

Workers' fight

3p

No. 75 Nov. 2nd to Nov. 9th 1974

STRIKE NOW TO FREE PICKETS

by Rachel Lever

TWO APPEALS were made to free the Shrewsbury pickets after they were jailed just before Christmas last year: one appeal was addressed to the top judges of the bosses' state. The other was addressed to the working class.

The judges have now given their verdict, and have sent Des Warren and Eric Tomlinson back to jail to finish their three year and two year sentences.

But the working class has still to make its voice heard and its power felt to release these two militants.

In 1972, that voice and that

power released five dockers from Pentonville jail in less than a week. Then, the bosses and their Government would have given a lot to have a nice, regular appeal procedure to go through. Instead, they had to resort to a feeble and trans-

parent excuse to let these men out of their clutches.

It speaks volumes for the lame response of the organised labour movement since the jailings 10 months ago (and since the arrests a year before that), that the judges did not take the opportunity of releasing Des and Eric through the 'normal channels' of the Appeal.

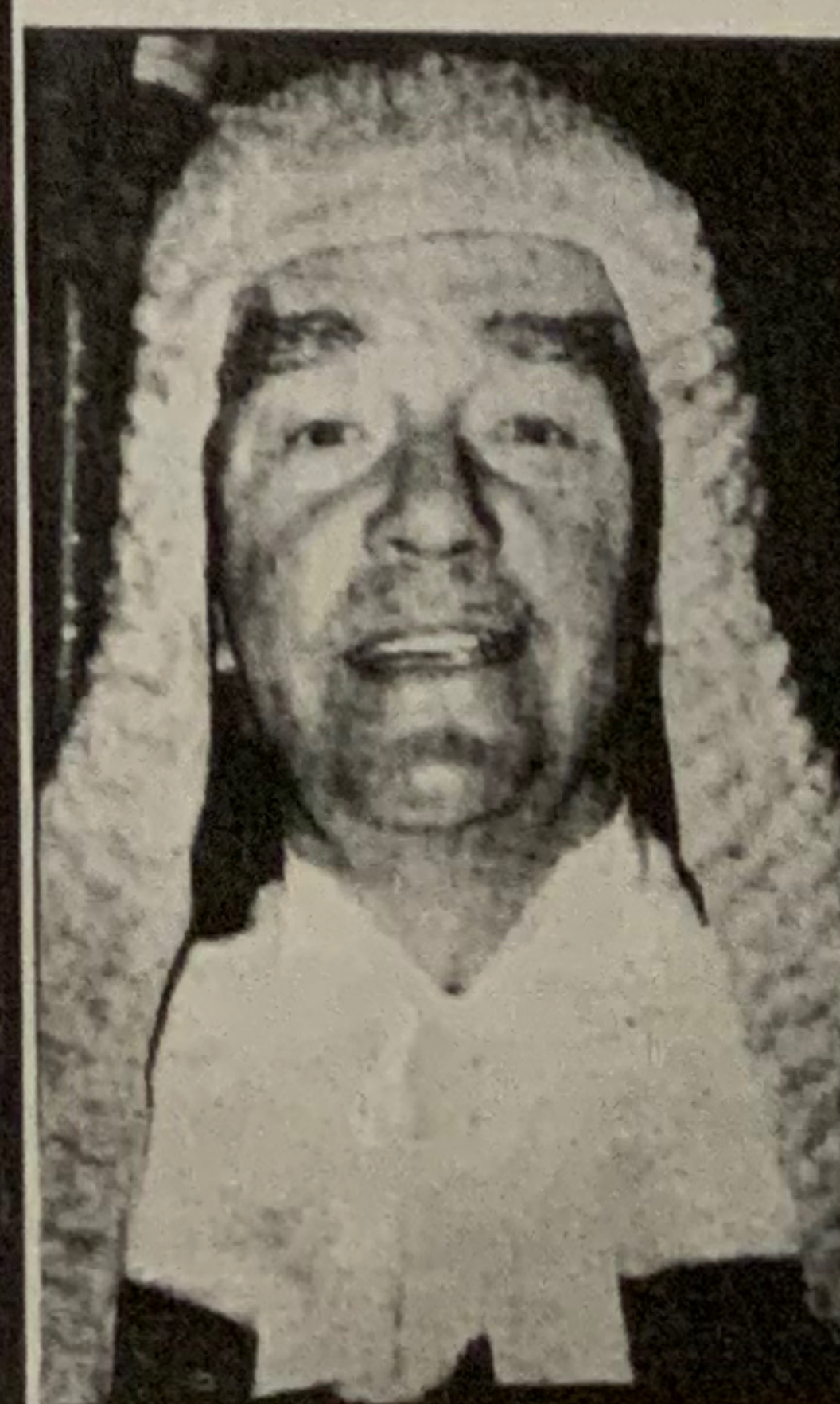
Nor were they interested in the legal arguments. If the trial itself was a complete farce, an open bosses' conspiracy to try to smash militant picketing, then the Appeal was even more so: so much, that Judge Widgery blatantly defined the purpose of the sentence, on men whose only crime was normal trade union activity, as a deterrent.

His aim was "total quietness", and any reduction in the sentences, or repudiation of the verdict of 'Conspiracy', would "undo all the good work that had been produced."

Frighten

Widgery and his class hate and fear militant picketing. They want it restricted by law and controlled and battered by the power of special police squads. And they have used the Shrewsbury show trials to frighten and intimidate workers as well.

Unless the working class acts to frighten and intimidate the bosses' state into freeing Des and Eric, then Widgery's "good work" will continue to reverberate through the class struggle.



WIDGERY - putting the frighteners on.

But for too long now, action was kept to a bare minimum. In fact, at official level, it was non-existent. At first, there was the excuse that a Labour Government would get in soon and free these victims of Tory 'justice'. It didn't. Then, a softly softly approach was adopted in the hope of sweetening the appeal judges.

Rats

Now the chips are down. If we don't act now, all the yellow rats who have left things get to this stage will be heard to utter soothing words about how soon Des and Eric will be able to get parole!

UCATT Gen. Sec. George Smith, who opposed any campaign for the Shrewsbury victims and said they were criminals (and that was even before they were convicted!) now has the nerve to say he is shocked. Too shocked for action, of course...

A lot of others, who have the power to act, are doing a lot of talking.

Scruff

But already workers are on strike, workers who are not prepared to let the empty talk go on any longer. Up and down the country, workers at building sites, and some factories too, are letting it be known that this is their issue and their fight. They are still few: but this time, instead of just lobbying and marching, they are going to other sites and works, to docks and industrial estates, to GET OTHER WORKERS OUT.

The North Wales Defence Committee, the mainstay of the campaign so far, has called for action "on an even larger scale than was used in releasing the Pentonville Five". Every trade unionist, they say, must stand up and fight.

That means first, strike action here and now, irrespective of the inaction or vague promises of the trade union leaders and officials. And it means taking those leaders by the scruff and insisting that they call the official action that's been missing up to now, and that could mobilise the vast power of organised labour.

Eric Tomlinson (left) and Des Warren



MINERS A VICTORY FOR SOLIDARITY

THE DECISION of the N.U.M. to recommend rejection in a coalfield ballot to be held in two weeks' time of the NCB's productivity proposals in a victory for solidarity

What was crucially at stake in the negotiations with the NCB was miners' unity as a work force, as well as miners' living standards and conditions.

At every stage of negotiation, the chief objective of the NCB has been to widen the gap between the 86,000 face workers and the 144,000 other miners, underground and surface workers, and, this done, to disintegrate the hard-won unity of the face workers

by pegging their pay rises to pit productivity rather than national productivity.

With no two seams the same, with the tremendous variation from coal field to coal field, (as well as variations in mechanisation) locally measured productivity would vary from pit to pit.

Originally, the NCB had offered the local productivity scheme and a system whereby non-face workers would receive 50% of the bonus paid to the face man. They conceded that this would be calculated at the national level, but still insisted on the local productivity measurement for the faceworkers.

This was the principle they wanted to establish, the thin end of the wedge that could lead to the effective dismembering of the NUM.

At the last negotiations, the union managed to push the figure up from 50% to 65% for non-face workers, but they accepted the pit-productivity principle.

Its rejection last Thursday by a vote of 14 to 12 reversed the previous decision and made the outcome of the forthcoming ballot almost certain to be favourable - particularly as the main advocates of the NCB offer are the relatively small Leicester and Nottingham fields, while its main opponents come from the big Yorkshire and Scottish fields.

NUM leader, Joe Gormley, made no bones about his disappointment with the new decision. That is his right. But the attack he launched on Communist Party Industrial Organiser, Bert Ramelson, is a sign that the behind-the-scenes battle could be a very dirty one indeed.

Manchester builders give a lead - HOW TO GET THEM OUT

ON FRIDAY, Nov. 1st, four Manchester building sites staged a half-day stoppage, called by Pochins (Oxford Road) Manchester Polytechnic site.

Pochins was one of the few sites in the country to go into action BEFORE the Appeal, only to be told "confidentially" by local Charter members that they "had it on good authority" that the outcome of the Appeal was already 'fixed' and the lads' sentences would be suspended.

On Friday, the men knew better. At a mass meeting of the strikers, Ian Heyes - site convenor at Pochins - proposed a further half day stoppage on Tuesday Nov. 5th, with a mass meeting to plan further action. Several other sites would be leafleted to come out, as well as the 3,000 strong Direct Works Dept.

Strike

A motion from Charter to have a whole day strike and no mass meeting (instead, for people to go to the lobby of UCATT head office in London, and attend the Charter meeting on the Wednesday night at Hulme Labour Club), was heavily defeated, and some irreverent individuals were heard to ask what had happened to the famous suspended sentences.

Ian Heyes pointed out that the mass meeting wouldn't prevent anyone who wanted to from going either to the London lobby or the Charter meeting, but that a full day stoppage (although it may sound more militant) would put the dampers on full participation at the mass meeting.

At this mass meeting the Pochins men intend to propose an all-out stoppage until Des and Eric are freed. "Whether we succeed", Ian told Workers Fight, "will depend on how much work we can put in before Tuesday". If they do succeed, the majority of Manchester's building workers will be on strike from Tuesday.

Docks

But that's not all. Harold Youd, a leading shop steward on Manchester's docks, spoke at the meeting on Friday and said that, given a strong lead from the builders, there was a good chance of dockers coming out too.

On Friday the 8th, moreover, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council has sponsored a big meeting to discuss action for the jailed pickets. It's hoped that delegates will come from Manchester's major Trafford Park engineering plants.

If the builders have already committed themselves to action, that will strengthen the hand of those who will be calling for all-out local strikes.

And that's just the picture in one city. With actions like these going on all over the country, Des and Eric could be out of jail in no time at all.

"FINALLY, and without having consulted the General Council, Mr. Murray undertook that it would unanimously press for all the eight points in the TASS resolution to be implemented if Mr. Gill would withdraw his motion, an assurance which was rapturously received by the delegates. Mr. Scanlon and Mr. Gill exchanged a long hard look across the hall, and then went off for a private conversation. Somebody suggested a five minute adjournment, but the chairman, Lord Allen, failed to take the hint and all was nearly lost. But just as he was putting resolution 49 to the vote, Mr. Gill reappeared and ... agreed to withdraw it. The day had been saved for the Labour Government."

That, according to one employers' paper, is how the Social Contract was clinched. It is now a matter of sheer speculation to wonder whether the Social Contract started out as a simple manoeuvre to get more votes, or to get a pay pause which would encourage the capitalists to

THE NECK-TIE OR THE NOOSE

two ways of 'controlling' the bosses' breathing

by Jack Price

put their faith in Labour and their money into industry, or whether its transformation into a kind of national plan was envisaged from the start. Certainly, the TUC's enthusiasm for it arose from seeing it as more than just a cover up for wage restraint.

WARNINGS

In the words of the TUC itself, "The Social Contract is the TUC's anti-inflation charter ... the Social Contract is a strategy for economic success. Out of this, greater social justice and better wages

and conditions can be won."

It is a fact that many trade unionists and even militants have tended to look at the Contract in this way, hoping for some patent 'cure' for the frightening spectre of inflation. So perhaps, after all the urgent warnings to ignore the Contract as a con-trick, it is time to examine the other side of its face.

Right from the outset, the Social Contract was seen by its champions in the labour movement as the "social side" of a national plan whose economic side was laid out in the White Paper "The Re-

generation of British Industry", sired by Anthony Wedgwood Benn. This is hardly surprising since roaring inflation has always been the occasion for "national plans" — both of the Left and of the Right. And like any other plan, the Social Contract/Industrial Regeneration plan explicitly committed itself to control.

That the control which is envisaged is more far-going than any other recent proposals is not because of any sudden conversion to Socialism or anything else so subversive of Labour values. It is because of the grave situation facing British capitalism. The clear prospect of widespread bankruptcies, company collapses and even slump does not act on the capitalists like a cold shower. On the contrary it leads to ever greater chaos in the ranks of capital, increasing speculation, swindle, refusal to spend money on new machinery and refusal to produce. In short: panic.

CONTROL

At the same time these, as well as other tendencies within the system (like the decline of certain industries like ship-building and aircraft) threaten the working class with not only the decline in value of wages, but with mass unemployment.

To protect the system from its masters, therefore, its cunning servants devise a plan. They say to the workers "without the masters you will have no jobs and therefore no wages" and they say to the employers "without control you'll have a revolution round your ears".

It is quite clear, of course, that not too much attention is being paid on either side. But the fact that control — any small amount of it — over the bosses has met with their strong resistance, means that any proposals to assert such a plan appear almost revolutionary, and will certainly need to be fought for.

PROPERTY

It is in this context that the argument about "hand-outs" has arisen. The employers are demanding that the Government funnel about £3,000 million into their pockets as "industrial investment". Harold Lever, Labour's millionaire Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chief economic advisor, has gone some of the way to meeting them by suggesting a "float" of £1,000 million to be doled out through the banks; while Dennis Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has already hinted at agreement with the CBI on a number of tax concessions and price changes that are worth about a further £1,500 million to the bosses.

All this means that those who have brought us (and in some cases even themselves) to the brink of ruin are to be rewarded by massive cash hand-outs — with neither control, conditions nor scrutiny.

The "Left", in turn,

demand that there be at least some guarantees that this money will go into industry. They point out that the last time the big businessmen got any 'incentive to invest' they didn't invest in industry at all. For instance, when Tory Chancellor Anthony Barber removed credit controls in 1971, the increased money supply was invested in property and commodity speculation, not industry.

DESTROY

In 1972, insurance companies and pension funds alone had £3,248 million invested in property. This figure is now over £4,000 million. Benn himself motivated his proposals to increase control over the operations of the industrialists by reference to this same tendency: "In 1971, investment for each worker in British manufacturing industry was less than half that in France, Japan or the United States, and well below that in Germany or Italy. In spite of the measures to encourage investment [the removal of credit controls and the Tories' 1972 Industry Act] taken since then, it has still lagged behind; indeed it was significantly less in 1973 than it was in 1970."

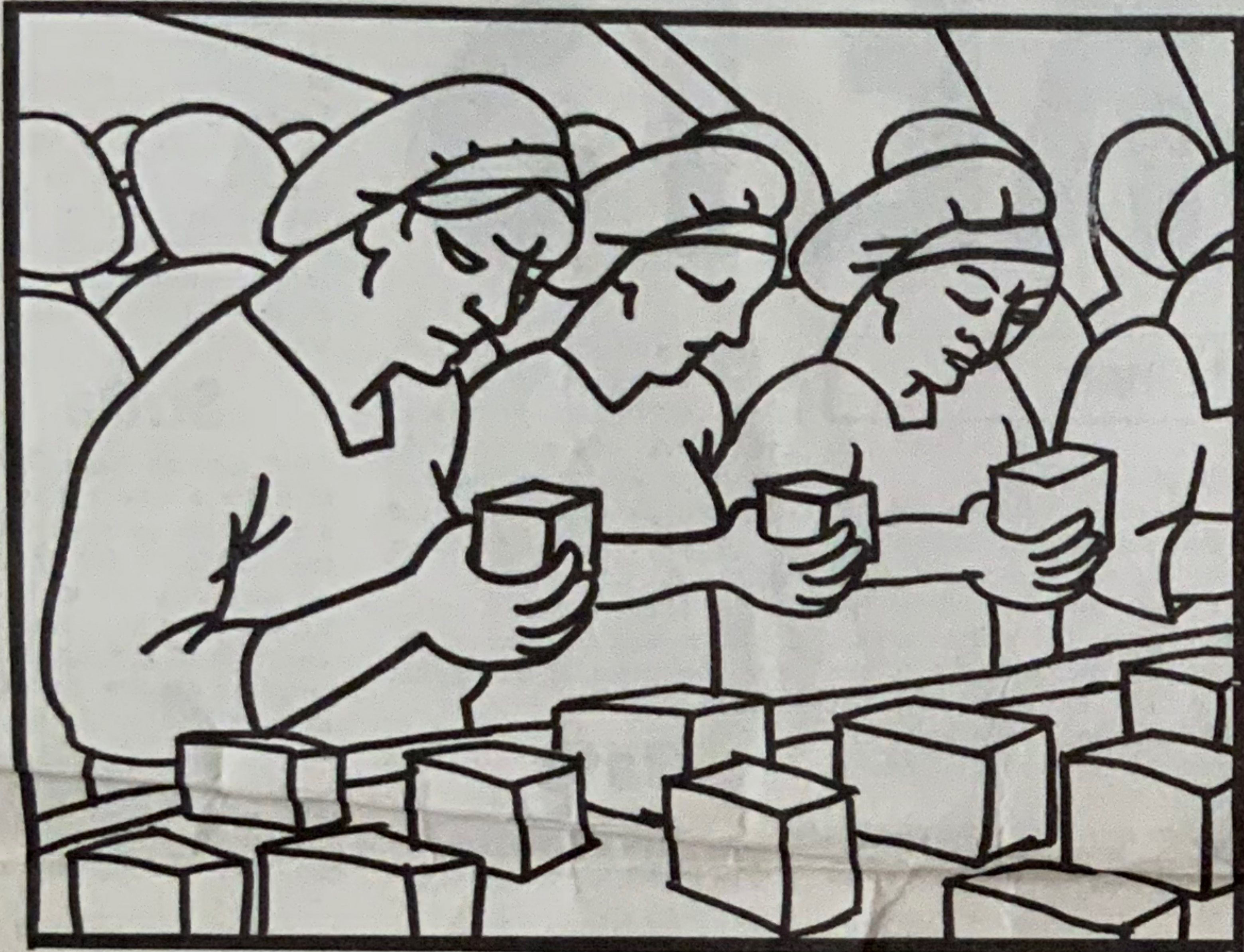
That meant one thing: the capitalists were not to be trusted. "This requires" concluded Benn "a closer, clearer and more positive relationship between Government and Industry." It was to achieve this, not to dismantle capitalism or destroy it, that he proposed the National

rate bonanzas for the employers but an extension of nationalisation and control of foreign trade, the TUC followed this up the very next day with a statement "that any further financial assistance to industry should be selective and should be coupled with accountability by the firms to the Government and with public participation in their control, and that the assistance should not be through the commercial banking system."

Likewise, control is the main point of the TUC's comments on the Labour Government's consultative document on the proposed Employment Protection Act.

The TUC, in addition to proposing a number of useful but still inadequate reforms which in no way limit the freedom of action of the capitalists (like extending the paid period of maternity leave to 12 weeks), proposes that "a worker appealing against a decision to dismiss him should retain his job, or be suspended on full pay until his appeal is dealt with; regional arbitration committees should be established by the Conciliation and Arbitration Service...;" and, most important, "redundancies should not take place without the approval of the Department of Employment."

It also repeats its demand for control over handouts, presses the Government "to deal with the Lump" which it describes as "bogus self-employment" and demands that Labour "prohibit private fee-charging employment"



WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER Issues the national conference must tackle

DELEGATES turned up last Saturday (Oct. 26th) to what many thought was to be the first national conference of the Working Women's Charter Campaign. However, in no sense was it such a conference.

First, it turned out that though some members of the Steering Committee had thought it was to be a national conference, others had been under the impression that it was to be a London meeting. Because many delegates had come from outside London, it was decided that they should be included in the voting, and a further vote allowed observers to vote as well.

However, because it was not fully a national meeting and many areas had not received invitations, it was decided that amendments to the Charter could not be discussed.

The confusion over the extent of the Conference meant that further time was taken deciding whether an organisational structure should be determined before strategy was worked out, or vice versa. Because it wasn't a proper national conference, structure had to be forsaken, even though a proposal had been made from the organising committee.

At last a debate on strategy was opened, but the large number of people wishing to speak meant that time for contributions was soon cut

down to 2 minutes per person, and the conference ended hastily with a decision to reconvene the conference on a definite London basis to prepare for a proper national conference.

At such a reconvened meeting, or before, the following areas should be discussed.

1. Preparation for the national conference, with delegates from all bodies working around the Charter, political groupings supporting it, and interested organisations of the labour movement, and in particular, representatives from recent women's struggles.

Methods

Such a conference should be prepared and preceded by a full circulation of documents on methods of work and amendments to the Charter. Given the often vague and un-specific nature of many of the points of the Charter, this could provide a really useful way both to involve grassroots organisations in a constructive discussion on women's needs, and also to bring in new ideas. Already, there have been proposals for very necessary enlargement of the demands for nurseries and other publicly provided facilities to take a great deal of the burden of housework and childcare off the backs of women; and for a fight to equalise

women's rights and status within the labour movement. Other amendments could include more specific demands in relation to women claimants, etc.

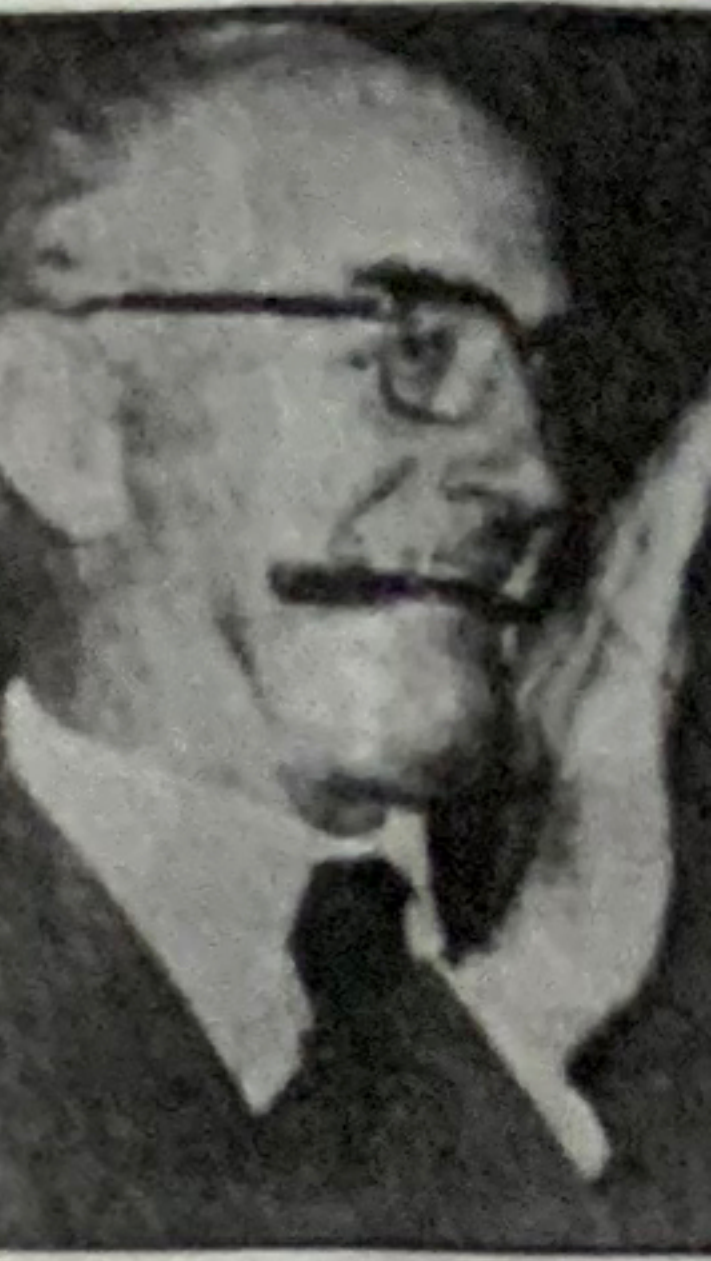
2. The setting up of a permanent national structure and organisation, with centralised publications which would be a focus for information gathering and research work, for publicising successes, backing up women's struggles, organising demonstrations and pickets and bringing the demands of the Charter to the attention of meetings and conferences of the labour movement through resolutions and leaflets; and finally, getting the Charter Campaign affiliated to other bodies and organisations, such as the National Rank and File organisation.

3. Methods of local organisation and work, to include initiatives for factory groups and branches to help women to organise themselves within the trade union movement and to push for the inclusion of the Charter's demands in regular pay claims, and to agitate at local and municipal level for the provision of nurseries and other facilities.

Given such an approach, there is no reason why the Working Women's Charter Campaign cannot make a real impact in the liberation of women today.

Sue Leigh

Parliamentary obstruct the face of restriction traditional freedom of Unless concerted a taken against them, it repeat of 1964, when ditched its program feeble reforms bec opposition from the b This has already st number of con (Pilkingtons, British onian and others announced their re carry out previous



Scanlon — a long hard

Price deaba goes on...

IN HIS letter to Workers Fight (No.72) John O'Mahony argues that any 'meaningful' price control is impossible under capitalism. The word 'meaningful' here begs a whole question. If it is taken to mean that no capitalist government can rationally plan the allocation of labour time between the various different needs of society, then he is, of course, correct. If it is otherwise then there would be little point in publishing Workers Fight.

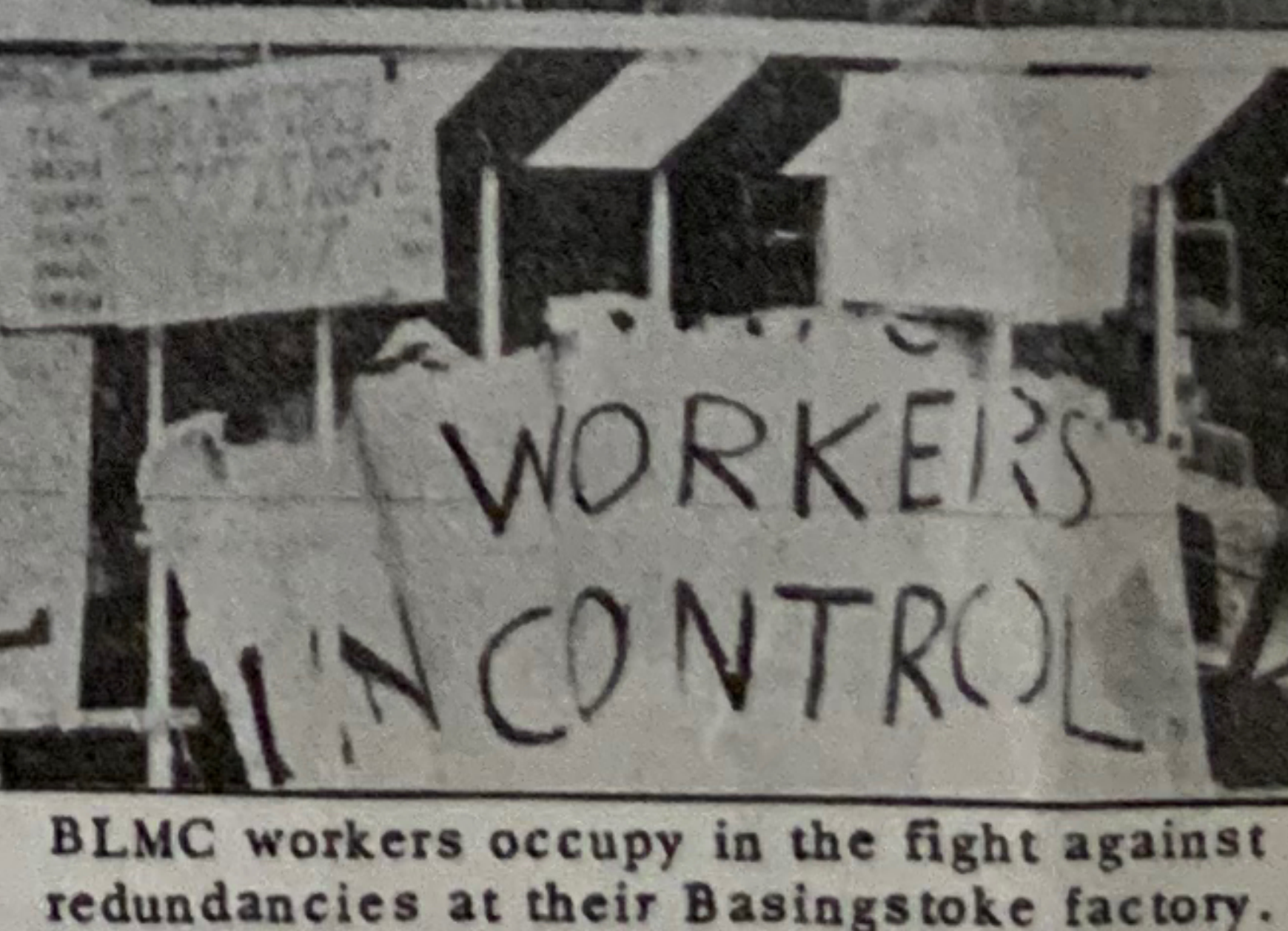
False

If however the point is that it is impossible for governments to influence prices, then the argument is false. Quite obviously governments can and do influence prices through such measures as subsidies (which were mentioned in taxation, monetary policy and the setting of prices in nationalised industries. This is not to say that the law of value no longer functions. It is to say that it functions in a very modified form from that described by J.O.M. In the steel industry, for example, prices have been kept down as a matter of government policy which is very much to the advantage of those capitalists who buy steel.

J.O.M. again correctly states that socialists should advocate price control. But his article in WF did not do that. Rather it pointed out how Labour government was backing down in the face of capitalist opposition to price controls. Of course, if it is impossible for governments to influence prices, then the headline "Healey backs down on price control" is nonsense. But then if it really is impossible for governments to influence prices, why are capitalists clamouring for controls to be dropped? Would they not prefer to keep them for the window-dressing purpose, which was of course the principle aim of exercise anyway?

Reform

The demand for price controls merely poses reform within capitalism without mobilising the working class for the overthrow of capitalism. We are not concerned with advocating this or that variation of capitalist rule. In getting rid of it altogether. The demand for a sliding scale



BLMC workers occupy in the fight against redundancies at their Basingstoke factory.

Enterprise Board, workers' participation and the Government's right to investigate the accounts of privately owned industry.

The fact that these proposals are inextricably linked with the Social Contract has made the TUC General Council line up against the Levers and Healeys in the Labour Party who repudiate such accountability. For it is their preparedness to leave out any practical accounting that undermines the Social Contract from the other side of the class fence.

When the Tribune MPs told Wilson at the first Parliamentary Labour Party meeting after the election that there should be no bargain-

agencies.' The division between the right wing Healey - Lever - Jenkins group and the Benn - Tribune "lefts" is thus a very real one. But this division is small compared with the gap between what this "left" proposes, and what is really called for.

Their conception of a "plan" essentially envisages a completely passive working class. The link between the plan and the Social Contract serves to bring this out most clearly: the workers' side of the Social Contract is, when all's said and done, lying down and keeping quiet.

Meanwhile, the capitalist class will engage in every kind of Parliamentary and extra-

Parliamentary obstruction in the face of restrictions to its traditional freedom of action. Unless concerted action is taken against them, it will be a repeat of 1964, when Labour ditched its programme of feeble reforms because of opposition from the bankers.

This has already started. A number of companies (Pilkingtons, British Caledonian and others) have announced their refusal to carry out previously made

investment plans unless the Government backs down again.

PASSIVE

And the workers aren't prepared to be passive. Quite apart from the upsurge of struggles over wages and conditions, Benn has received dozens of requests from factory convenors to meet them to discuss nationalisation of the firms they work in.

This is a hint of the fighting power that could be called up to defend a Labour Government that was prepared to stand up to the capitalists.

Thus both sides are shaping up for a struggle.

But it is a struggle that the Labour Party, both right and left (as well as the TUC) is not prepared to wage. Even while the left Labourites counterpose themselves (in words) and their plan to the will of the employers, they counter-

pose themselves and their plan (in fact) to the struggle-activity of the working class. And it's not even as if they just refuse to involve themselves in and encourage the extra-parliamentary struggle. The performance of the lefts in parliament is no less miserable than their performance outside.

And yet any control worthy of the name is something that only the working class can secure — and only the

working class and its loyal and directly elected representatives should exercise.

On the record, the Labour lefts, like the TUC General Council, have shown a greater loyalty to maintaining a "favourable bargaining situation" (that is, a booming capitalism) than they have to the working class.

The nationalisation and state control we have come to know has meant vast, often inefficient and always bourgeois-minded bureaucracy. Even if the Government were an extremely left one and full of good intentions, what is really needed is control by workers over industry and distribution through shop committees, trade unions and other workers' organisations.

CREDIT

Moreover, the new regime that the Social Contract fraudulently promised to herald should not be burdened to death by 'compensation' debts. This sort of "socialism" on the never-never will never be socialism. So — no compensation for big business.

The present debate on Government handouts basically reveals the inadequacy of all solutions, however well intentioned, that fall short of a nationalisation of all the banking, credit and financial instit-

tutions. That is the only way to control investment and simultaneously submit it to a plan working in the interests of, and decided on by, the working class. Nationalisation and centralisation of these these institutions should be done on the basis of a restoration of the savings of the small investor but not a penny to the banking and big business grantees.

ACUTE

What the industrialists are presently clamouring for is nothing less than money with menaces. If they don't get the money, they say, there will be mass unemployment. (Mass unemployment, that is, at a time of acute shortages: food shortages, housing shortages, shortages in manning of public and social services and so on.) If they dare either to carry out their threat of redundancy or attempt in any way to sabotage attempts to introduce even half hearted controls, their firms should be occupied by workers and they should be thrown out. While demanding the expropriation of such companies "from above", workers should not wait, but act "from below".

Steps toward control of the industries in which we spend our lives working and on which our livelihoods depend are necessary, and they should be done as a right, and not purchased as part of either a phony con-trick or a real contract.



Scanlon — a long hard look



Trades Union Congress — voting for the Social Contract

Price control — the debate goes on...

More letters on back page

of wages not only presents an immediately practical way in which the working class can defend its living standards, but also provides a demand which can mobilise workers towards the overthrow of capitalism.

Likewise on Northern Ireland. We do not demand that British troops do this, that or the other. We demand that they get out. However, when we point out how the Labour government backs down to the backward Orange bigots, does that logically imply that we are endorsing the presence of British troops, if only to strike at the Loyalists? Of course it doesn't. Or, to take another example, when Labour came to power in 1964 it did so on the basis of an expansionary policy for British capitalism. It was very soon forced to climb down by international finance. Of course socialists don't go around demanding 'an expansionary capitalism', but when the Labour government backs down on this, is it not quite correct to point out the fact and explain it?

Andrew Roberts

Not the whole story

J.O.M.'s letter (WF72) is quite right to warn against the misleading aspect of the headline 'Healey backs down on Price Control'. To suggest that a government running the capitalist system can do anything to intervene effectively in the basic market forces of capitalist anarchy would be wrong in fact, and could indeed detract from the need of workers to intervene themselves in the best way of all — by pushing wages up.

But his letter failed to make one important qualification. All too often the question of prices is treated in terms only of this (entirely right in itself) Marxist understanding of capitalism, failing to take account of a reality which has been somewhat modified.

A very large proportion of workers' income is spent on things like fares, rates, gas, electricity, rent and taxes (not just income tax, but also the notoriously regressive purchase tax — now VAT — and other tariffs that greatly affect the price of alcohol and tobacco). Then there are school dinners, dental and health charges, radio and TV licences, nursery facilities (if one can find them!) etc.

Reform

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IT REQUIRES effort to tear through the shrouds of scholasticism covering the figure of John Milton, who died 300 years ago. But the effort is worthwhile, for the voice of Milton is that of the first openly revolutionary poet in English literature, and of a man whose life and art are inseparably bound up with the process of the English bourgeois revolution between 1640 and 1660.

Milton was deeply involved in the events of these years, and his great work *Paradise Lost* in particular gains its power and authority from his intense grappling with the history around and within him.

The forces of the English revolution, in breaking the fetters of the established Church and Monarchy, and drastically altering society for the benefit of developing capitalism, had produced, over a long period, a revolutionary ideology, Puritanism.

Free will

Expressed in the terms of the religious struggle, this represented in essence the idealised will of the bourgeois in struggle against the institutions of a feudal past. Puritanism combined two features that are vital in understanding Milton. One was predestination — the idea that God had pre-ordained the victory of the righteous Parliamentarians over the reactionary forces in the Civil War; the other was free will — expressing the individualism of the bourgeois revolutionary who believed that by his own efforts and on his own responsibility he could create the conditions he required, and thus fulfil the 'word of God'.

The most radical of the Puritans, including Milton, believed that their victory in the Civil War, the elimination of King and bishops, and the breaking of barriers between the self and God, would usher in the 'Kingdom of Christ on earth'.

These hopes were dashed by the reality of the

demand which revolutionaries should not be 'above' making. It is of course a demand for reform, but only sectarians would ignore it or deny the need for it. After all, higher wages, pensions and benefits, better housing, health and education are also 'reformist' demands, but they all form part of the general struggle to improve workers' living standards under capitalism.

Jane Gordon

Lament for a Lost ideal

300 years after the death of the poet John Milton

class struggles in the revolution. The splits within the Parliamentary forces between the upper strata of the bourgeoisie, the Presbyterians, and the petty bourgeois masses behind the Independents, the use of the mass movement to defeat the King's forces and then the eventual crushing of the radical Levellers and Diggers, the consolidation of power under Cromwell and the later compromise of royal restoration, carried through a partial bourgeois revolution most effectively. But it did so at the expense of the lower middle class and artisans who had borne most of the fighting, and of the ideology of a biblical millenium which had done so much to sustain them in it.

Poetry

Their aspirations were for a kind of "classless" — in fact, petty bourgeois — democracy that was incompatible with further productive development and the bourgeois need for a political and economic framework in which to consolidate their rule.

Milton himself was hostile to the democrats, believing the interests of the revolution in the 1650s to lie with a few individuals round Cromwell. But with the restoration of the monarchy, the 'spiritual' revolution was finally betrayed, and Milton's poetry, working through the widest historical and philosophical field of reference, attempts to come to terms with this, the defeat of all his hopes.

Milton never saw his art as contradicting his

revolutionary activity. He saw poetry as a mode of action, interpreting and communicating the essence of human experience in relation to the universe, to educate and elevate that experience. Combined with his passionate, proud nature and his massive energy, this produces a majestic poetic style, forged in

so the fight for the earthly paradise of the revolutionaries is replaced, in defeat, by the striving for the individual "paradise within". Thus are 'God's ways' justified to man.

But none of this can explain the revolutionary energy and dynamism of *Paradise Lost*, because this energy all goes through the figure of Satan, who fills the poem with a tragic spirit of revolt, the striving of the individual will against a corporate tyranny.

It is Satan who dares to pit his will against God, who dares to declare total war and create the "evil" which Adam and Eve then choose to accept, and which brings man out of the luxurious parasitism in Eden into the long toil of productive labour, at the end of which is promised rest in Christ.



Satan — a heroic energy

defiant, blind solitude and structured in the form of epic, the breadth of which he needed to render a fallen world comprehensible in terms of the Christian myth.

The defeats of the revolution caused him to think that the majority of mankind, on their own responsibility, were incapable of attaining the 'grace' requisite to "Christ's Kingdom". This was attributed to the Fall. Only the Elect could overcome this, by their own efforts of reason and will, whereas the majority will always be sinful and imperfect. incapable of fulfilling "the word of Christ". And

Thus is the myth. But for Satan there is no rest, and his surging power is such that the rebel Milton almost denies the reassurances of Christianity even while striving to assert them.

In Satan is the spirit of individual revolution which cannot succeed, but beats savagely, heroically against the omnipotent. It is that spirit which Milton cannot subdue in himself, no matter how much he exalts "reason" as the light of the elect. And it is that crucial core of Milton, with all its tragic limitations in the bourgeois consciousness, that we need to point to in order to do justice to his memory.

ALAN HASLAM

Title: Workers' Fight, No. 75
Organisation: Workers' Fight
Date: 1974

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