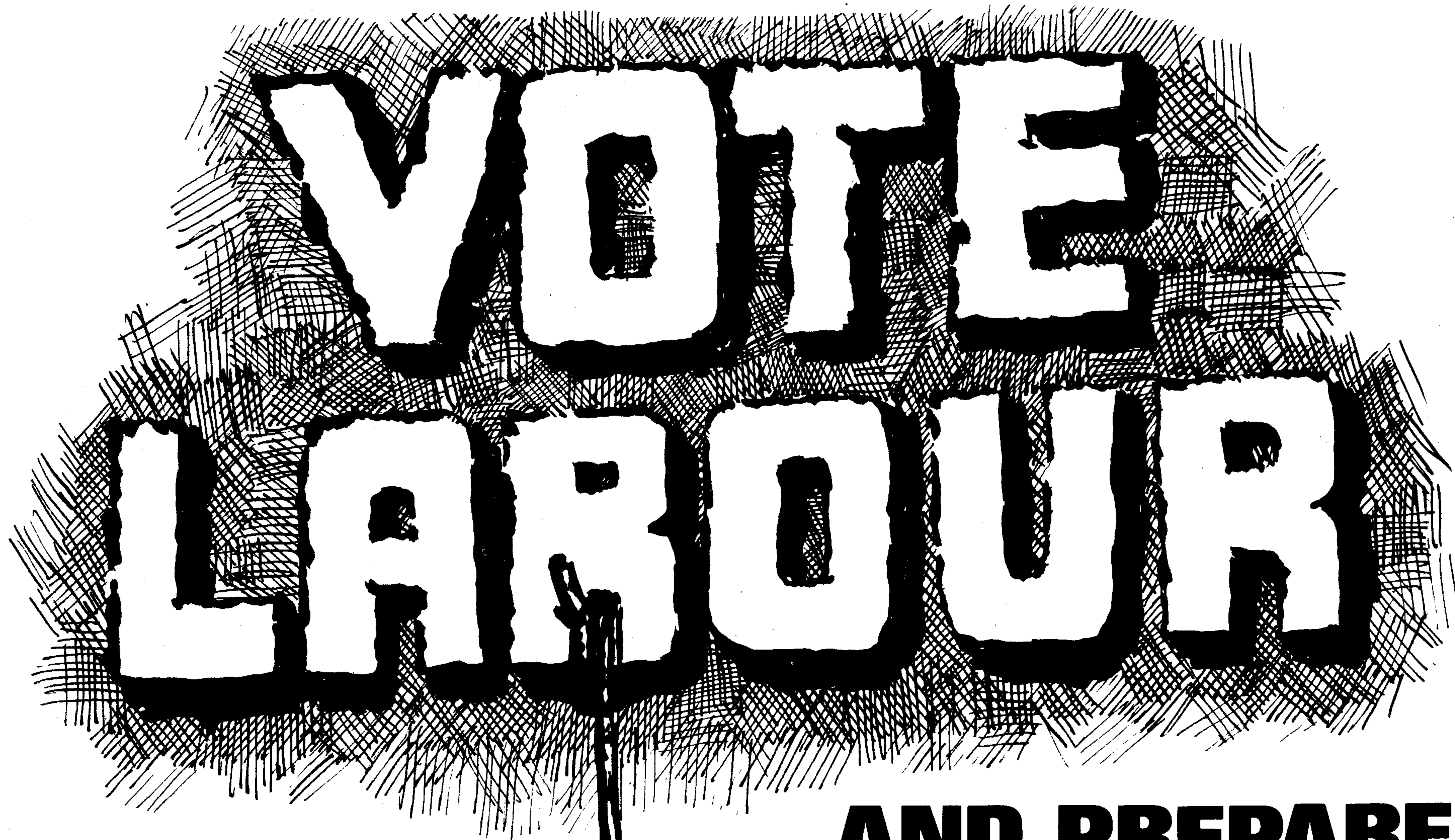


# Workers' fight

Support  
the  
Miners

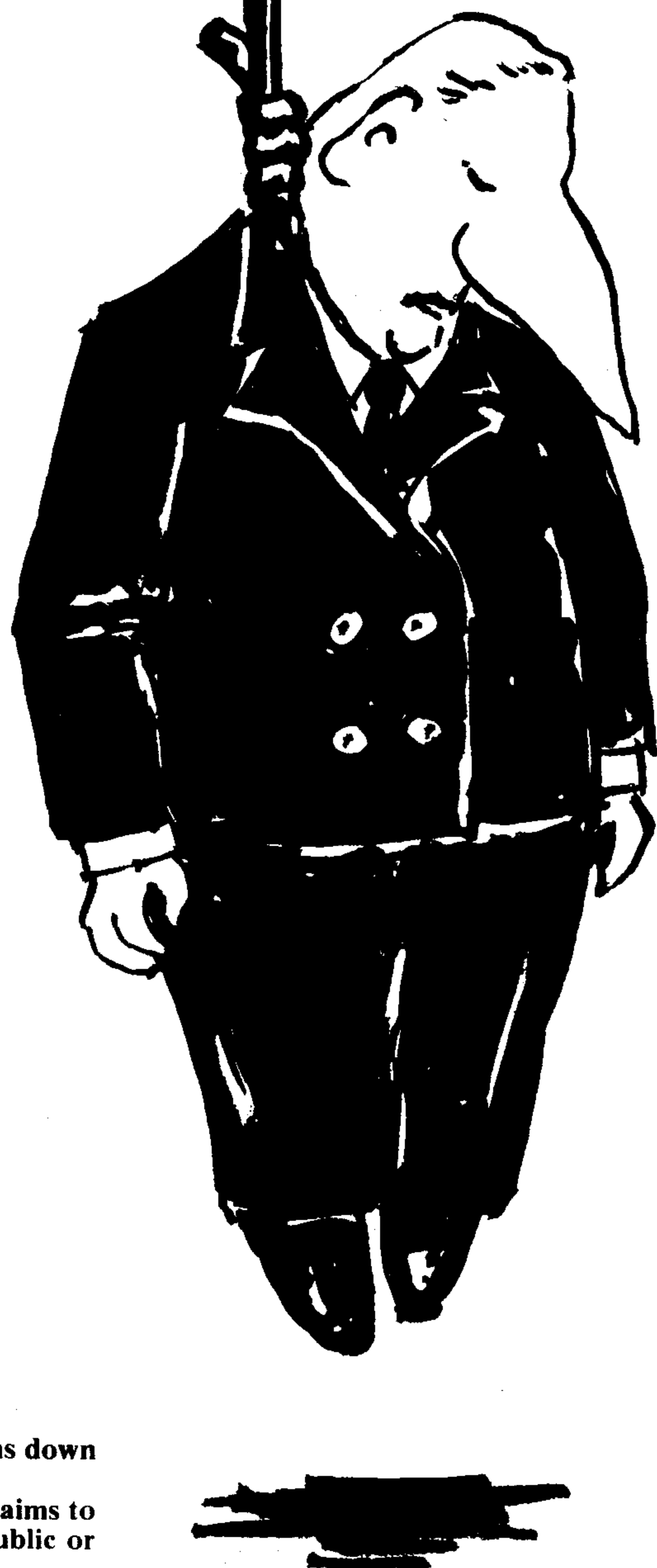
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No.45 — February 23rd to March 2nd



“ We as the Conservative Party and as the Conservative Government represent all the people. We are the trade union of the pensioners and children, the trade union for the disabled and sick, for those who live in slums and those who want to buy homes for themselves. We are the trade union for the unemployed and the low paid, for those who live in poverty and are hard pressed. We are the trade union for the nation as a whole.”

Edward Heath



## AND PREPARE TO FIGHT!

### THE SICK

Prescription charges doubled — sick working people often have to choose which item they need most, and leave out the rest. Hospitals reorganised to take in more private, paying patients. The health service literally bled white by Tory penny pinching.

### THE HARD PRESSED

Immigrants, already hard pressed by strange conditions and racist insults, have been subjected to a vast police witchhunt as a result of the Tories' Immigration Act.

Now Heath threatens strikers' families with starvation.

### UNEMPLOYED

The numbers went up over a million under the Tories. This week, over two million are signing on because of Heath's lockout.

### LOW PAID

The low paid have borne the brunt of the Tories' pay freezes and "Counter Inflation" legislation. Remember the hospital workers beaten down under Phase 2? And they've suffered the most from Tory food prices. Bread alone has gone up nearly a shilling a loaf in just one year.

### "THE NATION AS A WHOLE"

In Heath's jargon this means THE RICH, the bosses, the speculators, the banks. YES INDEED, the Tory government IS their trade union. From tax giveaways to union bashing, from wage freezes to government handouts, Heath has fully represented their needs and interests. ICI's profits doubled last year. The big banks' profits were anything from 50% up (Barclays and National Westminster) to 75% (Lloyds).

### TRADE UNIONS

It is OUR trade unions, the trade unions of the working class, that have been first in the firing line. We have had to face the Industrial Relations Act, the beggarly "Counter Inflation" clampdown and a massive stepping up of state thuggery, big wiggid brutality and legal harassment. 6 WORKERS ARE NOW IN JAIL FOR PICKETING.

It is the party linked to these organisations, the Labour Party, that we will be voting for. Not on its record, and not on its programme either. Its record is hardly better than Heath's. But it is the parliamentary political expression of the organised working class, who e defeat in these elections would enormously encourage capitalism's attack on our class.

So — VOTE LABOUR BUT KEEP UP THE FIGHT!

### PENSIONERS

5,000 every winter die from cold. The Tories promise a twice-yearly pension review — why only now that there's an election? They have consistently refused to give pensioners a living wage, and left them to starve for the last three and a half years. Only recently they turned down a request for a extra heating allowance after paraffin went up by 120%.

### CHILDREN

School dinners up in price and down in protein, free school milk abolished, mammoth cuts in education spending. Working class children exist in overcrowded, leaky, depressing slum schools, hundreds take their classes in cloakrooms and corridors, and thousands roam the streets because there aren't enough teachers.

### DISABLED

Tory government spending is so tight that local authorities have been unable to give the disabled the benefits they are officially entitled to.

### HOUSING

Public sector building is at its lowest in ten years, with completions down from 180,000 to 107,500.

The Housing Finance Act, a specially designed rackrenting Act, aims to eliminate any reasonably priced rented accomodation, in either public or private sector.

House prices have rocketed because of pure undisguised speculation. Mortgage rates make it impossible for young workers to buy a house in many cities, where even an old 2 up, 2 down can cost anything from £5,000 to £10,000.

The number of homeless is about to double as a result of the Tories' local government legislation.

The top six oil companies made £241 million profits in Britain in 1972 without paying a penny in tax. Between October 1972 and October 1973 the average manual worker's take home pay only just about kept pace with the rise in prices. But company profits rose by 16% in real terms. During the first three quarters of 1973 company profits made in Britain were £6,268 million, compared with £4,805 million in the first three quarters of 1972.

The Conservatives speak of North Sea oil as "the acceptable face of capitalism", and regard profits as a fair compensation for the capitalist's risk. Apparently the risks of death or maiming by industrial accident, or of industrial disease, warrant only £20 to £30 per week compensation for workers like miners or building workers, while the fearful dangers of being chairman of Plesseys require £3,176 to save them.

The Labour Party takes the view that a good proportion of profits should be channelled towards 'public welfare' via taxation. One prospective CONSERVATIVE candidate, even, has recommended that 'excess' bank profits (National Westminster profits have increased 56% to £189 million, Lloyds 75% to £130 million) should be channelled to the building societies. (What should happen to the profits, 'excess' or otherwise, or building societies, she didn't say).

## planned

But where do profits come from anyway? Who is to say whether they are 'excess' or 'a fair return'? Even £6,000 million is just so many peculiarly printed pieces of paper unless it represents a certain quantity of actual COMMODITIES — machines or buildings or cars or whatever. Where do these commodities come from?

Those commodities certainly don't just grow like leaves on trees, nor are they the divine reward of 'risk'. They are produced like any other commodities, by workers in

factories and other workplaces. The fact that they become the property of capitalists, of people who gain wealth not by working but simply by virtue of owning property to start with, is simply due to the peculiar way the economy is ordered in present day society.

Obviously workers in each industry cannot simply take possession of their own immediate produce, in the same way that a small farmer in an agricultural society could. Car workers can't eat cars, nor miners coal. Obviously, also, a certain part of the productive resources of society must go towards producing machinery and so on for tomorrow's production — not all of it can go to immediate consumption.

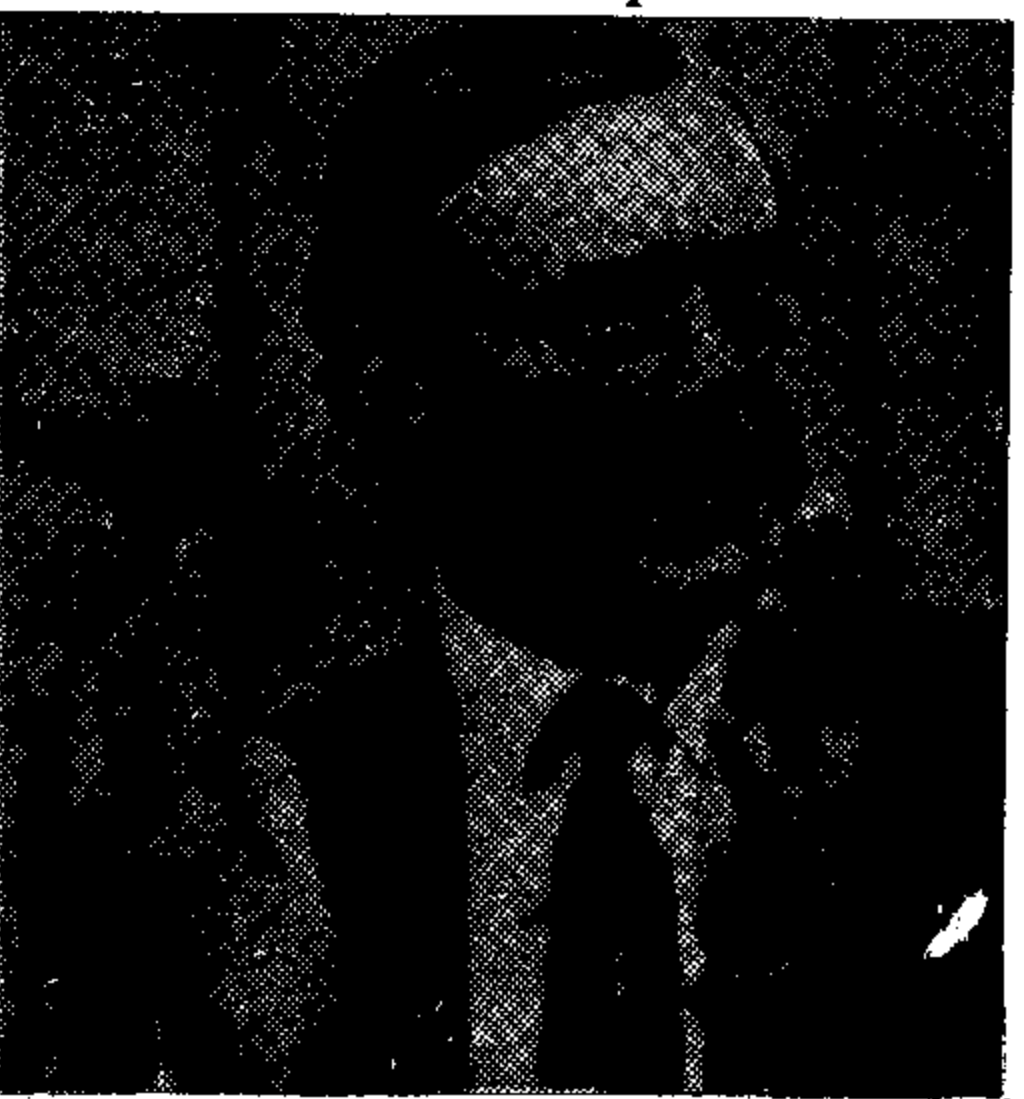
But there is absolutely no inevitable reason why the means of production should be owned by a tiny wealthy minority, rather than being the general property of society. The Russian revolutionary Victor Serge, in his autobiography, recalls arriving in the West with his young son who had been born and bred in the Russian workers' state. Pointing to a large store, his son asked him: is that really all owned by one man? Yes. But why does he want to own that enormous property? In order to make money. But isn't he rich already? Yes. Then why does he want to become richer....?

There is absolutely no inevitable reason why production should not be rationally planned rather than being regulated according to the ups and downs of private profits, with the resulting recessions, slumps, unemployment, and so on. There is absolutely no inevitable reason why monopoly pricing, speculation, and arms races should be allowed to continue, generating a spiral of price rises.

The Tories challenge Labour: where would the money come

from to invest in North Sea oil developments if there were nationalisation? We should answer: where would it come from anyway? Who would produce the oil rigs, the drilling equipment, the ships, the pipelines, and so on?

The Labour Party should reply to the Tory scare mongering by saying that they will nationalise ALL major capitalist concerns without compensation. There is no problem of how much it would cost. All that would be involved is getting rid of a minority of parasitic bloodsuckers and bringing the economy under a rational working class plan. The only DIFFICULT point about this programme is the problem of breaking the POLITICAL resistance of the exploiters.



Benn

How would industry be run without the bosses? Russia shows us an example where major industry HAS been nationalised — and, in fact, great benefits won from that fact — but the whole economy and society is run by privileged, arrogant, anti socialist bureaucrats, on a police state basis. This fact has enabled the Labour Party leadership to oppose thorough going socialist measures, of the type carried out in 1917 to 18 in Russia, on the grounds that Labour is a "DEMOCRATIC socialist" party.

But there is an alternative: opposed to the Stalinist

bureaucracy which consolidated itself on the ebb of the Russian revolution, and through the PHYSICAL liquidation of the great majority of the best members of the party which led that revolution, the Bolshevik party; and opposed also to the policy of Wilson, of treating capitalist private property as fundamentally sacred, only to be chipped away occasionally by a small siphoning of 'excess' profits or the bailing out through nationalisation of this or that bankrupt industry.

That alternative is the running industry, and of all society, through democratic workers' councils. The day to day running of each factory, workplace, and community, can be controlled by an elected committee of those working there, responsible to and recallable by general assemblies. Why not? After all, 99% of the practical running of every workplace is already carried out directly by wage or salary earning employees, who know a great deal more about their jobs than the men in the boardroom do. The other 1% of dictatorship from the top, of juggling with tax evasion, and of devising ways to cut the throats of competitive firms, can well be disposed of. The Lip workers in France, and (though as a stunted way) the UCSWORKERS HAVE ALREADY SHOWN THIS.

Of course, you can't have a railway system (for example) where each depot takes its own decisions, regardless of the others. We need a centralised state administration, coordinating all the workers' councils in a democratic congress.

Today, the running of society is almost entirely in the hands of a tiny minority. The great majority of us are little more than cogs in the machine. How much better things could be run if the creativity and intelligence

of millions of people were directly brought into the business of running society.

To carry this out would require the breaking up of forces like the police and the army, closely linked with the bosses' power, and the setting up of a democratic workers' militia. The present civil service — a powerful Tory force — would be replaced by an administration made up of people who were directly drawn from the ordinary workforce, would return to it after a short period, and would be paid no more than the average worker's wages.

All right... but how to accomplish all this? It is quite obvious that the present Labour Party leadership doesn't intend — in fact, doesn't even promise, though its promises are cheap enough — to do anything of the sort. It has a strong interest in the established system, comfortable positions of relative wealth and influence. The undemocratic structure of the Labour Party, where this top leadership can cut itself almost totally free from the working class base, is a strong guarantee for the ruling class.

The crucial factor in bringing about a real socialist transformation will be the self mobilisation of the working class, expressed in such actions as those of France 1968, Argentina 1969, or Quebec 1972, where the working class actually DID take control in individual towns. What role will the Labour Party play in such events? We can well

predict what the attitude of the Reg Prentices would be. We can also predict that the great majority of rank and file members will go with their class, the working class. EXACTLY how strong the genuine socialist element is, depends partly on OUR activity NOW.

Certainly there is no point in talking about "Labour to power with socialist policies" now. This would blur over the fact that the CRUCIAL factor in socialist transformation would be mass action outside Parliament, and it would blur over the BASIC changes in the leadership and structure of the Labour Party necessary if it is to play any positive role.

But when the Labour leadership does promise socialist measures — nationalisation, for example — even in their own half-hearted, and in fact quite un-socialist, way — then we must take them up on it. We must campaign for them to carry out their pledges. If they come out for 'workers' control' — even in a way that could well be used to just help collaboration between workers and bosses — we should take them up on it, demand that any promised workers' representation is actually granted, and strive through our own efforts to extend such measures and given them a real socialist content.

All such campaigns, though, are null and void unless we see that the MOST IMPORTANT thing is the REAL DAY TO DAY STRUGGLE of the working class, not waiting for the word from on high, not relying on fine resolutions on paper. One struggle like that of Lip is worth ten thousand resolutions for workers' control and socialism.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

# ELECTION MAY SHAKE PILLARS OF PATRONAGE

**EVEN THE BEST laid plans of mice, men and Tory rats can go wrong.**

Whoever wins the election of February 28th, the fact that the election has been called at this time threatens a major setback and markedly increases the chances of defeat for the present strategy of the British ruling class in Northern Ireland — that is, the section of the "United Kingdom" which has been in a state of civil war for four years now.

The problems of British politics force the British government to call a general election just when such an election is most likely to disrupt and undermine their cunning manoeuvres to legitimise and stabilise the new Northern Ireland Assembly.

## internment

There are two pillars to the British strategy. The first and fundamental one aims to create a stable, middle class political centre based on the new Assembly which will wean sufficient mass support from the so-called extremists to give it a political credibility, and thus consolidate a renovated, workable and flexible political structure in the North of Ireland which can serve the interests of British Imperialism and its client state in the south of Ireland.

The second prop, necessary to buttress the fundamental strategy, has been the military reign of terror against the Catholic population. While Catholic sectarian SDLP politicians have been holding hands with Brian Faulkner, the Orange bigot who was the main architect of

internment, and while government propagandists have prattled about the need for forgiveness, forgetfulness and reconciliation, the repression by the British Army against the Catholic population has continued unabated, and in areas like the Lower Falls even intensified.

On balance in the last months the British government has registered substantial successes. Successes which allowed it to operate from a position of apparently increasing strength.

## corrupt

The strengths on which the British imperialists' efforts to build a new political structure are these:

A. The war-weariness and the results of four years of British Army terror amongst the Catholic population.

B. The political weaknesses of Irish republicanism (for example, the tendency to think in almost exclusively militaristic terms, which has resulted over 50 years in a successive series of parasitic political formations from Fianna Fail to the SDLP exploiting the heroic military struggles of the revolutionary republicans to gain positions of power and influence from which they then betray the aspirations of the people whose support they fraudulently appropriated because of the political abstentionism of the genuine revolutionary anti-imperialists). Even more, perhaps, than the undemocratic British government ban on Sinn Fein (Provisional) candidates in the elections for the Assembly, this has allowed the corrupt Catholic

sectarian politicians to become a powerful force working for British imperialism to 'exploit' the war-weariness of the Catholic community and to reconcile sections of it to the new political set up.

C. The chronic religious sectarian division within the working class, which effectively neutralises it for any sort of political independence — even on a trade union level. Which is why the apparently reasonable and eminently 'socialist' proposal for a trade union militia as the answer to sectarian violence is a nonsense for the reason that sectarian division runs all the way through the trade unions themselves.

D. The support of the Southern Irish bosses — a support limited only by the fear of the reaction in the south, and working class reaction especially, to a too-open assumption of not just the role, but the full-dress uniform — helmet, badge, gun and all — of British imperialism's garrison in Ireland, an open assumption of the 'mantle' of the old Royal Irish Constabulary, the armed gendarmery which once held all Ireland in subjection for the British Empire.

E. The power and patronage which the Assembly puts in the hands of the Faulkner/SDLP coalition in an area where such patronage has always been a major factor in both politics and sectarian division. Already something like 4,000 people are directly employed in jobs associated with the new Assembly (in British population terms that would amount to 150,000 people). And this is only the beginning, and no more than a minor aspect of the

construction of a power-base built on direct self interest.

Thus, given time and a programme of positive economic development and reforms (reforms and concessions wrung from British imperialism not by the crawling political whores and scabs of the SDLP but by the revolutionary action of the masses in the streets and by the armed actions of their militias, the two IRAs, against the British army of occupation and its local auxiliaries), Britain could hope to cut the ground from under the feet of militant republicanism.

The imperialists could reasonably hope to build a large "middle ground" support for the Faulknerites. Brian Faulkner, defeated in the struggle to retain the majority and the leadership of the Unionist Party, had real prospects of re-conquering and re-grouping the majority of grass-roots Unionist support as the economically "positive" sides of the Assembly programme unfolded.

Entrenched with a workable majority in the Assembly, the Faulkner/Fitt coalition could still function as the government, even if — and we don't know — the Loyalist bloc of Paisley, Craig and West does now voice the feelings of the overwhelming majority of Protestants. With British-funded patronage to dispense and British Army force to back it up, the new Executive was in a position of very real strength.

Even the spectacular scenes in the Assembly itself in which the Paisley/Craig group physically assaulted the Faulknerites and repeatedly broke up the meetings probably helped stabilise the situation. Such antics must have convinced many angry Protestants



Grins and handshakes at Sunningdale — Southern Iris Inset: the Bloody Sunday massacre.

hostile to 'power-sharing' with the SDLP that a real fight for their cause was being fought in the Assembly, and thus lessened the possibility of a significant increase in the violence of the Protestant backlash.

While William Craig, leader of the Vanguard Unionist Party, now bears many of the marks of an unbalanced crank, even in the context of Orange politics, Paisley himself has for long played the same sort of role in Loyalist politics that certain 'fake lefts' play in working class struggles in Britain. An evil bigot, at least morally responsible for much of the sectarian slaughter, Paisley has nonetheless been described with some accuracy as a "fake right", and, because of a canny appreciation of the power of Britain in the Northern Ireland situation, not himself behaving as a consistent "Paisleyite". For long he has shown a willingness to tailor his actions, if not always his words, to this fundamental fact.

For all these reasons, given time — even only six months or a year — Faulkner's (that is, Britain's) advantages would have begun to return dividends.

But now the elections to the imperialist Parliament, to which Northern Ireland send 12 representatives, have come

'prematurely', and possibly disastrously for Britain's political cause. The present unsettled situation — the so-recent capture of the office of the Executive by the an Faulknerites creates the possibility that in the elections there will be such a massive Protestant vote of in effect — no confidence in the Assembly that the credibility of the Executive as a government will be materially undermined.

As many as 7 of the MPs return to Westminster may be an Assembly Loyalists. This would not directly affect the Assembly or the Executive, which are elected separately. Northern Ireland elections, nor even the Executive's ability to continue as an administration and fighting outlined above to consolidate a base for itself.

It would however enormous strengthen the striking power and political weight of the anti-Faulknerites, and strengthen equally their demand for new Northern Ireland elections. would vindicate — for masses — Protestants — their claim that the Executive is outrageous undemocratic. (Despite the demand for world-wide recognition of the artificial Northern Ireland state, with its 40% dissident

# ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

# A PROPHET OUTCAST?

**THE EXPULSION OF ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN from the Soviet Union is one more proof that the reactionary totalitarian bureaucrats who rule Russia and oppress the working class dare not allow freedom of thought, expression, communication, or criticism.**

Trotsky, commenting on the world wide system of lying propaganda with which the degenerate Stalinist parties poisoned and corrupted a whole generation of revolutionaries, once said that 'The revolution is the great truth of our epoch — it does not need lies'.

In their own way the Russian leaders recognise this. Fearless confrontation of reality is the

necessary precondition for the working class to seize hold of reality and change it. The Stalinist bureaucrats fear the revolution as the devil supposedly fears holy water. And therefore they fear not alone 'truth', but the very idea of unfettered circulation of information. Nonconformists like Solzhenitsyn who insist on the right to unregimented thinking and writing are seen as a dire threat.

## Police regime

Solzhenitsyn has long opposed the police regime and has finally been forcibly sent into exile as a reprisal for writing a history — 'The Gulag Archipelago' — of the slave labour camps in which millions laboured or perished.

The Stalinist rulers know that if

they relax their grip and allow the free flow of information and the freedom even to record recent Russian history more or less accurately, then they risk a mass uprising of the group they fear most of all — the working class of the Soviet Union and Stalinist Eastern Europe. Freedom to write can lead to spreading ideas which in turn can lead to organised political opposition. Very quickly that would lead to the working class asserting itself and questioning the right of the bureaucrats to their power and privileges — and to a settling of accounts with the heirs of Stalin.

Thus they have retreated from the brief thaw and mild liberalisation under Khrushchev. This was anyway primarily a move towards internal 'civilisation' within the ruling bureaucracy. They stopped the habit of periodically slaughtering each other and started to allow discredited bureaucrats to retire to the dachas rather than to the GPU graveyard.

One should not idealise Solzhenitsyn. Nor should one overreact against the nauseating sycophancy of the western press towards him.

## Executioners

Solzhenitsyn is not a communist, unlike oppositionists like Piotr Yakir, Grigorenko, and others who fight for a democratic working class regime in the Soviet Union. Some of his ideas are best called reactionary. 'The Gulag Archipelago' shows he has no understanding of the class struggle, and equates the violence used by the revolutionary working class in a great revolution with the reactionary Stalinist violence used primarily against communists and workers.

But we must remember where his ideas were formed: in opposition to the nightmarish reality of stalinist totalitarianism — 'socialism' not 'with a human face', but personified by the malevolent countenance of Stalin, and with a quality of life defined by the vast all powerful army of police, police spies, Labour camp guards and executioners.

## Bureaucracy

The bureaucracy which seized political power from the working class failed to destroy the fundamental social organisation of production created by the October Revolution — the nationalised and planned economy which remains a progressive conquest of mankind, needing only to be seized out of the hands of the bureaucrats in a new supplementary working class revolution. But its parasitic political and social role — Trotsky truly said that without the social conquests of the October Revolution the stalinist regime would simply be a fascist state — has transformed Russian society into one of the more powerful arguments against socialism in the arsenal of the bosses.

Despite confused ideas, and even reactionary ones, the

struggle of Solzhenitsyn and others in Russia now against stalinist totalitarianism is a progressive battle. It is not even very meaningful to categorise confusion by some USSR oppositionists, like Sakharov, as definitively reactionary or pro capitalist. In a society where there is an embargo on the free flow of information and systematic official lying, confusion is inevitable. Solzhenitsyn's opposition is part of a ferment — at present, apparently, mainly among a layer of intellectuals who are by no means ideologically homogeneous — that will help prepare that working class explosion of revolutionary action against the bureaucracy which is ripening.

## Expulsions

In the future working class democratic regime — when it is securely established — ideas will be dealt with as ideas, not by the policeman's truncheon or gun or the forcible expulsion of men who dare to say NO.

Solzhenitsyn is the first such expulsion from the Soviet Union since Trotsky was expelled in 1929. The press has compared the two men. A world of difference separates the outlook of the two men. Yet Solzhenitsyn's intransigence, audacity, courage, and willingness to stand against the might of the totalitarian state — after spending 11 years as a prisoner — can only provoke admiration: in that respect the comparison is not absurd.

Solzhenitsyn has been welcomed lavishly in the West. He will live where he chooses. In 1929 and after, Trotsky, the revolutionary, found himself on a "planet without a visa". That fact sums up the difference between the two men, who are so glibly compared.

## Militant

It remains to be seen however, what Solzhenitsyn will make of life under capitalism, some of whose features must appear attractive to oppositionists in the USSR, particularly as the ritual denunciation of capitalism's defects in the Soviet press can hardly carry much conviction with them.

In the capitalist world Solzhenitsyn may learn to appreciate the reality of class exploitation, injustice and oppression, against which the mass of workers and poor farmers have to fight and on which capitalism rests. The metaphor which makes up the title of the book which resulted in his expulsion from Russia is a brilliant image for the netherworld of prisons and labour camps which were and are dotted like a string of islands — an archipelago — throughout the land mass ruled by the Soviet bureaucracy. But throughout the world ruled by monopoly capitalism and its agents there are other metaphorical 'archipelagos' — 'islands' of imperialist massacres and concentration camps such as Vietnam, Chile,

Greece, Ceylon, Bangladesh, Laos, Indonesia. Islands of virulent racism such as South Africa, Rhodesia and Israel, and the same disease existing like cancer cells in the very bloodstream of most metropolitan countries. And much, much more — the poverty, the stultification of illiteracy, the homelessness and squalor, the needless ravages of controllable disease, the toil, drudgery and early death in near-slave labour conditions.

In this world Solzhenitsyn may thus learn what the revolution of 1917 was about, why the working class made it, what they aimed to eliminate, and why, to escape oppression, they fought victoriously to establish their own democratic workers' power. He may learn to distinguish between the liberating revolution of 1917 and the Stalinist political counter revolution which suppressed the Russian workers and established the horrors of totalitarian bureaucratic rule against which he has fought. He may come to understand that outside the Soviet Union the bureaucracy's crimes include helping

imperialism — as when it recently made a deal against the Vietnamese people with the war criminals and mass murderers of US imperialism who have laid waste to whole areas of Indo-China.

Solzhenitsyn has in fact begun to learn. Already he has said: "I am accustomed to all kinds of slander in the Soviet press which no one has the power to correct or refute. But I never expected that in the West such irresponsibility could happen." He may come to understand that the "freedom of the press" in capitalism is basically freedom for the press magnates. He may come to understand that the best alternative to stalinism is a revolutionary workers' democracy on the basis of the present remaining conquests of the October Revolution in Russia.

Even if he doesn't learn then we must not forget it even in our bitterest condemnation of Stalinism and our firmest support of the rights and the courageous fight of men like Solzhenitsyn.

SEAN MATGAMNA



Tories, British imperialist Heath, Faulkner and Fitt.

Catholic minority, as being inviolate, when they talk of 'democracy' they refer exclusively to relations within the Protestant majority. If a combination of the Catholic 40% and even so little as a 20% section of Protestants combine to make a majority within the state, then to these racists that is the most outrageous violation of democracy. By democracy they mean nothing but Protestant supremacy.)

An anti-Faulkner bloc elected to Westminster could become an alternative power base and rallying point for a fight against the Assembly and the Executive. It would probably erode Faulknerite support and slow down or completely disrupt the process of regroupment in the incubator of the patronage-broking Executive.

Such developments would set back the visible progress of recent months towards a substantial victory of the British occupation forces against republicanism. It would possibly throw the whole Northern Ireland political complex back into the melting pot.

Thus Heath's attempt to strengthen his hand in the British class struggle will probably weaken the grip of the British ruling class on the throats of the Irish people.

The IRA is still a force to be reckoned with. The talk of

rapprochement between the militant Protestants and the Republicans should not lead us to delusions that a miraculous eradication of the sectarian divisions of centuries is imminent. It nevertheless worries the British government, to the extent that, at least in the opinion of both republicans and Loyalists, the British Army is increasingly engaging in sectarian assassinations with the objective of intensifying the already murderous divisions between the two communities.

The British ruling class, while having a long term policy based on the need to de-sectarianise Northern Ireland society so as to regularise relations with the whole of Ireland as a client state of British imperialism, now paradoxically still needs to use and foster sectarian divisions. It must keep its grip on the situation now, against the revolt of the republican population — so as to ensure that the changes take place from above, at its pace, and in its own way.

Thus the elections could produce a whole new stage in Northern Ireland, with much that the British bosses and their stooges have accomplished through mass anti-Catholic terror and murder being undermined at its still shaky foundations.

John O'Mahony

MY LOCAL LABOUR candidate, like many others — whether Labour, Tory, or those other people — accuses the Tories of having "divided the nation". Under the last Labour government, evidently, there was "national unity", a highly desirable state of things, which prevented any unfairness, inequality, or injustice.

How pleasant it is to think back to those balmy days of "national unity" from 1964 to 1970.

Unfortunately, my memory fails at this point. Perhaps we could recall this social idyll of the sixties by having a demonstration to symbolise national unity.

It could take the form of a national three legged race, converging on Parliament Square. There would be great streams of rich and poor, tied ankle to ankle, moving along the motorways, resting only to play a friendly game of Monopoly, and watch leaders of all political parties Morris dancing on the service station forecourts.

As they wind their peaceful three legged ways along the hard shoulders of the nation, crowds would gather on the motorway bridges, cheering them on and singing choruses of the National ANTHEM.

The marchers — participants would be a better word — are wearing "I'm backing Britain" T-shirts, Union Jack shorts, and

## We British are a three-legged race

"Enoch is a moderate" badges.

Now they begin to converge on Parliament Square, which is festooned with streamers of ticker tape and poor pay slips. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Victor Feather, waits to bless the crowds.

Already the first row of the demonstration has come into view. It is composed of property speculators tied at the ankle to the parents of homeless families. What a compact symbol of social unity and the semi-detachedness of life in United Britain!

First into the Square comes the Minister of Energy, the sixth Baron Carrington. I'm sure you all know what a trying time the "great fuel" (as he is known to people of all social classes) is having selling 140 acres of his family estate to the High Wycombe council for £10,000,000. I know we all wish him well in the sale. And, equally I know that people from all walks of life will also wish High Wycombe council well in beating the noble lord down to a reasonable price.

Tied to his ankle is Mrs. Emmery. Many of you won't know Mrs.

Emmery. She is the homeless mother of three children (who have been kindly taken into care). Mrs. Emmery hails from Cardiff where she lives in Green Farm Hostel. Thanks to the wisdom of Green Farm's Rule 5 ("inmates must be out in the afternoons") she has been able to take part in this great social event.

Coming into view behind Lord Carrington and Mrs. Emmery, I can see Mr. Arnold Weinstock tied by the ankle to Mr. Martin Turner, an unemployed engineer. And behind them there's Harry Hyams (Mr. Centre Point) linked to the leg of Mr. Parry, whose two sons died in a pit accident last year. They seem to be discussing the common problem of spare rooms...

But just a moment... Mrs Emmery is flagging. No, not Union Jack waving, but tired. Will the Minister of Energy be able to do anything for her? He says that the homeless are the Minister of Housing's business. Lord Carrington is complaining he can't get into his stride if Mrs Emmery doesn't buck up. Crowds in the hotel windows overlooking the Embankment are shouting

"Lame Duck! Lame Duck! Lame Duck!"

People of every upper income bracket are running down from the rustic balcony of the Savoy Hotel past the mock up of a Salvation Army soup kitchen in the foyer and out onto the streets to commiserate with Lord Carrington. "She's got an anergy crisis", he tells them, appealing for support.

One of the stewards of the demonstration is coming over to Mrs Emmery now. He is arresting her for loitering! What's this? Mr Parry seems to be getting angry, and Mr Turner has broken away from Mr Weinstock and seems a trifle overheated too. There's a fight starting!

Here come the police now — rushing down the Strand in convicts' uniform, with a Special Patrol Group dressed up as hospital porters. Snatch squads of policemen in miners' helmets have now arrived to restore order in the national interest.

Here is Mr Wilson, tied leg to leg with Mr Heath, and carrying a flag saying "For God, for Harold, and St George". He's sorting things out now. Yes. It's Mr McGahey's fault, it appears. Mr McGahey, Mr Warren, and an Ugandan Asian are to blame. It seems to be working. Yes... order seems to be being restored. "Unity", I say, "let's have a bit of unity! You know it works

Alice Carroll

# MINERS MUST STEP UP PICKETING

THE FACT that the miners are not only fighting the government and the bosses is illustrated by the following account of picketing experiences told to WORKERS' FIGHT by a South Lancashire NUM member.

Last Monday (11th February), four lorries were turned back from the picket outside Kearsley power station. Three were tankers and the fourth was carrying cinders.

We got talking to some of the power station employees and found that the management had told the men to ignore the miners' picket as far as they could. There are four unions inside the Power Station, TGWU, GMWU, AUEW, and EPTU — and as far as we could find out the members had not been informed by their various union officials what to do over blacked fuel entering the station.

On the question of stocks it appears that Kearsley station has six weeks' supply of coal. 600,000 gallons of oil have been delivered in the last 8 weeks — this is much more than normal. These figures were confirmed by tanker drivers. One oil tanker that was stopped was driven by a shop steward from Esso Transport, Liverpool. Much to our surprise he argued that he should be allowed to cross the picket and unload. He said he was a TGWU member and he had received no instructions not to cross picket lines. He was eventually persuaded to turn back, but not before he had

approached the management inside. On coming out he warned us that attempts would be made to get oil in at night. At this time the pickets were only out during the day. They were afraid there was a danger of the fuel entering at night so they phoned Area CONTROL IN Bolton to arrange future 24 hour picketing. Area control have generally been very lax on picketing. The management in the power station made us take the picketing signs down from the walls and refused to let the pickets talk to the shop stewards in the power station. On the next day, the pickets found that the gates had been replaced, probably because of the friendliness they had shown previously.

## London teachers fail to rally NUT against Phase 3

The National Union of Teachers Special Conference on 16th February was a serious defeat for the left.

The Union Executive's recommendation to accept a salary settlement within Phase 3 was carried. That, in itself, was no great surprise. What was not totally expected was the size of the Executive's majority.

Only 4 speakers from the floor had managed to reach the rostrum when the proposition was made that the motion be put. Within five minutes that proposition had been carried and the settlement approved — with the anti-acceptance minority not even big enough to force a card vote.

Every single Association in Inner London and most of those in the outer London area had voted to reject the settlement and fight for the full 25% claim. But elsewhere — where the proportion of young teachers is not so high, where the crisis of the education system is as yet not so advanced, and where Union activity is less marked — most Associations decided to accept the settlement.

Some self-criticism is needed on the part of left wing teachers. Not enough work was done to prepare the Union membership in advance, and attention was

Martin Thomas

allowed to focus on the staff shortage and London Allowance issues. In fact, no consideration at all was given to the possibility of such a total sell-out on the national claim.

Even after the NUT Executive first decided, on January 26th, to bow to Phase 3, the response of the left was far too sluggish. The left wing caucus in the Union, Rank and File, managed to do no more than speeding up the production of its paper so as to be in time for the Special Conference. Most of what was done to fight the sell-out was on the initiative of individuals and small groups.

But the Special Conference decision is not the end of the teachers' fight — not by a long way. A leaflet distributed by Workers' Fight at the Special Conference outlines the next steps in that fight

1. Move into action immediately, alongside the miners, on the burning issue of the London Allowance. Extend the action on covering [for non-

appointed teachers] across the country. Move to selective and rolling strikes, demonstrations, etc.

2. Start a campaign for an Interim Award.

3. If a Labour Government is elected on the 28th, put the full claim straight back in again under the Re-opener Clause. Challenge Parliamentary candidates right now on their attitude to the teachers' claim and to education cuts.

4. NUT Associations should take a part in sponsoring Solidarity Committees for the miners in every area. Committees which bring in the broadest sections of working people on the basis of assisting the miners by publicity, funds, etc. and, when it is needed, giving practical assistance on the picket lines.

If your NUT Association as a whole does not support the miners, form a caucus which does.

5. We must fight for the right of children of striking miners to free school meals, for schools to stop if temperatures fall below the legal minimum as a result of fuel shortage and for contributions in each school to the miners' strike fund.

## Bosses' court tries 'Work or Full Pay' militant

THE BOSSES' TWO-DAYS-A-WEEK LOCKOUT has predictably brought with it the reality of the businessman's boast "a man is as good as his word". All over the country employers are wailing on their guaranteed week agreements — and sometimes with little or no official union reaction.

Women workers are particularly hard hit. In most cases a woman will not be able to draw unemployment benefit because, being on such a miserable wage she cannot afford

to pay the full insurance contribution. If she does manage to get unemployment benefit it will in almost every case be much lower than a man's.

If she has children in a nursery to enable her to go to work, she will still have to pay a full week's nursery fees (about £4.50) out of the reduced three day wage, as if she withdraws her children from the nursery for two days, she could risk losing a nursery place altogether.

The struggle put up by Jean Jepson of Beverley, near Hull, underlines the importance of guaranteed week agreements. Jean Jepson, who is a TGWU convenor at Armstrong Patents Ltd, was sacked for refusing to accept the 3-day wage and demanding that Armstrongs pay up on the guaranteed basic wage.

The company followed this up immediately by mounting an intimidation campaign in which they issued broadsheets threatening workers that if they supported Jean they would be sacked.

This campaign was partly successful. Only 100 supported

her. Then, to give the whole disgusting affair a touch of 'fairness', the bosses instituted a 'court' to try Jean. She was allowed to elect two members of the jury herself, but two shop stewards and the four management members were picked by the company.

The two Jean chose, both women, voted for her — although she was not given the chance of appearing before this 'court' — but the others voted in favour of the management.

The local TGWU organiser Les Uppgold's position is at best ambiguous. He says he supports Jean but at the same time he is arranging elections for a new convenor. What he should be doing is organising support for Jean and refusing credentials to anybody elected to replace her.

The fact that workers at Fenner's engineering works and Hull docks are blacking Armstrongs shows clearly that support can be organised. The strikers themselves are touring the country to gain support.

FRAN BRODIE

## I.M.G. and W.R.P. in the Elections

WORKERS FIGHT advocates a vote for Labour on 28th February. Not because we think a Wilson government would improve things greatly, but because a victory for the Tories would be a mandate for union-bashing and reaction.

Generally, in the election, the alternative is simply Labour, Tory, or junior Tory (Liberal). In eleven constituencies, revolutionary socialists are standing, candidates of the International Marxist Group or of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. As regular readers of WF will know, we have serious disagreements with the IMG and with the WRP. The WRP has a policy which amounts to scabbing on the struggle of the Irish Republicans. They muffle the question of the right of the working class to use forceful picketing and self-defence tactics in response.

The IMG for the past few months has confined itself to general phrasemongering about a general strike as the answer to all problems.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that people voting for IMG or WRP candidates will generally be voting for the basic idea of revolutionary socialism, not for the IMG's or the WRP's peculiar tactics. Such a vote will not affect the outcome of the elections, which will be either a Labour victory or a Tory victory. It would still be useful as an indication that many workers support the ideas of revolutionary socialism, and are not willing to put up with people like Reg Prentice for ever and ever, come what may.

A general policy of 'vote Labour' is, we believe, necessary; but there is no need to make a virtue out of necessity.

## MEETINGS

TEESSIDE — Sean Matgamna on "The Miners and the Election". 7.45 pm, Monday 25th February. Princess Alice Hotel, Middlesbrough.

MANCHESTER — Sean Matgamna on "Lenin and the Revolutionary Party". 8 pm, Tuesday 26th February, 'Mother Mac's', Back Piccadilly Street (near Woolworths).

COVENTRY — Marxist Education Series. "Women's Liberation". 7.30 pm, Sunday 24th February, Elastic Inn.

LONDON — Andrew Roberts on "Why vote Labour?". 8 pm, Sunday 24th February. Golden Lion, Britannia St, Kings Cross.

## HUNGER STRIKERS

### "Answer these questions", Home Office challenged

Gartree: ABOUT 250 DEMONSTRATORS from London, Nottingham, Luton, Leicester, Birmingham, and Coventry travelled to Gartree Prison last Sunday. The demonstration, organised by the Political Hostages Committee, was in solidarity with Hugh Feeny, one of the force-fed Winchester "bomb trial" prisoners who is now in Gartree gaol.

Amongst the Luton contingent were the relatives of other Republican prisoners at Gartree and elsewhere.

Hugh Feeny has now on hunger strike since November 14th. Like Gerry Kelly in Wandsworth and the Price sisters in Brixton he is demanding that he be sent to an Irish prison and given the status of political prisoner.

Hugh is now in the hospital wing in Gartree. But this is hardly an act of 'mercy'. According to the other prisoners he is just a skeleton. They, however, are giving him a lot of support. When he appears at the hospital wing window, cheers go up to help him keep his spirits up, despite the fact that the prison governor has ordered that no-one is allowed to speak to him, or, according to report, "so much as to smile at him".

In a letter to the Prisons Department the Joint Action Committee, one of the two groups campaigning for the release of the Winchester "bomb trial" prisoners, replied to the Home Office's recent statements about "inaccurate reporting".

Picking on tiny inaccuracies in reports in the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian, the Home Office has tried to pour scorn on all the reports about the prisoners.

But as the reply states: "We note with interest that you did not seek to refute misleading statements which were on the front page of the Daily Mail on Friday 1st February... It appears that you are not anxious to deny that the girls are in 'tastefully furnished rooms' with a TV set each, although you know as well as we do that this is untrue."

The letter then demands that the Home Office, now that it seems to have broken its claimed rule of not commenting on individual cases, should answer a few straight questions:

1. Are Dolours and Marian badly bruised as a result of man-handling while being fed?
2. Is Gerry Kelly passing blood?
3. Are his gums raw and bleeding as a result of the use of a sharp metal instrument to make him open his teeth?

3. Was Hugh Feeny badly batoned in the 'strip' cells of Liverpool prison?

3. Are all the prisoners three stone below normal weight and still losing?

5. Are all the prisoners still choking and vomiting when they are fed?

6. Are Hugh and Gerry being refused regular family visits contrary to prison regulations which state that such visits are a prisoner's right?

7. Has Hugh Feeny on at least one occasion been given an injection against his will?

8. Under which prison rules and for what purpose is this treatment being given to these four prisoners

## UP AT A STROKE

THERE ARE NO PRIZES for who can find the most price labels stuck one over the other on the same can or packet. Prices are rising so quickly that several increases take place while stock is still on the shelves.

Shop keepers, taking advantage of these increases, pass them on to shoppers even though they have bought the goods at a price below the original label's indicated level.

These increases are not paltry. In fact once converted into old money they appear even bigger: the increase from 9p to 11p is 5d in old money!

One way to combat this daylight robbery is for a number of shoppers to get together and go into a store, selecting those items that have been marked up like this. Loud insistence on seeing the manager (not in his office but up front) and loud insistence that the first-marked price is paid and no more might teach these get-rich-quick merchants not to be so quick on the draw.

LINDA YOUND

## Phoenix pamphlets

### THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT AND THE FIGHT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

11 important articles from Workers Fight, with introduction and appendix. They form an invaluable collection on the history, experience and theory of the General Strike. 20p plus postage (5p from 98 Gifford Street, London N.1)

### RACIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

Produced to help in the campaign against racism, this 20 page pamphlet takes up the 'reasonable sounding' racist arguments and traces the history of working class racism. Single copies 10p & postage; Bulk: 50p for 6, 80p for 12.

### WORKERS FIGHT AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Report of the Special Conference on the 4th International held in January 1973. 10p plus 5p postage from W.F., 98 Gifford Street, London N.1

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

## MERIDEN:

### NVT and Government manoeuvre against Co-op

FOR A WHILE it seemed as though the co-operative proposed by the workers at Triumphs Meriden factory near Coventry would come into being smoothly under the three sided agreement of the workers, the old owners Norton Villiers Triumph, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Now NVT chairman Denis Poore has backed out of the original agreement. That agreement stated that there would be a stage 1 in which the workers would operate the plant on a 'labour only' basis until July, when under stage 2 the workers would pay for the plant and take over full rights and responsibilities for running it.

Poore has shifted his ground from complaining about inadequate guarantees to laying the blame on "economic uncertainties." He is trying to hustle the workers into paying for the plant now — no doubt in the hope that they will not be able to use it.

The other NVT plant — to which manufacture of the Triumph motorbikes was to be transferred — at Small Heath, Birmingham, is still idle except for staff personnel. Most of the workers there have been made redundant as Poore's earlier intransigence led to the Meriden workers holding tools and jigs needed for the Birmingham plant's long-delayed production of the 'Trident' bike and other three cylinder models.

But while the blockade which the Meriden workers imposed on the tools and bikes has been effective, the longer the blockade goes on the more likely Poore is to have the tools manufactured elsewhere. One problem has already arisen with the bikes: it meant that certain gear changes will be necessary before the blockaded bikes, worth about £1 million, can be sold.

Enthusiasm among the 300 workers still at the Meriden plant remains high, despite the critical financial problems they face. Unfortunately, of the three sides who were party to the original agreement, it is not only NVT whose hostility is apparent. The Government is now, in the person of the Social Security, sending Unemployment Rehabilitation Officers to the site. They are pressuring the workers to take jobs elsewhere on threat of cutting off all benefits.

It is clear that NVT, the Government, and others are trying to hustle the Meriden workers into either giving up or rushing to accept any offers of finance to keep going. If these offers — from private sources — are accepted, then the co-operative idea will have been drained of all its novelty and all its fire. Control will have slipped out of the workers' hands as surely as in any other capitalist firm. This loss of control will extend, clearly to control over what gets produced — a key question for the 300 remaining workers.

It is vital, if this is to be avoided, for the struggle to reactivate. On the part of the Meriden workers themselves this means a change of attitude — a re-orientation away from negotiations and towards taking the firm. Taking it (not buying it) should be accompanied by a call on Labour to nationalise the firm — leaving the workers in control.

SID WEST

## NO CHOICE

"Some people would vote for a pig if it were up for election", said one man. "Some people have got no choice", said another. "Imagine you were a Tory in Bexley and Sidcup."