialists we should also be clear as to the nature of bourgeois law. It is always used in the last analysis to protect the interests of the few against the vast majority. It is a nonsense to proclaim its 'impartiality'. It is precisely this 'impartiality' which gave us, for instance, the anti-trade union laws and the racist immigration laws. No socialist would recommend that the majority of the working class or the blacks in this country should meekly submit to

these 'Laws of the land'. Neither should we. There must be: *Full support, including national mobilisation of all students, to any college which defies the law in the fight for an autonomous constitution.*

2. In line with this first point, there must be *unrelenting opposition to any standardised aims and objects clause.* Such a scheme in conjunction with the courts would be precisely the registrar through the back door.

3. *There must be UNCONDITIONAL support for all mass actions by students in furtherance of the autonomy struggle.* Where funds are frozen, this must include active encouragement to seize administration facilities in lieu of the return of these funds, and also provision of loans to such colleges, by national levy if necessary.

It is vital that any leadership elected at this conference is committed to the implementation of at least the above points.

-J.R. Clynes

SLAVE LABOUR IN WATFORD

A look at the effects of a prison 'outside party' scheme.

The Brookside Metal Company is situated just south of Watford on the A 41. The firm is a subsidiary of the British Insulated Callender's Cables Company. In 1970 Brookside won the Queens Award to industry, supposedly because the firm is very efficient and makes excellent profits for the parasitic shareholders. Yes, there are excellent profits to be made from the Brookside Metal Company. Profits that are made from the sweat of poorly paid labourers and prisoners from Pentonville who are allowed out on parole during the day. The working conditions are appalling.

The civilian labourers are the butts for abuse from the tyrannical management, and ill-tempered, bullying foremen. These workers have no recourse to the benefits and protection that a trade union would provide. In fact the formation of a trade union is very much opposed by the management, as obviously their vested interest in such a commercially viable enterprise as Brookside would be undermined, as would their standing with the "big wigs" controlling both the B.I.C.C. empire, and, of course, themselves.

Brookside is a large scrap metal yard cum foundry. A foundry with smelting rooms completely devoid of extractor fans to get rid of the many varied poisonous gases which come from the smelting of such "health risk" substances as lead and tin. The majority of workers are immigrants, mainly West Indians, working long hours under despicable conditions for very poor wages. In the main the workers are middle aged, with very few exceptions. They are seemingly reluctant to criticise the firm, in the open that is, feeling that their tenuous hold on a job might be in jeopardy by doing so. Indeed holding a job seems to be a very difficult thing to do at Brookside especially if a worker is critical of management attitudes, even if the criticism is voiced in a reasonable and sensible manner. Many workers get the sack for trivial matters such as demanding face masks to protect themselves from the fumes, or rubber boots when working in the mud and slush covered yard.

But there are workers at Brookside who labour under far more trying conditions than the over exploited civilians. These men are prisoners from Pentonville who slave on the prison's outside working party scheme. A scheme, so we are told, that was initially meant to help a man to readjust to the normal working conditions that one would find in any modern, efficient factory when he eventually returned to the so-

called "free society". Instead the ever grabbing capitalists have seen this scheme as an opportunity to once more exploit. Brookside is the epitome of this criminal attitude.

The firm pays Pentonville prison £17 per week for each prisoner working a 40-hour week! Each prisoner receives 40 p per week from the prison in pay! 1 p per hour worked!! Ten prisoners are constantly employed. The prison guarantees that there will be a full quota of men at the factory every day. Therefore this poses no problem of absenteeism for the management. The prisoners pay no insurance contributions. Neither do Brookside or the prison. Therefore the men have no recourse to compensation in the case of accidents etc.

This is slave labour. Pure fact. And the conditions under which the prisoners slave only substantiate this fact. From morning until night they toil with pick and shovel breaking up various metal ores that are emptied from large containers. The whole work yard is shrouded in dust. No face masks are provided. No milk provided - which is customary nay obligatory in these situations. The men work outside in all weathers - wind, hail, rain or snow and are not even provided with protective clothing, neither mackintoshes nor rubber boots. You can probably well imagine the filthy condition the men find themselves in at the end of the day.

Still there are nice hot showers to be found in a beautifully warm changing room, with lockers, tiled floors and driers. However, the management is very concerned that the prisoners should have as little contact with the civilian workers as possible, and so the men from Pentonville wash up in a small hand basin, and change in a damp, cold hut situated in the work yard itself.

The greatest trial of all though for any prisoner working at Brookside is withstanding the abuse that is heaped upon him from both management and foremen. This is the great plague of slaves. The prisoners are sworn at, "dressed down" in front of civilians, and generally reviled because of their unfortunate position. One foreman called Eddie when asking a prisoner to perform a particular task invariably shouts to him: "Hey fucking shit..."

In the main prisoners see no point in protesting about their abysmal conditions because they realise that they can be quite easily removed from the factory and sent

back to sewing mailbags in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the prison workshop - where the repressive attitude is even worse than Brookside - and replaced by another willing slave, gasping to work in the relative freedom of this Watford workhouse. Mind, there are fringe benefits to the job. One can look at the beautiful countryside on the journey to and from Pentonville every day. And every Friday night the management magnanimously donates a bar of soap to each prisoner for his own individual use.

Though some prisoners do protest. Early in January of this year three prisoners voiced their grievances to the yard foreman - Eddie. Within half an hour the local police arrived at Brookside consulted the screw for thirty seconds and whisked the three, now handcuffed men, back to Pentonville. The men were placed in the 'chokey', accused of being drunk, why else would they protest about the wonderful conditions at Brookside! The men were found guilty of being drunk, although they had received no medical from a doctor or any test whatsoever. Each man received a punishment of "fourteen days all round" - fourteen days loss of pay, fourteen days chokey and fourteen days loss of remission. Each man had initially less than a week of his sentence to serve when they approached the foreman about the bad working conditions. There are ways and means you see of convincing the slave that it is in his interest not to complain.

Brookside is not just an isolated case of an outside party scheme 'gone wrong'. In the eyes of the prison authorities it is perfectly all right. There are many such schemes now in operation throughout the country, and many more to come. The Home Office has realised that prisoners are a welcome source of cheap labour.

When a prison slaves 5 days a week in atrocious conditions for anything up to 6 months or more, is paid 40 p per week, and does not leave prison with more than £4 in his pocket with no home or job to go to then there is something sadly amiss with the whole of our fetid capitalist society. Mind you, Brookside are laughing - laughing all the way to the bank.

-Loobo' (ex-slave labourer and Pentonville prisoner)

1 - Chokey: solitary Confinement.

REVIEW

THE INSTITUTE FOR WORKERS CONTROL LOOKS AT THE MINERS STRIKE

As is usual with anything written by Michael Barratt Brown, *What Really Happened to the Coal Industry** is well researched, and well-written. Barratt Brown has assembled a wealth of material which gives key trends in the mining industry since its nationalisation in 1946.

Particularly important are the figures he has calculated showing the weekly earnings in the coal industry as a percentage of the average of all male manual workers in production industries. These show a decline from a peak of 125 in 1956 to 104 in 1965—a level which was held until 1970, after which it declined to 95 in 1971.

A startling set of figures is the share of coal in the competitive primary fuel market—this declined from 98 per cent in 1947 to 57 per cent in 1970/71. Barratt Brown analy-

ses the reasons why this shift took place at an even faster rate than consecutive governments planned; a major contributing factor being the slow-down in the rate of growth of the economy which led the oil companies to desperately hold prices to capture markets, so that their large-scale plants (largely financed by government investment grants) did not run too expensively below full capacity.

Even more dramatic is the picture drawn of the decline in the number of pits: 958 in 1947; 616 in 1962; 483 in 1965/6; and 292 in 1970/71. The rate of decline shown by these figures has been an accelerating one: a 26 per cent decline from 1956-62; 22 per cent from 1962-65/6 and no less than 40 per cent from 1965/6-1970/71.

Hence we have the picture of an industry which is being made more and more red-

undant by technological advance and where, as is usual in such cases, the workers concerned are expected to shoulder the burden.

Barratt Brown carefully analyses the policies of the NCB and government in each of these periods. He is especially acute in diagnosing the way the Labour Government went back on its promises to the miners.

His assessment of the last years of the coal industry and the particular form of productivity deal introduced in that period is enlightening. He is probably correct in his explanation of how this laid the basis for rising militancy in the mining industry—although he throughout makes the mistake of assessing such questions in isolation from general trends in the working class.

On these questions and many others the pamphlet is useful and a good buy for those who want factual material and a general background to the mining industry and its economics. However, in other respects this pamphlet reflects the confused politics of the Institute of Workers Control.

There is no analysis nor factual assessment of the role of the trade union leadership in this period. Surely some argumentation is necessary on the question of why the miners, whose militant history is a legend in the working class, allowed themselves to lose the relatively good wages position they carved out in the first years of nationalisation.

Although the pamphlet mentions workers control no argument is advanced as to what would be its features in the mining industry. We are told on page 4 that the miners had "long demanded workers control at all levels

of the industry". On page 5 we are told that they did not get workers control, yet nothing more is said on the topic except for hints that there were 'control' aspects to the 1969 unofficial strike and the 1972 official strike.

The pamphlet treats the coal industry—and the various governments' policies towards it—in isolation from politics as a whole. This is economism with a vengeance. What is worse is the pervading non-class approach. I can illustrate this no better than by quoting a chunk:

"The nation does need coal and will have to pay a decent wage to the miners who get it. Coal remains a precious national asset that will have to be most stringently conserved, not as fuel, but as a non-renewable source of chemicals, fertilisers, synthetic materials, paints and much else besides....."

An approach like this underpins the politics of trade union leaders who try to get their members to support class collaboration policies "in the interests of the nation".

Fortunately, when the miners went into action they threw aside the arguments about the national interest and were not at all impressed when told that their actions threatened "a precious national asset". If they hadn't, the strike would have been lost. Despite his intentions, Michael Barratt Brown advances an approach which undermines the class consciousness the miners showed in the strike.

—Pat Jordan

**What Really Happened to the Coal Industry*, by Michael Barratt Brown, Institute for Workers Control, price 12p.

LETTERS

Further repression in Mauritius

Dear Comrades,

The visit of the Queen and Prince Philip to the small sugar island of Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean, is being used by the government of the 800,000 population of mixed culture, to give a facade of respectability to its dictatorship. There is an all out effort to make Mauritius appear a peaceful, unified and happy country. In fact the government has postponed all elections, the municipal, due last December, and the general, due in August 1972, till 1976. This naturally has caused massive discontent throughout the country. A state of emergency is now in existence, which has lasted from just before Christmas when a General Strike of some 70,000 workers which demanded the withdrawal of a draconic law, that made the right to strike impossible in Mauritius, was crushed by the use of highly paid strike breakers, the army, and the sacking of hundreds of workers. Fifteen major unions, organising more than 80,000 workers, have since been suspended, leaving the workers with no protection from their employers. Today more than 40 political prisoners are being held in

"preventive detention", all being members, of, or trade unionists of unions affiliated to the main opposition party, the Movement Militant Mauricien, a Socialist party founded in 1968. Among the prisoners are Paul R. Berenger (26), the leader of the Movement, Dev Virahsawmy (29) the M.P. of the Party, Herve Maillon the internationally famous painter and Ramduth Jadoo, President of the Party.

In August 1971, a strike by the transport industry was declared illegal by the Government. The president of the union, Paul Berenger, and Dev Virahsawmy, in company with many workers were brutally beaten and arrested by the paramilitary police. Eventually after a hunger strike of six days by the prisoners a tribunal declared that the strike was legal and that the government was completely in the wrong.

Violence has become an everyday facet of life. Riot police and the quasimilitary special (mobile) force patrol, stop and search cars, people and houses. The history of violence started as long ago as 1963, erupted in communal riots in 1968 and eventually reached a climax in November 1971 with the attempted assassination of Paul Berenger and Dev Virahsawmy in broad daylight in the main street of Curepipe. The attempt failed, but unfortunately a 49-year-old doctor was shot dead instead. Those arrested in connection with the incident were all agents of one of the coalition government parties.

The government has continued its programme of silencing opposition, by censoring all

news papers, refusing to allow one, *Le Combat*, to be published and by putting under lock and key the press of the Movement's *Le Militant*. The Queen will be met with freshly painted walls, and homes and shop fronts, as the government covers up the myriad slogans directed against its dictatorial regime.

Thus the question remains, will the government have papered over the gaping cracks in Mauritius (its failure to solve unemployment, running now at 15% and rising unchecked year by year, corruption, wastage, 30 million rupees squandered, according to F.A.O., in the Ministry of Agriculture in one year, and a loss of support by the mass of the people) sufficiently to ensure an enjoyable stay in this "paradise" for the Queen and Prince Philip? Or will the rising tension the anger and frustration of thousands burst the restraining bonds creating a violent and dangerous situation on their arrival?

Yours faithfully,

P.C.

GLASGOW RED CIRCLE

Weekly Discussion Group for Revolutionary Socialists — Thursdays at 7.30 p.m.

Iona Community Centre, 214 Clyde Str.

NOTTING HILL RED CIRCLE

Meets every Monday night at 7.45 p.m. in the Britannia pub meeting room, Clarendon Road (near Ladbroke Grove tube). Buses 52,7,15. All Welcome.

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Racist education in Bradford

Dear Red Mole,

As you have been publishing various articles on immigrant education in Bradford I thought you might be interested to know about a boy who goes to our school (Bradford Grammar School). I was arguing about Communism with this boy and found out that he was a fanatical Enoch Powell supporter. Later on, I found out that his father was an immigrant teacher. His ideas, which were obviously a reflection of his father's about immigrants were shown in one sentence in which he said: "The (wicked black) Kenyans forced the (merciful, helpful) whites from their country, we should do the same to the blacks". Thus, Mr. Carter could show that your attack on him was sheer victimization!!

Yours fraternally,

Peter Mason

North London Red Circle meets every Tuesday at 8.30 p.m. to discuss revolutionary politics. All welcome.

General Picton Pub, Caledonian Road, (nr. Kings Cross Station) N.1.

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IRISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The Irish Solidarity Campaign holds alternate forums and business meetings every Friday at 8 p.m. at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (junction Wharfedale Road) nearest tube Kings Cross.

Friday, April 14th: Bob Purdie on the I.S.C. Manifesto - 'Why Irish Solidarity'.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Owing to increased postal charges and rising expenses we have unfortunately had to increase the Red Mole subscription rates to £3 p.a. for Britain and £4 p.a. for foreign subs. (£6 airmail). Current subscriptions will, of course, not be affected until renewal.

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP (British Section of the Fourth International)

Please put me in touch with IMG militants in my area.

Name:

Address:

Occupation:

Age:

Place of Work:



SPAIN Capitalism survives by the gun

The recent shootings at El Ferrol once more demonstrate the desperation of the Franco regime, its inability to find ways of silencing the Spanish working class for even a short space of time, by anything other than violent repression.

The occasion was a demonstration of naval shipyard workers to the gates of the El Ferrol factories to urge the workers there to take solidarity action with their strike. Two to three thousand demonstrators were stopped by 60 armed police. Three times they charged them. The police began by firing rubber bullets—a familiar enough story. Then, perhaps in panic, they shot bullets into the crowd, killing two men and seriously wounding 20. The comrades of the dead men, unarmed but not intimidated, took over the road and forced the police to retreat to their barracks. The next day the whole town was on strike, and solidarity action already appearing in other parts of Spain.

Under strong threats from the regime, they have now been forced back to work. The

outcome of the struggle is by no means all negative. Since the beginning of the year there have been upsurges of the student movement and the workers' movement throughout Spain. In the universities and schools there has been massive resistance to police repression. In the rank and file in the factories there has been a series of struggles against the regime's attempt to renew collective bargaining agreements with the yellow unions. New sectors, such as the teachers, have been drawn into struggle. These forces, the rank and file in the factories and the students in particular, are ready to respond with solidarity action against the Spanish state when it uses its guns against any section of them. What El Ferrol again teaches, like the death of the building worker in Madrid last autumn, is that the most urgent task is to arm the workers' movement so that it can take the struggle forward. The willingness of the regime to kill has been proved often enough. The response must be the formation of self-defence units in workers' struggles, the first step to the building of the Spanish workers' militia.

SPLIT IN MATZPEN

A split has occurred in the Israeli Socialist Organisation (I.S.O.) which published the newspaper *Matzpen*. The majority in this organisation had for some time been sympathetic to the ideas of the Fourth International and were continuing to win more support. The minority was quite explicitly anti-Leninist. Thus the old division between Marxism and Anarchism has been reproduced within the ISO and when the Leninists are in the majority, then, of course anarchists find the situation intolerable. The majority argued that an analysis of the Arab Revolution was meaningful in the context of the theory of permanent revolution, that the right to self-determination for the Jews only had a meaning within the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that an interna-

tional Leninist organisation was of key importance.

Between Marxism and anarchism lies the 'marsh' into which the centrists usually stumble. Unable to see political issues for what they are and attaching more importance to personal friendships, juridical formalities (i.e. how can the majority continue to use the paper when the ownership is in the hands of the minority supporters, etc.) the centrists proclaim their adherence to Leninism but end up in the camp of the anti-Leninists. Now that a split has taken place *The Red Mole* wants to make it clear that it regards the Leninist comrades as maintaining the real continuity of *Matzpen* and will continue to aid their work in this country.

ARMY DESERTER SEEKS ASYLUM IN SWEDEN



Kevin Cadwallader shows his Army identification card.

Kevin Cadwallader is a deserter from the British Army who is now seeking political asylum in Sweden. His case is being fought by the Revolutionary American People's Party (RAPP), a group formed mainly of American war deserters in Sweden which works closely with the Fourth International.

On arriving in Sweden, Kevin Cadwallader made the following statement:

"I Kevin Cadwallader, came to Sweden for asylum because of Northern Ireland. I do not think that what is happening there is very good. As I see it there must be a simpler way of ending the fight without more people being killed. So I have left rather than fight

in something I think is wrong."

In Swedish law, "a political refugee is a foreigner who in his home country runs the risk of persecution on political grounds". RAPP is fighting the case on the basis that: "The army from which he deserted is engaged in an undeclared war in Northern Ireland. It must be clear to everyone that to go against the policies of one's own government, and in protest, to desert to a neutral country, is a political act."

RAPP need funds urgently to fight this case. Please send to RAPP, P.O. Box 64, 13201 Saltsjö, Boo, Sweden.

The regime is, of course, still desperately trying to crush the revolutionary left before this can be accomplished. The renewed struggles of the mass of workers make this the more difficult. Franco is leaning heavily on the rest of capitalist Europe for help—in particular on France, the obvious political centre for exiled militants. The main barrier to the French government's desire to help by extraditing militants, is the solidarity movement which has existed ever since Burgos. Since the beginning of March it has centred around support for the hunger strike of four of the ETA militants under threat of deportation: this has already achieved the commutation of the order to exile to the northern French provinces, which the ETA comrades regard as condemnation to a 'slow death'. After two weeks of the hunger strike, the next move of French 'justice' was to

take them into hospital under close police guard for 'observation' which their own doctor judged quite unnecessary. But the fight will go on: the Ligue Communiste has issued a call for an intransigent campaign against any extradition, and for solidarity in the struggle against the French and Spanish states.

Capitalism in crisis is often bound to be short-sighted: and the desperate repression of the Spanish regime will strike sparks in the rest of Europe too. The arming of the Spanish working class is on the agenda. It is the most urgent task facing the revolutionary movement in Spain at this moment: solidarity with that movement will be essential in the development of the revolutionary left throughout Europe.

J. Frazer



Photo by George Snow

Just under 10,000 people took part in the Anti-Internment League demonstration on Sunday, 26 March. Marches from five different parts of London linked up in the Strand before proceeding to a final rally outside the Temple tube station on the Embankment. The use of Trafalgar Square for the rally had earlier been banned by the Government on the alleged pretext that Irish marches were likely to provoke violence, but in fact the demonstration passed off completely peacefully, thus exposing the entirely political nature of the ban.

At the final rally all the speakers emphasised that direct rule changed nothing but simply indicated the depth of the crisis in which British imperialism found itself. The Heath initiatives did not mean that we could now be complacent about the situation; on the contrary, they were a sign of weakness which we should take advantage of to the full by intensifying the campaign in this country.

NUS AND THE LIAISON COMMITTEE

Currently going the rounds of the local students union elections is a leaflet written by members of the NUS executive, headed 'What is the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Students Unions?'. It is not as one would hope, however, an attempt to grapple with the Liaison Committee's arguments politically—rather, it is an attempt to use the McCarthyite tactic of discrediting the LCDSU by branding it as an IMG 'front organisation' and slandering some of the individuals most closely involved with it.

To do this, of course, those members of the NUS executive involved (notably John Randall, Deputy President) have had to distort the facts somewhat. Not only do they give an incomplete listing of the LCDSU slate for the NUS elections, not only is it incorrect (see *The Red Mole* 38 on the IMG's decision not to participate in the slate)—but to the two actual IMG members in their list they add two more alleged IMG members, one alleged IMG sympathiser, assert that "the non-IMG members of this slate can be relied upon to toe the IMG line" with one possible exception, and then, hey presto, "the composition of the slate indicates that the LCDSU has now become nothing but a front organisation for the IMG"! They then confirm this conclusion by listing the members of the Steering Committee and again, by falsely alleging that certain people on it are members or sympathisers of IMG, produce an IMG bloc of 10 out of 17 steering committee members.

Their only attempt to deal with the political positions of the LCDSU is to say that these "are by and large the product of the confused analysis of the IMG (an analysis which only recently led them to call for the complete destruction of student unions and their replacement by 'red bases' within each university or college. So much for the 'Defence of Student Unions'.)" This last is, of course, rubbish, as a glance at anything we have written on students recently will show. The reference is to a questioning (not a call for their destruction) of the role of students unions in an article written by an IMG member in 1968 ("only recently"?).

The leaflet, first produced by NUS executive members for the elections at York University, concludes that "the LCDSU are the unwitting agents provocateurs of the right wing", and cites as evidence three colleges in which, "in the wake of LCDSU union leadership", the left has suffered setbacks. No doubt the writers were hoping for a further defeat for the LCDSU at York. Unfortunately for them, however, their candidate was soundly beaten by an LCDSU supporter who is not even a revolutionary socialist, let alone a member or sympathiser of the IMG. We really must be losing our grip—but then, of course, we are unable, unlike certain members of the NUS executive who belong to the Communist Party, to draw on such a long and widespread experience of rigidly controlling 'front organisations'.