

DEFEND THE NORTH WALES 24!



WORKERS' FIGHT
Special Supplement
by Andrew Hornung
and Maxine Landis

5p

Defend the right to picket

IN FEBRUARY of this year, 24 North Wales building workers were arrested. They are to appear in Court at Shrewsbury in October, charged with a rich variety of offences from causing damage to affray, intimidation and conspiracy.

All these 'crimes' were supposed to have been committed 6 months before the arrests, in the course of picketing during the National building workers' strike of August-September 1972.

The men were a bit surprised, to say the least. There'd been no particular incidents at the site in question. Certainly no-one had been arrested at the time, although police were present throughout.

Ugly

Some knew of truly ugly incidents in the strike - incidents in which the Police had shown no concern whatever. One such was the case of Mike Shivelock, a well-known Stourbridge militant, who was severely beaten up during the strike by 3 strange men who knocked on his door in the night. But when friends traced men they believed were involved, the Police refused even to investigate the matter.

Why then did the Police spend 6 months trying to build up a case against 24 men who had merely gone along on one of the hundreds of flying pickets of the builders' strike?

The answer lies in issues and events much bigger than the building industry and the strike. It lies in the major events of the British working class struggle in the half-year preceding the

The year had started out pretty spectacularly. The miners had struck out, alone, against the Tory Government's 7% Pay Norm. When leaders of other major unions failed to support them with strike action, it seemed that they were doomed to a slow and hungry defeat.

Instead, the miners went out and insisted on winning. Rather than stick around in their isolated villages and mount pickets at the pits, they formed flying pickets and extended the strike to immobilise the country's stockpiles of coal and coke.

This action brought them solidarity from rank and file workers, and was climaxed by the massive picket, joined by thousands of Birmingham workers, of the Saltley Coke Depot. Within hours the Government was on its knees, from which position it was well placed to negotiate its own resounding defeat.

The following month the Industrial Relations Act became law.

Leaders of many unions were at that time still appearing to be making a stand against it. Workers up and down the country were determined to resist it. And the Tory Government, still smarting from its recent trouncing by the miners, would have preferred to avoid any test cases just then.

Dockers

But the matter was beyond their control, and when a number of container packing companies decided to use the new law against dockers picketing their depots, there was little the Government could do to stop the

So they found themselves taking on a strong and determined group of workers, at the most disastrous time.

The result was the crisis known as 'Pentonville week', when 5 dockers, imprisoned in Pentonville jail under the Industrial Relations Act, were set free by thousands upon thousands of workers who struck and demonstrated, and would have been the vanguard of a spontaneous general strike if the Government had not caved in when it did.

Once again the Tory Government was beaten and humiliated. And this time also 'the law' - and in particular the Industrial Relations Act - had been 'brought into disrepute' and contemptuously disposed of by the working class.

These events form the background to the arrest of the 24 building workers.

Lame duck

The Tories' problem was that they needed to hit hard at the working class's newly discovered picketing weapons (the flying and mass pickets) but that the Law which sets out to do this, the Industrial Relations Act, had been rendered a lame duck. They knew they couldn't use it openly without risking another big, angry flare-up.

So it seems they decided to try to regain some of the ground they had lost to the dockers and the miners - and the working class as a whole - by staging a show trial of pickets.

The building workers' strike of August-September of that year, saw the widespread use of the

being more split up and isolated, and having the huge problem of non-union and Lump labour on their backs, must have appeared as an ideal target.

So, almost as soon as the strike was over, the police went on to the attack with their investigations of alleged "acts of violence, intimidation and destruction" by the flying pickets.

They based themselves on a "dossier" prepared by that assortment of cheap-skates, bullies, penny-pinchers and cold-war paranoiacs that go under the name of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers.

The NFBTE's claims were given scant attention in the serious press (apart from The Economist) but were taken up with relish by the NEWS OF THE WORLD, which ran a short series on "the Strife-Makers", in which several prominent building workers were slandered.

This scene was set for the attempted victimisation of the North Wales 24.

The aim of the trial is to create a legal precedent against effective picketing, to define in a "Court of Law" what is and what is not "legal" on a picket line.

All 24 building workers are

charged under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act. But this is merely a decoy. No Act contains the whole of the law on any subject; law is an amalgam of various Acts. And the law on picketing includes, as an essential component, the Industrial Relations Act. (See p.6)

Test Case

For the working class, it's a matter not of what's "legal", but of what is necessary. Picketing, legally defined, would consist only of "obtaining or communicating information". **THIS DOES NOT STOP SCABS!**

If we let them get away with this show trial, it will become a test case, a legal precedent for using the Industrial Relations Act, together with other Acts, to fine or jail any trade unionist on any picket line who does more than "obtain or communicate" information. (And even many who do only that: see p.7).

If the working class does not act to stop this happening, the Tories will have succeeded in doing by stealth what they failed to do openly with the Pentonville Five.

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Right: some of the 24 victimised building workers lead a demonstration through Shrewsbury after one of the Court hearings.

Talking to some of the defendants, we pieced together the story of the North Wales Twenty-Four

*The names have been changed



HOW THE 24 CAME TO SHREWSBURY

POLICE investigations are like traffic accidents. Suddenly, savagely, they crash into people's lives. What is always happening to 'somebody else' is now happening to you.

Suddenly the complaints of police harassment, bias and brutality are no longer the 'exaggerations and just deserts' of people you assumed were probably guilty in any case. Now they are happening to you, an ordinary working man, a rank and file trade unionist.

"What started it all off was what they said to Dave Morris", said Stan Jones. "Dave came to work the day after the police had seen him and said I shouldn't have made a statement to them against him. I told him I never made any statement whatsoever. But that night, when I got home, the police were there again. This time it was for me.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked them, 'tell the truth or tell lies like the one you told when you said I made a statement against Dave Morris?' They did not answer. They just took me down to the police station at Wrexham!"

Statements

The picture Stan painted was typical. The police failed to get those they pulled in to incriminate each other. But it must be said that they did get statements out of most of them. And many of these statements were carelessly worded. No one should have made any statement at all.

At the police station Stan was charged on several counts. Some time later, though, the police called on him again. *This time it was to say that the charges had been dropped!* It had been, they said, a case of mistaken identity. And it stayed like that for a few weeks. Then, faced with different charges, he was arrested.

It had been much the same with all the others. But in Dave Morris's case there was a spice of terror too. Keith Owen, who works with some of the men who have been arrested, gave this account.

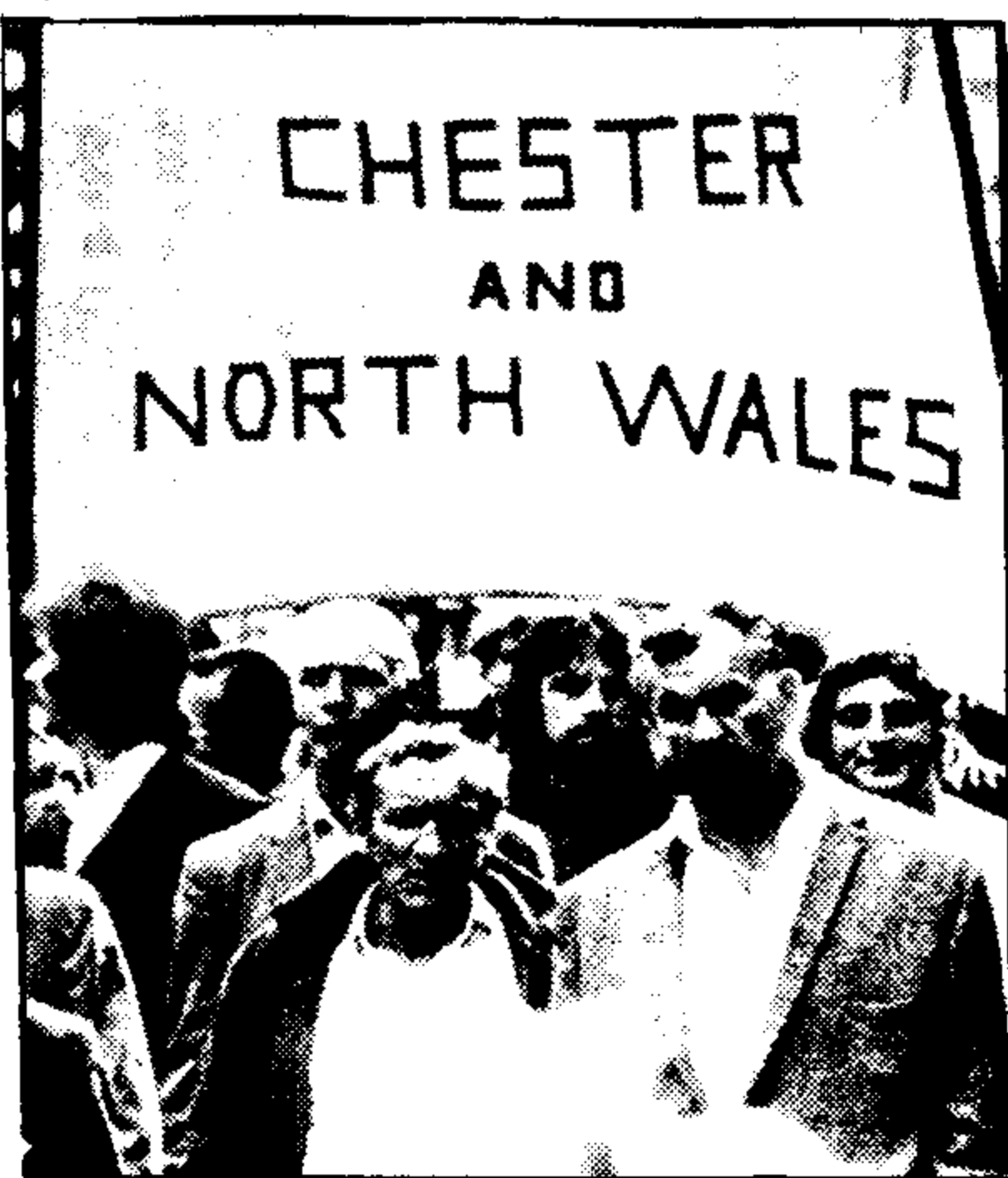
"I was one of the first to be interviewed by the police. In fact,

they told me that I was the *third to be interviewed in a succession of hundreds!* They showed me a picture of Dave Morris and asked me if I knew him. I told them I did, but refused to answer any more questions. Then, pointing to the photograph again, they said - "Now we're asking you lads to come in, but we'll be dragging this one in."

Dave's response to this was predictable. "When Keith and the other lads told me what had happened down at the police station I was terrified. I admit it. You see, I'd never been in trouble with the law and so I had never been in this situation before. So when they came and took me to Flint police station I thought 'This is it!'

When we got there I told them they would get nothing from me and refused to co-operate in any way. Finally they tried to get all sorts of personal details out of me which, they said, 'would be taken into consideration when the judge finds you guilty.'

By the time the final charges were brought six months had gone by since the mythical 'in-



idents' they were supposed to be guilty of. But the men remembered the flying picket squads and the way they were organised.

The picketing in their area had been organised by the Charter and North Wales Action Committee. The Committee, which was set up ad hoc, was nevertheless officially recognised by both the main unions involved in the strike, and planned the picketing and other actions in the area in the presence of full time officials and with their full participation.

Dave Morris recalled one particularly significant meeting. "In the presence of the Regional Secretary and the three full time officials for the area on the Committee I proposed that we escalate the strike. This was because of the pressure on our lads who had been out six weeks by then. I thought it was about time the strike was extended. This was accepted by the Committee and so we in the North Wales area escalated the strike before the rest of the country. It should be added that this proposal was agreed to by the officials who were present."

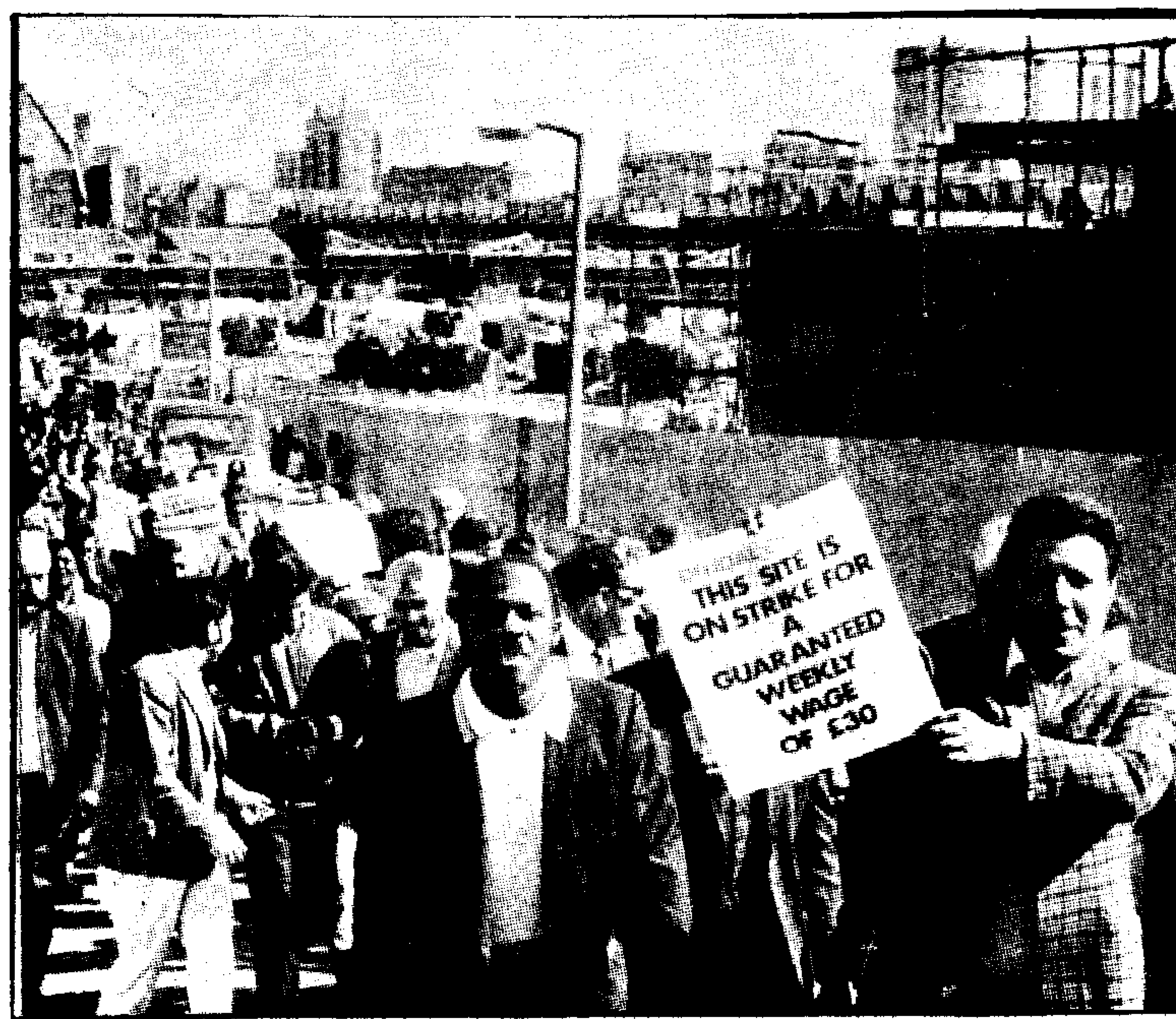
With that, the picketing in the area was stepped up. "I remember" said Gerry Cousins, "one of our officials telling us at the

the police offered to show them the way ... seeing as they had been "so well behaved".

At another site picketed on 7th August the police were again present. Once again there were no complaints from the police ... until six months later. Then, three men were charged with various "crimes" committed there.

Although the police had no occasion to interfere at the time, it is clear that somebody was already compiling a dossier; because we now see brought up as "evidence" piles of photographs of the twenty four taken while they were picketing. These photographs were taken by no amateur snooper. They were all taken with telephoto lenses from

Below: Builders march during 1972 National Building Workers' strike



beginning of the strike that we shouldn't be digging the garden or decorating the house but out on picket duty. That was Albert Press, the UCATT area ~~organiser~~ organiser".

At Kingswood near Telford in Shropshire the pickets managed to bring the site out without any difficulty. The police, who were present the whole time, congratulated the pickets on the 'good behaviour'. And when the pickets told the police they didn't know the way to the next site they wanted to picket,

a considerable distance.

Because of the dropping of the charges at Christmas the arrests in February came as a complete surprise to everybody.

As soon as they heard about them, both unions (UCATT and T&GWU) got together and issued to the arrested men a duplicated form. The form offered them full support if they signed it. In glowing language full of fighting spirit the form set out the facts. It spoke of the duty of all to support the twenty four in the name of trade union solidarity and

justice. All but a couple of the men gladly signed.

But if the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity flows through the veins of militants, it may be said that officials seem regularly to develop thrombosis. And as you go up the trade union hierarchy the thrombosis turns to rigor mortis. *Within 24 hours the decision to support the men had been reversed!*

Smith's treachery

And that effectively was the position of both the unions until recently. In a belated reply to a letter from the then secretary of Connah's Quay UCATT branch, George Smith, the Union's General Secretary, wrote: "I would advise you that we have had legal advice on the ... 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."

It looked as if the Union, fearful that 'Conspiracy' might extend to its own officials, was trying to do a deal whereby the police would drop these charges if the union agreed to withhold support.

However, it soon became clear that, whatever the union's assumptions about the 'legal processes', the police were determined to press on. In fact, one of the men arrested on two Conspiracy charges was informed through a lawyer that if he were to plead guilty to these they would "let him off lightly". If not, they would "get him on a whole number of other charges."

Fred Harris who is a branch

... Continued

secretary and who was a member of the Action Committee, summed up the officials' reaction from his own experience. "When I first heard of the arrests, I rang them up. I told them that they should be up on charges if anybody, because they were acting on official instructions. They said they agreed with me, but now they've kicked it into touch — they're playing safe!"

A little later one of the stewards on Fred's site rang up ... to tell them that now Fred had been arrested too. "Tell him he won't be standing alone when he is in Court" was all the official could answer.

800 Policemen

And that was true! Those who appeared in Court at Shrewsbury on March 15th for the pre-trial proceedings certainly didn't stand alone. But no thanks to the trade union officials for that. About a thousand brothers and sisters came to Shrewsbury that day to see to it that the 24 didn't stand alone.

There were building workers, steelworkers, dockers and students; there were banners from London, from Birmingham, Liverpool and Stoke.

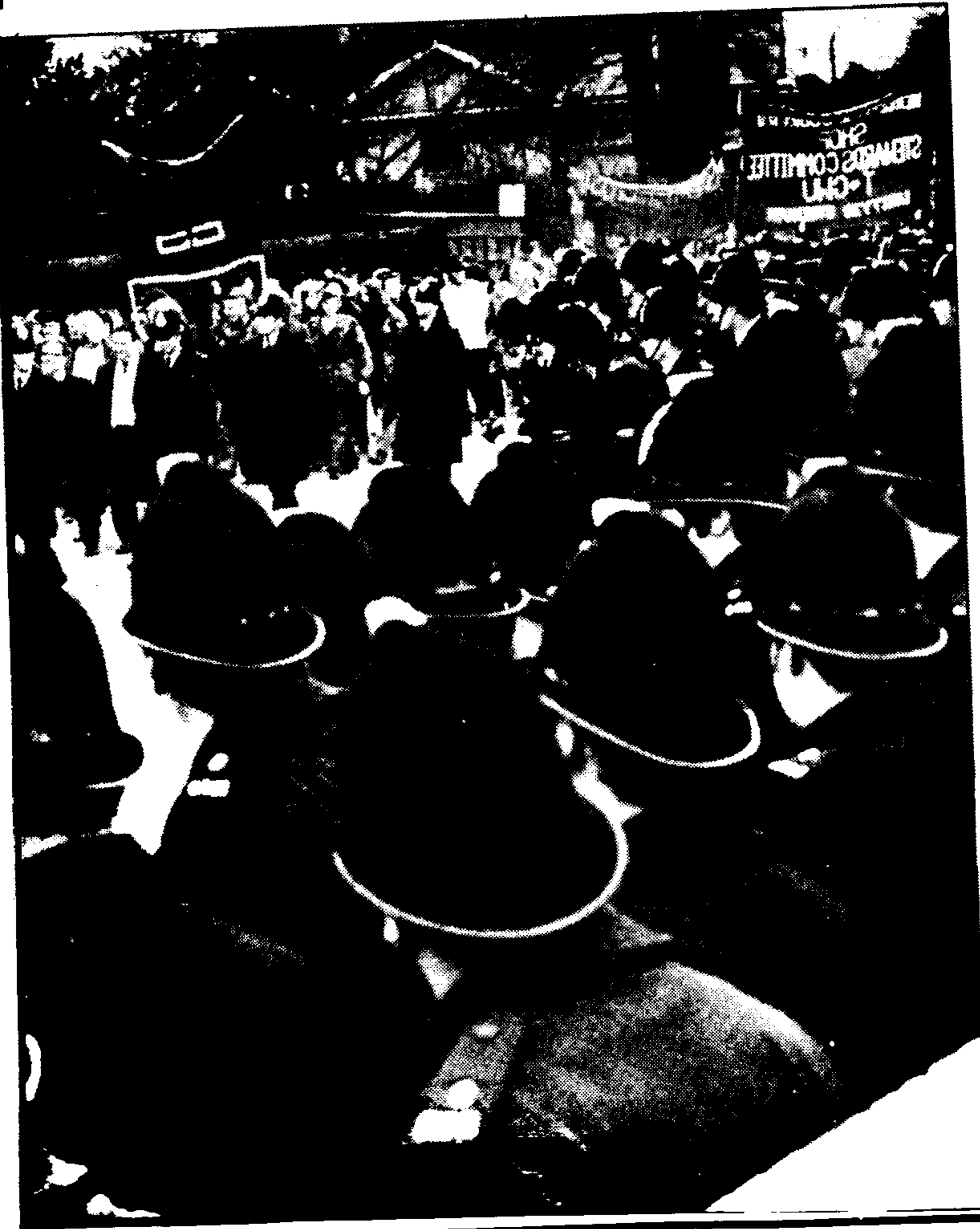
But there were no trade union officials! Or rather, there was one as a personal gesture — and he was worried in case his national officers victimised him for attending!

But that wasn't all that there was at Shrewsbury. Gerry Cousins was stunned when he saw 800 policemen at the Shire Hall Court at Shrewsbury. Now it was their turn, it seemed, to mount a mass picket!

They blocked off many of the roads going into town. They tried to delay or turn back vehicles whose passengers had come to support the twenty four. They lined the road outside the court. They stood in every part of the Court House. "There must have been a couple of hundred in the Court House alone", Stan guessed. "In the Courtroom there were about 40, and out in the corridors and the yard some had dogs."

"We went into the Court" Gerry continued, "and we sat down with the police flanking us on either side. I didn't see any public at all. Just three of four journalists, but I believe there were a few relatives of one man."

Shrewsbury meeting (top right) and march (below) flanked by thousands of police.



I thought, what have I done to deserve this? I must have pinched the Crown Jewels!"

When Pete Carter, a leading militant from Birmingham, said that "this trial is a political trial, a show trial" he was dead right. To what extent it was a "show trial", however, was not revealed the day after the first proceedings ... in Parliament.

On that day, March 16th, John Page — right wing Tory MP from Harrow West — was presenting a motion in Parliament which sought to ban picketing as we know it and remove social security benefits from strikers' families. He began his miserable speech by reading out a newspaper report which, he claimed, proved his point.

The piece he read was the DAILY TELEGRAPH report of the huge numbers of police that had been drafted into Shrewsbury

The stage had been set. The show had been performed. The "proof" had been presented. "Surely" Page concluded, "there is something wrong with our industrial relations system and the whole attitude of the country towards picketing if it is necessary for 800 police to be drafted to a court when 24 men are having their cases heard."



MOLD: HOW THE FIRST FRAME-UP FAILED

ONLY THREE days after John Page's Parliamentary Punch-and-Judy show (see above) its true significance was clear. Seven pickets were arrested on a mass picket outside the Fine Tubes factory near Plymouth where workers had been on strike for nearly three years. Not long after, 5 building workers were arrested in Birmingham after a peaceful occupation of a Lump labour agency, and charged with Conspiracy. Two hospital ancillary workers were arrested while picketing St. Mary's hospital in London.

At the same time, several men were arrested for "blemishing the peace" while picketing with electricians at the St. Thomas's hospital site in London.

Meanwhile the next hearing in the cases of the North Wales twenty four, originally scheduled for the 25th April, was postponed until 18th May. The 210 charges and 7 volumes of police "evidence" were apparently still not enough for even these capitalist courts to conduct their frame-up with.

Despite the mixed-up dates,

and the fact that May 18th was also the date of a mass demonstration in London against the Lump, 400 people turned out to support the seven who came up on that date.

By this time it became clear that the Government was spending a vast amount of money on this show trial, which it considers an important test case for its new, tougher policies. It's been rumoured that the case will cost the taxpayer around £250,000, to include the re-building of a section of the Shrewsbury court to hold it

Isolation

While the hearings dragged on with more delays, another problem arose for the 24 defendants. Already many were isolated in different jobs and areas, but at least there was one place where a number of them worked and which formed the main centre for organising their defence: that was the site at the Shotton steelworks. Then on May 4th, 117 redundancies were announced at Shotton; 8 of the defendants were among that number.

It also became clear that isolation was a deliberate tactic of the authorities, with the 24 being split up for various court appearances in different places

The first major trial was at Mold, Flintshire, starting on 10th July. There, 8 were found Not Guilty of affray and intimidation under the 1875 Act.

This was important. The first attempt to get the intimidation charges to stick had failed. But five of the 8 who came up at Mold were found guilty on charges of causing damage and were fined a total of £195.

As soon as the police had failed with the first "batch", it pulled three more into the dock. These, Arthur Murray, Les Hooson and Billy Hough were charged with intimidation, and Arthur and Les were also charged with threatening damage to property, at Padeswood on August 7th 1972 under the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875 and the Criminal Damage Act 1971.

One of the chief witnesses for the prosecution was site-manager Buckle. Under cross examination Buckle provided the Court with a laugh when he named T&GWU official Eric Roberts as his friend. Roberts, he said, had told him there was no sign of an official strike on the site, and that he would see that Buckle got 48 hours notice of any official strike action.

But there were more ominous notes sounded in the court. One of the prosecution's witnesses,

Vivian James, described the police's method of interrogation and extracting statements as "like the Gestapo"! There was no attempt by either the police or the prosecution to deny this.

When Billy Hough shouted out "Load of rubbish" during the prosecution's speech, he was summing up the whole rigmarole of so-called evidence for all of the men on trial.

Deadly threat

When all three were declared by the jury to be Not Guilty, the message to the police was clear: "You are liars!" The jury had refused to believe their framed up evidence.

It is worth noting, though, the Judge's remarks on the question of intimidation. He defined it as involving wrongful and unlawful acts, with a view to getting men to abstain from work.

The men don't have to be terrified by such acts; they simply have to stop work. In other words if the picket is successful, it is unlawful!

And affray? According to the judge you only have to be "in amongst those men carrying out the acts of violence" for this to stick.

These definitions pose a deadly threat to effective picketing. ■

READ WORKERS' FIGHT!

Right from the first announcement of arrests of some of the North Wales 24 back in mid-February, WORKERS FIGHT campaigned to publicise and explain the arrests. Not a single issue of WORKERS FIGHT went to press without reporting the latest news about the case and many numbers bore major feature articles explaining the issues raised. Not a single paper in the labour movement contributed as much as WORKERS FIGHT to making this case a central rallying point for the whole of the working class.

These reports and articles appeared in the context of a wide coverage of events and issues facing workers here and abroad. WORKERS FIGHT gives the revolutionary socialist viewpoint. WORKERS FIGHT is vital reading for all those facing capitalists attacks. It is a vital weapon in fighting back for socialism.

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TUC BACKS TORIES AGAINST PICKETS

Letter instructs: "Don't aid arrested pickets"

The letter from the TUC, refers to cases under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act against workers on picket duty. It says that the TUC has no objection to the police officers on the spot questioning such workers. It also states that the TUC has no objection to the police officers on the spot questioning such workers. It also states that the TUC has no objection to the police officers on the spot questioning such workers.

North Wales 24
Police pile

POLICE MOVE IN ON DIPVET

The 1875 "Conspiracy"

Their law —

New laws, NW24
new-style
Army and
Police

North Wales 24
It's a POLICE

POLICE ARREST 24 WORKERS

ALL OUT
MARCH
15th!

INSIDE
HOW THE CONSPIRACY
LAW WORKS

Mold victory:

The £1.4m. Trial
ORGANISE DEFENCE
COMMITTEES NOW!

Printed by ...



THE BUS

ABOVE Left: Frank Kitson, who says Army's role is to deal with subversives at home. Centre: Sir Robert Mark, chief of Britain's police. Right: Det. Chief Inspector Derek Sutcliffe of W. Yorkshire Police trying out a Webley 0.38. BELOW Left: Police at Indian Embassy where two Pakistani teenagers were shot dead by armed police. Right: Police photographer with telephoto lens watches dockers' mass picket at Neap House Wharf near Hull.



AT THE END of the building workers' favourite magazine, "betrayed its fear of effective pickets." "Ever since the miners were allowed their mass pickets of coal depots has escalated rapidly. There were during the dock strike. On Monday one of the five men jailed by the Industrial Relations Court in July, was fined £100 for assault while picketing. "The Government has already proposed existing legislation on picketing, not the present law, but the lack of

A BRIEF GLANCE at recent changes in the police force and the Army — the official, uniformed thugs — reveals a far more concerted and powerful force for attacking the working class in its struggles than any of the fly-by-night scab organisations.

We had got used to the idea in Britain that the police are not armed.

Then, without any warning, without the formality of a parliamentary by-your-leave, the police shot several people in one month in London this year, and suddenly a lot of people woke up to the fact that the police are armed.

The SUNDAY TIMES, a paper with no revolutionary or 'anti-police' fish to fry, reported on July 8th 1973 that the Home Office had decided to equip the police with a new rifle.

This rifle, the L39A1, is a high velocity rifle that has been turned down by the New York police because it is too powerful!

"Moreover" the paper tells us "the wounds inflicted by these rifles are so devastating that the International Committee of the Red Cross, in a report to be published later this year, plans to draw attention to the 'extraordinary' degree of suffering these weapons cause. In effect, the Red Cross will point out, they have a lethal impact akin to the internationally banned dum-dum."

THE STRIKE BREAKERS

THE ORGANISED violence of hired scabs against Chrysler strikers in June of this year must be seen as a grim warning that in future blood will flow on the picket lines ... if the bosses get their way.

The dispute at Chrysler's Ryton plant at Coventry began on Thursday May 24th, with 4,500 workers striking in support of 600 body shop workers.

Flying pickets were quickly organised by an Action Group set up by rank and file Ryton workers to get solidarity for the strike from other Chrysler plants. Action Group policy was to snarl-up co-ordination of components between the various factories, to stop production and force the Company to meet lay-off payments. Meanwhile, workers at other Chrysler plants were to stay in and go on working, while pickets blockaded the removal of their products.

Chrysler management, setting the scene for things to come, swung into action: it destroyed railings, demolished walls, and flew helicopters over the plant taking photographs of the pickets

and reconnoitering alternative ways of shifting supplies to avoid the pickets.

This proved unsuccessful. Then on Monday June 18th, like thieves in the night, the Walker Bros. rent-a-scab unit (hailed by the DAILY MAIL as brave commandos acting in the spirit of Dunkirk and Colditz) moved into action.

Ex-paras

They called themselves SPECIAL AID SERVICES and were composed in the main of ex-paratroopers. Their name was intended as a play on the name "Special Air Services" (SAS). (The SAS is an official branch of the British Army, now mainly used in Ireland, which specialises in undercover assassinations, brutality and dirty tricks.)

Walker's SAS did their namesakes proud. Taking six overloaded lorries out of the Stoke component plant they smashed through the picket line throwing bricks and bottles at the strikers as they went. Inside the Stoke plant John Docherty, a fork-lift

driver, was assaulted with a spanner by scabs who feared he would raise the alarm at the picket line.

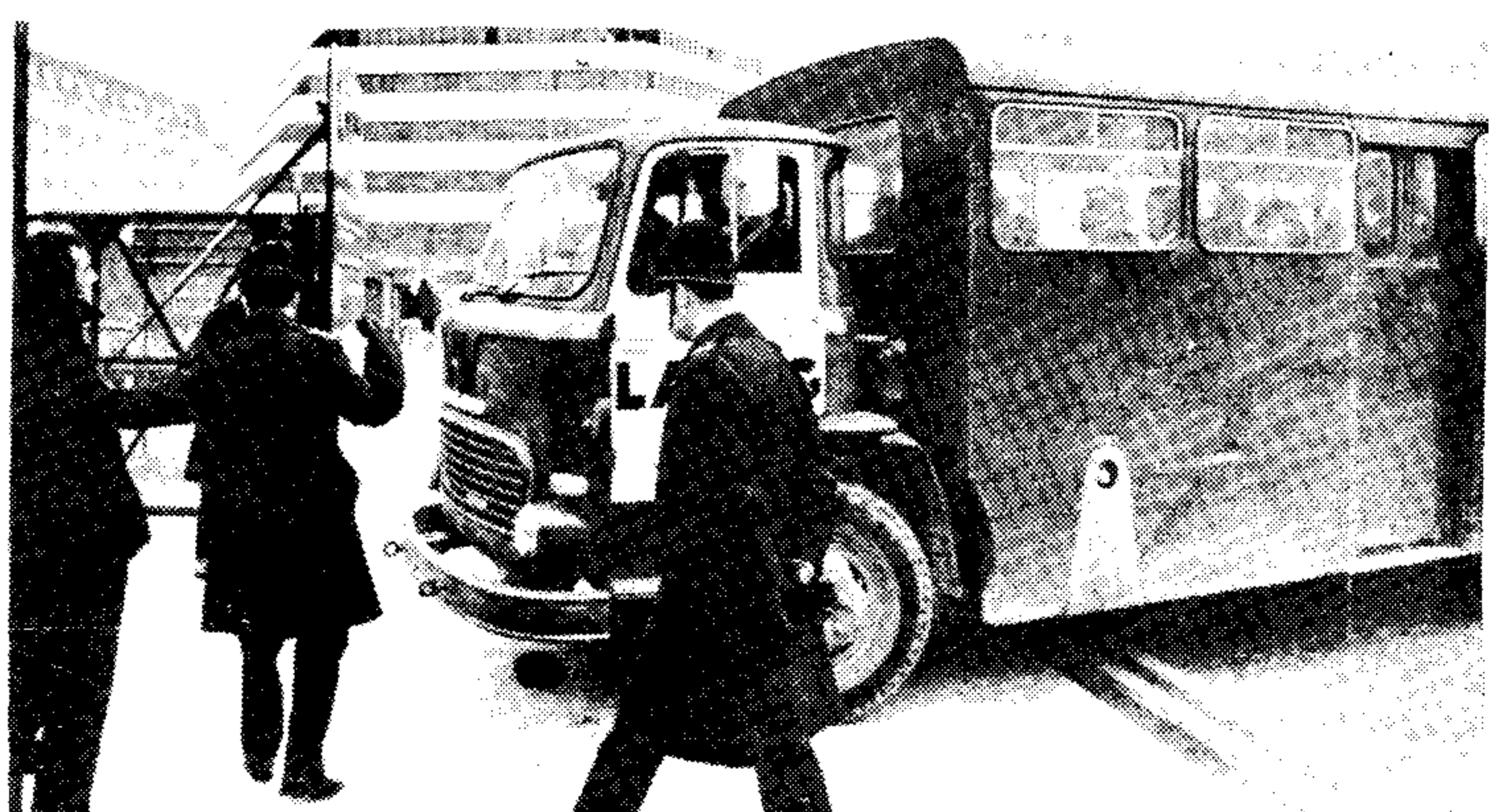
Violence didn't stop at Stoke. At Chrysler's Dunstable plant where three of the lorries eventually arrived (the other three collapsed as they were over-loaded) one of the company's own security guards was pinned against the gate and badly injured as the scabs drove past him.

Needless to say, the scab

drivers broke every rule in the book. They had no lights, blacked out number plates, were overloaded and dangerously driven. And the police? "Well, it was too dark to see, and too late to do anything!"

The press (where they didn't actually praise the ganster drivers) tried to cover the whole incident up by splashing big front-page pictures of two of the swine "apologising" to a victim in hospital.

BELOW: All smiles from police for the 'Rent-a-scab' drivers who drove through the pickets at Chrysler's Stoke plant (Coventry) throwing bricks and bottles. RIGHT: getting past the pickets. Above, 1970-style: mounted police escort scabs during Pilkington strike. Below, 1973-style, Laing's scabs arrive in a special armoured bus at St. Thomas's hospital site.



Army nominees

But the essential unity of purpose of the police and the Army is not only expressed in the arming of more and more police. It turns out that the Home Office committee which approved the buying of the L39A1 for the police had a majority of Army nominees over Police nominees.

In some countries the ruling capitalists, wanting to increase their control over militant workers, dissident students and other oppositionists, have created specialist police detachments concerned with political espionage, frame-ups, provocation and "riot" control.

The French CRS, the Italian "Carabinieri" and the American National Guard (Though these are not all full-time policemen) are examples of political or almost entirely political riot and investigation squads.

In Britain there hasn't so far existed such a force, though of course the Special Branch has its own thing going in frame-ups, provocation and political spying. Not long ago its methods came to light during the trial of five people who owned a shop in Wick Road in Hackney.

In their small shop — where clothing was sold in aid of the Irish Republican cause — a box

THE 'TORIES' PICKET STERS

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The Economist",
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25 by Colchester mag-
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nised to review the
The main problem is
enforcement of it.

Thousands of miners who picketed Sallley depot appeared to lay themselves open to prosecution, but no action was taken. During the building strike, employers have again been complaining about the lack of police intervention. It is no good saying that some agreement must be reached with the unions, because the union leaders have often lost control. Neither Mr. Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers, nor Mr. George Smith of the Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians approved of violent picketing. But neither was able to do much to stop it. For the employers the problem was reduced to one of "enforcement". And when it comes to enforcement they don't mind little "nasty incidents" or "violence".

of rifles had been found. These rifles had been stolen from a nearby Cadet training centre. Things looked bad for the prisoners

Trial dropped

It was later revealed that the shop had been rented in the name of someone who had not been arrested. A little further investigation revealed this man to be a known police agent-informer who had worked for the Special Branch as a provocateur. It then came out that it was he who had delivered the box of guns with another man. This other man, it then turned out, was a policeman, a member of the Special Branch.

Thus exposed, the trial of the "Hackney 5", as the prisoners were called, was quickly dropped. But the Special Branch was not investigated. The attempt to frame 5 innocent people, who could have got long terms in jail, was given scant publicity: certainly much less than the publicity surrounding their arrest, when big headlines blazoned forth that an 'IRA Arms Cache' had been found in London.

The Special Branch and its tricks have been with us for a long time. But with the success of the flying pickets during the miners' strike, the ruling class began to formulate a new threat. Special flying squads of anti-picket forces trained in riot control were advocated by various sections of the employers. The Army staff was insistent.

The DAILY TELEGRAPH, which by the end of the miners' strike had swapped its industrial correspondent for its military correspondent, Brigadier Thompson, advocated the same. It now looks as if Britain stands a likely chance of getting its own version of the hated CRS and "Carabinieri".

Armed police

Shortly after he became Prime Minister, Edward Heath gave this message to the United Nations: "It may be that in the 1970s civil war, not war between nations, will be the main danger we face".

It is not difficult to see the connection between this message and the arming of police that led to the spate of killings outside banks and at the Indian Embassy, when two Pakistani teenagers armed with toy guns were shot and killed.

These killings were carried out by members of the Special Patrol Group - apparently the latest addition to the State's arsenal of anti-working class violence.

All this doesn't mean that pickets will be faced with gun-

slinging police. But what we can expect is that we'll be up against the Force's special handpicked thugs, the type of copper who really likes to get stuck in and put the boot in, specially trained and well-coordinated, and quite possibly equipped with some of the 'crowd-control' weaponry that they've been practising on the Irish in the past four years - CS gas, rubber bullets, water cannons and massive great batons.

It is important, in fact, to be clear about the relationship between what's been happening in Ireland and the class struggle here. Certainly many generals and police commissioners are very clear. Which is just one reason among many why English militants must oppose the British Army's presence in Northern Ireland.

Among these top Army men is Brigadier Frank Kitson, a leading advocate of 'counter-insurgency terror' who has practised the best ways of suppressing the mass of the population in Aden, Kenya, Cyprus and lastly Northern Ireland. He has written a book in which he openly states that such methods will have to be used in Britain. This man is no isolated crank but a leading theorist for the British Army. We too must take note of what he says.

Special Army units

For Kitson, normal actions in the class struggle can be 'subversion', for example "illegal" use of "political and economic pressure, strikes, protest marches, and propaganda, and can also include the use of small scale violence for the purpose of coercing recalcitrant members of the population into giving support" (i.e. pickets). He says the Army should weigh in to combat this 'subversion', and he wants specialised army units to act as strike breakers - "specialist individuals and units within the army to enable essential civil services to be maintained in the event of civilians being unable or unwilling to maintain them."

Another thing Kitson wants the Army to engage in is internal "intelligence" work - every soldier keeping his eyes and ears open at home, in pubs and so on. In addition it should, he says, take more of a hand in forming opinion and putting out propaganda: such 'psychological operations' include 'planting' stories in the press and TV - and, after the Littlejohn affair, who can doubt that they are already doing that; and not only planting the stories, but making them too, like the conveniently-timed explosion in Dublin last year which helped to get repressive anti-IRA legislation passed.



TOP: Police overwhelmed by mass dockers' pickets at Neap House Wharf last year. This year, special anti-picket squads have appeared. They went into action at St. Thomas's Hospital site in London (centre) to clear the way for Laing's armoured scab-carrying bus. The bottom picture shows another of these squads at work in Hull, where they were seen to replace the local police.

WE CAN'T AVOID VIOLENCE

THE CHANGES now taking place in the Police and the Army (the new anti-picket flying squads, the Army's emphasis on 'internal subversion') will be incorporated into the permanent structure of the State — controlled at all times by the ruling boss class, and available to different governments to use in enforcing that class's rule in society. And only so long as they do that. And because the State is the strong arm of the ruling class only, it would even defend its power against a government if it seriously tried to tamper with the bosses' rule.

The State is the force behind the talk. It includes the Army, Police, the Courts and the prisons. As well as its open face, it also employs, as we've seen, its free-lance thugs, narks and provocateurs.

State violence

Where the bosses can't con us into submission, the Government threatens us into submission; and where it can't threaten us into submission then it does not hesitate to use state violence to get its way.

The past few years have seen a declining ability on the part of the bosses and their lie machine (TV, press, schools), and their allies in the trade union and Labour Party leadership, to con us into submission. Since the sweet-talk doesn't always work now, the threats have had to become more obvious.

"The Law" is the chief threat for use on the working class. After all, behind every law is the simple message that "if you break it, we can legally

use force against you." But as some of the laws have been prevented by militant action from working — in particular the Industrial Relations Act — the State is gradually turning more and more to open violence.

Without exaggerating the extent to which this has already happened, the fact is that it is on the increase.

As far as this is concerned, we can see, as the class struggle accelerates, two opposite movements. In the Army, more attention is being paid to "intelligence" (spying on militant workers) and other so-called "low intensity" and "low profile" operations of the sort 'pioneered' in wars such as that waged against the Republican population of Northern Ireland.

In the Police Force, on the other hand, there is a shift towards a more openly paramilitary approach: this year specially trained anti-picket commando squads have already made their presence felt in fights with pickets.

The two movements converge. They form a unity. And out of this unity will emerge a massive highly trained, specially privileged and technically sophisticated anti-working class police striking force.

Such a force must be met with force, and the beginning of such a force must be met with the beginnings of our own workers' defence organisations. The pickets are the outriders of these organisations. The mass picket and in particular flying pickets, must become our workers' militia in miniature.

There exists, of course, a whole chorus of miserable trade

union, Labour Party and Communist Party leaders who cry out against the use of working class violence in the class struggle. They howl and holler about the "irresponsibility" of those who "advocate violence"; they shout "provocateur" and "anarchist" at every serious contemplation of force.

In so doing they give vent to their fundamental pacifism as far as the class struggle is concerned. It does not matter whether this pacifism is based on sheer class cowardice, on veiled class collaboration, or on the "theory" of 'peaceful co-existence' and even 'peaceful revolution' put out by Stalin and his heirs — the chorus anyway sings in perfect harmony.

Suicidal

Let us be clear about this. We do not advocate violence. We advocate winning — and, indeed, winning with the least violence possible.

But is it possible to avoid violence? We think not. Indeed the examples already given show beyond all question that this is not a matter of speculation. It is a matter of fact!

It is therefore "irresponsible" (if we want to use this word) to advocate class struggle without being prepared for violence. It is "irresponsible" to the point of being suicidal to start what you won't finish. And it is "irresponsible" a hundred times over to practice or advocate

class war — and at the same time insist on your own disarmament; to advocate struggle — and in advance refuse to take up the weapons that may make the difference between victory and defeat.

Those who want to announce battle but renounce all violence in advance are the "provocateurs", for they are the disorganisers and the people who lead us up to a struggle and then desert.

Criticising those who refused to contemplate violence on the picket line, Leon Trotsky the great Russian revolutionary who opposed Stalin's bureaucracy, wrote:

"A strike is inconceivable without propaganda and without agitation. It is also inconceivable without pickets who, when they can, use persuasion but, when obliged, use force. The strike is the most elementary form of class struggle which always combines in varying proportions "ideological" methods with physical methods. Basically, the picket is the embryo of the workers' militia. He who thinks of renouncing "physical" struggle must renounce all struggle, for the spirit does not live without the flesh.

Following the splendid phrase of the great military theoretician Clausewitz, war is a continuation of politics by other means. This definition also applies to civil war. Physical struggle is only "another means" of the political struggle. It is impermissible to oppose one to the other, since it is impossible to check at will the political struggle when it transforms itself, by force

of inner necessity, into a physical struggle."

Those who deny this are in basic agreement with the laws on picketing. These laws attempt to do exactly what Trotsky here says is impossible. They attempt to restrict "at will" the act of picketing to what is "peaceful" and "ideological", that is, obtaining and giving information in an attempt to persuade.

Everything else — and here the Judge at Mold waxed eloquent — is violence and intimidation according to the law. Anyone advocating the same restrictions is in the final analysis acting in the same way as the capitalists and their agents, implicitly 'justifying' any repression against 'violent' picketing.

Which doesn't mean that it becomes a principle always to push every picket beyond the 'peaceful' state. As Trotsky also wrote, "It goes without saying that in every given case it is necessary to decide, in relation to all the circumstances, how to answer the enemy and to what limits to go in resistance. But this is a question of tactical expediency, which has nothing in common with the recognition or denial in principle of force."

Deaths

One other thing: isn't it time we insisted on our definition of "violence". Pickets, demonstrations and other confrontations are more or less infrequent and sporadic events. But what of the daily events?

In 1972 there were 221 deaths at work among insured building workers. Huge numbers of building workers on the Lump are not included in that total, and work on sites where safety is worse and the death rate no doubt higher. There is, on average, a death every day on British building sites. The average penalty for being in breach of safety regulations? About £20.

That is just one fact of the social peace that we are told we should not disturb for fear of "creating violence"...

So when we hear some reformist humbug preaching that "violence only begets violence", the answer is Yes! The violence of the capitalists begets our violence! ■



Home Secretary Robert Carr with Police — part of the permanent force of the State available to governments to control the working class.

The Act that protects the right to scab

THEY SAY THAT "possession is nine-tenths of the law". It is also true that nine-tenths of the law is about 'possession'.

As a mere 5% of the population own 80% of the wealth, it can be said that nine-tenths of the law is there to protect the one-twentieth of society that owns four-fifths of all private wealth. That is capitalist "justice"; that is capitalist "legality"; that is capitalist "equality"!

One such law is the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875. The North Wales 24 are all charged under Section 7 of this, which says it is an offence punishable with a maximum fine of £20 or maximum imprisonment of three months, for:

"Every person, who, with a view to compel another person to abstain from doing or to do such act which such other person has a legal right

to do or abstain from doing, wrongfully and without legal authority,

- (1) Uses violence to or intimidates such other person or his wife or children, or injures his property; or,
- (2) Persistently follows such other person about from place to place; or,
- (3) Hides any tools, clothes or other property owned or used by such other person, or deprives him or hinders him in the use thereof; or,
- (4) Watches or besets the house or other place where such other person resides, or works, or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place; or,
- (5) Follows such other person with two or more other persons in a disorderly manner in or through any street or road."

The key to the operation of this section is the words "wrongfully and without legal authority". The "legal authority" in question is provided by none other

than ... the Industrial Relations Act (see page 7) which supercedes all other Acts in its definition of legal picketing. This definition is, in itself, little different from that contained in previous Acts. What is different is that the Act defines a vast number of situations which it describes as "unfair industrial practices", and in all these situations the "legal authority" for doing any of the above (note particularly subsection 4, which describes the very quietest of pickets) is removed.

When the TUC, which is supposed to be fighting the Industrial Relations Act, jumps in to help the police operate the 1875 Act, telling Trades Councils not to help the North Wales 24 who "committed acts outside the definition of peaceful picketing" (see page 8 for letter from TUC) it is really helping to enforce the Industrial Relations Act.

Muzzle

The two Acts, as the TUC and UCATT leader George Smith well know, form an integral, close-knit unity. The North Wales 24 can only be charged under the 1875 Act because the Industrial Relations Act is on the statute books.

Even taken on its own, what the 1875 Act protects is the right to scab. It is designed to break the power of the strike, not by removing the right to strike, but by removing the right

to strike effectively. It gives us the right to strike the same way as a dog has the right to bite — just so long as he is either wearing a muzzle or has had his teeth knocked out.

At present this law is being tightened up in practice. Following several complaints from back-bench Tories, the press and the employers themselves, Robert Carr, the Home Secretary, circulated a statement to police urging them to enforce this law to the letter.

Meanwhile they hope to use the case of the North Wales 24 as a test case. And that is why it is so important for the whole of the working class. If the Tories get away with it, every single trade unionist on picket duty or on a flying picket will be at risk.

The usual pretext for urging such stronger police crack-downs is that there is a danger (for whom...?) of "violence and intimidation". This sudden concern on the part of the big bloodhounds of the bourgeoisie for sniffing out "injustice" is unconvincing in the extreme.

For instance, one of the Tories' chief spokesmen on these matters is Ulster Tory/Unionist MP Robin Chichester-Clark. He and his family are infamous for terrorising Catholics in Northern Ireland.

This is how he sees the question of picketing. "While the right to picket peacefully is permitted under law, and it is protected, those who wish to con-

tinue working despite the efforts of pickets must be free to do so. That is the cardinal principle of the whole matter. A great deal has been said about the right of those who wish to strike. Equally everyone has the right to work..."

Anyone, that is, who can get a job. When they're rationalising thousands out of a job to make more profits, you don't catch them using phrases like "the right to work"...

He goes on to say that "The courts have also held that an excessive number of pickets can amount to intimidation... In the miners' and dockers' strikes earlier this year, there were 350 arrests, leading to the imposition of what were, in fact, substantial fines."

Property

The protection of the right to scab (which here takes on the obscenely dishonest title of "the right to work") is then the central message of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875 (Section 7). When the judge at the Mold trial of 8 of the North Wales 24 summed up, he made exactly the same points as Chichester-Clark.

In this law then, the connection between the right to scab, the breaking of strikes and the protection of property is made plain. Its very title is a compact expression of the point of most capitalist laws.

They protect property. And they therefore protect those who own property. ■

LAW, WE ARE TOLD, is connected with justice. But all sorts of acts which are considered legal if they have the blessing of the authorities would certainly be considered unjust and criminal without it.

Imagine kidnapping a man and then forcing him to kill other people at your command. That's surely a crime! But if the State wants it, it takes on the high-sounding name of National Service, and is declared thoroughly legal. If someone steals from your wage packet, it's a crime. But all the State has to do is call it taxes, and it can call you a criminal for not letting yourself be stolen from.

Confined in horribly cramped quarters, stripped of your freedom and civil rights, with work and no pay, you must surely be the victim of some monstrous crime. But bless that tiny space and the other thousands upon thousands of similar cells with the honorific title of "Her Majesty's Prison" and everything is dandy. Bless it further with the even more melodious name of "Her Majesty's Pleasure" and you might quite legally never get out again!

Majesty of the Law?

To help the authorities to get away with all this, we are constantly led to believe — and the leaders of the labour movement in this country certainly do believe — that "The Law" is something majestic, awesome, and indeed almost supernatural.

The basis of this is supposed to be that Parliament makes the Law, that Parliament is "the representatives of the People" and that, therefore, The Law represents "The Will of the People".

All this is nothing but a load of wool as thick as a judge's wig and designed to be pulled well down over our eyes.

The law of this society is capitalist law, framed in the interests of the owners of the land, the factories, the building sites and the big money. It is made up or ripped up to suit their needs as they go along, and it is anything but sacred.

Far from being "The Will of the People" it represents the interests and the attitudes of the property-owning minority in society. These people appropriate and steal from us much that we create at work — and that's legal. But if we try to walk away with any of the products of our own labour — that's theft.

Why? Not because of some eternal, god-given, natural order of things, but because of things called laws that they've had made for them to help run their society.

But though they run and own this society, control its Parliament, its institutions, its uniformed strong-arm men and its law-enforcement agencies, the working class also has its strength. Many laws reflect the balance of forces in society between the working class and the ruling class.

This is particularly true of trade union law, as a brief outline of its history reveals.

A series of Acts

Since the repeal of the 1799 and 1800 Combination Acts which outlawed unions — this took place in 1824 — there have been a whole series of Acts which have sometimes broadened and sometimes narrowed the scope of union activities. In a succession of Acts between 1871 and 1876 unions achieved a degree of legal protection and their growing bureaucracies a degree of security.

As the struggle sharpened at the turn of the century the emp-

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT

BREAK THIS BOSSES' LAW!

loyers tried to hit back: where the Conciliation Act of 1896 failed to shackle trade unionists, the 1901 Taff Vale judgment tried to outlaw all effective strikes.

With the 1906 Trade Disputes Act, though, the ruling class led then by the Liberals was forced to retreat. But with the defeat of the General Strike of 1926 the capitalists seized their chance to cut back on the gains of 1906 and instituted the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, which was not repealed until a self-confident working class forced Labour to scrap it in 1946.

In 1964 another Labour Government was returned, after 13 years of Tory rule. It was pledged to plug-up an anti-union loophole that had been revealed in the Rookes v. Barnard case. It did this in the Trades Disputes Act of 1965.

But in the same year, it set

sight and quietly ignoring if their use would evoke anger and make things hot for them.

The battery of laws against picketing is far greater than is generally known. That is because many are not enforced. Here again, what's legal or not legal is generally determined by the relationship of forces.

If the police can get away with it, and if they are not treading carefully for fear of aggravating a tricky strike situation, they have a whole armoury of criminal charges which it is in their 'discretion' to bring. There is also a wide choice of civil charges which employers can bring against pickets — if they dare — ranging from trespass and nuisance (e.g. shouting too loud) to defamation (libellous placards), to a variety of actions under the Industrial Relations Act.

Many is the solid, law-abiding citizen who would be horrif-

peace" had they not taken such action, which was then obstructed.

How many pickets constitute a "nuisance" or an "obstruction of the highway"? All those who the police decide are not necessary for the picket as defined by their law, i.e. for obtaining or communicating information. In a case in 1960 the police obtained a conviction for "obstructing the police" in a case where a third man had tried to join two others on a gate. Presumably, when told to clear off, he had tried to insist on what he thought were the rights of pickets.

In that case, the police and the Court found that three were too many. *But if there been 3000, no doubt there wouldn't have been a single charge laid!*

With the Industrial Relations Act (1972) there has been a dramatic increase in the number of illegal acts that a moderately

ing behaviour etc. and charges under the 1875 Act (see page 6) can be brought against a picket, and the normal defence that such acts were committed in furtherance of legal picketing is simply swept away.

This was established by John Donaldson, Chairman of the National Industrial Relations Court, overruling Lord Denning, who had tried to rule that if the method of picketing is legal, then it is not rendered illegal by the nature of a dispute under the Industrial Relations Act.

So it is not just a question of prosecutions under the Industrial Relations Act, but also prosecutions under other laws made possible by the Industrial Relations Act, as in the case of the North Wales 24.

Illegal

The following are some of the situations in which picketing is now illegal under the Industrial Relations Act:

- For anyone except a registered Trade Union to induce a breach of contract, including a contract of employment: that is, practically any strike!

- Any action in support of an "unfair industrial practice", e.g. if workers take action to exclude a scab like Langston or Goad.

- Any industrial action to induce a breach of commercial contract by someone who is not a party to the dispute. (E.g. blacking and picketing of coke depots and power stations during the miners' strike; blacking of suppliers and customers of Fine Tubes, etc.)

- Any industrial action while a recognition dispute is before the N.I.R.C. or Commission on Industrial Relations.

- Industrial action to induce an employer to disobey a NIRC recognition order. (Such as an order in favour of the Ancient Society of Spanner Forgers and against the AUEW).

For the ruling class, their Tory (and Labour) front men in Parliament and their boys in blue, the problem is how to enforce the laws they've got. An official publication put it this way: "Recent ministerial statements... indicate that the Government feels that the present law properly enforced is adequate to cope with the situation." Right now Maurice MacMillan is busy drawing up a code of illegal picketing in an attempt to turn their new paper laws into real ones; while the police are organising their special anti-picket squads to make sure they've got the muscle to do this.

Not cricket!

For the working class, the problem is how to clear this legal armoury off the statute books. For the Law is not only a reflection of the balance of forces in society; it also helps to determine that balance.

The way to do it is not to do as a Labour Research Department broadsheet (Picketing — Trade Unionists' Guide) advises:

"It is very important where there is a mass picket that everyone on it knows the rules about avoiding violence and not interfering with blacklegs, and is clear exactly what slogans he is to shout and shouts no others." (Perhaps, too, it should have added that pickets should bring warm clothes, mufflers and a mack in case it rains, and not forget their sandwiches...)

No. The class struggle isn't a game of cricket, and militant workers will not be herded around like so many sheep.

These laws must be broken again and again (as they already have been) and new rights established in the struggle. And to do this workers must also ensure that pickets have the 'muscle' to face the new police.



The road to Saltley Coke Depot — the mass picket that won the 1972 miners' strike

up the Donovan Commission on Trade Union and Employers' Associations. The work of this Commission was used to frame the Industrial Relations Act (via In Place of Strife) of 1971. This Act is the biggest single attack made on the trade unions since the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike.

The balance of forces between the classes not only affects what goes onto the statute books, but also how rigorously the laws are applied. When the 'Official Solicitor' suddenly appeared in July 1972 and announced that the Pentonville Five should be released "because they had suffered enough", everyone knew that in fact it was because the Tory government had sweated enough under the pressure of hundreds of thousands of workers coming onto the streets to demand their release.

There was no question then of relentlessly enforcing 'The Law'. And many workers realised then, perhaps for the first time, just how un-sacred and unmysterious the law really is.

But in fact the ruling class keeps many laws 'up its sleeve' for use when it can get away with it, and for keeping out of

ordinary picket can commit. First, it's got to be an "industrial" dispute. Any and all picketing is illegal if it's in furtherance of a strike, say, in support of tenants facing eviction as a consequence of fighting the Housing Finance Act; or a strike against the Freeze or the Industrial Relations Act itself (such as the one on May Day).

Second, it is illegal for anyone (even a registered union) to picket the customers and/or suppliers of a firm in dispute (even if the dispute is not an "unfair" industrial practice, and even if the pickets are shouting "join us brothers" and not "Dirty scabs, we'll have your guts").

Then there are all the "unfair industrial practices" and picketing in connection with them can mean being hauled before the National Industrial Relations Court and fined and/or jailed, as were the Pentonville Five.

But that is not all. If the dispute is illegal under the Industrial Relations Act, then it is not directly in breach of criminal law. But it means that all the other, criminal charges, like obstruction of highway or police, breach of the peace, causing a nuisance, threatening and insult-

Calling people scabs, making V-signs, etc., are "insulting behaviour". There is also threatening behaviour — such as clenching your fist. Picketing the home (or the immediate vicinity of the home) of a scab or employer is also illegal since the Industrial Relations Act, however nicely it's done.

If the police tell you to disperse, or tell the picket 'leader' to disperse the picket, and are not obeyed, then that's obstruction of the police. The police don't need to have any reason for telling you to disperse. However law-abiding the pickets were, all the police need to say is that they thought there might have been a "breach of the

"Insulting"

Fight to Free the 24!

THE DEFENCE OF the North Wales 24 is a trade union and political task of the first importance.

At a time when the Tories are on the attack and the trade union leaders have refused to fight, every firm position taken up by the working class in refusing to retreat becomes a new battleground.

You can't stand still these days without digging in your heels!

To get a simple pay rise you have to break the freeze laws and navigate around the traps of productivity or threshold deals.

To have an effective picket, you have to defy the Industrial Relations Act, as you do to mount many kinds of strikes, blacking and other industrial action.

To avoid putting up rents (if you're a Councillor) you face being surcharged thousands of pounds and disqualified, as the Clay Cross council has. To avoid being rack-rented by the Government's Housing Finance Act, you have to organise in tenants associations and go on rent strike.

And to avoid your job being scrapped, you have to demonstrate and to occupy your work place.

Defied

But because, to hold onto these simple things that we once took for granted, it is now necessary to defy so many laws and go against so much authority, workers everywhere have taken up new and better ways of organising, of fighting back, of helping each other: flying pickets, mass pickets, rent strikes, sit-ins, solidarity campaigns and defence committees.

So all the time the ruling boss class and its governments, both Labour and Tory, have tried to push us backwards, we've been pushing them, too.

And when they thought they could just pick off 24 of our brothers and put them through a show trial to create a precedent for penalising effective picketing, they met a mounting campaign of support. And one of its advances has been that very many workers have learnt to have less, rather than more, respect for the bosses' Law.

This very fact, perhaps, is behind the reason for the general refusal of the trade union and labour movement at the official level to do anything for the twenty four. In fact, for as long as they could, these law-fearing gentlemen did their best to help the police railroad the 24 into court.

The facts cannot be disputed. We have already seen (see page 2) the disgusting letter UCATT leader George Smith sent to his Connah's Quay branch.

T.U.C.

Later, the Flint Trades Council wrote to the TUC to ask if they were keeping the case of the 24 under review. This is the treacherous reply that came back. It refers to a number of charges under the 1875 Conspiracy Act against pickets

"who have in the view of the police officers on the spot committed acts outside the definition of peaceful picketing. Trades Councils should not encourage delegates or affiliated

branches to take part in any industrial action in support of workers before the Court on charges arising from the Act unless requested to do so by the NECs of the Unions concerned."

The reply becomes even more absurdly two-faced when you realise that George Smith, the leader of one of the "unions concerned", is also this year's Chairman of the TUC!

Some Trades Councils went ahead anyway with organising support. Imagine the disgust of Lambeth Trades Council with George Smith's response to their trying to help his members:

"At a meeting of the Executive Council this week their attention was drawn to an appeal for money made by the Lambeth Trades Council in connection with charges against 24 building workers at Shrewsbury Court.

The E.C. takes the strongest objection to the action of the Lambeth Trades Council and is raising the matter with the TUC.

In the meantime the E.C. directs all Branches to ignore the Lambeth Trades Council appeal and Branch Aid Funds should not be used to make any donations to this appeal... Yours fraternally, G.F. Smith, General Secretary."

But with more and more pressure building up from the membership, the recent biennial Conference of the Transport and General Union finally committed itself, verbally, to supporting the North Wales 24. In front of 934 delegates representing 1 3/4 million members, the National Officer for the building industry, Bro. Kemp, stated officially that his



George Smith, UCATT leader

members (19 of the 24) would receive legal support.

Meanwhile pressure was building up in a number of areas for UCATT to come out in support of the twenty four. The slowest to be pressured by this growing force - which included some local Union officials - were North Wales official Albert Press and UCATT Gen. Sec. George Smith.

Albert Press, particularly after having said that his local members were "only one step from the jungle" has been 'blackened' on all organised sites in North Wales. When he arrives, work stops!

Another letter in George Smith's campaign against the 24 was sent to the secretary of a UCATT branch in Lancashire as late as 24th July. "Because the proceedings against these members are largely sub-judice" he wrote, "the E.C. would not like to set out its precise thoughts on this matter."

All the same, their thoughts were apparently precise enough to say "It is necessary to also point out that they did not act as trade unionists, as they were



One of the many meetings called in defence of the 24

What YOU can do

Make up your mind NOW: put YOUR back into supporting the North Wales 24.

Ask yourself: What have I done to help the campaign. What COULD I do?

Couldn't I get my trade union branch to sponsor a meeting with a speaker from North Wales?

Couldn't I arrange a mass meeting on the site or at work where someone could address my workmates on the need to support the 24?

Couldn't I get my trades council to invite a speaker, or at least order some leaflets from the Defence Committee to send out to the trade union branches in the area?

Couldn't I get a resolution through the branch to be sent to the union executive demanding they support the North Wales 24 and that they pressure the TUC to do likewise?

Couldn't I donate some money to the Defence Fund?

Couldn't I collect some at

work? Couldn't a levy be put on in my area?

Couldn't I help the Defence Committee in my area?

Couldn't I start a Defence Committee in my area?

Couldn't I write an article or an article for my Union's journal on the case of the North Wales 24? Or for the rank and file paper in my industry? For Charter? Or for the paper of my political party?

Couldn't I write a letter to my MP demanding he speak out in Parliament in favour of the 24 and in favour of militant picketing?

Couldn't I get a demonstration organised in my town to bring the case to the attention of the public?

There must be hundreds of brighter ideas than these! The point is to act on them! After all, can anyone who claims to fight on the side of the working class refuse to help?

not carrying out any instructions or actions out of the collective bargaining arrangements of this Union..."

And that is nothing but a very precise and barefaced lie! As is clear from the interview on p.2, not only was the Chester and North Wales Action Committee (which organised the picketing) officially recognised, but there were three officials present during all its meetings - Albert Press, Albert Hughes and Lew Armour.

Besides, Smith has a bloody nerve if he thinks he can define who is and who is not acting "as trade unionists"!

However, in face of constant pressure and agitation from the membership, and after the victory for such agitation at the T&GWU Conference, the UCATT leadership could hold out no longer. Right at the end of August they too gave in and agreed to carry out the Union's most basic duty - to defend its members.

But, with the record of UCATT's intense hostility to the 24 in mind, it would be foolish to place too much reliance on them or leave matters in their hands. And, in fact, we hear that Smith is even now obstructing

UCATT's decision to support the 24.

These problems were, of course, expected. Few have much faith in the official machinery if left to its own devices. But with Building Workers' CHARTER (a rank and file organisation and the real backbone of militancy in the building trade) many thought that backing would be swift and automatic.

It wasn't. There were long initial delays, hesitation and confusion, largely because of reformist, bureaucratic prejudices on the part of those Communist Party members who were toeing the Party's respectable softly-softly line.

After these delays, however, Charter got into action, and leading Charter members are playing an active and invaluable part in the campaign.

The Communist Party itself also took its time. For many weeks after the arrest of the 24, they did little or nothing to mobilise support. It was left to the small Trotskyist groups like Workers' Fight to do this.

And now the Communist Party still puts its hoary old anti-Trotskyism before unity in action in the campaign with

Bluff

The campaign to drop all charges against the North Wales 24 is growing in strength every day. But all this will be a sad and sordid bluff if we are not prepared to support the 24 in the event of their having to stand trial and even being branded as "guilty" by this capitalist court.

If the trial goes ahead its opening must be marked by a huge demonstration of workers at Shrewsbury. No day must go past without a picket being mounted outside the Courthouse.

If our brothers are found "guilty", we must stand by them in a refusal to recognise any sentence. Any sentence, whether it is jailing or fining, is an expression of the fact that the bosses think our brothers are criminals and picketing a crime. We have to reply that any striker convicted in these capitalist courts of aggressive action to stop scabbing is a hero to us, not a criminal.

It is our duty to set our brothers free of all sentences. If they should be jailed we must prepare to do exactly what we did in the case of the Pentonville Five - **strike until they are released.** If they are fined we should support any decision by them not to pay up - and support it with industrial action.

Strikes

To prepare for this, we must campaign for pledges of strike action, so that workers are ready to act immediately and without delay.

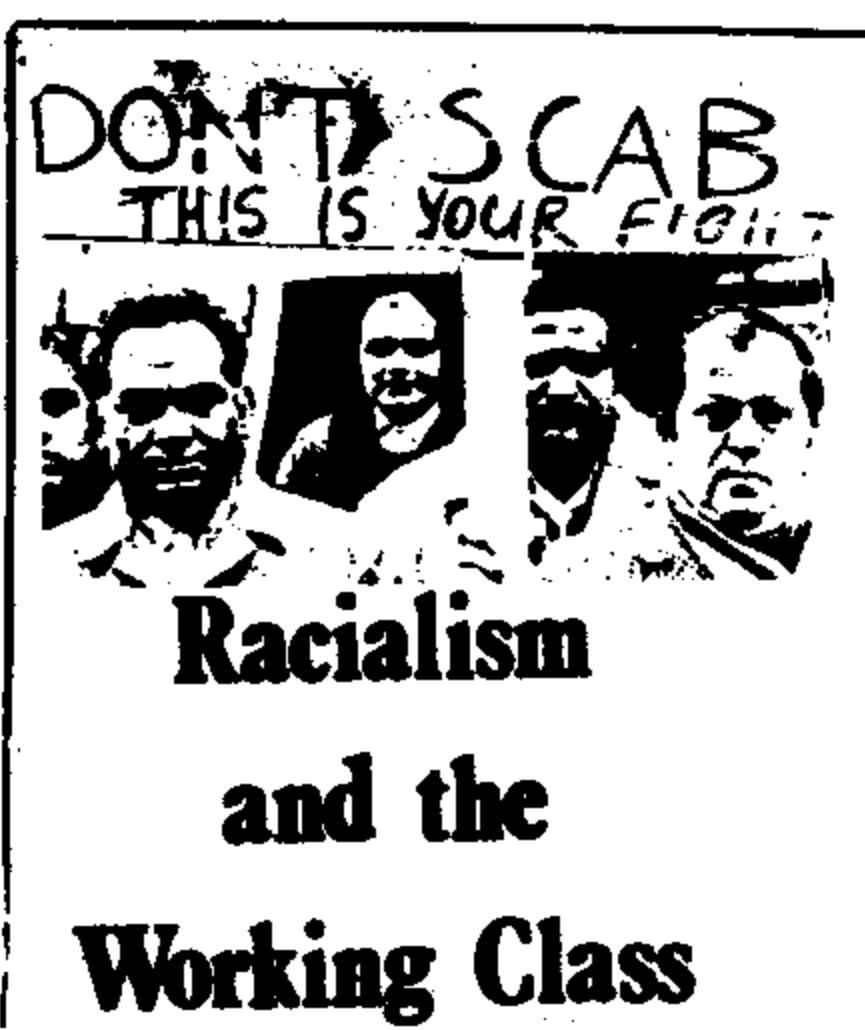
Above all we must make this a central campaigning issue for the whole of the working class movement.

After all, the whole of the working class needs the weapon of the pickets we hit the Tories with last year. In the struggle against Phase 3, against the mounting deterioration in the standard of living of the working class and in its civil liberties, we will need the most determined and courageous picketing.

DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST THE NORTH WALES TWENTY-FOUR!

HANDS OFF THE RIGHT TO EFFECTIVE PICKETING!

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