

## FIVE IN—ALL OUT!

**THE FIRST TRADE UNIONISTS** imprisoned as a result of the Government's Industrial Relations Act was soon followed by strikes of solidarity from dockers. London, Liverpool and Hull were virtually at a standstill as over 26,000 dockers came out in support of their fellow workers.

The prison order was made by Sir John Donaldson, president of the National Industrial Relations Court, against five dockers for contempt, for defying its order to stop threatening to black companies who had lorries which had crossed dockers' picket lines at Midland Cold Storage.

Dockers have been mounting pickets at the new inland container and cold storage depots claiming that this work should be done by registered dock labour. The dockers' pickets were so effective that at the United Kingdom cold store at Dagenham men were going to be laid-off on July 28. At Chobham Farm an agreement was reached which gave 18 registered dockers jobs there. The original depot workers were given 'more menial tasks to allow the dockers to unload containers and operate transporting machinery'. Although this agreement did not mean the sack for any of the depot workers the attitude of the dockers was that this work is ours by right.

Since the introduction of containers the port employers have closed down waterside facilities and opened up depots outside the registered dock labour areas. Some of these new depots are owned by

companies not normally associated with the docks but others are the same employers under a different name. Their tactic is to get the work done by cheaper and less well organised labour. The Midland Cold Storage was registered as a company in January this year. But by devious means of concealment it is really part of the Vestey empire who owned a company which closed down its Thameside operations as recently as March.

### SHORTSIGHTED

About a third of the dockers' jobs have disappeared since the acceptance of Devlin. The containerisation of cargoes still remains a threat to jobs. Employers see inland depots as a means of making huge profits from containers and from the cheaper labour they employ there.

However the London dockers have been shortsighted in the past not to see how things were moving against them. Instead of fighting Devlin they have accepted the generous redundancy payments which have bought off trouble for the employers and the Transport and General Workers' Union. Three years ago when these inland depots first started to operate they turned down the chance to work there as registered

dockers and bring the areas within the dockers' scheme. They just did not want to know then. Instead it was left to the market porters' section of the T&GWU to negotiate and help to draw up the agreements for the new depot workers.

The earlier Merseyside blacking was against two or three companies who refused to negotiate agreements with the dockers. In London the dockers were seeking to take over the jobs at the container depots. Considering how long they have been organised these depot workers have made substantial gains. It is true that their wages and conditions are still below those of the dockers but really the dockers missed their opportunity three years ago.

### WORKER vs. WORKER

Last week we saw lorry drivers and depot workers mounting their own pickets outside the docks. The worker vs. worker situation could only suit the employer. Some did pay the wages of their employees while on picket but the fear of losing their jobs was uppermost. Instead of getting together the dockers decided to use their organised strength against their own class and fellow-workers.

Fortunately when the news came through that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of the five dockers, the lorry drivers and depot workers ended their picket and came out in solidarity with the dockers. They realised that it was a class issue in which all must defend those who have defied the law. Despite the fact that the dockers' pickets were threatening their jobs, when the law intervened, they showed magnificent support. All the bitterness and hostility was forgotten, the issue became one of an injury to five, is an injury to all.

With the Industrial Relations Act in force, it was only a matter of time before trade unionists were imprisoned. It is no good the Government saying, correct as it may be, that the same thing could have happened in an ordinary court. For this shows how governments legislate on a class basis. It is the bosses' law and

the Act was only introduced to reinforce the class structure of our society.

It is tragic that the cause behind the dockers' action was really a scramble for jobs. Ever since Devlin, the T&GWU and the employers have been destroying the jobs of thousands of dockers. In most cases the golden handshakes have been accepted eagerly. Rather than getting together in the early stages of this struggle, dockers have fought a desperate rearguard action. Granting that the old port employers have moved from the new lucrative Thameside areas and set up inland depots (see *Time Out*, July 21-27 issue), dockers should have made it their policy that all workers doing work connected with the docks should be registered dock labour. This would have united depot workers, lorry drivers and dockers. It only needed a little vision to see that with containers and Devlin the traditional dockers' industry was going to change and was going to shrink. To safeguard their own interests they should have combined with these other workers, otherwise the strength and solidarity they have created over the years would be lost.

### CONCERN OF ALL

The imprisonment of the dockers is now the concern of all trade unionists. The dockers themselves have already shown where they stand. The print workers in Fleet Street stopped all but the *Sunday Times* last Saturday night and only the intervention of the executive of the electricians' union prevented a strike on Friday. Shop stewards at Fords and British Leyland have already pledged support and strikes are likely when workers return from their annual holidays.

Jack Jones, the general secretary of the T&GWU, and Lord Aldington's report solves very little since it only increases voluntary redundancies payments, and subjects containers depot usage to negotiations. The report will come before a dockers' delegate meeting on Thursday. This will not help dockers very much and should not prevent the continuing solidarity being shown with those imprisoned.

Mr. Feather and the TUC are due

to meet the Government and the employers on Tuesday in their efforts to solve the economic troubles of capitalism. It is unlikely that this meeting will now take place. Mr. Feather's statement: 'Putting people in prison in cases like this solves nothing. It makes already difficult problems much harder to resolve.' The Act must be suspended. This shows how extreme measures from the Government puts the trade union leaders on the spot. Are they to carry on with their co-operation with the Government or support the dockers? A path between the two will somehow be worked out, for it is certain that these leaders, even the 'left-wing' ones, would rather act as statesmen than as trade unionists.

Workers should not call on the TUC to do anything. It is not leaders that we want but pure and simple class solidarity. We do not want another lot of leaders in their place who would tread the same well-trodden path of collaboration with governments and 'gaffers'.

Our past history tells us that if enough workers show their solidarity, then the five dockers will be out shortly. The Government might well have thought it had picked its issue and moment well, but as soon as the lorry drivers and depot workers joined in, it backfired on them. The Government this week could well face a crisis which could be its downfall. Nothing frightens our foreign creditors more than a dock strike. The organised strength of the working class could bring Heath down, but rather than tamely let Mr. Wilson take over, perhaps our new-found solidarity could be used to aim for something more than a change of masters. Is it not time that we made governments and bosses redundant? Workers at Briant's have taken a few steps in this direction. For unlike others on what is vaguely called the 'left', we believe the time is always ripe for taking over our workplaces as long as men and women want to take that step. There is no historical process to go through, only a desire by enough people involved to kindle the flame.

Could not the opposition to the Act and the imprisonment of dockers kindle such a flame of revolt for workers' control? Could not we start producing and transporting the goods for people instead of the bosses' profits?

P.T.

Footnote: Dockers in France are now blacking British ships.

## Rio Tinto Branches Out

**EVERYONE BY NOW** must know about that massive industrial organization Rio Tinto Zinc, which has a finger in every pie, and stretches all over the world. What they may not yet know is that Rio Tinto is not just concerned with mining and connected industries. It has now also entered the field of censorship, the control of what is published in books, which is quite a jump from prospecting for minerals and digging them up.

The Friends of the Earth have been planning to bring out a glossy, coffee table book, entitled *Eryri, the Mountains of Longing*, to be published by George Allen and Unwin, which would cost £10. No doubt some unkind things were said in this work about Rio Tinto's plans to vandalise Snowdonia (*Eryri* is the old name for Snowdon), and this could not be allowed. If one is as powerful and rich as Rio Tinto Zinc there is no problem. It is enough to complain to the publishers about 'serious errors of fact', that is to say true statements that show Rio Tinto in an unfavourable light, and—hey presto!—the book is withdrawn or suppressed. It is all done very quietly, and in a gentlemanly fashion, and the general public knows nothing about it.

There is a brief report in *The Guardian* (21.7.72), which of course tells us very little. One has to guess what is going on. But it is surely an alarming situation when a mining company can intervene in this way. Even if the book, which has already been published in the United States, really did contain untrue statements the thing to do would be to publish the truth in the form of another book, or pamphlet, and let the general public be the judge. This method of 'behind the scenes' working suggests very strongly that Rio Tinto do in fact have something to hide.

The present writer does not know much about Friends of the Earth, which is presumably one of these new ecological movements, but one cannot help wondering about the value of coffee table books as a means of propaganda. Who can afford £10 for a book? Not I, for one. If you enter the world of the rich you are much more at their mercy. A cheaper book, a paper-back or a pamphlet could be produced without calling in the services of George Allen and Unwin, a big firm, which is no doubt concerned with its respectable image, and does not want to be involved in troublesome lawsuits.

The situation is already developing in some parts of the world where the state is actually less powerful than the big commercial combines. This of course has been so for many years in Latin America, but it is also now the case in some European countries, and looks like becoming the case in Britain. It already is so in Holland so I have heard. Whether we should lament this it is difficult to say. It is a reversal of the tendency of the last half century or so, and a return to the nineteenth century in some ways. As far as we are concerned it is the substitution of one authority for another, and perhaps makes little practical difference. But of course, according to democratic theory, the government is responsible ultimately to the people who have elected it. Rio Tinto is responsible to itself alone. It is therefore an autocracy.

One wonders how far this process can go. If a travel book can be censored why not a political one? The door is wide open. Any wealthy concern can freely stamp on any book or newspaper which publishes unwelcome facts. It is an interesting development which should be watched.

JOHN BRENT.

## QUIT ULSTER!

**A THIRTIES' HOLLYWOOD** movie had a scene of the projected lynching of a negro suspected of doing away with a small boy. During the hullabaloo attending the preparations for the lynching a townsman announces that the small boy has been found; turning away from his task of stacking faggots for the fire, a fellow citizen says in bewilderment, 'What boy?'

Similarly, one recalls a now Establishment-entrenched pioneer in squatting complaining that a *FREEDOM* article had omitted one of the important names in an account of an early squat. Our erstwhile reporter assured him that the names of the tenants were all in the account. 'No,' he said, 'I mean the names of the organisers.'

These two not dissimilar anecdotes recall the remark of Mr. Twomey of the Provisionals when he broke off the recent ceasefire. 'All for sixteen bleeding houses!'

Contemplating the bloody scenes and states of crisis in which modern political dialogues are conducted one discerns a complete divorce of means from ends. Indeed, ends are completely lost in a morass of bloody murders, shifty evasions, plain lying and moralistic clap-trap.

For example, to take something close to hand and topical, the *Socialist Worker*, worthy journal of the International Socialists, carries in its issue of July 22 a statement on Ireland. This statement dated July 17 (before the recent terrible bombings) from the IS Executive Com-

mittee quotes the previous week's statement, 'Much propaganda will be made by Whitelaw and the Tories about the decision of the Provisional IRA to call off the truce. The International Socialists think that this is a misguided and potentially disastrous step for the republican movement.' This, the IS think, needs amplification (so do correspondents in other parts of the paper) and goes on to amplify, 'IS believes that in the situation engineered by the British Army and the UDA in Lenadoon Avenue the breaking of the truce was inevitable. With the Catholic workers threatened with mass onslaught by the British troops and the UDA there can be no question about the duty of socialists to support the armed self-defence of the republican areas—as we made clear last week. Equally there can be no hesitation about our duty to support the IRA and all those forces fighting British imperialism in Ireland. Our criticism of the republican movement is that the logic of its politics has led to grave blunders—both in the indiscriminate bombing campaign which needlessly strengthened the grip of Orange politicians over the Protestant workers.' . . . Perhaps this week IS may issue another statement. In its letter columns (for which no newspaper is completely responsible) occurs the gem, 'It is time that we [the IS] realized that the IRA is the absolutely necessary armed wing of the Catholic community, and as such has the right to expect the full

support of British socialists.'

This wild confusion and irrelevant coupling of Catholicism and socialism obscures the simple power struggle going on in Ireland. The truce was not welcomed by much of the IRA and hardly any of the Protestants. It was only after the truce that the Protestants started playing cowboys and with their barricades and their Al Capone-style assassinations. It was a relief to some of the IRA when they could point out to the peace-hungry people of the Bogside that the British and UDA between them had forced the breaking of the truce. It was mere mischance that made the negotiations both with Wilson and Whitelaw come to naught.

Then came the wild demonstration of strength on Bloody Friday, aimless, purposeless and mindless, which made the British Army's Bloody Sunday look like the efficient, planned, mindful killing it was. It has now been proved to all and sundry that the Provisional IRA was not seeking a truce from weakness, it has fortified the Protestants in their godly righteousness, and has given the Catholic working-class another demonstration of the British Army's brutality which the IRA is willing to save them from or expose them to, whichever is needful.

Connoisseurs of political inability to conform to stereotype (particularly the IS's) might care to note last week's shooting by gunmen of a criminal (as distinct from 'political') prisoner among those demonstrating at a Belfast gaol. Previously they had mistakenly been cheered by Protestants. Secondly note the frosty response of the UDA to the Vanguard rent and rates strike proposal. Even to Protestants something is sacred

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