

# Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 237 11 SEPTEMBER 1971 2½p

Plessey and BAC workers show the way to defeat Tories

## FIGHT-BACK GROWS AGAINST SACKINGS

THE TORIES and the employers are deliberately boosting the unemployment figures towards the million mark as part of their policy to divide and weaken the labour movement. But a magnificent fight back is under way.

Following the UCS 'work-in' has come a more militant and potentially explosive factory occupation of Plessey's at Alexandria (this page) while British Aircraft Corporation workers in the Bristol area have launched a series of one-day strikes against massive redundancies (back page).

This determination and fighting spirit show the way for the whole trade union movement. A united struggle, linking up workers across the country, and including strike action and occupations, can defeat the Tory plans.

### Barricades at Plessey

as workers occupy  
to stop machinery  
being moved south

From Roger Rosewell

ALEXANDRIA, Dunbartonshire: Last Friday the flag over the Plessey factory was hauled down and dumped on the manager's desk. With it came the words: 'We have taken over.'

The company had intended to close the factory. Instead the workers occupied it.

The day began with Plessey's paying off the last 200 employees. Then the workers held a mass meeting, marched through the works, locked the main gates and made their shock announcement.

Since then they have slept in the factory and maintained a 24-hour guard on the gates. Managers have been admitted only after agreeing to have their cars searched and giving certain satisfactory assurances to the workers.

Any boss refusing this has been locked out. Posters and placards have been put up and a squad of workers has erected barbed wire barricades as a defence against any sudden police swoop on the plant. Food and blankets have been supplied by wives and a few local tradesmen.

Both management and police have warned the workers that they are 'acting illegally' and an attempt at a forced eviction is expected shortly. Other workers from nearby factories have been picketing the factory in solidarity and as a precaution against any attacks.

The factory used to be the Royal Naval Torpedo Establishment until it was bought by Plessey. They took control in January and immediately promised that more than 1000 workers would be em-

ployed by the end of the year.

Now, with unemployment well over 10 per cent in Alexandria, they have closed it.

The reason is brutally simple. Plesseys bought the factory for a mere £640,000. Inside is several millions pounds worth of machinery and metal. Plesseys are now transferring this to their Ilford, Essex, factory.

#### Blacking

The Alexandria workers are victims of this get-rich-quick operation. They have announced that they intend to occupy the factory until it is re-opened. They are refusing to allow any machines to be moved and the Ilford workers are co-operating by blacking any plant that is transferred to their works.

Eddie McLafferty, the shop stewards' convenor, told me: 'The Alexandria workers are not prepared to allow Plessey's to reduce the factory to four bare walls.'

The Tories and the employers are terrified that the idea of factory occupations will spread. This accounts for the almost total press blackout of the Alexandria struggle.

The workers need support desperately. It is the responsibility of the entire labour movement to give that support and to ensure that this vital struggle is won.

Messages and donations to: Eddie McLafferty, Plessey Works, Alexandria, Dunbartonshire, Scotland.



Locked gates, anti-Tory feelings at Plessey's occupied Alexandria factory

## New threat to UCS jobs

GLASGOW: The UCS work-in continues—and so do the redundancies. More than 700 men have now been sacked.

Last weekend Danny McGarvey, the Boilermakers' leader, announced that while his union would demand the nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry at this week's TUC, the trade unions were prepared to be 'flexible' about the future of UCS.

He said the unions had no objections to any 'restructuring'. This means the government will be allowed to form its proposed Govan/Linthouse division and then will agree to the sale of the other two yards to big business.

This means the break up of UCS, the acceptance of sackings and a victory for the Tory policy of butchering the yards.

McGarvey has also said that if the yards are kept open the unions will be prepared to discuss the introduction of double-day and three-shift working.

#### Sacked

Inside the yards no real evidence of a workers' take over exists. Workers are being disciplined by foremen and managers and one foreman sacked a worker for alleged misconduct. He has since been reinstated but the shop stewards have failed to explain how—in a yard they claim to have taken over—such a sacking was even possible.

Considerable and dangerous confusion exists about the nature of the takeover and the work-in. An example of this appeared in the Morning Star last week. It said:

'All UCS workers are determined to do their best for 'their' yard. Now it really is team work. The feeling 'you are letting the side down' is one experienced by the very few latecomers—yes, even time keeping has clocked new records of precision. It is summed up by the fact that the lunch time pint is downed minutes before the horn goes and the time-clock bell rings every second.'

But the yards clearly don't belong to the UCS workers. If they did, no sackings would be able to take place, no managerial discipline would be allowed and a 35 hour week would have been introduced, have been

This is due to the work-in policy. It has failed to stop redundancies and must be changed urgently.

1. The yards must be occupied and a sit in strike started. The liquidator should be sacked and all the ships confiscated until the Tories guarantee no sackings and reinstate those workers already made redundant.

2. The struggle must be spread and links formed with the Plessey workers who have occupied the Alexandria factory. Instead of working for the liquidator those UCS men already sacked should go to Plesseys and help defend that factory against any attempted police action. Other factories threatened with redundancy and closure should be occupied and regular conferences of Scottish shop stewards held to plan and unite the fight against unemployment.

3. The TUC should call—as a first step—a one-day general strike against rising unemployment and in solidarity with the UCS and Plessey workers. The TUC should demand also that both plants are nationalised under workers' control with a guarantee of no sackings.

## Danger of Heath-Lynch deal on Ireland

by EAMONN McCANN

AS A GIRL of 14 was shot dead in Derry and 20,000 Protestant workers cheered the bible-and-thunder rhetoric of Ian Paisley in Belfast, Heath and Lynch held 'friendly' talks at Chequers and agreed to meet again in October.

The Westminster and Dublin governments want to do a deal. This would almost certainly involve internment in the South and some way to lock the Catholic 'moderates'—Fitt and Hume's Social Democratic and Labour Party—into the machinery of government at Stormont. It will not work.

The massive solidarity of the rent and rates strike within the Catholic community and the continued mobilisation of Protestant workers behind Paisleyism make it clear that there can be no neatly negotiated re-arrangement of government that will 'solve the Northern Ireland problem.'

And if Faulkner releases a few internees this week as a gesture it must not stop the campaign for the release of ALL prisoners and the withdrawal of British troops.

Many Catholics have shown by their actions that they will settle for nothing less than an end to Unionist rule. Fitt and Hume would lose the little credibility they have if they accepted office in any 'Community government', such as is being canvassed by liberal commentators and by sections of the British Labour Party.

For their part, the Protestants fear incorporation into Lynch's 26 counties. Not surprisingly, since Fianna Fail represents 'Rome Rule' in the schools, a woeful level of social services, massive emigration and a generally lower standard of living.

#### Bombing campaign

Furthermore, the Protestants are being alienated by what appears to them to be an indiscriminate bombing campaign by the Provisional IRA.

Socialists who are now forced to work almost exclusively within the Catholic community are beginning to face up to this reality. In Derry the Socialist Resistance Group, fearing an SDLP sell-out, is forming street committees that could take over direction of the rent and rates strike.

They are also trying to drive home the point that the essential justification for the strike and for the 'no-arrears' policy is that the rents were always a fraud, used to pay the bankers' interest, not to maintain and build more houses. Efforts are being made to raise other issues, such as wages and unemployment and thus challenge the social systems of both the Six and the 26 Counties.

We have been heartened in the weeks since internment by support received from the International Socialists and other British organisations. While continuing to expose the role of British Imperialism in Ireland and offering aid to all those fighting against it, British socialists must also make clear to British workers the fact that NEITHER Faulkner nor Lynch and his adjuncts—such as the SDLP—offers a way forward.

The only forces capable of 'solving the problem' are those fighting for the overthrow of both Irish states and for socialism in Ireland.

Labour Committee: back page

PUBLIC MEETING  
Labour Committee Against Internment

Speakers will include  
BERNADETTE DEVLIN, MP  
Labour MPs, leading trade unionists and Irish Socialists

FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 8pm  
Camden Town Hall, assembly rooms  
(near Kings Cross, St Pancras and Euston stations)

TUC REPORT  
BACK PAGE



The lengthening shadow of the dole queue hangs over the organised labour movement. 940,000 people without jobs condemn a government that boasts empty slogans about 'equality of opportunity' yet within a year of office has brought back a grim reminder of the poverty and misery of the 1930s. Unemployment spells hardship and demoralisation for those without jobs. It is a serious threat to those with jobs, as well. It says, in effect, if you don't like your wages or conditions, there are plenty outside the gates ready to take your place.

A militant and determined fight, linking jobless and employed, is needed to beat back the Tories and the employers. The 'work-in' at Upper Clyde and now the occupation at Plessey's torpedo factory at Alexandria, show a growing determination by workers to save their jobs. A discussion on the tactics to be used by trade unionists in every sphere of their activities—against closures and redundancies, the Industrial Relations Act and productivity deals, as well as unemployment—is needed urgently. In this article TONY WILD recalls the bitter struggle of the Welsh miners in the 1930s to defeat company unions aimed at breaking their strength and reducing the number of jobs. It was a struggle that involved sit-in strikes. A further article will deal with the historic struggle in America in the 1930s to establish the right to belong to a union, a struggle which again included sit-in strikes and occupations.



Tears and smiles as the miners come to the surface after their occupation

The defeat of the General Strike in 1926 brought all sorts of trouble for the British working class. Disillusion and apathy set in. The managements were able to victimise many thousands of militants. The TUC lost several million members.

A particularly troublesome feature of the times was the growth of company unions. They had various names. To active trade unionists they were 'yellow organisations of social peace' consciously modelled on the government-run unions of Italy.

They would certainly have become one of the mainstays of British fascism, if Sir Oswald Mosley and his allies had not been driven off the streets.

In South Wales one of these so-called 'unions' grew under the leadership of a man called William Gregory and had a small but definite foothold during the early 1930s. The Industrial Union, as it was called, was thoroughly undemocratic and devoted to 'co-operation with the employers to try to make the industry successful'.

The Industrial Union did not have an easy time. There were occasional riots over blacklegging. The scabs had to be transported by a special train, called the Ghost Train by the local people.

The South Wales Miners' Federation launched a campaign in 1934 to recruit miners from the Industrial Union's stronghold at Taff Merthyr. They were faced with organised violence, but nevertheless recruited most of the miners.

### BOYCOTT

The height of the campaign was a walk-out by miners singing the Red Flag. The pit was shut for six weeks, and the employers ended their agreement with Gregory to organise the whole mine, although the Miners' Federation was not fully re-established.

The main feature of the campaign at Taff Merthyr was the mobilisation of the entire mining community against the blacklegs. Wives boycotted the shops of those with blackleg relatives. Children were kept away from classes that would have to be shared with blackleg children.

The boycott reached out to ban the blacklegs from buses and exclude them from organised sport and social life. The total menace they presented to the way of life in the coalfield was met by a total mobilisation of the working class in the area.

Gregory complained bitterly about the 'tyranny' of the Miners' Federation, which would be overcome in his own words 'with the assistance of the government. There is sufficient legislation for the protection of our members in the Trades Disputes Act of 1927, which we are demanding the government put into force'.

Taking courage from the victory at Taff Merthyr in 1934, the Miners' Federation brought 14,000 men out on strike on 1 October, 1935. All the men worked for two mining combines, the plan being to pick the combines off one by one.

The inhabitants of Blaengarw were able to cheer in new recruits at the end of the first day. So were the people of Cwmparc, but there a hundred police

# SIT-IN STRIKES THAT BEAT BOSSES' PLANS



Nine Mile Point pit-head: waiting for news of the sit-in

were needed to escort a handful of blacklegs home.

The policemen had to move on to help 'keep the peace' at Gelli. The Chief Constable of Glamorgan took charge and large reinforcements were called in.

Even so, the centre of trouble was not there but at Nine Mile Point colliery, at the village of Cwmfelinfach near Newport. In the rest of the dozen pits of the two mining combines, only 33 men were outside the Federation by Wednesday evening. It was at Nine Mile Point that William Gregory, the leader of the Industrial Union, and the employers plotted their counter-attack.

At the start of the strike on Tuesday, Nine Mile Point had only five non-unionists. By the Friday, between 20 and 30 had been moved in. By the second Wednesday, 55 scabs were working down the mine.

### IMPOTENT

The regular miners turned out to jeer the blacklegs' special bus. But, as the blacklegs' ranks grew day by day, it dawned on the strikers that their position outside the mine, with more of their jobs disappearing each day, was an impotent one. The Industrial Union had promised that all blacklegs would retain their jobs.

The men returned to work on the Thursday, but by Saturday 88 'independent spirits' were working with only 12 local men down the East Pit. The West Pit retained all local men.

It was the 78 men of the West Pit who sent up news with the boys at dinner time on Saturday that they were occupying the pit, on hunger strike, until the men were sacked.

Sunday passed off peacefully in Cwmfelinfach, but when the people turned out to jeer the blacklegs' buses on Monday they were confronted with the reappearance of the Ghost Train and a huge bodyguard of police.

The most honoured servants of local

capitalism were escorted below first. The men of Rock Vein pit followed after, met at the bottom and decided unanimously to stay down. The afternoon shift was not allowed below.

The spark of resistance at the West Pit spread further. 300 men began a stay-down at Rica and 500 more at Cross Keys, both in the same valley as Nine Mile Point.

The next day brought the return of the Ghost Train. No violence occurred. But, a reporter wrote 'All along the valley as the Ghost Train approached, they could hear a crescendo of shouting and cursing. You could hear the cat-calls when the train was a mile away'.

The flame of solidarity was fanned into a fire that day. Six more pits staged stay-down strikes: another 1,690 men were involved. Nearly 10,000 came out on sympathy strikes. The railwaymen of Merthyr banned the manning of the hated Ghost Train.

On Wednesday, a brief stay-down of a day and a half was begun at Taff Merthyr. But there the officials put up violent opposition, forcing one small group into their cages after a two-hour battle and turning the cold compressed air on to those who remained.

It was on Wednesday that the owners announced the 'indefinite' closure of Nine Mile Point. The Western Mail mented that 'The local workmen will never forget the lesson that the abuse of opportunities for wage-earning results in the cancellation of those opportunities, and it is to be hoped that the lesson will be thoroughly learned in all other parts of the coal-field as well'.

The tune never changes! Wednesday also brought the real crisis of the strike. A special delegate conference of the Miners' Federation adopted an executive recommendation to return to work pending negotiations for the reopening of Nine Mile Point.

After a debate lasting until 4 a.m. on Thursday by those at the surface, the

matter was put to the men below. They recognised the stupidity of chasing a red-herring thrown in by the owners, and sent back the message: 'We're stopping down till we have it in writing that the non-Federation men are sacked.'

Most of the men in the coalfield returned to normal working on Thursday. But two other sparks of resistance were left at Parc No. 2 Pit with 174 men and at Dare with 134 left below.

At Risca, where the men surfaced because they thought the Nine Mile Point men had come up, the employers had to close the mine to prevent them resuming the sit-in. The spark of resistance was still alive. On Thursday evening it was fanned ablaze again by a demonstration begun by the people of Cwmfelinfach.

### TRIUMPH

They marched first to Risca, then to Cross Keys, picking up people all along the route. They headed on to Newbridge, thousands strong, for the Calymen collieries to bring them out on strike.

A lodge official was laughed at as he tried to turn the crowd away. They simply waited for the appearance of the night-shift men, gathering their eloquence. They came and were dissuaded from going below. Triumphant the demonstration turned for home.

The next day, Friday, 34,000 men were on strike. And it was their solidarity which proved decisive. That final burst of militant unity was as much as the bosses could take.

On Saturday afternoon an official union deputation went below ground at Nine Mile Point. The miners emerged from the West Pit after 7½ days below ground.

The Industrial Union was banished from Nine Mile Point and all the local men reinstated by the discussions that followed.

The lessons of Nine Mile Point are important for us. The first is that militancy, unity, discipline and organisation are vital to the winning of such important struggles. The second is that complete democracy and rank and file control are essential in guarding against a sell-out.

The other lesson is that ordinary

working people are capable of organising themselves, and are capable of exercising democratic control over their own lives.

What happened in South Wales 36 years ago should provide us with the evidence on which to base our belief that the struggle for socialism can be won.

Vital reading for all socialists and trade unionists

## The fight against racialism

by MIKE CAFFOOR

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## INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS' AUTUMN WEEKEND RALLY

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15, 16, 17 October

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Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party: Duncan Hallas  
The International Movement: Tony Cliff  
Entertainment by Alex Glasgow and others

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# SCAB FORCE OUT TO WRECK SITE UNIONS



Pictures courtesy Building

by Peter Hitchens

THE LUMP is the curse of building workers throughout Britain. It wrecks trade union organisation before it has a chance to start and forces thousands of men to work in wretched conditions with no chance of a fight back.

When the building trades employers agreed with the unions to abolish the lump by 7 June 1971, it looked as though the battle was over. But not for long.

The Lump is still very much alive—and kicking hard.

It comes under a new name—Labour Force. Birmingham building workers uncovered Labour Force a few months back, and it's not a pretty sight.

The Birmingham men got hold of a folder issued by Labour Force. On the cover there's a picture of a woman in unlikely working clothes (kinky boots and a black bikini) shovelling cement. Underneath the folder announces a 'Unique System'. It certainly is.

The principle of the Lump is that men aren't employed on time or piece-rates. They are paid a lump sum for a sub-contract.

### RECIPE

This means that they are still supervised by a foreman, that they have to complete the job within a set time and that they are isolated from other workers.

In short, it is a recipe for cheap, unorganised labour. As well as this, a lump sum payment means a man is officially self-employed. So the employer is exempt from National Insurance and PAYE.

So the worker is unprotected against injury or sickness, and, as often as not, on the run from the Inland Revenue.

Inside the brochure, Labour Force offers employers men for hire on conditions like these:

1. No strikes
2. No overtime rate
3. No holiday pay
4. No staff shortages
5. No go-slows
6. No notices
7. No severance pay
8. No extras
9. One flat rate
10. All the hours you like.

... plus one—No SET. When you add the other conditions—'It is a refined modification of two systems: (a) the old labour only method, (b) direct employment'—the whole thing is an accurate description of Lump labour.

Labour Force claim to have 150,000 men on their books. They screen every one of their workers to make sure they don't get any 'troublemakers'.

And employers have to pay transfer fees of up to £1,000 if they want to keep a Labour Force



Top: Birmingham building workers demonstrating against Labour Force's unusual addition to the site gang worker permanently.

The aim of all this is to set up a monopoly of Lump labour. They want all building workers registered—with them. To make the job easier, Labour Force has its own 'Security Department' full of guard dogs, security men and spies.

There is no doubt that the activities of Labour Force are a hundred miles outside the Joint National Working Rules for the building industry.

But building workers can't rely on signatures, or pieces of paper to protect them from building industry sharks like Labour Force.

In Birmingham, a campaign has already begun against the firm. Earlier this year, 150 building workers from eight Birmingham sites demonstrated outside Labour Force's Midland offices.

### CONTRADICTS

They forced a curious statement out of Labour Force's local manager, a Mr Atkinson. Atkinson told the Birmingham Mail that his firm was 'against the Lump'. But he said 'If they (the demonstrators) are against the right of an ordinary working man to be self-employed, we do not agree.'

He went on to say that 'Labour Force meets all the employees' income tax and National Insurance contributions', which contradicts what Labour Force tells employers in its folder.

The trade in cheap, unorganised labour is a threat to all workers in the building industry. Together with the Industrial Relations Act it is a powerful attack on the right to organise and fight. It can and must be stopped.

All building workers should work for the demands set out by the Birmingham men:

1. Have nothing to do with the

## WHAT WE STAND FOR



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We fight: For rank and file control of the trade unions and the regular election of all full-time officials. Against secret negotiations. We believe that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.

For 100 per cent trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards. Against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikes are 'official' or 'unofficial'.

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 racialism 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.

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- 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/Northampton/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

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DURING ITA bank holiday people were interrogated, their crime? They formed those nate enough the operation: al activity: a while the Ital been carrying paign against icts'. Beneath people flies repressive mor For the wing and the outs' but mil tutional y left factories. The pies' is a meat in which the activity can powers of the Since the when Italian wage rises against the em real wages ha inflation and measures, the 1970. At the ers have launc in the factori they sustained





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## Raw look at gangland—but no solutions

'KRAY WITNESS shot in an attempted murder bid,' reads the evening paper headline. This is the supposedly fictionalised world of 'Villain'—London's East End with suitably grey surroundings and foul language. In fact, Richard Burton comes as close as the libel laws allow him to portraying one of the supposed bosses of London's underworld.

Villain bears all the marks of the modern, amoral, tough post-1970 gangster film. There is violence aplenty, homosexuality, Cockney slang and plentiful smatterings of four-letter words. As such, the film is both topical and exciting and Villain will doubtless be a very successful commercial venture.

The trouble is that try as hard as they can, films like Villain cannot avoid some confrontation with the moral problems raised by violence and gangsterism in our society. Villain's way out is to hide behind a mask of toughness and cynicism.

Society is in some vague, unstated way a nasty sort of place and so we get gangsters. The gang leader is shown to receive and also crave for the very same 'respect' that Members of Parliament and the leaders of society are accorded. More than this, the Members of Parliament are shown to be just as nasty, dirty and degraded as the worst of the gangsters.

The moral? Easy, the world is a terrible, dirty and festering place and only the toughest characters ever get anywhere.

### Gentle hints

All this is fine and good, but goes nowhere near far enough. As always in such films, Villain gently hints that MPs and respectable society are involved in gangsterism but there is nothing more than the hint. We are never given any analysis of such involvement and so inevitably the film collapses into more or less romanticised close-ups of gangsters, the 'villains' or if you like, the mugs, the front-men.

This enables the director to give us lots of violence, lots of scenes shot in East End pubs and even the statutory shot of a naked woman. We are shown the power, the romanticism, and finally the downfall of men such as the Kray Brothers.

We also have policemen who swear and threaten violence against their clients, such is the unfettered realism of this courageous film. But what we don't get is as much as a hint that while all this takes place, capitalist society keeps merrily rolling along, fattening upon its ill-gotten gains and robberies, maintained by law and order.

Twenty years ago, this situation produced films like The Blue Lamp, eulogies of the heroic policeman. Today, the focus has changed to the anti-hero, the gangster. But the end result is exactly the same—namely a refusal to handle the real complexity that is our actual society.

Both attitudes are equally irrelevant—'The Life and Times of the Mad Axeman' is just as bad an approach as 'Britain's National Hero—PC 49'.

In short, Villain is an exciting but trivial film. Its excitement is largely fraudulent, stemming from an artificial dramatisation of the life of an East-End gang leader. Unfortunately, the triviality is all too real—Villain neatly avoids all the dilemmas posed by the existence of men like the Kray Brothers and will doubtless be watched with great glee by the Krays of the next generation.

Martin Tomkinson



# COTTONS COLUMN

THE ZIONIST LOBBY has chalked up another victory for freedom of discussion. A chief sub-editor in BBC radio news has been demoted following howls of protest from the Zionists following an article he wrote in the Spectator.

The luckless sub, Mr Fergus Mackenzie, wrote a satirical letter in 18th century style to Mrs Golda Meir, the Israeli premier. It included the remark 'you have proved yourself... indefatigable in driving miserable wretches off your lands or reducing them to their proper status as hewers of wood and drawers of water.'

Mackenzie was accused of 'anti-semitism' and a Mr David Spector (!) of the Brighton Israel Friendship League has demanded from the BBC a written reassurance that it will adequately supervise its staff to maintain its 'reputation for integrity'.

The BBC has already bowed to the Zionist frenzy by demoting Mackenzie and docking his salary by £300 a year.

Apart from hiring Mr Spector to oversee any references to Israel, it is difficult to see what further steps the Corporation could take to toe the Israeli line. In most countries of the world, the BBC has its own hand-picked correspondents, their pukka English voices homing in on the wavelengths. But the BBC has departed from this time-honoured policy where Israel is concerned.

It has no resident correspondent there. Instead, two local Israeli journalists, Michael Elkins and Ascher Wallfisch, send despatches whose partiality for the Zionist settler state is understandable if distinctly unpalatable.

A BREAKTHROUGH against apartheid? An all-white school in Pretoria has agreed to enroll a black pupil. Before you reach for the champagne, hear this: the pupil in question, Chipso Kachingwe, is the daughter of the newly-appointed Malawi Ambassador to South Africa.



A kiss for the victor. What about the horse?

## Withering

THE private morals of the Royal Family are beyond description. According to the Sunday Times' suitably hyphenated equestrian correspondent, Miss Pamela Macgregor-Morris, Princess Anne's patriotic victory in the Burghley horse trials on Sunday was due to 'her brilliant little chestnut horse—which was bred by the Queen by the Argentine thoroughbred, Doubtless II out of an Argentine polo pony who was formerly played by the Duke of Edinburgh.'

We though there were stringent laws against bestiality. Call in Lord Longford!

## Mutiny on top

CHARITABLE readers will shed a tear for the plight of our captains of industry. The latest issue of the Directory of Directors bemoans the fact that the directors' lot has never been unhappier.

What makes them unhappy? 'The frustration of running businesses in a

country torn by industrial anarchy and with a labour force activated to a large extent by a desire to get as much as possible for doing as little as possible.' Those three-hour lunches in the canteen, golfing afternoons and Bahama holidays are getting a bit much.

The remedy put forward by the Directory says: 'Perhaps it is time directors started going slow or even going on strike now and again. What an amazed outcry there would be from the car workers if Lord Stokes went on strike with the safe keys in his pocket and the employees of British Leyland Motors could not be paid their wages in consequence!' Go on, Stokesy, try it, please.

WHAT is the world coming to? A Zurich gnome complained this week about the traumas shaking even quiet old Switzerland. 'Things are changing so fast and upsetting the calm of our lives. High prices. Foreigners. Women voting. Why, the other day, a banker here was arrested for embezzlement.'

## Take a tip

RESIDENTS of Craigcfnparc, South Wales, have raised a petition with several hundred signatures, complaining about a local council refuse tip which they consider unhygienic. They say in their complaint: 'It is disgusting that council tipping should be allowed in a place where flies, rats, smoke and dirt plague ordinary householders. We consider that the tip should be removed and placed where it can cause no harm or inconvenience.'

Councillor J. D. Maunder told a meeting of the local council that the residents should think themselves lucky. But for the tip, which had filled in a former swamp, they would be plagued by mosquitoes not flies and rats.

'If the protesters could be patient for three or four years this place will become a virtual paradise,' he said. The council accepted his advice.



TWO American comedy programmes of some quality are being shown on TV. They are All In The Family (Thursday, BBC1, 7.50) and The Odd Couple (Sunday ITV).

All in the Family is an adaptation of Johnny Speight's Till Death Us Do Part and Alf Garnett is turned into Archie Bunker. The Odd Couple is based on the film of the same name, but it too resembles a British TV programme—Steptoe and Son.

Both these series are streets ahead of other recent US humour that has been on TV here.

American TV is even more respectable than British TV because it is directly under the control of the various advertisers who sponsor and have a decisive say in the content of each programme. This presumably explains why All in the Family is less offensive to right-wing opinion than Alf Garnett. Garnett was grotesque, with his patriotism and racialism.

### Frustration

Archie Bunker seems much more reasonable. However Family still succeeds in having a go at Archie Bunker and his views. For instance, last Thursday a black youngster calls at the Bunker's house and mentions how well his parents are doing in business. Then we see an extended shot of Archie's face suggesting his frustration that any black person could be better off than him.

Carroll O'Connor, playing Archie, does this superbly with the minimum of facial movement. Much of the humour is like this—quite slow and quiet but effective, even if it had to be created this way to please the sponsors.

The real trouble is that certain areas are taboo for Family which were possible for Alf Garnett, like swearing. Speight often had to fight for his script not to be cut to make it less offensive, but he was allowed 20 'bloodies' in each programme.

The Odd Couple is about two divorced men, Felix and Oscar, who share the same flat. Like Steptoe it shows two people in a trapped relationship. At the same time as tremendous conflict, there is also a mutual dependence between the two. In this dilemma human frailty and a deep pathos are shown.

### Demands

Like Family, The Odd Couple is very funny, finely acted, but also less hard-hitting. Felix is like the old Steptoe, a hypochondriac who limits what the other person can do by making too many demands on him. Oscar, in similar fashion to the young Steptoe, resents the hold that Felix has over him.

But the old Steptoe is much worse than Felix. The old man is really mean and selfish, Felix is a hypochondriac and obsessively finicky about tidiness, which is more tolerable. Similarly Harold, the young Steptoe, is much weaker as a person than Oscar and more given to ridiculous ambitions and illusions in himself.

The conflict between Steptoe and son is therefore much sharper than between Oscar and Felix. Harold is frequently trying to leave home for good. Oscar merely rages ineffectively about how he would like to do something violent to Felix.

Recommended in the film column recently and now being shown on TV is The Sorrow and The Pity which shows many a middle class Nazi collaborator in German occupied France. (BBC2, Friday, 8pm).

Phil Hall

