

Socialist Worker

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Where's your writ, du Cann?

by the Editor

MR EDWARD DU CANN, former Tory Party chairman, MP for Taunton and chairman of merchant bankers Keyser Ulman, told the London Evening News last Friday that it was 'scurrilous nonsense and rubbish' for Socialist Worker to claim that he should have warned Vehicle and General policyholders of the impending crash of the insurance firm.

Keyser Ulman were bankers to V&G. Paul Foot wrote last week that the bankers sold all their shares in V&G five months before the collapse but continued to advise the firm on financial matters.

He added: 'In other words, the bank knew that V&G was going bust and promptly sold all its shares at a good price. Meanwhile they continued to act as financial advisers to V&G without murmuring so much as a word of warning to policyholders or anyone else.'

No obligation

Mr du Cann told the Evening News: 'Of course there was no obligation to warn policyholders. If I decide to change my brokers or change my shares I do not have to stand up on a box and shout it to everyone.'

'There is no reason to suppose that Keyser Ulman had any special knowledge of this company. This sort of thing is the responsibility of the Board of Trade or the British Insurance Association.'

'The Association is always advising that you can take out policies with their members quite safely. They are the people who assume a public responsibility.'

Here is an interesting insight into the 'business ethics' of a leading Tory big businessman. As chairman of a company advising V&G, he denies any responsibility to warn 800,000 policyholders of its impending collapse—a fact known throughout the City months before it happened.

Wry smile

And the 800,000 drivers who lost their insurance through the crash will have a wry smile at Mr du Cann's remark that the British Insurance association, of which V&G was a member, advises on the safety of policies from its member companies.

Mr du Cann went on to say 'One begins to wonder if one should mention the article to one's solicitor—or to the company's solicitors.'

Does one? Let's see your writ, Mr du Cann.

But on one important point, we must apologise, if not grovel, to the Tory MP. He denied the claim that he is one of the 'richest men' on the Tory benches.

This is a grave injustice to Mr du Cann. He is, in fact, a millionaire, which puts him a cut above the average Tory MP. We apologise for any embarrassment or inconvenience our remarks may have caused him.

INSIDE STORIES

War-time fight against union laws: 3
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TORIES' ATTACK HITS PAY AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH



United May Day march

A SECTION of the International Socialists' contingent on last Saturday's London May Day march. The march was supported by trade unionists and the Communist Party and ended with a rally in Hyde Park.

15000 join revolutionaries in France

MAY DAY 1971 marked an important success for revolutionary socialists in France. After the CGT (Communist Party-sponsored trade unions) had refused to allow the revolutionary groups to participate in their demonstration, a united march was organised by Lutte Ouvriere, the PSU, the Ligue Communiste, Secours Rouge and others.

This demonstration on Saturday morning rallied more than 15,000 including several large union sections of the other union federations, the CFDT and FO. The 'official' union demonstration in the afternoon rallied only just over twice that number and included numbers of revolutionaries participating as trade unionists.

The morning demonstration showed that the revolutionaries are a force to be reckoned with—a fact that individual Communist Party and CGT members will be unable to ignore.

THE GOVERNMENT is out to cut the living standards of the ordinary people of this country. No other interpretation is possible of the miserable 9 per cent wage increase that has been awarded to the postal workers.

The 230,000 postal workers will find themselves with nothing like the money they need to keep up with price rises of 10 per cent a year by the time they have paid back a third of their increase in taxes to the government. They will be forced to cut back on their spending. And not just on those little luxuries that make life bearable after long hours of work, but on basic necessities as well.

What applies to the postal workers applies to millions of other workers who have been refused adequate wage increases. It also applies to the 816,000 whom the government have condemned to the dole queues. All are having to watch every penny as prices, rents, health and welfare charges shoot up.

Striking evidence of what this means came to light this week. Since school meal charges went up by a third a fortnight ago, half a million children have been forced to stop taking them. In working-class areas like the East End of London, up to a third of parents feel they cannot afford to pay the increased sums. On the other hand, in a middle-class area like Dulwich the figure is less than 10 per cent.

For 30 years, the old diseases associated with malnutrition were virtually non-existent in this country. Experts have said that the major cause of the change was free school milk and cheap school meals.

Now both are being done away with. No wonder complaints like rickets are once more on the increase in working-class districts.

The policy of the present government is deliberately to cut back on many of the gains working people have been able to make over recent years. It is doing so in order to boost the profits of those who own the industry of this country.

It is also important to remember that all the present government's measures were pioneered by the last Labour government.

'Sacrifices'

The reason is simple. The present big business system will not work unless high profits are guaranteed to those who own industry. Today these profits can only be obtained by cutting living standards, by deliberately creating unemployment, poverty and malnutrition.

Ordinary workers gain nothing from the system. Whenever it demands 'sacrifices', we are always forced to make them.

We will only end that state of affairs when the working class itself controls society and takes the decisions. The need at present is to develop a united fight back against the different Tory attacks. In the process we can build a massive movement prepared to take direct action to end the big business system for once and for all.

THE POSTAL WORKERS AND THE TORY OFFENSIVE

Paul Foot

Vital reading as the court of inquiry into the post strike is published. A full analysis of the strike and the role of unions and government. 8p post free from IS BOOKS 6 Cottons Gdns London E2

a SOCIALIST WORKER pamphlet 5p

The harsh lessons of arbitration

THE RESULT of the committee of inquiry into the postal workers' pay claim, due to be published this week, is expected to recommend only a 9 per cent rise. This will mean that post office workers can look forward to a substantial drop in their living standards in the next few months. Most of them will pay back a third of that 9 per cent in tax. Yet prices in the shops are rising at 10 per cent a year.

The pay award should offer clear and decisive proof that arbitration is not some 'fair' and 'impartial' way of deciding the issues between labour and capital. Normally, the arbitrators judge what they consider the minimal award to workers will be that will not lead to further industrial action by workers or inflame class passions to such an extent as to make it difficult for right-wing trade union leaders to control their members.

In the postal workers' case, the arbitration was agreed to only on condition that the strike was called off. The union leaders accepted that condition. The arbitrators have estimated that the unions' members are not in a sufficiently confident mood to restart the strike and therefore have little industrial power. Consequently they will offer the workers so little that their real buying power will be reduced.

Yet the postal workers could have won. After seven weeks of strike action they were as solid as at the beginning. True, the telephone system was operating in a virtually unimpeded manner. True, too, that the Post Office was even making a profit on the strike, since it loses money on letters and makes money on phone calls. But the profits of big business were being hit.

If the postal workers had lasted out a few weeks longer, there can be little doubt that powerful groups like the engineering employers would have been begging the government to end the strike by permitting an improved wage offer.

Instead, the union executive called the strike off. They found that their hardship fund was short of the £100,000 a week needed to sustain those strikers without any other source of money. Other trade union leaders were appealed to. But even the so-called 'militant' leaders like Scanlon and Jones refused to give—rather than loan—money to aid the strikers. Despite the huge sums in their own union coffers, they sat back and left the postal workers at the mercy of the Tories. They feared a UPW victory that would have encouraged hundreds of thousands of their own members to push for improved wages.

Even at this stage the defeat could have been averted. The UPW leaders could have appealed over the heads of the official leaders to the rank and file who were fully in sympathy with the strikers. But Tom Jackson and his executive preferred to trust to the tender mercies of the government rather than to such an appeal. Ordinary postmen will now have to pay the price of that decision.

All sections of workers must learn the lessons of the postal workers' dispute if the same bitter experience is not to be repeated elsewhere. A real fight against the Tories' attacks on working people demands the creation of rank and file bodies in each industry and union that must push for united and militant opposition to the government's attacks.

THE QUEEN'S MAN

LEFT-WING MILITANTS are often asked why they reject the idea that socialism can be achieved through the ballot box. It is suggested that if only we were to stand for parliament and convince enough people of our ideas then we would be able to use the existing governmental machine to 'peacefully' transform society. It is also implied that when we call for direct action or for a general strike we are being 'undemocratic'.

People who raise such questions would be well advised to look at some parts of Harold Wilson's memoirs currently being serialised in the Sunday Times. In one or two passages Wilson inadvertently points to how power is really exercised in Britain. The Labour government of 1964 was elected to power on a programme that was far from radical. It had made vague commitments to improve welfare services but its chief stress had been on the need to make industry more efficient.

Hardly had the government taken office than there was a balance of payments crisis. Wilson describes what followed. 'We had now reached the situation where a newly elected government with a mandate from the people was being told . . . by international speculators that the policy on which we had fought the election could not be implemented: that the government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed . . . The Queen's First Minister was being asked to ring down the curtain on parliamentary democracy by accepting the doctrine that an election in Britain was a farce, that the British people could not make a choice between policies . . .'

Now Wilson could hardly tell the whole story of what happened and continue to pretend that Labour offers a real alternative to the present state of affairs. So he covers up on a couple of points. Firstly, that the 'speculators' were not actually strange foreigners but by and large British big businessmen trying to make a quick profit. And secondly, that despite all his own brave talk, he gave into their demands and did follow policies that prepared the way for those of the present governments.

The lesson is clear: merely controlling a parliamentary majority does not provide any basis for introducing change to British society, however meagre. For while parliamentarians argue and debate, those with real economic power use it to strengthen their position.

What applied in 1964 still applies today. Big businessmen force the government to do what they want not by waiting to see who wins elections, but by using their direct, economic power to the full. They will continue to get their way until the working class uses its power in the same way. Until a massive movement prepared to do this is built up the sorry spectacle of the last Labour government can only be repeated.

SW Correspondent

THE BASQUE militants sentenced to death last December were saved by the massive demonstrations, general strike and supporting action in the rest of Spain and abroad. The Spanish government thought it wise to retreat.

But since then nothing is heard of the situation in the Basque country. The story has faded from the press headlines, while the repression of the nationalist and workers' movement has been intensified.

The left raised its head during the campaign against the executions and the police have taken advantage of this to systematically arrest and torture militants in one sector after another. The banks, factories, colleges and left nationalist groups have all had thorough police investigation.

The police admit to some 60 arrests in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa alone, but that figure accounts only for those who will be brought to trial. Hundreds have been arrested and kept at police stations for 'questioning' for weeks, without the right to see a lawyer.

Undisturbed

Two people have been held for more than a month. One of them was still in the hands of the police at the end of April.

Now that world attention is no longer focussed on the Basque country, the police can carry out the repression undisturbed by bad publicity.

The victims have been mainly members and sympathisers of the Communist Party, the ETA and other left groups. The CP is the largest of these groups. During the ETA trial they played the leading part in mounting protests both in the Basque country and in other parts of Spain.

The ETA was unable to do this. Its nature as a secret guerrilla organisation means that it cannot organise mass activities.

The differences inside the ETA between



FRANCO: no rallies in Basque territory.

the left wing, which has friendly relations with the Communist Party and the nationalist tendency which wants a front of all Basques, irrespective of social class, prevent it from being a strong force.

The contradictory nature of the ETA's politics are not clear to most people. Actions such as the robbery of a Bilbao bank in aid of the families of strikers are highly popular. Most non-Basque workers took part in the strikes and demonstrations during the trial of the ETA militants last December, while in Bilbao, the largest Basque town, only about 4000 very bourgeois demonstrators turned up for the stage-managed pro-Franco rally. No such rallies could be held in the smaller towns.

Events in the rest of Spain have had even less publicity, but the repression continues. In Seville, 100 people were arrested in a drive against the Communist Party's leaders in the factories, districts and university.

The repression is not confined to just members of political groups. The prosecution is demanding seven years' imprisonment for workers charged with belonging to the Workers' Commissions. Their crime was trying to form links between the Orbeago and Irmo factories in the Basque town of Zumarraga to agree on a common policy, mainly on matters of safety of work. Orbeago had a long strike last year, partly as a protest against the factory's bad accident record.

The Communist Party's strength is increasing. The party's strategy is for a 'Pact for Liberty'—a popular front of all progressive elements including the liberal wing of the ruling class—that would campaign for a return to a parliamentary, non-monopoly regime.

Danish strikers defy the law

Rasmus Rasmussen

LAST WINTER a strike at the meat firm of Schaub and Co in Nyborg, Denmark, was defeated after 15 days and one-third of the workforce lost their jobs. Because of the dubious role of the union leaders and the labour court during the strike a new organisation has been set up, Workers' Solidarity, that will help workers who have been fined by the labour court or who are on strike or unemployed.

The strike, one of the longest 'illegal' strikes in Denmark for many years, started over the sacking of four militants, two of whom were responsible for organising a ballot among their workmates that demanded the removal of a particularly obnoxious foreman.

The fact that the firm had refused to pay holiday money and that they had fired workers without any pretence at negotiations meant that Schaub had broken two of the main points in a collective agreement. But under Danish labour laws, workers can only legally stop work over wage questions and the strikers agreed to keep the holiday pay as the main issue and stay within the law.

Union officials quickly settled the holiday pay dispute, with the firm paying up and admitting it had broken the collective agreement. But it refused to take back the four militants and the strike continued.

It was immediately declared 'illegal' by the men's union and the LO (TUC) and brought before the labour court, which told the strikers to return to work right away or be fined. The strikers offered to go back as soon as their four comrades were reinstated. The firm refused, the strike went on and the workers were fined £55 each.

Then Schaub issued a list with the names of 43 workers who could start work again if they wished and 22 others who were not wanted. The news that the men's union would do nothing to get them all reinstated gave the 43 no choice but to start work again without their comrades.

The 22 issued a leaflet explaining that the firm had provoked a strike to remove

the most active workers, introduce work-study and get rid of a large surplus of meat. At the same time Schaub had saved 140,000 kroner in wages and would receive 60,000 kroner in fines from the workers.

Since then the 22 have continued to bring their case to the attention of other workers, campaigning against the labour court, against the bureaucratic structure of the unions and for rank and file control and the right to strike. By refusing to let the matter drop, they have forced the firm to give up its right to collect the fines.

The newspaper Information, commenting on the consequences of the strike, said, 'The Schaub strike demonstrated the impotence the unions have forced upon their members by their acceptance of all these legal straitjackets. In reality it has become impossible for Danish workers to legally use the only effective weapon they have, the strike, in their struggles against the employers.'

Sour grapes and Mr Jacks

ACCORDING to A L Parson's letter (1 May) the International Socialists' criticisms of the Communist Party are 'sour grapes'. He says that we were wrong in attacking Communist Party member Sid Harraway's description of the Ford strike settlement as a victory.

To have called it a defeat, he says, would have been bad for morale. But the alternative to calling it a defeat is not to call it a victory.

I wonder if Mr Parson considers the following 'sour grapes'? Two months ago Southampton students banned the Conservative Association from the use of the Students' Union at the university. Last week the Tories attempted to reverse the decision.

Speaking for them was no less than Mr Digby Jacks, president-elect of the National Union of Students and Communist Party member. He argued that in banning the Tories we opened the door to attacks on education.

He doesn't seem to realise that the

The trouble is that no elements of this vaguely-defined and perhaps non-existent body are prepared to act. The party has to carry the weight of the popular front without the help of respectable allies.

A strategic result of the popular front is that the militants have to come out into the open. Carrillo, the Communist Party leader, has said that the movement must abandon 'sectarian isolation and caution'.

Workers are urged to run as left candidates for the posts of workers' representatives in the official syndicates—government-run 'unions'. At the lowest level of the syndicates, shop stewards are democratically elected.

In the past many militants have been elected but when there is a strike they are deposed by the non-elected bureaucrats and replaced by stooges.

Elections for the syndicates will be held in mid-May and this has revived the controversy as to what attitude the Spanish left should take to them. The dispute has persisted since the 1950s, when some groups began to move away from a position of boycott that the entire left had held since the syndicates were set up in 1939 and the workers' own organisations suppressed.

The correct strategy is not easy to work out. Concentration on winning syndicate posts might encourage a playing down of the workers' own illegal groups. An interesting variant was put forward by the delegates from Pamplona at the last congress of the Workers' Commissions. They proposed that the workers in each factory should choose their own representatives and communicate this choice to the management, while boycotting the official ballot.

But the main faction in the Commissions (the Communist Party) have launched a more thoroughgoing campaign on the syndicate elections than ever before. This strategy has two main dangers.

If there is an intensified repression the militants are visible to the police. If the regime allows a degree of liberalisation there is a danger of the militants being co-opted into helping administer the system.

GENERAL Franco attended the Syndicate rally on 1 May where a Russian folklore group performed. The police ensured that 'ultra-left elements' did not disrupt this triumph of peaceful co-existence.

Already Workers' Solidarity is being investigated by the Justice Ministry and the police. One reason given is that it is illegal in Denmark to make collections without a permit from the ministry, and Workers' Solidarity has been refused a permit.

The government is trying to ban collections for the Schaub fund and is also trying to prove that Workers' Solidarity is illegal. The result has been considerable publicity for its aims among workers.

The last few years have seen a sharpening of the class struggle in all the Scandinavian 'welfare states'. The number of strikes is higher than for many years and groups of workers opposed to the class collaborationist union leaders are forming and campaigning for the right to strike and an end to the anti-union labour court.

The government's effort to ban Workers' Solidarity shows how scared they are that control will pass out of the hands of the union officials and into the workers'.

Tory government has already been attacking education through increased prices for school milk and meals. He argued that if we were good we might not be attacked!

On free speech, Mr Jacks accepted that the Tories were attacking it through the Immigration and Industrial Relations Bill, but he thought they were doing it 'unconsciously'. According to him, socialists should never deny free speech even to fascists.

On these and other issues, Mr Jacks was questioned and exposed. Despite strong Tory support, his recommendations were rejected by a mass union meeting. Most students now consider him a fake left and an opportunist.

If a mass revolutionary party is to be built in Britain, the Communist Party will have an important role to play. However, leading members like Mr Jacks should make it clear which side they are on. Last week he was on the Tory side. We want leadership, Mr Jacks, but against the Tories, not for them.—JIM RAFTERY, Southampton.

World War 2: the 'Home Front' battle against Labour and Tory anti-union laws



The repressive war-time legislation was kept by the 1945 Labour government. Picture shows London dockers marching on the Old Bailey in 1951 to protest at the prosecution of seven of their strike leaders.

IN 1941, Kent miners at Betteshanger colliery, grumbling about the poor wages they got when working difficult seams, went on strike. As a result, they were prosecuted. The Canterbury court gave three union officials prison sentences, a thousand others received fines.

Far from cowering the men into submission, these sentences only made them more obdurate, determined not to go down the pit again until their grievances were dealt with and their brother miners released from jail.

Faced with such a display of determination—as well as the prospect of sympathy strikes at other collieries—the authorities capitulated. They released the men from prison and never collected the fines.

The Betteshanger miners' victory is probably the best known, and most frequently cited instance of the struggle against anti-labour laws during the last world war. But it is important to realise it reveals only one side of the picture. In many instances the anti-labour laws did work. The government frequently succeeded in inflicting savage blows on trade unionists.

Dangerous conditions

109 men at Cortonwood colliery, Nottingham, were fined, with the alternative of a month's imprisonment, when they struck against a wage reduction. At Valleyfield colliery in Fife, 30 men received similar treatment for refusing to work in conditions which, they claimed, were unnecessarily dangerous.

In South Wales miners were fined for bad time-keeping caused by buses being late.

By January 1943, the New Leader, paper of the Independent Labour Party, reported that '3000 have been prosecuted and nearly 250 imprisoned under the Essential Works Orders and other orders.'

Ernest Bevin, the war-time Minister of Labour, has been described as 'a dictator of labour'. He possessed an impressive armory to use against workers. There were a total of 868 emergency orders, written in obscure language, that gave him virtually unlimited power.

But the crucial question was not what was written down on paper. It was the class relationship of forces. Where organisation was weak or union officials bent, then Ernest Bevin used the law to control, bully, dictate.

But where the organisation was strong, he could not hammer the workers. In such a contest, it was Bevin himself, rather than the militants, who was likely to end up with a bloody nose.

The best instance of this happening was not Betteshanger, but in the Lanarkshire coalfield in October 1943. When five men were jailed for failing to pay



BEVIN: 'dictator of labour'

fines imposed under the Essential Work Order, 4500 colliers downed tools.

The authorities retaliated by escalating the struggle: 16 more men from another Lanarkshire colliery were flung into prison and many others were threatened with military call-up.

For the Lanarkshire miners, this was the last straw. The whole coalfield came out—and remained out—until every man was released.

But the coal industry did not have a monopoly of industrial unrest. It spread to other sections of the economy. Wages were failing to keep pace with prices.

Profits of the arms manufacturers—the 'merchants of death'—continued to rise as the soldiers fell on the battlefields. People were becoming war-weary. Some were even starting to realise that the war was not being fought for them, but in the interests of the capitalist class.

In these circumstances, with growing disenchantment among the workers, the government's anti-labour laws were powerless to stop an increasing number of strikes. Working days lost through industrial disputes, which were 940,000 in 1940 had doubled by 1942 and doubled again, to 3,710,000 days, in 1944. This occurred despite the fact that the state had resorted to more and more repressive measures.

Unholy trinity

Socialist Appeal in February 1945 gave the following statistics: 'Since the outbreak of the war, 23,517 workers have been prosecuted under anti-labour legislation. But not one boss has gone to prison under these same laws. The few who were found guilty received only nominal fines; while 1807 workers have gone to prison.'

An unholy trinity—the Tory-Labour coalition government, employers and union bureaucracy—combined to make an onslaught on the working class. They wanted to peg wages, speed up production, destroy militancy.

This was not merely the programme of right-wing union leaders, like Deakin, Lawther and Williamson—the Communist Party was equally fervently in favour.

At the Communist Party congress in May 1942, general secretary Harry Pollitt

honoured blacklegging: 'I salute our comrade, a docker from Hull. When the rest of the dockers struck work, he fought against it ... What courage, what a sacred spirit of real class consciousness to walk on the ship's gangway and resume his job.'

Six months later, the Daily Worker campaigned in defence of scabs' rights: it said Tyneside engineers 'victims' men who remained at work during a strike by dismissing them from their posts as shop stewards. The paper called on the Engineering Union to reinstate them.

In March 1943, Abe Moffat, the Scottish miners' leader spoke to men at Bowhill colliery and asked them to accept a wage reduction. He praised the Red Army and also Carlow Reid, the Fife Coal Company's managing director.

Union leaders, whether they were right-wingers or 'communists', found they had growing difficulty in keeping workers under control. Rank and file organisations were springing up, challenging their authority.

Councils of Action were being formed up and down the country, and a Militant Workers' Federation, based on Glasgow, sought to co-ordinate activity. The union leaders, under such tremendous pressure from their own members, were among the most strenuous advocates of further repressive legislation.

Smear campaign

Ernest Bevin obliged and introduced Defence Regulation 1 AA. The effect of this was to make any expression of sympathy for workers on strike punishable by five years' imprisonment or a £500 fine.

Parliament passed 1 AA while the country was in the midst of a strike wave. 10,000 engineers who worked for Vickers-Armstrong at Barrow came out for more money. They were receiving £3 12s 6d for a 47-hour week.

Then 130,000 miners in Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and South Wales struck. This was followed by a dispute, which started on Tyneside, involving 10,000 apprentices.

The capitalist press reported these strikes in an hysterical way. Newspapers used the reds-under-the-beds technique: the strikes were due to 'subversive elements' and 'hidden-handed agitators'. When four revolutionary socialists were arrested, this event was reported with glee and the press redoubled its smear campaign.

After being kept in prison without trial for 42 days, the four were charged under the Trades Dispute Act, 1927, with conspiring in furtherance of an illegal strike. This was a legal precedent—the only prosecution ever made under the 1927 Act—and it resulted in them all being found guilty.

Roy Tearse and Heaton Lee were sentenced to a year's imprisonment, Jock Haston to six months and Ann Keene to 13 days.

The sentences aroused widespread protests from the broad left. A defence committee was set up under the chairmanship of that old Clydeside rebel, Jimmy Maxton who issued a challenge to the government:

'I say this to Ernest Bevin and to the Prime Minister: If they really believe the ILP and Trotskyists are associating together in a plot to stir up industrial trouble, don't let them go after the boys. I am the parli-

amentary leader of the ILP. Let them haul me into the courts.'

More important than parliamentary protests was the effect of the prosecution on the shop floor. Over the years, the Trotskyists had conducted careful and systematic industrial work.

When the sentences were announced, it merely served to arouse more sympathy and support. Far from isolating them, it gave them fresh contacts.

Even in the army, where you would expect the government might be able to whip up patriotic feelings against the Trotskyists, the move misfired. A petition, signed by 82 soldiers in the Royal Engineers, was sent to the Home Secretary protesting at the way the Trotskyists were being treated.

And, more significant, soldiers in the Eighth Army debated the issue and a motion that strikes in wartime should be declared illegal was defeated. The debate was reported in their own paper, the Eighth Army News, under the heading: 'RIGHT TO STRIKE IS PART OF THE FREEDOM WE FIGHT FOR.'

Two months later, when the case of the four Trotskyists came before the Court of Criminal Appeal, the sentences were quashed. This decision fitted in with the mood of the time.

Capitalists realised that the country was entering a new period. The war was drawing to a close. Their need was to re-establish capitalist rule throughout Europe. In these circumstances, they could not afford to be provocative for fear of arousing revolutionary feelings similar to those that emerged after the First World War.

The post-war Labour government retained many of the wartime emergency regulations. In 1950-1, with a large arms burden straining the economy, the govern-

ment imposed a wage freeze and public expenditure cuts. Workers replied with industrial action.

The Labour government invoked Order 1305, a measure that said it was illegal to strike unless a long, complicated procedure had been gone through first. 10 London gas workers were sent to prison for a month. The verdict aroused much feeling among trade unionists and, on appeal, the sentences were reduced to £50 fines.

Having gained only a negligible victory, the Labour government tried again. Merseyside dockers were on strike, and they were trying to spread the dispute to London.

Total stoppage

To demoralise the dockers and cut off their leaders, the government arrested seven militants under Order 1305. But this had precisely the opposite effect to the one the government wanted.

The Attorney-General Sir Hartley Shawcross succeeded where the Mersey men had failed: his prosecution led to a total stoppage on the London waterfront. Angry dockers marched on the courts and made it quite plain they would not return to work until their brothers were released.

In panic and haste, the government capitulated. The seven were released and Order 1305 was removed from the statute book.

This magnificent working-class victory—the final removal of all the anti-strike legislation introduced in the Second World War—was accomplished not by honeyed words in parliament but by rank and file action. It is important that this lesson is remembered at the present time.

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BARBICAN BOS A STRIKE

MILITANT building workers on the City of London's multi-million pound Barbican redevelopment are currently trying hard to avoid an all-out strike. This might seem a 'strange thing for well-organised trade unionists to be doing. But the efforts of the workers are centred as usual on a refusal to comply with the whims and wishes of the employers.

Believe it or not, Turriff Construction, who are building one of the massive tower blocks to house the rich in the Barbican, would just love a strike. And at top level meetings with the notoriously right wing leadership of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, Turriff were informed that the union would go along with the employer's wishes. They would, said George Smith, CBE, call an official strike of their members on all four Barbican sites.

The reason is that Turriff did not have enough money to go on paying the kind of bonus they had agreed with the trade unions. They were involved in a dispute with the clients, the City of London Corporation, and their architects, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, over the release of extra funds for the contract.

The men would not be expected to work any less. Turriff would just reduce the bonus from an average £13 per week to £3 and the men would do the same work. The firm could not afford to pay any more until the City of London stumped up some more money for the job—or so they said.

But as the trade newspaper Construction News reported the situation: '... the men on the Turriff site are wary of any strike action. They are of the opinion that while a strike at this time might benefit some other party, their own best interests lie in forcing Turriff to exhaust the disputes machinery before any action is taken.'

What had happened to make the infamous Barbican 'disruptives' stick to procedure? Simply because the men knew they were being used in Turriff's attempt to extract more profits.

Chaos

Again, according to Construction News, the men were being used as 'political footballs' in Turriff's dispute with the City of London.

Turriff landed the contract to build Barbican phase 2 in July 1964. At a price of £6 million, they were due to be finished in January 1967.

So far Turriff has been paid £9.5 million for the job, which is still not finished four years after time. And Turriff—having been paid more than 50 per cent than they agreed—are suing the City of London for another £5.3 million. This will take the cost of the Barbican to nearly £15 million.

Edward Heath would have you believe that this 160 per cent rise in housing costs is due to the high wages of the Turriff workers. Not surprisingly this is somewhat far from the truth. It is due to the unplanned chaos that is capitalist construction.

What is happening on the Barbican is one of the many great scandals that the free press somehow never goes near. You will remember that this same press conducted a witchhunt against the Barbican strikers in 1967, only recently surpassed by press treatment of the power workers.

The phrase 'the industrial mafia' was coined then to describe 'the communist subversives' who were holding up completion of the Barbican redevelopment.

Shambles

This scandalous behaviour is not confined to Turriff alone. Every other contractor on the job is on the same milking machine, determined to extract the maximum profit from the shambles that is the Barbican, and provoke strikes to do it.

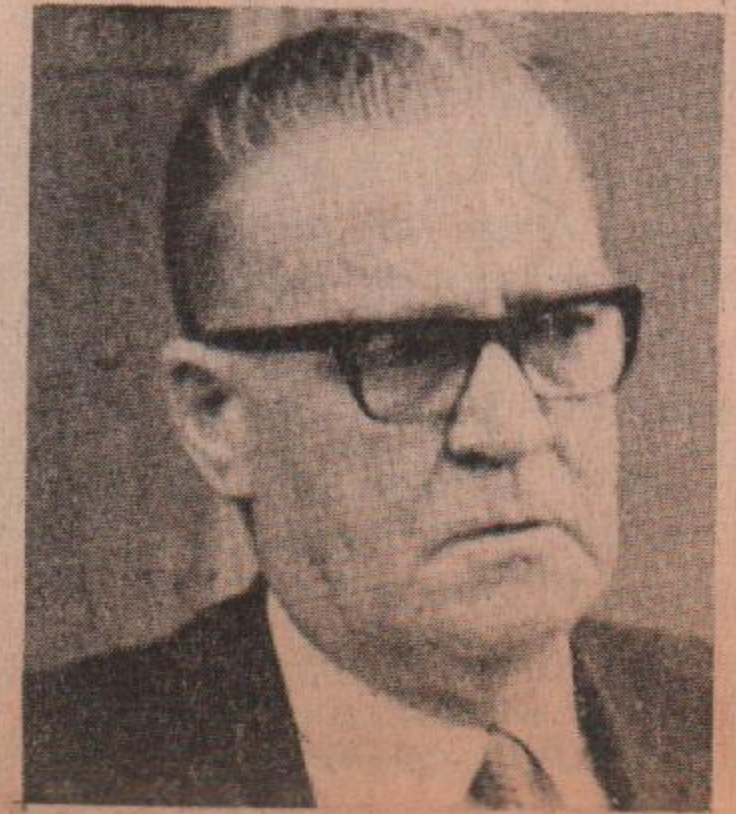
John Laing too is in on the Barbican action. This is the firm that built a chemical site in Cumberland so badly that it collapsed the first time it was used, killing two men. The firm whose agent used bribery and corruption to get housing contracts in Wandsworth. The firm whose managing director is Edward Heath's most intimate friend.

Laing started work on Barbican phase 3 in May 1964. At a price of £5.9 million, their piece was due to be finished in the spring of 1967.

In the spring of 1971, John Laing still hasn't finished that job. So far the

...to boost production on building sites house London rich and powerful

Investigation by ARTHUR M...



George Smith: make it unofficial

firm has been paid £9.4 million. It, too, had a £5 million claim against the City of London. But unlike Turriff it played its cards a different way.

There was another part of the Barbican due to go out to tender even as Laing assessed its claim: the Arts Centre estimated in 1968 to be worth £10 million. Three weeks ago John Laing got the contract for that Arts Centre at a 1971 price of £16 million. The firm and the City of London admitted that the final bill would be around £20 million by the time it was finished.

Maximum

John Laing shelved its £5 million claim against the City while it negotiated the Arts Centre contract. Now the firm has won the Arts Centre, it may never bring the £5 million claim on phase 3. Again if Turriff win in the courts, Laing may try for the claim as well.

Nor does it end there. Sir Robert McAlpine won the contract for phase 5A in September 1968. At a price of just over £3 million, the firm was due to be finished in May 1972.

McAlpine is currently on the seventh floor of this 43 storey block. Its whole contract period will be taken up in concrete structure work alone.

Current betting is that they will be finished in May 1976 rather than May next year as agreed. There is some slight possibility therefore, that McAlpine will be claiming a few extra few pence as well.

Overall, the costs of the Barbican have trebled since the 1964 kick off. They may go higher still, as the big contractors fulfill their obligations to extract the maximum profit.

But what this means in the harsh reality of life is that one of the world's greatest monuments to the hypocrisy of private enterprise is now being erected by building workers who couldn't even afford to buy a two-bedroomed house.

During the debate about the Barbi-

can arts centre the the City councille essful men—got up little of the truth.

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Sir Edward Ho Mayor of London recent Laing Bar licence to print me

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One little tale the key council Centre contract could ever want rich.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

out the world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

For equal pay and a better deal for young workers.

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

Against unemployment, redundancy and lay offs. We support the

demand: Five days' work or five days' pay.

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

Against racism and police victimisation of black workers.

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

For real social, economic and political equality for women.

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

Against secret diplomacy.

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

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

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

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

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

THERE ARE 15 BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

SCOTLAND
Aberdeen/Dundee/Edinburgh/Fife/
Glasgow N/Glasgow S/Stirling

NORTH EAST
Durham/Newcastle upon Tyne/
Teesside (Middlesbrough and Redcar)

NORTH
Barnsley/Bradford/Derby/Doncaster/
Grimsby/Huddersfield/Hull/Leeds
York/Selby/Sheffield

NORTH WEST
Lancaster/Manchester/Oldham
Bolton/Merseyside/St Helens/Wigan

Potteries

MIDLANDS
Birmingham/Coventry/Leamington/
Leicester/Oxford/Nottingham/
Redditch/Telford

WALES and SOUTH WEST
Bath/Bristol/Cardiff/Exeter/
Gloucester/Mid-Devon/Plymouth/
Swansea

SOUTH
Ashford/Brighton/Canterbury/
Crawley/Folkestone/Guildford/
Portsmouth/Southampton

EAST
Basildon/Cambridge/Harlow/Ipswich/
Lowestoft/Norwich/Colchester

GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES
Acton/Bletchley/Camden/Chertsey/
Croydon/Dagenham/Enfield/Erith/
Fulham/Greenford/Havering/Harrow/
Hemel Hempstead/Hornsey/Ilford/
Kilburn/Kingston/Lambeth/
Lewisham/Merton/Newham/Notting
Hill/Reading/Richmond/Stoke
Newington/Slough/South Ealing/
Tottenham/Walthamstow/
Wandsworth/Watford/Victoria

I would like more information about the International Socialists

Name

Address

Send to: IS, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

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In 1967 the press launched a vicious witch-hunt against militant Barbican workers. Now the real thuggery is hushed up.

Labour government called a witch-hunting public inquiry.

Over the last few weeks, TGWU officials have been trying for another inquiry into the real facts of what one described as 'the greatest scandal yet in UK construction.'

Last week all the Barbican workers staged a one-day strike as TGWU officials went to see Robert Carr to press this demand.

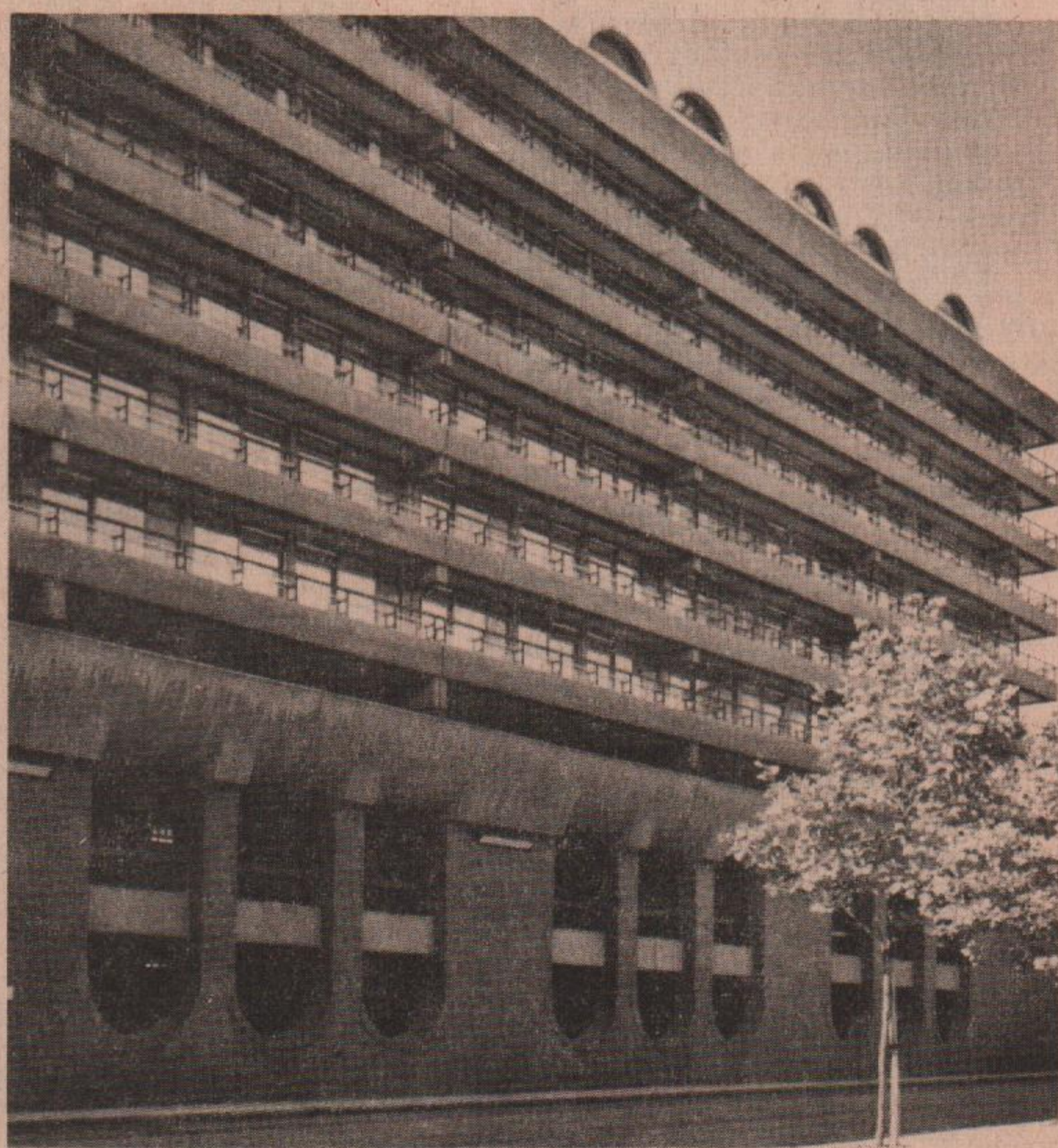
Anarchy

They were picketing Downing Street even as their officials were told that Mr Carr was 'too busy' to see them. 'Anyway,' they were told, 'Mr Carr will be seeing the employers.'

Yet another approach for an investigation through the National Economic Development Office was turned down, too. This may be not unconnected with the fact that the current NEDO head will shortly join John Laing as their new chief executive.

In the midst of this dreadful anarchy fathered by the employers and their system, the Woodworkers' Union leaders could find time only to change their line from offering Turriff a site-wide official strike, to offering an unofficial one as they did not wish to pay strike money.

That is the fruit seeded by those who are wedded to making the system work 'a little better'. On the Barbican, as elsewhere, it is time to start trying to get rid of the milking machine instead of servicing it.



Luxury subsidised flats for City businessmen

Big business kills the dream of Covent Garden

NONE of the national press reported an open-air meeting held in Covent Garden market on 22 April and attended by more than 500 people, which had been called to protest against vandalism. Which seemed odd, considering that the same press will normally give a two-column heading and at least 10 inches of space to the most insignificant complaint about vandalism.

The vandalism in Covent Garden, however, is being carried on not by teenagers or football hooligans but by the Greater London Council. They plan to demolish almost all of what is now known as Covent Garden and replace it with private conveniences for their business friends and associates.

For ever since it was decided that the market at Covent Garden should be moved to Battersea, the area has been marked down for comprehensive development. When the plans were first laid six years ago, lip-service was paid to the needs of the 3300 people (most of them workers and students) who live in one of the oldest and most pleasant communities in London.

There was talk of new schools, parks, playgrounds, day nurseries. There was talk of car-free areas. There was a great deal of talk about 'participation', and developing the area with the active encouragement of the people living there.

Such talk was enough to attract some of London's best planners to the project, and for a few months excitement ran through the planning department of the GLC. At last, dreamed the more enthusiastic of the council staff, here was a chance to build something of which the people living there might be proud.

Powerful groups

As the years went on, however, and particularly after the Conservatives gained control of the GLC in 1967, the priorities were shifted. Meeting after meeting of the 'consortium' appointed to deal with the development was told: 'We must do nothing to offend private enterprise'.

'Private enterprise' meant the big construction companies, and particularly the British Road Federation.

The BRF is controlled chiefly by the oil companies, the car manufacturing companies and the big civil engineering firms. It has well over a hundred powerful affiliates, including the Institute of Funeral Directors, whose business, of course, is greatly assisted by road-building.

BRF, John Laing Construction, Taylor Woodrow and other companies made it plain that the original schemes, especially the proposals for participation, were the product of 'woolly-minded idealism'. What was needed was profitable development. As a result, the following are the major priorities of the development as now proposed:

1. THE MOTOR CAR. A recent survey showed that the 3000 residents of Covent Garden owned between them 163 cars. The GLC propose, on the other hand, to build a car park to take 2000 cars and a three-lane motorway through some of the most attractive streets in the area.

Reverse trend

All planners outside the motor industry and the Automobile Association agree that the main planning objective for big cities should be the reduction of private car traffic into city centres. In the last three years, a strict parking policy and other deterrents has helped to bring down the total number of cars entering central London.

The average number of cars coming into central London in 1968 was 73,500. In 1969 it fell to 71,300.

Yet whenever anyone suggests development in central London, the big firms rush in with plans for more and more car parks, thus reversing the trend.

The car parks and the motorway will make Covent Garden into a stopping-off place for businessmen, within a cheap 'taxi distance' from the City of London or the offices of the West End.

by
PAUL FOOT

The daily charge for parking in the Covent Garden car park will be more than the average daily rent now paid by tenants in the area or their houses!

2. HOTELS. Still licking their chops from the fantastic profits, (and government subsidies) accruing to them from the latest 'hotel boom', at least two major developers plan to build big hotels in the area and have got outline planning permission for them.

The hotels will take up much of the space provided from the wholesale demolition of at least three-quarters of the existing houses in the area. The cost of an average room (plus breakfast) is unlikely to be less than £10 a night, which represents much more than double what the average resident in Covent Garden earns.

The hotels will be welcomed in business communities over the world. A recent survey discovered that more than 83 per cent of all hotel bills in London's luxury hotels were paid by big firms—on tax-free expenses.

3. A CONFERENCE CENTRE. Covent Garden has been described as 'the home of the one-man business', and many craftsmen still operate in the streets around the Seven Dials. They will now have to make room for a palatial conference centre whose halls will only be available to the biggest and lushest business conventions.

Luxury flats

4. HOUSES. The plan envisages an increase in the total population of Covent Garden and in the total number of houses there, although most of the existing houses will be destroyed.

Unhappily for the existing residents however, the housing envisaged has nothing to do with them. There will be blocks of luxury flats and lavishly-decorated private residences, at an average rent of £15 a week upwards. Even in the few houses built by the council, the rates alone are expected to equal the total of rates and rents currently being paid by Covent Garden tenants.

As for participation, it no longer exists. Camden Council which opposes the development, has been ignored. Westminster Council has been bought off with a promise that it can develop Piccadilly for its businessmen.

Lady Dartmouth, the scourge of Oh! Calcutta! and all things vulgar, has been brought in to introduce the most monstrous and hideous vulgarity yet proposed for London. The plan now is no more no less than an attempt to turn Covent Garden into an ugly, glittering esplanade for businessmen who work in central London and who need car parks, motorways, hotels and 'town flats' near their work. The people who live there now will have to get out and wait a few years for a chance to live in a Ronan Point in faceless suburbia.

The people of Covent Garden are fighting back. Covent Garden Community has already established an office in the area, and 46 street representatives have been elected by the opponents of the scheme in each street.

There is a fire and a militancy in the area not seen for decades. As one interrupter shouted during the meeting on 22 April: 'If they want us to go, they'll have to throw us out!'

to the hypocrisy of private enterprise

The left and the call for real democracy

The English Civil War was basically the revolution that brought the middle class of merchants and gentry political and economic power. But they could not fight this war alone. They needed an army, demonstrations, and mass support, especially in London and the other towns. They did not see their own struggle as a narrow class fight—which in essence it really was—but as an appeal to all Englishmen to defend the principle of 'liberty' against the 'tyranny' of Charles I.

Both town and countryside were seething with discontent at this time. The rapid social change of the 16th and 17th centuries had turned many peasants into poor smallholders or wage labourers. Many independent small craftsmen had become journeymen (working for a master for wages) or outworkers (producing in their own homes for piece rates) dependent on big employers.

It was from among these social classes—not so much the wage labourers themselves, as those independent small craftsmen and peasants who feared that they might become wage labourers—that the appeal of the middle class revolutionaries was answered. They saw 'liberty' in a very different light, however, from the merchants and gentlemen. And they produced two new political tendencies which were against all that the middle class was fighting for. These were the Levellers, a radical democratic party, and the Diggers, a communist action group.

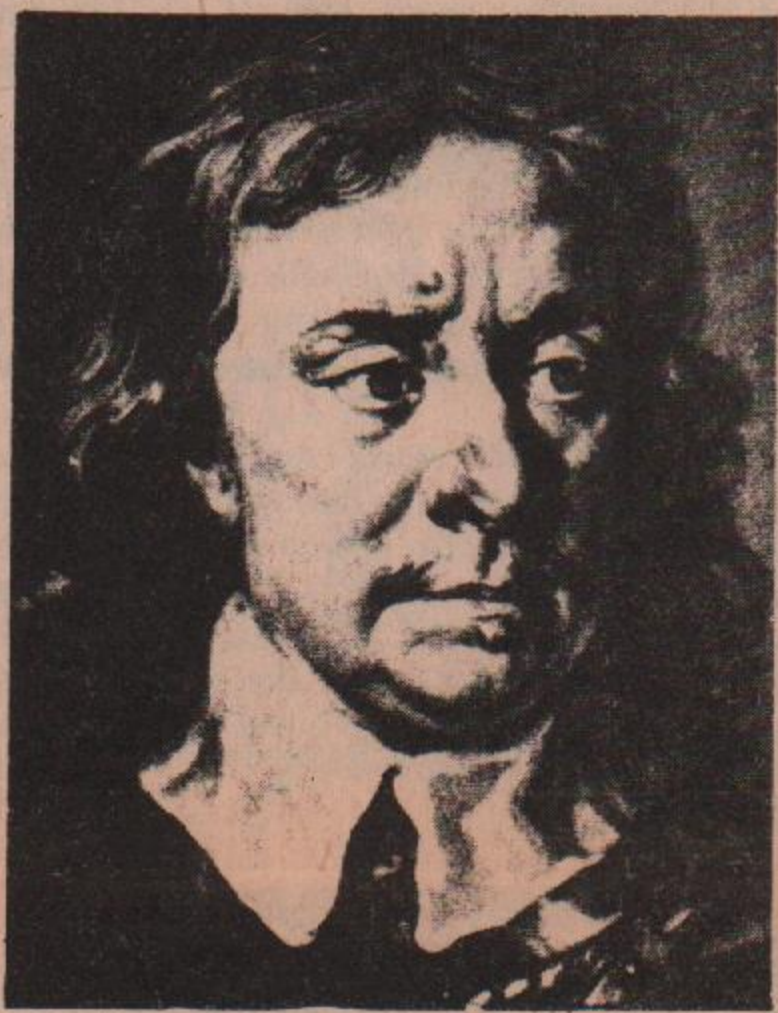
The Levellers, especially, provided Cromwell and his friends with the left-wing support they needed in the early stages of the Civil War. In 1647 the army leaders openly allied with the Levellers in order to push the more right-wing leaders in parliament into a further confrontation with the king, only to denounce the radicals once their victory was assured.

The strength of the Levellers in 1647 came from their influence in the New Model Army, the crack fighting force created by Cromwell to win the war. Cromwell believed that in order to fight well the soldiers must know and believe in what they were fighting for.

High level

Since he saw religion as the main issue, Bible-reading, prayer meetings, sermons and lay preaching were encouraged in his army. Whether they had volunteered or been conscripted, the men of the New Model soon became accustomed to freedom of thought and discussion. Since religion and politics were so closely connected in this period, and since there were several Levellers from London in the army, the political level was high.

The Leveller group had begun to form in London around John Lilburne—'Freeborn John' to his supporters—a Durham gentleman's younger son who first became involved in the religious opposition to Archbishop Laud when he was appren-

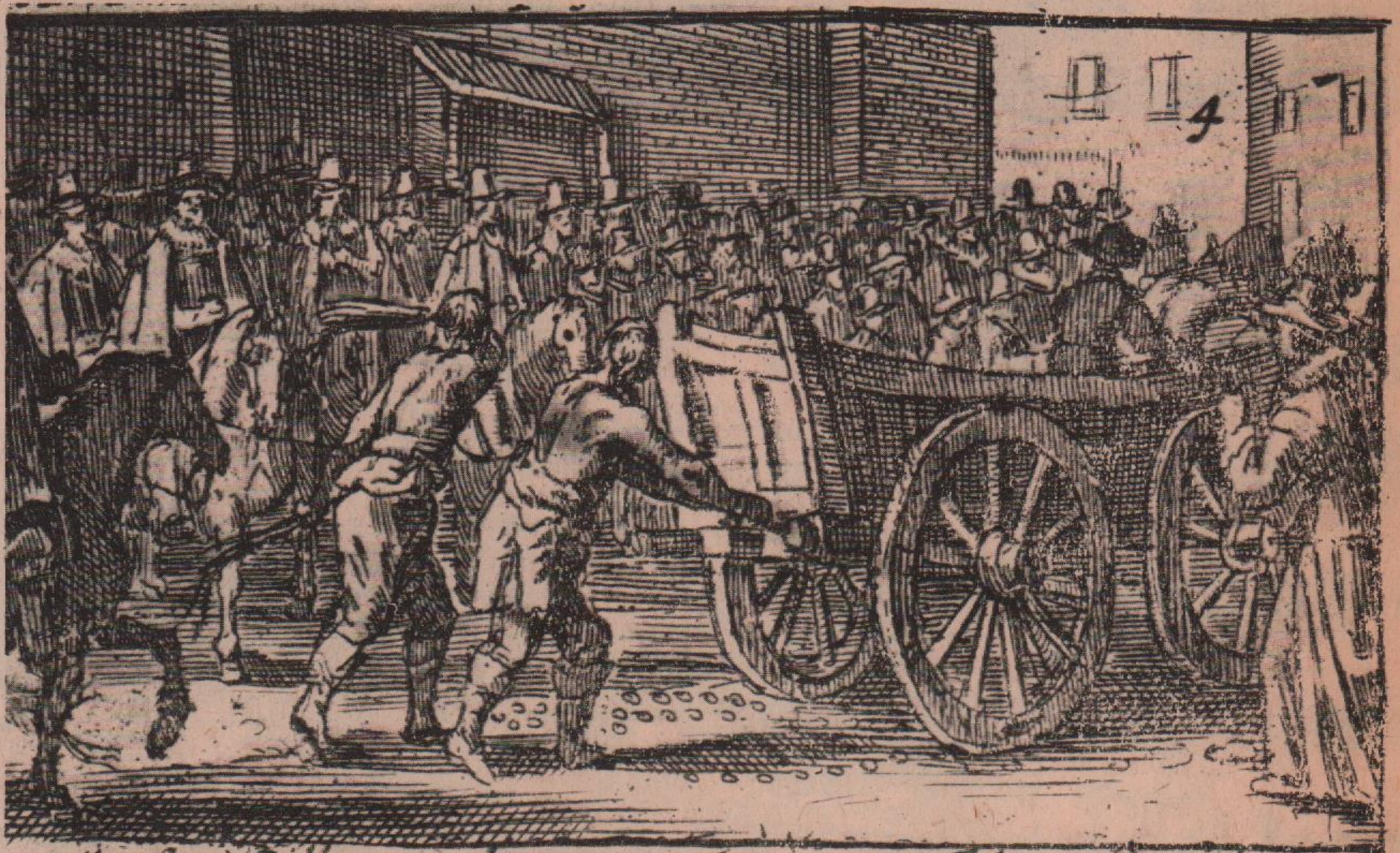


ticed to a London cloth merchant.

His courageous defence of religious freedom, despite persecution, had by 1647 developed into a concern for every sort of individual liberty.

When the right-wing parliamentary leaders tried to disband the army without paying its arrears, the soldiers organised their resistance with Leveller help. They elected representatives, called Agitators, and forced Cromwell and the other generals to discuss with them in a directly elected Army Council.

The soldiers' demands went far beyond their arrears of pay, far beyond even religious freedom. They had been told they were fighting for



*Meester Lilburn achter een kar gegeeffelt.
M^r. Lilburne whipt after the Carts earle.*

Leveller leader John Lilburne whipped through the streets of London

Cromwell and the Civil War

Second of three articles by

NORAH CARLIN

liberty and for the rights of parliament. Now they argued that parliament could not defend their own liberties unless it was elected by them.

The new constitution drawn up by the Levellers, the 'Agreement of the People', was debated in the new Army Council, with the Leveller spokesmen—the lawyer Wildman and the soldiers Sexby and Rainborough—demanding votes for all 'free men', more frequent parliaments, and guarantees of personal liberty such as no conscription.

It was here that the army leaders showed their true colours. To them, only men of property had political rights, and the call for a democratic parliament seemed to threaten property itself. They quickly ended their discussions with the Levellers and smashed the soldiers' mutiny which followed.

Party failed

After this defeat, the Levellers turned to their most brilliant, if hardly their most successful creation—a revolutionary party. Their members in London were organised in cells ward by ward.

A central committee of 12 was elected. A central treasurer collected subscriptions (6d to 2s 6d per week, depending on income), and allocated the funds to producing pamphlets and leaflets.

Party members organised demonstrations, unfortunately mainly at the funerals of those members who fell victims to the new regime. Leveller women organised their own petition and demonstration, in support of their 'husbands' liberties'.

But the Leveller party failed, and Lilburne suffered exile, prison and death. The forces of the middle class revolution were too strong for them,

but it must be said that their social foundation was very weak.

The people they attracted were mostly members of a declining class—the small craftsmen, and to some extent the larger peasants—who were gradually being subjected to the power of capitalist manufacturers, merchants and landowners.

Their highest value was small-scale economic independence, and they regarded servants and most wage-earners as having 'lost their birthright' by selling their independence with their labour power. They wanted a society of small, equal and independent producers, and saw democracy as the only way to guarantee it.

When discussing the extension of the vote, the Levellers talked freely of 'votes for all', but when forced to be more specific they usually denied that 'all' included servants, wage-earners living in their masters' households—sometimes all wage-earners—or people receiving poor relief. Added together, these formed a large part of the poor population. Women were never included—indeed, the Levellers sometimes stated that even the poorest man had 'property' in his wife and children.

Better chance

The working class that existed at that time was small and weak. Scattered in small workshops or producing for employers in their own cottages and garrets, the workers could have little idea of the force of collective action.

When they supported the Levellers, as many at least in London did, workers seem to have accepted the view that they had somehow fallen from the ideal state of economic independence, and wanted it back. They hoped that Leveller democracy would give them a better chance of regaining this state.

The Diggers, a group led by Gerrard Winstanley, appealed to the same sort of people with the same problems. But Winstanley saw that the political solution of Leveller democracy was not enough. Quite clearly and correctly, he pointed out that economic inequality was at the root of all political evils, and he proposed as a solution the abolition of all private property in the land and its produce.

Winstanley's vision of a communist society was very detailed. All land was to be farmed co-operatively by groups of families. Their produce was to be brought to common storehouses, where they would receive in return the necessities of life and the tools and materials for the crafts they could also carry out.

Education was to be free and available to all, and given in such a

way that there should be no distinction between 'intellectuals' and 'workers'. Hard-working citizens over 40 were free to retire and stand for election to a democratic parliament and local government bodies.

The only serious crimes were to be refusal to work for the common good, and conspiracy to restore private property.

In order to achieve this happy society, small groups of Diggers set out to take over the common lands (which were claimed by the landlords as private property) in the hope that others would follow their example. When everyone could see that their system was the best, the landlords would be persuaded to give up the rest of their property.

If the Levellers' organisation foreshadowed many future parties, from the Chartists to the Labour Party, it is not hard to find parallels to the Diggers' 'direct action by force of example' strategy. From Owenite communities to hippy communes, they have all failed to transform society.

Apart from their novel methods, the Diggers' ideas shared the social weaknesses of the Levellers'. Their communism depended on the vision of a society of small and equal producers.

Winstanley did not reject progress in trade and industry. In fact, he thought that the sharing of knowledge through education would lead to the greatest possible development.

But the future development of society, with all the marvellous achievements of modern industry, in fact depended on the growth of large-scale capitalism and the creation of a mass working class.

Our tradition

The small producers had to lose their independence, had to become the working class, for society to progress. Now, in our own time, the capitalists must be overthrown by the organised working class so that these achievements can benefit the whole of humanity and further progress take place.

The Levellers and Diggers were easily smashed by the forces of the 17th century middle class. They were not working class parties, but they are part of our history.

They broke with the religious ideas of the middle class revolution and appealed to reason and justice, which they believed were principles rooted in the nature of man.

The ideas of democracy and communism which they developed were not working-class democracy or communism, but they were ideals of the oppressed—in fact, of those who were to become the working class—and they are part of the working-class tradition.

Only the organised working class can avenge them by realising true democracy and true communism.

Important reading on this vital period of English history

Eduard Bernstein

Cromwell and Communism
—socialism and democracy in the English Revolution £1.00

Christopher Hill

The English Revolution
—a short marxist analysis 37½p

Puritanism and Revolution
—a series of essays on the background to the Civil War 52½p

Society and Puritanism
—a study of religion and its bearing on the revolution 60p

Reformation to Industrial Revolution
—an economic history of the period 35p

IS BOOKS

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NEXT WEEK: A closer look at the 'Lord Protector'

NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN!



ONE viewer's humour is another's embarrassing shudder and I am writing about the Ronnie Barker-Ronnie Corbett show on BBC1 (Saturdays) with some trepidation knowing that some of you probably spend 45 minutes rolling around the floor in helpless agony. I have carefully watched the show for three weeks running and have yet to actually chuckle, let alone laugh.

With all the trumpet blowing and flag waving from the BBC for this series, I would have expected something fresh and original from the two comics, and yet sketch after sketch is stale and hackneyed, the punch-line semaphored minutes in advance. And I find the way in which Corbett wriggles and giggles with glee at his own jokes pretty nauseating. Laugh and my part of the world doesn't laugh with you, mate.

Most depressing of all is the reliance on sex as the staple diet of most of the sketches. Gag after gag is fully of heavy innuendo, accompanied by shock pauses and double takes. Even the title of the send-up classic serial, Hampton Wick, will not be lost on those who know their Cockney rhyming slang.

And how grating it must be for homosexuals to have to hear, week after week, an audience screeching at someone flapping a limp wrist or clutching his rump at the mention of the word pansy. The guying of homosexuals is the built-in ingredient of most comedy programmes these days—even the genuinely funny Monty Python couldn't keep away from it.

Of course, nothing should be sacrosanct where art and humour are concerned, but why is it always the same easy, 'minority' targets that are singled out?

NOTHING funny about Callan, the spy series that ran up quite a cult following when first shown and now getting a re-run on ITV (Thursdays). It is drab, sordid and violent, a ludicrous portrayal of the 'Secret Service' engaged in battle with communists and ex-nazis.

What made the series so viewable was the quality of the acting and writing but it is sad that Edward Woodward should have achieved fame for this series when he notched up one of the best things ever seen on television in the dramatisation of Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* war plays. (Could we see that again, dear BBC, or isn't it 'ratings' material?)

There is nothing original about Callan. It is from the anti-Bond tradition of John le Carre and Len Deighton, the seedy, down-at-heel anti-hero caught up against his better judgment in the East-West underground spy war.

It is sheer nonsense, of course. Loud-mouthed, 'working-class' yobos who insult their superiors and disobey instructions would never be allowed to invade the tightly-disciplined, carefully-trained and class-ridden world of the real secret service.

And even the 'message' that Britain uses methods as nasty as the 'reds' is probably lost in the welter of kicking, hacking and killing.

SUNDAY's *Omnibus* (BBC1) was devoted to the famous French writer Marcel Proust, whom I have yet to read and was not encouraged to do so by this quite dreadful programme. At times it verged on self-parody, with novelists Angus Wilson and Raymond Mortimer chipping in squeakily to underline the latest point made by the narrator.

The style was olde worlde BBC of the mid-50s, with all the visual clichés trotted out. '1914—war broke out.' Cut to picture of big guns firing and recoiling. Gosh, so that's how war breaks out!

David East

Johnson —the ring of truth...

IN A SOCIETY that placed great stress upon 'virility', it is inevitable that the so-called 'sport' of boxing attracts great attention and interest. The sheer naked subtlety of two superb specimens of make beefcake pounding each other to insensibility has a perverse attraction for even those who are normally repelled by such displays of gross violence.

The most brutally fascinating of all such contests has always been the world heavyweight championship. What has given an added twist to such fights is that so often they have involved clashes between the white and black races. So vital does this need for racial identification appear that in the recent Frazier-Ali fight, Frazier was nicknamed 'the great white hope'.

The film of that name, *The Great White Hope* (Carlton AA), deals with an ironically similar situation. It is the story of Jack Johnson (given a different name in the film), the first Negro to win the world heavyweight championship and of the frenzied attempts of white America to discover a man capable of defeating him.

Degrading jobs

The film shows Johnson winning the crown, flaunting it in the black quarter of Chicago and taunting the whites of America as feeble and unmanly. If that was not bad enough, he openly associates with a white girl. There are many allusions in the film to the obvious yet nonetheless very real relationships between sex and boxing, spiced with the usual crude racial jokes.

Forced to stand trial on a trumped-up charge, Johnson flees America to try his luck in Europe. He fares little better there, being forced to take degrading cabaret jobs and to appear as an Uncle Tom buffoon—anything but himself. Poverty and humiliation drive his white girl to suicide and to Johnson deliberately 'throwing' a fight in order to appease the blood-lust of white America.

The parallels with Muhammed Ali are startlingly clear, a fact not overlooked by director Martin Ritt. 50 years have elapsed since Johnson's era but little has changed. Johnson bears many resemblances to Ali—a fast-talking joker on the surface, he was only too well aware of the disaster he courted simply by being himself, only too well aware of what real courage meant and involved.

The film is distinguished by a quite remarkable tour-de-force by James Earl Jones as Johnson. In the ring and out, in defeat and victory, Jones stamps his character ruthlessly and unnervingly on the film. It is this fine acting that brings the uncanny reality to the film.

Martin Tomkinson

THE GREAT SHIPPING SCANDAL

What is the cause of the growing number of collisions between giant oil tankers that pollute sea and beaches? Don't miss a major, exclusive story in next week's paper.



FOLLOWING PRICE INCREASES 500,000 CHILDREN HAVE STOPPED HAVING SCHOOL MEALS..

COTTONS COLUMN

HAROLD WILSON has a problem, the normal, everyday problem of your average socialist concerned with housing and the need to place a roof over the heads of those in need.

The Labour leader, many thousands of pounds better off for selling his dreadfully boring memoirs, has moved into £20,000 Grange Farm (four bedrooms, two bathrooms, two reception) at Little Kingshill, near Great Missenden, Bucks.

Wilson is already looked upon as the local 'squire' by the other villagers, but the Great Man has run into a spot of bother... over servants. He wanted to build a bungalow in the grounds of Grange Farm to house his servants but the local authority were not happy with the plans and he has had to submit new ones.

Readers will naturally come down firmly on Harold's side in this desperately vital battle with the reactionary local Tories. 'Houses for Servants' is the kind of slogan to bring fresh heart to the labour movement.

A WORD of advice to any reader who aspires to a seat in the House of Commons. A BBC World This Weekend profile of Birmingham Labour MP Ray Carter on Sunday told us that the man who has carried the Tories over the V&G scandal comes from a strong working-class, trade union background.

How, you might well ask, did he manage to overcome such powerful social drawbacks and still become an MP? The answer is simple—if expensive. A stalwart lady of the Labour Party told how: 'I think,' she said, 'the greatest contribution I made to Ray's career was to get him



WILSON: joining the squirearchy

to have elocution lessons. Principles you can drop in parliament, aitches never.

Grave story

SEEN on a gravestone in a field at Sunderland Point, near Lancaster, where one of the first cotton boats landed:

'Here lies POOR SAMBO a faithful negro who attending his Master from the West Indies DIED on his arrival at Sunderland. Full sixty years the angry winter's wave

Has thundering dashed this bleak and barren shore Since SAMBO's head laid in this lonely grave

Lies still and ne'er will hear their turmoil more. 'But still he sleeps till the awakening sounds

Of the Archangel's trump new life imparts Then the Great Judge his approbation founts

Not on MAN'S COLOR but his WORTH of HEART' H Bell, 1796.

In other words, there are no pass laws in Heaven—a fact to please R Maudling and sundry blackguards.

Biting remark

THE dreadful attacks on young children by security guard dogs has not brought a change of heart to the men who supply this 'service' to business and property owners.

Said Mr Derek Boyce, manager of Guard Dogs and Security, last week: 'We don't train our site dogs. We just make sure the ones we use are not vicious. If you break in, the dogs—they work best in pairs—will have you.

'They will tear you to pieces if you resist. There is no point in a dog which just barks or grabs your arm and holds you. This is rubbish and impractical to think that a dog will attack and then leave when you give up.

'They are wild. They run wild. They receive no training. Training is very expensive' So is life, Mr Boyce.

LAST MONTH the Blasted Heath declared that 'wage inflation is the main reason for both higher prices and higher unemployment. Big business is clearly unimpressed.

The spate of enormous salary increases goes on, with pride of place going to R W Bulfield, chairman of Mavitex. His handout has gone up by a cool 100 per cent, from £5000 to £10,000. HF Williams of John Williams of Cardiff Ltd has just had a 41 per cent increase, from £12,818 a year to £18,081. And GW Odey of Barrow Hepburn and Gale won't go short on his 37 per cent boost from £27,051 to £37,019.

What's sauce for the goose...

Tyne parity fight goes on

By Dave Peers

620 FITTERS at the Tyneside ship-building yard of Swan Hunter returned to work on Tuesday after a six week strike for wage parity with the boiler-makers. The fitters now have the same basic rate of £27 a week as the boiler-makers, but parity of total earnings has not been achieved.

But the fight for parity continues at the ship repair yard, where 380 fitters are still out. They have already been

offered parity of earnings with the boiler-makers by June 1972 but the question of an interim payment has yet to be settled.

The repair yard fitters have now been out nine weeks and their morale is high. If, as seems likely, they do achieve equality of earnings with the boiler-makers, this will be a tremendous step forward and should help to overcome the sectional rivalries that have divided workers in ship building. Unity will be vital in the struggles

ahead for there are now clear signs of a falling off in orders and shipyard workers of all trades will need to stand together to defend their jobs and living standards against the employers' offensive.

Only last week, a Tory government spokesman stated firmly that no more government aid would be forthcoming for this 'lame duck' industry. Shipyard workers need to press now for guarantees of job security that will provide a basis for the fight ahead.

Leyland locks out 2000 in bonus row

SW Reporter

MANAGEMENT at AEC, a British Leyland subsidiary at Southall, Middlesex, laid off 2000 workers last Thursday as a result of a 10-day old strike by 50 men in the engine assembly shop. The strike began when management deliberately broke a bonus agreement that led to cuts in wages of £3.68 a week.

On Friday, local Engineering Union officials told a mass meeting that the strike would be made official and that the laid off men should regard themselves as locked out.

A key figure in the dispute is the new manager, Musgrove, who was drafted in recently from another British Leyland plant at Bathgate in Scotland. It is clear to most militants that Musgrove has had orders from BL bosses to provoke the engine shop—the strongest section in the plant—with a view to undermining shop floor organisation.

Redundancies

If he is successful the way will be clear to introduce some kind of Measured Day Work scheme similar to that at Bathgate.

MDW would lead to redundancies. There is no doubt that British Leyland want to trim the workforce at Southall in line with their overall plan to cut labour costs to boost profits.

In fact, 'artificial redundancies' have already started. Old-age pensioners, who in the past have been allowed to stay on as long as they liked, have been told they must leave the day they reach 65—and they are not being replaced.

The strike, the longest dispute at the plant since 1935, is likely to be a long one. Donations to: Strike Committee, AEC dispute, AEC House, Woodlands Road, Southall, Middlesex.

NOTICES

PAUL FOOT on the Postal Workers and the Tory Offensive. Public meeting during UPW conference, Monday 17 May, 8pm, Highcliff Hotel, St Michael's Road, Bourne-mouth. Plus UPW speakers.

IS TEACHERS' meeting, Sunday 9 May, 11am, 2 Albany Terrace, NW1.

CARWORKER—Scottish meeting for workers in motor and components industry. 3pm Saturday 15 May, Trade Union Centre, Carlton Place, Glasgow. Rank and File paper plus Halewood shop steward on lessons of Ford dispute.

REVOLUTION IN PALESTINE—Nabil Shaath, a leading ideologist of Al Fatah (The Palestine National Liberation Movement) speaks on the democratic solution to the Middle East conflict. 7.30pm, Thursday 13 May, Collegiate Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC1.

SWANSEA IS: Talk on Reform or Revolution, Red Cow pub, High St., Thursday 13 May, 7.30pm. All welcome.

SCAB PHONE SERVICE IF BREAKDOWN OVER ENGINEERS' PAY

SW Reporter

POST OFFICE management are now engaged in full-scale preparations for the possibility of a strike by members of the Post Office Engineering Union.

At the Chancery Exchange in London on Monday, a Post Office area engineer inspected the emergency power supply provisions with a view to learning how they worked.

The emergency unit can be used to keep the exchange running during a strike of engineers. Normally the engineers' supervisors, called Assistant Executive Engineers, would be used to try and break a POEU strike.

Profitable

But there is every indication that the Post Office expects executive engineers to come out in support of the POEU should the management provoke a strike by a derisory final offer in reply to the current engineers' pay claim.

The Post Office plans to draft in area engineers to activate the emergency power supplies and keep the highly profitable phone service in action during a strike.

Strikers get poor support from GMWU

DUNDEE:- 42 women workers have been on strike for 10 weeks at the medical supplies firm of Hogg and Ross over an unacceptable bonus scheme. The management refused to negotiate with the union, the General and Municipal Workers, and the women were forced to take industrial action.

But the GMWU, apart from giving the strike official recognition, has done next to nothing to fight the company, which has filled the factory with scab labour. During the 10 weeks supplies have been blacked for only two days. The Transport Workers' Union withdrew blacking instructions when threatened with a court injunction.

Last week the strikers went to the Aberdeen congress of the Scots TUC to lobby Alec Donnet, Scottish Regional Secretary of the GMWU and STUC chairman. He refused to put forward an emergency resolution on the strike and the injunction, saying he 'must not favour his own members'.

Abandoned

The TGWU is prepared to resume blacking if the GMWU will accept liability for any injunction. But Donnet, a leader of the third biggest union in Britain, refuses.

The women have shown magnificent solidarity during the struggle but they are now wondering whether they are about to be abandoned by the GMWU. All possible pressure must now be put on the union to forestall a sell-out over the Dundee strike, for what is happening here could well be a foretaste of the sort of reaction workers will get from their unions when the Industrial Relations Bill becomes law.

Donations to: Mrs Brand, Strike Fund, 42 Laird Street, Dundee.

SUPPORT FOR FINE TUBES

Workers at Fine Tubes, Plymouth, on strike for 47 weeks, have won support for blacking the firm by trade unionists in Leeds, Doncaster, Huddersfield, York, Sheffield and Manchester. Workers at the Shell Carrington site near Manchester have agreed to cut off nitrogen supplies to the neighbouring Air Products factory.

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Redundancies will wipe out areas based on steel

STEEL SACKINGS BOOST TEESSIDE CRISIS

by Fred Pearson, BISAKTA

APART from the complete obliteration of Irlam in Lancashire, Teesside is the area worst hit by the latest list of Steel Corporation redundancies. More than 1000 men at Cargo Fleet Iron and Steel Works are to be thrown on the dole and another thousand from other works in the area.

Before the present redundancies were announced, unemployment had reached crisis proportions on Teesside, with more than 10,000 out of work. And it is openly acknowledged that the present redundancies are only the thin end of the wedge as far as the steel industry on Teesside is concerned.

It is possible that another 10,000 steel workers in the area will be sacked in the next three or four years. BSC has already announced that another 2500 jobs are under review. Hartlepool, which is already being described as the Jarrow of the 1970s

is to lose more than 600 jobs in one of the steel mills.

BSC and ICI employ over half the workers on Teesside. ICI have not taken on any new labour for months. 1300 redundancies were recently announced at Billingham ICI and apprentices are being told that the company will have no jobs for them when they come out of their time.

The response of local 'employment pundits' to all this is pathetic. The Teesside Regional Organisation for Industrial Development, which is meant to attract employment to the area, and which includes some prominent Labour lefts as well as the usual ratbag of Tories, is waffling about new factories which might come to Teesside.

Incompetent

But the 'jobs in the pipeline' game has gone on for years. Somehow very few jobs come out of the other end of the pipe.

The closing of the blast furnaces at Cargo Fleet is an excellent example of the total incompetence and callousness of the Steel Corporation management. They have just spent nearly £1 million overhauling one of the furnaces. Now it will never be used.

And these are the people who talk about unavoidable redundancy due to rises in wage costs. Without warning hundreds of men discover that they will be out of work within a month.

Nevertheless, the Steel Corporation has still not informed men at Cargo Fleet on which day or even week, they will finish. BSC's employees, many of whom have toiled in the steel industry for more than 30 years, are being treated like dirt to the fast. They are the last people who are informed or consulted about their future.

It is a disgraceful fact that all one can say about the role of the steel trade unions in all this, particularly the ultra

right-wing and undemocratic BISAKTA, is that they have done nothing. Indeed, they are boasting of how they have always co-operated with management in bringing in redundancies. Local productivity deals leading to further job wastage are still being brought in on Teesside.

It is now vital that rank and file militants in the steel industry draw up a programme for fighting redundancy. This should include demands for no more productivity deals, work sharing without loss of wages, a 35 hour week for all steel workers, a complete ban on overtime in areas threatened by redundancy, and that the government should build factories, nationalised under workers' control, to employ those who are made redundant.

In the fight for such demands it would be essential to campaign for democracy and workers' control of the unions in the steel industry.

Ford engineers condemn Scanlon

ENGINEERING UNION delegates from all Ford plants condemned their president, Hugh Scanlon, on Monday for his part in the 'no strike' agreement that ended the recent dispute. Only one delegate voted against the motion that condemned Scanlon for 'his participation in secret talks' with the company, 'the imposition of a secret ballot with company assistance which broke a nine-week strike of unprecedented solidarity.'

The motion added that Scanlon's activities disregarded the democratic processes of the union. The delegates called on the AUEW executive to ensure that such 'shameful events' are not repeated, to prevent the imposition of secret ballots and to promote the involvement of the union members in the formulation of agreements.

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