

Socialist Worker

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

ALL OUT FOR VICTORY!

Gas action spreads

... and Blackpool men stand firm after 10 days

CLOSE ON ONE MILLION WORKERS are now in revolt against the Tory wage freeze. Most of them are lower paid, even by the government's own penny-pinching definition. Many of them are below the poverty line, on £15 to £17 a week take home pay.

In the forefront of the revolt are the gas men, with basic pay for a 40 hour week of

SW Political Correspondent

only £19 for labourers and £22.87 for skilled men. Unless they get considerably more than the £2.25 allowed them by Heath, they will find themselves worse off than they were at the beginning of last year.

Close behind them have come the London teachers, fighting for an increase promised them a year ago. Now the Tories say they will be breaking the law if they get the increase.

Next Tuesday 250,000 civil servants are staging a one day strike. They have not had an increase for two years and many of them in the lower grades are having to manage on the same meagre wages as the gas men.

They will be joined in selective strike action next Thursday by a quarter of a million hospital workers, who are even worse paid. The porters, canteen staff, assistants and cleaners who labour to keep running a hospital system starved of government funds are being permitted a miserable £1.84 rise.

At present a quarter of the men workers get only £17.48 before deductions and a quarter of the women get £15.28.

The 50,000 Ford workers get slightly higher pay. But they are the worst paid car workers in Britain.

Yet the Tory government has decreed that any of these workers who challenge its policies will be breaking the law after 1 April. The press is giving full backing to Heath's claim that the fight for a living wage is an onslaught on law and order.

KNIFE EDGE

But this should not fool anyone into believing the government is in a strong position. Quite the opposite. Such are the problems of British big business that the Tories are on a knife edge. Heath and his friends know that a movement is developing that can smash the freeze in the interests of all workers.

No worker should accept the Tory argument that it is a threat to 'democracy' for workers who take home less than £20 a week to ask for more pay.

The hysteria of the press has been matched by the vacillation of the official trade union leaders.

The TUC has called a special one-day conference. By the time it meets the gas men will have been fighting for three weeks. Yet there is little talk of real solidarity being organised. The most that is likely is a one day national stoppage.

To justify their inaction TUC leaders are coming out with the most wild stories. Tom Jackson has gone so far as to say that it is no good resisting government wage control, as the only result will be an election which will strengthen the Tories and prepare the way for Enoch Powell.

What nonsense this is. The Tories know that an election alone will not stop lower-paid workers fighting back. What is more, if the TUC leaders were to organise a real counter-attack, Heath would surely be defeated at the polls.

The danger is not of confrontation with the government, but that the confrontation is taking place without united, militant leadership. That makes it essential for rank and file activists to take the initiative in the weeks ahead without waiting for the official leaders.

● Demand that the TUC organise an unlimited general strike in solidarity with gas workers, health workers, civil servants, teachers, Ford and other groups

● Demand that other unions, like the miners, fight now and not leave others to fight unaided.



AS gas workers step up their strikes and overtime bans against the freeze our picture shows some of the 200 gas men in Blackpool who have been on strike for 10 days. They are seen picketing the local gas works at Morton with union posters and copies of Socialist Worker.

The strikers have been the victims of a vicious attack from the local paper. It carried a headline 'Blackpool gas men ban mercy calls.'

In fact an offer of a full-scale 24-hour emergency service was turned down by local management until they were over-ruled by higher officials. The emergency service now run by the strikers includes the services of a qualified electrician on call for any pensioners who have difficulty with heating appliances. This has not been reported in the local paper.

Picture: PHIL McCOWEN

SUPPORT FINE TUBES NATIONAL PICKET Monday 19 March

Information about numbers attending picket to be received by 2 March Full details from Fine Tubes Strike Committee, 65 Bretonside, Exeter Street, Devon. Phone 0752 65459/65667

Factories swell IS fund

'PLEASE FIND £5 from a pensioner whose life is threatened by capitalism, not by the gas workers.'

'£1 in recognition of the consistent support given by Socialist Worker to the building workers' fight for a better standard of living and also because it fought for the working class against the corrupt bunch of criminals who run this society.'

Five pounds from a 'regular reader of Socialist Worker, Norwich'. £100 from an anonymous donor in Lambeth.

Extracts from just a few of the contributions that have been pouring in this week to push the fund for our new print shop up by £1231. The total now stands at £21,273 and a few more weeks

of sustained effort should reach our £30,000 target.

One of the most encouraging features is the growing number of collections we are receiving from readers in factories: Keith Blackman, Tottenham £7; TASS members at NSF, Keighley £4.20; NUT members £6.53. Other readers who want to follow their example can get printed collection sheets either from local IS branches or from our head office.

Finally, of course, there are the contributions from IS branches. Those received this week include:

Newcastle £264.13, Tottenham £35, South Shields £5, Liverpool £11, East London £52.55, Hornsey £20, Glasgow South £6.50, Wolverhampton £70,

Guildford £10.60, Lambeth £25, Loughborough £60, Edinburgh £5.16.

Our present printshop is working flat out to produce leaflets to aid the present struggle. Last weekend, for instance, we printed a quarter of a million leaflets calling for solidarity with the gas men. In the weeks of struggle ahead the demands placed on our resources are going to be greater than ever. The sooner we reach £30,000 and expand our printing facilities, the sooner we can measure up to the situation.

● Rush donations to Tony Cliff, acting national IS treasurer, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

'CRAWLING TO CRAIG' MOVE IS SNUBBED

by Mike Miller: Belfast

AFTER WILLIAM CRAIG'S latest speech on independence for Northern Ireland at a fascist-style rally in Belfast last week, the Social Democratic and Labour Party suggested talks with the United Loyalist Council, of which Craig is boss.

The idea was to work out a common strategy for opposing the British government's forthcoming White Paper on the future of Northern Ireland. Craig welcomed the idea, but the para-military groups which make up the ULC along with his own Vanguard vetoed it.

They are obviously not ready to talk to anyone. Last weekend three more Catholics were assassinated in Belfast while many more assassination attempts failed.

As the crunch period of the White Paper draws nearer the extreme right wing of the Ulster Loyalist Council is desperately searching for ways of maintaining its power in the Six Counties. Craig believes this can be achieved only through negotiated independence from Britain or failing that through a Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

In his search for support Craig was prepared to form an opportunistic alliance with the Catholic middle class as represented by the SDLP leaders. They in turn welcomed an opportunity of discussing ways in which they could win a share of power, in exchange for which they would help keep the Catholic section of the working class in fetters.



Craig: outbid on right

The whole affair was wrapped up in mystifying language. The SDLP leaders claimed that the United Loyalist Council represented 'the Protestant working class community', and all that they themselves were interested in was peace.

In fact the ULC leaders, Craig, Harding-Smith (UDA) and Billy Hull (Loyalist Association of Workers) are among the most savage enemies of the working class in Northern Ireland. Similarly the SDLP do not represent the Catholic workers, but rather a class that is desperately looking for ways of bringing those workers back into the game of middle-class politics and of getting them off the streets and away from 'dangerous and revolutionary' ideas.

The pretence that talks with conscious and semi-conscious fascists in the leadership of the far right would end sectarianism is ludicrous. These are the men whose very existence depends on sectarian appeals to ordinary Protestant workers and on keeping the labour movement divided and ineffective.



Protest vote say socialists

DUBLIN:-Members of the Socialist Workers Movement have been holding meetings and distributing leaflets pointing out to workers that next week's general election is a fraud. They say that Prime Minister Lynch is rushing in before the White Paper on the North, before prices go up even more and further jobs are lost. He hopes to crack down on everyone who opposes him.

But, as the leaflets point out, the opposition coalition would be just as bad as Fianna Fail, the present ruling party. Labour has tied itself to the right-wing Fine Gael and so 'cannot put forward the interests of the working class.'

'Anyhow it is hard to see how the real changes could come through Dail Eireann (parliament). The real power lies with the bosses, the seven per cent of the people who own 70 per cent of the wealth. The Dail dances to their tune.'

The only way forward for workers is outside parliament. 'Rising prices can be beaten by trade union action. Tenants can prevent rent increases. Strikes can smash the national wage agreement.'

'Workers take-overs can beat redundancies. National strikes can free political prisoners. The working class can solve all the main problems. These struggles must continue and must be organised and co-ordinated.'

Meanwhile, the SWM is arguing that the only value to workers of their vote in this election is as a protest vote. To that end they should vote for those few socialist and republican candidates who stand for working class interests.

If sectarianism is ever to end these men will have to be smashed. The SDLP won't do that by talking to them. The task of dealing with them falls to those Protestant workers who over the last few weeks have shown signs of disillusionment in the right wing gangsters.

Similarly, Catholic workers must not be fooled by the SDLP's rantings. It cannot solve sectarianism because it cannot solve the problems that cause and strengthen it—the unemployment, low wages, appalling conditions and slum housing for which Northern Ireland is notorious.

When socialists within the Catholic community begin seriously to fight on these issues then and only then will the possibility of overcoming sectarianism arise. Only then will the SDLP and ULC be swept aside and genuine working-class unity created.

There's a hole where the roof should be...



THE RAIN comes through the roof and Pauline Smith (16) catches the drips in a bucket. But that's the least of the Smith family's problems. For the condemned house at Dundas Terrace, Nottingham, is plagued with rats. Mrs Betty Smith has seven children and lives in fear of the rats attacking her three-months-old baby, Mark, during the night. And her husband, Gordon, an unemployed driver, has developed a duodenal ulcer through worrying about their living conditions.

Mrs Smith's daily routine includes putting out buckets to catch the rain and putting food out of reach of the rats. Paper is peeling from the damp walls and electric switches hang dangerously from their fittings. The rats have eaten away the skirting boards.

The Smiths are an urgent case for official attention. But the council can offer them little hope. The city's housing department says the family will have to wait until May 1974 for rehousing when the condemned house is pulled down. The council may be saved the bother of demolition if the rats keep up their efforts.

DUNDEE ON BRINK

by Andy Arnold

DUNDEE:-The result of next Thursday's by-election in Dundee East is crucial as far as the Labour Party is concerned.

Labour's majority at the general election was a thin 2800. The successful candidate then was George Thomson who has vacated his seat in order to go and work for the Tories as a Common Market Commissioner.

This time the Labour Party is running George Machin, a Sheffield Labour councillor, a member of the engineering workers union and a complete unknown to the people of Dundee.

The city has always had strong Labour constituencies in Dundee East and West. It has a long history of trade union militancy. Unemployment now is more than 8 per cent with more large scale redundancies threatened in the near future.

During the present Tory attacks on working-class organisation and living standards, a defeat for Labour in such a city as Dundee would be a clear indication of Labour's complete lack of credibility.

And yet with the weak, unenthusiastic campaigning of the local Labour group and the significant inroads being made by the Scottish Nationalist and the Liberal contestants, such a defeat is quite

possible.

And it is no coincidence that the Labour Party announced its intention last week to nationalise Scottish North Sea oil when in government since this is the Scottish Nationalist Party's major campaign issue.

Dundee is also an area where the Communist Party has a strong influence. A large number of full-time trade union officials here are party members. And the Communist Party decided to run a candidate in the by-election, Jack Ashton.

But just a few days after announcing that Ashton would stand and with his campaign just starting he was withdrawn. This caused much annoyance and confusion among party members, some of whom were distributing Ashton election leaflets on the same day the nomination was withdrawn.

The Communist Party officials (some of whom helped Machin win the Labour nomination) decided that with the insecure position of the Labour Party in the election fight, it would be far too risky for their party to run a candidate.

Whether or not Labour can retain this seat with the assistance of the Communist Party and top Labour leadership and a chain of Labour MPs who are currently visiting the city, remains to be seen.

Big fish find way through the ice

SOME of the nation's finest brains are going to be hard at work for the next couple of months. They are the backroom boys of high finance, the £10,000 a year taxation experts and financial controllers of the City of London.

The big task of the moment is to find ways under, over, round or through the freeze legislation. The prizes are dished out in millions of pounds worth of extra dividend for the shareholders, courtesy of the Treasury, the official custodian of Phase Two.

The job isn't too hard for the brightest boys. And the government has thoughtfully helped them along the way with that bureaucratic hold-all, the exercise of discretion in the administering of the Counter Inflation Bill.

Section 2, paragraph 9, sub-section D of the Bill allows the government to: 'Make provision for the giving of consent, whether by the Treasury, or one of the Agencies, to the doing of anything otherwise than by order of the Notice.'

Which is better expressed as 'Convince us you have a case, and we will let you crawl under the net.' The first weeks of the freeze give us a good idea of how that particular loophole is going to work.

Last week, the BATH AND PORTLAND mineral and engineering group declared record profits of £1.45m compared with £0.81m previously. The Treasury gave permission for the final dividend to be raised from 10 per cent to 12½ per cent (ie a rise in shareholders' income of a nice 25 per cent).

Push up

The week before that, WAGON FINANCE was able to lift its dividend from 2.5 per cent to 3.0 per cent (a 20 per cent rise in shareholders' income). The previous week, DEAN SMITH HOLDINGS raised their dividend from 30 per cent to 36 per cent (again a helpful 20 per cent rise in shareholders' take home pay).

ANGLIA TV were just as smart last month. They managed to push their dividend up from 7.5 per cent to a comfortable 8.87 per cent last month by the simple device of a scrip issue.

How do they carry it off? According to the Treasury, some companies find they are in conflict with earlier tax laws if they try to carry out the provisions of the Freeze. Schedule 23, paragraph 2(1b), of the 1972 Finance Act is the one that does it in the case of ALLIED BREWERIES who dished out an extra £3m a couple of weeks ago to its impoverished shareholders.

Allied claim they didn't really seek that extra income.

If they hadn't paid out the increased dividend this year, they would have been liable to double taxation on their franked investment income.

This would have made them uncompetitive in their tax situation and the Treasury accepted their point. Lucky shareholders. There are a lot of companies in the queue to pull the same stroke, and the Treasury is aware of this.

By an oversight in the earlier tax laws, they have provided a fine loophole for hundreds of companies who are involved in takeover negotiations. Even if the bid fails, the company still has to pay out the increased dividend and so the Treasury happily gave its permission.

At the end of next month, the Davy Ashmore engineering group is to declare its profits. In a letter privately circulated to shareholders, managing director John Buckley says that Davy Ashmore is fighting off a bid from Simon Engineering, but that Davy Ashmore's profits are going to leap from £2.3 million last year to well over £4 million this.

So the lucky investors in the company, who last year received a dividend of a mere 8 per cent, stand this year to gain one, with Treasury permission of course, of a massive 30 per cent. Or in other words, more than 350 per cent increase in their income.

DAVID CLARK

WHAT WE THINK

The freeze: unity can win

AS the political and industrial crisis gathers pace the working-class movement faces one of its greatest challenges. The decisions taken in the next few weeks are crucial not just for the current battles between unions and government. Victory or defeat now could have a decisive effect on the development of the trade union movement for years.

On the credit side we have the unprecedented sight of important sections—gas men, Ford workers, health workers, civil servants, loco men, teachers—already engaged in industrial action or preparing for it. The government's ability to divide the movement by pinpointing one group in struggle and launching a press witchhunt against it is seriously weakened by the growing opposition to its policies.

A united movement of all those fighting the freeze, low-paid and better-paid presenting a common strategy to the common enemy, could smash the policy and the government behind it.

Twisted

On the debit side we have the glaring weakness of the official trade union leadership. The Tory government, denounced from conference platforms for two and a half years by the union leaders, remains in power—courtesy of those self-same leaders. The movement unleashed last winter and summer in defence of the miners and the dockers could have brought the Tories down. Instead the TUC general council has twisted and turned in a desperate attempt to avoid a head-on industrial confrontation with the Tories.

The result is the wage freeze and all the sinister new legislation being rushed in to attack such basic liberties as the right to strike. Unless the freeze is defeated, it will be accepted government policy, whether Labour or Tory, for the state to legislate to hold down wages and chip away at the hard won rights of working people.

In spite of the sudden talk of 'general elections' and 'general strikes' from some union leaders, the basic aim of beheading any serious challenge to the government remains the same. Joe Gormley, right-wing leader of the miners, speaks of the

choice being collaboration with the Tories or a general strike, deliberately choosing two extremes to divert attention from the necessity to build on the present foundations, which means organising and leading to victory the present forces fighting the government.

Moss Evans, the chief union negotiator at Ford, talks of the need for unity against the freeze but cautions the Ford workers against 'going it alone'. But real unity is never forged by the powerful sections waiting for the weaker ones. Their task is to lead the fight and by their example draw other sections into the struggle. The decision by the Ford shop stewards to ignore the shilly-shallying tactics of their officials, to take strike action from 1 March and explicitly to fight in unison with health workers and civil servants, is a major step forward.

An open-ended general strike could defeat the government. It could compel the Tories to abandon their pay freeze laws and would leave them without any policy for solving the problems of British big business. Under such circumstances they could not remain in office. No amount of electoral jiggery pokery would provide them with a way out.

But such an outcome requires resolute and determined leadership from the trade unions. And that leadership is not needed at some distant point in the future. It is needed now, to mobilise the whole working-class movement in solidarity with the individual groups of workers at present confronting the government and its pay law.

If the TUC was really serious about taking up the government's challenge, it would be organising such solidarity action, culminating in an all-out general strike now. If it were serious it would be telling its members in each locality to take the preparations necessary to ensure victory for such a struggle by building councils of action made up of delegates from every union branch and every shop stewards committee to organise joint demonstrations and pickets.

In this way it would very rapidly ensure that there was very little 'public' left to support the government against the strikers.

But the TUC is not serious. Even now its main policy is to suggest further meetings with Heath and to complain that he is unwilling to take them seriously. It is calling a special conference

on 5 March to 'plan' action against the government. But we can expect little there except tub thumping from the 'lefts' and calls for total surrender from the right. The most the conference is likely to decide is a one-day general strike.

Let there be no illusions. The TUC would call for such limited action only as a gesture of defiance to the government on the one hand and to allow trade union members to let off steam on the other. The TUC will certainly not plan and agitate for all-out action that might seriously threaten the government and its policies.

The refusal of the TUC to give a real lead means that rank and file militants must act now, without waiting for it. Certainly, there is a need for resolutions demanding that the TUC call a general strike. But even more important is the organisation of immediate solidarity with those already in struggle.

That means here and now redoubling efforts at grass-roots level to weld the different sections together. It means mass meetings in every area of teachers, gas men, miners, civil servants, Ford workers, health workers, to plan united action. It means building solidly-based local committees that cut across sectional boundaries and create a real unity of purpose.

Paralyse

It means growing pressure, including the threat of 'unofficial' strikes, to force the union leaders to plan united action from the top from those sections in the firing line, backed by official support from the rest of the trade union movement in the form of blacking, picketing, and collections. Again, the experience of the miners and the dockers last year shows how such action can paralyse the government and its big business supporters.

The responsibility falls on the rank and file to organise now and not wait for the TUC. As the teachers and civil servants in London have shown, it is necessary to move 'unofficially' if there is to be any chance of official action. That is why shop stewards and representatives of all those sections currently fighting the freeze should plan joint meetings to

co-ordinate strike action, picketing, mass meetings and demonstrations and begin to lay the basis for effective councils of action in every part of the country.

On one point we can agree with the government and its press supporters: the unions ARE involved in political action. Politics is not something reserved for the five-yearly Westminster merry-go-round. The Tories, in the interests of the small but powerful minority that owns and controls the country, is engaged in a massive political onslaught against working people, involving wages, rents, social services and the basic right to organise at the workplace

Defends

We should not shirk the issue. Faced by a society in crisis, with its state machine growing daily more repressive against 'minorities' (including ten million trade unionists—some minority that) and with real power exercised not in parliament but in the hands of a tiny, unelected, unrepresentative group of industrialists and financiers, the unions should and must organise to fight back.

The 'law and order' we allegedly threaten is not devised in the interests of the majority, of the 25 million ordinary working people in this country. It defends the interests of the minority who tell us to sacrifice our wages in the 'national interest' while prices and profits soar, while 17 new property millionaires chortle all the way to the bank. It bolsters the rule of those who screech about strike pickets and rebel councillors breaking the law while every legal loophole is found to increase the wealth of the rich during the freeze.

Yes, it is a political fight. But the politics must be of our making. Not the politics of compromise and surrender practised by Labour and its union pals. It must be the politics of real socialism, arguing the case for united action not just to defeat the freeze or even the government but the whole rotting edifice of capitalism itself.

The working class is showing yet again its enormous potential. A golden opportunity exists for revolutionary socialists in the thick of the present struggle to help turn that potential into a mass movement challenging for workers' power.

HELP MAKE



OUR SALES SOAR

'It's the best paper around for workers' struggles'

by Margaret Renn
Circulation Manager

IN THE LAST YEAR, all over the country, Socialist Worker sales on council estates have been built up, and the coverage in the paper on the issues facing tenants has made it invaluable reading.

David Skinner, who writes on page 6 this week, is a Clay Cross councillor, a member of the group which is still standing firm against the government over the rent increases. In his opinion, 'Socialist Worker is the best newspaper around for trade unionists because it highlights the working class struggles up and down the country.'

Building up sales on the estates is very important at the moment. A member of York International Socialists branch told me how they had started. 'When planning campaigns against the April and October rent increases the best way to start will be with the new IS

tenants pamphlet. Otherwise use handbills or leaflets saying what Socialist Worker stands for, distribute them on certain streets, and then follow up with the paper. One useful tip is to try at the back kitchen rather than at the front door.

'The key to a successful round is regularity and leaving yourself enough time to talk to people about the paper. If people who buy the paper come to expect you regularly and you have time to talk, a round can stay solid, even after setbacks.

Encouraging

'On the estate in York with the biggest sales (60 papers) six of us meet on Sundays at 11am, divide up the round, and then, afterwards, meet in the pub. But we hope that in

time much of the round will be taken over by the regular readers, who will sell on their own streets.

'The most encouraging thing is that although the rent strike collapsed in November we have kept a hard core of the estates of more than 100 Socialist Worker readers, compared to 15 a year ago.'

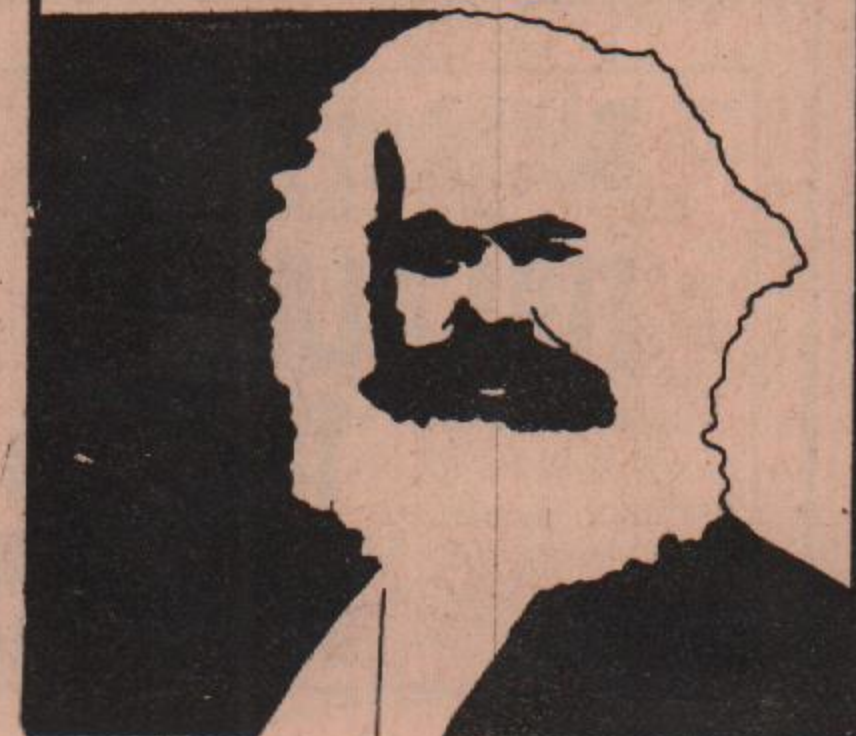
Several branches have sent me copies of leaflets about Socialist Worker they have distributed and we have now had some printed. Any branch or reader wanting copies should order them from me—cost £1 a thousand, money with orders please.

● If you have any other suggestions about organising sales on the estates please let me know. All ideas for boosting sales and reaching our 30,000 target are welcome. Please ring me on 01-739 2639.

The Meaning of Marxism

by Duncan Hallas

20p plus 3p postage
IS Books
6 Cottons Gardens,
London E2 8DN





BRIEFING

A LARGE number of French revolutionary organisations and newspapers, including Trotskyists, Maoists, and the PSU, the left socialist party, have protested against the Paris municipal council's decision to ban the Lutte Ouvriere group (Workers' Struggle) from using the Paris Sports Palace for its election rally.

About 50 members of the Ligue Communiste occupied the Paris Town Hall for an hour last Friday in protest, the executive of the Socialist Party has formally protested, and so has the Socialist and Radical group on the council itself.

Despite the actions of its Socialist and Radical allies in the Left Union, the French Communist Party has remained silent, although it was the victim of a similar ban on using the park at Vincennes for its annual festival last summer.

The government-appointed Paris Prefect has also refused Lutte Ouvriere the use of an open space to put up a marquee for the rally. Lutte Ouvriere has written to all the councils controlled by the left in the Paris area asking for the use of a large hall, and have declared that if this fails they will hold the rally on Monday as planned,

outside the Sports Palace.

In the Paris factory where the Communist-dominated CGT union expelled Guy Mouney for declaring he was a Lutte Ouvriere candidate, 60 workers signed a protest petition in the first hour it was circulated. The union bureaucrats and the Communist Party faction which runs the union will not get away without a fight.

A PROTEST movement has sprung up in Denmark in the past few weeks against the huge rises in food prices—mainly in dairy products, which, until the recent increases to bring the prices in line with the other Common Market countries, were much cheaper than elsewhere in Europe.

A housewife belonging to the Socialist People's Party has started a national petition against the rises and is being helped by a populist daily newspaper, which thrives on this type of thing. The response to the petition has been terrific and a boycott of milk products has led to a drop in sales of about 7 per cent. 10,000 people demonstrated outside parliament.

MARTIAL LAW MOVE AGAINST GUERRILLAS

RHODESIA has launched a big counter-attack on the freedom fighters. Martial law has been declared over the whole of Chiweshe Reserve, a 300 square mile area north of Salisbury. All whites have been asked to leave and the security forces have begun combing it for guerrillas.

The Minister for Law and Order, Lardner-Burke, has stated that the guerrillas might be peasants during the day and guerrillas at night.

As it became increasingly clear that the peasants supported and were servicing the guerrillas, collective fines have been imposed on whole villages. The mandatory sentence for co-operation with the guerrillas has been increased from three years imprisonment to 20.

The guerrillas' present offensive began in the middle of 1972 when military groups of both the Zimbabwe African People's Union and the

Zimbabwe African National Union began operations in the west and east of the country respectively, to mobilise the local peasantry. It was in these same areas that the Rhodesian and South African military forces were concentrated.

In August the first white soldiers were killed by a mine near Sinoia, only 50 miles from Salisbury. Then a goods train was derailed near the Wankie coal mining area.

In December the struggle took a more serious turn for Smith's regime, when ZANU guerrillas began attacking isolated white farms which have been taken over as army posts. Altena Farm was attacked by mortar and bazooka fire, which killed 15 soldiers and injured two civilians. The next day, Whistlefield Farm was attacked and 25 soldiers were killed. A mine exploded a Rhodesian security truck on the same day, killing 30

soldiers.

The Rhodesian and British press portrayed these incidents as attacks on innocent white civilians by terrorist bands. They never pointed out that the farms concerned had been converted into army posts after the successes of FRELIMO guerrillas in the TeTe province of neighbouring Mozambique, which threatened the railway between Salisbury and the port of Beira.

by Roger Tembo

THUGGERY

From these command posts the Rhodesian forces had been terrorising the local peasantry for months. The punishment of those who co-operated with the guerrillas reached barbaric proportions. The contempt of the white soldiers for the Africans they claim to be protecting expressed itself in torture and thuggery.

On 9 January, two South African

policemen were killed and five Rhodesians injured by a mine, and guerrillas attacked Mount Darwin, a small Rhodesian village, killing three Rhodesians. Two land inspectors were kidnapped in the same area in the same week. In the wake of these attacks the Smith regime desperately began its 'sanctions war' with Zambia.

When the propaganda myths of an oppressive regime like Smith's are exploded by hard reality, the reaction is violent and extreme.

Given the racialism of the Rhodesian forces, entire communities are likely to suffer wholesale terror in the months to come. In this situation, more peasants will join the guerrilla forces, and the war will escalate.

So far the working class of the towns has not been involved in the offensive, except in a servicing role. Just how crucial working-class participation in struggle in Southern Africa could be has been shown by the strength of the recent strikes in South Africa.

TWENTY THOUSAND people demonstrated in Milan last Thursday, and there was a 10-hour strike of printers throughout Italy, in protest at the shooting of two printers by a neo-fascist employer.

The victims were picketing Armando Girotto's printworks—he publishes a magazine called Hunting and Fishing—because he had tried to 'persuade' his 20 employees to join the neo-fascist trade union. He shot two of the pickets in the face with a hunting rifle.

IN ITS 14 years of existence the European Common Market has clearly failed to level up prices between its member countries. For example, the average difference in food prices within it is more than 50 per cent.

The European Commission has now published a report on the reasons for these differences, based on a study of the 1968 prices. It shows that the main cause of variation in prices is decisions taken by manufacturers and that taxation and profit levels have only a minor effect. Indeed, in some cases, for example cameras, the manufacturers' prices sometimes differed more than the final shop prices.

The report concludes rather pessimistically that there is little to be done, and that prices will continue to diverge widely within the Common Market as long as prices depend on the whim and marketing policies of manufacturers.

POMPIDOU TRIES TO SPLIT LEFT

PRESIDENT Pompidou's recent statement about the possible outcome of the French elections have been designed to split the Left Union. The Socialist Party leader, Mitterand, has responded by making it quite clear that he has no intention of being pushed leftwards by the Communist Party, especially on defence or foreign policy.

The Communist Party indignantly denies that there is any split in the Left, or that it would in any way push the alliance leftwards. Its leader, Marchais, has talked of confrontation between president and people if the Left win and are not allowed to take over government, but he has been careful not to say anything about how the people could actually fight this.

Marchais has attempted to strengthen the Communist Party's negotiating position in the Left Union by making it clear that in return for their votes in the second round they expect some ministerial jobs. He has referred to the role played by the Party in the post-war coalition government—which in fact amounted to getting the workers to 'tighten their belts'.

But the strategy of the right is quite clear. If they have to put up with a shift to the left, they want to limit it as much as possible. They particularly want to keep out the Communist Party, not because of its policies, which are respectable, but because its links with the unions make it possibly susceptible to mass pressure. The Communists repeatedly declare that they will not use this strength.

Militant coup leaves president a puppet

by Vic Richards

THE armed forces of Uruguay staged a coup last week, masking the realities of the power takeover by keeping President Bordaberry in office.

The real position emerges clearly, however, from the president's speech on radio and television last Wednesday announcing the end of the crisis.

'The executive will create the appropriate institutional channels to permit the armed forces to participate in national affairs, within the terms of the constitution and the law', he said. 'A national security council will be set up to assist the President of the Republic to promote the conditions necessary for carrying out the nation's goals.'

'The Defence Ministry and the armed forces will have a role to play in the tasks of the nation's planning, as well as in the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.'

The coup was staged on the pretext that a senator, Amilcar Vasconcellos, had insulted the army, and that the president's reply was not sufficiently strong. The rebels occupied all the radio stations, most of the capital, Montevideo, and had the support of the majority of the armed forces.

these posts of men put forward by the army.

Underlying the crisis is the long-term deterioration of Uruguay's much-vaunted prosperity. For nearly a century Uruguay enjoyed the appearances of a liberal democracy and a welfare state, on the basis of a booming cattle and wheat economy (and contraband trade with Brazil).

This 'prosperity' was largely the result of sharing the spoils among a small proportion of the population. The urban middle class, in particular, was given a relatively large share of the wealth and government jobs, providing a stable base for the state. But in the countryside the position of the great cattle ranchers was not significantly challenged, and the gauchos (cowboys) lived in poverty.

Bankrupt

The basis of the welfare state was undermined by the continuing fall in the price of Uruguay's exports, the growth of the main towns, and the rise of a fairly strong trade union movement. The run-down of the country's apparent prosperity, after 1930, turned into a series of major crises after 1964. The ruling parties proved unwilling and unable to attempt any major change, as they were firmly wedded to the status quo.

Out of their bankruptcy, and supported by popular resentment arose, a major urban guerrilla movement, the Tupamaros, which seriously threatened the government.

President Bordaberry, having failed to smash the Tupamaros by police action, allowed the army complete freedom to launch a campaign against them and this near-civil war has seriously weakened, although not destroyed, the guerrillas.

The military came to control much of Uruguay's internal affairs, and large sections of the army started to press for a complete take-over, following the example of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. The 'nationalist' tone of some of their statements is due, in the main, to the discovery that they would cut the ground from under the Tupamaros, politically, by identifying with the nationalistic military dictators in Peru.

Dismissal

President Bordaberry had the support of the navy alone. His appeal to the civilian population to defend the government led to a fiasco, when only a few hundred people attended a rally in its support. So Bordaberry gave in to almost all the demands of the military, including the dismissal of the defence and home affairs ministers, and the appointment to



A poster and effigy carried by some of the 150,000 metalworkers from all over Italy who converged on Rome during their one-day strike last week demanding a wage increase and better working conditions.

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MINERS' LEADERS DON'T WANT A DUST-UP

WHAT IS the National Union of Mineworkers doing about pneumoconiosis? The Times of 12 February announced: 'Union Ready for Legal Battle Over Miners' Disease Compensation'.

The article told of an attempt by the union to raise £500,000 for a special fund to fight the Coal Board in the courts for compensation for miners suffering from this strangling lung disease.

About time, too, some miners might think. It was February 1969—more than three years ago—when Stanley Pickles, a former miner from Ryton, Co Durham, got £7500 damages for pneumoconiosis from the Coal Board in an out-of-court settlement. Mr Pickles, however, was not a member of the NUM. He was a maintenance man, and so belonged to the AUEW, which fought his case for him.

The Pickles case had immediate results. In December 1970, 300 South Wales miners applied for writs against the Coal Board.

D C Davies, the compensation secretary of the South Wales NUM, told the Manchester Evening News: 'We have never had a penny in damages for pneumoconiosis, and that is why the action being taken is so important.'

Nothing, however, has been heard about these cases, or about 37 similar cases from Durham. In January 1971, the Lancashire Evening Post reported that 1100 miners in the North West had 'joined together in a mass action' to sue the NCB for pneumoconiosis damages.

Again, there was silence. In the 'safety debate' at last year's NUM conference at Morecambe, none of the NUM officials spoke of court actions on lung disease.

The problem seems to be that if all members of the NUM who suffer from pneumoconiosis are as successful as was Mr Pickles, the Coal Board will have to pay out hundreds of millions of pounds. There are at least 40,000 pneumoconiosis sufferers, who could win in the region of £300,000,000.

The prospect of all that Coal Board money going into the pockets of their sick members is not altogether pleasing for those NUM officials who have been fighting alongside the Coal Board for more government subsidies for the industry, and for the writing off of the NCB's debt. The sum which was written off as a result of the joint campaign is not much greater than the sum which NUM members might win in compensation for pneumoconiosis.

So the Times report goes on: 'Secret moves are afoot to prevent the industry's private grief from being dragged through the courts.'

A 'special conference' is being arranged to discuss the Coal Board's ideas for a 'state-financed compensation scheme'. Wrote the Times man: 'It is almost certain that the NUM . . . would respond to the conference proposals.'

It seems that the NUM, having shirked the issue in the first place, and after being shown up by the AUEW in the Pickles case, is still trying to avoid a 'confrontation'.

Ship-shape

THE ROYAL YACHT Britannia is undergoing another refit. No freeze has been applied to rising costs in this department, as the figures for the costs of Britannia refits over the years show:

1954	£67,000
1955-6	£69,000
1957-8	£163,000
1960-1	£208,000
1962	£60,500
1964-65	£324,000
1967	£234,000
1969	£474,000
1972	£1,800,000

PARLIAMENTARY PUFFS

DINING ROOM 'C' at the House of Commons lived up to its reputation last Thursday with a sumptuous lunch given in honour of the West German Ambassador, His Excellency K G Von Hasse, by the all-party West German Group, (chairman: Raymond Fletcher, Labour, Ilkerton; secretary: Bernard Braine, Tory, South East Essex).

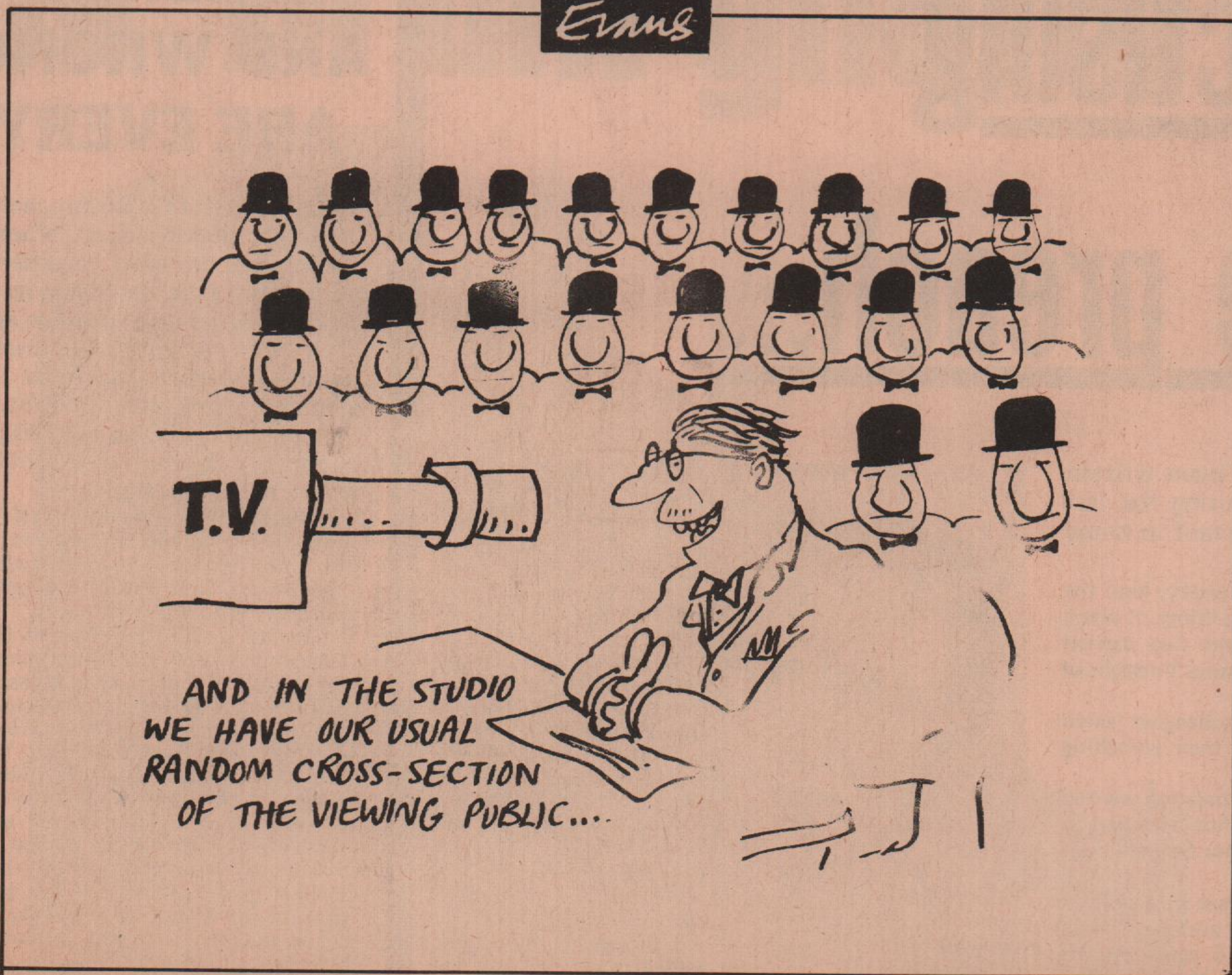
The following day, the parliamentary Animal Welfare Group met to discuss the slaughter of animals for export. Among those invited were representatives of the RSPCA and the News of the World. The hosts were Ken Lomas (Huddersfield, West, Labour) and Fred Burden (Gillingham, Tory).

And in case you think MPs are a dull lot, I'm

happy to announce that a parliamentary jazz group is being formed by Ray Carter and Arthur Davidson (Labour MPs) and Reg Bennett and Phil Goodhart (Tory MPs).

The Department of Health has arranged for cards to be distributed in the lobbies for MPs who want to donate their kidneys for transplant. Rumours that Mr Ken Lomas has sold his at the highest price have been discounted.

It is, however, definitely the case that Eddie Griffiths, Labour MP for Brightside, was a little embarrassed recently by the size of his bills for entertaining in the dining rooms.



COAL MAN ERIC CLIMBS ON THE GRAVY TRAIN

SOMETHING must surely be done soon about Mr Eric Ogden, the Labour MP for Liverpool, West Derby, whose recent performances in parliament have shocked even the Labour front bench.

Mr Ogden was a miner until he was elected to parliament in 1964 and so he gets £250 a year 'towards his election expenses' from the National Union of Mineworkers. But Mr Ogden has plenty of other irons in the fire, witness his remarkable speech in the House on 9 February, in which he opposed a private members' Bill proposed by Mr Ronald Lewis, the MP for Carlisle.

The Bill sought to make drug companies automatically liable in law for the marketing and distribution of unsafe drugs and also extended the Limitations Act to ensure that anyone can sue as soon as he or she discovers the cause of injury.

The Limitations Act has for many years held up the claims of miners who have wanted to sue the Coal Board for the injury and suffering caused by pneumoconiosis and other foul diseases contracted in the pits. Because six years have passed since most of the incidents of pneumoconiosis were first discovered, the miners in question, it is sometimes argued, cannot sue.

Mr Lewis' Bill if passed would have put paid to that nonsense and opened the floodgates for actions against the Coal Board. The NUM, therefore, was all in favour of the Bill.

Mr Ogden, however, though he voted in favour of the Bill, spent most of his speech attacking it.

This attitude, he assured MPs, had nothing at all to do with the fact that



he is the 'parliamentary adviser' to the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society. After defending Distillers, the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries and after picking a number of nits in the Bill, Mr Ogden said:

'To keep a balanced debate, we should put on record that thalidomide has done many people a great deal of good . . . Tragic as its effects have been for some people—and we cannot overestimate that—many people have been helped by using thalidomide . . . It is not wholly a negative drug. It has possibilities.'

Mr Ogden's moving contribution on behalf of thalidomide, which, on top of the damage done to the fetuses of unborn children, has also caused many thousands of cases of polyneuritis, a form of paralysis in the fingers and toes, is the latest in a long line of similar parliamentary contributions.

Last summer, with two other Labour MPs, Ron Brown (Shoreditch)

and Ben Ford (Bradford North), Mr Ogden visited South Africa as guests of the South Africa Foundation, a public relations organisation one of whose main jobs is ferrying British politicians round the gravy trains of South African cities.

Mr Ogden was indebted to Shell Oil, which arranged for him to see their single buoy mooring terminal off Durban, which has polluted the beaches for miles around.

Mr Ogden was very impressed by the arrangements and returned to the House of Commons to speak movingly in favour of Shell's plans to build a single buoy mooring terminal off Anglesey in North Wales. Mr Ogden was in no way put out by the fact that Shell's plans will mean a 10 per cent cut in the revenue of the Mersey, which he represents in parliament, or by the fact that oil is a main competitor of coal, which he also represents.

Mr Ogden also found time last August to visit Rhodesia as a guest of a tobacco company. He had none of the trouble getting into the country experienced by other Labour MPs with records of opposition to the Smith regime.

Once again, Mr Ogden enjoyed Rhodesian hospitality almost more than he could say. And on 9 November he spoke up bravely from the Labour benches against the continuing of economic sanctions against the Smith regime.

Mr Ogden has entered his name for the keenly contested House of Commons All Party PARASITE OF THE YEAR competition, and is running strongly for first prize.

Steel corp gets the knives out

THE PAST two weeks have been a bit of a come down for the five new worker directors of the British Steel Corporation. They have been attending a course at the TUC training college in London where TUC tutors have somewhat despairingly been trying to knock a bit of elementary trade unionism into the five new boys selected from 70 nominees put to BSC by the TUC steel committee.

It is thought that the five—one of whom is an executive member of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation—have been afforded some late night relief from the staid day time surroundings of Congress only thanks to the expense accounts the BSC so generously provides.

Just prior to the TUC course the five new £1000-a-year-on-top-of-their-ordinary-wages worker directors were on a two-week BSC induction course. This took place in the magnificent surroundings of the BSC Ashorn Hill management college which is tucked into the rolling Warwickshire countryside near Leamington Spa.

The BSC's course is designed to give the new directors a swift introduction to the new world of which they will be a minor part. The BSC sets out to increase the worker directors' grasp of the necessity of cost consciousness and ruthless efficiency, ie the need to slash the workforce by 50 per cent by 1980.

In between the formal teaching sessions, progress on other fronts is made. Management college staff go to considerable lengths to make sure that at the end of the fortnight the new worker directors' table manners are every bit as good as the suave Lord Melchett's.

Meals are accordingly made up of rather large numbers of courses with the appropriate wide range of cutlery. Cost to the BSC is a mere £120 a week for each student.

THE 'dividend rise' loophole exposed here two weeks ago has been exploited again—by Davy Ashmore, the big process plant combine, which has forecast profits up from £2.3m last year to £4m. With the permission of the Treasury, Davy Ashmore also announce they will be putting up the dividend payment from 8 per cent last year to 30 per cent this—a 350 per cent increase. This works out at a payment of 7.5p per share—and a total handout to Davy Ashmore shareholders of £1,618,000. Shares of the company have risen from 72p three weeks ago to 105p.

MANY COMRADES are going around saying that Eric Heffer, MP has written a book entitled The Class Struggle in Parliament. This is a shocking smear on a life-long fighter for the working class. I can confirm that Eric has written a book about the Industrial Relations Act and its origins, but it is, I am certain, quite impossible that he could have agreed to such a fatuous title.

COD WAR LULL AS VESSEL IS LOST

By Our Reykjavik Correspondent

There was a pause in the "cod-war" off Iceland yesterday as Icelandic, British and West German ships started a search for survivors from the Icelandic fishing boat Sjoestjarnan, 100 tons, which sank off the south-east coast of Iceland on Sunday.

The boat was returning to its home port Keflavik after repairs in the Faroe Islands when she sank. On board was a crew of nine or 10 plus the captain's wife. Four of the crew, including the captain, were Icelanders, the rest Faroese.

Don't make waves...

CONGRATULATIONS to the Daily Telegraph for this moving account on 13 February of a tragedy at sea. It was the only report of this episode in a national newspaper. I wonder what the coverage would have been like if the same tragedy had occurred to a British trawler in the middle of the 'cod war'?

Clay Cross: we're only practising what we preach...

THOUSANDS OF WORDS have been written about the Clay Cross struggles during the last few months so therefore it is important to know why we acted as we have.

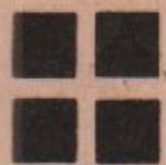
Was it a desire to rebel, achieve notoriety, kick the establishment? No. It was none of those things. It was a natural development by councillors who had carried socialism into practice on many other issues throughout the last decade.

For years my brother, Dennis and his colleagues (some of whom are still on the council) put their preaching into practice.

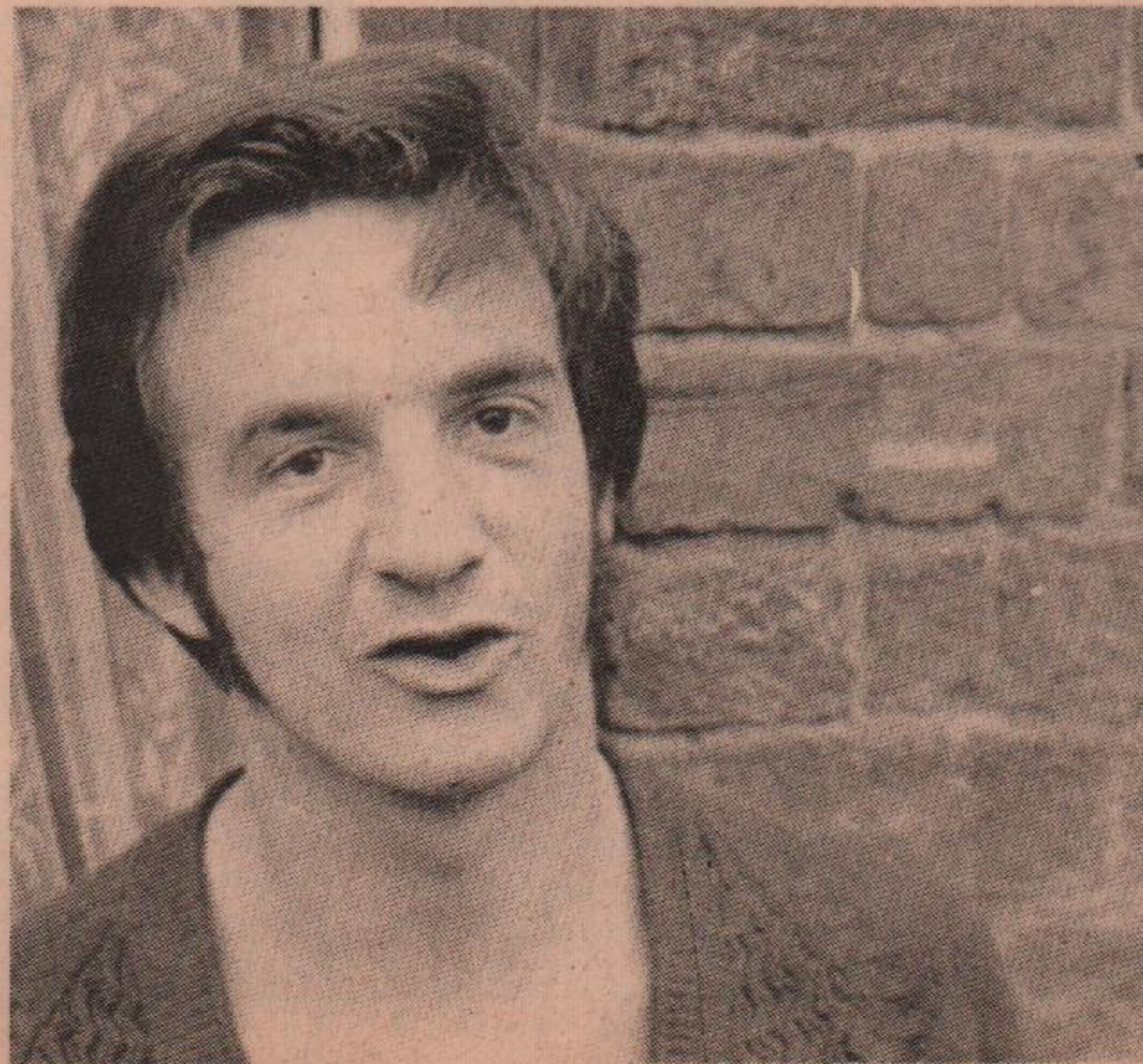
For ten years the Darby and Joan Association wanted a club in Clay Cross to replace the tin hut they had to use. So, in 1962, the newly-elected Labour Council built three (one on each housing estate).

Between 1964 and 1972, council houses were built at a rate which was three times the national average. Private property was gobbled up as soon as it came on the market at what seems, nowadays, like knock-down prices. Rents were kept down, rebate schemes thrown out, and Labour Housing Ministers visited at regular intervals and told that a low-rent, massive slum clearance would be good for Labour and the nation.

Against this background, I was elected three years ago, and the hectic pace was continued. Concessionary bus fares for the old, a quarter of a million pound swimming baths for the young, and free school milk for the children.



That was our first real challenge—how to feed the children and defeat the government. Needless to say, we won that bout fairly comprehensively, and not a single day was lost. Indeed when the money looked like running out the other week, we increased the chairman's allowance by £360 to buy milk to the end of the financial year. Then there was the postmen's



by DAVID SKINNER, Clay Cross councillor

strike, with not a single council meeting held for seven weeks on the principle that any—repeat any—letters distributed was tantamount to scabbing.

So it came as no surprise to most Clay Cross people when we took a quick glance at the Fair Deal for Housing White Paper and prepared ourselves for the biggest battle of all.

A lead was looked for from the Labour leadership. It came all right, in three different varieties. Implementation, non-implementation, and Crosland confusion.

The parliamentary Labour Party, in between cocktail parties and luncheons, fought for six long months, but when the guillotined Bill became law, with deep and solemn profundity declared, almost to a man, the law is the law is the

law. Unless of course, it is discussed in the context of company returns and tax evasion.

The TUC met and carried a resolution. A month later, the Labour party conference was held and another resolution was passed. What unity, what purpose!

Sir Ron Ironmonger, Alderman Sefton, Councillor Yapp and Millie Miller, with a few feinting jabs, shadow boxed for a while. Meanwhile, we informed the Minister of our desire for him to collect the extra £1 rent.



He refused, so on the basis that we couldn't break our election pledges, took the honourable view that a stiff upper lip, in the best British tradition, was called for. Stand firm chaps, weather the storm, and some rough forward play, what!

Now we have a total rent strike. £20,000 has been withheld from the Public Works Loan Board, and rent collectors have been re-deployed in retaliation to the special treatment that the government has imposed upon the Clay Cross people by the withdrawing of Housing Subsidies.

We didn't seek to fight alone, we seek no martyrdom, we just refused to compromise. So to all those in the movement who say, give up the fight, nobody will notice you've given in, I have to tell them they fail to understand why we stood for election in the first place.

We wanted to challenge, break new frontiers, and put our brand of socialism into practice. A simple formula that can only succeed, when compromise has been thrown out of the window.

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Dave Burn

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Shock report

Brutal

WHERE INTIMIDATION AND WRONGFUL ARREST ARE EVERYDAY EVENTS

HANDSWORTH, Birmingham—a ghetto like those in most of Britain's major cities. Where Asians and West Indians find themselves crowded together in appalling conditions, for which today they take the blame as the Irish did before them.

An area of poor schools and such rampant hostility from the welfare services that in early February a group of 40 black mothers staged a sit-in at the local social security offices to demand allowances that had been owing for several months. Where discrimination in employment has led to an unemployment rate among black school leavers many times that of their white counterparts.

Where harassment, intimidation, wrongful arrest and brutality from the police are the everyday experience of black people, especially the young.

One case from the files of the West Indian Federation is typical. On Friday 11 February last year a 25 years-old West Indian was stopped by two policemen outside his home and then, the Federation says, 'He was chased and beaten by them, beaten in the van on the way to Thornhill Road police station and beaten again on arrival. About 15 policemen were involved in this. Result: three stitches over left eye, stitches in foot, severe bruising, charged with assaulting a police officer.'

Always that bonus: 'charged with assaulting a police officer'. Birmingham magistrates are not renowned for siding with a black defendant against the police and the complaints procedure, of dubious value at best since the police are seen as judge and jury in their own case, is rarely even initiated if the complainant is convicted.

Protest

As one black community worker put it: 'The wealthy suburbs are policed by people who come from the same background and are concerned with the protection of property. Handsworth is policed by a group who are opposed to the community in terms of colour and class and concerned with law enforcement.'

Over the past year police provocation of the community has intensified. A group of 30 local community workers, councillors, and churchmen, hardly wild-eyed extremists, were recently moved to write a letter to the local Chief Constable protesting in the strongest terms against the discriminatory behaviour of his men.

The local paper, the Evening Mail, took the issue up and sent their garden fetes and women's correspondent Maureen Messent into the area to investigate. Her predictably mealy-mouthed report appeared under the headline: 'We Need Good Will Not Aggravation'.

Brian Walden, Labour MP for Birmingham All Saints, added his views a couple of days later with the penetrating observation that the blame rested fair and square with 'a very small minority of local militants who welcome confrontations'.

The black residents of Handsworth are not fooled so easily. A West Indian print worker who has

by
Mike Flood Page

lived there for 18 years puts it this way: 'The successive Immigration Acts passed by both governments over the last ten years have caused a lot of bitterness among people in the black community, and they give the racialsists in the police more play.'

'There is no doubt the situation is getting worse. Anyone with a black skin out late at night, especially a young person, is likely to be picked up and charged with something.'

'There used to be more parties and noise but the police didn't go as far then as they do now.'

Just how far they do go has been seen in massive raids on West Indians in pubs or at parties as in the Villa Cross and Whitehall Road cases reported in Socialist Worker on 3 February.

Not only was the Villa Cross raid carried out with an unprecedented display of strength and violence by the police, but as the case dragged on several defendants had, as a condition of bail, to undergo the daily humiliation of signing on at the hated Thornhill Road police station for six months.

During the frequent hearings that led up to the Villa Cross trial itself the police carried the provocation to the defendants and sympathisers into the court itself, in a series of incidents designed to rub salt into the wound.

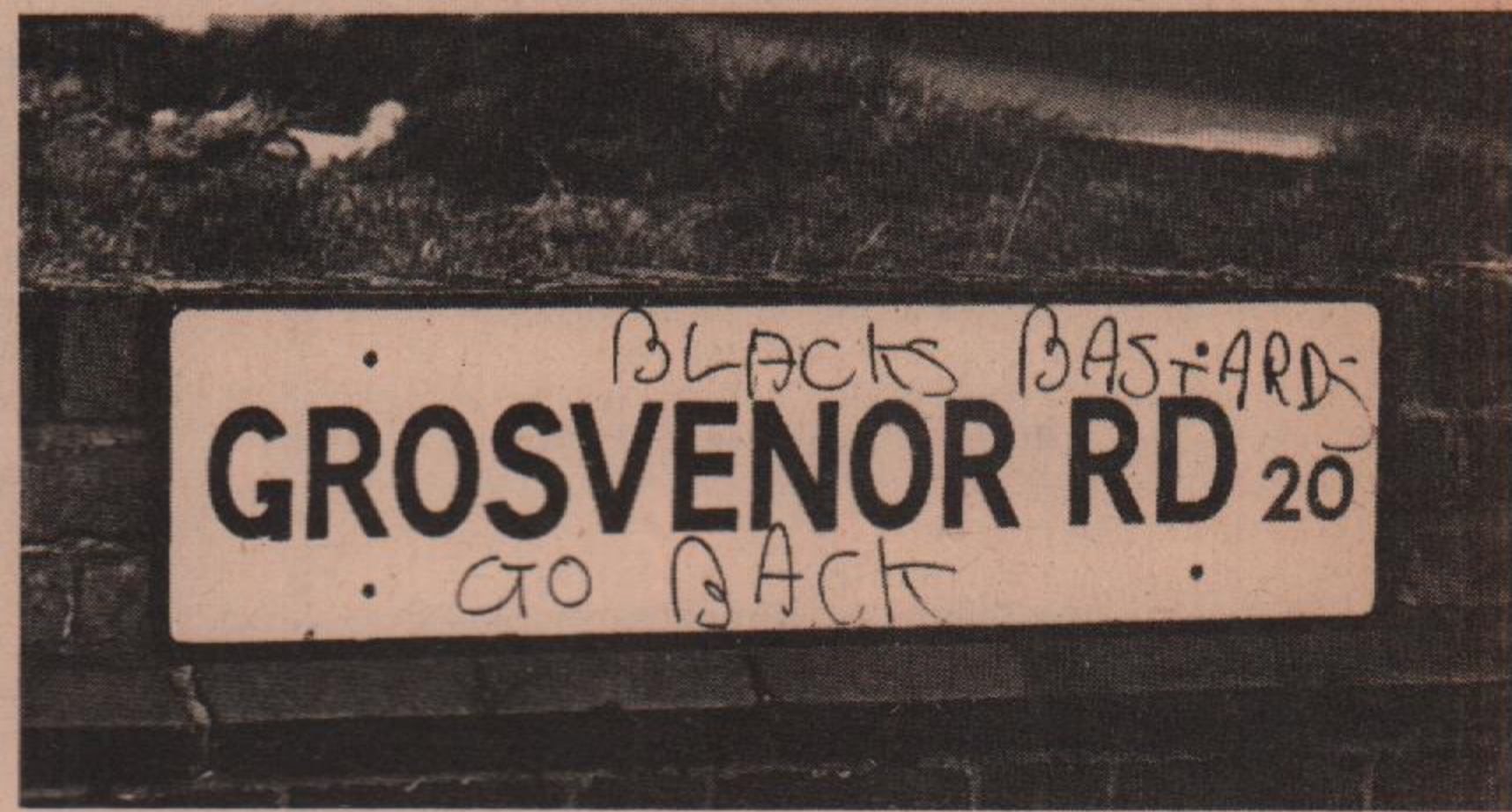
On one occasion one of the defendants was brought into court on a separate charge of wilful damage to a car. The police opposed bail on the grounds that 'knowing these West Indians . . . he would interfere with the course of justice if released.'

As the defendant and friends left the court the police seized two of them on the same charge and dragged them off, clearing the remainder of the people present from the lobby of the court.

On another occasion a young man was forcefully removed from the court for reading a newspaper. As people followed him out to see what was going on two of them were arrested on the grounds that they were causing a disturbance.

For once even the magistrate was forced to admit the evidence against them did not stand up and the case was dismissed. But the charges against the arresting officer were dismissed at the same time.

The recent case of the Whitehall Road 12 illustrates the same



National (Nazi) Front graffiti in Handsworth

Police attacks in a black Brum ghetto

The place that blacks in Handsworth fear... Thornhill Road police station, scene of beatings and false arrests

arbitrary brutality and harassment by police and courts. The savage raid resulted in one defendant suffering a broken nose, a dog bite and kick marks.

One man was picked up twenty yards from his home, nearly a mile from the party. Eye-witnesses report that two of the defendants' wives were also assaulted and arrested. They were taken to Thornhill Road station and were beaten again before they were released without charges.

The 16 years-old boy, who was released on £10 bail the morning after the arrests, found his bail raised to the same staggering figure as the other defendants when he appeared in court on 4 January: £100 on their own recognisance, £100 surety and the third previously unheard of condition of bail—the surrender of their passports.

Organise

The daily experience of discrimination at work is reinforced by the constant fear of the police in the community, and the increased powers of search for identification that the police have under the recent Immigration Act which came into force on 1 January.

This makes worse an already tense situation and gives racialsists in the force more freedom to act.

As one young unemployed West Indian told Socialist Worker: 'The raid on the Villa Cross pub has driven many people out of their local through fear of wrongful arrest. To fight this, black people must first organise and assert their own identity. And white militants must support them.'



How racism broke the union

RACIST MANAGEMENT and union officials' inefficiency sum up the story of the struggle of Asian workers at the small backstreet engineering works of Sleeman Shotblasting at Perry Bar, Birmingham.

The struggle began eight months ago, when Mohammed Raschid joined the firm and immediately unionised the plant which employs 40 production workers. Previously the management had enjoyed the 'co-operation' of the workers. This to some extent had been secured by the company's local Indian foreman, who maintained his hold over the men by hiring his relatives. He gave them the clean jobs and only employed other workers who could afford to pay him a backhander.

It is a not uncommon practice in Birmingham when immigrants are seeking jobs, due to their widespread inexperience of trade unionism. The result is that black workers often labour in dangerous and filthy conditions. Their pay is so low that they are forced to make up their wages with extensive overtime or else by 'bunting' the foreman an allowance to be able to work permanently on the night shift.

The language barriers and racist attitudes in the trade union movement discourages union officials from grasping the nettle firmly and unionising the small plants.

Only when the Asian workers come forward is there a chance of lifting the lid off the stinking

by Dick Pratt

bin. But as the case of Sleemans showed, even when this happens, union officials—in this case Jack Rogers, district official of the Transport Workers—are more reluctant to fight the issue than when white workers are involved.

Trade union officials will as a rule go only as far as they are pushed, but black workers often do not have the experience to do the pushing.

Like foundry work, shotblasting is extremely dirty and hazardous to health. At Sleeman Shotblasting management have a cavalier disregard for safety. They believe that Pakistanis are expendable resources to be sacrificed on the altar of profit.

A middle-aged worker, Mr Akbar, was off work for three weeks when a piece of machinery nearly split his foot in two. Although he received National Health benefit of £10 a week for himself and his family, the company denied all liability and he was refused compensation.

Another old Sikh, who would not give his name, working as a labourer at 40p an hour, accidentally dropped his ill-fitting false teeth into the unguarded machine he was operating. Again the management refused to reimburse him. Such miserliness smacks of the age of Dickens.

Safety goggles and masks are unheard of at Sleemans. The minimum working week is 50

hours. White workers rarely stay longer than three weeks, so they provide a convenient scab labour force whenever there is a dispute.

Allocation of jobs and overtime is the sole right of the foreman. On 12 December the management, seeing steward Mohammed Raschid as a threat to their regime, sacked him on the pretext of 'bad time keeping'. 23 Indian and Pakistani workers downed tools at once.

Raschid called in the union district official who took a day to arrive and then recommended a return to work. A week later, after negotiations with the management, the official notified Raschid that he had been unable to secure his reinstatement.

Many of the Asians tore up their union cards in disgust and many others, old and young alike, left the factory to find work elsewhere. The foreman appointed another shop steward who subsequently left.

The cause of this unmitigated defeat for trade unionism was the official's failure to back up the shop steward. Meanwhile workers at Deykin Engineering, a plant owned by the same company as Sleeman's have been laid off. Management claimed that no orders were coming in.

In fact the work has been transferred to Sleemans which has lower wage rates and, after the recent events, no effective union.

New look policies, old hack politicians

FINE TALK and no fight—that seems a fair summary of Labour's new manifesto for April's elections for the Greater London Council.

Like many Labour policy documents these days, the glossy red-covered pamphlet is stuffed with radical 'socialist-sounding' new-look policy plans. Though just to make things clear, the press conference to launch it was chaired by old-look non-radical right-wing machine politician Bob Mellish, MP.

The programme's daring title—a Socialist Strategy for London—sets the tone for a collection of proposals which hit the headlines of London's evening papers: municipalisation of rented accommodation, buying-up of land needed badly for development, subsidised fares, municipal trading to compete with private enterprise.

The trouble is that many of these are outside the powers of the Greater London Council and need the help of the Tory government at Westminster or of Tory local borough councils, especially in the outer suburbs.

Taking over rented accommodation would be welcome to many private landlords if 'fair' compensation was paid, as wages of low-paid workers in London are so low that they can't afford to pay an 'economic' rent. Councils would have to borrow the money to buy the landlords out and pay interest to the bankers at a higher rate than private landlords now get as rent on the property.

Protests

As for council housing, the manifesto claims that 'if the government tries to force us to increase rents under the Housing Finance Act, a Labour GLC will fight that decision.'

But GLC Labour leader Reg Goodwin admitted that all this meant was protests to Whitehall. If it came to it, Labour would implement the Act.

Asked for a pledge that, at least, a Labour GLC would not evict tenants on rent strike, he merely replied that he 'could not imagine' a Labour GLC would evict tenants.

Presumably his imagination had all been used up on the fancy pledges in the manifesto. London voters can 'imagine' how much these left-sounding pledges are worth from the fact that the conference of London Labour Parties called to discuss the programme of demands for the election called for non-implementation of the Fair Rent Act.

Reg Goodwin opposed the call and said he would resign rather than carry it out. Now if that's what he does with Labour policy before he's elected...

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Shock report

OLD AND COLD

ONCE a year the government and the press discover that cold can kill thousands of people. For a few days there is a public hullabaloo about the matter. Then it is quietly forgotten for another year.

By some strange coincidence it is only when miners, power workers or gas men are taking strike action that the danger to the very young and very old of low room temperatures is mentioned. At other times, however cold the weather, the subject is taboo.

Yet every winter thousands of old people die needlessly because of the cold. One estimate, in the Practitioner magazine nine years ago, suggested that 20,000 deaths a year were due to this cause.

Another estimate was that in February, March and April 1965 9000 people were admitted to hospital with body temperatures well below normal. Many others died alone in their homes, without their condition being diagnosed.

A report in the British Medical Journal last month produced striking evidence of the causes that bring about so many deaths through cold.

A survey of 1000 old people, selected at random from all parts of Britain, showed that even during last year's mild winter three-quarters of them were living in rooms below the minimum of 65 degrees Fahrenheit recommended by the Ministry of Housing.

— IGNORED UNTIL THERE'S A STRIKE...



Difficult to cope

More than half were below the 61 degree minimum which the law enforces on shops and offices. Clearly, these old people are in constant danger of cold.

Not surprisingly, it was found that one in ten had a dangerously low body temperature. And, the survey indicated that the general living conditions of old people made it difficult for them to cope with the effects of the cold.

A tenth of the total were housebound and a quarter lacked basic amenities like hot water or an inside toilet.

But the survey's most important conclusion concerns the reason why old people live in cold conditions.

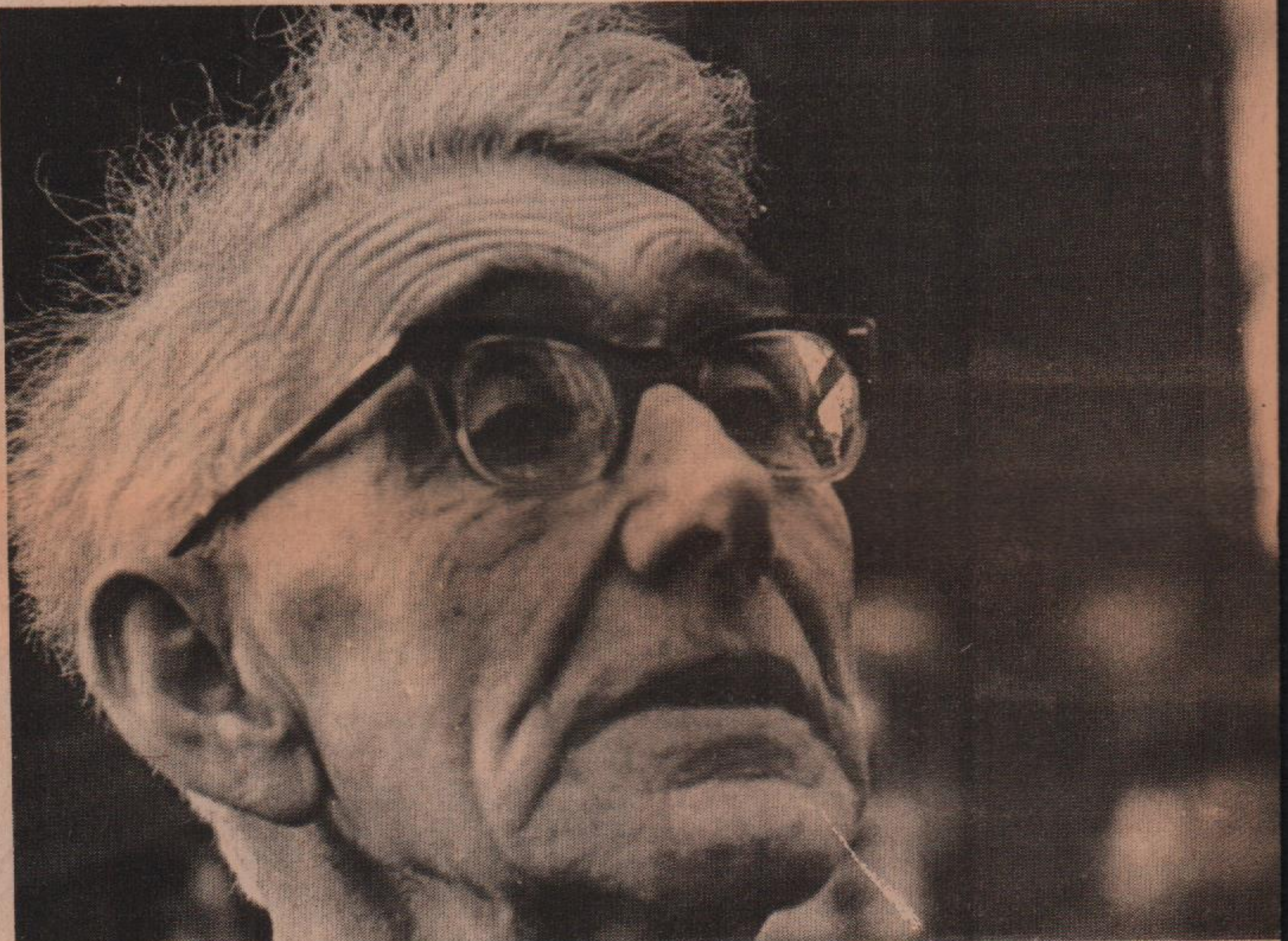
'The cost of fuel is undoubtedly the major worry for old people: 375 replied "yes" to the question "Would you like to have more heat in the house?"'

Ninety-one per cent of these gave 'too expensive' as the reason for not having more heating.

Those who suffered most were those on supplementary pensions. Although social security officials are able to provide an extra fuel allowance for old people, only one in 30 of them were receiving it.

Hoary old argument

Clearly, government members who scream about the plight of the old during strikes do not care enough the rest of the time to make their ministries give the old their due. They are quite happy to let a situation continue in which, as the report notes, 'low income is associated with low body temperature.'



'Government is killing off old people as surely as if it lined them up against a wall'

There is one hoary old argument which is used against giving old people more money as a means of keeping them warm. It is said that they don't know what temperature they do want.

This is not true. A small survey... as made in 1962 of old people living in local authority flats. In some of these flats the heating was paid for on a flat-rate system. They paid the same whether they used a lot of heat or none at all.

The people in these flats adjusted the temperature to suit themselves. The contrast with the recent survey is remarkable. Only one in 10 had room temperatures below 65 degrees F. Half had temperatures above 69 degrees.

In other words, given free use of heat, old people will not allow their rooms to get cold.

By not putting such a measure into effect generally, the government is killing off old people as surely as if it lined a few thousand up against a wall every winter and shot them.

Of course, not all sections of old people suffer in this way. One in 10 do live above the Ministry of Health's own recommended minimum temperature of 70 degrees. A few do live in luxury, centrally-heated flats with all the most modern amenities.

Perhaps David Bas Vic Feather also look for that sort of comfort.

But life is very different for the mass of old people, who in their time were workers, the power workers, the groups now in the press and politicians.

Convenient cudgel

During their working lives they were denied the opportunity of earning more than a living wage, let alone a decent pension for the future. In retirement their plight is ignored, except that it can be used as a convenient cudgel to bludgeon the generation of gas workers and miners.

Christopher Columbus landed first in the New World... and after praising God enquired urgently for gold. The natives, Red Indians, were peaceable and friendly and directed him to Haiti... He sailed to Haiti. The Spaniards, the most advanced Europeans of their day introduced Christianity, forced labour in mines, murder, rape, bloodhounds, strange diseases, and artificial famine. There was also slave labour. The pillage of Africa.

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In 1791 the slaves of San Domingo revolted, the struggle lasted 12 years. The slaves defeated in turn the local armed forces, a British force of about 60,000 men and a French expedition of similar size.

The revolt is the only successful slave revolt in history. It is this revolt that C.L.R. James deals with in his magnificent book, *The Black Jacobins*.



by our medical correspondent

MIKE G

Explosion of anger that started the gas men's union

'FELLOW WAGE SLAVES!' shouted Will Thorne, 'I am more than pleased to see such a big crowd of workers and friends from the Beckton Gas Works.'

'I know that many of you have been working 18 hours under very hard and difficult circumstances and that many of you must be dead tired... This sort of thing has gone on for a long time; we have protested, but time after time we have been sneered at, ignored and have secured no redress.'

'Let me tell you that you will never get any alteration in Sunday work, no alteration in any of your conditions or wages unless you join together and form a strong trade union...'

'It is easy to break one stick, but when 50 sticks are together in one bunch, it is a much more difficult job. The way you have been treated for many years at your job is scandalous, brutal and inhuman.'

'I pledge my word that if you stand firm and don't waver, within six months we will claim and win the eight-hour day, a six-day week and the abolition of the present slave-driving methods in vogue not only at the Beckton Gas Works but all over the country. Now, will you do this?'

Failure

A mighty roar 'We will!' broke the calm of a lovely spring morning in London's East End. It was 31 March 1889, and the gasworkers had gathered on a patch of open ground in Canning Town, East London, to hear Will Thorne speak.

The situation in Beckton Works had been deteriorating fast as the gas companies tried to hold on to their profits and to justify their failure to invest in new machinery by forcing the stokers and labourers to work harder in worse and worse conditions.

Will Thorne was a socialist and agitator. In his spare time he had read the works of Marx and Engels, of Bellamy and Hyndman. While in a gasworks in Birmingham he had urged the men to gang together to demand the end of Sunday work. Sunday work was ended, but Thorne was sacked.

For many months he had been urging the Beckton workers to form a union. His chance came when the management suddenly ordered men to do three extra charges on a Sunday, which meant another eight hours work without food.

Petition

The Canning Town meeting was the result. That morning, 1000 men enrolled in the new union. Sunday after Sunday, Will Thorne and Ben Tillett, the dockers' leader, toured the gasworks looking for new members.

On 1 July that year the union had 4000 members and Will Thorne was elected its general secretary. A petition was organised among gasmen calling for the eight-hour day. So many signed, and so great was the solidarity of the signatories that the gas companies collapsed without a fight. The eight-hour day was conceded.

But the employers were merely waiting their time.

As winter closed in, the gas companies prepared for the counter-attack. George Livesey, managing director of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, broke off talks with the union about double pay for Sunday work, and introduced his own 'bonus' or 'profit-sharing' scheme. This included a statement that anyone who took part in a strike or agitation for a



A contemporary drawing showing police and blacklegs in Leeds being showered with missiles as they passed under a bridge

'Stand firm, don't waver to end our slavery...'

strike would immediately lose all the money due to them from the profit-sharing scheme.

In response, the union called a strike, which started on 5 December. Blacklegs were brought in. They were cooked fine meals and given excellent sleeping accommodation in the factories, which were closely guarded by the police.

The union did not risk open confrontation. It sought to shame the bosses into surrender with demonstrations and speeches.

The tactic failed. Gas pressure stayed high as the blacklegs worked harder. Almost all the militants in the South West gas company were victimised and

bribed with liberal supplies of beer and tobacco. Before long, the strikers were beaten, and, once again, none of the men who had promoted the strike in any way taken on again.

Will Thorne brooded deeply over these two successful attempts to break up the union organisation. He determined to be prepared for the next employers' offensive.

It was not long in coming. Early in 1892, the Leeds Gas Committee issued an ultimatum to its workers that they must be re-engaged for a period of four months and must undertake not to strike in that period.

It also announced that stokers would be expected to do 25 per cent more work during their eight-hour shift.

It was a declaration of war. The workers at the Wortley Gas Works were leading the fight in Leeds, and had already called a series of mass meetings in the city, at which Thorne spoke. The cry was taken up throughout the city: 'The blacklegs must not pass.'

Crowds

Tom Paylor, a local striker, chalked all the main streets of Leeds with the news of where the blacklegs were arriving, and which route they were taking. So when the blacklegs arrived by train at three o'clock in the morning expecting a silent and untroubled journey to the factory, the streets were packed with workers and their families.

The blacklegs only got as far as the Town Hall after they and the policemen guarding them had been badly hurt.

The following day, the blacklegs stayed in the Town Hall while massive crowds gathered in all the main streets. At eight o'clock in the evening they started their march to the gasworks, surrounded by hundreds of police.

The men and women were armed with sticks and stones and many other makeshift weapons.

The battle went on to the gate of the works, which were invaded by strikers. Many blacklegs, terrified, escaped over the works' walls. Others, though finally barricaded in the works, were far too frightened to work. The next day, they left town.

The gas in Leeds ran out. The city was plunged into darkness, to the cheers of striking workers.

Witch-hunts

Four days later the employers caved in completely. The remaining blacklegs were paid off. All the workers were reinstated on their original terms. All the provocative notices were withdrawn, as were all summonses against workers for assaults on the police.

The General and Municipal Workers' Union to which the gasmen belong today is the same union which was formed by the agitation and struggle of men like Will Thorne, and was preserved by open battles in the streets despite the constant cautions and witch-hunts of 'moderates' in the press.

Unfortunately for the gasmen, the fire which had formed the union was soon doused. Thorne

himself, with his friend Ben Tillett, became a member of parliament and wrote with wonder about his meetings with 'great men' and even monarchs. The leadership of the union, with the consent of the workers, passed into the hands of men like John Clynes, the arch-reactionary Labour Home Secretary in 1929, who joined the Tories with Ramsay Macdonald in 1931.

The men who control the union today stand four square in the tradition of John Clynes and the mean reactionaries who succeeded him. The measure of their achievement for gasmen is that now, more than 80 years later, the workers are still working eight hours a day for six days a week—the hours which Will Thorne achieved in 1889.

Years of exploitation are having their effect, and now there are hundreds of men in gasworks who are fighting with the spirit of 1889.

When their union 'moderates' tell them to be good boys and lie down, they should remember that if Will Thorne and his comrades had lain down in 1889 there would never have been a union to be 'moderate' in.

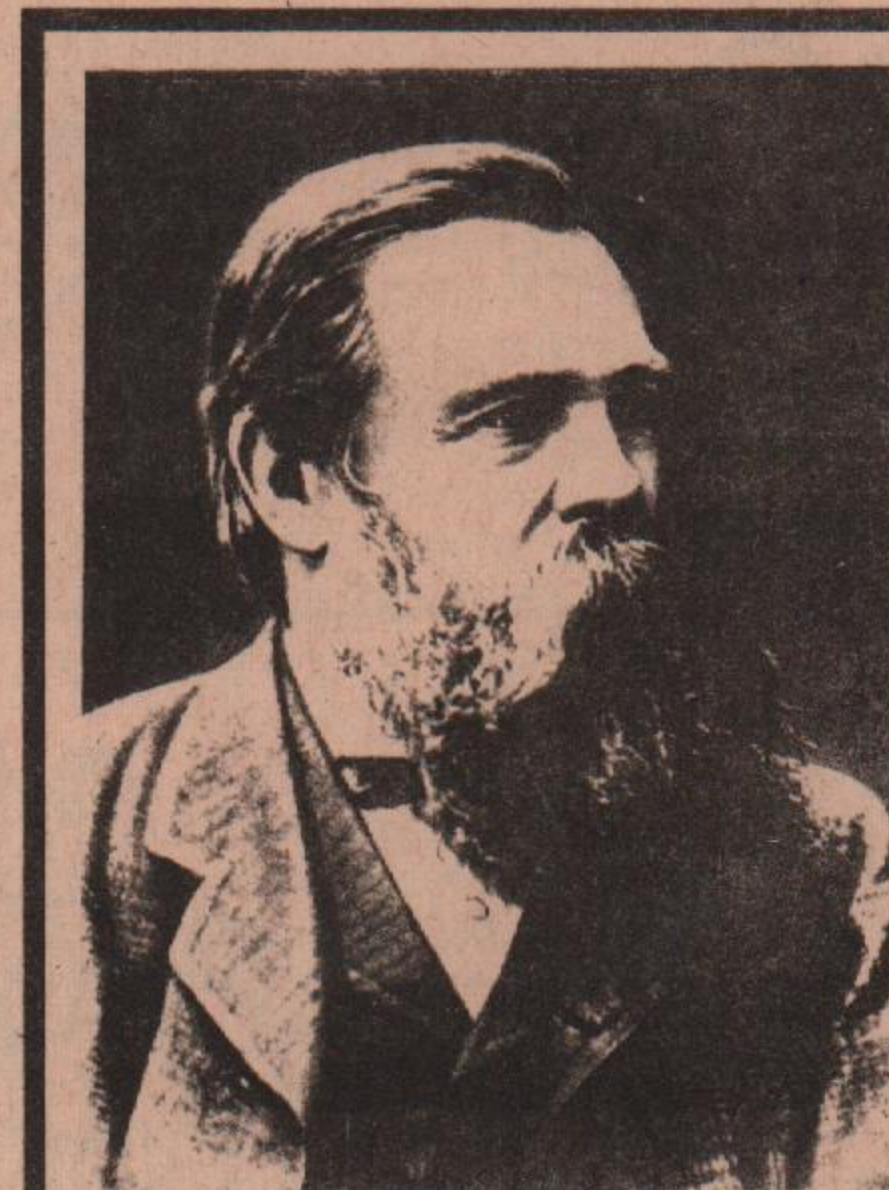


WILL THORNE

blacklisted throughout the country. The cost to the union was a massive £20,000.

Almost at once, the Gas Committee at Manchester provoked another major showdown with the union. They published and distributed huge notices offering higher pay to any workers who renounced the union. The union demanded the withdrawal of the notices, but the Gas Committee was adamant. An 'unofficial' strike started spontaneously, and huge meetings were held in support of the men in Salford and in Manchester.

But the bosses had planned carefully. Strike-breakers were sneaked into the works and



FREDERICK ENGELS

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Written by Paul Foot

FAILURE OF A REVOLUTION, by Sebastian Haffner, Andre Deutsch, £2.50

IN THIS BOOK Sebastian Haffner describes the events which led up to the bloody and tragic defeat of the workers' uprising in Germany after the First World War. Old dynasties and boundaries were disintegrating and new ways of production gave birth to new forms of working-class resistance.

But Haffner's book shows how in Germany their relationship to the small revolutionary groups was tentative and uneasy and how the revolutionaries themselves were outside the new forms of working-class organisation at a time when the traditional parties of the left, the social democrats, had abandoned even an academic battle against capitalism.

The failure was not just a German failure. In Scotland, Sheffield, Turin, Helsinki, Budapest, the possibility of a new form of working-class power erupted, then ebbed away and was lost. The consequences were great: the isolation of the Russian Revolution, splits in the socialist movement which death and betrayal made too deep to heal, and the defeat of working-class organisation and theory.

Contact between revolutionary socialists during the First World War was difficult. News travelled in a roundabout way. Ideas sprang up in different contexts. Translations were hard to come by.

During the war Ilona Duczynska brought to Hungary news of the Zimmerwald conference, held by revolutionary socialists against the war in Switzerland. A small group of Hungarian socialists who were also against the war produced a leaflet and organised underground with help from a Russian emigre called Justus. In 1917 there were scattered strikes in the Hungarian munitions plants.

But they were nothing compared with the strikes which were to follow in January 1918. On the 14th workers in Wiener Neustadt, near the Austrian border, came out in protest against a reduction in their bread ration. By the 16th the strike had spread to Austria and the Viennese workers, who were electing their own councils.

BARRACKS

But the old regime kept military control and the Austrian social democrats could still rely on the loyalty of the workers. There were stormy arguments within the party, the radicals were defeated, and the party pressed for moderate peace demands and called off the strikes.

The anti-war revolutionaries in Hungary were rounded up as soon as the strike wave reached Budapest, through Duczynska managed to get propaganda into the barracks. On the 18th, a general political strike broke out led by the Railway and Metalworkers Union. 150,000 workers marched through the streets of Budapest shouting 'Long Live the Workers' Councils' and 'Greeting to Soviet Russia'.

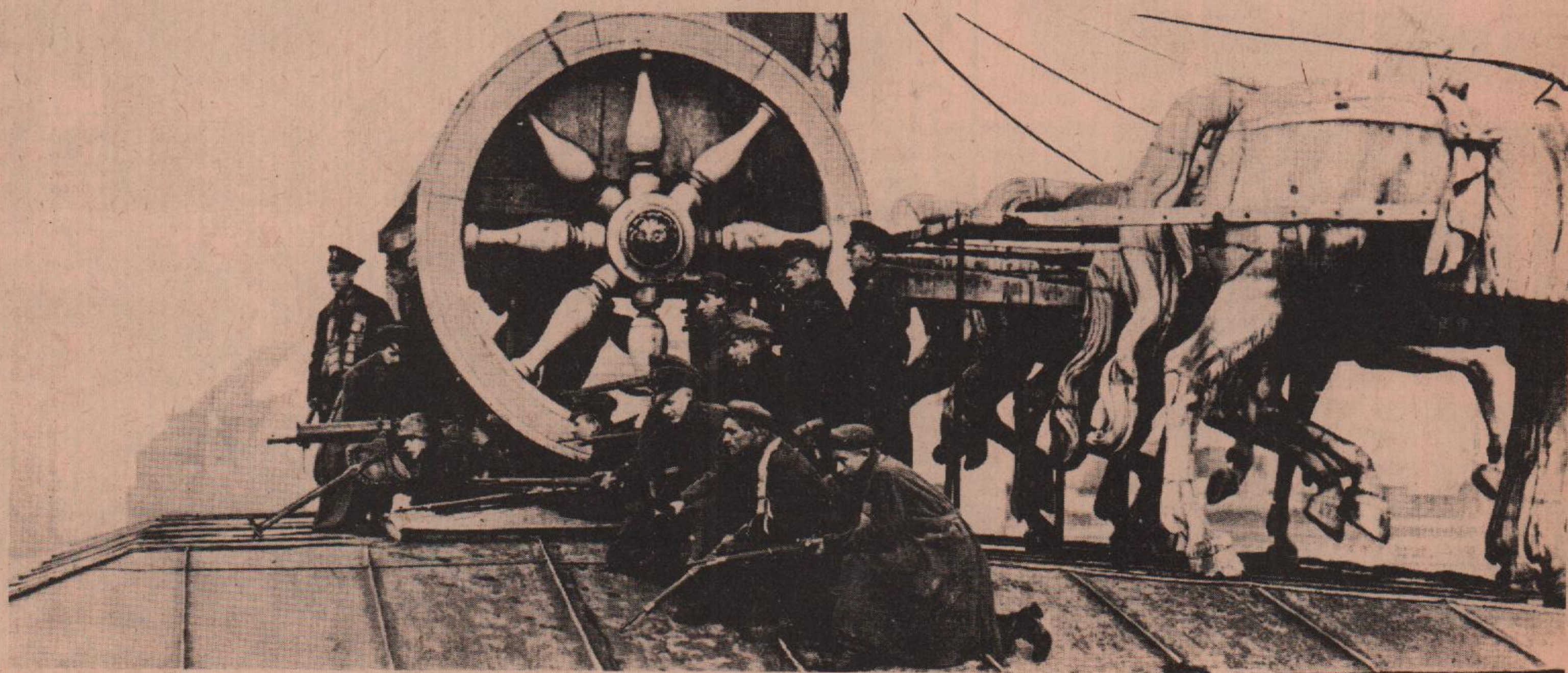
The social democrats tried to make the best of a bad job and sanction this strike, though the workers' slogans and actions continued to go beyond the party's own programme. Again they persuaded the workers to

return to work, though the Hungarians, especially in munitions, were reluctant to obey and resisted fiercely.

The next great wave of rebellion was in autumn 1918 and spring 1919, in Germany. Sailors mutinied in Kiel because their officers were determined to keep on fighting. The sailors wanted peace and felt they acted on behalf of the legitimate authority of the government. The dockers came out in support. Again they formed councils.

But again they accepted a social democrat, Noske, as their leader.

In Munich the workers were joined by poets and intellectuals. Haffner quotes a description of a meeting in a beerhouse written by the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. A young worker there sprang to his feet: '... if we could



Revolutionaries take up defensive positions on the roof of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin

WE COMMUNISTS ARE ALL DEAD MEN ON LEAVE

—EUGEN LEVINE, 1918, LEADER OF THE UPRISING IN MUNICH



get hold of a radio station and speak as common people to the common people over there, peace would come at once.'

But, like the workers who relied on the social democrats to represent them in their councils, he lacked confidence in his own capacity. He turned to Max Weber, the sociologist, who was also on the platform, and said: 'Here, these professor chaps, they can speak French. They'll help us to say it properly as we mean it.'

Because the councils sprang out of immediate and practical situations, concerted and sustained action was hard to maintain. Haffner describes the councils of Berlin, the creation of the German Communist Party and the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. He is concerned to show that Luxemburg and Liebknecht did not themselves engineer the workers' rebellion. Indeed Rosa Luxemburg continually urged caution.

But they were both trapped by the speed of events. So was Eugen Levine in Munich, who first urged caution when the Bavaria Republic of councils was set up but as civil war broke around him organised separately in the isolated and starving city.

When Noske took Munich, every-one suspected of being a revolutionary

was shot. Merely being working class was enough to make you suspect. Levine told the court which arraigned him: 'We Communists are all dead men on leave. It is up to you to decide whether my pass is to be extended once more or whether I will be drafted to join Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.'

Two hours later he was shot dead, shouting: 'Long Live World Revolution'.

But the world revolution was a long way off. The Finnish Republic collapsed, the Hungarian Republic of Councils survived only 133 days and ended with terrible vengeance from the right.

Haffner's book is useful because it contains information difficult to find elsewhere. But he remains very much outside the revolutionary movement he describes.

His approach to history is still concerned with the political surface of things. He does not ask of the councils: Which councils made what decisions? Who spoke? Who was represented? What powers did they assume? How did the workers who

created them see their role?

These questions need to be asked and answered not only of Germany, but of the councils that sprang elsewhere. Haffner's description is helpful in that it prevents generalising about the workers' council as a universally similar institution. The way working-class political consciousness has manifested itself through the workers' council has been complex and varied according to different historical situations.

Through the long years of defeat and bloodshed, when many socialists saw the main problem to be the creation of a disciplined party which could prevent pointless adventures, the young Munich worker's voice, with his dignity, hesitation and reserve, still penetrates. Few revolutionaries have been able to maintain the tension between the making of a movement in which that stifled voice can find its fullest expression, and the concentrated direction necessary to confront the manifold powers of the capitalist state.

SHEILA TURNER

For academics with Access cards...

REFLECTIONS ON THE CAUSES OF HUMAN MISERY AND ON CERTAIN PROPOSALS TO ELIMINATE THEM, by Barrington Moore Junior. Allen Lane £3.50.

ALLEN LANE are making quite a thing of publishing radical books in a pleasing format, and they certainly make you pay for the privilege.

Sometimes it's worth scrapping the pounds together, but Barrington Moore's new book is one you can safely leave to the academic with an Access card. Moore began this set of essays as an act of combined relaxation and self-discipline, doubting whether the result would require or deserve publication.

This should be warning enough: our author is a man who has arrived, with his previous books on Russia and on The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (a useful book in some respects, but uncritically accepted by too many on the left.) He is taking advantage of his established audience to pass off a pretentious and discursive stroll around human problems, with material drawn freely from assorted moments in world history.

Moore's chosen role is that of 'detached observer of human affairs'. It would be churlish not to concede that he has noticed a little more than most men in our universities who are paid to carry out this 'neutral' function, but his irritating sophistication is little improvement on the

dead hand of most fact-grubbing social scientists.

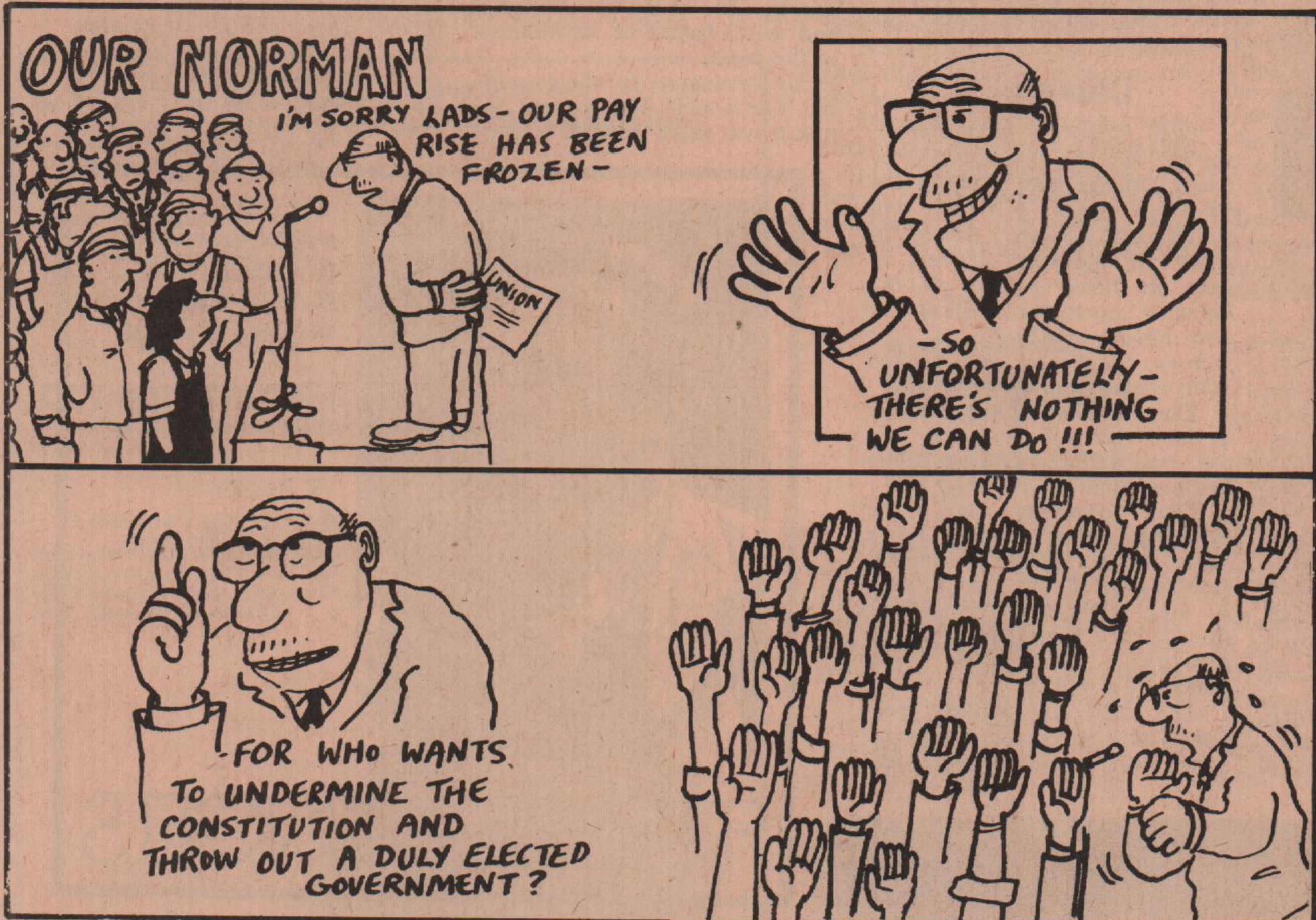
For four chapters he maintains a neat balance between 'a defeatist illusion of impotence' with regards to war, hunger and oppression, and what he chooses to call the 'opposite illusion' of 'romantic utopianism'. But the observer of Moore's method cannot help noticing that his steady 'realism' is directed mainly at the feasibility of a socialist solution of the world's problems. And in the Tifth chapter he finally comes to the point, as he takes to task radical and 'marxist' theorists of American

This is in fact the chapter most worth reading, as Moore raises some interesting (but not new) partial points against such writers as Magdoff, Baran and Sweezy—suggesting, for example, that US capitalism does not chiefly depend on exploitation of the Third World for its profits.

Nevertheless, Moore omits to deal with other marxist theories of modern capitalism which explain the things he points to, and readers of Mike Kidron's Western Capitalism Since the War will not be impressed. In his last chapter, Moore returns to the attack, suggesting the impossibility of revolution today.

Moore has no alternative, except a feeble liberal version of Marcuse's old idea that thinkers like himself should continue to talk about possibilities of different societies, even if these are not really on. If this book is anything to go by, all this means is idle chatter of a kind which is expensive in more senses than one.

MARTIN SHAW



LOCAL RADIO AWAITS THE COMMERCIAL CARVE-UP

THE TORIES got themselves into their usual muddle when they issued their election pledge to introduce local commercial radio to compete with the BBC.

For they did not realise that local commercial radio would not produce the profits their supporters greedily hoped for. They did not realise that radio could be local or commercial, but not profitably both.

The hapless Christopher Chataway, who became their Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, did not help matters when he announced later:

'In the arrangements we make for local radio we must ensure that the right kind of competition is encouraged. The first objective is to enable radio to cater for the people's needs . . . to enhance people's awareness of the community in which they live.'

The only 'people's needs' which concern the hungry franchise-hunters are their own. We will take a look at some of these entrepreneurs shortly. They are certainly not interested in community enhancement or high standards. Quite the opposite, in fact, for these ventures cost money.

BBC local stations, which are fairly solidly parochial, operate at a cost of more than £100,000 a year each. They get their national news service free from the BBC network, and do not have to employ a sales staff necessary to levy advertising.

Commercial stations will have to employ a sales force and also, under the terms of the commercial radio Act, provide a national news service in addition to their local news

service. This will either have to be bought from the national news service station, or, more costly still, be provided independently.

The Local Radio Association, led by Tory MP John Gorst, estimates annual operating costs at £50,000. This may well be possible—if the station has no local news service of its own and if it broadcasts a diet of unleavened pop and pap.

News is an expensive commodity. It has to be sought, sifted and presented by teams of journalists, whose services do not come cheaply.

Under the terms of the Act there is provision for 'co-operation' between a newspaper and a radio station in providing a news service. This raises the fear that a radio

station will be allowed simply to milk the copy provided by local newspaper reporters to their own news-desk.

Experience in Cambridge is interesting. The local branch of the National Union of Journalists, looking ahead to the time when Cambridge local radio was up for grabs, has attempted to get assurances that any local commercial station in Cambridge will have a 'news and current affairs service completely independent of any existing news service.'

The Cambridge NUJ statement went on to demand that 'a radio station should have its own news staff and 'should not extend a monopoly already enjoyed by local newspapers'.

Tory MP Francis Pym, who represents Cambridgeshire, took the matter up on behalf of the branch and approached Sir John Eden, Chataway's successor at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Eden wrote in reply, backing both horses.

FEARS

He said it was one of the main intentions of the Act to 'provide an alternative service of news and current affairs equal in quality and depth to that of the BBC.' In the next sentence he said he could not accept that the best service 'will necessarily be provided by additional journalists completely independent of existing news services'. This would be left to the Independent Broadcasting Authority to decide 'in the circumstances of each case'.

Pym also got in touch with Lord Aylestone, chairman of the IBA, and drew his attention to the branch's fears. Aylestone simply pointed out the platitudes of the 'guidelines' issued by the IBA, which state: 'In certain areas there may in practice be scope for co-operation to some degree between a newspaper and a radio station.'

When the branch approached the IBA direct and asked its head of radio, John Thompson, for an assurance that 'co-operation' would not mean an arrangement where copy supplied to newspapers was milked for a radio news service, he refused to give it. His paramount concern was to see to it that the new stations were 'viable', he said.

'Viability' is the current key word

VULTURES

in local commercial radio parlance. It means: 'How can we make it pay?'

In a town like Cambridge, for example, at least a dozen reporters would be needed to compete reasonably with the local newspaper. On current wage levels they would have to be paid at least £2500 a year, which means an annual wage bill of £25,500 before they have even moved out of the office.

This makes a massive dent in the £50,000 annual operating costs estimated by Gorst, and makes it clear that the local radio entrepreneurs have no real hope of mounting a decent news and current affairs service.

A study of the vultures waiting

to swoop as the franchises become available reinforces the obvious conclusion that profit is the first and only motive behind their interest in commercial radio.

Pye, for example, have their eye on Cambridge. Their local radio expert told a recent conference of local worthies that they planned to broadcast for 18 hours a day. A breakdown of each hour would probably add up to 30 minutes of records, nine minutes of adverts, 15 minutes of local chat or interviews, five minutes of news, and one minute of station announcements.

Local news was expensive, he went on, and it was doubtful how a station would receive its own news. He discounted the possibility of it running its own fully-staffed news team capable of competing with the local paper.

Pye were just one of the hundreds of companies who formed themselves into local radio groups in the late 1950s and 1960s when it looked as though licences to broadcast money were just around the corner.

Here are just some of the people you may meet down your way when the big carve-up of yet another of our natural resources—the airwaves—begins:

LORD COWDRAY (Westminster Press)—Barrow, Bath, Bedford, Bradford, Oxford, Durham, Darlington, Surrey, Swindon, Tynemouth and Middlesex.



THOMSON: Franchise-hunting

LORD THOMSON—Berkshire and Reading.

RUPERT MURDOCH (News of the World)—Brighton.

LORD BUCKTON, former Tory MP and now head of Portsmouth and Sunderland group of newspapers—Bishop Auckland, Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Newcastle, Tynemouth, South Shields, Sunderland and Teesside.

WOODROW WYATT—Banbury.

JOHN BOULTING, of British Lion films—Bournemouth.

PETER CADBURY, of Westward Television and numerous other companies—Bristol, Cardiff, Hampshire, Kent, Oxford, Plymouth, Sussex and 'Central England'.

LORD BRABOURNE—Canterbury, East Kent, Sheffield, Southampton and South London.

LORD CHELMER (former treasurer of the Tory Party)—Chelmsford, Essex and East London.

DAILY MAIL—Gloucester, Hull, Lincoln, Leicester, Scunthorpe, Swansea and Stoke.

LORD LONSDALE—Penrith.

LIVERPOOL POST—Liverpool, Bangor, Rhyl and North Wales towns.

SIR TUFTON BEAMISH—Brighton.

SIR JULIAN HODGE (financial friend of James Callaghan)—Cardiff.

DAVID DIMBLEBY—Surrey and Thames Valley.

LORD WILLIS—West London.

LORD BADEN-POWELL—Shepperton

LORD KENYON (director of Lloyds Bank) and Wilf Wooler—Wales.

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CHATAWAY: 'The people's needs'



COWDRAY: Eleven franchises



MURDOCH: Station at Brighton?

Don't let the buggers grind you down!

JOHN BERGER, the socialist and art critic who recently horrified the literary world by giving half his cash award from the Booker Prize to the Black Panthers, has written the screenplay for *The Salamander*, a feature film now showing in London (Academy Cinema).

The greyness of the rather utilitarian photography acts as a calm and neutral background for an excellent story and dialogue. It is quite the reverse of most glossy epics and features some of the wittiest and most observant dialogue heard in the cinema for some time.

It is set in Switzerland, of which Harry Lime said in *The Third Man*: 'Two thousand years of peaceful civilisation and what have they produced? The cuckoo clock.'

The story concerns two writers: a journalist, Pierre (the facts), and a worker/writer, Paul (the imagination), who also sings when he's unhappy. They attempt to write a story based on a press clipping about a girl who was accused of shooting her uncle with his national guard rifle.

Towards freedom

The girl, Rosemonde, the salamander of the title (a mythical lizard that is not consumed by fire), is played by Bulle Ogier. Working class, from a large country family, she drifts from one boring job to another, with occasional brushes with the law. We first see her working in that model of capitalist social relations, a sausage factory, with a long sequence that clearly shows the obscenity of such monotony.

When Pierre meets her after work, her first act is to put on the juke-box: the solid rock rhythm slowly loosens the accumulated tension of the day. The same music is used to underline the mood of immediate, if all too short, moments of liberation—as Rosemonde downs tools and walks out.

The distance between this spontaneous rebellion and a broader political perspective is reduced by Paul, who, patiently persuading her to return to work to avoid further suspicion of theft, tells her a story that helps to explain who her real enemies are. Drawing the conclusions for herself, she now seems confident enough to survive in the world as it is.

As Arthur Seaton put it in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*: 'Don't let the buggers grind you down!' The sum total of such daily refusals to accept the rules of capitalist society marks the first step towards liberation.

David Wild



Rosemonde (Bulle Ogier) in a scene from the film

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The International Socialists is a democratic organisation whose membership is open to all who accept its main principles and who are willing to pay contributions and to work in one of its organisations.

We believe in independent working-class action for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a classless society with production for use and not for profit.

We work in the mass organisations of the working class and are firmly committed to a policy of internationalism.

Capitalism is international. The giant firms have investments throughout the world and owe no allegiances except to themselves and the economic system they maintain.

In Europe, the Common Market has been formed for the sole purpose of increasing the trade and profits of these multi-national firms.

The international power of capitalism can only be overcome by international action by the working class.

A single socialist state cannot indefinitely survive unless workers of other countries actively come to its aid by extending the socialist revolution.

In addition to building a revolutionary socialist organisation in this country we also believe in the necessity of forming a world revolutionary socialist international independent of either Washington or Moscow. To this end we have close relationships with a number of other socialist organisations throughout the world.

We believe in the necessity to unite socialist theory with the day-to-day struggles of working people and therefore support all genuine demands that tend to improve the position and self-confidence of the working class.

We fight:

For rank and file control of the trade unions and the regular election of all full-time officials.

Against secret negotiations. We believe that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.

For 100 per cent trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards.

Against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikes are 'official' or 'unofficial'.

For equal pay and a better deal for young workers.

Against productivity deals and job evaluation and for militant trade union unity and joint shop stewards committees both in the plant and on a combine basis.

For a minimum wage of at least £25 a week.

Against unemployment, redundancy and lay offs. We support the demand: Five days' work or five days' pay.

For all workers in struggle. We seek to build militant groups within industry.

Against racialism and police victimisation of black workers.

Against immigration restriction.

For the right of coloured people and all oppressed groups to organise in their own defence.

For real social, economic and political equality for women.

Against all nuclear weapons and military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Against secret diplomacy.

Against all forms of imperialism. We unconditionally give support to and solidarity with all genuine national liberation movements.

For the nationalisation of the land, banks and major industries without compensation and under workers' control.

We are opposed to all ruling class policies and organisations. We work to build a revolutionary workers' party in Britain and to this end support the unity of all revolutionary groups.

The struggle for socialism is the central struggle of our time. Workers' power and a world based on human solidarity, on the increasing of man's power over nature, with the abolition of the power of man over man, is certainly worth fighting for.

It is no use just talking about it. More than a century ago Karl Marx wrote: 'The philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it.' If you want to help us change the world and build socialism, join us.

THERE ARE IS BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen
Cumbernauld
Dundee
Edinburgh
Dunfermline/
Cowdenbeath
Glanrothes/Kirkcaldy
Glasgow N
Glasgow S
Greenock
Stirling

NORTH EAST

Bishop Auckland
Durham
Hartlepool
Newcastle upon Tyne
South Shields
Spennymoor
Sunderland
Teesside E
Teesside W

NORTH

Barnsley
Bradford
Dewsbury
Doncaster
Grimsby
Halifax
Huddersfield
Hull
Leeds
Pontefract/
Knottingley
Scarborough
Selby
Sheffield
York

EAST

Basildon
Beccles
Cambridge
Chelmsford
Colchester
Harlow
Ipswich
Leiston
Lowestoft
Norwich
Peterborough

NORTH WEST

Barrow
Blackburn
Bolton
Burnley
Crewe
Kirkby
Lancaster
Manchester
Merseyside
Oldham
Preston
Rochdale
Salford
St Helens
Stoke
Stockport
Trafford
Wigan
Wrexham

GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES

Bexley
Camden
Chertsey
Croydon

MIDLANDS

Birmingham NE
Birmingham S
Coventry
Derby
Dudley
Leamington and
Warwick
Leicester
Loughborough
Mid-Derbyshire
Milton Keynes
Northampton
Nottingham
Oxford
Rugby
Warley
Wolverhampton

SOUTH

Brighton
Canterbury
Crawley
Eastbourne
Guildford
Portsmouth
Southampton
Woolwich

WALES and SOUTH WEST

Bath
Bristol
Cardiff
Exeter
Gloucester
Llanelli
Mid-Devon
Neath
Plymouth
Swansea
Swansea Valley

Ealing
East London
Enfield
Fulham and
Hammersmith
Hackney and
Islington
Harlesden
Harrow
Hemel Hempstead
High Wycombe
Hornsey
Houslow
Ilford
Kilburn
Kingston
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton

North Herts
Paddington
Reading
St Albans
Slough
Tottenham
Walthamstow
Wandsworth
Watford
Woolwich

THE UNIONS

Press union's somersault to stop militant takeover

ONE major contradiction in the otherwise tightly-controlled top-level structure of the National Union of Journalists is that the union's conference has the right to elect and re-elect at regular intervals the editor of the union journal.

Up until 1972 this was done on an annual basis with the successful candidate getting a small fee for his part-time labours. For years Allen Hutt, an extremely right-wing member of the Communist Party, was elected unopposed.

But in 1971, well-known militant Ron Knowles put up for the job and Hutt only just scraped home. Something obviously had to be done about such a serious situation.

Accordingly the leaders of the union moved for the annual elections for the

post to be brought to an end. Instead, they proposed that the editor should be elected for life on a ballot of the whole membership after the union executive had short-listed 'suitable' candidates.

The NUJ conference overturned this. It decided that while the post should be full time, it must be subject to re-election every three years.

One year of the old annual election system still remained. In the contest Ron Knowles came within 10 votes of beating Ted Simpson an executive member who was put up in place of Hutt—who had retired—by the leadership and the more respectable branches.

This year the situation has taken yet another awkward little turn. Ted Simpson has announced that he is unwilling to stand for a full-time job where he is regularly answerable to the union's conference. He could not, he says, offer himself for a job where he

might be sacked every three years.

And since no other nominations were received in time to challenge Ron Knowles, he has been elected unopposed as editor of the Journalist for three years.

This prospect so terrifies the leadership of the NUJ and their cronies up and down the country that they are now moving to abolish the full-time elected post they themselves created just one year ago.

Resolutions saying that the union cannot afford a full-time paid editor have magically appeared from several branches in time for inclusion on this year's conference agenda.

None of these branches, however, has raised any questions about the vast amounts of money wasted on the union's affair with computerised dues collection. Nor have they protested at the appointment for life of an extra organiser for television at a starting salary of £3500.

POST UNION IN RETREAT ON FREEZE

by Tom Dredge, UPW

AT THE Union of Post Office Workers special conference last week the executive council made it quite clear that they are prepared to accept the Tory government's norm for wages under Phase two of the Counter Inflation Act.

General secretary Tom Jackson said: 'If we have to accept £1 plus 4 per cent we will do so with bad grace. The rest of our claim will remain on the table.'

He was against an alliance with other public service unions because they all had different wage claims and so would be easy to split and divide.

The rules of the UPW were used ruthlessly to strangle any real debate on wages. As a result of a campaign by the London Overseas Telephones no 2 branch, 40 branches sent letters to Jackson demanding a report and a policy debate on wages.

All that emerged after an executive meeting was a statement by Jackson and a question and answer session which lasted for a total period of 2½ hours.

RULED OUT

Throughout the conference references were made to the National Industrial Relations Court although the UPW is not a registered union. It seems the executive has decided it owes a debt to the NIRC since it ruled against the Telecommunications Staff Association application for a recognition reference to the Commission of Industrial Relations, thus saving the UPW executive from having to adopt a fighting policy against this scab organisation.

An amendment from London district council stating that if compulsory overtime was not dropped from the Post Office rule book by October, then members would refuse to do it was ruled out of order because rule 19 gives to the executive alone the right to call industrial action.

The London district council appealed against this ruling and the appeal was carried by conference. The next day the chairman issued a statement saying that the union's lawyers had decided that this would be a breach of contract and contrary to the Industrial Relations Act.

They suggested a re-wording of the amendment which meant that conference could now only recommend to the executive that action be taken to have compulsory overtime stopped.

The London district council's reworded amendment came up for discussion and although there was no opposition from the floor or from

the platform, (Jackson even spoke in favour) the chairman encouraged the debate to continue for over an hour despite calls for the vote to be taken.

By carefully spinning out debates on matters where there was no division of opinion and by deft use of the rule book, the executive prevented any real discussion of the two most important subjects before the conference—the wage freeze and the Industrial Relations Act.

But Jackson spelt out the position that the union leadership would be adopting in considerable detail. 'A deal must be struck with the government,' he said. 'It would have to involve statutory control of prices coupled with statutory control of incomes, properly negotiated between the TUC, the CBI and the government and there would have to be amend-

ments to the Industrial Relations Act.

And the significance of Jackson's speech goes beyond the UPW. He is a member of the TUC general council and his support for total collaboration with the Tories is shared with many so-called leaders on that body.

REAL LINKS

The danger is that militants in the UPW may become disillusioned by the outcome of this conference. In fact it has never been more urgent for militant post office workers to make genuine, active links with other groups of workers who are fighting the Tories, their wage freeze and their battery of anti-working class laws.

At the same time UPW militants must prepare for the union's annual conference in May and try to use it to make it more democratic and responsive to the genuine aspirations of the rank and file.

Teachers hammer out policy

by Chanie Rosenberg
Secretary Hackney NUT

MORE THAN 300 teachers packed a Rank and File Teachers' conference in London last weekend.

The main discussions were on salaries policy and democracy in schools.

The local education authorities, against the wishes of the National Union of Teachers, introduced seven separate scales of pay for teachers a year ago. Now they are trying to widen them to divide the workforce even more.

Rank and File's policy has always been a single salary scale for all teachers. Equal pay would require a sharing of the extra responsibilities work in schools entails, which could be dealt with by election for the various jobs required.

The main opposing viewpoint proposed a flat-rate increase on all the scales. This would have the effect of freezing the differentials forever, and was roundly defeated.

The 'democracy' issue, central for a rank and file body, took up a large part of the conference. The majority were for building staff associations in the schools as the rank and file base

from which to fight to erode the domination of the head and gain more and more control in the governing bodies of schools, together with pupils, parents and ancillary workers.

The opposing view considered this participation in 'state institutions' to be reactionary and said teachers should opt out of all such bodies and not compromise.

They were roundly defeated by the mass of the conference who have experienced the daily struggle in the schools against the authority of the head and governing body and the deference of so many teachers to it.

The present strikes in London were seen as an essential fight if teachers were not to be beaten in the coming national negotiations. The offer of £52 million against the teachers £170 million demand must be thrown out. One method suggested of pushing through the freeze was by large towns fighting for their own allowances above the national minimum, as London is.

The unity and joint action of teachers with public service and other workers against the freeze was seen as crucial to success, and reports were given of action in different areas along these lines.

We're low paid, too!

Plight of Irish prisoners

Gas men and Tory blackmail

THE DANGERS threatened to old people by the gas strike are exaggerated out of all proportion by the government in their blackmail scheme to save paying the gas men the money they are worth.

If they want to speak of dangers, the elderly are put in danger of dying every day by hypothermia. Because of low pensions they can only buy food or heating. And we all know whose fault that is! Yet nobody in the government and the class it represents complain about this.

Most old people cannot afford gas when it is in the pipes and die in bed of cold because they cannot pay for gas, coal etc, which should be a social need, piped and paid for before they receive their pensions.

In such a 'technically advanced' society, the disregard shown for the elderly's needs—because they can no longer produce profits—is a crime.

We have all been told of the hazards of gas but the gas men work with these dangers every day. They are still kept on low wages and no one seems to care if they suffer or even get blown up.

Unfortunately people like nurses, hospital workers, essential services workers are low paid and always blackmailed into accepting it as they don't get more by asking. The government and employers know they can use the mass media to propagate how 'terrible' these people are for withdrawing their own labour. It is the government that should pay proper wages for such essential jobs and treat them as needs for people and not profit-making concerns.

The government and employers could stop all these problems today but they won't. It's their profits and only our lives! Things will not change until we have a truly socialist system built on need.—ANNE MARKS, Wigan, Lancs.

THE DISABLED, employed by Remploy in 84 factories, are another group of low-paid workers. The basic pay, including merit and proficiency, is 43½p an hour or £17.40 a week to which is added a bonus system.

My own pay packet works out as follows: basic pay

£17.40, bonus £3.70, equals gross pay £21.10, less £3.30 PAYE, 88p national insurance, 59p graduated pension and 32p Remploy pension. This works out as £16.31 take-home pay.

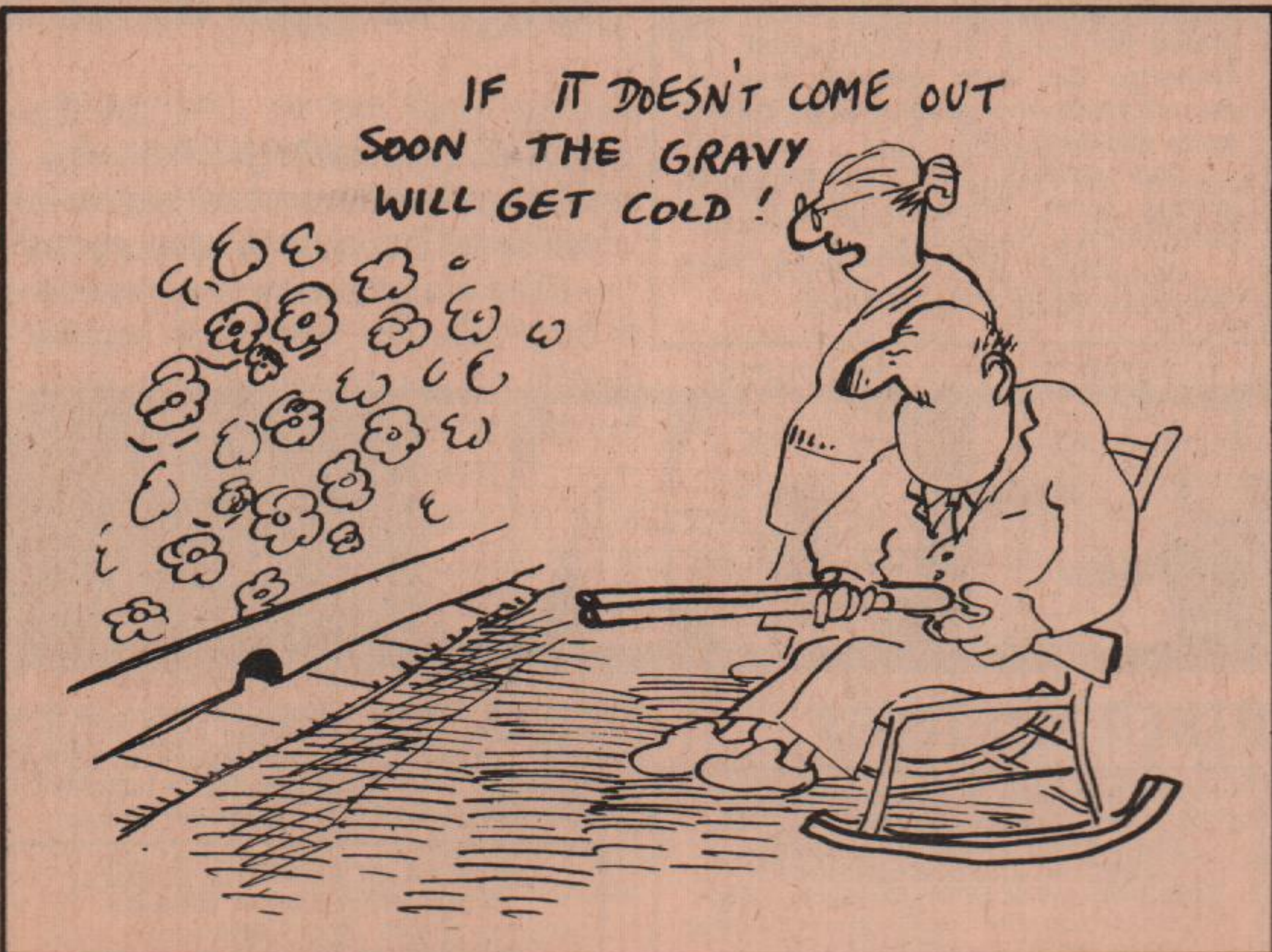
The bonus is paid depending on how fast one can work and the merit and proficiency on ability to work without supervision, good time keeping, etc.

The company says it works at a loss and is granted money from the Treasury. But with the high productivity here, that does not add up. The company is making millions of pounds in profit and this must be ploughed back into the Treasury.

Our new pay agreement will be discussed at a meeting on 29 February. I have written to my union demanding that they do not settle unless they can get at least a £25 basic rate. This remains to be seen as they settled last year for £1.80.

I fully back the gas men, hospital workers, civil servants, teachers, miners and Ford workers in their struggles. If any trouble breaks out at Remploy I hope you will back us to the full.—G W JENNINGS, Deputy EPTU shop steward, Brixton Remploy, London SW2.

LETTERS



Last week's cartoon: one of the best ever?

EVANS IS THE GREATEST

CONGRATULATIONS to Socialist Worker for having the best cartoonist around. Evans' ability to capture the insanity and hypocrisy of capitalism and turn it against itself is something we should not underestimate. Last week's Pensioner cartoon was one of his best ever. It seems that with a fine turn of his pen he can expose the ruling class's twists and turns even before they do them.

Remember the Official Solicitor, that prominent buffoon in last year's dockers' struggle? Evans saw him running around when the bosses still thought they might win. To be able to laugh at the employers' belief that they were supermen compared to the combined strength of the workers boosts our confidence in the struggle. Keep it up. Power to all the Normans.—ROGER HUDDLE, London E11.

Tragedy

I FEEL sympathy for Theodorakis (10 February). That he has lost faith in the class that could bring freedom to Greece is tragic.

It is sad, but I often feel doubtful about socialism. But obviously when remembering something as beautiful as: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need' all doubt is dispelled—for a while.

Why is this so? Plain and simply the answer is capitalist encirclement.

All around us are capitalist influences—our children are taught capitalist economics where man (living thing) is called a factor of production along with land and capital (inanimate things).

Consequently it is up to those of us who 'see clear' to show people that the evils are no longer bearable. We must not lose faith like Theodorakis but rather extend what we believe to other people.—PHILIP McHUGH, Accrington, Lancashire.

THERE ARE MORE THAN a dozen Irish political prisoners at present serving time in English prisons.

One of these, Eamonn Smullen, will be released on Friday 23 February, after serving a five year sentence as a Category 'A' prisoner in Gartree and Nottingham prisons.

Eamonn was charged with attempting to purchase firearms in November 1969, though he was in possession of no money, no arms existed and the police used an agent provocateur. Eamonn has been for many years a very active trade unionist, he had been a shop steward on the Shell site and since his imprisonment in Portlouse in the 1940s, where he served a long period of solitary confinement, he has been a committed socialist and working-class activist.

Despite Eamonn's political views, which were used against him at the trial, his case actually got very little coverage except in the Irish papers.

On Thursday 1 March, Eamonn will speak at a public meeting with Bernadette Devlin on the situation of political prisoners in this country and in Ireland. The meeting will start at 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, and we would be grateful if you would give it as much publicity and coverage as possible.—JACQUELINE KAYE, Secretary, Prisoners Aid Committee, 318 Lillie Road, London SW6.

Exploit

I HAVE to reply to Tony Harrison's letter on Social Security officials (10 February). My own experience, on the several occasions that I have had to claim social security benefit, has shown that officials, with a few exceptions, take advantage of their opportunity to exploit the vulnerability of claimants.

Most of us realise that 'the system' is to blame, but when receipt of benefits means the difference between feeding and not feeding our kids, anyone who knowingly wrongly denies us that benefit IS the enemy.—MAUREEN TOTOK, Manchester.

Letters for Socialist Worker must arrive first post Monday. They should be typed or written on one side of the paper only and may be cut for space reasons.

Complacent

MIKE CAFFOOR's statement (17 February) that 'Kevin Whitston is wrong about his facts . . . Wage increases have kept above the rise in the cost of living' not only contradicts articles in Socialist Worker but is a complacent reaction to the latest offensive against working-class living standards.

Compare this with Colin Barker's statement (27 January): 'You need 24 per cent . . . not to get richer, remember, but just to stand still.' The 15.8 per cent increase of hourly earnings that Caffoor talks about would mean, according to Socialist Worker, a fall in the standard of living for the working class.

In the same issue, Laurie Flynn points out correctly: 'It is a measure of the devastating attacks on working-class living standards brought about by the present crisis of British capitalism that the value of the 30 per cent rises Ford workers won in 1971 has almost entirely disappeared thanks to increases in the cost of living.'

The situation has not improved but considerably deteriorated. The food price index published by The Grocer stands 12.3 per cent higher than a year ago and this gives some indication of the real rise in the working-class cost of living. Once taxation and other deductions are taken into account, Caffoor's 15.8 per cent wage increase represents a fall in the standard of living.

But in spite of all this, he really has no understanding of the significance of the demand for a rising scale of wages as argued by Kevin Whitston. The argument is that it should be the starting point for any fight for a standard of living increase.

What the Ford workers would be saying is that we need a certain percentage increase before we begin to argue and fight for a standard of living increase. We need to catch up before any discussion can take place.

DAVID YAFFE, London NW3.

Help us through the wood

THERE IS A MOTION on the agenda for the annual conference of the National Union of Journalists in April which 'deplores the actions of certain groups of workers, among them dockers and car workers, who by securing excessive wage increases are establishing themselves as elite groups of highly-paid workers . . .'

The motion, which comes from the Hull branch of the union, goes on to say that the 'elite' dockers, car workers, and suchlike, are divorcing themselves from workers in other industries 'where such wages cannot be matched' and it calls for TUC action to depress what it calls 'excessive wage demands'.

Reflect

What is significant about this motion is that the journalists of Hull are not particularly right-wing or stupid. They simply reflect the feelings of many provincial journalists who accept the values and propaganda of the papers who employ them.

In Hull, for example, the local daily paper is the Hull Daily Mail, part of the Associated Newspapers chain of the Rothermere empire, which also controls the Daily Mail. Like the Mail, which runs headlines on the gas dispute such as THIS STRIKE CAN KILL, the Associated provincial papers pursue a solidly union-bashing line.

Editorials which appeal to the

Another important aspect of the motion is that it highlights the need for the merged company to buy up UK profit. Only 14.7 millions is expected to be available out of a pre-tax profit of £13.2 millions and while this includes an un- known amount for minority interests, the ruling UK tax rate is 40 per cent.

So expect an important UK acquisition before the end of this year. No one's giving any aid clues as to what sectors and companies will diversify into, or indeed whether there are any hat-tricks as a result of the oil crisis. But it will be to oil titles.

Finally, the document gives a list of 15 companies which are in of the world's oil. The list is of the world's oil. The list is of the world's oil. The list is of the world's oil.

simplistic line of 'holding the country to ransom' not only persuade many readers that strikes are inherently wrong, but also have their effect on the journalists who work on the papers. Their very approach to parties in an industrial dispute is different.

Managements are usually treated with diffidence and given all the time they require to come forward with a prepared statement. Union officials are usually peppered with questions which force them into a defensive posture, which is reflected in the eventual story.

Rank and file members are seldom given any space at all, unless they are the odd one or two members who speak out against the action.

All this happens not because the ordinary provincial journalist is actively plotting to distort every strike and bring the trade union movement to its knees. It is a product of society's values as a whole and journalism's values in particular.

The average daily provincial journalist earns between £40 and £50 a week and likes to think of himself as a professional person, something akin to a solicitor or an accountant. Industrial workers who earn more are resented, particularly the militant printers, who are more often than not overtly contemptuous of the tame journalists who moan loudly but accept their lot without a fight.

Since journalists in the provinces—and the same was true until recently of those in national newspapers—so compliantly knuckle under to the meanness of their managements, they have fallen way back in related earnings tables since the war. This increases their hostility towards those workers who do fight and win.

Tough

Without a tradition of militancy to fall back on, one has to be built for provincial journalists. Within the NUJ a growing number of people are becoming aware of this and are working hard at it. But it is a tough struggle.

The instinctive reaction to the Hull motion is dismissive contempt for its failing to understand the real injustices of our society. But that would only alienate the Hull journalists without increasing their understanding.

They need to be shown that all workers must unite to go forward,

not divide to drag other workers backwards. Their own unwitting role as propagandists for a hostile system which exploits them just as much as others has to be patiently and repeatedly argued with them.

This is being done within the union but socialists everywhere must play their part. It is not enough simply to despair at the reporter who turns up to cover a strike, naively believing that life can be divorced from politics. The real injustices need to be described to him. Workers should also chat to him about his own work and his attitudes. They should throw ideas at him.

This won't change anything overnight but in the case of most journalists in the provinces, who are basically honest and earnest about their work, it will lead to them questioning the assumptions thrust into their minds by their work—the assumptions that lead to headlines like HOPE OF STRIKE PEACE and editorials which slogane about 'the national interest'.

Eight years ago the Hull motion could just as easily have come from Teesside. Now, at the same conference, the Teesside branch, one of the most militant in the NUJ, has a motion calling for the executive to support journalists who fight for intervention in editorial policies.

Journalists can find a way through the trees—they just need a compass and some encouragement.

RON KNOWLES

Students to boycott Stirling 'show trial'

STIRLING:—Students at Stirling University have voted for a complete boycott of the disciplinary court which is proceeding with charges against eight elected student representatives following the demonstrations during the Queen's visit to the university last term.

The student boycott is in reaction to the four-month suspension of union president Linda Quinn, after she was found 'guilty' of taking part in meetings which discussed the demonstrations.

That the university is still proceeding against eight students shows that it is out to smash left-wing militants on the campus. Student representatives will not be able even to discuss any action against university policy if it is allowed to get away with this attack on the union.

Staff at the university have been shown that their opinions count for nothing. They voted 2-1 in favour of dropping all disciplinary action against elected representatives, but in deference to outside business interests the university is ignoring their feelings.

The labour movement in Scotland has shown increasing support for the students. Backing has come from the trades councils of Clydebank, Falkirk, Stirling, Cumbernauld and Glasgow, and from branches of the Post Office workers', transport work-

ers' and miners' unions. But the National Union of Students has offered only half-hearted support, and much of the propaganda circulated to other colleges has been lost in their bureaucracies. NUS executive elections are due soon, and delegates must commit candidates to state a course of action to be pursued at Stirling.

Messages of support and financial donations should be sent to John Davenport, CSA secretary, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.

Protest takes over university buildings

CAMBRIDGE:—Students occupied two university buildings last Wednesday after a meeting of 800 voted for the move as a protest against university rejection of their demands for reforms in the economics faculty. They were also protesting at a report by Lord Devlin which called on the university not to recognise the Cambridge Students Union.

During the sit-in the leaders of the students union tried to stall militant action and wanted to end the sit-in after two days, but the left-wing, backed by the majority, carried a vote to continue it until Monday.

Sackings provoke strike

NORTH LONDON:—25 workers from Grunwick Processing Laboratories, in Willesden, have been on strike for a month. They were made redundant after walking out in protest at the sacking of four fellow workers who were trying to organise the factory for the Transport Workers Union.

Conditions at Grunwick are appalling. During the summer when the firm develops holiday snapshots, compulsory overtime has to be worked far into the night—a 70-hour week is not uncommon, with an overtime rate of time and a quarter. Many Ugandan Asian workers are now employed there who are afraid of not getting another job if they support action against these conditions.

Nevertheless, some workers attempted to organise a union. When the employers found out, they retaliated with intimidation and threats: anybody who joined the union would be sacked. T J Doherty, the shop steward, was demoted from top grade colour printer to an unskilled job.

The strikers have succeeded in getting some deliveries blacked, but production is continuing.

Donations to: T Doherty, 23 Staverton Road, London NW2.

COURTS THREATEN FLYING PICKETS

by Ewa Widowson

BUILDING WORKERS who joined a flying picket in Shropshire during last summer's big strike face an all-out attack through the criminal law courts next month.

The story of how they have been arrested and accused shows the extent to which the employers and the state will go to hound and intimidate workers.

The flying pickets used in the building workers struggle forced UCATT, the builders' main union, into a national struggle. Without their victory would have been impossible.

On 6 September a flying picket visited five sites in and around Shrewsbury. By the end of the day about 60 police were following them around.

The pickets went on to the sites calling men out, asking for their support, making collections for the strike fund. Some men on the sites were 'lumpers', non-union and supposedly self-employed labour—the scourge of the building trade. Some machines got turned over.

But members of the action committee say there was no fighting between the pickets and these men. Certainly none of the enormous police escort saw fit to arrest anyone that day.

ISOLATE

But in November it became clear that the police were making extensive inquiries into the flying picket. Some of the men who had been involved were driven miles away to police stations in Shrewsbury and kept there for two to four hours.

At the police station they were bullied, threatened with 10-year prison sentences, told that they would be charged 'on the same principle as the Kray twins, and generally intimidated.

On Wednesday last week six stewards and action committee members were arrested on their doorsteps as they came home from work. The following night about 12 more arrests were made. All the men arrested are key men in the building workers' organisation. It is clear that the employers and the police are out to smash the organisation built up by rank and file building workers during the struggle.

INTIMIDATED

The charges against them are serious. They include conspiracy (planning the picket), demanding money with menaces (making a collection), and intimidation (on blackleg building workers).

They are not charged under the Industrial Relations Act (a matter for the civil courts) but under the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875. So they face criminal charges. This is an attempt to isolate the men from their union, since the union will not normally give legal help to men charged with criminal offences.

The men are to appear before a magistrates court on Thursday 15 March. They are calling for an all-out stoppage in the building trades that day. All trade unionists must support this call. Against the united power of the working class, the bosses are helpless. But if they feel they can get away with this attack, there will be no end to the persecution of trade union militants.

Donations to and further information from: Arthur Murray, Bali Hai, Old London Road, Bagilet, Flintshire.

WHAT'S ON

Copy for What's On must arrive by first post Monday morning. Charges are 5p per line, semi-display 10p per line. CASH WITH COPY. No insertions without payment. Invoices cannot be sent.

IS MEETINGS

- WALTHAMSTOW IS OPEN MEETING**
Revolt in the Public Sector
Speaker: Chanie Rosenberg (Secretary, Hackney NUT)
Thursday 1 March, 8pm
Grove Tavern, Grove Road, E17
- SOUTH EAST LONDON and WEST KENT IS branches Day School THE UNIONS**
Jim Higgins on
The Origins of the British Labour Movement
Andreas Nagliati on
Militant Trade Unionism Today
Saturday 24 February, 2pm
Charlton House, Charlton Village London SE7
- CAMDEN IS public meeting THE FREEZE AND THE RENTS**
Speakers: David Skinner (Clay Cross councillor), John Palmer and Hugh Kerr
Wednesday 28 February, 8pm
Camden Town Hall (small hall)
- EAST MIDLANDS DISTRICT IS DAY SCHOOL**
1. The Draft Programme
2. Economic perspectives and the Freeze
Saturday 3 March, 11am-4pm
The Charnwood pub, The Rushes, Loughborough
Admission to IS members only
Further details from branch secretaries
- OXFORD IS public meeting SMASH THE FREEZE**
Speakers: Wally Preston (AUEW) and Dave Edward (Fine Tubes)
Sunday 25 February, 8pm
Cowley Community Centre
- CHELMSFORD IS public meeting SMASH THE FREEZE**
Speaker: Paul Foot
Tuesday 13 March, 8pm
Chelmsford Civic Centre
- HARLESDEN IS public meeting**
Laurie Flynn (SW editorial board) Mike McGrath (chairman, British Museum CPSA)
Public Sector Workers AGAINST THE FREEZE
with representatives from most public sector industries
Thursday 1 March, 8pm
Willesden Junction Hotel, Station Rd, London NW10
- EAST LONDON IS public meeting FIGHT THE FREEZE**
Speakers: Colin Beadle (TGWU steward, Ford) and Wendy Plimley (health service worker)
Tuesday 27 February, 8pm
Lister Room, East Ham Town Hall, junction of Barking Rd and High St South
- Birmingham District IS public meeting THE FIGHT AGAINST RACIALISM**
Speakers: from Indian Workers' Association, Black People's Freedom Movement, and Nigel Harris
Sunday 25 February, 7pm
Digbeth Civic Hall (lecture room 2)

- HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON IS public meeting THE BATTLE AGAINST THE WAGE FREEZE**
Speakers: Colin Beadle (TGWU, Ford) Mike McGrath (CPSA), and from LASH (hospital workers), NUT, and other local trade unionists
Monday 26 February, 8pm
Rose and Crown, corner of Albion Rd and Stoke Newington Church Street London N16 (opposite Town Hall) (number 73 bus)
- HORNSEY IS public meeting SMASH THE WAGES FREEZE! SUPPORT THE GASMEN**
Trade union speakers
Tuesday 27 February, 8pm
Duke of Edinburgh pub, Fonthill Rd, London N4 (near Finsbury Park tube station)
- NORTH EAST LONDON Industrial Meeting FIGHT THE FREEZE AND UNEMPLOYMENT**
Speakers: Alan Watts (AUEW) and Tony Cliff
Saturday 24 February, 2pm
YWCA, 628 High Road, London N17 (social afterwards)
- EDINBURGH IS public meeting REVOLUTION AND THE THIRD WORLD**
Speaker: Martin Shaw
Monday 26 February, 7.30pm
Free Gardeners Hall, Picardy Place
- IS IRISH FORUM**
The Plough, Museum Street, London (near Tottenham Court Road tube)
Sunday 25 February, 7.30pm
Speaker: John Palmer on 'The Crisis in Ireland'

- LONDON REGION IS Weekend School** for branch education organisers: Saturday 24 Feb, 10.30am-5pm and Sunday 25 Feb, 11am-4.30pm, at 6 Cottons Gdns, London E2.
- BRIGHTON IS DAY SCHOOL:** draft programme. Sunday 25 February, 10am, Labour Club, Lewes Road, Brighton. IS members only. Contact M Perkins, 13 Buckingham Place, Brighton.
- NOTTINGHAM IS public meeting:** Tony Cliff on The Fight against the Freeze. Thursday 8 March, 8pm, Lion Hotel, Clumber Street.
- LEAMINGTON IS:** The Freeze—What it is and How to Fight it. Speaker: Bob Fryer. Tuesday 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Prince of Wales, Warwick Street.
- LONDON IS TEACHERS' MEETING:** Sunday 4 March, 10.30am, at 6 Cottons Gdns, London E2. All IS teachers must attend.
- LONDON IS REGION public meeting:** The Russian Experience—a marxist analysis. Speaker: Tony Cliff, Friday 2 March, 7.30-9.30pm, The Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (three minutes from Holborn tube).
- BEXLEY IS public meeting:** Mike Caffoor on The Labour Party, Tues 27 Feb, 8pm, Crayford Arms, High St, Crayford, Kent.
- LANCASHIRE REGIONAL AGGREGATE:** meeting on Socialist Worker. Spkr Margaret Renn. Sun 4 March, 12am, Swan and Railway Hotel, Wallgate, Wigan.
- IS HEALTH WORKERS' DAY SCHOOL:** Sat 3 March, 10.30am, at 6 Cottons Gdns, London E2. Speakers include Tom Snow (NUPE) on the reorganisation of NUPE and work in the union. If you need accommodation, contact Graham Jones, 86 Mount Grove Road, London N5. All health workers welcome.

OTHER MEETINGS

- SAVE FAMILY ALLOWANCES public meeting**
Breakdown of the Green paper, questions and discussion with Molly Meacher of the Child Poverty Action Group, and the Claimants' Union Organised by North East London Women's Family Allowance Campaign
EVERYONE WELCOME
Monday 26 February, 7.30pm
Conway Hall (near Holborn tube)
- PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY SOCIAL:** Friday 23 February, 8pm onwards. Dame Collett House, Ben Johnson Road, London E1, (nearest tube Stepney Green). Disco, dance, folk and bar. Tickets 30p on the door, 25p in advance from PD.
- ISRAEL - PALESTINE SOCIALIST ACTION GROUP** one-day seminar in Oxford: Towards the Middle East Revolution. Speakers from IPSAG and Israeli and Arab revolutionary groups. Saturday 24 February, 10.30am, Lindsay Hall, Balliol College. Details from 01-445 7511 or IPSAG, 5 Folly Bridge, Oxford.
- CLANN NA hEIREANN UNITED IRISHMAN FORUM:** Wednesday 28 February, 8.30pm, Co-op Hall, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7. Speakers: Jacqueline Kaye (Prisoners' Aid Committee), Clive Carroll (editor Rosca Catha) and Ian Mills (secretary Clann na hEireann London region).
- INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP/SOCIALIST WOMAN FORUMS:** On the oppression of women. At the Duke of York, York Way, Kings Cross, London N1. Monday 26 February, 7.45pm, THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY.
- UNITY THEATRE, 1 Goldington Street, London NW1:** Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 7.45pm—HOW WE KNOCKED 'EM IN THE OLD KENT ROAD, a dramatised version of the Briant Colour Printers' saga. Tickets 40p, associate membership 50p, bar. Box office phone 01-387 8647.

- CAMBRIDGE SocSoc Forum** on Roads to Socialism in Britain. Duncan Hallas with speakers from CP, IMG and Labour Party. Saturday 24 February, 2.30pm-7.30pm, Keynes Hall, Kings College.
- RANK AND FILE TECHNICAL TEACHERS meet** at The Roebuck, Tottenham Court Road, London W1. Sun 25 Feb, 7.15pm, to discuss Wage Freeze action/next ATTI conference.
- RANK AND FILE TEACHERS meeting:** Workers against the Freeze. Friday 2 March, 8pm, Holborn Assembly Rooms, St John's Mews, London WC1 (behind Holborn Library, Theobalds Road).
- MAKE THIEU RELEASE HIS 300,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW.** Indo-China Solidarity Conference demonstration to Saigon Embassy, 12 Victoria Rd, London W8. Monday 26 February: assembly behind Albert Hall, 5pm, ISC, c/o AREAS, 6 Endsleigh St, London WC1.
- IRELAND:** National Liberation and Socialist Revolution. Public debate between the IMG and 'Militant'. IMG spkrs: Bob Purdie (national organiser AIL), Gerry Lawless. 'Militant' speakers: Peter Taffe (editor, 'Militant'), Peter Haddon (Belfast YS). Friday 2 March, 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

NOTICES

- 25 REVOLUTIONARY SONGS**
Irish, IWW 'Wobbly', British, International.
Ideal for rallies, demos, parties. 15p POs, cheques to M Smith, 10 Stanhope Road, London SW16
- LAND WANTED HERTS/ESSEX area:** about 3 to 4 acres, NOT building land. Required by children's organisation (woodcraft) for weekend campsite. Rent or buy. Contact D Wheeler (01-888 2065), 85 Lyndhurst Road, London N22 5AX.

JUMBLE SALE: 2.30pm Saturday 24 Feb. St Peter's Hall, Beechcroft Road, Tooting SW17. Organised by Wandsworth IS—All proceeds to Printshop Fund. JUMBLE still needed. Please bring to the hall.

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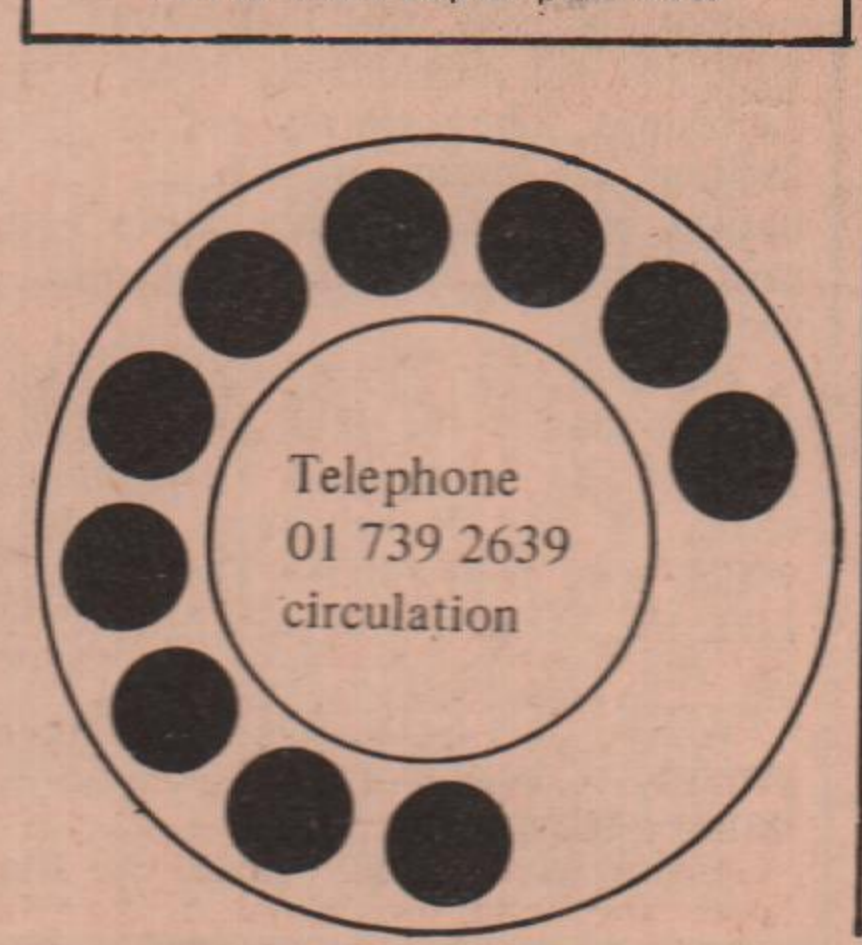
ENGLISH TRANSLATION Ligue Communiste Third Congress report from 'Rouge': Political resolutions: the elections in France; the 'Union of the Left'; Ligue Communiste-Lutte Ouvriere electoral agreements, 10p each plus 5p postage from Roger Blackmore, 28 Bailey Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Ten or more copies post free.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM JOURNAL: The following back copies are still available, but some only in limited numbers: 33, 34, 37, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53. 20p per copy, including postage. Money with orders please to: IS Journal, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

FINE TUBES National Picket: Monday 19 March, 6am. London Region IS are organising a coach. For details ring Alan Woodward at 01-808 2369.

PLUTO PRESS urgently needs typists for manuscript work at home. Please contact Diane at 01-722 0141 during day.

FACTORY BRANCHES?
For the background to the debate, read Communist Organisation—a pamphlet containing the Comintern theses on organisation, with a new introduction by Harry Wicks.
5p plus 3p postage from Comintern, 20 Stanley Road, Edinburgh 10.
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Drivers' big strike goes on

MIDLANDS:-1000 heavy lorry drivers working for BRS (Midlands) are now in their fourth week of strike action. What started as a claim for £2.50 as payment for holding a Heavy Goods Vehicle Licence has become an issue of major importance.

BRS management is threatening to close six of the 18 BRS depots in the Midlands and claims to have lost £500,000 since the strike began. Talks last Friday broke down when management offered increases of between 72p and £4.87 based on a revised productivity scheme.

Transport union official Alan Law pointed out that the total increase offered by management could be equally shared to give each man £2.50. But management insisted they could not make an offer beyond the limits laid down by the freeze.

During the dispute, British Leyland plants have been heavily affected, with 13,000 workers laid off at 11 factories.

Press reports have suggested that the BRS drivers who transport car body shells from plants such as Pressed Steel Fisher in Birmingham and the Swindon and Oxford depots wanted to negotiate separately with BRS. Alan Law said that management had attempted to do this but the men involved at these plants had refused to break with the main group of workers.

Packaging sit-in in third week

ST HELENS:-200 workers at the Jefferson Smurfit packaging factory have been in occupation for three weeks.

The dispute began when the SOGAT printworkers' chapel decided that workers should not move from machine to machine—as part of their campaign for an increase in the present miserable shift differential. Management then ordered workers to change machines, and when this failed broke procedure by trying to send the 'offending' workers home without pay. The workers then withdrew to the canteen.

Later that week a manager tried to remove printing dies from the works so that the work could be done elsewhere. Since then the whole plant has been occupied and a picket placed on the gates. Women and men are playing a full part in the occupation.

Walk-out after 54 suspended

PETERBOROUGH:-1500 workers at the BDA plant came out on strike on Thursday and Friday last week in sympathy with 54 toolroom men who were suspended after they took industrial action the previous day.

The toolroom sat down over a long-standing bonus dispute, and the company threatened to sack them if they did not return to normal working.

At a previous mass meeting a motion calling for a one-day stoppage against the government pay freeze and filing a claim for a £10 a week across the board increase with equal bonus and 90 per cent of the men's rate for women was narrowly defeated. The union executive is asking for £8 for skilled men and £5 for unskilled.

As a result of the strike the suspensions have been lifted and a full works conference arranged to discuss the toolroom bonus scheme, the wage claim, and equal pay.

Social workers back militant

NORTH LONDON:-More than 100 Islington social workers and other local authority employees expressed their support last Friday for social worker Myra Garrett, who is threatened with the sack for alleged incompetence. The charge is clearly a frame-up and sets a precedent that could be used against other militant social workers.

The local authority has been disturbed that social workers in Islington have been using their rank and file strength to unite with their 'clients', ordinary working people of the area, in the fight over poor housing and other issues. It is trying to clamp down on the right of a basic grade social worker to pursue the needs of 'clients' and to question the lack of resources available for the job.

Messages of support to Convenor of Shop Stewards, Islington Social Services Dept, Caledonian Road, London N7.

ATTACK ON SHOP STEWARD SUCCEEDS

RUGBY:-The management at GEC Machines has won the first round of its bid to get militant engineering union shop steward Steve Evans out of the factory. Evans has successfully been transferred to the press shop, so losing his steward's credentials.

700 workers at the factory struck last week after management insisted on Evans' transfer, but they returned to work last Tuesday after an agreement that the transfer would be discussed at a works conference the following day.

Anti-union firm locks out 1500 workers

DERBY:-1500 workers at Birmid Qualcast were locked out this week after negotiations over fringe benefits broke down.

Last week management rejected union demands on holiday pay and the main company board said there could be no negotiation of a new holiday pay agreement on a local basis since this was under consideration at company level. This is a complete reversal of previous company policy.

At a mass meeting last week the workers decided to keep strictly to a 40-hour week and work to rule. The meeting also decided that no partial shutdown of

the works resulting from the overtime ban and work to rule would be tolerated.

Management responded with an ultimatum that they would either have to shut down one of the foundries or the entire works. While stewards were still considering this, management posted a notice saying the works would be closed from Monday onwards.

Racism

Shop stewards met on Monday evening and demanded that management must end the lock out. This was to be put to a mass meeting for endorsement

on Thursday.

The locked-out men are members of the National Union of Domestic Appliance and General Metal Workers, the engineering (AUEW) and electricians' unions. More than half are black workers.

Birmid Qualcast is a Smethwick-based company with a notoriously anti-union management which plays on racism and redundancies and threats of closures to divide workers.

Stewards from the Derby plant were to meet their opposite numbers from Birmid's Dartmouth Auto Castings plant in Smethwick this weekend to discuss the situation throughout the combine.

ANGER AS UNIONS DUCK 'ALL OUT' VOTE

LEADERS of the four unions representing hospital workers decided last week on a campaign of industrial action. The government has frozen their members' wages for four months and is now saying it would be illegal for them to get an increase of more than £1.84 a week.

100,000 of the workers are on a basic wage of less than £20, and a quarter of the women workers get less than £15.28 before deductions.

The workers are understandably angry with the government. Many are also now angry with their union's official leaders, who are calling for selective strikes, an overtime ban and a withdrawal of co-operation as from next Thursday—action much weaker than that they had been instructed to carry through by their members.

The main union involved, the National Union of Public Employees

(NUPE), wasted several weeks holding a branch by branch vote. A clear majority voted for extended militant action. Half the branches called for an all-out strike.

A delegate meeting of transport union members in the hospitals unanimously voted a fortnight ago for the same policy.

Now the union leaders seem to be deliberately ignoring the feelings of the members—presumably in order to evade any real conflict with the government.

DECIDED

Extreme dissatisfaction with this approach was voiced at a second meeting of the transport workers' delegates last Friday. They demanded to know why John Cousins had not kept to the previous decision for all-out action.

Cousins claimed that the union had felt obliged to go along with policy decided by the other three

unions, but would back any action taken by its members. Members involved in strike action would get strike pay: £5 a week for men and £2.50 for women. The union would also give financial help to non-members who joined the action, he said.

The same anger at union officials was apparent at a 200-strong NUPE London Division special conference on Saturday. There was a lot of shouting and heckling by members who asked why the ballot had been taken at all. Was it just a device to postpone action?

Even full-time officials later admitted that the feeling of the meeting was for all-out industrial action. But they refused to allow delegates to put any motions or vote on any proposals.

Mark Palmer, from St George's Hospital, tried to put a three-part resolution calling for all-out action, for a joint demonstration with

teachers and civil servants on the day of the civil servants' strike next Tuesday, and for an officially organised conference of all public employees in London to discuss action against the freeze. He was ruled out of order and no vote was taken.

Feeling among militants in East London hospitals about the unions' decision against an all-out strike was very strong. Jimmy Ewing, who has been secretary of a NUPE branch covering three large hospitals for more than 10 years, was so disgusted that he sent an immediate letter of resignation to the union general secretary, Alan Fisher. Although his action was tactically ill-advised, his letter expressed the feeling of many members.

NO MANDATE

'The democratic ballot effected by our members and their subsequent verdict has been ignored and instead we are to be subjected to a variety of totally inadequate exercises that will serve only to increase the work load on nurses and similarly low-paid personnel . . .', he wrote.

'The national figures were very clear as to what course of action the membership directed. There was no mandate for the course of action that you intend to implement and I feel sure that because of your own apparent weakness and unwillingness to take any form of definite action, we the members will be subjected to a protracted campaign of futile bitterness and sterile petty incriminations. That will be the direct product of a question leadership.'

HOSPITAL WORKERS 'WON'T FIGHT ALONE'

HOSPITAL WORKERS must not be alone in their fight against the freeze—that was the unanimous decision of a big meeting of trade unionists in the Manchester area last week.

Government workers were well represented at the meeting, which was called by the United Manchester Hospitals branch of NUPE to discuss how to fight the wage freeze. A committee was elected to start united action against the freeze with representatives from NUPE, NALGO, ASTMS, CPSSA, GMWU, ATTI, UPW and UCATT.

Speakers included David Nuttall, a councillor from Clay Cross, who appealed for a united struggle against the Tories' attacks, John Corfield and Arthur Mullery, stewards in the building industry, told of the 'conspiracy' charges being made against pickets in Shropshire.



BLACKPOOL:-About 80 women workers are now on strike at Empire Football Pools. The strike has been made official by the shopworkers' union, USDAW, and several officials have been helping the women, the youngest of whom is only 16.

The picket was joined last Saturday by women from Vernon's and Littlewood's pools in Liverpool. The picket persuaded many not to go in to work and the first men joined the strike. This was seen as quite a breakthrough because the men at Empire Pools have a reputation for being

management followers.

When the union was first organised there last autumn one man joined and was made branch chairman. He resigned the following day after being in the manager's office.

The rates of pay at Empire are way below those paid to union members at other pools firms. A pools clerk 21 years old at Empire gets £12.80 for a 40-hour week—girls doing the same job at Littlewoods get £18.80 for a 36½-hour week.

shop it is not exactly surprising that no one stepped forward.

The union officials made it clear that they did not expect any widespread action to challenge this. Morale in Steve Evans' own department was shattered and the men did not continue to challenge the management.



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FORD TO

STRIKE ON 1 MARCH

Socialist Worker

**Unity
against
freeze**

by Sabby Sagall
FOUR HUNDRED Ford shop stewards voted unanimously in Coventry on Sunday in favour of a call for an all-out strike from 1 March if the company fails to make an acceptable new offer.

In line with the government's freeze, a paltry £2.40 has been offered in response to the unions' demand for a £10 increase.

An important initiative was also taken by the Ford national convenors' committee in inviting to the conference representatives from all sections of workers currently fighting the freeze. In stark contrast to the recent official conference of union leaders in the public sector, the Coventry conference ended with a call to action.

A six-point resolution was unanimously passed which included the demand that the TUC, at its special conference on 5 March, should call a one-day general strike in protest at the government's wage freeze.

A convenor from Rolls-Royce spoke of the urgent need to build a national committee linking militants throughout the car industry.

A Vauxhall convenor described how Vauxhall workers had traditionally been dependent on negotiations at Fords. But he added that they were now becoming more self-reliant.



Ford stewards at the Coventry conference: 'We can give decisive lead'

by Mike McGrath, CPSA
ON Tuesday 27 February 300,000 civil servants in the CPSA, SCS and Customs and Excise group will be taking part in a one-day national stoppage.

On that day too the National Union of Teachers will have some thousands of teachers out on selective strikes over their frozen pay claim. Many London teachers' associations have called for an all-out strike to coincide with the civil servants.

The CPSA leadership must be unique in its political cowardice. Rank and file pressure has driven them to call a one-day stoppage but they have attempted to emasculate it by their refusal to call demonstrations or meetings.

The official excuse given by the CPSA leadership for not arranging demonstrations and meetings is that members should spend the whole day picketing and not be diverted by other activities! Already 2000 Manchester social security workers have expressed their disgust at the leaders by walking out on a day's stoppage last week.

In the face of this vacillation, rank and file civil servants and teachers are organising their own demonstrations that day. In London civil servants and teachers have arranged to assemble at 2.30 at Hyde Park for a meeting and then march together to Central Hall (where there is an official teachers' meeting). All workers struggling against the freeze are urged to participate.

To ensure maximum effect in a stoppage, the rank and file always fights to force its leaders into action. But their latest evasion means that rank and file militants have the full responsibility for making 27 February a day of meaningful action.

In the present fight building up against the freeze the CPSA is first in the ring with its all-out national stoppage. Some co-ordination has been achieved with the teachers and this has shown the crying necessity for a public sector alliance.

The need for joint pickets, liaison for demonstrations and joint support in strike action against the freeze is daily becoming clearer. Public sector alliances must be built in the localities now—after 27 February the next alliance may well be for a one day general strike called by the TUC.

The British Museum branch of the CPSA has taken the initiative in Camden for calling for a public sector alliance and the local teachers association has done the same in Hackney. Other union branches must follow their example.

Under the pressure of a general strike call, these alliances will then broaden to include all workers and develop into real fighting rank and file organisations.

**ALL OUT ON 27 FEBRUARY!
SMASH THE FREEZE!
FOR PUBLIC SECTOR UNITY!**

Gas men fight on as press spreads lies

LANCASHIRE fitters and distribution workers are out in every town and plant workers at Warrington, Liverpool, Preston and Partington (Manchester) are on a non-operation and overtime ban.

Spirits are high and the determination to win is overwhelming. Pickets are enthusiastic and thorough. In Warrington, staff workers are being fined 10p entrance and 10p as an exit fee. (Funds go to Muscular Dystrophy.)

A real sense of unity has developed among gas workers. Strikers are resolved to maintain this unity after the strike too. They have already planned to have regular monthly meetings of stewards from the South Lancashire depots in the future.

And they have decided that redundancy must be resisted at all costs and that they will, if necessary, oust the outside contractors rather than see more lads thrown on to the dole queue.

In Wigan, where official strike action was preceded by three weeks unofficial strike action, militants are angry that the union is restricting official backing for strike action to two weeks. They are determined to carry on as long as it takes to win the claim.

Strikers are horrified at the press campaign being waged against them. Despite their offers to maintain emergency services and even repair faults in hardship cases, gas board officials continue to try to discredit strikers as 'potential murderers.'

Strikers sent six volunteers to man emergency services in Bolton. The gas board turned them away, saying that the number was too great and that they only wanted two volunteers. As a result there is

no emergency service in Bolton. In Wigan gas workers received strongly worded letters from the gas board criticising them for not manning emergency services. The strikers have been running an emergency service ever since they first took strike action over three weeks ago.

STOCKPORT:—Gas workers at the local depot are out on strike and are determined to stay out until their claim is met. One of them told Socialist Worker: 'They want us to crawl. But there's been too much crawling in this industry and it's going to stop.'

Wally Norman, the acting convenor, said: 'They're blaming us for the explosions when it's not our fault. The one at Marple was caused by the shoddy gear used by the gaffers.'

While he was talking the police arrived. 'They are around here a lot,' he explained. 'The newsagent's shop across the road has been broken into five times and never a policeman in sight. But since we've been out on strike, they've had a regular patrol.'

LETCHEWORTH, Herts:—90 members of the GMWU started an official strike for one week at the Natural Gas Conversion Centre on Monday. Pickets will be out but it is hoped that the TGWU drivers will join the strike.

David Cox, shop steward, told Socialist Worker that the workers were concerned not to give any ammunition to the Tory local press about old people. So local action committees have been set up to provide alternative forms of heating for old people if necessary and to deal with any emergency from old people as a priority.

SHOP STEWARDS representing 3500 gas workers in the West Midlands are meeting today (Saturday) to discuss plans for stronger action to curb gas supplies to industry. Many gas workers are already pressing for such action. At Tipton last weekend manual workers threatened to shut down part of the plant.

Bill McGinness, regional organiser of the General and Municipal Workers Union,

went to the plant to persuade the men not to walk out or flare off the gas instead of putting it through the mains.

The feeling among the men at Tipton was strong and they have accepted the situation on condition that GMWU gas officials should order more cuts to be made on industry. McGinness has really had to do a balancing act in view of the frustration of his members who want more hard hitting action.

Today's meeting will provide the opportunity for gas workers to escalate their action in the West Midlands to affect industry more widely in the area. At present only a few of the factories in the West Midlands area have been hit by the work to rule.

NUM DITHERS ON CLAIM

Bill Message

MINERS' leaders have again put off a decision to take any action in pursuit of their frozen claim for an extra £5.50 to £7.00. A proposal to call a special conference, which the left is confident would vote for strike action, was narrowly defeated by 14 votes to 12 on the NUM executive last week.

The latest offer from the Coal Board increased the original offer of £2.29 by a meagre 5p, although a few other concessions have been made. These include a doubling of the pensions from £1.50 to £3.00, an increase in the smokeless fuel allowance and an extra week's holiday at Easter.

The executive rejected the offer of £2.29 but it also gave the go-ahead for further discussions between its negotiating team and the Coal Board. This would appear to be a fruitless exercise since NCB chairman Derek Ezra has made it perfectly clear that he has no intention of moving beyond the limits imposed by Phase two of the Tory freeze.

Militants are worried that the narrow right-wing majority on the executive will impose a ballot emphasising the fringe benefits offered by the board which will be worded in terms of 'Do you support

these measures? After the executive meeting NUM President Joe Gormley made an ambiguous statement designed to get himself off the hook. He looked towards the TUC recall congress on 5 March and the possibility of a general strike.

Gormley knows that the chance of the TUC leaders calling a general strike is slim indeed. What sounds like an appeal to the TUC to assume its responsibilities of leading the struggle is, in fact, a miserable attempt by Gormley to crawl out of the firing line himself.

SWANSEA:—Delegates from pits in South Wales meeting on Tuesday called on the national union to organise a special conference. It also demanded that the TUC organise united action of all unions.

But on the prompting of the South Wales executive they rejected arguments for unofficial action now to force the hand of the union leadership and to show practical solidarity with other groups already fighting the government's freeze.

Bryn Williams from Cwm colliery—which had already voted to come out from next Wednesday—put the argument for an immediate stoppage and some eight delegates supported his position.

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