

APRIL 1973

FIVEPENCE

libertarian struggle



FOR WORKERS POWER

DANGER!



THE PARTY BETRAYS

paper of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists



1964

HARD

The main thing that the general election showed was that the Tory government did not get the support it asked for in the working-class organisations, although Heath demonstrated that he was willing to hold on to his reactionary policies to the very end. The election was called because the Tories recognized that a crisis was developing within the structure of British capitalism—a crisis that would deepen in the following two years. The £2,000 million balance of payments deficit together with the growing consciousness and militancy of the working class was leading to an inevitable squeeze on profit margins. The Tories saw the time as ripe to obtain a 'vote of confidence' to continue and increase their attacks on the living standards of the working class in their attempt to maintain profits and bolster up the capitalist system. However the Tories were denied a majority by a combination of two factors. Firstly in the traditional working class areas the high turnover of voters signified that many people who had previously abstained were coming out in support of the Labour party with the hope of bringing down the reactionary rule of the Tories. Secondly, it would appear that in Conservative strongholds many working class voters switched their vote to the Liberal party as a move to support the candidate most likely to gain a seat from the Tories. It would therefore seem that the working class used their votes, not merely to put a Labour government into parliament, but to prevent the return to power of the Tories and their reactionary policies. Clearly this would indicate the solidarity of the working class in their refusal to accept for any longer the Tories' attacks on their living standards.

Now that Labour is in power it seems that Wilson's plan will follow the pattern of 1964. He will introduce non-controversial policies with the hope, in the next 18 months, of showing that a Labour government is capable of managing the economy, after which he will call for another general election on the platform of efficient management. Whether such a course will be possible will depend upon the prevailing economic conditions. If a serious crisis develops then a policy of 'good management' will be doomed and it is likely that a national government will be formed, reflecting the situation of 1929-31, accompanied by vicious and repressive attacks on the working class. It is obvious however that the extent to which the Labour Party will gain any ground, given its existence as a minority government, will depend on the course taken by the Liberal and Nationalist groups in parliament. There seems to be little doubt that the Liberals will be unwilling to see the immediate collapse of the Labour government because, after their recent campaign, their funds are far too low to sustain another attempt to stand candidates on a large scale. Thus, with the abstentionism of the Liberals and scraps of support from the Nationalists, for example on the issues of nationaliz-

-ation of North sea oil, the E.E.C., the repeal of the Industrial Relations and Housing Finance acts, it seems likely that Labour may maintain sufficient strength to stay in power for the next two years.

LABOUR'S PROGRAMME

What then will Labour's programme be in the coming months?

1. The settlement with the miners, whilst not a total victory, has shown that an organized and solid section of the working class can bring down a government and secure substantial economic gains. We must learn the lessons of the action and build on the gains made through it.

2. Perhaps their first major move in parliament will be the effective repeal of the Industrial Relations Act in return for the acceptance of the 'Social Contract' idea amongst the trade union leadership. The working class must be aware of what this means. The 'social contract' proposal will represent, at best a standstill and quite likely a fall in the living standards of the working class since the government will primarily be concerned with maintaining the profit margins of British capitalism as a symbol of their respectability within international capitalism. Any such safeguarding of profits accompanied by 'industrial peace' must inevitably involve a reduction in the living standards of the working class.

3. A further and perhaps equally dangerous piece of legislation which Labour might well introduce under the label of the 'Industry Act' will involve plans to institutionalise workers' participation in industry. Such a move will serve only to divert the working class from their conscious involvement in the conflict with the capitalist class (see pps. 4&5 on workers control.)

4. The Housing Finance Act: It seems clear that, because of the existing economic situation the Labour government will be incapable of carrying out any large scale deficit financing in the field of housing and that local government will have to accept the impossible burden and thus the blame for inadequate housing. Therefore while the Housing Finance Act might be repealed it is unlikely that it will herald any meaningful improvement in the housing situation. Furthermore Labour's proposals for the control of land only take into account development land and then it is only the profits of property companies that will be taxed. They will not be taken over. Thus the development of housing will remain subject to the whims of private enterprise and profit. As a result there will be insufficient and inadequate provision of housing with the effect that rents and house prices will continue to rise.

5. The Labour proposals to nationalise North sea and celtic sea oil will be strongly limited by the pressures of the Liberals and Nationalists. What is most likely, if any scheme is developed, is a

state and private industry co-operation which will ensure the return of high profits to the private sector. The importance of the government's method of dealing with North sea oil is reflected in the fact that it will clearly affect Britain's standing in the international capital market, increasing her competitiveness and thus giving the appearance that Labour is capable of running the economy and developing it. The power that private enterprise will wield in any development scheme will however mean that little gain will be achieved for the working class, either nationally or internationally.

6. The Labour party realizes that the working class are no longer willing to accept the arrangement that now exists between Britain and international capitalists, the E.E.C. In fact however they will be restricted in their attempts to 'renegotiate', not only by the Tories and Liberals, but also by the strong pro-market voices in their own party. However even if such obstacles did not exist the freedom of negotiation, and indeed action in such fields as regional development, food subsidies and oil nationalisation would be completely restricted by the total domination of capital interests in the Common Market.

7. Apart from pension increases and perhaps some minor changes, such as in the area of milk and museum charges, the government will not take any action in education or social service provisions and their whole programme in these fields will be shelved. The excuse will be given, as during the 1964-70 government (see 'Lest we forget') that the Balance of Payments will not allow any action to be taken in these areas, and that to do so would damage the proverbial 'National Interest'.

8. The Labour Party's plans for nationalization will get nowhere. Not only are there strong elements within the Labour ranks who would oppose moves for nationalization, but both national and international capitalism would not allow it. Thus, even if Labour had a clear majority, organized capitalist pressure would prevent the carrying out of their manifesto.

a) Capitalist forces will use every legal and extra legal measure possible to block these proposals.

b) Capitalism would only let through those proposals where the gains to be made from nationalisation through colossal compensation would cripple the industries involved for decades to come e.g. coal and railways would benefit with industries in the private sector in terms of high profits due to released supplies.

c) Even the full acceptance of Labour policies would represent little more than moves in specific areas of industry, to trip the present economy further towards state capitalism. Nationalisation within a capitalist framework does nothing to

LABOUR

1974

change the fundamental balance of class power in society. The resources received from industry would still be used to perpetuate the system of bourgeois privilege and profit upon which the structure of capitalism depends.

d) Under nationalisation there will still remain a distinction between those who produce and those who do not: between the worker and the manager... the latter being appointed from above. Production relations will not be changed. There will still be a basic division between those who give orders and those who carry them out.

Labour supporters might argue that it is the vast majority that the Labour government have or the Balance of payments

situation that will prevent them from carrying out the socialist elements in their manifesto. In fact it is quite clear that the Labour programme has little, if any, real socialistic content. It makes no basic attacks on the profit domination of the economy. For example the profits made by banks alone, in the past months would be enough to pay for Labour's social programme. It is obvious enough that there can be no parliamentary road to socialism. Any attempt to change the fundamental distribution of wealth in the country, which is merely blocked by the 'peaceful' expression of majority wishes, will be met by the full force of the capitalist system which has the control of the laws, the means of production, the armed forces and the media.

OUR DEMANDS

The working class must unite to fight for the following demands-

- 1) Democratisation of the unions with direct responsibility to the shop floor
- 2) The repeal of all laws which affect the right of the working class to organize and picket.
- 3) Eliminate all privilege in the education and social services.
- 4) Erradicate differentials in living standards.
- 5) No toleration of the capitalist's notion of 'national interest' which is used solely as an excuse to limit the wages of the working class.
- 6) To forge strong links between the working class of all countries. This is particularly important to counteract the strength of the international capitalist blocks, such as the Common Market.
- 7) The right of the working class to manage and control the means of production Ownership and control of land by the working class.



LEST WE FORGET

Speaking on October 3, 1964, twelve days before winning the general election, Harold Wilson said, "You cannot go cap in hand to the central bankers as the Tories have been forced to do, and maintain your freedom of action, whether on policies maintaining employment here in Britain or even on social policies. The central bankers will before long demand that Britain put her house in order, and their idea of an orderly house usually means vicious inroads into the welfare state and a one-sided pay pause. The government will launch into savage cuts. The brunt will again fall on wages, on salaries and on the ordinary family struggling to make ends meet."

This is exactly what happened to Labour during the next six years of Labour rule.

Labour Record 1964-70

The 'attack on inequality' never took place. Instead taxes rose from 20% to 33%, whilst taxes on profit and dividend fell from 50% to 34%. It made no difference what government was in power. Under Labour inequality was increased by tax changes; in 1965-66 the total taxes on profits and wealth were less than the tax on tobacco alone. A government report showed that the proportion of income tax was the same for the low paid as for the rich



Wilson sells out again

The 'strengthening of the Welfare State' The 1964 manifesto promised the abolition of prescription charges. In 1968 £25m. was saved by reintroducing them. In the same year drug companies made £37.7m. profit out of the National Health and they spent £24m. on packaging and advertisements. School meals went up in price and so did dental charges. Free school milk for the over-elevens was stopped at the same time as reports were showing an increase in rickets in some areas. A massive increase in means-testing occurred; not only did needy families not get benefits they were entitled to but thousands of pounds were spent hunting 'scroungers'.

Labour's 'attack on low pay' got caught up in the 'freeze'. Labour's incomes policy was smashed by the revolt of the low paid, led by the dustmen in 1969. The wage freeze had no effect in helping the lower paid which was its justification.

Harold Wilson's 'new era of industrial relations' ended up with him personally smashing the seamen's strike of 1966, some of whom were getting only £15 for a 56hr week. Barbara Castle tried to introduce, 'In Place of Strife', a document so reactionary that twenty-nine clauses in Carr's "Fair Deal at Work" are taken from it. The era ended with a fifty per cent increase in unemployment.

Between 1964 and 1970, prices rose by 25%; immigration controls were tightened and racialism encouraged; British troops were sent to Northern Ireland; council house rents went up and no housing targets were met; the number of police increased by 25% and the number of teachers by only 8%.

The fact that Labour's record is so bad is not due to bad luck or lack of time or corrupt leaders, but to their belief that fundamental economic change can take place gradually through the existing state machinery of parliament. Any economic reform which threatens the economic power of the class who own the wealth of this country will meet with political resistance, and not just through the ballot box.

This time because of the depth of the crisis, the Labour Party will be more than ever incapable of carrying out its manifesto.

WORKERS

The idea of workers' control has been central to the principles of many left-wing organisations. It is now becoming a useful tool for both the established political parties and for the management. However in the mouths of these people the words "workers' control" are a screen for less acceptable proposals. In order to appreciate this fully, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what workers' control really means, and from where it sprang.

Firstly it should be recognised that there is a distinction between 'management' and 'control', - the functions of these may sometimes overlap, but they are essentially distinct. 'Management' is the state of affairs where the decisions are initiated and carried out by the same people, either individually or collectively. 'Control' means to supervise, inspect or check decisions, which are initiated by others. This implies either a limitation of workers' power or at least a duality of power. Obviously the latter will not suffice. What is needed is the situation where the working class as the collective producer takes all the fundamental decisions. This is done directly, through its own chosen organs, such as workers' councils, factory committees. These organs will consist of mandated, rotated and recallable delegates and should be federated on a regional and national basis. Therefore it is workers' self management that is needed, not just workers control.

RUSSIA 1917

The debate between these two can be most clearly seen in the events of the Russian Revolution, particularly between 1917 and 1921. During this time the issue of industrial administration was an effective indicator of the clashes of principles concerning the building of a new social order pattern.

In 1917 in Russia the economic base and the political supremacy of the industrial capitalists was shattered by a massive upsurge. The existing system of property relations was altered. However the characteristic authoritarian relations of production were not altered, and this is where the failure lay, because it gave an opening for new masters to replace the old ones. Why did it fail?

Confronted with workers' management, the owners had everything to lose, not only their ownership but also their privileges. Therefore it was a relief for them when the Revolution's leaders reversed the massive movements towards soviet power and decided to stop short with nationalisation and to retain the giving / taking of ord-

ers relationship in industry. Many saw the opportunity to regain their positions as managers of labour, albeit under a different title and they therefore either joined the Party or co-operated with it.

The revolutionary workers also had to deal with opposition from the reformist 'left', e.g. the Mensheviks and the right wing Socialist Revolutionaries. They regarded as 'utopian' or 'anarchist' any attempts by the workers to manage production.

The Bolsheviks also proved a problem. During the first months (March to October) they supported the Factory committees but afterwards turned against them, trying to incorporate them into a new union structure. This prevented the rapidly growing opposition to capitalist relations of production from coming to a head. Although the Bolsheviks helped to make a successful attack on the political power of the bourgeoisie, they also helped to restore 'law and order' in industry, which led to the consolidation of authoritarian relations once more in production. A young bureaucracy had begun to form within the Bolshevik party. Intellectuals began to dominate the committees and the Congress. These reasons, although superficial, may help to explain why the Bolshevik Party acted as it did.

A clear separation between the Bolsheviks and the masses began to appear. It had begun in 1905 when Soviets had begun to appear in many places independent of the Bolshevik Party. Those party members who were favourable to the Soviets, only saw

We're all in the same boat, cha



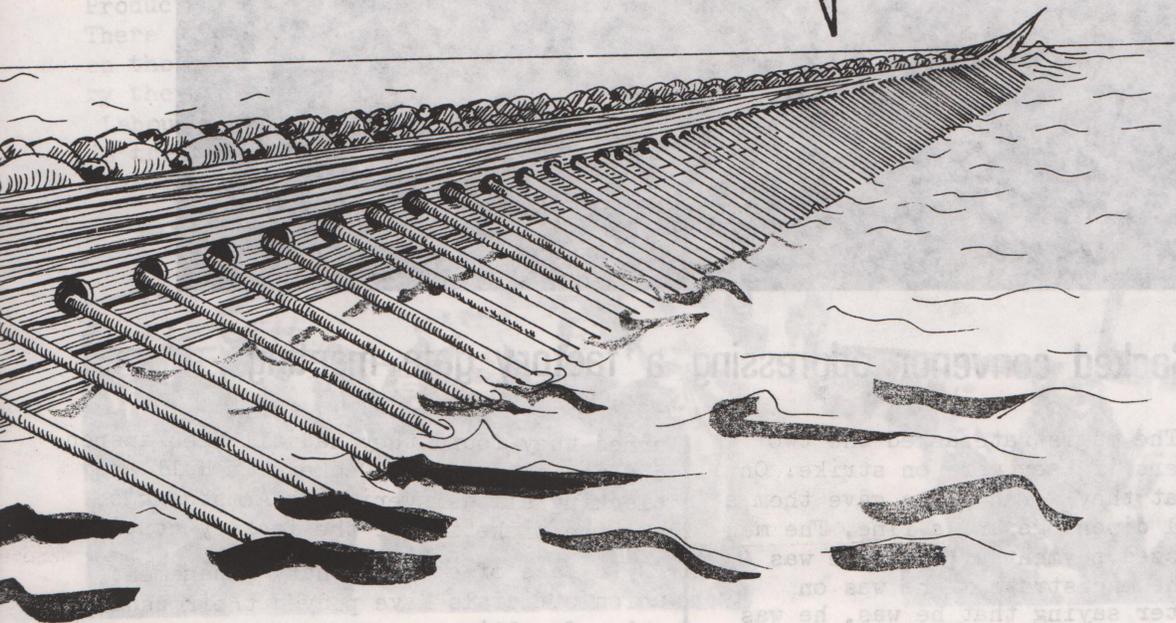
them as, at best, auxiliaries for the Party - but there were many who were not even favourable. By 1917 it was evident that the Bolshevik Party was out of touch with what the workers and peasants really wanted. The leadership of the Party was firmly in the hands of professional revolutionaries - not the workers who gave it its strength and support. "A worker-agitator who shows any talent and is at all promising should not work in the factory". (Lenin, Sochineniya). This fundamental contradiction meant that any real move for worker's power would of necessity fail.

The workers themselves were unable to understand or realise what was happening to them. They could not find any effective way of achieving and keeping by themselves their objective of workers' self management. Therefore leaders arose and took over decision-making, thus reintroducing the same relationships as had been in effect previously. The Bolshevik road to bureaucracy was embarked upon. Because there was still a separation between the means of production and the producers there was still exploiters and exploited.

From this several lessons can be drawn. Firstly the working class organisation must be strong enough to take and keep the management of society. Secondly 'workers' power' must not at any time be equated with Party power.

POWER?

But why do we always have to do the fucking rowing?



EUROPE 1974

"Create an equal partnership between employers and employed in recognition of the equal importance of their contributions to the success of industry."

Liberal Manifesto

"In consultation with the unions, we shall take steps to make the management of existing nationalised industries more responsible to the workers in the industry and more responsible to their consumers' needs."

Labour Manifesto

The above quotes show that even the established parliamentary parties in Britain are considering the idea of "workers' participation" (a diluted form of workers' control). They have realised the advantages of advocating this kind of policy. Firstly as part of their election manifestoes, it would win them some support from the workers and trade unionists. Secondly as a policy, it would help to create a more stable work force. Proof of this can be seen in the existing scheme of "workers' participation" practised in W. Germany. This has been in progress since 1951 and despite some opposition from certain sections of both the unions and the working class as a whole, it has spread to most parts of industry. In reality it gives the workers very little, except a false sense of participation in the decisions made concerning their working life. However

this, coupled with other legislation aimed at raising the status and security of the working class, has ensured higher production and less strikes, to the benefit of the profit margins of the capitalists.

The European Commission has been working on proposals to introduce such a scheme throughout the Community. Industrialists in Britain have shown great interest in the progress and results of the scheme. Both Liberals and Labour have included something similar in their manifestoes. These facts should cause no real surprise. For if the scheme is as effective — for the W German capitalists — as it appears, then the working class in Britain can be certain that capitalists in this country will try to use it for their benefit too. Everyone knows how much money strikes lose for the bosses, therefore any way of preventing so many strikes will be welcomed to capitalists.

For this reason alone the working class must not be fooled into welcoming these schemes with open arms. If they are put into operation (i.e. imposed upon the workers) then they should be seen for what they are and used accordingly. As an instrument to help achieve a full takeover of production by the working class, they are to some extent 'useful'. They are not an end in themselves. These schemes seem to give the worker some say in what happens to him, but in reality they do not. In fact they can be and are used to divide the working class, both within individual

factories and throughout industry as a whole. Individual factories will be isolated by pressure being put on the workers to boost the industry in their own factories. A false consciousness of interest will be created, with workers being made to participate in company interest at the expense of class interest. This is an indication of how the working class will not be given "equal partnership" or have industries made "more responsible to the workers".

The ruling class are trying to bring in these schemes in order to suppress the militancy that is steadily growing among the working class. It would obviously benefit them to have a more "contented" workforce, less liable to strike or cause disruption. They will therefore be prepared, through such schemes as these and through other legislation, to "give in" to certain demands made by the working class. It is certain that any demand for "workers' participation" will be met in the way already described. We, the working class, must not be fooled by this.

We must continue to fight for real workers' self-management. This will mean having a strongly organised, united working class, who, once they have gained control of the means of production, will be able to keep it and to use it for the benefit of the whole working class. There must be no reliance on leaders even if they purport to represent the interests of the working class. History has shown that only the working class can properly represent its own interests. Any decisions should be made and carried out by the same people. Once working class self-management has been achieved it must be maintained by the practice of certain principles.

The only practical way of organisation will be to have regional groups that are federated to each other. Meetings of any groups, regional or national, will be open meetings, with speaking rights for all. At meetings that cannot be attended by everyone concerned, mandated delegates should be sent, who are liable to both rotation and recall. This is essential to prevent the building of another elite.



"Trades Union officials (to the Boy-Who-Would-Grow-Up): 'Here, I say, think of us. This Growth has got to stop'. (Dedicated to the Officials at Unity House and their pathetic efforts to check this modern tendency on the part of the Rank and File to outgrow Institutions.)"

INDUSTRIAL MAFIA

The situation at Armstrong's factory in Beverley led Jean Jepson, sacked convenor at Armstrong's, to describe the businessmen's circle in Beverley as a Mafia at a meeting jointly sponsored by ORA in Hull.

She outlined the causes of the strike at Armstrong's. Seven years ago the union had negotiated an agreement with management whereby workers were paid for forty hours if they were laid off through external causes. When the three day week was imposed, management wanted to revoke this agreement and make the workers claim pay for non-working days from Social Security.

Jean Jepson says that she refused to sign away the agreement, whereupon she was first offered a financial inducement to leave (which she refused) and then was sacked (a) because she wouldn't sign the agreement, and (b) because she was 'sympathetic to the miners'. Eighty-nine workers then walked out. The T.G.W.U. officials became involved, and appealed to the Bridlington Tribunal against an unfair dismissal, against her wishes. Management was allowed to pick six members of the Tribunal, and Jean Jepson two. After a six hour meeting, during which neither Jean nor any of her supporters were allowed to speak, the voting to uphold her dismissal was six against two. The union fixed a deal with management whereby the strikers would go back (except Jean), and there would be no victimisation. Fifty workers returned to work. Jean was willing to take her appeal to the Industrial Relations Court, but her Union officials were unwilling, not due to any principled opposition but because it would bring to light some scandals concerning them and management.

An important point is that victimisation has occurred. Jean quoted an example. A striker had been fined £50 for an unrelated offence before the strike. He had paid off £30 of this, but during the strike fell behind with his payments. Two other Armstrong workers who were not on strike were caught robbing a safe in the factory. The two cases were heard on the



Sacked convenor addressing a factory gate meeting

same day. The magistrate asked the two safe-breakers if they were on strike. On hearing that they weren't, he gave them a conditional discharge and a fine. The man who had missed payment of his fine was asked by the magistrate if he was on strike. After saying that he was, he was given two sentences of 30 days to run consecutively. It was this that led Jean Jepson to say that the people who ran Beverley were a "businessmen's Mafia".

Due to the sell-out by T.G.W.U. officials of Jean's case many workers either drifted back to work or left the company. Only 20 were still out when Armstrong's called an election for a new convenor. A factory gate meeting was called, which fifty workers, half the work-force, attended. They agreed to boycott the election, hold a half-day strike, and call for the reinstatement of Jean Jepson. When they ret-

urned they found they had all been suspended for three days. Dockers in Hull are blacking all deliveries to Armstrong's, and the picketing of the factory continues.

In face of a reactionary management, union officials have played their usual role of selling out the workers under the disguise of a compromise. The union had ample warning of the threat to Jean Jepson when the management tried to sack her last year. But in this situation the workers have seen through their union and are pressing for strong action from the rank and file to make these officials totally responsible to the workers. Only through democratisation of unions and mandation of representatives can we ensure that these sell-outs are not repeated.

George Williams.

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THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE

THE REACTIONARY TORY GOVERNMENTS ATTACK ON THE RIGHT TO PICKET BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE POWER OF THE STATE AND THE POLICE OVER OUR RIGHT TO ORGANISE. WE DEMAND THAT THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT ABOLISH ALL LAWS THAT DENY THE ORGANISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST THE SYSTEM THAT REPRESSES IT.

The laws which relate to picketing are vague, deliberately so. They are largely left to the discretion of the police and the courts. With collaboration between the police and bosses 'in defence of property' against workers who organise on any level, as at Shrewsbury, there is little doubt that the discretion favours the capitalist class.

The police possess the powers to smash all forms of picketing, for their powers include the removal of any obstruction of the highway and prevention of a 'reasonably anticipated' breach of the peace. These two acts cover all forms of picketing. The police can then arrest workers for obstruction of the police in 'the execution of their duty'. As government measures aimed at repressing militancy, for example the Industrial Relations Act, are attacked with success by workers, the government will marshal the full force of the law, even using acts which have not been repealed but merely fallen into disuse. The use of the nineteenth century law on conspiracy against the Shrewsbury building workers is an example of the ruling class's manipulation of ancient laws to crush militancy. It must be remembered that most British laws are never removed from the law books. Further more even on minor cases the courts are unlikely to reverse the decision of the police 'on the spot', as this would undermine our legal system.

Pickets then can be arrested for the following offences;

1. Trespass.
2. Assault and battery.
3. Public nuisance.
4. Intimidation.

These are all very discretionary.

5. Inducement to break contract. This is more complex. It means that if the pickets try to persuade a driver from crossing the their picket lines and stop him delivering they would be liable to arrest because



Police and pickets clash while scabs get through the lines

they are trying to get him to break his contract of employment with the suppliers of the goods.

So that's the law, which the ruling class will always interpret to their advantage. In the run-up to the miners' strike we saw how Carr, the Home Secretary under the Tories, and Gerard (Dept. Assistant Commissioner of Police) prepared. They planned a national network of 'flying constabulary'. This coupled with planned detention centres where a large number of strikers can be dealt with. How long will it be before internment is deemed "necessary" as in N. Ireland?

Carr and Mark (Metropolitan Police Commissioner) did not make the usual noises about their action being a defensive measure against intimidation. Strikers, if the bosses have their way, will not be allowed to approach lorries, occupy the road or pavement or shout at scabs. As a police superintendant says,..... 'Any crowd opposed to one man is intimidation...but if the police are there between the crowd and the driver the intimidation is less.' Police tactics for the miners' strike were formulated as early as November and with

the statements by Carr and Gerard, the desire of the ruling class to keep the supply lines open was clearly revealed.

Police collaboration with the bosses can be clearly seen in a small dispute at Laricol Plastics as early as 1971, at a factory in Acton. In a dispute where pickets were vital for the success of the strike the police said that no more than two pickets would be allowed at any one time. This was adhered to except when a number of scabs were due to start work. The police then arrested the strikers. Once again the police were 'carrying out the law'. There had been no shouting on the picket lines, no interference or obstruction; the charge was that of obstructing a police officer.

Thus it seems that even if we adhere to the law, we have no chance of winning against the army of the state. In a dispute involving a small firm as in the case of Laricol, it is easier for individuals to be victimised; if we make concessions to the law, then the law stamps on us harder.

The solution seems to be revealed in a recent statement by Carr, 'the police have no chance of dispossessing several hundred people', and in the Police Gazette remarks about the Saltely picket; 'it was common-sense. You don't pick a fight with 10,000 people'.

The tactics of the government and police is to single out individuals, thus making them an example, e.g. the Shrewsbury pickets. The way to combat such move is to picket in large numbers where possible. The police will be forcing the confrontation; they have the choice of either breaking down, as at Saltely, or mass arrests of workers, and then the lines of class war will be clearly defined. The police will arrest workers if their action becomes too successful, and the police will be backed by the laws of the state.

The state will try to victimise individual pickets; united action is the way to fight this. Workers in all industries should unite in action for workers who are victimised. Strikes in small factories such as Laricol, need the support of the whole working class in the face of the opposition from the police and the state.

BOOK REVIEW

THE HAZARDS OF WORK by Patrick Kinnersley

Last year in Britain, 2,000 workers were killed in accidents at work; one million more contracted illnesses, ensuring that they die an early death. The vast majority of accidents are clearly the fault of the bosses. Safety laws have been broken or blatantly ignored; yet the factory inspectors are in the pay of the bosses. Average fines, for breaking industrial laws, are about £40 and no employer has yet gone to prison for endangering the life of or causing the death of, an employee. Workers at Shrewsbury have been gaoled for allegedly 'threatening employers and their way of life', by helping to make the

national building workers' strike successful. Legislation clearly is not going to protect workers, for those who legislate are in league with the bosses, and workers must organise to fight for safe working conditions along with an improved standard of living. Last year in the United States, 5,000 workers at Shell struck from January to July, due to hazardous conditions of work and many more strikes would occur if workers were made aware of the dangers they confront at work.

The unions have ignored safety factors. Only four in Britain have safety officers. Productivity deals are made which increase health hazards. Piece work rates, for instance, do not pay workers to take safety precautions. In the chemical industry, productivity deals were made to cut the time spent changing clothes and cleaning after work, so that now workers go home covered in harmful chemicals; thus increased pay is offset by loss of good health.

Even death acts on a class basis. According to the Registrar General's figures deaths are divided into five social classes. When the working class reach forty their strength and speed decline parallel to their wages, whereas the professional sector of the population receive their maximum earnings at this age. By the time they are sixty-five, ten per cent of workers have retired, due to ill-health and one in three workers over sixty have bronchitis. The bosses will seek increased profits above all else, even if it entails the death of workers.

Workers must recognise these dangers and organise at shop floor level, to stop bosses using them as fodder to increase profits.

"The Hazards of Work; How to Fight Them". by Patrick Kinnersley. Pluto Press, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Rd London NW1.

★★ RED CLYDE SIDE ★★

A major tactic of the ruling class in keeping power has been to suppress and distort the history of working class struggles. One of the tasks of a revolutionary organisation is to recall the history of working class militancy and to point out the lessons to be learnt from past struggles.

In the years before and during the 1st World War, the industrial areas of Scotland were subject to a great amount of socialist agitation. It was on the Clyde that the Shop Stewards Movement originated. Towards the end of 1914, with the close of a three year agreement, the Glasgow district committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (which evolved into the AUEW) demanded a 2d per hour pay rise.

This demand was turned down and an overtime ban started. Then a strike in 26 factories over the 2d issue erupted, and ten thousand engineers came out. The district committee backed down and persuaded the men to go back to work after a fortnight.

During the strike a group came together which acted as a co-ordinating body between the various factories. This was known as the Clyde Labour Withholding Committee (CLWC). It was an unofficial body and developed as a reaction against the betrayal by the district committee, and it was composed mainly of shop stewards who had already worked together in a local vigilance committee. The CLWC grew into the Clyde Workers Committee (CWC).

The CWC sought to increase the number of shop stewards in the factories and to try to change the workshop organisation from a craft basis to a class basis. Workshop committees elected by the workers were set up and were answerable to them, and convenors of shop stewards emerged, who had the right to move from department to department.

LEADERS SELL OUT

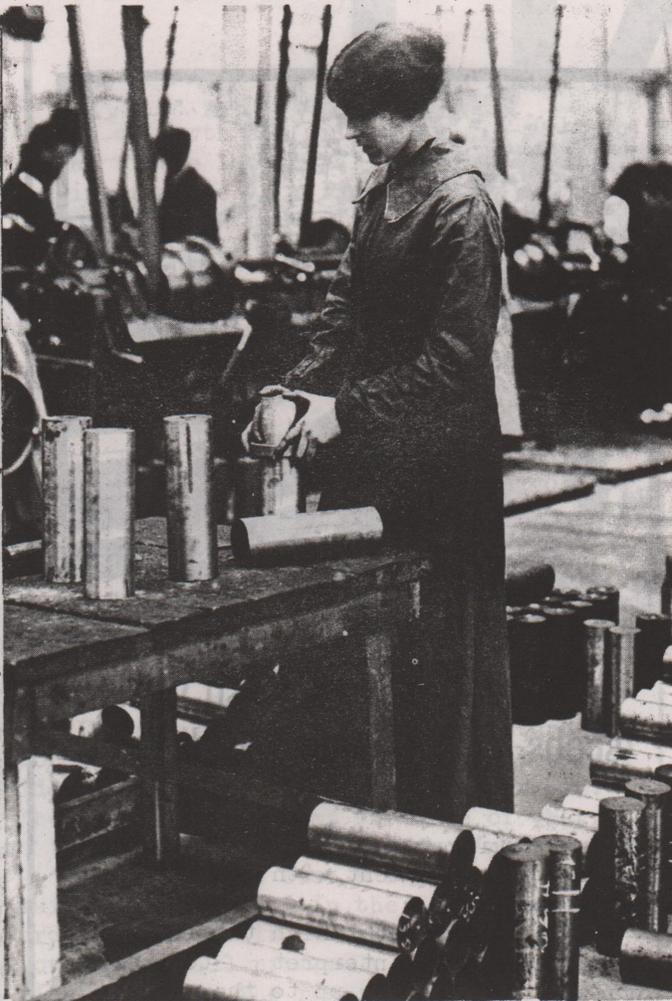
Through their struggles, the Clydeside workers realised the inadequacies of the official union leadership, and the need for independent rank and file organisation to oppose the union bureaucracy when they backed down over issues.

During 1915 and 1916, 250 to 300 delegates met every week - from the mines, the railways, the co-op workers, as well as engineering and shipbuilding. New methods of organisation were developing.

At the same time, the bosses were applying new policies. They centralised everything under the state, sped up industry and incorporated the unions into the state apparatus in order to effectively silence the workers under the excuse of the war efforts.

They began to introduce 'dilution' of labour - where unskilled workers were moved into the factories. This was a preparation for military conscription where the skilled working class would be creamed off into the army, being replaced by women, to whom the bosses could pay a lot less.

The Clyde Workers Committee led a consistent campaign against dilution and also against rent rises (with a spectacular and successful rent strike). The bosses replied against the rising militancy with the suppression of various socialist newspapers, including the moderate ILP 'Forward'.



Woman munitions worker after the 'Dilution of Labour'

broke up its presses and suppressed its paper. On March 17 1916, a strike flared up over the forbidding at the Parkhead Forge of a convenor visiting the different sections. The Government had eight leading stewards arrested and 'deported' from Clydeside.

It should be noted here that the CWC did nothing to extend the strike. It had been created at a particular point of struggle - now, like the union executive, it was backing down. Willie Gallagher, who a few weeks before was talking about revolution, ruled the motion from rank and file workers to declare a strike on Clydeside out of order. This from a man who called himself an Anarchist and Syndicalist!

This brilliantly illustrates the inadequacy of shop-steward organisations when a struggle develops and escalates, and the need for a mass assembly of workers, rather than uncontrolled delegates, to advance and voice the workers' struggle.

The Clyde movement was thus effectively crushed, aided by the imprisonment of leading socialist militants, e.g. John McLean.

But the Russian Revolution raised new hopes among the working class. A new militancy emerged, and grew over Britain. In 1919, the demand for a forty-hour week emerged. The Clyde Workers Committee, together with the joint committee of the local unions, launched a campaign.

Here again it showed its inadequacy by a) working with the union committees, being bound by collaboration with them, rather than by pushing for independent action bypassing the unions; and b) by not spreading the movement beyond the Clyde. This despite the fact that it was represented on the National Committee of Shop Stewards and by the fact that rank and file activity was spreading everywhere.

60,000 workers came out; a massive demonstration was held in George Square, Glasgow. Next day the Scottish TUC called a General Strike. Mass pickets moved from factory to factory calling people out.

Singers Sewing Machine Factory (scene of pre-war syndicalist militancy) and the miners struck. It should be remembered that the unions were forced into this situation by grass-roots militancy.

The strike spread to Belfast where thousands stopped work. On February 1st, a demonstration assembled to hear what the Lord Provost of Glasgow would do about appealing to the Government. But on the instructions of Whitehall, he had mobilised a police force, whilst troops, machine guns and tanks were being sent up!

The police charged into the crowd, batons swinging. Gallagher and Kirkwood, leading lights of the CWC were clubbed to the ground. The workers began to fight back; they tore up iron railings and threw them at the police. They seized a lemonade lorry and used broken bottles as weapons. The police were forced back.

The Riot Act was read, and Gallagher, Kirkwood and Emmanuel Shinwell (then a quite different person to his later years) were arrested. During the night, thousands of soldiers were moved into the city centre - (English troops - not Scottish ones whose loyalty was doubted). Tanks and machine guns were positioned everywhere.

Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary, told the Cabinet: "By going gently at first, we should get the support we want from this nation, and then troops can be used more effectively."

The General Strike collapsed. Union leadership backed down, the CWC were in jail and the workers, whose methods of struggle were not sufficiently advanced, retreated. The action lacked the support of the Triple Alliance of Miners, transport workers, and railway men, which could have been gained if the strike had been started a few weeks later.

The lessons to be drawn from this failure are obvious - that a national mass movement was necessary, a rank and file capable of combatting the bosses who would be prepared to go to any lengths to maintain power.

The present increase in army and police co-operation, e.g. N. Ireland, Heathrow and the increased recruiting of special constables, shows that the ruling class is now as willing to use force against the working class militancy as it did in Clydeside Nick Hillier.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE
O.R.A. write to 24 Moss St, York
SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ORDERS
write to 14 Lothair Rd South, N4