

Direct Action

For workers' direct control of industry

Inside—Printworkers are blackmailed : Russia, March 1917 : Wilson's wage freeze to continue

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MERCHANTS OF DEATH

COSY-GIN has come and gone, wine and dined at Downing Street, Buckingham Palace—and (with Tory oysters) at the Carlton Club. And the hideous war against the people of Vietnam continues. Napalm, "Lazy Dog" anti-personnel bombs, high explosive and chemicals rain down from the skies, devastating the countryside, destroying the crops and murdering the defenceless peasants and workers.

Appeals by 5,000 American scientists, by Labour MP's, by UN Secretary General U Thant to call a halt to the senseless slaughter fall on deaf ears. Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk and the mass murderers of the Pentagon are hell bent on continued destruction, to the greater glory of the dollar. Soon the number of American servicemen in Vietnam will top the million, as escalation steps up.

War is good business—for some. On February 9, when rumours of peace talks between Washington and Hanoi were gaining ground, there was something approaching panic on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Share prices did a rapid nosedive at the threat that the four-day truce might be indefinitely extended. Happily for the capitalist interests involved, it was a false alarm. The magic "plan", with which Harold Wilson attempted to silence his critics in the House of Com-

mons on February 14, was a non-starter. As Wilson well knew it would be.

The little man with big ideas, having accepted "100 per cent American sincerity to negotiate for peace" and, by implication, approved Johnson's resumption of bombing, continued his comic opera, Common Market junketing round Europe with George Clown. And once again, apparently, the subject was closed, so far as the Labour "Left" was concerned.

Wilson's pose of "honest broker" in the Vietnam conflict is sheer hypocrisy. The British Government is committed in support of the US war. Defence Minister Dennis Healey admitted on February 2 that three hovercraft "incorporating British-made hulls have been used by the US forces for operational trials in Vietnam." In fact, they had been in military use for six months, with only minor modifications to the craft built at Cowes (source *Peace News*, 17.2.67). Thirty-six Labrador dogs from Britain are being trained for use by the US forces in Vietnam at the Jungle Warfare School at Kota Tinggi, Malaya—an ironic contribution to this hideous war by the nation of dog-lovers!

If hovercraft and dogs, why not troops and planes? Because and only because wily Wilson knows such a step might be one too much. He remembers how Eden's abortive Suez invasion of 1956 sparked the biggest and angriest demonstration London had seen since pre-world war days. Let the Easter demonstrations this year be a warning to Wilson. British workers are solidly against involvement with Johnson's Merchants of Death.

● CND'S PARLIAMENTARY ILLUSION—PAGE 2

Roberts-Arundel strike gets aid—needs more

LIGHTNING STRIKES in the Manchester Area are being planned in support of 145 men sacked by the firm Roberts-Arundel of Stockport.

These men were sacked following a walkout on November 28 last year. Disagreement between the workers and the management first began in July, 1965, when the company was taken over by an American combine.

Relatively minor attacks on the workers such as the banning of teabreaks and the smashing of stools were some of the first steps taken by the new bosses. Also, some assembly workers were made redundant.

Then, in November 1966, they announced that they were thinking of taking on women. A few days later, an advert appeared in the local press offering jobs for some female workers. The unions protested about the lack of consultation

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Now Cuba rations sugar

CUBAN WORKERS are witnessing an agricultural miracle in reverse. The island has one of the most fertile soils in the world, but food is tightly rationed. A *Daily Telegraph* reporter in Havana says (31.1.67), "Even sugar is rationed." The weekly meat ration is 12 oz. (of which 6 oz. is second-grade meat). The monthly rations are: butter, 2 oz., coffee 6 oz., beans or lentils 24 oz., cheese 2 oz., chicken 1 bird for persons aged over 65 or under four, fats or cooking oil 1 lb., condensed milk 6 tins, soap 1 bar, toothpaste a tube per family; most clothing is also rationed. Havana Radio (31.1.67, reported *Daily Telegraph* 2.2.67) says fish is rationed to 24 oz. a month, the reason given being to assist the export drive.

CND and the illusion of Parliament

EASTER comes round again, we all march into London, listen to Labour MPs telling us how they will change everything (eventually), have a sing-song and go home.

By this time you would think CND would have learned to distrust and disbelieve the politicians, but they do not and they still believe that Nuclear Disarmament can be achieved through Parliament. When will they ever learn? The left-wing Labour MPs may have gone through their election campaign with CND badges in their lapels, but when they enter Parliament they find they mustn't rock the boat, or they'll be out of a job. Either that or lashed out of recognition by the Party Whip!

Labour's first "peace" move, *i.e.* the biggest arms bill ever, should have given Nuclear Disarmers second thoughts about voting for them. Their second "peace" move, *i.e.* giving 100 (obsolete) nuclear warheads to the (almost obsolete) Polaris fleet should have convinced the peace movement that the difference between Tory and Labour is the difference between V-bombers and Polaris. Some choice!

The CND once believed that a Labour Government would bring about Nuclear Disarmament. Now they have been proved wrong they tell us a left-wing section of the Labour Party will do it instead.

Some day they will have to realise that the path to Nuclear Disarmament does not lie through Parliament, but through the action of the people of Britain against the wishes of Parliament. Then we will again march out of London to complete the job we never really got started on—the demolition of the Aldermaston institution.

Dissatisfaction with the CND leadership seems to be growing, exhibited this year in the separate Committee of 100 demonstration. Many Aberdeen YCND and SWF supporters would rather take some Direct Action with the Committee, but circumstances allow us to go to London only and march with the CND.

This year we can but heckle the MPs again, but next year's march should start in London and end inside a military establishment, to let the politicians know, in no uncertain terms, that we have had enough of their lies and deceit.

IAIN MacDONALD

LETTER

Anti-militarist appeal

DEAR FRIEND,

I am making an appeal on behalf of Robin Warman, who has been in the Colchester Military Prison for the last three months and will serve another three. Since he has just done three days bread and water for refusing "to soldier", it might well be more.

He is not in any strict sense a pacifist, but nevertheless has learnt enough from the Army to be certain that it is morally wrong for him to be in it. At the age of 17 he was talked into "joining up" so as to become a PT Instructor, as he did not know any other way to achieve this. His parents being socialists did consider refusing consent, but eventually decided that they had not the right to interfere.

Soon after qualifying as an instructor, he lost his "tapes", because he was expected not to mix with privates and he persisted in putting friendship before rank.

In July 1964 his elder brother Chris was killed in a car

crash and this upset Rob deeply, his family had always been very united, and the eldest brother had also been killed in a crash three years before. So it was in a somewhat mentally disturbed state that Rob was sent abroad a few months later. He was in the Far East throughout 1965; and it was in Borneo, finding himself actually involved in military action, that his conscience first became troubled by the Army. At the time, however, this was only manifested in terms of fairly violent mutiny. But on return to England, he went absent as soon as he finished his disembarkation leave, going on the run repeatedly until he was finally picked up as a deserter in early October and court martialled.

If and when he comes out in May he will immediately be sent to join his battalion in Germany, unless he can either buy himself out, or the authorities should be persuaded to change their minds and give him his conscientious discharge. Buying himself out would cost £200, his family are in straitened financial circumstances and are in no position to help. As yet £20 has been raised. I should, therefore, like help, either from those who could afford to give something, or from anyone who can needle an MP into putting pressure for a discharge. I should be glad to hear if anyone can help or suggest action in any other direction.

Yours sincerely,

V. J. WARMAN (AEU Shop Steward)

60 Divinity Road, Oxford.

ROBERTS-ARUNDEL STRIKE (cont.)

and also about the fact that women were being taken on for the same jobs from which men had previously been made redundant. It is worth noting that whereas the men had been earning about £20, the women now doing their jobs received about £10.

After some fruitless discussion between union and management, the men walked out. On December 5 the strike was made "official" by the AEU. (This is the first major official strike for over 30 years in the Manchester Area in engineering.)

On the same day, the workers on strike received their cards through the post. An advert appeared in the *Manchester Evening News* addressed to—"Those individuals who appreciate working in a free atmosphere rather than the bureaucratic and restrictive environment of a union shop." However, this did not appear to have much success, as many applicants for the jobs advertised were dissuaded from entering the factory by pickets.

Just after Christmas, the men were offered their jobs back, but at reduced rates and under inferior conditions. This offer was turned down.

Since the walkout, the sacked men have received increasing support. A continuous picket has been maintained. Work from Roberts-Arundel has been "blackened" in some factories and by dockers. Further support is also anticipated. Contributions are also needed. Donations to: The Strike Committee, 125 Wellington Road, Stockport, Cheshire.

RON MARSDEN

LONDON SWF OPEN MEETINGS

Wednesdays : : 8.30 pm

March 15 Technicians' Unions—Discussion

March 29 The Russian Revolution—Talk by Tom Brown. Questions and discussion.

LUCAS ARMS, 245 Grays Inn Rd., London, W.C.1.

PRINTWORKERS BLACKMAILED

OVER the past 18 months the well-known phrase of the thirties, "the sack" has been conveniently dropped in an endeavour to kid people along that such a thing no longer happens. It is now called "redeployment", "redundancy", "encouragement to retire early", or simply "the copper handshake."

The printing industry like the car industry (only on a smaller scale) is experiencing the exercise of rationalisation which in cold terms means "a little more money and more work with fewer men".

Many people including rank-and-file printworkers endeavour to deny this, because they have soaked up the propaganda put out by government, press, radio and TV that they are overpaid, overstaffed and underworked. It's surprising how suddenly so many people claim to have a knowledge of the printing industry, including the Prime Minister, two-bit TV commentators and the noble lords.

I challenge any of them including the apology for a journalist Lord Arran to sit in the machine room of the *News of the World* for a couple of hours on a Saturday night and then honestly make the same derogatory remarks against printworkers. Adequate staffing allows machine crews to get out of the stinking machine room and away from the hellish noise.

Rationalisation has become accepted policy; since the murder of the *News Chronicle* and *Star*, printing workers have been consistently blackmailed with closures. "Economise or we close down," has been the employers' constant demand. The answer to this demand is not easy, in present-day society. What does one do if an employer states bluntly—"We are closing down"? Rationalisation is certainly not the answer, in the short term it looks an easy solution, but it is the road to ultimate unemployment in the industry.

The International Publishing Corporation (IPC) has grasped the present and potential situation very well. It bought out its competitors and progressively closed them down. Temple Press and Cornwall Press are the latest to come under the hammer. The employees of the two print shops have a choice: retire early, leave voluntarily (copper handshake) or be absorbed elsewhere in the IPC network, probably with less money.

The question has got to be asked, how long can this situation be allowed to continue? The print employers claim that new printing techniques need less men and at the same time increase production. If this is the case then the profitability must be greater, in which case, now is the time to actively talk about a shorter working week and longer holidays. It is no good the employers telling us that we couldn't supply the labour to support such a policy, because they have consistently told us we have a surplus of labour.

At first glance, advocating such a policy at this moment of time might appear crazy, but who says we should work 40-odd hours a week with only three weeks holiday per year? These figures are not sacrosanct for all time. They are, or should be, rock-bottom minimum.

INDUSTRIAL SUICIDE

ACCORDING to *Labour News* (from the USA), labour relations over there have moved past another milestone. *Labour News* is issued by the United States Information Service, for consumption in Britain.

The milestone referred to by the American bi-monthly is the fact that the first voluntary no-strike no-lockout contract has been signed between two of the largest restaurants and a union local representing 10,000 employees in New York City.

The contract, it is claimed, has been ratified unanimously by the employees and is regarded in labour circles as a highly significant and major advance in labour-management relations.

According to the contract, the union agrees "that it will not sanction, authorise, encourage or in any way support any strike or so-called 'unofficial and unrehearsed' acts by its members such as wildcat strikes, slowdowns, accidental sabotage and mass sickness and absenteeism. The employers' right to discipline or discharge employees engaging in such prohibited action shall be final and binding upon the union and its members."

Without appearing to be presumptuous, particularly hundreds of miles away, this contract to me has all the makings of a Right Bastard. Catering workers, with a stroke of the pen, have cut off both their arms, and their legs. Even the contents of Fort Knox is not a fair exchange for a signature to that contract.

GUTLESS AND SPOON FED

THE GUTLESS employers of the trawler fishermen crawled behind the Government's incomes policy, when they opposed the trawler fishermen's claim for shorter working hours.

The Industrial Court rejected the claim for a reduction in the present seven-day week of 56 hours to a six-day week of 48 hours without any reduction of pay plus an overtime payment of eight hours at 6s. an hour for Sunday worked at sea.

The union's evidence to the court submitted that following the seamen's strike last year, the National Maritime Board had agreed to reduce the normal working week in the Merchant Service to 48 hours made up of six eight-hour days. Sunday became an overtime day. Trawlermen at sea, the union submitted, worked an 80-hour week on average, and it was not unusual for them to work continuously 48 hours without sleep.

In their submission the employers claimed that the demand in essence was one for increased pay and was inconsistent with the Government's incomes policy.

Mr. Jack Jones, Assistant General Secretary of the T & GWU described the rejection as a scandal and went on to say, "The influence of the Government's White Paper on the period of severe restraint was very strong in this case, and eliminated any possibility of an impartial judgement" [My italics.]

"An industry," said Jack Jones "which has had a long record of peace could become a storm centre of industrial trouble if the trawler employers failed to work out with the union a realistic solution to the men's grievances quickly."

It's in the trawler fishermen's hands as to how long peaceful coexistence will continue; they must realise by now that their employers are not prepared to budge an inch, particularly with the Government strengthening their spine.

BILL CHRISTOPHER

Costly Co-operation!

THE NEW £17,000-a-year boss of the Co-op Wholesale Society plans to hire three deputies at up to £10,000-a-year each. It is reported that rank-and-file trade unionists in Rochdale have formed their own co-op. This will sell off union officials as "General Purpose Bureaucrats" to the CWS for only £9,000 apiece. Asked how his organisation was able to give such grand value at such a low price, the secretary of the Rochdale organisation replied, "We are eliminating the middlemen."

Direct Action

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Pottery workers opt out

THE MOST HEARTENING news of a month in which the Labour Government announced its intention of redoubling attacks on Britain's workers, by an extension of the wage freeze after July 1, came from Stoke-on-Trent, where the National Union of Pottery Workers, 26,000 strong, cut loose from the Labour Party.

The decision to stop the union's £1,000 affiliation fee came following yet another Order by Wilson's grim-faced hatchetman, Michael Stewart, the Economics Minister, blocking payment of a 15s. 6d. pay rise negotiated last June for 1,500 stoneware workers at Denby Pottery, Derbyshire. The increase, due to take effect on August 5 last year, was barred by the Big Freeze. So the NUPW took the employers to court for breach of contract, won its claim and was then asked by the Government to defer payment of the increase until February 15— forfeiting six months' back pay for their impatient members. This they refused to do—and in stepped Iceman Stewart with the threat of his Order.

For once, Stewart did not have the last word. Announcing the NUPW's decision to pull out of the Labour Party, general secretary Alfred Dulson said: "This Government is totally anti-trade union and it is time the rest of the movement woke up to that fact." Twenty-one words that add up to a coming-of-age on behalf of one group of workers.

But his most significant words, quoted by the *Daily Mail* (2.2.67) were these: "We have had more members ask to withdraw from paying the political levy to the party this year than I can ever recall."

In other words, rank-and-file action and pressure had preceded the Union's decision. As we said last month, the realisation that the Labour Party and Government is doing its damndest to prop up British capitalism with money stolen from our wage packets is beginning to gain solid ground. It's quite simple, really. By paying the political levy you help subsidise the thieves. It's like finding burglars stealing your household goods and paying for a taxi to carry the robbers and their loot away in comfort. By opting out of the political levy you at least have the satisfaction of kicking their backside through the front door and down the steps.

This can be done individually—or collectively. As the militant pottery workers have shown, individual action can become a collective decision, when enough union members take it.

Wishy-washy claptrap about the Labour Party being the "mass organisation of the working class", peddled by the self-styled progressives, is wearing thin these days, like the rest of their clapped-out slogans.

The strength of the working class lies in its organisation and action at the point of production. On the job. At shop-floor level. Not in Parliament. Nor in a Labour Party which opposes the workers at every turn.

Let's redouble the campaign to knock the monkeys off our backs. Stopping the political levy is an excellent first step.

Late news: following the pottery workers, five small Lancashire textile unions withdrew levy on Feb. 15. Grimsby fishermen directed union branch to stop affiliation fees (Feb. 17); 300 Sheffield toolworkers are threatening the same. All in protest against freeze.

BREAKING THE FREEZE

ON FEBRUARY 7 the Minister for Economic Affairs declared the Labour Government's intentions on wages. When he met TUC officials, he said that the "nil norm" would continue after June 30 and that the Government would actuate Part II of the Prices and Incomes Act—the "compulsory early warning system". Also they would strengthen it by increasing from three to 12 months the period of postponement of wage increases by preventing backdating.

So you put in your claim and if you get a settlement you wait a month while the Government decides whether or not to refer it to the Prices and Incomes Board; when it does so, the Board and Government spend up to 12 months "investigating" and "considering" it, during which time you can be fined up to £500 for taking *any* action to force your boss to pay up. Then, after 13 months delay, they'll prevent the backdating of any rise you managed to squeeze out of your employer.

And don't forget that the Act also applies to shorter hours and longer holidays, in fact "any claim relating to terms and conditions of employment . . ." (Pt. II, Section 13(1).) So if you're half-killing yourself at Fords or BMC as they speed up the line, don't worry, it'll be only 13 months before anything's done about it!

A year ago, when I was arguing against the Incomes Policy with a fellow worker (a Labour Party member), he said, "Look, we'll only have to wait four months at the most and then it could be backdated. At least Labour have produced a policy—we ought to give them a chance."

They have had their chance: in the manufacturing industries wages *fell* between April and October 1966 by 0.9% while the cost-of-living index rose over 4% from December 1965 to December 1966. In BMC, a manufacturing industry, profits rose from £30 million in 1965 to £32 million in 1966—and last November they sacked 12,000 car workers.

No doubt we'll be advised by various left-wing groups to lobby left MPs, pass resolutions demanding Wilson's resignation and fight to elect more militant union leaders.

But it's clear that some workers no longer trust in politicians and their hangers-on. At a meeting of rank and file workers in Willesden on February 6, organised by London Joint Shop Stewards Defence Committee, the speakers, with one or two exceptions, declared that respectable parliamentary action would not defeat the Incomes Policy and legislation and that organised industrial action was essential. A speaker who wanted to move a resolution calling on left MPs to demand Wilson's resignation and the repeal of the Prices and Incomes Act got little support from the meeting.

From DATA (draughtsmen's union), a speaker described how industrial action had broken the freeze:

A 15-week strike at C. A. Parsons, Newcastle, got 650 men four weeks' holiday.

Both Caterpillar Tractors of Durham and the Government backed down and coughed up when faced with a week's strike notice.

A campaign of overtime bans and work-to-rule in Manchester got big wage increases. Unfortunately those involved kept quiet about it.

Unofficial strikes, go-slows, work-to-rule—these broke the Attlee Government's Wage Freeze and can do the same again to Wilson's. As was said at the Willesden meeting, "Workers must organise at the point of production. They have only each other to rely on, as in the case of the Sunley building dispute where, after pickets had been served with injunctions, the lines were manned from other jobs."

ROGER ETHERINGTON

RUSSIA--THE FALL OF TSARISM

MARCH, NINETEEN-SEVENTEEN! The centuries-old tyranny of the Russian Tsars was overthrown. Smashed, shattered in a few days. This act of liberation was without parallel in human history. And it was no group of conspirators, no exploiting class wishing merely to clear the way for its own unhindered rule (as in the English and French Revolutions) that did it. This was the act, unaided, of the producers, the working masses of Russia.

No saviours from on high delivered. The men and women who produced the wealth and splendour that Tsarism stood for themselves struck down the exploitation and tyranny that it formed.

In Russia of that day, the peasants, agricultural workers and small farmers, made up two-thirds of the population of 170 million. On the land, the human working day was 14 hours. (Horses worked 12 hours, oxen 10.) 30,000 landlords held 190 million acres of land. 10½ million peasants held 202 million acres. A third of the peasants had no land. The peasantry bore a crippling burden of exploitation. The freeing of the serfs in 1861 had increased the economic burden of the landworker, leaving him with less land to support himself and his family, and his lord with a greater share of the fruit of his labour—often 50%.

Outbreak of war in 1914 increased this burden and strengthened the cause of land reform. Successive Tsarist regimes promised reform but never gave it. Increasingly, the peasants saw it as a matter of taking the land from the lords and dividing it up among themselves. Though Russian soils were fertile, and much farming land as yet unused, methods were backward, so that the grain yield per acre was but a third that of Germany in 1910. The call-up forced millions of peasants into the army and navy and reduced the male farm labour force by a half. The lord still expected his share, though. Cattle had to be slaughtered to feed the army; farm implements, never abundant, became scarce owing to the switch-over to war production. Life in the countryside became almost unlivable.

It was scarcely better in the towns. Indeed, war brought chaos to the whole of Russia. Everything was sacrificed to throwing as many men as possible into the front line. Arms, supplies and mobility came second. Actually, where it existed, manufacturing industry and transport were quite modern. In terms of concentration, Russia's industry of the time was more advanced than any other. More than a half of industrial workers were grouped in factories employing 500 persons or more. This was a great advantage in organisation.

GROUP NOTICES

ABERDEEN: Contact Ian Macdonald, 15 Cotton Street, Aberdeen.
BELFAST: Contact Tony Rosato, 103 Deer Park Road, Belfast 14.
BRISTOL: Contact Adam Nicholson, 10 Bellvue, Bristol 8.
GLASGOW: Contact R. Lynn, 2B Saracen Head Lane, Glasgow, C.1.
HULL: Contact Jim & Shelagh Young, 3 Fredericks Crescent, Hawthorn Avenue, Hessle Road, Hull, Yorks.
LIVERPOOL: Contact Vincent Johnson, 43 Millbank, Liverpool 13.
LONDON: Weekly meetings at Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (5 min. Kings Cross). Wednesdays at 8.30 p.m.
MANCHESTER & DISTRICT: Contact Jim Pinkerton, 12 Alt Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.
POTTERIES: Contact Bob Blakeman, 52 Weldon Ave., Weston Coynev, Stoke-on-Trent.
SOUTHALL: Contact Adrian Derbyshire, 2 Oakley House, Oakley Ave., London, W5.
TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Contact J. D. Gilbert Rolfe, 4 Mount Zion, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
WITNEY: Contact Laurens Otter, 5 New Yatt Road, North Leigh, nr. Witney, Oxon.

To finance the war, the government borrowed heavily and printed more and more money. Inflation was rampant, and in 1917 the cost of living was seven times that of 1914. But in organising the country for its war, the rotten regime, autocratic, inbred and corrupt, was completely incompetent. "The disorganisation is such," said the minister Krivochein, "that it is like a lunatic asylum."

At one thing only was the State adept—repression. Press, education, political discussion were under iron rule. Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, wormed their way into all opposition movements, whose members were under constant threat of death, exile or imprisonment. In 1905 the police successfully organised a yellow "Union of Russian Workers". The leader of the Bolsheviks (Communists) in the Duma, Malinovsky, was a police spy.

Victorious in the first bloody onslaughts of the war, the Russian armies, from August 1915, began to suffer heavy defeats. That month alone cost them 3½ million men. Arms production, despite allied shipments from England and France, was quite inadequate. Strikes and bread riots were frequent among industrial workers from 1916 on, owing to the worsening situation at home.

The employing class and its agents were very worried by the defeats and the discontent, but were powerless. Capitalism existed in Russia "by appointment"—under the Tsar's patronage. Much capital was foreign-owned, anyway, and the native employers had no centralised political power; the Duma was only a "consultative assembly", which the Tsar could summon or dismiss at will. So those who saw the Tsarist regime as a threat to their own future as legal robbers of the workers could get no further than backstairs intrigue and the murder of Rasputin, the Tsarina's adviser.

WORKERS ALONE COULD ACT

Only the working people had will and means to remove the Tsar, but not in alliance with their exploiters. The war had opened a chasm between them and their employers and lords. In the administrative chaos, the war was kept going only through spontaneous organisations which controlled production, distribution, and army supplies. But at the beginning of March, 1917, it was impossible to continue the war even on this basis. Military defeat was almost final. Factories ran out of raw materials; food supplies broke down.

March 8. Women in some factories went on strike. Metal workers join them.

March 9 (Russian old-style calendar February 24). Thousands of starving workers, with their wives and children, came out on the streets of Petrograd, the Russian capital and main manufacturing centre. They demanded, "Bread! Bread!" "Give us bread or shoot us!" Soldiers sent to disperse them refused orders to fire. Only some police and dragoons, mounted troops, obeyed their officers.

March 11. The Tsar ordered the Duma dissolved. The Duma continued to sit. Demonstration became revolution. "Down with Tsarism!" "Down with the War!" "Long live the Revolution!" Workers fought the police in the streets. The army wavered.

March 12. The army, workers and peasants in uniform, came in on the workers' side. The revolutionary troops defeated the police decisively. The people opened the jails and freed political prisoners. Three days later the Tsar abdicated.

Meanwhile, on March 12, the workers of Petrograd had reconvened the Petrograd Soviet, the Council of Workers' Deputies, last heard of in the General Strike of 1905.

MARK HENDY

Organise for safety on the job

ONE of the striking features of capitalism is that it is burdened with internal contradictions. In particular, the spending of time and care on any job conflicts with the need to produce more at less cost, and to do this the worker must control his environment, which in turn conflicts with management's parasitic need to control the worker. Similarly, the need of management to keep a docile but alert and minimally healthy work force cannot be fulfilled, since a man cannot be involved and apathetic at the same time.

This year of the Great Freeze is, by "coincidence", Quality and Reliability Year. Depending where and who he is the British worker has the choice of being "Quality Conscious" for about as much financial incentive as a rat has to swim for a sinking ship, or of being "Reliable" rather than join Britains first, planned, *conscripted* Reserve Army of Unem-

ployed Labour. It is, equally "coincidentally", the beginning of the great speed-up with faster machines and less workers tied to doing more operations in less time for less real wages. Now is the time when a careful and continuous campaign is being launched against whatever control people have over their working lives, control by which they defeat boredom caused by the division of labour, frustration caused by repetitive work, fear caused by the foreman and danger either in the nature of the job, the speed it has to be done at, the hypnosis the boredom induces, and so on . . .

This is a year when 21 million man-days will be lost through industrial accidents, that is, at least seven times more than those lost through disputes; disputes costing the "national" economy one-halfpenny for every pound that illness costs. This year, like any other, between two and four people will be killed at work every day of the year, and every such day over a thousand will be injured seriously enough to be away from work for at least three such days.

The injured will be tended in hospital by Cinderellas called nurses and by doctors who may earn the princely sum of £10 for 100 hours' work in one week, with the possibility of "treating" patients for 70 hours without sleep. This was the year when doctors at Newcastle, who have just won the right to work only one shift each day, by threatening a work-to-rule, had their ethics questioned; when limb-fitters at Roehampton were called criminals for scrupulously obeying the management's rules, and a Newcastle man with no legs will finally get an invalid carriage after applying in 1964, having six medicals to make sure he needed it, and waiting for permission to build a garage for it.

THOUSANDS OF REASONS

This was the year of Aberfan, when the tip foreman said "Safety wasn't my job", when we learnt that the *only* time ever that action had been taken, after complaints about tips moving, was when a Coal Board *manager's* house was threatened. This is the year that the secretary of the Hull Trawler-Owners' Association, commenting on a report that Hull fishermen die through accidents twice as often as miners, said "People do get swept overboard. But after all they often get swept back again".

Will this be the year that, despite the difficulties, people organise for control, for safety at work? When people will see that *anything* which tends to move power away from those actually engaged in production of any kind, whether towards management or union officials or both, should be resisted for all these thousands of reasons? And because of this new realisation will people dismiss the forthcoming Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions as an obscene, long-winded labouratory joke?

P.R.

ROCK-A-BYE COPPER

FRANCO'S FASCIST POLICE were recently seeking girl students who laid one of them out cold. When police moved into Barcelona University to smash a student demonstration on January 31, the girls swung their handbags and down went the copper, out like a light. The girls had rocks in their bags. Meanwhile, strikes and demonstrations by Spanish workers and students are reported daily in the British press.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

PLYMOUTH ANARCHIST GROUP: Contact J. Hill, 79 Underland, Plymstock, Plymouth, Devon.

ALTRINCHAM LIBERTARIAN YOUTH — Contact Stephen Richards, 25 N. Vale Road, Timperley, Altrincham, Chesh.

WANDSWORTH LIBERTARIAN YOUTH — Contact Adrian Morris, 26 Openview, Earlsfield, S.W.18.

SW MIDDLESEX ANARCHIST GROUP: Contact P. J. Goody, 36 Norman Ave., Hanworth, Middx.

NORTH-EAST NOTES

Mao on the Wear

AT THE beginning of February, the Gas Board decides to sell two of its Tyne-based colliers. Jim Slater, local NUS official, of Red Herring fame, calls for their nationalisation. Brother, they are nationalised.

Meanwhile, back at the canteen at Doxford's Sunderland shipyard, Chinese Embassy officials put on a film show of "The East is Red" for 450 (out of 2,000) of the yardmen and their families. The yard has just built a cargo boat for China, presumably to assist its booming trade with South Africa. A handout described the film as "a unique artistic tribute in praise of the Chinese revolution and the thoughts of Mao Tse Tung." Poems by Mao were sung by choirs. The press was kept out by the management. An official laid on beer and sandwiches; it seems that even Chairman Mao has been studying the thoughts of Chairman Harold.

We understand that certain narrow-minded people are against our Royalty repaying Kosy Jim's visit. We disagree: we think a visit by our Merchant Prince and his pound of flesh to the USSR would be a good thing, and we respectfully suggest that a prolonged visit to Siberia would greatly help bring about a closer understanding of the Soviet way of life.

SEEING THROUGH THE ALDERMAN: FREEZE BROKEN

LABOURER'S at Smith's Dock, North Shields, have just won a bonus, against the wage freeze, to bring them into line with craftsmen. Before the rise the craftsmen's differential had gone up to £69 a week in some cases. Nevertheless the union district secretary persuaded the men to go back so that he could negotiate, naked, with the management. Seeing through this the men were out a day later. By this time you could almost hear the management's wrists cracking as they clung on waiting for their trump card to appear: Fairfield's shipyard boss and Regional (NUGMW) Secretary Alderman Cunningham, who drove from his palatial new offices in Newcastle. The Alderman had to pull out all the stops and he took two hours in the local to get the men back so that he could negotiate, naked. However, no results having been achieved a day later, the men were out again and the management caved in. The rise will probably now be given to other Tyne shipyard labourers.

DIRECT ACTION REPORTER

JOHN BALL AND THE WAGE FREEZE: 3

JUNE, 1381, the men of South-East England carrying their deeds of land and freedom under the King's name began to march home to their farms and towns. They accepted the King's oath in spite of John Ball's sermons on the text, "Put not your trust in princes." Many still held a strange, superstitious belief in the neutrality of the Crown, a belief still popular today, even among left-wing and "revolutionary" persons who insist that the Sovereign is neutral, without power, opinion or character and therefore harmless.

Revolutionary peoples are always reluctant to form regular armies and once the crisis seems to be over wish to return to their normal work. These people were happy to do so. Seventy years later, when the men of Kent with Jack Cade defeated the royal army at Sevenoaks and entered London, they had their demands granted and dispersed, to be defeated by the royal power they had neglected to destroy.

The nobles were revived from their terror when the people dispersed and an army led by the Bishop of Norwich, lance in hand, fell on the scattered bands and slaughtered them. King Richard II led an army of 40,000 through Kent and Essex slaughtering by sword and gallows as he went. John Ball was among those hanged. At Waltham Richard was met by men who showed him his own written and sealed pledges. The careful historian R. Green wrote, "But they were to learn the worth of a king's word. 'Villeins you were,' answered Richard, 'and villeins you are. In bondage you shall abide and that not your old bondage but a worse'."

THE REVOLT SPREADS

But resistance was renewed. At Billericay the rebels went to the woods and fought two long bitter battles before being defeated. Grindecobbe at St. Albans, condemned to death, was offered his life if he would persuade his comrades to restore the charters wrung from the monks. At his trial he said to his comrades, "If I die, I shall die for the cause of the freedom we have won, counting myself happy . . . Do then today as you would have done had I been killed yesterday."

So great was the slaughter of the workers that some on the royal council became alarmed lest none should be left to till the fields and asked Parliament if they desired to set at liberty the serfs. The landowners replied that the peasants were their goods and the King could not take their goods from them without their consent, "And this consent we have never given and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

But resistance went on. It was at this stage that revolt

spread along the coast to Devon and to the North. At one time the rebels had retaken St. Albans and forced the gates of St. Edmundsbury, forcing the monks to give back the townsmen's liberty. The eastern counties were aflame with a hundred battles for freedom.

Massacre and hanging did not end the revolt. No one can tell how long the fierce class war went on; certainly the struggle was carried on by the sons and grandsons of the men who had marched with Ball and Tyler. By strike and armed action, by sabotage, by fire, bow and knife, by battle and "Robin Hood" deeds, by open defiance of the Statute of Labourers the fight was continued. The most active and distinctive period of the revolt must have lasted 60 years or more. And what came of it all? Again to our school books. John R. Green expressed it thus:

"FRESH FLESH AND FISH"

"The strife waged only the fiercer after the repression of the Peasant Revolt. The Statutes of Labourers, effective in sowing hatred between employer and employed, were powerless for their immediate ends, either in reducing the actual rate of wages or in restricting the mass of floating labour to definite areas of employment."

"During the century and a half after the Peasant Revolt villeinage died out so rapidly that it became a rare and antiquated thing. A hundred years after the Black Death the wages of an English labourer could purchase twice the amount of the necessities of life which could have been obtained for wages paid under Edward III."

Our schoolbooks once more. In that milestone of English literature, William Longland's *Piers Plowman*, we find in the first text (about 1362) not the gay, rich parasitic life of Chaucer's characters, but the poor, sad, cruel, burdened life of the labourer; but in later texts (about 1398) a great change is perceived. The labourer is portrayed as an upstanding, independent-minded person, well-fed and ready to fight.

Longland then wrote, labourers "that have no land to live on but their hands, disdained to live on penny ale or bacon, but demanded fresh flesh and fish, fried or baked, and that hot and hotter for the chilling of their maw." Such and much else in *Piers Plowman* show the great betterment of the worker's life.

Professor Thorold Rogers's great work *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* gives much factual evidence to support this view.

The Great Revolt inspired William Morris to write the imaginative yet accurate novel, *A Dream of John Ball*, which for many years was sold at Labour Party and Socialist meetings. No longer is this offered for sale. Like John Ball the book is banished to the dungeons of the new prelates who do not choose to remember. Instead of Wilson & Co. being inspired by John Ball, they choose to emulate the swordsmen and shyster lawyers of Edward and Richard.

TOM BROWN

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SEAMEN'S VOICE—For Rank & File Seamen. Issue No. 2 (Feb-Mar) now out. Contents include: Seamen and the Political Levy; The Union Hiring Hall; Unholy Alliance (continued); Requiem for Aberfan; plus articles on NUS Rules Revision 1967, etc. Editor & Publisher G. Foulser, AB. Copies 6d postpaid from 34 Cumberland Road, London E.17.

MANCHESTER WORKERS' FORUM—Meets every other Tuesday, 8.00 p.m., at Wheatsheaf Hotel, High St., off Market St., Manchester. Details from A. Barlow, 279 Cheetham Hall Road, Manchester 8.

Stuart Christie

SWF MEMBER Stuart Christie, sentenced in September 1964 to 20 years' jail in Spain on a phoney charge of terrorism, has now passed his "A" level GCE exam in History. Stuart, 20, was recently visited in jail by his mother, who reported him as well as could be expected.

WEST GERMAN unemployed numbered 621,000 at the end of January, 250,000 more than at the end of December. In the middle of the month 240,000 were working a week at least a sixth shorter than normal—an increase of 90,000 from mid-December. Doubtless it is all due to 13 years of Tory rule and the Gnomes of Zurich.

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ARGENTINE DOCKERS' FIGHT

DOCKERS and other transport workers in Argentina are at the forefront of a fight against the governing clique of generals. The generals led by Gen. Onganía seized power last June. They vowed they would get tough with organised labour and curb inflation (it's the same the whole world over!). Since then they have launched virtually an all-out attack on the dockers and railwaymen. The workers have fought back, backed by national and international solidarity, and the generals have not had things all their own way by any means, though they are using laws made under the Peron-Fascist regime.

Last year the military bosses put a "Captain of the Port" in charge of docks, and gave him powers to impose any system of working he wanted. Dockers' unions offered help in drawing up a more efficient working system but this was turned down flat.

On October 18 the unions called an indefinite strike against the new dock rules and on November 9 transport workers struck in solidarity. The generals ordered troops into the docks to work them and also brought in scabs. They seized the offices of the dockers' unions, which they tried to put under their control.

It was the turn of railway workers to come under fire on December 5. The government announced a plan, to take immediate effect, for widespread sackings and harsher "discipline". The railways were to be put under more central control, and there was to be, besides "modernization", an enquiry into the future of the railways. None of this, the generals announced, would they negotiate with the railmen's unions.

Dockers also fought back with an international solidarity appeal. All over the world, workers refused to handle Argentinian ships and aircraft—at least one ship has been "blackened" in the Port of London. A Labour Court took the dockers' union offices away from the government, who were forced by the strikes to agree to talks. On December 26 the

generals agreed dock work could continue without victimisations, pending further negotiations.

However when they went back to work after more than two months on strike, dockers found the dock area barred to them by troops. Also, the government jailed Eustaquio Tolosa, secretary of the Port Workers' Union (SUPA, an affiliate of the International Transport Workers' Federation). The charge was under a Peron-Fascist law of 1951 forbidding actions which may lead to political or economic sanctions against the State. Tolosa allegedly broke this law by calling for international solidarity in the dockers' fight.

At time of writing the CGT, which under Peron functioned as the State Labour Front, has called a 24-hour General Strike for March 1 and a 48-hour one for March 21/22.

Nationwide economic crisis underlies the conflict. The crisis is chronic. Far from fighting the galloping inflation the generals have spurred it on, and keep the presses turning out paper money faster than ever. *The Times* (13.1.67) says that the government in office before last June issued 21½ million pesos in its last six months, but the Onganía regime 79¼ millions in less than six months from seizing power.

Naturally, this is an attack on the purchasing power of wages. To halt the wage-claims that follow, the government has decreed a norm of 15% for this year's increases. This may sound fine compared with the "nil norm" over here, but remember even Wilson & Co. haven't yet resorted to the super-inflation the Argentinian bosses are up to. In reply to the norm the CGT has called the general stoppages.

Meanwhile, railwaymen in the important Bahia Blanca region have refused to accept the new railway regulations. Taking direct action on their own behalf, they have brought trains to a halt over a large part of the country. Their demand is that they are consulted first over any proposed changes.

The USA has backed the generals so far, but is not handing out the loans for which they ask. The International Monetary Fund is checking the government's books . . .

In Argentina, many dockers are organised in the Resistance Society of Portworkers, a Syndicalist union affiliated to the (Syndicalist) Regional Workers' Federation of Argentina. Sending the SWF greetings for our conference last year, they announced their joint calling of the docks strike in October.

Things to come?

DOLORES MILLER, aged 10, was shot dead by Chicago police on January 27. Police say they shot her when she was in "a large crowd" that was breaking into a shop. Meanwhile, more British police are being trained to handle guns. Mr. Jenkins, the Home Secretary, went on a trip to Chicago last year to study police methods.

DON'T BUY "WORLD BOOK"! The "World Book" encyclopaedia, now on sale in Britain, was produced by scab labour at Kingsport Press, Tennessee. At Kingsport, printworkers have been on strike since March 11, 1963 (see *DIRECT ACTION*, December, 1964). Print unions there have appealed for a boycott of the encyclopaedia, which is now being advertised in British papers. Terms are attractive—as they often are for scab goods.

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