

Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 220 15 MAY 1971 2½p

TORY BILL: DANGER OF UNION SURRENDER

Cooper gives green light to register

by DUNCAN HALLAS

THE TORIES have chalked up a modest victory this week. They may or may not get us into the Common Market but they are one more step along the road of shifting income from working people to the rich.

Not another cut in social services this time. Instead an attack on the grass roots shop floor organisations that are the main obstacle to Tory plans for industry.

The attack wasn't made by a Tory minister. It was made by a leading member of the fifth column inside our movement. The noble Lord Cooper, President of the Trades Union Congress and a card-carrying member of the Labour Party came out again, in defiance of the policy of his union the General and Municipal Workers and made it clear that he will press for registration under the Industrial Relations Bill.

Of course plenty of workers don't care one way or the other about this issue. They don't see its importance. In fact it is vital.

Registration is the first—and critical—step towards co-operating with the Tories in carrying out their plans. And these plans concern incomes—ours and theirs.

The object of the Industrial Relations Bill is to make it harder for workers to defend their living standards in a time of fast rising prices. Higher profits and lower real wages—these are the objects of the operation.

Planned

Growing unemployment, rising prices, productivity bargaining, cuts in social services and the Industrial Relations Bill are not odd, unconnected bits of Tory policy. They are part of a carefully planned attack on working people.

As to registration, Cooper and other right wing extremists in the movement hope to start a landslide. They believe that if they can start a big movement to register they can make nonsense of the Croydon TUC decisions on non-co-operation with the government.

As Socialist Worker warned in March, 'once registration begins the rot will set in. Not only on the right but on the left as well, the cry will be "they have registered, we have to do the same in self defence".'

Since then the 'left wing' TGWU Secretary Jack Jones has been hinting that he too may have to register. It won't stop there. The whole policy of non-co-operation is at stake.

Strategy

This is a bread and butter question. It's our money they are after, our money and hard-won conditions.

It has been clear from the beginning that the Tory strategy hangs on using the trade union bureaucrats plus unemployment to 'discipline' the rank and file. This strategy can and must be beaten.

In this season of union conferences, militants have to bring home to delegates what is at stake. The fight for non-registration, non-co-operation and united resistance to victimisation is the fight to defend living standards.

In every union the leaders must be forced to resist the Tory offensive—or get out and make room for those who will.



French Renault workers occupying the giant Billancourt plant this week

Sit-in strike by Renault car workers

RENAULT car workers have been occupying the giant Billancourt factory this week to strengthen union talks with management. The sit-in is a massive show of the workers' power and a sign of rising militancy after the defeat of the 1968 uprising.

A strike by 7000 specialist workers for more pay at Renault's Le Mans factory led to a shortage of components. 25,000 workers were laid off at other plants in France's major car combine.

Two other Renault plants have been occupied as the union officials have held talks with management over pay and grading. Earlier this week, the two sides were said to be far apart.

The government and employers in general are treating the Renault strike as a serious threat and are clearly worried by a return to militancy that might go beyond the bounds of a trade union struggle and spark off widespread opposition to the system itself.

Money crisis and Common Market: special articles on page 2

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Paper you can't afford to miss

ANOTHER Socialist Worker exclusive this week: on pages 4 and 5 Roger Rosewell goes behind the headlines to show that simple greed for profits lies behind the escalating tanker collisions in the English channel.

And on page 3, Paul Foot, whose new book on the A6 murder case is rocking the Establishment, exposes the hypocrisy of a system that denies postal workers a decent wage while crooks and speculators are applauded by the bosses' press.

Week by week, Socialist Worker brings you the stories the other papers are afraid to print. Last week's article on the scandal of the Barbican building site has been acclaimed as one of the finest pieces of fact-finding journalism seen for years.

Socialist Worker's aim is simple: to provide militant workers with information and arguments to arm them in their day-to-day struggles with bosses, government and union officials who prefer a quiet life.

And by arguing the case for socialist politics, we hope to develop that struggle into an all-out attack on the capitalist system by fighting to build a party that will lead the struggle for real democracy and workers' power.

You can't afford to miss Socialist Worker. Neither can your workmates. It deserves a wider audience.

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UPW conference meeting

Post workers and the Tory offensive

speaker: PAUL FOOT
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Socialists and the Common Market

THE GOVERNMENT'S attempt to join the Common Market is nearing its decisive point. Whether it is successful or not will be decided in the new few weeks. But what does this attempt signify, and what should be the attitude of working people to it?

To understand such issues it is necessary first of all to ignore most grandiose phrases printed in the popular papers. The Daily Mirror, for instance, has written of 'A time for greatness' and 'the trend of history'. Such language carefully ignores what the Common Market is really about.

Basically, the Market is concerned with how big businessmen in the different European countries should relate to one another when it comes to producing and selling goods. British big business was built up traditionally on the basis of selling goods and investing money in the countries of what used to be the British Empire. An army and navy were used to keep these countries under British control, and an ideology that exalted the 'Empire' or the 'Commonwealth family of nations' developed.

But in the years since the last war, the old area of the Empire has been a declining asset for British big business. The biggest markets for the products of modern industry are in advanced industrial countries, not in the Third World. Owners of certain industries are frightened that they will be unable to compete with American, Japanese or German companies that can produce goods more efficiently because they have a bigger number of people to sell their goods to.

All this has produced growing pressures on the government to jettison the old policy of letting goods flow freely between Britain and the Commonwealth, while charging import duty on goods from Europe. Instead, it is argued that British big business should align itself with Europe against the capitalist concerns of the rest of the world, including what used to be the Empire.

At workers' expense

Just as a whole mythology was built up to justify the Empire in the past, now almost religious tones are used about the 'New Europe'. But basically what is involved is the same obsession with maximising profits. The trend of the last 20 years is for European firms to have to co-operate with one another, merging and rationalising their production lines if they are to survive in competition with their American and Japanese rivals.

But under capitalism, rationalisation of production always takes place at the expense of workers. It means the closing down of factories not thought to make sufficient profits. It means the 'shaking out of surplus labour', boosting unemployment. It means rising prices. It also means the growing tendency for industry to be concentrated in certain localities, while whole regions are left to decline into wastelands.

The Common Market is an arrangement between capitalist governments that will accelerate these tendencies. That is why no workers should fall for the deceptive language used to justify it. But it is also necessary to beware of many of those who oppose entry into Europe. For the British ruling class is far from united over the issue. Many of its members want to force down wages, increase unemployment and raise prices outside the Common Market. They fear that entry will hurt the profits of the sections of industry they own.

Such people are raising slogans about the need to defend 'British independence' and this country's 'glorious traditions'. They talk of the dangers of rule by 'foreigners'. Some sections of the working-class movement seem eager to rally around them.

Dangerous nationalism

For instance, both 'left' Labour MPs and the Communist Party's Morning Star have treated favourably the activities of a body called the 'Keep Britain Out Campaign'. Among the leaders of this organisation are extreme right wing, racist Tories and open supporters of fascist groups. Such an alliance can only give the impression that what is wrong with society at present is not domination by 2 per cent of the population who own 80 per cent of the wealth, but that some of that 2 per cent might be 'foreigners'.

The Morning Star on Monday wrote: 'The Market takes vital decisions out of British hands—on the economy, on trade, on Commonwealth relations, on nationalisation, on the movement of labour, and on the legal system'. But however 'British' the minority who take such decisions at the moment, they could hardly be further from the working class. The fact that 'British hands' are creating unemployment in the economy, sending guns to shoot down peasants in the Commonwealth in Ceylon, restricting the movement of labour with the Immigration Bill does not make these measures any more progressive.

Such nationalistic ideas will be particularly dangerous if the government succeeds in getting into Europe. Then British workers will face the same problems, flowing from the same policies that face workers in Italy, Germany, and France. Nothing would please the minority of capitalists more in all these countries than for workers in Britain to blame the French and the Italians for their problems and French and Italian workers to blame the British. The ruling classes throughout Europe would be able to perpetuate their control by 'divide and rule'.

The Common Market offers nothing to ordinary workers. But neither does the approach that believes that somehow rule by an 'independent' British ruling class is a better alternative. What is needed is a movement to fight all attacks on workers, inside or outside the Common Market. As big business operates increasingly on an international scale, so must our fight against it. That means strengthening links between rank and file trade unionists in different countries. Nationalist flag waving can only make the real answer to the Common Market more difficult.

CURRENCY CRISIS: NEW THREATS TO JOBS AND WAGES

by John Palmer

THE WORLD CAPITALIST system had another heart attack last week. The patient has suffered a series of these crises in recent years. But last week's was the worst.

In the short run the patient may be helped to recover as a result of the currency plan agreed by the Common Market countries. In the longer run the outlook is gloomy.

Capitalism is a system of contradictions. Since the Second World War, and until recent years, it was possible to keep these contradictions under control. But they are now emerging more strongly than ever and they threaten the stability of the whole system.

Behind the statements and the late night meetings of finance ministers and central bankers lies the economic reality. Every major capitalist country is facing at the same time the problem of slower economic growth, rising unemployment and accelerating inflation.

Deadly threat

Economic stagnation and rising prices pose a deadly threat to profit, the life blood of the whole system.

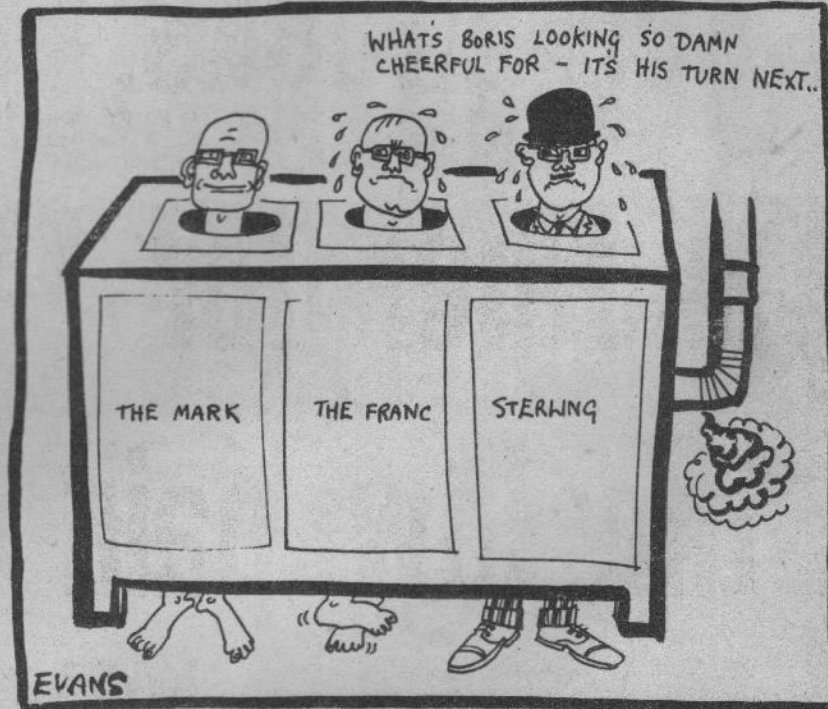
Not every country faces the threat to the same extent. But 30 years of capitalist expansion has linked the fortunes of each part of the capitalist world more closely with every other part. The growth of world trade and the emergence of the multi-national firm act as a conveyor belt by which the instability in one economy is exported to all the others.

The worst offender has been the United States. For decades after 1945 the boom in the US economy boosted the expansion of Europe and Japan.

The world's finances were based on the dollar. And the American view (accepted by the European ruling classes because they had no option) was 'what is good for the dollar must be good for the world economy'.

But American economic stability and prosperity was built on the system's massive involvement in the Cold War arms race. Full employment, price stability and expanding world trade were mortgaged on the diversion of production to the super-market in weapons of mass destruction.

But the growth of a nuclear arms race between the world's imperialist giants has pointed increasingly in a



An Evans' Cartoon in November 1968 at the time of the last money crisis

different direction to economic stability. America's involvement in the missile race has imposed a massive burden on the growth of industry's productive potential.

It has injected increasing inflation into the system. And it has generated fewer and fewer new jobs.

As a result of 25 years of full employment, made possible by the arms system, the American economy's hunger for imports has cut into her traditional trade surplus with the rest of the world.

But paying for the Vietnam war and the stationing of troops half way across the world, as well as the immense cost of providing the investment finance for the overseas subsidiaries of the giant international firms finally put America's balance of payments into the red.

America being in the red means that her trading 'partners' have had to accept IOUs in the form of dollars. Europe's dollar reserves have grown—and the dollars have acted as the germ carriers bringing America's economic disease to Europe.

Some of the European ruling classes (particularly the French) want to get shot of the dollar. But no one can agree how this can be done without risking a collapse of international trade.

The latest German Mark crisis is only a stage in this drama. The dollar surplus in Europe has created a 'wild cat' money market which roams the

international exchanges in pursuit of the highest rate of interest.

No one currency, no one national economy can permit a flood of Euro dollars into its markets. This is what has happened in Germany last week.

In an attempt to buy time the Germans have agreed to let their currency 'float' upwards against the dollar. German industry will not like this because it disrupts the Common Market system of agricultural subsidies and because it lets the Americans off the hook.

Hostile bloc

But, at best, it can only buy time. A new dollar crisis is inevitable. The hunger of the multi-national firms for dollar investment and the cost of America's military operations abroad make such a crisis unavoidable.

Sooner or later the European ruling classes are going to have to choose between subsidising American imperialism or forming a hostile monetary and trade bloc against the Americans.

Either way the crisis of creeping stagnation and rising prices is going to get worse. Both here, and in Europe and in the United States, it will not be the bankers, the finance ministers or the currency speculators who will suffer but the working people.

The latest currency crisis is a damning indictment of a social and economic system visibly in the process of decay.

'Silly boy' attack on Jacks

JIM RAFTERY's letter (8 May) refers to Digby Jacks, president-elect of the National Union of Students, as 'a fake left and an opportunist'. What a silly boy you are, comrade Raftery.

Far from 'most students' sharing your opinion, Digby received one of the highest conference votes ever to become president, and this was no accident: the Communist Party has played a consistent part in turning the NUS leftward and this has been no easy task considering that NUS belonged to the CIA-controlled international students' body and considering that many of our 'left' allies gave up the struggle and formed sectarian ultra-left student bodies such as RSSF.

The culmination of our struggle—in which Digby has played a leading role—was the election at this year's conference of a left-wing majority on the NUS executive, including three CPers. But comrades like J Raftery seem to think that the right-wing give up without a fight. No, when democratic means defeat then they work behind the scenes.

The battle in the NUS has only just begun and behind the scenes all kinds of dirt is beginning to appear, beginning with the news media's smear attack on Digby. But more sinister is a current attempt by the CIA to duplicate and undercut NUS services in banking, insurance and holidays, the idea being to discredit the left by putting NUS in financial difficulties: there

are also sinister warnings that the Monday Club advised its members to support Digby's election 'so that the NUS can be discredited', and of course there is talk in government of discrediting the NUS so that it can be 'clamped down on'.

When Digby spoke at Southampton it was not in favour of the Tories, because it is not they who suffer. They can bleat about injustice and lack of democracy while local authorities can cut off funds to student unions and the government can move in under this pretext.

We in the CP have fought to turn NUS left and it will take a unity of all progressive forces to maintain this stance. Southampton has got a responsibility to the whole student movement. Think again.—ALBERT MILLS, Durham Communist Party.

Right to strike

THERE is much to be done to awaken working-class consciousness on the Industrial Relations Bill. Without ignoring the rest of this venomous Bill, I feel that the basic right to strike for trade unionists is vital and must be hammered home by Socialist Worker and socialists everywhere.

If a decision is taken by a show of hands in favour of strike action and all negotiations have failed, this must be thrown in the face of Conservative and Liberal opinion within the trade union movement and outside. The right to strike

must be fought for first, as a lot of people don't know or don't understand the Bill. Logically, the rest of the socialist viewpoint should follow.

The government has no 'mandate' for union bashing as far as Scotland is concerned. Scotland overwhelmingly voted Labour—with no illusions! Recent municipal elections have proved this once again.

This point has been largely ignored, allowing Heath and the capitalist press to rave on about the Tories 'mandate'.—B McHUGH, Glasgow.

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As UPW conference meets, only one conclusion can be drawn from recent events:

One law for rich crooks, another for the low paid



Telephonists on picket duty during the UPW strike: £17m is a familiar figure

by PAUL FOOT

ON THURSDAY 6 May, the newspapers had three important news items for their readers which, when read together, said a lot about the priorities and 'moral standards' of modern society. They concerned the collapse of the Pinnock Finance Company in 1967, the report of the auditors into the recently-folded Vehicle and General Insurance Company and the report of the committee of inquiry into postmen's wages.

Pinnock went bankrupt more than four years ago after most of its organisers had left the country. Now the two government inspectors appointed to look into the collapse have come up with their explanation of what happened.

Their report is written in the gentle clichés of a barrister and an accountant who are rather shocked at what they have uncovered. Cut the cackle, and the facts are as follows.

Greedy investors

In 1955, an international crook and swindler called William Wright started business in Australia by raising funds for trading companies at a very high rate of interest. Money poured in from greedy investors and Mr Wright, in the words of the inspectors, 'converted it to his own use'. Somewhat naturally, funds started to dry up in Australia and so Mr Wright, who by now was nearly a millionaire, came to Britain in 1959 and set up the Pinnock Finance Company.

Once again, he sought deposits for investment from the public at high rates of interest and once again he got a good response from several thousand Christian gentlemen who wanted to make more for nothing than they

would by investing in 'safe, respectable' companies.

For eight years, Mr Wright 'traded' without let or hindrance from the law, the City of London, politicians, or the press. Not a question was asked in parliament during the first five years of robbery. His accounts were audited, without question from any of the 'watchdog' City institutions, by a crooked firm of auditors imported from Australia.

The press more than once recommended Pinnock as a good investment. In the meantime, Mr Wright and his managing director Mr Mortensen salted away a lot of the depositors' money. Mr Wright, for instance, paid a cheque for Ladbrokes for £18,624, which covered his gambling debts for a few weeks.

Then the company went bust. The total losses to some 9000 depositors was £9.2m.

Mr Wright, now a multi-millionaire, is alive and living very well in South America. One accountant in the company is in England. 'At this stage,' says the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is continually authorising nonsensical and frivolous prosecutions against hippies and blacks 'there will be no prosecutions'.

No one weeps for the 9000 depositors who wanted a fast buck. The odd thing about Pinnock Finance was the way in which transparent, named and known crooks were allowed to waste some £9m without impediment.

Now listen to the words of Mr Arthur Cheek, who is the official receiver for the Vehicle and General Insurance Company. He tells us that the total losses of V&G at the time of its collapse were £21m. Unfortunately however, the assets of the company, stretched out to the limit by Mr Cheek, totalled no more than £13m. In other words, for at least a year before the collapse, V&G was

operating at a loss of some £8m—not this time to greedy depositors but by ordinary people who own cars and are forced by law to insure them.

Once again, as described before in *Socialist Worker*, these massive losses were sustained during a period when everyone in the Establishment knew they were being sustained, but when no one in the Establishment did anything about it. The company was allowed to continue its operations, thus increasing the losses of its policy-holders, when the law of the market finally forced it to close.

In one day, therefore, we read stories of how a total of £17m was lost irrevocably to the public by incompetent and, in the case of Pinnock, openly crooked operators in the City of London.

£17m is a figure which sticks in the mind of ordinary postmen up and down the country. It is the figure quoted by the Post Office as the difference between the Union of Post Office Workers' revised claim for a 13 per cent rise in wages for its 250,000 members and the final 'settlement' imposed by a committee of inquiry—for a 9 per cent rise.

'National interest'

Many postmen hoped when Sir Henry Hardman was appointed chairman of the committee of inquiry into their pay dispute that Hardman would 'hold the ring' between the two other members of the committee, John Hughes, from Ruskin College who had put the power workers' case so forcibly to the Wilberforce Inquiry and Thomas Carlile, a Tory businessman, chosen by the Post Office.

The report of the inquiry showed that Hardman was well-named. He and Carlile signed the majority report which recommended the lowest possible settlement. Those sections of the report which summarise the case of the UPW and the Post Office could not help demonstrating the force of the UPW's case and the weakness of that of the Post Office.

The UPW had told the inquiry that a rise of 8 per cent would leave their members 5 per cent worse off than they could expect to be in view of pay increases elsewhere in industry. They pointed out that prices had risen by almost 8 per cent since their last settlement. All this Sir Henry grudgingly concedes, but flings it out of the window on the grounds of 'national interest'.

The section on 'the national interest' reads like a passage from the Tory Party's manifesto. 'The problem is to reconcile full employment with dynamic expansion and stability. The conclusion is inescapable. If the fight against rising prices and incessant erosion of the value of money is not to cause unemployment, there must be realism—and year after year—in wage settlements.'

Realism must start with wages. There is nothing in the report about controlling prices, nothing about the dangers of making one group of workers take lower increases because of general arguments about inflation (a factor which worried even the Wilberforce Inquiry). The majority's report is no more than crude class reasoning for a crude class settlement which does nothing to decrease the power and the growth of Post Office management, nothing to safeguard postal services, nothing to bring down the exorbitantly high rates of overtime, nothing to satisfy one single worker in the industry.

While reading the bilious attacks of a crusty old civil servant on their jobs as 'cosy', the postmen will notice that this same civil service did nothing whatever to stop open, prolonged robbery of many millions from investors in Pinnock and Vehicle and General Insurance Company. They might draw the conclusion that our current society treats its real criminals—the speculators—with respect and the people who do a job of work with contempt.

And they might even think that before their problems are finally solved, that society will have to be changed from top to bottom.

Dangerous concessions made on productivity

by Steve Mann and Dave Percival, UPW

AFTER more than six weeks on strike, the executive of the Union of Post Office Workers called off the post strike by agreeing to a committee of inquiry. It was a bitter blow to the members, who had fought so magnificently to win their pay claim.

To most Post Office workers the inquiry seemed the same as arbitration, which had been rejected rightly all along by the union. But a special bulletin from union head office said the inquiry would be 'far better than arbitration'.

The leaders recommended a return to work and followed this with a ballot of the branches. The members went back, demoralised, sickened and faced with a sterile waiting period while members were nominated for the inquiry.

When the inquiry met nearly a month later, the evidence submitted by the union had the appearance of a well-argued document, adequately stating the members' case. It had sections dealing with all the issues of discontent: incremental scales, pay deterioration, arbitration and growing management.

But what stood out like a sore thumb were the sections on productivity. The

union's attitude to productivity was summed up in a paragraph that said: 'The union will continue, as it has in the past, to co-operate in measures designed to increase the efficiency, productivity and profitability of the service.'

The whole of appendix G in the UPW evidence is given over to what is called: 'The union's participation in postal productivity and schemes designed to improve efficiency.'

But as Tom Jackson told the inquiry on more than one occasion, the union members have not received a penny piece for co-operating with such productivity schemes in the past.

Several rank and file post office workers gave evidence to the inquiry. One of them, a Leeds postman, explained the typical life for workers in his grade. He starts work at 5.30am and finishes at 1pm—a 43-hour, six-day week.

His wife has to work part-time in the evenings to maintain their standard of living. They see very little of each other and go out only on rare occasions.

The merits of the union's case were irrefutable, especially when put against the fumbling and incompetent arguments of the Post Office. At the end of the three days of union evidence, the audience, mainly Post Office workers, rose to applaud the committee, so sure were they that the union's demand for a 13 per cent wage increase and reduction in the incremental scales had been won.

STUNNED

But a week before the report was officially published, its findings were leaked to the press which reported under such headlines as '9 per cent shock for postmen'. Post Office workers were stunned. The union's own nominee on the inquiry, John Hughes, was so disgusted with the findings that he produced his own minority report supporting the union's claim.

As expected the committee came down heavily for productivity. The recommendations, binding on both sides, boil down to:

1. An accelerating programme for mechanisation.
2. A comprehensive programme of productivity measures to be agreed between management and union for implementation over a period. A review of other areas outside those covered in the initial period, particularly in collection and delivery.
3. Provision to be made for a new system of linking pay with productivity at local level, based on 'standard performance', accurately measured by method-time measurement techniques.

A further ugly intrusion in the majority report is the reference to the 'national interest'. This was not mentioned in the terms of reference for the inquiry and can be seen as another cheap method of putting the blame on workers for the state of the economy.

What trade unionists in general and Post Office workers in particular had feared has been borne out: arbitration of all types, with its built-in 2-1 majority, is weighted against the workers.

The only difference in this case is the way Post Office workers have been singled out by a reactionary Tory government to

be made an example to other workers in the wages struggle.

The inquiry is part of a chain of events: the sacking of Lord Hall, Bill Ryland's arrangements for emergency measures in case of industrial action, followed by the deliberate provocation of strike action by refusing one of the most reasonable pay claims ever made.

We must draw the necessary conclusions from these actions and prepare to fight back.

FIRST, we must demand an alliance of all public sector workers to fight jointly all wage claims, instead of being picked off one by one.

SECOND, we must declare opposition to all forms of productivity bargaining and redundancies and fight the increase in the size of management.

THIRD, we must declare our total opposition to any attempts to 'hive off' more profitable parts of the Post Office to private industry.

The branches fought without flagging throughout the strike. We must now make it clear that we want a reasonable standard of living without any productivity concessions.

Death at sea: scandal of 'flags of convenience'...



Spraying the Brighton coast to remove oil from Pacific Glory

Sixty-four seamen have died in the last 4½ months. Since 1968 there have been 72 collisions in the Channel and numerous disasters around the English coast. I have been investigating these appalling statistics and as a result of the evidence I have collected I can state that only one verdict can be reached: the seamen, along with many others, have died as the result of the shipowners' greed for maximum profits.

World shipping has boomed in recent years. Sea trade more than doubled in the 1950s. In the 1960s it doubled again and now totals a massive 2200 million tons of goods a year, half of it in oil. Shipping experts expect a further doubling in the next 10 years. In such a situation, every owner is tempted by the possibility of making huge profits. More and more ships are being built to keep up with demand.

The country with the biggest number of ships in the world registered under its flag is the Republic of Liberia. It is a small African state with a population of less than two millions but it has more than 36 per cent of world tanker tonnage.

Liberia cannot be regarded as a 'traditional maritime nation'. The ships are registered in Liberia for reasons of profit and convenience. According to a report published in 1958 by the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, 'There are two main motives actuating those shipowners who have adopted the practice of registering under flags of convenience, viz opportunities for avoiding taxation on the earnings of ships registered under these flags and in some cases relief from high crew standards and consequent operating costs.'

The Liberian flag is a 'flag of convenience' along with such countries as Panama, Cyprus, Honduras, Somalia and Malta. These countries, while not receiving any income from the taxation of ships registered under their flags and only charging a minimum registration fee, nevertheless collect a substantial amount of money every year.

According to official government figures, Liberia received 39.5 million dollars from vessel registration and tonnage tax in 1967. In the same year, income tax yielded 8.5 million dollars. As the total revenue for the state was only 50 million dollars, the income from shipping was more than 7 per cent of the total.

For Liberia this means that 'flags of convenience' are good business, as they are for many shipowners. Liberia has easy and lax maritime laws compared to a country like Britain. The 1969 version of the Liberian Maritime Law is a small publication of 43 pages. The British Merchant Shipping Act is 423 pages long with 748 sections and is supported by other legislation such as the Merchant Ships (Load Lines) Act.

In Britain, convention certificates for radio, safety and tonnage are issued by the Department of Trade and Industry. Liberia has no such technical government staff and delegates such work to what are known as 'classification societies'. Certificates of Competence for masters, officers and seamen are easily obtained and I was told that it was possible to 'achieve' one such certificate by postal examination.

Even an extremely friendly supplement on Liberia in The Times in March 1970 was forced to admit that, 'There still remains doubts about overall crew quality.' The validity of these 'doubts' can be appreciated by carefully examining some of the disasters that have taken place recently around the coast.

The Dover straits is the busiest shipping lane in the world and about 800 ships a day use it. 60 per cent of the world's collisions take place in Britain's coastal waters, in the North Sea, south of Aberdeen, in the Irish Sea and in the English Channel. Clearly, in such congested and busy waters, a high degree of competence is necessary.

In March 1967 the Torrey Canyon (registered in Liberia) and owned by the Barracuda Tanker Corporation, ran aground. It struck the Pollard Rock off the Scilly Isles and inflicted widespread oil pollution on the entire south-western coast of England.

A Court of Inquiry into the disaster published an eight-page report that showed that the master, who had a Liberian unlimited licence, changed the course of the vessel from passing by the west of the Scilly Isles to the east. He did this to reach Milford Haven as

In their quest for bigger profits, giant firms use undermanned ships with incompetent

quickly as possible. The report added: 'The master made a decision although he had never passed these confined waters between the Islands and Land's End as a master of and his knowledge of these waters was to passages made years previously as mate, but on those occasions he between Seven Stones Lighthouse and End, not between Seven Stones and

In other words, with a crew of 35 and men and a dangerous cargo of tons of crude oil, the captain took his into almost unknown waters. At 08.4 on 18 March, the master realised vessel was perilously close to the Seven and ordered the helmsman to go to the and come hard left to avoid a collision. The helmsman tried to do so but saw there response from the wheel. The vessel ran on its collision course.

The master ran to the wheel and for the automatic steering system was on, making the wheel ineffective for the ship. He turned off the automatic and began to swing left. But at 08 vessel struck the Pollard Rock at a full of approximately 15.75 knots.

None of the flares or signals sent from Seven Stones light vessel was seen. Torrey Canyon even though the first was sent up 20 minutes before the ship aground. The master had his certificate for this incompetence and obvious lookouts.

In October last year a major collision in the Channel between the Pacific (Liberian registered) and the Allegro (registered). 14 men on board the Pacific died in an explosion two hours after collision. The report of the Court of Inquiry the disaster was published on 20 April and revealed an incredible tale of incompetence and neglect.

The captain of the Pacific Glory had certificates of competence from Liberia, and Nationalist China. The Third Officer and one fourth engineer had no certificates at all. On the Allegro the master, Liberian and Greek certificates and a Third Officer and two of the three third officers had no certificates.

The report said: 'It is sufficient however, that in the present case, no officers who gave evidence at the hearing, not in the case of either vessel, im Board as sufficiently experienced or w

WHAT WE STAND FOR



THE International Socialists is a democratic organisation whose membership is open to all who accept its main principles and who are willing to pay contributions and to work in one of its organisations.

We believe in independent working-class action for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a classless society with production for use and not for profit.

We work in the mass organisations of the working class and are firmly committed to a policy of internationalism.

Capitalism is international. The giant firms have investments throughout the world and owe no allegiances except to themselves and the economic system they maintain.

In Europe, the Common Market has been formed for the sole purpose of increasing the trade and profits of these multi-national firms.

The international power of capitalism can only be overcome by international action by the working class.

A single socialist state cannot indefinitely survive unless workers of other countries actively come to its aid by extending the socialist revolution.

In addition to building a revolutionary socialist organisation in this country we also believe in the necessity of forming a world revolutionary socialist international independent of either Washington or Moscow. To this end we have close relationships with a number of other socialist organisations throughout

out the world.

We believe in the necessity to unite socialist theory with the day-to-day struggles of working people and therefore support all genuine demands that tend to improve the position and self-confidence of the working class.

We fight: For rank and file control of the trade unions and the regular election of all full-time officials.

Against secret negotiations. We believe that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.

For 100 per cent trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards.

Against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikes are 'official' or 'unofficial'.

Against productivity deals and job evaluation and for militant trade union unity and joint shop stewards' committees both in the plant and on a combine basis.

For equal pay and a better deal for young workers.

For a minimum wage of at least £25 a week.

Against unemployment, redundancy and lay offs. We support the

demand: Five days' work or five days' pay.

For all workers in struggle. We seek to build militant groups within industry.

Against racialism and police victimisation of black workers.

Against immigration restrictions. For the right of coloured people and all oppressed groups to organise in their own defence.

For real social, economic and political equality for women.

Against all nuclear weapons and military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Against secret diplomacy.

Against all forms of imperialism. We unconditionally give support to and solidarity with all genuine national liberation movements.

For the nationalisation of the land, banks and major industries without compensation and under workers' control.

We are opposed to all ruling class policies and organisations. We work to build a revolutionary workers' party in Britain and to this end support the unity of all revolutionary groups.

The struggle for socialism is the central struggle of our time. Workers' power and a world based on human solidarity, on the increasing of men's power over nature, with the abolition of the power of man over man, is certainly worth fighting for.

It is no use just talking about it. More than a century ago Karl Marx wrote: 'The philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it.' If you want to help us change the world and build socialism, join us.

THERE ARE 15 BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

SCOTLAND
Aberdeen/Dundee/Edinburgh/Fife/
Glasgow N/Glasgow S/Stirling

NORTH EAST
Durham/Newcastle upon Tyne/
Teesside (Middlesbrough and Redcar)

NORTH
Barnsley/Bradford/Derby/Doncaster/
Grimsby/Huddersfield/Hull/Leeds
York/Selby/Sheffield

NORTH WEST
Lancaster/Manchester/Oldham
Bolton/Merseyside/St Helens/Wigan/

Potteries

MIDLANDS
Birmingham/Coventry/Leamington/
Leicester/Oxford/Nottingham/
Northampton/Redditch/Telford

WALES and SOUTH WEST
Bath/Bristol/Cardiff/Exeter/
Gloucester/Mid-Devon/Plymouth/
Swansea

SOUTH
Ashford/Brighton/Canterbury/
Crawley/Folkestone/Guildford/
Portsmouth/Southampton

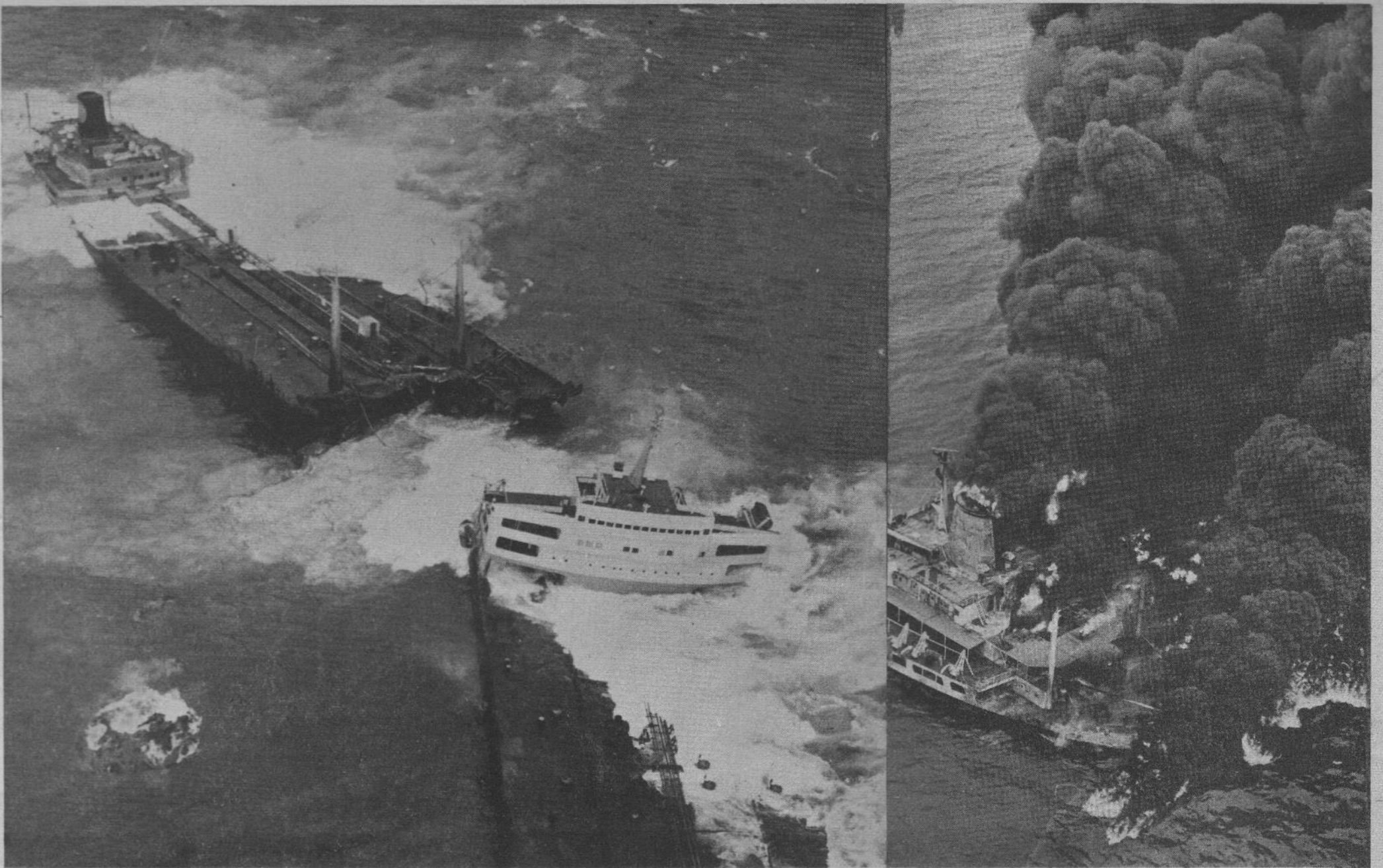
EAST
Basildon/Cambridge/Harlow/Ipswich/
Lowestoft/Norwich/Colchester

GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES
Acton/Bletchley/Camden/Chertsey/
Croydon/Dagenham/Enfield/Erith/
Fulham/Greenford/Havering/Harrow/
Hemel Hempstead/Hornsey/Ilford/
Kilburn/Kingston/Lambeth/
Lewisham/Merton/Newham/Notting
Hill/Reading/Richmond/Stoke
Newington/Slough/South Ealing/
Tottenham/Walthamstow/
Wandsworth/Watford/Victoria

I would like more information about the International Socialists

Name

Address



Torrey Canyon (left) broken in two and Pacific Glory's burning cargo of oil: what happens if a chemical warfare ship explodes?

officers licensed by countries with lax maritime laws

fied for service in vessels of this size and class.

The report also showed that in both vessels there were no proper look-outs and that radar was not used. The *Allegro* claimed that it was hard to see the lights of the *Pacific Glory* as it was a fair night and the lights of a town on shore conflicted with those of the ship. The report rejected this feeble explanation and retorted: 'If there were any such difficulty in picking them out as was alleged (which the Board does not accept) the *Allegro* would be exposed to the comment that she had no business in this locality to be blundering along at over 15 knots.'

After the collision, the *Allegro* sailed on but *Pacific Glory* was too badly damaged to continue. The captain of the *Pacific Glory* did not order 'general emergency' stations and instead of alerting the local shore safety authorities spent his time in trying to establish radio contact with his owner's representatives in London. Two hours later, the *Pacific Glory* blew up.

The Board of Inquiry into the collision merely censured the masters and placed them on probation for two years with the threat of 12 months' suspension if any unfavourable reports on their conduct was received during that period. It is likely that the two captains are sailing ships at this moment. The owners of the two vessels, which had been chartered by Shell and Esso, were fined. The C Y Tung Shipping Group of Hong Kong was fined the maximum under Liberian law of £458 and the Petroleum Marine Carriers' Corporation £500.

In March 1969, eight brave men of the crew of the Scottish Longhope lifeboat lost their lives answering a distress call from the Liberian ship *Irene*. A preliminary investigation into the running aground of the *Irene* was held in Greece in April 1969 but its contents were not revealed until 29 January 1970. The report said no formal investigation was needed. It was a disturbing conclusion.

The *Irene* left port with barely enough fuel to reach Norway and 48 hours after dropping the pilot the master cabled his London agents to say that 'the vessel was stopped because of lack of fuel'. The oil company concerned confirmed that the ship sailed without enough fuel and that the captain would not accept a short delay to get boiler oil onto the vessel. This was not mentioned in the report.

The master held a Liberian licence but neither the Chief Mate, Second Mate nor Radio Officer had licences. The report merely states

that the Chief Mate 'allegedly' held a Greek licence. No mention is made as to whether the Second Mate or Radio Officer held any certificates at all. This is of some significance when one reads that the radio direction finder bearings put the ship off the Norwegian coast when she was in fact off the Orkneys. In other words, she was lost.

The report is full of inconsistencies and omissions. It fails to mention whether the radar on board was being used or whether the set was in order or whether any of the officers were trained in its use. The report blames bad weather as the cause of the accident but gives no proper information to substantiate this claim.

It describes how the vessel sighted land at 19.00 hours on 17 March. Shortly afterwards the light of Portland Skerries lighthouse was seen flashing but this could not be identified by anybody on board. The report goes on to say that, after drifting to the north, 'breakers could be seen at a distance of approximately two miles.'

It fails to say why the anchors were not lowered at this alarming stage of events and, presumably referring to a time immediately prior to the grounding, states: 'The vessel was so close to shore that it would have been too late to let go the anchors as she would have swung astern on the rocks and been deprived of the use of the propeller.' A strange statement when one notes the master's report that the vessel had 'run out of fuel'.

The report concluded that there was no sign of incompetence on the part of the master 'but in light of possible mistakes of judgment' it suspended his Liberian licence for six months.

Most of these vessels, particularly the tankers, are modern and well equipped. But some of them are staffed by what must be considered incompetent officers and undermanned crews. According to the 1958 OEEC Report on flags of convenience, one of the incentives to shipowners to register in countries such as Liberia and Panama was 'relief from high crew standards and consequent operating costs'.

But some ships registered under such flags are unsafe and a menace to seamen's lives. In 1948 the International Labour Organisation accused many of the ships sailing under 'flags of convenience' as being no more than 'floating coffins'. The situation has improved over the past 20 years but there are still many hazardous vessels.

In January of this year, for example, a ship named the *Petros* (Liberian registered) and

owned by the United Shipping and Trading Co of Greece, left Norway with a cargo of pit props for Cardiff. The *Petros* had been declared unseaworthy by the Norwegian authorities and refused clearance to sail. It ignored the instruction. Half way across the North Sea it broke down and was towed into Lerwick in the Shetlands. While it was moored there, one of its boilers blew up and the chief engineer was killed.

Many of the ships that are registered under 'flags of convenience' are owned by American and Greek companies. Multi-millionaires like Onassis and Niarchos have ships registered in Liberia and Panama. As well as paying no tax and very small registration fees, the shipowners also benefit by paying low wages. Most of the seamen working on their ships are non-union labour.

American companies prefer to register their vessels in other countries in order to avoid paying the high wages and maintaining the correct manning standards that have been negotiated for US ships. As a result, the Liberian fleet is the largest in the world.

The inadequacy of the Liberian government effectively to maintain high safety standards and prevent incompetent masters from exercising authority cannot be totally appreciated just by examining the published reports of Boards of Inquiry. Only a few of these reports are available and there are none for a number of disasters.

But if you check the annual *Lloyds' Register of Shipping Casualty Returns*, statistical proof of these allegations can be found. The figures show the facts about Liberia's safety record. In 1967, Liberia lost 25 ships totalling 213,429 tons as against the UK's 13 of 18,104 tons. Expressed as a percentage of registered tonnage lost, Liberia's losses were 0.94 compared to the UK's 0.08 and were the fifth highest in the world. Liberia was exceeded by four countries, three of them recognised as 'flags of convenience' nations.

In 1969, Liberia lost 16 ships worth 13,584,900 tons or 0.46 per cent of registered tonnage compared to the UK's eight ships worth 1,411,100 tons or 0.06 per cent of tonnage. In the first eight months of 1970, Liberia lost 10 ships worth 611,423 tons compared to the UK's five ships worth 45,931 tons. The full figures for 1970 are not yet available.

The enormous increases in world shipping in recent years have brought the possibility of huge profits to innumerable shipowners. But because there is a shortage of trained certifica-

ted officers, safety has been relegated in importance.

So far this year there have been three major disasters in the Channel. On 11 January, the *Texaco Caribbean* (registered in Panama) sank after colliding with the *Paracas*. Eight members of the *Texaco's* crew, including the master, were lost. Visibility on that night was one mile.

The next day the *Brandenburg* struck the submerged wreck of the *Texaco Caribbean* and sank. 20 crew members died.

In the weeks after these two catastrophes, 16 vessels were reported as having ignored the wreck marks until the last moment. One actually sailed through the disaster area and miraculously avoided calamity. But on 27 February, a Greek ship the *Niki* collided with the other two wrecks and promptly sank.

In Britain the danger of sub-standard officers is growing. According to Mr J Slater, the Assistant General Secretary of the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, non-passenger ships in the home trade limits are not at present required to have a single certificated officer on board. While there are certain legal requirements for foreign-going ships, he estimates that there are some thousand uncertificated third mates taking their turn at watch-keeping on the bridge.

There have been many discussions and ideas put forward about Channel safety during the past few months. Overwhelmingly, they have concerned themselves with 'traffic lanes' and the problem of respecting them. Such solutions are clearly irrelevant if many vessels are undermanned, incompetently commanded and registered under 'flags of convenience'.

The growing number of serious disasters at sea and especially in the English Channel has frightening implications. Some of the vessels that use these waters carry cargoes of chemical and bacteriological warfare materials. In a parliamentary debate on 8 March, Mr Anthony Grant, Tory Secretary for Trade and Industry, evaded answering a question as to how many ships were employed and using the Channel in this capacity.

Any collision involving one of these vessels could result in massive poisoning of the sea and thousands of lives could be put in jeopardy.

At sea, as in every industry, the ceaseless quest for profits brings with it the threat of death and disaster. At sea, as in every industry, working people have the power to end these threats.

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The short period when England was a republic is glossed over in most history books as something out of keeping with the 'English way' of doing things and that the restoration of Charles II marked a return to normality. This re-writing of history is necessary for the modern capitalist class, who wish to ignore the fact that their predecessors came to power through bloody revolution. The English Civil War was not a period of brief national madness but a time of profound and vital change that prepared the ground for a new form of society. Between Charles I and Charles II the rising class of merchants, businessmen and landowners consolidated their power by sweeping away many of the old feudal restrictions to their ability to trade, exploit and make profits. The state machine was strengthened to speed the development of capitalism at home and abroad. Charles II returned to reign over a vastly different land to his father's. Our series ends with a closer look at the man who led the revolution and became Lord Protector of England.



A cartoon after the restoration showing killers of Charles I being hanged, drawn and quartered. In reality, the king killers had the upper hand.

Oliver Cromwell is one of the most controversial figures in English history. His character and his actions seem full of contradictions. He led the revolt which killed a king, and ended by possessing most of the powers of a king.

He fought and argued for religious toleration, but his rule is remembered for intolerance. His most famous saying, 'Trust in God and keep your powder dry,' expresses an ambiguous philosophy—a belief in the guiding hand of Providence combined with the most down-to-earth practical planning.

These contradictions can be understood only by understanding the nature of the 17th century English revolution and the part which Cromwell played in it.

The latest contribution to the debate on Oliver Cromwell is an impressive biography by Christopher Hill.* Though Hill (who used, at least, to call himself a marxist) implies that he would have supported the Levellers' opposition to Cromwell himself, his attitude to Cromwell is one of admiration and sympathy.

This gives him patience and insight in unravelling the complexities of this fascinating character. In particular, the part which religion played in Cromwell's personality is brilliantly drawn.



Cromwell and the Civil War

Last of three articles by
NORAH CARLIN

Relevant

The book is also valuable—and should be read by all present-day revolutionaries—for the picture it gives of the revolutionary atmosphere of those days. It hasn't quite been forgotten among the left that England once had a revolution—a long time ago. But the opening up of immense possibilities for a new society, the transformation of people in struggle, and the development of new ideas almost overnight, make these remote events highly relevant to our ideas of a second, socialist revolution.

Hill also shows the true nature of the 'Puritan' revolution. He describes the political and economic ambitions of the middle class of landlords and merchants and explains how the revolution won for them the power on which they built industrial, capitalist society. He discusses the religion of the Puritans, and how their belief in Protestantism and Providence was the mainstay of the middle-class advance.

But why was it Oliver Cromwell who rose to the leadership of the English revolution? What was the meaning of all the experiments, all the paper constitutions, and all the debates of those years of upheaval?

Why was King Charles II restored so soon after Cromwell's death, making it seem as though the revolution had failed? The reader may still be puzzled by Hill's book, for the central years of the revolution are explained almost entirely by Cromwell's personal role.

In fact, it is in these years that the contradictions of the middle-class revolution are most clear. The moderate country gentlemen who led the parliamentary revolt against Charles I did not think they wanted a revolution. All their demands for freedom for property and capitalist

enterprise were expressed in terms of the past, not the future.

They believed that such freedom had existed and then been taken away by Charles I's policies. They did not—indeed, they could not—claim that they wanted to transform society, because they wanted to preserve the great power they already had as well as to remove all further obstacles to its increase.

The revolution was begun with these 'conservative' ideas. But no revolution could be won that way. The first leaders of the parliamentary army, the Earls of Manchester and Essex, could win battles, but they were incapable of following them up with a final defeat for the king. The furthest they wanted to go was a compromise and in compromise all their gains would have been lost.

Meanwhile, a revolutionary army had been called into existence, which was developing ideas of liberty and democracy going far beyond the interests of landowners and businessmen. The lower classes had been called into action to demonstrate, riot and fight in defence of the House of Commons, and were beginning to ask why it did not represent them.

So the leadership of the revolution passed to a faction—the Independents, who included Oliver Cromwell—which was prepared to make the alliance with the lower classes necessary to defeat the king, and to reject this alliance ruthlessly when the revolution had gone far enough.

The Independents were prepared to go further than the Earls and their Presbyterian allies because they wanted a more radical, Congregationalist, church settlement, which would give the middle classes more control over religious affairs. But when it came to the crunch (as in

the Putney Debates), they stood by the interests of property and profits

Their success in 'tiding over' the dangerous revolutionary period was complete. They secured the gains to the middle classes, and made it safe to bring back the king and even the House of Lords, with the king's powers limited and the Lords filled with successful capitalists. The experiments of the years 1649 to 1660 are all variations on the theme of keeping middle-class interests afloat on the flood of revolution.

The first experiment, from the king's execution in 1649 to 1653, was government by parliamentary committee. There were committees on virtually everything, from the safety of the state to law reform and the condition of the poor. Many of them had been set up during the Civil War itself and the purged 'Rump' parliament continued them.

Corruption

A few much-needed reforms were carried out, such as the holding of legal proceedings in English rather than French and capitalist interests were protected by the final abolition of feudal dues and by the Navigation Act. But the trouble was that the 'committee men' liked power and refused to let it go. They would not hold a general election. (The problem of a government staying in office despite general elections was solved by a network of corruption and influence in the 18th century, and by the setting up of political parties in the 19th.)

Meanwhile, Cromwell had been

adding to his military and political reputation by his vicious suppression of the Irish people, including the terrible massacre of Drogheda. The Irish had revolted against Charles I in 1641, but they were no allies of the new English rulers. On the contrary, it was a top priority of the republicans to put down the revolt and make Ireland safe for Scottish settlers and London businessmen.

In 1653 Cromwell returned to England, dissolved parliament by military force, and set up the 'Rule of the Saints,' or the Barebones Parliament as it was known afterwards. The members of this parliament were nominated by Independent congregations and chosen by an army committee, in the hope that it would represent the 'godly' and carry out the best interests of the nation.

Unfortunately, some of the 'godly' who were chosen had hopes for a radical reform of society. In their enthusiasm for religious and civil liberty, they abolished capital punishment for petty offences, and went on to demand the abolition of tithes and further reform of the debt laws. These last were issues which touched on the sacred principle of private property, and the parliament was persuaded by its less radical members to resign.

Cromwell later said of the Barebones Parliament that 'if one man had 12 cows, they held another that wanted cows ought to share with his neighbour.' In fact, they said no such thing: the godly representatives were far from being communists. But any attack on property was seen by the army leaders as a threat to society.

The middle-class leaders' fears of radical reform are seen in the Leveller complaint that all those who fought for freedom were 'slap't in the mouths with these most malignant reproaches, O, yee are for Anarchy, yee are against all government.'

It was against the dangers of 'anarchy' that a stronger, more centralised government was next set up. At the request of the army leaders, Cromwell became Lord Protector, with full executive powers

New elections were held, with votes for all men with £200 worth of property in land or goods. (This excluded many small freeholders from the vote, and admitted the rich merchants and manufacturers.)

But even when Cromwell excluded a large number of elected MPs

as 'unreliable', the parliament opposed him and voted to restore the old landowners' franchise. It would not agree to his demands for taxation, and he had to go on raising money by the illegal excise tax, which hit hardest at the poor.

In 1656 Cromwell divided England into 11 regions and placed a Major-General in charge of each. But this only drew attention to how much the government was based on military power.

Finally, in 1657, Cromwell was offered the title of king. He refused it, but accepted a very similar position, with the right to nominate his own successor (his son), to choose his own council, and to call and dismiss parliaments

Lesson

This pleased nobody. It meant, in effect, a new royal house, and there was a strong movement in favour of restoring the old one. To the army republicans who had put Cromwell in power, it was a sell-out. To the common people, it made little difference.

Oliver Cromwell, who was respected by the army for his previous achievements, could maintain this farce. His son, Richard, could not.

The way was open for Charles II to return. He came back with few written limitations on his powers, but the object lesson was there: if he didn't toe the line, he might lose his head.

So most of the gains of the revolution remained. All confiscated lands were returned to their previous owners, but the king's feudal powers over landlords remained abolished, and the landlords' rights over their tenants were strengthened. The Navigation Act was renewed and extended, subjecting the new colonies to the control of British imperialism.

The abolition of certain courts had taken away the king's power to interfere with local government and to impose uniformity on the church, and he could no longer use monopolies as a means to control trade and industry. Shortly after the Restoration, acts for putting down popular unrest and restricting the movement of the poor were passed.

As Christopher Hill summed it up in a previous work, at the Restoration 'the rich inherited the earth'. The way ahead was clear for building capitalism in town and countryside.

Next week: a new series by Duncan Hallas, author of *The Meaning of Marxism*

* *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £2.50.

NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN!



After the flags have changed

IT IS difficult for many Western socialists to fully appreciate the total and disastrous effects that colonialism had on the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Everybody is aware of the cold statistics, the economic and financial measurements but these give only the scantiest of outlines for judging the overwhelming, tragic impact of imperialism.

The most important quality of David Caute's brilliant novel *The Decline of the West* (just reprinted by Panther at 60p) is that it goes a long way towards filling this gap. The book revolves around the political fate of a fictional African country that is a rough kind of conglomeration of Algeria, Ghana and the Congo.

In this cauldron of private obsessions and public power games, Caute is able to illustrate the distorting and perverting effects that colonialism has today as much as in the heyday of imperial power.

Unmatched

At one level, *The Decline of the West* is merely a fictional representation of the politics of so-called 'independence' and after. But it is much more than this, for Caute has succeeded in also laying bare the attitudes and mentalities of the individual servants and pawns of colonialism in a manner quite unmatched in modern literature.

Particularly impressive and convincing is Caute's portrait of the fascist Laval, obsessed by national pride and personal honour and courage. This is a notoriously difficult kind of character to portray realistically and it is a measure of Caute's ability that he not only succeeds in doing this but is also able to evoke the reader's sympathy for this fundamentally evil character.

There is much, much more as well—the role of British finance and American diplomacy in fomenting revolt in black Africa, the sexual tensions involved in the fairly common situation of black male students and white female sympathisers and the personal dilemmas of the young and inexperienced African leaders.

Staggering

In short, *The Decline of the West* is without doubt the most ambitious English novel of the last decade. Inevitably within such a gigantic effort there are portraits and evocations that strike the reader as exaggerated and implausible. But what is staggering are not these few failures but Caute's massive success in communicating the spirit and dangers of post-independence Africa. Rarely has there been a novel so redolent of the whole flavour of life in a colonial setting.

One of the requirements of a revolutionary literature is the ability to expose the bankruptcy of the ruling class in terms of both ideas and actions. *The Decline of the West* does this quite magnificently and should be required reading for all socialists.

Martin Tomkinson



COTTONS COLUMN

AN APOLOGY to the Rank Organisation. Two weeks ago, detailing the handouts from big business to the Tory Party, we suggested that Rank was out of love with the true-blue party as it had not donated to party funds last year.

We jumped the gun. Rank has just published figures until October 1970 that show that the massive sum of £50,000 was given to the Tories in an extended financial year of 70 weeks. This is the biggest donation on record. The previous highest was £33,000 from Guest Keen and Nettlefold in 1969.

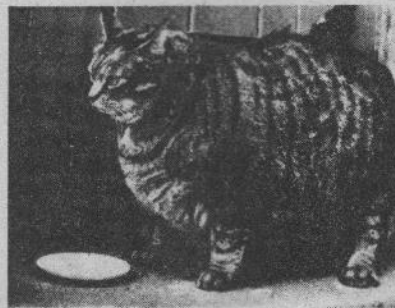
Rank's interests include cinema, television, bingo, radio and TV sets and photocopying equipment, plus its giant share of the bread industry. It is clearly not browned off with the Tories, as we suggested, but generously in love with them. Must be that Heath and co are pursuing policies that appeal to vast combines like Rank.

Just to complete the record, Rank chairman John Davis gets £47,500 a year. We refuse to indulge in any awful puns about the 'bread' industry.

LORD GEORGE-BROWN arrived in Johannesburg on Sunday to start a South African business trip. As Wilson's grisly memoirs have shown, Brown was the most eager member of the Labour cabinet to sell-out on the 'No arms for South Africa' principle. Now we know why.

Ammunition

USEFUL ammunition in discussions about the 'inflationary' nature of



Fat cat, Tory Cat?

wage increases. Labour Research has produced figures to show what happens to a 15 per cent improvement to a worker's pay.

Suppose he is a married man with two children earning £28 a week and he gets an increase of £4.20—15 per cent. Income tax at 30.14 per cent will take £1.26 of the increase and graduated national insurance contributions an additional 5p. So his existing take-home pay of £24.01 will rise to £26.90, an increase of 12 per cent.

But if prices continue to rise at the rate of 9 per cent for a year after the increase takes effect, then the real value of his take-home pay of £26.90 will in 12 months' time fall to £24.68—a real increase of 67p or 2.8 per cent. That 15 per cent looks fairly modest after prices and taxes have taken their toll.

For a married man with two children earning £38 a week a similar calculation shows that a 15 per cent increase in gross pay will, at the end of a year of 9 per cent inflation, be reduced to a real increase in take-home pay of 72p or 2.2 per cent.

The average increase spread over the whole year is higher than this. But from 20 September the sharp increase in graduated national insurance contributions will affect particularly all those earning between £20 and £40 a week. The rate will rise from 3.25 per cent to 4.35 per cent on earnings between £18 and £30 and the existing ceiling of £30 will be lifted to £40.

After 20 September, therefore, income tax (30.14 per cent) and insurance contributions (4.35 per cent) will take a total 34.9 per cent of wage increases up to £40.

And, says Labour Research, a major scandal of the whole system is that a director getting £30,000 a year pays no more national insurance contribution than a £2000 a year man.

Tabbed

THE NEWS that a young woman had affiliated her cat to the Young Liberals brought an indignant letter to (where else?) the *Daily Telegraph*. It was, said the writer, a betrayal of a cat's most cherished principles.

'Anyone who knows and admires cats as I do must realise that they are all Conservatives. All cats are strong supporters of private enterprise, most incline towards the right of the party and I suspect that many of them are already affiliated to the Monday Club.'

It is sheer nonsense. The Monday Club led the campaign for the abolition of cheap welfare milk. No self-respecting moggy would go along with a crowd like that.



ONE marginally interesting development in the last decade has been the transformation of yesterday's 'Angry Young Men' into thoroughly nasty middle-aged reactionaries. John Osborne, who began the whole AYM scene with *Look Back in Anger*, remains around the fringes of the radical protest movement, but two of his contemporaries, John Braine and Kingsley Amis, have made the soft transition to fame, fortune and right-wing politics.

Of course, they were never on the left. Their views in the 1950s expressed through such books as *Room at the Top* and *Lucky Jim*, showed that their anger was directed not at society itself but at its failure to give them a place in the sun. Theirs was the voice of the disgruntled young middle class demanding a fairer share of the spoils of capitalism.

Venomous

Once the spoils were won, the Labour Party was swopped for the Tories and they became obsessed with the 'communist threat', the 'black invasion' and the grip of the trade unions on the country's economy.

All this is by way of introduction to Kingsley Amis's play last Thursday that ended the latest BBC1 Comedy Playhouse series. It may seem an unnecessarily heavy-handed approach to what was offered as humour (and Amis himself would welcome it as proof of the general humourlessness of the Left) but I think the venomous outpourings of these much-publicised spokesmen of the extreme right need to be considered with a degree of seriousness.

The play, *The Importance of Being Hairy*, pandered to every conceivable middle-class prejudice against students, 'revolutionaries', black people and homosexuals. It was a vile piece of propaganda, unrelieved by original humour or good writing. It was simply a platform for Amis's own private obsessions and hatreds.

Duped

Set in a mythical 'University of Wessex', a sane, reasonable Amis-type lecturer pontificated against students living off grants, the low standards demanded by his fellow lecturers and their willingness to be duped by anybody who made vaguely 'progressive' noises. The action centred around the choice of a new lecturer by a selection board comprising a senile vice-chancellor, a Lesbian who pawed girl students, a stupid Indian (a doubly racist presentation this, as the actor was a white man 'blacked up') plus the Amis voice of sanity.

A sensible, short-haired applicant was turned down by the majority, who plumped for the most clearly idiotic long-haired, left-wing lout, who turned out to be a friend of the Amis-lecturer in disguise. The whole exercise was presumably to point to the gullibility of the establishment and their willingness to be taken in by the Left.

Harmless? Perhaps. But the fact that it was shot on a real university campus gave the play a degree of realism that would help enforce much of the ignorant prejudice towards students. Which is what Mr Amis was after.

Don't miss *The Rank and File*, next Thursday's BBC play, which will be from the Ken Loach-Jim Allen stable that gave us the epic *Big Flame*. Meanwhile, *Out of the Unknown* is back on BBC2 on Wednesdays, real science fiction, beautifully produced that is a welcome antidote to such mindless rubbish as *Star Trek*.

David East

Socialist Worker

Victory for Dundee women

by John Clossick

DUNDEE:- after 10 weeks on strike over a bonus scheme, 42 women workers at the medical supplies firm of Hogg and Ross have won a magnificent victory—in spite of the poor support from their union, the General and Municipal Workers.

The management filled the factory with scab labour but have now accepted in principle that all the women will be reinstated. No final date has been fixed for a complete return to work.

The sudden victory came last Friday night after a meeting between the manager, a GMWU official and George Thompson, MP for Dundee and a former Labour cabinet minister. But the firm's surrender was due to internal developments in the factory and the efforts and fighting spirit of the women picketing the gates in large numbers.

The women make surgical rubber gloves. By last Friday, more than 50,000 pairs had been returned from London because of faulty workmanship by the scabs.

This, along with a number of scabs giving up the job because of hard work and low pay, forced the management's hand. They had to give in for good commercial reasons: they needed the experienced workers to maintain their profits.

The strikers have won, but no thanks to the union. Just two hours before the crucial meeting between the management and Thompson, the GMWU told the women there would be no more strike pay until the situation had been reviewed by the union national executive.

The victory is doubly magnificent—a victory for rank and file militancy and a victory for women workers in general who are too often the poor cousins of the industrial and political struggle.

TGWU conference call for strike on Bill

DEMANDS for tough industrial action against the Industrial Relations Bill will be voiced at the annual conference of the 1.6m strong Transport and General Workers' Union in July. The agenda for the conference shows that one branch is in favour of a general strike against the Bill while another calls for a 'prolonged strike' of all the union's members.

The executive's own motion on the Bill restricts itself to calling for the repeal of the legislation by a future Labour government. Other motions call for a reduction in the working week and a ban on productivity bargaining to fight rising unemployment and short-time working.

Mirror mags strike demand

A MASS MEETING of magazine journalists employed by the International Publishing Corporation—the Mirror group—voted on Tuesday for strike action following the latest management offer to their pay claim.

Their negotiators have asked for £465 a year more on the basic rate. The management's first offer was just £65, increased on Tuesday to £143 to £200

on the existing rates of between £1585 and £3000.

The call for strike action will go to the executive of the National Union of Journalists, meeting this weekend.

Bill MacGregor, a militant member of the NUJ executive and an IPC negotiator, told Socialist Worker: 'It may be that IPC are prepared to take us on, relying on the traditional apathy

of white collar workers and journalists' loyalty to their papers. They are making a big mistake.

There is growing militancy among journalists. We are ready to fight and ready to suffer like all trade unionists.

If the management are crazy enough to lock us out, we will fight on, but we will need the support of all other trade unionists.'

LABOUR-TORY UNITY ON WAGES WHILE PROFITS BOOM

by JOHN SETTERS

TORY SPOKESMEN are still urging big business to hold down wages. Every government speech denounces 'inflationary' pay settlements and warns that unemployment is the inevitable result.

And Harold Wilson has also contributed to this nonsense in the last week. Speaking in London, he said he wanted 'self restraint' on the part of those, both unions and managements, responsible for wages.

Quite simply this means that workers should not ask or fight for higher wages and companies should not offer or concede them. Both the Tories and Labour are united in the aim of cutting workers' living standards.

Many workers have already suffered from this policy. The postmen, for example, have been told they can have no more than 9 per cent even though this is less than last year's rise in the cost of living.

But while trade unionists are suffering, big business is doing well. A number of firms have announced improved profits recently. They include:-

HOOVER: first quarter 1971, profits up to £2,840,000 against £1,871,000 last year.

TYLE Shipping Group: 1970 profits up to £1,003,179 against £754,904 the year before. Dividend up to 18 per cent.

AUTOMATIVE PRODUCTS: 1970 profits up to £4,488,814 against £4,177,172 for 1969. Dividend up to 12½ per cent.

W H SMITH: 1970 profits up to £4,690,000 against £4,070,000 for 1969. Dividend up to 12 per cent.

BURTON (tailors): last six months' profits substantially increased to £3.74 millions.

STAND FIRM

And in the midst of all these profit increases, the employers are preparing to 'stand firm' on wage claims and condemn those trade unionists who want a better life.

The purpose of this policy is not to 'save the economy' but to increase the wealth of the tiny minority who govern us.

Agricultural workers get less than £15 a week as a basic wage. At an auction held at Sotheby's last week, a record price was paid for champagne. 12 bottles of one vintage were bought for £130 while a single bottle of another brand brought £24.

So much for a 'fair and equal' society. So much for the trade unions 'holding the country to ransom'. All sections of workers should redouble their efforts to win substantial increases from the profit-hungry bosses.

MAINTENANCE workers at the Basildon, Essex, tobacco firm of Carreras have been on official strike for 12 weeks and are urgently in need of financial support. Donations should be sent to: R Walker, 120 Butneys, Basildon, Essex.

Sack for metal workers to boost firm's profits

MANAGEMENT of Enfield Rolling Mills, North London, are using the excuse that the plant is an 'unprofitable' part of the Delta Metal group, to sack 50 staff workers and 20 maintenance workers. Among the workers facing the sack are one shop steward and four members of DATA, the draughtsmen's and technicians' union, who recently led a strike for a wage increase.

Part of a letter to all the workers explaining the redundancies, says:

'Your board is determined that this factory should be as well equipped and as efficient as its competitors so that it will be able to achieve a prosperity in which everyone will be able to share.'

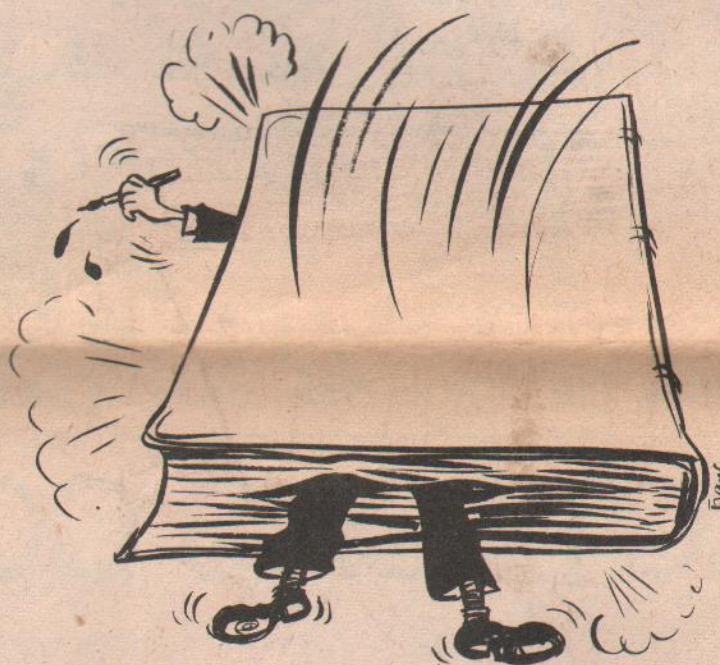
Profits for Delta Metal in 1970 were £18,303,000. The chairman, the Earl of Verulamium, was paid £21,171 and the company gave £10,000 to the Tory Party.

At the moment there is no campaign against the sackings at Enfield Rolling Mills and overtime is still being worked.

NUR takes 9%

LEADERS of the National Union of Railwaymen on Tuesday accepted a final 9 per cent pay offer from British Rail. The original NUR claim was for 25 per cent and the 9 per cent will amount to an actual cut in railwaymen's living standards with the cost of living rising by 10 per cent a year.

The British Rail offer will be considered by all unions with members in the industry this week. Meanwhile, the rail unions have lodged claims of up to 25 per cent for their members working on London Transport, but the surrender of the NUR on the national wage claim will strengthen the employers' hands in restricting any increase to the same 9 per cent.



THE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION HAS DECIDED TO REGISTER...

QUEEN'S AWARD WORKERS FACE THREAT OF SACK

by Hugh Kerr

HARLOW:- 380 AEI workers got a present from the Queen last week. They were given a badge saying they had won the Queen's Award for Industry for services to exports.

At the same time, they were given a present from their employers. They were told that in the next few months 266 of the 380 workers would lose their jobs because of lack of orders.

The factory already lost 200 workers three years ago when AEI was taken over by the giant GEC combine.

The latest shock news comes at a time when the 'model' Essex new town has an all-time high number of unemployed and when a number of firms in the town are preparing further redundancies.

AEI workers in Harlow are planning to fight the sackings along with other local trade unionists. They are refusing to discuss the details of the redundancies with the management and have blacked all movement of work to other firms in the GEC-AEI combine.

They are organising protest marches, meetings and other methods of fighting the sackings. The Harlow Action Committee and the local trade union movement are discussing how to fight the growing unemployment in the town and how to organise the jobless.

The attack on workers through the Industrial Relations Bill and through unemployment are part of the same Tory offensive to hold down wages. Harlow is organising to fight them together.

NOTICES

WANTED: IS publication/distribution manager to take charge of distribution of all IS material. Applications from members only to National Secretary, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

CARWORKER: Scottish meeting for workers in motor and components industry. 3pm Saturday 15 May. TU Centre, Carlton Place, Glasgow, Rank and file paper, Hallowood shop steward on lessons of the Ford dispute.

PALESTINE Solidarity Campaign: march and rally to US Embassy, Israeli Embassy and Jordanian Embassy, Saturday 15 May. 2.30pm Trafalgar Square. Speakers include Nabil Shaa'th, PLO, Tariq Ali, Fred Halliday and Stephen Marks.

INTRODUCTION to Marxism: series of lectures by Duncan Hallas. This Sunday 16 May: Surplus Value. 7.30pm, 6 Cottons Gardens, E2.

LONDON IS branch secretaries' meeting. Sunday 16 May, 2.30pm at 6 Cottons Gardens. All secretaries must attend.

ACTON IS: Roger Protz on the Millionaire Press. Thursday 20 May, 8pm, The Boltons Duke Road, off Chiswick High Road.

WANDSWORTH IS public meeting: Michael Duane on Education for What? Spotted Dog, nr Wandsworth Town Hall, 8pm, Thursday, 20 May.

LUTTE OUVRIERE Festival in the country near Paris, Whitsun 1971, 29-30, 31 May. Free entry to IS members. Political discussions, revolutionary theatre, dances, etc. Write now for details and credentials to IS international committee (Z2), 6 Cottons Gardens London E2 8DN.

HULL IS public meeting: The Tory Offensive and how to fight it. Spkr Tony Cliff, 8pm, Tuesday 25 May, Windmill Hotel, Witham.

STOKE NEWINGTON IS: public meeting Monday 17 May, 8pm. Jim Higgins on The Origins of Trade Unionism in England and The Present Struggle. Rose & Crown Cnr Stoke Newington Church St/Albion Rd N16. Bus: 73.

Published by the International Socialists, 6 Cottons Gdns London E2. Printed by SW (Litho) Printers Ltd (TU all depts). Registered with the Post Office.

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