

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

WHAT WE THINK

COAL has claimed seven more victims. Edward Finnegan, Charles Cotton, Alan Haigh, Frank Billingham, William Armitage, Sidney Brown and Colin Barnaby join the long list of mine workers killed by the most savage of industries.

The press speaks of 'tragedy' as though the disaster were out of the hands of mere mortals. But it was man made.

As our report on page 2 shows, the collapse could have, should have been prevented. There had been warnings of impending disaster for some time. They were ignored.

Ignored by a management that ever since nationalisation have not taken the elementary steps to make safe the gimcrack, bankrupt industry bequeathed them by the private owners.

And just like those former owners, the present Coal Board managers are driven by the same relentless quest for profit and 'efficiency' that cares more for upward curves on productivity charts than the safety of the men who hew the coal and make those profits.

There is little comfort to be drawn from the Lofthouse affair, least of all for the families of the dead men. But Lofthouse will remain not only as yet one more bloody page in the miners' history but as an inspiring example of what trade unionism and working-class solidarity mean.

DESPERATE

Thousands of miners toiled for days in water and sludge in a desperate effort to reach their trapped mates. They too ran the risk of death but they battled on, twelve hours or more at a time, without thought for their own safety.

Their endeavours shut the mouths of every press baron who rarely misses the chance to speak of 'greedy' workers concerned only with their own wage packet and to hell with the rest of the community.

For the miners showed that they do care about one community—the community of ordinary working men and women who in mines and shipyards, factories and construction sites produce the wealth of this country and whose rewards are lousy pay, wage freezes, law courts, injury and... death.

Lofthouse has stressed once again the burning need to change a system based on such twisted priorities and values.

It has shown the terrible price we pay for every day that system survives.

And it has shown the power and the decency of the type of people who can do the changing.

Clay Cross councillors call for support

LABOUR councillors at Clay Cross, Derbyshire, who are still refusing to implement the Tories' Housing Finance Act, have appealed for nationwide support for a demonstration against the Act in Clay Cross on Saturday 14 April.

Full details of the march will appear next week

As health workers battle on, TUC must be told:

FIGHT HEATH'S NEW CHAINS

THE MORE the union leaders crawl to Heath the harder he kicks them in the teeth. Vic Feather and company were back at Downing Street yet again on Monday, begging Heath to set up a special inquiry into the hospital workers' case.

Mr John Cousins of the Transport Workers Union aptly summed up the result: 'The meeting was pointless. I don't know why we bothered to come.' For once

SW Political Correspondent

Mr Cousins can draw some comfort from the fact that his members on strike are likely to be in complete agreement with him.

The union leaders don't understand the facts of life that should be clear to every working man and woman in Britain today. The Tories have set out,

crudely and determinedly, to attack the living standards of working people while prices and profits go on rising. The only possible answer to that challenge is to mobilise the entire trade union movement for all-out battle with the government and its big business backers.

The most disgraceful aspect of Monday's jaunt to the seat of power was that Feather and his friends knew that from next Monday, when Phase Two of the Tory wage freeze comes into effect, strikes for more pay will be illegal.

Collective bargaining, one of the great cornerstones of Tory 'democracy', has been tossed out of the window. Hard on the heels of the Industrial Relations Act come further state-enforced shackles to strip the trade unions of their power.

Is it any wonder that when Heath sees the union leaders begging at his feet that he contemptuously tells them that there can be no 'special cases' under Phase Two?

At every turn, the union leaders have done their best to sabotage the magnificent fight of gas workers, hospital workers and civil servants.

The hospital workers soldier on, more determined than ever to beat the freeze and get some way towards a half-decent wage. But without active support from other unions they will be left in isolation, subjected to abuse and lies by the bosses' press, and without adequate funds to sustain their fight.

SPEEDY

And the TUC, like some senile, collective Pontius Pilate, has washed its hands of its members on strike. Verbal support means nothing. The postmen had plenty of verbal support from the TUC but they were allowed to go down to defeat through lack of solidarity action and funds.

Must the same fate fall to the hospital workers? The answer is No—but only if there is speedy action by rank and file trade unionists to give them effective industrial backing.

It is no good waiting for 1 May, the TUC's official day of protest against the wage freeze. While every trade unionist must work to turn it into a massive display of working-class strength, one day alone will not bring down the government.

The need now is for workers with industrial power to use it to help the hospital workers to victory. The miners, balloting now on strike action, could have a decisive say in the defeat of Tory policy.

But car workers, engineers, dockers, steelworkers have a part to play too. In every area they should build links with the hospital workers through local action committees to organise strike action, mass picketing and workplace collections.

These are crucial, testing times for the trade unions. Either we unite to defeat the Tories and their sinister anti-union laws or we allow ourselves to be straitjacketed by the state and its courts.

The action we take now can drive a hole through the wage freeze not just for hospital workers but for every section of the movement.

It is up to the rank and file to show the way and, by their action, to demand of the TUC leaders: 'Get off your knees and fight.'



Rescue workers on their way underground in a vain attempt to find the trapped men

IS fund: don't stop the flow

THE MONEY continues to flow in for the IS Printshop Fund. But in the last week it has been slowing down a bit, so readers should make a bit more effort so that we can reach our target.

Last week we collected £693.92, bringing the grand total to £25,133.

Bootle gas workers on strike sent us £2, a York hospital worker on strike £1.20, Chrysler Stoke workers sent us £1.50. A dentist 'who supports the lower paid health workers in their struggle' gave us £150.

Workers in the photography department, Blackpool Tech donated £7.50, a

railwayman in Manchester £4, two OAPs from Stepney £2.

As usual IS branches did their bit: Pontefract/Knottingley £129, Edinburgh £52, Brighton £2, Coventry £20, Peterborough £5, Harlesden £22, Leeds £30, Chelmsford £50, North Herts £20, Dundee £8, Liverpool £4, Grimsby £33, Kingston £5, Cardiff £2, Bradford £5.70, Holborn £14, Hornsey £11.15, Northampton £75.11, York £12.20, Lambeth £25, Newham £42, Walthamstow £27.

A suggestion came from one reader: 'I am a reader of SW and a supporter but not a member of IS. To help the most worthwhile fund ever could I suggest that all readers/supporters send one or more books

of either Co-op or Green Shield stamps (full of course).

'I gather the circulation is around 30,000—if each reader sent one book of stamps, redeemable at about 50p cash, you would raise £15,000 in no time. What with the freeze and the number of industrial disputes, I am broke. But I have some odd books full of stamps and if everybody sent one or more in, the last and most difficult stretch of the fund raising would be accomplished with something to spare.'

● Rush donations to Tony Cliff, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN. (IS national treasurer Jim Nichol, injured in a road accident earlier this year, has now left hospital.)

Open letter to Liaison Committee page 3

Coal Board negligence behind Yorkshire pit disaster

EARLY ON WEDNESDAY MORNING last week miners working the Flockton seam on Face South 9B at Lofthouse Colliery near Wakefield, Yorkshire, were suddenly overwhelmed by a torrent of water which burst out of the coal-face in front of them

Everyone knows what happened. Lofthouse Colliery was descended upon by a horde of press men, photographers and television crews who spread the lurid details of the tragedy across the pages of the newspapers and across the television screens.

Heath visited the pit in a hypocritical display of concern. His main interest in the miners at the moment is centred around cutting their standard of living by freezing their claim.

All were unanimous in declaring it to be a 'tragic accident'. A tragedy it certainly was, but the sense of tragedy is only heightened by the fact that the 'accident' was avoidable.

The failure of the Coal Board to take adequate precautions at Aberfan caused that foreseeable tragedy when the mountain of colliery waste engulfed the village school. A similar failure at Lofthouse Colliery caused the death of the seven trapped miners.

If only the Coal Board was a little more interested in safeguarding the lives of the miners instead of pushing productivity ever upward the 'accident' at Lofthouse would never have happened.

Face South 9B was not due to be worked for very much longer. Coal Board officials knew that it was moving dangerously close to the shafts and workings of an old colliery that had been closed in 1850.

STANDARD

A new face—South 9C—was being prepared, but since it was not yet ready to start production, the Coal Board, with criminal neglect for the safety and lives of the miners, decided to continue working S9B until the new face was ready.

With shocking irresponsibility, they did not even carry out the standard safety procedure of drilling bore-holes forward from the face. This should be done wherever it is known that old workings exist.

It was not done, because the NCB say that the old workings were thought to be hundreds of feet above the Flockton seam which is being worked at the moment. Besides, this would have wasted valuable production time.

Over a period of centuries the North Yorkshire area of the coal field has probably been more extensively worked than any other area in the country. There are over 7000 known disused pit shafts, very few of which are ever inspected.

The disused shafts which collapsed above the heads of the miners at Lofthouse Colliery belonged to the old Low Laithes Colliery which was closed in 1850. The NCB has claimed that no plans of the old underground workings at Low Laithes exist. This may be true, although the Abandoned Mines Catalogue states that plans came in to the possession of a firm of mining engineers and surveyors in Wakefield in 1929.

A spokesman for the firm, Fennell, Green and Bates, told me that they were unable to lay their hands on the plans. He said that they would have handed them over to the Coal Board, but would probably have kept a copy themselves.

Even if the plans do still exist they are probably grossly inaccurate. It was not until the Mines Act of 1911 that colliery owners were required to keep accurate records of their workings.

Deliberate falsification of plans took place right up until the nationalisation of the industry. The mine owners would lease the coal rights for an area from the local landowner and in rich coal bearing areas the various concessions would often border on each other.

FALSIFY

It was almost a standard practice of the mine owners to extend their workings beyond their own boundary line in order to poach their neighbour's coal, and they would then falsify their plans in order to cover up their crime. It was not unknown for roadways to be rapidly blocked up with coal and rubble when the landlord's surveyor came to visit the pit.

The insatiable greed of the old coal-owners was responsible not only for the death and mutilation of their own workers, but it placed the lives of future generations of workers in the industry in peril.

According to one statement by Coal Board officials, they only knew of the location of one of the shafts at Low Laithes which collapsed. But they had not even investigated the conditions of this shaft.



Rescue workers preparing to go down the pit

WHY THE MINERS DIED ...

From BILL MESSAGE at Lofthouse Colliery

Had they done so they would have found not only that it had become much deeper than they assumed it was, but also that it had not been properly filled in.

But the most negligent aspect of the Coal Board's behaviour lies in the fact that they do not appear to have known, or to have done anything about getting to know, about the existence of a map which pinpoints the exact location of all the old shafts in the area of the old Low Laithes Colliery.

In the document room of Cusworth Hall Museum, near Doncaster, there is a detailed large scale map of the Low Laithes area, which dates from the late 1850s or early 1860s. This map shows very accurately the exact location of all four shafts which collapsed, together with another six of the larger shafts and two to three dozen smaller shafts.

RECKLESS

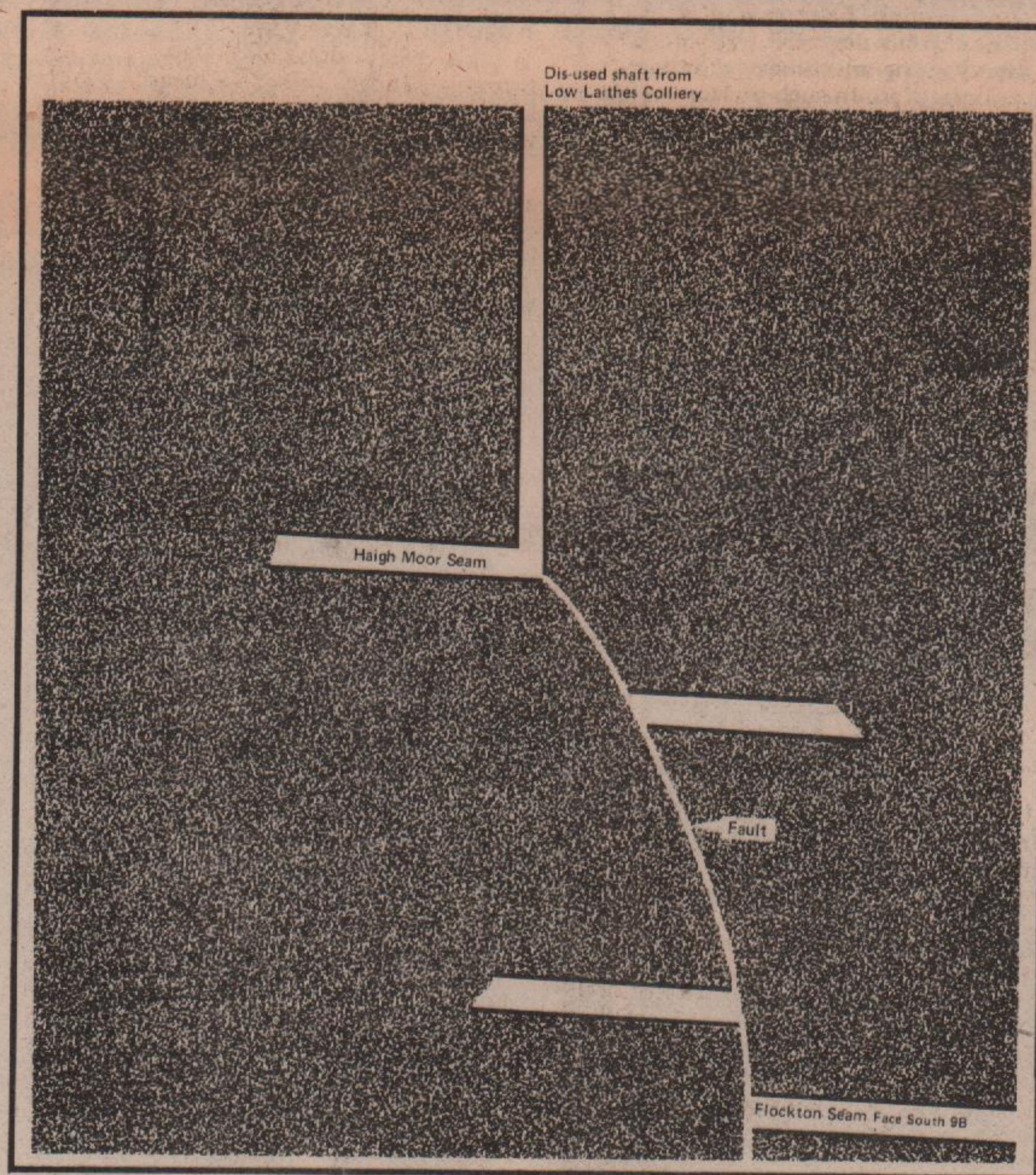
If the NCB had been at all concerned with the safety of its workers they would have discovered that they were recklessly extending Face South 9B into an area honeycombed by a fantastic network of disused shafts and workings. A second tragedy was only averted by chance.

NCB drivers, employed in carting loads of rubble to fill in the first two shafts which collapsed, were unwittingly driving their lorries directly over another shaft, which itself collapsed before the first two had been filled.

Mr Norman Stead, a farmer who works the land where Low Laithes Colliery used to stand had some revealing words to say about the shaft whose existence was known to the NCB. Ever since he took over the land in 1965 he has been continually filling in a depression which kept re-appearing in the ground.

Last September a three-foot deep hole appeared and Mr Stead sent for the NCB. They filled it in, but have had to return on more than one occasion to fill it in again. The last time this had to be done was less than three weeks before the disaster.

The most charitable thing that can be said about the Coal Board is that they were guilty of criminal complacency. They knew that there were old workings in the area, but they are saying that they assumed there was little danger because the old workings were well above the Flockton seam. But it seems incredible that their



Map of the disaster area, showing the fault leading to the coal face

own surveyors could have been unaware of a fault which was clearly shown on the old 19th century map.

When the faceworkers at S9B hit that fault early last Wednesday morning they took the plug out of an underground reservoir containing millions of gallons of water that had accumulated over the past 100 years.

Over the years mining disasters have become less frequent in this country. But still, after the trawling industry, the miner's job is the most dangerous in the country.

It is made dangerous by the officials

who control it. The eyes of the men at the top of the NCB never stray far from the productivity charts, while their hands are continually employed in doling out super-profits to their friends and relations who sit on the boards of private companies which do business with the Coal Board.

MAXIMUM

This creaming off of the wealth the miners produce was actively encouraged by the last Labour government's Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, which helped the big companies which supply the Coal Board with equipment to 'rationalise' themselves in such a way as to ensure the maximum profitability.

It has been further facilitated by the Tories, whose recent inquiry into 'alleged' mismanagement of board finances proved to be one of the biggest whitewash cases ever.

These are the people whose criminal disregard for the lives of miners goes hand in hand with their attempts to cut the miners' standard of living by refusing to go anywhere near meeting their present claim.

Morally they are as big a bunch of crooks and muggers as the old private coalowners whom they replaced.



Rescue workers studying a map before going underground. Some map reading by management might have averted the collapse.

NCB chief retires

MR TOMMY WRIGHT, acting director of the National Coal Board's North Yorkshire division, which includes the Lofthouse colliery, is to retire shortly.

The National Coal Board press office in London refused to confirm Mr Wright's pending retirement. A spokesman said: 'If he is going to retire, it would not be surprising. He is 61.'

The normal age of retirement in the National Coal

Board is 65. The NCB has not yet appointed a successor to Mr Wright.

Mr Wright has only been in his job for three months. He was moved to the position after a reshuffle in the higher reaches of the Yorkshire NCB following the premature departure of Mr Jim Stone, head of the Coal Board's Doncaster area, after revelations in the People newspaper about Mr Stone's connections with a firm supplying roofing material to the Coal Board.



The real face of British justice...

Brum's youngsters are 'mugged' every day

by Laurie Flynn

WITHIN hours of the terrible prison sentences being inflicted on three teenage boys in Birmingham last week for their part in a mugging offence, their neighbours in the Soho district of Handsworth had banded together and organised a petition demanding a reduction in Judge Croom Johnson's savagery.

They did not swallow the delirious approval of the 20 and 10 years' sentences in all the newspapers. For they know the real and permanent face of violence in Handsworth.

And like Paul Storey's mother, they know that what causes the young to take to petty crime (with its sad results for everyone concerned) is the appalling social environment in which they are all condemned to live.

Birmingham may have built more motorways, underpasses and flyovers than any other city in Britain. But that dubious advantage has been achieved at an enormous price. Part of that price is Handsworth, an area of rotting slums into which blacks and Irish, Turks and Pakistanis have been crammed at vast expense only to themselves.

Depressed

As a community it shows its wounds in deprived children, in rent arrears and overcrowding, in the permanent state of war between its young and the so-called guardians of law and order, the local racist police force.

And if you bother to dig them out, official statistics graphically document the injuries which are inflicted on this most depressed sector of Birmingham's working class.

Handsworth Soho is the most overcrowded part of Birmingham. Rents are so high and people so poorly paid that they are forced to share dwellings and rooms.

In his report on the area last year, black social worker Gus John showed that the number of households in Handsworth that have to share dwellings is four times the average for England and Wales, at 29.2 per cent.

And shared houses mean more people crammed into each room. Birmingham as a whole is bad enough, with 3 per cent of the population living more than 1.5 persons to the room. Handsworth Soho is four times worse than the average for England and Wales.

And 31 per cent of the households in Handsworth Soho have no hot water, 32



THE COURTS and their creatures are highly selective about whom they chose to make examples of. In 1969 Sir David Croom-Johnson was just plain Mr Croom-Johnson QC. In that year he reluctantly agreed to undertake a certain prosecution on the grounds that he had been promised elevation to the post of judge as soon as it was over.

On that occasion he did a deal with the defendant which ensured that the defendant would not go to prison. In return for pleading guilty to two charges, six others were dropped and only a fine imposed. The man was John Bloom, one time washing machine tycoon, charged with a £1 million fraud but found guilty only of allowing false company documents to be issued.

If no such deal had been struck with Bloom then a lot of dirty linen would have been washed in public. Bloom had been advised in his activities by some of the most prominent businessmen in Britain.

And English Electric had directly connived in his downfall by selling off faulty washing machines to undercut his competition. In such a situation big business did not want any examples to be made. Mr Croom-Johnson was only too pleased to oblige.

per cent have no use of a fixed bath and 37.4 per cent of the households have no inside toilet. In each case they are three times worse off than an already scandalous national average.

Birmingham City Corporation fully collaborates in this monstrous situation. It refuses to enforce legislation on multi-

occupation. This is because if it did so, then 50 per cent of the families in the area would have to be rehoused by the council which, thanks to the priorities of big business Britain, cannot get enough money to build houses to rehouse them.

For the same reason it does not use its powers of compulsory purchase on the rotting slums. In Handsworth Soho these have been used only 10 times in the last three years.

For the young, schools are sub-standard. There are no amenities. There is not one single council-run youth club in the area. All that the young black can look forward to is a lousy job on leaving school or no job at all.

Young blacks have four times more chance of being out of work as soon as they leave school than young and greatly deprived white kids. Paul Storey fits the profile exactly.

Black or white, they have time on their hands, and they have the needs and desires for clothes, for records and for pleasure that society instills in them. What they are deprived of is the means to satisfy those desires.

Surprise

Against this background is it surprising that they turn to so-called mugging as a way of satisfying those desires? In fact the only real surprise is that so few actually turn to crime.

One statistic tells the story of Handsworth's real violence. Bad diets, foul housing and living conditions ensure that twice as many babies die before the end of the first year of their lives than on average in England and Wales.

And what does Sir David Groom-Johnson, Judge of the Queen's Bench Division, know or care about this massive violence? The answer is simple: Nothing.

He merely administers the law which he and his kind use to bolster the order which created Handsworth Soho. The only answer his system has for those like Paul Storey who are its victims is to transfer them from one prison to another. The difference is that from now on Paul Storey and his two friends will not be shut in by social deprivation and unemployment but by uniformed warders with bolts and bars.

'ARE YOU SANE?' JUDGE ASKS MILITANT ON TRIAL

by Paul Foot

Hovell and Wescott went to see Tony Soares in Finsbury Park. They picked on Soares, apparently, because he had a previous conviction—for distributing leaflets ('incitement to riot') before the big Vietnam demonstration in October 1968. Soares had been convicted and sent to prison (for a first offence) for two years.

Tony Soares admitted his connection with the Black Liberation Front, whose paper was Grass Roots. But he denied any association with the issue of the paper which had contained the Molotov cocktail article.

He had not edited the paper, nor distributed it.

UNHAPPY

Tony refused to give the police officers the names of anyone associated with the edition. Infuriated at their inability to come up with the editor or distributors, Messrs Hovell and Wescott submitted a report to the Director of Public Prosecutions recommending prosecution of Soares.

Even the DPP was unhappy about the evidence against Soares and recommended that no prosecution could succeed. Nothing daunted, the police applied to their champion, Sir Peter Rawlinson, who promptly granted the order for Soares's prosecution.

On 9 March last year, six months after the article appeared, Tony Soares was arrested at gunpoint outside his local social security office. Bail was refused for four months.

At his trial, which was postponed twice, the prosecution could not produce a single independent witness to establish Tony Soares' connection with the 'offending' article.

They called the two police officers and an explosives 'expert' who said how dangerous the items in the article were. The police officers produced, as evidence of

incitement, letters and writings which they had found in Tony Soares' flat, which had not been sent to anyone.

In his defence, Tony argued that he had not been responsible for publishing or distributing the article, and had not approved of the article when he had read it.

Tony called several other black comrades, all of whom testified that he had had nothing to do with the paper, and an explosives expert who said that one of the 'cocktails' portrayed in the offending article would not have worked and the effect of the other weapons had been exaggerated by the Crown evidence.

All the black witnesses were bullied and harassed by counsel for the prosecution, Mr Michael Worsley, and by the judge. Almost all their examination was about their political views. All were asked about 'the cause of violence for political ends.'

In his summing-up, the judge said there were three courses of action open to black people with 'a sense of grievance': 'The first is to grin and bear it; the second is to change it by legal means. That's what there's a parliament for. And the third is to go back where they came from.'

At least three times the prosecution had to persuade the judge to modify the tone of his summing up and direction for fear that a conviction might be overturned on appeal. Sentence is expected within ten days.

In the meantime, the trial has served another purpose. Visitors to the public gallery were forced to give the police their names and addresses. The need to defend Soares necessarily let out the names of other Grass Roots supporters.

Inspector Hovell told the court: 'We are at the moment preparing a report for the Director of Public Prosecutions on others involved in this leaflet.'

The police and the judiciary will not rest until every black man that has expressed a view against the racism of modern capitalist society is safely under lock and key.

'YOU WROTE in an article of some kind that Enoch Powell was capable of sending all black people to the gas chamber. No sane man could make such a comment. Before I sentence you as a dangerous agitator, therefore, I shall have to establish that you are not insane.'

With these 'unpolitical' words, His Honour Mr Justice King-Hamilton remanded Tony Soares for medical reports at the Old Bailey last week. Tony Soares, who is known to all black people fighting against police oppression and racial discrimination in London, had just been found guilty on two counts of attempting to incite people to use firearms and to arson after a month-long political trial.

Tony Soares was found not guilty of the two more serious charges: attempt to incite people to murder and to use firearms with attempt to endanger life.

The cause of these weighty charges was an article which appeared in the fourth issue of Grass Roots, a black community paper based in North London, which was published in September 1971. The editor, an American called Abdullah Jamal, found that there was nothing to fill page five and reprinted a page of a previous issue of the American paper Black Panther. The page purported to be garbled instructions as to how to make a Molotov cocktail and to use other weapons.

A complaint about the article was made by Jack Baksi, the Community Relations Officer for Hackney to Stanley Clinton Davies, Labour MP for Hackney.

Mr Clinton Davies passed the complaint on to the Attorney General, Sir Peter Rawlinson, thus setting in motion the chain of persecution which landed Tony Soares in jail.

The two police officers put onto the case were Detective Inspector William Hovell and Detective Sergeant John Wescott, both of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard. Mr Hovell told the court: 'It is part of my duty to evaluate what is being said in political newspapers.'

Socialist Worker

Open letter to delegates to the Liaison Committee

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,

British capitalism is undergoing a deep, long-drawn-out crisis. Investment and expansion are too low to meet the challenge of Britain's international competitors. Each attempt to expand the economy is followed by balance of payments difficulties. Despite large state handouts to industry, unemployment still stands at three quarters of a million. In or out of the Common Market, this inbuilt crisis of British capitalism will continue and worsen.

Labour and Tory governments have both attempted to solve capitalism's problems at the expense of organised workers. Each developing strategy of the Tories is based on Harold Wilson's guidelines.

The working class response to this offensive in 1972 was magnificent. Miners, railwaymen, dockers, builders all fought and beat the employers and their government. This year new, previously non-militant, sectors have entered the battle.

The rank and file have indicated their willingness to struggle. That willingness has not been reflected in the trade union leadership.

The trade union leaders of right and left persuasion have at best tail-ended the movement. At worst they have sabotaged it. It gives us no pleasure, but it must be recorded and noted well that Jack Jones' role in the docks dispute was despicable and that Hugh Scanlon's role in the engineering claim and on the Goad case was equivocal and self-defeating. The response of the TUC to the struggles of the gasworkers, civil servants and hospital workers has never gone beyond mere verbal support.

The crisis of capitalism finds its reflection in a crisis of working-class leadership. At this stage in the defence of trade unions, it is worthwhile recalling the record of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. Formed in 1966, the LCDTU by 1969 managed to develop a series of one-day unofficial stoppages, culminating on 8 December 1970 in a strike of 600,000 workers. In 1971 several other smaller one-day strikes took place.

Fill the gap

A creditable record, it may be thought. But where was the LCDTU in the mass struggles of 1972 and 1973? The vitally necessary structure of local liaison committees had not been built. Worse, such committees were and are specifically excluded by the national Liaison Committee. It is not enough for LCDTU spokesmen to say 'if you want local committees, then build them.' The national committee must give the lead in creating genuine local committees throughout the country.

In a period of mass struggle the development of local solidarity and support is vital. If the union leaders are prepared to allow each section to be picked off one at a time, it is up to bodies like the Liaison Committee to attempt to fill the gap.

The inactivity of the Liaison Committee in 1972 indicates a too ready acceptance of the verbal militancy of the 'left' union leadership. If the lessons of the last year have not been learned, the LCDTU will inevitably and justly be condemned to irrelevance.

The building of a fighting rank and file movement is not in the episodic tokenism of well-spaced one-day strike calls. It is in the development of genuine roots in the localities that a movement and a leadership will develop.

The time to develop the movement is now. To transform an organisation of one-day protests into a consistent fighting movement cannot be achieved by tailing trade union bureaucrats, whatever their political affiliation.

- The LCDTU must take the initiative to:
- Build authentic local committees.
 - Develop the one-day protest as a first step to a general strike.
 - Fight against TUC/government talks.
 - Maximum solidarity with all workers fighting the freeze.

Smash the Freeze! No Incomes Policy! No Co-operation with the Industrial Relations Act! Kick Out the Tories!

Executive Committee, International Socialists

6 COTTONS GDNS, LONDON E2 8DN



How ITT tried to beat Allende

by Chris Harman

EVIDENCE of how big business reacts to the election of governments whose political colouring it dislikes was given to a US Senate sub-committee last week.

John McCone, a director of ITT, the telecommunications giant and one of the world's biggest companies, told the committee that he had carried an offer from ITT to Henry Kissinger, Nixon's chief advisor, and

Richard Helm, head of the CIA, in an attempt to prevent the election of Salvador Allende to the Chilean presidency two years ago.

McCone is himself a former head of the CIA.

William Merriam, one of the company's vice-presidents, in turn described how another top CIA man,

William Broue, 'approved plans to block the election of President Allende'. Broue, who was head of the CIA's clandestine operations in the Western hemisphere and sat in at top-level meetings of Nixon's National Security Council, had 'contacted a group of US businessmen in the hope of applying anti-Allende political pressure through concerted economic action'. ITT had offered to contribute a million dollars towards ensuring the success of this plan.

A later witness from ITT, Edward Gerrity, contradicted his fellow directors and denied unconvincingly that ITT had offered support to the CIA proposals. But he admitted the existence of a 'five-point CIA plan to create economic chaos in Chile' through 'a slowdown or cancellation of credits by banks, a slowdown in sending money or spare parts by companies, pressure on Chilean savings or loan companies to close their doors, withdrawal of all technical help...'

Secret

The aim of the CIA was for the American companies operating in Chile to use their massive economic power to create havoc in the country. Millions of Chilean workers and sections of the middle classes would then blame their resulting poverty on the shift to the left and support efforts to bring in a right-wing government.

In order to bring about this state of affairs a section of the US state machine engaged in secret talks with the most powerful companies. So close were their ties that a vice-president of ITT could refer to the head of the CIA's undercover operations on the American continent as 'our man in the CIA'.

The CIA in turn has built up a machine capable of influencing political events throughout the world, including giving a helping hand to various right-wing Labour politicians in Britain.

There is nothing about the plotting of the CIA and ITT to suggest that it was in anyway exceptional. The signs are that both intelligence chiefs and company directors take such activities for granted. The only difference this time was that a chain of accidents brought it to public light.

The evidence coming before the sub-committee shows there are powerful and well organised forces capable of resisting pro-working class reforms anywhere in the world, and that big business will stop short of nothing to achieve its goals.

STUDENTS PROTEST AT MILITARY LAW

by Richard Kirkwood

A MASSIVE revolt has broken out in France's high schools, the lycees. In most of the major towns of France more than 75 per cent of the schools were on strike last week.

The climax was Thursday's massive demonstrations, when 80,000 took to the streets in Paris and 200,000 in the country as a whole.

The issue at stake is the new regulations for military service. Until this year young people who wanted to continue their studies had the right to postpone their call-up.

This is particularly significant in France, where anyone with the basic entry qualifications has an automatic university place. Clearly the people who are going to be most hit by the new regulations are those from poorer backgrounds, who are less likely to take up their right to university places after more than a year in the army.

The new law went through two years ago with virtually no opposition. The only person to vote against was Michel Rocard, of the Left Socialist Party, the PSU. The Communist Party dodged the issue by not taking part in the vote.

SELECTION

Now that the law is about to be put into effect, those who will be affected have revolted. They see the new rules not only as an attack on their right to defer call-up but as a means to sneak in a form of selection for entry to higher education.

The initial organisation against the new law, which is called after Minister of Defence Michel Debre, consisted of the 'committees against the Debre law', largely led by revolutionary socialists, in particular from Trotskyist and near-Trotskyist groups. These committees were responsible for most of the work in spreading the strikes and called for a demonstration last Thursday, 22 March.

In the early stages of the movement against the Debre law the 'official' left, stuck in its electoral respectability, either ignored the movement or, like the Communist Party youth and student organisations, put out leaflets warning the students against provocation. At the last minute, last week, they did an about-turn and supported the protest.

ENORMOUS

At first they tried to sabotage the demonstration by calling one of their own on the day before. This failed: only a few thousand joined them. With yet another about-turn they decided to join the Thursday demonstration. So Thursday's demonstrations were a show of strength by the entire left.

It was probably this together with the fact that the demonstration was led by the revolutionaries, that induced the police to ban Thursday's demonstration after they had allowed Wednesday's.

Despite the ban, an enormous demonstration gathered lycee, college and university students and some young teachers. Although the groups led by the Communist Party supported the demo, defying the ban, they kept away from the main demonstration and had dispersed by the time it was viciously set upon by riot police.

Throughout France there were similar, though in general more peaceful, demonstrations. In the North



Some of the 60,000 students and teachers who marched in the Paris demonstration last week

four out of five lycee students were on strike, in Dijon 8000 demonstrated, in Lyons 12,000 and in Toulouse, where the schools had been closed by the authorities, 30,000 took part in a peaceful march without police interference. In many places, Tours and Toulouse among them, the marches are described as the biggest since May 1968.

Although the Communist Party and other 'traditional' left organisations have joined in the struggle, they have carefully refrained from trying to link it with workers—indeed they have insisted that the movement be kept to the limited question of the call-up for students. Even most of the revolutionary groups, though stressing the broad political implications against militarism and the class bias in abolishing the postponement of call-up, have stuck to the issue of postponement itself and have tried to appeal to young workers by demanding that the right to postpone call-up be extended to all young people.

The only group to have gone

further is Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Struggle) which argues that postponement is of little use to young workers and that the only demand which can really mobilise all young people against militarism is for the total abolition of military service as it exists at present. Lutte Ouvriere is fighting in united action with the other revolutionary left groups but at the same time trying to win over the lycee students to its own position.

CONTACT

With masses of workers now frustrated at their failure to get their most basic demands met through electoral channels after the recent right-wing victory, there is a real possibility that the revolt in the schools could spark off a more general movement against the government. A lot depends on the reaction of the traditional workers' organisations—but it depends even more on whether the lycee students can find a point of contact with workers.

Athens Law School occupied

THE decisive action by more than 2000 students who occupied the Athens Law School building last Tuesday broke the apparently peaceful atmosphere of the cooling-off period which the Greek junta had imposed by locking them out. It shows clearly that the students are determined to push forward as a movement and challenge the political power of the junta.

What the government meant by 'cooling off' was revealed by the way it acted, after consulting with the university authorities. It wanted a breathing space to make more arrests, reorganise the repressive

machine, and to come to an agreement with the university authorities who had been angered by previous police handling.

The government wanted to co-ordinate its own action with that of the university.

This was clearly seen from the big meeting Papadopoulos held with the university authorities and the government-appointed student councils. Apart from the pretence that Papadopoulos was partly giving into student demands, the main theme of the meeting was the consolidation of the harmonious relationship between the government, police and the university authorities—in other words, getting the professors to police the students.

But the students smashed this manoeuvre. After a series of small demonstrations and a sit-in at Patras University

BRIEFING

AT THE height of the struggle in Italy over the national industrial agreements, the engineering unions have reached a tentative agreement with public sector employees which is a partial defeat for the working-class movement.

The engineering workers' main demand was for a single grading system uniting manual and white collar workers. The agreement concedes a single system, but creates new divisions among the grades, hitting white collar workers in particular. This is bound to be rejected in many factories, but is equally certain to be imposed by the unions if the final details are settled with the public employers' federation.

Given the high level of militancy of the engineering workers, who have intensified industrial action over the past five months with strikes, mass meetings and demonstrations all over Italy, the agreement is a serious retreat by the union leadership. It will weaken the struggle of other engineering workers at a time when the employers and the state are stepping up

repression against picket and militant workers.

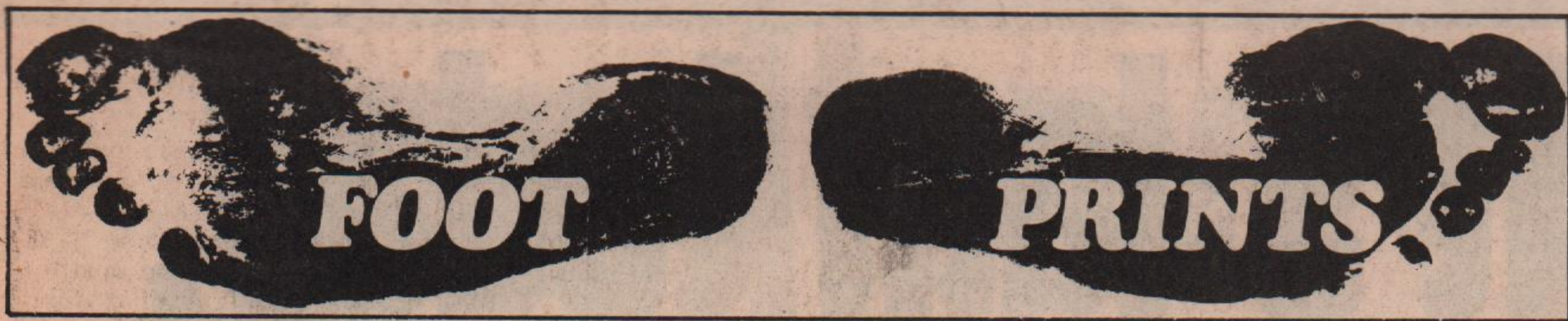
DURING last month's student strikes in Italy, police shot dead two demonstrators, one in Milan and one in Naples. The official reaction of the FGCI—the Italian Young Communist League—was to condemn the government and police, but to lay 'equal, if not greater, blame' on the revolutionaries who 'provoked' the police and 'gave them an excuse'.

If the police were disarmed, the FGCI went on, they could become 'the instrument of the citizen's defence and the guardian of his liberty (in short, like the English police).'

IMMIGRANT workers in several major French towns have been on hunger strike for some weeks now in protest against the second-class rights offered to migrant workers, and in particular the latest government circular which ties them even more closely to the whims of their bosses and of the police. In several towns the hunger strikes have been accompanied by protest strikes and demonstrations supported by French socialist groups.

LITTLE has appeared in the establishment press about the events surrounding the air-traffic controllers' strike in France. The main issue was the right to strike, which had been abolished for airport workers in 1964. At the time the main union for air-traffic controllers, the Catholic-dominated CFTC raised little protest. But now the controllers are no longer willing to put up with this restriction.

The most disgraceful aspect of the strike was the behaviour of the other unions, in particular the Communist Party-controlled CGT, which refused to support the strike and which effectively offered to scab if military control, imposed during the strike, has been lifted.



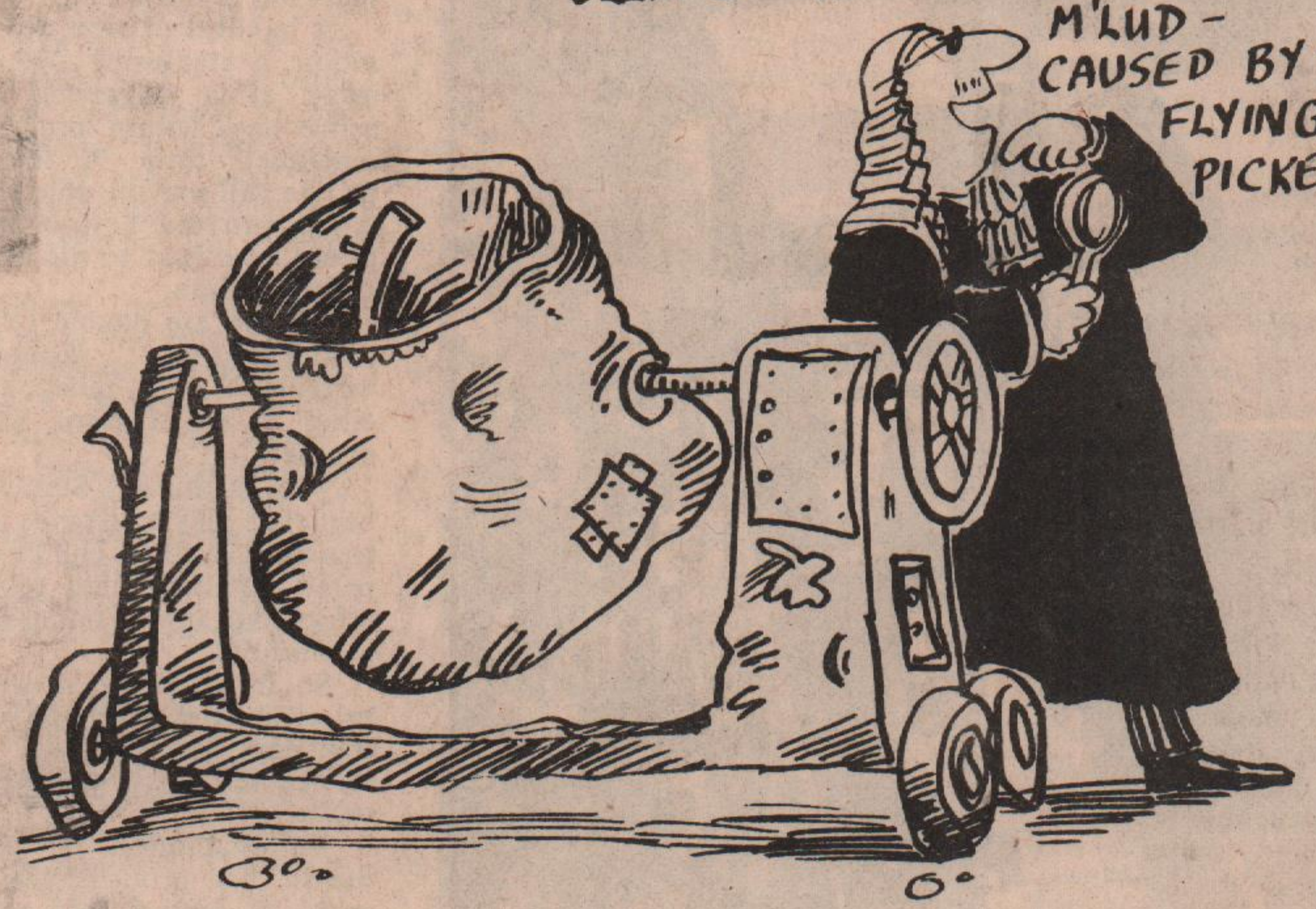
Prepare to meter doom

THE North West Gas Corporation, in Manchester, is pondering over a letter received on 15 March from a rich consumer in Bowden, a snooty suburb, which explained how her cleaning lady had tried to commit suicide by turning on all the gas appliances.

The bid had failed, but the consumer did not think it fair that she should be charged for the gas used, and demanded an allowance on her fuel bill.

Evans

A DISTINCT SCRATCH CAN BE CLEARLY SEEN ON THIS EXHIBIT M'LUD - CAUSED BY THE FLYING PICKET...



The bakers' dozen increases

ON 21 March the Ministry of Agriculture announced a series of price rises in bakery products, such as rolls, buns, sweets, sandwiches and domestic flour. The rises were announced in all the newspapers. This meant that the bakers thought they couldn't get away with the increases without the public realising.

This is not always the case. If the bakers (or any other manufacturers) think they can get away with price increases, they make a deal with the government to keep the whole thing secret.

On 2 March, for instance, Mr M F Zimmerman, director of the National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers sent a circular to all his members.

The circular was marked 'strictly confidential' and 'not to be communicated to anyone without prior express approval of the director of the association.'

It reported: 'The National Association has negotiated and concluded agreement with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of increases of prices of flour confectionery products which incorporate dried fruit and/or apples.'

The increase, said the circular, would be 6 per cent, and would apply only to smaller bakers.

Mr Zimmerman ended his good news with a warning.

'I will emphasise the undesirability of price increases. The Association will be making no reference to the Ministry's agreement in its journal. Neither will there be any release to the national or trade press.'

'It is not in the best interests of the industry, the government or the public unduly to highlight these justifiable reliefs for the Master Bakers' desperate economic plight.'

Mr Zimmerman also pointed out: 'This is the first occasion that a trade association has negotiated with the Ministry price increases for its members as a whole.'

Three weeks later the Master Bakers struck again—this time with a publicly-announced rise. This all falls in with the strategy for food price rises outlined by Mr Zimmerman on 28 February.

He wrote in another circular: 'April will be a most sensitive month for price increases; members would be well advised to make no such movements if this is possible. March, yes—subject to the provisions of the standstill; May, yes, under the formula in Stage II; but April...'

Donations, however low, from those who cannot live any longer with the 'desperate plight' of the Master Bakers should be sent to Mr Zimmerman at his office at Queens House, 2 Holly Road, Twickenham, Middlesex.

MRS BARBER AND THE 40,000 SHARES

WHAT with all the fuss about Anthony Barber's Budget and the enormous benefits it bestows on people with unearned incomes (money for nothing) no one seems to have probed the curious mystery of MRS Barber's shares.

Mrs Jean Barber is the daughter of Mr Milton Asquith of Wentbridge, Yorkshire (Mr and Mrs Barber and their family also live in Wentbridge, as did Mr John Poulson—but that's another story).

Mr Asquith's family firm is the large and profitable glass works, Redfearn National Glass, which operates at Barnsley and York. In 1950, immediately after Anthony Barber married Jean, he was taken on to the Redfearn board of directors, where he has stayed ever since, except in periods when he was a Minister.

The Asquith family hold a huge block of Redfearn shares. The Chancellor's father-in-law, for instance, owns 92,750 shares, which are worth about £1 each.

Last year Mr Asquith netted about £4000 in dividends on these shares—and this year, after the Budget, the amount he can keep after tax will almost double—thanks to young Anthony's work at the Treasury.

The Redfearn shareholders' list on 19 February 1971 showed Mrs Jean P Barber as the proud owner of 43,650 shares, in three accounts. Nearly 30,000 of these she owned by herself, the others in concert with a Miss Eileen M Asquith.

The 1972 shareholders' list, however, shows that Mrs Barber owned no shares at all. For some reason, the people responsible for the Redfearn accounts have not thought



Chancellor Tony with his wife and two daughters

it necessary to record the dates of the transfer of Mrs Barber's shares, as they are obliged to do by law (one of the many company laws which are not enforced).

If Mrs Barber sold her shares in 1972, she was lucky, for the shares reached an all-time high in that year of 217p (double what they are now). A more likely explanation, however, is that she has shifted her shares into a 'nominee account' to avoid the prying eyes of impertinent journalists.

Mr Barber is not in favour of nominee accounts, and he and Mr Peter Walker (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry) are busy working out ways and means of putting an end to them. In the meanwhile, Mr Edward Du Cann, the well-

known 'insider dealer' who is also chairman of the 'much-respected' Tory backbench 1922 Committee, has told several million television viewers that he always keeps his shares in nominee accounts.

At any rate, Mr Barber himself is not in the least embarrassed by his shareholdings. His holding in Redfearn was increased last year from 5,000 shares to 7,500.

Mr Barber, of course, has been far too busy with the affairs of state to declare this interest while boosting dividends with his tax reductions.

Miss Josephine Barber and Miss Louise Barber, Mr Barber's delightful daughters, are also proud owners of 802 shares each in Redfearn Glass.

Bermuda Sharks

PERCEPTIVE newspaper readers on 12 March were surprised to notice that the stories about the previous night's shooting of the Governor of Bermuda had been written up almost exclusively by 'City' and 'business' correspondents. The report in London's Evening Standard, for instance, was by David Malbert, the paper's City editor, in the Evening News by Christopher Fildes, City editor, and in the Financial Times by Arthur Sandles, who calls himself the 'travel editor'.

Were all these money men flown out specially to cover a murder story? Not at all.

They were all attending what has been described as 'a standard jaunt', organised by a firm called C C H Investments, who are building a big hotel and beach club in Bermuda.

C C H Investments had flown 105 stockbrokers, 'investment experts' and financial journalists first class to Bermuda so that they could all see at first hand what an excellent investment are CCH shares.

The tour included an inspection of the site, and a talk from a top CCH official on the wonders of Scottish labour (apparently Scottish labour was cheaper than Bermudan labour, and was flown out to build the beach club. Local racials have started a 'Jocks Go Home!' Committee). These duties aside, the guests were free to roam around the island reflecting on the generosity of CCH and the million reasons why CCH shares are such a good buy.

Imagine the journalists' fury when they were rung up in the middle of the night to be told of the Governor's death, and ordered to 'file copy' immediately.

One angry journalist, tumbling downstairs his voice thick with sleep and booze, was heard to grumble: 'Why can't those news desk bullies leave us alone? Who do they think we are—reporters?'

ALL the newspapers reported on Monday that David Lazarus, chairman of the Brent Conservative Association, has written a letter to all Conservative Associations begging them for more support for Enoch Powell.

None of them reported that Mr Lazarus joined the National Front in 1968. His NF membership number was 9008. When Private Eye published this fact two years ago, Mr Lazarus angrily issued a writ for libel. No apology was made, and for some reason Mr Lazarus did not continue with his action.

Quote of the week

'I know, in the present state of society, the enormous educative effect that private practice has. You are challenged by somebody, perhaps of your own intelligence and status, or better than your own, in a way that you are not challenged by people who are doing more day-to-day manual work and that kind of thing...'

'I think that there are amenities which it is possible to buy. There are people who have more money to spend and a position in life to uphold; people who go to better and more expensive shops when they want clothes, or something of that kind, and I see no reason why such people should not have some of the conditions which one expects in private practice.'

—LORD PLATT, former president of the Royal College of Physicians in the House of Lords debate on the Health Service, 29 January 1973.

PURCHASING HIRE

THIS enticing offer is put out by the management at Xpelair, a GEC subsidiary in Birmingham which makes fans (the ventilation in the factory needless to say, is appalling). It has been sent out to all workers.

All you have to do is to introduce a potential worker to the management. If he or she gets taken on and stays for 13 weeks, the introducer gets £10.

Management have lit on this interesting idea for beating the freeze in an effort to cut the enormous costs in their personnel department, much of which is

devoted to seeking out workers who will stay in the factory, especially in the winding department where turnover is very high. The idea of getting the workers to do this awkward job for next to nothing was described as 'brilliant' by top GEC management, who are looking to see if the scheme succeeds before adopting it in all plants.

Meanwhile, women workers will have to make do with a Phase Two £1.80-a-week rise on their meagre earnings, which, even at top bonus rates, will not exceed £20 a week.

£10 CASH
OR MORE
COULD BE YOURS IN ONLY 13 WEEKS



One reason public transport services worsen—they are crowded off the roads by the more profitable private car

It's jam today,

by Les Kay

IN THIS world of spaceships and synthetic fibres the ability to move from place to place is not a luxury but a necessity.

Yet with all the resources of a technological revolution behind us we are incapable of satisfying that need as far as the great mass of mankind is concerned.

A handful of men can reach the moon, a staggering 240,000 miles away at a staggering cost, and arrive back within minutes of their scheduled time. A few hundred people will soon be able to cross the Atlantic to New York in about three hours—at a cost to the taxpayers of £1000 million.

Yet we are unable to move our schoolchildren, shoppers and workers a few miles across our cities in an efficient and reliable manner.

Why is this so? Surely it should be child's play to arrange a domestic transport system, child's play compared to the time, research and effort put into Concorde and the moonshots.

So it would be if we had our priorities right! If we saw public transport as a socially necessary service and not as a money-spinning racket.

Nationalisation of the bus industry has brought the continual spiral of service cuts and fare increases which the Tories first warned of when they opposed it so firmly in 1947. Not that they were at all interested in service to the public any more than the major private bus company, British Electric Traction, when it formed an Omnibus Passengers Protection Association to put out propaganda in defence of the private ownership

of transport.

What worried them were the state's new powers of compulsory purchase, which seemed to threaten profits and property rights. The Conservative Party repealed these powers in 1953 and since then has encouraged British Leyland to buy half the shares in the profitable state-owned bus building companies. The Tories have also relaxed restrictions on public service vehicle licensing to promote pirate, private services.

Growth

Unlike road haulage, passenger transport has never been denationalised because the industry has failed to attract major investment since the 1930s. Money is available for moonshots and supersonic aircraft, but not for buses.

During the whole 25-year period during which the state gradually acquired ownership of the vast majority of buses in this country, private motoring became one of the most important growth sectors of the British economy.

The astronomical costs involved in road construction for the private car, in accidents and pollution, and in lost time through congestion matter little to the investor so long as the industry which uses his money can provide a profit for him. And the big profits come from producing luxuries for the richer half. Passenger transport is a blatant example.

Poorer people living in country

districts need to be able to reach the neighbouring towns to shop. But because they cannot afford to use the buses regularly, demand for country buses has continually fallen. Villagers have been forced to buy cars or stay at home if they cannot afford them.

On the other hand city services running through down-town areas and used by working people often subsidise services to residential areas which carry fewer passengers.

The first Labour Minister of Transport, introducing his nationalisation bill in 1947, only went half way to reversing this tendency. 'Capital must go where it is most needed and where it will best serve our national resources,' he said. It was clear from the parliamentary debate on this issue that the plan was for passenger transport subsidised by the taxpayer and servicing British industry—which was, in the main, to stay in private hands geared to the drive for profits.

Compensation

Immediately after the war, passenger transport on the roads was monopolised by two firms—Thomas Tilling and British Electric Traction. Wasteful running costs resulting whenever two firms ran on the same routes had been eliminated by mergers. Bus and rail timetables were rationalised as a result of the massive investments of the main line railway companies in road passenger transport.

So in nationalising the services the Labour government was only following a trend already established.

The government first approached the Tilling group. But the shareholders would not part with their shares until they were assured that

THE MAN FROM ROBBEN ISLAND

The George Peake story: Part 2



George Peake, revolutionary socialist and trade union organiser in South Africa, was arrested in 1961 when he attempted to plant a bomb in a Cape Town prison as part of the Congress movement's military campaign against apartheid. His arrest coincided with the introduction of the Sabotage Act which carried a maximum penalty of death. George tried to escape across the border into Botswana but was arrested and brought back to Cape Town.

HARD LABOUR IN THE FORTRESS OF NO ESCAPE

SO IT WAS BACK to Roeland Street jail again, this time to be held in manacles and dubbed a 'dangerous prisoner'. His trial came up in 1962 before an English-speaking judge, two Afrikaans QCs who acted as 'assessors'—and no jury.

He was charged with possession of explosives, attempting to cause an illegal explosion and attempting to damage state property. Found guilty, his lawyers vehemently opposed his decision to make a political statement from the dock which, they stressed, would only mean a heavier sentence.

But George was adamant. 'I'm not going with a whimper. I want to make a statement of my political beliefs.'

And from the dock he declared: 'I make no apology. I intended to cause an explosion—not to endanger life but to draw the country's attention to the mood of the black people.'

'I gave five of my best years to fight for this country when the present Minister of Justice was in prison for his Nazi sympathies. Now I am in the dock as a "traitor". I am not ashamed of being a traitor in his terms.'

He launched into a bitter denunciation of the Group Areas Act, the harassing of blacks, the systematic police beatings and the denial of the vote to black workers.

'We were promised a "better deal" after the war but now things are far worse. Before you sentence me, if it is one that I survive and I leave prison, I will feel duty bound to follow the same path.'

Thugs

Then came the long, terrifying wait for the sentence. When it was delivered there was astonishment in court: four years' hard labour, with two years suspended.

In South African terms, it was a lenient sentence, so lenient that George received another beating from Roeland Street warders who were incensed by the judge's softness. They cheered up a little when they learnt

'Build yourself a prison—then get inside'

of George's destination—the prison camp on Robben Island where he would have the grim distinction of being the first political prisoner.

Using his skills as a building worker, George was put to work constructing a new maximum security section on the island and was then promptly locked inside his own handiwork.

'The prison commander took a dislike to me. He said building work was too easy and had me sent to the stone quarry.'

'The prisoners had to break out two cubic yards of bare rock a day with hammers and chisels. Then we had to break the lumps into small pieces and tip them into the sea.'

The black warders on the island were fairly sympathetic to George and he was able to establish links with his family and comrades through one of the warders. The Congress movement's paper was smuggled to him and he copied out extracts from the paper and gave them to other prisoners. By the time the first six months of his sentence had passed he had been joined by a further 100 political prisoners.

The authorities were worried by the fraternisation between prisoners and the black guards who were replaced by specially recruited white guards. 'They were real thugs.'

One day, as George was returning from the quarry, the tannoy barked out his name and ordered him to report to a camp officer.

The officer was disarmingly friendly. 'I hear that you are studying to improve your education. How are you getting along? That's the sort of prisoner we like—one who tries to rehabilitate himself.'

'You could be upgraded. Can I see some of your work?'

Barred

George produced a notebook and the officer skimmed through the pages. His manner changed violently and he flung the notebook down.

'You swine!' he shouted and produced some of the snippets from the Congress paper that George had copied out for other prisoners. The writing was the same.

'You'll never be upgraded,' the officer told him gloatingly and George spent the next two and a half years in solitary confinement, where he suffered agonies from the untreated arthritis in his painful, twisted limbs.

The date of his release was 3 September 1965. On 2 September, as a homecoming present, the government slapped an extended banning

order and a house arrest on him. The house arrest restricted him to his home from six in the evening until seven in the morning and he was not allowed to go beyond one square mile of his house at any time.

'I was barred from all industrial areas and from meeting more than one person at a time, except for two relatives and a doctor—and he was not to be a communist.'

'My whole family was under house arrest and we had to report to the police twice a day.'

When the initial shock of this prison-without-bars existence wore off, George attempted once again to operate in politics clandestinely but after three years of house arrest he began to question the point of this twilight existence.

He opened a store in an effort to earn a living for his family but it flopped because of the terrible poverty of the black people in the area. 'We ended up giving most of the goods away.'

Broke, unable to operate politically, harassed and intimidated 24 hours a day by the security police, George decided that his duty as a revolutionary lay elsewhere—if only temporarily.

His request for a passport was

jam tomorrow

they could make more money by parting with their bus fleets than by running them themselves.

The colossal sum of £24,800,000 was agreed as compensation. The British Transport Commission handed out nearly £5 of its own stock for every £1 of privately-held Tilling stock. Then in 1968 the British Electric Traction companies were bought out completely. The whole network came under the control of the National Bus Company

Subsidise

Some indication of the way the National Bus Company will be run can be gained by looking at the man they have put in charge. Freddie Wood (he says he likes to be called Freddie because it helps to build a friendly image) was born in Goole, Yorkshire, and educated at Feldsted, an Essex public school.

He was hoiked out of university at the age of 21 when two deaths put him in line for the managing director's job of Croda International, a firm in which his family had a great interest. He didn't get the job though. The other directors packed him off to America to prove his worth.

There he set up his own company with a share capital of £100 and sold a half share to an American in return for his air fare to New York. Within two years he had bought out his partner for £10,000 and the firm was making half as much profit as the British parent company.

Wood—a millionaire before his 41st birthday—is insistent that buses will make a profit. True, fares would probably rise . . . but loss-making



The passenger: as services are cut, his fares are still paying off the former bus owners.

companies would be asked to examine their ways and if there was no profit ahead they would be asked to go, he told the Brighton Evening Argus on 1 May last year.

He detailed his plan in the big empty mouth of the NBC 'Bus' magazine. 'We propose to improve and maintain our service . . . by whatever means are at our disposal, specifically including energetic management and methods, marketing economies and rationalisation . . . We must find out what the customer wants and provide it at a profit.'

Or in the words of a bus militant: 'More one-man-operated buses and the axe wielded as never before. And if the passengers want a service badly enough they'll pay whatever

we charge.'

It is in fact the bus user who subsidises the government and the former owners of the fleets. It was calculated in the 1970s that the capital debt of the public sector has grown by three times and the interest by five times.

In practice this meant that Tillings were able to form a highly profitable holding company with 20p shares now worth £1.50 and paying a dividend of 17 per cent. It also meant that their former subsidiary, Eastern Counties, only just managed to break even last year before paying the government £250,000 in interest for buying them out.

To eliminate the financiers' interest was never the aim of those who spoke in favour of nationalisation. Labour's post-war election manifesto, 'Let's face the future', rejected the idea of confiscation and agreed to the principle of compulsory purchase, the price for the companies was fixed by arrangement with the former directors.

Decline

The rape of the transport industry by big business has meant many problems for the bus worker. The continual run-down of services coupled with soaring fares and the expansion of one-man operations has meant redundancies on a scale unequalled by many other industries.

The lack of co-ordinated action in defence of bus workers' living standards has meant bus workers have watched their real wages decline in direct ratio with the rate of inflation. The last national wage

rise of £1 was swallowed up almost immediately by rising prices, leaving bus workers much worse off than they were a year ago. The recently lodged new national claim was for 'a substantial increase.' Readers can judge for themselves how substantial £1 plus four per cent will be.

What is needed in this situation is an organisation which gathers together all the militants in the bus industry around a central platform of more aggressive, militant policies. The foundations of such an organisation are already being laid with the growth of regional and local rank and file papers in different parts of the country. What is needed now is to consolidate the strength of these different papers, to build groups of militants around them and link up the different areas of struggle.

Even when this has been achieved, only half the job will have been done. For the real roots of the problem lie deeper still, in the very fabric of our society. Many years ago George Moore, a well-known bus militant, wrote in the first issue of the busman's rank and file paper 'Platform': 'We will never have a good job based on a bad service to the public.' He was absolutely right.

We will never have a good job until buses are run because people need them—and not because there is a profit in it. Only when the bus industry is taken over by the workers and run by the workers in the interests of the workers will such a situation exist.

● Les Kay, a member of the Transport Workers Union, is a driver for the Ribble Bus Company in Lancashire. He is a member of Blackburn International Socialists.

Tories' law still nobbling unions

THE Industrial Relations Act has slipped out of the news since the employers suffered their defeat over the Goad case. The considerable victory for militant defiance in the Langston case was passed over in embarrassed silence by the Tory press.

But, if anything, the workings of the Act in the past two months are even more of an indictment of the employers' law than the Goad case or even the imprisonment of the dockers last July.

'Unfair dismissal' procedure—hailed by the press and certain union leaders as a 'charter for workers'—looks more and more like the weapon of the ruling class that it is when applied to the real world.

Dismissal for striking is of course entirely 'fair' in the employers' courts. In a case involving a strike for union recognition at Browns of Wem Ltd (Shrewsbury), the men selected for dismissal were those left on strike after the others had been forced back to work.

The local Industrial Tribunal ruled that this was not 'unfair dismissal' because union recognition is not a right of workers and, in any case, their union was not registered.

The Tribunal then 'criticised' the company for breaking the Contracts of Employment Act and the Tory Code of Practice. Readers need not worry—Browns of Wem were not dragged through the courts for breaking the law.

In the meantime a judgment at Beverley in Yorkshire ruled that nine men, members of the GMWU, were fairly dismissed for banning overtime to 'induce' the management to pay higher wages.

'Advantages'

In Birmingham a worker at Ketch Plastics was 'fairly' sacked simply for saying he wanted to join the AUEW. As he hadn't been in the job for two years and the AUEW is not registered, his right of 'free speech' was worth nothing.

Naturally the registered union gets nobbled just as effectively. The agreements of registered unions are legally enforceable, with no blacking allowed, no solidarity action and no closed shop. Tories and employers alike are always pointing out the 'advantages' of registration. In fact at their 'fair' you lose on swings and roundabouts alike.

Both the TUC and the Labour Party talk of 'amending' the Act—like amending a loaded gun. Nevertheless it is possible to 'amend' the Act and it has been done successfully by several hundred thousand workers on their own.

The NIRC has drawn the lessons from the Goad affair as it did from Pentonville. Both over the Langston case at Chrysler Ryton and in a case involving Lucas Aerospace and TASS, the employers have retreated. The courts have quietly changed the Act with the employers' grateful blessing.

This is a victory which must be driven home throughout the trade union movement. The principled stand of the AUEW and TASS and, more important, the action of rank and file trade unionists, have driven a gaping hole through the law.

All the wheedling of Labour MPs, all the fawning of the right wing, did nothing but make the employers laugh.

Their retreat now is a defeat for the right in the trade unions. The lesson is clear: the way to use the law against the employers is by breaking it, over and over again.

David Beecham



Queuing up for passes: treatment of blacks in South Africa that George Peake fought against. Without passes they cannot work and are liable to arrest.

refused. The alternative, an exit permit, meant permanent exile. The authorities were only too happy to supply such a permit.

Beautiful

George was granted a British passport because his father had been born in Britain. So now, with a foreign passport and an exit permit, he was 'free' to go. Because of the detention order, he was forced to say goodbye to his friends one at a time.

And police harassment continued right to the docks where his family were due to board ship for Britain.

The police officer who had watched and spied on me for years opened every one of my cases at the customs, throwing everything on to the floor. I just managed to scramble on board ship in the nick of time,

weighed down with crumpled clothes.

'White South Africans have a saying that the most beautiful sight in the world when you return home is Table Mountain coming up over the horizon.

'Man, I can tell you the most beautiful sight in my whole life was seeing Table Mountain disappear below the horizon!'



FOOTNOTE: In Britain George Peake went back to the building trade and is now a shop steward on a hospital site in West London. He quickly tired of the 'Cook's Tour' nature of exile politics and looked around for a real organisation to join. One look at the Morning Star convinced him the Communist Party was not the answer.

He was impressed by Socialist Worker and its orientation on the working class. Disgusted by the 'lump' and the lack of fight by building union officials, he

worked with IS builders and then joined IS in 1972. Two of his daughters have also joined IS. His wife Lulu is a hospital worker active in the current struggle against the freeze.

The recent strikes by black workers in Durban against the grinding poverty of their existence—some earn less than £4 a week—impressed him but he stresses the total lack of political leadership and the fact that neither the Communist Party nor the Pan-African Congress had any influence.

'There is no socialism in the black nationalist movements in Africa. Black leaders like Nyerere co-operate with neo-colonialism. People say that if Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies fall then South Africa will be engulfed, but many black countries have their main trading links with South Africa.

'All their revolutionary rhetoric masks crude capitalist relations with South Africa. The revolution has to be made in the west to smash neo-colonialism before there can be the chance of socialist revolution in Africa.'

FREDERICK ENGELS
THE CONDITION
OF THE
WORKING CLASS
IN ENGLAND
INTRODUCTION BY ERIC HOBBSBAWM



ENGELS

It is common to think of Friedrich Engels as the shadow and rich benefactor of Marx, and nothing more. He was, however, a man of outstanding ability in his own right—and much of Marx's work was based on Engels' knowledge of 19th century working conditions.

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YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT if you rely on press and television for the truth, but the battle against the Housing Finance Act is still going on all over the country.

And as the Act will take another savage swipe at workers' incomes this year, it is vital that tenants and the trade union movement reassess their strategy for opposing the next rent rises.

One key lesson the tenants movement has learnt from 1972 is that the Labour Party will not defend them. At national, council and local level, the party has sold the tenants down the river at every turn.

Labour leaders whined: 'We must respect the law—we must obey parliament'—the same message they are now droning out about the wage freeze. In a matter of weeks, Labour councillors turned somersaults from being totally opposed to raising rents to 'reluctantly implementing' the Act.

The one Labour council in the country fighting the Act is Clay Cross in Derbyshire—and the national party has done its best to attack and undermine the councillors there.

But the real tragedy of 1972 was that there was no national strategy in the tenants' movement for defeating rent increases. The only organisation that could have given the lead—the Communist Party dominated National Association of Tenants and Residents—failed totally.

Because of the Communist Party's concern with electoral respectability, NATR based the whole of its campaign on non-implementation by Labour councils.

Ignored

EVEN WHEN that strategy proved to be a complete failure, NATR offered no alternative tactics. At the one representative national conference called by NATR last July, a move from the floor by tenants' association delegates who were members of the International Socialists succeeded in winning a big majority for rent strikes backed by industrial action, despite platform opposition.

The NATR leaders ignored the vote and refused to campaign on the conference policy. Currently, their one pathetic suggestion is to fight the rent rises by tenants appealing against their 'Fair Rent' assessments.

As a result of the absence of national strategy and organisation, the tenants' movement last October did not meet the first increases, with a unified strategy. Only IS had campaigned for rent strikes backed by industrial action, but despite a major effort we were not able to move most tenants into action.

But on 1 October several hundred thousands tenants did refuse to pay their £1 rent rise. In more than a hundred towns and cities, tenants went on rent strikes—mainly partial strikes but total in some areas.

They were the biggest rent strikes in the history of council housing. But they were neither widespread enough nor deep-rooted enough to be sustained for more than a few months.

The crucial factor was the tenants' confidence in their ability to defeat the Tories on their own. Lack of real organisation and complete confidence led to an inevitable decline and now there are only some tens of thousands on strike compared to the massive response last autumn.

BUT THE OUTLOOK is far from gloomy. There are strong possibili-

White Paper: plan to keep Ulster in chains

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS for the future of Northern Ireland, published in the White Paper last week, have been greeted with enthusiasm by the press and politicians in London and Dublin. The Labour Party leadership has given them its blessing and so have spokesmen for the Catholic middle class in Belfast.

The most vehement opposition has come from those traditionally most in favour of British rule in Ireland—extreme Loyalist politicians like William Craig and Ian Paisley.

Yet the White Paper is a quite explicit scheme for keeping British control over Northern Ireland. And it offers nothing to the vast majority of those who have been opposed to British rule in the past.

The White Paper insists that 'due provision' is made 'for the United Kingdom government to have a continuing and effective voice in Northern Ireland's affairs.' It stresses repeatedly that the fight against those who oppose the presence of the British troops will continue.

Indeed, trial by jury is to be done away with in order to make it easier to imprison people named by the army as 'terrorists'.

For those who live in areas like Andersonstown, the New Lodge Road, the Lower Falls, the Bogside, little is likely to change when the government's plans are implemented.

The 2000 British troops and 17 military installations that dominate the West Belfast suburb of Andersonstown will remain. The nightly searches and early morning arrests will go on. Men will continue to be dragged away to join the 300 from the area already in Long Kesh.

Aroused fear

The novelty in the White Paper is that for the first time in the 50 year history of Northern Ireland a positive attempt will be made to involve Catholics in running the machinery through which British rule is maintained.

In the past control was maintained through the Unionist Party and the Orange Order. Both were built on the basis of systematic and deliberate religious sectarianism. Through them patronage—in the form of better jobs and better housing—were handed out to their exclusively Protestant middle class and working class supporters, while Catholics were effectively discriminated against at all levels in society.

Now the aim is to 'seek a much wider consensus than has hitherto existed,' to 'involve majority and minority interests alike' in the work of the government.

It is these features of the new measures that have aroused fear and resentment among the traditional Protestant supporters of British rule. The Protestant politicians like Craig feel that they are being squeezed out of effective power.

And Protestant workers fear an end to the various forms of discrimination that have protected them against the worst effects of high unemployment, low wages and miserable housing.



White Paper spells out that harassment by troops will continue

Their reaction is to denounce the measures as 'gerrymandering' and to complain that they give the British minister of state dictatorial powers.

But the alternatives they support—whether the 'independent British Ulster' of Craig or the complete absorption into Britain of Paisley—merely demand a different sort of gerrymandering and a dictatorship based upon a denial of rights to the Catholic population.

Any clash between Loyalist organisations and the forces of the British government will be a clash not over whether British imperialism should continue to dominate Northern Ireland, but over what form the domination should take.

Yet there is ample evidence to indicate that the main problems that affect Protestant workers flow precisely from control of the province by the British ruling class, whatever



Craig: squeezed out

political form it takes.

Usually the impression is given that Britain 'subsidises' Northern Ireland with immense sums of money that raise the living standards of the people.

Certainly, sums of money do flow from the British government to Northern Ireland. Last year, for instance, something like £66 million from Britain was paid out as national insurance and social security payments in Northern Ireland.

But these sums are very small compared with what the British ruling class get out of the province.

The main industries of Northern Ireland are owned by the same one per cent of the British population who own most of industry in this country. It is estimated that their investments in the Six Counties amount to anything up to £7000 million.

Benefit employers

The profits they get amount to about £500 million. In other words, they get about seven times as much back as is given to Northern Ireland's workers as 'subsidies'.

And that is not the end of the matter. The workers pay rents, rates and taxes. As in Britain, the overwhelming majority of the rent ends up in the pockets of money lenders based on the city of London.

And the taxes contribute towards government services that benefit the employers. For instance, any British firm that invests in Northern Ireland gets a grant from the Northern Ireland authorities, paid for out of taxes, towards at least a third of the cost.

Again, £50 million of Northern Ireland's taxes go towards 'law and order'—that is towards the upkeep of

the police, prisons, concentration camps and courts that protect British rule.

When such sums are added together it becomes clear that the workers of Northern Ireland pay out in taxes alone sums to the owners of British business easily as big as they get back in 'subsidies'.

British big business cannot in any way solve the basic problems facing Northern Ireland workers. It will only invest there if it is promised profits bigger than anywhere else in Europe.

Even the White Paper admits that 'Northern Ireland has had to make immense efforts to maintain its employment position, let alone improve it.' Despite a 'skilfully and vigorously conducted programme of industrial development . . . Northern Ireland has remained the poorest region of the United Kingdom.'

In other words, although the White Paper would not admit as much, under existing property relations there is little hope that the conditions of the workers in Northern Ireland will improve.

Complete end

It is for this reason that the concessions to the Catholic middle class contained in the White Paper will in no way solve the problems of Catholic workers.

But it is also for this same reason that the attempts to restore the old form of British rule by the Loyalist organisations offer no way forward to Protestant workers. In either case, unemployment, slums and low wages will continue.

The only real way forward for workers of either religion is by uniting with workers in the rest of Ireland to take industry out of the hands of its present owners and organising production for the benefit of the whole population. But that means a complete end to British control over the Six Counties.

That is why socialists in Britain must reject completely all the propaganda in favour of the White Paper. We must continue to demand the withdrawal of British troops and to defend those members of the IRA and others who are fighting in the streets of Northern Ireland to drive the troops out.

Chris Harman

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RENTS: ROUND 2

Union support vital for battle on the estates



The fight goes on: tenants marching in Bolton against threat of eviction with (left) IS member Tony Boyle of Towerhill tenants in Kirkby speaking.



STRATEGY FOR VICTORY

- 1** Mobilise for industrial action now. To give the tenants the feeling of solidarity we must make sure they have real pledges of backing by local shop stewards' committees. Flying squads of workers prepared to stop evictions must be set up in every factory and workplace near estates.
- 2** National rent strike action needed. To be successful this time the rent strikes must be built on as wide a scale as possible. A national strategy is needed. This needs a national rents action conference, as called for by the North West Tenants' Conference.
- 3** Build the tenants' movement by strengthening tenants' organisations where they exist and by building action committees where they don't. Such committees must keep tenants informed and show the connections with the freeze.
- 4** Prepare for total rent strikes now. The only way to defeat the increases is by a mass rent and rate strike that hits directly at the Tories. Areas that have been on total rent strikes since October are holding out much better than areas that just withheld the increase.

ties for the development of the battle against rent increases this year.

First, 5½ million tenants will get their 'Fair Rent' assessment this year. Although some of the provisional assessments under Labour councils were fairly low they will be raised substantially when they go before the Rent Scrutiny Board on 10 June.

Figures from the New Town Development Corporations, which are government agencies, suggest an average 50 per cent rise in this year's assessments. At this rate, the plan to double council house rents by 1976 will be achieved.

Second, every tenant will get another rent increase of 50p a week more than a million will receive them on 28 April and a further four million on 1 October.

Third, there will be massive rates

increases as well. As a result of inflation and revaluation, the average council tenant faces rises of between 30p and 60p a week in rates.

The revaluation of properties in many areas is also biased against council tenants. In Harlow New Town in Essex, the domestic rate for houses has been revalued 2.7 times while the industrial and commercial properties rate has gone up by only 2.3 times.

Burden

This means that the council tenants pay a bigger proportion of the rates burden as well as increases due to inflation.

THE PRACTICAL EFFECT can be seen in Harlow where the average

council tenant will pay 35p a week more in rates after 1 April while Johnson Mathey, a big bullion firm in the town with record profits of £6.5 million last year, will pay £9000 a year less in rates because of revaluation.

These massive rate rises, on top of rent increases, could produce a new anger among tenants that might prove explosive.

Finally, and most importantly, the rent and rate rises come slap in the middle of the wage freeze.

Rents and rates are not covered by the freeze. So if your £1 plus 4 per cent comes to £1.80, knock off 50p for tax, 50p for rent increase, 30p rate rise and you are

left with 50p a week to cover all the other price rises.

In other words, this amounts to effective wage cuts for most workers. And that is precisely the Tory plan. Rent and rate increases are part of the overall strategy to cut wages and shift the money saved to profits.

Forced

Faced with this prospect many council tenants will be forced to fight. There is no other way. There is no hope of buying a house now since house prices rose 47 per cent nationally last year and 70 per cent in the south east.

Even if you are receiving a rebate now you will get a rent rise in October, for then rebates will be based on 'Fair Rents' and not the present rent.

The tenants' struggle will be one of the most important battles against the Tory wage freeze this year. Last week's conference of the International Socialists decided to mobilise its forces to rebuild the tenants' movement to fight the increases all the way.

If a section of workers can defeat the freeze they will give a tremendous boost not only to all trade unionists but to the tenants' movement as well.

International Socialism 56



The March issue of International Socialism journal takes a critical look at the state of the left as the working class prepares for a major confrontation with the government and analyses the experience of recent key struggles. Articles include:

- John Charlton: **The Miners**
 - Jules Townsend: **The Liaison Committee**
 - Hugh Kerr: **The Tenants' Struggle**
 - Richard Kirkwood: **France 1936**
 - Martin Shaw: **Student revolutionaries**
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- Plus Notes of the Month and book reviews
International Socialism Journal, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN
 Annual subscription £2.10 (12 issues)

Special rents roundup written by HUGH KERR

CANNON TO THE RIGHT OF THEM

THIS is a biography of Sir Leslie Cannon, president of the Electrical Trades Union from 1963 until his death in 1970. It is written by his widow and a former industrial editor of *The Guardian*, and deals in detail with his successful struggle to wrest control of the union from the Communist Party leadership of Haxell and Foulkes.

In the course of their narrative, the authors raise more interesting questions than they answer. The crucial issue is who were the faceless men, the sinister hidden forces that helped Cannon to triumph?

Obviously, Woodrow Wyatt helped, and so did the capitalist press, with its 'red scare' campaign. But how much finance came from organisations like the Aims of Industry and the American CIA? This we do not know.

Even so, interesting evidence is scattered throughout this biography. It tells us that once Les Cannon broke with the Communist Party, he lost his post at the ETU-sponsored Esher College. Then he conducted a six-month campaign against the Party leadership.

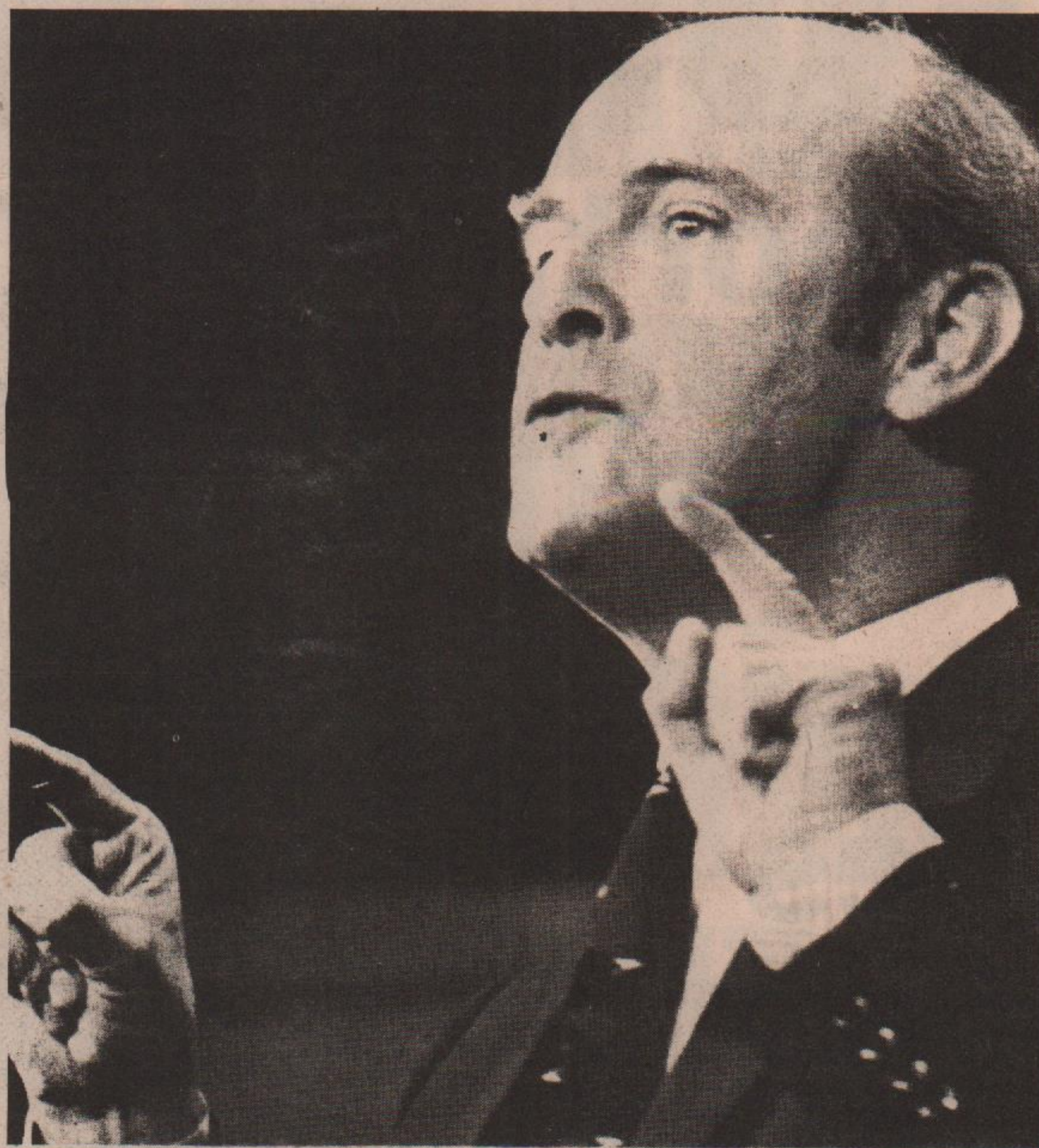
This exhausted the Cannon family's savings by the beginning of 1958 (page 181). Yet Sir Leslie remained undismayed. He got a £16-a-week job at Hawker-Siddeley at Kingston (page 198).

Somehow or other, with these slender means, and not qualifying for legal aid, he instigated proceedings against Haxell and Co. He secured the service of one of the most eminent legal brains—Gerald Gardiner, later Lord Chancellor—and a mammoth case ensued. It lasted for 42 days.

UNCLEAR

But after all this, one intriguing question remained unanswered: Where did Cannon get the money from to mount such a costly legal onslaught?

The authors do not tell us. Perhaps it fell from heaven in £100 packets! What we do know, however, is that by 1961 he had kissed good bye to the tools and had bought—how is not revealed—a new car, a



LES CANNON: The book says nothing of his support for Stalinism

Review of THE ROAD FROM WIGAN PIER

by Olga Cannon and J R L Anderson, Gollancz, £3.90

cream-coloured Ford Consul (page 231). Although it is unclear whether he was in gainful employment or not, the following year Cannon bought a holiday cottage in Devon (page 256).

Of course, after 1963, when he became ETU president, greater affluence changed his life-style even further. His two sons were sent to privately-run boarding schools (page 281). The family moved from Chessington—a house Olga Cannon describes as 'an ordinary little suburban semi'—to the more exclusive residential area of Dorking (page 282). The lowly electrician emerged as a noble knight.

This is a far cry from Wigan in the depression years, the period during which Leslie Cannon grew up. The fourth of a family of seven—his mother prematurely weakened by 17 pregnancies—he knew hardship and poverty from birth. His father, a miner, was unemployed for a long time before eventually getting work as a lavatory-attendant.

Experience of the inhumanity of society drove Leslie Cannon into politics. In 1939, at the age of 19, he joined the Communist Party. This was a particularly bad time to be a new recruit: mental agility and

a lack of principles were required to follow the gyrations of the party line.

At Moscow's bidding, the Communist Party supported the war, then opposed it, and finally ended up supporting it again. Like an obedient parrot, Cannon blurted out whatever he was told to say. Right from the outset, he became an apparatus-man, beloved by his King Street bosses.

RUTHLESS

In 1943-4, when the Party was in its ultra-patriotic mood, industrial discontent swept through Britain. Workers downed tools in protest. They objected to the way Churchill's government permitted prices and profits to rise while it pegged wages.

But militants, besides being subjected to fines and imprisonment under state regulations, discovered the Communist Party acting as a fifth column within working-class ranks, striving to gain compliance with capitalist industrial discipline.

Among the Party members in Lancashire, Leslie Cannon was one of the most ruthless and vicious. Significantly, it was at this time that he acquired his first experience

of scabbing on his fellow men. For services rendered, Cannon received a seat on the ETU executive.

This biography, unfortunately, fails to mention these activities. Equally important, it does not deal with Leslie Cannon, the party hack in the ETU leadership after 1945.

How come there are no quotes from his speeches where he lavished fulsome praise on Stalin? Why is there nothing said about his own ballot-rigging in the Wigan branch of the ETU? Did the biographers never hear that he was an outspoken supporter of the purges, both of the British Communist Party and in Eastern Europe, between 1945 and 1956?

Indeed, unswerving loyalty to Stalinism won Cannon the appointment at Esher College. Harry Pollitt, who had a high opinion of Cannon, saw him as the man to lead the counter-offensive against Trotskyism within the ETU.

This had arisen because some union branches, particularly in the London area, had been hearing lecturers like Karl Westwood, who tried to get them to question the basic tenets of Stalinism. ETU activists attending the college would be 'put right', in all probability, by the forceful and intelligent way Cannon explained the Party line.

But the undeviating Cannon himself became a devotionalist.

How this happened is not difficult to understand. Whereas true socialists relate themselves to the rank-and-file, Leslie Cannon's ear was always attuned to the union bureaucracy. Once this began to falter, once he saw that their widespread unpopularity made Haxell and Co's position untenable, he left the sinking ship.

'EXPENSES'

The journey from Stalinism to right-wing officialdom is not a big step to take. *The Will Lawthers, Sam Watsons and Jack Tanners* had all taken that road long before Cannon. It does not involve changing fundamental principles: workers are to be controlled in the class struggle—their enthusiasms usually dampened down—and the leader essentially plays the role of a boss.

Union leaders are a privileged caste, remote from the members they are supposed to represent. The authors of Cannon's biography favour this arrangement: 'English working-class leaders used to be so scared of apparently earning more than the wage-earners they represented that they were compelled to resort to various devices to obtain 'expenses'...

The British tradition was that you wore a cloth cap to negotiate with a top hat—fine as a rugged ex-

pression of human equality, but hard on those forced to live on cloth-cap wages while meeting as equals men on top-hat salaries.

'Things are better in Britain now: trade unions have a greater awareness of the value of their own officials, and the appointment of trade unionists to the boards of nationalised industries has helped to bring out the disparity in the rewards for representing men and representing management.' (page 108)

The authors, alas, fail to say how a union leader, looking for lucrative promotion to some nationalised body, can effectively fight against that body, genuinely putting forward his members' grievances against it, because this would dash his promotion prospects.

But then, in the biographers' opinion, the function of a union leader is to assist in the smooth-running of the industry. Class collaboration, not higher wages, is the overriding aim.

CONTROL

What Les Cannonism means in practice can be seen from studying the Prices and Incomes Board report, No 42, on the pay of electricity supply workers. In the three years following Cannon's appointment as ETU president, their productivity rose while their wages failed to keep pace with the rising cost of living. From April 1964 to April 1967, their increase was only 11.9 per cent—while in manufacturing industries generally, where workers were usually fortunate not to have Sir Leslie's 'help', wages rose by an average of 16 per cent.

Equally disastrous was Cannon's impact on the internal workings of the ETU. After he came to power, he set about stripping the union of every vestige of democratic control.

Power became centralised in full-time officials' hands, men who usually had acquired the knack of being on the most friendly terms with employers but without the same cordiality towards the union members. These gentlemen were able to reach agreements with industrialists behind the backs of the rank-and-file.

It would be wrong to end this review without making a couple of personal points, based on my own life in Wigan for many years. I have now been in politics for almost 30 years, and I have never known a man as deeply hated by his fellow workers as Sir Leslie Cannon. In trade union circles in Wigan, you can hear innumerable stories about his dishonesty, his lack of loyalty, and his selfishness. His private life was as odious as his political.

RUBBISH

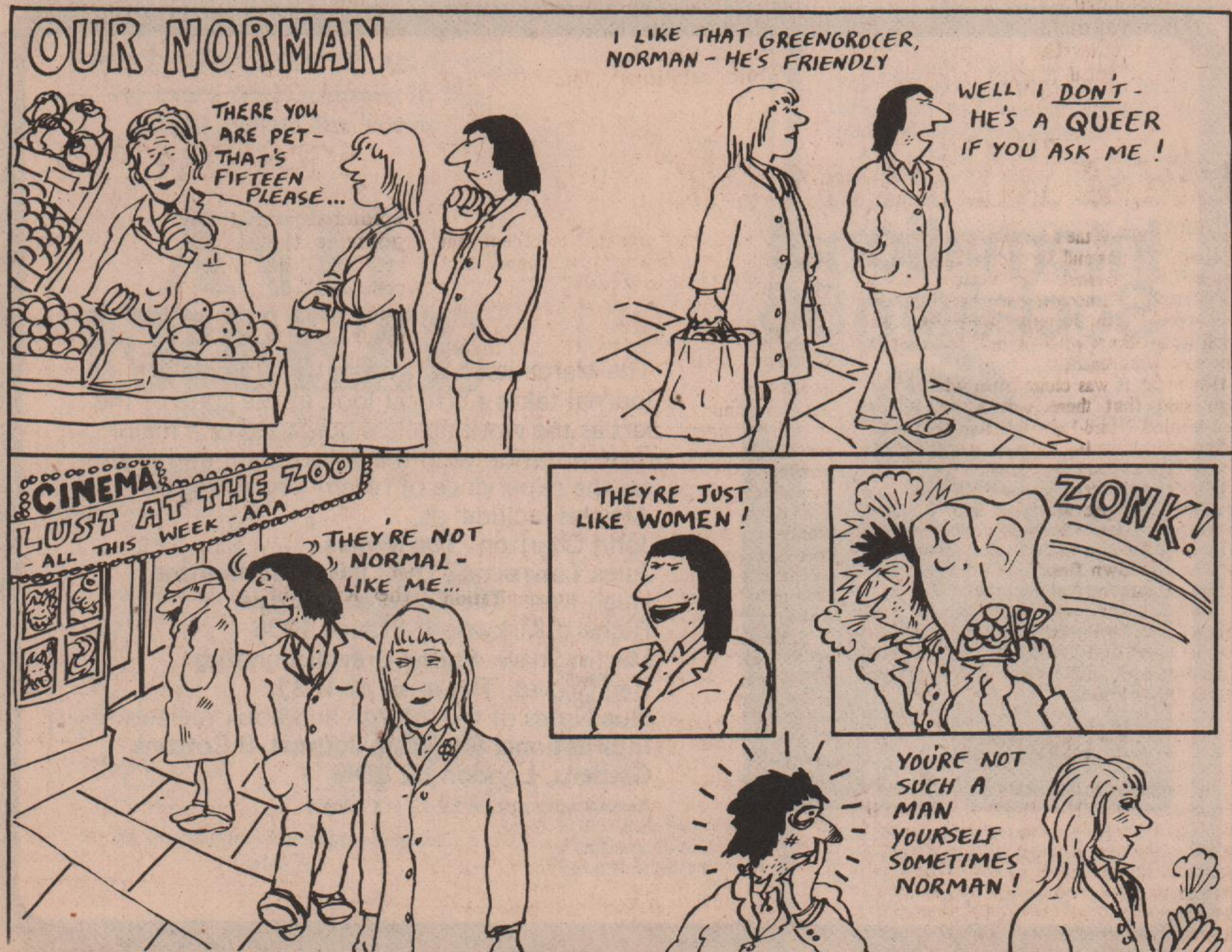
But there were two Cannons, and one was as excellent as the other was grim. Leslie Cannon's father, Jim, was a fine militant, the salt of the earth. Joining the Socialist Labour Party in 1906, he acquired a knowledge of marxism that his son could never equal.

A quietly-spoken man, not given to pushing himself to the forefront, he nevertheless played a courageous part in many industrial struggles and in opposition to the First World War. Later he became active in the Communist Party, but left it when it entered its crazy 'Third Period'. He continued to put forward a sound socialist line, although a lone voice.

It is the bravery and inspiration of men like Jim Cannon which will ultimately achieve a socialist society—the Les Cannons of this world will be consigned to the rubbish bin of history.

As for this biography, it is a pitifully poor effort, a work of hagiolatry rather than scholarship. There is a much better book, already written but so far not published, which fully explains Sir Leslie Cannon's activities—I mean, of course, his bank book.

Raymond Challinor



THE CLOCKWORK MIRACLES

Nigel Fountain
on THE
FESTIVAL
OF LIGHT

EDDIE STRIDE comes from a working-class background and lives in the Spitalfields district of London. Much of his time is taken up with the attempted rehabilitation of the methies and winos who haunt the Aldgate area of the East End. He is the vicar of Christ Church, Spitalfields.

He is also one of the prime movers behind the Festival of Light.

He's in his fifties and worked on the shop floor before entering the Church. The crypt below the beautiful if decaying old church has been turned into a sanctuary for people who have been totally smashed by the system.

Eddie Stride's study is packed with books, theology, philosophy and politics. Books like *The Assault on the West*, a volume which the periodical *Twentieth Century* claims 'stresses the anti-intellectual, mind-rotting nature of Communist-inspired propaganda, not honestly seeking to persuade but obliquely to convince of the inevitability of socialism, to undermine the morale of opponents and to inspire bloody-mindedness and sedition.'

Many socialists regard the Festival of Light as a useful weapon for our rulers to clobber the right of free speech, to channel dissent into the blind alley of arguing the merits of Marlon Brando's cinematic sex-life.

CHRONIC

Socialists are right, but it isn't quite as simple as that. Eddie Stride believes in what he's doing.

'Socialists believe in subverting the system through sex,' said Stride. 'I think I read it somewhere in Marcuse.'

Marcuse, the German marxist, has argued that sexual liberation is an essential part of socialist revolution. Stride's misunderstanding was genuine—he seems incapable of understanding sexuality save through the idea of a besieged virgin (Britain) hanging on to life's most precious jewel.

Stride's attack is not restricted to socialists. He attacks capitalists, laying into the local Trumans Brewery for its sexually slanted advertising,



LEFT: Mary Whitehouse and Malcolm Muggeridge, twin stars of the Festival. 'Prayer was answered, and another Peter heard his call from God... and joined the committee,' wrote Muggeridge.

BELOW: A still from the film *The Clockwork Orange*. 'I am convinced this is an evil film,' said the Rev Eddie Strides.

which he sees as one of the routes to the chronic alcoholism of Spitalfields.

But there is a crucial difference. Capitalists are there to be reformed into the model advertisers and employers dishing out clean goods for a clean society. 'I believe that this democratic society is in essence the best we can have until that day, which I don't think is far away, when God rules directly on earth.'

Until that day Eddie Stride and the Festival of Light concern themselves with what they regard as the crucial problem of the day—what Stride refers to as 'sexploitation' in the media. The word springs from his lips as naturally as socialism from Karl Marx. For the Festival of Light, just as for Andy Warhol, sex is what makes the world go round. But the wrong way...

The weapon to eliminate 'sexploitation' is rather crude. Apart from deputations to local cinemas showing the usual 'Danish/housewife/dentist/' skin-flicks the attacks also take in *Clockwork Orange* and of course *Last Tango in Paris*.

'Nobody in *Clockwork Orange*



showed any sign of having any virtue in them at all,' said Stride. 'I've never met a social worker like the one in that film. I am convinced it is an evil film, and that it has encouraged mugging and violence among the immature.'

The idea that art can concern itself with 'evil' (whatever that is) without being evil escaped him.

The Festival of Light doesn't have a paid-up membership. It operates on the basis of local groups, churches,

well-wishers.

The high point of its activities was the Trafalgar Square rally of 1971. On the day of the rally *Land Aflame**, a book produced to promote the movement, claims that 100,000 people were involved, nationwide, in celebration.

The book itself, given to me by Stride, is indeed an amazing volume. It reads like the Gospel according to Sunshine Breakfasts.

'Public relations! The vital link

with the media, the only way to tell people what is happening, what the Nationwide Festival of Light stands for... A demanding job for someone! The committee decided that the Lord would have to find extra help for this, of a very special kind. Where could such a Daniel be found, within the PR world itself, who would support the Festival wholeheartedly?

'Prayer was answered, and another Peter heard his call from God, responded to the need, and joined the committee.'

PESSIMISM

Since that day the Festival has soldiered on. Eddie Stride is still going to the movies, writing letters, reading film reviews. The Festival will doubtless continue to prosper, and Malcolm Muggeridge will continue to pray with all his heart 'that it may be the beginning of a continuing process of moral and spiritual regeneration.'

In April 1940 George Orwell wrote of Muggeridge's book *The Thirties* that it 'is the Book of Ecclesiastes with the pious interpolations left out... It is the Christian pessimism, but with this important difference, that in the Christian scheme of things the Kingdom of Heaven is there to restore the balance...'

'Mr Muggeridge, needless to say, refuses this consolation. He gives no more evidence of believing in God than of trusting in Man. Nothing is open to him except an indiscriminate walloping of all human activities whatever.'

Orwell would be amused to find that God has made it to Muggeridge through the Festival. When you've got an organisation, indiscriminate walloping, and God, what more can you want?

**Land Aflame*, by Flo Dobbie (foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge) Hodder & Stoughton 40p.

The Abominable Doctor Midweek

NEVER tell an editor you don't know what to write about. 'Have a look at *Midweek*,' he suggested.

Hastening back from the Palace Cinema at Bodmin and an engagement with *The Abominable Doctor Phibes*, I made it to the armchair with minutes to spare.

Ludicrous Kennedy introduced his one-man *Top of the Form*, Nicholas Harman, and we were right in there with Roy Jenkins rattling away on the subject which is dividing the nation, Harold's Hernia, that dear old split in the Labour Party they're always on about.

Followed by your friend and mine, Eric Heffer, with Harman sitting on his head and stuffing wadding down his throat every time he looked like opening his mouth so that one of those instantly recognisable substitutes for Dick Taverner could put the right-wing point of view again in case Big Roy hadn't made it all clear, all clear, all clear... Sorry, dozed off. Where were we?

Ah, yes, *Midweek*. Item two. Acres and acres of old film devoted to the British entry in the Eurovision Golden Paint-Pot Contest. Hotly tipped at £25,000 per square yard of canvas, the man who put Jesus Christ up there with Our Winston, Graham Sutherland.

Oh, dear, oh dear, we all know poor old Ludicrous has had his budget cut and he's only lingering on there because Kenneth (Mister Environment) Allsop has



priced himself out of the spot, but for real earth-shattering relevance to the Problems of the Day give me the *Abominable Doctor* every time.

But still, late-night telly's another world. Once you're past *News at Ten* you're there till midnight, so I switched over to BBC2 and *Real Time* and glad I did too. Of course, you've got to be a member of the cultural elite to watch this programme because if you were up for an 8am clock-on then match-sticks won't keep you watching.

They had Mike Leigh on, talking about his *Play for Today*, *Hard Labour*, and then some London schoolkids who'd been taping their own TV programme.

I admit to having dismissed *Hard Labour* a little slightly last week. I still don't think it worked as Leigh said he intended it to—as a kind of Hogarthian caricature of life—but getting that message

wasn't helped by the fact that the plugs in the *Radio Times* and in the trailers billed it as a Tony Garnett Production, which put it right in amongst the work of Jim Allen, Neil Dunn, Jeremy Sandford, Ken Loach and others who've made Garnett's name as an impresario.

However, it was clear from what Mike Leigh said that there was a whole lot more behind *Hard Labour* than Garnett's blurb would have led anyone to suspect. A case of *Cathy Won't Go Home*.

What's significant is that Mike Leigh, like the kids who followed him on the programme, doesn't think it's necessary to shut himself up in a darkened room and write it all down first. He does it with the actors, cameras and sound-recorders.

Chucking the typewriter out of the window, or the exercise book and the biro, Leigh and the kids are at last beginning to chuck the old myth of 'literacy' with them.

Phoney

It was all a bit tentative, of course. Lip-service was paid by the teacher to the fact that the kids had written out a rough script before organising the technical equipment, and Leigh offered, us a background of experience in the theatre as testimony to his cultural respectability. Personally, I hope Leigh will grow out of this, but as far as the kids are concerned it's clear that they've got the message.

Tom Clarke

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'.

For equal pay and a better deal for young workers.

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 a minimum wage of at least £25 a week.

Against unemployment, redundancy and lay offs. We support the demand: Five days' work or five days' pay.

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

Against racism and police victimisation of black workers.

Against immigration 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 man'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
Dunfermline/
Cowdenbeath
Glanrothes/Kirkcaldy
Glasgow N
Glasgow S
Greenock
Stirling
- NORTH EAST**
Bishop Auckland
Durham
Hartlepool
Newcastle upon Tyne
South Shields
Spennymoor
Sunderland
Teesside E
Teesside W
- NORTH**
Barnsley
Bradford
Dewsbury
Doncaster
Grimsby
Halifax
Huddersfield
Hull
Leeds
Pontefract/
Knottingley
Scarborough
Selby
Sheffield
York
- EAST**
Basildon
Beccles
Cambridge
Chelmsford
Colchester
Harlow
Ipswich
Leiston
Lowestoft
Norwich
Peterborough

- NORTH WEST**
Barrow
Blackburn
Bolton
Burnley
Crewe
Kirkby
Lancaster
Manchester
Merseyside
Oldham
Preston
Rochdale
Salford
St Helens
Stoke
Stockport
Trafford
Wigan
Wrexham
- MIDLANDS**
Birmingham NE
Birmingham S
Coventry
Derby
Dudley
Leamington and
Warwick
Leicester
Loughborough
Mid-Derbyshire
Milton Keynes
Northampton
Nottingham
Oxford
Rugby
Warley
Wolverhampton

- WALES and SOUTH WEST**
Bath
Bristol
Cardiff
Exeter
Gloucester
Llanelli
Mid-Devon
Neath
Plymouth
Swansea
Swansea Valley
- GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES**
Bexley
Camden
Chertsey
Croydon
Ealing
East London
Enfield
Fulham and
Hammersmith
Hackney and
Islington
Harrow
Hemel Hempstead
High Wycombe
Hornsey
Houslow
Ilford
Kilburn
Kingston
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
North Herts
Paddington
Reading
St Albans
Slough
Tottenham
Walthamstow
Wandsworth
Watford
Woolwich

THE UNIONS

DEAR BROTHER SCANLON

WHAT are you going to do about Fine Tubes?

I realise that this question has been asked of you before—perhaps even by Ernie Roberts, who spoke with such fury and determination at last year's Fine Tubes conference in Birmingham.

I also realise that you now have only seven members left on strike, and that most of the strikers are in the Transport and General Workers Union. The reason I write to you is that you clearly understand the issues involved at Fine Tubes, and the extent of the damage to the trade union movement throughout the country which would flow from any defeat of the strike.

You expressed yourself very clearly on these matters in your introduction to Jim Arnison's book, *The Million Pound Strike*, which dealt with the strike at Roberts-Arundel, Stockport, in 1967 and 1968.

The Roberts-Arundel strike was very similar to the strike at Fine Tubes. The same sort of numbers of workers were involved in a dispute with a subsidiary of an American company which was denying them the right to trade union organisation in the factory. Most of the workers belonged to your union and the Transport and General.

ELEMENTARY

A massive solidarity campaign, organised in the main by your union (you were the executive councillor for the area at the time), brought the company to its knees and forced it out of business.

This is what you wrote about the strike:

'Overshadowing everything was the basic fact that this dispute was caused by the calculated attempt of an employer to destroy the most elementary rights of trade unionism. Fortunately, for trade unionists, this management was stopped in its tracks by the power of organised labour...'

'Although the Roberts firm may have represented nothing but itself, any success it may have had in crushing elementary working-class defences would have been of benefit to larger and even more dangerous enemies of trade unionism in the future... The defeat of this management should prove a lesson to any employers who imagine that they can ignore the prime right of all workers to be organised in a trade union of their choice...'

'It is vital that all trade unionists avail themselves of the opportunity of studying the issues raised by the Roberts-Arundel dispute—and of how the great working-class resistance was organised.'

DETERMINATION

'It is the story of a working-class victory; we must be vigilant that, if necessity arises, such victories, with such determination, are made possible in the future.'

You yourself were deeply involved in the dispute at Roberts-Arundel. I remember joining in the ovation at the Trades Union Congress at Brighton in 1967 after you had spoken movingly of the Roberts-Arundel dispute. 'This fight,' you declared, 'can and will be won.'

It was won, thanks, in part at least, to the organisational determination of AEU officials in Manchester, including yourself. At one time a million workers were prepared to answer the union's call for solidarity with the Roberts-Arundel strikers.

Everything which you said and did and wrote about Roberts-Arundel applies tenfold to Fine Tubes.



Police move in to break the Fine Tubes picket line

Let's see action for Fine Tubes

An open letter to Hugh Scanlon, president of the AUEW

The threat to trade unionism if managing director Tom Barclay gets away with it at Fine Tubes is much greater now, when the government, with the Industrial Relations Act and the freeze, is sabotaging the right to organise.

The Engineering Employers Federation have been equivocal about Barclay's stand against unions at Fine Tubes. If he wins, the employers will be much quicker to support other efforts of this nature—especially in a relatively poor area for trade union organisation like the South West.

SHAMEFUL

The next few weeks are crucial for the future of the Fine Tubes battle. There are a number of ways you could swing the balance back in favour of the strikers.

1 PICKETS: Many of us felt that last Monday's picket showed how easy it would be to stop goods going into the factory if a mass picket was organised every day for a month. Surely you and your officials, in concert with the Transport and General Workers, could organise such an operation.

2 BLACKING: The strikers have been greatly cheered by the decision of Rolls-Royce stewards to black Rolls at Derby while it handles Fine Tubes material. But the orders are still getting through a number of 'leaks' in the union network, which must be tracked down and plugged. A combined effort by AUEW officials and your research organisation can do this job, which is almost impossible for a handful of strikers with very little experience of struggle.

A blitzkrieg operation, sponsored by you, to plug these holes could have a dramatic effect on the viability of Fine Tubes.

3 STRIKE PAY: Your executive's decision to cut off strike pay from your members after a year on strike was shameful. You have claimed that your hand was forced by the rule book. If so, the rules should be quickly changed.

More importantly, however, there is nothing in your rule book to stop a campaign for funds, sponsored by the union president, to supplement the dwindling resources of the strikers. Why does this fund-raising always have to be left to the shop stewards' organisations? Why can't funds be raised by the trade union machine?

4 SOLIDARITY: At Roberts-Arundel almost every engineering shop in Manchester area was standing by to answer the union's call for solidarity action.

The employers must be made to lose from Barclay's antics, or they will continue to support him. Cannot a day of solidarity action with Fine Tubes be named now, and organisation start to halt industry at least throughout the South West in protest against the Fine Tubes management?

These actions are all within your power. They are not expensive—at least not comparatively so. Their effect would be the crushing of the Fine Tubes management and a new confidence among hundreds, if not thousands, of trade unionists in the South West. The reverse would be worse than catastrophic for your union and for all others.

As you wrote yourself—'WE MUST BE VIGILANT'. The 32 brave men and women in Plymouth, and the 700 men and women who came from all over the country to support them on 19 March, are looking to you, with increasing exasperation, for a sign of such vigilance.

YOURS FRATEERNALLY, PAUL FOOT

Press hypocrisy on the mines tragedy

THE PRESS and television coverage of the Lofthouse colliery disaster must turn the stomach of every miner who remembers the lies and distortions churned out by the media in last year's strike.

Once the picketing began to bite the reports abandoned all their patronising drivel about 'special case' and 'occupational hazards' and tried their best to drive the miners back to work. It was even easier for them to ignore the

working conditions of the builders and dockers and now of the hospital workers.

In the shadow of this tragedy what hypocritical attitude will the government and press take if the miners vote for strike action to win their claim? John Corrie, the Scottish poet and miner, wrote in his poem 'Women are waiting tonight', concerning a pit disaster:

'... the press
That has spilled oceans of ink

Poisoning the public against the "destroyers of industry"

Will tell the sad tale
And the public will say "How sad".
But a week today all will be forgotten,
And the member of parliament,
The coal owner, the parson,
The press, and the public,
Will keep storing up their venom and their hatred
For the next big mines strike.'

-A J BROOKE, NUM, Huddersfield.

POLLUTION AND MIGRATION

LIKE Mervyn Hughes (17 March) I too am unhappy at certain aspects of Socialist Worker's 'What We Stand For' and would question whether it is in part either international or socialist. You appear to ignore the fact that we exist on a finite planet, so that the politicians' promises of continuous economic growth are a physical impossibility. In particular, all known deposits of petroleum, natural gas, copper and aluminium look like being exhausted by the turn of the century.

This raises the question of how these limited resources are to be distributed. Surely to an International Socialist the answer must be 'to each according to his needs', giving priority to those needs essential for survival in the Third World over those needs created by advertisers in the Western World, such as for colour televisions and deep freezes.

I am convinced of the necessity for revolutionary change, but surely the fact that trade unions exist to improve the standard of living of their members makes them part of the system, in which case the only hope for mankind lies with the Third World.—ANTHONY COLLINGS, Exeter.

I FEEL that Mervyn Hughes is being somewhat pedantic on immigration. It may be true that, at some future time, certain controls may be necessary over the mass movements of people from one country to another, in the interests of all the people involved. However, at the present time, immigration controls are clearly being used as a tactic of the ruling class to divide the working class and draw attention away from the real issues.

It is only through maximum solidarity with immigrants and would-be immigrants that this deception can be exposed and thus unqualified opposition to all immigration controls is, at this time, both justified and necessary.

The environmental issue, however, deserves closer consideration. This is an issue about which many people are, and should be, deeply concerned but, due to various misunderstandings and misconceptions, no clear analysis of the problem or remedial programme has been put forward.

Unless one believes that all that exists was created by a beneficent deity there is no rational justification for assuming that what is natural is necessarily what is good. Indeed all human progress has been to replace what existed. Nature is an extremely complex system and although it can easily adapt to small changes, the present combination of man's power for widespread change and his extremely limited knowledge could well be lethal.

Thus I would argue that environmentalist issues should not be dismissed as middle-class mystification but should be given a rational discussion within a socialist framework.—SUSAN HUBBARD, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

I AGREE with Mervyn Hughes' remarks about the need for socialists to take seriously the threatening ecological crisis. That it receives scant attention in the capitalist press is understandable—a system based on industrial growth, in a world where the material base for that growth is finite, is hardly likely to publicise its own doom.

For it to receive scant attention in a socialist paper is inexcusable. Unless IS incorporates an understanding of ecology into its perspective, that perspective, though adequate in dealing with classical economic crises, will be unable to cope with all the crises facing capitalism today.

The effects of industrialism on the world's resources is problematic to a socialist society, no less than to a capitalist one. For a world socialist society to have any chance of rectifying some of the problems of today it is not only necessary for it to be based on a system of negligible industrial growth but also for the resultant industrial output to be sufficiently low that our environment can accommodate it in terms of both pollution and resource depletion.

The problem of overpopulation compounds the issue further.—R MERRITT, Cullompton, Devon.

I THINK Mervyn Hughes has some lingering bourgeois ideas. A person who decides to migrate must accept a period of initial upheaval.

In the long term, 'lack of socialisation... insecurity and maladjustment' depend to what extent the new environment is favourable. All restrictions on immigration must be racist since they presuppose unfavourable foreign environments for people, which we as International Socialists must be committed to eradicate.

We must also be committed to eradicating environments that are naturally unfavourable to man's productive use of the planet. This means control over nature. The way this can be done with despoilation or pollution is by striking a rational balance between what is taken out and what is put back in.

This is where the harmony comes in. It is what capitalism fails to do but it is a basic premise of all socialist relationships.—JOHN C PRANCE, Epping.

Gas ballot: the men

feel betrayed

I HAVE been reading Socialist Worker for only a few weeks, but as a worker in the gas industry, I have been impressed by your coverage of the gasworkers' action up and down the country. I certainly intend to take the paper regularly and sell other copies to my workmates because as we get squeezed more and more we need such a paper to tell us the truth and organise the resistance.

But I would also like to let your readers know that the lads in the gas industry are bitterly disappointed in the so-called leaders of the GMWU. Nearly everybody I have spoken to feels that with clear guidance and a bit more effort we could have won our full claim.

Instead of which we have a sell-out staring us in the face. Some of us thought that when Cooper and Hayday were replaced by Bassett and Edmunds the union could look forward to a new era. But I am afraid it is a case of more of the same.

At the last delegate meeting of the West Midlands shop stewards in the gas industry, more than 75 per cent of those present were pressing for stronger action by the union. But what do we get? After having some of its members up north out on strike for eight weeks, the union leaders called for a ballot.

When you are in the middle of a battle you don't sit your troops down to discuss whether it is worth fighting after all.

I was not very hopeful of the ballot coming out for militant action because of the influence of the press and television. We would have stood some chance if the union leaders conducted a campaign up and down the country persuading the gas men not to be taken in by the hysteria of the gutter press, and to keep the fight up. Instead the GMWU leadership just used the ballot as a smoke-screen to cover up their retreat.

Such men have a lot to answer for—not only to their own members but also to the hospital workers, the civil servants and all other trade unionists who are fighting for a decent life. Socialist Worker must keep the pressure up and show what spineless creatures these union leaders are.—WEST MIDLANDS GAS SHOP STEWARD (name and address supplied).

CHRIS HARMAN wrote in 'Two-faced wail on Bomb terror' (17 March) that 'Of course, revolutionary socialists are not against violence' and used the expression 'violence of mass movements'.

This is incorrect. Force (not violence) is the midwife of the old society pregnant with the new. Violence is the word to be always employed to characterise the use of armed bodies of men (police, military, etc) to hold back the tide of progress towards a classless, harmonious social order.—HUGO DEWAR, London SW11.

IRELAND: MIND WHAT YOU SAY

IF the International Socialists are serious about building a revolutionary socialist alternative to the present capitalist controlled system then it should treat the volatile situation in Northern Ireland with extreme caution. Any expression of opinion should be constantly rechecked with respect for the people involved.

In an area such as Birmingham,

LETTERS

Ram it home: Labour is no alternative!

YOUR EDITORIAL (17 March) on the political bankruptcy of the Labour Party was fine. IS must re-double its efforts to expose the fake 'left-wingism' of Labour's opposition to the Tories.

Look at Labour's record! Labour leaders refuse to support the hospital and gas workers—they merely call for public inquiries and royal commissions. These are classic parliamentary devices for shelving issues.

Reg Prentice, Labour's spokesman on employment, refused to support the five jailed dockers and told the train drivers to get back to work. Michael Foot supported the Tory state of emergency against the dockers in 1970 and Eric Heffer refuses to call for political strikes against the



Prentice: attacked dockers

government. This list could be vastly expanded. But it is clear—and we should ensure it is clear in our propaganda—that the Labour Party, even in opposition, has deserted the trade unionists who pay for Labour's upkeep.—NIGEL TODD, Lancaster.

Bloody hands

YOUR ARTICLES on the American Indians last week gave a good insight into American capitalism's bloody past. But one very important point was not developed.

British history is even more littered with massacres than American—but Britain is far more successful at burying its past.

How many British people realise that Britain was responsible for the murder of the entire native population of Tasmania, something that even the Americans couldn't manage with the Indians.

Or take the example of films. America has recently produced a number of very honest films about its past: 'Soldier Blue', 'Little Big Man'. Britain? There was 'Cromwell' which didn't even mention that he massacred the populations of Wexford and Drogheda.

Or 'Zulu'—a piece of straight imperialist propaganda, which made

no mention of the revenge Britain took on the Zulus, such as shooting prisoners from cannon.

Compared to America or France, Britain's imperialist myths are still intact. To take a few more recent examples—while Algeria and Vietnam were terrible shocks to France and the USA, the lies about what Britain did in Kenya in the 1950s, in Aden in the 1960s and in Ireland in the 1970s are still unshaken.

British imperialism has millions of forgotten human skeletons in its cupboard. It will be a great step forward when we can honestly face these facts, and set about avenging them.—FRANK ROBERTS, Liverpool 24.

● Letters must arrive first post Monday. They should be typed or written on one side of the page only. Handwritten letters must be clearly written with names in capitals to avoid mistakes. Letters may be cut for space reasons.

Dockworker: we run it ourselves

WE WOULD LIKE to correct a reference you made in the 24 March edition of Socialist Worker.

When reporting on the IS conference, you quoted Jim Higgins as saying 'our rank and file newspapers' with reference to the docks. We would like to take this opportunity to point out that The Dockworker is completely controlled and written by dockers and does not voice the views of any particular political organisation.

Although we owe a debt to the SW printshop, without whose assistance we would not get the paper printed, all the material is written by registered port workers and the editorial board of six dockers are only the ones who decide on its final content.—M FENN, for The Dockworker editorial board, London E13.

JIM HIGGINS, IS national secretary, comments: The Socialist Worker report did give a false impression of the relationship between IS and rank and file papers. IS does not control these papers. Our trade union members are actively involved in their publication and often played a leading role in getting them off the ground. But as Mickey Fenn correctly states, they are genuine rank and file papers run and controlled by workers in their respective industries.

Panel

I WOULD like to draw readers' attention to the fact that there are now vacancies on the BBC Listening Panel. Members on this panel are asked to listen to and comment on BBC radio programmes.

If readers have time to spare they could make an application to the BBC. It would be a pity to let the panel get packed with Mary Whitehouse supporters.—GORDON LOGAN, Norwich.

'Justice'

ANGELA WEIR's letter about the Stoke Newington 5 (17 March) should jolt all revolutionaries out of any political complacency they may be feeling. These five people are in prison for 10 years purely for conspiracy, that is thinking and talking about acts against the state, not actually committing them.

Whether we believe these people actually had any part in bombings or their planning is largely irrelevant. The fact is that they and Jake Prescott are behind bars for having ideas not too dissimilar from those propagated by revolutionary socialists every day.

Their imprisonment sets a precedent whereby anyone engaged in discussions or activities against the state can be charged and sentenced equally as viciously. It is our duty as revolutionary socialists to support wholeheartedly the campaign for the release of the Stoke Newington 5, and their appeal against 'British Justice' which as we know is justice for the ruling class.—KITTY WILLIAMS, Plymtree, Devon.

which has a large number of Irish immigrants and people of Irish descent, there already exists among them well-defined opinions of the nature and cause of the problem.

Also many working-class people have sons and friends in the British Army in Northern Ireland, and although I agree that the army should not be there, it is hardly the fault of

the ordinary soldier that he is there. The newly recruited soldier is not knowingly 'an agent of British imperialism'.

It is very possible that some support for IS has already been alienated by rash statements on Ireland and that much good work on the industrial front could also be put in jeopardy.—BILL CAMPBELL, Warley.

Engineers support hospital marchers

SHEFFIELD:—More than 4000 workers marched through the city on Friday afternoon in support of the hospital workers. Apart from hospital workers themselves, there was a tremendous response from Sheffield engineers—workers from Shadlows, Firth Browns, Bone Cravens, GEC and River Don swelled the demonstration.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, South Yorkshire NUPE organiser, told Socialist Worker: 'The Tories are picking on the hospital workers as the weak link. Our morale may fall if the rest of the working class doesn't fight with us. Today's demonstration shows the way.'

Last week hospital workers picketed the Yorkshire Council meeting of the Mineworkers' Union for solidarity action. Supporters of The Collier, the rank and file miners' paper, successfully brought out one unit at Houghton Main Colliery, near Barnsley. Trevor Brown, Houghton miner and member of the International Socialists, commented: 'It's about time the miners came out in support of the hospital workers. For too long we've let them fight the Tories alone.'



Tony Hope, a convenor at Sheffield's River Don steelworks, speaking at the demonstration



Hospital workers on the 4000-strong march

Trades council attacks freeze

LEICESTER:—The trades council voted unanimously last week to call a local conference of trade unionists to discuss methods of fighting the freeze, and to set up an action committee to initiate and co-ordinate efforts to this end.

As a first step in setting up the action committee, a meeting is to be held between the council's executive and the local Engineering Confederation, which represents a large number of local AUEW branches not yet affiliated to the trades council. Militants in the city are hoping this will be the beginning of a fighting alliance of all Leicester workers.

The original trades council motion itself came from the Mid-Leicestershire National Union of Teachers, and this reflects the growing awareness among local white collar workers of the importance of union action. The City NUT branch, with the ASTMS, NALGO, and ATTI branches, is setting up an area Public Sector Alliance. But white collar unionists also realise that the real power lies with the manual unions, especially the AUEW, for the engineering industry dominates the city.

The engineers also face their own problems. The local industries which the engineering firms supply—hosiery and the boots and shoes—are rapidly declining or moving abroad. Recent months have seen large scale redundancies at Davis, Frog Island and Vaughan Way (part of the Courtauld group), Dunlop, St Mary's Mills and a host of smaller shops.

Union sabotages glassmen's fight to save jobs

WEST LONDON:—Bitterness and demoralisation have set in at Rockware Glass, Greenford, after the decision at a mass meeting two weeks ago not to fight to save the 900 jobs.

The meeting ended in chaos when it became clear that Transport Workers Union shop stewards, representing about 400 of the workers, had allowed their national official, Bob Davis, to meet management to negotiate an improved redundancy offer. Until then the Rockware Co-ordinating Committee, had been carrying out the decision of the previous mass meeting to fight the closure.

This had had some success. Visits to the other factories in the combine had resulted in the formation, for the first time, of a national Rockware combine committee. A local campaign of support had been launched.

Now the internal disintegration in the factory means these gains will probably be wiped out. On top of all this a new menace is raising its head. A large number of the TGWU members are black. Some white trade unionists who ought to know better are going around saying: 'It's all their fault'.

Local leaders of the engineering union must also take some of the responsibility for what has happened. Although they vigorously opposed the blatant sell-out tactics of the TGWU they gave no clear lead. 'We will fight!' was never translated into a concrete programme of action. This vagueness allowed the TGWU to take advantage of the situation.

It is possible that a new group of militants will emerge inside the factory and stop the rot. The factory is not due to close until next year. If this does not happen then Rockware will come to symbolise one more giant step to making West Middlesex an area of low wages and weak trade unionism.

CIVIL SERVICE UNION LEADERS SURRENDER

THE leadership of the largest union in the civil service, the 200,000-strong Civil and Public Service Association, has surrendered in the fight against the freeze.

It has told its branches that there will be no further industrial action after a 'last fling' stoppage which was to be held yesterday.

The leadership has followed a weak and dithering policy ever since civil service wages were frozen last October—a full month before anyone else's.

For a long time the union leaders did their best to avoid taking any

by Mike McGrath

industrial action at all. Rallies were held throughout the country at which no clear lead was given. And although rallies during worktime on 10 January had overwhelming support, it was not until 27 February that a national one-day stoppage was organised. Even then, no demonstration was organised, so the publicity value of the stoppage was virtually nil.

By the time the leadership called two sets of official week-long selective strikes, unofficial action had already broken out in Glasgow,

Manchester and other militant areas.

Readers of the national press will be forgiven if they have not noticed the official selective strikes. In the whole of London only 21 members have been called out—those working at St Stephens Press. The press produces Hansard and the London Gazette and has continued to do so throughout the dispute, although there has been some difficulty in distribution.

On any night up to six members of the union's national executive

could be seen on the picket line. While this showed a praiseworthy desire to do their bit, some positive leadership would have been of more value nationally.

Members have been told that the association cannot afford any more action. This is nonsense. With only 6000 members out of 200,000 on strike, £150,000 in the strike kitty and a 50p levy per member coming in every week, there's probably more money in the bank now than when the dispute started.

No, lack of money is not the reason.

As one national committee member said: 'The committee is quite simply afraid. They feel they have done their bit and now want someone else to fight.'

COMPROMISE

This is an accurate assessment of their mood. It is not that they are individually cowards. But they have never had to lead a fight on wages because civil servants have been paid automatically what other sectors of workers have won in struggle.

Far less has the leadership ever led a fight against the government. It sees its role as one of collaboration and compromise irrespective of the members' wishes.

The general secretary, Bill Kendall, who is so militant on television, has said many times during the dispute that he supports an incomes policy if it is in the national interest, but does not want civil servants to be treated unfavourably! The same dithering and lack of aggressiveness is shown in relation to Friday's stoppage. It is being left to branches whether or not they call out their members. A more pitiful abdication of responsibility cannot be imagined.

Lecturer who joined picket is victimised

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:—An attempt is being made at Northumberland College of Education to victimise a lecturer who backed the students' national day of action for increased grants a fortnight ago. The 'crime' of the lecturer, Steve Whitley, is that he stood on a students' picket line that day.

Previously the head of the college, Eileen Churchill, had circulated all staff telling them that they were expected to be in college to meet their normal work commitments. But Steve Whitley had no teaching commitments that day and so assumed he could join the picket line without breaking this instruction.

Later the head told him he was being punished because he had shown himself to be a person on whom I may not rely'.

At present Steve Whitley is suspended from all duties, while the college governors decide what action to take. He is receiving backing both from his own union, the NUT, and from students in the college who have occupied the college administration building. But it is important that students and teachers at other colleges send messages of support.

Bosses' double-dealing sparks off strike

MANCHESTER:—Workers at Gardners diesel factory in Eccles are out on strike against double-dealing by the management. The issue at stake is the Manchester Piecework Agreement, which allows the right of any engineering worker to go off piecework on to the lower day rate.

The wage rise agreed last year means that the basic rate rose from £19 to £22. At Gardners, the rise has been used as an excuse for cutting the piecework bonus, so that a fifth of the 2000 workers get no bonus at all. When a further £3 rise scheduled for August comes in, the proportion of workers getting no bonus could rise to three-quarters.

So the works committee put in a claim for a new bonus scheme last October. When it had not been granted nine weeks ago, 600 workers banned piecework and went on to day rates. Production fell immediately from 140 engines a week to 40.

A fortnight ago management retaliated by locking out all those working the day rate and all those backing them with an overtime ban. At a mass meeting, the men decided to strike until those laid off are

taken back.

Messages of support and donations to: W R Thomas, 27 Snowden Road, Eccles, Manchester.

MANCHESTER:—Militant teachers in the local branch of the NUT who proposed that the branch send delegates to the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions were greatly surprised to find their proposal opposed by Communist Party members.

For the Liaison Committee is led by prominent Communist Party militants, and the Party is well-known for its calls for 'unity'.

Yet first the local Party members tried to amend the proposal out of existence and finally they voted against it.

We can only guess at the reason for this puzzling behaviour. Rank and file teachers have been active and successful within the NUT and the union executive has been trying to break the opposition in any way it can. It seems some Communist Party members had been instructed to support the executive's approach.

200 PICKET UNION MEETING

EDINBURGH:—More than 200 contracting electricians from the five largest construction sites stopped work last Wednesday to picket the area contracting shop stewards' conference in the Grosvenor Hotel.

The stoppage was organised to expose the conference as a sham and to demand a fighting policy in the contracting industry. At the conference shop stewards could not move resolutions. They could only listen to full-time officials' reports and were permitted only one, written, question—submitted in advance.

Outside the hotel the picketing electricians held a meeting which the full-time

officials refused to address. The meeting demanded an end to the Joint Industry Board (JIB) agreement and unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in the officials.

OPPOSED

At the meeting inside, executive committee member W Blairford reported on the wage negotiations within the Scottish JIB. The electrical trades union is pressing for an agreement similar to that recently agreed nationally, allowing for a rate of £1 an hour—but only in 1974. Also in the agreement are the check-off system—union dues to be deducted through the JIB—and provision for reclassification of work from

silled to unskilled, to start immediately.

The shop stewards opposed this agreement and have called upon the executive to arrange a mass meeting of all electricians in the area before any settlement is reached. If the executive refuses to do this, the shop stewards will do it by themselves.

Electricians up and down the country should start organising now for an end to the JIB with its grading and penal clauses, and should support the setting-up of independent shop stewards' committees to control overtime, working practices and local agreements, and to determine policy in the union. They should join the campaign for £1.50 an hour now, and a 35-hour week.



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Sit-in workers beat union-buster

SUNDERLAND:—The dispute at Coles Cranes is over after 12 weeks of bitter struggle. The workers' occupation of the factory has defeated the union-busting activities of millionaire William de Vigier—better-known in the factory as 'the godfather'.

De Vigier, who had previously said he would never come to the North East to talk to the workers, was forced last week to start discussions with the stewards and full-time union officials.

At the meeting he conceded the four points put forward by the strikers. He has agreed that all management notices cancelling agreements, customs or work practices will be rescinded, that all previous agreements will be restored, that there will be meaningful discussions with the union over security of employment for the workers, and that there will be no victimisation.

Matty Wake, engineering union convenor, said: 'It was good to see that arrogant, self-centred man crawl to the people who work for him.'

The proposals for a return to work were put to a mass meeting of strikers after a victory march through Sunderland, supported by the trades council and other workers. The recommendations put by the stewards were accepted, with a small minority voting against.

The popular local full-time official for the clerical workers' union, APEX, told the meeting: 'The trade union movement owes a great debt to the men and women of Coles Cranes for showing that people like de Vigier cannot trample on the trade unions and get away with it. Things will never be the same in the Acrow Group. Spurred by your actions other groups of workers will now prevent de Vigier treating them like dirt.'

But there is a note of caution in the jubilation. De Vigier has a long record of waiting until trade unionists are off their guard and then going back on his promises.

The agreement contains clauses that say that such things as mobility of labour, and a reduction in non-productive time will be subject to negotiation. Workers and stewards will have to be vigilant in case management tries to resume its attacks

Lock-out threat at Ford plant

DAGENHAM:—Management at Ford are threatening to lock out all Paint Trim and Assembly (PTA) and Body Plant workers unless the PTA workers end their series of sit-in strikes.

The PTA workers have been staging sit-ins over the past two weeks in an attempt to get all workers in the Dagenham complex to maintain the agreed overtime ban strictly until Ford boosts its wage offer.

Meanwhile Ford management summoned a special meeting of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee, where they agreed to make one or two minor amendments to their latest offer. The Ford unions at top level have been resolutely determined to avoid a fight with the government over the freeze and are hoping that Ford will come up with something to save their faces.

At the special negotiating committee meeting on Friday last week, Ford management said they would review the penalty clauses on holiday pay, bonus and lay off benefits in the last agreement if the unions would sign the new agreement, which is firmly within the limits of phase two of the Freeze.

THREE BLACKS ACQUITTED

BIRMINGHAM:—Three of the remaining 11 defendants in the infamous Whitehall Road case have been found not guilty. The case follows a brutal raid by the local racist Handsworth police on a West Indian party on Boxing Day last year.

Five of the eight who were found guilty of a concoction of assaulting the police, causing an affray and possessing offensive weapons, received prison or borstal sen-

THE IRON FIST FOR HEALTH PICKETS



Don Steadman speaks to the meeting of hospital workers outside St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, on Monday

More hospitals join struggle

MANCHESTER:—More hospitals have joined the struggle. Workers at Park and Davyhulme came out for 24 hours last week and are coming out again. Stockport Infirmary and Stepping Hill Hospital workers also came out for 24 hours, joining laundry staff who have been out for three weeks. Stepping Hill workers are angry at attempts to drive laundry through pickets and all Stockport hospital workers threatened an indefinite walk-out if police arrested any pickets.

Police harassment at United Manchester Hospitals at the beginning of last week was defeated by picketing inside the gates on hospital property. The strikes are as solid as ever, despite attacks in the press.

Porters and domestics at Ladywell are still out and at Hope Hospital cooks have joined drivers on indefinite stoppage.

NUPE pickets at Hope have just received £4 strike pay after four weeks on strike and feeling against the officials is high. Stewards throughout Greater Manchester are getting together to co-ordinate the fight this week, since all attempts to push officials into effective co-ordination have failed.

■■

COVENTRY:—31 hospital consultants urged hospital workers on strike to go back to work this week. One claimed: 'The lives of the Coventry people are in peril. I can say that categorically.'

But for all the scaremongering in the

press, union members in four main hospitals have come out solidly, keeping emergency services going, but mounting continuous effective pickets. In the Gulson Road hospital, nurses who belong to NUPE refused to carry out extra duties which involved scabbing.

Meanwhile, the consultants were given a taste of their own medicine by NUPE officer Alan Greenwood. 'Our members are getting fed up with these scaremongering and irresponsible allegations from these doctors. We hear nothing from these spokesmen when National Health Service patients are kept two years on the waiting list for operations while private patients are treated by the same consultants without delay,' he said.

There is to be a march in support of the hospital workers in Coventry on Friday this week, and at least some car factories are expected to come out in support.

■■

LONDON:—50 shop stewards from a dozen London hospitals met last Friday to plan co-ordinated action. They agreed to set up a hardship fund for London strikers.

The Flying Picket, a broadsheet produced by the strike committee at St George's Hospital, Hyde Park, is to be used to keep strikers informed of activities at other hospitals. A campaign is to be launched in union branches to get the union leadership to follow the ballot decision for all-out strike action.

PICKET LINES

NORTH WALSHAM, Norfolk:—Workers from the Crane Fruehauf factory have now been occupying a council house in nearby Suffield for more than three weeks, preventing Erpingham Council from evicting their workmate Eric Amies and his family.

Shop stewards from the factory, where Eric is employed as a welder, have made it clear they will stay there, despite police threats, until the council provides Eric and his family with a decent house. Erpingham Council still seems determined to turn a man, his wife, two young boys and a four-week-old baby girl out on to the streets.

Eric's crime was to be £3.25 in rent arrears. He was off work with a broken bone in his foot, his wife was in hospital with high blood pressure and his daughter died after four years of illness with diabetes.

The titled gentry who pack Erpingham Council have been unrelenting. So far only the prompt action of his workmates has prevented the family being split up and without a home.

■■

SOUTH LONDON:—The liquidator for the Briant Colour Printing Company, Old Kent Road, has issued a high court writ against Bill Freeman, chairman of the joint chapels committee, for possession of the company books and records. The case is to be heard on Wednesday.

Bill Freeman told Socialist Worker that the joint chapels had agreed that he should not attend the court. 'As trade unionists we are against going to the NIRC and we are equally opposed to our affairs being

ROBERT CARR, Tory Home Secretary, announced last week that the government would police the laws on picketing much more forcefully.

The very next day two hospital workers on picket duty outside St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, London were arrested and charged with obstructing the police.

Their crime had been to explain to the commander of the huge force of police turned out to 'control' the St Mary's picket that as stewards they could not ask their members to 'move along' and abandon the picket.

When the two men, Don Steadman, NUPE branch secretary in the St Mary's group of hospitals, and Peter Barker, a steward, appeared at Marylebone court last week, railway workers from London Transport lift and escalators division and teachers came to picket the court. Several other London hospitals decided to come out on indefinite strike if either one was punished. The two men were remanded on bail until 7 May.

THREATENED

After their experience with the police and the courts, the NUPE members at St Mary's decided on Monday to come out on an indefinite strike. Don Steadman, the arrested branch secretary, talked to Socialist Worker on the picket line on the first day of the indefinite stoppage.

'You can see how determined the government is by the way they are treating pickets up and down the country. What was done to us last week is absolutely typical. The hospital authorities are playing their part in this sort of thing too. Quite a number of the strikers here are Spanish. They are frightened because they have been threatened with having their labour permits taken away.'

'All this stuff about our strike threatening the sick, holding them to ransom, is just hypocrisy. The sick are permanently held to ransom because the Health Service is deprived of funds, because

of poor staffing, old buildings and the like. Long before the strike, there were six and 12-month waiting lists for beds.

'The leaders of our own union should come out into the open and stop shilly shallying. They should give us a direct incentive for an all-out fight to win.'

'The trade union movement hasn't learned the lesson of the postal workers' strike of two years ago well enough. People stood back and watched the TUC stand back and let the postal workers be clobbered on their own. We've had many, many promises from other groups of workers. But the time for action is now. What is needed is a real broad movement of the working class. That would topple this lot.'

Council moves against rent strike tenants

KIRKBY:—The Labour-controlled council voted on Monday to deduct rent arrears from the pay of tenants who have been on total rent strike since last October.

During the council meeting 250 people from all over Merseyside and Lancashire demonstrated against the council's further surrender to the Tory Housing Finance Act. The council officers were heavily guarded by police, the same police who had brutally attacked Kirkby tenants picketing the housing committee meeting two weeks ago.

A campaign of industrial action is being launched to prevent the 'attachment of earnings' orders being put into effect.

Workers in the cold store at Birds Eye factory have already agreed to withdraw labour in support of the tenants. Kirkby Trades Council has convened a special meeting to rally support.

Union tries to barter with steward's card

NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS:—The sit-in at Ruston-Paxman Diesels for the reinstatement of John Deason, the AUEW shop steward, is now in its fourth week. Last week Bob Wright, an executive committee member of the AUEW, and John Tocher, its divisional organiser, made informal approaches to senior GEC management, offering a compromise solution: Deason's credentials would be suspended for one month while talks take place at London level.

The stewards are deeply concerned at this compromise approach and have passed a resolution to Warrington District Committee and the executive saying that stewards' credentials are not negotiable and should not be bartered about by full-time officials.

Building boss blackmails council over multi-million-pound site

CHELSEA:—The five victimised workers on the multi-million Cubitt's Worlds End site returned to work on Monday after being reinstated, only to face a further threat.

A meeting of the Tory-controlled Kensington and Chelsea Council last week was told that a letter from Cubitts had been received containing a ransom note. Either the council agreed to Cubitt's proposal that the rest of the contract be renegotiated and Cubitts paid a substantial amount of extra money or the firm would pull off the site by Friday.

The announcement came at 2am on Thursday at the council meeting which the Mayor had adjourned earlier in the evening after people in the public gallery had broken into an uproar of protest at the council's refusal to receive a delegation from Fulham and Hammersmith Trades

Council, tenants and residents and building workers from the site.

Council officials are believed to be recommending that the council should cough up a hefty amount of ratepayers' money in response to Cubitt's blackmail.

As part of their strategy for milking the borough of at least an extra £1 million, Cubitts and its bricklaying subcontractor Mark Prince have provoked dispute after dispute on the site. The brickies and brickies' labourers have now been on strike continuously for eight months without strike pay. Their union, UCATT, has refused to spread the struggle to other sites.

The men feel totally cynical about Cubitt's intentions and are prepared to take determined action if the firm pulls off the site this weekend.

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