

MILITANT

FOR LABOUR AND YOUTH

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PRICES AND INCOMES

NO WAGE RESTRICTIONS: FOR A SOCIALIST PLAN

BY TED GRANT

The British economy grew by the miserable figure of 2% in 1965, and according to the latest forecast of the economic experts will only grow by the same miserable figure, at best, in 1966. Thus the economy manifests the same disease of virtual stagnation as under the Tories.

The measures that Wilson has taken, under the pressure of the bankers and industrialists, have also been virtually the same Stop-Go financial and economic policies that ended so disastrously in the Balance of payments crisis. Following on the demands of Big Business, Government expenditure on "wasteful" social services was slashed, Housing, hospitals, schools, education, roads and other social services have all suffered cuts. In addition the raising of the Bank Rate while benefiting the bankers, places a crushing burden on Councils attempting to try and cope with the needs of housing their constituents.

Now for this year Wilson is prescribing more of the same medicine. At a time when the steel industry is complacently expecting a drop of something like 2 million tons in production, and other industries are similarly placed, Wilson declared in his speech of January 10th "In the months that lie ahead, we shall see whether the British people are prepared to assert the qualities that are needed—qualities of effort and ingenuity, of restraint and self-discipline, of unselfishness, of willingness to surrender selfish sectional interest to the call of a greater national and social interest." There would be no let up in the credit squeeze. Then he added for good measure "Outmoded relics (so called restrictive practices) of trade depression must be attacked where they hold back production".

STICK & CARROT

Apart from the stick, carrots were also to be offered—"new proposals for stimulating industrial investment and regional development."

Such a speech could as easily have come from Churchill or MacMillan had they been in power now. For what is the meaning of the speech? For the workers "sacrifices" of cherished rights fought for and won over generations of struggle by the trade union and Labour movement. That is the meaning of the attempt to restrict wage increases by the Prices and Incomes Board. The railwaymen have just had a taste of the bitter dish that is

being cooked up for them by the Government, to the applause of the financiers and industrialists. For the capitalists there is to be a new programme of lavish grants to try and persuade them to "modernise" their equipment. For the workers more effort, for the capitalists more inducements. Quite a pleasant division of tasks... if one is a capitalist!

PRICES RISE

Meanwhile the Prices and Incomes Board has failed entirely in the attempt to keep down prices. Even the price of bread has risen by 1d. for a large loaf. This will hit the poorest and most wretched part of the population, to whom bread is a staple of their diet. The Financial Times and other journals of finance-capital are all demanding further drastic action to keep down wages. In its issue of 31st December last the above-mentioned journal demanded that ".....all wage settlements (should be) subject to approval by a wages court which would take the national interest fully into account." Wilson's principle that all "sectional interests" must be cast aside thus apparently has their warm support, when it is applied, as intended, to the trade unions and the working class.

MONOPOLIES BENEFIT

The measures announced by Wilson benefit businessmen, especially the monopolies and Big Business. Yet see how these gentlemen react at the merest suggestion of an encroachment on their entrenched interests and privileges. Mr John Davies Secretary of the Confederation of British Industry declared at the suggestion that the nationalised industries might be allowed to extend their field of operation ".....Private industry regarded the extension of nationalised industries 'manufactur-

ing powers' with implacable hostility"...

"Certainly in this area of nationalisation there are the seeds of what might be a dire conflict and thereby (the Government) forego the co-operation which it has so far enjoyed and to which any Government is entitled providing it does not seek to damage with intent the industrial fabric of the country."

...The issue of steel nationalisation might have been an occasion for a major confrontation, but that was withdrawn." (Speech at luncheon of the London and South Eastern Regional Council of the Confederation of British Industry on 18/11/65).

Here you have the issue glaringly exposed. Wilson is

demanding that the workers strain every nerve, etc. etc. in the "national interest" which the capitalists interpret as the strengthening of capitalism and the further enrichment of themselves. Anything which touches the sacred vested interests of capitalism is against the "industrial fabric" i.e. capitalist ownership of industry and thus against the national interest!

CLASS SOCIETY

By deliberately playing down the class basis of society, the Labour leaders are deceiving the people, and being used by Big Business for precisely their "selfish sectional interests".

Yet even from a capitalist point of view the holding down

of wages does not serve the interest of modernisation but on the contrary delays and prevents it. Even with the lavish subsidies of the State, 20% grants in cash, 40% in Regional Development Areas, and the tax concessions in addition, the employers will only undertake modernisation when it promises bigger profits for themselves. That is the only "national interest" that they understand.

LIMITATION WAGES

Even the Financial Times admitted the correctness of the argument of Jack Jones, a leader of the T. & G.W.U. in opposition to the limitation of wages implicit in the Prices and Incomes Board when its

Continued on page 3.

VIETNAM "PEACE" OVERTURES AMERICAN BLIND ALLEY

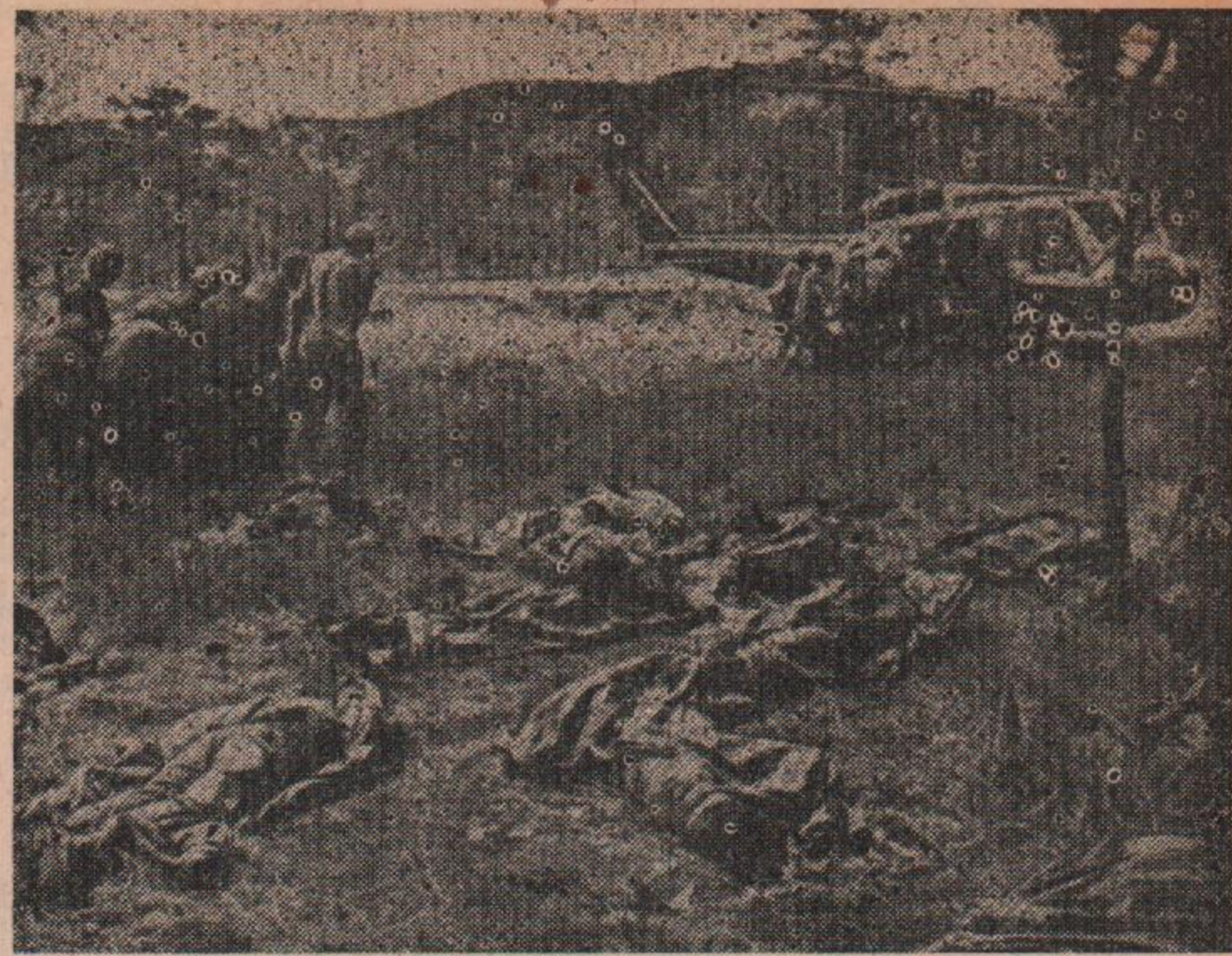
BY PETER TAAFFE

Despite the squandering of billions of dollars and the lives of American soldiers, U.S. Imperialism is doomed to defeat in Vietnam. The peasants hunger for national independence and unification have proved to be more powerful than the most fiendish weapons of destruction. Napalm, torture, burning and looting, backed by 225,000 "super-efficient" troops of the world's mightiest power, are impotent against the power of the National Revolution. As the "Observer" 16/1/66 remarked, "Almost all their weapons either have been captured from the Americans or consist of now obsolescent equipment." And yet the Vietcong continue to mete defeat after defeat to the forces of U.S. Imperialism and the puppet Government.

Recognizing the defeat of its aim to check the national revolution begun under the French, U.S. imperialism has started a "peace offensive." The hypocritical Johnson seeks some kind of face-saving formula to relieve U.S. imperialism of its burden.

"VIETCONG" GAINING

Contrary to expectations, the ending of the monsoon season has not seen the eclipse of the Vietcong. Precisely the opposite; they have gained ground in every field. The capitalist press itself, and the correspondents on the spot, admit that the Vietcong control 90 per cent of the countryside, and that the vast majority of the people are behind it. The towns, formerly "havens" from the Vietcong, have also been



American Workers Die for Big Business Interests In Vietnam

caught up in the war. Even the generals and "tops" of the South Vietnamese army are riddled with Vietcong-sympathisers. As the "Observer" remarked, in relation to a battle on January 9th. "The Vietnamese High Command was not even notified of the operation until the last minute, as a security precaution. "As in every guerilla war, the 'conquerors' find themselves assailed from all sides. The peasantry, the backbone of the Vietcong, have been reinforced in their hatred of the alien invaders, by the Imperialists' brutal attempt to subdue them by indiscriminate bombing of villages, and setting fire to the villages and rice-fields. A graphic illustration of what this has meant, was given by an American correspondent, who related the "accidental" burning of a village and the subsequent apology of an American "adviser". "Tell the Old Man we sorry we shoot at you, we thought you V.C. (Viet-

cong)". He repeated the words in Vietnamese, and the farmer smiled politely and contemplated his burning crop." Washington Post, 6/1/66.

MASS PROTEST USA

Not least of Johnson's reasons for his current "peace overtures" has been the increased military involvement of the U.S. in arms and men. The heavy losses of American troops—240 dead a week in November and December (higher than in the Korean War)—have sparked off a mass protest movement in the United States itself and affected the American people as a whole. Congressmen returning from the Christmas holiday complained of opposition to the war among their constituents. The White House itself has been bombarded with letters opposing the war, and the National Opinion Poll showed that 70 per cent of the American population are opposed to a prolongation of the war. The

Continued on page 2.

TYNSIDE
 READERS MEETING
 Sunday 20th February
 7.30 p.m.

BRIDGE HOTEL

(End of High Level Bridge)
 NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

SPEAKER: TED GRANT
 SOCIALIST POLICIES
 THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

Lessons of Hull

BY PATRICK CRAVEN (St. Pancras North Y.S.)

The success of the Labour candidate in the North Hull by-election demonstrates convincingly that the mass of the workers in this constituency at least, are not prepared to desert the party which they traditionally support. Despite the fact that the Labour Government is now pursuing policies which, at home, work against the Trade Unions and the workers in general, and abroad, is enthusiastically serving the interests of British Capitalism, to the extent that, as Angus Maude, the Conservative MP has stated, the Tory opposition "has become a didate, whilst always posing workers cannot see an alternative to Labour.

"RADICAL" IRRESPONSIBILITY

In this situation, the intervention of Richard Gott and the "Radical" Alliance, was not only futile, but did great harm to those campaigning for Socialist policies, both in Hull and nationally. Impudently rejecting the Party in which he had such faith only a few months earlier, when he was attempting to become Labour candidate for Richmond, he decided to descend upon Hull to try and take advantage of Labour's small majority to make an opportunist raid, on the Government's even smaller majority. His platform was not even Socialist, but one of "moral" protest against one aspect of the Government's policy, the

Vietnam question. Had he been "successful" in helping the Tory to win, not only would this have incensed millions of Labour supporters, but it would have made far more difficult the task of those campaigning for a socialist policy not only in relation to Vietnam but on all other issues. Gott has failed to understand that Socialists can only achieve any advance by struggling alongside the workers in their organisations and their party. Every socialist in Hull should have worked for the Labour candidate, whilst always posing his opposition, not only on Vietnam, using the opportunity to spread his ideas to the Labour supporters and build up a Socialist opposition.

ACT AGAINST BANKERS

For the Wilson Government has taken no effective action to weaken the position of the owners of the giant monopolies, who have caused Britain's rate of production to increase so slowly, preferring to adopt the same restrictionist economic measures which they so fiercely condemned when they were taken by the Tory administration. "He had to satisfy the international banking community by masochistic and irrelevant cuts in our standard of living, harmful restriction and needless increases in our costs and price structure, because he believes that international speculators are impressed by actions which in

Fight Anti-Trade Union Legislation

Some readers have been critical of the article on the anti-working class legislation being contemplated by the Labour Government.

However readers and supporters of Militant should have a due sense of proportion. The headlines of the article indicate the main emphasis that should have been given. "T.U.'s Must Say: NO! TO LEGISLATION. LEADERS MUST DEFEND RIGHTS."

T.U. LEADERS SILENCE

The article should have been slanted to give emphasis to the reactionary character of the legislation and the need for militants to agitate and struggle against it within the Labour and Trade Union Movement. This activity should have been around the demand that the Union leaders mobilise their members by launching a campaign for the abandonment of such shameful legislation, by a government

the long-term harm the economy," is just as true of Wilson to-day as when he himself made this accusation against Selwyn Lloyd.

Criticism of the Government's policy must not be muted, but so long as the Labour Party is the party of the workers Socialists must give critical support to all Labour candidates and work for the return of the Labour Government.

speaking in the name of Labour. It should have emphasised as the main theme of the article the need to fight the suggested legislation within the Labour Movement. It should have dealt with the need to preserve the independence of the Trade Unions from the entanglement of the capitalist state even under a Labour Government. They must fight all anti-working class measures whoever introduces them.

At the same time it should be remembered that we reach primarily the advanced workers at this stage, and therefore the lessons of perspective should also be given.

N.Y. TRANSPORT STRIKE

While the mass organisations of the workers remain intact, legislation can hamper, but also embitter the workers. It is wrong to underestimate this vicious legislation but it is also false to exaggerate the possibilities in front of reaction at this stage.

It is one thing to put it on the statute book it is another thing to carry it out. Any attempt to carry it out will cause a worse situation than the employers are trying

to avoid. Instead of small strikes they will have big ones. They will heighten the class consciousness of the workers and aid their radicalisation. The example of the New York Transport Workers strike is particularly clear, in this regard. The Court Injunction that the strike was illegal and the arrest of the trade union leaders, embittered the workers and made them even more determined.

It did not prevent the victorious outcome including the release of the Union leaders unconditionally. It should be pointed out to the advanced workers and the militants, that the union leaders, who are looking the other way, or at best only expressing nominal opposition to the suggested legislation may themselves be caught in a trap of their own making.

RAISE ISSUE IN UNIONS

If Michael Quill, a non Socialist Trade Union leader, under pressure of his members and of circumstances, can wage a struggle and "defy the law", then certainly the British trade union leaders, with the Socialist consciousness of the movement, under pressure of the workers can find themselves in the same situation.

Now is the time to raise the issue sharply and clearly in the trade unions and labour movements, shop steward's committees and on the factory floor unconditional opposition to any legislation restricting trade union and workers rights. Move resolutions of protest in the wards, G.M.C.'s trade union branches, district and area committees, shop stewards' committees, and throughout the labour movement.

A SOCIALIST POLICY FOR LABOUR

By Ted Grant

A Militant Pamphlet Price 1/-

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BUSINESS MANAGER'S APPEAL

With the first issue of 1966 "Militant" is beginning a massive sales drive. Never has the need for a paper to pose a revolutionary alternative to the policies of the Labour Government been as great as now, in the Labour movement.

The first priority is to ensure that the "Militant" is on sale at all Labour Party and Trade Union meetings, demonstrations and rallies. If you agree with our ideas and wish to spread them, order extra copies to sell to your comrades at work and in your Ward Party or your University Labour Club. To obtain a regular order for a dozen or so copies, please let me know straight away. At least take out a year's subscription for yourself, for only 9/-.

We also need your support in the form of money. Lewes Young Socialists recently made a magnificent donation of £30. Can your organisation do better? Please give as much as possible yourself, collect from your friends and persuade your Y.S. branch, Ward Party or TU branch to donate even more.

Please send me MILITANT For 6/12 months (Post Free). I enclosed P.O./Cheque for value 4/6 6 months, 9/- 12 months.

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VIETNAM

From page 1. wave of opposition will continue to rise if the war should continue. The mounting financial burden, while not of decisive importance to the US economy, is threatening another round of inflation. In his State of the Union Message Johnson envisaged the enormous expenditure of £6,000 million in Vietnam, if the war should continue through next year. With this gigantic burden on the economy—three times the total arms bill of British Imperialism—the helplessness of the position of imperialism is clearly recognized in Johnson's 14 points. From the "intransigent" position of "never" negotiating with the "rebels," he has been forced to concede Vietcong participation in any negotiations. Johnson further proposes to "neutralise" South East Asia. Just what this "neutralization" means, can be seen from this comment by the Washington correspondent of the "Times," 21/1/66: "Even if the fighting could be stopped, the formation of a coalition government is seen here, frankly, as bringing only a communist coup on the pattern of post-war Czechoslovakia and Poland. "Thus the Imperialists understand that, with the departure of U.S. forces, the puppet tops presently in command of Saigon would quickly give way to a Government based on the Vietcong which in turn would lead to the unification of the whole country. Unable to "save" Vietnam for capitalism, "why not make the best of a bad job?" reason the foremost thinkers of imperialism. The purely nationalist aims of the

RAFFLE

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revolution will have no great appeal to the workers of the West. Hence the suggestion of De Gaulle to come to terms with the revolution. Why not concede victory to the Vietcong, and attempt to assist the establishment of a regime on the pattern of Tito, independent of both the Russian and the Chinese bureaucracies? This is the real meaning of the "carrots" in the form of massive aid, dangled by Johnson in his Baltimore speech and after, and not at all by any lofty concern for the welfare of the Vietnamese people.

The future triumph of the Vietnamese revolution will mark another step forward in the colonial revolution. It will give a mighty impulse to the revolution in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and the whole of South-East Asia. As such, it must be hailed and supported by the militants and activists in the Labour Movement.

Labour in South West

BY JOHN EWERS (Gloucester Young Socialists)

In an area where there is relatively hardly any unemployment, or a housing shortage, or where industrial strife breaks out only intermittently, it is surprising that the size of the organised Labour Movement, especially the Young Socialists is that which it is.

The Young Socialists have been expanding rapidly within the last two months: over a dozen new branches have been formed, or old ones revitalised. The area where there has been the most expansion is Wiltshire—about half a dozen new branches have been formed, based on the small towns in the country.

RURAL AREAS

The counties of Wiltshire and Dorset are basically rural areas, and therefore, the local farm workers are plagued constantly by the "tied cottage system." The local N.U.A.W. has fought for a long time to challenge the farmer's right to throw his labourer-tenant literally "out into the field": the tenant having no security of tenure. Admittedly after the Government's recent Act, the farmer requires a court order to do this.

On the industrial front when trouble does erupt, the struggles are usually protracted and bitter. Examples of this were the T & GWU's attempt to get Union recognition at a Dye Works in Dorset (not far from Tolpuddle). This resulted in a long drawn-out fight. The ASSET strike of inspectors and chargehands at Normalias Ltd. of Yeovil. It lasted two months. The issue was the national rate in comparison with the "Somerset" rate.

RATE FOR THE JOB

The situation in the South West could turn out very favourably if the Young Socialists act to recruit the young unorganised workers in such bastions of the capitalist establishment as Debenham's shops, and other large concerns throughout the region, where trades union organisation is weak or non-existent.

In this way the struggle for better wages and conditions can be co-ordinated. The employers can be told firmly that our demands are to receive nothing less than workers in other areas. We refuse to be used as cheap labour for their immense profiteering.

Militant

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(Hackney Central YS).
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Craven, St Panc. N. YS

Correspondence: 197 Kings Cross Rd WC1 Phone BRU 1436

EDITORIAL

SUPPORT THE RAILWAYMEN

The impudent and cynical rejection of the railwaymen's claim by the Prices and Incomes Board, is a provocation for the whole of the working class.

It is an attempt to put on the railwaymen the burden of the inefficiencies of capitalism past and present. Why should the railwaymen be pushed back to conditions like those of 1955. The railwaymen won even under Tory Governments the right of comparability with like jobs in outside industry. This is now rejected.

If the railways do not pay it is because of the terrible burden of interest paid in compensation to the shareholders of an industry reduced to rack and ruin by their selfish greed for gain.

Slash the compensation to a minimum based on need for those shareholders without resources. Let the capitalists bear the burden not the railwaymen.

In addition to the contemptuous rejection of the modest and just demands of the railwaymen the Prices and Incomes Board on the issue of liner trains is backing "private" big business all the way at the expense of the railwaymen.

The State is being used economically and politically for the interests of Big Business. As the editorial of Railway Review of December 31st makes clear its is intolerable that "drastic control of wages and conditions is inextricably bound up with prices . . . drastic control of wages and conditions will lead to a fall in the standard of living of the working class. What is more, it will result in a rise in the wealth of the already rich."

That is precisely what has happened. The railwaymen gave the only answer possible.

The N.U.R. Executive voted in favour of a strike by 20 votes to 3. The strike notice expires on February 14th.

Support the railwaymen in their demand for higher pay, an immediate 40 hour week, and a third weeks holiday.

NIGERIAN MILITARY TAKE-OVER

The favoured "democracy" of Africa has collapsed in ruins. Nigeria, which was supposed to be the show-piece of the Western capitalist powers in Africa, has succumbed to an army takeover. The "democracy" was based on the rule of a semi-feudal Muslim landlord class in the North, which contains the majority of the population, but which is the most backward part socially and politically, rigged elections in the West, and an uneasy coalition between the ruling elements.

Underneath the surface unity there remain the tribal antagonisms fostered by imperialism in the past. The Ibo, the Yoruba and the Muslim Hausa in the north.

The gaining of independence has not prevented the continued economic domination by British Imperialism. None of the problems posed by backwardness, disease, poverty and malnutrition has been solved. Only a rich layer of landlords, of a small clique of capitalists, and bureaucrats, have anything like a reasonable standard of living.

The state is ridden through and through with corruption and nepotism. Consequently in the West where allies of the Northern ruling clique were in power through rigged elections with the support of the Federal Government, there has been a state of almost permanent rebellion.

Now the army officer caste has seized power, killing the Prime Ministers of the West and South, and according to some reports the Federal Prime Minister as well. The rebels have reached agreement with the top generals not involved in the revolt, on the basis of an amnesty for the mutineers. Thus a military bonapartist regime has been established.

All the regimes on the African Continent reveal a like instability. The ruling layers of capitalists, landlords and bureaucrats are even incapable of uniting the African Continent. Africa remains enfeebled and Balkanised. Independence marks an enormous step forward. But not one of these countries is strong enough to stand on its own economically against the pressures of far stronger Western Capitalism.

Many of them try and maintain a balance by manoeuvring between the Soviet Union, China, and the Western capitalist Powers.

The events in Nigeria are a demonstration of the fact that on the capitalist path there is no way forward for the African peoples. Even the democratic rights painfully won in the West, are thrust aside because of the insoluble social contradictions.

In time the African peoples will come to understand that freedom and democracy can only be gained by overthrowing capitalism and landlordism in alliance with the workers in the West.

INDUSTRY:

Dirty Stick For Workers

BY REG TAYLOR Secretary Ruislip-Northwood C.L.P.

Convenor of Shop Stewards, Walter Kidde Co. Ltd Northolt, Middlesex.

One of the promises that Harold Wilson made during the election campaign, and repeated at the Blackpool Conference was to make Joint Production Committees compulsory in all factories and other places of employment. Production only increased by 2% in Labour's first year of office and although food prices, fares, income tax, and insurance contributions not to mention rents and rates, have gone up, wage increases have been very meagre. But there has been a strange silence on dividends which last year were 10% up. Will this lead to higher living standards as promised in the statement on Prices and Incomes? The answer is obvious. So how to tackle the problem is something that all trade unionists must now seriously consider.

RELY ON OWN STRENGTH

We cannot leave it to the leaders of the Movement, the Woodcocks, Carrons, Greens or Coopers, as their ready subservience and acquiescence to George Brown's prattle has already left us with the dirty end of the stick. We will only achieve higher living standards based on greater socialist planning and a powerful Trade Union Movement. We must exert pressure in our Union and L.P. organisation in order to force changes towards a genuine socialist policy. Every Trade Unionist wherever he or she works must see that initial representations is through a bona-fide shop stewards committee. In the docks, railways and the big motor works progress has been made through the or-

PRICES AND INCOMES

From page 1.

Midland correspondent pointed out.

This sort of "Socialism" being advocated by Wilson will undoubtedly gain the whole-hearted support of the capitalists and their press. Their only criticism is that they are doubtful whether Wilson can deliver the goods.

When the workers see that the measures announced will only increase still further the record profits of the capitalists while not solving in any way the fundamental problems of the economy, they will demand an accounting from their leaders. There is nothing remotely resembling "Socialism" in these measures, hardly anything that the bankers and the Confederation of British Industry can object to. It will increase the power of Capital over Labour without solving anything.

Yet Britain is still a country of enormous wealth. What is required is not legislation restricting the rights of the trade unions and the workers, and limiting wage increases but **limiting the power of the capitalists.** That is the root of the problem. Let the Government mobilise the mighty power of the trade union, co-op and Labour organisations. Let

organisation on the floor of the shop in face of opposition not only from the management—but very often from the full-time Trade Union officials. An active factory organisation will settle disputes at their source and prevent the fruitless sparring that takes place within the frame-work of the York Memorandum.

DON'T BLAME WORKERS

The policy of a Trade Unionist taking a grievance to his branch and then sitting back to watch it get in the sausage machine that leads to York went out with wooden ships. The smallest issue that can frustrate the least important worker must be dealt with immediately.

For the umpteenth time, Ray Gunter, the Minister of Labour, has warned the workers of stagnant production, restrictive practices and unearned wage increases. In war and peace the workers have always shown their readiness to scrap craft rights or union rule books if they think it is to the advantage of the community as a whole. But to expect only wage-earners to jump when the whip is cracked shows a complete lack of understanding of the true position. Let the Minister of Labour or the Chancellor of the Exchequer address the real culprits over

LEEDS READERS MEETING

1st & 3rd Wednesday
each month 7.30 p.m.
6, Winstanley Terrace
(Back Door)
Victoria Rd., Leeds, 6.

Feb 2nd: The State.

Feb 16th: Bureaucracy.

the tannoy at Ascot, Henley or the grouse moors. Tell them that the workers are not going to make a bigger cake just because the bosses want a bigger slice. Tell them that the legislation they are going to introduce will send bosses to prison for putting profits and dividends before production. Face them squarely with a plan based on Harold Wilson's pledge that industry and commerce will be run on a what you know basis and not a who you know basis and no longer will it be necessary for so called Socialist Ministers to appear on television or clutter up the Press with attacks on the workers. We can increase production, stabilise prices and make the export drive a success if socialist measures of nationalisation are introduced.

LONDON READERS FORUM

Sunday 13th February
7.30 p.m.

The Dolphin

Tonbridge Street, WC1.
2 mins from Kings Cross
(Behind Camden Town Hall).
A SOCIALIST POLICY
FOR LONDON HOUSING
Ellis Hillman. (G.L.C.).
John Smith (London District
Management Committee,
Amalgamated Society
Woodworkers)

MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

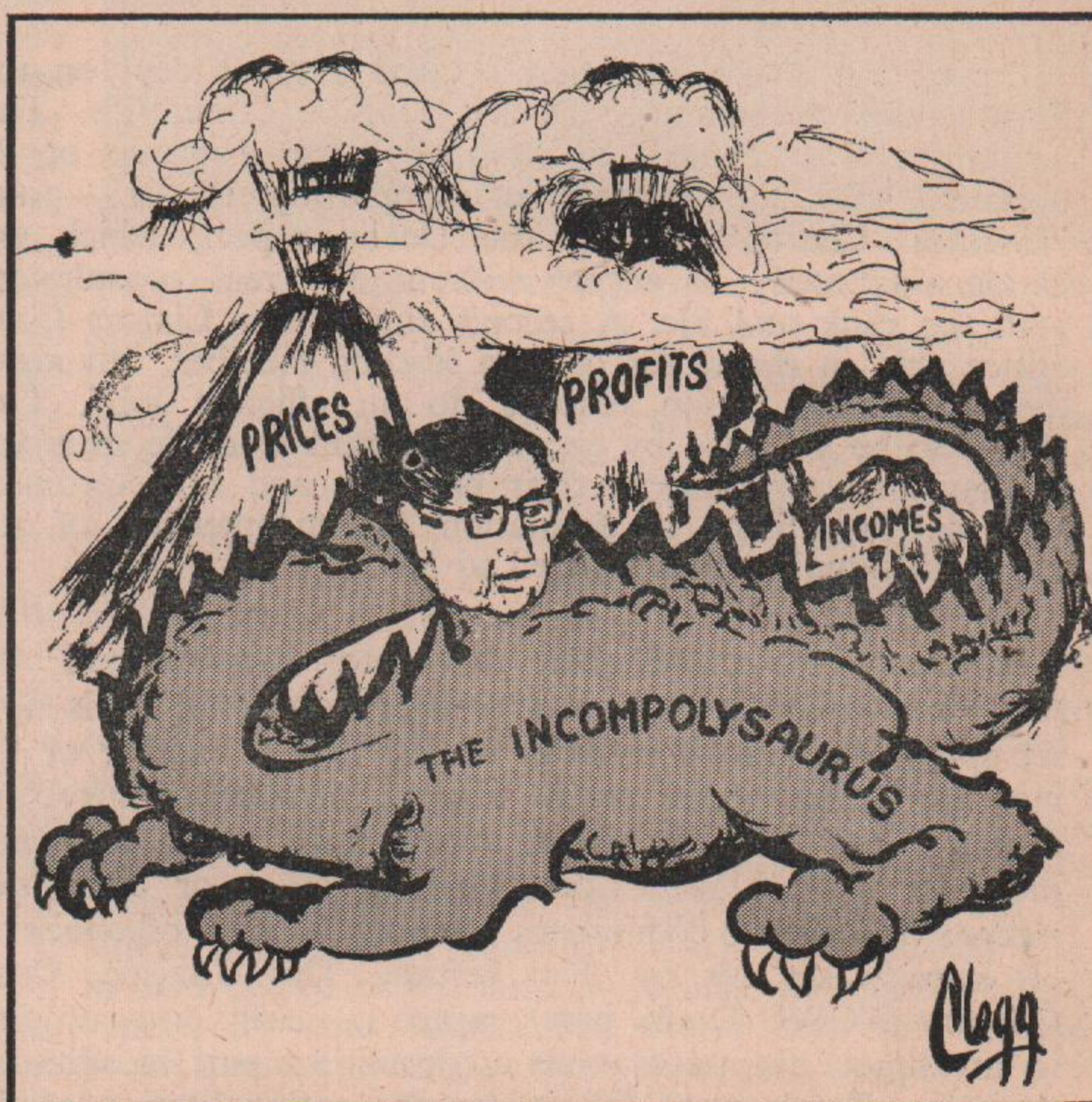
Fortnightly meetings are being held in the Militant room, 197, Kings Cross Rd., London, WC1, at 7.30 p.m. the next three are

Feb 6th: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN THE WEST

E. Grant.

Feb 20th: THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR. P. Taaffe.

6th Mar: VALUE, PRICE & PROFIT: Lynn Walsh.



them conduct a campaign for an Enabling Bill to take over the 400 monopolies, the insurance companies and the private banks, which own and control the greater part of the wealth. Then organising production on the basis of a democratic plan of production involving the workers and all

sections of the population, except the tiny handful of exploiters, they can solve the problems of production for the benefit of the people and not for the benefit of the exploiters. Production would increase not the miserable 2% forecast but 12 and even 20% a year.

COUNCIL SACKS FED' STEWARD

WHIP WITHDRAWN By our own Correspondent

Recent events in Birkenhead have severely shaken faith in the local "guardians." At the January Council Meeting a number of Labour councillors were forced to break the whip because of the sacking of the works department Federation Steward whose chairman W. Jones is a trade union official.

Since then the Trades Council and Labour Party have come out in support of the "Rebel" Councillors.

The reason given for the redundancy was that the steward was only one of over 30 temporary painters, duly laid off. The "principle" of "last in first out," had been applied. A steward was no different than the rest. He wasn't being victimised.

An official of the F.B.O. and a painters' union officer met the committee. Their arguments that even a private employer would not dare to do what this Labour Council was doing fell on stony ground. They made it clear that they did not like seasonal employment of painters by a local authority. The least they expected was that normal procedure be honoured and that the Federation Steward be kept on.

LABOUR PRINCIPLES

A long and often bloody struggle has brought the Labour Movement to its present position of strength. The hardest fight of all was to establish shop floor organisation. Many were the Martyrs! *Without this basic organisation the mighty Labour movement could not exist.* But every principle of Trade Unionism should be sacred to and binding on Labour Party members—the guardians of all working class interests. All the Tories and the Labour majority voted for the sacking (3 against).

At the Labour Group only

8 councillors supported the call for reinstatement. When the matter came before the council 4 councillors voted against the minute; Trades Council Chairman, J. Harland, M. Noonan and J. McDonald and a Liberal with 5 abstentions.

WAR ON UNIONS!

J. Harland attacking the decision said war was being declared on the trade unions. Councillor McDonald said a direct blow was being struck at trade union organisation. Both felt the traditions of the department and the industry were being broken.

Since that date despite the support of the Central Party, the "whip breakers" have been called before group officers. One "left-wing" councillor stated that as a fundamental principle of trade unionism was at stake the three who opposed the sacking publicly were doing the trade unions' job for them. They were wrong. Another asked why he shouldn't break the whip over differences in education. Yet another asked why, after signing standing orders and then breaking them, Cllr. McDonald should not leave the Party?

The standing orders are clearly intended to hold together a Labour Group and not a Liberal one. The Labour Group were guilty of breaking more than standing

Birkenhead

National attention was drawn just before Christmas, to the two-day stoppage by the Birkenhead bus conductors and drivers, and their subsequent sacking by the Labour transport committee.

The strikers were viciously attacked by the local press, and on television, a sharp rebuke was given by Councillor Linfield, the chairman of the committee.

No voice was raised publicly in defence of the men. As is usual in industrial disputes, only a distorted one-sided voice reached the public ear: "Those irresponsible workers again!"

It is not true, as is widely

believed, that the stoppage was directed toward achieving a five-day-week, which, under the new national agreement, a council need not grant—the men had been tried by the management too much! Apart from lesser issues of unrest, the immediate reason for the strike was that the men could not get a meeting by a given date—the 18th December. The National Agreement on hours and wages states that it is operative from the first full pay-period in 1966, yet no joint meeting was arranged for local application until Jan. 3rd.

MEETING REFUSED

As early as February 1965, when the 40 hour week was felt to be coming, Mr. Vanderwerff, a previous union secretary, made it clear that he expected the new agreement to be discussed in time to be implemented in the new year of 1966; and again, in September, he stressed the same point. What response did he get?

In December the new secretary, Mr. Jones was refused a meeting with the Transport Committee by the manager. The men's representatives say that the manager considered it the management's right to choose from the four alternatives in the new agreement. Right up to the strike he told them they would work the 6 day, 46 hour week.

Clause (2) (1) of the national agreement states clearly that where the newly won 40 hours is implemented without compulsory overtime the management will decide how it is to be worked from four alternatives: 5 or 6 day week, 11 day fortnight, or 21 day cycle of 160 hours. But in clause (7) which deals with compulsory overtime being worked it states just as clearly that "joint agreement" will decide upon the alternative.

Every trade unionist knows that workers who refuse to defend themselves are unmercifully trodden underfoot. The manager was told there would be trouble. There was—the men struck!

Shameful Action

The shameful episode came when the Transport Committee replied in the manner of Victorian employers and handed out dismissal notices to over 600 workers and indiscriminately too.

Mr. Richards, the present transport workers' Secretary, stated that notices were received by men who were off sick or on holiday. One night-foreman, not involved in the dispute, actually received a letter of dismissal.

The men were offered their jobs back if they reported for work on the third day. If they didn't the committee said they "might consider" offering employment at a later date: each man as a "new entrant."

Who was irresponsible here? The Transport department could have been denuded of all staff. In fact, had the men reported back at a later date, the buses could not have run, as a "new entrant" must work a period as a conductor. There would obviously have been no drivers!! Also the men would have had to start from scratch with superannuation.

However, the men, though enraged, went back on the third day. But only in order to start discussions with the committee.

BUSMEN FIGHT BAD CONDITIONS

By COUNCILLOR JOHN McDONALD

Wider Question

At the time of writing after the first pay period in January the committee are considering the alternatives. They have already rejected the men's offer to work a five day week and their rest-day overtime. Reason? "Staff shortage."

What do the busmen's committee say? Their chairman Mr. Edwards pointed to the amazingly high turnover of staff, last year; 46 per cent. He said that the accumulative effect of different causes of discontent coupled with the recent treatment meted out are making men with years of service look elsewhere for work.

A committee man cited some causes of discontent: meal-times; a conductor with a thirty minute meal-break can spend 10 minutes paying in takings, queue up for his meal and have only ten minutes left to eat and rest.

Because of lack of recreational or rest facilities men with a 2 hour break between halves of shift can find themselves compelled to wait in a bare canteen; no T.V., armchairs, billiards, comforts etc. Lavatories are semi open air and freezing in winter, one is not kept private, it is often left in a disgusting state.

When approximately £½ million was spent out of profits on a new garage, facilities were left completely inadequate. "The men who make the profit are not considered," said Mr. Vanderwerff.

No help is given in allocating shifts to help T.U. committeemen to be free to attend. Only very recently was the Trade Union Secretary given any special consideration.

The men also feel bitter about an editorial press attack on their "absenteeism" and "lateness." With the long and awkward hours often worked their situation is fully understandable. A tired driver is a potential danger.

Future Action

What is likely to transpire? One thing is certain if conditions don't improve; if the busmen are provoked by a one sided working of the national agreement, trouble lies ahead for the whole Labour Council and not only from the busmen but from the rank and file in Birkenhead.

At the last meeting of the Trades Council and Labour Party a resolution was passed calling for the reprimand of the transport chairman and manager.

The transport workers committee claim that although the manager does not seem to have the authority to negotiate, they find they were turned down in their requests for consultative meetings with the committee.

A constructive step forward would be the setting up of a Trades Council and Labour Party and Labour group committee to investigate the whole issue.

Such action, like industrial action, however valuable is insufficient. Only by the political activity of the workers and their vigilance in controlling their elected representatives can these problems be solved fully. This is demonstrated not only locally but also in relation to the Labour policies of our representatives at national level.

Bristol Dockers Demand Action

By our Bristol Correspondent

The recent 26-day strike at Bristol and Avonmouth Docks was triggered off in the first instance over the rates for packaged timber, but behind the tension which this revealed was a serious discontent with the way in which the TGWU officials have been doing their job. As a result, the strike itself seemed almost to be a dispute not only between workers and employers (though it was this as well) but also between rank and file union members and their own brass-hats. ...

During the strike, attention centred a great deal on the Bristol and Avonmouth Docks Liaison Committee. This committee was formed, at first by a small group of 26 dockers, with the purpose of supporting the 11-point "Dockers' Charter" against the Devlin report, which the Union was ready to accept without any real consultation with the rank and file. A second aim of the Liaison Committee was, in the words of a leading member, "to make their inefficient Union officials do an efficient job". This aim is to be achieved by encouraging rank and file members to play an active part in their branches and to co-ordinate such activity. Since its formation the membership of the Liaison Committee has jumped to 500.

A Committee of Enquiry (the Flanders Committee) was set up by Ray Gunter to look into the causes of the recent dispute. QUESTION from members of the Liaison Committee: Why was no committee of enquiry set up by Tim O'Leary (TGWU Docks boss) to investigate the accusations that his officials were falling down on the job of representing the interests of their members? Especially in view of the incident in Lshed, when 1,500 dockers gave what was virtually a vote of no confidence in those officials.

The rapid growth of the Liaison Committee shows the rising level of activity and the

desperate discontent of the ordinary dockers. It is note worthy that a number of the leading members of this Committee have never held any kind of office or committee position in any organisation before. This Liaison Committee is clearly going to play a prominent part in agitation for the nationalisation of the Docks and an improvement in dockers' conditions and welfare.

GRIEVANCES NOT SETTLED

There is no doubt that the basic grievances of the dockers have still not been met and the situation in the Port of Bristol

continues to be explosive. The situation is very fluid and there are signs that the dockers are looking around in a number of directions for a solution to their problems. Some have begun to see the political side of the question and are moving towards the Marxist wing of the Labour Party. Others are showing interest in the National Portworkers' Union—a small but active breakaway union which has been canvassing in the district. To follow this path would be dangerous. One has only to remember the experience of the Hull and Liverpool Dockers when they tried this same experiment with the Blue Union, which today stands on the Right of the TGWU, and disastrously split the advanced militants from the rank and file.

FLEXIBLE POLICY

The solution is to remain inside the TGWU, fighting to link up locally and nationally to exert pressure on the Union machine, to try and change it. At the same time, the unofficial Liaison Committee, elected by the dockers themselves must be strengthened and linked to the Liaison Committee in all the other ports.

A flexible policy on these lines, working within the Union branches and at the same time through the Liaison Committees will exert a double pressure.