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WORKERS' FIGHT

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FLUSH THEM OUT!

Blood on the Waves

In the wake of the Aberfan disaster, the tragic loss of trawlermen's lives this month demonstrates once again that the only thing that matters in this society is profit - and that it matters above all else.

The 59 lives taken in the sinking of three ships only underline the barbarous conditions that still exist for Trawlermen and their families. Between 1948 and 1964, 757 fishermen lost their lives through accidents at sea, over 400 of them not attributable to any accident to the vessel itself.

FATIGUE

In all major shipping nations men work 12 hours on and 12 off. The British trawlerman gets only 6 hours off in 24. He is bound by medieval laws of mutiny and it is quite common for fishermen to work 20 hours for several days running. Matresses are not automatically supplied by the owners - the assumption being that the men can and should sleep in their boots!

Thus fatigue is the most powerful factor in causing injury and loss of life from gutting knives, unguarded machinery, pitching, icy decks and inadequate rails (often none at all). Professor Schilling of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine attests to this. He says that the fatigue he saw on a trawler reminded him of what he had seen during the Dunkirk retreat of 1940!

Dangers from fatigue are also accentuated by the blatant lack of proper safety precautions and the compulsion to go to sea in the most treacherous of weather. Fishermen refusing to go can actually be prosecuted under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894.

OWNERS' NEGLIGENCE

Nothing was heard of the St.ROMANUS or the KINGSTON PERIDOT for well over a

week. IN FACT THERE WAS NOTHING SENT OUT FROM THE ROMANUS FOR 18 DAYS, DURING WHICH TIME THE OWNERS, HAMBLING'S, DID ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, reassuring all concerned that everything was all right. When news of the disasters came through, both Hambling's and Hellyer Bros. (owners of PERIDOT) just lowered the flags to half mast and awaited the collection of their insurance benefits from the Hull Owners Mutual Insurance Co.

Many of the ships currently in use are just not cut out for heavy seas - and between a third and a half of the Hull distant-water fleet is 18 years old or more. The St.ROMANUS was built for a coastal operator in 1948, and was known to ship water with a following sea: it didn't even have a qualified radio operator! The PERIDOT was built in 1950, and the ROSS CLEVELAND in 1949. They are more or less typical.

RISKS ENCOURAGED

Because a trawler skipper's pay is wholly dependent on getting as big a catch as possible back to the quayside fast, he is naturally encouraged to take unnecessary risks in perilous seas. The KINGSTON PERIDOT was running before a force 10-12 gale, and in all probability huge waves swamped the boat. In addition, since the basic pay of trawlermen is only £13.7.0 a week, in order to earn a living the men have no option but to work long hours in conditions laid down by the employers and the skippers. All bonuses are paid by poundage. And, in order to get the maximum bonus, undermanning (as on the ROSS CLEVELAND) is common; this, coupled with unpaid compulsory overtime, adds up to plain, old-fashioned slavery.

Perhaps one of the most illuminating aspects of the whole business is the role of the T&GWU, which includes most of the trawlermen in its ranks. The

abuses have gone on year after year without the T&GWU doing one blind jot. Jack Jones, after the disasters, has suggested that each ship should have a shop steward. Why was this never fought for before and why has the T.&G. allowed the mutiny laws to go unchallenged? Without the right to strike the closed shop is a mockery. Once again it shows the acquiescence of the T.&G. in the employers' plans, in spite of left talk by some of its leadership.

MEN MUST RELY ON THEMSELVES

We applaud the action taken by the fishermen's wives in setting up their own organisation to demand action from the Government and the employers. This genuine rank and file pressure has made the Government sit up and brought promises of some action. But trawlermen be warned! The case of the Board of Trade Enquiry on the St. FINNBAR disaster only shows that no faith can be placed in Government Commissions.

The St. FINNBAR was a modern ship with elaborate freezing plant and sophisticated electronic equipment. Yet in the crew of 25 there was no qualified electrician. One man - the engineer - was an "amateur electrician" who relied on "trial and error"! to carry out repairs. On Christmas morning 1966 it caught fire in the Arctic. 10 men were burnt to death and 2 more drowned in attempting rescue.

The skipper and mate admitted, on oath, that no fire drills were held, even though they had been entered into the log book. The Enquiry said this was "not material". It was also admitted that on every one of her 13 voyages the St. FINNBAR had suffered major electrical faults, 2 voyages being cut short for this reason. On the last voyage the skipper and mate noticed that sparks were coming from the lifeboat davits. Neither took any action. The firm swore blue that "all the electrical apparatus had been thoroughly tested before her last voyage." But the

managing director admitted to a SUNDAY TIMES reporter that both the FINNBAR's generators were unsatisfactory and that shortly before the fire the governor on the main generator went wrong. He said: "This blew numerous fuses and damaged the main radio transmitter and .. steering apparatus. The engineer confessed that he did not know if this would have any effect on the ship's wiring."!

The Enquiry's findings? "On the evidence offered ... the cause of the fire, the inability to control it, or the resultant loss of life, were not due to the wrongful act or default of any persons."

Thus the employers were absolved by a "neutral" commission. Further, its findings meant that the widows and dependents have no claim to compensation unless they can afford to test the matter at law - under an equally "neutral" judge!

The firm's compensation to the widows? 3 weeks pay, a letter of condolence and a free car to the memorial service. Enough said.

Fishermen and their wives must rely on their own power. They must demand:

- ☆ 12 hours on, 12 hours off;
- ☆ Repeal of Merchant Shipping Act and other backward regulations which leave them at the mercy of profit-hunters;
- ☆ Adequate safety measures to be supervised by fishermen themselves;
- ☆ A basic minimum of £20 a week for 40 hours with overtime for extra hours worked;
- ☆ Full trade union rights on all ships;
- ☆ Guaranteed £20 minimum when unsafe weather prevents work. If the employers say they can't meet this, demand they open their account books to inspection by workers!

NATIONALISE THE FISHING INDUSTRY.

Stan Lomax.

WORKERS' FIGHT

All correspondence, reports, articles, etc., should be sent to the Editor, Rachel Matgamma, 31 Leicester Road, Cheetham, Manchester 8.

VICTORY to the NLF!

With a reserve of strength hardly believable after over three years of murderous war on their own territory against the world's greatest military power, the Vietnamese armed people, the NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, has launched a general uprising throughout the whole of American-Occupied Vietnam. Simultaneous risings were staged in 26 Provincial Capitals, and innumerable towns, under the very nose of the Army of US Imperialism. Only yesterday the US Government was proclaiming it could see Victory on the horizon waving the Stars & Stripes - and at the end of January it lost control of its own 'Embassy' in Saigon! It has now out-Nazid the Nazis in bombing its own puppet Capital city and many others besides! It had recently proclaimed its growing control of the countryside - only to be proved incapable of securely controlling the cities it has long occupied! Just as it was fabricating an appearance of 'success' for Johnson in Election Year, the fictions have been rudely ripped away and the stark reality exposed: that the USA has garrison control in South Vietnam and little else, not even reliable 'native' puppets. It is reduced to enclaves in a hostile country and to an ever-escalating slaughter of the resisting people whose country it has occupied.

On the television screens of the world, like a massive modern gladiatorial spectacle from one of the most enslaved parts of the Third World, the horrors of the charnel house that US Imperialism has made of Vietnam have been brought to hundreds of millions of people. This will increase the upsurge of indignation against Johnson's Fourth Reich. To more and more people the logic of continued US occupation is apparent: indiscriminate mechanised massacre on an ever-increasing scale. The irrepressible Vietnamese people, after a war against imperialism already lasting over a quarter of a century, will not be beaten. They have made freedom more than a word, and more than a wish. A whole people, facing horrors unknown in history, proclaims to the world with all the burning sincerity of action and suffering, its living principle: VICTORY OR DEATH! The criminals in Washington and their accomplices in the capitals of Europe are clearly prepared to accept that if this is the choice, it will be the latter. The reflex decision to unleash all its force against the cities of South Vietnam, causing untold civilian casualties (which the propagandists in their usual manner simply included in the count of NLF casualties) is only the latest tangible proof of this.

As we go to press the war of attrition in this new stage continues, with a build-up around Khe Sanh. Some of the limitations of the NLF have already been shown in the lack of any prepared underground workers' organisation in the cities, where the workers have lately been militant, to prepare and lead a seizure of power by the working class, in alliance with the NLF. Nevertheless, the US aim of a stabilised stooge regime to take over the 'pacified' areas from the US army, has received severe blows from the exposure of its protege's puppet helplessness. Internationally the FUEBLO affair, & the recent strains around Cambodia, show the growing difficulties of the USA in maintaining itself astride a reluctant Asia. Over FUEBLO it had to back down. It is generally accepted that the arrest of the spy ship by the North Koreans was a deliberate act of solidarity with Vietnam. Korea, the Vietnam of the early 1950s, failed to throw out the Americans, and for 18 years a brutal gauleiter regime has oppressed the people in the South, aided by 55,000 US troops. In the last year guerilla activity in S. Korea has increased, threatening a new outbreak against the US occupiers. The strains on the USA are growing.

It is dangerous to drive a mad dog into a corner. And this one has nuclear teeth. It is believed that the troops in Korea have nuclear weapons. The responsibility of the world labour movement for disarming the nuclear maniacs is increased by the blows inflicted by the colonial peoples on this aspirant Rome of the modern world. And only the labour movement, not least that in the USA, will finally do it.

Inside the USA the opposition to the war grows. Yet significantly, none of the likely Presidential candidates (McCarthy is a joke) is for ending the war: there is too much at stake for the ruling class to bow to pressure so easily. As the pressures build up former Hawks like McNamara and Goldberg reclassify themselves as dove-hawks and drop in warlike altitude as Johnson becomes more unrestrained. Even McNamara, the Himmler of the 60s, couldn't stand the pace.... and we have Clifford in his place. The driving force here is not Johnson's psychology but the fact that this is a vital global issue for US Imperialism. Thus only a really big upsurge of the US people, spear-headed by the workers, has any hope of affecting the US Government in this course.

There may indeed be, as the sour grapes merchants say, a hint of desperation in the recent actions of the NLF. This would come from consciousness of the terribly unequal forces involved. We too, while we applaud the heroic uprisings, must not underestimate the reserve strength of the richest country in the world. That would be both stupid and dangerous: we also have a role to play, and one which we cannot shirk by ignoring the enemy's strength. While Wilson is playing the role of one of Johnson's beagles, barking as told, with slight modulations for his 'home ear', we must step up the job of organising active solidarity - industrial, where at all possible - with the people of Vietnam. If the successes of the NLF generate even a hint of passivity or vicarious self-satisfaction, that will be a crime. We must mobilise the working class against Johnson and Wilson. All talk of 'Peace', of compromise negotiations, has been brushed aside by the new upsurge of the NLF. THE VICTORY OF THE NLF is the only road to peace - because any victory of the USA would only mean a lull for recuperation by the Vietnamese people.

The immediate focal point of our activity must be to work for a massive **VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN** demonstration in London, March 17th.

Tees tenant fight

Proposals have been passed by the Tory controlled Teeside Council to introduce a rent rebate scheme for council tenants. The burden of this pandering to capital will be borne by 37,000 of the 47,000 tenants, who will share payment of £330,000: this is to prevent rate increases. Individual tenants will be expected to pay an increase of up to 30s. a week spread over three years. Assessment of rebates will depend on the area and the quality of housing, as well as income.

The obvious effect of this is to divide the tenants and bring them face to face with each other, turning one area against another, one street against another, one tenant against another. In order to pay off the debts of the Council to the finance companies, and to save any increase in rates to local industry, the working class is again being made to foot the bill.

The Labour opposition on the Council have displayed characteristic opportunism in fighting these measures, by opposing this particular scheme while still supporting the idea of rebates in principle. Only strong, organised action by the tenants of Teeside, and eventually throughout the whole North East, fighting on the platform of: **"NO RENT INCREASES TO BUY OFF FINANCE COMPANIES AND BIG BUSINESS"** can prevent this vicious scheme being introduced.

Phil Thorne

RALLY ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS

— and have your wages cut!

The above seems to be the implications of the recent Government cuts in social services. These must not only be protested about but also understood. To do this we have to look at these measures in a slightly wider context. The cuts in social services are a part of a continuing pattern that was apparent almost immediately the Wilson government took office in 1964. Briefly, this pattern can be said to be the cutting down of the amount of national income going to the working class, and more specifically a cut in real wages (as opposed to any money increases allowed). Above all there is the need to restore the sagging rate of profit of an enervated British capitalism. British capitalism can no longer afford to dole out reforms: it is intent on taking them back.

STRUGGLE FOR THE BOSSES' POUND

The cuts of January 16th have to be seen as being directly related to the devaluation of the Pound that took place on November 19th last year. This came at the end of three years' struggle by Wilson to maintain the Pound at the parity of \$2.80. This struggle was not the meaningless exercise that some critics of the government alleged. From the point of view of the capitalist class, and more particularly those who either operate from the 'City' or engage in large overseas investment, there were real advantages in keeping the old rate of exchange.

As with most moves by this Government the Labour Left was caught off balance by the devaluation, rushing in to support it only to find they had been duped once more. The manner and

conditions under which it was carried out brought the maximum disadvantages to the working class. The devaluation was accompanied by a bank rate of 8%, the highest for over forty years, which is going to affect municipal rates considerably (because of borrowing) and also private mortgages; and it will add generally to industrial costs which will be passed on to the consumer.

There was another foreign loan of \$3,000 million negotiated, the conditions for which are unfolding only now. Even without these two points devaluation in itself would have placed an extra burden on the working class, especially the lower paid sections, because of the increased cost of imports. This extra cost, it is estimated, will lead to a general rise in prices of 5-5½ per cent in 1968. But of course this is an average, and the particular rises will probably be much more. These, and other measures taken at the time, helped to maintain the growth of unemployment which has been continuous since July 1966.

The November devaluation gave the government the possibility of achieving a favourable balance of payments by the end of this year. However, there are internal and external factors that have to be taken into account.

WORKERS NOT SUBMISSIVE

Firstly, despite the wage freeze and period of 'severe restraint', wages in money terms still went up in 1967. Coupled with this has been the fact that the working class, or at least sections of it eg the dockers, have fought back, and the cut back in labour costs did not materialise to the extent the Government hoped

for. Moreover, because there was likely to be a growth in production this year - partly because of a growth in productivity - and with it a renewed demand for labour, it was likely that unemployment would slowly begin to decline in the late Summer. The problem for the Government was this: because of the time-lags involved it will be toward the second half of this year that the full benefits (for the capitalist class) of devaluation, in the way of increased orders, would be felt.

What the Government did not want was a situation developing where export demand could not be met in full because of the lack of capacity in men and machines. Had such a situation developed it would have meant, despite all that has been done, that unemployment could have dropped to around 1.5 per cent and this would have created acute labour shortages in some regions. Given such a situation the working class would have been in a position to once more move and press home wage claims.

MORE DEFLATION

What the January 16th cuts, and the coming budget, mean is that the Government intend to further deflate the economy by a massive cut in the workers' living standards. By these means they hope to push unemployment up higher than it is now. This will serve two ends: a) it will (it is hoped) damp down any industrial struggle, and b) it will mean that a boom will get under way in 1969 which will be export led and thus put the balance of payments right. However, the sting is in the tail. It is hoped that because of the increases in productivity, even when such a boom gets going, unemployment will remain at its present level. The continuance of the present level of unemployment is seen as being necessary to 'discipline' wage demands. In the meanwhile there will be the report of the Royal Commission on the Trade Unions. There can be little doubt that this will lead to further attempts to whittle down the power and what little independence the unions have today. And as an interim measure it cannot be ruled out that a further wage freeze will be attempted.

Will all this succeed? This depends on a number of factors. Firstly, the export led boom could fail to materialise. The year 1967 saw a slowing down in world trade and the recent measures announced by Johnson to cut down the export of US capital could lead to considerable further slowing down. Therefore there is a fair-sized question mark placed over the projected strategy of the Wilson Government. Should world trade fail to expand, or even decrease, this will hit Britain very hard. Should this situation arise, far from a boom in 1969 there could be the prospect of a continuing rise in unemployment. Once the measures taken already and those forecast for the budget, begin to work, only a rise in exports can stave off a further period of stagnation.

Secondly, this strategy will only succeed to the extent that the working class is prepared to go on shouldering the burdens of British capitalism. Despite the craven attitude of most trade union leaders, 1967 was not a year such as to be encouraging to Wilson, Gunter and Co. 1968 promises to be even less so from their point of view. The dockers have shown the way forward: despite all the handicaps they suffered from, they demonstrated they were prepared to fight. A new situation is developing with the building and strengthening of rank and file movements and changes in the trade union leaderships: a combination of such factors could lead to big new struggles both industrially and politically.

The 2/6 prescription charge, cuts in housing and school milk are all further fruits of this rotten Government. It is rotten even by its own mildly reformist policy of the last election. The lesson for Marxists to drive home is that this Government has to be fought, not pleaded with. The Tribune Left are in utter confusion and grasp at any straw that Wilson throws to relieve them of the need to fight. They will not abdicate their pretensions to be 'left-wingers' - WE MUST DEMAND THAT THEY EITHER FIGHT OR GET OUT OF THE WAY.

Lloyd Jackson

BUSMEN: Cousins on the RUN

by
S. Matgamma
(T&GWU)

Cousins, autocrat of the T & GWU and heavy-weight champion of the 'left' trade union bureaucrats, has given his answer to the big question now posed to the labour movement: FIGHT OR RUN? Clearly Fighting Frank has decided to put his track-shoes on. That much is clear from the miserable performance over the municipal busmen's pay dispute.

Faced with an open challenge from this 'Labour' Government of wage-slashers, strike-breakers and counter-reformists, the cardboard cavalier of the 'left' appealed not to the impatient strength of the working class, but to the bourgeois courts. Thus Cousins and the leadership of the T & GWU have betrayed not only the busmen - by no means only the busmen - but the rest of the working class as well.

This was a major test for the whole working class of the Government's policy of wage cut through Devaluation and wage freeze, a policy dependent on state control and the quiescence of the union leadership.

ROUND ONE TO THE BUSMEN

After a protracted and bitter struggle, which involved overtime bans, working to rule and strikes all over the country, the Municipal busmen finally forced the employers to agree to an increase in basic pay of £1 a week. But under present conditions this was only a preliminary. In no sense was it a victory, and the employers knew it. So they went through with a comedy. The municipal maidens said Yes - knowing that their father the State would never agree....

Then the heavy 'father', in the guise of Ray Gunter, stepped in. He announced that the increase was against Government policy and could not go through. The Union/employer agreement in mid-December had just beaten to the punch a Prices and Incomes Board report on Productivity bargaining. This envisaged that massive sums such as a full ten shilling note might be added to the weekly wage

of some busmen in return for acceptance of one-man operation; or, roughly 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -3% of the overall savings they would make for the employers! That was the only type of 'increase' Overlord Gunter was interested in.

GUNTER

Gunter warned the T & G that the Government was ready to impose a 6 months standstill order on the wages of the 77,000 municipal busmen. Under Part II of the new Prices and Incomes Act the union would face a £500 fine if it tried to pressurise the employers into paying up.

The Union officials argued that the increase did not contradict the I.P. because it involved workers earning less than £15 basic. But the Minister pointed to the actual average wages of the men to prove they were not underpaid. Against their demand for a miserable increase which would, at best, keep them at par with the new cost of living, he cited the massive overtime stints put in by most busmen in order to get a living wage! His demand was that the agreement be scrapped and a new round of bargaining be started on a "productivity" basis.

PUT UP OR SHUT UP

This outcome could hardly have been unforeseen by the Union leaders. But no preparation had been made for a fight. What to do when they came smack up against the resistance of the state was something not raised with the membership. Perhaps Cousins thought that the Government would cave in before a few militant noises. He would gladly have ignored the State - but it didn't let him.

The possibility of strike action was used for juggling with. But the T & G leaders somehow lacked conviction in this particular role. A credibility gap yawned ahead of them. The possibility of a struggle was in the air, but no-one seemed quite convinced it would actually happen: the reluctance of

the 'Lefts' to challenge the Government was well known.

Secure in this knowledge, the Government dug its heels in. But significantly it still left the rear open for a possible retreat. It did not rush in to invoke the powers of the new P. and I. Act, as yet confining itself to threats while watching the reactions of the workers and the Union. The ball was at Cousins' feet.

Unwilling to take a decision to fight the Government, the Bureaucrats on Jan. 10th, under strong pressure of the rank and file, announced a Delegate Conference for January 18th to consider the situation in light of Gunter's veto. Cousins said the Delegate Conference must decide policy. While not committing them to anything, this course let them give the appearance that they might be preparing for a fight. It was a frank piece of bluff - aimed at the Government and also at the rank and file.

The following day, Jan 11th, the Employers ratified the pay agreement, with the obvious aim of making sure the onus was on the Government to stop the wage rise. They were getting out of the line of fire now, as earlier their agreement to the increase had merely been a retreat to a more fortified position under Gunter's wing. The Tory press immediately pointed out that they were not defying the Government, but merely invoking Gunter's protection. They were anxious that the Government should bring in Part II of the new Act to 'compel' them not to pay out the money.

Whatever the intentions of the employers their ratification could only strengthen the men in a fight. Together with the willingness of the busmen to see the fight through, this could have been a major asset in the hands of the Union leaders.

THE DELEGATE CONFERENCE

Against this background, the Delegate Conference met on the 18th. The spirit of large sections of busmen was expressed in the demand of the Scottish delegates for "positive action" to force the

employers to shell out the £1 a week in defiance of the Government. But that required that the Union prepare to fight the Government. Cousins merely procrastinated, making militant noises. He was still thinking in terms of bluff, but the bluff didn't include even actually calling for a strike vote; which would have called the Government's bluff.

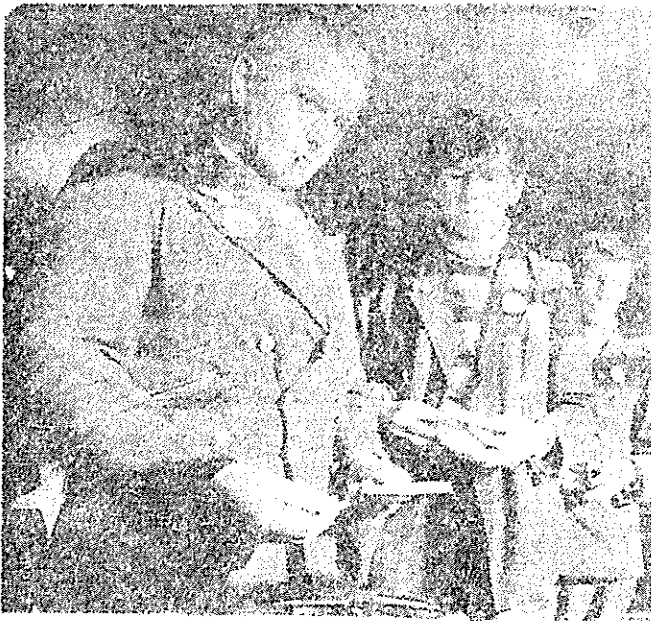
He headed off the strike demand, using the status his 'Left', 'militant' image had given him to dissuade the delegates with vague talk of selective local stoppages. He wanted more time.... On his suggestion a final decision was postponed for a week - he had suddenly discovered the need to probe once more the attitudes of the rank and file!

Asked what he thought of Gunter's threats Cousins recorded "... a sense of irritation. I don't think this is the way to conduct affairs between a Labour Government and the Trade Unions that support them." No doubt! But he had no policy, no will to beat that Government, or to face the fact that when the Government insists on intervening, the issues posed are those of either a sharp industrial and political fight against it - or capitulation.

During the week of postponement the Government made it clear that a proposal by Nottingham Corporation, which had lost £30,000 during a two week strike in December and was now willing because of a chronic shortage of bus staff, to pay the £1 from Feb. 4th., would not be allowed to go through.

But the Government still held its hand on bringing in Part II, awaiting the result of the January 25th recall Conference. It was reluctant to put up barricades when there was even a remote chance of having the giant strength of Britain's Biggest Union hurled against them. The possibility, by a serious show of strength, of forcing the Government to retreat, was still there. It was as yet only threatening to use its powers.

But the threat was enough for Fighting Frank. He advised the January 25 Conference against a fight with the Government.



strength with the Government. The right wing of the Trade Union movement will doubtless heave a sigh of relief...."

Instead of mobilising its real - industrial - strength to challenge the Government's policy, which it nominally rejects, the T & G put its tail down and went to law. That was to accept defeat without a struggle: the worst possible, most demoralising sort of defeat, particularly after the fight already put up by the men. The 'Left' bureaucrats settled for a fake 'fight' where they had no hope of winning, instead of one where they were, and are, strong enough to win. Going to court was merely a means of channeling the militancy into the ground - to disguise a defeat and the fact that the T & GWU, for all its talk, was running from the confrontation with the Government.

2 days later, on January 27th, the Government, for the first time, invoked Part II of the new Act, freezing the £1 increase for 77,000 municipal busmen for a preliminary 3 months, with the option of a further three. Cousins and Co. had made up the Government's mind for it.

NOT ONLY THE BUSMEN

Cousins of course has an 'excuse': the argument that the busmen are relatively weak industrially. The ECONOMIST, belligerently beating the Big Capitalist war drums, had proclaimed: 'This is the strike to have' - a weak adversary for the Government. But it went on to qualify this - the busmen are weak only in the absence of solidarity.



They should, so he said, sticking his head deep in the sand, keep the struggle as one between the Union and the Employers! Naturally he wasn't explicit as to how this was to be done under the present conditions - and in fact he himself wound up proposing a fight against the Government - only it was to be a 'fight' in the Lawcourts! Of course he correctly saw this not as a fight but as an evasion.

A FIGHT IN THE COURTS !

The delegates took his advice by 52 to 11 votes, and settled for the non-starter of a courtcase against a Government which has recently plugged up all the legal holes uncovered in the last Act in cases brought against it by the technicians unions. The shocking thing is that this was a blatant non-starter, and was seen as such by the capitalist press.

The employers' periscope, the FINANCIAL TIMES, commented: "The Government yesterday gained an important psychological victory over trade union opponents of its Incomes Policy when the T & GWU decided against strike action in the Busmen's pay dispute... It is an astonishing climbdown for the T & GWU to be taking legal action rather than industrial action. It will disappoint other militant unions which have been waiting to see the T & GWU engage in a trial of

Strike action need not by any means be confined to the municipal busmen. 100,000 provincial busmen could also be brought in very easily - without even the need to negotiate alliances with other unions. The T & G already has a many-unit army of many more workers within its boundaries. All are faced with a wage-cut. All are candidates for the £15 basic minimum proclaimed as Union policy. Knowing that any workers who challenge the Government are fighting for the whole working class, the full weight of this mighty Union should have been thrown in behind the Busmen - and with other demands as well!

Cousins had the commanding position within the Union machinery, and also at the Delegate Conferences. He evaded the issue. He was as much afraid as Gunter of the latent strength of the people he allegedly leads. That much was shown by the treachery of the T & G during the docks strikes only three months ago.

Today, with the Government acting as dam to wages, such necessary struggles as the long pre-December battle with the local authorities are only preliminary, limbering-up skirmishes. To fight the preliminary battles and then to shirk the decisive test against the employers' state and their 'Labour' lieutenants, is to make a mockery of the struggle of busmen throughout the country - and to risk their total disillusionment.

Cousins and his minions such as Jones and Nicholas parade around as Lefts. They 'oppose' the Government and the Prices and Incomes Act: they want more Nationalisation. They are built up by various people on the Left like the "Communist" Party, TRIBUNE, and some of TRIBUNE's juniors and understudies. To portray these bureaucrats as genuine lefts is to prepare even bigger sell-outs in the future - for bigger stakes. Those socialists and even 'Marxists' who have done so have a lot to account for.

We have every reason to expect a swing left by the Unions under pressure of capitalism's crises. But this will always lag behind the objective needs of the workers at any given moment. It will always be unreliable no matter how 'Left' the bureaucrats talk or how massive the forces they command. Even when events force these people to go through the motions of fighting - their nature remains the same. The key for socialists who turn not to the bureaucrats for solutions but to the working class, is to place the main emphasis on the organisation of the rank and file, at local level and in 'unofficial' committees, linked up nationally and independent of the bureaucrats.

The objective need today is to prepare a serious showdown with the Government and its Incomes Policy. That still lies ahead of us.

SUBMIT THE MILLIONS

1st Man: Who are those people?

Eats his bread, dies contented
And is honourably buried, but
They end before their time
Struck down and trampled on
and heaped with shame.

2nd Man: Not one of them
Cared only for himself
They ran without rest
To get bread for strangers.

1st Man: Why without bread?

1st Man: Why don't we ever hear about them?

2nd Man: The unjust man may cross the
street in the open
But the just man hides.

2nd Man: If you read in the papers that
certain criminals have been
Shot or thrown into prison,
they are the ones

1st Man: What's being done to them?

2nd Man: Although they work for low wages
and are useful to many men
Not one of them lives the
years of his life

1st Man: Will it always be like that?

2nd Man: No.

(Brecht, St. Joan of the Stockyards, Sc. II)

MOSCOW TRIAL 1968

It is said that in 1922 there were in Russia 40,000 poets. Throughout the terrible years of Civil War and famine, they sang their poems in the public squares, recited them in meetings, read them out in cafes, and posted them up on walls. They came in every shape and size - Futurists led by Mayakovsky, lyric poets like Yessenin, Cosmists, Imagists, traditional Romantic poets, revolutionary mystics like Blok, and many others, all experimenting and exploring in a way that would have been impossible 5 years before, and was to be impossible 5 years later.

The young workers' state was facing possible extinction at any moment from the White armies within and the massive array of Imperialist armies which first invaded and then encircled it. Yet these poets wrote freely: they hadn't an army of censors sitting on their backs, and there was a widespread feeling of respect for the view, expressed by Lenin and held by all the Bolsheviks, that ~~Every~~ artist ... can claim the right to create freely according to his ideal, whether it turns out good or not."

Cuba, in many ways similarly beleaguered scorns censorship of the arts. Last August the Paris Salon de Mai reopened in a special building in Havana, showing all the major styles of painting today - op, pop, kinetic art, free abstraction, and surrealism - a thing unheard of in Moscow in 40 years. And this January a Congress was held representing equally variegated trends in culture in general, to which 400 delegates came from 70 countries.

And yet in Moscow 1968 four young people were sentenced to terms of imprisonment from 2 to 7 years for defying the censor and distributing various pieces of writing in forbidden styles; and for compiling details of the trial of two other

writers (Daniel and Sinyavsky) who had been similarly arraigned. "The law allows me to write, but on condition that I write in a style other than my own, I have the right to show the face of my spirit, but I must first set it in the prescribed expression! What man of honour would not blush at such presumption" !

But the Russian thought-censors are not as brazen as they once were. Not only did they do their best to smear these writers with the smell of reaction - but they dared not even do so openly. Luridly lying trials, rigged and with the ropes showing, are still unfortunately a feature of the public life of the capital city of the first workers' republic fifty years after the Revolution. But there has been some progress within the genre: the charges are lurid still - but relatively small-scale compared with the fantastic fabrications of arson, sabotage and treachery of the thirties; confessions are now the exception rather than the rule; and instead of macabre, soulless puppet-shows, the victims now defend themselves - showing that, unlike the hypnotised firing-squad fodder of an earlier period, they are genuine oppositionists fighting with ideas and social aims held aloft for a banner.

Yuri Galanskov was sentenced to 7 years hard labour for 'anti-Soviet' activities and was alleged to have received money from a reactionary organisation based in West Germany, N.T.S. (which in turn is said to be financed by the CIA). And yet in June 1965 the same Galanskov appeared at the US Embassy in a spontaneous one-man protest against the US intervention in the Dominican Republic. Is there not something of a contradiction?

Alexander Ginsberg, who was sentenced to 5 years (although he had appealed to the court to pass on him the same sentence as on Galanskov) said at the trial

"I am not anti-Soviet and consider myself a supporter of proletarian democracy" and said that while he would die for his country, he would not lie for it. Neither were their supporters outside the court so eager to sell their country to Imperialism. As Pyotr Grigorenko pointed out, he has "shed blood for his country."

The only one of the accused known to hold to 'western ideology' was none other than the darling of the court, Dobrovolsky, who was 'let off' with only 2 years for giving evidence against the others. He took up religion some years ago. But in fact the ideas were irrelevant to the court - what mattered was that he gave the 'correct testimony', while Vera Lashkova, Ginsburg and Galanskov all maintained that their actions were not 'anti-Soviet'.

The utter falseness of the whole idea that as soon as people start doing anything unauthorised in Russia they must want to restore capitalism, is shown by the secret, shamefaced conduct of the Trial. In the months before it opened there had already been a great deal of hedging about by the authorities and the KGB. First they denied the arrests. Then, after a number of intellectuals had signed a protest that those arrested had been held longer than the legal period of 9 months which the KGB are given before people must be brought to trial, a date was announced. Then it was postponed.

The intention was obviously to try and avoid the adverse publicity which had accompanied the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial in 1965. Then it was announced that the trial would be open - but, while relatives and friends gathered outside, only specially selected hecklers were allowed in. Disjointed reports have emerged, however, and something of the manner of this trial can be seen from the Appeal circulated afterwards by Larisa Daniel and Pavel Litvinov, which shows a "proletarian justice" with the blindfold taken off and forcefully placed on the eyes of the worker observers:



**Pavel
Litvinov**

**Larisa
Daniel**

"The case took on the character of the well-known 'witch trials' on its second day, when Galanskov and Ginsburg - in spite of a year of preliminary incarceration, in spite of pressure from the court - refused to accept the groundless accusations made against them by Dobrovolsky and sought to prove their innocence. Evidence by witnesses in favour of Galanskov and Ginsburg infuriated the court even more. ...

Judge Mironov has not once stopped the prosecutor. But he is allowing the defence to say only that which fits in with the programme already prepared by the KGB investigation. Whenever any participant in the trial departs from the rehearsed spectacle the judge cries: 'your question is out of order', 'This has no relation to the case', 'I will not allow you to speak.' ...

The witnesses leave the court after their examination, or rather they are pushed out of the court, in a depressed state, almost in hysterics.

Witness Yelena Basilova was not allowed to make a statement to the court. She wanted to record how the KGB had persecuted her mentally sick husband, whose evidence, given during the investigation when he was in a certifiable state, plays an important part in the prosecution case. Basilova was driven out of the court while the judge shouted

and the audience howled, drowning her words.

P. Grigorenko (the former Major-General ...) submitted a request that he be examined as a witness because he could explain the origin of the money found on Dobrovolsky. According to Dobrovolsky, Galanskov gave him the money. Grigorenko's request was turned down on the pretext that he is allegedly mentally ill. This is not true. ...

The "commandant of the court", KGB Colonel Tsirkunenکو, did not allow witness L. Katz back into the court after a recess and told her: "If you had given other evidence you could have stayed"...

The courtroom is filled with specially selected people, officials of the KGB and volunteer militia, who give the appearance of an open trial. These people make a noise, laugh and insult the accused and the witnesses."

There are those in the British Labour movement who think that this trial and others like it are both fair and justified in a country they consider to be Socialist. Some of these people are merely stuck in attitudes they adopted 30 years ago and have stubbornly clung to, through thick and thin and the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Others are young and adopt such attitudes now not out of hard line Stalinism, but in a simple, diametric reaction against the hypocritical bourgeois-'liberals' who condemn such trials in Russia but are silent about the tyrannies of capitalism from Rhodesia, through Greece, Spain and Portugal, to South Africa, Britain and the USA - not to mention such capitalist atrocities as the Vietnam genocide.

The world, however, is not made in black and white, and a simple reaction is not the Marxist way to view the world and adopt a stand. Russian 'socialism' or otherwise must be judged by concrete events in Russia - not the concrete events by a prior decision that the state is socialist adopted in the spirit of "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

If Russia were indeed Socialist, there would be an immense freedom and variety of ideas which would flourish and grow

and develop without restriction - a freedom unattainable under capitalism. The young people who are being brought to trial all over the Soviet Union belong to an 'underground' containing something like that variety of ideas. Their main point of agreement is that they want the freedom to write and discuss them openly, and using any style or form which suits them. According to a recent account of this Underground, the majority have joined it because they are increasingly aware of the contradiction between Russian realities 50 years after the Revolution - and the Marxism which they learn in school and university.

That contradiction is, for instance, summed up if one considers the latest Moscow Trial in the light of the quotation from Marx in the fourth paragraph. And that contradiction will persist until the Russian workers have passed through a new revolutionary toll-gate on the road to socialism, the road from which they have been for so long deflected by the usurping bureaucracy.

The young members of the literary Underground are playing their part in the ferment that must lead up to the direct seizure of power by the workers. It is up to us here in the labour movement to support them in their struggle by organising protests, particularly within the CP and YCL, against the mock-trials and the savage repressions. In doing so, we must also insist on a Marxist evaluation of Russia in place of the blind emotional reaction which all too often is based on little more than wishful thinking.

R.L.

WORKERS' REPUBLIC

No. 20 now out. Articles

on: Black Power; Art in

Russia; Marxism of October.

& a Trotsky Reprint

BACKING BRITAIN'S BOSSES

On January 3rd a full-page advert appeared in THE TIMES which looked like a collective love note -

"Valerie, Brenda, Joan, Carol and Christine, we love you", ran the caption. From Playboys to Debs?

Well, not quite. The above mentioned ladies are, of course, the typists at Colt Ventilation and Heating Ltd., who started the profit-boosting scheme for workers to put in an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ hour a day without pay. The advert? You guessed it. Put in and paid for by one of the larger advertising firms on behalf of Britain's bosses, and costing £2,000.

The next day, a similar advert appeared, this time by the SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND - the organisation which pretends that the problem of child poverty can be solved through odd pennies, without abolishing the system which creates and thrives on poverty. Some of these pennies were no doubt used to finance this gimmick - unless Prince Philip or someone near him paid for it. After all, H.M. the Queen is the patron and Philip, who sent a congratulatory telegram to the typists, can surely afford the equivalent of a few coppers for we common folk. Presumably he'll play polo for an extra half hour a day.

EVERYBODY WHO IS ANYBODY

As to be expected, these adverts are only a fraction of the time and money spent

on the gimmick by the press, radio and T.V. Many comedians, serious and funny, have been enlisted. There's Jimmy Savile, who proclaims he earns £50,000 a year for the pop music firms. Presumably he will spin the Top Ten once more each day. That'll just about take half an hour of strenuous exercise for "Britain".

Then there's Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, who together with the Chief Rabbi is practising a little Christian-Jewish friendship in advocating love ... for our bosses! In a revealing article in THE TIMES of Jan. 13th Stockwood compared the Nation to a family. One big

happy group, no doubt, with the boss as Dad. Remember, if you think that social service cuts are savage attacks on your living conditions - "it is the duty of a family to take care of its members that are in real need..." That's right, you pay for the worse off of your brothers. No pocket money from Dad, in fact he is taking some back - except for good boys like Stockwood, who receives a mere £3,000 a year for his efforts.

Needless to say, the new Poet Laureate earned his keep - "To work then islanders, as men and women..." counselled he in his poem. An ex-CP "educator", now in the service of a different set of hacks.

PRICES AND PROFIT PEGGING ?

In face of rising prices on



everyday commodities, with an eventual rise of £1 a week in the family food bill, the spectacularly advertised announcements of price pegging, salary cuts and dividend "freezing", are sick jokes. So Billy Butlin in "Backing Britain" takes a self imposed salary cut from £20,000 to £15,000 - what a sacrifice! All the business lunches and other parties will suffer terribly. And of course, he'll be very sorry to take his share of the profits when the handout comes round. After all, his assets only amount to £2,700,000. Even with a 3 or 4% dividend he'd only get £100,000 or thereabouts. Poor fellow. Still, he might just afford a holiday out of that....

Those firms that have been broadcasted as freezing dividends (very few) won't suffer either. Those that own shares, if they don't - for the sake of "Britain" - reap now, will do so later when bumper payments come.

And I'm sure that Express Dairies will suffer tremendously through their much trumpeted act of not raising prices till - March 31st! Incidentally, we presume there'll be no price increases in the immediate future on the "I'm Backing Britain" badges, shirts, mugs and other profitable knick-knacks.....

WORKERS TO BLAME ?

The gimmickry that has accompanied the Backing Britain campaign has its serious sides. It is part and parcel of a more general campaign that goes on all the time and has intensified in the last 3 years of "Labour" office: that of blaming the workers for economic problems. In spite of "lazy" workers, employers continue to make fat profits. Yet, who produces these? The workers? Shh, don't be so irresponsible and unpatriotic! Even Harold Wilson in attacking the Tories in a pre-election speech in 1964, didn't seem to think much of the anti-worker line. This is what he said: "...For

the first time since the days of the early Tudors, German workers take home wages greater than ours, and work fewer hours." Lazy workers?

Not that Wilson has any alternative. His aim is to run capitalism better than the Tories, so he naturally ends up attacking the workers when the broken down, outmoded system is in trouble. So, note the changed tone, after three years of union-baiting and anti-union legislation, to Jan. 8th 1968: "Five girls recognised the need for individual responsibility and personal involvement" - now a fully-fledged advocate of an extra half hour a day of slavery.

Perhaps all the talk about half an hour of unpaid labour has been so welcomed by the bosses because it helps to obscure the fact that very much more than half an hour's work a day is already unpaid, going to make up the capitalists' profits. Talk of a voluntary donation of surplus value implies that as things normally are under capitalism we work for "Fair wages". But under capitalism there can be no such thing as a "Fair wage".

RESIST ATTACKS ON OUR CONDITIONS !

As long as the capitalist class has real control, any sacrifices made by workers will only benefit the handful of profiteer parasites. Not only that, but in the crazy, unplanned system that is capitalism, any such sacrifices rebound on the workers anyway. Longer hours with no pay means more goods and, in the context of the tightening world markets, more unemployment and in the end less goods. There is considerable unemployment in France (400,000) and in Germany (the boasted land of everlasting boom - 600,000), and US capital is squeezing its workers. There is no way out under the present system. Under it, even the wonders of technology bring nothing but stagnation.

P.S.

**I'm Backing WORKERS' FIGHT --
-- with a SUB: 9s. for 12 issues.**



**The
A B C
of
Materialist
Dialectics
by
LEON
TROTSKY**

(We print here an excerpt from IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM. This book is a collection of Trotsky's writings of 1939-40 in the struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition of Burnham/Schachtman/Abern in the Socialist Workers Party of America. Specifically the argument was on whether revolutionary socialists, fully conscious of the barbarism of Stalinism, should continue to stand for unconditional defence of the Soviet Union. Flowing from this was the question of the class character of the Soviet Union, on which the opposition differed amongst themselves (which didn't prevent an unprincipled alliance on the "concrete questions"). Finally flowing from this in turn arose, inevitably, the question of method - of how, anyway, does one judge the class character of states? How does one arrive at understanding of complicated phenomena in general? The argument boiled down to a question of the method of Marxism. Burnham was against Dialectics; Schachtman was indifferent. Trotsky insisted that concrete questions could only be properly appreciated and clarified on the basis of discussion on methodology. The following is an excerpt on the logic of Marxism from one of his articles (A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party) in Defence of Marxism.)

The dialectic is neither fiction nor mysticism, but a science of the forms of our thinking insofar as it is not limited to the daily problems of life but attempts to arrive at an understanding of more complicated and drawn-out processes. The dialectic and formal logic bear a relationship similar to that between higher and lower mathematics.

I will here attempt to sketch the substance of the problem in a very concise form. The Aristotelian logic of the simple syllogism starts from the proposition that "A" is equal to "A". This postulate is accepted as an axiom for a multitude of practical human actions and elementary generalisations. But in reality "A" is not equal to "A". This is easy to prove if we observe these two letters under a lens - they are quite different from each other. But, one can object, the question is not of the size or the form of the letters, since they are only symbols for equal quantities, for ins-

tance, a pound of sugar. The objection is beside the point; in reality a pound of sugar is never equal to a pound of sugar - a more delicate scale always discloses a difference. Again one can object: but a pound of sugar is equal to itself. Neither is this true - all bodies change uninterruptedly in size, weight, colour, etc. They are never equal to themselves. A sophist will respond that a pound of sugar is equal to itself "at any given moment". Aside from the extremely dubious practical value of this "axiom", it does not withstand theoretical criticism either. How should we really conceive the word "moment"? If it is an infinitesimal interval of time, then a pound of sugar is subjected during the course of that "moment" to inevitable changes. Or is the "moment" a purely mathematical abstraction, that is, a zero of time? But everything exists in time; and existence itself is an uninterrupted process of transformation; time is consequently a fundamental element of existence. Thus the axiom "A is equal to A" signifies that a thing is equal to itself if it does not change, that is, if it does not exist.

At first glance it could seem that these "subtleties" are useless. In reality they are of decisive significance. The axiom "A is equal to A" appears on one hand to be the point of departure for all our knowledge, on the other hand the point of departure for all the errors in our knowledge. To make use of the axiom "A is equal to A" with impunity is possible within certain limits. When quantitative changes in "A" are negligible for the task at hand then we can presume that "A" is equal to "A". This is, for example, the manner in which a buyer and a seller consider a pound of sugar. We consider the temperature of the sun likewise. Until recently we considered the buying power of the dollar in the same way. But quantitative changes beyond certain limits became converted into qualitative. A pound of sugar subjected to the action of water or kerosene ceases to be a pound of sugar. A dollar in the embrace of a president ceases to be a dollar. To determine at the right moment the critical point where quantity changes into quality is one of the most important and difficult tasks in all the spheres of knowledge including sociology.

Every worker knows that it is impossible to make two completely equal objects. In the elaboration of bearing-brass into cone bearings, a certain deviation is allowed for the cones which should not, however, go beyond certain limits (this is called tolerance). By observing the norms of tolerance, the cones are considered as being equal. ("A is equal to A"). When the tolerance is exceeded the quantity goes over into quality; in other words, the cone bearings become inferior or completely worthless.

Our scientific thinking is only a part of our general practice including techniques. For concepts there also exists "tolerance" which is established not by formal logic issuing from the axiom "A is equal to A", but by dialectical logic issuing from the axiom that everything is always changing. "Common sense is characterised by the fact that it systematically exceeds dialectical "tolerance".

Vulgar thought operates with such concepts as capitalism, morals, freedom, workers' state, etc. as fixed abstractions, presuming that capitalism is equal to capitalism, morals are equal to morals, etc. Dialectical thinking analyses all things and phenomena in their continuous change, while determining in the material conditions of those changes that critical limit beyond which "A" ceases to be "A", a workers' state ceases to be a workers' state.

The fundamental flaw of vulgar thought lies in the fact that it wishes to content itself with motionless imprints of reality which consists of eternal motion. Dialectical thinking gives to concepts, by means of closer approximations, corrections,

concretisations, a richness of content and flexibility; I would even say a succulence which to a certain extent brings them close to living phenomena. Not capitalism in general, but a given capitalism at a given stage of development. Not a workers' state in general, but a given workers' state in a backward country in an Imperialist encirclement, etc.

Dialectical thinking is related to vulgar thinking in the same way that a motion picture is related to a still photograph. The motion picture does not outlaw the still photograph but combines a series of them according to the laws of motion. Dialectics does not deny the syllogism, but teaches us to combine syllogisms in such a way as to bring our understanding closer to the eternally changing reality. Hegel in his LOGIC established a series of laws: change of quantity into quality, development through contradictions, conflict of content and form, interruption of continuity, change of possibility into inevitability, etc., which are just as important for theoretical thought as is the simple syllogism for more elementary tasks.

Hegel wrote before Darwin and before Marx. Thanks to the powerful impulse given to thought by the French Revolution, Hegel anticipated the general movement of science. But because it was only an anticipation, although by a genius, it received from Hegel an idealistic character. Hegel operated with ideological shadows as the ultimate reality. Marx demonstrated that the movement of these ideological shadows reflected nothing but the movement of material bodies.

We call our dialectic, materialist, since its roots are neither in heaven nor in the depths of our "free will", but in objective reality, in nature. Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of nebulae. On all the rungs of this ladder of development, the quantitative changes were transformed into qualitative. Our thought, including dialectical thought, is only one of the forms of the expression of changing matter. There is place within this system for neither God, nor Devil, nor immortal soul, nor eternal norms of laws and morals. The dialectic of thinking, having grown out of the dialectic of nature, possesses consequently a thoroughly materialist character.

Darwinism, which explained the evolution of species through quantitative transformations passing into qualitative, was the highest triumph of the dialectic in the whole field of organic matter. Another great triumph was the discovery of the table of atomic weights and chemical elements and further the transformation of one element into another.

With these transformations (species, elements, etc.) is closely linked the question of classification, equally important in the natural as in the social sciences. Linnaeus' system (18th century), utilising as its starting point the immutability of species, was limited to the description and classification of plants according to their external characteristics. The infantile period of botany is analogous to the infantile period of logic, since the forms of our thought develop like everything that lives. Only decisive repudiation of the idea of fixed species, only the study of the history of the evolution of plants and their anatomy prepared the basis for a really scientific classification.

Marx, who in distinction from Darwin was a conscious dialectician, discovered a basis for the scientific classification of human societies in the development of their productive forces and the structure of the relations of ownership which constitute the anatomy of society. Marxism substituted for the vulgar descriptive classification

of societies and states, which even up to now still flourishes in the universities, a materialistic dialectic classification. Only through using the method of Marx is it possible correctly to determine both the concept of a workers' state and the moment of its downfall.

All this, as we see, contains nothing "metaphysical" or "scholastic", as conceited ignorance affirms. Dialectic logic expresses the laws of motion in contemporary scientific thought. The struggle against materialist dialectics on the contrary expresses a distant past, conservatism of the petty bourgeoisie, the self-conceit of university routinists and a spark of hope for an after-life.

TEACHERS' STRUGGLE GOES ON

by Dave Spencer (N.U.T.)

"But to go to school on a summer's morn,
Oh! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay."

William Blake, 1794.

Now that the dust has settled and "Disgusted" of Abertillery and "Fair Day" of Hunstanton have laid down their pens, at least on the teacher's pay issue, what was it all about and what have teachers learned?

BURNHAM

Last year was Burnham year for teachers. The Burnham Committee, set up in 1927, is the teachers' negotiating machinery. It consists of representatives of the Local Education Authorities (the teachers' employers), the government and the teachers' unions (Yes, there are more than one! 1)NUT, by far the largest, 2)NAS, no women allowed, 3)AMA, mainly graduates, snobs anonymous). It meets every two years to review teachers' pay and, naturally, we always expect a rise. The NUT claim this year to Burnham was for a 25% increase in basic pay. This may seem a lot but 25% of nothing is still nothing. The basic scale for teachers was £730 - £1,400 over 14 years and the NUT claim was for £900-£1700 over 10 years, a modest amount. Many teachers of course get more pay than the basic, with extra

qualifications and responsibility posts but many don't, particularly young teachers. There is of course no payment for overtime, either at school or at home in marking and preparation.

After some deliberation, Burnham offered the teachers a 6% rise, which in view of the rise in the cost of living over the past two years and the fact that the teachers' pay would not be reviewed for another two years, was quite scandalous. Even the flabby NUT Executive had to take a stand. They registered a failure to agree and called a special Conference of the Union in May to decide on action. The conference called for a fight, threatening firstly sanctions (type of work to rule) followed by phased strike action if these had no effect.

ARBITRATION

Under the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1958, any failure to agree must automatically be followed by arbitration (shades of the Trade Union White Paper?) which is binding. Arbitration generously offered 7% instead of 6%, with no back pay. In September the NUT went into action with its sanctions in certain areas. These sanctions took the form of a withdrawal from the school meals service, a leaving of schools during the dinner hour and letting the children and canteen staff get on with it. Many teachers joined the NUT because of its firm stand

and packed meetings gave full support for the fight.

On November 28th, however, during all the enthusiasm and calls for no surrender, the NUT Executive signed an agreement with the L.E.A.s to set up a working party "in a spirit of good will" to look into the salary structure and get a settlement by early 1969, subject, and here's the rub, "to contingencies of Government policy". Stinking sell-out is hardly an adequate expression to describe this action. Disillusionment and cynicism are once more rife in the Union.

EFFECTS OF POOR WAGES

For a young man or woman of 22 or 23, after 7 or more years extra schooling, £14 a week gross is just not enough, particularly when they have left home and are living in bed-sitters. If they are married with children, it's just impossible. It is not surprising therefore that last year, of those leaving Teacher Training College, 2,000 students never entered teaching, and that 1 in 5 men and 3 in 5 women, leave before they have done five years' teaching. Although 2,000 more students took degrees at University last year than the year before, far less went into teaching. Many teachers go abroad where they find they are paid more. The British teacher is paid far less than his European counterpart, (e.g. starting rate is £1700 in Sweden, £1,200 in Germany and £770 in France.)

In face of all this, there will be 350,000 more children by 1971, and 20,000 more teachers will be needed. In "slum schools" in large urban areas, "unqualified teachers" are the rule rather than the exception. Some local authorities have as many as a quarter of their teaching staff untrained, unskilled and unqualified. Of course, these "unqualified teachers" are paid far less than qualified teachers, making a saving to the authority - and at least the children are off the streets under a roof and reasonably quiet.

In other words, to maintain the Education

system even at its present level, more pay is needed for teachers. Yet last year, the LEAs' income was cut by £104 million and this year it will be even more: and education takes up the largest slice of an LEA's income.

THE SYSTEM

The Labour Party in its section on Education in SIGNPOSTS FOR THE SIXTIES and in subsequent election propaganda, insists on a number of improvements and reforms in the education system, all of which are part of NUT policy, incidentally. These include the raising of the school leaving age to 16, new Comprehensive schools, building of new schools in deprived areas (where many schools condemned before the war are still in use) and the lowering of class ratios to 30 children to a class in all schools (at present over 75% of classes in Junior Schools and over 50% in Secondary Schools have over 30 children - as against an average of 15 to a class in Public Schools). The Flowden Report on Primary Education and the Newsome Report on Secondary Education have insisted on these demands as being the very minimum.

Socialists would attack both these reports and the Labour Party documents as being inadequate - for example, even 30 to a class is too many. The Public Schools - over £500 a year to send a boy to Eton, Harrow, Rugby, etc - must be abolished as such. The whole of the school curriculum should be looked at and revised to give more emphasis to practical subjects. But in the present economic situation, in common with the other social services, even the minimum reforms cannot be met.

TEACHERS MUST PREPARE TO FIGHT

What is clear is that it is precisely the "contingencies of Government economic policy", accepted by the NUT on November 28th, that is wrecking the Education system - and that under capitalism it is impossible to get a really decent education system where the real needs and interests of ordinary children can be fully met. The NUT claims to be non-political and it is only this year at

its Easter Conference that it is likely to join the TUC. Bringing up political and economic points in branch meetings is still regarded as being very bad form even, or especially, by Communist Party members.

Teachers should insist on wider and more general Union meetings, rather than cliquish committee meetings of headmasters, where political and economic questions and solutions can be discussed. Young Teachers' Committees can be very useful ginger groups. The NUT's affiliation to the TUC must be taken up at branch level, with involvement in Trades Councils and the labour movement. It is here that the needs of the education

system must be pushed, and here that teachers can gain from the experience of industrial action of the other unions. Teachers should call upon the NUT Executive for action on their Conference decisions. Following this, they should join the Labour Party and form socialist teachers' groups inside the Labour Party to press for the minimum demands outlined in the Labour Party's election propaganda - which have in a sense become transitional demands. Failing any satisfaction, public meetings under the Labour Party banner should be held, with instructions to MPs to fight the issue in the Parliament. A call must be issued for a National Constituency Parties Conference to discuss the whole subject.

How to GIVE the Sack

Now I know that WORKERS' FIGHT has no disreputable working class readers. Nor the sort of people who would do such a grievous wrong to the humane sensibilities of their employer as to force him to dismiss them. Of course not! Readers therefore will be inclined to view sympathetically the problems, pressures and 'emotional stresses' which face the average Personnel Manager, whose job, naturally, includes regular chopping sessions with the hatchet.

The problem is that some workers, at various levels, actually resent being sacked and create a bit of a fuss! And that's not all: 'Of all the problems an executive is called upon to resolve, none is more fraught with emotion than when he has to dismiss an employee....' So there you have it: hiding behind the hard hatchet-faced pose of the industrial executioner is a quivering jelly of 'humane' squeamishness. And more. 'This emotion has the most undesirable effects - a build-up of nervous tension for weeks, for example - and many is the time that a man continues to be employed long after he should have been dismissed, simply

because the executive who has to do it, cannot face up to the task!!

The things they do for us! Just to keep the heavy weight of decision making from burdening us down, they take upon themselves the sole right and duty of decision and control over us. It would of course be less, far less, of a strain on the nerves of the hatchetmen if such things as hiring and firing, redundancies, etc etc were directly in the collective control of the workers involved. But that would be passing the buck. It would also be downright Socialism! These front-line fighters in the personnel war must soldier on, with the aid of nerve pills, such feelings of moral righteousness as they can muster, and the natural thickening of the skin that goes with their status.

But now Social Science - capital S! - comes to their rescue with a codified set of recipes for the successful and least messy chop! A Dale Carnegie, Stephenson by name, has walked amongst them, and, according to the preview in the Financial Times (whose opinions I

have already quoted) is offering a handbook for the guidance of the professional or semi-professional chopper.

In face of the 'emotional stresses and strains' facing the men who purge those least amenable, for whatever reason, to the exploitative suckers of the bosses - what does this prophet of 'sacking without tears' suggest? PLANNED DISMISSAL! It must become a planned management function! And why? Stephenson gives 6 Good Reasons:

'To avoid deterioration of the dismissing executive's own work because of his emotional upset; to avoid the dismissal interview from developing into an argument; to avoid post-employment problems - trouble the employee may cause among people outside the company; to avoid a feeling of insecurity among the rest of the staff; to ensure that dismissal is carried out in the right place and at the right time; and, finally, to preserve the company's good image'.

So there! Capitalism shows its genuinely humane concern for people by planning for people-waste disposal in the same way as thing-waste disposal. What greater compliment could such a system pay to humanity?

Curiously Stephenson recommends more personal involvement for the chopper-man. It seems many of them don't always know why the blow they are delivering has been decreed. Stephenson says: STUDY THE FACTS. He lists generally applicable reasons for firing, apart from redundancy and bad health (!) -

'Inefficiency without doubt is the main reason for firing anyone. Another good reason is if one

man has a negative, dispiriting, or 'positively deleterious' effect on another. A strong candidate for dismissal is the employee who swears continuously spreads rumours, speaks disparagingly of the company ... borrows money from his colleagues and is slow in repaying ... who has a love affair with another employee...'

Best time for delivering the bad news? Evening, preferably Friday evening, if possible with an interview in private lasting "between 15 and 45 minutes": "...much of the force of an outraged, disgruntled or over-aggressive employee disappears over a night or weekend." A final word from the Financial Times: "And so, stick to your plans: state the facts, avoid a discussion, then soften the blow (if appropriate) by wishing the employee greater success in future..."

And that's the recipe - delivered like a lab report on guinea-pig handling. Considerate readers will probably be inspired to step up the effort to relieve these poor people, who are so sensitive on such questions, from their burdens - by taking, together with the rest of the working class, control of hiring and firing, and everything else, out of their hands.

Will Stephenson's recipes help us when we come to our own big, Final Dismissal - of the employers, their Government, their state, ... and their hatchetmen? Can we do it politely - and without discussion? Somehow I think it just might reach the argument stage - and not merely a verbal one. It won't happen just before closing time on a Friday evening. And it won't be over in 45 minutes.

Albert Catta.

VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN (Manchester.) Demonstration Feb. 24th.

Leaving at 2.30 from University Union, Oxford Road. Social in the evening. For further details contact VSC Secretary, Jan Marsden, c/o 31 Leicester Road, Manchester 8.