

# Socialist Worker

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Fight to the finish - no productivity swindle

## BACK THE MINERS:

## BLACKING KEY TO VICTORY

### Urgent appeal for funds

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS' executive committee last week launched an appeal to its branches for £5000.

The present struggle of the miners, the occupying workers at Fisher-Bendix and many other disputes have presented us with unlimited possibilities to spread socialist ideas and to build a fighting socialist organisation.

Already this week we have printed 20,000 copies of a Socialist Worker 'Miners' Special'. Kirkby and Merseyside branches have produced 5000 copies of a Fisher-Bendix special.

We are handicapped severely by lack of funds for even the bare essentials. There is an urgent need to place full-time organisers in key provincial cities where progress can be made.

The target date for the appeal is 29 February. We urge all branches to send in their levies as quickly as possible.

Just as important, we ask all our readers who support the aims of Socialist Worker and the International Socialists to hold collections and to send individual donations to our funds.

As socialists, we must grasp the tremendous opportunities that now exist.

JIM NICHOL  
IS National Treasurer

Send donations to: IS Fighting Fund, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN. Cheques, postal orders should be made out to the International Socialists.

### Sit-in ends

MOLD, Flintshire:-120 workers at Allis-Chalmers, who had been occupying the plant for two weeks in a sit-down strike against closure, voted on Tuesday to end the occupation.

Bamfords, the Uttoxeter-based concern which had bought the manufacturing rights for agricultural machinery previously made at the Mold works, has agreed to take over the Welsh factory for a trial period of three months. Most of the Allis-Chalmers machinery will be transferred to Uttoxeter and the labour force will be cut to about 60.



Miners from the Coventry area on picket duty at the giant West Drayton coal depot in West London seen discussing with a lorry driver on Tuesday. The pickets have mounted a 24-hour guard on the depot and have successfully turned away a number of lorries sent for coal supplies.



Miners' wives took part in the lobby of parliament on Tuesday. The tremendous unity of the miners has been re-inforced by support from their wives. In Staffordshire, wives have joined the picket lines. PICTURES: JEFF PICK

THE MINERS CAN WIN—that is the clear picture that has emerged as the strike goes into its second week. The response to the strike call has been magnificent.

Area after area has reported not just 100 per cent support but a tremendous determination to fight to the finish the Coal Board and its backers, the Tory government. No compromise—that is the unmistakable message from all over Britain. (COUNTRYWIDE ROUND-UP—Back Page).

This is a key battle that affects every working man and woman in the country. The Tories and the bosses are determined to drive down wages and conditions in order to boost profits at our expense.

They want to inflict a defeat on the miners in order to tell every other section of the trade union movement: 'Fight for a wage increase that keeps you ahead of price rises and we'll clobber you just like we did the power workers and the postmen!'

That is why the miners' fight is YOUR fight. Your ability to beat off rising prices, soaring rents, welfare charges and transport costs depends on the miners chalking up a major victory.

### United action

The miners need the support of all rank and file trade unionists. Transport workers and dockers must black any movement of coal. The bosses are running out of supplies—when their machines stop churning out profits, then they'll be prepared to talk turkey with the miners.

The miners will move coal for hospitals and old people. That's all. No other supplies must move. That means massive solidarity action from railmen, lorry drivers and port workers.

Power workers are clamouring for united action with the miners. A common front of these two groups of workers could bring the government to its knees.

The danger to the strike comes from the foot-shuffling of the trade union leaders. They don't like militant action.

### by the Editor

They are 'respectable' people, locked into the corridors of power with government and employers. Tough strike action is an embarrassment to them.

So instead of the TUC mounting a massive campaign to black coal, Vic Feather, the 'impartial' umpire, suggests he should discuss the 'problem' with both sides.

And even the giant Transport Workers Union, led by 'left-wing' Jack Jones, refused to instruct their members to ban the movement of coal inside power stations.

The other danger comes from the miners' own union leaders. Their president, Joe Gormley, is in favour of settling the strike for more money in return for increased productivity concessions—the sort of concessions that have destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs in the industry and helped swell the dole queues.

There must be no concessions, no compromises in this struggle against a vicious and reactionary anti-working class government.

Black the movement of coal. Demand action from your union leaders. Back the miners all the way to a victory for the whole working-class movement.

Donations to miners' strike funds to: local branches or NUM, 222 Euston Road, London NW1.

Inside Fisher-Bendix REPORT P 4

## Black militancy grows in Rhodesia

by Roger Tembo

**AN INCREDIBLE** tragi-comedy is being performed in Rhodesia.

The setting is right in the middle of the capital city, Salisbury. In an elaborate office, sixteen ex-colonial civil servants from Britain, led by Judge Pearce, have set up shop. They were all educated at public schools and Oxford or Cambridge, and incline politically towards their benefactor, the British Tory Party. What are they doing there?

Their declared purpose is to discover whether the five million African people in Rhodesia accept or support an agreement drawn up between a deep blue Tory Foreign Secretary and the self-confessed racist Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith. They are going to find out in six weeks whether five million black workers and peasants heartily love being (i) mercilessly exploited at starvation wages by 200,000 whites; (ii) not allowed any political say; (iii) locked up without trial; (iv) forced to live on abominably overcrowded, infertile rural reserves; (v) largely deprived of educational opportunities and skills.

Yet the very settlement that is being tested has already been trampled upon. Before the ink dried on the Anglo-Rhodesian agreement, Smith's police were let loose on various African townships to arrest known militants. The agreement allowed for free political activities during the presence of the Pearce Commission.

### Defiance

Requests by African nationalists for permission to hold public meetings have been turned down, and where meetings have been held they have been broken up by the police.

Much to the discomfort of the whites in Rhodesia, there has been a swift resurgence of the African political movement. There is more confidence and a general mood of defiance in the townships and reserves. Shops, police stations and administration offices have been attacked and burnt.

Following the example of the Ovambo strike in Namibia, 3000 miners in the asbestos mines in Shabani (owned by British firm Turner and Newall) have gone on strike after the dismissal of ten militants. In the subsequent demonstration, one miner was shot dead by police and nine injured. Slogans calling for 'People's Liberation in Zimbabwe' have appeared in some schools.

In Bulawayo, the main industrial city, a leaflet circulated among workers states: 'Together we have the power to free ourselves. The sacrifice and suffering will be great, but it is the very sacrificing and struggling which will make us, not only worthy of our freedom, but capable of maintaining it. OUR

LABOUR IS OUR POWER. The whole economy depends on our cooperation. If we were prepared to withdraw our labour we could free ourselves and bring in a just society ... STRIKE FOR FREEDOM.'

Elements of the movement today have progressed beyond the old-style nationalist politics. The formation of a united front under the African

Nationalist Council undoubtedly helped.

Yet the politics of the council's leadership is largely negative. It still doggedly persists in the illusion that the British government can bring about a neo-colonial solution in Rhodesia, and so obscures the criminal role of British imperialism in Rhodesia. The council's dubious

alliance with elements of the liberal establishment in Britain will lead to its undoing.

For the question of the revolutionary overthrow of the Rhodesian regime must still be faced. The role of British capitalism in strengthening minority rule will sooner or later be exposed: if the council leadership won't do this it is only a matter of time before the workers of Salisbury and Bulawayo will do it for them.

● Anti-Apartheid have called a demonstration in London on 13 February in protest at the Rhodesian settlement. Full details on page 11.



Marchers in London remind South Africa that the eyes of the world are on the struggle of the workers of Namibia, whose strike against the racist regime is now in its sixth week

## Peace, but trouble lies ahead

by Edward Crawford

FAR FROM SOLVING the problems of the ruling classes in the Indian sub-continent, the recent war has made things more difficult for them and their backers in the world at large.

In Bangladesh the economy is in a mess. Roads and bridges are wrecked and the country is split by violent hatreds between the Bengalis and various minorities who collaborated with the Pakistanis.

There is not the slightest hope that Mujib Rahman, the new Prime Minister, will get enough aid from any source both to repair the damage caused by the war and to start development again. The economy is in a downward spiral, and if he cannot deliver the goods, violence will break out as the so-called left-wing elements take to arms.

In what is left of Pakistan, Bhutto is faced with similar problems, which are

going to get a lot worse. Much of the population have been able to enjoy a higher standard of living until now only because they were able to live off East Pakistan.

In West Pakistan the army is a sort of huge social security system for the peasantry: it is the one job they could get with some prospects. Now the army must be cut in size as the East Pakistanis are no longer paying taxes to keep it going. Once Bhutto starts cutting expenditure the screams will start.

India, even before the refugees made things worse, was faced with terrible economic problems which have only been

sharpened by the war. Every year India faces a balance of payments crisis, she cannot pay both for imports and the interest on the aid that had been 'given' to her. The solution is usually to make an arrangement with the creditors to add some of the interest to the total debt.

If the Indians do not get any more money they just get deeper into debt. Sooner or later they will not be able to pay and will go bankrupt.

The population of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh make up half the underdeveloped world outside the Communist bloc. There is a real industrial base in India, and a large, if dreadfully poor, working class. If India collapses, this would be proof that capitalism had come to a dead end. Yet there does not seem to be a party in India that can lead the working class to victory.

WHILE British miners strike, a book just published in the USA, *Death and the Mines* by Brit Hume, highlights the problems faced by American miners.

In particular Hume studies the struggle by West Virginia miners to get compensation for black lung diseases. Doctors hired by the company denied this was caused by inhaling coal dust, and blamed it on excessive smoking and nervousness.

When one courageous doctor did a TV programme on the disease, it was never seen in the mining area. The cable TV company, which used the mine company's payroll to send bills to customers, obligingly cut it off.

Nonetheless, the miners succeeded in winning compensation legislation by a series of mass strikes, demonstrations and lobbies.

They were not helped much by the leadership of the United Mine Workers' Union, who have been consistently indifferent to questions of safety and health. Hume also tells how Joseph Yablonski was encouraged by Ralph Nader to run against the president of the union. Nader then dropped Yablonski, although Yablonski knew his life was in danger.

Shortly after he had been defeated, Yablonski was shot dead together with his wife and daughter. Though he had given information to the police before his death, they had taken no action; later they used that information to make arrests.

WITH last week's military coup in Ghana, Kofi Busia followed Nkrumah into exile.

Ghana owes over £200 million to British creditors. As the debt grew larger, Busia's argument that 'it was all the fault of Nkrumah's expensive "socialist" projects' (that is, iron and steel works, state farms, etc.) grew less persuasive.

The debt grew for a very simple reason. Ghana relies on a single crop export, cocoa, and the stranglehold of world capitalism decides its price. Two-thirds of Ghana's exports are cocoa. Between 1953 and 1961 cocoa exports increased by 71 per cent, but the revenue rose by only 23 per cent. Farmers worked harder for less return.

Meanwhile the price of European goods rose. A piece of machinery that in 1953 cost Ghana the price of ten tons of cocoa cost that of twenty-five tons in 1961.

Not everyone worked as hard as the farmers. There are now fewer goods trucks and two and a half times as many private cars as at independence in 1957. Rampant inflation and the realisation that Busia's bunch was as expensive as Nkrumah's led to an increase in strikes. When Bentum, of Ghanaian TUC, started to campaign last September for an increase in the workers' minimum wage, the TUC was dissolved.

Busia's attempt to make the workers scapegoats didn't give him much time. Before Christmas the government devalued the currency, and at the same time promised Busia it would have only one Christmas booze-up instead of several.

In the deep economic crisis it is hard to see which way the army will turn. Possibly, as in Nigeria, they may try to forestall popular discontent by scratching at the surface of corruption among politicians and civil servants. At the same time they will introduce austerity measures which will hit Ghanaian workers and farmers hardest.

ALEXEI STAKHANOV, whose record coal-dig in 1935 opened the way for a massive productivity drive in Russia, is alive and working as an assistant chief mining engineer. He has just written an article in Pravda which shows he is keeping up with the new needs of the Russian economy. 'Muscles and sweat are not enough,' he says. 'This is the age of science and workers must adapt to it.'

SEVERAL political arrests have been made in Czechoslovakia. This follows the action of six opposition groups in circulating hundreds of thousands of leaflets during the elections last November. Those arrested include a number of prominent former supporters of Mr Dubcek.

Arrests of Croat leaders are also going on in Yugoslavia. It seems likely that the situation is being used to get rid of left-wing elements in the student movement as well as of nationalists, but there is no clear information as yet.

## PROMISES, PROMISES...

IN PREPARATION for the 1973 parliamentary elections, the French Communist Party has just published a 250-page paperback, its Programme for Government.

The title is in itself significant. For during the 25 years that the Communists have been kept out of power, they have had no other aim than to regain the lost glory of 1945-47, when they were in the government.

Of course, if such a return to government is to be possible by electoral means, then the CP must have an alliance with the Socialists and the wreckage of the rest of the left.

This is why, for 25 years, the CP and the trade union it controls, the CGT (by far the strongest union among workers), have always held back workers' struggles, halted strikes launched by workers themselves, and, as in 1968, condemned disorder

In France and Italy the Communist Parties have hundreds of thousands of members and millions of voters. Does their size make them successful representatives of workers' interests? This report from the paper *Lutte Ouvriere* examines the new programme of the French CP.

on the streets.

For they say that under a reactionary government in the hands of the big monopolies the workers can't make any gains anyhow, but if they want to improve their conditions they must vote for the candidates of a united left which, once in power, will set up a 'popular government'—this means voting for the candidates of the CP and their potential allies in the Socialist Party.

So one might expect to find in this voluminous programme the solution to all the demands that workers have not been able to win. But no. Only about 20 pages

are devoted to the satisfaction of the immediate demands of the working class. For since the CP wants to govern the country, it also gives its point of view on the administration of public finance, on industrial development, on foreign policy....

Even in those pages devoted to the day-to-day problems of workers, it would be hard to find any firm or detailed commitment on basic demands. Thus we are told that the return to the forty-hour week will be 'made general', that a substantial increase in wages will be 'embarked on', that rents will be held at a 'moderate' level.

### GRAMSCI:

Prison Notebooks

£6 post free

Turin 1920: Factory councils and the General Strike

23p, including postage

FROM: IS Books

6 Cottons Gardens, London E2

# Socialist Worker

For Workers Control and International Socialism, 6 Cottons Gdns, London E2 8DN

## TUC leaders must be forced to fight

IN THE MIDLANDS lorry drivers in the Transport Workers Union have been instructed not to deliver coal to power stations. In Plymouth dockers claim to have had 'no instructions from the union' to stop handling coal. Swansea and Newport dockers are effectively blacking coal imports but German coal is on its way to East Anglian ports in the expectation that it will be unloaded and distributed.

The overall picture is of a magnificent response by rank and file trade unionists to the miners' cause. Militants have done a fine job in many cases but in too many others less enthusiastic elements are able to use the excuse of 'no instructions'. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the trade union leaderships.

It is no use expressing 'unanimous support for the miners' as some union executives have done. What is needed is a total blacking of the handling of coal. The TUC General Council must be made to face up to its responsibilities and issue the call for a complete boycott on the movement of coal.

Feather and the right wing will do their best to evade their plain duty to give real support to the miners. That goes without saying. But what are the 'left wingers' on the General Council doing?

It is no use them saying they are in a minority. A firm call for total blacking by the TGWU and the Engineers would put Feather on the spot. A conference of executives to organise solidarity should be demanded. After all, such conferences have been called before for less important reasons.

This strike is make or break for the trade union movement in 1972. Not just the miners' claim is at stake, important as that is in itself. Every claim in every section of the trade union movement is involved.

The employing class and its political representatives, the Tory government, are determined to force down real wages and increase profits. Last year the trade union bosses proved in practice that they preferred the defeat of the postmen to a real fight with the employers and their government. This time they must be forced to fight.

The magnificent stand of the miners can mark the turn of the tide. Each and every conscious trade unionist must do his utmost officially and unofficially to contribute to mobilising the whole movement behind the miners. Organise blacking, directly where possible, press resolutions demanding action by your executive and by the TUC General Council, convince your workmates that the miners' fight is their fight.

A defeat for the miners would be a defeat for the organised working class. A victory for the miners will be a victory for every working man and woman.

## Mess the system leaves

POLLUTION isn't new. Take a look at the countryside around Wigan or Broxburn. The hideous scars left by the profit-hungry capitalists of earlier generations are plain to see.

What is new is that the increased scale of operations and the rapid technological changes of the last decades have produced a situation in which massive pollution is no longer confined to the working-class areas. The new pollution affects the rich as well.

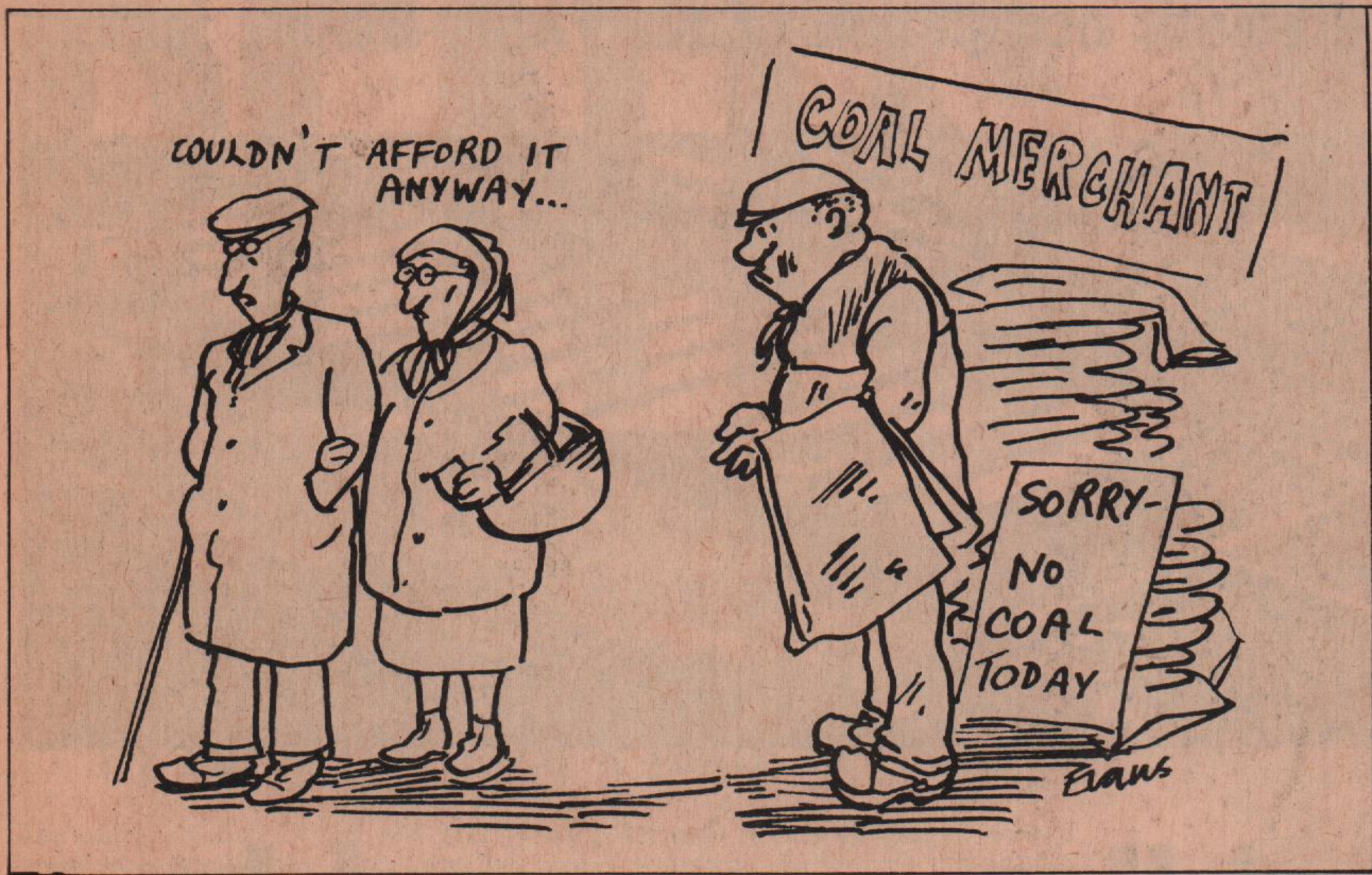
It doesn't affect them equally of course. It is still true, as it has been for a century and a half or more, that the life expectancy of the industrial worker is materially shorter than that of the wealthy suburban or country dweller. Bath or Scarborough are still a lot less polluted than Battersea or Smethwick.

All the same the problem is a serious and growing one. The recent manifesto by a group of scientists is a welcome sign that many people outside socialist circles are realising that it is first of all a political problem.

The point needs to be stressed. There are no technically insoluble problems that prevent a pollution-free environment. The ingenuity, energy and resources that go into capital accumulation, product differentiation and sales promotion could equally easily solve the pollution problem. The snag is cost and its effect on profits.

Avoidance of pollution is like industrial safety. It costs money. A world organised on the basis of production for profit will be a polluted world. Profits come first.

Certainly it is necessary, as so many well meaning people say, to change our social priorities. But the priorities are not 'ours'. They are the priorities of the ruling class. To do anything effective about the growing menace of pollution means to challenge the power of big business. It is yet another reason to join in the struggle for socialism.



## COTTONS WARS

### Sheppard's flock

THE MAIN TASK of abusing the miners and distorting their pay claim has been taken up with enthusiasm by Mr W V Sheppard, the Coal Board's deputy chairman. In the past week Mr Sheppard has been especially strict about the immorality of miners who do not work safety shifts.

Mr Sheppard started his career for the Coal Board in his native East Midlands (Nottingham area). In the early 1960s he was the Coal Board's Director of Production, and as such was appointed chairman of an arbitration panel to find out whether pit props ordered by the Coal Board from a Nottingham firm, Bonser Engineering, were a direct copy of pit props patented by another mining machinery firm, Gullick Ltd.

Gullick claimed that the Coal Board were flouting their patent and deliberately feathering Bonser's nest.

Mr Sheppard 'found' that Gullick's claims were ridiculous, and the Coal Board continued to order props from Bonser.

No one pointed out that at the time of the 'independent arbitration' Mr Sheppard's wife held 500 shares in Bonser.

Later, in 1967, Mr Alfred Robens, son of Lord Robens, then chairman of the Coal Board, joined the Board of Bonser. Bonser never looked back. For some reason, more and more orders seemed to come in from the Coal Board.

### Go, Joe

RANK AND FILE MINERS are eagerly supporting the Labour Party's campaign to send a delegation to Rhodesia to investigate the Pearce Commission's handling of the proposed settlement with Smith. The miners' keenness is not unconnected with the fact that NUM President Joe Gormley is a member of the delegation and they would prefer him to be several thousand miles away while the strike is in progress.

SEZ YOU: Coal Board ad in the advertising magazine Campaign: 'Coal—the fuel that can't be cut off.'



Gormley: we think you ought to go

### Jules' robbery

WORKERS sitting in at Fisher-Bendix at Kirkby may like to know the following facts about Sir Jules Thorn, chairman and managing director of Thorn Electrical Industries (which owns Fisher-Bendix) since 1937.

Together with other individuals and on his own account, Sir Jules owns a total of 5,684,444 shares in the company. (He may own a lot more under the names of nominees.)

Seven months ago, when the first closure of Fisher-Bendix was announced, the value of one Thorn Electrical share was 342p. The value of Sir Jules' little holding was, therefore, £19,494,000 approximately.

Today the share value is 493p—and Sir Jules' holding is worth £28,101,000.

In the intervening time, Sir Jules' holding has risen in value by £8,707,000 or, approximately, £1,215,285 a month. Every week, in other words, Sir Jules grows richer, just from the increase in value of his shares in his own company, by approximately £300,000.

THE French firm of Moulinex is alleged to be interested in buying the Fisher-Bendix site at Kirkby. Moulinex's top representative in Britain is a Monsieur Bourgeois. Looks like being a classical struggle on Merseyside.

### Unfair Co-op

ONE of the stalwarts of the Labour Left for many years has been Robert Edwards who, until recently, was the general secretary of the Chemical Workers Union. Mr Edwards is the Labour and Co-Op MP for Bilston in Staffs.

Delegates to the TUC and Labour Party conferences have been bored for many years by Edwards' 'moving' appeals on behalf of the exploited peoples of South Africa, Spain etc.

Strangely, he has never spoken in public about his association with Ellis Seillon, an international swindler of considerable skill who was convicted last week of cheating several banks of some £13m.

The bank which was swindled the

most was the Co-Operative Bank, which is usually most cautious in its investment.

For some reason, which has never become clear, the Co-Op bank believed everything Seillon told them and loaned him millions of their clients' money.

At one stage, these loans can only have been advantageous to Edwards. As late as 1970, he still owned some 12,000 shares in Seillon's crooked company, Mesco Consolidated. He was also a director of Corton Beach (holdings), a bogus holiday firm which Seillon had founded as a cover for his other dealings.

### Smart talk

HOW NOT TO make friends and influence people: The St Michael's Immigrant Centre in Bradford has produced a leaflet for Asian students that must take the chappati for bad taste and insensitivity. The idea is to encourage the students to conform to the 'British way'.

Sketches of two boys shows one dressed like the Sneak of the Third from some pre-war public school with the legend: 'This boy is very smart for school. He is wearing a suit. He is wearing a shirt and tie. In England it is best to wear a tie with a shirt. It looks very smart.'

Next to him is a grotesque sketch of a Rocker from 10 years ago. 'Look at this boy! His hair is too long and very untidy. His shirt has many colours. His jacket is very untidy. His trousers are very tight. His shoes are very long and pointed with high heels. He is smoking. This is a bad school-boy. This kind of boy will get into trouble. You must not come to school looking like this.'

Turning to the girls, they instruct them to remove their bangles and necklaces, take off their 'fancy' gameez and shilwar and to switch to 'neat and tidy' blouses and skirts.

But worse is to come in a section on hygiene that shows a boy and girl standing by themselves because they have no friends. 'They are not clean. They do not wash or bath themselves properly. They are dirty. No one wants to be near them.'

As the Times Educational Supplement points out: 'Just the thing to make newly arrived immigrants feel that they're wanted and that we have some understanding and admiration for their custom, dress—and, of course, hygiene, when Muslims have extremely careful rules and standards.'

NICEST thing seen on television last week was the breakdown of an interview on 24 Hours with Menachem Begin, Israeli right-wing fanatic and former leader of the terrorist Irgun that massacred hundreds of Arabs in the struggle to create the Zionist state. As the song almost said, the BBC couldn't Begin the Begin.



Telephone  
01 739 9043  
editorial

**UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT:** the words are spelt out in giant black letters along the wall surrounding the Fisher-Bendix factory in Kirkby, near Liverpool.

The new managers are the workers, 1000 manual and staff, who are occupying the plant 24 hours a day to stop its shutdown. The vote to start a sit-in was taken unanimously on 5 January when management refused to withdraw their notices of closure and removal of machinery.

They were given 10 minutes to leave the grounds. Then the workers took over. It was another collective refusal to accept the bosses' belief that profits are more important than people.

In six months, the tactic of factory occupations has spread south from Scotland with the realisation that those who produce the wealth and run the machines have the power and the right to take such action to stave off the dole queue.

And with each occupation has come a growing militancy, a greater determination. The respectable 'work-in' on the Clyde with friendly relations between workers and managers has been replaced at Plessey, Allis-Chalmers and now Fisher-Bendix with an authoritative declaration: 'We're not working their machines — they're not having their machines until they guarantee our jobs.'

There is no feeling of being under siege at Kirkby — once you are through the gates. And that is no easy thing. Stacker trucks laden with wooden pallets barricade each entrance and the gate houses are manned by workers who stop and interrogate each visitor.

Inside all is quiet efficiency. As we waited for a shop stewards' spokesman in the foyer on the plush seats normally reserved for visiting management bigwigs, the Tannoy system crackled into life.

'Here is a statement by the shop stewards' committee.' It was an answer to a press report of a Thorn management spokesman who had said that several hundred jobs could be found for redundant Kirkby workers at their nearby Skelmersdale works.

The stewards stressed that no such offer had been made to Kirkby workers. They said the Kirkby personnel manager had told the stewards just two weeks before that there were no job opportunities anywhere within the Thorn Group for Fisher-Bendix employees.

### CHEATING

But even if there were such opportunities, the shop stewards were unimpressed. 'The unemployment situation in Skelmersdale is in a similar position to that of Kirkby and the work people recognise this fact and are not prepared to take away jobs from the unemployed of Skelmersdale,' their statement went on.

'The Thorn statement claims that these alleged vacancies are due to their expansion programme. If Thorn are expanding then they should be expanding at Kirkby.'

If someone somewhere in the management is not telling the truth, that is nothing new in the recent history of Fisher-Bendix, which is a notable example of the cheating and double-dealing that are the hallmarks of Mr Heath's 'abrasive' new Britain.

The Kirkby factory was built 11½ years ago, with the aid of a £3½m government grant. It was then a subsidiary of the British Motor Corporation and the main product was the Bendix washing machine.

BMC sold the firm in 1968 to Parkinson-Cowan, who were swallowed last year by Sir Jules Thorn's multi-million domestic appliances combine. Production of washing machines at Kirkby was run down in preference to central-heating radiators.

### RUSHED

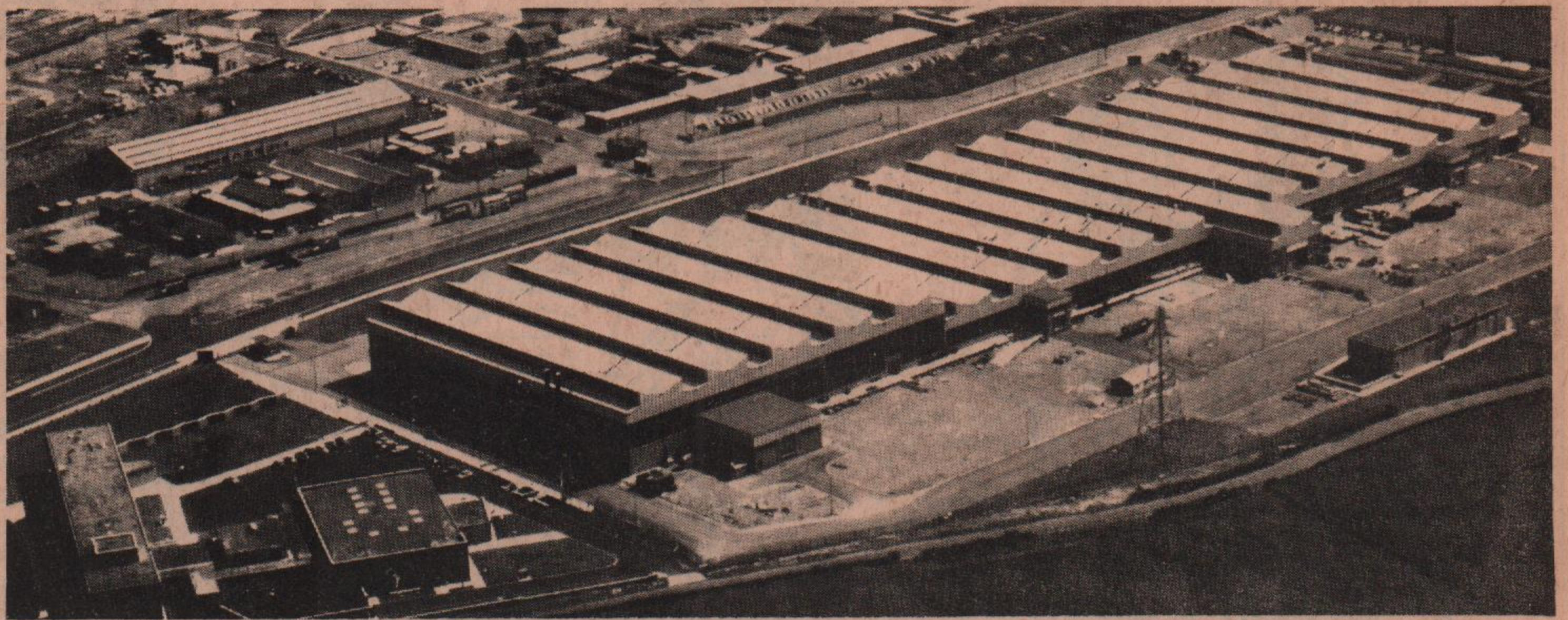
The stewards were told that Thorn was stopping the production of washing machines completely. Radiators were just a convenient stop-gap for the management until they closed the Kirkby plant.

The story about stopping Bendix production was a lie. It takes a workers' occupation to find out the truth. Management correspondence files have been most informative.

While the stewards were being told that Bendix machines were, so to speak, all washed up, Mr K Booth, the Kirkby branch manager, rushed out a letter to the trade:

'Dear Bendix Customer: This letter is to clear up any doubts you may have as to the future of Bendix in the Domestic Appliance Industry. It has been reluctantly decided to cease the manufacture of Bendix Washing Machines at the Fisher-Bendix plant... This does not mean the departure of Bendix from the washing machine scene; Bendix products will continue to be marketed and the range will be expanded.'

With some excitement, Mr Booth told the trade that a new tumble-dryer would be added to the Bendix line.



# Bosses' lies exposed by sit-in strike at Kirkby

by Roger Protz

And at the time of the Thorn takeover, Mr G A Bilsland from head office wrote to Kirkby asking for full details of 'your tumble dryer, dishwasher and washing machine which I understand are to be the main items immediately involved in next year's selling programme. I also hear that two additional washing machines are likely to come into circulation in the near future.'

Other letters in the management files answer the apparent contradiction between closing the Kirkby plant and stopping production of washing machines while the trade was being given a glowing report of exciting new machines.

Elaborate plans had been under way for a year to have Bendix machines made under license by a firm called CARSA in Spain. The new tumble dryer machine had been developed at Kirkby. Now it was to be put into production in Spain where a police state makes trade unions illegal and wages and conditions are so bad as to ensure the maximum profits for Fisher-Bendix.

The whole sordid business throws an interesting light onto the 'morality' of capitalism: exploit the skills of Lancashire workers for 11½ years with the aid of lavish sums of public money, then threaten to close the works at a time of high unemployment and minimum new job opportunities while you prepare to switch your exploitation to the workers of fascist Spain. How well Sir Jules deserves his knighthood.

Now secrecy and lying have been replaced by workers' democracy. Weekly mass meetings—they can be held more frequently—discuss the progress of the sit-in strike and future plans.

Special committees have been elected to run the occupation on a 24-hour, six-shift basis: they include press, propaganda, security, hygiene, attendance, refuse collection, canteen and entertainment. Every worker gets an attendance card each day and reports to a committee for duties.

The canteen is a good example of the pride the workers now have. Once grubby and with unappetising food, the kitchen staff scraped a quarter-inch of grease off the floors and scrub them continuously while excellent meals are prepared.

The employees are working for themselves, not Thorn. The giant presses that once thundered out an endless stream of washing machines and radiators stand idle and, as far as the stewards are concerned, will remain idle until they receive a guarantee of work and no redundancies.

The management's disregard for its workers' livelihoods is not matched by its concern for the machines. When supplies of oil for heating the plant were cut off after the occupation began, the workers threatened to light fires under the presses. Oil supplies re-started—and Thorn will have to foot the bill.

The workers know that the plant, worth £2m, is a major trump card.

Six unions are represented at Fisher-Bendix: AUEW, TGWU, EEPTU, ASTMS DATA and CAWU. We were shown round by Archie Breden, the electricians' steward, now in charge of organising trips to raise support and money for the occupation.

Factories and building sites throughout Merseyside had been visited. Support was rolling in: food for the kitchens, donations to the strike fund and promises of physical support if Thorn attempts to evict the workers.

### REDUNDANT

I told Archie Breden that I had been struck immediately by the authority and efficiency of the occupation. What did they feel about the 'necessary' role of management now?

'Management are redundant,' he said: 'We could run the factory. Of course, we would have problems, but we would get assistance from other experienced trade unionists.'

'People became immediately responsible. They no longer feel subservient.'

But there is no romanticism about this struggle. The stewards know this is not a fight for socialism in one isolated factory, but is a battle, first and foremost, for the right to work.

The key to victory is a solidarity campaign that will hit at the whole giant Thorn empire. The first step was effective action within the combine and all Thorn shop stewards had been invited to Kirkby last Saturday to discuss the situation.

The Kirkby workers struck last year when 500 were threatened with the sack but they seemed isolated until workers at the Birmingham plant responded to their appeal and threatened to strike themselves. Thorn backed down within hours.

Kirkby are also appealing to the wider trade union movement and to housewives to boycott and black Thorn products, which include Bendix, Tricity, Moffat, Kenwood, Main, Radio-Rental,



Top: aerial view of the Fisher-Bendix plant  
Above: the gatehouse—a simple poster sums up workers' aim

DER, Multi-Broadcast, Parkinson-Cowan and Rumbelow.

Archie Breden had high hopes that dockers would refuse to handle the Spanish-made Bendix machines now being imported into Britain. Because of their shoddy materials, they would quickly rot on the quayside and help bring Sir Jules to heel.

Blacking and sympathy strikes are actions that could bring reprisals under the Industrial Relations Act. The Kirkby stewards' reaction is short and simple.

'We don't consider the Act,' Archie Breden said. 'We told the workers it doesn't exist.'

He recognised that the main force to help them win is the rank and file of the trade unions. A powerful combine committee within Thorn, plus action from dockers, transport workers and consumers, can hit Thorn where it really hurts.

Last week Thorn announced pre-tax profits of more than £19½m for the six months to September last year. Experts expect a colossal £48m profits in the next period. Action that hits at those

profits can force the bosses to retreat and agree to keep the factory open.

And Archie Breden acknowledged another thing: because of the weakness of the official trade union machine, a political organisation that helps link and unite the working-class movement is vitally necessary in the crucial battles ahead.

The Fisher-Bendix factory hums with quiet determination and conviction. There is a struggle that deserves and must have the active support of every trade unionist in Britain.

### POINTER

Along with the other factory occupations, it is a declaration that working people, whose skill and enterprise creates the profits and wealth of the minority, will fight for the most basic of democratic rights—the right to work.

It is a demonstration, too, of the enormous enterprise and organising ability of working people, a pointer to a sane society where production is for use not profit.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT is a sign that needs to be hung on every factory gate in Britain. It is not the workers who are redundant but Sir Jules Thorn and the rest of his class.

# Thorn can be defeated—by trade union solidarity action

Organise a collection NOW for Fisher-Bendix. Send to Tom Staples (Treasurer), 42 Kennelwood Avenue, Northwood, Kirkby, Liverpool L33 6UF.

# RENTS

**It's not just council tenants who are under attack from the Tories. Private tenants, already harassed by landlords, face a jump in rents**

The major objective of the new Tory Housing Act is to force a doubling of council house rents over the next three years. But council tenants are not the only group whose housing rights are coming under government attack. There are 1.3 million families who rent from private landlords and whose rents are at present controlled by law. This group of tenants includes many old age pensioners and families on very low incomes. Yet, next year, the Tories intend to scrap controls altogether and rents will rocket.

**MR GILLESPIE of Holloway Road applied to a rent tribunal and had his rent reduced. His car was daubed with paint while on the street, and its tyres were cut with a saw.**

A bathroom which the Gillespies had been allowed to use ceased to be available. Noise nuisance increased, and finally the electricity was cut off.

This story of harassment was reported recently in the House of Commons, but Mr Gillespie and any other private tenant just doesn't have the law on his side. If he could get physically assaulted the police might do something, but otherwise...

Only an average 56 people a year were convicted for harassing tenants in 1965-70: 600 people a year were convicted for begging in the street. Seventy people were convicted each year for illegal eviction: twice as many were convicted for keeping brothels.

The police say they are too overworked to bother about protecting tenants. The truth is they are more concerned with protecting property owners — there are more than 40,000 convictions for shoplifting and 1400 for poaching each year.

When Labour brought in the laws against harassment and eviction in 1965, Richard Crossman boasted that they were the first clauses of a 'tenants' Magna Carta'. Yet even Labour's almost invisible rent controls are to be stripped away by the Tories.

## Property

The 'Fair Rents' law will put the 1,300,000 controlled tenants — including many pensioners — at the mercy of the government-appointed lawyers and professional valuers who have a built-in majority on the local rent assessment committees.

Who then will come first: property or people?

The reverence for property of the present rent tribunals — which are the appeal courts for thousands of furnished tenants — was clearly shown in evidence to the Francis Committee on the Rent Acts. The Thames Valley Rent Tribunal chairman, Mr D Yardley, told how the tribunals value worthless rubbish:

'Even when furniture would fetch nothing if sold, we tend to take a sort of figure of £10 for a bed and mattress anyway, even if it is ghastly, and for an armchair £4 to £5 anyway whatever it looks like, and a couple of pounds for the lino even though it is foul — that kind of thing. We may result with perhaps £40, £50 or £60 as our total capital value for the furniture.'

Furniture valued at £60 means an extra £1.50 on the monthly rent, for each year the tenant is made to pay a quarter of the estimated value of the furniture.

The last Labour government allowed an enormous loophole to develop in the rent control laws, which apply only for tenants renting unfurnished from a private landlord. The Wilson government tolerated a

by JIM KINCAID

situation where if a landlord could get rid of a sitting tenant whose rent was controlled, the premises could be relet furnished — and the rent pushed sky high.

Especially in London, the switch to furnished lets has been happening with fantastic speed. In 1963, 90 per cent of houses and flats advertised in London for let were unfurnished. By 1970 only 5 per cent were unfurnished.

In the furnished sector the landlord holds all the cards. A few sticks of tatty furniture are sufficient to make a flat 'furnished' in the legal sense. A pound or two invested in some local junkshop puts the landlord in a position of overwhelming strength.

## Pressure

Legal protection of the unfurnished tenant is virtually non-existent. Labour's 1965 Rent Act introduced rent tribunals to which tenants in furnished flats or houses could appeal for a reduction in rent. But few tenants care to risk an application to a rent tribunal for fear of reprisals from the landlord.

In England and Wales, each year only about 15,000 out of 500,000 furnished tenants apply to a rent tribunal, and a third of these applications are withdrawn under pressure from the landlord before the tribunal has finished processing the case.

The 'tenants' Magna Carta' is practically invisible. Harassment of tenants and illegal eviction occur on a massive scale. Recent studies show that eviction by private landlords is

**The houses were poorly built anyway; now the landlords are squeezing the last drops of profit from them. A few sticks of old furniture and they can add £18 a year to the rent.**

the biggest single cause of homelessness among the thousands of families who each year are forced into local authority hostels.

Unbelievably the laws against harassment and illegal eviction cannot be used to reinstate a tenant.

The indifference of the police is matched only by the leniency of the

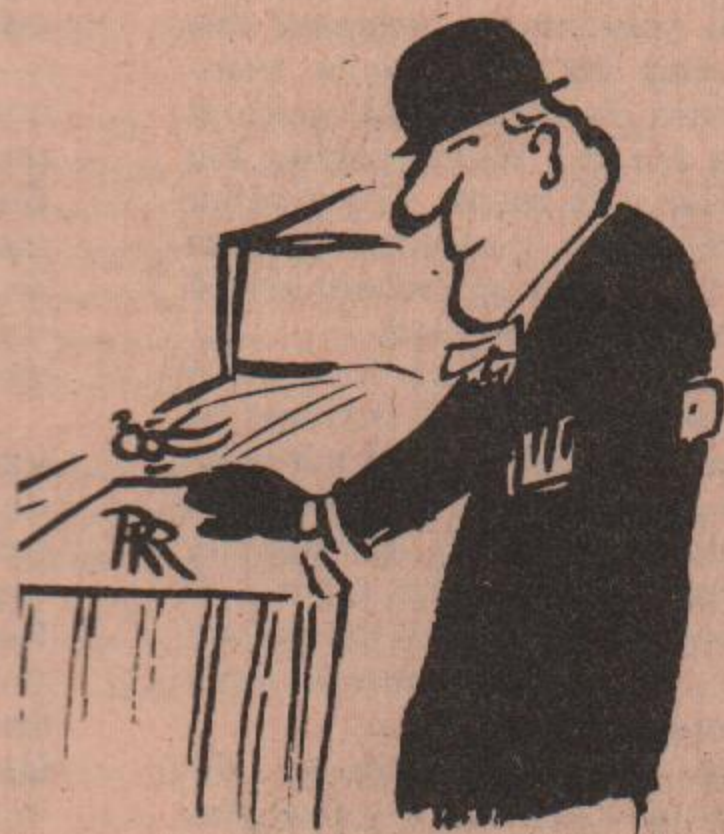
courts. The maximum fine for eviction or harassment is £100, but landlords convicted of eviction were fined only an average £25.50 in 1966 — and this had dropped to £15.75 in 1970. For harassment fines in 1966 averaged £20.50, and only £16.75 in 1970.

The latest Tory housing legislation

contains nothing at all about furnished tenancies. The Tories are content to leave the furnished tenant exactly where the recent Labour government left him — exposed to the crudest exploitation, backed by a system of laws and tribunals which is fixed to the advantage of the landlord.



## IN THE CITY



with T. H. Rogmorton

## Happy old year for profiteers

THE capitalists moaned so much in 1971 about inflationary wage settlements, wrecking strikes and international money problems that you might think they had a hard year. But according to official government figures, profits zoomed.

In the City share prices had a merry time most of the year. Some rose by more than 200 per cent. There is only one thing that makes share prices go like that: bigger profits. And it wasn't because speculators were looking to 1972 for their bumper profits: businesses were turning them in all through 1971.

According to the Central Statistical Office, gross trading profits of UK companies were up 10.3 per cent in the first quarter of 1971 and up 14.6 per cent in the second quarter, at a mere £1,424,000,000. The third quarter figures are expected any day now and will probably be much higher.

Now remember those figures are achieved after paying those 'grossly inflationary wages' that are so damaging to profits and the health of British industry. But it is even better than that for the capitalists: three other things have happened this year to help them.

FIRST, interest rates have fallen. That means it is cheaper for them to

borrow money to reinvest, and that comes out of those gross trading profits.

SECOND, Corporation Tax has been reduced from 42½ per cent to 40 per cent.

THIRD, most important, the government has introduced a new system of depreciation allowances. This is the system whereby the government says: 'It's costing you a lot of money to buy new machinery that will fall in value (just like a car) so we'll let you have some money to make up for what you will lose when you replace the machinery.'

Interestingly, the worker doesn't get any allowance for the depreciation on his car. The company director, because his car is owned by and paid for by the firm, does.

### Cash

Previously the government gave a cash gift to companies and the company depreciated the machinery over a period of years. Now the government gives a tax rebate of 40 per cent of the value of the machine in the first year of its life.

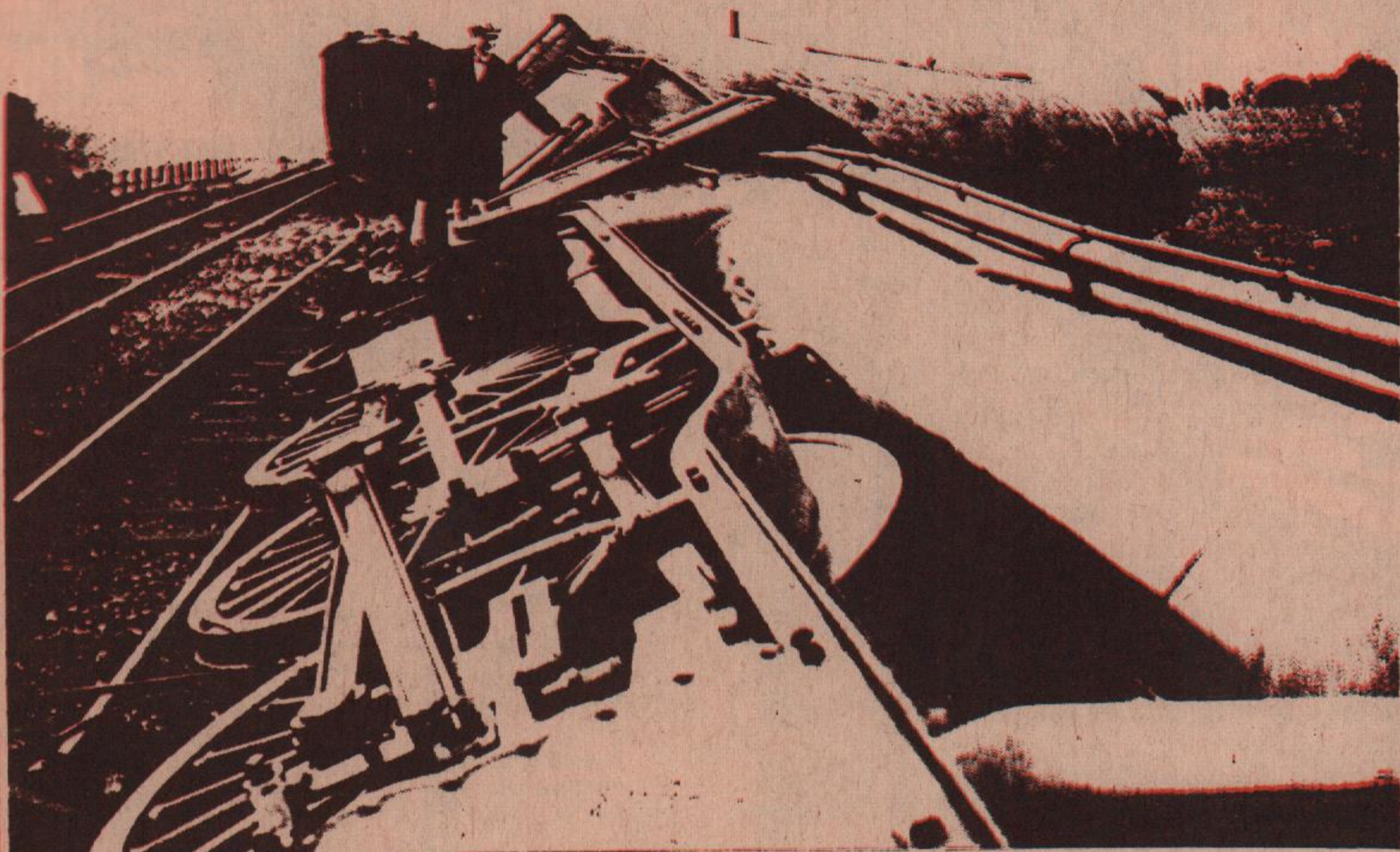
This change alone will make a phenomenal difference to a company. If the company was making £1000 gross

trading profit in 1970, it would be making £518 after tax, assuming an average amount of investment in new plant. In 1971 the same company would be making about 23 per cent more after tax profit. And that ignores the cheaper money it borrows and is after all those wages have been paid.

Two other things: when the Tories announced the new depreciation system they said it would save millions in investment grants. Which it will — but it will also slice the revenue from Corporation Tax. Second, many companies will never again pay full tax, because of the big allowance they get from the government. Their published accounts, needless to say, won't show that, but their accounts to the taxman will.

So profits were up phenomenally and so was unemployment.

Quite simply, money that could have been given to the workers has been given to the capitalists and the workers have been put out of their jobs. It puts the lie once and for all to the idea peddled around by trade union bosses and the Labour Party that when it is good for business it is also good for the workers. The City meanwhile continues to rejoice.



A blackleg train derailed by Northumberland miners in 1925

## When the TUC betrayed miners

**THE LAST STRIKE** to close down every coal mine in the country was 45 years ago. Despite that, it remains full of lessons for today.

by Chris Harman

The background was simple. In June 1925 the coal employers told the union — then called the Miners' Federation of Great Britain — that the existing national agreement would be ended in four weeks.

It would be replaced by wage cuts and by area agreements — which meant miners in different coal fields competing with one another to see who could keep their jobs by working at the lowest wages.

Everybody knew that this was more than an isolated confrontation between the owners and the men in the pits. The Tory government of the time saw this as a test case. Baldwin, the prime minister, told a miners' union delegation that 'All workers in the country have got to face a wage cut'.

People also had vivid memories of events four years earlier, which were in many ways a dress rehearsal for 1925-6. In 1921 a similar ultimatum had been given to the miners' union and the owners had locked out the men.

The leaders of the big railway and transport unions had promised support for the miners, issuing strike notices due to come into effect 12 days later. The government made clear its determination to fight.

### Bitter

The Emergency Powers Act was invoked. Reservists were called up. Special 'defence corps' of strike breakers were formed. Machine guns were posted at pit-heads.

The official leaders of the unions were no match for the hardfaced men, prepared to resort to any means to uphold the rule of profit, who run capitalist governments. The sympathy strikes were called off and the miners left to fight alone for eight weeks.

Immense demoralisation followed this betrayal. The miners were forced back to work, bitter and defeated. In the months that followed the government and employers forced wage cuts and a weakening of union organisation on section after section of workers. Total trade union membership fell by 2½ millions in little more than a year. No wonder the betrayal of 1921 was referred to as Black Friday.

But hard and painstaking work by rank and file militants succeeded in rebuilding the strength of the unions and the fighting confidence of workers by 1925. It was this the Tories were determined to smash.

At first, however, it seemed that they were going to be foiled. Bitter recollections of the aftermath of Black Friday forced the transport workers and rail union leaders to take a more forceful stand. Coal stocks were very low and at a time when coal was more important as a fuel than it is today. Faced with the likelihood of a rapid shutdown of all industry the government intervened to postpone the conflict with the miners. The

lockout notices were withdrawn and an extension of the old agreement arranged — but for an interim period of nine months only.

The ruling class began its preparations immediately. Coal stocks were accumulated. Measures for putting the country under emergency, quasi-military rule were drawn up.

The names of volunteers ready to scab or carry out special police duties were collected. The leaders of the then revolutionary Communist Party were imprisoned.

Meanwhile the official leaders of the working class did precisely . . . nothing. Their leftwing speeches were meant for the conference hall alone.

Ernest Bevin, who was head of the Transport Workers' Union, later admitted that 'no definite proposals for action had been formed and put down' before the nine months' extension ran out.

### Frightened

The Tories kept to their schedule. In April 1926 the owners announced that the lock-out of the miners would come into force at the beginning of the next month unless the workers accepted their terms.

Because of the deep sympathy for the miners' case among the working class the TUC was compelled to promise sympathy action in support of the miners' union. Yet those same leaders were frightened of battle and were privately asking the miners' union to give in to the coal owners.

The general strike lasted nine days. In the localities there was a magnificent response to the call for solidarity with the miners. Workers understood that a defeat for one was a defeat for all. The TUC admitted that the strike was bigger than it had expected.

The enthusiasms below frightened the TUC leaders more than the Tories did. As Charles Duke of the General and Municipal Workers wrote: 'Everyday the strike proceeded, control of the strike was passing out of the hands of the responsible executives . . .'

### Forced back

After nine days such 'leaders' had had enough. They called off the strike with no assurances at all that any of their demands would be accepted by the employers or the government — and without any guarantees that trade unionists would not be victimised.

Yet the strike had not been weakening at all. Indeed, the day after its official end the number of strikers rose by 100,000.

The miners had been abandoned. Not by the trade union movement, but by its leaders — including those who had talked about 'the destruction of wage slavery' the previous year.

Nevertheless, the miners themselves refused to surrender and continued their struggle from May to November. Even when they had been out under conditions of unprecedented hardship for seven months, they rejected the advice of some of their leaders to end the struggle by 480,806 to 313,260 votes.

Eventually, however, they were forced back to work on the owners' terms. The cost of the defeat was enormous. Tens of thousands of miners were not taken back and many did not get jobs until more than ten years later.

The others had both longer hours — up to 49 hours a week at the face — and lower wages imposed on them.

### Losses

But it was not only the miners who suffered when the leaders of the other unions sold them out. The whole trade union movement was damaged. Thousands of militants were victimised in almost all industries.

Hundreds of thousands of workers left the unions. Wages were slashed everywhere. Above all, the faith of millions of workers in their ability to fight back against the bosses was destroyed.

The defeat was not inevitable. The Tory government did not have the power in 1926 — and its successors do not have the power today — to beat physically the united strength of millions of working people. Instead it depended on the official leaders of the movement to spread confusion and to fragment its strength.

There is only one way to ensure that the working class never has to relive that bitter experience. A revolutionary workers' organisation has to be built that can co-ordinate the efforts of rank and file militants and enable them to cut through the pretence and rhetoric used by union bureaucrats who divide the class and frustrate its efforts to fight.

## UNION FIGHTS ALONG THE BOSSES' CHOSEN LINE

by  
ROGER ROSEWELL

# THE GREAT WAGES BATTLE

THE TORY GOVERNMENT and its big business allies have launched a massive attack on the wages and living conditions of working people.

But the labour movement is fighting back with a militancy and a determination unmatched in the post-war period. The miners, who have seen their industry cut back savagely since the war, are fighting for a living wage. Many of them take home less than £18 a week — which puts them below the official poverty line.

We have interviewed Vic Feather, the current TUC general secretary.

NEARLY two million engineering workers could be involved in local pay disputes during the next few months because of the total breakdown of the industry's national wage negotiations and a firm refusal by the employers to offer more than just a meagre amount.

The national pay claim was for a £6-a-week all round increase, a 35-hour week, increased national minimum rates, equal pay, longer holidays, more lay-off pay and all without any productivity strings.

The employers, encouraged by the Tory government, rejected this and replied by offering a mere £1.50 extra on the skilled rate and even less for the lower grades. No other offer was made. Every other part of the claim, presented because the last three-year agreement ended in December, was refused.

The last agreement had given only an average annual increase of about four per cent, and the incredible rise in the cost of living last year alone almost completely eliminated any benefits from this settlement. So the unions demanded that the latest claim should only last for one year.

Apart from rejecting it, the Engineering Employers have also condemned it and pompously declared that the submission of the claim was wrong and that it should 'lead many trade union members to

doubt if their best interests are best served by such aggressive policies.'

In November the unions decided there was no point whatsoever in continuing to try and negotiate with the bosses.

During the last year the engineering employers have been demonstrating an increasing hostility towards the unions — as seen in Coventry, where they ripped up a 30-years-old pay agreement and then resorted to lock-outs in an effort to crush the toolroom workers' resistance.

Last week the national committee of the industry's biggest union — the Amalgamated Engineers — decided that its members should fight for the claim on a factory to factory basis and that the union executive should declare official strikes in support.

When the employers made their inadequate offer they had suggested that the union should raise its demands on a factory to factory basis. They had several reasons. First they recognised that none of the unions in the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions had seriously campaigned in support of the claim among their members.

Next they realised that with the scrapping of the industry's national procedure agreement there might

be confusion among stewards, and the present level and the industry might scare so accepting less claim.

This view was shared by the engineering that local settlements on all of which is accepted committees is concerned.

### Link

Engineering fight to reverse a great danger that be fragmented by essential that organised in support. If the engineers with the miners then the engineering be a real fight but the Tory government defeated.

While the fight decisions goes on struggle in support stepped up.

Factory occupation organised and the Engineering action deliberately

# and the man who won't be leading it

IT WAS the week before Christmas that Socialist Worker went to see Victor Feather, Commander of the British Empire and General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress.

Vic Feather is in charge of the working class movement's general staff which brought the 'settlement' at Pilkington's, let the postal workers go down alone and refused to call strikes against the Industrial Relations Bill or more recently refused even to call a meeting to decide united action in support of the miners.

It was the day that the November unemployment figures were announced and the newspapers were jubilant because they had not risen yet again.

Of course Vic Feather was concerned. His whole imagery is drawn from the thirties. He talks readily of 'britches arse out', and other scenes from a desperate Yorkshire childhood. He sees unemployment and poverty as 'the denial of citizenship'. And that of course is a crime.

But when you've risen from obscurity in Bradford to the post of Generalissimo of the trade union movement, it might be expected that you identify your own uphill climb with the general progress of the whole working class. Vic Feather does just this.

## Semi-socialist

He is convinced that the battle against the Tories and the society that produces them, is gradually being won. Energetic lobbying from the trade union movement in the shape of Vic Feather is altering the Tories' path.

'The Tories are being driven down a semi-socialist path,' he claims.

Unemployment is not part of a deliberate political attack on the working class movement, he says. 'After all the Tories want to be re-elected.'

Asked why the trade union leadership continued to cause unemployment by signing productivity deals and why there was no policy for shorter hours and longer holidays to create work, Vic Feather replied that what industrialists want is four or five years growth. Vic wants it too. So does the Financial Times, recognising that expansion does not mean more jobs.



VIC FEATHER: wheeler dealer of the workers' general staff

As Edward Heath is believed to have said: 'Vic may know what you want. But I know what you need.'

'If unemployment was to become chronic,' said Vic, 'the TUC might then suggest longer holidays and the raising of the school-leaving age.'

'It would be better if shorter working hours came through technological changes rather than from policies to oppose unemployment,' he said. Unemployment was way over one million as he spoke, and set to stay there.

## Alone

Perhaps you will recall that the TUC threatened anti-Tory strikes when the Tory government first came to power. Since then the power workers and the postal workers have acted alone and been beaten.

The TUC general staff never went near them. The Industrial Relations Bill has become an act on the nod, opposed by speechifying and one great day of action.

But two newspaper strikes have been settled with the direct intervention of Vic Feather. The press releases announcing these underlined the presence of Vic Feather, instrumental at getting peace to break out where once there was war.

## Sharp

He is an affable man, keen to tell you that he still lives in the same house he bought when he came to London 30 years ago. His art collection has got bigger since then.

And Victor is as sharp as they make them. A wheeler-dealer of some accomplishment, according to those who see him in action. He simply never lets you finish your question before you get the answer.

Often question and answer are entirely unconnected, as for instance when Vic Feather makes it absolutely clear he has no time for undisciplined militants who interrupt meetings, or for the revolutionary left.

In his eyes the official trade union movement is the great

achiever, progress bit by bit. That the movement was born against the law, built and sustained by men and women who stand against the mainstream, against the great committee rooms of their time, is all forgotten.

Vic Feather is but one man, sat at the top of that great institution, the Trades Union Congress, an organisation charged with leading the working class movement.

Except that when it comes to the knuckle, the TUC is a stage general staff for a stage army. The energies and creative abilities are not qualities to be unleashed, but to be hinted at when the going gets a little rough in the committee rooms of compromise.

In Congress House, the trade union movement is composed exclusively of great names. At this time it is Joe Gormley who is in dispute. Outside, the miners and the entire working class movement are fighting for their very lives.

Laurie Flynn



He and his General Council have refused to take any steps to aid the miners in their crucial fight. Reliance on Feather and co could lead to a grim repetition of 1926.

The power workers, so viciously witchhunted in their last dispute, are on the eve of important pay talks. Unity between them and the miners, whose industries are interlocked, could quickly paralyse the bosses.

We also analyse the present situation in the engineering industry where union leaders, including those with an undeserved 'left-wing' reputation, have backed down from a fight to the finish with the employers.

## Time we turned up the power

EXTRACTS from the editorial in the latest issue of *ADVANCE*, the rank and file power workers' newspaper:

The electricity supply industry is the most important in this country. When it stops producing so do 95 per cent of all other industries. The effects of a simple work to rule and overtime ban by the manual workers in the industry caused nationwide industrial dislocation.

Potentially, the bargaining power of the industry's workers is enormous. The industry is large, rich and provides the very life-blood of British industry. We who generate the vast quantities of electric power used daily by industry are employed in little over 200 locations, producing a commodity which must be used within seconds of its production as it cannot be stored. We have 100 per cent trade union agreement with the CEEGB.

On the reckoning, the power worker should be among the highest paid workers in this country and one of the most militant sections of the British trade union movement. If we face grim reality, the situation on the supply wages front is very different indeed.

According to the Electricity Council Report, 1970/71, the wages bill over 12 months period had increased by only 7.4 per cent, whereas the corresponding figure for the whole economy was 23 per cent. Average weekly earnings in supply are now slightly below those in industry generally and substantially below those in the manufacturing industries.

Since 1967 the number of industrial staff in electricity supply has been reduced by 35,000. Now in this period of heavy unemployment there are some 5,900 electricity supply workers on the labour market at the present time.

The Scrooges at Millbank offered on the 16 December an average increase of approximately 7½ per cent. It was rejected. The cost of living in the last 12 months has risen

by 12 per cent. The offer is an insult. It doesn't even keep our wages in line with the cost of living, let alone improve them.

The supply workers believe, with justice, that they are entitled to a larger share of the wealth they alone have produced.

The electricity worker is not only fighting for a decent wage and better working conditions, he is fighting for the right to work along with his brothers at UCS, Plesseys, etc. So along with a demand for an improvement in pay must come an equally important demand: an immediate end to redundancies and all pay and productivity negotiations. Make our brother negotiators practice what they preach. All unions and the TUC in particular, have said loud and clear they are against the ever-increasing numbers of unemployed. Pay and productivity means workers displaced. The remedy is simple.

## Unity is strength

In all the unions members must: fight for democratic control over negotiations. No settlement without ratification by ELECTED (not selected) delegate conferences. WE PAY THE PIPER - LET'S CALL THE TUNE.

Miners in the militant Yorkshire area have called on their leaders to link their pay claim with that of the power workers. They feel that a united front on both sections would be the most effective way to beat the Tory government plans to drive down wages in the public sector.

The message is simple, unity is strength, if we want to win our wage claim, the miners must win theirs. If the miners are beaten so will we be.

*ADVANCE* can be obtained from 68 Fountains Road, Stretford, Lancs. It costs 3p.

## The Power Game

by Colin Barker

The truth about the power industry, the workers' pay claim and the grim record of productivity dealing. 25p plus 3p post from *ADVANCE*, 68 Fountains Road Stretford, Lancs.

# The 'socialists' who betrayed the cause at the wave of a flag

'I AM NOT a capitalist soldier; I am a proletarian revolutionist. I do not belong to the regular army of the plutocracy but to the irregular army of the people. I refuse to obey any command to fight from the ruling class . . . I am opposed to every war but one; I am for that war heart and soul, and that is the world-wide war of the socialist revolution. In that war I am prepared to fight in any way the ruling class make necessary.'

These were the words of the great American socialist Eugene Debs. When he spoke them, the workers of Europe had already been involved for over a year in butchering each other for the greater profits of their masters.

And 'socialist' leaders who for years had piously repeated the same excellent sentiments as Debs were busy urging the workers into trenches, supporting 'their own' governments, and churning out arguments to 'prove' that the victory of their own side would further the goal of socialism.

In 1912 the socialist parties of the world, meeting together in a congress of the Socialist International, had all vowed to oppose any attempt by their ruling classes to involve the workers in a new war, and to use that war, if it came, to prepare the overthrow of capitalism.

But when they were put to the test in 1914, only a small minority stood by their principles. The rest co-operated in the war effort.

## The Tsar

The First World War started when Germany invaded Belgium, and her ally Austria invaded Serbia. So in France and Britain, the right-wing socialist leaders argued that the Allies should be supported as they were fighting to defend small nations against aggression. In Germany, the right-wing leaders argued that Germany should be supported because she was being shut out of her rightful place in the world by the bigger imperialisms of Britain and France. And anyway, Germany was also fighting the Tsar of Russia, who was well-known to be the most reactionary ruler in Europe.

Obviously they could not all be right. But what was the First World War really about? Many people still believe that the Second World War was a 'war for democracy against fascism' but few still believe the idea that the 1914-18 war was fought 'against Prussian militarism, and for the rights of small nations' is not believed by many people now. Instead, shows like 'Oh what a lovely war!' have spread the idea that the war was fought for nothing at all, that the whole thing was an insane accident.

## Carve up

But this is not much nearer the truth. 'War is the continuation of politics by other means' said a great German military strategist. And in the years before the First World War, world politics was dominated by the rivalry between the great powers to carve up the world between them. The war was fought to resolve the struggle for markets and raw materials.

The supporters of the war liked to point out that Marx and Engels in their day had frequently supported one set of capitalist countries against another, and had tried to see which side's victory would be better from the standpoint of the working class. Why could this not be done in 1914? This was what the leaders of the right wing and the centre in the

## PART SIX

European socialist parties argued they were doing.

By a strange coincidence, 'socialists' in Germany reached the conclusion that it was the German government's victory which would serve the interests of socialism, while British and French 'socialists' came to somewhat different conclusions. 'Socialist principles' seemed to change with the flag.

Lenin swept away this nonsense and special pleading by pointing out that the wars the right-wingers were talking about had been fought when capitalism was still developing, and the working class was weak. They were wars fought by young, developing capitalist classes, to lay the basis for the growth of capitalism by sweeping away foreign oppression, feudal forms of government, or anything else that stood in the way of the expansion of capitalism.

But the First World War did not happen because capitalism was still developing. On the contrary; it was brought about because the advanced capitalist countries had gone so far as to divide the world up between them. Modern mass production had developed; new sources of raw materials were needed, and new markets. War was the only way to change the existing division of the world, and replace it by a new one, more to the advantage of this or that imperialist power.

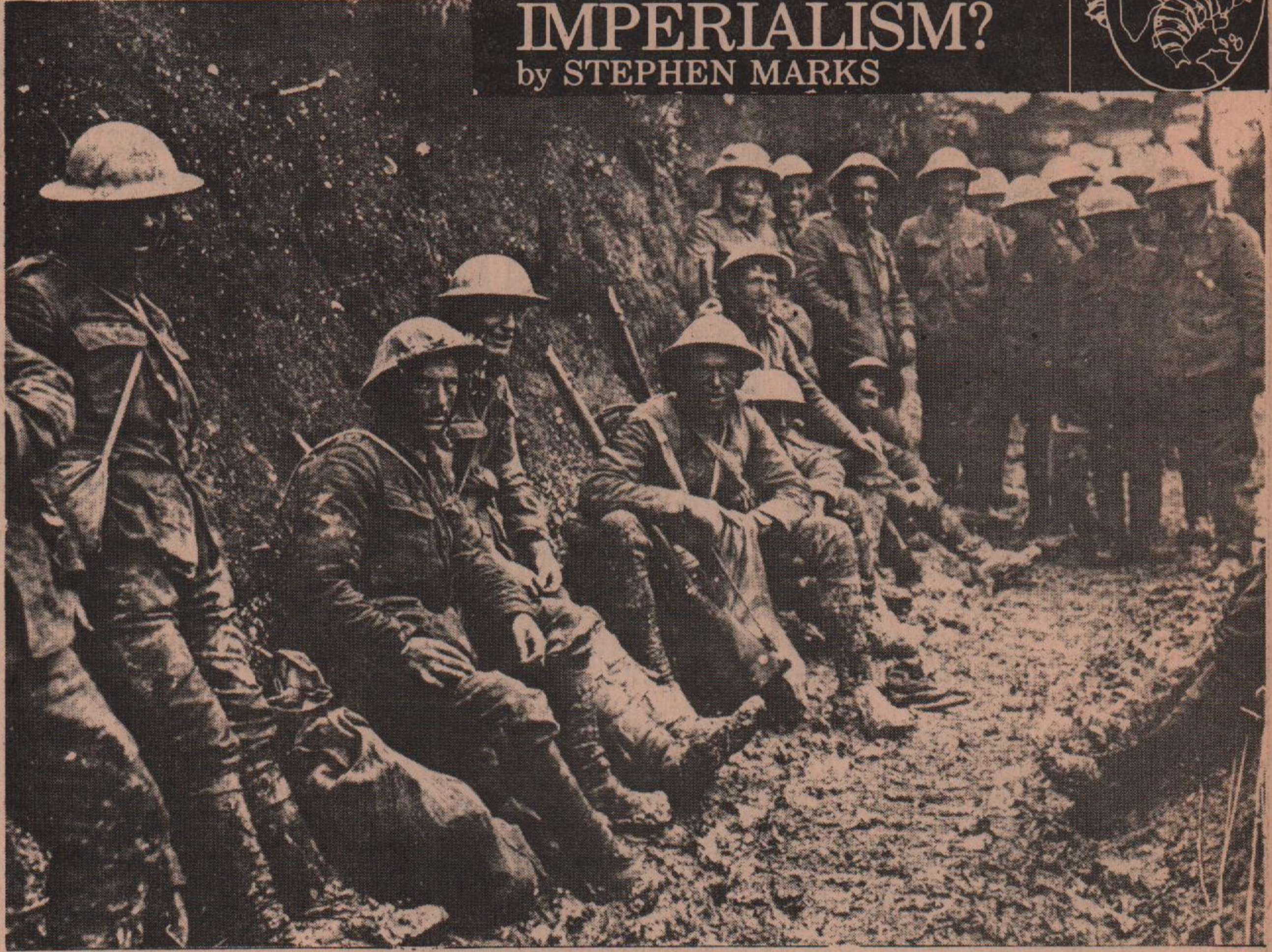
## Barricades

But at the same time, the growth of modern industry had produced the modern working class, which was fighting for its own interests. One reason why the various ruling classes welcomed the First World War was that it came just at a time when class struggles were hotting up; in 1914 there were barricades in Moscow and near civil war in Britain over the Irish question.

At the beginning of the war the workers of the various countries supported it in a wave of patriotism; but as the war developed, disillusion set in. Strikes and demonstrations against the war developed. If the socialist parties had voted against the war and made propaganda against it and for the overthrow of the class that caused it, they might have been isolated for a time, but the opposition would have grown sooner, and been more effective when it came.

That the socialist and trade union leaders supported the war was due, Lenin argued, to the fact that the super-profits earned from imperialism made it possible for the workers to win reforms for a time. A layer of bureaucrats and officials grew up within the workers' movement on the basis of this process, and assumed that the gradual winning of reforms could go on forever.

This had its own logic. If the aim of the movement was now to win a bigger slice of the 'national cake' instead of



Men who fought 'to make the world safe for democracy'—or was it capitalism?

taking over the bakery, then it seemed natural to the bureaucrats to increase the size of 'their' national cake at the expense of the workers and employers of other countries. This was the real basis of 'patriotic socialism'.

The war was being fought in Europe, but it affected the fate of all the oppressed colonial peoples, who were the spoils over whom the different gangs of robbers were falling out.

The war speeded up revolt in the

## WHAT IS IMPERIALISM?

by STEPHEN MARKS



colonies, where native troops were conscripted to fight for their oppressors. Lenin supported all these struggles, especially the Easter rising in Ireland of 1916, as part of the general revolt of all those ground down by imperialism. Revolutions, he pointed out, are impossible without all oppressed groups joining in the fight against enslavement, and spurring on the workers' movement in the process.

Imperialism for Lenin was not just a question of what the advanced countries

did in their colonies. It marked a new period in which socialism was on the agenda, and capitalism had no alternative to it but new and ever more destructive wars. This understanding was the basis of his role in the Russian Revolution in 1917. It helped his followers in all countries build a new revolutionary international out of the ruins of the old. And whatever else may have changed in the workings of imperialism since then, the world around us shows it is still true today.

# Disaster still looms, but the press has got bored with it

## POLLUTION



by DALE FOX

NOW that the much-publicised Conservation Year has passed away, pollution continues unabated, little-publicised, but not unnoticed.

The local successes against pollution can always be sure of a headline — how many more times do we have to be told that a few less fish are dying in the Thames? But even the most superficial survey reveals that the pollution graph is climbing steadily upwards towards disaster point.

Middle-class conservationists are beginning to accept that the private enterprise system can provide no effective answer to an economic problem which requires a forceful political solution. Though pollution has virtually disappeared as a topic in the popular press it is still with us as a steadily worsening threat. This is clear from the evidence of only the last month's crop of under-publicised reports:

### Poisonous

Metal contamination expert Professor D Bryce-Smith announced that land which Leicester City Council was trying to sell to property developers was so heavily contaminated with toxic zinc waste that it would be better sold to Rio Tinto Zinc.

The local Labour MP remarked that the land, formerly used as a sewage farm, was a danger to children who played on it.

An area of sea a mile square off the Kent coast was put out-of-bounds to fishing vessels after trawlermen netted 20 10-gallon drums of cyanuric chloride and reported finding fish with hideous red patches.

The Dutch paper De Telegraaf proved its claim that the waters of the Rhine-Meuse rivers were as toxic as highly-poisonous developer, by printing a photograph developed in river water.

### Deaths

Leading oceanographers called for an immediate international conference when they discovered unexpectedly high levels of chemicals known as PCBs in areas of the Atlantic from the Arctic to the Antarctic. PCBs are closely related to DDT, and are blamed for the deaths of about 15,000 seabirds in the Irish Sea in 1969.

Pollution-conscious holiday-makers are warned to steer clear of Penarth, Herne Bay, Clacton, Ramsgate, Lowestoft and Yarmouth. These are some of the many coastal centres which figured badly in a survey of beach pollution by human sewage. Some beaches were so heavily polluted that only the strongest and most dangerous viruses — that is to say those which are resistant to antibiotics, such as the typhoid viruses — could survive on them.

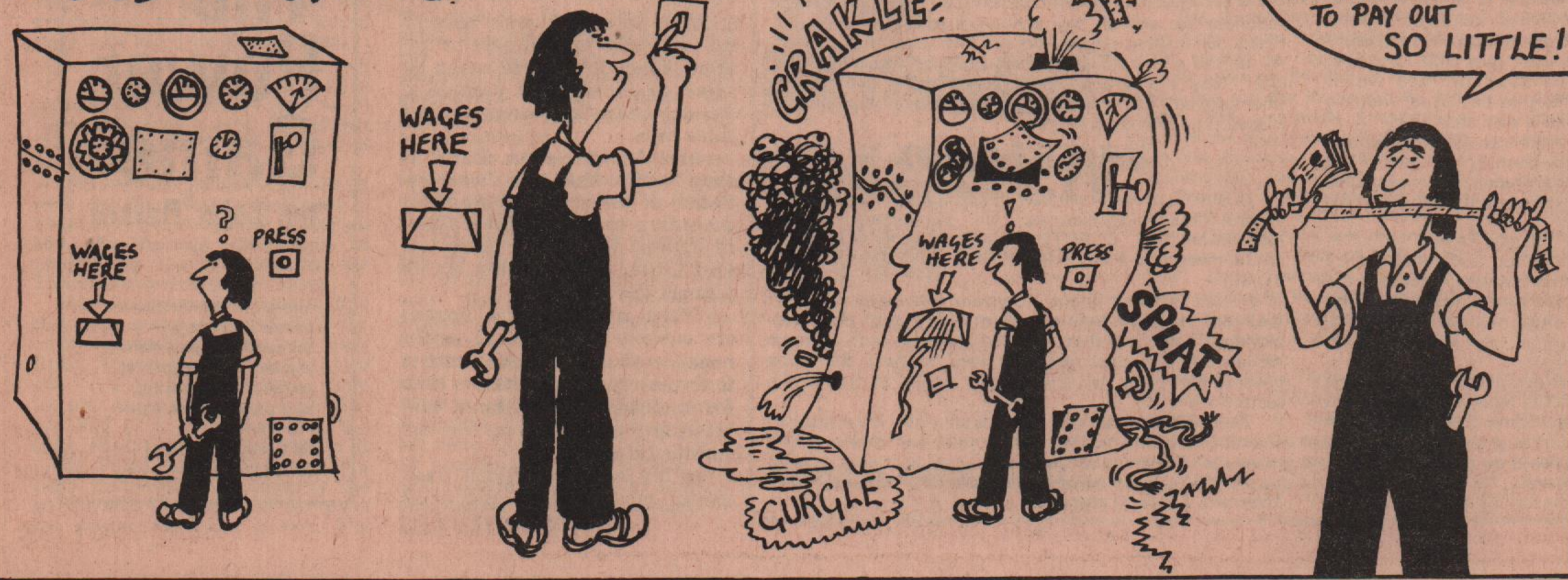
The Americans in Vietnam have launched a programme which is devastating 1,000 acres of good land a day. Two nightmarish machines are involved: the 20-ton bulldozer armed with an 11ft-wide tree cutting blade, and a bomb known as the Daisy Cutter which weighs 15,000 lb and produces a blast only slightly second to that of an A-bomb and which destroys all vegetable and human life within a mile of its detonation.

A careless officer let it slip that: 'Daisy cutters have such a devastating effect that we hate to give them publicity.'

These cases are only a minute cross-section of the pollution problem.

The effective solution of the problem can only come from a revolutionary socialist movement which will put life before profit. But in the short-term there is the possibility of direct action. Recently a group of militant conservationists took action against Schweppes' callous refusal to collect used bottles by dumping several thousand non-returnable bottles outside the company's London headquarters, and in Japan a thousand students bought a share each in arch-polluters Mitsubishi and turned the shareholders' meeting into an anti-pollution platform.

## OUR NORMAN





# ARTIST REVOLUTIONARY WHO TOPPLED NAPOLEON

GUSTAVE COURBET was an extraordinary man, a revolutionary artist whose hatred for the French ruling class of the 19th century was only equalled by their fear and hatred of him.

Napoleon III was so incensed by one of his paintings in the 1853 Salon that he struck it with a hunting crop. The head of the 1872 Salon selection committee said: 'Courbet must be kept out of all exhibitions. We must henceforth consider him to be dead.' The authorities were quite right to fear Courbet. As a painter he was dangerously realistic. He was also a revolutionary.

Courbet was born at Ornans in 1819. He was a self-taught painter, but it was not his imperfect knowledge of form that horrified and enraged the middle-class 'art-loving' public. It was his subject matter.

The artist was greatly impressed by the abortive insurrection of 1848 in Paris. In 1849 he painted *The Stonebreakers*. Two workers, their faces half-hidden, are bent in the back-breaking task of smashing stones to build roads. There is a monolithic feeling about the two straining figures; the colours are subdued—a harsh black, white, and grey.

The wealthy visitors to the 1855 International Exhibition were outraged. They were used to the airy and harmonious colours of artists like Ingres, whose plump and over-dressed subjects were considered the ultimate in drawing-room refinement. 'One would appreciate it if Monsieur Courbet would have his stonebreakers' shirts mended and their feet washed,' wrote an alarmed gentleman in the visitor's book.

## Drunken priests

It wasn't just that Courbet had chosen humble workers as his models, for other artists had painted workers—in various patronising and sentimental ways. But the distinguished visitors sensed a threat in these particular stonebreakers' averted faces and sullen backs...

Worse was to follow. In *Return from the Conference* (1863) a group of dignitaries and priests are seen ambling home. Priests! A proper subject for a large oil painting! But to the dismay of the connoisseurs these priests are plainly drunk. The resentment of the art 'establishment' grew.

Feeling against Courbet was not helped by the fact the artist had one considerable character defect. He was extremely conceited. One picture shows Courbet meeting a rich friend on the road. Courbet called it *Wealth Meeting Genius*. Another, *The Studio*, shows him surrounded by various artistic muses and a host of admiring friends.

He liked to call himself 'the master-painter without ideals or religion'. At the same time he belittled the painters of fairies and nymphs favoured by the French middle classes. 'I have never seen either angels or goddesses, so I am not interested in painting them', he said.

He presented his own theory of *The Origin of the World*, which was both blunt and firmly materialist. It was a painting of a female pelvis, pubic hair included. The sensitive ladies of the upper-crust 'Art' world shuddered and reached for their smelling salts.

## The Commune

Just as the art critic suspected, Courbet's politics were revolutionary. Early in his career he refused the Legion of Honour from the minister of fine arts—who thought that the artist might be bribed if not bullied. Courbet answered: 'My opinions as a citizen prevent me from accepting a distinction which depends essentially on the monarchist order... The state has no business in involving itself in art... Its interference has a completely adverse influence, damaging to the artist in deluding himself about his real worth, damaging to art by trapping it in official categories and condemning it to the most sterile mediocrity'. (Soviet officialdom please note!)

But Courbet's own personal overthrow of 'the monarchist order' was to come. After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and the abdication of Emperor Napoleon III in September, the workers of Paris rose up and seized the city. The Paris Commune was established in March 1871.

Courbet had been a member of the Federation of Artists set up during the siege to preserve the city art treasures from the Prussian bombardment. The federation included other important painters and anti-Bonapartist artists; Daumier, Corot,

Millet and Manet, all of whom had suffered under the censorship and intolerance of the Empire.

In the Place Vendome, in Paris, stood a high column. On top was a bronze statue of Napoleon I, dressed up as Julius Caesar. (Previously the statue had been of Napoleon III, whose portly figure was also tagged out as a Roman, but this had proved too grotesque even for the admirers of the regime.)

Long before the Commune, Courbet had called for 'the removal of a mass of melted cannon which perpetuates the tradition of conquest, pillage, and murder, and which is as absurdly out of place as a

Howitzer in a lady's salon among the shops, filled with silk frocks, laces, fripperies, and diamonds, that adjoin the establishment of Worth, the favourite dressmaker of the courtesans of the Empire.

## Tyranny

*'Would you preserve in your own bedroom the bloodstains of a murder? Let the bas-reliefs (the bronze ornamental panels decorating the column) be transferred to a historical museum, let them be set up in panels on the walls of the court of the Invalides, I can see no harm in that. Those*

*brave men captured these cannon by the sacrifice of their limbs; the sight will remind them of their victories—since they are called victories—and especially of their sufferings.'*

The Vendome Column was a symbol of imperial tyranny. Its bronze was needed by the Commune for reversion into guns. The artist Courbet had put himself at the service of the Commune. Accordingly: 'The Commune of Paris, considering that the imperial column in the Place Vendome is a monument of barbarism, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a negation of international law, a permanent insult by

the victors towards the vanquished, a perpetual threat to one of the three great principles of the French republic, fraternity, decrees:

'First and only article: The column in the Place Vendome will be demolished'. Courbet was put in charge of the demolition, but not without misgivings. He wrote gloomily to a friend: 'You will see, when this column falls it will crush me.'

On 16 May 1871 more than 20,000 people watched as cables were attached to the column. At the first attempt the winch-pulley snapped, and a groan of disappointment went up. After a long delay another attempt was made. The column fell like a giant factory chimney.

*'The statue of Napoleon', records a witness, 'had fallen beyond the heap, and having smashed the pavement into splinters, lay a wreck, with one arm broken and the head severed from the body.' Cheering Parisians clambered over the wreckage. But the celebration was short-lived.*

## Executions

Government troops from Versailles entered Paris on 21 May. While the Communards had been preparing their symbolic execution of the Emperor, the government had been preparing the physical execution of the Communards. By 29 May 7000 insurrectionists had been killed. Between 25,000 and 30,000 Parisians were later shot by firing squads. Their bodies were displayed on the streets in open coffins. Courbet was arrested and put on trial for the destruction of the column.

In later years he wrote to his father: 'The real enemies of France were not the Prussians. They were our friends the French reactionaries, assisted by the clergy.'

The ruling class was uncertain what to do with Courbet. One 'High Constable of Letters' in fashionable circles wanted to 'exhibit citizen Courbet before the whole of France locked in an iron cage under the pedestal of the column'. But after eight months in a rat-infested cell the 'painter-bandit Courbet' fell ill and was released.

In 1873 a new trial was arranged. Courbet was still very popular with French workers and abroad. Instead of being imprisoned he was instructed to repay the entire cost of the column.

*This was calculated as 323,091 francs—and 68 centimes. Courbet was to pay at the rate of 10,000 francs a year, an impossibility. In addition he was to pay a 500,000-franc fine straight into the state coffers, in gold.*

All his property and paintings were seized. His bank deposits were monitored and spies were set to watch the progress of any new paintings. Life in France became unbearable, and Courbet fled to Switzerland. It is reported that he wept with relief on crossing the Swiss border.

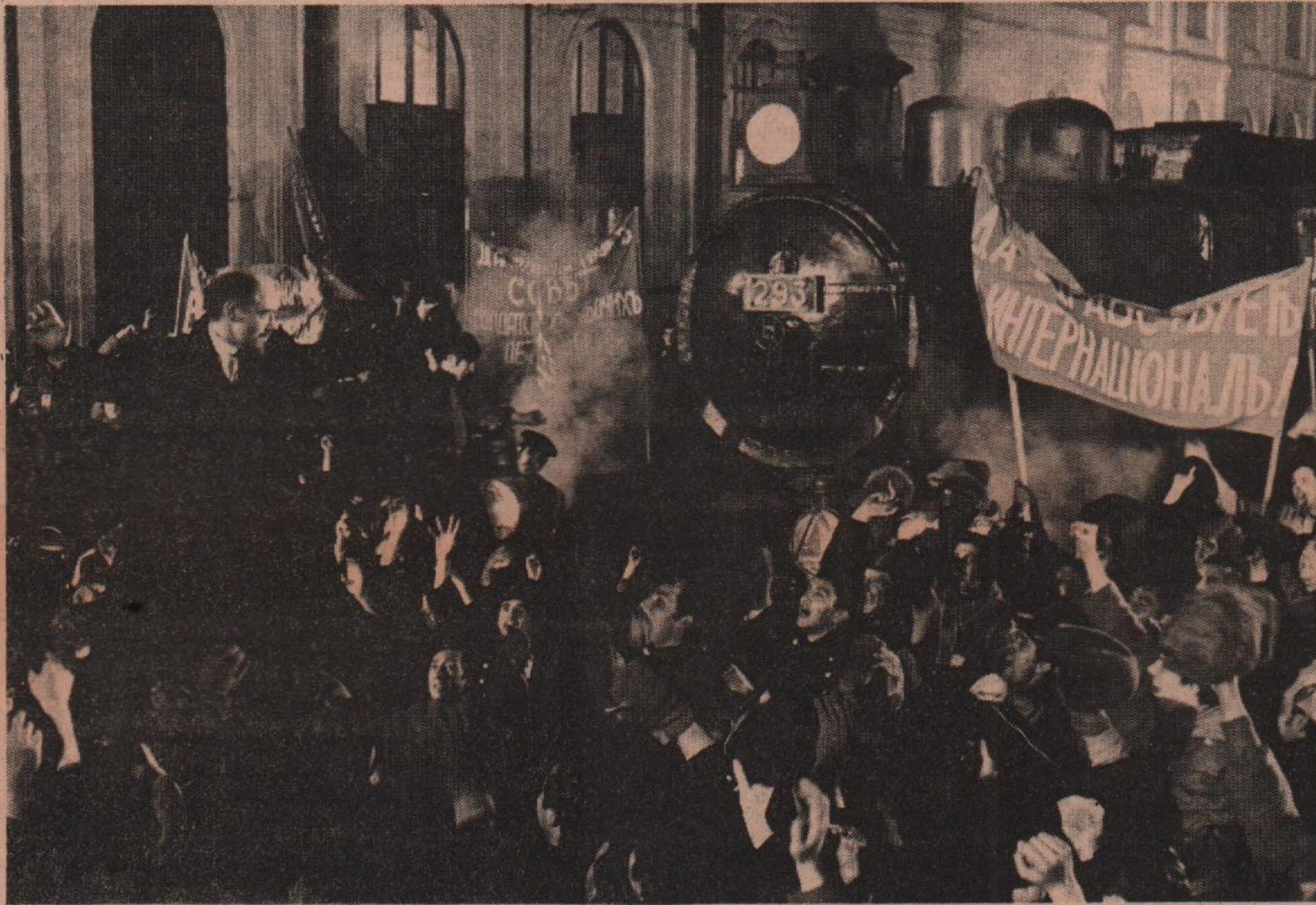
## Exile

The reaction in France meant a complete boycott of Courbet's paintings. It was forgotten that throughout the Prussian siege of Paris and the brief life of the Commune he had been the main defender of the city's greatest treasures, including the Louvre, the Cluny and Luxembourg museums, and the Arc de Triomphe. This had at times meant defending them against over-enthusiastic Communards who wanted to remove every trace of the Empire.

Courbet has left us with a clear picture of 19th century French society. Pictures like *Funeral at Ornans*, which shows a whole village population assembled for his inspection, *The Stonebreakers*, or his portraits of revolutionaries like Proudhon and Chopin, are a world away from the bland and flattering self-images which the middle classes hung in their drawing-rooms and called 'Art'.

Courbet died in Switzerland in 1877, worn out by official persecution and frustration. He presented his last work, a sculpture, to the small Swiss town which gave him shelter.

*It was a bust called Liberty and was received... with much gratitude. We will keep and treasure this monument which will say to posterity: a famous exile found refuge here.'*



Lenin arrives at the Finland station — a scene from *Nicholas and Alexandra*

# Oh what a lovely Tsar!

FOR anyone interested in a completely stupid interpretation of Russian history immediately before the revolution, the new film *Nicholas and Alexandra* is a must.

The story traces the life of the last Tsar and his good lady from the turn of the century until their execution after the 1917 revolution, and tries to convince the audience that there would have been no revolution if the Tsar's son had not been a haemophiliac (he'd have been a rotten little bleeder, anyway) or if Rasputin had been sane.

The real causes of the revolution, the ruthless exploitation of the workers by new-born Russian capitalism and the age old bloody slavery of the peasants, do come out of the film on occasions. There are the death scenes in the St Petersburg sweat shops and the massacre of peacefully demonstrating men, women and children on Bloody Sunday in 1905, but we are asked to ignore these incidents and accept that if the Tsar had been a little bit brighter and a little bit more in control there would have been no fight against his corrupt regime.

The film makers show their contempt for the Russian working class by indicating that the Tsar's only mistake was not to throw enough crumbs to them. This belief that the

worker is stupid, greedy and easily controlled is strengthened by the fact that they expect British workers in 1972 to accept this load of rubbish as the truth.

This ridiculous approach to history, which sees events in terms of individuals and not classes, is carried on by the vicious character assassinations of the revolutionaries portrayed in the film.

On one level this approach is simply silly, particularly the first scene in which the Bolsheviks are involved when Lenin says something to the effect of 'Hello Trotsky, I'm Lenin, this is Stalin', and then goes on to treat all present as mere puppets. Later on the distortion gets more serious and Lenin is portrayed as a power-mad opportunist who never even mentions the working class. This is pro-capitalist propaganda in its crudest form.

Despite all the efforts of the writer, however, there are moments when the truth shines out from the film. There is one scene where Kerensky (one of the heroes, of course) is ranting that the Bolsheviks are only a handful who must be put down by the troops immediately. The real situation breaks through when a minister replies that there is not one regiment in St Petersburg that can be used against the Bolshe-

viks because of the popularity of Lenin's policies.

In this film there are other instances, far too numerous to mention here, of deliberate distortion failing to mask completely the truth about the Russian revolution. But on balance the film achieves its aim of anti-working class propaganda. You have to approach this film in a highly critical way to avoid being influenced by its anti-Soviet message.

This fact was forcefully brought home to me when I saw the film. A woman sitting in the audience by me cheerfully munched her crisps while workers were starving to death or being massacred in peaceful demonstrations, but as soon as the Tsar abdicated and had his number of servants cut to four she broke out into floods of tears which lasted for the rest of the performance.

On balance, *Nicholas and Alexandra* is well acted, well photographed in beautiful colour, a tedious three hours long, and utterly dishonest. However, given the present fashion for unhappy endings in current cinema, readers may want to see it just for the rare pleasure of a happy ending. The Tsar is shot!

GLYN CARVER

PHIL EVANS

# 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 restriction.

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 IS BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

**SCOTLAND**  
Aberdeen  
Cumbernauld  
Dundee  
Edinburgh  
Fife  
Glasgow N  
Glasgow S  
Stirling  
St Andrews

**NORTH EAST**  
Durham  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Spennymoor  
Sunderland  
Teesside  
(Middlesbrough & Redcar)

**NORTH**  
Barnsley  
Bradford  
Doncaster  
Grimsby  
Halifax  
Huddersfield  
Hull  
Leeds  
Mid-Derbyshire  
Ossett  
Scarborough  
Selby  
Sheffield  
York

**NORTH WEST**  
Barrow  
Blackburn  
Bolton  
Crewe  
Kirkby  
Lancaster  
Manchester  
Merseyside  
Oldham  
Potters  
Preston  
St Helens  
Wigan  
Wrexham

**MIDLANDS**  
Birmingham  
Coventry  
Leamington  
Leicester  
Northampton  
Nottingham  
Oxford  
Redditch  
Rugby  
Telford  
Wolverhampton

**WALES and SOUTH WEST**  
Bath  
Bristol  
Cardiff  
Exeter  
Gloucester  
Mid-Devon

**SOUTH**  
Plymouth  
Swansea

**EAST**  
Basildon  
Beccles  
Cambridge  
Colchester  
Harlow

Ipswich  
Leiston  
Lowestoft  
Norwich  
Peterborough

**GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES**  
Acton  
Camden  
Chertsey  
Croydon

Dagenham  
East London  
Enfield  
Erith  
Fulham  
Greenford  
Hackney & Islington  
Havering  
Harrow  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hornsey  
Hounslow  
Ilford  
Kilburn  
Kingston  
Lambeth  
Lewisham  
Merton  
Newham  
Paddington  
Reading  
St Albans  
Slough  
South Ealing  
Tottenham  
Walthamstow  
Wandsworth  
Watford  
Woolwich

# When papers come across the truth

**MOST NEWSPAPERS** responded to the story of widow Ann Hemmingway's suicide when she was presented with an £18.50 electricity bill. But typically they could not really get to grips with the issue.

It seems to be too difficult for the highly-paid leader writers and features staffs to understand what is actually going on 'out there' in the lonely, miserable, impoverished world of their readership.

Oddly it was the Daily Express who came nearest to giving us any kind of examination into the questions Mrs Hemmingway's death raises, but even so Robert Millar's hastily conceived and written piece was light years wide of the mark.

He managed to rake up a few other fake demands and was able at least to appreciate 'that it is the old and the sick who are least likely to be able to cope with the threats'.

The Sun and the Mail printed empty leaders, rehashing the facts and stirring them into a mush of insincere regret. The Telegraph gave us three-quarters of a column of sundry reactions under the inadequate headline **INQUIRY INTO FAKE POWER BILL** and the Guardian contented itself with a laconic recording of the bare facts in two back-page paragraphs.

Incredibly it did not seem worthwhile to any of the news editors in Fleet Street to attempt to understand the social conditions which can drive despairing human beings to a desperate death to avoid a frightening demand for money. None of them really wanted to know the kind of life she led before an electricity bill



pursued her into the gas oven.

Then, do they really care?

The squads of reporters who are sent out to camp on the doorstep of tycoons in the middle of their sordid divorces never seem to be available to be able to cover the 'life-style' of a poor widow.

## Lower

The disgusting Telegraph, in an edition that gave almost a column to King Frederick's obituary, a large picture of a disc jockey and his fiancée, a quarter of a page to the love-lives of a vicar and a baronet, used Mrs Hemmingway's death as a platform to attack nationalised industries.

This was by way of an editorial two days after the original reports of the suicide were published. I often tend to believe that the Telegraph can sink no lower, but it seems that if you give them a couple of days the paper can always come up with

something to degrade itself further. **THE TIMES** on Saturday gave a hefty front page report to the law suit against Home Secretary Reginald Maudling by investors of the Real Estate Fund of America.

A story filed by Peter Strafford in New York said Maudling denied being at any time president of the REFA. His affidavit thought that newspaper claims to the effect that he was REFA's president may have been based on confusion with the Real Estate Management Company of America Ltd.

In the Telegraph the story was buried away among the trivia of its page three. It was given three paragraphs under the heading **LAWSUIT HARMS MAUDLING, SAYS LAWYER.**

The Daily Mail was too compact to be able to find space for the embarrassing case. There was no trace of the story in the Guardian either and the Mirror was too busy headlining **MAUDLING BLASTS THE BBC AGAIN** to worry about informing readers of the Home Secretary's problems across the Atlantic.

The Sun found at least space for a couple of paragraphs on page four to note that the case was being heard.

The Observer has become an increasingly depressing and dull paper over the past few years, but it still manages to come up with a few bright spots now and then... usually from Trog.

His Rhodesia cartoon last Sunday was superb. A pathetic Lord Pearce, briefcase in hand, is being addressed by Smith, who is holding a lash in one hand and a rifle in the other. The gun is aimed at a group of gagged black Africans. Smith is saying: 'You wanted to ask something?'

## IS NEWS

**THE International Socialists' Industrial Conference** meets at a time of critical confrontations between key sections of the working class and the Tories and employers. All IS Branches must make sure that industrial members attend the conference.

It will be held at Holdsworth Hall, Deansgate, Manchester on Sunday 30 January at 10.30am. The first session until 12.30 will be on **The Fight against Unemployment**. It will deal with the experience of work-ins, occupations and how to implement the IS programme to fight unemployment. Speakers will be **Chris Davison** (TGWU) and **Jack Spriggs**, Convenor of Fisher-Bendix.

The second session, from 1.30 to 3.30 will be on **The Fight against the Industrial Relations Act**. This will deal with the legal aspects of the Act, including the closed shop and sanctions against leafletting in support of strikes. The speakers will be **Jim Higgins** (POEU) and **Bowes Egan**.

The final session will be opened by **Roger Rosewell** on the **Industrial Work of IS** and will end at 4.40pm.

The Industrial Committee of IS has produced two statements for the conference on Unemployment and the Industrial Relations Act.

The main proposals of the statement on unemployment are:

1. **No productivity deals.** All such deals tend to reduce job opportunities whether they involve direct redundancy or not. For the 'freezing' of existing deals, particularly flexibility clauses where job recruitment has stopped.
2. **A £25 minimum wage.** For a living wage. Ban on overtime in firms/combiners

declaring redundancies. Enforcement of union limits on overtime. District overtime bans where members are unemployed.

3. **Cut the working week.** For a 35 hour week without loss of pay. For militant action to force the shorter week.

4. **No redundancy.** Opposition to cuts in manning levels, redundancy and natural wastage. Black work and machines of sections where sackings are imposed. Build and strengthen combine committees to make blacking effective. Share the work where redundancy is enforced. Defend the organisation—first in, last out. Occupy the factories and strike to defend jobs. Conference recognises the tremendous step forward by the Plessey and Fisher-Bendix workers in occupying their factories and believes that this tactic should be spread.

5. **Work or full pay.** Let those responsible for unemployment carry the can. Either provide a man with work or maintain him at full union rates of pay.

6. **Organise the unemployed.** Build links with the employed working class through the trade unions. Regular meetings of unemployed members in trade union branches. Resist the means test and benefit stop. Support the Claimants' Unions.

7. **Nationalisation under workers' control.** Challenge the right of employers to put men on the dole.

The main demands of the statement on the Act are:

1. Total non-co-operation with the Industrial Relations Act and
2. The immediate expulsion from the TUC of any trade union that collaborates with the Tory laws.
3. That the trade unions defend and expand the closed shops, and oppose

both agency shops and legally binding agreements.

4. That the Trade Unions maintain and officially support blacking and sympathy strikes.

5. That no trade union strike be postponed because of government orders to delay it for 60 days.

6. That no trade union organise secret ballots except where required by existing rules.

7. That no trade union pays any fines or penalties and officially support any refusal to do so.

8. That all strikes be made official and that the national trade union officials take official responsibility for these disputes.

The conference will be asked to endorse the following campaign of action against the Act:-

1. Launch a propaganda drive against the Act.
2. Demand that individual trade unions, groups of unions and the TUC organise strikes and other solidarity action in support of any workers or unregistered trade unions prosecuted under the legislation.
3. Organise strikes, occupations and other forms of industrial action where the Act is used.
4. Take strike action against any attempts to destroy closed shops.
5. Build genuine trade union local Councils of Action to co-ordinate and spread rank and file solidarity action wherever prosecutions under the Act take place.
6. Fight against those trade union leaders who refuse to seriously oppose the legislation.
7. To work for the defeat of the Tory government.

# WHAT'S ON

Telephone 01 739 2639 business

*Copy for What's On must arrive or be phoned before first post Monday morning. Notices are charged at 5p per line, six words per line. Semi-display 10p per line. Cash with copy or, if phoned, by first post Tuesday. No insertions without payment—invoices cannot be sent.*

## MEETINGS

**CRISIS IN IRELAND:** Ciann na h'Eireann public meeting: Co-op Hall, Acton High Street, W3, 24 Jan, 8pm.

**GLASGOW IS:** Bernadette Devlin MP and Steve Jefferys, IS area secretary, on The Struggle for Socialism in Britain and Ireland; Friday 4 Feb, Woodside Halls, 7.30pm. Tickets from IS members or write to 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2.

**LEEDS DAY SCHOOL on the Fair Rents Act:** Sunday 23 Jan at 11am, Belle Vue Community Centre, Belle Vue Road, Leeds 6. All welcome. Organised by Burley Tenants Association.

**NOTTINGHAM IS public meeting:** Albert Hall, Wednesday 26 Jan at 8pm, Paul Foot: Why the Miners Must Win.

**LAMBETH IS public meeting:** The Miners' Struggle, speaker Laurie Flynn, Wed 26 Jan, 8.15pm, Tulse Hill Tavern (cnr Tulse Hill and Norwood Road.)

**PORTSMOUTH IS public meeting:** The Fight against Unemployment, spkr Roger Rosewell, Tuesday 25 Jan, 8pm, The Oddfellows, Kingston Road, Portsmouth.

**LEWISHAM IS public meeting:** Symposium on Workers' Control, speakers John Jennings (IWC and Tribune), Roy Tearse (ex-industrial organiser of the RCP) and Duncan Hallas (IS), Thurs 27 Jan, 7.30pm sharp, Ladywell Baths, Lewisham High Street, SE13.

**KILBURN IS public meeting:** Support the Miners, speaker Laurie Flynn, Mon 24 Jan, 8pm, Kent Room, Anson Hall, Chichele Road, Cricklewood, NW2.

**EAST LONDON IS public meeting:** Mike Cooley, president of DATA, on Support The Miners, Defeat The Tories! Wednesday

26 Jan, 8pm at The Boleyn, Barking Road, Upton Park.

**WOMEN IN ACTION**  
Conference on claimants, tenants, and industrial work with women  
Open to all IS members and supporters  
Saturday 26 February  
10am-6pm in London  
Details from branch secretaries or IS Women, 18 Dickinson Rd, London N8

**ALL IS MEMBERS**  
invited to attend a school to discuss questions of current interest:  
**Theory of Crisis and Permanent Arms Economy—David Yaffe; The Revolutionary Party—Pat Gode; Reformism and the Labour Party—Ted Jones; UCS, Unemployment and Industrial Perspectives—Tony Polan.**  
Saturday 22 Jan, 10.30am,  
Room 212, Hammersmith Town Hall.  
IS members only

# Tough time in student fight

**SW Student Reporter**  
TORY education minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher has postponed her plans for shackling student unions for a year in a desperate attempt to cool off student militancy.  
But the government has not in reality conceded a single inch. They are talking of a 'registrar' for students unions—a measure which would be as sure as any other to enforce state control over union funds and to prevent students from fighting in an organised way against the Tory carve-up of education.  
At this stage it is crucial that the determination shown in the massive one-

day protest strike by students in December is kept up and intensified. This is necessary both to keep pressure on the Tories and to prevent the leaders of the National Union of Students doing a deal with the government.  
Already the NUS has been defying the instruction of its national conference by talking with the government, and the chief danger is that they will sell out in the summer when the rank and file is not able to organise properly.  
Here the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions is important. At a national conference last Saturday it was decided to mount a serious challenge to the leadership at the NUS emergency

conference on 29 January.  
Among other things it was felt that a challenge should be made to the Tories over student political payments and that supporting organisations of the committee should vote students' union money to the miners' strike.  
All this means that students are in for a tough and long drawn out battle during the coming year, both against the Tory government and against the NUS leadership.  
The demonstration called by the NUS for 23 January must be a massive rejection of the government's plans and a warning to the NUS leadership that it must wholeheartedly resist them.

# Resistance stiffens in Northern Ireland

by Brian Trench

**BELFAST:** The British Army arrested 62 men last week in the biggest search-and-raid operation since August last year.

The New Lodge Road area received special attention. For almost 48 hours there were checks on all people and vehicles entering and leaving the district.

Anybody moving about the streets could expect to be stopped and searched at least a couple of times. Women's handbags and shopping baskets were searched. Children's schoolbags were emptied. Teachers at one school telegraphed Mr Heath, complaining about harassment of pupils.

Hundreds of houses were broken into and searched. One woman became so tired of her front door being broken down that she offered the house keys to a platoon commander. With stiff upper lip he replied that he could not accept her offer—private property, and all that.

## Taunt the troops

The woman's gesture illustrates what any conversation with people in the area bears out: the military has failed to intimidate the nationalist population. Young children of six and seven stand in groups around the 'pigs' (troop carriers) taunting the soldiers, 'We're going to join the IRA.'

They probably will, too. Actions of the military like last week's only stiffen the will to resist.

The men drinking in the Starry Plough, the pub owned by interned Belfast councillor James O'Kane wait for the inevitable search of the bar—with gritted teeth, and clenched fists, but disciplined. Any anti-government leaflets are left in safe keeping. There's no point in individual heroics.

The people know that the military occupation has to end—as long as they don't give in. In the present war of wills, the IRA, and the population supporting it, is winning.

The houses in the Lower Falls all display 'Rent Strike' or 'Release the Internees' notices. In the Derry Bogside the younger people gather for a 'folk session'. They too show their confidence. They sing about Eamonn Lafferty, shot by British soldiers last August. But they sing, too, about 'building a socialist republic now'.

## Strength of feeling

In contrast with this, the signs of the authorities' nervousness can be seen everywhere. Politicians and military leaders issue contradictory statements about the possibility of defeating the IRA. None of them know what a 'political solution' is, because they don't understand the strength of feeling among the people in the areas, like New Lodge and the Bogside and the Falls, which have borne the brunt of the repression.

They don't understand that almost everybody who passes the barracks in Belfast's Springfield Road curses the British Army's presence. Small wonder if you are driving, you have to slow down to a crawl to get over the ramps and if you are walking, you can only pass down one side of the road.

Directly in front of the building is a mass of barbed wire and barriers, and a 20-foot high fence. On top of the building are two sentry posts covered in camouflage netting. There are searchlights and sandbags everywhere.

Springfield Road barracks has several times been the object of attack. It symbolises accurately what the British Army in Northern Ireland is—an army of occupation. It makes clear why they have to go, before the Bogside's song about 'workers' unity' and a 'socialist republic' has a chance of becoming reality.

# United fight at Parsons



PICTURED here are the 10 men who make up the Co-ordinating Committee at C A Parsons works in Newcastle upon Tyne where management want to sack 950 manual and staff workers. The workers are resisting the bosses by working a four-day week. All unions representing shop floor and white collar workers have a member on the committee which has refused to discuss the firm's 'trading position' until all redundancy notices are withdrawn.

Left to right in the picture are: Peter Goodman, Terry Rodgers, Harry Blair, John Harkins, Dick Brambleby, Mick Wallace, Norman Davidson, Peter Burns, Frank Lott and Derek Taylor.

## Rank and file protest at union ban

**NORWICH:** The members of white collar union ASTMS who were represented by Ian Gibson, now barred from office by the union executive, have protested and say they will defy the ban.

Ian Gibson—an IS member—was banned two weeks ago from holding office until after the 1973 conference.

His 'crime' was that he told another union member what had happened at the executive meeting that refused both to make the Doncaster-Monkbridge strike in Leeds official and to give money to the strikers' hardship fund.

The union members that Ian Gibson represents were never consulted in any way in the witch-hunt that followed. His branch is now insisting that he continues in all the offices he holds.

They have also called for an emergency resolution at the 1972 conference and announced that they intend to defy the executive ban by 'reserving the right to elect him to any branch office.'

## Sackings start strike

**SOUTHAMPTON:** 80 carpenters at the Higgs and Hill General Hospital building site began a strike last Friday after three men were sacked for 'bad workmanship' and 'not being conducive with a happy site'. This is the management's second attempt to get rid of the men. Last November they tried to sack them for being 'inflammatory characters', but were defeated by a strike.

# RENTS-LABOUR COUNCIL GIVES IN TO TORIES

by Hugh Kerr

**HARLOW COUNCIL** in Essex is the first Labour council to vote to put the Tories' vicious 'Fair Rents' plan into effect.

It is a surprising development, for the Labour group has supported the struggles of tenants and council workers in the past. It is a warning to all tenants not to put any faith in the noises other Labour councils are still making.

Two and a half years ago the council froze the rents of its 1200

tenants in sympathy with 18,000 Development Corporation tenants—not under its control—who were on partial rent strike.

But last year a local Tory complained to the District Auditor about this refusal to raise rents 'for political reasons'. The Auditor held a public inquiry. He decided not to make the councillors pay the amount that would have been raised by the increase, but he warned them not to repeat their conduct in future.

The result was that when the 'Fair

Rent Bill' was published and tenants began to organise against it the councillors and some Labour Party members raised the spectre of the Auditor.

When the local Engineering Union branch sent a resolution to the Labour Party demanding that the council refuse to operate the bill, Stan Newens, ex-Labour MP and Tribune supporter, amended it to read that the council should 'oppose the Bill after careful study of the implications'. In other words, he got the councillors off the hook.

## HECKLED

When the Labour Council discussed the Tory rent measures last week it was no surprise when they voted to introduce increases averaging 60p a week, with some as high as 87½p. The meeting was faced with a demonstration of 50 tenants organised by the local International Socialists and the Communist Party, who forced their way into the meeting to heckle.

The councillors' excuses were pathetic. 'We can implement it more humanely than the Tories', said one. 'If we don't somebody else will.'

Thirteen Labour councillors had the guts to vote against the rises, and one resigned over the decision. The tenants decided to organise to make sure that the council is unable to implement the rent rise.

The whole incident reveals clearly how incapable Labour councils are of fighting to defend working-class interests and how wrong people are who pretend that socialism can be won gradually by working through local Labour parties.

# Builders fight for closed shop site

by Gerry Kelly  
steward, Woodgate Valley site

**BIRMINGHAM:** Building workers at the militant Woodgate Valley site began a sit-in in the site canteen last Friday. The dispute began when the management refused to remove two non-unionists from the site and suspended two men who refused to work with them.

At a mass meeting on Thursday 13 January the men decided to report for work the next day, but to sit-in in the canteen until the non-unionists were

removed. So far the management have not come back to the men with any assurances.

A statement from the site committee states that Bryant's are using a council contract to try and break effective trade unionism on the site. They are playing about with ratepayers' and taxpayers' money and with the future of workers who are in need of new homes.

The building workers have stressed that there will be no compromise in the fight to achieve the first closed shop on the Bryant's site in Birmingham.

**DAGENHAM IS public meeting**  
Paul Foot: How to Fight Unemployment  
Church Elm Pub, Dagenham  
near Dagenham Heathway station  
Thursday 27 January 8pm

## NOTICES

ALL IS branches please note: changes in orders for Socialist Worker must be telephoned to the Business Manager on 01-739 2639 by 5pm Monday or to arrive by first post Monday.

**INTERNATIONAL MARXIST REVIEW** No 2 contains: The End of American Domination—the devaluation of the Dollar. The Specific Oppression of Women Towards a Feminist Revolutionary Movement. Chile—The Bloodless Revolution? Marx and the Paris Commune. Rosa Luxemburg. The Greening of America. From IMR Publications, 16a Holmdale Road, London NW6. Price 22½p post free

**LIAISON COMMITTEE CONFERENCE:** Be sure to apply early for credentials for the 13 February conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, TO Jim Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

**FIGHT THE SELL OUT IN RHODESIA DEMONSTRATE SUNDAY 13 FEB**  
Meet Speakers Corner 1pm  
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**MICHAEL FOOT MP** **STUART HALL**  
**ALTHEA LECOINTE JONES**  
**JIMMY REID**  
**MIKE TERRY**  
**The Rev Dr COLIN MORRIS** — chairman  
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**INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 50**  
Tory attack on Housing  
Russia: 1918 The Critical Year  
The British CP 1945-64  
Work in, Sit in, Redundancy  
Bangladesh  
'The British Road to Socialism'  
20p from 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2

**THE STRUGGLE IN IRELAND**  
11am-6pm Sat 22 Jan  
North London Poly, Holloway Rd, N7  
Speakers from:  
Provisional and official Republicans,  
Anti-Internment League, People's  
Democracy, Irish Solidarity Campaign  
8-12pm Irish Evening  
Admission 30p  
All proceeds to families of internees

**FLAT WANTED for couple.** West or south-west London. Tel: 01-454 7611

**SUNDERLAND IS public meeting:** Support the Miners' Strike, Thursday 27 January 8pm. Boilermakers' Club, Dame Dorothy Street, Sunderland.



I would like more information about the International Socialists

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# Socialist Worker

## Scots car plants: the fight for parity goes on

by Steve Jefferys  
Chrysler strike committee

SCOTLAND:—This week only the work of superintendents and managers at Chrysler's Linwood factory and British Leyland's Bathgate factory was keeping heat and light on for the monthly-paid staff still working when all hourly-paid workers were on strike.

The strike, over pay parity with the car firms' Midlands factories, was now in its second week. The staff unions at the factories were being asked for financial support, for in the past their wage talks have followed closely on those of the manual workers.

Liaison between the two shop stewards' committees sprang up overnight. Delegations were exchanged and Stan McEwan, chairman of the Leyland Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, spoke at the Chrysler mass meeting on Friday, 14 January.

At this meeting there was a further unanimous vote to continue the strike.

Earlier in the week the Linwood shop stewards had rejected a management move to shift the struggle from wages to negotiations about small improvements in the strings attached to the offer.

This move had been made in conjunction with the full-time union officers. Jack Jones of the Transport Workers Union and Bob Wright of the Engineers personally instructed their local officers to enter 'talks about talks' with the Chrysler management, even though the management refused to allow the full shop stewards' negotiating team to be present.

### Rejected

The local officials were largely in favour of the claim and informed the shop stewards about these moves, but overstepped the mark when they agreed to a joint Chrysler-union press statement being issued before they had reported the results of the meeting to the strike committee.

This statement actually described the talks as 'constructive', and so allowed the Daily Express to distort the picture and raise among members false hopes of a settlement.

Since these moves were rejected the management has made another approach to the unions and further talks were being held in London on Tuesday, the outcome of which were not known when this paper went to press.

The shop stewards at Bathgate have already addressed miners' meetings on the similarities of their two fights, and as the struggle for parity continues the involvement of the government becomes more and more obvious.

Miners and carworkers both have claimed £8.9 a week wage rises. The miners and Bathgate workers have been offered £2, the Chrysler workers £4.

As the Chrysler Strike Committee appeal puts it: 'The fight we have started will not be an easy one. The Tory government has made no secret of its aims to keep workers' wages down. They will back Chrysler management to the hilt to prevent our claim being won.'

Growing discontent among rank and file

# POWER 'BAN' IS A GESTURE

THE POWER WORKERS' leaders threatened an overtime ban last week as a gesture towards the growing discontent among the union rank and file at the slow progress of pay negotiations. The ban is to start on Saturday 29 January.

Nationally the power workers are in much the same position as the miners. The labour force has fallen by a third in four years, while productivity has shot up. Wages are rising slower than the cost-of-living.

Militant action now, with the miners on strike, could ensure victory both for the power men's 12 per cent pay claim and for the miners, but the official call for an overtime ban is not the sort of militant action that can succeed on its own.

Average overtime in the power industry is only 75 minutes a week, so the ban will take a long time to have any impact.

No wonder that, as one leading militant told Socialist Worker: 'There is quite a feeling of resentment among the rank and file at the way in which the unions have been biding their time and not pushing the claim...'

This feeling has to be translated into action. The demand must grow for effective official action, and thought must be given to effective unofficial militant action—especially a work to rule.

The power men could help their own claim and give the miners backing by refusing to repair broken down coal plant, by stopping the movement of coal within the power industry, and by short stoppages in power stations in support of the miners.



GEORGE DAINTON, surface worker at Betteshanger colliery in Kent: 'I think it is a shame that the national press puts the problems of Georgie Best before those of 280,000 workers. My base wage is £18 a week before stoppages.'



GEORGE COWLENS, retired Kent miner: 'These men are worthy of more money. They're worse off now than they were in '67. For the last 15 years they've had no reward for productivity. The coal board has had that.'

### SOUTH WALES

Miners' picketing has been very successful. Dockers have refused to unload at least two coalships and railway workers are respecting picket lines. Will Thomas, the NUM area agent, said NUR help had already brought four open cast washeries to a stop.

As the strike began, the conditions under which miners work were graphically illustrated by figures published by Dr Tudor Hart, a South Wales doctor. He has shown that coal miners' death rates are now 24 per cent worse than in 1931 and babies of miners' families in the valleys have a 24 per cent greater chance of dying in the first year of life than the average.

### KENT

Bob Morrison, chairman of Betteshanger NUM branch, told Socialist Worker that in the first week of the strike pickets from Kent, operating as far afield as London and Brighton, had stopped two million tons of coal from being moved, including a million tons at Kingsnorth power station alone.

Liaison with trade unionists in Dover has stopped coal being shifted, but if the liaison fails for some reason, then 300 pickets will move into action.

### YORKSHIRE

Union members have been giving the support promised to the miners in efforts to stop any movement of coal. But there were rough scenes at Grimethorpe last Wednesday when scab lorry drivers, paid bonuses of up to £15, tried to drive straight at picket lines. One miner ended up in hospital with both legs broken. The miners nevertheless succeeded in stopping

# Miners on the pickets

coal going out, except to hospitals, pensioners and schools.

There was success too at Rawmarsh, where workers at the cokeworks agreed that 60,000 tons of coke would not be moved. Gwyn Reed, of Doncaster NUM strike committee, paid tribute to the solidarity of the coke workers.

### DURHAM

Durham miners are absolutely unanimous. All but a few pits have no NUM safety workers. There is even talk of trying to get the overmen out, so there will be no cover at all.

This reflects a marked change in attitude. For 20 years pit closures have staved off militancy, but now a common feeling even in the smaller, threatened pits of West Durham seems to be—let them close, if it gets a decent wage for the men in the pits which stay open.

### NORTH WEST

No coal is being accepted at any of the 38 power stations in the North West, said the secretary of the power workers' combine in the area, Wally Preston. Attempts by the electricity board to use alternative fuels have also been stopped.

Wally Preston has also received a letter from the miners' general secretary, Lawrence Daly, congratulating him on a leaflet distributed by the rank and file power workers' paper, Advance. The letter assures the powermen that the miners 'will not accept any squalid compromise'.

### FIFE

Miners in Fife have been spectacularly successful in their efforts to stop coal moving in the county. 24-hour pickets at Longannet and Kincardine power stations and at the Rexco smokeless fuel plant at Comrie pit have paralysed Fife's fuel supplies. Coal is only being moved if it can be proved that it is for old-age pensioners, schools or hospitals.

Methil power station has been stopped, and the Westfield opencast coalworks, which supplies coal to the huge Cockenzie power station, has been sealed off. Longannet power station is operating at 25 per cent output and Kincardine power station is so desperate for coal that attempts have been made to bring in supplies of the much more expensive smokeless fuel.

These successes are a direct result of the solidarity action of railwaymen, dockers and lorry drivers. The footplate-men (ASLEF) are refusing to move any

coal from anywhere to anywhere, and the key Thornton branch of the union have called for industrial action on their own pay claim if there is no reasonable offer by 21 January.

Oil tanker drivers have pledged not to supply power stations in Fife with oil if there is an attempt to switch fuel, and ASLEF have backed this up with a similar pledge.

The pickets have been so successful that the haulage contractors in the area have given up trying to run the lorries and have laid off 200 drivers. After being laid off, some of the drivers visited the pickets and expressed their solidarity with the miners.

### STAFFORDSHIRE

'Magnificent' was how Tom Connor, NUM branch secretary at Lea Hall colliery, Rugeley, described the strike and the support from the miners' wives and fellow trade unionists. He said that this struggle revealed the solidarity of working people against the Heath government and its policies.

Fifty lorry drivers, who are members of the transport workers union and employed by Charringtons and William Kenrick, have been threatened with the

sack for refusing to cross picket lines, and power workers at Rugeley power station have pledged full support.

Miners' wives have joined the picket lines and on Monday nearly 40 were outside the power station.

Mrs Kath Watkins said she has had to bring up four children on the £13 a week her husband, a surface worker who lost an arm in the pit in 1952, brings home.

### NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

A hundred per cent support for the strike continues, and so does picketing. At Gedling Colliery, which has the problem of a highly dispersed labour force, a member of the strike committee reports that support for the strike is beyond all expectations, with men on the picket line he had never thought he would see there. At Harworth pit, which is threatened with closure, the men have refused to allow NUM men down to fight spontaneous fires.

The local T&GWU and ASLEF have pledged full support, as have G&MWU workers at the Rexco plant, but employers continue to try and move fuel. At Mansfield a lorry marked 'hospital delivery' which took coal from a yard then went to a Coal Board building.

### WARWICKSHIRE

The men are in good spirits after the first week on strike. Picketing in the Midlands has been 90 per cent successful in stopping lorries.

Much of the confidence of the workers stems from the fact that they have refused to continue to maintain sophisticated equipment. One local miner insisted that if the machinery was not used in a fortnight it would be useless.

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How to get to the IS Industrial Conference 30 January

