

WORKERS' FIGHT

No 24

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4p

As Tories step up attack on unions

POLICE MOVE IN ON PICKETS

POLICE HAVE NOW ARRESTED TWO HOSPITAL ANCILLARY PICKETS AT ST MARY'S HOSPITAL, PADDINGTON. AND LAST WEEK SEVEN PICKETS WERE ARRESTED AFTER A POLICE ASSAULT OUTSIDE FINE TUBES, PLYMOUTH.

This is part of an attack on the right of picketing, which has proved so effective in recent strikes.

Last year's mass pickets smashed Tory government plans on wages and the National Industrial Relations Court. Miners and dockers used their muscle power to turn picket lines into impassable barriers against scabs and other Judases. In Birmingham, there was a city-wide strike, as thousands reinforced miners picketing Saltley Coke Depot. They overwhelmed the scab-herding police, closed the depot, and immediately afterwards the Government caved in.

Now the Government, in turn, is using mass squads of specially trained police to physically beat down pickets. Police strong-arm squads have assaulted Hull dockers. They have smashed their way through picketing electricians at St Thomas Hospital, London, using maximum force. In every dispute now the police harry and attempt to intimidate pickets. In Manchester they have made a point of

Sean Matgamna.

arrogantly warning hospital pickets not to molest scabs.

ANTI-PICKET SQUADS

These are dress rehearsals. If the miners strike again, they will be met by these special police anti-picket squads.

The anti-picket squad is the centrepiece in a full-scale drive against picketing. The Government rightly sees picketing as the weapon which helps to mobilise some of the reserve strength of the working class in what would otherwise be sectional struggles, to be isolated by the centralised power of the bosses and beaten down.

There is a sustained press campaign. Robert Carr, the Home Secretary, has issued statements 'insisting' that the number of

pickets be limited to two. 'Conspiracy' charges have been brought against 24 building workers in connection with last year's strike.

But the State can bring conspiracy charges whenever it thinks it can get away with it. Whether it can actually curb

mass picketing depends on its ability to physically beat down pickets. That's where the police squads come in.

STEP UP STRUGGLE

This is the Tory counter-attack
see p.3

1000 RALLY TO DEFEND PICKETS

IN SHREWSBURY ON 15 MARCH, 24 BUILDING WORKERS APPEARING IN COURT were met by a show of solidarity from other workers, meeting outside the court and then marching through the town. They were also met by a massive attempt at intimidation by the forces of ruling class 'law and order'.

At the court hearing, the 24 - members of the T&GWU and UCATT - were remanded on bail of £50 each until the committal proceedings, to be held in Shrewsbury on 25 April.

All 24 (and not only 6, as wrongly stated by the capitalist press and by the Morning Star) were up on a conspiracy law of 1875. There are also charges of damages, and, added 14 days later, unlawful fighting and causing an affray. The police are using conspiracy law so that hearing evidence will be admissible.

On 15 March, the police stopped all traffic going into Shrewsbury with a complete road block. Wolverhampton builders were stopped 6 times on their way in. We then had to drive through a narrow entrance into a car park - containing about

by **Cynthia Baldry**

300 police drawn up in formation! Hundreds more police and steel barricades surrounded the court itself, whilst police and dogs confronted the defendants as they went into court from the back. Six of them had previously had a night inside in solitary confinement. Now they were told that only one relative would be allowed into court for the hearing. The father of one defendant, John McJones, was hit by the police. His wife found herself



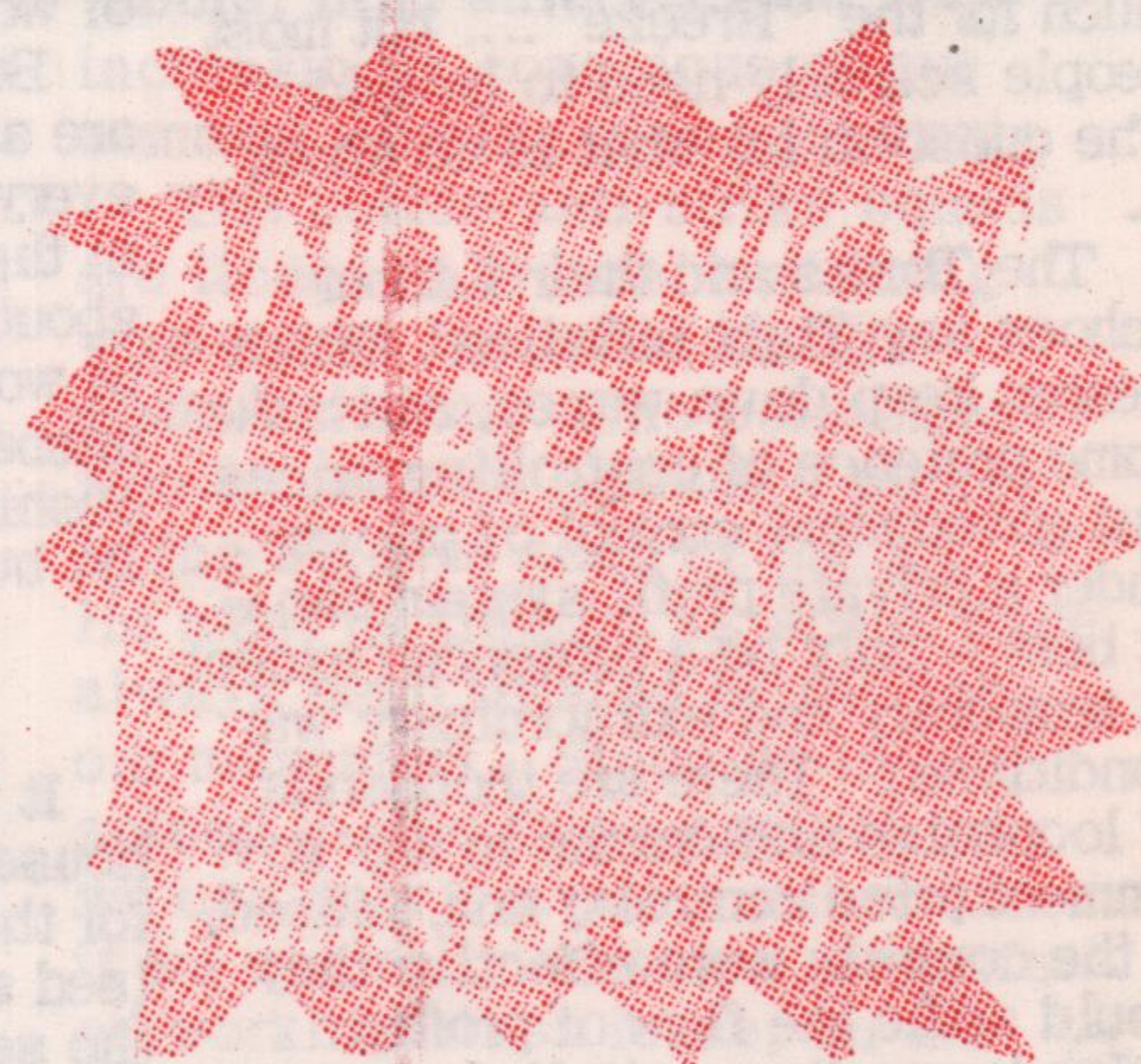
**Black community bookshop
after Fascist firebomb attack
see report p.5**

on her own in a court supposedly too full for relatives - but full of dozens of police. Only six people were allowed into court to support the defendants.

Barry Scragg, UCATT branch secretary and chairman of Deeside Trades Council, had this to say about the conspiracy charge. "Obviously it's been brought in purely and simply as an alternative to the Industrial Relations Act.... None of them was charged with this at the beginning. It was brought in, I believe, when they felt that they couldn't get the lads on the other charges".

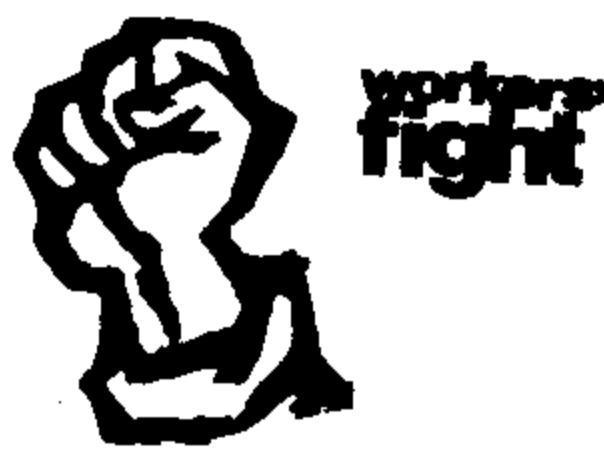
CLASS ISSUE

As Pete Carter, builders' leader from Birmingham, pointed out, the trial is a show trial, a political trial, an effort by the Tories to back up the Freeze by getting 'pub-



lic opinion' on the side of the ruling class against our Trade Union practice of picketing. The issue is a class issue and we must respond as a class.

see back page



TOKENS WON'T DO

SO HEATH AND BASNETT BETWEEN THEM HAVE DEFEATED THE gasworkers. The union leaders' did not draw the gasworkers' militancy together into a coordinated offensive — instead, they let it work itself out in this action here, that action there. Then they seized on an 'improved' offer by the Government (the 'improvement' being a tiny concession on pension contributions) and told the members "it's the best you'll get". Thus demoralised, the strikers felt further effort wasn't worth it.

That story is the story Heath would like to see repeated with the whole working class. But he knows it won't be that simple.

The hospital workers are still fighting. Their chief weakness is that they cannot hurt the bosses economically. It is vital that better-placed sections with claims in — such as the miners — come forward with action alongside the hospital workers.

In fact, even the miners, with their economic strength, won last year only when they reached out with flying pickets and drew in other workers to their struggle. The Tories understand the importance of that — and that's why they are moving in with tough laws and special police squads against pickets. The way to answer them is a massive show of force, mass pickets, a mass strike wave.

THE UNION LEADERS

The Union leaders are not prepared to wage this sort of united fight. They play all kinds of delaying games with ballots and negotiations to make sure that workers in struggle play musical chairs with each other, instead of combining in one big tug-of-war against the Freeze. Some, like Gormley, are even using agitation for a general strike as a 'left' camouflage while he keeps the miners still at work until the gas and rail struggles have come and gone, and while the health workers bravely soldier on against a host of provocations and hysterical witchhunts.

If the Trades Union Congress seriously wanted to improve the miserable low pay of the hospital workers, then it would already be organising solidarity action. But what do we have in fact? Trades councils are to organise demonstrations. Useful, of course, and to be supported. But if the Tories confined themselves to organising demonstrations and hoping by that to persuade the hospital workers to reduce their claim — then the hospital workers would long ago have gained their full demand!

LIVING STANDARDS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Heath knows, and the TUC knows, that more than money is at stake. Successive governments have been trying to *shackle the Unions to the State*; to turn the Unions into numbed and battered serfs so that the bosses can boost profits.

They want to have the Unions *regulated and ordered* by law — their law, that they have made up for the purpose. The labour movement must choose whether to *actively defy* that law — or to go along with it, and see our living standards and our civil liberties slashed.

To *defy* this State attack requires our full industrial strength — the *general strike*. But the TUC tops are simply *scared* by the prospect of an all-out general strike that would go beyond their control. One-day protests as a safety-valve — yes. Anything effective — no. These people would rather have us wait until a Labour Government

is elected to 'solve our problems'. That is, they want us to accept *defeat now* — and hope that, somehow, Labour will change character and convert that defeat into victory for us.

Militants who weren't born yesterday know very well that the fight won't be over when the removal men come for Heath. And what is also clear is that any time lost in fighting back now is ground lost, momentum lost, strength lost, and, above all, morale lost.

KICK THE TORIES OUT

Yes, of course, we *fight to get the Tories out*. But it is a fact that union-bashing and wage-freezing are not just Tory policies. They are the policies necessary for any government that accepts the demands of the private-profit system of capitalism. They are the policies of the 1964-70 Labour Government. Any new Labour Government won't undo what the Tories have done; more likely there'll be an insidious process of slight amendments here and there to help make it all stick more permanently.

To say that getting the Tories out is the *main aim*, the first step, is not right. The logical next step is to develop the massive industrial mobilisations to their next stage — the general strike. And to accept the 'ballot box trap' during a general strike would be a step *backwards*. It would mean moving from the industrial arena, where we have powerful forces, mobilised in action, to reliance on the likes of Wilson, cynical politicians who are a hundred times closer to the Tories and big business than they are to the working class.

The ruling class would far rather see a change of government than any serious concession on the Industrial Relations Act.

GENERAL STRIKE

Solidarity actions against the Freeze, self-defence and counter-attack against picket-bashing, and the need for a powerful blow to clear out the Industrial Relations Act — all fuse together in the campaign for a general strike. Not a token, but a real general strike that gets the ruling class by the throat and squeezes until it caves in.

What the TUC has called is not even a token general strike. It's all an optional do-as-you-please affair. They hope it will let off steam.

But it *could* build up steam.

The militants, such as those who came out for the Pentonville Five, see what is needed. Their problem is that they do not have the permanent nation-wide structure and sufficient organisational framework — as the TUC does — to wield authority with the millions who will follow a TUC call.

The urgent need is for the militants and fighters in every industry to link up and build such a structure to act as an alternative, rank-and-file leadership within the unions. Not only in preparation for an all-out general strike situation, but also to meet the now daily need for coordinated action against the Act, against the Freeze, and in defence of victimised pickets and militants.

Meanwhile, we cannot let the TUC off the hook. They still have a powerful voice to call out millions of workers, and we must insist that they use it properly.

PRICES UP AT A STROKE

FOOD PRICES ARE ESTIMATED to be going up at a rate of 28% per year. In one year, according to official figures, beef has gone up from 55p to 75p per lb, cod from 31.5p to 37p, and eggs from 24p to 28.5p per dozen. So much for "cutting prices at a stroke", so much for the "Freeze"... but most people scarcely need to be told. The question is, what to do about it.

The Tories and their Labour echoes say 'fight inflation'. Which means: keep down wages, and make some pretence of controlling prices. But government control of prices under a private profit system can — at best — only be a pretence (except in temporary and extraordinary war conditions). There are thousands of loopholes and cracks in any government price controls; and, indeed, if the controls were effective they would stifle the flow of profits which keeps the capitalist economy going. No capitalist government, then, would want to have effective controls, even if it could. The only government that could control prices would be a workers' government, in

a planned economy.

In fact, the 'fight against inflation' is a smokescreen for a fight against wages and for profits. Our chief come-back against rising prices is to combat the 'fight against inflation' with a fight for higher wages. And that is what thousands of workers are doing, right now.

But what about the millions who are affected by price rises like everyone else, but aren't involved in the trade union struggle? What about housewives who don't go out to work? They can support their husbands, sons, neighbours in pushing for higher wages — certainly: but what else?

ORGANISE

It would be foolish to think that housewives' action can substitute for the action of trade unions, organised at the point of production, in the self-defence of working people. But housewives can organise, and can achieve something.

A speaker at a recent conference of the shopworkers' union, USDAW, put forward the simplest idea against rising prices: shop-

workers should refuse to charge any price increases! This workers' control of prices, unlike government control, could be effective. Some supermarket millionaire might go bust — fine: let the supermarkets be nationalised and let the bosses' State foot the bill for keeping food prices down, until such time as the working class can take over the entire economy and run it rationally.

But there is little hope that the notoriously right-wing USDAW will actually do anything; and individual shopworkers (mostly unorganised anyway) will fear victimisation if they defy management.

Unless, that is, housewives could show that the manager can be beaten. A supermarket manager has only limited resources of courage. Confronted with large numbers of angry, determined, and well-organised housewives protesting at a price increase, he might well let the increase lapse. (He couldn't square it in his accounts? Easy. A few fictional 'broken windows' or 'spoiled consignments' would settle the books.)

COST OF LIVING

Many housewives have in fact acted — mainly through picketing supermarkets with high price rises. But sometimes this doesn't achieve much. Shoppers coming across the picket naturally want to know where cheaper prices can be found — and

the militant housewives rapidly become just a 'consumer advice bureau'. Ineffective militancy against price rises can even lead in a reactionary direction — if housewives identify the fight against price rises with the 'fight against inflation', and thus come to the conclusion that the only resort is to oppose 'inflationary wage increases'.

Where housewives are not yet strongly organised enough to force removal of price increases, they can certainly help to improve their own organisation and boost workers' wage struggles by exposing the role of profits in pushing up prices. A careful survey of prices of various goods would give a working-class 'cost of living index', far more realistic than the official government figures.

If retail prices are compared with wholesale and manufacturers' prices, and the overheads are analysed — all these figures are marked, tabulated, and recorded by ordinary working people, they can be found out — then a part of the tip of the iceberg of profits can be made visible.

Information of that sort would be valuable propaganda ammunition to aid the hospital workers, the civil servants, and other workers in their pay struggles — which are right now the front line of the fight of the working class to deal with rising prices.

MARTIN THOMAS

LONDON BOMBINGS

Unanswered questions

IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN WHO planted the bombs which exploded in London, injuring many and indirectly killing one man (from heart failure). The Irish Republican Movement (both Provisional and Official sections) unflinchingly acknowledges acts such as this, when it organises them. That neither section of the Republican movement has accepted responsibility for the bombings must lead us to reserve judgment.

The prevalent 'theory' is that Republican militants from Northern Ireland, acting independently, were responsible. But it is more than certain who bears responsibility for the widespread injuries that resulted from the explosion. Not those who planted the bombs — but the British police. There is evidence that the police knew of the bombs days before. Adequate warning was in any case given by whoever planted the bombs for the areas to be cleared.

They weren't cleared, and many injuries followed. The police claim that a "human error" led to the disastrous delay, with police arriving at one bomb site 20 minutes after a journalist. Though naturally the bosses' papers generally rush to accept the police story, there is no reason why militants should believe it. As a plain matter of fact, statements by the Republicans are a great deal more reliable in such matters than are the police.

FRAME-UP

In the last year the police were shown up in a London court as attempting to frame up some Irishmen on gun charges. Noel Jenkinson was given 30 years jail on the evidence of an informer. The number of incidents of corruption and of violence involving the police in recent times — such as the murder of David Oluwale — has been massive. It is possible that the authorities made a deliberate decision not to clear the streets in order to whip up as much support as possible for their police state repression against the Northern Ireland Catholics.

Anyone who thinks that idea shocking, unthinkable, and 'out of character' for the police and military hierarchy in Britain should recall that there is a great deal of evidence that the British army in Northern Ireland has created 'its own' murder gangs which go around attacking Catholics and Republicans (see last issue of WF).

They should also look around them at what has been going on recently in Britain itself. More and more the ruling class is convinced of the need to use massive force to quell the working class. The armed Special Patrol Groups are one example. Special flying squads to smash picketing have been organised all over the country. 24 building workers have been prosecuted.

The powers of the police are being increased. Militants and leftists are being victimised on such vague charges as 'conspiracy', difficult to disprove, but carrying heavy penalties. The armed forces are being prepared and the Territorial Army expanded to meet a general strike situation. More and more, military theorists who speculate on the use against the British working class of the methods their sort has perfected against 'colonial' peoples are gaining respect and credibility.

At the very least, what the evidence adds up to is that the ruling

by **STAN LOMAX**

class is preparing to enormously strengthen the state and to create a special strike-breaking commando force like the CRS in France.

72 HOURS INCOMMUNICADO

The first casualty after the smoke had cleared from the bombings was in fact traditional British civil liberties. Those arrested and taken off the Belfast plane were held incommunicado, in best police state tradition, without being allowed to see a solicitor, for 72 hours. Legally, this was already a reserve possibility; its use is very unusual.

In fact, it is even not impossible that the bombs were planted by the state authorities as part of a campaign to undermine civil liberties in Britain. Very recently, bombs exploded in Dublin just as the Dail was debating a law to allow conviction on the mere say-so of a senior police officer. The explosions stampeded (or gave an excuse to) the opposition party to support the law.

The bombs were attributed to the Republicans. But a basic tenet of Republicans since the '40s has ruled out any armed action in the 26 Counties. Almost certainly the explosions were the work of — either the Irish or the British secret service. The Republicans had nothing to gain.

But it is certainly possible that the London bombings were indeed the work of outraged militants from Northern Ireland. If so, this paper does not consider it is the business of British militants to condemn them. True, any excesses of feeling provoked in the British people by the bombings will be used and manipulated by the government to aid its goals. The Government has too much at stake in Northern Ireland for its policies to be affected by a vague war-weariness in Britain. But it is not the business of the Republicans of Northern Ireland — any section of them who take action against the repressive policies of the British government — to make life easy for militants in Britain. It is our business to agitate for the removal of the British army of occupation from Northern Ireland.

OFFICIAL TERROR

Innocent people were injured by the bombs. That's true, and we regret it. But in Northern Ireland innocent people are picked off at random by British soldiers in plain clothes touring round Belfast and Derry. The British army systematically terrorises the Catholics, wrecking their homes in the middle of the night, arresting people and holding them without trial — 600 are still interned. One year ago — as all the world's press except the British believes — the British army deliberately shot down 13 unarmed men as a 'lesson' to the Catholic people of Derry.

Last August the British army smashed through the barricades which the Catholic minority had erected to protect their communities in Derry and Belfast. The result has been a massive increase in the number of sectarian assassinations — the vast majority being of Catholics, that is of the people kept down, terrorised, and repress-

ed by the Orange and British state for more than 50 years.

It is this which provoked the bomb in London. It is against this official terror, which has turned Northern Ireland into a slaughterhouse, that those who planted bombs in London — if they were indeed Republican activists — were protesting.

On the day of the bombings the British administration organised a plebiscite in Northern Ireland — with a foregone majority for Union



because the state was designed in the first place with a population balance between Catholics and Protestants that would ensure such a conclusion.

HYPOCRISY

It would be bloodthirsty stupidity to argue that because of what

PICKETS FROM PAGE 1

ack. Every working class intensification of the struggle against the bosses calls for a stepping up by the bosses in their turn — right up to the point where the working class breaks the power of the bosses once and for all.

The idea that even a strengthened police force could win in a confrontation with the working class is still laughable — if the strength of the working class is used. But only if it is mobilised and used. Otherwise specially trained gangs of thugs in blue uniform and helmets can be a formidable force against small groups of workers.

The answer is to step up the struggle on our side. Last year the mass pickets were an 'optional'. Now, ruling class tactics make big mass mobilisations necessary for victory. They make alliances of workers in struggle, and organised support action, essential. The building of joint action committees to organise such solidarity can mean the difference between victory or defeat.

In France and Italy strikers have for long had to face police bullying and intimidation. They have responded by organising for self-defence. In America strikes have very often tended to become civil wars (see p. 9) Workers could win only by match-

the British army does and what it stands for in Ireland, it's just fine that innocent people are blown up in London. But no-one who does not come out four square against that army's presence and activities has any right to be horrified or to disapprove.

To be outraged at the bombings in London and indifferent to the army's actions in Northern Ireland is either scandalous hypocrisy or a racist assumption that injuries caused by an act of war in London are more important than the slaughter over which Britain presides in Northern Ireland. It is implicitly to assume that an injury to an innocent Londoner is vastly more important than a bullet in the back of the head for an armed or unarmed Derry Catholic — fired either by a British soldier or by a loyalist Orange assassin given his chance by the way the army smashed the Catholics' self-defence.

We are neither racists nor are we hypocrites. The Northern Ireland Republicans have every right to fight back. We, the British working class, have neither the power nor the right — and Workers Fight hasn't the inclination — to tell them not to fight to drive the British army out of their country.

The British working class does have the right and the power to help them get the British army withdrawn from Ireland. It has the socialist duty to do so. The way the bomb explosions were used to step up the attack on civil liberties in Britain is not the responsibility of the Irish republicans (even if they planted the bombs). It is our responsibility to defend our rights.

Long ago Karl Marx wrote that a nation that enslaves another cannot itself be free. That reactionary attacks on British civil liberties are so closely connected with the reactionary British war in Ireland, is a concrete example of what Marx meant. If the British working class go along with military terror in Ireland, they will find it very hard to stop some of its aspects spilling over into Britain itself.

ing force with force, violence with violence, the "strong arm of the law" with the stronger arm of the working class.

Heath and his despicable Tory gang have taught us in the last two years what a sham the 'neutrality' of the law is. Many workers now don't give a damn about Tory law. Even less now does 'the law' deserve respect or 'obedience' when it is being 'reinterpreted' as a scab's charter in a Government attempt to break the strength of the working class. They want to reduce us to an atomised, broken-spirited rabble, from an organised force increasingly conscious of our common working class interest.

The police anti-strike squads are licensed to attack striking workers as the tools of this scabs' charter. The policeman who attacks or arrests a picket is the biggest scab of the lot. He must be treated as scabs have always been treated by the labour movement. Since he is organised to use force against us, we can only prevail against him if we can rally massive, organised working class force, on the model of Saltley and beyond.

The next mobilisation of mass pickets will have to be more disciplined, better organised, and better trained than the last lot.

CHILE

Allende stays but crisis deepens

Contrary to popular expectations, the recent elections in Chile resulted in considerable advances for the ruling UP (Popular Unity) coalition of President Allende.

The right wing Opposition parties, the Christian Democrats and the National Party were expected to gain votes from the chaos of the Chilean economy. For the Chilean ruling class have used their economic power, left almost unscathed by the Allende government, to sabotage the economy, with food prices rising by 240% last year, and rationing of meat being introduced.

In fact, the right wing National Party did increase its share of the vote, but the greatest increases went to the Socialist Party,



especially where there were left wing candidates. Inside the UP coalition, the Socialist Party has pursued a more left wing course than the Communist Party, which has put collaboration with the Christian Democrats above all else.

The election therefore shows a growing polarisation in Chile, underlined by the recent spate of land seizures and factory occupations, carried out by the workers and peasants themselves without waiting for the government to 'legally' carry out those measures. This polarisation promises to upset Chile's 'parliamentary road to socialism' before long, by erupting into open class warfare.

TONY BROCKMAN

Argentine Elections

PERON'S MAN

WILL SHATTER

PERON'S MYTH

THE ONE THING THE ELECTIONS in Argentina certainly represent is defeat for General Lanusse, the military ruler since April 1971. He had fished for months to get a candidate agreed jointly between him and the supporters of the ex-President Juan Peron. His efforts failed — the Peronist candidate, Campora, won by a big majority, and Lanusse's semi-official nominee got just 0.94% of the votes.

Campora's campaign had been conducted on the slogan 'Campora in government, Peron in power'. But it is not possible today to repeat the policies of Peron's presidency from 1946 - 55. In the early

part of that period, Peron, although a right-winger, gained support from the working class of Argentina which still continues today, on the basis of real economic reforms. Economic conditions today, though, will not permit similar reforms without a real fight against American interests — and Peron and Campora certainly will not fight.

The ruling class of Argentina thus face a real danger of the Peronist 'myth' cracking, and an eruption of working class militancy. Peron and Campora may attempt to play off one section of the employing class against another — relying on the support of the industrial bosses to squeeze (in a limited way) the agricultural bosses. But there is also the army — clearly tied to the agricultural big business interests. As significant as the elections will be the secret negotiations carried out over the next few weeks between Campora and the top army commanders.

JOHN STERLING.



Bolton: demonstration on 16th March against the victimisation of six rent strikers. Bailiffs had gone as far as labelling furniture to be confiscated. But for the moment the council have retreated. As well as Bolton people, the demonstration included groups from tenants' associations all over the North West.

IN BRIEF

NEW CRIMES

FOR OLD ●

While the racist 'Paki-bashing' continues unnoticed, the sensation hungry press has, for the last few months, been conjuring up the demon of some supposedly 'new' crime — "mugging". In fact it is nothing other than the ordinary street stick-up. But that isn't really dramatic enough for the press's law and order fiends. No doubt lesser punishment than the 20 years meted out this week on a 16 year old lad wouldn't have satisfied the sirens of sensationalism either.

After the hysteria, it was some surprise to see a television interview with Robert Keenan, the victim of the attack. He has been terribly and tragically injured. His speech is slow, his hearing and sight impaired. But there was a world less bitterness and vengefulness from him than from the press.

Asked how the attack had affected him, his comment clearly placed his attackers and himself as members of one class. "It means that I am now walking about the streets the same as they were — without work, without money, without anything."

We don't defend the crime, though we do believe that the fact the lads called an ambulance and stayed around until it came suggests that they are far from the bloody assassins the papers claim. Some black militants believe that Paul Storey's recent brush with the police and his association with black community organisations account for the barbarity of the 20 year sentence.

Paul Storey, Mustafa Fuat, and James Duignan are members of the same class as Robert Keenan. In fact, Paul Storey's last job, like Robert Keenan's, was as a building worker. Both worked in a trade where there is on average a death a day, with an average fine on the employers for breaking safety rules of £12 a time. That's legal. It brings no press outcry. And there's no new name invented for it: just an old name — murder — that's been neglected.

Homicide Squad ●

Pushed to give some account of the morals of his police force, South Africa's Minister of Police, Mr Louwrens Muller, said that only 13 out of 205 policemen convicted of crimes of violence had been discharged from the force. 27 of those convicted had previous convictions — one for five counts of common assault.

In four years, 864 police have been convicted of crimes of violence — including homicide. Of these only one in ten were discharged.

In 1969 three Africans died of suffocation in a police van. Parliamentary protesters were accused of being unpatriotic and no-one was even dismissed. Since introduction of detention without trial, at least 16 people have died in 'security' custody. Five of these deaths have not even been recorded officially.

Not everyone gets off scot-free: after all a policeman charged with beating up a black man just for fun was fined £30 and reprimanded for laughing in court every time the incident was mentioned.

A young African who snatched a woman's handbag in Pretoria was gaoled for two years last month. He was a first offender.

White Scabs ●

The mass strikes in South Africa have done more than decades of liberal talk to alert British trade unionists to the Africans' starvation wages, on which the wealth of white

South Africa is built. But some unions are still happy to close their eyes.

17 Zulu crew members of a British cargo ship, the Clan Robertson, were on strike, refusing to sail on wages "that couldn't feed a small dog". Union Castle was paying them £35 a month, while a British agreement lays down £88 minimum.

The Zulu seamen were well supported and encouraged by Swedish dockers, seamen, and tugmen, who got together to blockade the ship at Gothenburg.

But the ship's all-white officers, British members of the Merchant Navy and Air Lines Officers' Association, were prepared to sail. And when Union Castle flew in a complement of British cadets, the strike was broken. The Assistant General Secretary of the officers' union stated that "The cadets could well not be aware of the issues involved" But what about the officers themselves?

WELSHING

ON PRINCIPLE ●

Cardiff Labour Party is in uproar. There have been resolutions demanding that MPs Jim Callaghan and George Thomas either return the 5000 £1 shares each has in the Commercial Bank of Wales ('gift' from financier Julian Hodge), or resign.

Unimpressed, one of the Labour Party leaders in the city declared that "Socialism is all very well in theory", and went on to tell constituents that their interests were now being represented..... on the board of the bank!

WRONG OUTRAGE

Contrast the treatment of two bombing incidents.

The Old Bailey bombing was either a perfectly justified act of retaliation in the course of a war; or else a provocation, as seems possible from the highly dubious behaviour of the police.

It was met with howls of protest, pages and pages of blown-up pictures, blatantly racist anti-Irish cartoons, and approving publicity for anti-Irish lynch mob acts. The police did their best to put a name to those 'responsible', though no-one had in fact claimed the action as theirs — and the Provisional IRA, who were supposed to have done it, always acknowledge their actions.

Shortly after, five buildings in South London were attacked with petrol bombs. The Black victims had been the butt of racist attacks by local Monday Club politicians, and the bombings were obviously the work of fascists, possibly supporters of the National Front.

The treatment? Hardly a mention in the press. No 'outrage'. No talk of 'blitz'. No anti-Monday Club cartoons. No incitement to break the windows of fascists. No call to outlaw the National Front. And the police were quick to state that it would be difficult to find who had done it.

Letter from Belfast

SOFT SELL FOR MORE ARMY BRUTALITY

THE RESULT OF THE RECENT Border poll — 57% voting for the Union with Britain — has been claimed as a victory by the Unionists. Their obvious delight with the result, however, has more to do with the fact that they feared an even lower percentage, closer to or even below the 50 mark. The 57% was achieved by a temporary united front of the Paisley, Craig and Faulkner factions.

The result told us only what we knew all along. Northern Ireland was created as a state on the basis of a sectarian head count — approximately two Protestants to every Catholic — in order to allow the Unionist minority in Ireland to remain within the British empire in 1921. The problems of Northern Ireland today are a direct consequence of that decision by the British government, over 50 years ago, to partition Ireland and allow a sectarian regime to take power in the North.

The Border Poll, which was seen initially as a sop to the Unionists, will now be the main plank in British strategy when it comes to getting the Unionists to accept the new order imperialism is about to create in the North. The Catholics will receive the old stick/carrot treatment — a few tasty phrases in the White Paper to entice the Social Democratic and Labour Party; and

the British Army to deal with the IRA and their supporters.

The British press have been building up the forthcoming White Paper as the great 'solution' to the problem of Northern Ireland — that is, the 'problem' the British government is having with the Irish, not the 'problem' the Irish are having with the British. Sealed lips are the order of the day with Tory politicians and civil servants, while everyone waits for the ritual unveiling. It would not be giving away too many state secrets to say at this stage that the main elements, buried under civil service verbiage, will be:—

1) A new Northern Ireland Assembly — a Stormont Parliament by another name, with more powers of interference reserved for Westminster.

2) A Council of Ireland — a talking shop for the northern and southern bourgeoisies. Given Ireland's position within the Common Market, Irish capitalists are going to find out that in order to survive alongside the bigger fish they will have to unite.

A similar Council was provided for in the Government of Ireland Act 1920 — the 'constitution' of N. Ireland up until Direct Rule a year ago. That Council never met. Both the Green and the Orange middle classes found it more advant-

ageous at that time to go their own way.

3) A Bill of Rights — the main political demand of the TUC, and the Labour and Communist Parties. The fact that the demand for a Bill of Rights is no longer the demand it was in the early Civil Rights days can be seen from the fact that all the Unionists now support such a Bill. A Bill of Rights will placate the more militant elements in the Labour Party and mean absolutely nothing in Ireland, given the fourth main ingredient of the White Paper.....

4) Security to remain under Westminster. To the average resident of a Belfast ghetto this will mean continued army occupation, riots, raids, searches, internment, and, from time to time, army atrocities such as the killing of a 12 year old boy in Newry a few weeks ago by a drunken soldier.

No doubt we will be told the British army will remain to 'keep the peace', defeat terrorism, etc. These nice sounding phrases mean nothing more than that the British army exists to defend the interests of the British ruling class and will continue to do so for as long as they need it and can get away with it. 'Tommy' has been 'keeping the peace' in half the countries of the world at one time or another — until he has been driven out of them. The British army was driven out of most of Ireland in 1921 but managed to secure a bridgehead in the north because of the existence of the Unionist minority there. Fearing a threat to its interests in Ireland, and elsewhere, from instability in Ireland, the British army is there to make sure that change occurs peacefully and under British control.

There can be no meaningful solution for the Irish people as long as the British ruling class uses its army to impose a settlement designed to further, not the interests of the Irish people, but those of the British capitalist class. The future of the Irish people, whether Catholic or Protestant, must be decided by themselves. Only defeat of the British army in Ireland and support for the Irish cause in Britain can guarantee the basic right of the Irish to self-determination.

AUSTEN MORGAN.

15 March 73.

French Elections

WE WILL NOT WAIT FOR '76

THE RESULTS OF THE FRENCH elections showed a vote for the Communist Party of 1% less than in 1967. But many militant workers are disillusioned with the CP's pussyfooting. They will not 'wait for '76' (the presidential elections), but will press ahead now with industrial struggle to achieve aims promised by the Left Union, such as the 40 hour week and the 1000 Franc minimum wage.

The Communist Party had tailored its campaign to show the middle class and the employers how respectable they were. When President Pompidou made threats of resigning or refusing to recognise a Left government if the CP-Socialist Party-Left Radical alliance won the elections, they pleaded with him that he should see himself as "the president of all the French people"! But the CP's crawling didn't pay off — the 'Reformist' centre rallied solidly to the majority on the second round.

"... The Union of the Left has above all benefited the Socialist Party", wrote the revolutionary paper *Rouge* on 9 March. The SP was the only party to see a big increase in its electoral strength, and its leader, Mitterand, is now well placed for the '76 elections. Such was the result of the hard

work of thousands of CP members!

286 000 voters expressed their mistrust of the Left Union candidates by voting for the revolutionary candidates of *Lutte Ouvriere* or of the *Ligue Communiste* (French section of the IVth International). This represented 2.1% of the total votes in the 262 constituencies where revolutionary candidates were standing — a big increase on the 1.1% vote for Alain Krivine in the 1969 presidential elections. Many of the revolutionaries' votes came from workers normally voting for the CP.

Another 'left' group, the OCI, put up 20 candidates, many of them in competition with LC or LO candidates. But the OCI stressed as "the prime task", the "practically possible step" — "to struggle for a SP-CP government without any representative of a party of the bourgeoisie". (*Informations Ouvrieres*, 21 February).

Meanwhile the OCI loudly denounced the revolutionaries as 'crypto-stalinists'. But the workers understood that in reality it was the OCI which was crawling before the CP bureaucrats and the bourgeois careerist Mitterand. The OCI ended up with 9000 votes (0.8% of the total in their 20 constituencies)

MARTIN THOMAS

Racist bomb outrage in S. London

FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, the Black Panther Movement in Brixton has been working to mobilise the community around its basic needs.

It was from this work that the Unity Centre at 74 Railton Rd, Brixton, was born, a cultural and political centre serving the Black and working class community in Brixton. The Unity Centre was a place where people lived, it was a political bookshop, the only one in South London, a discussion centre, a place where young black people came to work at their poetry and music.

It had an immediate response from the community. Every day, people, both black and white, would come to offer their assistance, discuss ideas, relate sufferings at the hands of the council, the police, the employers, and the government.

That is why the Unity Centre, even its very name, was seen as a threat by the Tories and Fascists in South London, and by their mouthpiece the South London Press. That is why two Monday Club GLC candidates, Nicholas Bennet and John Pritchard, publicly agitated to get Unity Centre destroyed. That is why the South London Press has waged a continuous campaign against the Black Panther Movement and all Black organisations fighting oppression in the community.

FIVE BOMBINGS

In the early hours of the morning of Thursday March 15th, the Unity Centre was destroyed by a Fascist fire bomb. Farukh Dhondy, a member of the Black Panther Movement, was asleep in the house when the bomb was thrown, and barely escaped death.

Nor was that the only firebombing that night.

Altogether five premises belonging to black people were destroyed and seven people were injured.

These attacks are clearly part of a campaign of terror being waged against black people in South London. It is not so long since *The Coach and Horses*, a Brixton pub with a black landlord, George Berry, was firebombed. There was Amins grocery store in Streatham, and the Kingston Foodstore on Lesson Rd, both fire-bombed. Larkies Barber Shop in Brixton Market was attacked. Two years has not been long enough for the memory to be forgotten of the night in January 1971 when six black people were scarred for life because a fire bomb was thrown into a party in Lewisham.

It must now be the task of black and white militants to start a determined campaign to destroy the fire bombers and everything they stand for, and fight in every way possible against fascism in all its forms.

The destruction of the Unity Centre has been a tremendous financial blow to the Black Panther Movement. Fire destroyed the building — but it cannot destroy the spirit and commitment which brought the Unity Centre into existence and will build it again. A fund is open and support is essential. Contributions should be sent to: 38 Shakespeare Rd, London SE 24.

Marion Kavanagh.

See pp. 6-7:

**'Racism and
the Working Class'**

COLONIALISM

AND THE

ROOTS OF

RACIALISM

Racialism isn't something new to Britain. It didn't arrive from the West Indies or India together with Commonwealth immigrants. It was brought back together with the loot from the pirate raids the British bosses mounted against other countries and civilisations. It is deeply rooted in Britain's history as first a colonial power, and then a major power of modern Imperialism.

Britain's colonial and imperialist system was barbarous and savage: there has never been a system of intense exploitation that wasn't. Britain forced the Opium trade on China by war. The history of India in the Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a history of plunder and massacres by the British boss class. Britain enslaved Africa, having already built the wealth of its rulers on the inhuman trade in black African slaves.

These things had to be 'justified' somehow. They were inevitably justified by making out that the victims of British rule were inferior, uncivilised, outlandish, less than human.

But for the most part anti-'coloured' racialism at that period found its outlet overseas rather than within Britain itself. (Though there was violent racism directed against the Irish immigrants, who suffered riots and pogroms.)

For a period, moreover, the working class retained a remarkable degree of immunity to the virus of anti-Black racism. For example, during the American Civil War, the Northern states which stood for the abolition of slavery blockaded the ports of the slave owning South. The blockade meant that the English cotton mills either closed or went onto short time, and as a result thousands of working people in Lancashire were thrown near to starvation.

Under pressure from the mill owners, the British government threatened to break the blockade. The mill owners, who had lost only profits, were solidly for the South. But the cotton workers, who stood to lose their lives as a result of the blockade, organised massive protests against the government's plans and declared that their own misery was as nothing compared to the evils of slavery.

Thus the British working class can look beyond its own apparently most immediate 'interests' — or what the lying propaganda told it were 'its' interests.

Yet today there is a heavy streak of anti-black racialism within the working class immigration in the last twenty years has only brought it to the light, not caused it. Its roots are in the British

FASCISM, before the War, crushed and pulverised the labour and trade union movement in Italy and Germany. It was a club wielded by the bosses as a last resort to beat down the working class, recruiting its forces from the lower middle class, the demoralised unemployed, and sections of backward workers. TODAY, open Fascism is a growing force. It is a reserve weapon of the bosses, a potential threat to the labour movement.

The manure bed in which this deadly weed has found nourishment has been the rotten, festering mass of national and anti-black racist prejudice which has in a few short years forced its way to the forefront of British public life.

Many workers share, in one degree or another, racist prejudice. Such attitudes pose a deadly threat to the labour movement — of disunity, and of the development of fascism.



bosses' Empire.

The more recent colonial wars of Britain against 'native' peoples struggling only for the right to control their own countries were fought by conscript armies, made up mostly of young workers. These wars have created a poisonous feedback of racism into the working class.

The British trade unionist sent to suppress the revolts in Malaya



DEAD BODIES IN VIETNAM

had to be indoctrinated with a typically imperialist contempt for those he was fighting. Lest he sympathise with his victims, he was encouraged to see them as from another species.

Look at the Americans in Vietnam, doing work such as the casual slaughter in ditches of women, children, babies and old men at Mai Lai. Most people in a 'normal' state of mind wouldn't be able to do that to cattle, let alone human beings. Learning to live with this sort of thing involved quite ordinary, even anti-war GIs, in thinking of the Vietnamese (whose civilisation is older than that of Europe) as inferior

beings, whom they called "Gooks".

Britain's dealings, despite a carefully constructed image of benevolence, have been as ruthless, if less technological, as those of Nixon, Johnson and Kennedy in Vietnam.

In the early 1950s in Kenya the so-called Mau Mau rebellion was savagely suppressed by the British Army (led among others by the present Brigadier Kitson, now the boss class's expert on how most effectively to use force within Britain — against the working class).

According to newspaper legend it was a series of savage massacres of 'innocent' and immensely precious white 'civilisers'. In fact it was a heroic revolt by the Kikuyu people to reclaim their stolen land; and they were forced to form a 'secret society' in the same way and for the same reasons as the first English trade unions were secret societies.

The whites who died can be counted on one's fingers. But between 5,000 and 10,000 Africans were slaughtered by the British army — an army mainly made up of working class conscripts.

How can working class involvement in such deeds (involvement being active participation, general political collusion and subsequent acceptance of the ruling class's propaganda version of the event) — how can this fail to be a virulent well-spring of working class racism?

'Building on these foundations, the British rulers' propaganda machine has worked to turn workers' anger at social shortages and life under capitalism away from those responsible and onto black workers. Today, a septic stream of racism exists among workers, many of whom are in other ways quite class-conscious and even militant.

It is a racism based on insecurity, ignorance and the consciousness of 'difference' hardened into prejudice and bigotry.

RACIA WORK

Even my own home became a place of insults

"Suddenly Britain and even my home had become places where if I walked the streets I faced insults. Where if I went into a pub, I risked being snubbed. Where if I went for a job, there were automatically no vacancies. I became one of those men who some people love to hate. I had become a coloured man. Since the change of colour I can feel a change of personality. I have become more wary and withdrawn. I have to be on my guard all the time. Because of my colour I go as little as possible to London. If I go by car. I've read about this Paki bashing. I hate going on tubes and buses just in case there's a skinhead ready to put the boot in."

Thus the News of the World told the story of Mr George Tonkin, a 31 year old Welshman. The News of the World did give publicity to the trials and fears of Mr Tonkin, but because he was a former white man. Mr Tonkin found himself the victim of the classic TV comedy situation — a kidney disease had turned the colour of his skin from white to brown. Discriminated against, insulted on the streets, harassed and attacked, he found his situation so intolerable that he undertook a dangerous operation which he hoped would change his skin back to its original colour, and died shortly afterwards.

The situation which Mr Tonkin found so intolerable is nothing different from the normal daily life of thousands of black workers and their families in Britain. The poison of racialism infects British society from top to bottom.

At one end there are the racist politicians who are handed all the services of the press and TV so that they can spread their lies about black people being a 'problem'. This blatant incitement to race hatred, of which Enoch Powell is the ring master, passes for 'respectable' politics despite the Race Relations Act.

At the 'other end' there are the 'Paki bashers' who take up Powell's embittered rantings, and, more sinister still, fascist organisations such as the National Front. There have been several bomb attacks on black people's homes, obviously inspired by race hatred.

The pressure of this verbal and physical intimidation has led some black people to try and seek Mr Tonkin's way out: they have sought to lose their black identity and thus one often sees advertisements for such ridiculous potions as hair straighteners and skin whiteners or European style wigs.

But increasingly black people are saying that they are proud to be black. They are saying that the 'race problem' isn't their problem. They are saying that the real problem is that this is a white racist society. And they're dead right about that.

RACIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

by Joe Wright

IT'S NO USE ARGUING WITH A hard-core racist. Mere words are of no use. They are sick people who need to focus their hate on another group of people.

Let's look, though, at some of the common, reasonable-seeming arguments of many white workers. The bosses' newspapers plug these ideas and arguments — about the social services, the 'overcrowded island' etc — with one thing in mind: to divide the working class against itself, to drive in the ruling class wedge of racialism.

They are arguments that must be taken up every day.

How must militants answer them?

WHY IMMIGRATION AT ALL? WHY NOT EVERYONE TO HIS OWN COUNTRY?

Well, "everyone to his own country" has hardly been part of the British philosophy. In Rhodesia, for example, the British immigrants, unlike the harassed and exploited immigrant population of this country, form a minority which exploits and dominates the rest of the population.

The movement of workers from the poorer countries to the richer countries is an essential part of capitalism. Integral to capitalism is the existence of 'free labour' — workers moving from the countryside and small towns into the big city employment centres.

As capitalism became a world wide system, so did 'free labour', and today there is hardly a capitalist country in the world which does not have an immigrant population.

But the big increase in post war immigration came as the deliberate result of government policy. There was a labour shortage in many basic industries after the war and this became acute in the early fifties. The government mounted lavish recruitment campaigns in Africa, India, Pakistan and the West Indies.

Indeed, such people as Duncan Sandys, who now call for repatriation, toured Uganda and Kenya appealing to the African Asians that they should take British passports and come to Britain. Potential immigrants were promised a fuller life in the British 'motherland', and many took up the offer.

HASN'T IMMIGRATION CAUSED UNEMPLOYMENT?

In 1966 the average monthly unemployment figure was 360,000; by 1970 the average had risen to 603,000, and as we well know by the end of 1971 it was running near the million mark.

What had happened to immigration during that period? The answer is that taking into account all immigration and emigration, 415,000 more people had left the country than had entered. How is it possible to say that immigration causes unemployment?

THAT MAY BE SO, BUT THE FACT STILL REMAINS THAT THERE ARE 1 MILLION BLACK PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY AND NEAR

ENOUGH 1 MILLION UNEMPLOYED. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

But you might as well say that there are one million people with ginger hair and freckles, and that it's they who are causing unemployment.

In the 1930s there were 3 million unemployed — who would you say was responsible then?

Unemployment is part and parcel of capitalism; with every slump in the economy, unemployment rockets. It is sheer lunacy to think that unemployment can be solved by a campaign against black people, since this would disrupt the working class unity which is essential to fighting unemployment. We must demand the right to work as a right for the whole working class and in particular for black workers who are, more often than not, the first to be made redundant.

WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICES? WE'RE TOLD THAT BLACK PEOPLE ARE A STRAIN ON OUR SOCIAL SERVICES?

Why do you talk about 'our' social services? It's not 'ours' — we don't control it do we?

But the working class as a whole pays for social security. And black workers pay more for social security, because they often come to this country already trained, because they come when they are young and thus a higher percentage are employed (and there are, for a whole period, very few pensioners).

Bearing in mind the higher proportion paying contributions (and creating wealth generally) look at the figures for what's spent:

Average for total pop:	£62.4
Average for immigrants:	£48.7

(Figures, for 1966, from Colour & Immigration in the UK. Institute of Race Relations, 1969).

Thus black immigrants, proportionately, pay more and take less from social security than whites. If there were no immigrants, the social services would be worse.

These figures amount to a scandalous cheating of the immigrant population.

All workers are cheated by the state. Of the wealth which the working class created (bosses and machines by themselves produce it) nothing is taken by the state, only a part comes back through social services. A whole lot more is actually spent on purposes directed against the working class, like the police and the army.

But these figures show without a doubt that black workers are especially cheated.

WE'RE ALSO TOLD THAT BLACK PEOPLE CAUSE THE HOUSING PROBLEM

How many black building workers have you seen? Quite a few? And how many black property speculators are there? Probably not one. Who caused the rise in prices? The building workers or the speculators and land owners? And how many of those black workers that you see

building modern houses are going to live in them? Not very many.

Most black people are forced by low wages and discrimination to live in the old slum areas of the city centres. Again, they are the worst hit victims of the housing crisis.

The sort of logic which blames black people for bad housing and unemployment also blames the working class for rising prices. Most trade unionists know full well how to answer that argument. They would vigorously reply that it is the government and the barons of capitalism who cause rising prices.

Isn't the answer to the racist lie that black people cause unemployment and bad housing exactly the same?

WHAT THEN DO YOU SAY IS THE BEST WAY TO GET RID OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND BAD HOUSING?

But why do you ask? Most workers know instinctively that the answer is a struggle against the capitalist class and its system. Just look



Top: building workers. Below: hospital workers.

at the struggles of last year — the miners, the dockers, the struggle over rents which is still going on, and against the Freeze and the Industrial Relations Act.

Every trade unionist worthy of the name knows that essential to the struggle is working class unity. Look at the trade union banners. They nearly all have "UNITY IS STRENGTH" as their slogan, or even better, "WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE."

But, unfortunately, the working class does not know instinctively that the ruling class infiltrates its thinking with ideas that are totally alien to the true working class ideology that is necessary for winning a successful fight. Racialism is just one of those ideas.

The struggle against racialism is part of the struggle for the unity of the class.

HOW CAN ONE FIGHT RACISM WHEN IT IS DEEP AND WIDESPREAD?

This is not easy. First we must attack its roots by explaining Britain's past and present role as an imperialist power.

There is also an immediate daily struggle here and now. Black people themselves have started to fight back and to fight for their rights. They are not any longer prepared to be kicked around.

White militants must defend the right of blacks to fight back and to organise separately, politically, culturally and in any other way they think fit, and explain in the factories what it is they fight back against.

We must also fight for working class unity — black and white. White workers must fight against the bosses' (and, in many cases, trade union bureaucrats') attempts to divide workers by blatant discrimination. The laws to 'stop' discrimination are a sick joke. We must use our own, industrial, strength, just as we do against their other rotten divisive tactics.

There are thousands of simple effective ways that black and white workers can unite. Just to give an example: in 1971 there was a strike at Laricol Plastics in North London, a small firm employing Asians. The strike was defeated, one of the reasons being that the police came along to a perfectly peaceful picket and arrested all but two of those on picket duty, because, they said, two was the maximum allowed.

If the strikers were white it is doubtful if they would have even tried it on. Yet at the same time as this was going on there were massive pickets of Ford workers and postmen every day. Some of these could have been spared to have a mass picket at Laricol Plastics and show the police and the employers that the trade union movement wouldn't allow its black brothers to be victimised.

It could have happened, it should have happened, but it didn't.

We must also build trade union anti-racist committees to defend the black community (physically where necessary) and to fight to eradicate racialism.

But, as we have written before in Workers' Fight, proposals for unity and anti-racist campaigns are mere good intentions unless they are ideas, slogans, proposals in the hands of an organisation which sees the fight against racialism as part of a general class struggle and can act as an agency for organising that struggle on all its levels.

ABORTION: WOMEN DEFY CHURCH AND RIGHT WING

Whenever there is a discussion on the Women's Liberation Movement, the same question always comes up — we are told that the movement doesn't relate to working class women, and, particularly, one of its aims, abortion on demand, will not mobilise them.

But free abortion on demand is a question that relates to all women and especially working class women. For it is the working class woman who has to risk her life at the hands of the back street abortionist. (To get an abortion 'legally', she must either be at death's door or already have several children).

Rich families can afford to have as many children as they wish, and they can afford not to have children. They already have abortion on demand. But for the working class woman it is an urgent question.

Abortion on demand is a step towards control over our own bodies. The right to have or not to have children, without the Government or the Church laying down the law.

For centuries women have been silent, weighed down by prejudices. Women have been taught — right from early childhood — that it is their duty to be the servant of the family, to bear and bring up children. Girls are given dolls, they are taught to cook and sew, to prepare for housekeeping and child care, while boys prepare for a trade or a job. Girls are taught that sex is a duty with a marriage contract and immoral without. By calling for abortion on demand, women are defying these prejudices.

REACTIONARY

That defiance creates a storm of opposition from the supporters of the present-day family as a pillar of present-day society. In Liverpool, the right wing was able to organise the largest demonstration seen for years, specifically on an anti-abortion platform. Its ranks were made up of National Front fascists, politicians, the Mothers' Union, and people organised by the religious hierarchy.

Some of the most reactionary and dangerous elements of this society — and those deceived by them — were marching against this simple and just demand.

The politicians and priests who play on people's concern for children to mobilise them in defence of the 'unborn child' show less concern when it comes to protecting the children already born... children who are living in damp and squalid hovels, children whose families cannot afford the bare necessities of life, meat, fruit, milk.

There was no shouting from these protectors of 'morals' when the children in the 'welfare' state were deprived of free milk. Nor do they make an outcry now, when we are shown on TV how to cook seaweed because we cannot afford meat and fruit any more.

SANCTITY

Anti-abortionists often talk of the 'right to life' of the 'unborn child'. An embryo in the period within which it is safe to carry out an abortion is not a developed human form and cannot be said to have consciousness in anything like the same way human beings do.

Anti-abortionists may have mystical religious and philosophical beliefs which lead them to believe that an embryo is nonetheless a human being. They have, of course, a right to their beliefs, and a right to refuse abortions for themselves. But we cannot give them the right to impose their beliefs as law upon other people.

In present-day society, anyone who tries to take 'sanctity of life' as his supreme rule is, in any case, simply wandering around with his eyes closed. Today, there is mass destruction of life by the ruling classes and governments of the world — through starvation and lack of drugs costing a few pence in the 'Third World', through work conditions which mutilate and kill people, through imperialist wars.

What is the attitude of the supporters of 'sanctity of life'? Helpless good intentions accompanied by pleas to the oppressed not to resist (the sincere pacifists) or bloodthirsty support of imperialist war (the Catholic hierarchy).

And the rule of 'sanctity of life' is a deception even when applied only to medical matters. Take euthanasia. The fact is that euthanasia takes place every day. Thousands of old people can be kept alive (or semi-alive) for years, given sufficient drugs, special equipment, operations, etc. A decision is made that certain people should have the operations, the kidney machines, etc... and others shouldn't. Naturally, your chances are better if you are rich, white, and living in Western Europe or the

USA. In any case, a decision to keep all old people alive as long as possible would be inhumane and almost certainly technically impossible.

SOCIALIST

The only way respect for human life can be made anything other than a fraud is by fighting for a society in which the basic conditions of decent life are provided for all, in which murder by classes and governments is abolished: a socialist society.

In such a society, children could be cared for collectively. There would be the freedom to have children, with confidence that they would be brought up in good conditions, as well as the freedom not to have children.

Old people would be assured of a dignified life, would not be in risk of dying from hunger and cold through trying to manage on a £6.75 pension. If they felt that death was preferable to the gradual loss of their faculties, they could take that decision without fear that people were anxious to 'get rid' of them, or to keep them alive as 'cabbages' for the sake of collecting big medical fees.

Abortion on demand grants at least some real respect for the lives of women. It frees us from one of the shackles that hold us to a downtrodden position, and thus is a step towards enabling us to take our full part in the struggle for a society with real respect for life.

PATRICIA KELLY

Sunday 25 March —
Manchester, Counter-
demonstration against
anti-abortion rally.
Meet Upper Brook St
2 pm.

A BOOK YOU SHOULD READ

JOHN CUNNINGHAM REVIEWS

A Classic of the Hungry Thirties

WALTER GREENWOOD WAS ONE of the great chroniclers of the working class. He knew which side of the fence he was on as he wrote about the world as he knew it.

He was born in Salford in 1903 into a world of cobbled streets and the mills and factories of industrial Manchester; the pawnshop; the 'grubber' (workhouse); and, looming over everything, the spectre of unemployment, the dole and as a final humiliation, the means test.

"Love on the Dole" is Greenwood's most famous book. It is the story of Harry and Sally Hardcastle, the son and daughter of a Salford miner, and is set in the thirties.

Harry leaves school and signs on for an apprenticeship at the local engineering firm of Marlowes, preferring this to a full time job in a pawnshop where he had worked part time while at school.

Greenwood's description of the pawnshop is superbly vivid and really brings to life how this establishment was, quite often, only way working people could keep their heads above water. Articles were brought in — clothes, clogs, bed linen, anything which could be exchanged for a few shillings. The next week they would be reclaimed, for a while, before the process was begun all over again.

These transactions fell to the women of the house:

"In the staring gaslight the women, throwing back their shawls from their dishevelled hair, revealed faces which though

"LOVE ON THE DOLE" and "THERE WAS A TIME" by Walter Greenwood. Penguin paperbacks, 30p and 25p respectively.



dissimilar in features, had a similarity of expression common, typical of all married women around and about; their badge of marriage as it were. The vivacity of their virgin days was with their virgin days

gone; a married woman could be distinguished from a single by a glance at her facial expression. Marriage scored on their faces a kind of preoccupied, faded, lacklustre air as though they were constantly being plagued by some problem. As they were. How to get a shilling, and, when obtained, how to make it do the work of two. Though it was not so much a problem as a whole time occupation to which no salary was attached..."

So Harry becomes an apprentice at Marlowes. But the seven years apprenticeship is a bosses' con: the firm gets seven years' work out of a lad at a cheap rate and then at the end of it he is given the sack and a new apprentice is taken on.

The seven years soon passes and Harry is laid off and forced onto the dole. His money is cut off completely and, to add to his troubles, he is forced into a shotgun marriage with Helen Hawkins. The misery of the family is completed when Sally loses her fiancé Larry Meath, who dies of pneumonia after being beaten up by police on an unemployed march in Manchester.

Sally, now hard and bitter and anxious to help her impoverished family, goes off to live with the local bookmaker. She despises him, but uses his influence to obtain jobs for Harry and her father and to secure her own future.

Greenwood describes how continual unemployment can totally demoralise a person, eating away like a cancer.

"You fell into the habit of slouching, of putting your hands into your pockets and keeping them there; of glancing at people, furtively, ashamed of your secret, until you fancied that everyone eyed you

with suspicion. You knew that your shabbiness betrayed you; it was apparent for all to see. You prayed for the winter evenings and the kindly darkness. Darkness, poverty's cloak. Breeches backside patched and repatched; patches on knees, on elbows. Jesus! All bloody patches."

But through all this, "Love on the Dole" is above all the story of the fight of working people to maintain their dignity as human beings, threatened as they were by forces which many did not understand. It is a book every militant should read, vividly depicting as it does the resolve, the determination and the courage of working people.

"THERE WAS A TIME" is basically Greenwood's autobiography up to the acceptance for publication of "Love on the Dole". He describes visits to the 'grubber' to see his grandparents and his childhood as the son of a Salford barber.

Another early memory was of the First World War, of the collapse of workers into a fervent national chauvinism at the outbreak of the First World War, as they went off, singing, to die in their thousands fighting a war which had nothing to do with them.

Disgruntled by one bad job after another and three periods on the dole, he tells how he attempts to make his living by writing, and how through this he was able to break the chain that held him to a life of penny pinching poverty.

But, despite all the changes that have taken place, the capitalism that created the 'hungry thirties' is still, basically, with us. Returning to Salford thirty years later, he finds that the last remaining pawnbroker crudely sums up the situation: "The world's going crackers. We never learn. But like I said, one thing is certain, they're staying up there where they are, those brass bolts, just in case."

“At first the pickets went out barehanded, but they came back with broken heads ... Then they equipped themselves with shillalahs for the next trips.....”

STANLEY LEE WRITES ABOUT THE GREAT MINNEAPOLIS TEAMSTERS' STRIKES OF 1934

WHEN THE PICKETS FOUGHT BACK - AND WON

In the press reports of 1972, a vast hue and cry was raised over the tactic of flying pickets, which proved so devastatingly successful against the Tories in the Miners' and Building Workers' strikes. What was it that terrified the Tories? The flying picket, unlike ordinary picketing, is offensive, not defensive. By bringing more and more workers into struggle, it contains the seeds of the general strike.

We have to prepare for future battles by studying and absorbing the lessons of previous battles. In 1934 a series of strikes by the Teamsters in Minneapolis, USA, pioneered the flying picket tactic, and helped to pave the way for the mass unionisation of workers in US basic industry in the later '30s - the biggest upsurge yet of the US working class.

Teamster Rebellion, by Farrell Dobbs, is an account of what was perhaps the best organised series of strikes in history.

The Teamsters Local 574 had not won a strike in Minneapolis for 20 years. In fact, all the unions were weak, and none had won a strike in that city for over ten years. The employers were organised in the Citizens' Alliance, which had a full time staff, stool pigeons in the unions, and controlled city hall.

The first teamsters' strike began at a favourable time for Local 574,

'Teamster Rebellion', by F. Dobbs. £0.95 from Pathfinder Press.

U.S.A. 1934

DRIVERS, ORGANIZE!

Because of the depression, wages of all workers have been reduced, and this has resulted in the general lowering of the standard of living.

The increase in the cost of living has resulted in further wage cuts.

WHAT MUST WE DO?
The Only Answer is ORGANIZATION!

DO YOU KNOW?

That under Section 7-A of the N.I.R.A. workers are not only granted the right to organize, but are guaranteed the right to exercise this privilege without discrimination?

DO YOU KNOW?

That the coal drivers of Minneapolis took advantage of this privilege to organize and through our organization gained a 25% wage increase?

and won union recognition. It showed that the unions could win in Minneapolis. The strike leaders, among whom the Trotskyists of the Communist League were prominent, went forward from this victory to organise other sections of the working class.

30 000 men were unemployed in the city. Local 574 fought for public relief for them, and the leaders of the unemployed were consulted about union picketing. Agreement was reached with the farmers about

food supplies. A women's auxiliary was formed, which played an invaluable role in the strike. A strike headquarters was set up, with offices, a mechanical repair department for picket vehicles, a field hospital, and facilities for feeding 4 000 to 5 000 people daily. They also printed their own daily paper.

The pickets were well organised. J P Cannon, a leader of the Communist League, wrote: "At first the pickets went out barehanded, but they came back with broken heads and injuries of various kinds. Then they equipped themselves with shillalahs for the next trips. A shillalah, as any Irishman can tell you, is a blackthorn stick you lean on in case you suddenly go lame. Of course, it is handy for other purposes, too."

POLICE OPEN FIRE

The forces of 'law and order' soon showed their true face, when a scab truck escorted by 150 police was followed by a picket truck. The cops opened fire and shot to kill, as was later attested to by the special investigating commission. Two workers were killed and 67 wounded.

The big business press praised the 'bravery' of the police in shooting down defenceless workers.

London 1973

But the workers, confident in their organisation, stood firm. Finally, after standing up to the National Guard, Local 574 won a great victory. They ended the strike with 7 500 pickets, 450 cruiser cars, 16 motor cycles (for couriers) and two airplanes. The Communist League branch, without which the strike would never have succeeded, doubled its membership.

There are many valuable lessons to be learnt from this struggle. It was one of the few struggles in which the workers were equipped with a leadership as clear-headed and resolute as the bosses'. It is especially important for us today to learn the lessons of the pioneering use of flying pickets and how the bosses reacted.

SELF-DEFENCE

As workers intensify their struggle, so the ruling class is more and more moving to repressive measures. They seek to transform unions into appendages of the State, a means of disciplining workers. Most of the military exercises of recent years have been based on the theory of civil unrest in Britain and the role of the Army in that, rather than any mythical invasion from Eastern Europe. Faced with these developments, we must fight defeatism, passivity and smugness in the working class, and argue the need for workers to unite for their self-defence.



POLICE ARREST SEVEN AT FINE TUBES

ABOUT 500 TRADE UNIONISTS from all over the country joined the picket line at Fine Tubes, Plymouth, on Monday 19th. Delegates from as far afield as the Royal Group of docks and Dunlop Speke came with messages of support, hard cash, promises of blacking, and a standing ovation for the 32 men still heroically holding out after nearly three years.

The management have brought in scabs and — as speaker after speaker stressed — for victory, Fine Tubes raw materials and finished goods must be blacked throughout the country. Partial blacking of tubes has been going on for some time, at Bristol Rolls-Royce for instance. Now stewards at Rolls in Bristol are threatening to black goods coming from Rolls Derby, unless they refuse to order from Fine Tubes. Delegates also reported attempts to stop steel supplies coming from the north, with 40 pickets at Lowmoor Steels of Bradford; Osborn Steels of Sheffield have also supplied during the strike.

Very little support has come from local trade unionists. NUR men have been handling the tubes, delivery drivers have been coming in, and very few outsiders have helped out on the long grind of the daily picket at the gate. This is especially tragic since firms are starting up in Plymouth precisely

because of the lack of unions and the low wage rates in the area, and you can be sure they have all got one eye on Fine Tubes.

Numerous delegates expressed strong criticisms of the half-hearted way the AUEW and the T&GWU have helped the strikers. Hugh Scanlon has left AUEW members to struggle on without strike pay and with only nominal blacking notices to the branches.

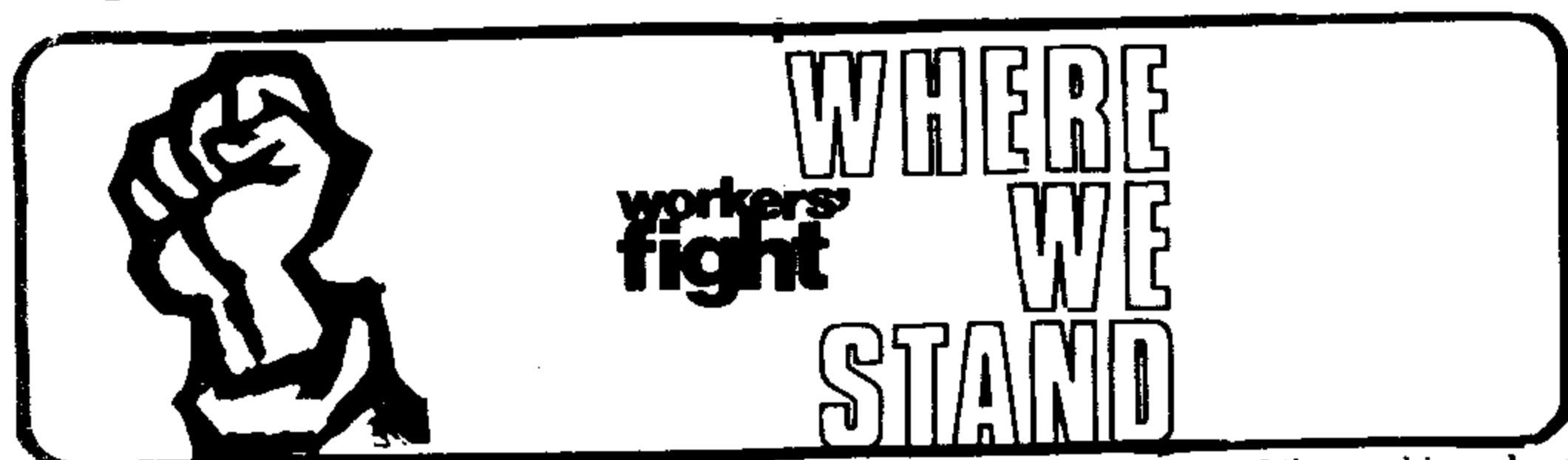
Meanwhile solidarity action and cash has been coming steadily from rank-and-file trade unionists: workers at a power station in Ellesmere Port had been sending £80 a week for a long period, and sums of £250 or £200 from carworkers were handed to the strike committee on Monday.

The forces of 'law and order' played their usual impartial role during the picket. 300 or more police formed a screen for the scabs as they drove in, and made seven arrests amongst the pickets. On the last national picket in July 1971, nine were arrested. The Evening Herald, Plymouth's local rag, did its best to distort the days events, with headlines of 'Violence Flares in Fine Tubes Protest', praises for the brave policemen doing their duty, and misquotes from pickets.

Contributions to: 65 Bretonside, Exeter St, Plymouth.
ED COLLINS



September 1971: three policemen defend 'law and order' at the expense of a picket.



CAPITALISM is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the colonies and neo-colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, at the same time as it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health: in reality the boom was like the flush on a sick man's face. Already economic expansion has given way to creeping stagnation.

TODAY the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world, of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world, and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

THE ONLY WAY OUT is for the working class to take power and to bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan, in place of the present unplanned and blind private profit system. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

The working class has created political parties for this purpose — LABOUR PARTIES, COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.

The task is therefore to build a socialist party which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class. WORKERS' FIGHT is a group of revolutionary socialists, aiming to build that party: a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.

The basis of our activity is the scientific theory of MARXISM, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change.

Although they cannot organise the struggle for workers' power, THE TRADE UNIONS are indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. We fight for the independence of the unions from all state control, and within the unions for militant policies and for democracy. We see the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Its life and work-situation is quite different from that of the working class. Lacking a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, or any fundamental historical interests of its own, its general tendency is to work with the bosses and their state against the working class.

Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries and guided by the ideas of revolutionary Marxism can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.

We fight against the INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, against any incomes policy under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.

We fight against UNEMPLOYMENT; for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining.

We fight to extend the power of workers to control the details of their own lives in industry

Editorial Board: Sean Matgamna (Editor); Andrew Hornung (Design); Martin Thomas; Rachel Lever; Bas Hardy.

Business Manager: Tony Brockman

here and now. We stand for the fight for WORKERS' CONTROL with the understanding that it can be made a serious reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' 'participation' in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

We believe that the "PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM" is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully; no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine (army, police, civil service) which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic Workers' Councils.

THE LABOUR PARTY is a capitalist party in its ideas, its policies, and in its record in government. At the same time, the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions, support and finance the Labour Party. There is an 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the Unions, allowing the possibility of large scale active working class participation in the party.

We relate to the Labour Party, therefore, not by simply denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the particular stage in its own development — ideological, political and organisational — represented by Labourism.

We fight for full and equal rights for WOMEN, for female emancipation from the male domination which has co-existed throughout history with class society and which has its roots in such society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our own class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves".

We fight against RACIALISM and against immigration controls. We fight for the integration of immigrant workers into the labour movement and for a united front against capitalism, whilst supporting the right of black minorities in Britain to form defence leagues or independent political organisations.

We give unconditional support to the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against IMPERIALISM, and to their organisations leading the fight.

British workers have — fundamentally — more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We see the fight for socialism as a world-wide struggle, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party, such as Leon Trotsky founded the Fourth International, in 1938, to become. We consider that the mainstream of Trotskyism surviving from the 1938 Fourth International is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International but that this organisation in some of its theories and much of its practice (for example that of the British section) represents a degenerate form of Trotskyism. We fight for the regeneration of the Fourth International.

We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of THE U.S.S.R. and the other countries called 'communist' which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social regime of the different bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone with real communism. At the same time, we defend the nationalised economy in these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally: that is, irrespective of the selfish, usually anti-working-class and anti-revolutionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies.

There are OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS which have generally similar aims, but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider all these groups to be seriously — sometimes grossly — inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these groups where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences.

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CONFERENCE HEARS OF RENTS EVICTIONS

200 ATTENDED A NORTH-west tenants' conference called by Liverpool Trades Council on March 11th.

It was reported from Bootle that 200 rent strikers are being threatened with eviction; in Bolton, six militants were to be victimised (see p. 4); in Tower Hill, police have brutally attacked rent demonstrators.

What way forward? The starting point for any discussion had to be the general picture of declining militancy in the rents struggle, and the fact that the struggle has generally remained separate from other major working class battles.

Where possible, the present rent strikes should be continued, with preparation for expanded action against further rent rises — regular bulletins, public meetings, picket lines, anti-eviction squads.

Where decline threatens to lead to demoralisation, tactical retreat may be necessary. This tactical withdrawal should be announced publicly beforehand, with a program of regroupment to include building and strengthening links with the organised labour movement.

Priority

Tenants can invite hospital workers to speak on their platforms, campaign on their estates in support of workers in struggle, and get delegates elected to the Joint Action Committees against the Freeze which are being set up in many areas.

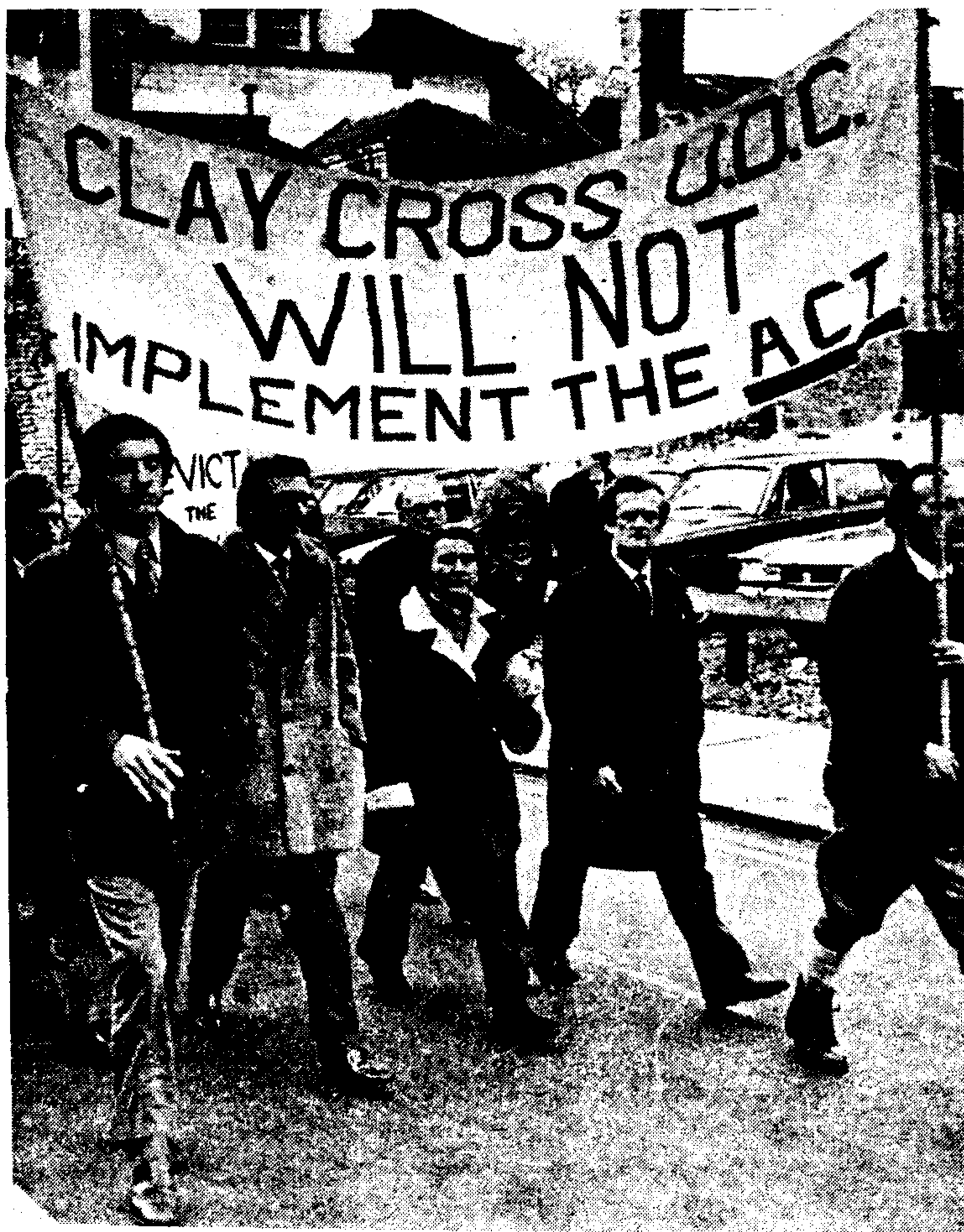
Some of the speeches from the floor ran directly counter to this perspective. Many tenants have had difficulty in getting any recognition from the industrial labour movement, and some were inclined to a 'go it alone' policy.

But the fact is that the one time that tenants acting as tenants have won a major victory was in Clydeside in 1915 — when their action was linked with industrial action. This is not to argue that tenants should wait for industrial action before acting themselves; but that, at every point in the fight, tenants should see it as a priority to make links with the organised labour

movement. Of course, if tenants come to trade unionists presenting their struggle as just another good cause, trade unionists are likely to reply "we've got enough of our own problems". It is vital to explain that rents are their problem; that a defeat for the tenants is a victory for the employers' offensive and a setback for the whole working class.

The conference's decisions were for a regional coordinating committee, a national conference, and a national lobby of Parliament. Fine. But committees, conferences, and lobbies by themselves will not protect tenants from eviction and victimisation.

JOHN BLOXAM



Workers Lobby As Davis Stalls

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY steelworkers demonstrated outside the AUEW headquarters in Sheffield, as the 250 delegates of the TUC's steel unions which met on March 7th to hammer out a strategy against

redundancies.

At least, that's what they were supposed to do. In fact, Sir Dai Davies, SICC chairman and general secretary of BISAKTA, made sure that nothing came out of the conference at all.

He refused to invite lay delegates from his union, the largest in the industry; and right at the beginning of the conference, he announced that there were to be no resolutions and no recommendations!

Charlie Jones, one of the delegates from Shotton, steelworks, summed up the feeling of the lay delegates: "They feel the same as we do — let down".

Outside, there was a short open air meeting of the lobbyists, from Shotton, Stanton, Newport Tube Works, Lackenby, and East Moors. The Shotton men explained their call for a National Action Committee, to be discussed at a conference on April 13th. (see below). Tony Duffy (Lackenby) and Geordie Barclay (Stanton), both members of the editorial board of Real Steel News and of Workers Fight, stressed the need to link the immediately threatened sites with the 'heritage' sites in the National Action Committee.

On a resolution from Tony Duffy, half of the lobbying steelworkers and wives toured the steel works in Sheffield, getting a good response.

The contrast between that rank and file response and Davies' betrayal is the clearest proof of the need for the coming national rank and file conference.

Details of the conference from the Secretary of the Shotton Action Committee: K W Monti, 25 Chester Close, Shotton, Deeside, Flint

CLAY CROSS

Contrary to lies in the press and on television, Clay Cross Council is still NOT IMPLEMENTING the 'Fair' Rents Act. Tenants there are paying the normal, pre-Act rent. Rent increases are NOT being paid. The Government is still being defied!

Bolton: UNITY AGAINST FREEZE

ON THURSDAY 22 MARCH A united front trade union committee against the Freeze will be holding its first meeting in Bolton.

The decision to set up the committee was taken at a public meeting on 14th March. Speakers at the meeting were John Barber, gasworkers' shop steward, Jack Sutton, secretary of the National Alliance of Stewards in Health, Dave Nuttall, Clay Cross councillor, and Roy Ratcliffe (AUEW and Workers Fight National Committee).
HOWARD SWEENEY

Bristol: STUDENT SIT-IN WINS

Students on rent strike in Bristol — as part of the national NUS campaign on grants — faced a threat from the Vice-Chancellor to debar all rent strikers from applying for a place in a hall of residence next session. After a mass meeting, 200 students occupied the University

Administration Building. Direct action produced results — within two hours the Vice-Chancellor had completely withdrawn his threat.
SIMON TEMPLE

Bolton: SCAB ATTACKS PICKET

Last week, gas strikers in Bolton heard that some vehicle fitters were going into work at 7 am in order to cross the picket line before it was manned. Three union members went along early and caught a blackleg driving across the line. They stopped him and asked him not to pass. Finally, after argument, the scab pulled out two tyre levers and advanced towards the pickets. An elderly gas worker who was slow in dodging out of the way had his arm injured, and while the other two were aiding him the blackleg fitter drove into work.

We can leave it to the Bolton gas men to devise a method of dealing with such scabs when they return to work.

ROY RATCLIFFE

Teesside: UNION-BASHING BY LAING

SIXTY-FOUR CONSTRUCTION workers at the Laing Pipelines Offshore site at Graythorp have been sacked for demanding their nationally agreed pay rate.

The men, AUEW (CEU) members, employed by subcontract scaffolding firm SGB Power Chem, were told to join the T&GWU — as low-grade scaffolders receiving 57½p an hour instead of the AUEW rate of 65p plus 30p bonus — or else be sacked. When they walked out, Laing ended the contract with SGB and sent messages to other scaffolding firms offering jobs — i.e., appealing for scabs.

The scaffolders have been picketing the Graythorp site since they walked out, and 600 men — about half the workforce — were laid off. But the next day most of those laid off returned after management — union discussions, and implicit union agreement with Laing's policy of recruiting scabs.

Although the attempt to get a

new scaffolding crew has failed, the staff side have been doing some construction work, and the men still have a long battle in front of them.

The miners and building workers have shown how effective flying pickets can be — in fact the striking scaffolders often praise the miners' tactics — and occupations have come to the fore recently, too. Militant tactics — coupled with active solidarity — are needed to defend and extend trade union rights from militantly right-wing bosses.

ALAN THE ASBY

Liverpool: IRO CALLS MASS LOBBY

Electricians at the IRO site in Bootle have been on strike for 104 weeks, with no aid from the union. They are calling for a mass lobby and demonstration at the headquarters of the electrical contracting Joint Industry Board, Sidcup Green, Kent on March 30, at 2 pm

BUILDERS

DISCUSS FIGHT

AGAINST LUMP

THE BUILDING WORKERS' Charter conference on March 10th was attended by 550 delegates. In many ways it was a success, though attendance was down on last year's National Conference. It reaffirmed the determination of militant building workers to continue the fight against the employers, the Tory government, and the lump.

The conference voted unanimously to campaign for £40 for 35 hours immediately after June 7th. This is certainly a move in the right direction, as it will keep the pressure on the employers who will no doubt try to hold the building workers to the two year deal which George Smith and his bureaucrats signed on their behalf at the end of the strike last year.

According to the Charter policy statement which was passed, the Charter is going to wage "total war on the lump" with regional demonstrations and official picketing of lump sites. As part of the campaign there will be an all-out national stoppage on June 7th. Other measures included the blacking of lump firms and refusal to negotiate with any firm which operates the lump at the joint negotiating bodies.

Certainly these measures will go a long way to fighting the lump, but what is needed even more is a co-ordinated national policy, the type of action taken in Birmingham against the lump must be spread. And there must be a fight now for the registration of all building workers and organisation on the basis of regional pools (as in the docks). Together these measures constitute a fighting policy which can smash the lump.

The conference didn't confine itself to issues concerned only with the building industry. It pledged its support for the hospital workers and supported the call by Shotton steel workers for the setting up of a national committee of steelworkers.

The conference lacked a thorough discussion of policy and strategy, but many individual speakers raised important points such as the

Workers charged for official picketing

Those who did respond to the call to come to Shrewsbury included Liverpool dockers and Shotton steelworkers, whose works were stopped for the day; building workers from Wales, Merseyside, London, and the Midlands; and representatives from four Courtaulds factories in North Wales.

Liverpool builders' leaders Frank Marsh and Alan Abrahams called for the TUC to call a general strike on the day of the committal proceedings, 25 April, and for the lads to have full official backing. This needs to be not only in the form of finance but also in the form of organising national support. The use of criminal charges is calculated to split support. The Trade Union bureaucrats are using this to avoid supporting the defendants. The defendants in UCATT were offered official support by national official Eric Hughes, on 9th March - only to hear the follow-

Manchester hospital workers stage sit-in

"THIS WILL BLOW THE WHOLE thing sky-high", commented London hospital workers' leader Mark Palmer after branch secretary Don Steadman was arrested at St Mary's hospital, Paddington..

But even before then hospital militants were standing firm against witch-hunts and diversions. Labour MPs and the TUC have called for an "official inquiry" - their version of the Tories' Pay Board tactic. But hospital workers realise that we have to smash down the jail

bars of the Freeze, not try to wriggle through as a 'special case'.

In Sheffield the "Telegraph" has been calling the strikers murderers, even though the local Department of Health and Social Security specifically denied the charge. In Manchester, the Evening News tried to make out that the strike was crumbling. The wretched press hack who cobbled together that lie found himself confronted by an angry hospital union branch chairman in the Evening News office.

Over 30 hospitals in London have been engaged or are now engaged in action ranging from work to rule, banning of private patients, go-slow, and bans on overtime, to indefinite stoppage. St George's are coming out on indefinite stoppage from April, and there is also a possibility of indefinite stoppage at Kings College Hospital.

1000 hospitals are in action nationally, 350 on strike. In Manchester, a mass sit-in in various hospitals is planned for March 26th. At the last mass meeting, when the United Manchester Hospitals decided to stay out for the third week, another call was put out for an "all-out" national strike.

CROSS-UNION UNITY

A meeting is planned for Friday 23 March to get a real co-ordinating stewards' committee going. A call has gone out from the Secretary of the National Alliance of Stewards in Health for a meeting to organise a national stewards' committee. Such a committee could give a lead to hospital workers facing victimisations (St Leonards, Shoreditch, London, and Newmarket General), volunteer scabs (Liverpool), and now arrests of pickets.

Most importantly, the cross-union stewards' committee could do the vital job of breaking down the divisions and uncertainties created by the officials of the four health service unions, as reported from Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Swansea, Liverpool and Yorkshire.

On 23 March, Yorkshire miners are backing a Sheffield demonstration in support of the hospital workers, and many doctors and patients all over the country have also expressed support. In Manchester and Camden & Islington, hospital workers are centrally involved in all-union committees against the Freeze.

What is needed now is for miners, water supply workers, railwaymen, and other groups with claims outstanding to move into action rapidly and fight alongside the hospital workers against the Tories' wage-freezing and picket-bashing.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



Hospital workers march in Dover

FIGHTING FUND

In Workers Fight no. 22 we launched a campaign for a £1000 fund. The purpose of this fund is to finance the technical improvements we need to boost the quality, the regularity, and the circulation of the paper. We are relying on our readers and supporters to get this sum together over a period of ten months - some may be able to pledge £1 or £5 each month, but even such small contributions as regular readers giving 10p for their copy instead of 4p will help.

The total so far is £129.47. This is not a bad start, but we need to get more pledges of regular contributions.

need to organise regional conferences along the lines of the Scottish regional conferences; and the need to change section 12 of the Charter's demands from calling for nationalisation of the building industry to a call for nationalisation under workers' control.

The stage is now set for a new round with the employers. They

are using the lump as a fifth column in the building industry, as Birmingham militant Pete Carter remarked. The figure for men on the lump may soon reach half a million. Unless it is fought vigorously and continually, it may set the building workers back 20 years in their fight.

LEN GLOVER

SMITH'S LETTER

On 14th March UCATT general secretary George Smith wrote to UCATT branch secretary Barry Scragg.

"CHARGES AGAINST BUILDING TRADE WORKERS.

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your communication dated the 24th February, in connection with the above, and would apologise for the delay in replying thereto.

"In this respect I would advise you that we have had legal advice on the lengthy and nature of the charges against the members involved in this particular situation and

it would be doing the Building Unions a great disservice, and indeed the Trade Union Movement a great disservice, to demonstrate or call a national stoppage in regard to these matters as the charges range from civil offences to criminal acts and our concern in matters of this kind is to defend the rights of Trade Unions to carry out picketing during the course of an official dispute.

"We must take the view that the legal processes are such that that content among the charges based on the Conspiracy Act will soon be disproved as playing no part in the other charges that are made against the members concerned."

In other words - Smith will do nothing to defend workers prosecuted for official picketing! Some men are speculating that the union may be making a deal with the police to drop the Conspiracy charge if the union drops support of the men on the lesser charges.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

Suspicion is increased by police tactics in relation to one of those arrested, on two conspiracy charges. They have told him that if he pleads guilty they will let him off lightly; if not, they will get him on a whole number of additional charges.

ALL OUT 25 APRIL

We must work to put pressure on the Trade Union bureaucrats to get official support - but we cannot afford to wait for them to act. It is necessary for the rank and file in all trade unions to act now, through branch meetings, and also by mass meetings at places of work, to get definite commitments to come out or at least send delegations on 25 April and to organise collections. Builders should ensure that Charter comes out and organises support.

All donations to: Defence of Pickets, c/o M R Williams, Ifford Centre, Ocean View, Carmel, Flintshire.