

IRISH POLITICAL
PRISONERS ON
HUNGER STRIKE—
SEE BACK PAGE

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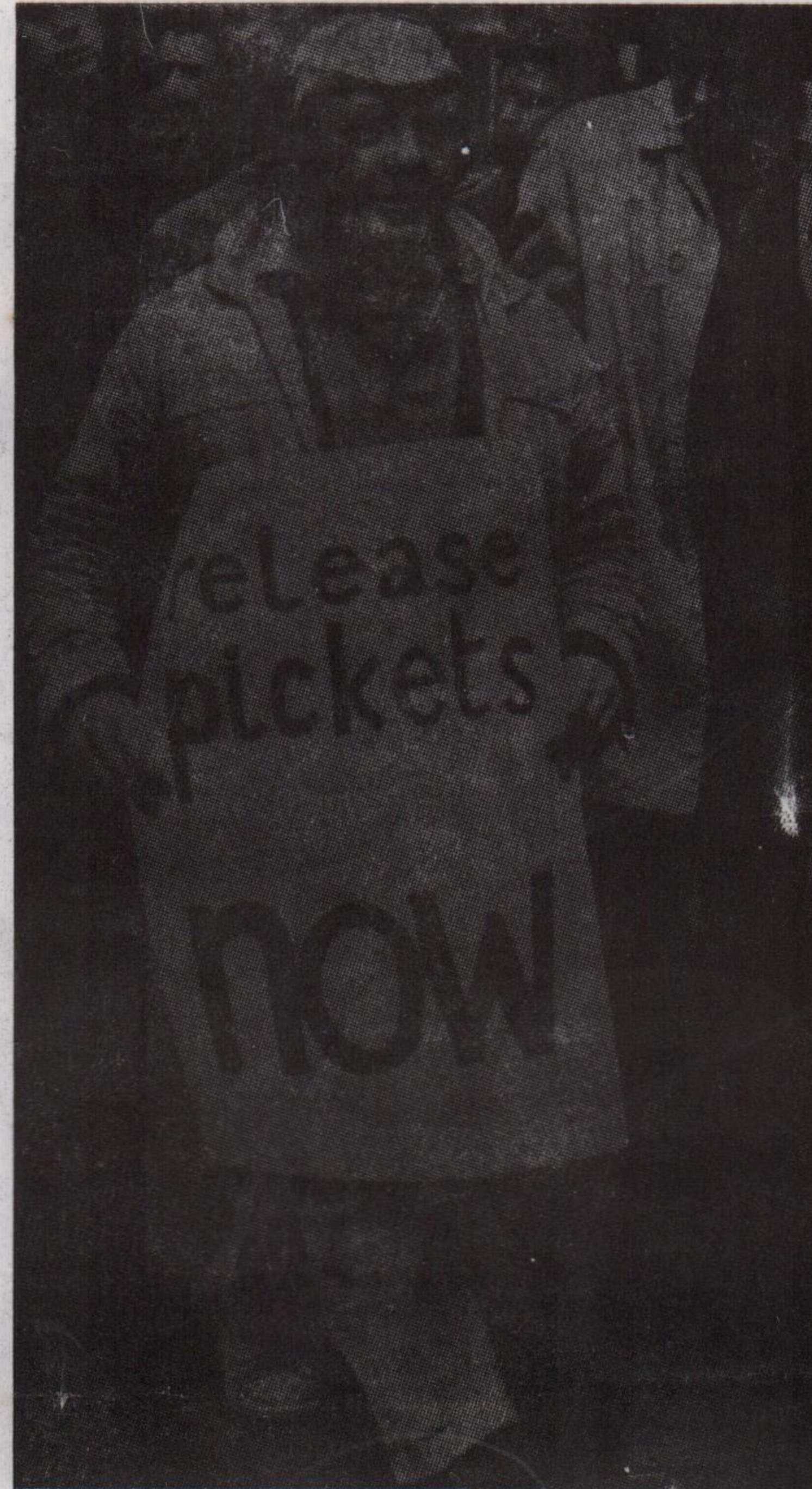
Workers' fight

3p

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LABOUR IN POWER BUT

PICKETS STILL IN JAIL



Two jailed pickets on hunger strike

THE Queen's Speech "bears enough resemblance to the election manifesto (itself a highly diluted version of the programme published last year) to sustain the faith of Labour supporters, yet is sufficiently vague in detail to... avoid forcing either the Conservatives or the Liberals into outright opposition. The more potentially controversial the issues at stake, in fact, the more carefully ambiguous the phrases with which they are handled." THE *Financial Times* sums them up pretty well.

The Queen's Speech was definite in two areas. First, foreign policy. This is largely identical with the Tories.

Repression

"Support to the constitutional arrangements (for) Northern Ireland" — that is, to the plans for securing British imperialist domination and exploitation of Ireland on a firmer basis. But as the Labour leaders well know, the Sunningdale Agreements promise very little after the election of eleven Loyalist MPs to Westminster. Wilson's talk of "combatting violence and terrorism" is a polite way of saying that Labour is perfectly prepared to continue large-scale armed repression of the catholic people of Northern Ireland.

Support for NATO — for the military alliance that assists Portugal in its bloody repression of its African colonies, and stands ready to carry out the same suppression against any revolutionary movement in Europe.

In the Middle East, support of the UN Security Council

resolution 242. That is, de facto support for Zionism, with a few pleas to Israel to be less aggressive.

Re-negotiation

"Attach particular importance to the work of the United Nations". The two most decisive aspects of the "work" of the United Nations in its 27-year history have been its armed actions against popular liberation forces in Korea and in the Congo.

There is also the more vague promise for renegotiation of the terms of entry to the Common Market and a referendum. Having launched a chauvinist hullabaloo against Common Market entry as an opportunist political diversion, the Labour leaders now have to do something to square their record.

Obviously socialists are entirely in favour of any real reforms, however minor, that may be won by renegotiation.

Pensions up

But anyone who places any great hopes in that renegotiation — or still worse, anyone peddling the reactionary demand for withdrawal from the EEC — is fooling himself. Firstly because the Labour leaders will shunt the whole issue to the background as much as possible. Secondly because the real roots of such things as massive price rises are in the general crisis of capitalism and not in the particular conditions of British entry into the EEC.

On domestic policy, Labour does promise something different from the Tories — at

least in certain areas.

Rents will be frozen for a year and the Housing Finance Act repealed. Pensions will be increased. Museum charges will be removed. There will be food subsidies, reportedly extending to about £500 million a year, or about 20p per week for each of us.

There are more indefinite plans or proposals for women's equality for nursery education and fully comprehensive secondary education for improving the National Health Service (but nothing definite about prescription charges) for better laws on industrial safety for protecting furnished tenants from eviction and for public ownership of land — and "to eliminate the abuses arising from the lump".

Meagre

The "social" concessions scarcely go as far as restoring the Tories' cutbacks. They are actually very meagre indeed compared with the concessions doled out to calm working class militancy by governments shortly before and after the First World War, or after the Second World War.

Still, the line is clear. Workers are being told that we must choose priorities. Do we want higher pensions, or do we want wage increases? Do we want nursery education, or do we want restoration of the general educational cuts made by the Tories? Are we going to give the Labour Government a chance to achieve a little, or are we going to wreck it by extravagant demands?

On a fundamental level, the answer to these choices is simple. If we had a socialist

economy, where the whole productive effort of society was directed towards improving the well-being of the people, then we might well debate whether pensions should be increased first, or wages. While 70% or 80% of the wealth in the country is owned by a 10% minority, we demand both higher wages and higher pensions — at the expense of the rich.

Socialist

Having said that, we can take up the challenge to list priorities.

1. No government regimentation of working class militancy. Unless we retain our independent fighting power, we are hamstrung. The best intentions, demands, or priorities are worth nothing without preparation to take direct action to back them up. Historically, in fact, the major advances in social services have been won as a by-product of militant industrial struggle.

Nationalisation

We must demand repeal of the Industrial Relations Act, and no incomes policy under capitalism — together with a £30 minimum wage and equal pay for women workers now.

But the GOVERNMENT HAS NOT EVEN PLEDGED ITSELF TO FREE THE PICKETS JAILED at Shrewsbury. Phase 3, we are told, will continue for several months more. Then — "securing the orderly growth of incomes on a voluntary basis" — i.e. trade union leaders should police their members. The Industrial Relations Act is to be replaced

ON March 20th hundreds of workers will be lobbying Labour MPs, demanding the dropping of charges against the six building workers jailed at Shrewsbury for picketing. The TUC has discussed the 24 "as a matter of general concern", and is raising the matter with the new Home Secretary Roy Jenkins.

Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson had to go on hunger strike after their appeal, demanding that they return to the open prison in Stafford rather than being kept in London.

But even now the TUC is not demanding the release of the six. And at an election meeting in Liverpool, left Labour MP Eric Heffer, asked if he would call for support for the 20th March demonstration, said "I have done as much as I can within the context of Parliamentary procedures".

The latest issue of the UCATT journal continues that union leadership's cop-out on the question of the right to picket. "The trial of the workers at Shrewsbury", it says, "cannot be viewed as an attack on picketing in general, for it is clear that it is no such thing". "The trial and conviction was a much more limited attack on certain techniques employed by a particular group of pickets."

UCATT state "Hunt vs. Broome... clearly established the right of peaceful picketing". Broome was found to be breaking the law because he stood in front of a lorry

holding a placard and in that way made it stop for nine minutes!

The indications are of a possible sell-out compromise, where trade union officials will completely drop the case in return for some reduction in the sentences and/or amendment of the 1975 Act under which the pickets were charged (something Heffer is pressing for). The important issue of principle, the right of militant picketing, will be shoved aside or, rather, the legal precedents won against that right will be consolidated.

That is why there must be maximum rank and file mobilisation for the 20th March demonstration. (Assemble 1.30 pm Tower Hill). UCATT and T&GWU have called a conference for 16th March, and delegates have already been elected from NUR, TASS, ASLEF, NATSOPA, NALGO, NUPE and NUT branches as well as Trades Councils. It is important that this conference should firmly reject the policy of simply relying on the official machinery, a policy which could lead straight into a sell-out.

Pressure should be kept up on the official leadership for a firm stand of 'release the pickets and drop the charges'. Resolutions must be put in before 23rd March for the UCATT bi-annual conference coming up in June. But above all we must argue for a perspective of escalating industrial action to force the dropping of the charges.

CYNTHIA BALDRY

by a "measure providing a statutorily based system of conciliation and arbitration."

2. Price control. In the 1920s, before the General Strike, the National Union of Mineworkers' claims usually included three elements together wage increases (or

resistance to reductions) reduction of coal prices and nationalisation. So much for the idea that wage increases necessarily go together with price rises!

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THREE YEARS ago when Frank Roche hurled canisters of CS Gas from the public gallery of the House of Commons to give the MPs of the Mother of Parliaments a small taste of what the workers of Derry and Belfast were suffering daily at the hands of that Parliament's army in Northern Ireland, a joke went the rounds on the left. It was said that Roche was the first honest man to enter Parliament with revolutionary intentions since Guy Fawkes. True enough. But earlier, in 1969, someone else of revolutionary intent and an honesty that was to prove durable and incorruptible had entered the House of Commons — as an elected representative. Bernadette Devlin (now McAliskey) was elected for the Mid-Ulster constituency in a by-election during the early period of struggle for civil rights in Northern Ireland. Her defeat in the February 28th general election is a sad loss for revolutionary socialism.

Bernadette Devlin — the militant who didn't mellow

Bernadette entered politics young (she was 22 when elected to Parliament), raw, inexperienced, apparently a lightweight and accidental figure, hustled to probably transient prominence by a confused situation in Northern Ireland politics. She was an outspoken socialist but ideologically rather imprecise and unformed (which, to her credit, she knew, admitted and tried to change). She was an able tribune of the oppressed in Northern Ireland, articulating with fierce intensity their determination to fight back and to ensure that things would never be the same again in Northern Ireland. But no great excess of cynicism was required to predict or expect that she would very likely "mellow" in Parliament, be re-moulded and become "responsible", in return for small reforms. That is that she would become a pliant tool of the ruling class. Such had been the fate of many older and apparently tougher leftists who entered Parliament determined to be roaring socialist lions, but quickly became neutered rabby cats, uttering occasionally plaintive conscience-saving miaows. Think not just of Bernadette Devlin's Civil Rights associates now leading the SDLP. They were either responsible for promoting the modified sectarianism of the hijackers (John Hume) or else dyed in the wool Catholic sectarian politicians who found occasional talk of 'Connolly socialism' useful to get votes in Belfast (G.Fitt). Think of someone like West Salford Labour MP Stan Ormer. For long he paraded as a left AUEW-sponsored MP and undoubtedly he was sincere. He helped expose the repressive old regime in Stormont. But lacking precise revolutionary theory, drive, understanding or strategy, he is today partly responsible for promoting the modified sectarianism of the capitalists' policy in Northern Ireland, accepting the bosses' solution. Think of Barbara Castle, the 'left' who championed Labour's version of the Industrial Relations Act. Watch what happens to Michael Foot, for long the 'keeper of the socialist conscience' of the Labour Party.

(a peculiarly flexible conscience which has a tendency to go to sleep "for the duration" during periods of Labour government). Even the filthy and evil bigot Ian Paisley "mellowed" in Westminster. But not so Bernadette Devlin. She wasn't broken in to be a "responsible" (to the bosses' system) member of Parliament. Treating its stuffy "hallowed" traditions with the contempt they deserve, she used Parliament — as a sounding board and, for a period, an effective platform for revolutionary socialist ideas. As the Northern Ireland struggle escalated, her revolutionary socialist ideas crystallised. Her years as an MP didn't make her flabby, but harder and tougher. They produced not an erosion of the will to fight, but a gleeful exploitation of every opening to strike wherever and whenever possible — including, after the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in '72, a physical assault in the Commons on Tory spiv and then Home Secretary Reginald Maudling. She never descended to the stupid delusion — which seduces many that power for the working class is or can be found in Parliament. She knew and proclaimed that mass action by the working class is where the real power for change is to be found.

1969 — Bernadette Devlin by the Derry barricades she helped defend



Protests at garrotting of Salvador Puig

"The garrott is made up of an iron collar, a chair and an iron pole. The victim is strapped down in the chair, which is attached to the pole. The collar is put round his neck and the executioner tightens the collar by twisting a screw, snapping the spinal cord." (Tim Brown, Sunday Times). IN THIS WAY two people were put to death in Spain on March 2nd. One of them, Salvador Puig, an anarchist, had been found guilty of shooting a policeman. It was the first execution of civilians in Spain for 11 years, and it marks a sharp turning point in the Spanish rulers' policies. From now on they are prepared to enforce brutal repression against the increasing militancy of the Spanish workers' movement. As reported in WF46, the Puig case follows hard on the heels of the imprisonment of trade union leaders and the violent suppression of recent strikes. The 'liberal period' of the Franco regime is now definitively over. There was a strong response in Spain to the executions, and in other European countries too. On the day of Puig's funeral in Barcelona, armed police turned away thousands of mourners. On the following two days student demonstrations, especially in Madrid, were dispersed and many were arrested. In Barcelona several explosions occurred; a bomb demolished the wall of an Army barracks. Protest in European cities saw pickets on many Spanish embassies. The international campaign failed to save Salvador Puig. The Franco regime, in its move towards the fascist Right after the assassination of the Prime Minister Carrero Blanco seems less and less likely to take notice of 'international opinion'. This makes it more necessary that we are consistent in our support for the Spanish workers, as they move towards what could be the final clash with the regime. We must support them as practically as we can in their attempt to bring down this brutal fascist dictatorship which has ruled uninterruptedly now for nearly 40 years. CLIVE BANE

FOR NEARLY four years, political talk has been one long series of curses about the Tories. Demonstrations have echoed to the cries of "Heath Out! Tories Out!" while that hated government sank as deep in unpopularity as in failure. Its leader was a laughing stock; its slogans a sick joke. Yet with the coming of the elections, its opponent, Labour, ended up with its lowest vote since 1935, its lowest share of the poll since 1931... and was victorious. The biggest increase in votes went to the Liberal Party. Not because the Liberal Party had any clear policy, any way out of the present crisis. Far from it. According to opinion polls, about the only consistent political common factor of Liberal voters was opposition to Common Market entry — despite the fact that support for Common Market entry has been one of the Liberals' few clear and consistent policies. The point, though, was that both Tory and Labour governments were fresh in the memories of most voters. The Liberals were the party of no history, no connections and no firm position. Tories and Labour still remain the fundamental parties tied to the two great social classes in Britain, capitalists and workers. In that sense the Liberals are still a marginal party. They are not the party of the middle class in the sense of representing definite social interests with a distinctive policy and attracting steady support from definite social layers. They are not a party of any organised links, they are a party of oddments, and for that reason a question mark hangs

LABOUR WINS BUT LEFT SHOWS ITS WEAKNESSES

John Stirling analyses the election results

over the future voting pattern of the millions who voted Liberal last month: re-absorption by the major parties, or possibly a sharp turn to right or to left. The Welsh Nationalist vote decreased from 181,000 to 171,000. However great disillusionment may be with Westminster; these were rather too serious times for playing around with the 'nationalism' of a "nation" whose distinct existence rests on purely mythical "history" of more than 600 years ago. Scottish nationalism, with a substantially more real basis for its demagoguery got 632,000 votes, as against 290,000 in 1970. The fundamentally true-blue colours of the Scottish Nationalist Party were shown, however, by its opposition to nationalisation of North Sea Oil, preferring chauvinist ranting about "Scottish oil". The National Front, Britain's main fascist grouping, won 75,900 votes in 54 constituencies — an average of 1,405. In Leicester East it polled 3,662 votes. In the two West Bromwich constituencies a total of 6,014. In each of these constituencies it obtained 5% of the vote. Out of the 54 constituencies the National Front contested, 38 were Labour seats, 15 Tory and one

Liberal. They got an average of 1,530 votes in Labour-held seats, 1,050 in the Tory-held seats. 43 of the 54 constituencies were working class urban areas. The fact that the swing to Labour was abnormally high in Wolverhampton seems to show that Enoch Powell swung at least some tens of thousands of voters. The swing was 16.3% in Powell's old constituency, 12.7% in the rest of Wolverhampton, 8% on the adjacent area, and 4.7% in the West Midlands conurbation as a whole. As yet the National Front has not mustered the confidence for much large scale strong-arm activity. They may find such confidence from these election results, though they were bitterly disappointed. The fact that Colin Jordan, leader of the openly Nazi British Movement, himself a convicted synagogue-burner, could get over 700 votes in the constituency, where he stood, may give the Front further encouragement to show its full fascist face. It is important that the Labour movement should mobilise

to rapidly depress any such confidence. It is easy and even quite accurate to explain Labour's inadequate showing by referring to its dithering in the face of class struggle, refusing to support the miners clearly and instead trying to outdo the Tories as defenders of the 'National Interest' and 'Men of Moderation'. But the election results were not a success for the left outside the Labour Party either. On the credit side, Eddie Milne won Blyth as an Independent Labour candidate (with the support of the Bates Colliery NUM Lodge and the local UCATT branch) against the right wing official Labour Party candidate, Ivor Richard. Milne had been sacked by his Constituency Party (with the support of Labour Party officials) a few weeks before the elections, for demanding a thorough inquiry into the Labour Party in the North East after the Poulson affair revelations. The Communist Party's performance was dismal, despite the big press coverage won by Mick McGahey. Jimmy Reid, standing in Dunbartonshire Central, got a disappointing 5,928 votes (many Party members expected him to win), but the 43 other CP

candidates managed an average of only 624 votes each, as against the 662 average polled by their 58 candidates in 1970. The steady decline of the CP vote thus continues. And it isn't very surprising when you think about the CP's election slogan "Sack Heath at a stroke". Any reasonable person who just wants to sack Heath at a stroke will obviously vote Labour. If the CP wants to do better in elections, it will have to come out with clearer opposition to the Labour Party leadership. Peculiar tactics It is only by comparison with the bad CP performance that the votes won by the revolutionary socialist candidates were anything but derisory. The International Socialists, despite their sizeable resources, stood no candidates. The Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) got 1,108 in Wallsend and 991 in Pontefract, but its average over all 9 constituencies was 466 — which included a figure in the 50s for a candidate standing against Jimmy Reid. The International Marxist Group (IMG) did so badly that its paper didn't even publish

International

She herself played a heroic part in the physical defence of the Bogside in Derry when, in August 1969, Orange police and civilian Loyalist thugs tried to organise an anti-Catholic pogrom — and she got six months' jail for it. Nor did she stick to Irish issues. She understood the importance of the working class struggle in Britain and other countries and was wholeheartedly devoted to pursuing it. She was the only MP to join the pickets and demonstrators outside Pentonville Jail when the 5 dockers were jailed in July 1972. To the shame of the British labour movement and as a measure of the political backwardness and 'uneven development' of even good industrial militants, she was met by violent abuse and threats

*Last possible Demo Canav would a Wo desper done, deput spoke: impor to re argum raise it really 'discus said "Farrel

Councils of Action

A WEAPON WORTH FIGHTING FOR

THE miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 have both raised the question of the need for a united action by wide sections of the working class in their struggles with the bosses and the threat of British intervention on government. This need is the side of Poland in its war against the new Russian state. Poland had invaded the Soviet Union in early 1920 and had been on the whole, advanced their separate demands separately. But the miners found that even a struggle to defend their living standard precipitated a major crisis, with the Government prominently involved.

It is precisely within such a situation that councils of action become a burning and practical need. During the period of bitter class struggle from 1918 to 1926, leading up to the General Strike, the idea of Councils of Action was pushed by many sections of the labour movement, including even parts of the official leadership.

In 1920, a national Council of Action was created by a joint

meeting of the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party, held on 9th August. It arose out of the threat of British intervention on government. This need is the side of Poland in its war against the new Russian state. Poland had invaded the Soviet Union in early 1920 and had been on the whole, advanced their separate demands separately. But the miners found that even a struggle to defend their living standard precipitated a major crisis, with the Government prominently involved.

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MINERS

Many transformed themselves into solidarity committees to organise aid for the miners who carried their strike on for nine months more. However, because of defeat inflicted upon the movement nationally, the committees were not able to organise industrial action. They had to content themselves with collecting money, food, clothes, etc for the miners. But without such help the miners could not have held out as long as they did.

These examples of Councils of Action point to some lessons which are reinforced by the much richer experience of such councils which many other countries have seen. Councils to emerge as fully fledged, as sparkling new revolutionary organisations quite separate from the staid, humdrum apparatus of Trades Councils, District Committees, and so on. In 1920 and in 1926 the Councils of Action came largely from the

meeting of the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party, held on 9th August. It arose out of the threat of British intervention on government. This need is the side of Poland in its war against the new Russian state. Poland had invaded the Soviet Union in early 1920 and had been on the whole, advanced their separate demands separately. But the miners found that even a struggle to defend their living standard precipitated a major crisis, with the Government prominently involved.

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WORKERS' CONTROL

The whole point is that the logic of a wide-ranging class struggle, once embarked on, can carry Councils to further and further steps of workers' control — provided that there is a sufficiently influential organisation of revolutionary socialists within the Councils, like the Bolsheviks in the Russian Soviets of 1917, to draw out that logic.

This fact shows up the falseness of those who condemn Councils of Action as divisive diversions and say we should work through the official labour movement instead. Building Councils of Action does not — must not — in the least exclude also working in the official labour movement. Councils of Action do not grow up as a result of left wing plots though certainly revolutionary socialists are always explaining and arguing for united organisation and activity across the working class. Councils of Action grow up where the needs of working class struggle clearly and obviously burst the banks of the narrow and sluggish official structures.

It is clear that if we set up some small group of leftists and call it a 'Council of Action', we are miseducating people in what Councils of Action really are. But every time the class struggle creates the possibility and the overriding need for action committees — as with the need for solidarity committees for the miners' strike — then we must go out and build them, on the basis of practical action.

K Tarbuck

German 'social contract' on the rocks

THE STRIKE of German public sector workers — railmen, dockers, municipal workers from clerks to dustmen, public transport workers — has ended with a partial but important victory for the workers and a real shaking of the hold of the trade union bureaucracy.

Following on a whole series of wildcat strikes in the steel and auto industry — notable in the latter case particularly for the leading role of foreign workers, especially Turks — this strike of 1540,000 workers marks an important crisis for the Brandt government, and indeed for the whole system of German industrial relations.

This great strike had been preceded by a whole series of protest strikes that were to serve as a warning to the trade union bureaucracy that would not get away with a sell-out this time. The demands of the strike were drawn up by the trade union leadership under pressure, from the rank and file. They were for a 15% increase in wages with a minimum of 185 DM (£30) per month increase and 300 DM (£48) holiday pay.

Many groups of shop floor workers put forward proposals for a lump sum wage rise instead of a percentage, in order to avoid splitting the strike by reflecting the existing differentials. They also demanded larger increases. For instance the Gelsenkirchen district of the OTV (Union for public services and transport) put forward a demand for a lump sum increase of 300 DM; the same demand was put forward by

directly refusing their wage demands — Brandt himself came out with a proposal for a 9.5% settlement — it has to lean heavily on the trade union bureaucracy to do its dirty work: in Germany the reality of the 'social contract' is already biting deep into workers' living standards.

Under pressure, however, the unions were forced to make certain preparations for a strike, so as not to be totally exposed. The Government's initial offer was an increase of a miserly 7.5%, but this offer was rejected by the rank and file who were still complaining bitterly about last year's deal which was a full 1% better than this one!

That was when Brandt made his offer. But that too was

rejected, and the strike began. By the following day the offer was improved to 11%, and this time the unions' decided to settle — being more afraid by the strikers' potential power than of their inevitable outcry at the sell-out.

Despite the ability of the OTV bureaucracy to get this offer accepted, the degree of opposition marks a significant loosening of their hold over the membership. The reverses in the upward swing of the German economy, reflected in the high rate of inflation, first undermined (from 1966) the Conservative CDU Party, and now threaten to do the same to the Labourite SPD and its props among the trade union bureaucracy.

MARKUS RAUCH

important centre of state power is in the control of the armed forces and the administrative legal machinery, not in Parliament — to that extent any parliamentary system is a sham. But that doesn't mean that we are entirely indifferent to the form of the electoral system. In particular, the present system, quite clearly, discriminates against minority parties.

Proportional representation would mean that the chance of a clear majority Labour government, let alone a majority socialist government, would be reduced virtually to nil. An 'alternative vote' system, where votes cast for minority parties could be transferred to the voter's second choice party (as in France) would be better.

Urgent

The present situation of political tension opens massive opportunities for revolutionary socialists to increase our influence. The advanced, self-reliant industrial militancy of recent years is still very much with us, a nightmare for Labour and Tory leaders alike, and a source of confidence for revolutionaries. If we are to take the opportunities, we must learn first the sobering lessons of these elections. In the task of creating a political organisation and programme adequate to the interests of the working class and its potential militancy, we have so far advanced very little. Much remains to be done, and must be done urgently. We must not blind ourselves with comforting thoughts about the unfair nature of the electoral system, or banal daydreams about Labour fighting on a socialist programme.



Meeting of post and rail workers proclaims: "Roast Genscher (Minister of Labour) on a Spit".

chauvinistic trade unionists who failed to understand that the struggle for freedom and the battles of the British working class are one fight, one and the same.

Genuine

Devlin can be criticised. She made mistakes, judgments, dubious alliances (IS, SLL). She preached a rather crude socialism. But they 'honest' mistakes, by one learning about revolutionary politics whilst anxiously fighting fierce, complex political battles under great pressure. In addition, she allowed to 'fade out' in the recent election.

She took her all in all, and over our differences with Devlin was the genuine revolutionary MP. The two Communist MPs in the early 1920s. (The famous Gallagher, Communist from 1935 to '50, was a chauvinist and class traitor.)

On the occasion of her electoral is a time when it is worth this and remembering it. Irish and British bosses do doubt jubilant at her as are the backstabbing politicians of the SDLP, candidate in Mid-Ulster, Cooper, split the anti-e vote and ensured her

this article is not a local obituary for Devlin. Parliament for her a tool in the hand, not a way of life. I doubt she will continue struggle.

John O'Mahony

summer, when it looked like that the Peoples' Party hunger strikers Tony and Michael Farrell be allowed to starve to death, the Workers Fight member in a state attempt to get something approached Orme (Labour's only Northern Ireland man) for help. The self-styled little man's response was repeat stock ruling class threats and vaguely promise to "with Willie Whitelaw". The priceless moment in the election was when this 'militant' but don't you think that Mr. is being unreasonable!"

vote totals (not a difficult thing to do up). Apart from Tariq Ali's notes in Sheffield Attercliffe (few considering Tariq Ali is probably the best-known revolutionary in Britain), they got lunatic fringe scale votes. The Communist Party of England (a cranky Maoist) gained as big an average of 6 constituencies as the IMG over three.

When calling on people to vote for the IMG and WRP candidates, the Workers Fight stated that: "People vote for IMG or WRP candidates generally by voting for the basic of revolutionary socialism, not the IMG's or the WRP's 'tactics'. Unless support for revolutionary socialism is at an extremely low level — and the evidence of the class struggle, and recruitment to revolutionary organisations, in recent years indicate that — the 'tactics' of the IMG and WRP did in fact affect their

WRP concentrated on tactical scaremongering about moves towards a Greek-style military dictatorship — concentration camps being built, so on — without even citing factual evidence to back their statements, and without going forward much clearer policy beyond 'Labour to go with Socialist Policies'.

IMG produced weird propaganda about general strikes being an excellent environment for general elections, culminating, Heath hesitated a couple of before resigning, in a frantic the Labour Party leaders to aside bourgeois institutionalism and form a workers' government backed up a general strike.

election results have led a lot of discussion about electoral systems. I don't think exists believe that the

KANGAROO COURT AT OXFORD

On Monday morning the trial of 18 students at the disciplinary kangaroo court of Oxford University began. They are charged with the occupation of a University building in the campaign for a Central Students' Union.

The court, which has never met before, has from the beginning clearly been a simple rubber stamp for victimisation. It consists of three senior members of the University who are entitled to make the procedure up as they go along and who spend most of the time displaying their bias in favour of the prosecution.

To begin with they rejected with little consideration submissions from the defendants to adjourn the trial to allow their counsel time to be briefed properly and to allow certain witnesses immunity from disciplinary action and on several other points. The trial, which the defendants asked to be in public, has on totally spurious grounds been restricted to about 6 or 7 of the public. At the end of the first day the defendants demonstrated their feelings about the court by stamping their feet and trying to argue with the chairman.

On the second day four defendants were physically removed from the court on the grounds that they were disrupting it. This has effectively left one person who is defending himself without any representation, as he refused to give an undertaking not to disrupt the court.

The case of the prosecution involves trying to distinguish five so-called ringleaders who will be thrown out of the University, while the others receive lesser sentences. They are relying on the main University spy for most of their evidence, which is unfortunate for them as he has been shown in cross-examination to have an amazing ability to contradict himself. This will probably not affect the end result, however.

The importance of this trial is not confined to Oxford, though the University is trying to establish as many precedents as possible. There is a vicious campaign against militant students in the press, and victimisations at Essex and at Kent. It is important to show that students will not be intimidated by rigged trials or ammonia throwers. B.R.

"This is a wonderful victory for us. 2,625 people voted for us, 71½% of the poll — the highest ever".

Those were the words of Dave Nuttall, ex-Clay Cross Councillor, after 10 of the "second 11" Clay Cross Councillors were returned on March 2nd. One of them was June Nuttall, his wife. "We shall carry on exactly as we did before advise tenants not to pay any rent increases and build another £1 million worth of council houses and

Clay Cross: victory for second eleven

bungalows. This is a blow against Mr Patrick Skillington, the Housing Commissioner, and the Housing Finance Act."

When asked about the merger of Clay Cross Council into the new North East

Derbyshire District Council on April 1st, he replied "On the very Saturday that we were being voted in, the new Council (without our seven representatives because we were disqualified) voted 33 to 8 for implementation of the

Housing Finance Act, even though many were voted in on a non-implementation ticket. Some who voted for were Labour, and I don't know how they can look us in the face again".

How will this affect Clay

Cross? "The Labour Government must repeal the Housing Finance Act as a top priority. This would mean that the fact that the new Council had implemented would be nullified and there would be no rent increase. Our struggle over these years will not have been in vain. The people of Clay Cross will be able to claim that they did more than their share in helping to kill the Housing Finance Act to the benefit of working people

PRO-ISRAEL FASCISTS COURT JEWISH VOTE

TWO weeks before the election, the following headline appeared on the front page of the Jewish Telegraph, a weekly paper which serves the Zionist Jewish community in the North-West "National Front says 'Protect Israel'".

There followed an approving report of the fact that the National Front will be fielding 200 to 300 candidates next time round, if predictions by their candidate for Rochdale, 31-year old chartered accountant Mike Sellars, are correct. Blinded by their own peculiar brand of political imbecility, which enables them to ignore any facts except those which relate to their particular chauvinist obsessions, the Zionists from the Telegraph slavishly printed Sellars' denial that the Front is fascist, and his statement

"It is not true that we are anti-semitic, we are putting up Jewish candidates."

Irresponsibility

But for complete political irresponsibility, this takes the prize

"Another candidate, 37-year old freelance textile agent, Kingsley Reed, who will be contesting Blackburn, has Jewish blood on his father's side according to Mrs Reed, and she too is of Jewish descent through her mother".

It doesn't matter if a man is a fascist, a member of an organisation which will act as stormtroopers for the bosses when they wish to smash working class organisations, whose publications carry anti-semitic propaganda, and whose supporters already use violence against black people and Jews — if he is prepared to say "Israel must be protected", and claim to have Jewish blood in his veins, the Zionists will support him!

To be fair, the following week's Jewish Telegraph did try to re-establish a balanced view. A new front page article began with a sober warning against being taken in by smooth words with which

fascists conceal their foul doctrines. But then it went on to say that Jews must vote for the candidate who will not give an inch to the Arabs over oil, who will support Israel down the line in defending the interests of the west against the Arab people.

The paper reports the 'disgust' felt by distinguished

Zionists that... fascists were using the sacred Union Jack in their advertising! They ask people to complain about this to local papers. In another stunning blow against fascism, they have instituted an inquiry into the claims of NF candidates to be Jewish!

In the past, Jews have joined blacks, socialists, and

trade unionists in fighting fascists off the streets when they have tried to come out into the open. Now is not the time for Jewish people to sink into Israel-centred apathy with respect to the growth of the Right in Britain. We hope that Jews will step up their struggle against fascism, and in the course of that struggle

realise that their true allies are not US imperialism, British governments, and people "with Jewish blood on their father's side", etc, but class conscious militants of whatever race who are prepared to fight for socialism.

NAOMI WIMBORNE

'FREE IRISH HOSTAGES!' CALL TO LABOUR

ON Sunday, 10th March a rally and march was organised by the Irish Political Hostages Campaign from Speakers Corner to Harold Wilson's house to increase the pressure on the Labour Government to allow the prisoners to return to Northern Ireland to serve their sentences and to be given political prisoner status.

The four prisoners — Marion and Dolores Price, Gerard Kelly, and Hugh Feeney — began their hunger strike immediately on being sentenced at Winchester for their part in the London car bomb explosions of last year. Since that date — 15th November — all four have been on hunger strike. For a considerable part of the period they have been force-fed.

At the rally before the march moved off, Eamonn McCann contrasted the chorus of protests from the Labour Party at the time of the force-feeding of Judith Todd in Rhodesia to their silence at the treatment of the four Republican hunger strikers. Where were the Tribunites and the other Labour Party stalwarts who had stood on the same spot in Hyde Park a few years before

by John Harris

demanding an end to the force-feeding of Todd? Like most so-called socialists in this country, they have a habit of quickly dropping principles when the issue of Ireland is raised.

But the return of a Labour

Government has raised hopes among the Irish Republican movement and their supporters that the return of the hunger strikers may be just round the corner. Not that they have any illusions in the 'humanitarianism' of the Labour Party — the Irish people particularly remember that it was the Labour Party which sent in the troops in 1968. But with the breakdown of the Sunningdale Agreement, the hunger strikers may be returned as part of a Labour attempt to prevent any further deterioration of British imperialism's shaky hold on Ireland.

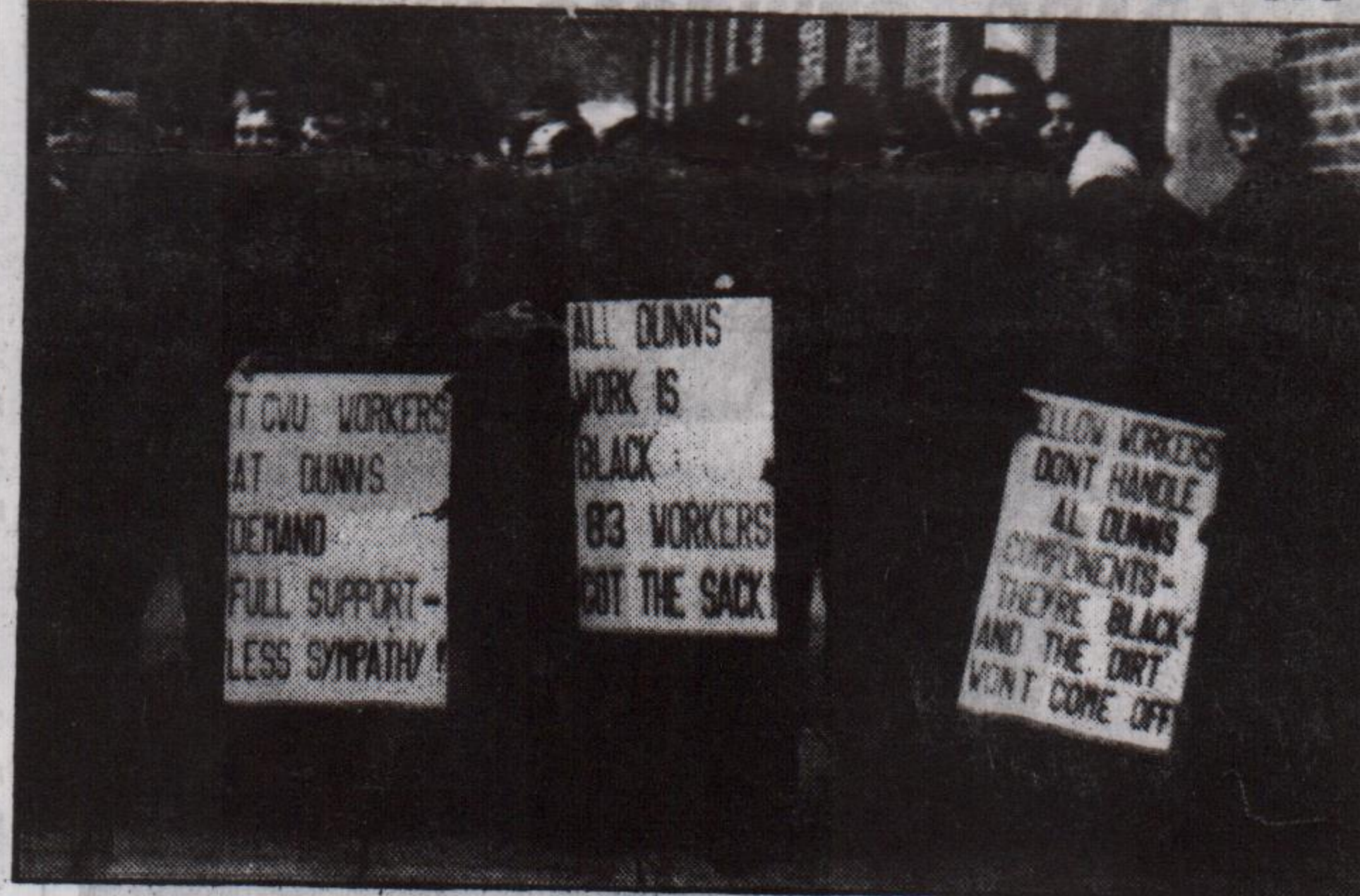
The latest news we have received of the physical condition of the prisoners makes the stepping up of the campaign essential. Marion Price's throat is now

so inflamed that the tube which is forced down her throat every day can no longer reach her stomach. Consequently she is receiving very little or no nourishment.

With this in mind, we must all renew our efforts to get these prisoners the demands for which they have suffered for so long, that is — that they should be granted political status and be allowed to return to Ireland to serve the rest of their sentences.

ABOUT 60 people took part in a 24 hour fast-vigil outside Winson Green Prison, Birmingham. 15 people fasted the entire 24 hours, after which one, Tommy Molloy, a 21 year old Irishman from Co Roscommon, declared that he would fast until the hunger strikers' demands were met — or die.

T & GWU RECRUITS SCABS AT ART CASTINGS



The strike at Art Castings, Coventry is now in its 11th week. Officials of the union involved (T & GWU) have been dragging their feet in getting goods blacked and getting support for the strikers. The photograph shows strikers and members of the

Coventry Action Committee lobbying the Coventry District Committee of the T & GWU recently.

The strikers have rejected a management offer that they would take all the strikers back, but with no promise to reinstate

the three victimised shop stewards arbitration instead. But all the scab workers taken on by the firm at the beginning of the dispute have been accepted as members of the T & GWU!

The strikers and Coventry Action Committee members have leafleted factories where castings are still going in, lobbied meetings, and maintained as solid a picket line as is possible given the continual police harassment and arrests.

Send messages of support and donations to the Strike Committee at 154 Churchill Ave, Coventry.

ASIAN Workers in Struggle. Five pages of interviews with workers engaged in day to day shop floor struggle make essential reading for socialists. In this month's Race Today, Single copies 15p. Annual subscription £2.00 — from 184 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

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

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MEETINGS

NOTTINGHAM Workers' Fight. Andrew Hornung on the history of Trotskyism. 8 pm, Friday 22nd March. The Peacock, Mansfield Rd.

LIVERPOOL Workers' Fight socialist forum. John Riley on the foundations of Marxism. 8 pm, Wednesday 27th March. Stanley House, Upper Parliament St.

LONDON Workers' Fight. Sean Matgamna on Ireland after the elections. 8 pm, Sunday 24th March. Golden Lion, Britannia St, Kings Cross.

THE WEEKLY WORKERS' FIGHT

WITH the return to the five-day week, readers and supporters should be better able to make contributions to help keep the weekly Workers' Fight going. We need £100 every month. So far this month we have £24.22.

QUEEN'S SPEECH from P.I

The only bodies that could effectively impose a total price freeze would be local committees of workers and housewives with the support of the labour movement. Big food companies and chain stores would protest at loss of profits. We should demand nationalisation. That is a serious way of dealing with the problem. 20p per week subsidies and total retreat from Labour's pledges to nationalise, even on North Sea oil, are not.

3. Work or full pay. There are extremely clear signs of a severe recession coming later this year. It is no doubt a good thing that the unemployed will be able to loiter in museums without charge, but that is not enough.

Occupations like those of UCS, Fisher Bendix, and Plesseys will be on the agenda again. The demand in such cases should be nationalisation under workers' control.

4. Repeal of all racist Immigration Acts. There is the usual flabby promise in the Queen's Speech about "opposing all forms of racial discrimination". This is vile hypocrisy while the Government continues to assert, through Immigration Acts, that coloured immigrants are at best an unwelcome addition which Britain tolerates through great generosity.

Profiteers

Socialists must assert that coloured immigrant workers are actually a gain as far as the British working class is concerned. Their entirely justified spirit of rebellion against the British imperialist power structure is a hundred times more healthy than white-skinned industrialists and profiteers.

5. Immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. And the Republican hunger strikers' demand to be returned to Ireland and granted political prisoner status should be met right now.

Of course these policies

would be voted down by the Tories and Liberals. But, apart from the fact that Labour could get away with a great deal more in Parliament than they like to admit (the Opposition are going to choose their moment very carefully before precipitating a new election), putting forward serious policies for the crisis would be the best way for Labour to win the new elections which are inevitable before very long, anyway.

But Labour's present policies are simply not addressed to the problems of safeguarding the interests of working people in the crisis. It's not as if they are misguided, or not resolute enough their aim is directed somewhere else altogether. That is why they propose nothing on unemployment, next-to-nothing on prices, and actually propose to hold back workers' attempts to defend their living standards by winning wage rises.

"Contract"

The aim is a "social contract" — the Government is trying to exchange some

"social" concessions for a clampdown on working class militancy, and thus to gain some security for the rickety structure of British capitalism.

That is why it would be quite wrong for us to hold back on any demand or any action to "give the Government a chance". They will use every chance — to weaken us.

Programme

Over the last ten years, the tone in which the ruling class speaks to us has changed dramatically. No longer the comfortable drawl of "you've never had it so good". Instead, curt orders — redundancy notices, wage freezes, Industrial Relations Act. So far the working class has found phrases with which to reply — factory occupations, flying pickets, mass strikes.

In the "social contract", we are now hearing a new tune from the ruling class. It is up to socialists to find the vocabulary of a working class reply, in terms of a clear counter-programme of priorities, and action to fill that programme out.