

NOV. 28th.

LAST CHANCE TO FREE THE PICKETS

ALTHOUGH there is still some dithering and uncertainty about the date, it looks as if November 28th will be the last chance for the labour movement to make a bid to free the two jailed pickets, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson.

And it IS a job for the whole labour movement. As the latest leaflet by the North Wales Defence Committee puts it, "We urge the TUC to make the 28th an OFFICIAL stoppage. We believe the responsibility for securing the release of our brothers no longer rests solely on the shoulders of the building workers. We will only win this fight if we all fight together."

Yet all that we have seen so far from the official movement is what one member of the Defence Committee has called "organised confusion." For instance, the Executive of UCATT, the builders' union, has said that Regional Executives should support a mass lobby of Parliament and the Labour Party Conference on the 28th — if there is a lobby!

Why don't they simply call an industry wide official strike for that day? And the TUC itself has still to pronounce at all, despite the commitment made at the last Congress to get the men free.

Stoppages

On Thursday November 14th, about 200 Merseyside shop stewards, mainly from the building industry, met and decided to work for stoppages on the 28th, unless the TUC was to organise action for shortly after that date. But if the TUC put the date back further than the first week in December, they'd go ahead "without the TUC". And Simon Frazer, speaking for the National Co-ordinating Committee, reported that workers in Manchester and Birmingham were also organising for the 28th.

Bill Jones spoke of the need to 'do the job properly now'.

This is the vital message that must go out. Let's have no more delusions about what we can achieve later. IT ALREADY IS LATER! In fact, it really is the very last chance to use the "full resources of the labour movement" to get the lads out.

And that means USE THE FULL RESOURCES. It means everybody coming out on that day. And staying out, and going around to get others out. Not just the sites, but the ports and the car factories and the pits and the printworks. Like they did for the Pentogville Five.

If that happens, this last chance will perhaps not have been missed.

Pledges

To make it happen, we have to work for it. Rope in everyone willing to help into emergency work teams. Get meetings called in every major workplace in your locality so that the issues can be put to all the workers and a vote taken to pledge action on the 28th — strike action if possible. Back it up with leaflets, posters, publicity. Put resolutions in your union branch and Labour Party: resolutions that stress commitment to action.

And ram home this fact: IT'S NOW OR IT'S NOT AT ALL.

INSIDE: more on the campaign for the Shrewsbury pickets, plus letters on last week's reports.

MINERS BALLOT WHY THE PRESS SAID 'VOTE YES'

By Stephen Corbishley

IN THE PAST couple of weeks we have witnessed a barrage of the most unwholesome press campaigns around the miners' pay ballot. Sickly sweet-talk has alternated at a frenzied pace with vicious and slanderous attacks on the miners and their leaders. And all the time there's been more than a suspicion that the propaganda was aimed not so much toward the miners as to the rest of the working class — which has stood behind the miners twice now as they battered down the ruling class's wage restraints.

Certainly the miners know the issues without the Mirror and the Sun spelling out the figures for them. And most of them had declared their opposition to the Coal Board's productivity scheme before balloting even began.

The NCB offer is for increased payments to be made on the basis of a method study of each pit and face. A 'standard task' will be set, and where this is exceeded, a bonus will be paid.

The development teams of workers who open up new coal faces will be paid a bonus on their own team efforts. The faceworkers will receive a bonus based on the pit average of all faceworkers. All other miners will receive 65% of the national average of the faceworkers' bonus.

Get the picture? Development teams pitted against faceworkers, faceworkers turning on each other if the pit average is low, and the other miners turning on the faceworkers if the national average falls.

This is a perfect recipe for division and squabbling between miners of different



grades and in different areas. A dog eat dog situation deliberately engineered by the NCB and the Government.

The intention behind the apparent generosity of the NCB's bait of £12.50 to the 80,000 faceworkers, and £8.50 to the 144,000 other miners, is to break the unity and cohesion which has developed amongst the miners from just before the 1972 strike.

The NUM as a united and powerful union will be reduced to the shambles it was before piecework was

business. Yet it has been trade union leaders who have given a warm welcome to the Budget, while the big employers are grumbling and complaining that they weren't given more.

The present feeble price controls are to be made

By
Martin Thomas

looser. The prices directly controlled by the government — nationalised industry prices (such as gas, electricity and public transport) and rents — will be rising sharply. An easing of taxes on profits will give about £800 million to big business; the total handout to the bosses was estimated by Denis Healey at £1,600 million.

There will be a severe squeeze on local authorities' expenditure, which will mean further cutbacks in areas like education and social welfare. Provision will be made for easier loans to industrial capitalists. On wages, Healey's line was that wage rises are the main cause of inflation, so wage increases must be kept down.

Enforce

The day after the Budget, Shirley Williams suggested that the Labour Government might enforce 'wage curbs by penalising employers who pay out increases beyond the Social Contract guidelines. This suggestion was probably more a "declaration of intent" than a firm policy; employers would not take kindly to being forced into sharp confrontations with workers with no escape route. What it does show is that the Labour Government is perfectly prepared in principle for wage freezing

by law; and in the event of a drastic downturn in the international economic situation, they will probably try it.

Trade union leaders looking for things to praise in the Budget had to scrape around. There is the return of the £10 million tax on union funds from which the unions would have been exempt but for the Industrial Relations Act. There is an increase in family allowances. There is an increase in pensions (an increase of about 16% in money terms over a year, that is, a cut in real terms).

That's all.

But, instead of rejoicing, the bosses have taken all the handouts given them and are crying for more. And, from the point of view of their class, they're quite right.

Healey claimed his Budget would stop depression and heavy unemployment. By 'heavy' unemployment, he means over a million out of work. Anything up to a million is now, apparently, quite alright.

The bosses do not like Healey's outlook of 'moderate' recession. Probably quite correctly, they are doubtful about the ability of the Labour Government's "social contract" to keep wages down. They want sharper policies.

But only last February, the bosses were on the run. The labour movement was winning victories. And since

Workers' fight

3p

No. 77 Nov. 16th to 23rd 1974

£10 MILLION TO UNIONS £1,600 MILLION TO BOSSES

And the TUC says it's great...

Contd. back page

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Another Judge outlaws picketing

YOU CAN stand on a street corner talking to a friend till the cows come home. You can queue for a bus, unfortunately sometimes for hours. You can stand on the pavement for days and even camp down on it to watch royalty go past. Or you can walk up and down with a placard advertising Fred Cafe or warning that the Day of the Lord is coming.

But try stepping outside with a placard objecting to high prices, or the political regime represented by this or that embassy, or a racist film or a tyrannical and greedy landlord, or a local council that won't provide a necessary pedestrian crossing — and you can be done for obstruction, defamation or public nuisance. And, if there are two or more of you, you might be charged or sued with conspiracy to do these things.

Special privileges?

Last week in the High Court Mr. Justice Forbes ruled that "it is quite wrong to argue that such conduct [picketing] becomes clothed with a legality which it would not possess in a non-political situation." And according to him, no picket of any sort is legal unless it is in furtherance of a trade dispute. And even then it can only legally have very limited uses.

Yet in contradiction to what he was implying in the statement above (that somehow political activities and pickets expect special rights and privileges that other people don't have) he made clear that "reasonable use of the highway" was in fact any use of it that wasn't political: "...a tired pedestrian could lawfully rest for a while on the street or pavement, or a bus queue could stand at the roadside. Even a theatre queue could lawfully form..." Very generous! "But there was no right to use the street or pavement for political demonstrations... The fact that demonstrations were common at places like 10 Downing Street or outside certain foreign embassies did not mean that they were lawful." (Guardian, 9.11.74).

This judgment has of course massive consequences for freedom of political expression and activity in this country.

Freedom of speech

It isn't in fact new. The legal basis on which 'protest' pickets have been mounted has been very shaky indeed, depending more or less on an extension of the explicit legality of (peaceful) industrial picketing to other sorts of pickets. And there have been, also, references

to "a general right to picket as part of freedom of speech" and in exercising democratic rights.

It was precisely this defence that was put forward in last week's case, where Prebbles Estate Agents of Islington was asking for an injunction to stop members of Islington Tenants Crusade picketing its premises.

Eager to pounce

But the fact that Judge Forbes was able with a snap of his fingers to declare all protest and 'consumer' picketing to be illegal (and to have been so, apparently, from time immemorial) shows just how flimsy has been the legal ground we've been standing on — watched by those circling, red-eyed police eager to pounce if only the law allowed.

So all it needed was one judge to come along and define the law a bit more starkly. According to the Guardian's legal correspondent, this was "the first court ruling in modern times on the legality of non-industrial picketing". And in it Judge Forbes states "the right to be on the highway is subject to the law relating to highways" and that, although the European convention on human rights had supported freedom of peaceful assembly, this did not give the right to assemble on the highway!

Now, and until that law is re-defined again either by the Appeal Court (the same which has just sent Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson back to jail...) or by Parliament in the promised new Bill on picketing, those circling police can pounce.

Taken for granted

What we are faced with is a situation where as a result of a number of court decisions a whole lot of rights that the labour movement has taken for granted for years and years no longer exist. And we're also in a situation where, because the ruling class is hectorically preparing weapons to use against us in the coming struggles, we can't be at all sure that those rights will be restored.

Already, the Police Federation have said that it would be "madness" if Roy Jenkins were to include in the new Bill the right of industrial pickets to stop lorries for long enough to tell their drivers about the dispute they were involved in.

We too are going to have to fight and exert a great deal of pressure, to make sure that what we have long regarded as normal democratic rights will now be written into the law so that no judge can come along and play around with them.

And, legally or not, one of the ways we'll exert that pressure is through protest pickets....

RON VANDY

OPEN LETTER FOR A REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT

Send stamped addressed envelope to Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1

THE DEMONSTRATION in Shrewsbury on March 15th, 1973 at the first pre-trial hearings was a tremendous success. When it was all over we flooded back to the car park where the coaches were that had brought people from all over the country to the Shire Hall Court House. Amidst all the milling about in the car park a leading member of the Communist Party's building workers got on top of a concrete bollard and shouted "Just a minute lads, before you go..." Everybody hushed up and moved nearer. "Just before you go, let's have a vote of thanks to the MORNING STAR for its coverage of the case so far."

Everybody cheered. It seemed churlish not to ... except that the 'Morning Star' up to that date had not covered the case! As 'Mackie' Jones, one of the 24, who was to be jailed for 9 months, said to me when we talked in the Connah's Quay Labour Club, "What they wrote you could have got onto the back of a match box."

Workers Fight first reported the case on our front page in February 1973. Since then it has carried report after report on the case and the issues it raised, and two special supplements too. Right from the beginning we pushed to make this case an issue for the whole working class movement.

Shotton

From the end of February onwards we urged those of the defendants we were in touch with — those on the Shotton steelworks site — and their stewards to begin a national campaign for the release of the 24 from all charges. We assisted with the drafting and the production of the first leaflets the Defence Committee put out.

But North Wales is a bit of a backwater, and many of the lads felt that they had neither the know-how nor the resources to conduct a national campaign. That was a job for Charter, the CP-dominated rank and file movement within the building industry, they said. And so they took the matter to Charter...though this rather begged the question: why hadn't Charter already done something?

Charter

Those who sent Dave Jackson, then a T&GWU steward on the Shotton site, to the next Charter editorial board meeting were confident that their fellow building workers would jump at the chance to conduct a campaign — particularly one that could not just wrench their mates from the clutches of the law but raise the important issues of the flying picket and the lump.

But they didn't. And it took a few more weeks of pressure before Charter would accept the responsibility for such a campaign.

All the time it was a matter of "faith in the courts" and "faith in the officials" — many of whom were themselves Charter supporters. The leader of UCATT, George Smith, however, left no one in doubt as to where he stood in the matter. He wrote to Connah's Quay UCATT branch that "it would be doing the building unions and the Trade Union movement a great disservice to demonstrate or call a national stoppage in regard to these matters as the charges range from civil offences to criminal acts..."

Many argued that pressure needed to be brought on the officials. No one doubted it, but what

Boxing cle win

**TUC BACKS
TORIES AGAINST
PICKETS**

Letter instructs: "Don't aid arrested pickets"

North Wales 24 North Wales 24 It's a POLICE
Police pile

**POLICE MOVE
IN ON PICKET**

The 1875 "Conspiracy"

**Police ARREST
24 WORKERS**

ALL OUT
MARCH
15th!

INSIDE
FOR THE CONSPIRACY
LAB WORKERS

Mold victory:

New laws, NW24
new-style
Army and
Police -

The £1/4m. Trial

**ORGANISE DEFENCE
COMMITTEES NOW!**

Headlines from WF: right from the start, warnings & calls for action

Workers Fight argued was that the best way of doing that was to mobilise the rank and file and expose the union leaders like Smith for what they are. To this end we printed in our paper a number of the letters that Smith sent to UCATT branches — particularly in North Wales and the North West.

None of these letters appeared in the 'Morning Star'.



Smith

Obviously, whatever the verbal agreements or strategy, the CP had a line of softly - softly, and was against a campaign at that point. This was further confirmed when, amazingly, the next edition of Charter showed no signs of there being a campaign on the North Wales 24 at all. In some places, like Teesside (on Middlesbrough Trades Council) CP members were even voting against local campaigns. (Only the minutes need to be viewed to check the record...)

Brake

Gradually — and largely from fear that organisations like that around Workers Fight would "take over" the campaign if they did nothing — the Communist Party and Charter started to move... usually just enough to keep at the head of the movement and just too little to do more than act as a brake on its possible development.

On September 22nd last year, Liverpool Trades Council was host to hundreds of trade unionists from all over the country prepared to fight to "Free the 24". Workers Fight was not allowed to put to the Conference a resolution calling for stoppages in the event of any of the 24 being penalised. Instead it was referred to the Trades Council's Executive, never to be heard of again.

Right at the beginning, there had been doubts as to whether the lads in North

Wales could run a national campaign; most of the doubts were their own. Gradually, despite the establishment of a couple of "coordinating committees" at the national level, the committee in North Wales

Hong Kong POLICE WHERE FEARS MILL

WHY HAS Britain not terminated its colonial rule over Hong Kong, in an age of general decolonisation?

Hong Kong has functioned as an ideal base for the financial, industrial, and shipping operations of British capitalism in South East Asia, which, economically has been one of the world's fastest growing areas, during the '60s.

Hong Kong has been one of the main props to an ailing pound. The Financial Times estimated the backing given to the pound through Hong Kong to be in the region of £900 million. This sum is a direct transfer of the planned surplus in the Hong Kong budget, plus reserves invested by the private banks.

Hong Kong has also been an escape route for speculators; one study quoted it as being the place where most of the capital outflow leading to the '67 devaluation of the pound went.

Parasitic

The local bourgeoisie has always been unhappy about Sterling's parasitic relationship with the Hong Kong dollar, but they accepted this as the price for the political cover and access to international markets which the status of Crown Colony brings. In recent years, however, they have had to readjust, first to successive devaluations of the pound, then to Britain's entry into the EEC and the breakup of the Sterling area, and finally to tariff difficulties, competition from Korea and Taiwan as alternative sources of cheap labour, and to the oil crisis. These developments have strained relations between London and the Hong Kong ruling class.

The Hong Kong bourgeoisie have managed to gain more financial freedom, reducing the reserves they have in London. However, Britain's failure to

was left holding the baby. was in the realisation that this was likely to happen that Workers Fight continually advocated that control of the campaign should be vested in that committee and not elsewhere.

Illusions

As it was, what dominated the conduct of the campaign was what dominates the politics of the Communist Party militant. Not so much dishonesty or cynicism, and certainly not cowardice or laziness, but rather totally debilitating illusions in the trade union bureaucracy, complete reformist illusions in the Labour Government, and governments in general in relation to the state.

Whether it is the mass CPers who didn't bother to drum up more than a token demonstration on the day that Warren and Tomlinson's Appeal opened because they "had it on good authority that there was deal and the lads will go

Second part of an article by CHEUNG SIU MING.

obtain for Hong Kong tariff preference within the EEC together with the economic measures taken by US imperialism, has forced the local regime to move away from its 25 year old policy of concentrating on light manufacturing export industries

Turmoil

They have been forced to bring in heavy industry despite the scarcity of land and terrific costs. The major projects have been a polystyrene factory and several oil storage and refining installations, including one for China's petroleum.

This painful transition to an economy infected with rocketing inflation has brought about a period of sharp class struggle, which is severely disorienting the established Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions controlled by Peking sympathisers.

The social conditions for the majority in Hong Kong are appalling. The official statistics of average income are second only to Japan's in the Far East. But the enormous inequality between rich and poor, and the lack of social amenities, make any flat averages meaningless.

Slums

There is an enormous annual surplus in the colony's budget; but it is not used on needed public work like cheap housing. The budget is transferred to London, or spent on capital projects — for example, the highway system and harbour tunnel was much needed after the break-down of transport for the police and army during the 1967 riots, but

ver doesn't

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE SHREWSBURY 24 CAMPAIGN

off"; or whether it is the one who even after the appeal had failed "had it on good authority that the Union would do something immediately"; or whether it is, say, Ken Barlow who, speaking in the name of the virtually useless National Shrewsbury Co-ordinating Committee, wants Harold Wilson and "other ministers to address a public meeting on the need to free our members" — whichever it is, what is common to them all is these deepseated illusions that lead to defeat. And they lead to defeat whether the men want that or not.

Sincerity is not the issue — politics is.

Outrage

All the time that **Workers Fight**, and **Workers Fight** almost alone, was reminding readers of the need to campaign, not to rely on the courts, not to rely on the officials who so far have been at best do-nothings and at worst strike-breakers, the 'Morning Star'

was complacently ignoring a real campaign aimed at the Appeal.

The sense of bewildered outrage that marks article after article in that paper after the disgusting Appeal decision comes not so much from the viciousness of the sentence (there was nothing new in that) but from the sense of shock and of being betrayed by those trusted in by the Communist Party itself.

All out

The best of them were in fact in battle order straight away. Their spontaneous gut reaction, their sense of class hate and solidarity broke like a volcano through the crust of bureaucratism and routinism. The foot-dragging that had meant delay after delay, the manoeuvring that pushed business about the 24 to the end of the agenda and from there on to next time's agenda... all this was gone.

The militants in Liverpool, mainly CP members, and some of them people

who had played the issue down as long as there was talk of "deals", "elections", "boxing clever" and not playing into the hands of the "ultra left", stopped the sites, bringing about 4,000 men out on an indefinite strike to free Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson. This was to be Pentonville 5 all over again.

But it didn't last. Not because the militants in Liverpool didn't want it to. But because, recovering from its shock and looking at the token noises made by

George Smith, who has been the chief scab in the whole affair, the CP's shaken confidence in the trade union bureaucracy was restored.

But faith in the trade union bureaucracy is not just the result of this or that mistaken idea; it is the other side of the coin of a lack of faith in the rank and file workers themselves.

The small turn-out at the rally in Clapham on 5th November only served to fuel the lack of faith. However, not everyone was convinced of the hopelessness of the situation. There were still plenty of CP militants listening to the recommendation to "go back" with their fists clenched and their lips shut tight. That

may be to their credit, but the two are not going to be freed by silence. The only ones to profit will be those who are disorientating the movement and disorganising it.

Lobby

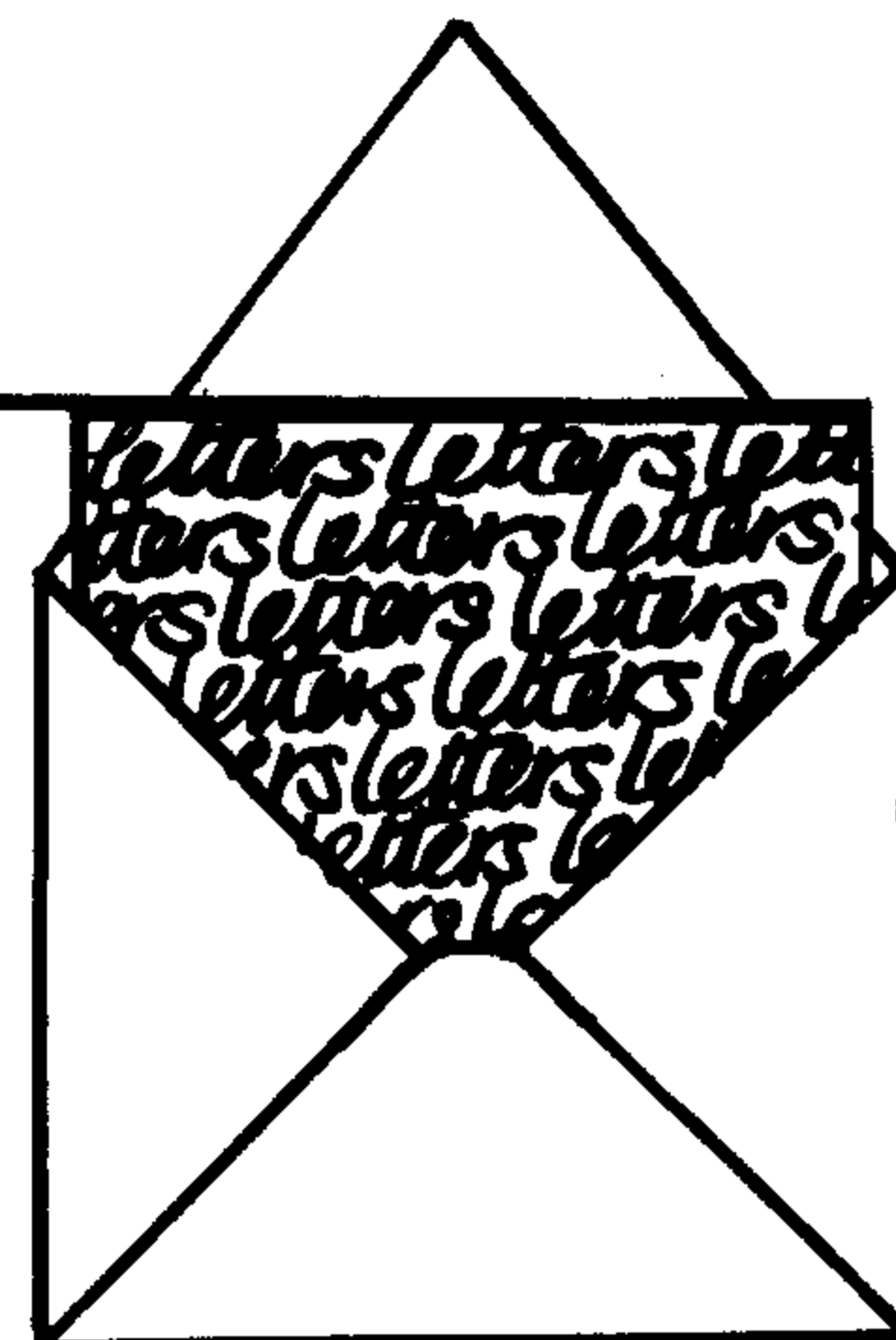
Workers Fight members in Manchester worked to get the sites out there. 1,500 men struck to back their mates in Merseyside and free Des and Ricky. The will is there. But the Liverpool about turn will no doubt mean demoralisation — just at a time when the strike could have been spread. And it will mean that the same men will be less eager to come out again.

The lobby must now be

supported. But we reiterate what we said last week, and what we've said all along — "The best demonstration won't be one tenth as effective as a rolling strike movement..." The prospect of the lobby has been used to delay such a strike movement developing now. But the situation could be saved by using that oneday strike and lobby as the beginning of an all-out strike movement.

It is in that spirit that it should be supported and worked for.

ANDREW HORNUNG



involved in every other level of activity, is now the only way of securing the release of the last of the 24.

D.J.Beck, Swinton, Manchester

'Unfair to Charter'

YOUR REPORT in WF75 headed **How to get them out** appears to state that the workers on the Oxford Road (Pochins) site Manchester were told by local Charter members, after they had decided to take some form of action, that the 2 would be given suspended sentences. You imply by this that local Charter members were trying to dampen down resistance in the event of the appeals failing. True, there was a general feeling amongst many workers who had been involved with the Shrewsbury 24 from the word go that with the pressure that had been exerted at various levels to involve the whole of the trade

union movement, that this would have some bearing on the appeals.

In saying that, we are not naive enough to believe that the Lawlords and the class they represent would still allow the opportunity to escape them to make criminal case law against effective picketing.

At no time was it the policy of the local Charter to dampen down activity to secure the release of Des Warren and Riki Tomlinson.

I also work on the Pochin site and you also state that a motion opposing the proposal of our site convenor was made by the Charter. This is incorrect. The motion was put by a

Charter member, but I believed it was the policy of the North Wales Defence Committee who called for the stoppage and lobby. Indeed, you go to some lengths to involve the Charter in general prior to it meeting at Hulme Labour Club on Wed. 6th November, where it formulated its policy based on activity throughout the whole country. Unfortunately there has not been the widespread spontaneous action in the form of a national strike, especially in the building industry, which I believe, having been

NOT CYNICAL

I WANT to make some points about the article **A hasty retreat in fight to free the Pickets** in WF76.

You correctly point out the important defeat that the vote to return to work in Liverpool represents, and the role of the Communist Party in this. However, I think the emphasis of the article was wrong.

The picture painted was one of the mass of workers at that meeting raring to go on strike action, but being cynically diverted and stopped by the local CP leadership in the building industry. The real picture was slightly different.

It was not so much that the mass of workers were raring to go, but that they were out and in relatively large numbers — and, given correct leadership by the CP, could have been convinced to stay out and have provided a spearhead, with Manchester, for fighting for a rolling strike situation.

Editor's comment: The article above on the CP and the campaign should clarify points raised in both letters. However, one or two specific points can usefully be made in reply.

DJB's letter expresses very well the equivocal feelings of many people involved in the campaign. At one and the same time he says that "with the pressure that had been exerted ..." they felt this "would have some bearing on the appeals"; and also that "we are not naive enough to believe" that the Judges really would be affected. The trouble is that in order to keep up and organise a really effective campaign, it is necessary to opt clearly for the second view, and to clearly reject the first view. The CP didn't do that. Before the appeal it did play on the first view rather than the second, and it did in fact help to dampen activity at that time. I believe the Pochins site in question was the only one to attempt serious action at that stage, and the turnout at the pre-appeal demonstration at the Law Courts was a pathetic 200 from the entire country. Later, DJB says that Charter only formulated its policy on Wednesday November 6th, on the basis of the fact that there hadn't been a spontaneous strike movement.

But Charter itself and the CP were a very decisive element determining whether or not there would be such a movement (which, DJB must know, needs to be worked for even when there is a big element of spontaneity). And the equivocal attitude to the possible results that could be expected from pressure "at various levels" was itself something that played a very big part in creating the situation that the meeting in Hulme Labour Club could

Instead of taking this opportunity, the recommendation was to return to work — the opportunity was lost by the defeatist subordination of rank and file action to the trade union leadership line of the CP. A betrayal, yes — but one that came from a leadership that didn't have a clear idea how to fight, not from one which didn't want to fight.

Also, it is not true that the CP have a "no strike" policy — for example at least in Liverpool the local CP leadership have called for strike action on the 28th. What is true is that the CP have no policy of developing, here and now, all out strike action — the only policy that will free the pickets.

Lastly, what we should be calling for is not simply for everybody to strike on the 28th, but to turn the one day strike into an all-out strike movement.

George Macaulay Toxteth, Liverpool

look at and assess.

GM in his letter says that the local CP leadership wasn't cynical. Maybe not. But it wasn't entirely honest either. The men at that mass meeting, whether or not they were "raring to go", weren't presented with the full facts. It is possible that, even if they had known of Manchester's strike decision, they would still have decided that it wasn't the right time to go ahead with strike action. But they had the right to be told, and they weren't told. Whether or not Frank Marsh, who recommended the return to work, knew and deliberately kept the information to himself, we don't know. But it is certain that the CP was keeping quiet about the Manchester strike decision: the Morning Star managed to report the mass meeting at which the men decided to strike without telling its readers of that decision! Instead, they quoted another speaker at the meeting calling for support for the meeting called by the Trades Council.

Which, I think, demonstrates that we were right to refer to the CP's "no strike line". Obviously this didn't mean that the CP never calls for strikes for the 24, or that they oppose a strike on the 28th. What it clearly means is that they had decided, quite coldly, that they didn't want a rolling strike movement there and then.

One final point: great play was made about "going back united" — yet no attempt was made to consult with the men in Manchester or even inform them, and they were left to find out for themselves later that day that they'd been left in the cold. It is that sort of behaviour that quite deservedly calls forth the sort of forthright language used in the article that GM questions.

REGIME CHINA TANCY

was also a generous handout to the construction consortium.

The much advertised slum resettlement programme is in fact the government's method of accentuating and concentrating the previous slum problems into extremely confined areas. Typical are 120 square foot units in high rise blocks, designed for a family of five adults (children count as half), with 10 families sharing toilet and cooking facilities. The squatters living on hill-sides often prefer to stay as they are, despite the dangers of landslides during the monsoon season, but they are herded to the 'government built' slums so that the land can be used for luxury flats or office blocks.

Macao

The riots of 1966-67 took place during an economic background of rising exploitation, exporting difficulties, and delicate relations with China during the Cultural Revolution. The neighbouring Portuguese colony of Macao was effectively taken over by the local Chinese businessmen who traded with mainland China, after a successful insurrection 'inspired' by the cultural revolution. The subsequent riots in Hong Kong were blamed by the British on a conspiracy by the local Maoist leadership.

In fact a wave of strikes had preceded the riots. Rioting flared when, after one of the police's interventions in those strikes, an arrested striker never made it to the courts alive. He died of 'internal injuries' while detained at the police station. Once the rioting had started, it seems that the local Maoists tried to move into the leadership without having first consulted Peking. Afterwards they received a sharp rebuke from the mainland for jeopardising China's foreign



HONG KONG LEFTISTS ARRESTED IN RAID

exchange earnings.

Since these riots there has been continuous turmoil. Half of the population is under 21, putting a great strain on the feeble education and social services departments. Juvenile crime has rocketed, and is virtually beyond the control of the corrupt police force. The police, generally hated, have experienced recruiting difficulties, despite the low qualifications for the force.

Youth

The youth have received a taste of direct political action through several incidents and campaigns, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of the May 4th Movement in China (a movement against colonialism and against traditional elitist culture).

As in 1919, Japanese imperialism was the prime target. Japan had seized an island off the China coast for oil explorations. The anti Japanese demonstrations soon turned into an anti colonial assault as the Hong Kong police reacted brutally and clumsily. The youth movement continued to grow, with the campaign demanding that Chinese be

made an official language, and of course, the campaign to get police chief Godber back to face trial in Hong Kong.

Recently, rapid inflation has brought about a further wave of protests and strikes. Such massive political events have not been seen in the colony since the war. The local Maoists in control of the established trade unions have been left floundering, and a revolutionary group with the correct politics should make rapid gains in the present situation.

Ripe

China's position is that it refuses to recognise the unequal treaties which conceded Hong Kong to Britain. Hong Kong is a part of China and will be liberated "when conditions are ripe". Thus, at the United Nations in 1972, the People's Republic of China requested that Hong Kong be withdrawn from the UN's official list of colonies, on the grounds that Hong Kong is part of China and the UN is not entitled to meddle in China's "internal affairs". We have no indication at all from Peking what is meant by conditions becoming "ripe".

China has always had the possibility of easily controlling Hong Kong; it is the main supplier of food, and of water when rainfall in the colony is short. But the Chinese government has been happy enough to allow Hong Kong to continue under imperialist control. China derives half of her foreign exchange through Hong Kong, through its shops, banks, and factories, and through remittances from workers in Hong Kong to their relatives in China.

Maoist

The early Maoist policies of alliance with local capitalists meant that these parasites could take their investments out of Shanghai into Hong Kong. In the Korean war years of 1950/51, about 150 million US dollars came to Hong Kong that way.

The Bolsheviks in the early years of the Russian Revolution were under even worse pressure from imperialism, but they never defaulted on their duty to spread the revolution internationally as the Maoist regime did in the early 1950s. "But", states the Hong Kong Research Group pamphlet, "China's attitude is determined not by economics but by politics". How very true!

Exiles

The Maoist bureaucrats are not keen to see the Hong Kong workers move into political activity beyond the control; hence their sharp rebuke to the local pro Peking trade union leaders for their "ultra leftism" in the anti colonial riots of 1967. The Peking regime would far rather maintain a cosy relationship with an imperialist dominated Hong Kong than see a workers' revolution.

But Hong Kong contains many exiles from the years of the Great Leap Forward, from the 'hundred flowers' purge of intellectuals, from the persecution of the Chinese Trotskyists, from the "sending down" of dissident Red Guards who took Mao's radical rhetoric too literally. There is a Trotskyist nucleus.

The Hong Kong masses hate colonialism, but so far they have been held back, unsure and fearful of the mainland bureaucracy. Under the leadership of anti Maoist communist revolutionaries, the concentrated working class of Hong Kong can act as the spark for a struggle for proletarian democracy throughout China.

SACKED FOR STRIKING

AND TRIBUNAL RULES IT'S NOT 'UNFAIR'

Recently Middlesbrough Industrial Tribunal — an "independent" body of course — unanimously upheld Scarborough District Council's sacking of four Whitby dustmen for going on strike.

They had been sacked after walking out over the Council's rigid interpretation of what was and was not "overtime" — an ambiguous term as it related to them. They had also been involved in Whitby's "pig swill" dispute last summer, when the Council, despite a lack of contingency plans and suitable vehicles for the situation, ordered dustmen to collect swill from farms infected by swine disease — and all the men had held a one day protest strike.

Obviously there were four "trouble makers", daring to challenge the council in the interests of public health and their own rights, so they had to go.

The men appealed to the Industrial Tribunal, but any illusions they may have had in this august body, or in Labour's new legislation must now have been crushed.

Tribunal chairman A.J. Bowker told them that under the new law, as under the Industrial Relations Act, "dismissal because they had taken part in a strike is not held to be unfair."

In other words, Labour's much vaunted "labour relations" legislation lets bosses victimise strikers!

In fact, when you study the new Act closely, you find most of the main bits of the hated Industrial Relations Act (and, if your memory's that good, of Labour's own "In Place of Strife" proposals that paved the way for the Tories.)

This cannot be explained away by talking about "a few unfortunate amendments". If the Tory-Liberal bloc has wrecked the planned Act, why the hell doesn't Wilson admit it? Perhaps he was afraid of losing votes in the last election. Perhaps he's afraid workers will start taking matters into their own hands, as they did with "In Place of Strife" and the Industrial Relations Act. Whatever the reason, anyone foolish enough to believe the "50 good reasons for voting Labour" can say "We were conned".

Alan Theasby

ON FRIDAY 8th November the shop stewards proposed a return to work at a mass meeting of craftsmen at IMI Witton. It was accepted by all but six out of the 750 men present.

The offer accepted was a rise of £8 per week, plus a consolidation of the threshold payment existing at the moment, which stands at £2.80 (it should have been £3.60). It is to run for eleven months, until next October.

This was only one week after we had rejected an offer of £6 plus threshold consolidation of £3.20, so what we had was an increase of £1.60 on the previous offer. Our original claim was £15 straight rise, to bring us level with other craftsmen in the area and to overcome the erosion of our standard of living due to rising prices.

After stoppages, this £15 claim would give a rise in real wages of 28%, which is realistic given prices rising at 20% per year. But the £8 offer we accepted is only 14% rise on take home pay. Given 20% inflation it does

WE COULD HAVE GOT THE LOT!

What went wrong at I.M.I.

not even bring us back to where we were a year ago.

Why haven't we got our £15? Where did we go wrong?

Firstly, our organisation was terrible. We had no strike committee as such, no strike fund, and communi-

cation between shop stewards and men left a lot to be desired.

Secondly, our national officials did everything in their power to get us back to work, and would not make the strike official.

Thirdly, we did not believe in our own strength. At the beginning of the strike, on 7th September, our shop stewards stated that management were quite prepared to write us off for a month and we should be ready for a long stay out. Yet after only five weeks they are now running round saying that we have no chance of getting £15. It is only over the last week or so

that the strike has really started to bite, and yet we have capitulated.

For all that, the solidarity the craftsmen have shown over the last five weeks is a token of what we can do if we have a better leadership.

John Bryant

Rank & File actions to support Scottish teachers

A NATIONAL demonstration in support of the Scottish teachers taking strike action for increased pay is planned for Wednesday 20th November, in London.

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS, Scottish equivalent of the NUT) began by making a display of militancy and demanding 10% interim pay rises from the Houghton Committee. The low level of this demand, coupled with the fact that Houghton is unlikely to make any recommendations that can be implemented for at least three months, spurred Scottish teachers to take the fight into their own hands, and action committees based on Glasgow and Edinburgh were set up to mobilise around the demand for £15 immediate flat rate increase for all teachers, backdated to May 24th.

Salaries on average 10% lower than in England, and classes larger, together with the

fact of even the 10% EIS claim being turned down, all this made the teachers determined to fight, and simultaneous strike action by 20,000 other Scottish workers for their pay claims added to the teachers' confidence.

The EIS raised their demand to £10, but the action committees are sticking to their £15 and in EIS Glasgow branch at least, classroom members of EIS have rejected their leaders' formula and maintain that nothing less than £15 will do, with a promise of all out strike action after November 21st if it is not forthcoming.

The EIS have set a deadline of November 30th, when they propose to intensify official strike action, at present taking the form of rolling three day strikes (at least 600 teachers out every day in Glasgow during the last three days) and working to rule on a simultaneous campaign over working conditions.

In addition to intensifying the strike, systematic disruption of SCE exams (Scottish equivalent of the GCE) is promised as a tactic.

English teachers too are hoping for an increase from the Houghton inquiry... but, at present, just hoping. However, the need for solidarity between English and Scottish teachers is clear. A united fight could win substantial salary concessions. Disunited, both England and Scotland could be defeated, and educational conditions will continue to get worse.

Beth Stone and Dick North have already put forward a motion on the NUT Executive to support the £15 demand, and they have been defeated. Solidarity, then, will have to be based on unofficial action.

Some London schools may be on half day strike on the 20th. Washwood Heath comprehensive in Birmingham is coming out on strike this Friday, 15th November, and the teachers will be going round other schools to try to get support for a mass rally next Wednesday.

Ian Hollingworth
Cynthia Baldry

In Liverpool, NUT members at Paddington Comprehensive passed a motion calling on the NUT locally to call a mass meeting of teachers to discuss the issue, in school time. The motion has been referred to national level. Collections in support of the Scottish teachers are also being taken in Paddington Comprehensive and in Quarry Bank Comprehensive.

The demonstration on the 20th must be a launching pad for much wider unofficial action! Assemble Euston 1.30pm and march to Whitehall. Rank and File will be holding a meeting to discuss further action after the march, at Friends House, opposite Euston Station, at 5.30pm.

Ian Hollingworth
Cynthia Baldry

He said... nothing.

While the Right is ruling the roost, the 'Left' MPs are putting up no fight at all.

The task of fighting against Healey's Budget, and of building a political alternative in the labour movement to Healey, falls to the rank and file. To rising prices and wage restraint, the rank and file must reply with a fight for a sliding scale of wages (automatic increases to keep pace with the cost of living) and solidarity with all struggles to improve living standards. To the threat of unemployment, the rank and file must reply by fighting to cut hours, not jobs.

Instead of saving capitalism at the expense of the working class, the working class must save itself.

At the expense of capitalism.

Another success for Merseyside Anti-Fascist Committee

AN ATTEMPT by Chester National Front to hold a secret, private meeting with NF vice chairman John Tyndall, last Thursday, November 7th, was thwarted by a picket organised by Merseyside Anti Fascist committee.

After the anti fascist demonstrators had been evicted from the meeting room by police, they picketed the pub where the meeting was being held and leafleted passers by.

At the end of the meeting the anti fascists returned to barrack the fascists as they were leaving their meeting. The first small group of fascists leaving the pub began to fight with the anti fascists, but the police broke this up by arresting some of the pickets.

Most of the attempts at arrest failed, however, because of quick rescue work by other demonstrators. One of the people rescued in this way was the Anti Fascist Committee photographer, who was deliberately singled out by two Special Branch agents in order to smash his camera.

One fascist deliberately drove his car into a group of anti fascists and police. Two policemen and an anti-fascist had to be taken to hospital.

The National Front's confidence in Chester — an area where they had high hopes — has been severely

battered. However, the Merseyside Anti Fascist Committee could have used a lot more support, such as from the Militant supporters who watched the struggle from the bar of the local Labour club, directly across the street from the NF meeting).

The comrade who was arrested has been charged with assaulting the police and... under the Race Relations Act. A large fine may be expected.

Jon Riley
Donations to: Defence Fund, M.A.F.C., St Mary's Annexe, Lower Milk St, Liverpool 3.

NUPE Shorter hours claim not optional extra

NUPE MILITANTS in the Manchester area are calling for a meeting of shop stewards of all sections (hospitals, ambulancemen, and local government manual workers) to discuss the fight for the union claim of £30 basic minimum, a 35 hour week, 4 weeks holiday, and continuation of threshold payments.

Delegate conferences of each section are being called by the National Union of Public Employees to discuss the recent offer from the employers.

The offer, at £29.55, doesn't look too bad. In fact it is only about £3.50 increase on the present minimum basic of about £22, since the offer includes the existing threshold payments, but refuses to

consolidate them into the basic. The 35 hour week, the continuation of threshold payments, the claim on holidays — all are rejected.

The Union leadership have advised rejection of the offer, but their circular does not mention the 35 hour week clause. Apparently they see it as an optional extra, of no real importance. Moreover, they have put forward no ideas for action win the claim.

It is vital that rank and file militants get together to map out action, on the basis of the demand for the full £30 basic, threshold payments consolidated on top of the £30, and the 35 hour week.

Jack Sutton.

from page 1

Bosses' Budget

When we have had a government which is supposed to be a Labour government. Why is it now that the bosses are arrogantly complaining about this right wing Budget, while the TUC leaders are rummaging around in the small print of Healey's proposals for items to praise?

The fact is that when it comes to saving capitalism at the expense of the working class, the bosses know what they want. Healey basically wants the same thing: to get capitalism through the crisis on the backs of the working class.

What has given the bosses new confidence and led to the trade union leaders offer-

ing their services as ancillaries in the private hospital ward where big business is being nursed through the crisis, is this fact: when the labour movement kicked out the Tories, the only alternative we had to replace them with was people like Healey, whose policies are basically the same as the Tories.

'Left' Labour MPs, who interpret the 'social contract' in terms of genuine reform along 'state capitalist' lines, were angry about the Budget. They were disappointed, discontented, unhappy, and they did... nothing. The great Left wing champion Benn probably felt really miserable about it.

from page 1

Coal Board

And after doing nothing to make working conditions safer or healthier, it tries to bribe miners into putting in long hours in the pits — and at the same time to whip them in with a monstrous witchhunt against "absenteeism."

It is actually an indictment of the NUM leadership that it's done so little to cut working hours that while thousands are so crippled by the miners' lung disease pneumoconiosis that they can't work the official full week, other men have to decide for themselves, on an individual basis, to shorten their working week rather than shorten their lives.

Despite the NCB's "hunt the Reds" campaign — or

perhaps because of it — the miners will no doubt have voted NO in overwhelming numbers. But where do they go from there? Though the left prevailed on the Executive to produce a recommendation against the scheme, there is still talk (including from Scargill) about an 'alternative' national productivity deal, and about increasing output "one way or another".

But no productivity deal is in the miners' interests. Even if it wasn't divisive, it would be dangerous and unhealthy, as well as being based on the bad principle of trading for a pay rise instead of just demanding it as a right.

The best thing for miners would be a massive cut in working hours with no loss of pay. This must be a major demand in the forthcoming pay claim.

And if the NCB wants more coal, let it employ more miners to get it.

MEETINGS

LONDON Workers Fight readers' meeting. "The Present Situation in Ireland". Speaker Sean Matgamna. 8.30pm, Sunday 17th November, at the 'George', Liverpool Road (Angel underground).

LIVERPOOL: public meeting, "Free the Shrewsbury pickets". Speakers from Workers Fight (Ian Heyes, site convenor, Pochins Manchester Poly site); Revolutionary Marxist Current; International Marxist Group (Pat Hickey, UCATT convenor, Birmingham), and Big Flame. 8pm, Wednesday 20th November, at Stanley House, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool 8.

ENFIELD COLLEGE Workers Fight meeting. "The case for a revolutionary regroupment". Speaker, Andrew Hornung. 1pm, Monday 18th November.

NOTTINGHAM W.F. Public meeting: "The case for Revolutionary Regroupment". Speaker: Andrew Hornung. At the 'White Hart', Glasshouse St. (behind Victoria Centre) 24th Nov. at 8pm

Enfield students sit-in for better deal

STUDENTS at Enfield college voted 249 to 190 to occupy from 1.30 pm on Monday 11th November to 5pm on Wednesday 13th.

The students are demanding an end to discretionary awards, an end to the spouse contribution, no to the education cuts, and grants to be linked to the cost of living index. On Wednesday, students from all the colleges in Enfield, Barnet, and Haringey marched to the LEA offices in Church St, Edmonton, to further these demands.

Alan Duffield

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