

workers' ACTION

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JUDGES BASH ANOTHER UNION

Thanks to Lord Denning, South Africa watched the Cup Final last Saturday. In the Appeal Court, he granted an injunction to the BBC to prevent the Association of Broadcasting Staff from pulling the plugs on the

Laws to protect trade unionists are supposed to be the plus side of the Social Contract — the Labour Government's side of the bargain.

But not only are trade unionists coming under new attacks from judges using Labour's brand new laws. To make things much, much worse, the government itself is bringing in laws specially designed to strait-jacket trade union actions.

The CRIMINAL LAW BILL, which has been launched with Labour's blessing, will create new offences for occupying factories (and for squatting in unused houses and for political protest occupations).

Instead of 'Trespass' being a civil offence, it will be made an arrestable criminal offence.

Another Bill which is presently wending its way through Westminster committee rooms, and which has been publicised even less than the Criminal Law Bill, will allow employers or third parties (such as the National Association for Freedom or the Economic League or customers of a strike-bound employer) to take out an injunction for the delivery of "goods" to which they have been denied access.

This could presumably be applied to any products which are being blacked and which trade unionists refuse to allow to be moved.

The drafters of this Bill [the "Torts (Interference with Goods) Bill"] obviously also had factory occupations in mind. Among the "goods" to be delivered up on injunction (on pain of being in contempt of court) are buildings or land.

What a bargain! What a Contract!

by MIKE SNELLING

transmission to South Africa of the Wembley match.

The judgment is the latest and perhaps the most serious so far in a string of recent legal attacks on trade union freedom of industrial action.

First there was the decision to outlaw the blacking by Post Office Union members of scab work from Grunwicks. Then there was the judgment which effectively destroyed the 7-day blacking of communications with South Africa, also by UPW members.

The UPW conference was told by Michael Foot that next year the government will introduce legislation which will (if the Liberals care to allow it to pass) restore the right of the UPW to take strike action. (Remember, if there's repressive legislation that they urgently need, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, it goes through in a matter of hours.)

So for the Grunwick strikers, help is on the way ... next year! So much for the visiting cabinet ministers who graced their picket line last week!

What does the ABS judgment mean for other trade unionists?

In reaching its decision, the Court of Appeal chose to put a narrow interpretation on Section 29 (1) (a) of the Trade Union and

Labour Relations (Amendment) Act 1974. This defines a trade dispute (i.e. an action which has legal existence and rights) as a dispute concerning "terms and conditions of employment, or the physical conditions in which any workers are required to work."

This leaves a very large number of disputes in a state of legal limbo, so that any anti-union far-right outfit can come along and get an injunction on the grounds of public interest or whatever. Or, as in the ABS case, an employer can get an injunction on no

grounds at all to stop an action and make it illegal.

At risk would be all "conscience" action such as strikes by journalists against National Front adverts in their papers; or protest strikes on political issues, such as against the Cuts or against anti-union legislation.

Laws and legal precedents against industrial action are coming as fast now as under the Tories (see inset). But no amounts of injunctions could stop a really determined group of organised workers.

The backing down of the UPW and now the ABS are as bad precedents for us as the court actions themselves. It's time we set a better precedent!

NOW 'SECRETS THREE' FACE SPY CHARGES

The case of Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell, who have been charged under the Official Secrets Act, took a grim new turn this week.

So far, they have been waiting to hear whether the Attorney General Sam Silkin was going to confirm charges against them under Section 2 of the Act, which relates to unauthorised use of information.

In Court last Tuesday the three men (who were active in the campaign to prevent the deportation of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball) heard that these charges against two of them [Berry and Campbell] are going ahead. And in addition, new charges were being brought against all three either under, or in connection with, Section 1.

Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act is the one that relates to spying. It carries penalties such as 15 years' jail. The charges refer to purposes "prejudicial to the safety or the interests of the state" and to "information which might

be ... useful to an enemy".

The new charges do not relate to any alleged other offences. Though the three men's homes have been turned upside down by the Special Branch, the new charges still only refer to an interview which Aubrey and Campbell did with Berry for an article for Time Out.

It is no accident that the new charges were brought on the same day that the Section 2 charges were confirmed. Silkin and Home Secretary Merlyn Rees had to decide to back out, or else to throw in heavier charges in the hope that this way they would at least get convictions on the lesser ones.

The case had been an embarrassing one for Rees. Just six months ago he said in the House of Commons that receipt of information should no longer be an offence. Repeal of Section 2 has been repeatedly promised since 1971. The Official Secrets Act as a whole is reckoned to be totally obsolete, even by people who care about the security of Britain's capitalist state.

The prosecution tried to claim that the earlier charges were just "holding charges". But obviously the use of Section 1 charges is a desperate attempt to throw enough mud so that some of it will stick.

But why were the charges brought in the first place?

The attack on these journalists is part of a general campaign against journalists whose investigations threaten to make public things which it is more convenient for the Government [and/or MI5] to keep hidden. In the cases of American writers Agee and Hosenball, deportation was used. In this, linked, case it is Official Secrets.

It all adds up to one thing: an attempt to neuter the press and keep the shutters down around the doings of the government.



Duncan Campbell, Crispin Aubrey and John Berry

ISRAELI ELECTIONS

A VICTORY FOR ISRAEL'S ENOCH POWELL

THE VICTORY in the Israeli elections of Menachem Begin's Likud bloc has been greeted by almost universal alarm in the capitals of the world. Likud's defeat of the ruling Labour alliance is seen as a major setback to plans being cooked up in Washington for a Middle East peace settlement.

With his immediate post-election declaration that the new government would encourage the settlement of the west Bank, Begin fed the fears of those who saw in the fall of Prime Minister Rabin the opening of a new period of friction between Israel and its protector, the United States.

RESIGNED

In March this year, Rabin, who resigned the premiership when (after a series of corruption cases had rocked Labour) it was revealed that his wife had illegal bank deposits abroad, made it clear that "The Israelis who were able to believe that the United States had been, in the past, or were today in favour of Israel remaining in the occupied territories have been living in an illusion".

Begin does more than live in this illusion: he renames the occupied territories



Rabin knew US intentions

"liberated territories" and claims that Likud does not wish to annex these areas because "You cannot annex what is rightfully yours".

The optimistic bourgeois who had been backing Carter's apparent formula of "a phased withdrawal from virtually all territory taken in 1967 in return for piecemeal steps towards full peace, with a Palestinian 'homeland' established along the way", saw Rabin's replacement by his Labour successor Peres — never mind Begin! — with horror. Now

by Paul Adams

their worst fears have come true.

For instance, the journal "Middle East International" had this to say on the eve of the elections, "For the minority of Israelis who recognise that only a genuine and far-reaching change of political direction can bring with it the reward of peace, the substitution of Mr Peres — or, heaven help us, Mr Begin — for Mr Rabin as prime minister will be still more discouraging..."

Begin's attitude towards the Palestinians is fully in the tradition of the Jabotinsky "Revisionists", whose youth movement he once led. The Revisionists represented the extreme nationalist-religious wing of Zionism, pledged to a military conquest of all of Biblical Israel and its subjugation to racial-exclusivist Jewish rule.

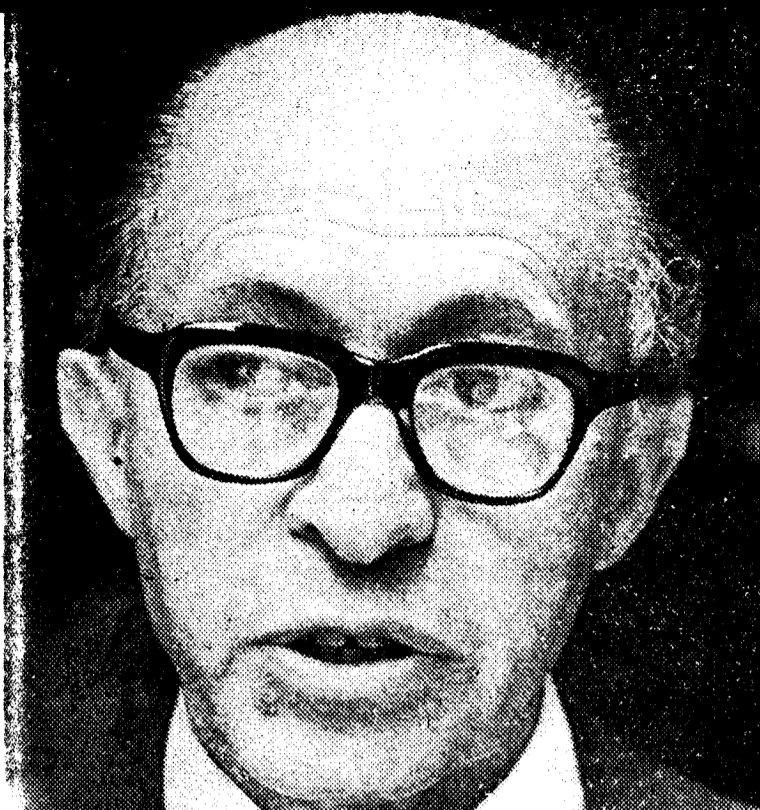
The Likud leader is an unreconstructed cold-warrior, and hostile to the traditional forms of state intervention in the economy that were such a feature of Labour administrations for the entire 30 years of Israel's existence. The party's economic policies are aimed at a lowering of the rate of inflation (currently 40%) by cutting back on state expenditure and increasing unemployment.

But while Likud has won the election, there are serious doubts as to how long it can stay in power. Firstly, Likud does not have an overall majority and even if it forms a coalition with the religious parties and Arik Sharon's right-wing Shlom Zion party, its majority will only be very narrow.

WRONG

Secondly, the worsening conditions of the working class that would result from Likud's economic policies will hit hardest at the party's own main base of support among the poorer and oriental Jews. This could lead to a serious undermining of that base.

But the main obstacle for Likud is the US. Begin obviously thinks that the tail can wag the dog and that Carter can be pressured to adopt a less conciliatory stance vis-a-vis the Arab regimes. He is wrong. Carter is no friend of the Palestinians, but he is determined to further US penetration of the Middle East, to strengthen its military hegemony in the



THE LANGUAGE OF RACE AND BLOOD

MENACHEM BEGIN is treated in the Western press as the bogeyman of Israeli politics, rather in the way Barry Goldwater was treated in the US presidential elections of 1964, or the way Enoch Powell is treated now.

He shares particularly with Powell that image of mystical-moral fervour which prevents them from appearing in all their primitive and bloody vulgarity. Just as Powell, the thin-striped parliamentarian, has become the respectable ideologist of the racist street thug, so Begin, the equally formal party leader, is the hero of the most right-wing racists and obscurantists of present-day Zionism.

As commander of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the anti-British physical-force disciples of Jabotinsky's Zionist Revisionism, Begin was directly responsible for the massacre of 254 Arab villagers at Deir Yassin in 1948, and other atrocities.

His Zionism, however, is not so remote from the Zionism of Golda Meir and Weizmann. Rather Zionism has always been composed of several different

but interlinking strands, one of which has articulated its objectives within the framework of bourgeois-liberal and western social-democratic concepts, another of which, Begin's, has used the language of mystical messianism. For instance, Jabotinsky once wrote that "From blood and sweat a race will emerge, strong, generous, and cruel".

Zionist propaganda has always been couched in the language of social democracy, which has for the most part also been the main tendency in Zionism. The realities, the "facts" established by Zionism have, however, always accorded with the language of force and conquest, of race and blood, the language of Begin and the Zionist right.

Begin is the bogeyman for western Zionists because he speaks the language of Zionism that accords with the realities, a language which embarrasses western Jewry and non-Jewish Zionists — a language that will appal the Labourites in Britain who have always stupidly boasted of Israel's "socialism".

area and establish a more secure relation with the oil-producing regimes.

And Carter is not going to permit Begin or anyone else to tear up these plans by such provocations as a crash project for Jewish settlement on the West Bank (something which was happening bit by bit under Rabin's nose because of Peres' links with the religious settlement movement of the Gush Emunim). Such a plan will bring in its train massive resistance on the part of the West Bank Arabs and with it the inevitable sequence of repressions, brutalities, arrests, street killings by the army and so on. This in turn will affect Israel's image abroad and force the US to distance itself from Zionist policies.

But if Likud's victory threatens to derail the US "peace plans" in the short term, this is not because the party's outlook is so much more anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab than the previously ruling Labour bloc's.

Labour and Likud, including Begin's Herut wing, are both racist-exclusivist, expansionist, and pro-imperialist.

The clash arises because Likud is attempting to achieve a greater independence from the US than the previous administration. This is true not only with respect to domestic affairs, but also on questions like South Africa, where Begin is frankly pro-Vorster.

The imperialist leaders are alarmed at Begin's victory because they fear they will be cheated of their hoped-for settlement in the Middle East. The Arab leaders' attitude is similar, but coupled with the fear that Begin's provocative policies will encourage the growth of militancy on the West Bank and within the Palestinian refugee population, and their allies... just at a time when the Arab leaders thought Carter's announcements could be used to isolate the militants and build up the more conservative wings.

ZIONIST 'LEFT' LOSES GROUND

NOT ALL the results of the Israeli elections are out yet. But it is already clear that the right-wing Likud bloc, headed by Menachem Begin, leader of its Herut wing, has won.

Likud has 42 seats, three more than it got last time. It will probably gain another two when all the results are in. Labour crashed from 51 seats to 33, most of the defections going not to Likud but to Yigael Yadin's Democratic Movement for Change, a new party that managed to capture 14 seats.

The National Religious Party increased its number of seats by two and now has 12 seats in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament). The two ultra-religious parties took 5 seats; the rightist Shlom Zion party got 2.

On the left of the Zionist spectrum, Rakah (a wing of the old Israeli Communist Party) will take 6 seats, while the pro-Labour Arab list lost two of its 3 seats. Shulamit Aloni's Civil Rights list fell from 3 to 1 and the Shell 'peace list', a new formation, got 2 seats.

Flatto-Sharon, the French millionaire standing in the election as a one-man party in order to gain parliamentary immunity and so avoid extradition to France, where he faces charges of income tax evasion, got two seats!

After the 1973 war, many commentators predicted that Israeli public opinion would shift "to the left" to adopt a more conciliatory stance vis-a-vis the Palestinians. This, it was claimed, would be the result of the failure of Israel on that occasion to humiliate the Arab armies in the same way as in 1967.

That prediction is now proven false. Certainly those favouring direct negotiations with the Palestinians are stronger than before. But that is because a certain polarisation has taken place in Israeli society. In general, however, the swing has been to the left conciliatory, most "hawkish" wing of Zionism.

There is another indication that Zionist nationalism has become more rather than less firm. Historically Zionism has divided between those who were prepared to tailor their chauvinism exactly according to the wishes of one or another imperialist power (Weizmann, Sharet, Rabin) and those who sought maximum independence, relying more on military force and pressure on imperialism from Zionists abroad (Ben Gurion most of the time, but above all Begin).

In the election of this election, Yadin and Begin, for all their differences, represented a line which stressed relative independence of the US. This additional confirmation of the hardening of Israeli chauvinism only serves to reinforce the unreality of the various optimistic forecasts of a progressive dilution of hard-line nationalism in Israel.

'Don't give too much away' Healey warns the CBI



"If there is to be greater local freedom" in pay bargaining, said Denis Healey, "we have to combine it with responsibility and reasonable discipline. That applies to employers as much as to trade unions."

"The authority of trade union officers can quickly be undermined if employers bend the rules or exploit them for their own reasons". Healey referred to the undermining of the first, informal, Social Con-

tract wage controls by big pay increases in 1974.

It was a neat way of turning upside down the usual argument which tells trade unions to hold back lest they "undermine" the bosses and thus harm national prosperity. But no-one in Healey's audience — it was the Confederation of British Industry — saw any oddity in trade union officials having the job of keeping wages down, rather than pushing them up.

They understood too well that, under the Labour government, the trade union bureaucracy has been foremost in trying to solve the crises of capitalism at the expense of the working class.

Why did Healey have to appeal to the bosses? It takes more and more certain that if a Phase 3 can be put together, it will have to include a large element of "flexibility", to be regulated by bosses and unions rather than by government ruling.

Opposition in the trade unions is too strong for a rigid Phase 3 to be pushed through. Even the notor-

ously right-wing Frank Chapple of the EPTU has come out against a new round of pay curbs.

Chapple is a practised demagogue. Before Phase 1 was brought in, he declared firmly he was against wage control, and now he scabs on the 500 striking electricians at Port Talbot. But his statement reflects a growing trend. SLADE, TSSA, ASLEF, ASTMS, and the Tobacco Workers' Union all have either just decided against Phase 3, or are almost certain to do so within the next week or so.

Dozens of different forms of flexibility have been discussed in the press. Every one is a way of swindling the working class. Flexible or inflexible, wage controls are nothing but ways to reduce the amount workers get in wages, to the benefit of profits. They have nothing to do with reducing unemployment, stopping

inflation, or helping the low paid.

The Union of Post Office Workers conference voted for Phase 3, but mandated its leadership to seek a settlement incorporating automatic wage increases to keep pace with the cost of living. The National Union of Journalists conference, three weeks ago, took a similar line: approving Phase 3 but instructing all union negotiators to seek cost-of-living increases.

Both unions were trying to evade the problems. Wage controls will mean a further cut in living standards — that is the reality. We do need inflation-proofing of wages, but we can win it only through struggle to smash the pay curbs. To support, and to follow the example of, the electricians still on strike at Port Talbot, is the first step. That way we will undermine the trade union officials, and the bosses too.

No one wins in NI elections

LAST WEEK's local government elections gave the voters of the Six Counties the opportunity to pass their verdict on the recent attempt of Ian Paisley and other hardline Orangemen to organise a general strike.

The poll shows that Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party have consolidated the support they had in the strike, with 14% of the votes. Alliance, a heavily Protestant-based middle-class party which is self-consciously "non-sectarian" also gained 14% of the votes, establishing itself for the first time as a major political force.

Many Catholic areas had a turn-out of below 40%, partly because the Provisional IRA called for a boycott of the election. The Social Democratic and Labour Party remains the predominant force within the Catholic camp.

The fiasco of the 'strike' has

not, apparently, led to a collapse of confidence in Paisley. He still draws on a strong current of 'not-an-inch' Loyalism. But with less than one in three of Protestant votes, and less than half the votes of the Official Unionist Party, Paisley has made no decisive gains either. The ultra-Loyalists have, however, consolidated and re-defined themselves.

The losers, apart from the Official Unionist Party, were the Unionist splinter groups: Vanguard, led by William Craig, and the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, which was led by the late Brian Faulkner. The semi-eclipse of these two will speed up their reabsorption into the Official Unionist Party.

Though the OUP clearly lost votes to the Paisleyites on the 'Right' and Alliance on the 'left', it remains the biggest party in the Six Counties.

The combined Alliance-SDLP



vote, over 1/3 of the total, will be interpreted as a solid block in support of power-sharing. And the sharper separation of the Paisleyites may well free the OUP for a new exploration of the possibilities of doing a political deal. Already Harry West has been invited to discuss 'devolution' with Roy Mason.

Devolution, integration with Britain, or a new parliamentary arrangement — none of these will satisfy the desire of the Six County Catholics to break out of the sectarian state. The fact that less than 40% of the Catholics voted may well prove to be the decisive fact to emerge from the election.

SMITH'S 'POST BOX' OR CARTER'S MESSENGER BOY

Ian Smith's white racist regime has sent troops over the border with Botswana, claiming "hot pursuit" of some guerrillas of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front.

At the same time Zambia said it was "going on to a war footing" after the threat made against it by Smith who said he "might have no alternative but to strike against bases in Zambia" to prevent what he claimed were "plans for a major offensive against Rhodesia."

This threat was communicated to the Zambian government via Britain's Foreign Minister Dr. David Owen, who was described by Zambia's President Dr. Kaunda as "a post-box" for Smith. And the 'post box' underlined the message by harbouring that by harbouring ZAPU and other guerrillas Zambia

"could jeopardise our own efforts to promote a peaceful settlement."

But what is Owen doing? What "peaceful settlement" is he advocating?

The fact is that the biggest single pressure on Smith is his fellow racist Vorster, the South African leader. Vorster's pressure on Smith, pushing him towards making some concessions, has been entirely the result of the armed actions of the guerilla forces that defeated Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique and his fear of armed actions on the borders and even inside of South Africa.

Owen's efforts are the latest in a long series of British efforts to get a settlement in Rhodesia that will suit the United States and South Africa.



Leon Trotsky once commented on the absurdity of religious broadcasts: Dark Ages superstition conveyed by modern technology.

Forty years later we have the prospect of the leaders of two of the worlds most spankingly technological states getting together to talk about the Good Book. "We will talk a lot about the Bible, which we both know well", said Israel's new leader Menachem Begin of his forthcoming meeting with Jimmy Carter.

Of course there's no real contradiction: the Bible has always been a useful adjunct to pillage and ruthless exploitation, the speciality respectively of Begin the terrorist and Carter the millionaire.

One might have got the impression last week that capitalism is one big philanthropic enterprise for providing workers with jobs. From bosses' spokesman Fred Caterwood down to Woodrow Wyatt, the consensus was that bribery in pursuit of foreign markets was a good thing "if it saves jobs". Profits? Perish the thought — they just happen to be a by-product of providing jobs for the needy.

"That ranting, rising, sometimes almost screaming voice reminded me more than anything else of Hitler. And some of the content, too. Mr. Foot ... seems to be developing all the inst-

incts of a dictator."

Lord Justice Shawcross, speaking to the City of London Club, was taking exception to Michael Foot's assertion that Judges are a pretty anti-working class lot.

Having got that off his chest, Shawcross went on to the main part of his speech ... which was devoted to the need to keep private enterprise and boost profits to 25% as the "very minimum acceptable return" ...

Remember the case of Karen Quinlan, the girl kept alive though her brain had been destroyed?

No such fine scruples in Social Contract era Britain. It was revealed last week that such is the shortage of dialysis machines that many kidney units operate a "cut-off" point based on age. At one unit nobody over 45 is offered treatment because of lack of

resources.

The matter came to light when a 57-year old woman died after being denied further kidney machine treatment. Though other cases may look less clear cut, the British Kidney Patients' Association said that "Four thousand patients a year die this way and the blame should go where it lies — with the health authorities."

And, they might have added, with the government which forces health authorities to economise with NHS patients' lives.

A hospital consultant was ticked off by the Health Service Ombudsman for being rude to a woman seeking an abortion. He had been sarcastic in front of medical students, had said if he gave her an abortion she'd be back in six months for another, and accused her of "moral blackmail" for telling him of her problems at home and the fact that her mother had given her a month to get an abortion or get out.

But the Ombudsman had nothing to say (it's not his job) about the law which forces women to go into reasons like this to obtain an abortion. Abortion on demand would put an end to scenes like this, where consultants can air their prejudices and make a woman grovel for something which should be hers by right.

Maureen Colquhoun, MP for Northampton North, seems to be sure enough of her "case" to remain Labour candidate there at the next election to threaten court action and write off to the newspapers about it, but not to meet her local party.

She says she will not be available to meet the EC to discuss a resolution that she stand down as MP, until July 9th.

Northampton North GMC last week indicated where it stands by sending a donation to the Defence Fund of the Newham North East Labour Party activists who were taken to the High Court by Prentice supporters.

Meanwhile, more embarrassment for Colquhoun, who claims that lots of ordinary Labour Party members wrote to her welcoming her remarks endorsing Enoch Powell.

One such letter was sent to Tribune, claiming to come from three "ordinary workers and Labour voters". But among the signatures appended to this blatantly racist letter was that of one Syd Avis: the same Syd Avis who stood

as National Party candidate for Lewisham West in the recent GLC elections, and the same Syd Avis who was expelled from the students union of Middlesex Poly a year ago for being a member of the National Party.

Unfortunately, most of the 2,000 letters Ms. Colquhoun to have received were probably genuine. And that makes her action much more deplorable, in emboldening the racists in Labour's ranks to come forward, and giving the Syd Avises a nice smelly pool to go fishing in.

We reported in this column last week that Labour National Agent Reg Underhill had called for a reconsideration of advice to Labour candidates not to appear on platforms with the National Front. In a letter to The Times (Monday May 23rd) he states that his remarks had been completely misquoted, and that "the advice must remain".

The Grunwick bosses have appointed the former local police chief as their personnel manager. Ex-Chief Inspector Robert Johnson had earned the favour of Grunwick's by arresting nine Grunwick pickets/strike supporters. After storms of protest at the police action, Johnson retired last month.

IN FEBRUARY 1917 the workers had left the factories for the streets to overthrow the autocracy. The revolutionary upsurge which toppled the Romanovs created a sense of power and confidence amongst the working class, which inevitably spilled over into the economic and factory struggle.

Although the state autocracy had been smashed, the economic autocracy of the boss and manager remained.

Between February and October a series of increasingly bitter industrial battles were fought. They escalated from the simple attempt to establish proletarian factory organisation, through the struggle for workers' control of production, to the seizure of power by the soviets.

The factory committees which spearheaded the fight have justly been described as "schools of communism". In and through them, the proletariat not only expressed its revolutionary aspirations but went through an intensive revolutionary education in struggle.

The war had exhausted the Russian economy; the search for war super-profits had distorted and mangled it. The bourgeoisie had placed itself in the role of the disorganiser of production as inflation, unemployment, and shortages existed side by side. The task of reorganising the economy fell to the proletariat.



At first this took the form of a massive strike protest against the unfair wage scales which had grown up during the war and which discriminated against workers in the 'non-essential' (i.e. non-war-related) industries. When this subsided at the end of March, many workers returned to the factories, to find them abandoned by their owners and managers. The natural step was for the factory committees, elected and formed during the first weeks of the revolution, to try to re-start production without the bosses.

When runaway capitalists returned, after finding that their worst fears of the revolution had not been confirmed, they were placed under the regulatory power of the factory committees. Thus from the first workers' control was the result of elemental, revolutionary direct action from below which neither sought nor received from the Provisional Government any constitutional sanction.

However, most factory committees were not yet so advanced. Mainly they tried to establish the right to factory organisation and negotiation with the employers. Their first great test case came with the refusal by many bosses to implement the agreement on the eight hour day signed by the Petrograd Soviet and the Petrograd Manufacturers' Organisation on March 10th.

When the factory committees simply imposed the agreement, they were followed by workers all over the Russian Empire. The committees had shown their strength, and the bosses



were forced to retreat. The Provisional Government showed its colours when Mil-iukov declared that the benefits which the workers could expect from the revolution were "within extremely narrow limits". Those limits apparently excluded a legally enforceable eight-hour day.

Mortally afraid of the factory committees, the government 'compromised'. It was willing to give the committees legal sanction — so long as their powers were tightly circumscribed.



The result was legislation of April 23rd, which 'recognised' the committees but defined their 'sphere of competence' in an extremely narrow way. They were not made obligatory, hiring and firing was not mentioned as an area of control, and their workings were to be subject to government arbitration.

The ploy was obvious in its attempt to contain the potential of the committees — but this mattered little.

In most areas the workers had already gone far beyond the limits of the law, whilst in areas where factory committees did not exist the law encouraged their formation.

Factory committees assumed the most radical powers in Petrograd. At a conference held before the promulgation of the law, the Factory Committees of the War Industries declared:

"From the factory committee originates all the regulations concerning the internal management fixed by law (such as the fixing of hours of work, wages, hiring and firing, leave etc.) with notification to the director of the factory or section.

"All administrative personnel, higher managers, heads of sections or workshop technicians are engaged with the consent of the factory committee...

"The factory committee constitutes the organ controlling the activity of management in the administrative, economic and technical fields. With the purpose of realising this preliminary control the factory committee sends one of its members to represent it on the man-

agement, on the economic and technical committees as well as the different sections of the factory. The representatives of the factory committee must immediately, in order to keep in touch, be furnished with all management's official documents, budgets of production and expenditure, as well as all documents on arrival or despatch".

Petrograd was ahead of most other regions. But there were exceptions. For example, Kharkov held a conference of committees well before Petrograd, and in Moscow the typographical workers, remembering their experience in 1905, resurrected their "autonomous commissions".

In Kharkov the tasks of the committees were defined as:

"To take production into their hands, safeguard it, maximise it and exercise the necessary control over all branches of activity... work out wage rates, the first step of control being the supervision of the carrying out of agreements between bosses and workers.

"Finally, they are charged with the fixing of wages, with health, with the technical quality of production

The for woi con

Continuing ARNIE PROUT's on

and with the working out of factory regulations...

Although details differed from one area to another, the trend is clear: almost everywhere the committees went far beyond the law and the pressure for this came from the masses themselves. They became "revolutionary combat units" — a concentrated expression of revolutionary energy.

Capital had to defend itself. The bosses began a drive for overtime, increased productivity and a restriction on the activities of the committees. The bourgeois press began a lying campaign of propaganda which denounced the "excessive demands" of the "unpatriotic" workers, and these cries were taken up by the Provisional Government. Konovalov, the Minister of Commerce, denounced the workers' demands as "intolerable and inadmissible", and attempted to blame the virtual collapse of production on the workers rather than the profiteers.

In order to nail these lies, and cement the relationship between workers and soldiers formed in February, delegations from the barracks were taken on tours around the factories; they reported back the truth to their comrades. A series of strikes in defence of the eight hour day led to the first wave of lock-outs and sabotage as employers withdrew their managers, closed down plant, and sold off raw materials.



It was in this context that the First Conference of Factory Committees in Petrograd met. At this gathering the key political battle, which determined the line of development of the committees until October, took place between the SRs and Mensheviks on the one hand and the Bolsheviks on the other.

The cowardly class collaboration of the Mensheviks was exposed by the address of the 'socialist' Minister of Labour, Skobolev:

"... the role of the factory committees is finished... to the extent that we are undergoing a bourgeois revolution we must come to an understanding with the bourgeoisie".

How this contrasts with the speeches of the factory

fight

Workers' Control

Special series to mark the 60th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution

gates! Deputy Jitvitov reported as saying:

... Workers' control is a counter-attack of the working class against the bourgeoisie. The workers consolidated their forces in creating factory committees and then they lead an economic struggle against the bourgeoisie. With the aid of the factory committees the workers make the capitalists sweat."

Deputy Nemtsov of the workers added that:

"We can escape from economic production and establish order. By taking control of production into our own hands we will learn how to work in production and we will raise up the standard of socialist production."

The Bolshevik policy attempted to channel this revolutionary energy towards the seizure of state power by the workers. Writing in September 1917, Lenin explained the true value of the struggle for workers' control. "When we say 'workers' control', placing this slogan by the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat, always after it, we thus make clear what we have in mind. The state is the organ of the rule of a class. Which class?"

... if the proletariat, if we have in mind a proletarian state... then workers' control can become a national, embracing omnipresent, exact accounting of production and distribution of goods."

At the Conference Lenin stated that a number of measures were necessary for workers' control was to prevent the economic catastrophe. Firstly, that all managers and technical personnel be compelled to subordinate themselves to the organs of control. Secondly, that local Soviets and trade unions as well as the factory committees and the socialist parties participate in this work. Finally, that all commercial information, bank accounts, etc., be open to their inspection.

The Bolshevik resolution proposed an "all-state organisation" to begin the distribution of vital goods, the general requirement of labour service from all citizens, and the setting up of a workers' militia. A campaign against closures was to be unleashed and coordinated by a pan-Russian centre. In this way, "a series of carefully considered and gradual, but immed-

ately realisable, measures" could develop "into complete regulation of the production and distribution of goods by the workers".

Out of 421 factory delegates present, 355 voted for the Bolshevik position. It was the first Bolshevik majority in a mass proletarian organisation, but one which showed that the tide was beginning to run away from the reformists. The party used its base in the factory committees to expand their influence during the next months.

From May onwards the employers' offensive increasingly took the form of closures, lock-outs, and the sabotage of production. Between March and July 568 enterprises were at a standstill; this covered a total of 104,372 workers. In the main production was ended because the super-profits of war production stopped flowing into the bosses' coffers. The bourgeois press kept up a constant anti-working class campaign despite the fact that wages only barely kept pace with prices.

These lies were exposed by workers' inquiries into the true state of affairs. The best example of this was the "sabotage at Likinsk". The factory of Smirnov, a former Controller of State, was closed down for "lack of fuel" and because the "machines needed urgent repair". A special workers' inquiry revealed that three months' fuel existed and the machines were in need of running repairs only.

Smirnov, chairman of the War Industries Committee, was no isolated exception. All over Russia similar situations were revealed. This struggle broadened the role of the factory committees and posed the question "Who will organise the economy?" In this way the call for soviet power gained momentum.

This was revealed on June 18th when the opportunist soviet leadership called a demonstration which they believed would be a manifestation of mass support for themselves. To their horror the official slogans were hardly in evidence at all, whilst contingent after contingent proclaimed the Bolshevik demands: "Long

live workers' control!", "Down with the ten Capitalist Ministers!", "Down with the offensive", "All power to the Soviets".

This dynamic was only slowed down by the setback of the July Days — the ill-timed and premature armed demonstration led by the Kronstadt sailors [to be covered in the next article in this series on 1917]. The disorientation and confusion which followed allowed the employers to drive home their anti-workers' control campaign.

From May onwards the bosses had fought against factory committee control of hiring and firing. They attempted to replace the committees by their own nominated agents. The Provisional Government had gone along with this, and had even discussed the introduction of martial law on the railways (which would involve the forcible dissolution of the committees.)

The earnestness of their intentions is amply revealed by the following statement of Riaboudinskii at the Congress of Commerce and Industry.

"It is possible that to escape from this situation it will be necessary to have recourse to the emaciated arm of hunger, to national poverty, which will take by the throat those false friends of the people, the democratic soviets and the factory committees."

More 'moderate' bourgeois, like the liberal economist Stuve, argued that, whilst a gradually arrived-at participation of workers in 'normal' capitalist production was one thing, workers' control was as unthinkable as democratic soldier control of the army. In the trenches the troops drew their own conclusions!

On July 8th, the Journal of Commerce and Industry published its 'minimum programme' for economic recovery. Its main points were pay reductions and the end of factory committee 'interference' in management. This campaign was coordinated by the Society of Manufacturers, who in August elaborated directives to eliminate the meddling of the factory committees."

Their lackeys in the government soon responded — on August 28th the 'socialist' Minister of Labour issued a circular limiting the rights of the committees and expressly forbidding them to meet in works time.

The July setback allowed these developments to take place, especially as the Bolshevik leaders were arrested or forced into hiding. But July had sharply posed the issue, "Who shall hold power?"

As August progressed, a massive industrial battle took place in which the seizure of power by the soviets was pushed more and more to the fore. There were literally hundreds of such battles. The typographers and textile workers of Petrograd and Moscow, the metalworkers, the Donbas miners and the Baku oilworkers demand special mention.

The common feature of all these battles was the realisation that workers' control could only be achieved by the seizure of power.

The struggle of the Moscow tanners typified this process. In June the tanners had forced the employers to agree to their participation in hiring and firing. By August the bosses were attempting to reverse this and refusing to accept the agreement.

The tanners responded with a 2½-month strike, which attracted the support of the entire Russian proletariat. All attempts at 'conciliation' through the 'good offices' of the government failed. Agreements were made and broken literally within hours. By October the tanners had become tired of this "playing of games" with the bosses, and the factory committees announced their battle cry:

"1. Continue the strike until victory;
"2. Not to enter negotiat-

ions with the employers.. until they indicate their open willingness to satisfy the workers' demands;

"3. To appeal to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies... to demand an immediate governmental decree on the right of factory committees to participate in hiring and firing..."

Flowing from this, the committees demanded: "The transfer of all power into the hands of the Soviets"

A similar situation developed amongst the textile workers, who on the 9th October declared:

"200,000 textile workers are ready at any moment, at the first call of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, to take decisive action against the employers' sabotage and against the detrimental activities of the Provisional Government"

Through the struggle for workers' control the Russian proletariat had learned the necessity not only of factory organisation and struggle, but also the imperative need for the seizure of power by the proletarian organisations and the destruction of the old, bourgeois state machine.

'LEFT ACTION' SEES NEED FOR AN ACTIVE LPYS

THE Left Action conference this Saturday (May 28th) can be an important step in the struggle to change the Labour Party Young Socialists.

For too long the YS has been a sterile talking shop dominated by the Militant tendency. Its answer to every problem has been to propose the nationalisation of the major monopolies. It has completely failed to wage a serious fight on the key issues facing the working class today. Its "Campaigns" such as the Youth Campaign Against Unemployment have been little more than a series of propaganda meetings followed by lengthy rounds of self-congratulation.

Left Action was established four months ago, as a paper fighting for a different sort of YS. We wanted an unemployment campaign that would organise young unemployed workers to fight for jobs, supporting struggles against redundancies, and demanding better treatment while on the dole. We wanted to translate the YS's paper support for the Working Women's Charter into an active struggle for women's rights.

Most of all we wanted a serious fight against racialism. It is not enough to bemoan its existence and explain that the answer is socialism, while avoiding the awkward questions here and now. That is Militant's approach. On paper they favour the removal of racists from office; but when Northampton MP Maureen Colquhoun supported Powell's recent racist

rabble-rousing, they refused to join the struggle to get rid of her. Yet her position has led to fulsome praise from the National Front."

The Conference will discuss how to carry these campaigns forward and will elect a new editorial board. But the crucial debate seems certain to centre on the political basis of Left Action itself.

This debate will determine the future development of the paper and the tasks it sets itself.

There are two different views among Left Action supporters. Some argue for a general political programme which we should seek to make the focus for a struggle against the Labour Right.

But such a programme must either be a collection of platitudes that do not differentiate us from Militant (and other left reformists) and do not provide a focus for our work; or it will be politically unacceptable to many Left Action supporters.

Far better to realise the limited basis of our unity and make that our platform. Essentially we agree on the need for an active LPYS and on a number of campaigns.

Workers' Action supporters will be arguing for this conception at the conference.

(The conference is open to all Labour Party members, but only LPYS members can vote. It takes place at Essex Road Library, Essex Road, London N1, nearest tube Angel; starting at 10.30am.)

ROSS CATLIN
Left Action EB

WOMEN'S CHARTER TO SET UP UNION FRACTIONS

The Working Women's Charter Conference on the weekend of 21-22 May reflected the impasse of the campaign.

Representation at the Conference was weak, not reflecting the support that the campaign has on paper. Most affiliated organisations did not bother to send delegates, and many of the WWC groups were not represented.

The situation for the campaign would not have been so gloomy if a correct orientation had been taken by the campaign for the future.

This extremely important discussion was put off until nearly the last item on the agenda, giving no time for adequate discussion.

However, clear positions were put as to what the focus of the campaign should be, in the debate on amending the Charter.

The campaign still operates with the Charter of ten demands drawn up by the London Trades Council in 1974, which are outdated and inadequate in many respects. The first national conference of the Charter campaign, in 1976, endorsed several amendments to the Charter, but decided to let them stand as "policy" alongside the official Charter, which would still be the unamended version.

This year Workers' Action supporters once again took up the argument for amending the Charter.

They argued that the focus of the Charter campaign must be primarily towards women in the workplace, where they have the best chances of organising and achieving their demands. Campaigns in the community must not be ignored, but the main effort must be directed to organising in industry and in

the unions.

Workers' Action also argued that the Working Women's Charter must take up all areas of discrimination and all the attacks that women face, and pose concrete demands to defend their interests.

The Charter is inadequate in many ways, particularly concerning women's right to work, wage restraint, racism and sexism.

The International Marxist Group (IMG) and the Communist Party, arguing against amending the Charter, posed a completely different orientation.

The Charter should be a "bridge to the labour movement", distinct from women at the grass-roots. Rather than the needs of women in struggle and of practical battles around the fundamental problems facing women and the working class, they orientated instead to "agreements at the top". They forgot that without a militant rank and file base, these "bridges" will collapse, and the Charter's list of twelve national unions which support its demands will remain just a list on paper.



The motion to amend the Charter was lost, but fortunately Conference did not adopt the structure for the campaign proposed by the North Tyneside Charter group.

They argued for an ad-hoc committee with a merely coordinating role. The Charter should not initiate any national events, and should shelve its paper.

The passing of this resolution would have been a big step backwards for the campaign, almost liquidating it organis-

ationally.

It represented the politics of the "socialist-feminist" grouping present at the conference. The socialist-feminists emphasise the importance of organising women in the community. They also argue that it is primarily through experiencing sexual oppression within the family that women become radicalised, and that it is on that basis that the Charter should relate to them.



With their emphasis on personal, subjective experience, and on local community action, they are logically sceptical of any centralised structure for campaigning.

Their tendency is to relegate to secondary importance the interlinking of women's oppression and class oppression. They become diverted into an illusory search for political action outside of the class struggle through which the capitalist society which oppresses women is maintained, and through which it will be overthrown.

Despite the confusion on general perspectives, a number of valuable resolutions on immediate action for the Working Women's Charter Campaign were passed. They came from Workers' Action supporters and from the "Workers Power" group.

A resolution on the cuts called for WWC fractions within the public sector unions. It also condemned the Social Contract, scheduled a national conference in the New Year on cuts, unemployment, and the Social Contract, and resolved to "support all workers fighting all forms of wage control".

The IMG put a successful amendment to delete the clause "Where redundancies do go through, we fight against women being put on the list first just because they are women". They argued that although the resolution called for a "fight... against all redundancies", the clause admitted the principle of redundancies. But this ultra-left verbiage merely covers up a real problem which thousands of women face.

Resolutions to step up campaigning on abortion and to expand the Charter paper were also passed. On the Equal Pay Act, Conference declared: "A campaign to re-word the Equal Pay Act can prove to be reactionary, or lead to job evaluation schemes. It is not a question of the correct formula, but who decides — the working class or the employers."



"[The WWCC will] campaign for women's committees to be set up inside the unions to go round and investigate the implementation of equal pay where the union members work. Where equal pay is not being implemented, the women's committees to demand the union concerned fights for its women members to receive their rights'."

Those activities — particularly the building of fractions in the unions — lay the basis for drawing new forces into the Charter campaign and making it less of a paper front with no organisational substance. But the confusion at the Conference puts a question mark over whether the Charter campaign can take advantage of the potential that exists. PAT DAVIES

"What is it that touches off a chord in the instincts of the people to whom we seek to appeal? It can often be the most simple and primitive thing.

"Rather than a speech or printed article it may just be a flag; it may be a marching column; it may be the sound of a drum; it may be a banner or it may just be the impression of a crowd. None of these things contain in themselves one single argument, one single piece of logic... They are recognised as being among the things that appeal to the hidden forces of the human soul".

This passage from a speech made by John Tyndall to National Front activists in 1973 is quoted in Martin Walker's book, *The National Front* (Fontana, £1).



Walker is at his most interesting in his exploration of the subjective, psychological workings of the National Front and its leading members — their obsessions, their endless scheming, plotting and poisonous personal rivalries. Over a period of four years Walker managed to wheedle interviews out of all the prominent members of the Front and the other organisations of the Right, doubtless exploiting their eagerness to stab each other in the back. The National Party split, of course, provided ample motive for former Front leaders to spill the beans on Webster, Tyndall and company.

We learn from Walker also a great deal about the evolution of the NF out of neo-Nazism. In 1954 A.K.

WHAT MAKES FASCISTS TICK?

Chesterton, a prolific anti-Semitic propagandist of the '30s, founded the League of Empire Loyalists, a somewhat aristocratic organisation for whom Jewish Wall Street capitalism and Russian Communism were synonymous. A number of later NF leaders, such as Tyndall and John Beckett, took their apprenticeship in racist politics inside this organisation.

By 1960 these men had graduated into the British National Party, led by Colin Jordan and enjoying the patronage of the widow of long-time Nazi Arnold Leese, a lady who had endearingly trained her cat to give the Hitler salute.

This was the period in which Tyndall habitually wore jackboots, attended parties to commemorate Hitler's birthday, and sang camp songs about race and soil. By 1962 the BNP had itself split, spawning the National Socialist Movement.

It was for the organ of this group that Martin Webster wrote his famous article, "Why I am a Nazi", in which he concluded: "Not a day goes past without some act of stupidity by the Jews and their allies coming to light — acts of foolishness brought on by the chill North wind flaunting the

swastika banner in the sky... In every White land in the world Nazi movements have been formed, and we join with them in the historic Nazi battle cry. Victory Hail! Sieg Heil!"

Further fragmentation followed, while anti-immigrant groups sprang up in many areas of the country, notably the Midlands and Southall. It was the staggering victory of Peter Griffiths in Smethwick in 1964 that sent a shock through the warring splinters of the Right, showing beyond doubt that the issue of black immigration could bring massive returns. Throughout the middle and late sixties the process began of bringing the various groups together into a unified organisation which could take advantage of these new prospects.



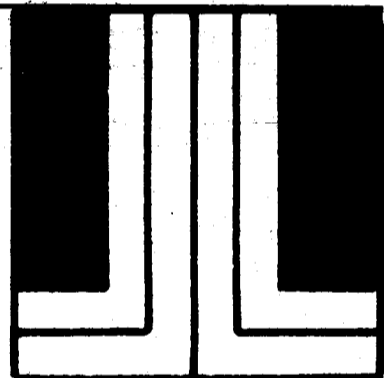
The National Front itself came into being in February 1967, but it was several months before Tyndall himself was admitted. For many of the founding members of the Front, he was too notorious: for the British Right, he was in fact the symbol of uncompromising Nazism. But compromise he did, preferring to forego

his Hitler birthday parties and play down or jettison whole chunks of 'Nordic' ideology in favour of the greater opportunities this unified organisation afforded him. He was quietly convinced that he would in time assume supremacy of the Front.

Walker provides his readers in some detail with a characterisation of the NF's ideology — and Tyndall's contribution in particular. He points out that, though race has been the fuel of their growth, they have continually attempted to campaign around other issues, too — Ireland, the EEC, the trade unions, Southern Africa, for example.

But for Walker these attempts are concessions to 'populism', a desire to find respectability. He does not see that a fascist party — and he perversely denies, despite all the evidence he himself adduces, that NF members are fascist — while in Britain it will use racism as the bedrock issue, will not and cannot confine itself merely to this issue. The NF has quite consciously devoted much of its attention to the trade unions, to 'law and order', and to the suppression of the left.

The dynamic of a rabidly racist party in Britain will



REVIEW

inevitably lead it towards fascism. Tyndall knows this well enough, and it was for that reason that he was prepared to concede so much in order to join the NF.

Walker is in fact utterly confused when he comes to analysing what he has described. It needs to be said also that his own attitude to the Front is ambiguous: he claims to count several NF members among his friends. In a rather half-hearted way he also hopes that his book will be of use to NF loyalists as well as anti-fascists.



As a reporter he has spent much time inhabiting the twilight zone where investigating the Front and almost being incorporated into it as a participating critic converge.

Combined with the total absence of theoretical analysis, this gives the book the character of murky impressionism. But the research will be invaluable for anti-fascists developing an effective understanding of their enemy.

JAMES RYAN

FINAL DEBACLE OF T.O.M.'S IRELAND DELEGATION

THE FINAL debacle of the Troops Out Movement's Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland took place last Saturday (May 21st). After an 8-month delay, a meeting was called to approve the final report of the Delegation. It was attended by less than half the 54 delegates who went to Ireland. The sudden revival of activity on the part of the organisers of the Delegation was undoubtedly an attempt by them to recoup after the recent split of almost all the branches from the Troops Out Movement which they controlled.

The Draft Report suffered from a number of important defects. It lacked any real insight into Loyalism (not surprising, since the delegation refused to meet any Loyalist organisations), it failed to call for solidarity with the Republican struggle, and the campaign in Britain around the Report was to be based not on "Troops Out Now" but on the abstract formula of "Self-Determination for the Irish People" — which can mean virtually anything. Although the meeting made a number of amendments, none of these major faults was rectified.

Simon Temple (Norwood CLP delegate, and a Workers' Action supporter) then proposed that a minority note of reservation be added to the report, dealing with the issue of seeing the Loyalists and the basis of the campaign in Britain. The meeting rejected this, despite the promise of provision for minority reports in the original plans for the Delegation.

At that point, five delegates, supporters of Workers' Action or of the International Marxist Group, walked out of the meeting, as we could not see anything worthwhile coming out of the publication of the report and the campaign around it.

★ Workers' Action supporters who went on the delegation are willing to speak at trade union or Labour Party branches on the visit to Ireland and what it showed about Britain's policy in Ireland, as they see it. Contact WA, 49 Carnac St, London SE27.



FREE RONAN BENNETT - ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE P T A

TWO libertarian socialists, Ronan Bennett and Iris Mills, were arrested in an early morning raid by armed Special Branch officers in Huddersfield on Wednesday May 11th.

Although the two were missed by friends over the weekend, it was not until Monday 16th that the story of their arrest, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, was released in the *Huddersfield Examiner*.

An ad hoc committee for their release was formed that evening, and has since organised pickets of the police stations and of Arnley Jail, in Leeds, where Ronan Bennett was moved to.

Huddersfield LPYS affiliate

ed to the committee and sent a letter to MP Ken Lomas, calling on him to take up the case with the Home Office and to vote to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Iris Mills was released on the Monday evening after being questioned by Special Branch about her 'terrorist activities'. No charges were made or evidence produced. She told the committee, though, that she feared Ronan would be deported.

No charges or evidence are required under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for such a deportation. Ronan has already served 18 months in Long Kesh

for a crime he was subsequently acquitted of.

On Wednesday 18th May, at 7am, the original detention order expired and an exclusion order was served on Ronan Bennett

He has no right under the Prevention of Terrorism Act to appeal against this, but his solicitor has made representations to the Home Office. Ronan is due to meet a Home Office official on Tuesday, 24th May.

Immediate action is necessary to free Ronan Bennett. Contact Huddersfield ad hoc committee for the release of Ronan Bennett, 16 Old Road, Holmbridge, Huddersfield.

Tim Riley

CHLORIDE VOTE TO OCCUPY

WORKERS at Chlorides voted overwhelmingly on Monday 16th May in favour of occupation, at mass meetings held in Dagenham and Manchester, with subsidiary depots in Cannock, Leeds, Bristol, Glasgow, and Wembley also in support.

Among the 1500 workers in Dagenham, and 3000 in Manchester, only about 30 were against taking this action.

The decision was taken when management broke the previous productivity agreement without the agreement of the workers. Under the old agree-

ment, if production targets were not met due to some breakdown, then the workers would still get their bonus. But under the new deal they will not. Instead the company has been seeking to import 200,000 batteries and put Chloride labels on them.

A large number of these batteries are from South Africa, though the Unions have a policy of no trade with apartheid.

The other point of dispute is that the management took a decision to integrate with the state pension scheme, which

will mean less favourable terms for the workers involved. The decision was made without any agreement with the unions.

The company has also committed itself to moving the production of a component used in car batteries to Kings Lynn. In the long term this will mean a loss of 200 jobs at Dagenham.

The support is solid, and the unions involved are T&GWU, ACTSS, AUEW, TASS, ASTMS, EPTU, and the sheetmetal workers, coppersmiths, and heating & domestic engineers.

STEVE GOLDSTONE

workers' ACTION

supporters' groups

BASINGSTOKE, BIRMINGHAM, BRISTOL, CAMBRIDGE, CARDIFF, CHELMSFORD, CHESTER, COVENTRY, EDINBURGH, HUDDERSFIELD, LEICESTER, LIVERPOOL, LONDON, MANCHESTER, MIDDLESBROUGH, NEWCASTLE, NEWTOWN, NORTHAMPTON, NOTTINGHAM, READING, ROCHDALE, SHEFFIELD, STAFFORD, STOKE.

Write for details of meetings and activities to:
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27

Working men's club to rescind race rule

A SIX month fight against racism at Barras Green working men's club, in Coventry, has been settled with a complete climbdown by the club's newly-elected committee. At a meeting last Monday, May 16th, with representatives of Equity, the Musicians' Union, and Coventry Trades Council, they agreed to call a special general meeting within 3 weeks to recommend that their club rules banning all coloured members and visitors be withdrawn.

They further pledged no victimisation of any people involved in the dispute, and agreed to withdraw their ban on Bro. Mervyn Williams, who was expelled from the club for introducing an Indian visitor.

For their part, the trade union delegation agreed to lift sanctions on the club for one month to allow these points to be implemented.

The dispute started when the club refused admission to an

Indian artist, a member of Equity, to perform at the club. Equity put an immediate ban on the club, and called on Coventry Trades Council to help organise a picket of the club. This picket was kept up, turning back dustcarts, pop lorries, and beer lorries.

The biggest breakthrough came when convenors at the three main Midlands breweries agreed to black the club, partly because of support given by Equity to a delivery drivers' strike in the past.

At the meeting, one committee man complained that they had suffered for being too honest, and that other working men's clubs were just as racist. This is true — and those other racist clubs should be dealt with by the same methods of working class solidarity as were successful at Barras Green.

Dave Spencer

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word; block ads, £5 per column inch. All payments to be made in advance. Send copy to Events, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

SATURDAY 28 MAY. Left Action conference. 11am to 4pm at Essex Road Library, London N1.

SATURDAY 28 MAY. Northampton Women's Rights conference, organised by Northampton Labour Party and Trades Council. 2pm to 5pm at Spring Lane school, behind the Barclaycard Centre.

TUESDAY 31 MAY. Cardiff Workers' Action readers' meeting on "A Woman's Right to Work". 7.30pm at the Rhymney Hotel, Adam Street.

WEDNESDAY 1 JUNE. Workers' Voice public meeting. "Phase 3, Free Collective Bargaining, or working-class fight back: which way forward?" 8pm at Ladywell Baths, Lewisham High Street, London SE13.

Part 3 of Fran Brodie's series on The Politics of the Suffragettes has been postponed because of pressure of space in this week's Workers' Action.

ADS

"THE SPARK", journal of the Revolutionary Communist Group (Australia) Number 1, May 1977. 20p.

SPARTACUS, monthly paper of the German Trotskyist organisation Spartacusbund. 35p.

PERMANENTE REVOLUTION, organ of the Internationale Kommunistische Liga of Austria. 25p.

LA CLASSE, monthly paper of the Lega Comunista (Italy). 15p.

LUTTE DE CLASSE / CLASS STRUGGLE, bilingual Trotskyist magazine published by Lutte Ouvrière (France). 40p.

"ORGANISING THE PROLETARIAN PARTY", articles from Workers' Action reproduced by the Revolutionary Labour Group (Australia). 20p.

All available from Phoenix Pamphlets, 98 Gifford St, London N1 0DF. Ad 15% per order p&p, minimum 6½p.

**SATURDAY
MAY 28th
LEFT ACTION
Conference
11am to 4pm
Essex Road Library,
London N.1**

Published by Workers Action, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27. Printed by Azad (TU) 21 York Way, London N1 Registered as a newspaper at the GPO

WORKERS IN ACTION

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO SCARE PORT TALBOT STRIKERS

THE STRIKE of 560 electricians at Port Talbot's British Steel Corporation (BSC) works is now in its tenth week. Opposing them is the familiar Social Contract line-up: their own union, the EPTU, the TUC steel committee, the Government, the press, and, naturally, their own employers, the British Steel Corporation.

Their union claims the strike is against the Social Contract and therefore cannot be supported. The steel committee says that "No one engaged in the strike will look back on it with pride", and is urging the men to return to work. The Government has stated — and the press has delighted in splashing the news about — that the strike is blocking a £835 million development plan. And BSC warns that continuation of the strike, which has meant the lay-off so far of 6,700 steelworkers, will lead to loss of jobs both in Port Talbot and elsewhere in South Wales.

But against this barrage of attack the strikers are holding firm. In the open letter to the labour movement their stewards drafted two weeks ago they said,

"The response and interest in our strike has been tremendous. It is heartening to us that the rank and file have rallied to our cause. Our resolves is as determined now as on the first day of the strike".

The strike started on March 24 when five workers were refused an extra payment for working on the new sinter plant which prepares iron ore for the blast furnaces. This was management's provocative response to the men's demand — made clear at a mass meeting on the previous day — for a £10 a week "special skills" pay rise.

BSC have since said they will offer more money to a selected few, but the strikers want an increase for all electricians.

The BSC and the EPTU have claimed that the men's demand broke the social contract. Of course, BSC has already conceded "special skills" payments to blast-furnacemen working new equipment during the period of the "Contract". The longer the strike continues, however, and the more the Corporation and the men's union insist that the strike is against the social contract, the more a victory for the strikers will

really mean a defeat of the social contract.

Certainly BSC is treating the strike as a real test of strength. That means that we have to answer the Port Talbot workers' call for "further assistance to actively, morally and financially support us" with a big effort. To help that effort the strikers have produced their own 'Strike News'.

'Strike News' can be ordered from Bill Curtis, 23 Hawthorne Ave, Baglan Estate, Port Talbot. Donations, messages of support, and requests for speakers should be sent to the same address.

BEWARE! SPECIAL BRANCH AT WORK

Documents uncovering management's dealings with both the extreme right-wing anti-union organisation, the Economic League, and the police Special Branch, have been found by workers occupying the Reinforced Steel Services plant at Greenwich, London.

Immediately on the men's return to work on January 21, after a successful strike against the appalling health and safety hazards in the plant, management hit them with the threat of the closure of the works.

With that threat facing them, it was not surprising that the workers voted to participate in a local demonstration on May 11 to protest against cuts in social services. Management

tried to stop this participation, and the workers retaliated by shutting down operations for a day to go on the march.

Management replied by sacking six workers and suspending seven. All of them are members of the steel industry's main union, the ISTC. The men occupied in response to this attempt to reverse the gains won in January, and to smash the trade union organisation.

Despite the evidence of the files — which proves that the bosses have been spying on the workers and planning to smash their organisation — the

ISTC is still echoing BSC management's demand that the men end their occupation before negotiations take place. No doubt the ISTC find little wrong with management documents recommending works managers "bulldoze" trade union officials.

After the evidence at RSS, steelworkers at other sections of BSC should call on their unions to demand that BSC repudiates the spying activities their RSS managers have been caught engaging in, sacks the managers involved, and agrees to dismiss any others found consorting with the Economic League, Special Branch, or any other union-bashing outfit.

EQUAL PAY STRIKERS RALLY SUPPORT

AT A MASS meeting last Monday the 400 workers on strike for equal pay at the Laird Portch textile factory in East Kilbride decided to stay out. The skilled women at the factory are being paid £10 a week less than the unskilled men.

The bosses' idea that they could treat the strike as a demand for a straight wage increase for all the workers, and not as a strike for equal pay, was thrown out by the strikers. Their latest ploy was to send a letter to all employees admitting there were discrepancies in the wage rates between men and women, but claiming that as the women could make this up with piecework, it didn't really matter.

The fact of the matter is that even if the women get the maximum, it is only £39.30 for them, while the basic rate for men is £43.

More importantly, as strike convenor Ellen Nicklin points out, the strikers want the backward system of piece work abolished and replaced with a decent wage.

Management have also offered to get ACAS back to assess the situation.

The strikers have contacted Willy Ross, Labour MP for Kilmarnock, where two Laird Portch factories are out in solidarity, and Morris Millar, MP for East Kilbride, to try to get them to take their case up with the Equal Opportunities Commission. But no reliance can be placed on these people.

Meanwhile, solidarity pickets of Laird Portch retail outlets were organised on Saturday in Glasgow by Women's Voice supporters, and in Edinburgh by members of the Working Women's Charter Campaign and supporters of Women's Voice. These pickets can gain important publicity for the strike, and it is vital that WWC groups immediately organise them at the outlets of Coats Paton (the parent company of Laird Portch) — Jaegers and 'Country Casuals'.

The strikers are travelling to the Ladybird plant at Finnieston to try to get them to black work normally done by the East Kilbride factory, which they have so far refused to do. Rumours are spreading that Coats Paton may try to close down the East Kilbride and Kilmarnock factories, which makes it even more urgent that the maximum pressure be put on them from all Coats Paton workers.

Donations to Ellen Nicklin, 153 Leeward Circle, Westwood, East Kilbride. GORDON BREWER

GRUNWICKS GET SYMPATHY BUT STILL NO ACTION

LAST THURSDAY, 19th May, the Grunwick strikers were honoured by the presence of three Cabinet ministers, Shirley Williams, Dennis Howell, and Fred Mulley, on their picket line. All three are members of the strikers' union, APEX. They join a long list of 'celebrities' who have supported the strike.

The dispute at the Grunwick Film Processing firm in North West London started 40 weeks ago, when the workers, receiving £28 a week with compulsory overtime, went on strike demanding recognition for their Union, the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX).

The strike could have been won way back in November when the UPW imposed a black on the company's mail order work, which makes up 60% of its trade, thus thwarting Grunwicks continued operation with scab labour. The bosses' quick and effective answer — through the extreme Right-wing 'National Association for Freedom' — was to have the UPW solidarity action declared illegal by the High Court.

In December, Len Murray, general secretary of the TUC, spoke at a public meeting in support of the strikers, and declared, "We are not only with you, but alongside you". The full weight of the labour movement, he promised, would be put behind the strikers.

For a long time the Grunwicks bosses refused to allow the Government's Arbitration, Conciliation, and Advisory Service (ACAS) to intervene in the dispute. It can only do so with the agreement of both sides. After they eventually did agree, management argued that the strikers should not be included in the ballot on unionisation, since they had all been sacked after striking and were no longer em-

ployees of Grunwicks! It took four months for ACAS to produce its report — in favour of union recognition. Grunwicks refused to accept it. This leaves it as worthless as the paper it is written on, since ACAS has no statutory powers.

The police have not been slow to show which side they stand on. On November 1st, the day the UPW blacking was put on, six pickets — one striker and five local Labour Party members, including a councillor — were arrested and charged with "obstructing the highway". They were convicted, but later acquitted on appeal.

The police have regularly harassed pickets. When one picket, Kanti Patel, was beaten up by the bosses' thugs, the police immediately moved in to arrest... Jack Dromey, secretary of Brent Trades Council!

Despite a several-hundred strong demonstration of trade unionists in support of the strikers some weeks ago, and regular picketing of chemists who take Grunwicks films, the strike has dragged on with no victory in sight.

The Labour and trade union bureaucrats give the strike verbal support because of its connection with the 'other side' of the Social Contract — the Employment Protection Act and ACAS.

The Employment Protection Act, introduced in 1975, guarantees workers the right to be members of a trade union.

ACAS was introduced with the intention of avoiding class conflict by finding 'compromises' between workers and management. Grunwicks have refused to play according to the rules, instead relying on their own strength to gain complete victory. This is what brings down the wrath of the TUC and Labour MPs against the bosses.

They see the danger of work-

ers recognising the feebleness of what was exchanged for cuts and wage curbs.

Even in this situation the bureaucrats have done nothing effective. The only occasion on which Grunwicks retreated from their hard line was when Post Office blacking was imposed. It was then that they agreed to go to ACAS. This gave Jackson of the UPW the excuse for calling off the blacking. Despite saying that the blacking would be reimposed if APEX and the strikers asked for it, Jackson has done nothing since, citing the danger of breaking the High Court ruling.

When Michael Foot spoke at the UPW conference on how British justice has been biased against trade unionists, the comment fitted the cases of the UPW blacking of Grunwicks and of South Africa, though Lord Elwyn Jones later explained that Foot was talking about the Tolpuddle Martyrs! If Labour ministers are serious about supporting the strikers, they should not only 'promise' to repeal the Post Office Act, but give full backing for the UPW in bringing Grunwicks to a halt.

Every effort must be made to win this strike in the coming weeks, which are crucial with the summer film trade coming up. Workers' Action readers should commit their trade union and Labour Party branches to action in support of the strikers, and to call on the UPW and Labour Party to take all action necessary to win the strike.

For further information, and lists of chemists in your area which deal with Grunwicks; and messages of support and donations, contact Grunwicks Strike Committee, c/o Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Rd, Willesden, London NW10.

PETE FIRMIN

TGWU SELLS OUT AT FORTES

THE LONG-STANDING fights against Trust House Forte for union rights are over. The picketing of the Randolph Hotel in Oxford was called off on Tuesday, and the usual Saturday night demonstration at Night Out in Birmingham was stopped last week.

These two long-running battles at Trust House Forte, which is notoriously anti-union, were ended around the same time by the Transport and General Workers' Union, and without the demands having been won. The T&G sold out the workers had fought with great courage for the simple right to unionise.

The Randolph Hotel dispute began last November, when 15 women T&G members were sacked, ostensibly because they refused to work weekends, but in reality for joining the union.

Since then they have maintained a picket and kept the strike solid — despite lack of official support and scabbing by T&G members. Only six of the women have dropped away, being forced by financial pressure to find other jobs.

A couple of weeks ago, a mass demonstration was organised when Lady Birdwood, a well-known fascist, held a 'Self-Help' meeting in order to express support for THF against the strikers. Police arrested 38 people on the 300-strong picket.

Then, a week or so later, Hewlitt, the T&G district officer, accepted on behalf of the strikers a slightly improved offer from management.

Instead of the £250 compensation originally offered, management conceded £300! The two longest-serving workers got £500.

Hewlitt gave the strikers no alternative but to accept. He told them that if they didn't, official union support would be withdrawn. So the women join the lines of unemployed in Oxford. Their chances of finding jobs are small. Most of them have had their photos in the Oxford Mail, and no employer is going to risk employing a known militant.

At more or less the same time, Alan Law, Hewlitt's Birmingham equivalent, was hard at work trying to negotiate with management over the Night Out dispute.

This dispute began three months ago when Pat McGuire, a waitress, was sacked — again, for trying to set up a union. 12 other people came out in support, and have been out since.

Recently mass picketing, supported by THF drivers and other workers, has succeeded in cutting off fuel and other essential services to the club, as well as THF at Corley services on the M6.

Every Saturday night the customers had to run a gauntlet of jeering pickets — not too good for business. As a result of the picketing, the club was threatened with closure.

Then Law stepped in. He called off last Saturday's picket while the issue was being taken to arbitration at ACAS.

Law's action has seriously damaged the chances of success. If the club was close to closing down, pressure should have been maintained until management were forced to give in. It is highly unlikely that ACAS will rule in favour of the strikers, especially in view of the settlement at the Randolph Hotel.

T&G members must not let these failures go unnoticed. Motions must be raised in the branches condemning the T&G, and the two officials in particular, for their sell-out of these determined strikers. Questions must also be raised about whether a deal was arranged by the T&G nationally with THF management, behind the backs of the strikers.

And the 38 people arrested while showing their support must not be forgotten — they will need financial support to pay for fines and costs.

ROS MAKIN