

Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

157 5 FEBRUARY 1970 EVERY THURSDAY 4d

Swedish strikes: special report page 5



SACKED EDMONTON RIGGERS ARE REINSTATED

STRIKING RIGGERS at the Edmonton Refuse Incineration Plant in North London seen attending a site meeting on Monday where they were addressed by Mr John Baldwin, an official of the Construction Engineering Union (left - papers in

hand). The men were sacked when they demanded adequate safety precautions from their contractors, Stewart and Lloyd. 80 more workers were dismissed when they refused to do the sacked men's work. Following Monday's meeting, all the

men were re-instated. But 100 electricians are continuing their work to rule and ban on overtime on the site. Under the terms of the Joint Industrial Board for the electrical contracting industry, the men were forced to work up

to 80 hours a week. Both the JIB and the men's union, the EETU, are threatening them with disciplinary action. But the sparks have won a small victory - the employers provided a full-time nurse for the site this week.

Tories move to the right

THE TORIES' election proposals emphasise the growing drift to the right of parliamentary politics in Britain.

The Tories have been encouraged by the almost total collapse of Labour's meagre programme of reforms and the government's substantial success in placing the burden of economic problems squarely onto the shoulders of working people.

And Heath and company have been forced, in spite of weak protests, to adopt more and more of the extreme racist and anti-union postures of Enoch Powell.

Heath's plans are clearly tailored to win approval from the pool of middle-class voters who are the traditional supporters of the Tory Party. They have moved sharply behind Powell as they see themselves menaced by the mammoths of big business and organised labour.

Retreat

The Tories intend to continue Labour's attempt to make the trade unions the scapegoats for the chaos of the big business system. A cooling-off period will be introduced to crack down on strikes, wage agreements will be enforceable by law and blacklegs will be encouraged not to join unions in order to weaken the workers' collective bargaining power.

The safeguards of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act will be virtually swept away. The plans have been rightly described as 'the scabs' charter'.

Heavier taxes will be milked from working people. This is the meaning of decreasing direct taxation and increasing indirect methods such as purchase tax on goods, where no account is taken of the shopper's income.

The Tories often speak of the 'plight' of middle class salary earners who are apparently taxed out of existence. This ignores the statistical evidence that more taxation is taken from smaller, working-class pay packets.

Indirect taxation and legally binding wage agreements would result in a further savage bite out of the workers' already declining income.

Scapegoats

The squalid retreat before the racials continues. The Tories will strengthen existing tough immigration laws by putting Commonwealth immigrants on the same basis as 'aliens'.

The idea is to make the immigrants' position still more precarious in order to push through Powell's policy for forced repatriation. But there is little doubt that such plans will be revised and refined as the election battle heats up and Powell makes further obscene and economically nonsensical speeches.

Echoing the extremist to back page

Bertrand Russell

BERTRAND RUSSELL, philosopher and mathematician, who died this week, was a dedicated and courageous fighter against nuclear war and imperialist butchery in Vietnam. We extend our sincere sympathy to Lady Russell.

Labour homes plan collapses

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S housing policy has collapsed. Fewer houses are being built than when Labour took power in 1964 - and council housing is being cut back most severely.

In both the 1964 and 1966 elections, Labour made it clear time and time again that it recognised the urgency of the housing crisis. In the whole field of social policy, it undertook to give number one priority to achieving an output of 500,000 new houses by 1970.

Speaking in Bradford in March 1966 the Prime Minister said: 'We shall achieve the 500,000 target and we shall not allow any development, any circumstances, however adverse to deflect us from that aim.'

The output of houses struggled up to just over 400,000 in both 1967 and 1968. But the figures for 1969, just published, show a steep fall back to 367,000.

Downward trend

In 1969, compared with the previous year, the number of new council houses fell by 3½ per cent and the number of new private houses went down even more - by 18 per cent.

The government has admitted that this downward trend will continue and that in 1970 it will be the council house sector that will be particularly affected. In recent months there has been a drop of 9 per cent in the number of new council houses started.

A forecast circulating privately inside the Labour Party suggests that housing output this year may well be as low as 360,000. This could be an over-optimistic estimate. In a recent survey of building firms, 83 per cent said they would

by David East

be building fewer houses in 1970 than last year.

Not only are fewer houses being built under Labour, but they are taking longer to complete as well. In 1960 the average council house took 13½ months from start to finish. Now the time taken is 16 months.

What explains Labour's collapsing housing programme? It is not lack of workers with the necessary skills. The Employment and Productivity Gazette reports that in September 1969 there were 10,498 building workers wholly unemployed plus 5785 painters and decorators out of a job.

The government blames Tory local councils who now control most towns and cities. It has a point. The Tory 'shadow' housing spokesman, Peter Walker, recently warned Tory councils to 'resist the temptation to

go building council houses for all sorts of seemingly good reasons'.

But official figures indicate that people on the waiting list for a council house can expect even less where Labour is in control. In the past year there has been a 17 per cent drop in council house starts in Labour controlled local authorities but only 13 per cent where the council is Tory or Liberal.

Staggering burden

Dominating local authority housing policy is the staggering burden of interest charges on money borrowed to finance house construction.

Labour ministers frequently congratulate themselves on the council house subsidy introduced in 1967. What they don't mention is that the subsidised 4 per cent interest rate only applies to borrowing for new house construction.

What is killing local authorities is the need to pay 8½ per cent and more in interest to finance the burden of accumulated debt.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS' PUBLIC MEETING

Solidarity with Black Panthers

SPEAKERS

Selma James
Charles Leinenweber (American International Socialists)
A British Black Panther
Chairman: Paul Foot

FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY 8pm
Africa Centre 38 King Street WC2

In the first three years of the Labour government, current expenditure on housing by local authorities rose by £130 million a year, 8½ per cent of this increase was spent meeting the costs of higher interest rates.

When councils protest, the government tells them to put the rents up. It is currently encouraging councils to increase rents by an average of 7s 6d a week each year.

A new council flat costing £3700 to build usually has a 60 year repayment period. If the interest rate is 6½ per cent (low by current standards) the total eventual cost to the council will be £15,300.

Since 1964 the average price of a new house has risen from £3500 to £5000. The government has taken no effective measures to stop the profiteering on land which they so often condemned in opposition. The construction industry makes £200 million gross profit each year.

Meanwhile, half a million families are still on council waiting lists - and this is a huge underestimate because it does not include many in slum houses. At the present rate of slum clearance it will take 39 years to get rid of all the houses at present unfit.

All the fine election promises lie shattered. The slums fester, the waiting lists grow while Labour learns yet again the elementary AEC of a society run in the interests of big business - where profits are paramount, working people can go to hell.

RAT-BAG OF THE WEEK

'IT WAS not the government's fault when, in the "white heat" of the technological revolution, a man's job was taken over by new machinery.' - Technology Minister Wedgwood Benn speaking in a parliamentary debate on unemployment

Child poverty: report says it's worse under Labour

by Valerie Clark

EVEN THE MOST respectable radicals are beginning to be disillusioned with the Labour government. Last week the Child Poverty Action Group, comprised of academics and social workers, made some biting criticisms of the government's record of social policy.

Professor Peter Townsend, CPAG's chairman, and Mr Frank Field, its director, presented a 30-page report to Mr Richard Crossman, the social security minister, which emphasises the harsh effects of Labour's action.

They mention numerous ways in which the plight of poorer families is now worse than when the government took office.

The report points out yet again that while militant action has won wage increases for some workers, the Incomes Policy has successfully held back the demands of the unorganised low-paid.

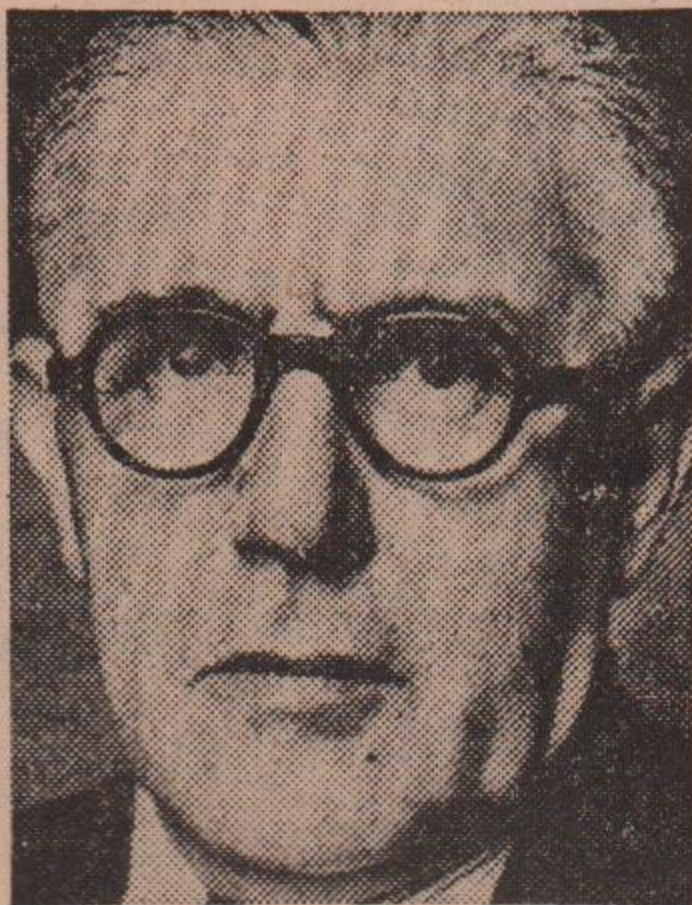
So much for Labour's promises of a 'planned growth of wages'.

Real struggle

For the last three years the number of unemployed has been around the half million mark — almost the highest since the war. The number of long-term unemployed has nearly doubled since the government took office.

Add to this the rise in the cost of living, which has meant a real struggle for many families. During the last five years, prices have risen by 25 per cent — nearly twice the average of the last five years of Tory rule.

At the same time we have seen prescription charges re-introduced, free milk for secondary school children abandoned, and 50 per cent



CROSSMAN: little excuse

risers in the cost of school dinners, welfare milk and dental and optical care.

No one expected miracles of the government but after all the party propaganda about their 'burning desire' to abolish poverty and assurances that they would not allow 'the weakest to go to the wall', most working-class people did expect to be a bit better off with a Labour government.

To quote the CPAG report, 'one would have expected a Labour government to have waged an all-out attack on poverty. But nothing can be further from the truth'.

Before the 1964 election, Labour boasted of having all sorts of plans ready to improve the social services. But once elected, the main thing they put into action was merely 'a major review of social policy'.

And on some important questions — like the one-parent family — the net result of this lengthy review was just to set up another committee of inquiry.

There is little excuse for the appalling record. Affluence is not as widespread as they'd have us

believe.

Nearly a million men take home less than £15 a week in their wage packet. And these low-income families often pay out a larger proportion of their income in direct and indirect taxes than do high-income families.

The increases in national insurance contributions particularly have hit the low-wage earner harder than most. In practice, this means that many families don't even have properly balanced meals.

The latest National Food survey shows that, in terms of satisfying the recommendations of the British Medical Association for intake of calcium, the diet of families with four or more children living on less than £19 a week was on average, 11 per cent short of the recommended allowance. Little wonder that middle-class children are taller, heavier and healthier than working-class children.

After the moans about the British taxpayer spending too much on the Welfare State, it's interesting to see how Britain compares with other countries in this.

Hardship and distress

Eleven countries now spend relatively more than the UK. And, in spite of Labour's promises to expand the social services, since 1964 they have used the 'economic crisis' as an excuse to limit the expansion to 6 per cent per year.

Although there is plenty of evidence of hardship and distress, the government proposes that social services should grow by only 4 per cent a year up to 1972 and by less than 3 per cent in 1972-4.

After leaving Mr Crossman's office, Mr Field said, 'We came away feeling that the government had no proposals to help poorer families'.

If the government isn't even going to help the poorest, there's obviously not going to be any general improvement for the average family.

struggle against the ruling class through the mass organisations thrown up in the course of that struggle.

To overcome the unevenness with which this experience is gained, to draw and preserve the lessons of past struggles and transmit them for the future, to fight against the pressure of bourgeois ideas in the working class, and to bond the fragmentary struggles against capitalism into a conscious and coherent offensive, a revolutionary Marxist party of socialist militants is required, embracing the vanguard of the working class.

The struggle to build such a party is only part of the wider struggle to create a World Revolutionary Socialist International, independent of all oppressors and exploiters of the working class, whether bureaucratic or bourgeois.

International Socialists therefore fight for:
Opposition to all ruling-class policies and organisations.
Workers' control over production and a workers' state.
Opposition to imperialism and support for all movements of national liberation.
Uncompromising opposition to all forms of racialism and to all migration controls.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the paper.



The CPAG report suggests some sensible reforms — a national minimum wage and huge increases in family allowances. Neither Labour nor the Tories are likely to act on these suggestions for years.

But even if they were put into practice tomorrow, the same pattern would be there. We are still living in a society where a few are very rich, the majority just about make ends meet, and the weakest — the

old, the badly-educated, the sick and the children — are left at the very end of the queue.

It's the same old system. And this latest report is another piece of evidence to show that the Labour government has no intention of changing it.

The address of the Child Poverty Action Group is 1 Macklin Street London WC2 (01 242 3225).

LETTERS

Biafra war caused by competing oil giants

CONGRATULATIONS on Wenda Clenaghan's excellent sketch of Nigerian history (22 January). However, it seems to me that the present situation is incorrectly assessed in several ways:

1. Gowon is not merely 'a puppet of the feudalists'. In fact, he and his military government represent rather a coalition of the 'national' big capitalists and the Northern feudalists.

The phrases 'Muslim politicians' and 'Northern rulers' do not specify the class composition of those who organised the 1966 massacres of Ibos. They were mainly 'local' merchant capitalists, middle bureaucrats, army and police officers with whom the Ibos were competing. They are, in many respects, in conflict with the national ruling coalition.

Failure to appreciate these points leads directly into the Biafran 'genocide' myth. It was never in the interests of Gowon and co to effect such a 'final solution' of the Ibo problem.

2. Eastern ruling class propaganda was hammering the 'genocide' threat and hatred of the Hausas into the Ibos even before the war began. This probably explains the decision of the Constituent Assembly to pull out of the Federation.

However, it is naive to suppose that this mandate was the only, or even the major, reason which decided the Eastern ruling class, led by Ojukwu, on secession. There is, in fact, a great deal of evidence that, without the encouragement of the French imperialists and a section of US oilmen, that tragic step would not have been taken.

Thus the war resulted from a struggle between oil monopolies established in the area and rivals wishing to grab some of the loot from them. At an early stage in the war even Shell-BP (and with them the British government) seemed to waver between backing a 'united Nigeria' and a Biafran 'Katanga'.

Later they put all their money on the favourite while the French and associated interests, since they had nothing to lose, continued to disrupt the situation to delay the arrival of their competitors' oil profits and plant the seeds of further secession.

3. It is true that Nigeria is about to be 'stabilised' again under imperialist domination (probably of a more Anglo-Soviet than Anglo-US variety this time) and it is even likely that the corrupt politicians mentioned in the article will make a come-back.

But this is not necessarily a cause for the sort of pessimism I detect in Wenda Clenaghan's article since surely no socialist could prefer the disintegration of Nigeria under competing imperialisms?

Working class and peasant militancy continues in the West; a new radical movement is growing in the North; the massive Federal army, consisting mainly of dispossessed peasants and labourers will return to the old conditions of unemployment and poverty; and the Eastern masses will resist the appeals of new 'Ojukwus'.
An era of genuine class struggle

could replace the mystification of 'tribal struggle' to which British socialists are also all too prone. - PAT MCCONVELL, London N7.

I WOULD LIKE to congratulate Wenda Clenaghan on her reporting of the defeat of Biafra. But one thing has been largely left out and that is the role of Russia in the conflict.

In fact Russia's role has been to give total support to the Federal side in their murderous attack on Biafra. So much so, that the official Nigerian newspaper said on 29 January that Nigeria (ie the ruling class of Nigeria) 'owed a debt of great gratitude' to the Soviet rulers.

Compared with this, the paper said Britain 'developed cold feet at the start of the war'. To have a so-called socialist country give more support than the British ruling class to a reactionary state based on old feudal classes is quite disgusting. It must be gratifying for the Ibos to know that they are dying of 'socialist' bullets.

In fact of course this has nothing to do with socialism. The Soviet bureaucracy is in true capitalist colours prepared to exchange any number of lives for a new market, the 'superstructure of economic, cultural and social co-operation' the newspaper talked about.

I hope all IS members will raise this with Communist Party members. No socialist country could play such a role. - MARTIN BARKER, Bristol.

Dangerous illusion

BARRY MILLS (22 January) is wrong. Fascism is not 'openly anti-working class' and cannot afford to be since it needs mass working class support if it is to win power.

Anyone who has studied the programme of Mosley's Union Movement or discussed with left-wing members of the National Front will find their demagoguery (demands for price and rent controls and for low interest rates, attacks on profiteering and even on the Labour Party for being anti-working class) not much different from that of Labour left-wingers and the CP (or IS).

In singling out the fascists for greater opposition than other capitalist parties, IS encourages the dangerous illusion of the 'lesser evil'. This was behind the policy of the German social Democrats when they united with other democratic parties in a bid to stop the Nazis.

But this merely encouraged Hitler by providing further failures by democratic reformist governments for him to exploit.

The effective way to combat fascism is to build up a strong socialist movement, opposed to all capitalist parties whether democratic or fascist. This is the policy of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. - J LEWIS, Newport, Monmouthshire.

This correspondence is now concluded. - EDITOR.

Letters to the editor (typed or written on one side of the paper only) must arrive first post Monday.

Socialist Worker

6 Cottons Gardens London E2

Tel: 01-739 1878 (editorial) 1870 (business)

WHERE WE STAND

CAPITALISM has nothing to offer mankind but exploitation, crises and war. The ruling classes of the world — a tiny minority — subordinate the needs of the vast majority to the blind accumulation of capital in the interests of competitive survival.

Imperialism condemns two-thirds of mankind to famine and calls forth movements of national liberation which shake the system and expose its essential barbarism. The constant and mounting preparations for war and the development of weapons of mass destruction place the survival of humanity itself in the balance.

The increasing intensity of international competition between ever-larger units drives the ruling classes to new attacks on workers' living standards and conditions of work, to anti-trade union and anti-strike laws. All of these show capitalism in deepening crises from which it can only hope to escape at the cost of the destruction of all its independent organisations.

The only alternative is workers' power — the democratic collective control of the working class over industry and society through a state of workers' councils and workers' control of

production.
Only thus can the transition be ensured to a communist society in which the unprecedented productive forces thrown up by capitalism can be used to assure an economy of abundance. Only the working class, itself the product of capitalism, has the ability to transform society in this way, and has shown its ability to do so in a series of revolutionary struggles unprecedented in the history of all previous exploited classes.
The working class gains the experience necessary to revolutionise society by constant

William Morris: a vision of socialism

by
Martin Shaw

Perhaps the greatest of the early English marxists was William Morris. Poet and designer, he entered active socialist politics only in his late forties, although his conviction of the need for a fundamental change in society had been maturing for many years.

When the 1880s created the conditions for a new socialist movement, Morris flung himself into the task of socialist propaganda. But he did not just reproduce the ideas of Marx.

In his many articles and lectures he creatively developed the attack on the conditions of art and labour in capitalist society. In his articles are to be found the most concise statements of his ideas.

But in many ways the greatest of his works is his utopia, a vision of the future communist society published at the opening of the second decade of the modern socialist movement.

This was *News from Nowhere*, the first instalment of which appeared in *Commonweal* 80 years ago, in January 1890.

It is immensely valuable to read it again today. When Morris wrote it there were many around — notably the Fabians — who identified socialism with some kind of bureaucratic collectivism.

But today the idea of socialism is far more identified, in the minds of most people, with the managerial capitalism of Labour or with Stalinist tyranny. And, of course, socialism is thoroughly discredited by being identified in this way.

Morris gives us a picture of socialism which goes far beyond any idea of state ownership or bureaucratic control.

Morris's utopia takes the form of a dream in which the narrator is transported into the communist future, into the England of the late twenty-first century which has passed through a period of thorough

transformation after the socialist revolution.

He revisits areas of London and the Thames valley which he had known all too well in the ugliness and misery which dominated them in his own day — and which are not gone from us today. He meets a wholly new kind of people from the oppressed, the harassed and the prematurely aged population of 19th century England.

The visitor is amazed and confused to find the Thames clear, unpolluted, stocked with salmon. He is even more surprised to find that people do not understand when he offers them money for services rendered and goods obtained.

London, the great, dirty, crowded metropolis, has — in that form — disappeared, the result of planned transformation and not of the H-bomb or any other of the modern weapons of mass destruction.

All kinds of small changes have taken place. Parliament, for instance, is used for storing manure and as a subsidiary 'market' (the description is not exact, because although there is distribution there is no buying and selling). Such details are absorbing, but Morris's traveller finds that very fundamental changes are behind them.

By a combination of direct exploration, as he sees for himself the miraculous difference in life and nature, and by probing his hosts, he discovers the quality and the principles of organisation of the new society. And we realise the irrationality of the old social forms of capitalism.

Several themes run through the narrative and the explanations. Man no longer plunders nature, mutilating its natural beauty, for the production of unnecessary articles. Buildings no longer stick out like sore thumbs but blend harmoniously with their surroundings — the visitor describes houses 'new-grown' on a hill near Oxford.

The domination of the town over the country, seen alike in the hideous growth of the towns and the plunder and decline of the country and the village, has been ended. Instead the two have been merged into a garden in which the real benefits of urban civilisation have been preserved.



Morris: Art is the expression of man's joy in labour

These changes reflect a fundamental change in the nature of work. The material needs of society having been assured, work is no longer a mechanical operation performed under the pressure of external necessity. It has had restored to it the element of pleasure associated with individual creation and enjoyment of use.

Morris wrote elsewhere that 'Art is the expression of man's joy in labour', and his indictment of capitalism was that it had made art (the visual arts) impossible and labour unbearable. Slowly after the revolution, with the achievement of the material wealth necessary for a full life for all, these evils have been overcome.

But the change in the relationship of man with his natural surroundings and in the nature of work, are both cause and effect of changes in the relationships of men and women with one another.

'The great trouble,' Morris's traveller is told by an old man who knows the history of the revolution and the growth of the communist society, 'was that the once-poor had such a feeble conception of the real pleasure of life: so to say, they did not ask enough, did not know how to ask enough, from the new state of things.'

But the remedy of art, or a new pleasure in work, is only meaningful because people can now have genuine pleasure in each other's company, instead of drudgery, friction and conflict spreading from their work into all human relationships.

Morris is not a devotee of 'pleasure' in the sickly sense to which we are coaxed to it by today's advertisers. The enjoyment of and delight in life through natural human relationships lights up every aspect of his picture of a new society.

Morris appeals to the deep feelings of revulsion at the chaos, waste and ugliness of production for profit which have inspired every kind of socialist activity. By imaginatively projecting his own very strong personal convictions in the form of this dream he deepens the desires of his readers for change.

And this is why, on awaking from the dream, Morris's narrator can overcome his despair at finding the world still as it was when he left it in the 19th century: '...if others can see it, as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream.'

Morris realises that a vision by itself is not enough. In order for a vision to find real meaning it must be anchored in the realities of existing society and the actual pos-

reformists who clumsily label Morris a mere 'utopian' socialist. Capitalism, since Morris wrote, has achieved after its own barbarous fashion, some of the changes that Morris saw as the results of socialism. Take the relation between town and country — the town centres are indeed declining, and the town has invaded the countryside in the last half century.

But at what cost! Unplanned decay in the towns, ugly sprawl in the country. The basic anarchy in man's relation to his natural environment remains.

Equally, the forms in which Morris saw necessary social activities being undertaken often seem old-fashioned. Take the distribution of goods as an example: Morris sees market places with small booths, where we might more easily envisage some simple, rationalised version of a supermarket, without muzak, 'free' offers or the interminable queues at the cash desks.

But the principles embodied are the same: personal wants, needs and tastes fully catered for.

More serious objections to Morris's vision can be raised in that he seems at times to suggest the total elimination of large scale production and the substitution of handicrafts. And it is probably true that he underestimated, although he did not rule out, the continuing importance of much of the industrial technology developed under capitalism even to a communist society.

But his dream is not so unreal in relegating these problems to a secondary position. Nor is Morris's emphasis on recreating pleasurable labour so false. The realm of freedom as a new childhood for mankind, as well as a new field of triumph for his intellect, is an idea which strikes a deep chord.

An imaginative project of communism written today would undoubtedly be cast in a very different form, and use a very different style, from *News from Nowhere*. Its strength and limitations are very much a product of Morris's own experience, the life and traditions he knew and developed in.

But it stands almost alone in its field — a commentary perhaps on both the state of art and of the socialist movement.

And 80 years on we still need Morris's vision. The real experience of the transition to socialism is limited to a short period in a backward country and we need to remember how much further our aims go than anything which was achieved, or could have been aspired to, in post-revolutionary Russia.

For we in Britain, and the advanced world generally, are today much closer potentially to a truly communist society. *News from Nowhere* is part of the tradition on which we can draw in our struggle to create that society.

The March of the Workers by William Morris

What is this, the sound and rumour? What is this that all men hear,
Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is drawing near,
Like the rolling on of ocean in the eventide of fear?
'Tis the people marching on.

Whither go they, and whence come they? What are these of whom ye tell?
In what country are they dwelling 'twixt the gates of heaven and hell?
Are they mine or thine for money? Will they serve a master well?
Still the rumour's marching on.

Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Forth they come from grief and torment; on they wend toward health and mirth,
All the wide world is their dwelling, every corner of the earth.
Buy them, sell them for they service! Try the bargain what 'tis worth,
For the days are marching on.

These are they who build thy houses, weave thy raiment, win thy wheat,
Smooth the rugged, fill the barren, turn the bitter into sweet,
All for thee this day — and ever. What reward for them is meet
Till the host comes marching on?

Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Many a hundred years passed over have they laboured deaf and blind
Never tidings reached their sorrow, never hope their toil might find.
Now at last they've heard and hear it, and the cry comes down the wind,
And their feet are marching on.

O ye rich men hear and tremble! for with words the sound is rife:
'Once for you and death we laboured, changed henceforward is the strife.
We are men, and we shall battle for the world of men and life;
And our host is marching on.'

Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

'Is it war, then? Will ye perish as the dry wood in the fire?
Is it peace? Then be ye of us, let your hope be our desire.
Come and live! for life awaketh, and the world shall never tire;
And hope is marching on.'

'On we march then, we the workers, and the rumour that ye hear
Is the blended sound of battle and deliv'rance drawing near;
For the hope of every creature is the banner that we bear,
And the world is marching on.'

BOOK SERVICE for William Morris

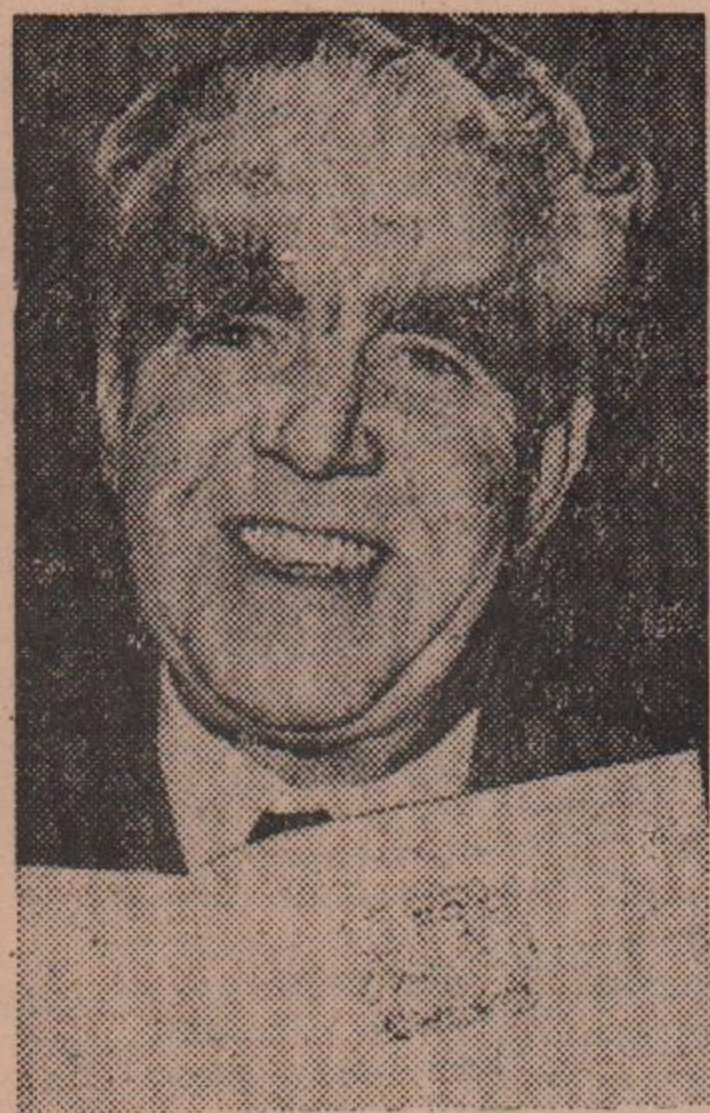
Three Works by William Morris:
News from Nowhere, *The Pilgrims of Hope*
and *A Dream of John Ball* 12s post paid

William Morris: selected writings and designs,
edited by Asa Briggs (includes most of
News from Nowhere) 8s 6d post paid

The English Utopia by A L Morton 13s post paid

6 COTTONS GARDENS LONDON E2

Woodcock's 'troubleshooters' menace shop stewards' strength at Birmid Qualcast



WOODCOCK with the CIR report

by John Setters (AEF)

ON 21 JANUARY the Commission on Industrial Relations finally issued its report on the nine Warley, Birmingham, foundries of Birmid Qualcast Ltd.

The government told the CIR to investigate the 'bad labour relations' at Birmid's Dartmouth Auto Castings, Birmingham Aluminium Castings and Midland Motor Cylinder following complaints from the Engineering Employers' Federation.

The CIR is chaired by former TUC secretary George Woodcock, aided by Allan Flanders, the high priest of productivity bargaining, Leslie Blakeman, former Ford's personnel manager and ex-miner's secretary and life-long 'communist', Will Paynter.

The complaint about bad labour relations was repeated by the chairman of Birmid Qualcast, the Marquess of Exeter, when he spoke to the annual shareholders' meeting last December.

Exeter, a former Olympics hurdler and renowned right-winger, bitterly complained about Birmid workers: 'I referred last year to my deep concern at the extent of industrial disputes, in particular unofficial stoppages by which a few render ineffective the honest endeavour of the many to build the sound and prosperous future we all desire.'

Profits

He appealed to everyone at Birmid to 'play the rules'. 'without such rules we cannot operate successfully and in consequence all employees will suffer alike.'

The Marquess then went on to boast of a record 1969 profit of £8,377,416. Last year the firm's nine directors received £142,483 between them and the shareholders' dividend was 17.2 per cent.

During 1969, each worker contributed £9 10s a week to the company's profits. In the same period, profits rose by 14.7 per cent, productivity by 13 per cent and wages by 8.68 per cent.

The CIR report proposes a series of 'reforms' which, if put into effect, would smash rank and file trade union organisation and increase the management's power and control.

On page 21, the Commission notes that workers have been successful 'in securing a measure of control over their working environment by vigorous and often unconstitutional trade union action.'

The results of this have been (page 7) that 'the foremen's managerial role has been allowed to decline' and that 'the emergence of shop stewards as leaders' has presented the foremen 'with powerful rivals'.

Alarmed

The report also states that 'groups of workers have taken to themselves some of the supervisors' tasks' and that (page 20) the foremen feel 'that their authority has been eroded under the pressure of the trade unions.'

Alarmed by this situation the CIR has firm views on what must be done. On pages 9 and 10 its report recommends that there must be a 'more active role for foremen in the direct supervision of workers' and that ASTMS - the foremen's trade union - must 'recognise their responsibilities to management'.

Only a week before the CIR's public report was issued, a Birmid worker was sacked by a foreman for allegedly disobeying orders. Fortunately the strength of the foundry organisation was sufficient for an immediate strike to win the worker's re-instatement.

Understanding that firm opposition to any increased management discipline would not yield any advantage, the CIR report suggests another group of 'reforms'. On page

menace shop stewards' strength at Birmid Qualcast

exclusive Troubleshooters' secret Birmingham report
CIR TELLS BOSSES 'GET TOUGH WITH MILITANTS'

Socialist Worker headline 18 September: our publication of their private report enraged the CIR men and forced them to issue their finding to the general public

11 it proposes that more regular meetings should be held between the management and full-time trade union officials and (pps 10 and 13) that divisional negotiations should largely replace individual foundry bargaining.

The report also recommends (page 13) that shop stewards should receive time off with pay in order to attend special training courses 'where there is a particular need for changes in attitude and for an understanding of the basic principles of industrial relations.'

The intention of all these proposals is clear. The CIR recognises that the trade union organisation is able to challenge managerial authority. It wants to reverse this by increasing the foremen's power and reducing the influence of the shop stewards by removing negotiations from their control and excluding them from divisional discussions.

And, of course, it also wants to 'educate' the shop stewards so that in future they 'realise' how to behave and how not to.

According to the CIR, the most important cause of the shop stewards' power is the operation of Birmid's piecework wage system. Consequently, on page 14, the report recommends that this method should be 'reviewed' and goes so far as to say that 'so long as the payment systems remain unaltered industrial relations in these companies will continue to be unsatisfactory.'

Vital

The CIR admits that it cannot itself make recommendations about how the payments system ought to be changed but that does not prevent it from making suggestions.

The most important of these refers to the new provisions of the 1968 national engineering agreement concerning job evaluation, more work and method study and no pay rises without measured increases in workers' output or efficiency.

When the president of the Engineering Employers' Federation commented on these same provisions, he said:

'Out of the agreement the Federation gained some vital concessions. I think that the agreement should be of great benefit to federated firms but, of course, it will be of very little use if companies do not take advantage of it.'

What's good for the CIR is clearly good for the gaffers!

In case the attack and hoped-for removal of the piecework wages system does not smash the shop stewards and rank and file trade union organisation, the CIR has more proposals for 'reform'.

On page 15, for instance, it urges the management 'to decide on its own objectives and to devise policies on industrial relations so that a firm foundation is laid for consistent managerial action.'

In addition to this appeal for a management declaration of war, the report states (pp 15 and 16) that the 'state of trade union organisation within the companies is plainly inadequate' and that 'the removal of these inadequacies is a matter for joint agreement between the union and...the companies are entitled to expect from the trade unions...that they will put their own relations in a state which will facilitate both the negotiation and the operation of...new agreements.'

Finally it recommends (p 16) that for the shop stewards 'the sizes of constituencies, the details of elections, the process of notification of management of changes in stewards and for issuing credentials all need to be governed by more careful and consistent provisions.'

The CIR was set up in April 1969 as part of the general attack on the trade unions. The first official details about it were contained in Mrs Castle's White Paper In Place of Strife, which featured plans for anti-strike legislation, the enforcement of which would have been through fines and bailiffs.

Menace

Under the guise of 'neutrality' and 'independence', the CIR's job is to study firms, 'learn' all about them and finally make proposals.

Because it is part of the capitalist state machinery, the CIR threatens the continued existence of strong trade unionism in Birmid. The CIR's proposals menace the shop stewards' organisation and can only result in higher profits for the Birmid shareholders.

In the past, attempts by the management have been made to split Birmid workers by racialism and inter-union disputes. The maximum unity is now urgently required to oppose the CIR, defeat its recommendations, fight against those trade union leaders who support them and lastly organise a militant counter-offensive against the CIR and the Birmid owners.

Courageous Panthers fight business grip on ghettos

THE BLACK PANTHERS are the only organisation in the United States which has a base among the negroes in the big city ghettos. It was founded in Oakland, California, in 1966 by Huey Newton (now in prison) and Bobby Hutton (murdered by the police), then students at Merritt College.

Their first action was to follow the police who patrolled the ghetto. They were armed (as Californian law permitted) and their aim was to inform their black comrades of their legal rights. Every time a cop called a black 'nigger', they responded by calling him 'pig'.

The cops were caught off guard by these 'legalist' measures and for a time the repression slowed down. But soon they pulled themselves together.

Black militants were followed, arrested on the slightest pretext and sometimes shot down out of hand. (In the last year more than 28 have been murdered and 108 arrested.)

But the Panthers went on growing and rapidly became more political. Their politics varied from month to month and from town to town.

Most of the left groups supported the Panthers and tried to influence them. Their line varied from military defence of the ghettos to electoral alliance with the Californian white liberal 'peace and freedom' groups. They advocated a 'Popular Front' against fascism and a permanent campaign for community control of the police.

Likewise their attitude to the whites varied as time went on. At present the Panthers are not opposed to whites as such, but only to racials and especially to racist institutions: schools, police, law, the government and its black lackeys, the moderates and 'uncle Toms'. There is even a white organisation solely concerned with fund-raising and propaganda for the Panthers.

Within the black movement, the Panthers are violently opposed to the 'cultural nationalists' who find a personal escape in studying

African languages and eating 'soul' food, which the Panthers denounce as the food left over for the slaves by the slave-owners.

The Panthers have a rigidly graded military and political organisation. These are the conditions that have to be fulfilled by members in Chicago:

- Attend six hours' political classes weekly.
- Read two hours a day (for leaders)
- Sell at least 75 papers a week.
- Bear arms and know how to use them.
- Carry out regular mass work.
- Any member who fails to carry out these points is expelled. They reject clandestine attitudes. One leader put it: 'How can people respect and follow us if they don't know us?'

Demand UN plebiscite

Their agitational programme contains the following points:
 Free breakfasts for undernourished ghetto children, free clinics, liberation of schools, community control of the police.

The Panthers believe that American blacks form an 'internal colony' held down by an occupying army - the police. To win their demands, blacks must struggle for self-determination within this 'internal colony'. To this end, they demand a plebiscite under United Nations supervision.

In their weekly paper Black Panther, they call for the end of big business exploitation, but their political ideology is confused and often contradictory.

All the same, the Panthers have contributed more than any other group, by their courage and decisiveness, to the increase of consciousness among American negroes.

This is a shortened version of an article in Lutte Ouvriere, weekly paper of Socialist Worker's French comrades.

The symbol of the American Black Panthers



COMING SOON!

The Employers' Offensive-productivity deals and how to fight them.

by TONY CLIFF

All trade union militants and socialists will need this important study. Watch for special pre-publication offer

PLUTO PRESS
 6 Cottons Gardens London E2



Swedish miners shatter myth of industrial harmony

From Anders Melander

ON TUESDAY 9 December at 6am 75 men staged a sit-down strike in the Svappavaara iron-ore mine in Sweden. 1150 followed them on Wednesday and within two days 4800 workers in Svappavaara, Malmberget and Kiruna had stopped work.

The men have been on strike now for two months. They are employed by LKAB, the state-owned iron-ore mining concern 1000 miles from Stockholm.

The workers demanded the abolition of a clause in the firm's controversial 'working laws' which says the employer has 'the right to lead and distribute the work and to employ labour'. The disputed clause is frequently used against individual workers to force them to do dangerous jobs against regulations.

Discontent at working conditions and wages had been growing for some time. Wages increased more slowly than for other workers and actually decreased compared with the rising cost of living.

The strike was prompted by anger over a promised wage increase that was smaller than expected.

The miners are also dissatisfied with time study techniques which work in the bosses' favour and harsh working conditions that prohibit conversation and drinking water during working hours.

Workers can only visit the lavatory in their own time and the meal-time lasts from 11.30am to 12. Workers who lose a minute's work are stopped an hour's pay.

The strikers demanded that they should elect their rank and file negotiators for future talks with LKAB. They have no faith in their union representatives. The strike committee elected Thure Rantatalo as their negotiator.

The miners also called for LKAB to leave the powerful employers' organisation SAF. The Swedish Communist Party VPK, has attempted to introduce a Bill to this effect in parliament but the Social Democratic government has blocked it.

Refused articles

Press, radio and television have mounted a campaign against the strike, putting the employers' and union arguments but barely mentioning the strike committee's complaints and demands. The union-owned evening paper Aftonbladet pursues an anti-strike policy and has refused to print articles in favour of the strike committee.

But a Gallup poll in December showed that two-thirds of Swedish people support the strikers.

In the last 10 years production at LKAB has risen by more than 300 million kroner (12 kroner to £1). In the same period, the consumers' price index went up by 35 per cent but LKAB wages increased by only 30 per cent and the workforce decreased from 7000 to 5200.

The employers' 'union' the SAF is always quick to push through negotiations over unofficial strikes in privately-owned concerns, but it has held up talks at LKAB to show how much better things are run by private enterprise.

Right-wing critics are using the strike as an excuse to prove the evil and decadence of state ownership and social democratic government.

A mass meeting of strikers in the Kiruna sports hall elected a strike

committee of nine workers as the right wing press denounced the stoppage as a move by the communists to regain their control of the local union, which they lost to the social democrats last year. This is totally untrue.

To show how close they are to their members, the union began talks with LKAB 1000 miles away in Stockholm.

The strikers said: 'Let them negotiate. It doesn't matter what they decide, it doesn't concern us at all. The union doesn't represent us in any way.' They demanded talks in Kiruna and nowhere else.

Massive solidarity was shown throughout Sweden by other workers, sailors, students, politicians, intellectuals, artists and housewives. Money for the strike fund started to flow in from the first day of the dispute and by the end of January donations amounted to several million kroner.

At a mass meeting in Kiruna on 18 December, strike committee member Luspa asked the workers: 'Will you go back to work?' Answer: 'NO!'

Luspa attacked the union for negotiating with LKAB in Stockholm without reference to the strikers. 'The union tells us to follow the regulations - then they form a negotiating delegation that is not elected by the workers themselves. They've started a wildcat negotiation!' he declared.

Three days later a meeting turned down a union call for a return to work pending negotiations - the bosses' demand.

Talks broke down

At the end of December a delegation of 29 men representing the strikers was formed for talks with LKAB. The delegation consisted of six union representatives, the nine-man Kiruna committee, nine from Malmberget and three from Svappavaara.

The delegation was weak, especially as a union official was chairman, although Thure Rantatalo had been elected as the strikers' negotiator. But the talks quickly broke down and 4500 out of 4800 workers voted to continue the strike.

Under great pressure, the government announced on 22 January that LKAB and all other state-owned companies would be withdrawn from SAF. The government had consistently turned down such a demand for 10 years in parliament. It has taken massive strike action to force its hand.

On 25 January, an LKAB executive, Lundberg, flew to Kiruna to talk with the strikers' representatives. He said their list of demands would mean a 47 per cent increase in wages expenditure and were completely unrealistic.

The strikers demand:

1. Agreements reached with LKAB cannot be vetoed by SAF.
2. Minimum 17 kroner an hour underground, 15 on the surface. A abolish the time study system. Increase holiday pay.
3. Free bus service to and from work.
4. Age of pension for miners to be lowered from 65 to 60.
5. Re-write collective contract.
6. Immediate research about air pollution conditions in the mine and electric motors instead of diesel.
7. Non-company doctors and free working clothes.
8. Withdrawal of decision to increase rents in company flats.
9. Complete abolition of the 31 articles of the 'working law'.
10. LKAB head office to be moved from Stockholm to the mines.
11. Guarantees that strikers and their committees be protected from persecution.
12. The contract to be valid from the day when the strikers go back to work.

The strikers' condition for going back was that points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 must be immediately implemented.

Lundberg accepted the demand for increased holiday pay and said he will look at the time study payments. But he refused to give any definite guarantees to the workers.

Lundberg is speaking to mass meetings this week at all three strike centres and the union is expected to make a major effort to get the men back to work.

Even if they return, the LKAB strikers have decisively changed the Swedish industrial scene. Unofficial rank and file strikes have



Striking miners pictured at Kiruna

spread throughout the country in recent weeks.

On 16 January, 1500 Volvo car workers stopped work in Gothenburg. Immediate local negotiations were granted and three days later the strikers won their demands for an 11 per cent wage increase, with up to 35 per cent for some categories.

A few hours later, 1000 Saab car workers struck. 'We do exactly the same job as the Volvo workers, so we want exactly the same wages,' they declared. Negotiations began immediately.

There have been two more Saab strikes since then and a further stoppage at Volvo.

Rubber workers, electrical workers, dockers, telephone workers, forestry workers, airline workers -

all have staged lightning strikes in the last few weeks.

1400 policemen have expressed their discontent and several thousand lowly-paid railway workers are contemplating strike action.

Many of the strikes have won immediate improvements, including wage rises of up to 10-25 per cent. Where results have not been won, further strikes are expected in the near future.

The LKAB miners have shattered the myth of industrial peace and prosperity in Sweden. They have shown that workers still face low wages and bad conditions after decades of 'Labour' government.

They have also shown that Swedish-style nationalisation means no change for the labour force. When

LKAB was taken over by the government, the Labour Minister of Finance said it would continue to be run along strictly business principles.

The first paragraph of regulations for state-owned companies states that the most important principle to guide management is the principle of profitability.

With private bankers still on its board, LKAB has steadily increased its profits while the labour force has declined. Now the workers have hit back and threaten those profits.

No wonder Prime Minister Palme, Sweden's Harold Wilson, has denounced them.

Messages of support should be sent to LKAB Strike Committee, Kiruna Sports Hall, Kiruna, Sweden.

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

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Please send further details of the meetings and activities of the International Socialists to:

Name _____

Address _____

Send to IS, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2.



Socialist Worker

FORD WORKERS MUST CLOSE RANKS: NO RETREAT ON £10

Socialist Worker Reporter

FORD WORKERS throughout Britain must close their ranks and demand from the unions that there is no retreat on the £10 wage demand.

If the management does not concede the full increase there should be no further delay in closing down the company's 22 plants.

The Ford workers at Swansea who struck on Monday and Tuesday are the only section to keep their word and fight for parity with Midlands car rates. They returned to work on Wednesday correctly realising that they can not win on their own but rightly angry that other plants refused to honour the pledge to strike from 2 February.

The workers' partial retreat is understandable. The £4 offer from Ford boss Bob Ramsay is almost certainly the largest ever made in any section of the engineering industry.

But if the workers accept this offer, many would find themselves only £2 a week better off. The rest of the increase would be eaten away by increasing rents, rates, higher mortgages and fares.

The whole increase would be wiped out in less than two years if the cost of living continues to escalate at its present rate — and the odds are that it will increase even more rapidly.

Unanimous decision

The workers' enthusiasm for action has also been dampened by the vacillations of the trade union leaders. This is particularly true of Transport Workers' spokesman Moss Evans, who assured the Ford management that there would be no strike.

The TGWU mass meeting made a mistake in not putting a firm date to the call for a deferred strike if further negotiations were unsatisfactory. It took a specially convened meeting of Engineering Union shop stewards last Saturday to come to the almost unanimous decision that negotiations should not continue past 16 February.

On Sunday 8000 Dagenham workers voted in favour of the AEF decision. But two weeks' delay in taking strike action put the determined Swansea workers in an impossibly isolated position.

There must be no further retreat. Ford can afford the full increase. In 1968 the company made £1233 profit out of each worker compared to Rootes' profit per worker of £379.

£10 without strings or strike action from 16 February — that must be the clarion call throughout Ford's empire.

DEVON MARCHERS BACK CENTRAX STRIKE

by Granville Williams

IN AN EFFORT to end the three-month strike of Centrax workers at Newton Abbot in Devon, trade union leaders last Friday brought together management and local representatives of the manual workers' unions.

But it is clear that the management is not prepared to negotiate on the demands of the strike committee or to avoid friction.

On the same day as the meeting, a member of the strike committee received a letter from the management informing him that he had been 'summarily dismissed' following an incident a month before. The police had investigated the incident and decided not to take action.

This small incident highlights what is at stake in the South West for workers. In an area which is predominantly based on agriculture and tourism, trade unionism is weak. Centrax, with more than 1000 workers at Newton Abbot, is the largest factory in South Devon.

There is no alternative employment for the strikers. With unemployment running at 6 per cent, it is either work at Centrax or leave the area.

A poor settlement, or none at all, will put back the growing movement which demands a minimum wage of £17 10s in the South West.

It is only three years since

the Transport Workers struck at Centrax for recognition and now of the eight unions involved in the official dispute are out in solidarity with the three manual unions.

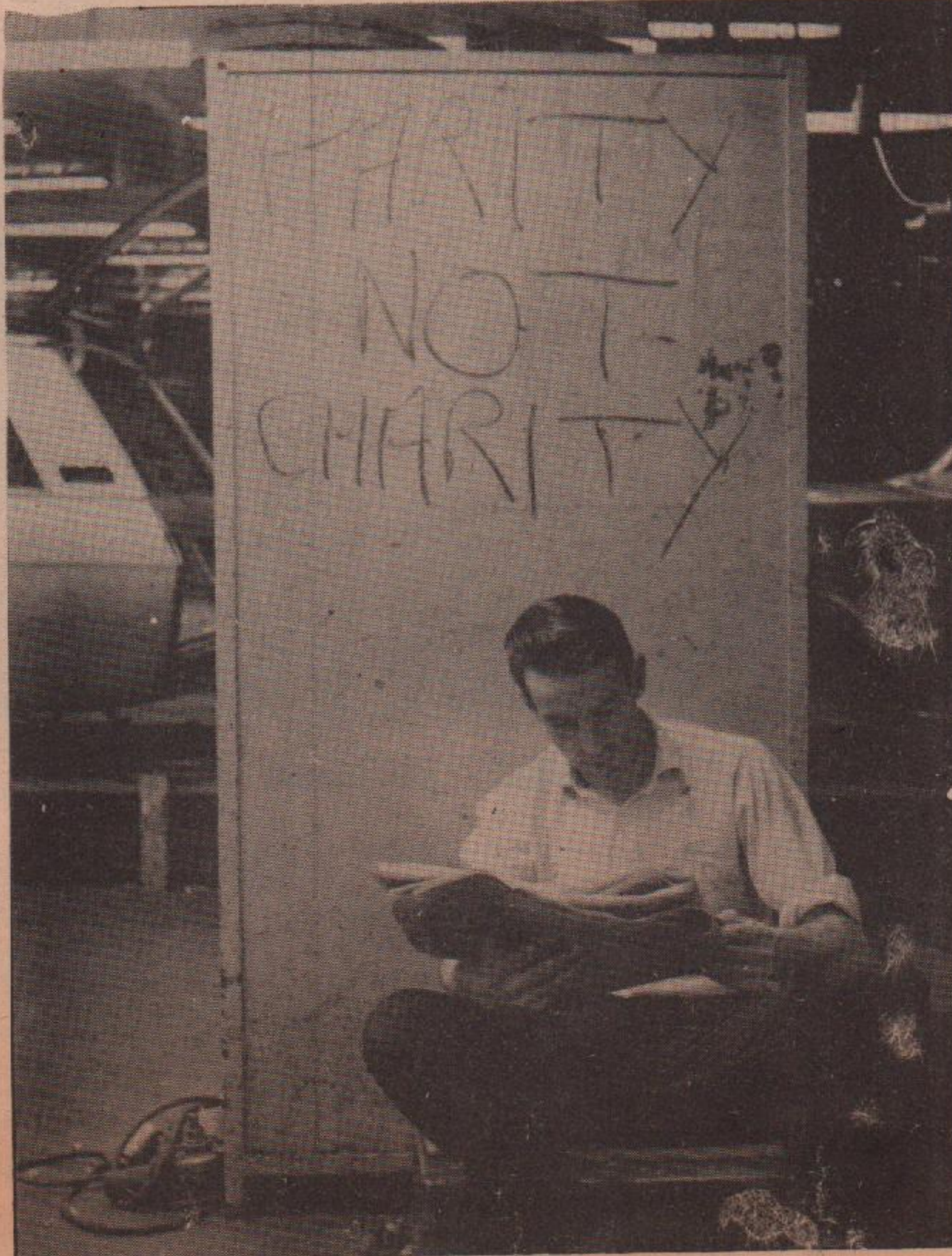
At the meeting following the march against low wages in the South West in Exeter on Saturday, the two best speeches were made by Dave Ferguson (AEF) and Jim Robinson (TGWU) — both on the strike Committee.

Dave Ferguson stressed that the only way workers would win the struggle for better wages was to get into the unions and then use the strike weapon if employers would not budge.

Jim Robinson saw the key question in terms of equal pay-firms employed female labour to cut the wages bill.

The key factor has to be a determined campaign to assist the Centrax strikers in achieving their wage claim. Following from this the initiatives of Newton Abbot Trades Council and the Tolpuddle group in demanding a minimum wage of £17 10s have to be used to link up the struggles of all lower paid workers in the South West.

*** On Monday the Centrax management turned down a union demand for 2s an hour. They offered instead 6d an hour pending the introduction of a productivity agreement. The strike continues.**



Slogan at Dagenham. Picture: M A Hiles

Tories move to the right

from page one

howls of Goldwater and Wallace, the Tories plan, under the guise of 'maintaining law and order' to crack down on the rights of demonstrators.

They are thinking in the short-term of anti-apartheid marchers and squatters, but they would also use such measures against the growing opposition to big business policies throughout industry.

Of course, all these proposals are designed to win middle-class votes. If they win the election, the Tories, like Labour, might well jettison all their promises and toe the line drawn by the giant monopolists of ICI and GEC, the real power in Britain today.

In spite of their ultra-right noises this week, the Tories would prefer to continue Labour's policy of integrating the trade union leaders closer into the meshes of the state machine rather than provoke a head-on collision with the rank and file. Vic Feather and his colleagues will be encouraged to develop their role as policemen of the labour movement.

The Tories, if they return to office, will have to be fought every inch of the way. But the threat contained in their election bribes to the middle class should not force us into the trap of thinking of Labour as a 'lesser evil' — an attitude that is certain to be adopted by every left Labour faker in the run-up to the general election.

Whatever the marginal differences, both parties, in different ways, represent the interests of big business. The policies of both parties are designed to modernise the system at the expense of the working class.

The task of socialists and militant trade unionists is to avoid this grotesque charade of political ring-a-roses and to continue the painstaking work of building a movement to overthrow both political parties and the system they represent.

NOTICES

IS further education group: 7.30pm Sun 8 Feb, Metropolitan, 95 Farringdon Rd (tube Farringdon St).

IS TEACHERS: important mtg to discuss policy statement, 10.30am Sun 8 Feb at 2 Albany Tece NW1.

LARGE ROOM in pub required for IS social at Easter, within 2 miles of central London. Ring IS secretary with suggestions — 739 1878

BEST PRICES paid for second hand books, pamphlets of interest to socialists. IS Book Service 6 Cottons Gdns, E2.

MARKIST STUDIES winter issue. GEC-EE Merseyside. Theory of state capitalism, Ken Tarback, Industrialisation of backward countries, Ernest Germain, Bukharin and socialist realism, B Biro, British Trotskyist movement — some notes, John Walters. New printed format, 52 pps. 3s 4d pp. BMS Publications, 16a Holmdale Rd London NW6.

TONY CLIFF on Productivity Deals, Exeter University, Devonshire House, Rooms C & D, Weds Feb 11 at 8pm.

Grading threat in builders' new pay deal

by Ted Richards

THE NEW PAY DEAL covering more than one million building workers comes into operation this week. The cash increase involved, 2s 1d an hour between February 1970 and June 1972 seems quite large by the standards we have been led to expect from the spineless leaders of the building trade unions.

But the strings attached to the agreement represent a real threat to the workers in the industry. Apart from increasing the differential between the general and craft rate still further, from 1s 3½d now to 1s 6d in 1971-72, the agreement has far more sinister implications.

It aims at the wider introduction of incentive schemes and productivity agreements into the industry. These are to replace completely any 'unofficial payments in excess of the existing standard rates' which employers have been forced to concede on organised sites or in response to labour shortage.

The implementation of productivity agreements means 'The use of balanced gangs, greater flexibility or the relaxation of specified work practices'.

In other words, this agreement opens the door for the employers to introduce interchangeability of labour which so far they have not been able to get away with.

The general principles governing incentive schemes have been rewritten and local incentive tribunals abolished (perhaps they were too subject to militant rank and file pressure).

Opens the door

The payment of collective bonus on a trade or site basis has been specifically excluded from the agreement. This opens the door to favouritism and the division of the workforce to the employers' benefit.

Small wonder then that the recent policy statement of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers welcomes the agreement as giving the employers 'the all important notice of wage levels over a forward period'. Calling for 'strong organisation on both sides of the industry', the NFBTE goes on to advise employers to notify the unions on the commencement of any large contracts.

Having won their spurs in their betrayal of the Barbican strike, the union leaders can now be relied upon to stamp out any militant organisation before it arises.

The employer/union tie-up goes even further. The Wage Structure Working Party of the NFBTE, with Prof. Phelps Brown (who okayed labour-only subcontracting) as consultant, has already drawn up a 'definitive list of occupations together with summary descriptions' which in plain language is a grading scheme.

This is what the employers have been aiming for over the last few years and what they hope to get as the pay-off in 1972.

The union bosses, of course, will want their price and it is likely to be a 100 per cent union membership agreement. George Smith, General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (now safely fused with the Painters Society) praises the latest agreement of the railway unions which enforces 100 per cent membership and therefore



GEORGE SMITH Praise for rail unions

gives the union leaders enormous power, enabling them to drive workers out of the industry if they step out of line.

Such an agreement, and there seems little doubt that many of the large and more far-sighted employers would welcome it, could solve two things for the union leaders.

First it would enable them to expel militants from the industry and from the union.

Secondly it would counteract the steadily declining membership of the building unions brought about, in part, by continual backsliding and cowardice on the part of the existing leaderships.

The employers' strategy is clear: a graded, 'flexible' workforce under the control of the employers and union leaders along the lines of the Joint Industry Board for the electrical contracting industry.

This could bring a rich harvest for the employers but cold comfort for the building worker. The economic development council for the building industry forecast at worst, a reduction of the labour force of 20,000 with an annual increase of output of 3 per cent per head by 1972 and at best a reduction in the labour force of 140,000 with output up 6 per cent.

Prospect is bleak

With employment in the industry during the first eight months of 1969 the lowest since the freezing winter of 1963, the prospect is bleak.

Militant building workers fighting to improve wages and conditions in the industry will need to launch a united fight if these plans are to be defeated.

The right of stewards to negotiate all matters relating to incentive schemes and site procedures must be defended. The deteriorating safety standards of the industry must be reversed.

100 per cent trade union membership and the outlawing of labour-only sub-contractors must be achieved by a national campaign directed at the largest employers, not by behind the scenes 'check off' negotiations.

Angry tenants in siege of town hall

by Martin Earle

THREE HUNDRED council tenants demonstrated at Marylebone Town Hall in London on Monday against rent increases of up to 10s a week and the refusal of Westminster City Council to carry out internal decorations and repairs, equivalent to a further increase of 10s a week.

Other tenants packed the public gallery of the council chamber. When Alderman Hancock, Chairman of the Housing Committee, attempted to justify the rent rises, interruptions became so frequent that the Lord Mayor ordered

the hecklers to keep quiet or leave.

Heckling doubled in volume and following a signal from the Lord Mayor, the entire council stood up and left the chamber.

Enter the police. Very politely and patiently, they explained to the tenants that they would have to leave so that the council meeting could continue.

Equally politely, tenants pointed out that they did not want the meeting to continue. However, in the confusion that followed the police were able to soft-talk many tenants out.

The remainder left on the promise that other tenants who

had been attending a meeting outside the town hall would be admitted into the public gallery when the council had re-assembled.

When the last tenant had left, the doors of the public gallery were shut and, on the Lord Mayor's orders, no-one else was admitted.

Tenants, angered by the trick which has been played on them by the police and the council bureaucrats, returned to their homes wiser to the processes of local government democracy and determined to carry on the fight. It seems likely that Westminster will see a wave of rent strikes