

A POLICY TO MEET THE CRISIS

EDITORIAL BOARD STATEMENT

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In one week's time, on March 5, the special congress of the TUC will be held in London to decide how to meet the Tory onslaught.

The congress will assemble against a background of industrial indignation not seen since the 1926 General Strike: gasworkers' strike and work to rule, civil servants' overtime ban and withdrawal of co-operation, hospital ancillary workers' selective strikes

To make the Tory government resign would be a great educational experience, politically speaking, for the working class. But it would only be a step.

From that point onwards there would have to be a massive campaign to mobilize electorally the working class and the progressive elements in the middle class to elect a Labour government pledged to socialist policies.

We say 'pledged to socialist policies' knowing that the present leaders of the Labour movement have no intention of introducing such policies. Indeed, in the last analysis some of them will be prepared to join a coalition government with the Tories to head off the working class.

But if the working class is strong enough to force the Tories out, it is strong enough to deal with the traitors in its own midst. This can only be achieved by exposing them in the fight for an alternative socialist policy.

The Central Committee of the Socialist Labour League calls upon the working class to support the following policies to unite the working class against the Tories and the present Wilson-Feather leadership of the labour movement:

1) A Labour government must immediately repeal the Industrial Relations Act, Housing Finance Act, Immigration Acts, Fair Trading Act and all wage control. After the repeal of all Tory anti-working class measures, there must be legislation to implement the Charter of Basic Rights, along the following lines.

2) The right to work! Capitalism demands mass unemployment. The right to a job must be guaranteed. This can only be done by breaking the grip of capitalist ownership on the economy. Employed and unemployed must unite to insist on a Labour government nationalizing the main industries and banks, under workers' control and without compensation.

The struggle must begin now. No closures, no sackings, must be the policy of the trade unions. Occupation of factories threatened with closure, as part of the fight to bring down the Tories.

3) The democratic right to strike and to organize in trade unions. Only the organized working class can lead mankind out of the historical crisis. Every right and every gain won by the working class, every democratic right in Britain, has been won because of the organized strength of the unions and the strike weapon.

A Labour government must immediately repeal the Industrial Relations Act. This fight must begin now by forcing the TUC to break off all relations with the government and mobilize the working class to destroy state control of wages.

4) The right to defend rights won in the past and change the system. All the changes in legal procedures made by the Tory government must be repealed. All secret police and MI5 organizations must be disbanded and fully exposed. The secrets of the Tory administration in this sphere must be

published. All rights to assembly, free speech and the Press must be guaranteed.

5) The right to a higher standard of living. It is not the living standards of trade unionists, but the profit system, which causes the crisis. The first step must be to expropriate all the great fortunes of the rich, close down the Stock Exchange, place a state control over all movements of capital in and out of the country.

Nationalization of the basic industries and of all large companies, banks, building and insurance societies will provide the resources for a unified plan to improve the living standards of the whole people. Workers' control of these, as well as the present nationalized industries, will run them in the interests of the workers and consumers.

Again, the fight must begin now. State control of wages must be answered by the most widespread fight for wage increases to meet price rises and improve standards. This means a fight to remove the Tory government and change the union leadership.

6) The right to health and welfare benefits. Every Tory government cut in welfare benefits, in the health service and in all public spending must be revoked. On the basis of nationalization, a crash programme of expansion of services to the unemployed, the low-paid, the sick and the aged must be undertaken as an absolute priority. The working class and the Labour govern-

ment must take immediate and absolute responsibility for these victims of the capitalist system.

7) The right to decent housing. Decent housing is not a luxury; it is a necessity. People have the basic right to decent accommodation at rents they can afford. Nationalization of the handful of building monopolies and building societies will provide the basis for a massive programme of new house building. The disgraceful problem of the homeless in the cities must be immediately solved by census and taking-over of all unoccupied property.

8) The international responsibilities of the working class. The working class is international. We fight for the unrestricted right of any worker of any nationality to move freely through the world.

Withdraw the troops from Ireland. Unite the Irish and British working class to throw out the Lynch and Heath governments.

Unite in the struggle for the Socialist United States of Europe, the only alternative to the Common Market plans for dictatorship.

Withdraw all British troops from abroad and disband the present standing army.

Sign treaties with all ex-colonial countries for programmes of equal trade and mutual assistance.

Break from NATO and all imperialist alliances.

For the carrying out of such policies the SLL fights for the

and overtime ban, London teachers' rolling strike action, disruption to train services by railwaymen and, in all probability, an all-out strike by Ford workers.

Large sections of these workers openly acknowledge that the only answer to their fight to maintain a decent standard of living is a General Strike. That is, the creation of the industrial and political conditions which will force the government to resign.

We are convinced that if the TUC were to make a General Strike demand, then a unity in action against the common enemy could be forged on a scale never before known in history.

For this reason the All Trades Unions Alliance has called for a mass lobby of the Congress at Central Halls, Westminster, next Monday morning.

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The SLL calls upon every socialist and class-conscious worker to consider this programme and manifesto very carefully, and to decide now to take up their inescapable responsibilities. The building of the revolutionary party is the burning question now, not in some remote future. The SLL is determined to carry through its transformation into a revolutionary party.

We say that Heath's ultimatum to the working class can and must be answered around this policy.

● Make the Tories resign.
● Expose the Labour leaders who betray the fight for socialism.

● This exposure will open the way for the building of a revolutionary leadership around a revolutionary programme to take the working class forward to power.

We urge you to join the SLL. Come to the Empire Pool, Wembley, on Sunday, March 11, to see our pageant of working-class history, 'The Road to Workers' Power'. Help us transform the SLL into a revolutionary party.

Rally against Tories, Empire Pool, Wembley, March 11

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DAILY ORGAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

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Zionists are murderers, say Jewish marchers

THE barbaric crime of the Israeli government in shooting down a Libyan airliner over the Sinai desert, killing 106 passengers and crew is causing revulsion even among long-standing supporters of Zionism.

In London at the weekend a number of Jews took part alongside Arabs and their supporters in demonstrations denouncing the atrocity, and branding the Zionist chiefs as murderers.

It is clear that General Moshe Dayan and his fellow militarists in Tel Aviv have overstepped the mark with the brutal and cold-

blooded decision to shoot down the airliner.

This was not an accident committed in the heat of battle by a beleaguered power, but a pre-meditated massacre of defenceless people by an air force which enjoys crushing superiority thanks to US assistance.

As Shimon Peres, the Israeli Transport Minister, made clear, the shooting was carried out 'after careful consideration' evidently among the top brass of the Air Force determined to force confrontation with the Arabs.

It confirms to the hilt that there cannot be peace in the Middle East so long as imperialism and its agencies remain. Israel's existence, guaranteed by

US finance for the purpose of policing the Arab revolution and destroying its best militants, is a permanent cancer in the Middle East.

Israel was created by war—a war which drove the Palestinian people from their homes and imposed on those who remained the status of second-class citizens in their own homeland. Its role is to act as the chief gendarme for the big oil companies and investors who want to profit from the exploitation of Arab resources.

How can this be fought? The shooting of the Libyan Boeing has once again revealed the bankruptcy of the Arab bourgeois leaders, who have no

answer to the bloody gauntlet thrown down by the Zionists.

President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, for example, spoke angrily about the Israeli massacre but went ahead just the same with his envoy's mission to the White House, which is supposed to be the start of a new peace initiative.

In other words, Sadat is reduced to appealing to imperialism and its agencies, while the Egyptian masses, roused to fury by the latest Israeli crime, are demanding war with the occupiers in Sinai.

The airliner atrocity comes at a time of great danger to the Arab revolution. Imperialism is determined to put an end to opposition in the Middle East so

that oil supplies to the big monopolies of the US can be assured.

Aided by the Central Intelligence Agency and provided with vast sums for arms buying the Israelis are being encouraged to strike against refugee camps throughout the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon and Syria.

More sinister still is the tide of cowardly assassinations of leading Palestinian activists, including Mahmoud Hamchari in Paris, Wael Zwaiter in Rome and others in Cyprus, Lebanon, Tripoli and even Scandinavia.

The shooting of Libya's Boeing is a vivid exposure of the real character of Zionism.

By shattering the illusions of many pro-Zionists it points the way to the unity of Arab and Jewish workers in the Middle East, which alone can destroy the grip of imperialism and its agents.

REVISIONISTS CREEP CLOSER TO THE STALINISTS

What we think

AS THE political and economic crisis grows steadily worse, and the working class is thrust into the most decisive clashes with the Tory government, so the utter political bankruptcy of all the revisionist groups becomes ever more nakedly exposed.

After years in which they have used 'Trotskyist' phrases as a cover for their bitter opposition to the essence of Trotskyism—the preparation of a revolutionary party to lead the working class to power—the intensity of the present crisis impels them inexorably to the right, towards the Stalinist and social-democratic bureaucracies.

The latest example comes in the current issue of the 'state capitalist' paper, 'Socialist Worker'. This is the paper of the International Socialists group which deserted Trotskyism in Britain in 1950 with the false and anti-communist 'theory' that capitalism has been restored in the Soviet Union and the 1917 revolution defeated.

In an editorial statement on the present crisis, an ambiguous and half-hearted call for a General Strike is combined with the absence of any lead to the working class on what must follow such a General Strike.

But it is this question which is now decisive for the whole of the British working-class movement. The breakdown of the gasmen's talks proves that the Tories are heading in the direction of an all-out confrontation with the working class. The real issue is no longer whether a General Strike will take place, but under whose leadership and with what results.

Everything, as Trotskyism has insisted and fought for throughout its history, turns on this question of revolutionary leadership.

As a middle-class, centrist group, the IS are intensely perturbed over the consequences of the crisis. When Joe Gormley, right-wing miners' leader spoke last week telling the TUC that they must either fight or capitulate to the government it is clear that he terrified not only the lefts and Stalinists, but also the revisionists.

'Joe Gormley, right-wing leader of the miners, speaks of choice being collaboration with the Tories or a General Strike, deliberately choosing two extremes to divert attention from the necessity to build on the present foundations, which means organizing and leading to victory the present forces fighting the government.'

It is not Gormley who is trying to 'divert attention.' As a notorious right-winger his intentions are clear. The real point is that it is the revisionists who are seeking desperately, and in the most cowardly manner, to 'divert attention' from the real implications of the present crisis.

Perhaps they would care to tell us that the alternatives are: it is either capitulation and the loss of all working-class rights or the mobilization of the working class to defeat this government and replace it with a Labour government pledged to socialist policies. Of course, the Labour leaders have no intention of carrying out such a policy. But to demand and fight that they do is an absolutely necessary policy in order both to expose the reformists and centrists, while at the same time uniting the working class

in struggle around a revolutionary programme (which can only be implemented by the revolutionary party).

It is against such a policy that the IS group has always fought so consistently and determinedly. For centrism leads to the defeat of the working class at the hands of capitalism, as we saw so tragically with the POUM in Spain in the 1930s.

'Socialist Worker's' editorial appeal for 'the politics of real socialism' is the language of centrists seeking to cover up the crudest forms of syndicalism and their preparations to collaborate with the fake 'left' and Stalinist bureaucracy against the working class. This is the only meaning that can be attached to phrases such as 'the responsibility falls on the rank and file to organize now and not wait for the TUC', and, earlier, 'It means building solidly-based local committees that cut across sectional boundaries and create a real unity of purpose'.

Here speak loud and clear the politics of centrism, which always aim at giving the right wing a cover for their betrayals.

The IS concentration on rank-and-file is designed to split the working class from its responsibility to fight the reformist leadership, under conditions where no political lessons can be learned.

Marxists have never been opposed to ad hoc rank-and-file organizations. But the aim of such bodies for them, unlike the centrists, has always been to unite and mobilize the working class to raise the fight against reformism inside, in particular, the trade unions. Such a struggle is now imperative. It must be waged inside every body within the working class movement, both nationally and locally. The labour and trade union leaders must either be made to fight or cleared out of the way for those who will.

This method of struggle is the key to the raising of consciousness in the working class, because it maintains the essential unity between the militants and the broad masses.

In deliberately avoiding such a fight the IS only repeat the betrayals of 'Third Period' Stalinism, which after 1929 falsely denounced the social-democrats as 'social-fascists', and prepared the way for the most catastrophic defeats of the working class at the hands of Hitler fascism.

But the state capitalists are not alone in their hostility to everything for which Trotskyism has fought. Standing shoulder to shoulder with them is the International Marxist Group. This is the descendant of the group which reneged on Trotskyism in 1953 on the grounds that Stalinism was no longer a counter-revolutionary force and could be transformed into a revolutionary instrument for the taking of power.

The logic of such politics is clear from the latest issue of 'Red Mole', organ of the IMG. Like their fellow revisionists, the state capitalists, they carry a front-page article, under the headline 'Organize for a General Strike', which

consciously avoids the question of what would follow from such a strike. They deliberately avoid any call for the replacement of the present government with a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

Here they merely echo the line of the Stalinist 'Morning Star'. But it is on the inside pages of the group's paper that this centrist rump is unashamedly exposed as an abject stooge for Stalinism.

In a centre-page spread headed 'Pay Fight: Paul Smith assesses the Liaison Committee Conference', the IMG analyses the implications of the conference which the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions have called for March 31.

Now as every conscious worker knows the Liaison Committee is the Stalinist body which has fought at every stage against the Tory government and its pernicious anti-union legislation. It is only in a struggle against such treachery that the All Trades Unions Alliance has established itself as the industrial arm of the Socialist Labour League. The Liaison Committee is a creation of Stalinism and has absolutely no independence from it.

Yet we find that these renegades from Trotskyism not only fail to mention the ATUA at any point—but actually do all in their power to boost the Stalinists. 'The LCDTU', they say, 'is really the only national rank-and-file organization in the working class'.

Speaking of an earlier Stalinist conference they write: 'At the height of its influence the LCDTU was capable of holding a conference in London attended by over 2,000 workers. . . . If there was ever a meeting of the rank-and-file leadership of the British working class in one room, that was it. The potential strength of such a conference is possible to show. Similar conferences, even on an industry basis, of the shop stewards' movement of the old Amalgamated Society of Engineers organized massive solidarity strike waves which sent the government reeling during the First World War.'

Here the IMG manages to combine gross historical distortion with craven tail-ending of Stalinism.

First it is a bare-faced lie of Smith to say that the Liaison Committee attracted an audience of over 2,000. At the height of its influence, as Smith well knows, 1,700 attended the November 14, 1970, conference at the Friends' Meeting House. The following April at Croydon attendance had slumped to 400 because the Liaison Committee had by this time sold out. Naturally Smith fails to tell his readers that the last ATUA conference, held in Birmingham last October, saw an audience of well over 2,200, representing every major industry.

And, secondly, permit us to point out to these ill-read revisionists, that the shop stewards' movement did not send the government 'reeling' during the First World War. The government survived precisely because of the syndicalist limitations of the shop stewards' leadership, limitations within which every re-

visionist and Stalinist wishes to see today's struggle confined and thereby defeated.

Thirdly, to liken the shop stewards' movement in the 1914-1918 period to the Stalinist Liaison Committee is the foulest slander against that movement of 60 years ago. Despite its many serious limitations, the shop stewards' movement did represent some of the best elements in the British working class, many of whom, under the pressure of events, were moving in the direction of Marxism. It was from this layer that the British Communist Party recruited some of its best forces.

The Liaison Committee represents a Communist Party which from the mid-1920s onwards, along with the Communist International, completely abandoned Marxism. The LCDTU represents a movement with nearly 50 years of unbroken betrayals behind it. It is exactly in line with the degeneration of Pabloism that it should seek to defend such a thoroughly bankrupt and discredited movement.

Any 'criticisms' which Smith has of the Stalinists are quite secondary and beside the point. Indeed in a completely dishonest manner he ascribes policies to the Liaison Committee, for which they never fought, in an implied attempt to attack the SLL.

'Having lined up Scanlon . . . the Communist Party saw little further point in national industrial initiatives. It was pressing home the advantages it had won in the bureaucracy through the Labour Party conference and with the slogan "Labour to Power with Socialist Policies".'

Here, indeed, is a gross lie. Everyone knows, including the Pabloites, that the Stalinists at no point fought for such a policy. The whole purpose of the fraudulent Stalinist call to 'Kill the Bill' was to divert attention from this very question.

Along with this deliberate whitewash of Stalinism goes a conscious attempt to ensure that the working class will never have the opportunity to settle its long-overdue accounts with the trade union and labour leaders, of all stripes. After saying that 'every militant is in favour of the recall of the TUC' Smith proceeds to tell his readers: 'But to see this as the decisive task is in fact to turn the struggle of the rank and file back into the trade union leadership.'

In other words, whatever 'differences' the Pabloites and the IS have, these gentlemen are absolutely agreed that the struggle must be diverted away from the organizations of the working class into blind rank and filism.

The utter futility of such policies, as well as their counter-revolutionary purpose, is shown at the very end of Smith's article when he points to the example of London USD&AW members 'to mount a campaign, together with local trade unionists, to suppress price rises by refusing to sell at higher prices. This,' he says, 'shows a practical means of tackling the rising cost of living of the great mass of the population, not just the industrial workers.'

Here is reformism and syndicalism gone mad. It is in struggle against such methods of thinking, and the practice which it reflects, that the Socialist Labour League has the great task of transforming itself into a revolutionary party to lead the working class to power.

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

Two items from recent issues of the 'Morning Star' make interesting reading for those following the ebb and flow of relations between the Wilson leadership of the Labour Party and the Gollan leadership of the Communist Party.

Morning Star, January 5, 1973.

Dundee: Why Communists won't contest

The Communist Party will not be contesting the Dundee East parliamentary by-election, which is expected to take place early next month.

In a Press statement issued yesterday, the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party said: 'In consultation with our prospective candidate, Mr Jack Ashton, and the Dundee constituency committee, we have reviewed the position in the by-election.

'Giving consideration to all circumstances, including that the selection of the Labour candidate was the result of the unity of the left forces; the number of candidates now expected to contest; and the need decisively to defeat the Tory candidate, we have decided to withdraw our candidate.

This decision is taken not only to facilitate the defeat of the Tory candidate, but to contribute to a united campaign to secure the downfall of the Tory government.

With the withdrawal of our candidate we now call on all our members and all the left progressive forces in Dundee, to unite in mobilizing every support to win the election of George Machin, the Labour candidate.'

Morning Star, February 13, 1973.

Labour to lift Friendship Societies ban? by Peter Zinkin

A major step toward lifting bans on friendship societies with socialist countries was taken by the Labour Party executive's Organization Committee yesterday.

Supporting the move, Mr Ron Hayward, general secretary, said the proscription was obsolete and becoming ridiculous.

Mr Reg Underhill, national agent, was instructed to write to each of the societies for information about the present position, partly to ensure that all on the proscribed list were still in existence.

The moral of the two stories is simple: You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

Students at the New University of Ulster in Coleraine, County Londonderry, have launched a campaign to secure the release of one of their colleagues who has been jailed for three years.

Peter Cosgrove, a second-year student, was jailed under the Special Powers Act.

The savagery of the sentence—in the worst prisons in the British Isles—has had a sobering effect on the student body.

Roger Curry, the Students' Council president, has compiled a memorandum on Cosgrove's arrest and imprisonment. In it he calls for a campaign 'by all people who value justice'.

He concludes his appeal by saying: 'I would ask you to do everything in your power and to use your good offices to lobby support not only for this specific case but against such legislation.'

His appeal raises not the slightest mention of the nature of Tory rule in Northern Ireland. Where does Curry suppose the Special Powers Act came from? Who decided to activate it? What forces are implementing the Act?

While utterly condemning the liberal campaign by Curry and the Students' Council, we produce sections of the memorandum on the Cosgrove case. It is a warning to students throughout Britain that under Tory law there is no such thing as 'justice'.

In December 1971 Peter, whose home is in Cookstown, was found to have in his wallet a list of car registration numbers together with descriptions of vehicles of the right references related to the private cars of policemen stationed in Coleraine.

At no point did Peter deny compiling the list. In his defence Peter alleged that over a period of time he had been subjected to a measure of police harassment. On one occasion in Cookstown he had been searched while walking home in the dark by police and on another his house had been raided. He had been further worried on returning to Coleraine by the fact that as he walked to the University in the mornings he felt that he was being followed by cars.

It was at this stage he decided to note the numbers and descriptions of the vehicles. In the late summer of 1971, some months before being charged, Cosgrove consulted a local solicitor, Mr E. M. Doris, for advice on what he should do about this surveillance. Mr Doris gave sworn evidence to this effect in court.

When charged under the Special Powers Act of collecting and recording information of such a nature as was cal-

THREE YEARS JAIL FOR CAR SPOTTING



Above: Heath and the British Army in Ulster. Curry's appeal raises not the slightest mention of the nature of Tory rule in Northern Ireland. Where does Curry suppose the Special Powers Act came from?

culated to be useful to persons hostile to the maintenance of order there could be no other verdict than guilty as there is no onus whatsoever on the prosecution to prove any malicious intent or connection with an illegal organization.

Merely collecting or recording material which might be used in such a manner is an offence. Once convicted under this unjust law the minimum prison sentence which the Judge could impose was three years.

There are a number of other points of direct relevance to this case which highlight the injustice of the Special Powers Act and the system of mandatory minimum sentences.

At the time, in December

1971, when Peter was charged he was 19 years old. However, he was held on bail, without undue restrictions on his movements until the trial in January, 1973. This is perhaps some measure of the dangerous nature of his character.

However this delay by the prosecution had several far-reaching and iniquitous results to his welfare. By holding the case longer than six months it meant that the charge could not be amended and that a summary trial was no longer possible.

In other words he had to face a judge and jury with a minimum sentence of three years rather than a magistrates court with the sentence largely at the discretion of the magistrate or judge.

Both these are plainly against the defendant's interests. In addition he suffered an extra year of tension. In choosing the jury, it is normal practice for both sides to challenge the jurors. However, it is interesting to note that the Crown successfully opposed all the Catholic members of the Jury with the result that it was a totally Protestant body.

A closer investigation of the case reveals other facts which contravene normally accepted standards of justice. At the time of military activities in respect of this case the army had in fact no legal powers to do so. This has since been rectified by retrospective legislation—normally condemned in democratic societies.

TORIES TAKE AN INTEREST IN EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

A Tory MP has won a second reading for his Employment Agencies Bill. He told the House of Commons last week the Bill was necessary 'for the protection of the public.'

Mr Kenneth Lewis, the Tory member of Rutland and Stamford, said that if his legislation was passed, it would ensure that employment agencies were 'properly conducted'.

He suggested a registration fee of £100 and a further £50 licence fee every year and penalties for breaches of regulations ranging from £100 and £400.

Mr Dudley Smith, the under-Secretary at the Department of Employment, welcomed and supported the Bill.

The sudden Tory interest in employment agencies is curious. In times of heavy unemployment these privately-owned groups, with their dramatic advertising campaigns, have become extremely profitable.

In the long term the Tories would like these private groups to take over the running of sections of the present labour exchanges.

The function of private employment agencies in Britain is explained in a letter from a Workers Press reader who works for such an outfit:

'Labour as a commodity under capitalism has probably reached its most intense manifestation with the temporary employment agencies business—the "temps".'

'The workers, hired ad lib, unprotected by union organization, are supplied on demand to companies requiring tem-

porary labour at peak periods or who are unable to recruit permanent labour due to poor conditions or low wages.

'The amount paid by the company to the agency is £35 to £40 a week, yet the agency pays the workers only £18 to £22 a week. Therefore the agencies are pocketing almost half the wages.

'The main danger of such an unorganized work force is its potential threat to the standards and bargaining strength of permanent, unionized workers.

'This can be clearly seen in the attitude of many big companies: they would prefer to pay "temps" £10 or even £15 more a week for outside staff, rather than increase the wages of their permanent office staff.'

In this sense, the Tory Bill is not 'to protect the public' (when have the Tories ever been interested in that?) but to strengthen these agencies in the fight against organized labour.

POLITICAL PROFILES

By LEON TROTSKY
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WHEN GASMEN FOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT IN 1872

The third of four articles by Bernard Franks on past and present struggles of the gasworkers.

The gas industry is a lot older than most people think. So is the tradition of industrial and political action by gasworkers to defend their rights and conditions.

The first commercial gas firm, the Chartered Gas, Light and Coke Company was founded in 1812 in London, though hundreds of gas plants had already been built before this to provide lighting for individual factories. By 1830 there were over 200 private gas companies in Britain.

The work was tremendously hard and often dangerous. Coal had to be manhandled from barge to wharf, by cart to gas station yard, from yard to retort house and into the retort by shovel and wheel-

barrow. The retorts could be temperamental, often shooting out long tongues of flame and many of the men were badly burned.

Later the scoop was introduced for charging the retorts. This was a 9ft U-shaped shovel with a T-shaped handle. It was loaded by three men, two of whom then supported it on either side using an iron bar called a 'horse' while the third used the handle to ram the scoop into the furnace and turn it over.

In 1833 the gasworkers were among the first to join Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. In 1834 London gas stokers combined to force up wages and began a strike which plunged Westminster into darkness.

'A very extensive union was formed,' according to

'The Times' of March 11, 1834.

The men at different London companies resolved to join in strike action simultaneously, but delayed to let discussions take place. In the meantime the employers paid for scab labour to be brought from all over Britain, then began a campaign of sacking union members.

BLACKLEGS AND SACKINGS

Thirty-five men were dismissed from the Imperial Company Works where 'a strong body of police were assembled to the station house in Phoenix Street, Somerstown, to repress any tumult that might occur'.

At the Chartered's works in east London, men struck

successfully for the reinstatement of a sacked man, but soon after the company was able to dismiss 156 stokers for union activity.

Mass importation of blacklegs and systematic sacking of trade unionists enabled the ruthless suppression of this early attempt to organize.

Today's actions against the Tories being taken by gasworkers have a historic significance as they occur almost exactly 100 years after other important political struggles by the gas stokers.

In 1872 events occurred in the London gas companies which were to lead to thousands of workers from every industry being directly involved in action against the Liberal and the Tory governments of the day. In September of that year a new gasworkers' union was formed,

Above: An early horizontal retort house where 'town gas' was manufactured. Conditions were very dangerous and the work stoking the retorts, very hard.

the amalgamated Society of Gasmen.

Great improvements in pay and almost an end to Sunday working were won by strikes and threats of strikes against the companies which operated under local monopolies granted by parliament. Up to this time the gas workers, fire-rakers, coal wheelers, firemen and scoopers had been working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week.

Employers quickly decided that the new union must be smashed in line with the general political and legal onslaught on trade unions and strikers which was being launched at that time.

At the end of November 1872 men at the Imperial Gas Company's Fulham station struck against the dismissal of a union man, for 'breach of duty' and his replacement with a non-unionist.

Blacklegs were brought in, so pickets were sent to St Pancras gas station where they persuaded the men there to stop work. Soon other gasworks were out in sympathy.

Hundreds of workers attended a meeting of delegates at the Bell and Bull pub in Finsbury on December 2.

The chairman said that an organized attempt was being made by the companies to break the union. He added: 'We must now be prepared to meet force with force.'

A list of gas stations where men were now out included Beckton 500, Bow 200, Hackney 300, Fulham 240, Battle Bridge 68, Kensal Green 240, and Greenwich 70.

By 6 p.m. that day a total of 2,408 gasworkers were out on strike. The chairman commented that the managers were making great efforts to get hands '... but many, not knowing the stokers' duties, had been sadly burned'.

By December 4, 1872, many areas of London were in darkness. The Press vilified the strikers for 'imperilling the safety of the Metropolis'.

It was said that the enforced darkness was stopping business, and, because it gave cover to thieves, was also a direct threat to life and property. The claim was also made that there were professional agitators at work. Certainly, there were likely to be workers involved well experienced in working-class politics. East London, north and south of the Thames, had been a stronghold of both the Chartist movement and of local branches of the First International during preceding years.

Events took a new turn when the management of the Chartered's Beckton works asked for summonses to be issued against 500 strikers for illegal breach of contract and against six leaders for conspiracy.

The breach of contract charge was a common one, coming under the Master and Servant Act of 1867. Previously anyone could be charged and sent to prison for leaving or neglecting work; 8,000 men and women and children were so convicted in 1856.

The Act was modified in 1867, but still allowed imprisonment for 'aggravated misconduct', which meant that it was still of use as the employers' main weapon against strikes.

CONSPIRACY CHARGE

Written contracts did not have to exist for the law to apply. It was sufficient that a worker was accepting wages from an employer for a charge to stick.

In 1872 there were 17,100 prosecutions and 10,400 convictions under this law.

The conspiracy charge against the men's leaders was for 'agreeing together to coerce their employers to restore into their service a certain man named Dilley, who for good and sufficient reasons had been dismissed'.

Thomas Dilley (23), 'had refused to work with non-union men. He had been sacked then reinstated when the strike began'.

However, the workers decided they would not return while Fulham was still out.

The same day that the summonses were taken out, December 4, 3,000 gasmen and other workers marched with bands and banners from Bow Common to Trafalgar Square for a meeting and returned by way of the Strand and Fleet Street.

The next day a new and sin-

ister development occurred when it was revealed that the police were not only protecting blacklegs, but were under official orders to recruit them.

'The Times' of December 5 stated: 'The police throughout the metropolis have received orders from Scotland Yard to send down labourers wherever they can obtain them.'

In the same issue of the paper, the directors of the Chartered Company expressed their 'warmest thanks' to the Press 'for their ready and valuable support' and to the police 'for their prompt and hearty personal co-operation'.

They explained that for 'the protection of the interests of shareholders' it was '... incumbent to repress in the most determined manner, and at any cost, an attempt on the part of the men to dictate conditions of employment which are likely to become subversive of all discipline and to lead most surely to the speedy renewal of a struggle from the results of which the public have a clear right to demand to be protected'.

The police intervention was not the first activity of its kind that year.

In May, soldiers from Aldershot had been used to help get in the harvest and break a strike of 16 farmworkers at Wootton, Oxfordshire. This action had raised a storm throughout the labour movement which was renewed with this latest event.

SIX WEEK'S HARD LABOUR

The stokers were most certainly prepared to defend their strike. At the north Woolwich station on December 5, 30 to 40 pickets intercepted two wagon-loads of straw being taken to Beckton to be used as bedding for blacklegs who were living on the premises. The pickets threatened to burn the wagons, so the drivers turned back.

This activity contrasted with that of leaders of other unions who were not anxious to upset the employers, even advising the gasworkers not to picket the gas company's premises. Wanting to preserve their respectability, they urged a return to work and arbitration.

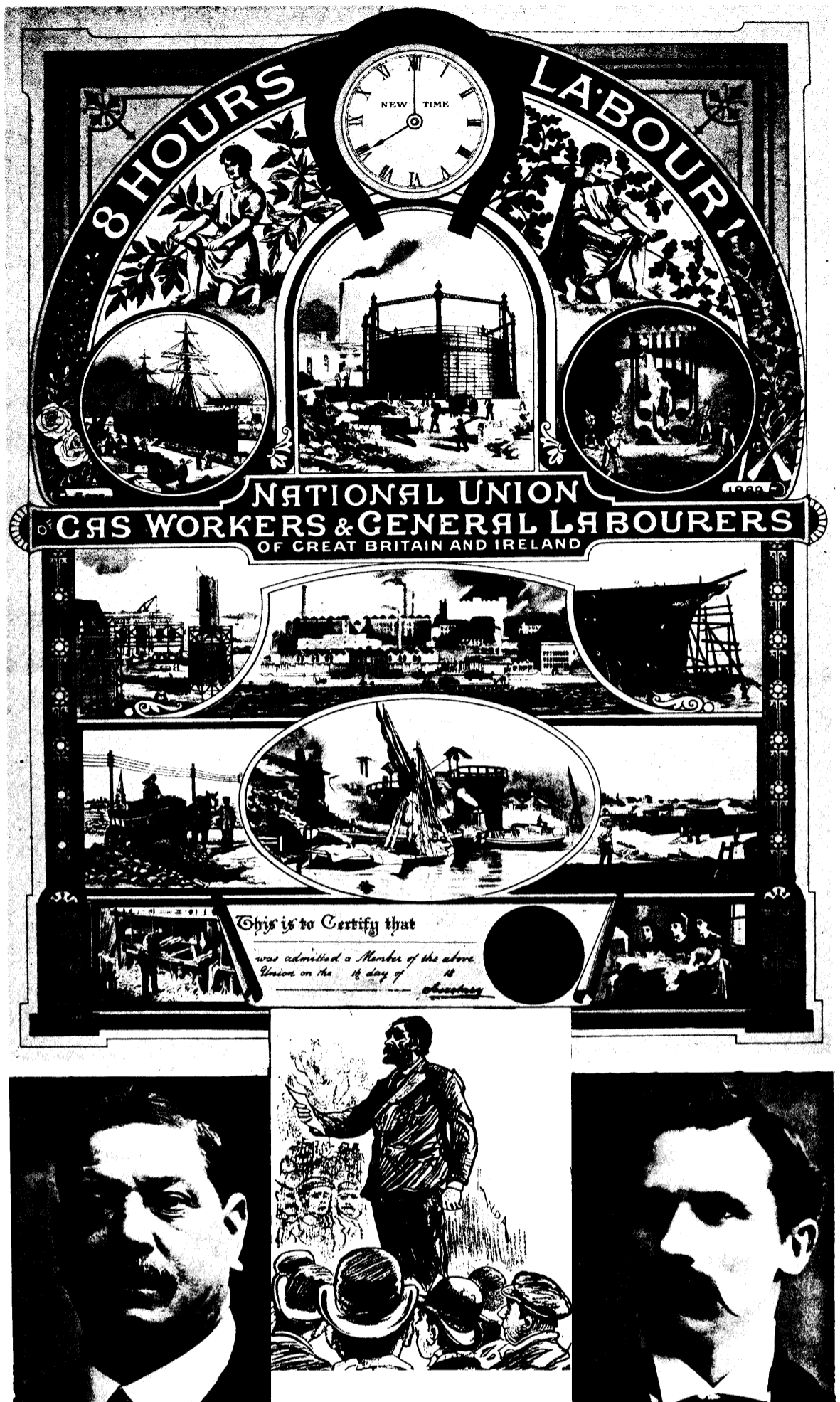
During the following week 17 men were sent to prison for six weeks' hard labour under the Master and Servant Act for 'aggravated misconduct in absenting themselves from the service of the Chartered Company'.

Four workers from the Commercial Gas Company at Stepney were given six weeks' imprisonment for 'wilful and malicious breach of contract'.

However, when the remaining strikers were told that a new steam stoker would be brought in—nicknamed 'the iron man'—they replied that they would say to him: 'Are you going to join our Society? If you do not, we are not going to work with you.'

On December 19, five gas stokers, John Bunn, George Ray, Robert Wilson, Edmond Jones and Thomas Dilley were put on trial 'for conspiring to intimidate and force certain servants of the company to depart from their hiring'. Also for conspiring by threats and menaces to exhort the superintendent of the company to reinstate Dilley 'in restraint of trade and the freedom of action'.

The jury found the five guilty, but added a strong recommendation to leniency. To the contrary, the presiding judge, Mr Justice Brett, announced: '... the time has come when a serious punishment and not a nominal or a light one must be inflicted'. According to Brett, the gasworkers' combination involved a 'molestation' of the masters. Under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871, pickets especially were liable to be



Will Thorne, John Burns and Tom Mann, who, in 1889, jointly founded the Gasworkers' and General Workers' Union. Above: The Union banner.

prosecuted for 'molestation'. However, the maximum sentence for this was three months' hard labour.

Combined with the conspiracy laws a longer sentence could be passed. Brett sentenced all five to a year's jail.

In fact, the only conspiracy that had been proved was that of the employers who had joined together to break the union, as confirmed by the similar events at Beckton and Fulham.

A gas stokers' defence committee was formed. Mass meetings followed up and down the country against the imprisonments and for the repeal of the laws which had brought them about. In London, throughout January, packed meetings organized by the London Trades Council were held at Lambeth Baths, Exeter Hall, Shoreditch Town Hall and on Clerkenwell Green.

Hundreds more packed a Birmingham meeting in the middle of the month and another was held at Nottingham.

By this time the six weeks' hard labour men were being released, 11 on January 23, 1873, and five more the next day. The continued build-up of activity and the hostility of

the labour movement forced the government into shortening the sentences of the men on the conspiracy charge to four months.

The five were released from Maidstone prison at 9 a.m. on April 15, 1873, to be met by a huge demonstration organized by the London and Maidstone Trades Councils, with full bands and banners.

A victory had been won, but the agitation did not abate. A meeting of delegates from 100 trade societies called a new demonstration for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, to be held in June.

They demanded also the removal of certain clauses in the Master and Servant Act, and an end to the use of the conspiracy charge against strikers.

On Whit Monday, June 2, 1873, a massive demonstration of workers from all trades marched from the Thames Embankment to Hyde Park behind the Farriers' banner, inscribed

'OUR REPLY TO (IN)JUSTICE BRETT'

The crowd of 100,000 gathered round six platforms to listen to the speakers.

The gas union did not survive this period, but the agita-

tion contributed enormously to the sweeping away of the 1871 Act and the ending of the Master and Servant powers in 1875. However, the conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of that year also brought new restrictions on strikes by gas and water workers.

UNION FOUNDED

In 1889 the Gasworkers' and General Workers' Union was formed by Will Thorne, Tom Mann and John Burns, a union which was to play a decisive part in the new political struggles which led to the founding of the Labour Party in 1906.

These events were dealt with extensively in an article published recently in Workers Press—the 'The Heritage of the Gas Workers' by Peter Jeffries (February 7, 1973).

This union, forerunner of the G&MWU, was founded and built with the aid of the Marxists, including Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, and was the one of which Frederick Engels wrote that the members '... choose only openly declared socialists as their leaders'.

CONTINUED TOMORROW



PREPARING FOR THE STRUGGLES AHEAD

Only two weeks to the Empire Pool, Wembley. On Sunday, March 11, we take the Pool with our Pageant of working-class history called 'The Road to Workers' Power'. Before an audience of 10,000 trade unionists, their wives and youth from all over Britain we will re-enact episodes in the struggle of the British working class to gain its basic democratic rights.

Pageant production teams are working in four centres around the country—at Middleton in Lancashire, Jarrow and South Shields on Tyneside, Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales and Covent Garden in London. Under the direction of top-class professional directors we have assembled a group of players to recreate this history. These are not highly-paid actors who are taking the parts. Many of them have never been near the stage or in front of an audience in their lives. They are ordinary men and women from the workers' movement who have come forward to recreate their history, the history of the working class.

The Socialist Labour League has more experience than any other movement in the production of material of this type.

Two years ago at the Alexandra Palace we staged '200 Years of Labour History', and during the

national Right-to-Work marches a year ago we presented 'The English Revolution', based on the Cromwellian revolution of 1640. 'The Road to Workers' Power' is our biggest project yet. It is being prepared in a period when the Tory government is engaged in the wholesale legal destruction of workers' rights. Even as the rehearsals are in progress the Tories' Phase Two legislation is being railroaded through Parliament. This Bill abolishes the right to freely negotiate wages and imposes state control over salaries.

The basic democratic rights of the working class were won in struggle and they can only be defended in struggle. Today that struggle means forcing the Tory government out of office. In its place must be elected a Labour government pledged by the mass action of the working class to repeal all anti-union and anti-working class legislation. This will mean the abolition of the 'fair rents' Act, the Industrial Relations Act and the Counter-Inflation Act, plus the withdrawal from the capitalist conspiracy in the Common Market.

The staging of the Pageant, our biggest-ever anti-Tory rally, will mark a decisive stage in the transformation of the Socialist Labour League into a revolutionary party.



Top left: Young workers in the Tyneside pageant group



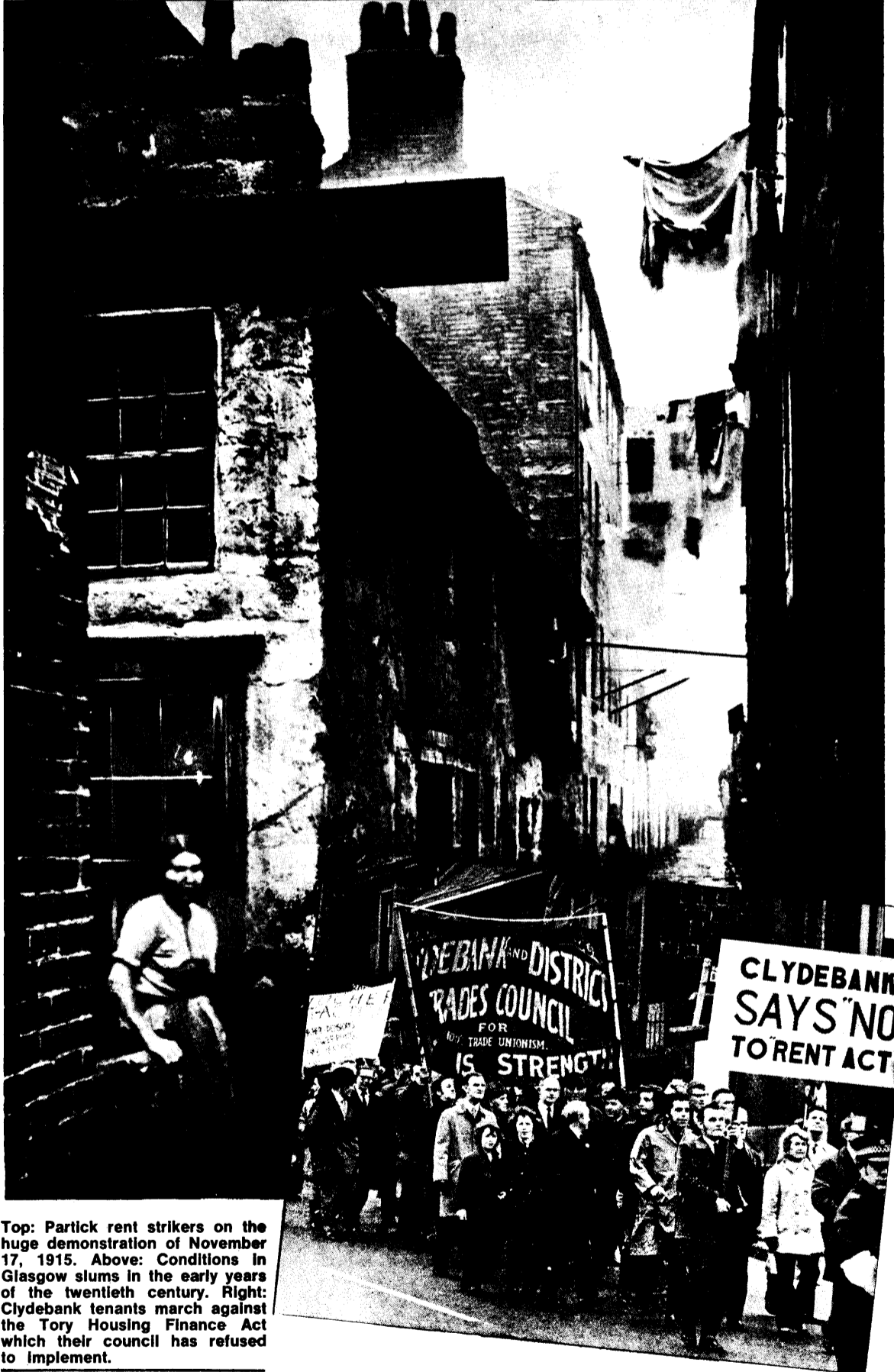


Top left: Young workers in the Tyneside pageant group listen to directions. Top right: Rehearsal of a scene from the Chartist history at Middleton. Above left: Director Steve Clark discusses a scene with workers in the Tyneside contingent. Above right: Director Corin Redgrave prepares a sketch with the Middleton team



Tyneside pageant group listen to directions. Top right: Rehearsal of a scene from the Chartists history at Middleton. Above left: Director Steve Clark discusses a scene with workers in the Tyneside contingent. Above right: Director Corin Redgrave prepares a sketch with the Middleton team

DAIRY OF THE CLYDEBANK RENTS FIGHT



Top: Partick rent strikers on the huge demonstration of November 17, 1915. Above: Conditions in Glasgow slums in the early years of the twentieth century. Right: Clydebank tenants march against the Tory Housing Finance Act which their council has refused to implement.

There are still workers alive in Clydebank today who remember the enormous struggle put up against rent increases and the Liberal-Tory coalition government during World War I.

Today their children who live in council property are still spared the £1 increases ordered by the Tories. And for refusing to bow to the

government, the town council has been fined £5,000.

In the spring of 1915, landlords, taking advantage of war-time conditions, began demanding higher rents and threatened the tenants with evictions.

As the struggle in Clydebank reaches a new stage, a Workers Press correspondent has reconstructed in narrative form the momentous events of 1915 as the revolt developed against rent increases.

April 12, 1915:

The National Relief Fund notifies branches throughout the country that they must stop the payment of rents of families whose husbands are in the army. The grant is to cease with the payment of the March rent.

April 13, 1915:

Eviction notices are handed to tenants in the Yoker district. Workers at the Harland and Wolff shipbuilding and engineering firm pass a motion of protest and begin taking collections to aid the families.

The 'Glasgow Herald' reports that recruitment into the army and navy to date was 5,000 in the Govan area alone.

June 6, 1915:

Mass meeting organized by the Labour Party House Committee on Glasgow Green. Preceded by processions from Bridgeton Cross and from Govan and other parts of Glasgow. Speakers are Councillors Wheatley, Dollan, Taylor, Hamilton and Brown. A resolution is passed opposing rent increases during the war.

June 7, 1915:

The 'Herald' reports that an Independent Labour Party meeting has passed a motion against conscription.

August 27, 1915:

Over 120 tenants in South Govan go on rent strike and refuse to pay the increases notified from April 23, putting rents up from £1 7s 1d to £1 8s 7d a month from May 28.

Tenants are now sued for 4s 6d each. A test case involves a Mr. John Thom of 14, Steven Drive, Govan. It is dismissed. Another case is brought against Mrs Stewart, mother of nine, whose husband is in the army. It is also thrown out.

Early September:

A factor visits houses in the Partick area to collect the additional rents. 'He was pelted with bags of peasemeal and chased from one of the streets by a number of women, who upbraided him vociferously,' say reports.

September 14, 1915:

By now questions have been asked in the House of Commons. Over 1,000 tenants are refusing to pay increases ranging from £1 to £3 per annum. Factors have issued summonses leading to evictions which will take effect on September 28. Prime Minister Asquith says he is watching

the matter 'very carefully.'

October 7, 1915:

Over 1,000 women from six districts demonstrate and march into St. Enoch's Square in the centre of Glasgow. Deputations also sent from 14 other districts. Partick tenants are summonsed in the small debts court and a deputation is sent to the Corporation.

A local steel factory, Beardmore's, doing munitions work, passes a resolution saying landlords are profiteering from the influx of munitions workers into the district.

October 16, 1915:

An eviction case is pending against munitions worker John Horsburgh of Govan. And it is now confirmed that a government inquiry is to be set up into the rents question. The same Saturday, 2,000 assemble in Partick, swelled by many factory workers. Two Labour councillors address the meeting.

October 22, 1915:

Four councillors have joined the rent strike, says the 'Herald.' They are Councillors Denny, Taylor, Kerr and South. Some 1,500 tenants in Rutherglen now refusing to pay the increases. Mass meeting the area.

October 29, 1915:

Reports of the first attempted eviction in Merryland Street, Govan. The householder—a widow—gets support from neighbours and supporters who attack Sheriff's officer with flour and whitening when he arrives. One woman is arrested and quickly released. The officer flees the scene. The movement is now spreading to Dundee, Lanarkshire and to Hamilton.

November 14, 1915:

A big demonstration in Partick. The main speakers are Mrs Crawford and Mrs Ferguson of the Women's Housing Association. 'It is essentially a women's fight,' she says. All law that is just and fair demands respect. That did not apply to laws which allow rent increases at that time.

November 17, 1915:

Test cases are to be heard in the courts. And the movement reaches a high point. Demonstrators march from different parts of Glasgow to the city centre. The Govan march passes the school where John McLean, popular socialist orator and opponent of the

war, is teaching. He is asked to lead the march. McLean had been sacked the day before by the Corporation for his outspoken opposition to the imperialist war. Workers at Harland and Wolff's, Stephens and Fairfield shipyards strike. It is estimated that some 10,000 workers and tenants are assembling.

A large number enter the court and delay the sitting. The Sheriff agrees to hear the case put by deputations from the Dalmuir shipyard, Parkhead Forge, Weirs, Cathcart

and a number of other engineering plants. After a recess, the Sheriff returns to the court and the cases are dropped on the grounds that government legislation is pending.

The Sheriff was probably in telephone conversation with the government while in his chambers. From the court the marchers want to demonstrate outside the recruiting offices in West Nile Street, but are persuaded to go home.

November 25, 1915:

While demonstrations and meetings continue the govern-

ment is obliged to bring in a Bill fixing rents at current levels. The 'Herald' says the government has been 'intimidated'.

For the next few weeks the demonstrations gather pace and many court hearings are interrupted.

December 10, 1915:

The final provisions of the government Rents Bill are now known. Rents under £35 a year in London, £30 in Scotland and £26 elsewhere are to be frozen. Some security of tenure is also given.

WORKERS NOTEBOOK

THREE CONTRIBUTORS

What have Hugh Scanlon, 'left' president of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, and Ian Mikardo 'Tribune'-ite MP and president of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, got in common with Jonathan Guinness, chairman of the Monday Club?

Well, it seems that they are all well disposed towards the private bankers Morris Wigram Rosenthal Ltd. At least they are not unfriendly towards them because they have all contributed to the bankers' expensively-printed newsletter on the subject of the unions and the government.

And in a short foreword to their pieces, Morris Wigram and, presumably, Rosenthal are suitably grateful to their 'distinguished contributors'.

Quite what Messrs Scanlon and Mikardo hoped to achieve by writing in the newsletter is difficult to fathom, while Guinness's interest in using this platform is more obvious.

Yet surely it must have occurred to the union men that their brains were simply being picked in order to help the newsletter's well-heeled readership prosecute the class struggle against their members better?

Scanlon's main purpose in writing his piece seems to have been to assure his audience that there is no danger of the unions seeking to displace the Tory government.

'It is no part of trade union philosophy to try and usurp the government by industrial action,' he says. 'Through the different political parties, various groups of society will seek to wield their influence and, in the case of the trade unions, they do this through the labour movement.'

How nice, how cosy, for your average silk-shirted banker lounging in his average oak-panelled boardroom! But what about the government's attempts to usurp basic working-class rights with its state pay laws?

Scanlon even goes on to claim that the Tories, 'After a period of complete abrasiveness, and an apparent desire for endless confrontations with the trade unions', were at least showing some willingness to talk their future plans over with the unions.

Union co-operation in

'strengthening the economy ... can be won,' says Mikardo. But it can only be won 'on the basis of the right social and economic infrastructure.'

Nationalization of the banks, perhaps?

The burden of Guinness's contribution can be summed up in its title: 'The unions—a power to be harnessed.'

After throwing at the trade union movement the accusation that 'parts of it are prone to influence from the Communist Party which acts in the interests of a foreign dictatorship,' Guinness sets out a plan for virtually complete state control of the unions—particularly of their internal elections.

In an unsuccessful bid to sugar over his reactionary aims, he calls this, obscurely, 'genuine legitimation'.

Guinness concluded: 'The present situation, with the trade unions and their great power isolated from government and a prey to cliques, is not acceptable. Power belongs in the government process and nowhere else; let us get it put there.'

Below: Scanlon, Mikardo and Guinness.



MESSMER TELLS THE WORKERS—'YOU HAVE NO VOTE'

Round-up on the French Election

Pierre Messmer the Gaullist Prime Minister of France, has once again stressed that there could be no question of President Pompidou calling upon a left-wing Prime Minister to form a government.

Interviewed by Agence France-Presse, Messmer made it clear that the President would invite a Gaullist leader to form a minority government if the Union of the Left wins a majority in the National Assembly on March 11.

Cynically, Messmer said that if such a minority government were defeated in the chamber there would have to be a fresh vote to decide the 'disagreement which would arise between the two seats of power embodied by the President and by the assembly'.

The interview, published less than two weeks before the first round of the poll on March 4, is a restatement of the position already outlined by the President himself at his Press conference earlier this month.

The Gaullist position is a direct challenge to the French working class, which is certain to vote in its millions for the Socialist Party-Communist Party-Left Radical Party coalition.

Messmer and Pompidou are telling these workers in advance that their votes are worthless, that they cannot vote out the Bonapartist regime and that Gaullism is here to stay, regardless of the will of the majority of the electorate.

Messmer and Pompidou base their case on the 1958 constitution which was tailor-made for General Charles de Gaulle. The constitution gives the President of the Republic sweeping dictatorial powers which have, until now, largely been concealed behind a parliamentary façade.

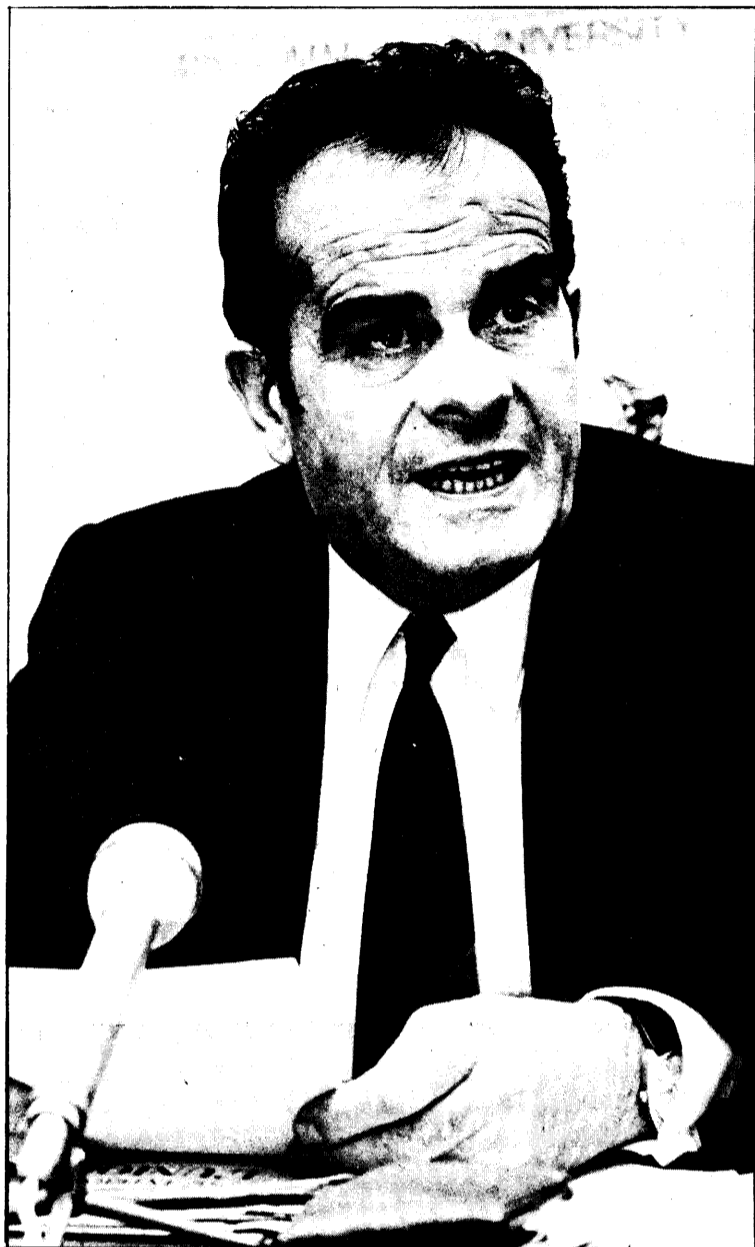
With the collapse of the international monetary system, and under the impact of President Nixon's hammer-blows against the Common Market, the French employers must now put aside the mask and prepare to inflict decisive defeats on the working class.

All the issues raised in May-June 1968 by the mass movement of workers against French capitalism remain unresolved. That is why Pompidou has thrown down the gauntlet and challenged the working class directly to battle.

He well knows that the outcome of his present policy can only be a major constitutional crisis driving directly towards civil war. His policy relies above all on the treachery of the French Communist Party, the largest workers' party.

This Party is peddling the crassest constitutional illusions and systematically disarming the workers as the election draws near. Replying to Messmer's outburst, for example, Party chief Georges Marchais assured an election meeting that the CP would make certain that democracy and legality were respected.

The Communist Party certainly did not want to destroy the constitution, but would simply erase those parts of it which tended to reinforce the



Mitterrand and Marchais (above) partners in the coalition of Socialist Party and Communist Party for the coming elections.

abuse of power and one-man rule, Marchais said.

The CP chief referred pointedly to that section of the constitution which states that 'national sovereignty belongs to the people who exercise it through their representatives' and to another passage which says 'no section of the people nor any individual can take the exercise (of national sovereignty) into his own hands'.

This kind of rhetoric is a most dangerous trap for the French workers. Marchais and company ignore the fact that Gaullism came to power by tearing up the old post-war constitution of the Fourth Republic and writing another to suit its own Bonapartist ends.

Gaullism is a regime of police batons backed by the army tanks. Such a government can-

not be overthrown at the ballot box, as Messmer and Pompidou have already made clear. The fact that the General Strike of May-June 1968 proved insufficient to overturn the regime clearly indicates the fraudulent character of the Union of the Left programme.

It was the Stalinists who deprived the French workers of victory against de Gaulle in 1968. They led the working class back to the plebiscitary ballot box and enabled de Gaulle to hand over power to his own nominee.

Those French revisionists who now urge the Stalinists to reform the constitution are simply bolstering the campaign of deception. The French working class must be alerted to the danger in front, not lulled into illusions of a constitutional road to socialism.

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COUNCILS OUTBID BY THE SPECULATORS

It is now being proved with regular monotony how difficult it is for local councils to get hold of land for building work.

Private developers and speculators are outbidding them when any piece of land comes on to the market.

One case in point was the recent auction in London of about 2.9 acres of land near Clapham North underground station.

This estate comprises 47 houses, six shops with flats above and six blocks with a total of 24 flats plus offices and storage.

Known as the Ramsbury Estate, the freehold was up for sale. By the time of the auction it was known that

several property companies were interested in the 'development potential' of the buildings.

With this in mind, Lambeth council went along to try and buy the estate. But their money ran out and a group called Investment Securities bought the plot for £700,000.

Councillor Ewan Gale, chairman of the housing committee was understandably galled at the defeat: 'Once again we have been outbid by a price far in excess of normal investment values. We were only able to bid up to a realistic market value for the property, which we put at £600,000,' he said afterwards.

The recent Paris fire in which a school burned 'like a box of matches', killing 23 people, has raised doubts about the materials and construction of a building.

'Fire Prevention' campaigns take the form of telling us to be careful with our matches and practise our fire drill, yet architects, builders and furnishers freely use highly-inflammable materials in houses and public buildings.

Worse still, the real fire risk is often concealed. Everybody knows that wood will burn. Much less is known about synthetic materials and if we are told that our walls are covered with 'fire-resistant' material or that our plastic foam chairs are 'self-extinguishing', we tend to feel reassured, especially if the material carries a British Standards Institute label to say it has passed certain tests.

In fact, according to reports from the Department of the Environment's Fire Research Station, the existing standard fire tests are inadequate and misleading.

'Self-extinguishing' plastic foam upholstery will not flare up if a lighted cigarette is dropped on it, but once a fire establishes itself the stuff will burn fiercely, giving off as much heat as the same weight of coal, and clouds of poisonous fumes. Under similar conditions polystyrene ceiling tiles melt into burning globules. Most synthetic materials will behave in a similar way.

The existing tests serve as a cover for the manufacturers who have to appear to set some safety standards. The method used in most tests is to hold a sample of the material horizontally and light one end. It is then withdrawn from the flame. If it goes out, it is 'self-extinguishable'.

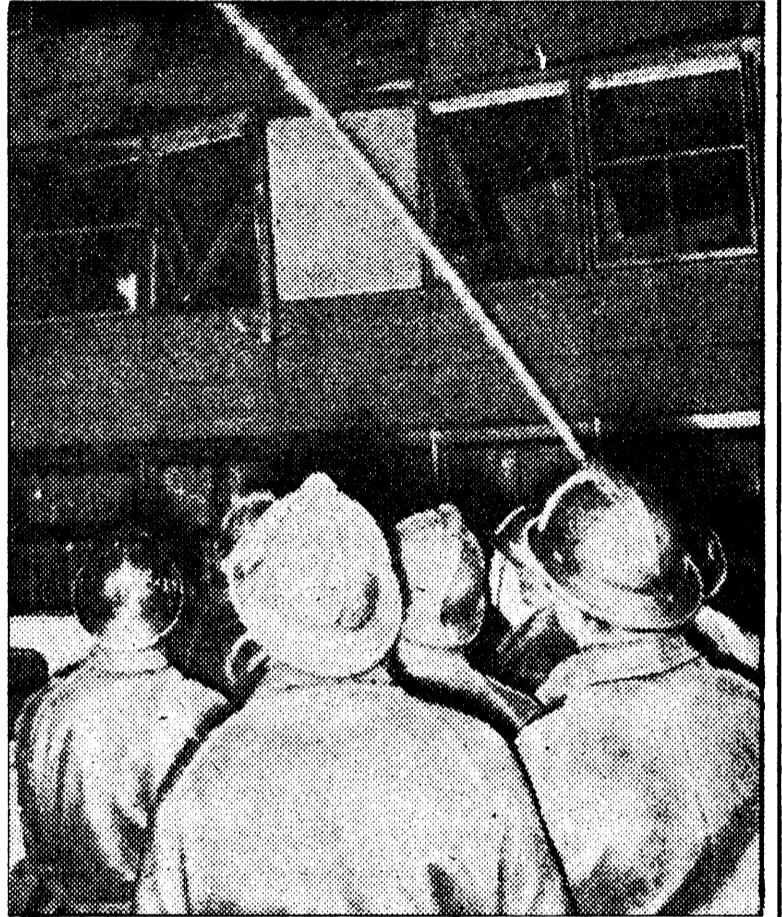
Even wood can be self-extinguishing under those conditions. Alternatively, the extent to which the fire spreads can be measured.

No attempt is made to reproduce real conditions, to assess the effect of ventilation, as in a corridor, to see whether poisonous fumes are given off or to see how the material responds to an established fire.

Experiments by the FRS, which try to reproduce real conditions, and reports by Fire Brigades, clearly show the danger of these tests which are only used to deceive customers.

The BSI claims that the tests are 'quality control' tests only

FIRE TESTS MADE TO DECEIVE CUSTOMERS



Above: Firemen tackle the fire in Paris which killed 23 people.

—so much for its service to 'the consumer'!

The manufacturers are, of course, opposed to any legal controls. A proposal to ban the use of inflammable materials in corridors and circulation areas, when the Building Regulations (1972) were being drawn up, was quickly thrown out.

At the same time, manufacturers are getting worried. In 1970 Alfred Moskovits, who supplied 'self-extinguishing' foam plastic furnishings to a French dance hall, was subsequently held partially responsible for the fire in which

146 people died because he had not warned the buyer of the dangers.

Businessmen are afraid that incidents like this will put people off buying plastics for construction and furnishings.

As an editorial in 'Modern Plastics International' said, with reference to this problem: 'To be able to predict real fire risk is a very complex problem requiring an expensive research effort. Is it worth it? We think the future of plastics in buildings hangs in the balance.'

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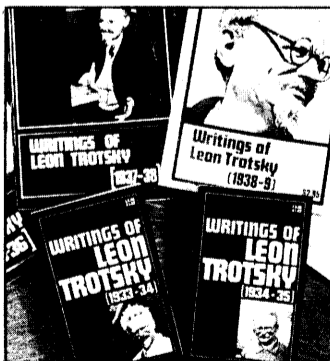
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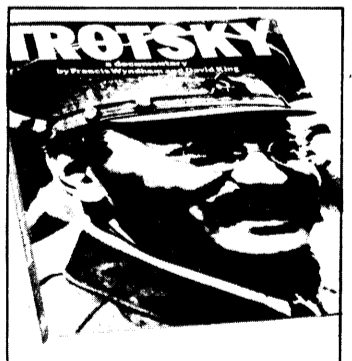
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Building workers fight 'the lump'... and the Tories

BY PHILIP WADE

BUILDING workers throughout Britain are fighting back against the most serious attempt ever made to undermine the basis of trade unionism in the industry.

The Tories have set the scene with the attacks on the basic rights of all trade unionists, making it a criminal offence to strike for higher wages, taking the road to dictatorship and the corporate state.

And since the end of last year's massive and determined strike by builders for the national claim—betrayed by the union leaders after 12 weeks—the employers in this industry have hit back with a campaign of victimization, intimidation and, above all, by the use of 'the lump' (labour only sub-contracting).

First a number of militants were sacked and strikes provoked aimed at undermining union organization. Then the employers produced dossiers claiming a conspiracy by pickets during the national dispute.

Then it was the rapid expansion of labour only sub-contracting. It is estimated that over 500,000 men in the industry now work as self-employed, in some cases legally, in others not.

No tax

In other words, half the men in the building industry are not organized on a trade union basis, and pay no tax and have no insurance cards.

'Subbies' are being paid lump sums of up to £15 a day. For that they rush around the site, doing any jobs required and working any hours demanded. While the main contractor stands by, the trade unions are seriously weakened.

In London's Aldwych, men on the McAlpine luxury hotel site have been out since Wednesday against a labour only sub-contractors and plan to stay out until they are removed from the site. McAlpine's deny the sub-



Building workers picket McAlpine's

contractors are a 'lump merchant'.

Last week I talked to some of the men on the picket line about the strike, while two men sat in a car opposite, taking notes. Some claimed to recognize them as company spies.

First I spoke to federation steward Tony Crilly, a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union. He told me that since work began last August, about 40 per cent of the men had joined a union. The fight was now on against the lumps.

'As well as taking on men with insurance cards, these sort of companies take on men with exemption certificates. This is contrary to the Working Rule Agreement which says all operatives working for contractors have to be directly employed.'

'We want to get labour only sub-contractors out altogether, even if some of the men do pay tax. These subbies are the base for the whole business. We have to fight to remove the basis on which the lump operates,' he told me.

'Lump labour makes it impossible to get any unity on the site, and undermines the whole basis of trade unionism here.'

'The purpose of this campaign by the Joint Sites Committee is to eliminate the lump, and combine the struggle for the extension of trade unionism throughout the industry.'

Rights

This campaign, he explained, came at a time when the Tories had taken away the negotiating rights of the trade unions, the right to strike for higher wages.

'Every worker is fighting to defend his basic rights. How do we eliminate the lump and organize 100 per cent trade unionism in our industry in this situation?' he asked.

'We can only do that by destroying the source of the lump—the system which creates the lump merchants and the profiteers. The lump is all part of the capitalist system and it means we have to fight for the nationalization of the industry.'

'That is the mood of the workers today. They want that sort of a fight. At the Joint Sites Committee meeting last week we agreed to pull out as many sites as possible to lobby the special Congress of the TUC.'

'We want it to call a prolonged General Strike to get the Tories out and replace them with a Labour government pledged to socialist policies—which must include the nationalization of the industry under workers' control and without compensation.'

'In this way we'll eradicate the lump for ever.'

T&GWU member Pat Byanes has worked in the industry for ten years and sees conditions getting worse.

'As far as the building employers are concerned we're still classed as peasants,' he said.

'To me the fight has to be to get the lump off all jobs throughout the industry.'

'What the employers want is some sort of workforce that keeps shifting from job to job,

without being attached to the main contractor. In that way, without unions, they'll have the militants out as soon as they open their mouths.'

'They want to go back to the days when everyone employed themselves. Already many of the militants can't get jobs. They have a blacklist out all over London.'

'Then we end up building useless things like this hotel which none of us can use.'

'I say nationalizing the industry is the only idea. Get rid of the sub-contractors and people like McAlpine's who make millions out of these projects.'

Carpenter William Allan told me: 'On jobs like this, sub-contractors men can take the whole site over. Subbies are preferred because they never cause strikes.'

He explained that while he was earning about £35 for an average 45-hour week, those working as self-employed were being paid £12 to £14 a day.

'This means the union is powerless,' he said. 'These men just run around the site, working like madmen, preventing trade unionists getting work.'

Blacklist

Another man said he had been forced to work for a sub-contractor because he could not get a start with McAlpine's.

A former worker at the militant World's End site, Chelsea, he said a blacklist was operating all over London. He had come out on strike with McAlpine's men and was immediately sacked.

'If the employers get away with this all the time we will never get an effective organization on site.'

'Although the government and the employers are attacking unions everywhere, building workers are more vulnerable than most. Nationalization of the industry is the only answer.'

'We might get that if we pressurize a Labour government.'

'They say a General Strike would be unpopular. But it is the only answer. I'd like to see the TUC call an all-out stoppage before the Tories break the unions once and for all.'

TODAY'S TV

BBC 1

9.38 Schools. 12.25 Cywain. 12.55 News. 1.00 Pebble Mill at one. 1.30 Woodentops. 1.45 Pets and vets. 2.05 Schools. 4.00 Pixie and Dixie. 4.10 Play school. 4.35 Jackanory. 4.50 Blue Peter. 5.15 Yak. 5.40 Wombles. 5.45 News, weather.
6.00 NATIONWIDE.
 6.45 **TELEVISION TOP OF THE FORM.**
 7.10 **STAR TREK.** Friday's Child.
 8.00 **PANORAMA.** 9.00 **NINE O'CLOCK NEWS.** Weather.
 9.25 **PLAY FOR TODAY: 'THE OPERATION.'** Written by Roger Smith, directed by Roy Battersby. With Tom Kempinski, George Lazenby, Maurice Rooves, Maureen Shaw.
 10.50 **COME DANCING.** 11.25 **LATE NIGHT NEWS.**
 11.30 **OPERA IN REHEARSAL.** Act 2 of Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro'. 11.55 Weather.

BBC 2

11.00-11.25 Play school. 5.25 Open University.
 7.05 **PARENTS AND CHILDREN.** 7.30 **NEWS SUMMARY.** Weather.
 7.35 **LOOK, STRANGER.** A Good Job With Prospects.
 8.00 **ALIAS SMITH AND JONES.** Something to Get Hung About.
 8.55 **CALL MY BLUFF.** 9.25 **DAVE ALLEN.**
 10.10 **METRO-LAND.** A celebration of suburbia with Sir John Betjeman.
 11.00 **OPINION.** 11.15 **NEWS EXTRA.** Weather.

ITV

9.30 Schools. 10.33 World War I (London only). 11.00 Schools. 12.05 Mr. Trimble. 12.25 Alice through the looking glass. 12.40 First report. 1.00 Mr and Mrs. 1.30 Emmerdale farm. 2.00 Schools. 2.20 Cartoon. 2.30 Good afternoon. 3.00 Film: 'Double Bunk'. Ian Carmichael. Comedy about newly weds. 4.25 Pardon my genie. 4.55 Clapperboard. 5.20 Lollipop loves Mr. Mole. 5.50 News.
6.00 TODAY. 6.40 **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!**
 7.30 **CORONATION STREET.** 8.00 **WORLD IN ACTION.**
 8.30 **BLESS THIS HOUSE.** One Good Turn Deserves a Bother.
 9.00 **THE RIVALS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.** The Absent-Minded Coterie.
 10.10 **NEWS AT TEN.** 10.30 **THE WILD, WILD WEST.** The Night of the Big Blast.
 11.30 **DRIVE-IN.** 12.00 **WORLD WAR I.** 12.25 **IT'S WORTH READING.** Mary Craig talks to Judi Dench.



George Lazenby, Maureen Shaw and Tom Kempinski in 'The Operation', BBC1.

REGIONAL TV

CHANNEL: 9.30-11.52 London. 1.15 News. 1.30 London. 2.25 Film: 'The Young Ones'. 4.20 Puffin. 4.25 London. 6.00 News. 6.15 Maverick. 6.45 London. 10.30 Theatre. 11.20 News and weather in French. Weather.
WESTWARD. As Channel except: 12.05 London. 12.57 News. 1.00 London. 4.20 Gus Honeybun. 6.00 Diary. 6.35 Danton. 10.30 News. 11.55 Faith for lie.
SOUTHERN: 9.30 London. 2.10 Training the family dog. 2.30 Houseparty. 3.00 Film: 'Cruising Down the River'. 4.25 London. 6.00 Day by day. 6.40 London. 10.30 Southern scene. 11.00 News. 11.05 Theatre. 12.00 Farm progress. 12.25 Weather. Guideline.
ANGLIA: 9.30 London. 12.04 News. 12.05 London. 2.00 All our yesterdays. 2.30 Houseparty. 3.00 Marcus Welby. 3.55 Romper room. 4.22 News. 4.25 London. 6.00 About Anglia. 6.45 London. 10.30 Russell Harty. 11.30 London. 12.00 Big question.
ATV MIDLANDS: 9.30 London. 12.00 ATV programme guide. 12.05 London. 3.00 Film: 'My Six Loves'. 4.25 London. 6.00 ATV today. 6.45 London. 10.30 Name of the game. 11.55 Stories worth telling.
ULSTER: 11.00 London. 1.33 News. 1.40 Schools. 2.40 Romper room. 3.00 Film: 'Ride the High Iron'. 4.22 News. 4.25 London. 5.20 Emmerdale farm. 5.50 London. 6.00 UTV reports. 6.15 Dick Van Dyke. 6.45 London. 10.30 Monday night. 10.40 Film: 'Yellow Canary'.
YORKSHIRE: 9.30 London. 3.00 Film: 'My Learned Friends'. 4.25 London. 4.50 Skippy. 5.20 London. 6.00 Calendar. Weather. 6.45 London. 10.30 Name of the game. 11.50 Yoga. 12.15 Ugliest girl in town. 12.40 Weather.
GRANADA: 9.30 London. 12.00 Handful of songs. 12.05 London. 2.00 All our yesterdays. 2.30 Film: 'Variety Jubilee'. 4.00 Grossroads. 4.20 London. 6.00 Newsway. 6.25 This is your right. 6.40 London. 10.30 Chester. 11.00 Film: 'Love Hate Love'.
TYNE TEES: 9.25 Thoughts from the little read book. 9.30 London. 2.00 All our yesterdays. 2.30 News. 2.31 Galloping gourmet. 3.00 Film: 'The Farmer Takes a Wife'. 4.25 London. 4.50 Skippy. 5.20 London. 6.00 Today at six. 6.35 Cartoon. 6.45 London. 10.30 Face the press. 11.00 Name of the game. 12.25 News. 12.40 Lectern.
SCOTTISH: 9.30 London. 2.00 All our yesterdays. 2.30 Dateline. 3.00 Film: 'Stage to Tucson'. 4.25 London. 6.00 Scotland today. 6.30 Cartoon. 6.45 London. 10.30 Late call. 10.35 Dragon and the lion. 11.20 Quentin Durgens.
GRAMPIAN: 10.58 London. 1.38 Schools. 3.05 News. 3.08 Film: 'Dilemma'. 4.25 London. 5.20 Emmerdale farm. 5.50 London. 6.00 News. 6.05 Royal Clansmen. 6.45 London. 10.30 University challenge. 11.00 Name of the game. 12.35 Meditation.

SLL Public Meetings

SOUTHAMPTON
THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 8 p.m.
 Joiners Arms Hotel
 St Mary's Street
 Speaker: ALAN THORNETT
 (Deputy senior steward,
 Morris Motors, in a personal
 capacity).

DAGENHAM
THURSDAY MARCH 1, 8pm
 Manor Park Library
 Romford Rd/Rabbitts Road
 opp Rabbitts Pub
 speaker: G HEALY
 (SLL National Sec)

HULL
THURSDAY MARCH 1, 8 p.m.
 'Windmill Hotel'
 Witham
 Speaker: CLIFF SLAUGHTER
 (SLL Central Cttee)

WEST LONDON
THURSDAY MARCH 1, 8 p.m.
 Lyndhurst Hall
 Grafton Road, NW3
 Speaker: M. BANDA
 (SLL Central Committee)

LUTON
FRIDAY MARCH 2, 8 p.m.
 Assembly Hall
 Town Hall
 Speaker: M. BANDA
 (SLL Central Committee)

TOTTENHAM
TUESDAY MARCH 6, 8 p.m.
 Lord Morrison Hall
 Chesnut Grove
 Speaker: G. HEALY
 (SLL National Secretary)

ALL TRADES UNIONS ALLIANCE MEETINGS

Fight rising rents and prices
 Defend basic democratic rights
 Force the Tories to resign

CLAPHAM: Tuesday February 27, 8 p.m. Clapham Manor Baths, Clapham Manor Street, S.W.4. 'Defend Democratic Rights'.

PADDINGTON: Tuesday February 27, 8 p.m. 'Prince of Wales', corner of Harrow Road and Great Western Road.

KIRKBY: Tuesday February, 27, 8 p.m. Southdene Community Centre, off Broad Lane. 'Crisis of capitalism and the future of the trade unions'.

CAMDEN: Tuesday February 27, 8 p.m. 'Prince Albert', Wharfedale Road, Kings Cross. 'Lessons of fighting the Housing Finance Act'.

HARROW: Tuesday February 27, 8 p.m. Labour Hall, Wealdstone. 'All out for Wembley Pageant'.

TOOTING: Tuesday February 27, 8 p.m. 'Selkirk Hotel', Selkirk Road, Tooting Broadway. 'The rise of Italian Fascism'.

ABERDEEN: Wednesday, February 28, 8 p.m. Trades Hall, 24 Adelphi.

COVENTRY: Wednesday, February 28, 7.30 p.m. Woodend Community Building, Hillmorton Road.

EDINBURGH: Wednesday February 28, 7.30 p.m. Graphic Club, 15 Brunswick Street, 'Workers' rights' and the fight against the Tory government.'

GLASGOW: Wednesday February 28, 7.30 p.m. Woodside Hall, St George's Cross.

DERBY: Thursday, March 1, 7.30 p.m. Metal Mechanics' Premises, Charnwood Street.

CROYDON: Thursday March 1, 8 p.m. Ruskin House, Coombe Road. 'Support the gasmen'.

HOLLOWAY: Thursday March 1, 8 p.m. Co-op Hall, Seven Sisters Road (near Finsbury Park Station). 'Marxism and the trade unions'.

KINGSTON: Thursday March 1, 8 p.m. 'Liverpool Arms', Cambridge Road. 'Support the gasmen and hospital workers'.

GLASGOW: Sunday, March 4, 3 p.m. Partick Burgh Hall, near Merkland Street Underground. 'Hospital workers and the Tory government.'

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As gasmen, Ford workers, teachers and many other sections of workers remain firm against the Tories, we are sure that there is growing support for our paper.

Workers Press remains in the forefront of the struggle against this Tory government. Our paper alone has prepared for this crisis situation. We say the only way to end these attacks against the working class is to force this government to resign.

Now we need every ounce of support you can raise. We have three days to complete our £1,750 target for February's Fund. Don't waste any time. Collect as much as you can and rush it all immediately to:

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February Appeal Fund
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Top Tory threatens 'Ulster' plan for unions

BY IAN YEATS

THE TORY government would deal with trade union militants as it had dealt with terrorism in Ireland, Ulster supremo William Whitelaw said at the weekend.

He said: 'Just as in Northern Ireland, those less capable of protecting themselves have to be defended against those intent on imposing their own will—in one case by armed strength and in the other by industrial strength.'

He told Penrith Tories that the government's fight against inflation required the nation's backing, but they were unable to get it because of the attitude of the TUC.

Whitelaw went on: 'There are those who are threatening to challenge the prices and income laws in order to satisfy their own selfish ends.'

'The basis of the troubles in Northern Ireland is the attempt by extremists to have their own way.'

'In Northern Ireland we could, as a government, opt out and let them sort out their own problems. There are those who advocate this course. On inflation we could opt out and allow

BRITISH Road Services drivers meeting in Birmingham yesterday voted 130-113 not to return to work this morning. They will meet again tomorrow. It was, however, left to the 'individual consciences' of the drivers at each depot to decide whether they stood by yesterday's decision to continue the four-week-old dispute.

a free for all. There are those who advocate this course.

'But this is not the way of responsible government. The duty of government is to protect those in society who are not equipped to protect themselves, be it against the bomb and the bullet or the evils of inflation.'

● The Labour and Liberal Parties have put their electoral machines on red alert in anticipation of a snap General Elec-

tion following next Thursday's by-elections.

Tory leader Heath is thought to be watching the results of the elections closely. Any signs of a 'humiliation' for Labour could give him the green light to go to the country.

In London at the weekend 200 Labour prospective parliamentary candidates were addressed by Harold Wilson on election policy and strategy.

Ford split would aid Heath

BY STEPHEN JOHNS

SHOP STEWARDS from all Ford plants in Britain will hold a key meeting today over their £10 pay claim.

Top of the agenda will be whether Ford plants will respond to the March 1 all-out strike call or settle for local forms of industrial action.

The discussions will follow a meeting between top Ford management and the union negotiating team.

Yesterday 2,000 Ford workers from the Swansea plant voted to launch a three-day 'guerrilla' strike on March 1 in support of the claim.

This action is a step back from the earlier total national stoppage position taken at Coventry last weekend.

Swansea convenor Hugh Wallace said they were changing their tactics because of the government's pay laws—under which a strike at Ford's would be illegal.

'The government are hiding behind Ford's. We feel these big world companies could get rid of this law any time they like.'

He said that more sit-down strikes and guerrilla action might follow the three-day stoppage but this would depend on the feelings of the membership.

The Swansea stewards emphasized they were carrying out the wishes of the men and they feel they are taking a leading role in the unrest brewing throughout the Ford combine.

There are fears, arising from Friday's national shop stewards' meeting, that some of the plants are not prepared to come out. Halewood and Swansea appear to be the most militant.

A split in the ranks now or anything less than all-out strike action would be interpreted by Heath and his Cabinet as a major victory in their campaign to regulate wages by state decree.

Gasmen 'are being conned'

BY ROYSTON BULL

GASMEN'S leaders David Basnett and John Edmonds seem finally to have got the message which the Heath government is determined to hammer home: that the days for bargaining are over and that £1 plus 4 per cent is the law of the land.

The propaganda build-up towards a compromise solution to the gas dispute fizzled out on Friday evening after the G&MWU leaders had met Maurice Macmillan, Minister of Employment.

The Pay Board, Macmillan explained, will neither now nor later on be in any position to alter the offer to the gasmen of £2.24 more per week, or £1 plus 4 per cent, whether it sits initially as a Royal Commission or whatever it does.

The sole purpose of Heath's invitation to the gasmen to go to the Pay Board was to give this corporatist set-up some early experience in determining the practical criteria for the arbitrary decisions the Board will make over pay claims during Phase Three.

Macmillan told Basnett that the Board would not even consider the gasmen's claim as such in order to make an award for payment under Phase Three in the autumn. The claim would have to be submitted again when the time came and when the Phase Three guidelines had been worked out.

These will be far more stringent even than the Phase Two £1 plus 4 per cent. And even that pittance, whatever it is, would be denied to gasmen until 12 months had elapsed from the date of their present settlement whenever that is finally reached. So it would be well into 1974 before the Pay Board pronounced on the

'merits' of the gasmen's claim.

Basnett said that Macmillan would not guarantee that comparability with electricity pay would be restored.

As Fred Howell, T&GWU, put it bluntly: 'The gasmen are being conned.'

● Civil servants in their thousands will go on a 24-hour strike from midnight tonight in protest against the pay laws. Three unions are involved and nearly 250,000 workers could be affected.

The action will delay Budget preparations, hold up traffic at London airport, and delay passage through customs points.

Even the citadel of Phase Two ideology, the Department of Employment, will be affected. The staff association have put up huge notices reading 'Join in by staying out on February 27'. It is a sign of changed times.

Special ATUA meetings

ANCILLARY WORKERS
and
CIVIL SERVANTS

No state control of wages!
Support the gasmen, hospital
workers and Civil Servants!
Make the Tories resign!

Tuesday February 27
7.30 p.m.

Norfolk Room
Caxton Hall
Caxton Street, SW1.

POSTAL WORKERS
The crisis of capitalism and
the future of the trade unions.
Sunday March 4
10.30 a.m.
Conway Small Hall
Red Lion Square
Holborn.

BUILDING WORKERS
The crisis of capitalism and
the future of the trade unions.
Tuesday March 6
7.30 p.m.
Norfolk Room
Caxton Hall
Caxton Street, SW1

TUC must call a
General Strike to
make the Tory
government resign
LOBBY THE TUC
MONDAY MARCH 5

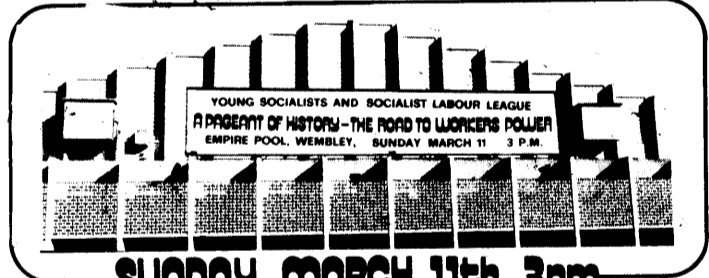
9 a.m. Central Halls, Westminster
(opposite Houses of Parliament)

Report back meeting: 2 p.m. Friars Halls, Sheetmetal
Workers Union, Blackfriars Bridge (nearest tube
Blackfriars).

DEFEND ALL DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Defend trade unionism and basic living standards
Unite in action to make this Tory government resign

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SLL
PUBLIC
MEETINGS

OXFORD
TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 27
8 p.m.
Clarendon Institute
Walton
Speaker: G. HEALY
(SLL National Secretary)

MEDWAY
TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 27
8 p.m.
Aurora Hotel
Brompton Road
Gillingham
Speaker: MIKE BANDA
(SLL Central Committee)

SLOUGH
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 28 8 p.m.
Britwell Community Centre Long Furlong Drive Britwell Estate
Speaker: G. HEALY (SLL National Secretary)