

WORKERS' fight

3p

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JAN 15 - DAY OF STRIKES FREE JAILED PICKETS

Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson and John McKinsie Jones are still not free.

These three North Wales building workers, jailed for 3 years, 2 years and 9 months respectively in reprisal for their work as organisers of flying pickets during the 1972 building workers' strike, have now been inside since December 19th. On January 11th they will apply for bail, pending their appeal against conviction and sentence.

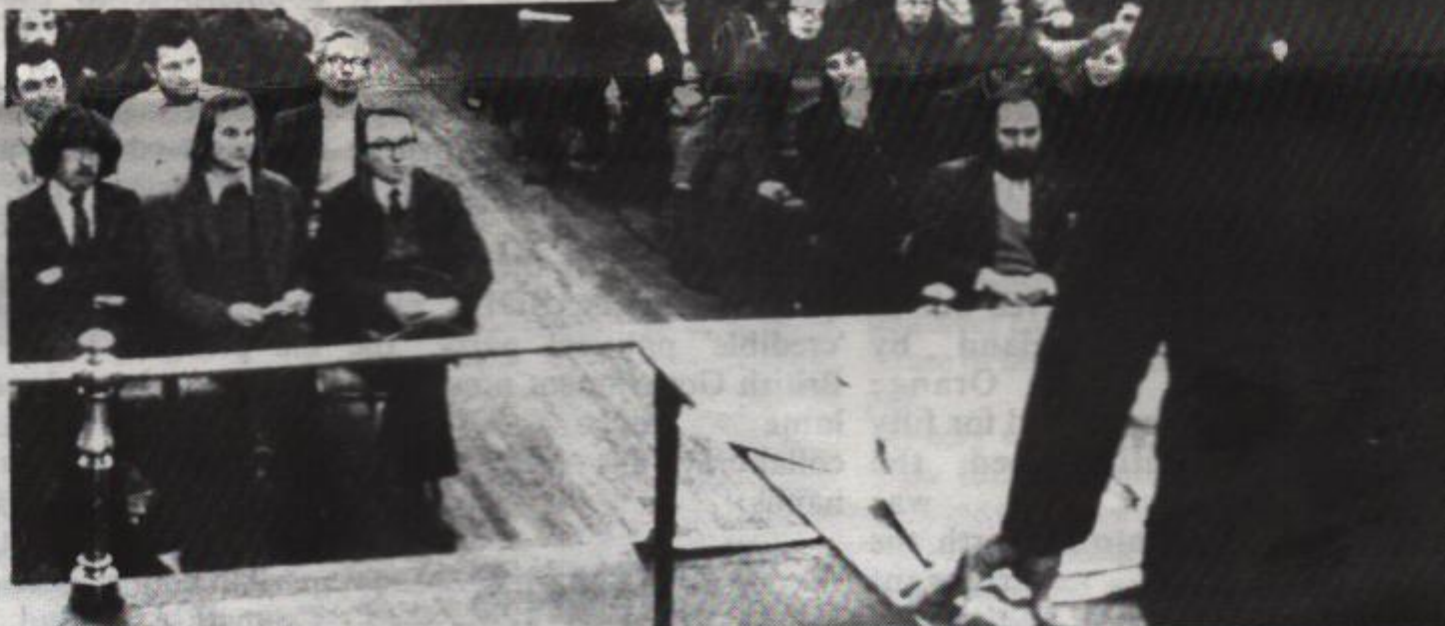
The anger of the working class in response to the trial and sentencing of these trade unionists was slow to spark, but it has now begun to burn fiercely and is spreading daily. It has not been as explosive or spontaneous as the fury that greeted the jailing of the 5 dockers in Pentonville in July 1972. But already the Tory government must be wondering if it won't now, also, be forced to give up its victims.

The T&GWU Builders Section has now called for a one day national builders' strike on January 15th. On the same day, London Trades Council has called for a London Day of Action. On the 11th, there will be a mass lobby of the Appeal Court in London, and massive strikes are planned for that day in Liverpool and Manchester.

The Building section of the T&GWU has also called on the T&GWU Executive to ask the TUC to set up a National Campaign Committee to fight for the Three, and to get the law on picketing changed so there will be no more convictions like this.

There have also been many suggestions that the Liverpool Trades Council should reconvene its recent conference on the defence of the North Wales pickets (there are 24 altogether facing criminal charges) to plan national action.

The labour movement must launch a crusade to Free the Three and wipe out the other charges. We must make every effort to get action by the official trade union movement. That is



Part of the meeting at Shoreditch Town Hall on January 4th which resolved on strike action on January 15th to free the three jailed pickets. See back page for more details of action. (Photo: Chris Davies, REPORT)

irreplaceable. We must demand that every official body, and first and foremost the building trade unions and the TUC, take up the cause of the North Wales pickets.

But more irreplaceable is organised action by the rank and file of the labour movement. Without this, we can expect nothing from the leaders. Indeed, UCATT Gen. Sec. George Smith has spent more time campaigning

against the pickets on the grounds that the charges were run of the mill criminal charges.

The real strength of the campaign will depend on grass roots committees in every place of work to explain the issues and get pledges of action from their workmates. Where there hasn't been spontaneous action, action must be prepared and organised. Trades Councils,

Shop Stewards Committees and local Defence Committees should actively sponsor such works committees and work to get them set up.

We must build the mass campaign that has so far been lacking. That means working and fighting for the involvement of the broadest layers of the labour movement. The stoppages taking place in the next week

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

The next round of action should be planned for the week when the Appeals are being decided - to show

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Tanks at Airport a P.R. Stunt for Army Scabs

THE TANKS and soldiers with live ammunition in their guns at Heathrow Airport may possibly, as the Government claims, be intended as a show of force to warn off Palestinian guerillas who are allegedly armed with anti aircraft missiles.

But it is not very probable. In the present crisis it is far more likely that they are a show of force to help prepare the ground for the widespread use of strikebreaking troops. Certainly, the activity of the soldiers at Heathrow makes little military sense in relation to its stated purpose.

Similar actions to the Heathrow one are, we are now informed, planned to take place throughout the country, and a major part of the 'manoeuvres' appears to be publicity and public relations. Even the EVENING STANDARD thinks that the aim of this is to accustom the British people to the sight of armed soldiers in the streets, here as in Northern Ireland.

The main purpose of the exercise seems to be to create an atmosphere in which it appears that "we" are threatened by violence - from Palestinians, from Irish Republicans, from British revolutionaries, and from strikers, all conspiring against "the British way of life": and the Army 'is our protector'.

The real conspirator is the Tory government which is planning to use troops to strikebreak, perhaps in the miners' dispute, certainly in a general strike. The Government knows there is a real possibility of a general strike if it declares a new wage freeze, confiscating rises due under wage agreements signed by 2 million workers under Phase 3.

The bosses' government is preparing. So must the labour movement.

Unions must fight Witchhunt

THE TORIES are preparing for a General Election, and the signs are that it could be very soon. They hesitate only from fear of being swept from office by an electorate outraged at their three and a half year record in government.

They plan a 'Red Scare' election - a witchhunt against the unions, militants, revolutionary socialists and communists.

Already the miners' and railmen's overtime bans are being presented as a plot to scuttle capitalism. They have been waging a fierce hate campaign against Wedgwood

Benn, the lightweight political opportunist who has taken to saying publicly what many workers think.

The bosses and their politicians never understand that the working class and the capitalist system, which forces it to defend its interests at every turn, are incompatible. Therefore they look for 'plots' and conspiracies to explain the

ever recurring revolts and struggles of the working class.

In a union bashing election the Tories will ask: Who rules - Parliament or the trade unions? What this really means is: who rules - trade unionists or the Parliamentary servants of the City of London spivs? But they won't put it like that.

With steel production falling to an unexpected

degree, government strategy for riding out the miners' struggle may collapse, as industry is forced to a complete shutdown. Heath knows that he will attempt to impose a new wage freeze - Phase 4 - if as expected the rising cost of living triggers the threshold clauses in the wage settlements so far agreed under Phase 3. The government used threshold

agreements to fob off demands for large scale immediate wage increases, gambling that the cost of living wouldn't rise quite so high. They are obviously losing the gamble.

Thus an election victory may become essential if they are to have any hope at all of carrying on as a government.

Despite their record of vicious anti working class

policies and crass failure even as the bosses' government, they could hope to rally the more backward voters in a red scare election.

The one thing that will aid them above all else, is if the Labour Party and the Unions cower back defensively before the witchhunt. Unfortunately they may.

Most union officials and Labour MPs are themselves witchhunters. It was the then Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson who denounced "politically

Support Miners, Railmen!

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ISRAEL

Settler State Politics Move To The Right

THE OUTCOME of the Israeli elections can provide little comfort for those Western socialists who look to the Israeli working class as a progressive force. The results show a drift towards the right wing Likud party, who took six seats from the ruling Labour coalition — a shift which will mean a whittling away of much of the room for compromise and manoeuvre at the Geneva negotiations.

The Likud represents the extreme chauvinist wing of the settler mentality which spreads

right across the board of Israeli politics, bar the tiny anti-Zionist left. Their leader Menahem Begin is notorious for the massacre of 254 Arabs at Deir Yassin during the 1948 war. Likud campaigned on a platform of attacks on Government inefficiency during the war, and for no withdrawals from any occupied territory.

Among their leading lights in this campaign was General Arik Sharon, who led the attack across the Suez canal and is something of a military

hero in Israel. For Palestinians however he is better remembered for other exploits, such as blowing up a Jordanian village in 1953, killing 69 inhabitants of whom half were women and children.

The Israeli Labour Party, while no less expansionist than the Likud, would probably be willing to countenance a partial withdrawal in Sinai, in return for an agreement leaving Israel firmly holding the rest of the occupied territories which have been stolen since 1967 and before.



Left: Golda Meir - winning but weakened; Right: General Sharon - the hero of the "hawks".

But now in order to form a government, Golda Meir will have to rely more heavily on her coalition partners such as the National Religious Party, which stands for even firmer links between church and state, and claims Jerusalem, the west

bank of Jordan, and parts of Syria as belonging to Israel by biblical right. It campaigned in the elections against any Israeli withdrawal at all.

Paul Itizé

FAULKNER DEFEATED BUT HEATH'S SECTARIAN BLUEPRINT SURVIVES

BRIAN FAULKNER'S defeat by a majority of 80 at the January 4th meeting of the Unionist Party's Ulster Unionist Council is a serious blow against the Sunningdale Agreement. It was, of course, an expected blow.

The British Government's strategy of replacing the Unionist bloc that ruled Northern Ireland for 50 years with a new alliance composed of moderate and pliant Unionists linked with moderate, pliant, Uncle Tomish Catholics called for the hiving off of the die hard, unaccommodating loyalists from the Unionist Party, and their banishment to the political ghetto in which Catholic politicians had languished for 50 and more years.

Control

Far from being hived off, however, they now control the Unionist Party. Now Faulkner's battle to corral the masses of the Protestant population will have to take the form of building a new, moderate, Unionist Party.

Faulkner's defeat is indeed a blow against Sunningdale, but is not by any means a decisive scuttling of it. That Agreement expresses the long term common aims of the anti working class forces who dominate the Northern Irish cockpit — the British ruling class, the Southern Irish

capitalists, and their local allies and stooges. The coalition Executive in the North and the Council of Ireland to link the North and the South, is their common framework for 'normalising' N. Ireland politics.

It means replacing the no longer workable sectarian dictatorship of the Unionist Party by a sectarian coalition in which the spheres of influence of Catholic and Protestant sectarian politicians are marked out. They alleviate sectarianism by in fact enshrining it in a new framework. If the Six County state, artificially carved out of the body of Ireland by imperialist and Orange sectarian violence, had for fifty years institutionalised the sectarianism that was programmed into it at birth, the Sunningdale Agreement institutionalises it in the very mechanism of government.

The Council of Ireland is to be the rudimentary framework allowing for the possible coming together of the two hitherto divided sections of the Irish bourgeoisie in what might be the first stages of the long touted 'federal solution to the Irish problem' — naturally in close alliance with Britain.

Carrying through the Agreement depends on a number of conditions.

Firstly, on weening sections of the Catholics into supporting it. Secondly, on the ability of the more amenable Unionist leaders to placate or burke the Orange backlash.

Thirdly, on the collaboration of the southern Irish ruling class in repressing the Republican movement and in offering state level conciliation to the Six County state.

Forcibly excluding the Provisional IRA from the elections (refusing to allow Sinn Fein to stand; the Official IRA, which was not excluded, got only about 12,000 votes) the British occupation forces helped the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) to a monopoly of Catholic seats in the Assembly and a position of plausibly looking like a leadership of the Catholic population. They have yet to defeat the IRA, but have certainly succeeded in establishing the SDLP.

The Southern Irish ruling class has tightened up against the Republicans — the first

fruits of Sunningdale was a meeting of southern and northern Police Chiefs — and the Southern Government has given de facto recognition to the Northern state. (Though there are reports that Fianna Fail, Jack Lynch's opposition party, may be preparing to repudiate this.)

The significance of Faulkner's defeat is that it marks a crisis in the carrying out of the third condition — placating a sizeable enough body of Unionists to form a credible Protestant partner in the coalition. Having successfully set up the Catholic quislings of the SDLP as a 'credible' political party, the British Government now has a lame duck Unionist collaborationist party on its hands.

Favours

Lame it may be, but by no means crippled. Faulkner's defeat is far from decisive — either for the coalition government or for the future of a collaborationist Unionist party.

There are certainly enough Faulknerite members in the Assembly, even allowing for a few possible defections after his resignation as Party leader, to ensure a guaranteed majority in the Assembly in partnership with the Alliance Party. Not only that, but the patronage and power of the Administration will be a very potent force in the struggle that will come now for grass roots support — and Unionism was always a Tammany Hall party of patronage, favours, backscratching and crude self serving. After the mass revolt of recent years, the British government will certainly make available the funds for reform in Northern Ireland — the biggest reforms come through fear of revolution. This golden manure will help the Government Unionists to grow and develop their roots. Short of a 1929 type world slump, Britain will probably be able to guarantee this, and will willingly do so after the experience of the collapse of part of the 'United Kingdom' into a state of civil war in the last 4 years.

These are powerful forces working for Faulkner — though they do not of course exclude the possibility of an uncontrollable and violent

Protestant backlash, in its turn causing new and deeper ferment in the Catholic population, which would upset all the calculations.

Ferment

The Orange forces themselves are in ferment, because they have little to counterpose to the policy of Faulkner, that is, Britain's policy. Integration with Britain is scarcely possible if Britain turns it down, as it has. Independence, cut off from Britain and the British exchequer, is, sanely, inconceivable. Bending with the pressure from Britain as Faulkner has done is what remains. Even the anti Faulkner Unionists quickly indicated willingness to take their allotted seats in the parliamentary section of the Council of Ireland, despite all their protests.

No less significantly, the influential former Stormont MP Desmond Boal, an intimate of Ian Paisley, has now said that given the present choice before the Unionist population he would opt for a united Ireland with the Council of Ireland strengthened and having the same power over a new and stronger Stormont parliament that the Westminster Government had over the old one.

Realities

The war of the IRA continues — the heroic and just struggle of the best elements of the Catholic working class against British imperialist rule in Ireland and for Irish independence and freedom. Support for those conducting that war should not blind us to the fact that over the last year the inexorable pressures and underlying realities have told heavily against the IRA, fighting against a host of strong and powerful enemies.

The strength of the SDLP, in truth now the mainstay of the Sunningdale Agreement and the new Stormont — in fact the party which expresses and links the interests and policies of both the British and Irish ruling classes more consummately than any other political party in Ireland, North or South — is the measure of the toll imperialist repression has taken of the resistance in Northern Ireland.

But the resistance continues. If the Sunningdale Agreement breaks down it will boost that resistance by discrediting the SDLP. Unfortunately, despite Faulkner's defeat, Sunningdale is not scuttled yet.

In Britain it is all the more vital now to throw the weight of the labour movement against the machinations of the British ruling class in Ireland. Far from guaranteeing peace, the British ruling class is still terrorising the Catholics. Since Sunningdale a wave of British Army terror and intimidation has hit even the mild and moderate Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, which criticises the Agreement and advocates continuation of the rent and rates strike until Internment is ended.

Obstacles

Far from eliminating sectarianism, the Sunningdale Agreement merely modifies the sectarian balance within the Six County statelet, ensuring the livelihood of Green and Orange politicians, but in the process erecting yet a new set of murderous sectarian obstacles to working class unity.

And that unity is essential. It can only be prepared by abolishing the Six County sectarian state, not by giving Catholic middle class sectarian politicians such as Gerry Fitt a role in a new sectarian superstructure — which has been aptly described as an internal, institutional partition of Northern Ireland itself.

Disunity

Socialists must continue to raise and fight for the demand for a united Ireland, and to demand an end to all British interference. The British army of occupation should be withdrawn immediately and unconditionally. Unless the British labour movement fights vigorously for these demands now, it will once again bear part of the responsibility for allowing the British capitalists and their Irish stooges to erect a political framework which will militate against working class unity for many years to come, as the old Northern Ireland 'Settlement' did for many black and terrible decades in the past.

John Mahony

Discussion

FROM BARRICADE TO BALLOT

In WF 37 an article by Jackie Cleary with the slogan of "Red Weekly" called down the Government was either a thinly veiled call for an armed insurrection.

JACKIE CLEARY's article in WF 37 exposes a blatant contradiction in his argument against the call for a general strike to kick out the Tories. In one paragraph he states quite correctly: "either such a call is a call for armed insurrection in the course of a general strike to force the government out (or overthrow the system) — and since neither the working class nor the revolutionaries are anywhere near this possibility, that would be raving ultra left nonsense. Or else it means a general strike to force the Tories to call an election."

But then he continues: "To kick out the Tories and replace them with a Labour government is of major importance now. But if a general strike, however it started

WORLD GLUT OF OIL?

THE ANARCHY and chaos which is endemic to capitalism was sharply demonstrated by an article which appeared in the Irish Times on Friday 4th January.

Written by C.T. Rand, an American Middle East 'specialist', the article claims that, contrary to popular myth, there is no world shortage of oil — rather there is a world glut of it.

The argument is backed up with various figures. For example, when the Nixon administration ended America's 14 year old ban on crude oil imports, the Arabian American Oil Company's production shot up to eight and a half million barrels a day. Aramco, one of Saudi Arabia's biggest producers, had planned in 1970 to double production from 4 to 8 million barrels a day, but the 8 million target was not to be reached until 1975.

Then came the Middle East war. King Faisal announced that oil production was to be cut back by 10% and ARAMCO's production fell to 7.8 million barrels a day — a figure still way above the level ARAMCO had projected in 1970.

Rand claims that there is total ignorance about the size of Middle East oil reserves and the amount of oil which is getting through to Europe and America. In Holland, where there is still a ban on Sunday driving, tankers are queuing up to unload. In America, the price of home heating oil has gone up by 60 cents a gallon and yet barges, full of crude oil, lie lined up along the Ohio because they can't discharge fast enough.

But prices continue to rise, and according to Mr. Rand so does production. However, the main point of his article is that nobody really knows just what is going on. Rand calls for the public to force "Congress to enact stiff legislation demanding full disclosure of oil industry data".

Socialists must go further and call for a workers' inquiry into the oil industry: into the profits of the oil companies, the size of stocks, and just how the crude oil is distributed. Len Glover

LETTER:

Keep up solidarity

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your paper and we look forward to receiving your literature in the future. We are aware of the great solidarity work done by your organisation in England and that recently the defenders of British capitalism have been paying particular attention to your movement.

I would like on behalf of the republican movement to express solidarity with the British working class in their struggle against British capitalism. Keep up the solidarity work. We only ask that you pay particular attention to the plight of Irish political prisoners in English jails. THOMAS McK Belfast.

WITCHUNT ELECTION from P.1

motivated men" during the 1966 seamen's strike.

Instead of retreat, we need a vigorous offensive against the Tories and their pretences. The working class and the trade unions are far better fitted to determine what happens in Britain than are the capitalist bloodsuckers and their chief Parliamentary pimps and Major Domo Heath.

In reply to the witchunt the Unions must launch a campaign which puts the government on the spot, and thereby the capitalist system as well. It is the bosses' system. Its crises are their responsibility, not ours. The working class, on whose backs the parasites now ride, could organise a better system. And it will, as soon as it organises itself not only for defence and betterment, as now, but also for a socialist offensive against capitalism.

Meanwhile it must defend itself. Workers must stand unconditionally with the miners and railwaymen. Support them. Defend them from the witchunt. Help them to drive their blows home.

Whatever the prospects of an election or its outcome, we must prepare now for a general strike to reply to any attempt at a new wage freeze.

We must reply to the witchunt by insisting that the party of the trade unions — Labour launches an offensive against the Tories and pledges itself to carry through the following measures on being returned to office:

Repeal the Industrial Relations Act and compensate its trade union victims.

End all government interference with the trade unions.

No Incomes Policy under capitalism! Demolish Phase 3 and the 'Counter Inflation' legislation of which it is part.

Bring in a guaranteed £30 minimum wage tied closely to the cost of living.

Scrap the Housing Finance Act.

Enforce equal pay for women now.

Abolish all racist Immigration Acts.

Unconditionally withdraw British troops from Ireland.

Union struggle at Coventry Art Castings

For a long time we have been working to create a well organised trade union shop at Coventry Art Castings Ltd in Nuneaton.

The firm was recently formed from a complex of small back street workshops. It supplies components to the car and engineering industry, and has the backing of a well known anti union firm — A.L. Dunn.

We have been threatened by the company, individuals have been victimised, and finally a shop steward has been sacked. In spite of these tactics the vast majority of these workers are now in the T&G.

The immediate issue behind our strike was a wage claim. In response to the management's refusal to agree we imposed an overtime ban. The company laid off various sections, and victimised one worker. As a result of this last action 83 workers came out on strike.

The Company has refused to withdraw the sacking to allow negotiations to take place.

The strike has been solid since 10th December, most of the strikers being from the die casting shop.

Miners bitter at Tory Onslaught

WHATEVER anyone else may be thinking about the 'crisis' which has resulted in a million more workers signing on for the dole, the miners are very angry indeed.

They know they are just two purposes behind the two day a week national lockout: to spin out coal stocks to enable the government to hold out against the miners' overtime ban; and to turn other workers against the miners so that, if and when they take full strike action, they will be less likely to get the solidarity that helped win the 1972 strike.

As far as the miners themselves are concerned, the whole trick is backfiring. In the Durham area many pit workers have been commenting that "We might have accepted the offer at the beginning, but not now. It's obvious the Government is trying to blame us for the mess they're in. Now, if it comes to it, we'll strike. We're that bitter..."

Though the three day working is costing the Government an estimated £40m a week in unemployment benefits and loss of tax revenue, and the capitalist class is probably losing

something like £500m a week in lost production, the Tories reckon it is worth all that to prevent the miners from crashing through their policy for controlling and holding down workers' wages. They have decided that they would rather see the whole of British industry dislocated now, in the interests of keeping profits high and wages low in the future. Meanwhile they try to win workers to a 'joint national struggle' — against what they claim to be the combined forces of the miners and inflation.

There is at least one group of workers who won't be taken in by this. Bakery workers certainly won't. They generally earn less than £20 a week, and haven't had a decent rise in years. Yet bread went up 4 times in 1973, went up another penny a loaf last week and is expected to rise again several times in the next year.

Meanwhile Ranks Hovis McDougal report a rise of £4 million in profits up to September 1973. Then again, take the farmworkers. Did poultry farm workers' wages double last year to produce the 100% increase in egg prices? Or are they still among

the lowest paid and hardest worked people in the country...

Nor have the miners been fooled. They know that the only way they can fight inflation is to get more pay. And the same goes for every other worker in every other industry.

The miners shouldn't have to work overtime at all to earn a living wage. Now they are demanding a minimum wage of £35 to £40 — little enough anyway for spending 40 hours a week underground working

crouched double or waist deep in water in deafening noise, inhaling with every breath the coal and stone dust that has left 43,000 now suffering the crippling disease of pneumoconiosis. And little enough to meet the ever growing cost of living.

The NCB has lost at least 30% of production because the miners aren't working overtime. The NCB has come to rely on overtime and is content to see gross undermanning in the pits. Gangs of 8 men frequently do the work of 12. Certainly as long as miners' wages and conditions are at the present level, the numbers will not be made up. Talking to a journalist last week, a miner mentioned ironically that a local woman was pleased that the 'poor pit ponies' had been brought up from the mine. Yes, he said, but they left the donkeys down there.

In face of the Government's drastic action against the miners, the overtime ban is now showing itself not to be effective enough. The Tories have opted for a war of attrition, and are prepared to sit it out. They are willing to use diversions like the bathtime negotiations

There have already been dozens of brief walkouts in

various pits and sections of pits. These, and the unprecedented 50% absenteeism after the holidays all testify to the miners' willingness to step up the action and win the claim. But these actions can also turn out to be a pressure valve which lets off steam and diverts energies from a united all out strike.

The miners have very little time to lose now. Coal stocks, despite uncertainty over the actual figures, are probably higher than at this time last year. Oil supplies are getting back to normal. The winter will not last forever.

Heath has demonstrated that he is willing to half cripple the economy and beggar the working class in order to beat the miners. The only way the government will be brought to its knees now is by cutting off coal completely, and imposing an immediate black on the movement of coal, enforced by strenuous nationwide picketing.

This is the thing Heath fears most. It is what the miners will have to do to win. And they must be given the backing of the whole labour movement in doing it.

Tom Ramsey



...to Heath and Phase 3!

CARWORKERS DEMAND: WORK OR FULL PAY!

OXFORD, Monday 7th Jan: 500 workers gave a militant answer to the Tories' 2 day lockout here today when they organised a 'walk in' at the Cowley BLMC plant.

At a mass meeting it had been decided to support a Joint Shop Stewards' proposal to fight against being shut out without pay. They are demanding that the firm, part of the Austin Morris division, lives up to its guaranteed week agreement.

There are already a million people laid off as a result of Heath's action against the miners.

There is fear now that an unexpectedly large fall in steel production will make even a 3 day week impossible and force many plants into a complete shutdown for at least the duration of the crisis.

The refusal of the 500 at BLMC Cowley to passively resign themselves to the lockout offers a lead to the rest of the labour movement.

We cannot and should not allow our people to be thrown into the streets. If the owners of industry cannot guarantee work, then they must provide full pay.

Crisis Fund
£112.55
Target £400
by
Jan 30th
SEND DONATIONS TO:
W.F., 98 Gifford Street,
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Published by Workers Fight,
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Printed by voluntary labour

Growing campaign to free jailed Pickets

In London over 500 people attended a meeting called by the London Defence Committee. Resolutions were passed supporting a picket of the Appeal Courts on January 11th, at 10 am in the Strand, London, and the January 15th strike and demonstration (1pm from Tower Hill) called for by the London Trades Council. On January 8th, London building workers picketed the offices of UCATT and the T&GWU to demand national action to free the three jailed pickets.

It was also reported to the meeting that members of the Barking and Dagenham Defence Committee occupied parts of the TUC headquarters to force the question of the outrageous jailings upon the TUC leadership; but an interview with Len Murray led nowhere.

Liverpool Trades Council called a meeting on January 3rd and 200 shop stewards attended. The meeting agreed to a resolution calling for a one day stoppage, although many militants present spoke out in favour of a total stoppage until the three were released.

Strong support for the stoppage has come from building workers throughout Merseyside, and at Dovecote site, Corporation building workers had already come out before Christmas.

In Coventry the local Action Committee have been holding

THE RECALL meeting of the National Committee of the AUEW recommended last

Thursday that the union, the largest in the engineering industry, begins an overtime ban in support of its current claim. The decision, which was taken by 39 votes to 13, will go forward to next Thursday's meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU). In this way the National Committee of the AUEW is trying to take an initiative and get the support of the other 30 or so unions in the CSEU.

The current claim is for pay increases up to £10 per week on the national minimum rate for craftsmen and corresponding increases for less skilled workers.

Strikes for Jailed 3

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them what will happen if they try to keep our brothers behind bars.

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

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

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

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

There is also a demand for longer holidays and equal pay for women.

On of the central points of the present claim, however, is the demand for a 35 hour week. £35 for 35 hours must be the centre of the fight. When the going got sticky last time in the only area that had the guts to fight, the question of the hours was the first to be jettisoned. This must not happen again.

Hugh Scanlon is quoted as saying that the overtime ban will be held off till after the period of three day working, so that it will hit the employers the moment they think they're in the clear. But even so, the overtime ban is the least effective method of struggle. It divides the piece workers from the time workers and will come at a time when many workers will be wanting to make up for the lost time of the Tory lockout.

The unpopularity of the overtime ban is likely to be used by the right wing as an excuse to demand a settlement on the terms of the EEF, which replied to the CSEU's demand by offering £2.50 on the craftsmen's rate, £2 for the unskilled, and a disgusting £1.80 for the women. The offer was of course rejected. But the right wing has unfortunately been strengthened since then by recent elections, and the left cowed both by these results and by an allegation of ballot rigging in Scotland.

When 200 shop stewards met in Sheffield on December 2nd, the call went out then for a national overtime ban. Similarly when the convenors' and senior stewards' meeting took place in Manchester on 14th December, the hand of the advocates of the overtime ban was strengthened.

But this is a sign of weakness and not of strength.

Of course, now that this is the decision, it is vital that every engineering worker carries it out. That's the only way of taking the alibis away from the right wing. Conway and his cronies are busily referring to the catastrophes of the last CSEU claim. Rank and file engineers must answer with full support for the overtime ban policy, even with all its shortcomings. Only a national strike will be able to break the resistance of an extremely confident EEF and a very determined government. The campaign for that has to start right away.

JACK PRICE