fight a rearguard action to keep job losses to a minimum & to obtain adequate redundancy settlements.

Much of this was done undramatically through responsible employer-union negotiation. It was only when this broke down & there was confrontation that the general public took notice. And then, largely because of the way the disputes were presented in a predominantly anti-union press, the unions were seen as culprits. That made them easy scapegoats.

Both Labour & Tory governments in this period made moves towards introducing statutory rules into industrial relations but neither party was prepared to risk unpopularity by pushing too hard on the issue. Labour couldn't afford to antagonise its chief supporters & financial backers, the trade unions, by interfering with their customary right to bargain with employers.

This was what prevented Wilson's government (1964-70) from persevering with its attempts to outlaw unofficial strikes, as laid out in its 1969 White Paper, 'In Place of Strife'.

For their part, the Conservatives couldn't easily reconcile the thought of imposing on employers & workers with their belief in a free market. Edward Heath's government (1970-74) did put law restrictions on the unions similar to those proposed in 'In Place of Strife', only to find itself involved in a running battle with the unions.

In 1972 alone, strike action accounted for the loss of 23 million working days. The climax of the struggle came in 1974 with an industrial crisis & a three-day week.
This is how it was perceived by many inside as well as outside the Labour Party. The unions were angered by Wilson's attempt to lay most of the blame for the government's financial plight on the strikers, a tactic he had tried the previous year when condemning the seamen's actions.

When the government subsequently introduced the 'In Place of Strife' white paper, a set of proposals aimed at preventing future strikes, the trade unionists in the party rebelled & forced it to be withdrawn.

In 1970 at the end of Wilson's first government there was a general feeling that it hadn't lived up to expectations. The sharpest sense of disappointment was among traditional Labour supporters who felt that the government had promised much but delivered little.

Compared with Attlee's government, it had an unimpressive record of reform. It had entered office claiming to be a modernising, reforming government, but in practice had appeared different from its Tory predecessors only in style - not in content.

While some of the reforms look impressive - it didn't amount to substantial change. The legalising of abortion, the decriminalising of homosexual acts & the abolition of the death penalty may be said to mark an important stage in the modernising of Britain. At the time these were controversial issues and they still are.

There were those who were unhappy with these expressions of what became known as 'the permissive age'. Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary between 1965 & 1967, suggested that a more appropriate term than the permissive age would be the 'civilised age'.

It was the left of the Labour Party & the young people who had had the highest hopes of Wilson who by 1970 were most disillusioned. They found that the character of politics had not changed in the way they had expected. 1964 had not marked a new departure but a continuation of the same. It was simply the party labels that had changed.

**Criticisms of Wilson's first government:**
- Rising unemployment
- Inflation
- Wage controls
- Attempted restriction of trade union freedoms