

WORKERS' FIGHT

no. 9

24 June - 7 July

4p

TURN TORY RETREAT INTO A ROUT!

Police frame up

EXPOSED

EMBARRASSED BY A RECENT newspaper report, the Metropolitan Police have been forced into appointing a team to inquire into their latest frame-up attempt. After an article appeared in the Sunday Times, the head of the Metropolitan Police has inaugurated the usual pantomime. Two high ranking police officers will inquire into the circumstances of the case of the "HACKNEY FIVE" and report back . . . to the police, of course!

On November 17th police of the Special Branch raided a shop in Wick Road, Hackney, and arrested five people. The five, who had set up a shop to sell clothes in aid of Ulster Catholics, were said by the Police to be members of Sinn Fein or Saor Eire (a radical Republican organisation). In court they were charged with possession of stolen weapons.

As the Sunday Times found out, however, the 11 rifles, 8 bayonets and 3 automatic pistols with 56 rounds of ammunition were planted on the premises by two men, one a policeman and the other a police "infiltrator".

The "infiltrator", John Parker, who claims he has done jobs like before for the Special Branch, delivered the arms to the house which he rented for the five.

In Court the two Special Branch detectives who gave evidence refused to answer questions about these two "colleagues". They claimed "It would prejudice the security of the State."

The Hackney Five were lucky. The police attempt to rig up and "IRA show-trial" to add to the unthinking hysteria directed against those fighting British troops in Ireland was too crude even for the judge. The farcical 'trial' was simply stopped.

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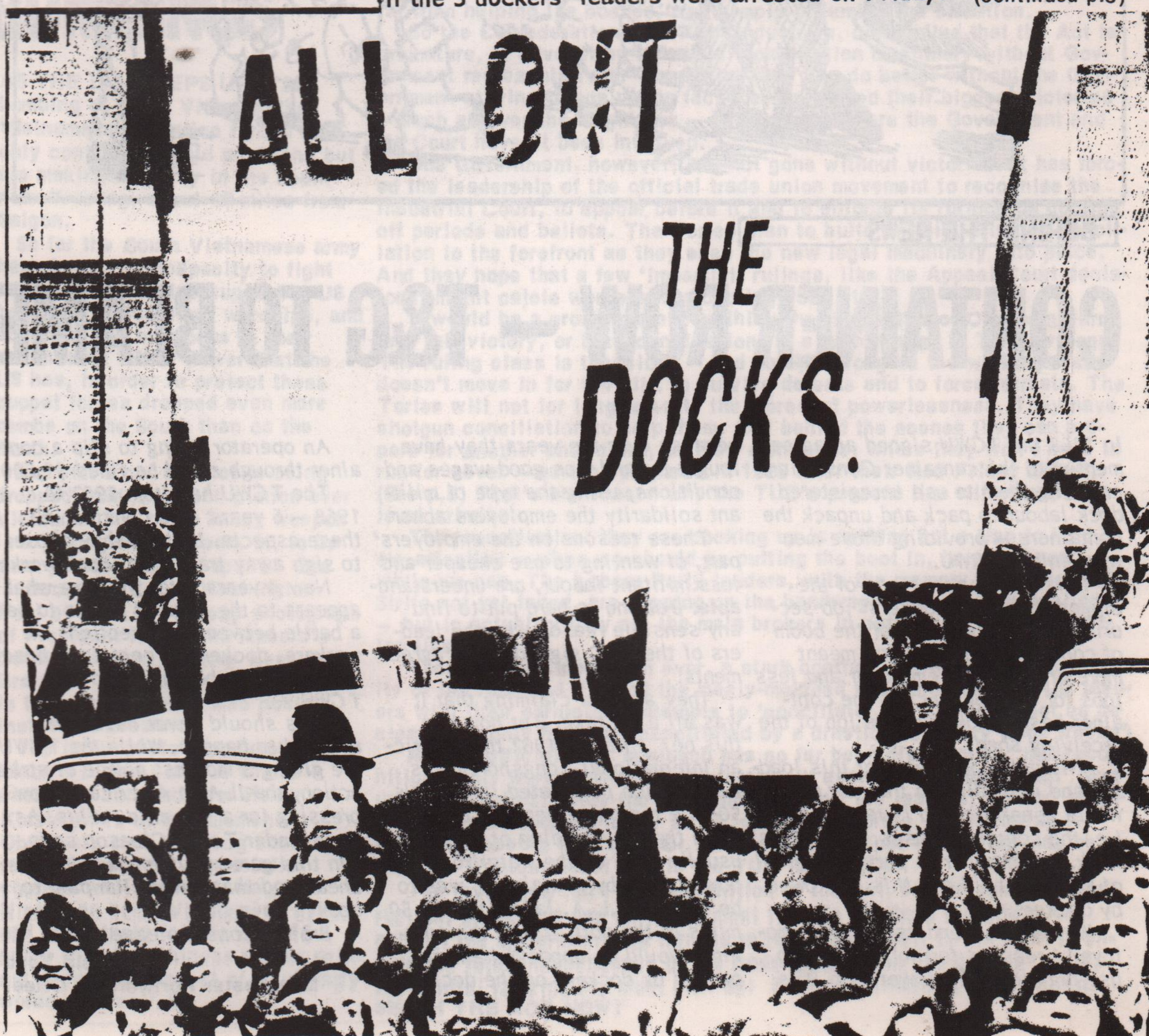
**Defend
Stoke
Newington
Eight!**

FRONTS OF BRASS AND FEET OF CLAY! That sums up how the Heath Government looks to millions of workers right now.

It had squeezed the Social Services, deprived young working class children of school milk and thrown hundreds of thousands on the dole — all the time the smug, well-fed bourgeois faces of its members expressing how good it felt to be efficient, prosperous, ruthless, self-reliant, unsentimental Tory 'hard-men' out to exterminate all known species of lame duck.

Finally they goaded the workers into hitting back. And last week they were in headlong retreat from the wrath of the working class! All the class had to do was begin to move into action and the ground already shifted alarmingly under the feet of the Government!

On Thursday and Friday the 15th/16th June, Britain hovered on the brink of an 'unofficial' spontaneous General Strike. A 100% solid national Docks strike was certain for the following Monday, if the 3 dockers' leaders were arrested on Friday. (continued p.3)



the unquiet calm

N.IRELAND AFTER THE CEASEFIRE



The campaign for 'peace' in the Six Counties appears to have triumphed. The Provisional wing of Sinn Fein announced on Thursday 22 June that "the IRA will suspend offensive operations as from midnight on Monday June 26 1972, provided that a public reciprocal response is forthcoming from the armed forces of the British Crown".

They stated that "The leadership of the Republican movement believes that a bilateral suspension of operations would lead to meaningful talks between the major parties in the conflict" and further "The movement has formulated a peace plan designed to secure a just and lasting solution, and holds itself in readiness to present it at the appropriate time".

INTERNMENT

The announcement was welcomed by Mr Whitelaw, who said that there would "obviously" be a favourable

response from the British army (ie if you don't shoot at us we won't shoot at you?), by Cardinal Conway, Harold Wilson, Jack Lynch, Liam Cosgrave (leader of the main opposition party in the 26 Counties) — in short by all the shrewder political spokesmen of imperialism in Ireland.

The Official IRA and the Irish Communist Party have also stated approval, though the Officials hoped there would be no talks until all internees have been released. There seems to be some danger of this happening, however. Gerry Fitt's Social Democratic and Labour Party is already doing it, breaking a solemn pledge not to

WHITELAW'S ALLIES

Whitelaw's bargaining position at any future talks must be a strong one. He still has men in custody, he can use the UDA as a bargain-

ing counter (compare Lloyd George's threat of "immediate and terrible war" in 1921 to win over the Irish delegation to the acceptance of the Treaty).

He has the Catholic Church on his side, as well as Jack Lynch, who is intent on muscling in on the talks, and, as British imperialism's best friend in Ireland, surely stands a good chance of being invited.

Immediately, Whitelaw has to tackle the problem — for him — of the rent and rates campaign, the no-go areas, the resistance of the Catholic minority.

This resistance has been broken down before — in the dismantling of the barricades in 1969 — and may be again.

The wings of the IRA appear to have paid the penalty of not consolidating their hold on the 'liberated areas' against the SDLP and the Church, and stand a good chance of being excluded from the talks.

Our main job in Britain, however, is to stress, still, the principles in danger of being submerged: that the Irish people, north and south, as one unit, have the right to decide their own future collectively, on the basis of the democratic majority wish; and that British imperialism, and the British army, do not have any right to decide the future of the Irish people.

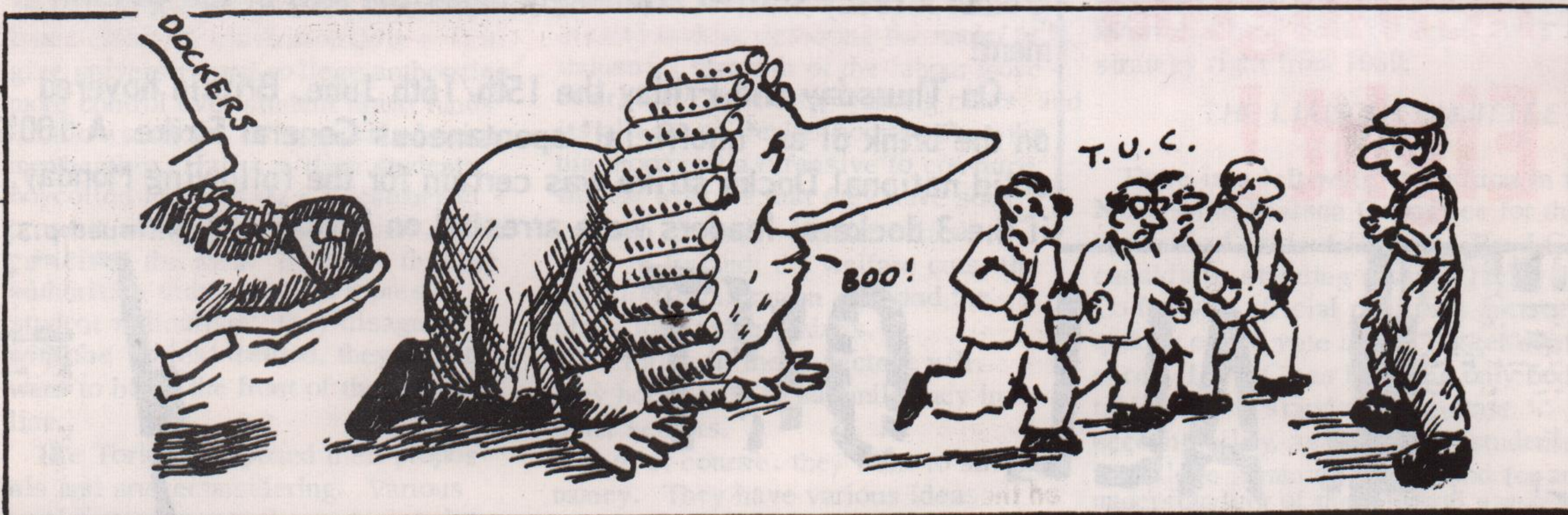
SELF-DETERMINATION

Any settlement at this stage is bound to fall short of freedom for Ireland. If full civil rights are granted and there is increased state aid for the 6 county economy this will not be enough to heal the scars of the past. Ireland as a whole will remain exploited, mutilated, subservient.

The idea of a six-county referendum — put forward by Heath three months ago — denies the right of the whole Irish people to self-determination. A valid referendum would have to cover the whole 32 counties — not that imperialism could be 'voted out'.

In the coming phase, socialists will have to be clear that what we stand for is the right of the Irish people to kick out British imperialism, not just to be conciliated, to be granted a few sops in an impermanent peace founded on domination.

Chris Gray



BEHIND THE NEWS

CONTAINER ROW — T&G TO BLAME

In 1968 the TGWU signed an agreement with the container Consortium enabling them to use unregistered dock labour to pack and unpack the containers — providing those men were in the TGWU.

This was to prove one of the biggest blows to dockers' job security. This is because of the boom of container ships, which meant more profit to the employer and less jobs for the dockers, as the container bases took over the job of the receiving shed.

It is quite obvious that this loading and unloading in the new places where general cargo is received, i.e. the container bases, is dockers' work. A container is part and parcel of a ship's hold and this is stowed by dockers.

We can well understand the employers' reasons for not wanting to use registered dock workers. It is

because over the years they have fought for and won good wages and conditions, using the type of militant solidarity the employers abhor.

These reasons on the employers' part, of wanting to use cheaper and less militant labour, are understandable. But one is hard put to find any sensible reason why the leaders of the T&G signed these agreements.

They are now claiming that it was all a mistake. But how can this be? When in 1962 the American International Longshoremen's Association negotiated its famous 50-mile radius agreement, this laid down that any loading or unloading usually done on the waterfront and now cut out by containers, was to be done by I.L.A. labour within 50 miles of the port. If not, the container would be unpacked and re-packed by dockers on the dockside.

An operator trying to slip a container through could be fined \$1,000.

The TGWU had from 1962 to 1968 — 6 years — to consider all these aspects. Instead they chose to sign away traditional dock work.

Now 4 years later we have what appears to the general public to be a battle between two sections of workers, dockers v. container base workers, both belonging to the TGWU.

This should never have been allowed to happen. While the TGWU are giving 3 months' notice of strike action, the ILA in America is now pressing for a 100 mile radius. As their leader Teddy Gleason says, "In this game you've got to think ahead and that's what I'm paid to do."

Brother Jones, please note!

Harold Youd
Manchester Portworkers Cttee.

Berresford Ellis, author of the 'History of the Irish Working Class', discusses his book and his views at an

IRISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

forum: General P icton pub, Caledonian Road (near Kings X), London N 1. Friday 7 July.

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CIVIL SERVANTS FOR STRIKE BREAKING?

With sit-in strikes and mobile pickets, the labour movement is rediscovering weapons from the past. But the bosses are doing the same.

In 1925-26, the period running up to the General Strike, the bosses set about building up a strike-breaking force, the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies. (See article inside, page 4). Blacklegs were trained to drive locomotives in the private railways of large factories at week-ends and instructed in the operation of the telecommunication system.

And today? At the crucial period of the miners' strike, around the struggle at Saltley, a circular was sent round to civil servants.

It stated that in the event of a national disruption of essential services and transport, volunteers would be called on from the civil service. They would have to perform jobs outside normal civil service duties,

and supplementary payment would be made above normal wages.

The Tories have already - so it is reported - made detailed plans for the use of the army to strike-break in the event of rail or docks stoppages.

According to official myth, the army, and particularly the civil service, are neutral bodies, above partisan class interests, dedicated only to the so-called 'national interest'. But what goes on behind the scenes, under the cover of official secrecy, is very different from the myth. And before long it may not be just behind the scenes. If the bosses and their State are preparing, the labour movement must prepare too. And all the strike-breaking lackeys of the Tories put together will not be enough to defeat a labour movement which stands firm in solidarity. A few thousand scabs cannot beat millions of workers. ■

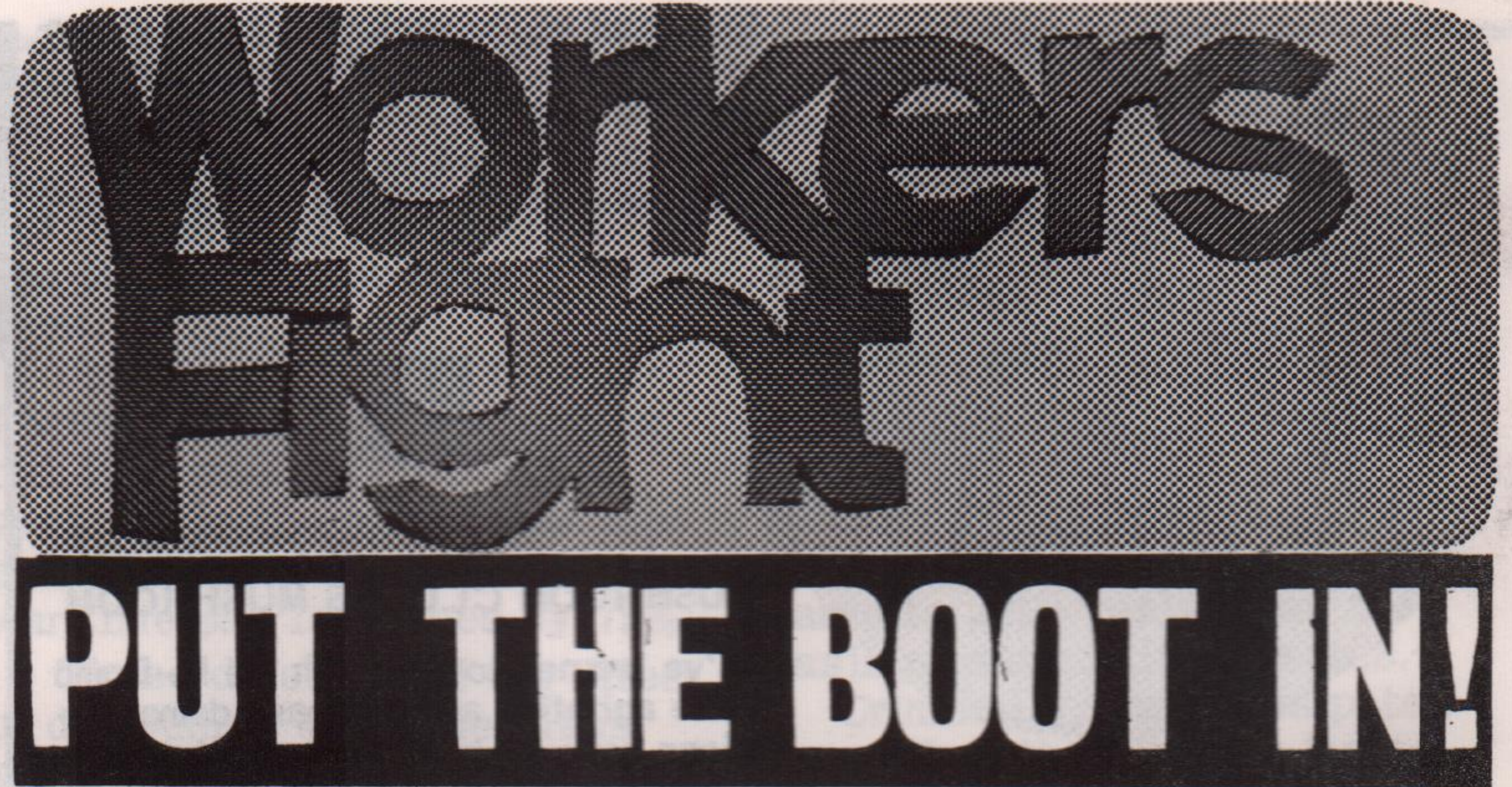
VIETNAM N.L.F. MAKE HEADWAY DESPITE U.S. BOMBINGS

AS THE U.S. STEPS UP ITS bombing of North Vietnam, the Vietnamese liberation forces not only continue to hold positions but are making headway in the south near Trabang, about 40 miles from Saigon.

So far the South Vietnamese army has shown its incapacity to fight without the massive support of US bombers, helicopters, warships, and advisors. So enormous is their reliance on US air power that the US has, in order to protect these puppet forces dropped even more bombs on the South than on the North.

But that's not all that is being dropped from American planes over Vietnam. The other handy weapon is a propaganda weapon, or, to be more precise, two weapons. One is, according to the Washington Post of June 8, "a cozy photograph of President Nixon and Russia's Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev ...". The other weapon is the same but with Mao posing instead of Brezhnev.

The latter photo was taken during Nixon's recent visit to China - where his chief advisor Henry Kissinger is at this moment. Obviously such a strong show of revolutionary anti-imperialist courage was shown by Mao that Nixon can bomb Vietnamese dykes and other installations only 15 miles from the Chinese border without even the prospect of a 'strongly worded protest'. ■



from page 1

The carworkers had pledged their support. So had the miners. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions had committed itself to action the previous week. The 450 Scottish shop stewards, whose emergency conference in Glasgow pledged to defend any militant who was victimised, would surely have been drawn into the strike movement, as would millions of other workers who watched the Government's confrontation with the dockers. The Government had little choice but to retreat - for the moment.

The Tories had already suffered a setback in their use of the Act when the Appeal Court earlier in the week quashed the £55,000 fine paid by the TGWU for Contempt. The capitalist Judges were hardly taking the workers' part against the Government. Nor were they neutral. But they were mindful of the paralysing repercussions throughout a legal system based on precedent if the TGWU (in legal terms the "principal") were penalised for the actions of the stewards (in legal terms the "agent"). And no doubt also, whereas the £55,000 was levied as a punishment for the TGWU's original boycott, the Appeal Court reverse was a reward to the Union leaders for sitting up and begging in the Tory Court.

The decision not to jail the three docks stewards was, however, very different. It was a definite, unmistakeable retreat in face of the strength of the working class.

The Tory Government must conclude that the Act hasn't worked out at all as they intended it to. Nevertheless, their retreat is unlikely to signal a major change in strategy away from coercion of the trade unions.

The problem of inflation, the deteriorating balance of payments, talk of another devaluation, all indicate the tremendous pressure they are under to solve their problems by holding down wages. To do that, they must either defeat and demoralise the working class, or at least cool the situation while they patiently persevere in foisting the Act on the Labour movement as the new framework for boss-worker relations which they still hope to establish.

Even before the first Appeal Court decision there were moves to pad the shackles of the Industrial Relations Act with the cotton wool of 'conciliation'. The TUC leaders were desperate to get out of the firing line; the CBI was becoming impatient with the crudities and inefficiencies of the Government's approach of trying to impose a law it hasn't the power to enforce (The Mirror likened it to Prohibition in America...), on a working class which has not first been softened up and demoralised by defeat.

The British working class hasn't been broken or bridled now for decades. In a series of battles, beginning with the miners' strike, it has taken on and defeated the Government. It has improvised and rediscovered weapons like the mass picket which generate class-wide solidarity action. Just when the Industrial Relations Act made sympathetic action illegal the working class rediscovered how vital a weapon it is. The Act, far from helping the bosses, was simply inflaming the situation.

So the Confederation of British Industries, concluding that the Act is premature, is advocating industrial conciliation machinery without Government representation. They think they can do better than the Government stirring things up. In fact they've scored their biggest victories - such as over the Engineers - in struggles where the Government and its Court haven't been involved.

The Government, however, has not gone without victories. It has forced the leadership of the official trade union movement to recognise the Industrial Court, to appear before it and to enforce its rulings on cooling off periods and ballots. The Tories plan to build on this, bringing conciliation to the forefront as they ease the new legal machinery into place. And they hope that a few 'impartial' rulings, like the Appeal Court decisions, might cajole workers into cooling hostility.

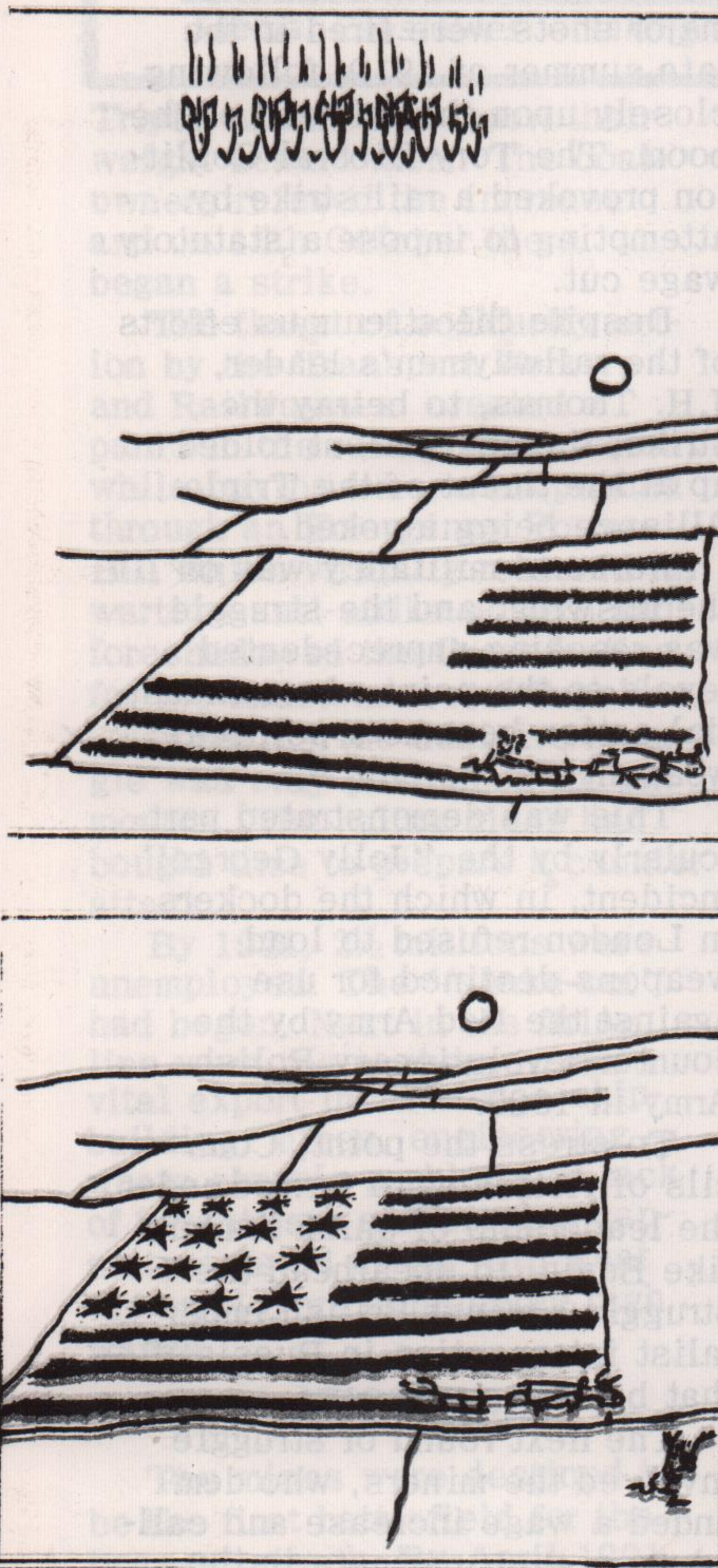
It would be a gross mistake to think that the battle of Chobham Farm is a full victory, or that 'conciliation' is a real change in Tory strategy. The ruling class is tenacious - and able, so long as the working class doesn't move in for the kill, to survive defeats and to force retreats. The Tories will not for long tolerate their present powerlessness. They have shotgun conciliation to help them. And behind the scenes they can prepare for another showdown, on their own terms, where they won't have to run for cover - as they prepared in 1925 after their Red Friday defeat. (See p.5) That's one reason why the TUC's present line with the C.B.I. is so criminal.

The 'conciliation' they are cooking up is nothing but a trap to hold our attention - when we should be putting the boot in, here and now while we can. The Labour Party leaders, with the memory of In Place of Strife not yet faded, are jumping on the bandwagon of anti-Tory feelings - but in actuality they are the main brokers in politics of the conciliation line.

There is now, more than ever, a stark contrast between the combativity of the rank and file and the mealy-mouthed squirming of the TUC leaders with their pernicious attempts to 'conciliate' the CBI (who, let us be clear, will only be really conciliated by a drastic 'voluntary wage freeze')

All the official TUC approach has so far been disastrous: "non-recognition" only worked when it was forcefully asserted by "unofficial" and unsanctioned action by the rank and file. Now the leaders, instead of following up the recent victory so as to rout the Tories, are frittering it away hobnobbing with the CBI. Whatever tight spot the Tories may be in, their greatest asset now is the TUC leadership.

The issue now isn't non-recognition of the Act, but its complete destruction. Socialists and militants must fight to continue the offensive against the Government, to turn its retreat into a rout. In the fight to ensure the total independence of the trade unions from the bosses' state, the central rallying cry must still be: FOR A GENERAL STRIKE TO SMASH THE ACT NOW!



In Brief

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

All the recent talk by both Right and 'left' Trade Union leaders about 'respecting the law' reminds us of a disgusting scene in the House of Commons which occurred on the eve of the General Strike in 1926. Faced with the threat of TUC support for the miners, and, simultaneously, the appeals of Labour parliamentarians not to provoke a General strike, Stanley Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister, could find no more appropriate reply than to quote from the leader of the Labour Party, J R MacDonald. As J R Clynes described it in his memoirs: "He (Baldwin) turned on us and quoted an article written some time before by Ramsey MacDonald in the 'New Leader': *All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike. It has no practical value; it has one certain result - a blinding reaction. Liberty is far more easily destroyed by those who abuse it than by those who oppose it. I agree with every word of that, commented Baldwin to the hushed and crowded house*".

And so the Tory leader went off to fight the class war with a text from the Labour leader on his lips.

It may not be long before Heath is quoting Wilson, Feather, and Jack Jones on respecting law and order to a "hushed and crowded house".

ENOCH CROSSES THE BOYNE

Any July 12th in Belfast you'll see hundreds of crudely painted banners depicting King William of Orange crossing the Boyne River on a white horse. Other banners show the mustachioed face of Lord Randolph Churchill, Winston's demented father who 'played the Orange card' for the Tories in the 1880s, and helped stir things up in Northern Ireland. Enoch Powell's malevolent countenance has yet, so far as we know, to be painted into the Orange pantheon, but he must by now be well in the running.

Weekend after weekend he speaks to the Unionist lodges in Northern Ireland. His message is that the people of Northern Ireland are *British*, not Irish. He wants full integration of Northern Ireland with Britain.

Given full integration, what would Powell do with the 40% of the Six County population who have fixed ideas about being part of the Irish nation? It's not yet clear. Obviously his proposals for repatriating Blacks from Britain could, with a few modifications, be developed and applied to Northern Ireland.

"Repatriate" the whole Republican Irish population from one part of Ireland to another?

MINERS ACQUITTED

After threats by Scottish miners' leaders that there would be an immediate mass walkout if any of the miners on trial for their part in the picketing of Longannet Power Station last February were jailed, all the accused were found not guilty of the various charges brought to 'teach them a lesson'.

The court's yellow streak is entirely

the result of the working class's victories over the Tories. What a contrast with the arrogant jailing judges who terrorised workers in the courts after the defeat of the General Strike in 1926.

MUSHROOM CLOUDS MUSHROOM

We've learned to live with the H-Bomb - the agitation and the mass demonstrations have all but disappeared completely. This is remarkable, since the threat from nuclear weapons, far from diminishing, is probably increasing. The Stockholm International Research Institute has just pointed out that in the ordinary course of the spread of nuclear power for peaceful purposes, more and more countries are acquiring the *capacity* to make nuclear weapons.

Anyone who feels sure this won't lead to a spread of nuclear weapons can turn over and go back to sleep. Pacts and agreements between capitalist governments and Stalinist governments will never guarantee the safety of humanity.

The prospects here were shown by the US Secretary of Defence when he said that the USA needed more Trident long range missile submarines, and B1 bombers to strengthen its hand in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks . . .

Meanwhile workers in Australia haven't gone to sleep on top of the world-annihilating nuclear stockpile like people in Britain have. They are boycotting French trade in protest against the French nuclear tests in the Pacific.

PENAL SERVITUDE

Barton Dock Road Container Base, which was fought for and lost by Manchester dockers in the courts 4 years ago, is now being partly manned by casual labour.

Manpower Limited, an organisation which men can use to seek employment without any cards, are paying 40p per hour to pack and unpack containers on the base.

Over in Warrington a firm called Wardles employed prisoners from the local jail to pack and unpack containers - at the generous rate of five bob a week and an ounce of 'snout'!

So if the 3 London stewards had got arrested in Warrington, they would have found themselves on container work anyway.

WILL THE REAL PLEASE STAND UP ?

'Inprecorr', a bulletin published by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in the German language, circulated in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland, recently reproduced an "Interview with Gery Lawless, an Irish Revolutionary" from 'La Gauche', the Belgian paper edited by Ernest Mandel. It was prefaced by the following note:

"Gery Lawless (pseudonym: the Outlaw): sentenced 36 times (that is a fact not a bit of showing off), imprisoned many times, particularly on account of his membership of the IRA. As a child he was in a British concentration camp. Claimed by the Northern Ireland regime to be one of those chiefly responsible for the present disturbances in Ulster"

Yes, of course. And his silver spurs glistened in the moonshine as he rode away into the Celtic twilight

THE YEARS 1919-1926 marked a decisive period in the history of the British labour movement.

An understanding of this period is of immense importance to workers today.

Like today, it was a time of growing class conflict where every struggle became sharper than the one preceding it. This sharpening of class struggle derived from a profound dual crisis of British capitalism.

Firstly, Britain, the first capitalist state on the world arena had entered a phase of irreversible decline, her economic pre-dominance being challenged and displaced by the other imperialist states.

The First World War itself had, in part, been a product of this decline. Germany had begun to encroach upon and capture large chunks of the British share of the world market to the extent that this loss could only be redressed and a redivision of the world market re-effected by military means.

But far from the war providing a remedy for the chronic overall problems of British imperialism, it actually deepened them, opening the way for an even mightier challenge from the USA.

ORGANISED

Secondly, the period was characterised by a cyclical crisis of capitalism. The post-war boom, which had been based upon a demand for industrial goods, ended abruptly in mid-1920 when the inflationary bubble well and truly burst.

And these were not the only difficulties which faced the bosses. The post war boom had registered tremendous changes in the outlook of the working class, which had taken advantage of the inflationary situation to assert its strength. To wrench wage concessions out of the employers, the workers had to resort to their only weapon: organisation.

Trade union membership grew in leaps and bounds from 5½ million in 1917 to 8½ million in 1920. The changes in consciousness in the working class produced by the sharpness of the struggle helped in

Thomas - "begged and pleaded..."



turn to intensify the problems of the ruling class, giving it very little room to manoeuvre.

EUROPE ABLAZE

Equally vital in its impact was the example of the Russian October Revolution in 1917. As Marxists have always emphasised, revolutionary developments are never purely national in scope, and constitute an international phenomenon.

The early twenties exemplified this. All Europe was ablaze. There had been revolutionary waves in Germany, France, Italy, Hungary and Ireland.

In Britain, too, there were revolutionary developments taking shape in every sphere of society. There were strikes in every industry, disorder in the Army and even a strike by those custodians of capitalist property and legality, the police.

Thus, the position of the ruling class hardly provided a foundation for optimism. Yet, there was only one way out - a relentless attack on the living standards and rights of the working class, which prepared to meet this challenge in the only way it knew: by developing and strengthening its own organisation.

This explains the drive towards the amalgamation of trade unions which took place in the immediate post-war period. In 1921, the AEU (now AUEW) came into existence as a result of the amalgamation of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and nine smaller unions.

Similarly, in 1922, the T&GWU emerged out of the shell of the old Transport Federation. Two years later came the GMWU.

Parallel with this, the pre-war agreement for a Triple Alliance of Transport, Railway and Mining Unions to stand and act together, was revived.

RAILMEN WIN

Both sides were getting into battle formation and the first major shots were fired in the late summer of 1919, following closely upon the tail end of the boom. The Tory-Liberal Coalition provoked a rail strike by attempting to impose a statutory wage cut.

Despite the strenuous efforts of the railwaymen's leader, J.H. Thomas, to betray the strike, the government folded up at the threat of the Triple Alliance being invoked.

Workers' militancy was on the upswing, and the struggle was reaching unprecedented levels to the point where industrial action became a political weapon.

This was demonstrated particularly by the "Jolly George" incident, in which the dockers in London refused to load weapons destined for use against the Red Army by the counter-revolutionary Polish Army in 1920.

To stress the point, Councils of Action were formed under the leadership of union leaders like Bevin, to spearhead the struggle against British imperialist intervention in Russia if that became necessary.

The next round of struggle involved the miners, who demanded a wage increase and called upon their partners in the

1919-1926

how the Tories prepared their

VICTORY OVER THE WORKERS

by
David Black

strength from their victory over the miners. They took on the engineers and virtually smashed the remnants of the massive war-time Shop stewards movement.

Following on this, they inflicted defeats on the dockers, building workers and textile workers, to the extent that they could boast of having slashed war-time pay increases by 75%.

These defeats had the effect of dampening down the class struggle. Large numbers of workers drifted out of the unions. The tide of class struggle had begun to ebb. The only force which stood up against these developments was the infant Communist Party, which fought resolutely inside the unions to draw out clearly and understand the lessons of Black Friday.

MINORITY MOVEMENT

By early 1924, the workers began to regain their fighting spirit. This was reflected in the

defensive, and aimed at consolidating their positions amidst tremendous rank and file criticism by being seen to be doing something.

This line, of course, only created the conditions for further treachery. At a time when capitalism could not afford half-measures, this leadership of J.H. Thomas and Co. were prepared to act only on the basis of such half-measures.

Criminally, they dissipated the will of the class to fight and covered the coming struggle in a smokescreen.

RED FRIDAY

The capitalists saw things quite differently. They knew what was in store and prepared for it. They began by demanding new wage cuts in the pits and threatening a lockout.

Owing to the low stocks of coal available, this was a premature move. Recognising their advantage, the miners rejected the coal-owners demands, and in July 1925 forced the Tory Government to back down by granting a subsidy to maintain wage levels for nine months.

This was a partial victory. The Tories had retreated — strategically. It became known as "Red Friday".

The Tories were quite clear on what they had done. As Churchill put it - "The Government was impressed with the fact that the country as a whole was not sufficiently informed about the character and consequences of such a struggle... We therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it or, if not averting it, of coping efficiently with it when it comes." Or, as Baldwin put it more succinctly "We were not ready."

Their intentions were quite clear to everyone except the trade union and labour leaders. The whole crisis of the coal industry determined the bosses' and Tories' outlook. The return to the Gold standard had forced British export prices up and put coal out the running in a market flooded with cheaper German and Polish coal.

The employers and their government were now intent as never before on cutting miners' wages. To do this involved the capitalist state in preparations of a most detailed character.

THE O.M.S.

In September 1925, they began in earnest to prepare for a revolutionary situation. They set up a body "unofficially" with the object of maintaining communications and supplies in the event of a general strike. This was the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies.

It was made up of middle class Tories who wished to do their "patriotic duty". It was joined by students and such gutterwash as the (pre-Mosley) Fascists.

The government encouraged the OMS and set about preparing its own forces. It divided the country into ten regions, each under a Civil Commissioner. 88 Voluntary Service Committees were set up to keep local services in operation.

Continued on p.10



Special Constables — taking up the cudgels

Triple Alliance to throw their weight behind them. The coal-owners refused the increase and on 16th October there began a strike.

The threat of solidarity action by the Transport Workers and Railwaymen created a panic in the ruling class which, while buying time, also pushed through an Emergency Powers Bill which virtually restored its wartime anti-strike powers and foreshadowed the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies.

In reality the decisive struggle was only postponed for six months. The ruling class had bought time to prepare a counter attack.

By 1921, 2½ millions were unemployed. The "shake-out" had begun. Next in the firing line were the workers in the vital export industries — shipbuilding, mines, engineering — where chronic problems of lack of investment and surplus capacity existed along with what the employers considered high wages.

BLACK FRIDAY

The mines were destined to be the first battlefield for the bosses' attack. By April 1921 the coal-owners demanded a

wage cut and, this being rejected, locked out the miners. It was now class against class.

Amidst tremendous support for the miners in the working class, the Triple Alliance was invoked, a sympathetic strike being called for 16th April 1921.

The Tory-Liberal Government was now on a civil war footing with the Emergency Powers Act implemented, reservists mobilised and troops posted to industrial areas. The union leaderships surrendered at once.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Thomas of the NUR and Williams of the Transport Workers backed out and left the miners to fight alone. Betrayed and deserted, the miners fought on for two months and were forced to concede defeat.

This monumental betrayal went down in history as Black Friday and was a colossal demonstration of the cowardice of reformism. Moreover, it served to demoralise whole sections of the working class.

STEWARDS

Section by section, the employers dealt with the unions and, in the wake of Black Friday, defeat followed defeat. The employers had drawn

rise in the number of strikes, which rose from 576 in 1922 to 710 in 1924. This steady increase reflected, in turn, the determination of workers to resist attempts at wage cutting, whether at the behest of a Labour Government or the Tories.

It was clear that the working class was going to stand its ground, despite the treachery of the reformist leadership — "left" or right.

This resolve gave new heart and courage to the militants who began to organise anew for class battle. The Communist Party launched the National Minority Movement, a mass rank and file organisation to co-ordinate the militants.

Functioning essentially as a broad alliance of militants, it embraced a quarter of the organised trade union movement at its height. Through its activity A.J. Cook was elected as secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain.

The policy of the National Minority Movement was an offensive one, aimed at turning the tide of struggle into an all-out assault on the employers and their state.

The policy of the trade union leadership was, however, purely

ONE IN THE DOCK ALL OUT THE DOCK

They say, though I don't believe it personally, that in Italy there's a statue of the Virgin Mary that miraculously sheds tears. After the victory of Chobham Farm, if there's anywhere that's got a statue of Heath, I bet they'll have found it sweating.

Feather had capitulated to the courts with his ludicrous line of: "I didn't know the NIRC would have the status of a High Court". The rest of the TUC leaders followed him. Jones agreed to pay the £55,000 and had to be

saved — not by defiance but by Denning! The railway leaders followed the ruling of the NIRC, and had a ballot of their members.

Only the rank and file stood firm. The victory of Chobham Farm is their victory. It was their fight that was a rallying cry for the hatred of the working class for the Tory government.

Messages of support by immediate strike action came from all the ports. NUR members at Southampton dock pledged their support. Stewards at the Vauxhall Motor Company pledged theirs. Many

smaller groups of workers stood at the ready — prepared to walk out in the event of any docker being jailed. And the mighty weight of the Scottish miners was behind them too.

What was in the offing was a spontaneous General Strike — official leadership or not.

But then the Tories chickened out and approved the appeal on behalf of dockers — an appeal the dockers didn't approve of themselves.

In fact, if they were angry before, the dockers were furious now. While being delighted at their

victory, they were being deprived of their prey. They didn't want to stop the Tories, they wanted to smash them.

As Alan Williams, one of the three the Tories threatened, said: "I didn't want a solicitor representing me in a court I don't recognise" Vic Turner had a simpler message "It's a bloody liberty".

Now the rank and file has stopped the retreat of the labour movement and started the retreat of the Tories. **TURN THE RETREAT INTO A ROUT!**

Danny James.



!
VS



Above: Vic Turner addresses the mass picket. Below: A container carrier is stopped: the blacking continues. Below: A docker's look of scorn for the police.



“Make no mistake about it, the same action will take place if they try it against any industrial worker in this country” *Vic Turner*



From April to May 1902 Rosa Luxemburg wrote a series of articles and analyses of the General Strike. They show her at her most characteristic — rejecting even the least schematism and always open to what was new and rich in the class struggle. In this piece, part two of "YET AGAIN ON THE BELGIAN EXPERIMENT", written fully four years before the experience of the wave of mass strikes in Russia allowed her to write her classic "Mass Strike", Luxemburg bases herself on the real experience of the then just defeated Belgian strike.

Two points stand out. Firstly, she sees that the Belgian "experiment" was something new, that the term General Strike, though traditionally referring to the anarchist model which made the strike equivalent to the revolution could cover other new tactical methods, and also that General Strikes for limited aims could be undertaken.

Secondly, though still somewhat enmeshed in views of parliamentarism that prevailed before the Russian Revolution, she saw how the subordination of the spontaneity of the strike to parliamentary-type alliances brought disaster.

The most important development in the history of the practice of the General Strike, however, has taken place since this article was written. The working class has added the spontaneous General Strike — as in France 1936 and 1968 — to its tactical armoury.

We publish this article not as a set of recipes, but so that we can learn, most of all, from the brilliant richness of her method, its clarity and freedom from stale preconceptions. This we must learn to apply to the General Strike experiences of our times, including the present struggle for a GENERAL STRIKE TO SMASH THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that the General Strike is one of the most time-honoured slogans of the modern workers' movement; certainly it is one of those over which there has been the hottest and most frequent debate within the ranks of socialism.

If however one avoids having nothing but the word (1), the mere sound, ringing in one's ears and tries to get at the essence of the matter, then it will be clear that the term General Strike is applied in various cases to cover quite different things and consequently receives quite different appraisals.

It is obvious that Nieuwenhuis' (2) famous idea of a General Strike in the event of war is quite a different thing from the international general strike of miners that was being planned in England at the beginning of the 'nineties and for which Eleanor Marx sought to gain the support of the French Socialist Congress in Lille in 1890.

It is clear that there is just as great a difference between October 1898 in France when the attempted General Strike in favour of the railwayworkers by other sections met with bitter failure and the brilliantly successful General Strike of the North Eastern Railway workers in Switzerland. Likewise that the successful General Strike in Carmaux in 1893 as a protest against the special powers assumed by the mayor, the ex-miner Calvingac, has nothing in common with the "Holy Month" decided upon by the executive of the Chartists as long ago as 1839, etc. etc.

In a word, the first precondition for an examination of the question of the General Strike is that one makes a distinction between national and international General Strikes, political and trade union ones, sectional and generalised, those that are motivated by a particular event and those which derive from the general strivings of the proletariat, etc.

One only has to cast one's eye over the variety of experiences of this form of struggle and one will see how mindless is any stereotyping, summary dismissal or glorification of this weapon.

Let us turn our attention in particular to the political general Strike, and exclude the straightforwardly trade union sectional strike which in most countries has become a daily event making any "theorising" superfluous.

ANARCHIST

We see here what in our opinion are two different conceptions of the operation of this means of struggle: the anarchist General Strike (3) and the political issue mass strike (4) as we shall for the moment call it.

In the first category we find above all the national General Strike undertaken with a view to its ushering in the socialist order, which has been the traditional hobby-horse of the French trade unionists, the Broussists (5) and the Allemanists (6).

This conception was clearly expressed for instance in the periodical "L'Internationale" of May 27th 1869 where we find written: "When the strikes spread and link up one with

another they are very close to becoming a General Strike; and a General Strike linked with the ideas of emancipation which currently prevail must end with a great cataclysm that would consummate the social upheaval."

The Congress of French Trade Unions which met in Bordeaux in 1888 resolved likewise: "Only the General Strike or the revolution can bring about the liberation of the working class." As a characteristic rider to this another resolution was accepted by the Congress in which the workers were encouraged to "make a clean break with the politicians who betrayed them."

The same basis underlies the French resolution which was supported by Briand (7) and opposed by Legien (8) at the last International Socialist Congress, held in Paris in the summer of 1900 (9).

This urges "the workers of the whole world to organise a General Strike, should it be possible to use this organisation as a simple means, a lever, whereby that pressure could be exerted on capitalist society which is unavoidable for the introduction of the necessary political and economic reforms, and if the situation presents itself as favourable, for putting the General Strike at the service of the social revolution."

In the same category we find on the other hand the idea of utilising the General Strike as a means against capitalist wars. This idea was expressed as long ago as the International Socialist Congress in Brussels in 1868 and once again was taken up and propagated in the 'nineties by Nieuwenhuis (10) in Brussels, Zurich and London. (11)

PANACEA

In one as in the other the characteristic thing in the conception is the belief in the General Strike as a panacea against capitalist society as a whole, or, which is the same thing, against certain of its essential functions; the belief in an abstract, absolute category of the General Strike as the method of the class struggle equally applicable and equally successful in all countries and at all times.

The bakers stop delivering their wares, the street lights remain unlit, the rail and tramways do not run — the cataclysm is at hand! Worked out on paper like this the plan was as valid for all times and countries as any groping in a fog.

This averting attention from the specifics of time and place, from the concrete political situation of the

class struggle in each country as well as from the organic connection between the decisive battle for socialism and the daily struggles of the proletariat, the patient work of education and organisation — all this was the typically anarchist feature of this conception.

The other side of the coin of the anarchist was the utopian aspect of this theory, and with its emergence ... emerged the necessity to fight this conception of the General Strike with the utmost vigour.

UTOPIAN

Thus we have for decades now seen Social-Democrats (12) fighting the utopianism of the General Strike. The tireless struggles of the French Labour Party against the French trade unions were based on exactly the same principles as the invariable disputes of the German delegation at the International Congresses with Nieuwenhuis.

In this the German Social-democrats earned for themselves the special merit of having not only given the scientific arguments against the utopian theory but particularly of having counterposed the practice of day to day political struggle at the level of parliamentarism to the speculations of a once and for all, decisive, battle "with arms folded" against the bourgeois state.

That is the extent — no further — of what is called often the Social-democracy's struggle against the idea of the General Strike. In fact it is only against the absolute, anarchist theory of the General Strike that the critique voiced by the advocates of scientific socialism was addressed. And it was only against this that it could have been addressed.

The political issue General Strike which the French workers have from time to time engaged in for specific political ends, as in the already mentioned case in Carmaux; and which the Belgian workers in particular often engaged in as part of the struggle for universal suffrage, shares only the name and the technical form with the anarchist General Strike theory. Politically however they are two quite separate conceptions.

While the anarchist General Strike slogan is based on an abstract general theory, the political strikes corresponding to the second conception occur in particular countries or simply in particular towns and regions as the product of a definite political situation and directed towards a specific political outcome. There can as a result be no denying the efficacy of this weapon in gen-

eral or a priori since the facts, the victories in France and Belgium, prove the opposite.

CONSCIOUSNESS

But further, the entire argument that proved so effective against Nieuwenhuis or against the French anarchists does not in the slightest hold against the political General Strike of a local character.

The contention that the ability to carry out a General Strike presupposes the existence of a stage in the education and organisation of the proletariat that makes that very General Strike superfluous and the taking of power a simple matter of course — this masterly rapier thrust by the old Liebknecht (13) against Nieuwenhuis ... is completely inapplicable when it comes to local and political issue General Strikes. For these the only necessary preconditions are popular political demand and a favourable balance of forces materially.

In fact quite the contrary: no doubt can be cast as to whether the Belgian General Strikes undertaken in the pursuit of universal suffrage invariably draw more people into action than can be said to be consciously socialists in the real sense.

The political strike in Carmaux worked in exactly the same way and brought about such a rapid and thorough raising of the level of consciousness that after the campaign was over, even a deputy of the right wing admitted to the socialists: "If you wrest many more victories like this one in Carmaux you will have already gained the upper ground, for the peasants always rally to the side of the stronger force and you have proved that you are stronger than the mining company, than the government and the Chamber." (14) (Almanach of the Workers Party 1893 - RL)

The Nieuwenhuis or the French-anarchist General Strike ideas form an inescapable closed circuit of on the one hand the degree of socialist consciousness necessary for a General Strike, and, on the other hand, seeing that socialist consciousness as the outcome of the General Strike.

But the political issue General Strike on the contrary relates to aspects of the day to day political life which are deeply felt and excite lively interest. At the same time it serves as an effective medium of socialist agitation.

In the same way the contradiction construed between day to day political work, in particular parliamentary activ-



ROSA LUXEMBURG THE GENERAL STRIKE

ity, on the one hand, and *this* category of the General Strike on the other is pure tilting at windmills. For, far from wishing to replace parliamentary and other day to day work, the political General Strike serves as another link in the chain of methods of agitation and combat.

In fact it serves directly as a tool in the parliamentary struggle. Significantly all the political General Strikes to date were attempts either to preserve or gain parliamentary rights: the one in Carmaux for the local franchise (15), the one in Belgium for universal equal suffrage.

SPECIFIC

If political General Strikes have not occurred in Germany and have only been used in a few other countries then it is certainly not because of a supposed contradiction with some "German method" of conducting the struggle.

The simple reason is that it takes certain specific social and political conditions to be able to use the General Strike as a political weapon. In Belgium the high level of industrial development in conjunction with the small area of the country makes it quite simple to effect a rapid spreading of the strike movement. Also it requires what in absolute terms is not a very large number of strikers, say 30,000 (16) to paralyse the economic life of the land.

Germany as a big country with far flung industrial regions separated by vast stretches of agricultural land and an absolutely huge number of workers is in this respect in an incomparably unfavourable position. And the same applies to France seen as a whole, not to mention larger and less industrially centralised countries.

But what also constitutes a vital aspect of this is the existence to some degree of the right of combination and democratic norms. In a country — like Upper Silesia — where striking workers are simply driven to work by the police and gendarmes and where agitation amongst "those who are not work-shy" leads straight to the jailhouse if not penal servitude there can be no talk of a political General Strike.

Thus if the General Strike has so far only been used as a political weapon in Belgium and partly in France it is by no means the mark of some imaginary superiority of the German Social-Democracy or a momentary aberration of the romance countries. Rather it is these factors — more a testimony to our

semi-asiatic backwardness as far as politics is concerned.

ENGLAND

Finally there is the example of England where to a large degree all the economic and political preconditions for a successful General Strike exist but where this mighty weapon never gets used in its political life.

This example spotlights yet another important precondition for its utilisation — *the internal coalescence of the trade union and the political workers' movement*. In Belgium the economic struggle and the political function as an organic whole, the trade unions and the party finding themselves side by side in every important action, working hand in glove with one another.

In England however, the narrow craft and therefore also divisive parish-pump politics of the trade unions together with the lack of a strong socialist party excludes their combining in a political General Strike.

A closer study also shows that all absolute judgments of the General Strike and condemnations made without taking the concrete circumstances in every country into account, nominally basing themselves on the practice in Germany, amounts to nothing but national conceit and thoughtless *schematism*. And this same question shows one other thing: that when the advantages of a "free-hand" in socialist tactics is so eloquently advocated to us, the advantages of "keeping-your-options-open" or of adapting to the variety of the concrete, it is in the last resort always no more than the freedom to engage in horse-trading with the bourgeois parties.

When on the other hand it is a question of mass action, some means of struggle distantly resembling a revolutionary tactic, then these devotees of the "open options" immediately turn into the dourest dogmatists. They then try to force the class struggle the whole world over into the mould of the so-called German tactic.

If this recent General Strike in Belgium has been unsuccessful, this fact cannot constitute grounds for a 'revision' of the Belgian tactic, because it is well known that the General Strike was neither prepared for nor was it used politically. In fact it was paralysed by the leadership, and before it could accomplish anything dispersed.

Because mass action was not contemplated by the political — or, to be more precise — parliamentary

leadership of the movement, the striking masses stood in the wings waiting for their cues with no connection with what was going on on stage until they were finally shunted off to the dressing room. The failure of the Belgian campaign succeeded in proving the pointlessness of the General Strike as little as the surrender of the military defences of Metz by Bazaine (17) proved the pointlessness of military defences as such or as little as the parliamentary collapse of the German liberals proves the pointlessness of parliament.

Quite the contrary. The fiasco of the latest action of the Belgian Labour Party must convince everyone who knows how it was prepared, that only a General Strike — one that really takes the field — could have achieved anything. And if there is any need to 'revise' the tactic of our Belgian comrades then it seems to us that it should be in the direction we indicated in our previous article in this periodical (18). The April campaign after all showed one thing clearly: that a strike indirectly against the church but directly against the bourgeoisie is a complete waste of time the moment the fighting proletariat is politically tied to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie turns from being a means of pressure on the government into a ball and chain that lames the steps of the proletariat. (19) The most important lesson of the Belgian experiment speaks out not against the General Strike as such but on the contrary against a parliamentary alliance with liberalism which condemns every General Strike to fruitlessness.

We must oppose with the utmost sharpness, however, just reacting to the very mention of the word 'General Strike' with the old threadbare clichés once, but no longer, useful to combat the ludicrous ideas of Nieuwenhuis and the anarchists. The same applies to any attempt to 'revise' the Belgian tactic simply on the basis of the most superficial confusion as to what happened in Belgium, because not only the Belgian workers, now as then, but also the Swedish (20) stand poised to wield the weapon of the General Strike in the battle for universal suffrage. It would be a pity if even a tiny handful of militants in these countries let themselves be led astray in their search for a strategy by means of forms of speech and lured by the preferability of the so-called 'German' methods of struggle.

(1) All emphases are Rosa Luxemburg's including those within quoted passages.

(2) Nieuwenhuis: Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846—1919). Leader of the Dutch Socialist Union; went over to anarchism later; advocate of anarchist General Strike and 'ethical socialism'.

(3) By this is meant the General Strike which is really synonymous with 'the revolution', advocated by anarchists and later syndicalism. Bakunin was its great advocate in this period.

(4) Rosa Luxemburg is evidently not too happy herself with this terminology. The point is that the strike is planned and relates to specific goals short of a revolutionary overthrow. In no. 7 of *Workers' Fight*, page 4, what is called type (a) under the section PLANNED STRIKE is about the equivalent although as Rosa Luxemburg makes clear the leaders might still betray as in (b) and (c).

(5) Broussists — followers of Paul Brousse (1854—1912). After the destruction of the Paris Commune Brousse worked with Bakunin. In 1881 he appeared as the leader of the Possibilist faction in France advocating reformist gradualism and decentralisation, particularly use of local councils.

(6) Followers of Jean Allemane (1843—1935), also Possibilist. Like Brousse in favour of world wide as well as nationwide general strike.

(7) Aristide Briand. French socialist, left Party in 1904. Later a minister and Prime Minister in France.

(8) Karl Legien (1861—1920) Opponent of General Strike. Right wing Social-Democratic President of German Trade Union Commission.

(9) International Socialist Congress, Paris 23—27 September 1900 (see Rosa Luxemburg: *The Socialist Crisis in France*).

(10) Compare with Trotsky: *The ILP and the Fourth International*; in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1935—36*, page 64—69.

(11) The International Socialist Congresses took place in Brussels from 16—22 August 1891, in Zurich from 6—12 August 1893 and in London from 27 July — 1st August 1896.

(12) Social-Democrat was the term used before 1914 for what we would now term Marxist.

(13) Wilhelm Liebknecht was the father of Karl Liebknecht the great revolutionary who was murdered with Rosa Luxemburg in 1919.

(14) By Chamber the deputy was referring to the French Parliament.

(15) In France, unlike Germany, it was difficult to get socialists in Parliament but easy to get them on local and departmental councils. It was for this reason that the Broussists stressed local elections and that the local franchise was a real issue in Carmaux.

(16) Actually over 300,000 took part in the strike.

(17) Achille Bazaine (1811—1888) was the French general forced to surrender at Metz.

(18) The reference here is in fact to a whole series of articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* 14 April, 15 April, 21st April, 22 April, and, particularly, *Die Neue Zeit* Yr. 20 1901/2 vol 2 pp 105—110. In these articles she shows how the alliance with the liberals defeated the General Strike.

(19) On the question of the reform of the franchise in Belgium at this time the principal opposition was the Catholic Church. The position of the Social-Democrats expressed in their paper 'Peuple' was this: "Stand firm" it told the strikers, "so that at least the legal channels for public opinion (ie Parliamentary elections — trans.) will be opened to you by means of the pressure being exerted by the liberal bourgeoisie and all the official representatives of trade and industry". This faith in the 'pressure' of the bourgeoisie determined the alliance of the socialists and liberals which shackled and then smashed the whole strike movement.

(20) The Swedish strike timed to coincide with a parliamentary debate was called off on the promise of universal equal suffrage. The government, however, prevaricated, and it was years before Sweden achieved it.

WORKERS' FIGHT

Where we stand

■ Capitalism is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the colonies and neo-colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, at the same time as it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible, the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health: in reality the boom was like the flush on a sick man's face. And already economic expansion has given way to creeping stagnation.

■ Today the ruling class can keep their system going only at the price of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world, of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world, and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

■ The only way out is for the working class to take power and to bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan, in place of the present unplanned and blind private-profit system. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

■ The working class has created political parties for this purpose — Labour Parties, Communist Parties, Social Democratic Parties. But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.

■ The task is therefore to build a socialist party which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class. WORKERS' FIGHT is a group of revolutionary socialists, aiming to build that party: a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.

■ The basis of our activity is therefore the scientific theory of Marxism, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present-day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change.

■ We fight for the independence of the trade unions from all state control, and within the unions for democracy and militant policies. Although they are not enough for the struggle for workers' power, the trade unions are necessary for the defence of workers' interests. Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries in united class action, can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable and independent instruments of working class interests.

■ We fight against the Industrial Relations Act, against any incomes policy under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.

■ We fight against unemployment; for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining.

■ We fight to extend the power of workers' to control the details of their own lives in industry here and now. We stand for the fight for workers' control, with the understanding that it can be made a serious reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' 'participation' in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

■ We believe that the "Parliamentary road to socialism" is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully: no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine, which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic Workers' Councils.

■ We give unconditional support to the struggles of oppressed peoples fighting against imperialism, and to their organisations leading the fight.

■ We fight racialism and against immigration controls. We support the right of black minorities in Britain to form defence leagues or independent political organisations.

■ We fight for full and equal rights for women, for female emancipation from the male domination which has co-existed throughout history with class society and has its roots in such society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our own class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves."

■ British workers have — fundamentally — more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, nationality or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We see the fight for socialism as a world wide struggle, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party. We give critical support to the Fourth International.

■ We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of the USSR and the other countries called 'communist', which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social regime of the different Bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone with real communism. At the same time we defend the nationalised economy in these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally: that is, irrespective of the selfish, usually anti-working class and anti-revolutionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies.

■ There are other political groups (including the official British section of the Fourth International) which have generally similar aims, but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider all these groups to be seriously — sometimes grossly — inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these groups where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences.

Dave Brodie

TOM CONSTERDINE

THE HANGING MAGISTRATE

Not long ago the Manchester Evening News printed an item concerning a particularly nauseating heap of human garbage by the name of Tom Consterdine, Justice of the Peace and Chairman of the Social Security for Crewe, Cheshire.

What took place the previous day, as the squalid little publican sat in judgment over his fellow men, was a prime example of the contempt many of the reptiles on the bench have for the poorer members of the community.

As he sentenced an unemployed father of five to six months imprisonment for the theft of £8 from his electricity meter, he remarked: "The key to this situation is that whilst you are drawing large amounts of money weekly from the Social Security, you are not likely to want to find work."

The Defendant had earlier informed this venomous bilge rat that he received £17.20 per week unemployment benefit to keep himself, his wife and their five children.

Later, the magisterial maniac told the prisoner: "You draw Social Security for doing nothing. Does it ever prey on your conscience?"

The walking disease that is Tom Consterdine owns a busy hotel on the outskirts of Crewe, where no doubt he entertains his public-spirited patrons, retired Brigadiers, landlords, policemen and the like.

This most certainly keeps him in more than reasonable comfort. An amount such as £17.20 a week probably does to feed the dogs.

It is surprising (mildly so) even in this oppressive society, that a creature such as he can not only foul the pavements he walks upon and pollute the air he breathes, but is also permitted to use his position as a public officer to insult, degrade and humiliate the wretches who stand before him.

It is indeed frightening that any twittering, gibbering megalomaniac can decide the fate of those poor unfortunates who fall victim of the mind-crushing system which types like Consterdine help to preserve.

One thing to remember. Don't get booked for parking in Crewe. You could finish up breaking rocks on Dartmoor.

1926 (continued)

The police force was enlarged through a massive recruitment of Special Constabulary and the armed forces were mobilised to guard the docks, railways and telephone exchanges.

Warships were anchored in the Mersey, Humber, Tyne and Clyde, while troops armed with gas were moved into the capital and the main industrial centres.

The bosses meant business. True to form, the trade union leaders did nothing to meet the challenge.

A Royal Commission on the Coal Industry reported, demanding that the miners accept a wage cut and a longer working day. The coalowners declared a lockout for May 1st, 1926 unless the miners accepted these conditions.

In response the miners raised the slogan: "Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day. No district agreements."

On April 20th a state of emergency was declared and the Special Constabulary was mobilised. On April 29th the Executives of the Unions met in a special TUC Conference, and frantic efforts were still being made by 'leaders' like J.H. Thomas and J.R. Clynes to avoid a confrontation.

On May 1st, the miners were locked out. Simultaneously the TUC Conference took a poll of the trade unions on their attitude to a General Strike to defend the miners. 3,653,527 voted for a General Strike; 49,911 were against.

But still the union leaders prostrated themselves before the Government, begging the cabinet of "hard-faced men" not to push them into a fight. "I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all today," confessed Thomas.

Finally the dithering leaders had their hands forced for them — in the middle of a conference with the Cabinet — by unofficial direct action by the NATSOPA chapel of the Daily Mail, which refused to continue printing a viciously anti-union editorial.

Baldwin, hearing the news, jumped up from the conference table and broke off the negotiations.

Even now the trade union leaders were still grovelling, and tried to disown the printers. But the Government felt that it could beat an army led by

such generals and, moreover, it needed to take on the workers and defeat them. So the strike was on.

The union leaders were terrified. In fact, they agreed with the Daily Mail — "Two Governments cannot exist within the same capital. One must destroy the other, or surrender to the other." The labour "leaders" thus felt that a working class defeat was an enticing prospect, because fundamentally they feared the workers more than the employers.

They deliberately held back the workers even after the strike was declared, leaving whole groups like the engineers at work until the very last day of the strike. Throughout the strike they maintained contact with the Government.

Finally they called off the strike "so that negotiations could begin", even though the determination and activity of the workers was increasing and a whole new wave had started to move into action.

Victory had been possible. But the miners were left to fight alone for 6 months, when they were forced back to work with their wages cut, hours lengthened and national agreements scrapped.

Thus the ruling class was able to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class. This was soon followed by the mass unemployment of the "Great Depression". And it took more than a generation for the labour movement to recover from the defeat.

The only force which could have provided a principled alternative leadership was the Communist Party, whose leaders had been jailed before the strike and which, following the lead of the Stalin leadership of the Communist International, was tied hand and foot to the so-called lefts on the General Council of the TUC. Their slogan of "All power to the General Council" effectively made them indistinguishable from the trade union Lefts.

In the absence of revolutionary leadership, the class was defeated and demoralised, not so much by the preparations of the enemy but by the eagerness of its own "leaders" to throw in the sponge.

This is the central lesson of 1919-1926 for today. Neither Feather, nor even Jones and Scanlon, will take the responsibility of leadership in a serious fight, as Feather's scurrying to and from Downing Street, and Jones' and Scanlon's conduct in the docks and engineers' struggles show.

Today, the Tories are buying time and preparing behind the scenes. 1926 must not repeat itself.

INDUSTRIAL FIGHT

BRIEFING

Hilary Cave reports on the EQUAL PAY fiddle

"I'm an Englishman, and I think that most people, like me, would never work for a woman or a black".

So said one faithful servant of capitalism, a personnel manager at Hawker Siddeley, in 1971.

He did in fact highlight one of the features of capitalist economy — the use of such labels as 'woman' or 'black' as an excuse to pay low wages. These methods are much respected by company directors and shareholders because they increase profits.

Working women have long suffered from the well-tried 'divide and rule' policy. In wages, working conditions, fringe benefits and trade union organisation, women lag far behind men. If we look at minimum pay, the position of women seems to have improved since 1969. But looking at minimum wage levels can be misleading.

In 1975, when the Equal Pay Act comes into force, and women's minimum rates will have to equal those of men, most women will not actually take home as much money as most men.

A survey carried out by the Coventry Engineering Employers themselves in 1971 showed that, although women now get a higher percentage share of men's rates, the difference in take-home pay has widened by as much as £10 a week.

How do the bosses manage this?

In the 200 years since the factory system began in Britain, they have become very clever at splitting up the workers. They tell us that women are 'less reliable' as workers, and therefore do not qualify for equal pay.

Why? The usual answers mention staying at home to look after sick children, and the inferior physical strength of women. If all else fails, the excuse that women don't need as much money as men because their husbands will support them, will do.

There are seven commonly found ways of making sure that women's actual wages are lower than those of men. All these will go to prevent the Equal Pay Act becoming really effective in 1975 — unless women organise now to fight them.

* *Separate but not equal:*

Make sure that men and women do different jobs, so that it's im-

possible to compare their wages.

* *Night Work:*

Employers usually pay more for night-shift work, 'dirty' or 'heavy' work. Women in industry are prevented by law from working on night shifts, although hospital nurses might be forgiven for wondering why night-shifts are illegal for women in industry, but not for women in hospitals.

* *Overtime*

Most women avoid this because it has traditionally been taken for granted that working women should also look after the house, the kids and aged relations. By keeping basic pay low so that earnings have to be made up with overtime, employers can be sure that most women's actual wages are much lower than those of men.

* *Service payments:*

Most of the 6½ million working mothers in Britain have been victims of this fiddle. Large extra payments or special bonuses for long — usually unbroken — service can mean that women and men doing the same job are likely to be earning different wages.

* *Regrading:*

All the jobs done by women are counted as, for instance, 'Grade 6'. All the jobs done by men are placed in 5 grades above this. The Equal Pay Act, which forbids agreements giving separate rates for men and women, will allow this sort of regrading.

* *Basic rate:*

Companies whose consciences would be upset by the regrading fiddle often use this version of it. The women's basic rate is raised so that it equals the men's rate. All jobs are then regraded, with bonuses for 'dirty', 'heavy' or 'strenuous' work, and it's quite easy to see that women will take home less.

* *Job evaluation:*

This may be called 'scientific' by management, but it is simply a systematic way of avoiding equal pay. Each job is given a number of points. Those scoring high are given the highest wage rates. It's quite simple to make sure that the jobs done by women do not score high on this points system.

It is not only in wages that women lag behind men. Their 'fringe benefits' are also less,

as in the case of pension schemes and sick pay. The following table gives the percentage of employees covered by pension and sick pay schemes:

	Manual	Non-manual
Sick pay		
Men	62.9	91.6
Women	48.8	82.3
Pensions		
Men	45.3	73.2
Women	11.9	38.6

The outstandingly low figure here is the number of working class women covered by pension schemes. Thus those who earn least at work will receive the least in retirement — although their need will be greatest.

In the light of this, there can be no doubt that equality of women's earnings will not be created in 1975, when the terms of the Equal Pay Act come into force. Like so much 'progressive' legislation it is largely a sham, full of

loopholes and room for the bosses to manoeuvre and fiddle as they please.

Trade Union militancy could make sure that these fiddles did not succeed, but many women are simply not trade union members. Those who are members are often inactive.

This is not surprising when we consider the pressures on women to accept most or all of the responsibility for running a home or looking after children.

Yet it cannot be left to the officials in the trade unions to push the fight for real women's rights in industry. Just as the official leaders of the trade union movement have avoided a real fight over the Industrial Relations Act, they have for years failed to take effective action over the question of equal pay for women.

Reliance on the E.P.T.U...

THE G.E.C. SUBSIDIARY, RELIANCE TELEPHONES, Wellingborough, has closed down one part of its factory, the department where mainly women workers wired up jack-in equipment. Nobody complained because it was thought "well, they're only women workers".

This sort of attitude highlights one of the basic problems of the area — that of weak basic trade union organisation.

Northampton is a weak trade union area and Wellingborough particularly weak. Reliance was at one time fairly strongly organised by the ETU. But this organisation crumbled up when the ETU branch secretary Askew organised a ballot so that he could sell the men down the river in a pay dispute. The way he organised it was that members and non-members alike were balloted — the total workforce.

Understandably this rankled with the members of the Union and many dropped out altogether.

However, with only a few members left in, the ETU still retained negotiating rights, although the majority of the workers in the shop had changed to ASTMS in disgust.

The status quo is being kept with the active connivance of the operations manager, Stringer, who for obvious reasons prefers the devil in his pocket to the one he doesn't know.

To show how 'democratic' he was, Stringer said he would arrange a meeting with 10 workers from the shop floor to help "iron out differences". The time chosen (by Stringer of course, and with no prior notice) was a Friday, at 4.35pm. And when, come 5 o'clock, the men decided to go home, Stringer could righteously exclaim "They're not interested in their own affairs — we might as well adjourn the whole thing!"

During the meeting Stringer was asked why he wouldn't agree to ASTMS having negotiating rights. He said he had written to the ASTMS branch secretary, and he hadn't replied yet. Though he himself had taken all of 4 months to reply to the branch secretary's previous letter, he frothed angrily that "such

discourtesy cannot be tolerated!" (Reminds one of school — write out 100 times "I must not be discourteous to Mr. Stringer" — and then perhaps he'll grant trade union rights!)

The uncertain trade union situation could hamper the coming pay talks. The men demand a rise on 3 grades of about £4. (The basic grade at present is £19.20.) Who is going to negotiate?

FIERY KEARNS

Lately the fiery Brother Kearns of the ETU came to speak to the men.

"Askew's no good" he says "ring me up any time, any place. I'll work wonders if you will promise me your full backing."

Some people were taken in. But ask Bro. Kearns what happened at Nene Valley Mobile Homes a couple of years back during a dispute: after a lockout, there he was at the fore — "we'll black these goods from Land's End to John O'Groats. The company's taken on more than it bargained for!"

The next day he ordered the ETU men back to work. They were the first back at work.

Now rumour has it that Operations Manager Stringer is arranging a meeting with the ETU in Manchester, behind the men's backs. In this way he might hope to ease out ASTMS. (In 1968 he eased out the AEF, who were forced to hold their meetings outside the workshop before they withdrew finally.)

The method could be something simple like bringing the negotiation procedure forward so that the ETU are still sole negotiators, and then after that just play for time.

Stringer reckons he can win by dilly-dallying. But he could be very wrong.

Jack Wolf

I would like to know more about Workers' Fight.

NAME

Address

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Send to:

John Sterling
98 Gifford Street,
London N.1.

POLICE FRAME-UP

FROM p1

But other trials are going on which also show the growing political repression being carried out by the police force for the "security of the State".

One of the most important is the trial of the people now known as the "Stoke Newington Eight".

Last August saw a stepping up of police — in particular Special Branch — activity against revolutionaries. Partly this was connected with the series of "Angry Brigade"

actions, in particular the bombing of the homes of Robert Carr, William Batty (managing director of Ford UK) and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry John Davies. This last action came a few days after Davies had announced his intention to close the Clydebank and Scotstoun yards of UCS.

First, two houses in Essex were searched. Numerous houses of friends of Jake Prescott and Ian Purdie, whose trial date had just

been set, were raided. On August 15th there were three separate raids in London, and more on the following days. On August 20th the first five out of the eight were arrested — later another three were charged: like the others, on various counts including CONSPIRACY TO CAUSE EXPLOSIONS.

Whatever our political differences with those arrested — and they are many and deep-going — the

Stoke Newington Eight are serious revolutionaries fighting on the side of the working class. And their defence, as befits their beliefs, will be a political one.

The trial, which is due to last until about October, will be the scene of important revelations about the activity of the police and the Special Branch, and their agents. It will be a living example too of one of the Defendants' main points: that police repression against the political opponents of capitalism is on the increase; that all sorts of cover-all charges like Conspiracy, requiring only the most circumstantial of "evidence" are now being used by the State to attack and frame up its enemies. (It was on such a charge that Jake Prescott was given 15 years in jail last year.)

* * *

If the Sunday Times has done some service here, the opposite can be said of The Times itself. After an article appeared in that paper about armed training for the IRA in London, Michael Callinan and another man were arrested. They were charged in connection with a speech they are alleged to have made in Hyde Park about the war in Ireland.

The charge of Treason-felony, a very old charge hardly ever used and carrying huge penalties, has been brought against them. They have repeatedly been denied bail.

STUDENTS' STRUGGLE — A BALANCE SHEET

THE EXISTENCE OF A RADICAL student movement is to the advantage of the working class. If you don't believe it, ask the miners. During the strike, left wing students were able to provide accommodation, funds, extra pickets, and publicity for the miners' cause.

So the Government, logically enough, is against student radicalism. Late last year they brought out a plan, the basic effect of which would be — 1) to give university and college authorities more control over student union funds to allow students to 'opt out' of union membership. Half a million students boycotted lectures on 8 December in protest; and college authorities also criticised the idea. It wasn't that the authorities didn't want to repress student radicalism: they disagreed with the Tories' method, they didn't want to be in the front of the firing line.

The Tories postponed their proposals and are reconsidering. Various tactics are open to them: to appoint a Registrar of Student Unions, to insist on a standard 'Aims and Objects' clause in all student union constitutions, to put union membership on an 'opting in' basis, and so on. Very likely they will use the opportunity given to them by the students dispersing for the summer to push through other measures.

The basic purpose will be the same — to stop the student unions being an area where left-wing ideas have influence, to destroy the political autonomy and independence of student unions.

This purpose has been pursued consistently for the last three years, with a skilful policy of victimising militant students and lecturers. Probably at least a hundred students have been picked off in that period. Some previously militant universities, for example Essex, were reduced to a state where no left wing organisation existed. Administrators "took care" with admissions to universities: the Registrar of Keele University put it like this — "The disadvantage of a bad home background used to be a positive advantage in getting a place at Keele; now the university simply cannot take the risk of accepting a candidate who might cause trouble" (Times, 19 April)

But still student unions have

continued to vote support and money for such causes as the miners' strike and — worst of all from the Tories' point of view — the fight against British imperialism in Ireland. So the Government has launched a sharper attack.

OFFENSIVE

This fits in well with their general offensive. To assist them in their crucial task of defeating the massive industrial strength of the labour movement, they attack the working class, and its allies, at weaker points. Thus the big propaganda offensive to convince British workers that they have some common interest with the British Army in Ireland; the welfare cuts; the racist Immigration Act; and the plans for student unions.

Victories in these sectors will, they hope, help to sap militancy in other sectors.

And, of course, they want to save money. They have various ideas — shorter courses, four term years, student loans instead of grants, and so on.

Socialists must be against this penny-pinching. But these financial cuts have not, on the whole, been the main issue in the present confrontation. Already the Government have cut the real value of student grants considerably, and they have channelled an increasing proportion of students into the poorly provided non-university colleges. (The proportion was 31% of full time students in 1957/8, and 47% in 1967/8). Student accommodation has got worse and worse. All this has happened with comparatively little resistance. The NUS is not an ordinary Trade Union, with economic power and rooted in an economic struggle.

Important student struggles rarely centre round immediate, utilitarian issues — even if they start on such issues, they quickly escalate to broader social and political issues.

THE NUS

The President of the National Union of Students, Communist Party member Digby Jacks, has appealed to students to 'defend the unions'. But he hasn't explained the importance of saving them, other than in general talk of 'democracy' and the 'no money for student sports clubs' aspect.

He has played down the political issues, and has failed to support local struggles for autonomy, as at North London Poly.

The NUS approach has been like the TUC approach over the Industrial Relations Bill, only worse. The CP has stressed, again and again, the 'contradictions' between the Government and the college administrations thus obscuring the fact that the administrations have been pursuing the Tories' strategy right from 1969.

THE LIAISON COMMITTEE

There is a left-wing opposition in the NUS — the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions. The LC candidates standing against Jacks & Co for NUS official positions got over a quarter of the vote at the Easter conference. The LC has been the only body taking a firm stand against state accountability, against tying students to college administrations, and for an understanding of the political nature of the struggle, for solidarity with the working class and the fight against imperialism in Ireland.

The LC held its third national conference on 20/21 May. It decided, correctly we think, to continue to centre its work round the issue of the political autonomy and independence of student unions. This policy, proposed by the International Marxist Group, was opposed by the International Socialists, the other main political group in the LC. The IS proposed instead that the LC should be based on a comprehensive political programme. But if the LC has any meaning, it is as an alliance on specific, limited issues — not as a half-baked political party.

What the LC conference did not take up sufficiently was the task of translating the abstract-sounding issue of autonomy into popular terms. The conference spent 45 minutes arguing over whether to use the term 'technocratic reforms' (IMG) or 'capitalist rationalisation' (IS): what it didn't discuss was how to get EITHER of these terms over to large numbers of students and workers.

And it is vital to explain the issues widely. We cannot afford to concede easy victories to the present bosses' offensive on any front

John Cunningham
Chris Whytehead



At a recent meeting called by the Downham Estate Tenants Association (Lewisham, London), Labour Councillors met a stormy reception. 100 tenants had packed to capacity the Goldsmiths Community Centre on the Estate.

On the platform was a spokesman for the Labour Council, which has decided to implement the Tory Rents Bill.

His speech was met with a howl of abuse from the meeting and he was unable to finish it. The tenants stressed that they didn't want excuses — but a strategy with which to fight.

Also on the platform was a Left Labour councillor and a local Communist Party member. They gave the tenants many fine words, but both exuded confidence in what the Labour Party, rather than the tenants themselves, could do. Thus they failed to concede to the demand for rent strikes.

It was at this point that a member of WORKERS FIGHT spoke up. He stressed the need for a fighting strategy of a rent strike and the obstruction of the Housing Commissioners.

The tenants appeared to welcome this lead, and the meeting finished by passing a resolution which called for the Labour Council to reverse its decision on implementation — or else stand down.

Steve Woodling