

Workers' fight

Shrewsbury 24 Special Supplement

JANUARY 15th 1974

Shrewsbury Trial A THREAT TO EVERY MILITANT

WHEN THE Judge handed down sentences of THREE YEARS, TWO YEARS AND NINE MONTHS on Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson and John McKinsie Jones in the Shrewsbury trial on December 19th, even the foreman of the jury muttered "disgraceful" and left the court, followed by another juror.

The sentences are certainly a vicious and disgraceful proof that this government is determined either to break and tame the labour movement, or to break itself in trying.

That Government knows what the whole capitalist class knows — that nothing will ever go right for them in Britain until they have broken the militancy of the working class and loaded the complete weight of the problems of the capitalist system onto its bent back.

The jailing of the three is a blow in their war to tame the working class, to beat it down.

It is symbolic that the three are builders. These are men who have fought against super exploitation in the building industry, against the lump — a cattle market for labour — and against the profiteering vermin who coin tens of millions out of the labour of building workers.

The insecurity, widespread non-unionism, and divided labour force in the building industry — these are conditions the bosses want to spread and impose on every worker in British industry.

The jailing of the three is a blow in the offensive to achieve that

aim. If the sentences stick, from now on to picket aggressively will be to risk fines or jail. To get together with other militants to plan the moves of the workers' side in the class war — that will be to risk charges of conspiracy, followed by years in jail.

Direct action

Their side in the class war is armed with the "might and majesty" of the law — backed by the police and the army. Ours only with direct action. The charges were brought as a test case to tighten the law on picketing. It is now so tight as to outlaw forceful direct action. And since their defeat by miners and dockers in 1972 the Government has prepared and continues to prepare "snatch squads" of police thugs to haul militants into the spider's web of ruling class justice in the course of future struggles.

That's why the sentences are a challenge to the whole labour movement and why the issues must be posed clearly.

Either we now compel the state to release its grip on our three brothers or we face the certainty that this time next year the number of jailed working class victims of the class struggle — of the coming big battles — will number dozens if not hundreds instead of the present three.

If the reaction had been as instantaneous and powerful as that which greeted the jailing of the five dockers in 1972, the three would be out of jail already.

In the name of the three jailed men, socialists and militants have the right to pose the following questions, and to insist on answers:

BUILDING WORKERS! Your brothers are in jail! What are you doing about it?

MINERS! You know this is an attempt to frighten you. You know Des Warren has been sentenced to three years to intimidate you and stop you giving the Tories the thrashing you gave them last time and the thrashing they deserve now! What are you doing about it?

DOCKERS! 300,000 men struck so that your five brothers could be freed from Pentonville Jail. You swore then that you wouldn't let it happen to anyone again! Honour your promise! Decide on action NOW.

PRINTERS! You are always the first to respond by shutting down the bosses' lie machine. You were the first out in solidarity with the dockers. What are you going to do now?

EVERY TRADE UNIONIST must stand by these three brothers now. **WAR HAS BEEN DECLARED BY THE TORIES** and this sentence was the way they chose to make the declaration. The war is against you.

A powerful campaign must be created NOW, pledged to all out direct action if the sentences are not quashed on appeal and the charges on the remaining 18 dropped.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL! RELEASE THE THREE IMMEDIATELY! DROP THE REMAINING CHARGES.

three now jailed and the three others whose sentences were suspended, then all the previous action will have to be seen as a token of renewed effort after the Appeals.

Then the issue will become clearer to wide masses of workers — but only if the militants do their job, from now, and begin insistently explaining the issue and what is at stake.

In 1972 the slogan was raised: **5 Trade Unionists are Inside — why aren't you out!** Now we must ask: **If they manage to keep these 3 inside, how long can other militant trade unionists expect to stay out of jail?**

This is now the burning question for the whole labour movement.

The labour movement must launch a crusade to Free the Three and wipe out the other charges. We must make every effort to get action by the official trade union movement. That is irreplaceable. We must demand that every official body, and first and foremost the building trade unions and the TUC, take up the cause of the North Wales pickets.

But more irreplaceable is organised action by the rank and file of the labour movement. Without this, we can expect nothing from the leaders.

The real strength of the campaign will depend on grass roots committees in every place of work to explain the issues and get pledges of action from their workmates.

Where there hasn't been spontaneous action, action must be prepared and organised. Trades Councils, Shop Stewards Committees and local Defence Committees should actively sponsor such works committees and work to get them set up.

We must build the mass campaign that has so far been lacking. The stoppages must be used to take the message to other workers,

with flying pickets, leafleting and factory gate meetings, to win workers for further action on the kind of scale that will shake Jailer Heath in his resolve.

The next round of action should be planned for the week when the Appeals are being decided — to show them what will happen if they try to keep our brothers behind bars.

If the Appeals fail to remove every trace of the sentence and conviction of the

WHAT WE NEED TO DO NOW

APPEAL TO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

from Des Warren

I HAVE SPENT a week in prison now. The convicts and others in there told me that a speech from the dock would get me double. But I must speak out.

It has been said in this court that this trial has nothing to do with politics. Among the ten million trade unionists in this country I doubt if you would find one who agreed with this statement.

It is a fact of life that due entirely to Acts of parliament every strike is now regarded as a political act. It therefore follows that every act taken in furtherance of an industrial dispute also becomes a political act.

There are even those who describe it as a challenge to the law of the land when men decide not to work beyond the agreed number of hours in the working week and ban overtime.

The building employers, by their contempt of the laws governing safety regulations, are guilty of causing the deaths and maimings of workers. Yet they are not dealt with by the court.

The law is quite clearly an instrument of the state to be used in the interests of a tiny minority

against a majority. The law is biased. It is class law and nowhere has this been demonstrated more than in the prosecution case at this trial.

Was there a conspiracy? Yes, there was. But not by the pickets.

The conspiracy was one between the Home Secretary, the employers and the police. It was conceived after pressure from Tory MPs, who demanded changes in the picketing laws.

There is a very good reason why no police witness said here that he had seen any evidence of conspiracy, unlawful assembly or affray. The question was hovering over the case from the very first day — why no arrests on 6 September?

That would have led to even more important questions. When was the decision to proceed taken? Where did it come from? What instructions were issued to the police and by whom?

I am innocent of the charges and I will appeal. But there will be a more important appeal to the entire trade union movement

Nobody here must think they can walk away from this court and forget what has happened here. We are all part of something much bigger than what has taken place here.

The trade union and working class movement cannot accept this verdict.

BELOW: Ricky Tomlinson (left) and Des Warren (right)



& Ricky Tomlinson

I HAVE SAT here for many weeks and seen my character systematically shredded up. It was said in the last war by Doctor Goebbels that if you repeat a lie often enough it becomes accepted as the truth.

This I have observed in this court and now know it to be true.

So much so that the constant use of the words 'petrified', 'terrified', 'afraid', 'frightened' and 'scared to death' by witness after witness led even myself to think for a moment that I had done the things I had been accused of.

I have heard the judge say that this was not a political trial, just an ordinary criminal case. I refute that with every fibre of my being.

How can anyone say this was just an ordinary trial when 1000 police were on duty outside this very building because building workers were due to appear before the court?

No sentence passed on me by this court, however lenient or however severe, can hurt me more than I have been hurt already. I have been almost totally unemployed since my arrest and this punishes my wife and two infant sons to a far greater extent than it does me.

During the length and course of this trial my family have been abused by the very people whose duty it is to assist them, but that matter is now in the hands of my Member of Parliament.

In the course of this trial I have discovered many things about the law of the land and the legal system. I express my fear for the working class movement.

The sentence passed on me today by this court will not matter. My innocence has been proved time and time again by the building workers of Wrexham whom I led, and, indeed, by building workers from all over the land who have sent messages of support to myself, my family and my colleagues.

I look forward to the day when the real culprits, the McAlpines, Wimpeys, Laings and the Bovis and all their political puppets, are in the dock facing charges of conspiracy and intimidating workers from doing what is their lawful right, picketing.

It is hoped the trade union movement and the working class of this country will act now to ensure that another charade such as this will never take place again, and the right to picket or strike will be defended even at the cost of great personal hardship or individual freedom.

THE BUS

AT THE END of the building workers employers' favourite magazine, "The betrayed its fear of effective picketing. Ever since the miners were allowed their mass pickets of coal depots this has escalated rapidly. There were m during the dock strike. On Monday, one of the five men jailed by the National Court in July, was fined £125 for assault while picketing a "The Government has already promised existing legislation on picketing. Th not the present law, but the lack of e

A BRIEF GLANCE at recent changes in the police force and the Army — the official, uniformed thugs — reveals a far more concerted and powerful force for attacking the working class in its struggles than any of the fly-by-night scab organisations.

We had got used to the idea in Britain that the police are not armed.

Then, without any warning, without the formality of a parliamentary by-your-leave, the police shot several people in one month in London this year, and suddenly a lot of people woke up to the fact that the police are armed.

The SUNDAY TIMES, a paper with no revolutionary or 'anti-police' fish to fry, reported on July 8th 1973 that the Home Office had decided to equip the police with a new rifle.

This rifle, the L39A1, is a high velocity rifle that has been turned down by the New York police because it is too powerful!

"Moreover" the paper tells us "the wounds inflicted by these rifles are so devastating that the International Committee of the Red Cross, in a report to be published later this year, plans to draw attention to the 'extraordinary' degree of suffering these weapons cause. In effect, the Red Cross will point out, they have a lethal impact akin to the internationally banned dum-dum."

Army nominees

But the essential unity of purpose of the police and the Army is not only expressed in the arming of more and more police. It turns out that the Home Office committee which approved the buying of the L39A1 for the police had a majority of Army nominees over Police nominees.

In some countries the ruling capitalists, wanting to increase their control over militant workers, dissident students and other oppositionists, have created specialist police detachments concerned with political espionage, frame-ups, provocation and 'riot' control.

The French CRS, the Italian "Carabinieri" and the American National Guard (Though these are not all full-time policemen) are examples of political or almost entirely political riot and investigation squads.

In Britain there hasn't so far existed such a force, though of course the Special Branch has its own thing going in frame-ups, provocation and political spying. Not long ago its methods came to light during the trial of five people who owned a shop in Wick Road in Hackney.

In their small shop — where clothing was sold in aid of the Irish Republican cause — a box



ABOVE Left: Frank Kitson, who says Army's role is to deal with subversives at home. Centre: Sir Robert Mark, chief of Britain's police. Right: Det. Chief Inspector Derek Sutcliffe of W. Yorkshire Police trying out a Webley 0.38. BELOW Left: Police at Indian Embassy where two Pakistani teenagers were shot dead by armed police. Right: Police photographer with telephoto lens watches dockers' mass picket at Neap House Wharf near Hull.



THE STRIKE BREAKERS

THE ORGANISED violence of hired scabs against Chrysler strikers in June of this year must be seen as a grim warning that in future blood will flow on the picket lines ... if the bosses get their way.

The dispute at Chrysler's Ryton plant at Coventry began on Thursday May 24th, with 4,500 workers striking in support of 600 body shop workers.

Flying pickets were quickly organised by an Action Group set up by rank and file Ryton workers to get solidarity for the strike from other Chrysler plants. Action Group policy was to snarl-up co-ordination of components between the various factories, to stop production and force the Company to meet lay-off payments. Meanwhile, workers at other Chrysler plants were to stay in and go on working, while pickets blockaded the removal of their products.

Chrysler management, setting the scene for things to come, swung into action: it destroyed railings, demolished walls, and flew helicopters over the plant taking photographs of the pickets

and reconnoitering alternative ways of shifting supplies to avoid the pickets.

This proved unsuccessful. Then on Monday June 18th, like thieves in the night, the Walker Bros. rent-a-scab unit (hailed by the DAILY MAIL as brave commandos acting in the spirit of Dunkirk and Colditz) moved into action.

Ex-paras

They called themselves SPECIAL AID SERVICES and were composed in the main of ex-paratroopers. Their name was intended as a play on the name "Special Air Services" (SAS). (The SAS is an official branch of the British Army, now mainly used in Ireland, which specialises in undercover assassinations, brutality and dirty tricks.)

Walker's SAS did their namesakes proud. Taking six overloaded lorries out of the Stoke component plant they smashed through the picket line throwing bricks and bottles at the strikers as they went. Inside the Stoke plant John Docherty, a fork-lift

driver, was assaulted with a spanner by scabs who feared he would raise the alarm at the picket line.

Violence didn't stop at Stoke. At Chrysler's Dunstable plant where three of the lorries eventually arrived (the other three collapsed as they were over-loaded) one of the company's own security guards was pinned against the gate and badly injured as the scabs drove past him.

Needless to say, the scab

drivers broke every rule in the book. They had no lights, blacked out number plates, were overloaded and dangerously driven. And the police? "Well, it was too dark to see, and too late to do anything!"

The press (where they didn't actually praise the ganster drivers) tried to cover the whole incident up by splashing big front-page pictures of two of the swine "apologising" to a victim in hospital.

BELOW: All smiles from police for the 'Rent-a-scab' drivers who drove through the pickets at Chrysler's Stoke plant (Coventry) throwing bricks and bottles. RIGHT: getting past the pickets. Above, 1970-style: mounted police escort scabs during Pilkington strike. Below, 1973-style, Laing's scabs arrive in a special armoured bus at St. Thomas's hospital site.



THE TORIES' PICKET MASTERS

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e main problem is
enforcement of it.

Thousands of miners who picketed Saltley depot appeared to lay themselves open to prosecution, but no action was taken. During the building strike, employers have again been complaining about the lack of police intervention. It is no good saying that some agreement must be reached with the unions, because the union leaders have often lost control. Neither Mr. Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers, nor Mr. George Smith of the Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians approved of violent picketing. But neither was able to do much to stop it." For the employers the problem was reduced to one of "enforcement". And when it comes to enforcement they don't mind little "nasty incidents" or "violence".

of rifles had been found. These
rifles had been stolen from a
nearby Cadet training centre.

Things looked bad for the
prisoners

Trial dropped

It was later revealed that the
shop had been rented in the
name of someone who had not
been arrested. A little further in-
vestigation revealed this man to
be a known police agent-informer
who had worked for the Special
Branch as a provocateur. It then
came out that it was he who had
delivered the box of guns with
another man. This other man, it
then turned out, was a policeman,
a member of the Special Branch.

Thus exposed, the trial of the
"Hackney 5", as the prisoners
were called, was quickly dropped.
But the Special Branch was not
investigated. The attempt to
frame 5 innocent people, who
could have got long terms in jail,
was given scant publicity: cer-
tainly much less than the public-
ity surrounding their arrest, when
big headlines blazoned forth that
an 'IRA Arms Cache' had been
found in London.

The Special Branch and its
tricks have been with us for a
long time. But with the success
of the flying pickets during the
miners' strike, the ruling class
began to formulate a new threat.
Special flying squads of anti-
picket forces trained in riot
control were advocated by various
sections of the employers. The
Army staff was insistent.

The DAILY TELEGRAPH,
which by the end of the miners'
strike had swapped its industrial
correspondent for its military
correspondent, Brigadier Thomp-
son, advocated the same. It now
looks as if Britain stands a like-
ly chance of getting its own ver-
sion of the hated CRS and "Car-
abinieri".

Armed police

Shortly after he became Prime
Minister, Edward Heath gave
this message to the United Na-
tions: "It may be that in the
1970s civil war, not war bet-
ween nations, will be the main
danger we face".

It is not difficult to see the
connection between this mess-
age and the arming of police
that led to the spate of killings
outside banks and at the Indian
Embassy, when two Pakistani
teenagers armed with toy guns
were shot and killed.

These killings were carried
out by members of the Special
Patrol Group - apparently the
latest addition to the State's
arsenal of anti-working class
violence.

All this doesn't mean that
pickets will be faced with gun-

slinging police. But what we
can expect is that we'll be up
against the Force's special
handpicked thugs, the type of
copper who really likes to get
stuck in and put the boot in,
specially trained and well-coor-
dinated, and quite possibly equip-
ped with some of the 'crowd-
control' weaponry that they've
been practising on the Irish in
the past four years - CS gas,
rubber bullets, water cannons
and massive great batons.

It is important, in fact, to be
clear about the relationship be-
tween what's been happening in
Ireland and the class struggle
here. Certainly many generals
and police commissioners are
very clear. Which is just one
reason among many why English
militants must oppose the British
Army's presence in Northern
Ireland.

Among these top Army men is
Brigadier Frank Kitson, a lead-
ing advocate of "counter-insur-
gency terror" who has practised
the best ways of suppressing
the mass of the population in
Aden, Kenya, Cyprus and lastly
Northern Ireland. He has written
a book in which he openly states
that such methods will have to
be used in Britain. This man is
no isolated crank but a leading
theorist for the British Army. We
too must take note of what he
says.

Special Army units

For Kitson, normal actions in
the class struggle can be "sub-
version", for example "illegal"
use of "political and economic
pressure, strikes, protest march-
es, and propaganda, and can
also include the use of small
scale violence for the purpose
of coercing recalcitrant members
of the population into giving sup-
port" (i.e. pickets). He says
the Army should weigh in to
combat this "subversion", and he
wants specialised army units to
act as strike breakers - "spec-
ialist individuals and units with-
in the army to enable essential
civil services to be maintained
in the event of civilians being
unable or unwilling to maintain
them."

Another thing Kitson wants
the Army to engage in is internal
"intelligence" work - every
soldier keeping his eyes and ears
open at home, in pubs and so on.
In addition it should, he says,
take more of a hand in forming
opinion and putting out propa-
ganda: such "psychological op-
erations" include 'planting' stor-
ies in the press and TV - and,
after the Littlejohn affair, who
can doubt that they are already
doing that; and not only planting
the stories, but making them too,
like the conveniently-timed ex-
plosion in Dublin last year which
helped to get repressive anti-IRA
legislation passed.



TOP: Police overwhelmed by mass dockers' pickets at Neap House Wharf last year. This year, special anti-picket squads have appeared. They went into action at St. Thomas's Hospital site in London (centre) to clear the way for Laing's armoured scab-carrying bus. The bottom picture shows another of these squads at work in Hull, where they were seen to replace the local police.

TORIES' NEW ATTACK ON RIGHT TO PICKET

ONLY two days after Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson and John McKinsie Jones were locked into their cells at Shrewsbury, the Tories' "Law Lords" took their war against picketing another step further along the way to making effective picketing virtually illegal.

The case they were considering, officially called Hunt v. Broome, also, like that of the Shrewsbury 24, arose out of the 1972 Building Workers Strike.

But whereas in the Shrewsbury case, by means of frame-up, lying and conniving, the police claimed that there had been "violence and intimidation", in this case not even the strong arm of the law claimed that.

John Broome, a full time organiser for UCATT, had been on the picket line in Stockport near Manchester during the strike. He stopped a lorry to inform the driver that there was a strike on and that he should turn back. As he was telling the driver

the reason for the strike, he was arrested by Police Inspector Hunt of the Lancashire Constabulary.

Hunt claimed he was arresting Bro. Broome on charges of obstruction under Section 121 of the Highways Act. Bro. Broome, of course, knew that "peacefully communicating information" was clearly within the law, and so when he appeared later at Stockport Magistrates' Court he was not surprised to be found Not Guilty.

Despite all the Tories' talk of cracking down on 'violence' and not on peaceful picketing, the matter didn't stop there. The Home Secretary stepped in and ordered the Lancashire Constabulary to appeal against the Magistrates' judgment.

The Magistrate had stated that the legal right to picket was "meaningless unless the picket places himself in such a position that the person to be persuaded is obliged to stop and listen for a reasonable length of time."

But the Appeal Court — and now also the Law Lords, to whom Bro. Broome pursued the case — found that it wasn't within the law to stop people, however peacefully (Broome had merely stood in front of the lorry holding a placard).

Thus, even according to the Stockport Magistrate's definition, the legal right to picket has been rendered "meaningless".

Now, just like the case of the Shrewsbury 24, what started out as a local case of police harassment has been turned by the Tory government into a national scale attack on workers' rights.

This judgment, an attack on the mildest and most peaceful form of picketing — coupled with the Shrewsbury trial and the savage 'deterrent' sentences so far passed there — is the clearest indication that the Tories are not interested in 'peace'. What they want is war.

And that's just what they are going to get!

Right from the first announcement of the arrest of some of the North Wales 24 back in mid-February of last year, WORKERS FIGHT campaigned to publicise and explain the arrests. Not a single issue of WORKERS FIGHT went to press without reporting the latest news about the case and many numbers bore major feature articles explaining the issues raised, and fighting to make this case a central rally-point for the whole of the working class.

These reports & articles appeared in the context of a wide coverage of events and issues facing workers here and abroad, from a revolutionary socialist viewpoint.

WORKERS FIGHT, now published every week, is vital reading for all those facing capitalism's attacks. It is a vital weapon in fighting back for socialism.

TUC BACKS TORIES AGAINST PICKETS

Letter instructs: "Don't and arrested pickets"

North Wales 24

Police pile

POLICE MOVE IN ON DIRTY

The 1875 "Conspiracy"

Their law = 0

New laws, NW24

new-style Army and Police

It's a POLICE POLICE ARREST 24 WORKERS ALL OUT MARCH 15th!

INSIDE HOW THE CONSPIRACY LAWS WORKS

Mold victory:

The £¼m. Trial ORGANISE DEFENCE COMMITTEES NOW!

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WE CAN'T AVOID VIOLENCE

THE CHANGES now taking place in the Police and the Army (the new anti-picket flying squads, the Army's emphasis on 'internal subversion') will be incorporated into the permanent structure of the State — controlled at all times by the ruling boss class, and available to different governments to use in enforcing that class's rule in society. And only so long as they do that. And because the State is the strong arm of the ruling class only, it would even defend its power against a government if it seriously tried to tamper with the bosses' rule.

The State is the force behind the talk. It includes the Army, Police, the Courts and the prisons. As well as its open face, it also employs, as we've seen, its free-lance thugs, narks and provocateurs.

State violence

Where the bosses can't con us into submission, the Government threatens us into submission; and where it can't threaten us into submission then it does not hesitate to use state violence to get its way.

The past few years have seen a declining ability on the part of the bosses and their lie machine (TV, press, schools), and their allies in the trade union and Labour Party leadership, to con us into submission. Since the sweet-talk doesn't always work now, the threats have had to become more obvious.

"The Law" is the chief threat for use on the working class. After all, behind every law is the simple message that "if you break it, we can legally

use force against you." But as some of the laws have been prevented by militant action from working — in particular the Industrial Relations Act — the State is gradually turning more and more to open violence.

Without exaggerating the extent to which this has already happened, the fact is that it is on the increase.

As far as this is concerned, we can see, as the class struggle accelerates, two opposite movements. In the Army, more attention is being paid to "intelligence" (spying on militant workers) and other so-called "low intensity" and "low profile" operations of the sort 'pioneered' in wars such as that waged against the Republican population of Northern Ireland.

In the Police Force, on the other hand, there is a shift towards a more openly paramilitary approach: this year specially trained anti-picket commando squads have already made their presence felt in fights with pickets.

The two movements converge. They form a unity. And out of this unity will emerge a massive highly trained, specially privileged and technically sophisticated anti-working class police striking force.

Such a force must be met with force, and the beginning of such a force must be met with the beginnings of our own workers' defence organisations. The pickets are the outriders of these organisations. The mass picket and in particular flying pickets, must become our workers' militia in miniature.

There exists, of course, a whole chorus of miserable trade

union, Labour Party and Communist Party leaders who cry out against the use of working class violence in the class struggle. They howl and holler about the "irresponsibility" of those who "advocate violence"; they shout "provocateur" and "anarchist" at every serious contemplation of force.

In so doing they give vent to their fundamental pacifism as far as the class struggle is concerned. It does not matter whether this pacifism is based on sheer class cowardice, on veiled class collaboration, or on the "theory" of 'peaceful co-existence' and even 'peaceful revolution' put out by Stalin and his heirs — the chorus anyway sings in perfect harmony.

Suicidal

Let us be clear about this.

We do not advocate violence. We advocate winning — and, indeed, winning with the least violence possible.

But is it possible to avoid violence? We think not. Indeed the examples already given show beyond all question that this is not a matter of speculation. It is a matter of fact!

It is therefore "irresponsible" (if we want to use this word) to advocate class struggle without being prepared for violence. It is "irresponsible" to the point of being suicidal to start what you won't finish. And it is "irresponsible" a hundred times over to practice or advocate

class war — and at the same time insist on your own disarmament; to advocate struggle — and in advance refuse to take up the weapons that may make the difference between victory and defeat.

Those who want to announce battle but renounce all violence in advance are the "provocateurs", for they are the disorganisers and the people who lead us up to a struggle and then desert.

Criticising those who refused to contemplate violence on the picket line, Leon Trotsky the great Russian revolutionary who opposed Stalin's bureaucracy, wrote:

"A strike is inconceivable without propaganda and without agitation. It is also inconceivable without pickets who, when they can, use persuasion but, when obliged, use force. The strike is the most elementary form of class struggle which always combines in varying proportions "ideological" methods with physical methods. Basically, the picket is the embryo of the workers' militia. He who thinks of renouncing "physical" struggle must renounce all struggle, for the spirit does not live without the flesh.

Following the splendid phrase of the great military theoretician Clausewitz, war is a continuation of politics by other means. This definition also applies to civil war. Physical struggle is only "another means" of the political struggle. It is impermissible to oppose one to the other, since it is impossible to check at will the political struggle when it transforms itself, by force

of inner necessity, into a physical struggle."

Those who deny this are in basic agreement with the laws on picketing. These laws attempt to do exactly what Trotsky here says is impossible. They attempt to restrict "at will" the act of picketing to what is "peaceful" and "ideological", that is, obtaining and giving information in an attempt to persuade.

Everything else — and here the Judge at Mold waxed eloquent — is violence and intimidation according to the law. Anyone advocating the same restrictions is in the final analysis acting in the same way as the capitalists and their agents, implicitly "justifying" any repression against 'violent' picketing.

Which doesn't mean that it becomes a principle always to push every picket beyond the 'peaceful' state. As Trotsky also wrote, "It goes without saying that in every given case it is necessary to decide, in relation to all the circumstances, how to answer the enemy and to what limits to go in resistance. But this is a question of tactical expediency, which has nothing in common with the recognition or denial in principle of force."

Deaths

One other thing: isn't it time we insisted on our definition of "violence". Pickets, demonstrations and other confrontations are more or less infrequent and sporadic events. But what of the daily events?

In 1972 there were 221 deaths at work among insured building workers. Huge numbers of building workers on the Lump are not included in that total, and work on sites where safety is worse and the death rate no doubt higher. There is, on average, a death every day on British building sites. The average penalty for being in breach of safety regulations? About £20.

That is just one fact of the social peace that we are told we should not disturb for fear of "creating violence"...

So when we hear some reformist humbug preaching that "violence only begets violence", the answer is Yes! The violence of the capitalists begets our violence! ■



Home Secretary Robert Carr with Police — part of the permanent force of the State available to governments to control the working class.