

# Workers' fight

3p

No. 79 — December 7th to 14th 1974

## Shrewsbury prisoners

### Judge sums up the campaign...

THE REQUEST of the jailed Shrewsbury pickets, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson, to have leave to appeal to the Lords against their long jail sentences has been turned down. This means that there is no longer the slightest excuse for not pulling out all the stops in developing the campaign for their release.

Drawing close to Christmas, much of the effort at the moment is going into socials and other fund raising activities to provide the wives and children of these two militants with something cheerful.

As soon the New Year comes in, the objective must be all out action to get the two released. There can be no more stalling; only the strength of the working class in industrial action can get them out now.

There can be no better argument for this than the words of the judge reviewing the request to appeal. He said that there were no legal grounds for granting leave ... and there was no sign of the case being a matter of great public interest!

There could be no more biting condemnation of our failure so far to make a real impression with our demonstrations and protests.

As the judge said. It's up to us. It always was.

THE MAJOR content of Jenkins' new "Prevention of terrorism" Act is a political attempt to consolidate the reactionary nationalistic mood following the Birmingham bombings. The hasty "rushing through" of legislation which had apparently been waiting in the contingencies cupboard for 18 months was done in the manner of a conjuring trick, placing vengeance against supporters of those fighting the British in Ireland in the place where people might have demanded to see some political solution.

A good deal of the new Act was already in practice, or half way to being law. Now, things which a few weeks ago were cause for agitation and anger about this or that ugly police practice, or cause for wonder at the outrageously repressive attitude of a court meting out £50 fines for the wearing of black berets — now all, and much more, is the new legal reality.

The police now have a free hand to go on the rampage in the Irish communities in Britain. Using exclusion orders, internment can now be extended to cover Irish people living in Britain (unless they can show that they were born here or lived here 20 years and have UK citizenship); such people if they are deported to Ireland face the likelihood of being taken straight off a plane and driven to Long Kesh or the Curragh for indefinite imprisonment.

#### BANNED

The section of the Act that's admitted to be useless or worse to the police in detection, is the most vicious and far reaching instrument for harassment and intimidation of political opposition to Government policies in Northern Ireland: it certainly implies censorship of the written and spoken word (and perhaps thoughts, too, if they had thought-police), and long stretches in prison for

# FIGHT JENKINS' POLICE STATE LAW!

showing one's political allegiance in public. A South African exile writing to the Guardian remarked that this law looked all too familiar to him. (Yet it's been greeted with not a word of protest or even reservation by those ranting on interminably about NUI closed shops being a threat to the freedom of the press.)

The pretense that the Law is designed to combat all "terrorism" impartially is gross hypocrisy. By its own definition "terrorism means the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear." By this definition, if they were consistent, every British soldier in the north of Ireland would be deported back to Britain under heavy guard for repeated and continual exercises in bullying and terrorising of the

people of the Catholic ghettos — in violent and destructive raids and searches, in mass roundups and beatings designed purely and simply to subdue the people through fear.

No, this Law is not for combatting terrorism (even supposing any law were effective for doing that). The British Government must know by now that no amount of repressive laws enacted in Northern Ireland have produced any cessation of the republicans' military actions. Rather, the aim of the law is to use political repression to harass, silence and drive off the political scene the supporters of Irish republicanism.

#### WEDGE

The law is designed to foster British nationalism and outlaw the opponents of that nationalism. Its effect will be to make the Irish in Britain into second class citizens constantly having to prove their innocence of vague and ill-defined "crimes" (such as believing Britain has no right to be in Ireland), constantly having to prove how long they have lived here, to produce documents, birth certificates etc. Just as the Immigration Acts have done with black people.

And just as the Immigration Acts have produced a massive growth in racialism in response to this classifying and pigeon-holing of "aliens", the "Prevention of Terrorism" Act is likely to drive a deep wedge into the working class.

Much of the Act is admitted to be a "public relations job" — that is, a "war-time" morale booster, a digging of political trenches around "the nation".

Militants who have noted the use of "the nation" to force wage freezes down our throats and to isolate strikers, know what a dismal effect this mood, and its

## TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!



crystallisation in law, can have on the class struggle.

But it isn't all propaganda. There are some very concrete, and dangerous, measures in it. Most to be feared by militants is the extension of the power of the police to search and arrest without warrant, and to hold people longer than 48 hours in the police cells.

These powers, on paper, are supposed to be limited to "offences under the Act", that is, Irish politics. Certainly, Irish solidarity and back-up groupings will be hit first and most directly. And we must defend them: their work is vital.

But the Act has very elastic boundaries, and is also full of undefined concepts which make it something of a dragnet law, rather like conspiracy. Organisations can be banned for "promoting or encouraging" "terrorism" in relation to Northern Ireland. Who knows what "promoting or encouraging" mean?

At present only the IRA is banned. Suppose the Troops Out Movement, which many trade union bodies, trades councils and so on, have sponsored, is

banned for "encouraging terrorism" by giving 'aid and comfort' to the republicans? Then all those giving the T.O.M. "financial or other support" will be drawn into the scope of the Act.

Moreover, political groupings not solely concerned with Ireland, but having a position of solidarity with those fighting British imperialism, can be banned — with no new legislation. All those supporting such organisations will then be affected.

Even if in the short term people in the labour movement not active on the Irish question find themselves unaffected, do we think that police state methods and law can be practised on one section of the working class without having a profound effect on the whole of the class?

Ask not for whom this bell tolls in the long term, it tolls for thee, as the face of political life in this country changes at a pace startlingly hastened by the Irish war.

The police need little encouragement to turn their new powers into general practice. They weren't exactly scrupulous before, as many of the Shrewsbury

24, or any black kid worked over in the cells, can testify. Who can believe that the new powers the police have been given won't be extended formally, or won't just seep out in so many places and become such common practice that anyone who complains will just be laughed at?

Britain can never solve the mess it has created in Ireland — least of all by repressive laws designed to silence its opponents, to substitute for political solutions, and to solidify right wing opinion behind the government.

The only way out is to get out — get out and let Ireland determine its own course and its own future.

As long as Britain stays in Ireland, the violence, the communal divisions and the civil injustices which it has perpetrated there, will increasingly come back home. As Karl Marx so accurately observed, "a nation which enslaves another can never itself be free."

Published by Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1. Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

## How to fight it...

THE FOLLOWING guidelines for action against Jenkins' repressive Act were adopted at last weekend's Rank and File Delegate Conference in Birmingham (see full report inside). The resolution, submitted by AUEW Witton, was amended by the delegate from ASTMS London West End branch, to read:

- \* This Conference
- \* Condemns the bombings in Birmingham as dividing workers on nationalist and religious lines and offering no solution to the need for self determination of the Irish people.
- \* Must organise a campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, and must oppose any victimisation of Irish people, and political and trade union militants, under it. Conference also opposes any victimisation of such people under the pressure of anti-IRA feelings.
- \* Calls for a national congress of all TUC affiliated unions on the question of Ireland and of democratic rights (in Britain) at which the TUC is pressed to mobilise its full resources to defend any member against whom charges are brought under the Act.
- \* Demands the expulsion from the trade union movement of any member found to have taken part in violence against the Irish community.
- \* Demands the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, rather than attacks on civil rights, and as the only way to stop the bombing campaign in this country. To this end Conference resolves to support the Troops Out Movement and the right of the Irish people to self determination.



# Catching a mood...

NO ONE in Birmingham knows who F.P. Walsh is. But there are three 'poems' of his pinned up next to the wreaths and flower crosses outside what's left of the Tavern in the Town in the Bull Ring. Passers by stop and read, and nod approvingly at these bizarre, ranting, hate-filled, blood crazed verses. They seem 'a bit extreme' but they catch a mood.

And under the cover of this mood, this anti-IRA and anti-Irish storm, reactionary elements are settling old scores and opening old wounds.

In many Midlands car factories fighting broke out on the day after the bombings. Members of the fascist National Front were able to exploit the mood to pick on Irish workers — even those completely dissociating themselves from the IRA — sometimes beating them up, sometimes isolating them from the rest of the workforce, and sometimes forcing them out of the factories altogether.

But those who led such victimisation were not all NF members. And their victims not always Irish. At one important Birmingham

works, for instance, a supporter of Workers Fight found himself before an improvised workshop 'court' "to discuss this brother's views". He argued that he supported the right of the Irish people to self determination and logically that meant solidarity with those fighting to realise that, and opposition to those fighting against it: that is, solidarity with the IRA against British troops...whether the fighting was in Ireland or in England. He condemned the Bull Ring bombings, but pointed out that the ultimate responsibility for them was the British government, and that the cause of such attacks was the brutal repression by the

British army in Ireland.

But, given the general mood, no amount of reason could have won the day, even if there had been more general understanding about the Irish question than there is. As if acting as a conscious foil to our comrade's internationalism, his shop steward piped up "I could understand it if you were a patriotic Irishman, but you're English. That's what gets me!"

## MISERABLE

But that wasn't the whole truth — although the idea did typify the dead-end logic of chauvinism that condemns each nation's workers to fight, not together against their

'masters', but in their masters' armies against their own class brothers. The truth is that what 'got' this steward was the leaflet that our comrade had distributed during a recent strike urging rejection of the miserable settlement proposed by the union officials and the shop stewards. (The deal was in fact rejected.) That's what really got him. And when the bombings happened, they were used to get back at this militant.

If trade unionists don't oppose it, the backlash from the bombings will be used to

strike against both political and trade union militants where they have voiced the slightest opposition to Britain's murderous oppression in Ireland.

Of course, the mood did not start with the Bull Ring terror. It started a long time ago, and was whipped up to a frenzy in the previous week when Roy Jenkins publicly egged on the police — and with them, implicitly, the most reactionary elements within the local population grown fat already on anti-black racism — to come down on the sympathisers of the IRA on the occasion of McDaid's funeral. Thus the fires of nationalism were stoked up. No amount of 'civilised disclaimers' to the effect that the public should not take matters into their own hands can wipe away Jenkins' role in whipping up the anti-Irish race hate in the Midlands. PAUL ADAMS



# POLICE THE DU

THE I.R.A. IS NOW BANNE in the very imprecise new law p the Republican armed factions.

Expression of "support" for can range from a maximum of maximum of 5 years and an unl The slogan which sums up t WORKERS FIGHT on Ireland will, if some judge so rules (as is "support" for the IRA. To c meeting of 3 or more people in private meeting, or to allow su by a member of "a proscribed o penalties.

The expression of the politic the war in Ireland — solidarity now outside the law.

## THEIR SOLE DE

So be it. The IRA is banned. of terror in the north of Irele Britain for the IRA is banned. T of Belfast's Catholic ghettos, th Orange pogrom mobs and the British army units in routi undercover plain clothes murde

The "IRA" is outlawed organisations of Orange big despite undisputed responsibility murders' in 18 months. (Tha simply because they are Cath evidence of Catholic — not reprisal killings emerged, on according to the terrible logic o 6 Counties, aimed at fighting Sectarian hatred as such as al Orange supremacists, regardin morally inferior; to the repub Orange bigots have always see to be won over.)

These Orange gangs are pampered and fostered by the incubus for the hatching out of t ago and obligingly smashed the (such as the 'no go areas'), open sectarian murder.

To speak in favour of the IRA of praise and support at "Professionals" — the mercenar like war-time regulations, excep protected by the normally acce of war.

## AN ARTIFICIAL

To assert that the IRA is a operating without any secure b Northern Ireland republican continual harassment and terr from that support) — tha propaganda and can be constru

To deny that Hugh Feeney, Dolours Price (indeed the hu charge in British concentration that is to support the pretenti Queen's enemies.

fight against a foreign army o preserving an artificial partiti Catholic-Protestant divisions?

Psycopaths they are, then. A violence of the ruling class wit with terror. So indeed are the support their right to do so.

To assert that the IRA ha socialism, for which working



## PROVISIONALS' STATEMENT ON THE BOMBS

ON SATURDAY Nov. 23rd, the Provisional IRA issued the following statement on the Birmingham bombings:

1. It has never been and is not the policy of the IRA to bomb non military targets without giving adequate warnings to ensure the safety of civilians.

2. Detailed investigations are being conducted to establish the extent, if any, of Republican involvement in the bombings. We note that a group calling itself 'Red Flag 74' has claimed respon-

sibility and while we do not know who these people are, we are satisfied they have no connection with the Republican Movement.

3. Irrespective of who carried out the Birmingham bombings, responsibility for the tragic loss of life rests firmly with the British Government. The policy of that Government towards Ireland is the root cause of the conflict for the last five years and until there is a change of policy, we see no end to the conflict.

"FOR terrorists there is no explanation" stated one of the Londoners interviewed in an Evening Standard "Picture-probe" feature. No doubt he meant to say he saw no reason for placing bombs. But he was certainly right that the reasons are never explained in the press.

In all the thousands of words spoken and written since the Birmingham bombs, it's surprising how few have even touched on the reasons why so many perfectly normal Irish men and women have adopted a violent and hazardous struggle, and why tens, possibly hundreds, of thousands of ordinary decent working class families in the north of Ireland have gone through hell and high water to support them.

One doesn't, of course, expect to see the bosses' press siding with the IRA in its war to drive the army of the British ruling class out of Ireland. Like one doesn't expect to see them supporting workers' strikes. But it would only be asking them to treat their readers as reasonable, thinking adults if we say they should at least tell people what it is all about.

## Cartoon

In conditions of almost total silence about the causes of the war, the press has produced a veritable outpouring of racism to fill the vacuum in people's understanding. The whole war is treated on a primitive and childish bogeyman level, at its most virulent in the cartoons of republicans as some sub-human species. A Waite cartoon in last week's Mirror disgustingly added an animal tail to the caricature bomb planting Irishman — an effect sufficient to match up to the filthiest Nazi-type race propaganda. Or perhaps we

# London Evening Double Standard

should simply refer back to war-time images of dirty huns and the slant-eyed "yellow peril".

Max Hastings, known to many as Dishonest Journalist of the Year, does much the same sort of job verbally in the London Evening Standard (22.11.74). "Some are evident psychopaths who greatly enjoy killing" he says. Many IRA men would simply be common criminals in different times and at best, he writes, they're just brick-layer's mates (and how many shades of unconcealed snobbery have gone into that statement!) seeking "an importance and a sense of purpose" they wouldn't have in peacetime.

If propagandists like Hastings can convince people that the war has merely been dreamed up for the greater glory of bored Irish brick-layer's mates, and that there is no other reason behind the suffering, then that does away with the need for any reasoned argument about the rights and wrongs of the war itself.

## Imitate

It is true that the IRA, unlike most other guerilla armies, does have a deep attachment to the flag-waving, funeral parading, ceremonial side of military life. But if there is any criticism to be made, it is only that they too closely imitate the panoply of conventional establishment armies.

Hastings, who no doubt fully supports such things — swagger sticks, regimental mascots, Royal Colonels in Chief and all — can hardly complain.

By what double standard is the funeral of an IRA volunteer soldier an "obscene and disgusting parade", while a similar funeral of a British soldier is a "dignified and moving occasion"? And doesn't the British Army play up travel, glory and excite-



# The prisoners — hostages in British jails

DOLOURS and Marian Price ended their new hunger strike after two days, apparently on instructions from the Provisional IRA. Which, in itself, is sufficient to refute the common slander that the Republicans have a "thirst for martyrs", and suchlike absurd notions.

The fact that the case of these prisoners is no longer subject to the press's beloved "will they live or die?" "human

drama" and its attendant publicity should encourage socialists to give it more, rather than less, attention.

## REVERSAL

The Price sisters started their second hunger strike when they learnt that the Home Secretary had stated categorically that it was now out of the question for them to be sent back to a prison in the north of Ireland to complete their long prison sentences.

This was a sharp reversal of his statement in June, that it was "possible and reasonable" to send them back. And it is probable that an assurance to this effect was given them

privately, on condition that they put their trust in the Government and ended their hunger strike.

In June, however, Mr. Jenkins was under a great deal of pressure from MPs, doctors and welling public opinion against the revengeful and brutal treatment the hunger strikers (the Price sisters and Hugh Feeney and Gerard Kelly) had suffered while being forcibly fed.

They had in fact suffered the extreme cruelty and degradation of force-feeding for five whole months. Campaigners had pointed out that this amounted to torture by any definition; revelations of what they had endured



# THE STATE LAWS AND DUTIES OF SOCIALISTS

IN BRITAIN — "I.R.A." presumably means any one of

the IRA" is illegal. Penalties of 6 months and £400 fine, to a limited fine.

The basic political position of the "Solidarity with the IRA" (likely) be construed to mean support, organise and address a meeting to be addressed "organisation" carries the same

of WORKERS FIGHT on with the IRA — is therefore

## FENCE

But the British Army's reign continues. "Support" in that is, support for the militia their sole defence against both British Army (the ordinary terrorism, and the gangs of the SAS type).

but the para-military remain legal — legal, for at least 200 'Sectarian' is, slaughter of Catholics; only recently has any necessarily Republican — tiny scale and obviously, sectarian conflict within the sectarian fire with fire. ways been the mark of the Catholics as racially and, on the contrary, the misled misguided compatriots

not merely legal, they are British army, which acted as the UDA two and a half years self-defence of the Catholics the floodgates of bloody

is now illegal. All fair words are monopolised for the of the British army. Just that IRA prisoners are not standard standards for prisoners

## PARTITION

heroic army of volunteers use except the support of the masses (themselves under organisation to shake them loose is clearly "pro-terrorist" and as illegal "support".

Gerry Kelly and Marian and hundreds incarcerated without camps) are psychopaths — Who but psychopaths would occupying their country and in custom-built to maintain

and so are all who oppose the violence, who fight terror like Workers Fight who

a just cause, that (short of unity would be needed) its

included such incidents as omit being scooped up and poured back down the feeding tubes. And the death from pneumonia of another hunger striker, Michael Gaughan, served to underline the arguments about the danger of forcible feeding.

## CYNICALLY

Now all that is forgotten. Jenkins, cynically exploiting the present wave of anti-republican hysteria to welsh in his promise, states that the prisoners' return to Ireland has in fact conditional on there being 'no new outbreaks of violence or deterioration in the security situation in

programme of breaking the 6 County sectarian bearpit and re-uniting Ireland is the **only solution** to the slaughter in Ireland — and that therefore it has a right, even assessed on purely rationalist, humanist grounds, to fight for that objective against the British Army — **that is support for an illegal and infamous organisation of callous murderers.**

To deny that the IRA are a bunch of cowardly assassins and to insist instead, citing decade after decade of unequal struggle against insuperable odds, that the record of the various currents and groupings loosely called the IRA is powerful evidence that might is not right, that defeat after defeat after defeat and bloody repression cannot, has not quelled the desire of the Irish people to liberate itself — **that is to glorify and therefore "support" a proscribed organisation.**

To insist that the record of struggle for Irish freedom in this century as before, now summed up in the republican struggle and its army, is one of the epics of struggle for human freedom — **that is no doubt, too, "support" for the IRA.**

The truth, according to law, is otherwise. This truth, as legislated, is that the British Army is the real force fighting for freedom in Ireland. As it did before in India, in Kenya, in Malaya, in Aden. Its record not bloody, but flawless and shining...

## NATIONAL OPPRESSION

To point out that the atrocity — it can only be called that — of the Birmingham bombings, which may or may not have been the work of Irish republicans, is historically the result of the national oppression of the Irish people over centuries, breeding in its turn a nationalist attitude to the whole British people (including the working class, with its callous indifference to the repression of the Irish people) and the direct immediate result of the savagely brutalising activities of the British army for 5 years now — **that is now "pro-IRA propaganda" and as such illegal.**

To suggest that only the Irish people can solve their own problems, including the problems created by centuries of British occupation, and to go on **logically** to support those fighting, including within Britain against military targets, to drive out foreign troops — **that is to support a terrorist, illegal organisation.**

The IRA is banned: the masters of the terrorist army of occupation in Northern Ireland have dubbed the guerilla freedom fighters murderers and assassins and terrorists and proscribed them, and will strike at those who support them.

That is the law. But they fool themselves, the liars, the hypocrites, the tyrants and allies of sectarian bigots, who frame such laws — if they think that "law is stronger than life, or than men's desire to be free". Tyrannous laws have not "worked" in Northern Ireland. They fool themselves if they think they will work in Britain.

The law is the law, until the working class is willing and able to replace bourgeois law with working class law. But the situation in Northern Ireland remains the same: an artificial six county state; built-in and unbridgeable sectarian division so long as that state exists; and a just war of liberation, spearheaded by the republicans, stemming directly from decades — no, centuries — of oppression of the Catholics. The "Draconian" law of Jenkins the professional ruling class toady changes nothing of that.

## TASKS AND DUTIES

The tasks and duties of revolutionaries in Britain remain unchanged, too, both by laws and by the strength given to those oppressive laws by the tactics of indiscriminate civilian bombings — tactics which would have been condemned by Irish socialist republican leader James Connolly as "blithering idiocy" and murderous stupidity, and which must be condemned by revolutionaries in Britain and Ireland.

**But the cause of the republicans remains a just cause. Their fight remains a legitimate war of liberation.**

Northern Ireland."

At the time, this statement appeared to be a vague face saving get-out clause for Jenkins. BUT NOW IT IS APPARENT THAT THE PRISONERS ARE INDEED BEING HELD AS HOSTAGES against the "good behaviour" of the IRA. Though obviously they are quite innocent in relation to anything that has happened since their arrest in March 1973, they are being used as pawns to play in British imperialism's political military power game in Ireland. This point was rubbed in when SDLP leader Paddy Devlin, ever in tune with his British masters' every wish, rushed to blame the IRA for the fact that

Jenkins had gone back on his promise.

Needless to say, the keeping of hostages is in flagrant contradiction to principles, such as those in the UN human rights declaration, that Jenkins is supposed to subscribe to. And (if it's not a bit of a come-down from such lofty spheres) it also happens to be in contradiction to the rules of HM Prisons, which state that long serving prisoners should be kept in prisons nearest their families.

But then, what are UN declaration, prison rules or personal honesty to Jenkins, who was fully prepared to see these young prisoners die.

Jan Wilde

AFTER the last TUC Conference a vast task confronted socialists. The trade union leaders' almost unanimous approval of the Social Contract confirmed anew their desertion to the cause of class compromise. The enormous task of organising the rank and file for a class-wide fight against inflation and unemployment, wage 'restraint' and 'law and order' attacks fell to the most class conscious elements of the rank and file itself .... "if the leaders won't lead the rank and file must".

Such vast tasks can be met neither with the narrowly aristocratic attitudes of the strong, well organised shops nor the narrow factional jealousies of this or that 'revolutionary' organisation. Yet these were exactly the dominant attitudes of the delegates of the 2nd National Rank and File Movement conference at Birmingham's Digbeth Hall on November 30th.

## DISUNITY

The Conference began with a discussion of unemployment. Without being related to the resolutions before the conference this 'discussion' became little more than the retailing of anecdotes, to little political point. One heard the constant repetition by members of IS (International Socialism) of the idea that "it is all very well having pretty programmes but it is action that matters." Of course this would be true if it made any sense to counterpose programmes to action. But it doesn't. This approach is simply a way of covering up for programmatic sloppiness.

The only point around which there was anything approaching a debate was the 'sliding scale of wages'. Jack Sutton, of Workers Fight, representing NUPE United Manchester Hospitals Branch, proposed a draft resolution as an alternative to the one put forward by the Conference's Organising Committee. A central point of this draft was the need to protect the real value of wage rises by having them rise automatically with the cost of living. This must be a cornerstone in the fight against the effects of inflation and the disunity in our class that it sows.

The opponents of this demand concentrated their attention on the demand for a large (30% across the board) wage rise. As Dick North, an NUT Executive member, put

## Look no strings

AT THE Rank & File Conference at the Digbeth Hall Birmingham I saw a puppeteer performing with his puppets. But I couldn't see the strings.

Time and again the delegates seemed to respond not to the arguments put forward but to the recommendations of the platform. The chairman would simply say that "the Organising Committee wants you to accept" or reject this or that motion — and the voting followed accordingly.

Yet it was given out that this would be the most democratic conference any of us had ever been to.

My own experience confirmed the mechanical way people were voting. Early in the Conference I presented an amendment to the Organising Committee's resolution. The amendment came from the GMWU Spun Plants branch of Stanton steelworks, and advocated the principle of election for all seats on the Organising Committee: one delegate to be elected from each sponsoring paper, and ten elected directly by conference.

I pointed out that the Morning Star had claimed that the conference and the whole movement would be just the manipulated backyard of the IS group. People were right to be suspicious — after all, this is what some rank and file movements had turned into in the past. If we wanted to avoid that fate, and also convince

# The politics of self promotion

by Jack Price

it in speaking for the Organising Committee, "the demand for a sliding scale of wages reflects the pessimism of the weaker sections represented here today".

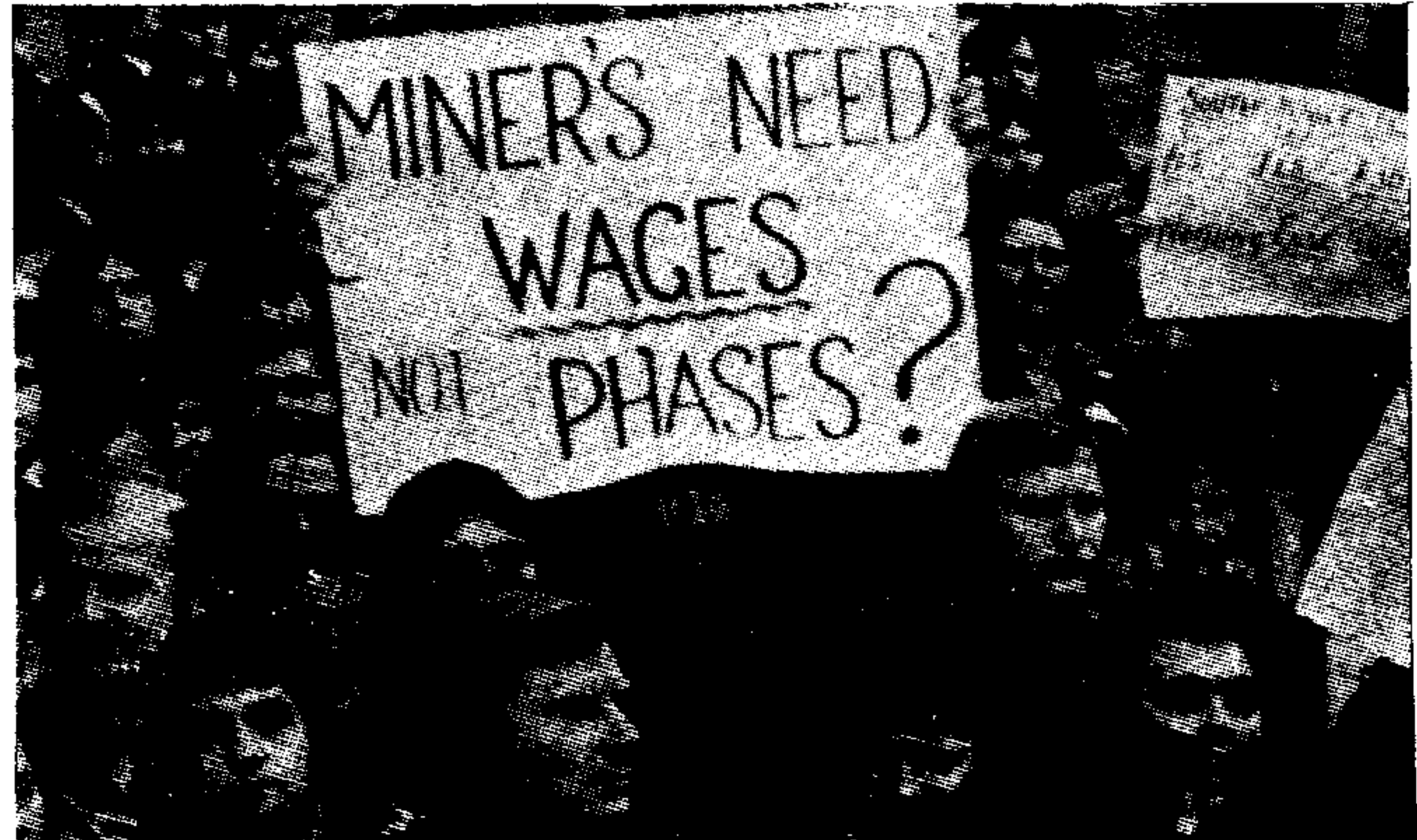
But this is wrong: it is not pessimism that determines our preference for "a sliding scale of wages" but the fact that the working class is in a defensive position at the moment, disunited and with a majority of sections incapable of achieving wage rises that would put them ahead of rises in the cost of living. What Dick North's conception "reflects" is the myopic self confidence of do-it-yourself militancy.

In the final analysis, of course, it is the coming spate of wage claims and strikes

movement can perhaps do so: but not on its own account (a detailed programme of demands similar to that of the Working Women's Charter was thrown out by the 1st Rank & File conference in March.

Thus instead of the Rank & File movement being able more and more to link up and integrate the different grass roots rank and file movements — some based on a single factory, a single industry or a single issue — I.S. as its main moving force sees to it that it divorces itself from these, claiming that they make no contribution to the struggle.

To the extent that the Rank & File movement refuses to participate in these often more broadly based organisations except with a view to presenting them with



that will prove one demand or the other right, and we must in any case all give our utmost support to those sections in struggle.

The organisational meanness of the conference was best brought out by a speech by Carol Durras, a SOGAT member from Merseyside, who claimed that support for the Working Women's Charter was no contribution to the struggle for women's rights and women's liberation. In line with the shameful position taken at the last IS conference a couple of months ago, she and other IS members believe that only IS can make a contribution to women's liberation. The Rank & File

an ultimatum — "Join IS" or "Join the Rank & File Movement" — to that extent it will remain IS's backyard, militant but sterile.

There were signs that this degeneration has already set in: unlike at previous conferences, this one did not see one miner, one docker, one railwayman, one postman, or one print worker (except Ms. Durras) speak. And yet the whole movement was initially sponsored by IS-dominated papers in these industries. Seeing that the principal character of the conference was "self promotion" it is worth looking at this, the debit side of such an affair, in assessing its significance.

A SECOND VIEW by **Geordie Barclay**

others that this organisation really was democratic, we had to ensure this would be the case by passing this amendment.

Everyone nodded. "You've got them with you", I told myself.

But I was judging by shop floor standards, where reasoned argument is all important. The people I was dealing with now were torn between their loyalty to IS and their own sense. So when the platform recommended rejection of the amendment all the head-nodding turned to head-shaking.

But I had another amendment to present later and so I had time to think about my experience. This time my amendment was that if the Rank & File movement is to build roots in the working class movement it must organise local branches.

Much the same resolution, in fact, as IS itself had proposed at the Communist Party's backyard industrial conference, the Liaison Cttee. for Defence of Trade Unions.

This time no one opposed me. Not even the Organising Committee. Once again I thought my branch's position must have carried the day. But the puppeteer was there again. This time it was even more obvious, because, forgetting to make a recommendation, the vast mass of delegates didn't vote at all. Only when the chairman realised what he had done, and belatedly make his recommendation, did those little

wooden hands go up.

Both amendments were an attempt to avoid the Rank & File movement becoming just a backyard. Both failed. The delegates would have done well to remember Trotsky's words on the relationship between the revolutionary party and the trade unions, and to have applied these sensibly to the conferences of the Rank & File movement:

"The struggle for the Party's influence in the trade unions finds its objective verification in whether or not the unions thrive, whether or not the number of their members increases, as well as in their relations with the broadest masses. If the party buys its influence in the trade unions only at the price of a marrowing down and factionalising of the latter — converting them to into auxiliaries of the party for momentary aims and preventing them from becoming genuine mass organisations — then the relations between the party and the class are wrong." (Leon Trotsky, *Communism and Syndicalism*, 1929.)

The worst thing about this conference was that it hindered Rank & File from becoming a genuine workers' movement not by drawing the political lines too sharply (in fact they were hardly drawn at all) but by drawing the FACTIONAL lines around it like deep trenches, and being guided by them alone.

# LABOUR IN POWER — BUT A POWERLESS CONFERENCE

LAST WEEK'S Labour Party conference did nothing to suggest that the Labour Government has any clear idea of how to solve the crisis of British capitalism, except the familiar technique of loading the crisis onto the working class.

The message of the Social Contract — that is, of stagnant or declining living standards — was broadcast not only by Harold Wilson, giving a dire warning against "big pay rises", Denis Healey, Jim Callaghan and right wing General Council member Alf Allen, but also by the darling of the Labour lefts, Michael Foot. Either accept the Social Contract, he said, or accept inflation and unemployment. In other

by Ben Sugrue

words, head they win, tails we lose: and the pretense that there is something for the working class in the Contract has long ago been dropped, and certainly got no mention at this conference.

## budget

The alternative view to this, the view of the rank and file critical of the real effect that the "Socialist" con trick of Foot and Co. has had on our pockets, was put by Brian Anderson (AUEW Tass). "How do you think we feel now having heard the budget? The last thing we

expected when we asked for a redistribution of wealth and income was that the redistribution would be in favour of the rich."

The labour movement's power, or lack of it, over its leaders was a recurrent theme of the conference. Indeed the power over its own conference was called into question over the chaotic and disputed conference arrangements. But much more important, it was made clear that conference had no power to mandate its government over vital issues such as Clay Cross and the Shrewsbury pickets, and over the calling,

timing and management of the Common Market referendum which delegates held to be so important.

The power of conference extended precisely to "passing opinion" on these issues, issues too important to be allowed out of the hands of the leadership in its wisdom.

## status

In line with the continuing anti-democratic status of the conference, reform to extend the powers of Constituency Labour Parties over their MPs was also defeated. Moved by Ken Coates of the Institute for Workers Control, speaking for Rushcliffe constituency

party, the measure would have introduced "re-call" into the proceedings of the PLP, by making Labour MPs stand for re-selection by their CLPs during the course of a Parliament.

It was opposed from the platform by the 'left wing' Ian Mikardo, and with it fell the possibility of important pressure for democratisation from the grass roots. Democratisation from above, Benn style, might be the only democracy we're left with. Unless we organise to fight again on these lines.

## Lightning sit-ins point the finger at Fisher

Lightning 2-hour sit-ins hit the Manchester Royal Infirmary when ancillary workers occupied the catering department and part of the Eye Hospital in protest at the way the negotiations on their £30 minimum claim are going.

Further action is planned, and NUPE members in Liverpool are now threatening not to work on Christmas day.

Their suspicions have been aroused by NUPE leader Fisher's handling of the Council workers' pay settlement, where the £30 minimum has been 'achieved' by the trick of consolidating existing thresholds and adding on a maximum of £3.43.

This deal has put the hospital ancillary workers in NUPE on their guard. In fact in the delegate conferences held since last December, many have rejected the NEC call for accepting "nothing less than the local government workers". Manchester delegates, for instance, voted instead, unanimously, for nothing less than the full claim of £30, plus the thresholds consolidated on top of this.

Negotiations begin again on December 13th, and a picket may be mounted to remind the NUPE negotiators that the membership do in fact want the full claim.

This should be the start of a militant campaign, and ancillary workers must now begin to seek support from other workers in this claim. If there is no fight on this, inflation will simply tear the guts out of what wages we have left, and the NUPE will drift further towards collapse.

JACK SUTTON  
NUPE, United Manchester Hospitals

are not idle. In London on Monday Dec. 2nd a Campaign Committee was set up, based on Holland Park school, where the NUT office and phone will be used to co-ordinate activity. And on the same night in Liverpool delegates from a number of schools set up an Ad Hoc Action Committee to campaign for the £15 increase.

I.H., C.B.

## ACTION STILL CENTRED ON SCOTLAND

ALTHOUGH several schools in England and Wales have begun to take action on the claim for £15 a week increase for all teachers (reported in last WF) the majority are waiting for the publication of the Houghton Report (due December 16th) and the focus of action remains in Scotland.

There, even the leaders of the teachers' unions have seen through the bribe of this month's £100 lump sum 'on account' designed to stave off pressure on the Houghton Inquiry. They have reacted by calling national strikes which will have closed most Scottish schools for three days this week.

The £100 has been apparently taken out of that part of the proposed award which is to be backdated to May 24th. Sam Fisher, CP member of the NUT Executive, says that "the signs are that the Houghton award won't be very much less than 25%." The fact is that a 25% increase on the basic scale (including thresholds) spread over the last seven months would amount to over £230. So the question remains — "Why only £100?"

But at least the NUT Executive are appearing to make a stand on thresholds. They are rejecting the idea that previously paid threshold payments should constitute part of the pay increase. We must hold them to that and not let them quietly drop it, the way the demand for backdating of the London Allowance claim quietly disappeared from their leaflets.

If teachers in England and Wales are mostly waiting, they

# NUS TAKES UP ALL THE EASY OPTIONS

THE N.U.S. conference last weekend showed no signs of the cracks in the 'Broad Left's' (i.e. Communist Party's) domination such as were evident at the Liverpool conference last April (when an IS motion on grants was carried).

Except for the rejection of the Executive majority — report on Soviet dissidents, which was a whitewash of the repressive nature of the USSR, and the acceptance of the Executive minority (IS dominated) report which detailed the repression, the broad left had things very much their own way. (Though they did make themselves thoroughly unpopular when, in the course of the debate on a general civil liberties motion which called for the legalisation of 'pot', their spokesman said pot smokers were "socially diseased"). That motion was in fact carried, and the many issues it included could provide the basis for a valuable campaign if the NUS acts on it.)

The domination of the broad left at this conference meant that there will be virtually no grants campaign in the coming months, and the women in society motion got watered down to paying mere lip service to the liberation of women.

But inevitably, so soon after the massive backlash following the Birmingham bombings, and in the wake of Jenkins' new repressive laws, a major question was Ireland. And here the CP's domination had the

most serious consequences.

As many speakers pointed out, it had taken the Birmingham bombings to get Northern Ireland put on the NUS conference order paper as an emergency motion. The cruel repression by the British Army in the North had not in itself been seen to merit the conference's attention.

The motions to Conference consisted of three main positions. With both the right wing and the left (IS) defeated, the Broad Left's 'package', with its nonsense about a Bill of Rights for the north of Ireland and withdrawal of troops to barracks was accepted. Speakers against the motion pointed out that calling for a Bill of Rights for the north meant rejecting the right of the whole of the Irish people to self determination, and that 'troops back to barracks' rather than 'out now' meant giving credence to the view that troops have a peace keeping role. But the broad left still won the day, in an atmosphere of general capitulation to the right wing hue and cry. Conference did however decide to oppose Jenkins' legal measures and the extension of police powers, but unfortunately didn't actually go so far as to plan a campaign against the laws!

Apart from this debate, the motion that aroused the most interest was one — moved not by the 'left alternative' bloc but by Middlesex Poly (with a delegation largely of Workers Fight and Peoples Democracy

adherents) — which took a clear stand in support of the right of Irish republicans to fight back. The motion explained that the bombings, if they were done by republicans — which the motion also correctly placed in great doubt — were basically the result of the failure of the left in Britain and of such bodies as the NUS, the stand firmly with the anti-imperialist fight and meet British chauvinism head on.

Though many other motions included demands for 'Troops Out Now' and recognition of the right of Ireland to self determination, none took such an intransigent position in solidarity with the republicans

and their right to do more than defend the Catholic areas.

The interest aroused by the Middlesex Poly resolution brought an invitation for a member of the delegation (Nick Mullen) to the press conference following the debate to put the opposition view to the now-official NUS one, and the same points were also made in television and radio interviews.

However, despite the fact that such a principled line did get a good hearing, it failed to win the support of the majority of the delegates.

The net result of the debate is that, in keeping with British liberal traditions, the NUS has selected the easy option of mouthing opposition to the repressive measures while dodging the difficult but important issues of giving the opposition teeth and standing, despite all the problems, with the republican struggle.

D.R., B.H.

## Women and Socialism Conference

# WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER DEBATED

ON SATURDAY 30th November, 300 women met in Leeds for a one day "Women and Socialism" conference, to discuss the campaign around the Working Women's Charter and whether it was a progressive development for the Women's Liberation movement.

The atmosphere was good and discussion lively, and it was useful to see the reactions of the women's movement to the aims the Charter had set itself, to bring the demands of the women's movement into the labour movement, and to see how it assessed the Charter's achievements of the past 9 months.

Many people felt the Charter was good, but in need of amendments, and it was hoped that a conference in March will sort this out in more precise detail, preferably adopting amendments which had emerged through the struggle.

Another view saw the Charter more as a vehicle for struggle, a way to introduce feminist demands into the male dominated work place and trade unions, and with the process of organising around it being as valuable as the demands themselves. It was felt it could provide a focus and a way of co-ordinating women's struggles for improved conditions, and a way of highlighting the position of women as workers and in the home.

The conference also heard the views of the "Power of Women Collective", who said that the Charter does not in any sense reflect the real needs and aspirations of women. All women, they say, are workers, and what the Charter does is simply rationalise our role as fulfilling two jobs, one domestic and one in employ-

ment, and make it even more possible for capitalism to exploit us. What we need, they said, was more pay for either job, shorter hours, special conditions for us as women and a general recognition that our own self-activity is what will achieve results, not merely attempting to get resolutions passed by trade unions.

There has always been inherent in their position of defending housework — as long as it's paid — a downgrading of demands which would work toward the abolition of this sort of petty servitude for women. It was precisely to break up women's role as kept domestic servants that the Charter was drawn up, and it is this aspect perhaps more than any other which has given it such impetus.

It is not surprising then, to find them arguing against the whole idea!

The conference came to no fixed conclusions, and was undecided as to a national perspective for work around the Charter.

Locally, of course, groups are springing up all over the place. In Rochdale three weeks ago the Trades and Labour Council adopted the Charter by a large majority. We are trying to get a sub-committee formed to look into the implementation of the Charter, a crucial step in terms of the equal pay struggles in the area. We hope it will act as an educative centre for trade unionists, to make them aware of the specific situation of women workers.

Hopefully the next women's strike will not now find itself as isolated as the women at SEI were, forced to go back because their male workmates and fellow trade unionists refused to support their struggle for equal pay and conditions.

SUE ARNALL

## FASCISTS BEATEN AGAIN

AFTER a week of publicity, COLIN JORDAN's British Movement 'Smash the IRA' march through Liverpool attracted only 40 fascists and Orange bigots.

Although the Trades Council, the Communist Party and I.S. decided to do nothing to stop Jordan's fascists, the counter-demonstration numbered 100, screening the Nazis along their entire route and drowning their poisonous propaganda with anti-fascist chants. And we gave out several thousand leaflets.

At the Pierhead, Jordan's thugs tried to take the Trades Council rostrum for speeches, and it was here that 5 comrades were arrested in the fight to prevent the fascists getting a platform. The attempted

speeches by Jordan and local fascist McCaughlin were completely drowned out, and after a while they packed up and were driven off under police protection.

Although the anti fascist demo completely ruined the British Movement march, the fact that the Nazis were using the anti-IRA issue scared off a number of so-called socialists from opposing them. It is clear that unless the anti-fascist movement is prepared to challenge the extreme right's anti-Irish racism, the past year's anti-fascist work will have been undone.

Donations to help our work and defend those arrested to: Merseyside anti-fascist Cttee, St. Mary's Annexe, Lower Milk Street, L. pool3

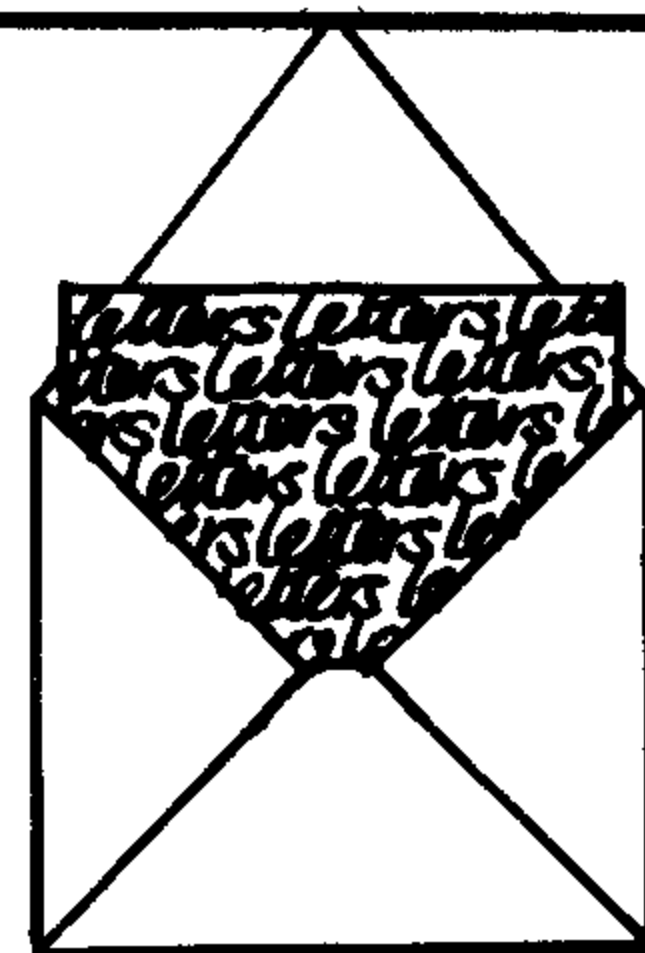
## After the vote was over...

A mass meeting of Tillie Henderson (Leigh) strikers on November 21st began by rejecting the management's offered package which included a fall back pay of £23.83 (not £25 as demanded), an increase of 7p to 82p an hour for workers on the new engineering scheme reaching 100% of production target, with other workers getting the nationally negotiated 6p an hour increase as a straight one not linked, as previously, to piece work.

As many of the strikers (particularly the militants manning the picket line) drifted away from the mass meeting,

the union reps. went back to management, returning with an extra 3p an hour for non-engineering scheme workers who were not already getting a protection of earnings bonus. They reconvened the meeting there and then put this miserable 'gain' to those who were left, who voted to accept and return to work.

Militants afterwards described the deal as a sell-out, but stressed that, especially as the strike had only lasted three days, they didn't think it would result in demoralisation or a blow to union organisation in the factory.



## On 'The Right to Work'

Jack Price's article 'The right to work' missed two very important points on which George Doughty (General Secretary, DATA) should have been hammered.

The two points I mean come in this quote "We must encourage a collective approach among trade unionists to current employment problems. This would involve fighting redundancies or, at the very least, demanding higher redundancy payments, longer notices, earlier retirement with adequate payments, a shorter working week, greater control of overtime, longer holidays and so forth."

The two points I believe Jack Price missed were longer notices and higher redundancy pay. While both these demands look to be in the interests of our class they are definitely not so. Anybody who has ever been involved in a redundancy situation will tell you that the biggest barrier to a fight is the redundancy payment.

Even the National Action Committee on Steel voted out a resolution calling for higher redundancy pay. It was defeated quite heavily, with only two delegates voting in favour. It was seen that to call

for higher redundancy pay was to take a defeatist point of view, and it was also seen as morally wrong to sell something which was not yours but belonged to the future generation. Charging a higher price might make it capitalistically right but it wouldn't make it morally right.

In steel we get two years' notice of redundancies and most militants' views on this are that it is too long. What happens is that people see two years as quite a long time and therefore don't start taking industrial action, and instead go off on a tangent of petitions, marches, deputations to Parliament etc. (As described by Jack Price himself in the section 'Coming unstuck in steel'.) Each of these things is demoralising and after 12 months of this, people start saying that it's time for industrial action — but when they look around they find half the work force gone, and no new starters as people don't come looking for work at a place threatened with redundancies. Most of the people left are working 12 hour shifts seven days a week to keep the wheels turning, meanwhile spending their redundancy money in their heads.

Most of these people are in the 50 to 60 age group and the thought that is going through their heads is 'how do I make my redundancy money spin out until I get my old age pension'.

I believe Jack Price would agree that these people are hardly likely to be the vanguard in the fight against redundancies. I speak from experience, having been involved in the Stanton Action Group where we finished up with a loss of 1,500 jobs.

Geordie Barclay  
Shop steward, Stanton.