

Socialist Worker

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

NO! We won't pay for their crisis

PRICES are rising faster now than ever before in Britain. The government's own figures show a 3.9 per cent rise in the single month of March.

April's figures are likely to be even worse as the budget and increased fares, power and phone charges take effect.

The Tories and the press have one simple explanation for these figures. They blame wages. They keep repeating that wages are rising far faster than prices.

But when the effect of increased tax and national insurance contributions are taken into account, even the best-off workers have only just been keeping abreast of prices until now. As the new price rises take effect even they will begin to fall behind unless they fight for more pay.

Wages are not responsible for the tax rises and the rent rises announced by the government. Workers are not to blame for meat prices being kept artificially high by the Common Market. Workers have not caused the massive rises in interest charges. Workers are not benefitting from the soaring share prices this week.

It is not only the Tories who are blaming wages. On Monday Harold Wilson joined in the chorus. He said that 'the big battalions' must not hog the 'national cake'.

Blame

But workers are not responsible for the crisis, for the fact that the cake is getting smaller. Our wages were squeezed in the vice of Phases One and Two of the Tory wage freeze when the symptoms of crisis first developed.

Even Jack Jones, of the Transport Workers Union, seems to accept that high wages are to blame for the crisis. He is talking about a new form of incomes policy which would peg everyone's pay, just as the Tory '£1 plus 4 per cent' limit did two years ago. But such a scheme could only mean increased profits for the employers, who would be under no compulsion whatsoever to use those profits for any useful purpose.

If the wages of, say, GKN are frozen, the directors and shareholders of GKN benefit, not other workers, old age pensioners or the unemployed.

What is most absurd about plans for wage restraint is that they cannot deal with the crisis. They cannot impose order on those who run the

economy—the small minority who own and control the commanding heights. So they cannot end the sequence of boom and slump that has led us into crisis.

In the past trade unionists have been pressurised by the press into accepting such arguments. So we had a 'pay pause' in 1961, a Statement of Intent in 1964, a wage freeze in 1966, an 'nil norm' in 1970, a Phase One in 1972, Phases Two and Three in 1973.

None of these measures stopped the rising trend in prices, nor the demand of the Tory press for still

further attacks on wages.

Only one thing could do that—a workers' onslaught on the present system, to take economic power from the ruling minority and to reorganise the economy on a rational basis.

Until we reach that point, there is only one answer to rising prices—to step up the fight for higher wages, against the cut-backs in government spending and against redundancies, and against the Labour government that depends increasingly on the Tories to protect it from its own supporters.

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TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

Come to Saturday's labour conference

THE House of Commons has renewed the Prevention of Terrorism Act, by which more than 100 Irish workers in this country have been held by the police without charge and without trial. Half of these workers have also been deported without trial.

Only ten Labour MPs had the guts to vote against. Congratulations to them. But what about the 300 others who say they believe in civil liberty but do nothing to stop an Act which threatens the liberties of every Irish worker in Britain?

The Act's renewal underlines the importance of the Labour Movement Conference on Ireland this Saturday, which will campaign to get the troops out of Ireland to to repeal the Terrorism Act.

This week five members of the strike committee of Glasgow Corporation electricians, which has just led a victorious 14-week strike for pay parity with electricians working for contractors, issued the following appeal to their fellow trade unionists in Britain:

The present government has shown that they are prepared if need be to break official strikes by the use of troops. This was shown recently when they moved in troops against the Glasgow Corporation HGV drivers and electricians.

By the use of the Army in this manner many of our members were able to relate more clearly to the role of the British Army in Ireland. The troops in Ireland are there purely to protect the interests of British big business and there can never be a solution while they are present.

It was once said: "No nation which oppresses another, can itself be free". This is the position which the British working class will continue to find itself in as long as we do nothing or little to alter it.

The undersigned members of our committee fully support the conference on Ireland on 24 May and recognise the right of the whole Irish people to national self-determination. The delegates we send will be calling for the withdrawal of troops now. We also urge all trades councils, shop committees, etc, to send delegates, as this conference must be the springboard for the Labour movement's campaign for Irish national self-determination.

Signed: John Glen, J Wing, G R Kelly, James Peterson, D Morland.

Already more than 200 delegates have registered to attend the conference. There could be more than 300 by the time it opens. This will be the largest delegate conference on Ireland to take place in Britain since the war.

You can still go. Delegates with a letter of authority from a trade union body, student union or Labour Party will be admitted at the door of the conference on payment of the fee (75p). It is at the Collegiate Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC2, starting 10am.

Observer tickets for the gallery are still available at 75p. Phone Troops Out Movement, 01-602 1899.



Workers at Chrysler Stoke voting this week almost unanimously to continue their strike for a decent living wage. The reporters and television couldn't claim that this vote was unclear or fiddled. FULL STORY: page 15. Chrysler wives support the strike—page 2.

Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

বাংলাদেশের ৫০০,০০০ টাকা: কে ধারাল?

Stonehouse: £500,000 question the police won't ask

SEE CENTRE PAGES

WHAT WE THINK

A MIGHTY press campaign is being waged to reverse the decision of the AUEW National Committee that voting for officials should take place in the branches, not by post.

A postal ballot for AUEW union officials must be supported, claim the leaderwriters of our newspapers, in the interests of 'union democracy' and 'fairness'.

Needless to say, the press devotion to these principles is sudden—and hypocritical. The same leader writers are the first to campaign against the regular election of trade union officials. They are the first to support those unions, like the General and Municipal Workers Union or the steelworkers' union, which have no regular election at all.

Their sudden obsession with democracy in the unions does not extend to democracy in the boardroom, where far greater economic power is wielded than in union offices. Who elects managing directors and chief executives? Nobody. By the way, who elects newspaper editors? Nobody.

Destroy

The truth is that the newspapers are interested only in union democracy in order to destroy it. They prefer no union elections. Where there are elections, as in the country's most democratic union, the AUEW, they

AUEW VOTES: A good decision—but what a way to take it!

want the elections to be carried out in the most undemocratic way possible.

They want the postal ballot because it is more undemocratic than the vote in the branch—even though more people vote by post than in the branch. Why is this so?

Because the postal vote isolates workers from one another when taking their decisions. The only public discussion on the issues facing them in the election will then be in the press or television—which are owned and controlled by the employers. All the propaganda in press and television works against strong, militant trade unions. If votes are left to individuals in their homes, the press and TV have a free run on the discussion.

Discussion and debate in the branch or shop floor meeting, or union conference,

leads to decisions taken by trade unionists as **trade unionists**. It provides a different form of discussion to ranting in the press and television.

After discussion in the branch, the names on the ballot paper are connected with known faces, known policies. Election addresses can be read out and openly discussed. If the ballot comes by post, there is nothing but a name.

Encourages

The same newspapers which howl for a postal ballot are not in favour of proper election addresses being circulated. They 'can't be afforded', they say.

A postal ballot encourages votes for a candidate who lives in the same place as the voter.

A postal ballot gives full reign to the Woodrow Wyatts and the Robert Maxwells, employers who have the money to finance right-wing union campaigns. The man with the most money can make the most propaganda.

The postal ballot kills branch life. What's the point of going to the branch if you can't choose who makes the decisions there? So the number of people who play a part in the union goes down and down. More and more power is handed over to a handful of irresponsible officials.

The decision of the AUEW National Committee to go back to the branch vote was right. But the way the decision was taken—by the dubious disqualification of right-wing delegates to the committee—was bureaucratic nit-picking of the worst kind.

This sort of manoeuvre plays into the hands of the press and the right wing. They argue that voting in the branch will be used by the Left to establish minority control, with small meetings whose style is deliberately set to 'freeze out' the union's rank and file. The rotten manoeuvre at Blackpool gives all this talk credibility.

So does the main argument in the Broad Left of the AUEW against the postal ballot—that the union 'can't afford it'.

Expense

Already, Tories in the House of Commons are demanding government money to pay for postal ballots. If the main argument against the postal ballot is expense—what will the Broad Left say if the government stumps up the money?

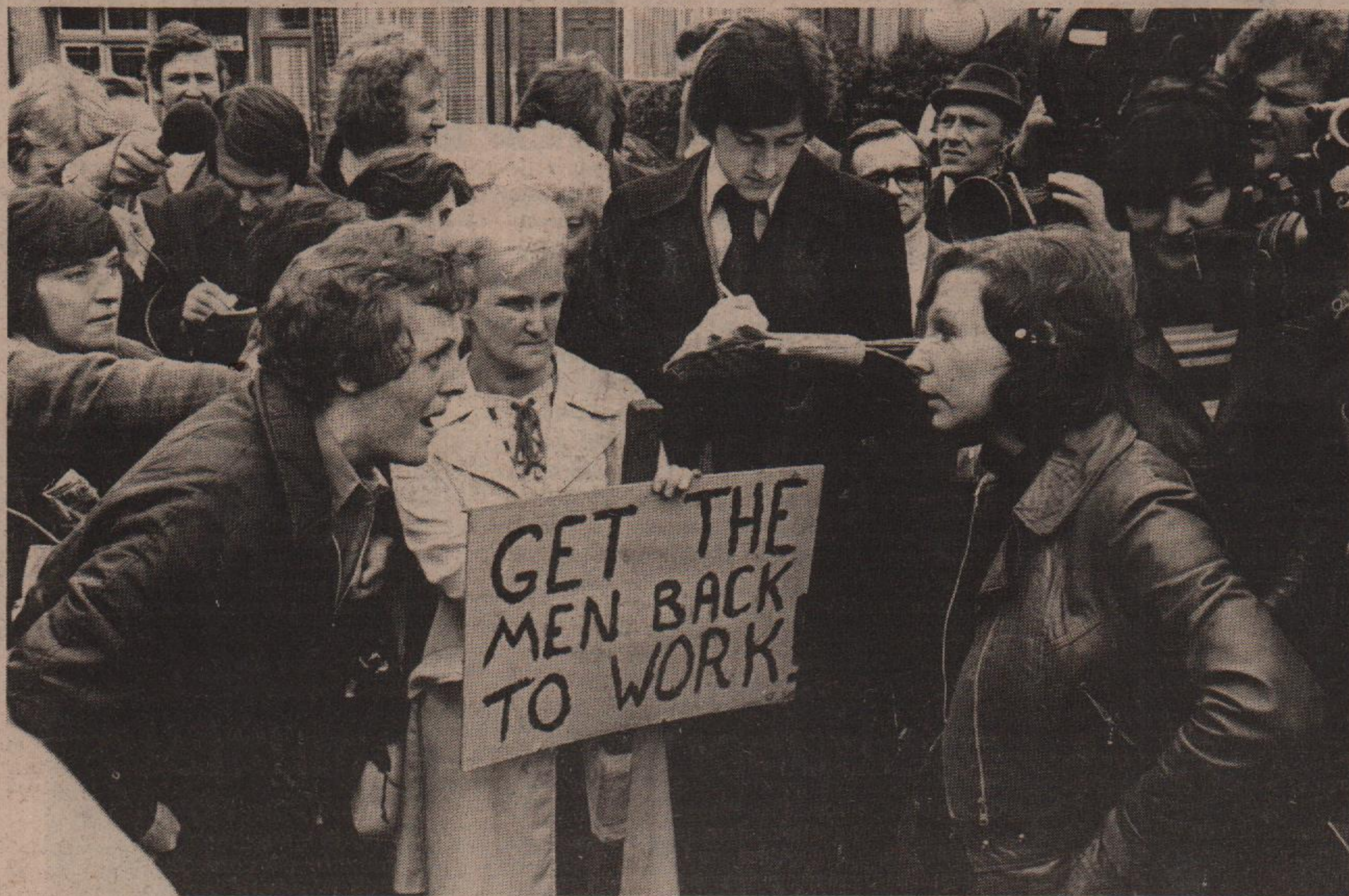
The argument for the branch vote is *not* about money. It is *not*, as the Broad Left spokesmen sometimes argue, for control by an 'informed' clique so that 'important offices' in the union can be won for the Left.

It is that the branch vote opens the door to genuine rank and file participation in the union's affairs.

The only real antidote to the right wing and their friends in the newspapers, the only road to strong, democratic trade unions is an informed rank and file membership which takes part in union discussion and decision.

We argue for the branch ballot, the branch debate, the branch discussion: **to build the rank and file in the union, a rank and file which will have no truck with careerists and office-hunters on the Right or Left.**

Why we stand beside our husbands in this strike — by Chrysler wives



Maureen Enever (right) arguing for the Chrysler strikers against the 'back to work' wives.

The press last week was full of a 'confrontation' outside the gates at Chrysler Coventry between wives of Chrysler strikers.

The newspaper editors were bitterly disappointed. They had hoped to mount another Wives Against The Strike campaign such as the one which broke the drivers' strike at British Leyland, Cowley, last year. Their hopes were dashed by a new Support The Strike Group, which turned up to put the strikers' side of the argument. Among the organisers of the new group is Maureen Enever, interviewed for Socialist Worker by Gail Armstrong.

support. And that was all we really did to start with.

What happened at the picket itself?

When we arrived with the kids the place was mobbed with reporters and TV crews. But I don't think they expected to see us turning out. To my mind they were hoping for another Cowley wives field day. They were amazed to see any opposition.

At first they were falling over themselves to take pictures of the kids. The poor kids didn't know what was happening, but that didn't stop the press. They were more interested in dramatic pictures than what we had to say.

They couldn't believe we had done it off our own bat and they were convinced our husbands had put us up to it! I ask you! We don't need our husbands to tell us the price of food.

Hardship

We didn't go for a confrontation with Mrs Willis and Co. Strikes cause hardship all round, and they are worried that Chrysler will pull out and leave us all on the dole.

But if management are talking about an offer on the 23rd and workers' participation, to me they look like a firm that's ready to pull out. The bills can't wait till the management thinks fit to pay us out. The men in Detroit earn twice as much as Chrysler workers here. They would be mad to pull out when they can get away with these slave wages.

What we want is a fair wage for everyone, that will bring us

back to the standard of living we've lost.

What effect do you think your action has had?

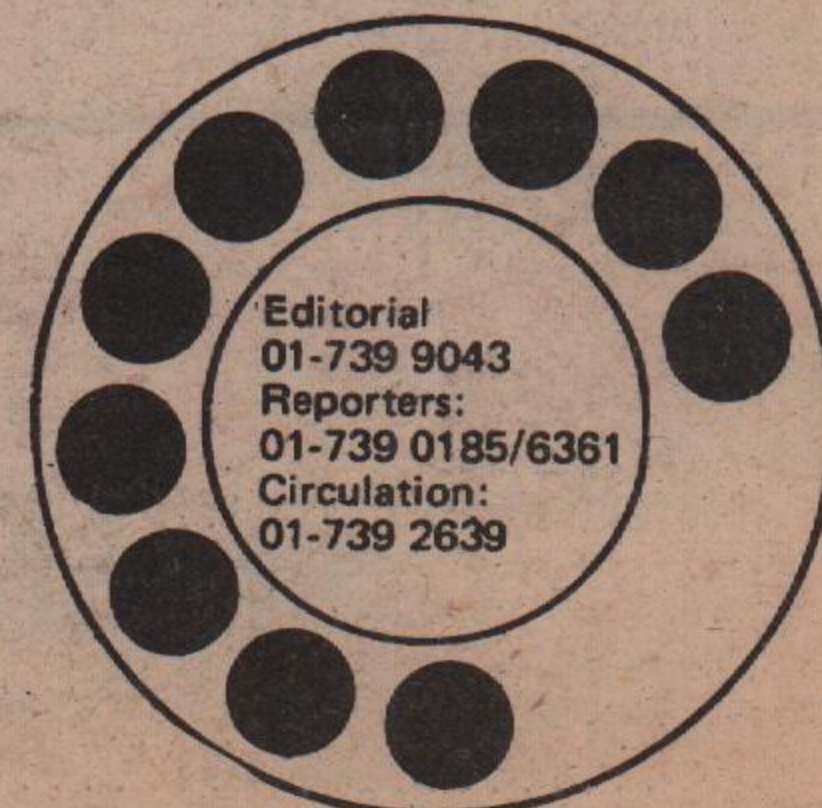
Well, we showed Mrs Willis and Company and the press that we won't stand aside and watch our standard of living cut. It was great to see the number of wives who turned up at the mass meeting on Thursday to support us. We will stick by our husbands until they get a decent settlement.

Well, where do you go from here?

We have now got the basis of a Chrysler Wives Support Committee. We will make it our business to demonstrate our support of the claim at all the mass meetings. We will have to stick together to help each other through the strike.

Also we want to tell other Chrysler wives why we demonstrated and why they should join us. Most women only know what they read in the papers about the dispute. Well, we've just found out you can't expect a fair hearing in the press. The men have also got to tell their own wives about what's happening in work. If they did there would be many more of us!

Picture: John Sturrock (Report)



NO



Arch-Tory Geoffrey Rippon and Labour Minister Shirley Williams share a Pro-Market platform. They also share pro capitalist policies.

District calls factory 'NO' meetings



Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

by Mick Brightman
AUEW North London District Committee, in personal capacity.
IN keeping with AUEW policy, the union's North London District Committee is pursuing the NO campaign by arranging a series of factory meetings—to be called by works committees in leading engineering factories in the area.
The first after-work meeting has been called by the Acton Works LTB factory and jointly sponsored by the Ealing Get Britain Out Committee. It is being held at Acton Town Hall, Acton, at 5.15pm on Thursday (22 May).
Speakers include Bill McLaughlin, AUEW divisional organiser; Ray Buckton, general secretary of the engine drivers' union ASLEF, a Labour Minister (as yet unnamed) and Sir Ian MacTaggart.
Congratulations to North London District Committee for arranging these meetings—but this meeting will be hopelessly marred by having MacTaggart as a speaker.

Speculator

MacTaggart is a slum landlord and property speculator. He is a former chairman of the Society for Individual Freedom, a front for extreme right-wing politics, and has given money to the Monday Club.
It is only to be hoped that the next meeting organised by the district committee in North London, which is expected to be at Frigidaires (General Motors) in Hendon, will not have such a speaker on the platform.
The working class are being deceived enough by the right-wing Keep Britain In campaign. Don't let's confuse the NO campaign even more by sharing platforms with extreme right-wing slum landlords.

WITH two weeks to go to the referendum, the big business pro-Market machine is really rolling. Every major daily paper is pumping out propaganda for a Yes vote. Barclays Bank has sent a letter to everyone who holds an account there urging them to vote Yes.

The Economist reports that most major employers are producing special issues of their company journals, urging their workers to vote for the Market—and in most cases they are so arranging things as to prevent any letters to the journals from shop stewards replying to this argument.

For the first time too, the popular press is beginning to come clean about the real significance of the referendum. Last week the front pages were covered with pictures of the Common Market 'coalition' of Heath, Jenkins and Thorpe—and by hints that all three would consider a coalition on other things as well if they got a big enough Yes vote.

It is this which makes the campaign for the No vote so important to the rank and file of the labour movement.

Yet the campaign for the No vote is hardly...

ground. The official campaigners of the Get Britain Out Campaign and the Common Market Referendum Campaign hardly seem to have started moving. They hold the occasional public meeting, they put up a few posters of Union Jacks, but they do little else. Maybe they are afraid to embarrass Wilson, Jenkins and their friends by a real campaign.

The future of the Tory-Labour Right alliance depends on the activities of rank and file trade unionists. It depends on propaganda in every factory to counter the bosses' propaganda. It depends on the organisation by shop stewards' committees of mass meetings, in work time if possible, to explain the need for a No vote.

Socialist case

It depends on union branches, trades councils and shop stewards' committees using the factories as a base for taking the campaign into working-class areas.

The No vote can be won in almost any factory. But only if the real socialist case against the pro-Market coalition is put, by pointing out how a Yes vote will strengthen the alliance of the Tories and the Labour Right, an alliance which not only means remaining in the Common Market, but also more wage restraint, more unemployment, more public spending cuts.

We need WORKERS' links, not bosses,' to fight unemployment

LABOUR ministers who oppose the Common Market have been arguing all week that the Market is responsible for higher unemployment in Britain. They claim that since Britain entered the Market, imports have risen sharply, leading to a loss of jobs in some industries.

They also point out that direct investment by British firms in the other Common Market countries rose by £300 million in the first year of Market membership, compared to a rise of only £70 million in investment by other Common Market countries here. The argument is that but for the Market, there would have been more investment in Britain and less unemployment.

However much we may sympathise with such people in their desire to drum up the No vote, we have to say that the argument, the way they put it, is wrong.

Unemployment is a result of the international capitalist crisis, not the Common Market as such. A capitalist Britain would have had as much unemployment outside the Market as in.

The real fault with the Market is not that it is a conspiracy by 'foreigners' against British people, rich and poor alike. It is that it is a capitalist institution and so cannot deal with the problem created by the international crisis, in Britain or anywhere else in Europe.

That is why there are 1,500,000 unemployed in West Germany, 1,000,000 in France, another 1,500,000 in Italy, as well as the 900,000 unemployed here.

One aim of the Common Market is to allow the employers to move their investments from country to country. When they find profits too

low in one part of the Market, they can close shop and move. They hope that such a movement of capital will increase unemployment and force workers to accept lower wages, until profits in the low profit areas rise.

But the way to fight this is not by talking about protecting 'British jobs' against 'foreigners'—not by nationalistic flag-waving, but by forming links with the workers of the same companies in other countries.

We are against the Common Market because it strengthens the employers in every European country, and that increases their ability to make workers pay for the crisis. That is why we are for a No vote. But the alternative is not to get out of the Market and leave everything else as it is, but to build international links between workers and to fight for a socialist Britain as part of a socialist Europe.

Young European Scabs

AMONG the organisations campaigning for a Yes vote, and financed by the European Movement, is a body called the Young European Left, and its affiliate the Young European Socialists.

It proclaims that it stands for a policy by which 'democratic socialists in Britain, in collaboration with their socialist comrades on the Continent, can fight for a socialist society throughout Europe'. To this end it has produced many posters which it has put up particularly in colleges and universities, saying that a Yes vote will aid the unity of Europe's workers.

But last week it proved how hollow is its internationalism and its socialism. 250 workers, many of them Asian or West Indian, have been on strike for five weeks at the Chingford factory of the London Rubber Company. Their fight is for an elementary defence of trade union organisation.

Last week a van from the Young European Socialists, complete with Yes posters on the side, turned up at the factory to collect a consignment of balloons.

Faced with a picket line, the socialist internationalism of the Young European Socialists was immediately put to the test. They could either show their real solidarity with the workers from different countries who were on the picket. Or they could prove that their alliance with Tories and big business for the Yes vote was more important to them than anything else.

They did not hesitate in showing where their allegiance lay. They drove straight through the picket line.

Effectively they proved that their initials, Y.E.S. do not stand for Young European Socialists, but Young European Scabs.

Socialist Worker meetings against the Common Market

VOTE
NO TO
COMMON MARKET
SOCIAL CONTRACT
UNEMPLOYMENT
WILSON'S TORY
POLICIES

ALL LONDON
Tuesday 3 June
7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 (Holborn tube). Speakers: Tony Cliff and members of European revolutionary organisations.

NORTH LONDON: Wednesday 28 May, 8pm, Lord Morrison Hall, Chesnut Grove, Chesnut Road, N17.

NORWICH: Wednesday 28 May, 8pm, The Cock pub, King Street. Speaker: Nigel Harris.

DUDLEY: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Smiling Man pub, Hall Street. Speaker: Local trade unionist.

KINGSTON, Surrey: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Kingston Library meeting room, Fairfield Road. Speaker: John Palmer.

NORTH WEST LONDON: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Anson Hall, Anson Rd, NW2. Speakers: Chris Harman and international speakers.

LEEDS: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, The Peel, Boar Lane, City Centre.

LEICESTER: Wednesday 28 May, 7.30pm, AUEW Hall, Vaughan Way, Speaker: Chris Harman (political editor, Socialist Worker).

SOUTHAMPTON: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, UCATT Hall, Henstead Road (off Bedford Place). Speaker: Paul Holborow.

SOUTH WEST LONDON: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Co-op Hall, Upper Tooting Road, Tooting (Tooting Bec tube). Speakers: Duncan Hallas and a member of a Danish revolutionary group. Admission 5p.

GRIMSBY: Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Darleys Hotel, Cleethorpes. Speaker: Tommy Douras.

BARNSELEY: Tuesday 3 June, 8pm, Lecture hall, New Library, Shambles Street. Local speakers.

VOTE NO! posters available from Elana Dallas, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2. Phone 01-739 1878.

VOTE NO! leaflets available from Sue Baytell, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2. Phone 01-739 8600. 15p per 100.

Labour and the £



COALITION 1931: Labour's Snowden and MacDonald, and (centre) Tory Baldwin

1931: Class treachery in the 'national interest'

THE ARGUMENT for a National Government and a coalition of Labour and Tories have been heard in the Labour movement before. In 1931, it was put into practice.

In the May 1929 General Election, the Labour Party under Ramsay MacDonald emerged the largest party in the House of Commons.

Although the Labour Party did not have an overall majority, the leadership agreed to form a government. From the start, it was obvious that there were only two things they could do:

Central

Either fight for socialist policies and, when defeated, mobilise a massive campaign in the working class; or trim their policies to suit the Liberals and Tories.

The party was elected on a programme which was far from socialist, but it was pledged to a number of substantial reforms: notably to raise the scale of unemployment benefit. Unemployment was the central issue.

Since 1921, there had never been less than a million unemployed and in some areas of the country unemployment was half the total workforce.

Unemployment was rising rapidly. In December 1930, it reached 2,500,000. By July 1931 it had reached 2,800,000. Only a far-reaching change could overcome a massive slump.

The Labour programme had called for an increase in unemployment benefit to £1 a week for a man plus 10 shillings for a dependent wife and five shillings for each child.

The first proposals put forward by Jimmy Thomas, the notoriously right-wing Minister in charge of unemployment, failed to meet even these modest targets. The male unemployment benefit was left at a beggarly 17 shillings a week and the rate for a dependent wife was raised from seven to nine shillings.

Even these minimal reforms were too much for big business. While unemployment continued to soar, the pound sank on the foreign exchange markets.

The government moved sharply against its own supporters. To solve the financial crisis, an 'impartial' committee under Sir George May of the Prudential Assurance Company and containing four Tories, Liberals and two Labour representatives, recommended massive cuts in government spending.

The publication of the report only made the financial situation worse and the government went on to make even more massive cuts, including a ten per cent cut in unemployment benefit.

Coalition

These cuts proved too much for the bulk of the Labour Party and the government was forced to look to the Liberals and Tories for support. The Tory and Liberal leaders were keen to form a coalition.

One told the King: 'In view of the fact that the necessary economies would prove most unpalatable to the working classes, it would be to the general interest if they could be imposed by a Labour government.'

Failing the consent of the Labour Party, MacDonald was quite happy to serve the 'general interest' by leading a coalition government.

The National Government which came out of this treachery continued to pursue viciously anti-working class policies, cutting unemployment benefit and pay in the public sector.

Lesson

When MacDonald, Thomas and the rest had served their purpose, they were soon ditched in favour of openly Tory ministers.

The lesson of 1931 is plain. A government in the 'national interest' is a government pledged to capitalist policies and can only attack the working class.

The situation today is different. Although there are those in the Labour Party who want to follow in the footsteps of MacDonald and Thomas, the working class today is far stronger than in 1931.

Then the trade unions were still staggering under the defeat of the General Strike and the rank and file were weakened and demoralised.

Today we can pose a real alternative. It is possible to build a fighting workers' party which can lead the fight back against capitalist policies.

**COLIN
SPARKS**

1966: Wage freeze and witch-hunt

THE LEADERS of the Labour government of 1964-66 did not, like Ramsay MacDonald and his friends, go into a formal coalition with the Tories. But they were just as much subject to blackmail from big business, and responded to it by turning on their own working class supporters.

Almost as soon as Harold Wilson's government was formed in 1964, there was a flight of money out of Britain. Businessmen, bankers and currency speculators did not trust the new government and exchanged their sterling funds for the currencies with governments they did trust.

The result was a growing balance of payments crisis.

Wilson describes in his memoirs how the governor of the Bank of England told him he would have to adopt Tory policies.

Forget

Wilson eventually agreed, saying it was necessary to forget Labour's election promises while the immediate economic crisis was solved.

Richard Crossman, then Minister of Housing, describes in his diaries the reaction of the Labour ministers:

'One could see at Cabinet how, whether they belong to the Right or Left of the Party, they can be terrorised, and how weak and pliable they are in the hands of the City and the Bank of England when a crisis of this kind blows up and they must put the country before their class...'

Chance

The reversion to Tory policies only succeeded in alleviating the crisis temporarily. In the spring of 1966 Labour went for another election, which it won overwhelmingly.

Most workers felt they still had to give the government a chance. To many it seemed that, with one of the largest Labour majorities in history, the reforms longed for were going to be granted. They got a rude shock.

The crosses which workers had put on ballot papers were almost immediately proved to be much less important than the control



'COALITION' 1975: Liberal Thorpe, Tory Heath and Labour's Jenkins

which the very wealthy had over economic powers.

From May to July, there was continual selling of sterling by the giant corporations and the big banks. Again, the government ignored the direct action of the employing class, and instead blamed its own supporters for the crisis.

In the third week of May, the National Union of Seamen began a strike for a wage of £20 a week. At a meeting of the Labour cabinet, Ministers were agreed that they had to resist 'to the death' this challenge.

If, at any point in the weeks that followed, they were tempted to give in to this pressure from the seamen, their resolve was strengthened by pressure from big business, as money continued to move out of the country.

James Callaghan, for instance, bitterly attacked the seamen in a speech on 26 May. 'The seamen,' he declared, were 'imperilling the government's policy on full employment.'

Harold Wilson appeared on television. He attacked a 'small group of politically motivated men'. He meant the seamen's leaders, not the

business interests forcing the government's hands.

The TUC backed Wilson to the hilt, telling the seamen that it would not support them if they refused to accept the employers' terms.

The seamen were forced back to work, but that was not the end of the matter. On 22 July, in a final, desperate attempt to placate those who held real economic power, Wilson did something the Tories, until then, had never dared to do: he introduced a wage freeze.

Protest

Only one Labour Minister made even a half-hearted protest at this drift in Labour policy. On 4 July, Frank Cousins resigned from the Labour Cabinet over incomes policy.

His place was taken, without a qualm, by a young, ambitious, junior minister with fewer working class links: Anthony Wedgwood Benn.

Unlike the crises of 1931, the crises of 1964 and 1966 did not lead to the Labour leadership going over to the Tories. Partly this was because the crisis was not as great as

in the Thirties, partly because working class organisation was still very strong.

Indeed, some sections of the employers saw a Labour government that obeyed their will better than the Tories because it could more easily gain trade union support for anti-working class policies.

In real terms, today's crisis is much more severe than that of 1964 and 1966. That is why much of the press and much of the Labour right wing would like a formal coalition.

But the working class movement is even stronger than in 1964-66. And so big business and Harold Wilson himself doubt if a formal coalition would work.

The Financial Times noted a fortnight ago that many Tory MPs feel their party would be no better at solving British capitalism's problems than is Wilson.

So, for the present, many prefer a Labour government that kowtows to big business and depends on Tory votes to an open coalition.

But their views could change overnight if the crisis gets much worse.

BY PAT KINNERSLY

Author of *The Hazards of Work*

IN Birmingham one Saturday evening last year 20 people died as explosions ripped through the bars in which they were drinking.

The law of the land left no room for doubt that this was murder, yet within a week the House of Commons had rushed through a new law giving the state unprecedented powers against anyone it suspected.

In the parish of Flixborough one Saturday almost exactly a year ago, as people in nearby houses made their tea and watched the end of the Youth International football match on television, a huge cloud of escaping vapour exploded above the Nypro chemical plant. Twenty-eight workers died as the blast flattened the whole site.

The law of the land had nothing to say about the killing of the 28.

The House of Commons did not tax the energies of its members with late sittings to push through new laws to hound any employer who might possibly pose the slightest threat to workers' lives.

The worst the honourable ladies and gentlemen had to endure on this occasion of harmonious sympathy for the bereaved was the jarring note struck by the member for Scunthorpe, John Ellis, who actually suggested that the lives of his constituents had been sacrificed 'on the altar of profit.'

When the ruling classes feel threatened they get new laws; when workers feel threatened they get a public inquiry. A court of inquiry was duly set up.

Lives

That inquiry has now reported its conclusions on 70 days of eye-witness and technical evidence. It had to choose between two explanations put before it. Both agreed that the collapse of Nypro's boded up bypass pipe caused the fatal explosion. But they disagreed fundamentally on what caused the pipe to collapse, the Factory Inspectorate and the court's advisers said that internal pressure caused it to jack-knife—the 'one bang' theory.

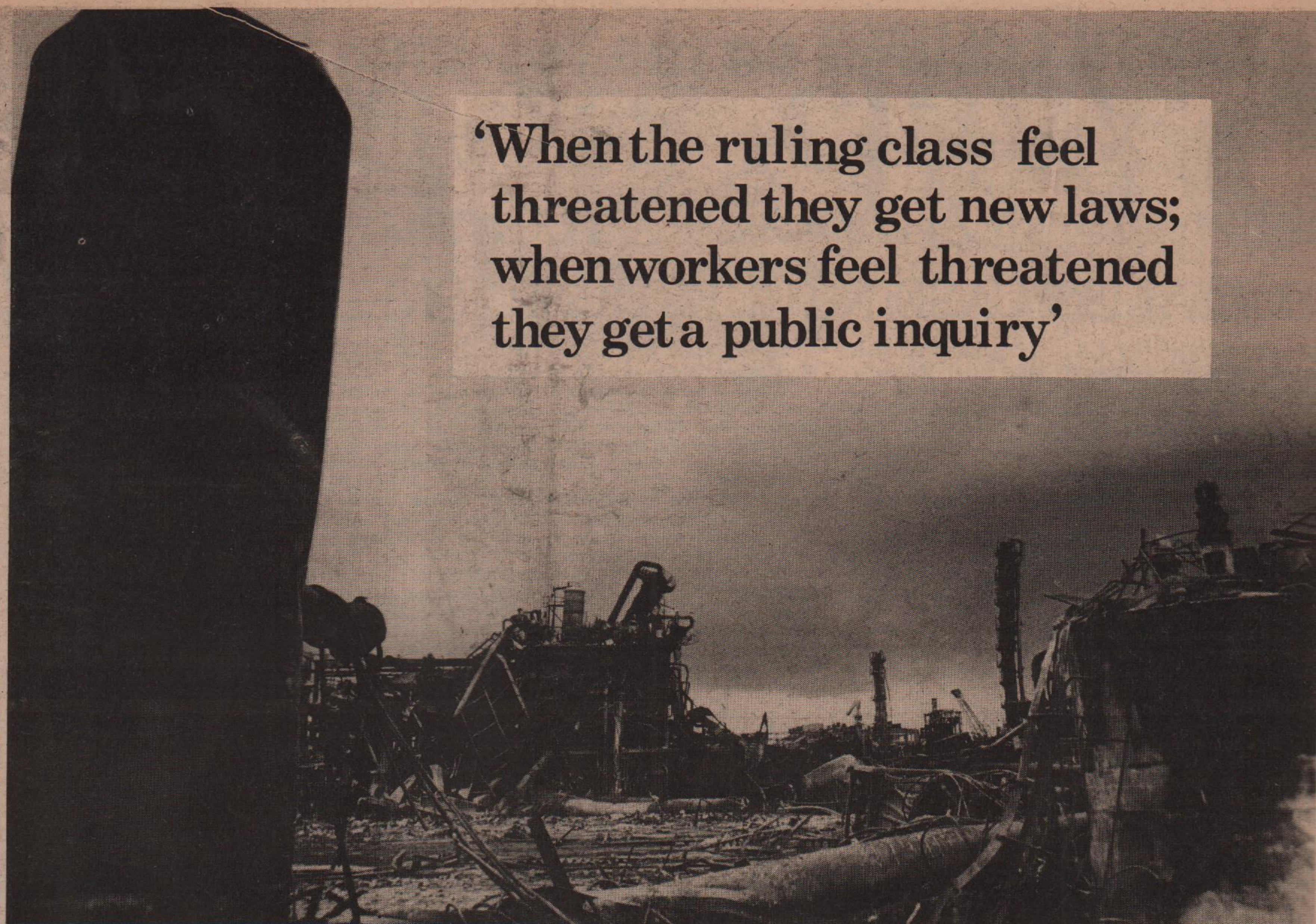
Although the report admits that failure solely due to internal pressure wasn't very probable, even theoretically, it gives hardly more than a page to its reasons for thinking that's what happened. Instead it concentrates its energies—and 12 of its 38 pages—to an attack on the alternative theory put before it by two highly qualified chemical engineers—the 'two bang' theory.

The two engineers challenged the establishment explanation of the disaster by suggesting that there was a small explosion before the main one. They pointed to two loose bolts on a flange and, right next to it, a burst in a permanent pipe. The burst was caused by a high temperature flame and they thought the flame might have come from a leak in the flange.

'Two bang'

Their theory fitted eye-witness accounts of events before the big bang. It fitted with ionosphere pressure readings taken at Leicester University showing two blasts. And it would explain why scientists couldn't get their replicas of Nypro's boded pipe to collapse anywhere near normal operating pressures.

There's no doubt their theory had its technical difficulties. But its real stumbling block was political and economic. Like most courts of inquiry the unwritten duty of this



Where 28 men died—the Flixborough Nypro plant after the blast. PICTURE: John Sturrock (Report)

'When the ruling class feel threatened they get new laws; when workers feel threatened they get a public inquiry'

The Flixborough whitewash

one was to reassure—to convince the public that the chemical emperor was wearing a fine suit of safety clothes and that this was just an embarrassing little tear which would soon be stitched up.

The 'one bang' theory enabled them to conclude that 'The disaster was caused wholly by the coincidence of a number of unlikely errors in design and installation of a modification'. To accept the 'two bang' theory centred as it was on an unmodified part of the works, would have meant admitting that these plants were much more dangerous.

It was therefore much more important to prove than an ordinary pipe couldn't have failed than that a bodge-up did.

Having got that out of the way, the court was able to get out the big whitewash brush: ● *Nypro was to blame* (the company had already admitted as much so this was a foregone conclusion). But *they didn't deliberately put lives at risk*.

It was just that the desire to get the plant back in production 'led them to overlook' the hazards of not doing a proper design or carrying out any safety checks. Try that one on the police if you're caught driving to work in a car without

MOT: 'So sorry, officer, I was so keen to get to work I overlooked it. Pity about all those dead people in the bus queue.'

● *Nypro was very safety conscious*. The court had heard that the company removed a cracked reactor and bridged the gap without finding out why the reactor cracked or if the other five were damaged.

Nypro was storing more than a quarter of a million gallons of inflammable substances on site which hadn't been licensed by the local authority.

Offence

The company didn't employ a full-time safety officer on site.

The court had heard that leaks discovered on a shift shortly before the disaster couldn't be fixed because all the spark-proof tools were locked up and no one had the key.

● *The chemical industry is safety conscious*.

The court says it heard nothing to the contrary. In fact such evidence was outside the court's brief, having been hived off to a separate 'committee of experts' on major hazards, and such evidence was therefore ruled out. Since Flixborough there have been several deaths, the most recent at Laporte Industries in Ilford,

● *The plant as originally designed and constructed didn't create any unacceptable risks*.

The court itself gives the lie to this one when it says that 'no one concerned in . . . design or construction . . . envisaged the possibility of a major disaster happening instantaneously.' When the plant was being built there were already many accounts of this kind of explosion in the technical literature. Were the reports not read—or were they ignored?

In fact the inquiry revealed many possible routes to disaster which the industry was taking no steps to block off.

The urgency of these discoveries is not conveyed by the inquiry's report. None of its recommendations force any immediate action on the industry. Instead problems are passed on for consideration by other parts of the bureaucracy.

In reality it is the industry which is given a second chance after what should have been its Ronan Point. It will not be ordered to take any of the following urgent actions:

1. Fit automatic isolation valves in systems like the one at Flixborough where hundreds of tons of hot pressurised liquid were free to escape if one part of the system was breached.
2. Install dump tanks.
3. Get rid of all galvanised parts in contact with stainless steel pressure components. It was shown that this combination could produce almost instant ruptures in a fire.
4. Install fire detectors and deluge systems that really work.
5. Protect thin pressure elements, like stainless steel expansion bellows, from fire. They too could fail in minutes in a major fire, producing a Flixborough-scale vapour cloud.

6. Fit steam or water jet vapour curtains around all potential vapour cloud areas.

7. House control room and other workers in blast-proof structures. The 18 lives lost in the crushed control room could have been saved.

8. Employ safety engineers qualified in chemical and mechanical engineering and allow no work on pressure systems without their signed authorisation.

Workers should not be surprised that the court ducked its responsibility to warn workers and to impose costly limitations on the freedom of the chemical barons. It made much play with the idea of 'acceptable risk' but its real job was to see that the current high level of risk remained acceptable.

It is not. If the industry does not radically alter its approach another Flixborough is inevitable.

Risk

Only workers have the power to force the industry to divert its massive profits into new standards of safety engineering.

Oil and chemical workers in the US showed the way with their five-month health and safety strike against Shell in 1973. In this country workers at Shellhaven are now forging the essential rank and file links with all oil workers in the area, plus national links with other Shell plants.

The Sterling Organics strike on Tyneside has shown that we are ready for the fight on hazards. Militancy and organisation can force management to concede health and safety contracts.

But we shouldn't delude ourselves that this is more than a small step towards ridding ourselves of the underlying hazards of a system which locks up pickets while companies that kill go unpunished.

Nypro didn't even have to pay for the cost of the inquiry. The court decided that the government should pay. You and me. Congratulations, brothers and sisters, you've just bought a bucket of whitewash.

A CAUSE FOR CONCERN



The Flixborough TGWU shop stewards' committee is one of the sponsors of this pamphlet which points out the faults and dangers in the new Health and Safety at Work Act—and suggests some remedies.

Copies 5p each (plus postage) from Rank and File Organising Committee, 214 Roundwood Road, London NW10.

The Hazards of Work

BY PAT KINNERSLY

Your job is dangerous, but will your boss tell you? He might then have to pay out extra money for safety . . . But this book will, the first in the Workers' Handbook series, and it will show you how to fight the dangers too.

90p (plus 10p postage) from Pluto Press, Unit 10 Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1 8LH.

FIFTH COLUMN on the Yes-men



'SOCIALIST' CASE: NO QUESTIONS ASKED

UNDER the European banner are gathered all those people and groups so loved by Fleet Street. 'Europals' blazons the Sun over a picture of Heath, Thorpe and Jenkins. 'The Coalition' splashes the London Evening Standard over the same picture.

The traditional source of funds for the Labour Party has been the trade union movement. Since the Party is opposed to the market the Yes-men and women have had to go elsewhere. So the kind of political backing they've got, and the kind of politics they are presenting is the product of the people behind the Yes campaign. And despite the talk of 'donations flooding in from far and near, great and small' it is quite clear that the selling of the market takes the same style, and the same costs, as the selling of petrol, cameras, or paint.

For the big corporations the benefits seem clear cut, so it is unsurprising that upwards of 30 multinationals, who have invested heavily in Europe should be subscribers to the EM.

These include ICI, Dunlop, BP, Esso, Metal Box, Reckitt and Colman and ITT, of Chilean fame.

'There is no such thing as a national solution to the problem of the multinationals' claims a YEL pamphlet proudly. Well that's certainly true, but when it comes to getting money, their Big Brothers in the European movement have certainly found them a very useful solution indeed.

'By 1971 the European Movement's budget was in the vicinity of £500,000' reports 'While Britain Slept'. ... in the first seven months of 1971 its budget was £40,000 on press advertisements.'

One of the European Movement's claims in the past has been that individual contributions have been greater than corporate ones. Well if they were on the lines of that received from Michael Sobell (of TV fame) then this is understandable. He forked out £300,000. Then happily he received a knighthood.

BIG MONEY BRITAIN IN EUROPE

THE campaign to keep Britain in the European Common Market is under the umbrella of an organisation called Britain in Europe

BIE operates from Park Lane, and through the European Movement, from 1a Whitehall Place, London, SW1

Recently the BIE and the European Movement have been incensed by unkind accusations of their lavish spending on advertising.



'We aren't ashamed—we will have to account for our money, and we will, after the campaign is closed' said a spokesman. 'It's normal policy for a political campaign. It is a huge mixture of donations, large and small, I don't even know where it's all coming from.'

It has however been adequate to employ 16 regional organisers for the campaign, and to sustain a series of large adverts in the national press—like a half page in The Times last week.

They have been accused of out-laying £135,000 for their TV promotions which have been on over the last few days. The spokesman 'had no idea' how much they had cost but was distressed over the comments which had been made over the employment of a Mr Guggenheim as a public relations man.

'It distresses the people we have working on PR' said the spokesman. 'All we did was have Guggenheim advise us on our special TV slots. I don't know how much they cost, or how much he was paid.'

Guggenheim has a considerable reputation in his field. He was a PR man for the Kennedys in the USA. A speciality of his was the filming of his subject over a long period, and the judicious cutting of this down to a few minutes of lively, abrasive quotation, argument, cut and thrust.

This gives the useful impression of a man not afraid to tackle the rough questions, and with the aid of a pair of scissors, ensures that no wrong impressions are created.

A technique like this costs a lot of money, but doubtless the BIE and the European Movement hope it will be worth every penny. It has been suggested that Guggenheim himself got at least £20,000 for his services.

The 'independence' of Young European Left

THE European Movement operates from 1a Whitehall Place SW1. The offices are an annex of the National Liberal Club, traditional home of the Liberal Party leadership and friends through the ages. The Liberals are doubtless gratified to have been able to lease off the premises to such 'moderate' tenants, and ones with which they have so much political sympathy.

But what about the Labour Campaign for Britain in Europe, and its youthful counterpart the Young European Left? Where do they live?

In keeping with their position on the right of the Labour Party they operate from Attlee House. Where's that?

It is at 1a Whitehall Place, London

A walk around 1a is an introduction to the Coalition-pushers dream. On one floor, the European Movement, with its posters, its Liberal stickers, Tory stickers, and Labour stickers. Then go along the corridor, down a short flight of stairs, and there is the Labour Campaign for Britain in Europe and the YEL, with its own pair of offices. On the walls are charts, showing the progress of Tory, Liberal and Labour pro-marketeters around the country. So where exactly is Attlee House?

This is Attlee House. A basement suite in the National Liberal Club.

Didn't the YEL feel rather uneasy about the choice of name for this office? 'Well it was rather bizarre' said Julian Priestley the secretary. 'It isn't at all clear how the name was arrived at, or what Attlee's line on Europe was. I think he was opposed. You should ask Dickson Mabon or Shirley Williams.'



Dr Dickson Mabon MP was the founder of the right-wing Labour MPs' Manifesto group, and he was less than forthcoming.

'It was unanimously agreed by the council. Attlee was a very good European.'

Wasn't he worried that the fact that the campaign operated from the European Movement offices and this might throw doubts on its independence?

'No, we're quite separate. We could have got offices elsewhere, but we have got these offices, we have our own separate entrance, and our own separate postal delivery.'

Didn't the European Movement Campaign pay for the premises? After all the Campaign received cash donations from the EM?

'We pay our own rent. I don't see

why I should answer these questions, particularly hostile ones over the phone. You should do it in the proper journalistic way, I don't want to answer these questions.'

On the financial question Priestley was slightly more helpful.

'We do get campaign funds from Britain in Europe. There's help for particular projects'. He wasn't clear exactly where the money came from, but BIE stressed that it was taken from the government donations to the BIE, and not from the lavish corporation contributions.

But even if the money did come from corporations Priestley didn't see any contradiction in taking money from the people the Labour yes campaigners claim to be anxious to

Labour con-trick for Europe

'JOBS for the boys' say Britain in Europe posters around Britain, showing happy healthy children smiling into the camera, 'Vote YES for Europe'.

Are you so cruel that you could dash the bread from these infants' lips by voting No?

Other posters show serious looking workers, clearly gravely concerned that you should even think of giving a V sign to the Common Market. Why, if you said No to that lot they'd probably go on strike! And over all these posters flutters a pretty little dove, tastefully kitted out in a union jack.

The Labour Campaign for Europe misses out the dove. EUROPE YES proclaims their new four page tabloid, and a hand grasps an unidentifiable flower, red on the edges, and appropriately, white in the middle. Below it is Harold Wilson gazing out at you with all the integrity and singlemindedness for which he is justifiably famous.

It is stirring stuff. It is also part of the longest, most heavily plugged, well financed confidence tricks which our rulers, who have had plenty of experience, have pulled on us...

QUESTIONS ON THE CRISIS

ACCORDING to Tory spokesman Peter Walker, Wedgwood Benn compares 'with some of the most dangerous figures in history'. Harold Wilson referred to him as 'an old-testament prophet' and hardly a day passes without fresh abusive attacks on Benn on TV and in the press. The Tories are really working themselves up into a lather about 'Bennery' and their indignation is not all faked.

One thing this campaign has already achieved. It has made Anthony Wedgwood Benn the undisputed leader of the Labour Party left. So it is not surprising that thoughtful people in the working class movement are wondering if Benn's ideas are perhaps what they are looking for. At any rate the ideas of a man so violently attacked by the gutter press must be worth some consideration.

Benn stands for two things, more state intervention in industry and 'workers' participation' in management. Neither of these is particularly new or particularly radical so why all the fuss? Partly because the way

BENN: WHY ALL THE HYSTERIA?

Benn advocates them, partly because of the political situation.

Introducing the Industry Bill in parliament, Benn said, 'Another criticism is that this is a socialist measure. It is: and who is to argue that where public money goes in there should not be an equity stake and public accountability? Public sector investment—now 28 per cent—is one of the major sources of continuing confidence, even during the period of recession.'

Of course big business would like to get public money on a big scale without having to concede a state shareholding but, in practice, they are not too unhappy about state participation. Ferranti have just got £15 million from Mr Benn in return for a third of the shares in a deal put through on the basis of legislation introduced by the Heath government. 'The two main shareholders, the Ferranti brothers, Sebastian and Basil, are happy with what they have got from the government,' reports the Guardian.

So they ought to be, having got what no bank would lend their shaky business in return for shares that were probably unsaleable. But that will not alter the hostility to Benn.

Risk

That is because Benn has said repeatedly that he is out to save jobs. He said it about the Ferranti deal. He says it about the Industry Bill—'I see no prospect whatever of reversing an even sharper downward trend in job opportunities in the development areas during this recession... unless we have the power through the National Enterprise Board to act directly on the problem.'

This is what upsets the CBI, the Tories and the right wing of the Labour Party. They all want a sharp rise in unemployment. That is their 'cure' for inflation. And Benn's 'job saving' interventions encourage workers to resist closures if not lay offs. Working class resistance is what the unholy alliance of big business and the Labour bosses really fear. So Benn, because he goes out of his way to talk about saving jobs, is a menace in their eyes.

Whether Wedgwood Benn is sincere or not is not really the point. His record in the previous Wilson government was a very bad one in just this field. He was the 'Technology' Minister responsible for pushing through mergers that cost many thousands of jobs.

Perhaps he has had a change of heart. In any case he is arousing just the sort of expectations that can lead to more and more resistance to the wave of shut-downs now in the pipeline. That is why Harold Wilson is going to appoint a different Industry Minister once the Referendum is out of the way.

DUNCAN HALLAS



SATURDAY
BBC-2: 7.15pm. BY VIOLENT MEANS is a documentary on the West German Baader-Meinhof anarchist group, on the reasons that they have operated as urban guerrillas/terrorists, the background to their trial, and West Germany's rulers' reaction to them. LOOKING FOR CLANCY (BBC-2, 8.10pm) is a dramatised novel in five parts about two journalists' journey from youthful idealism to, in one case sell-out and corruption. Time span is from the General Strike to 1960s' Vietnam demonstrations. SECOND HOUSE SECOND RUN (BBC-2, 9pm) is a 45 MINUTES EACH WAY, a 'documentary entertainment' about football, with playlets by Willis Hall, Alan Plater, and Gordon Williams and Terry Venables.
SUNDAY
BBC-2: 10.25pm. Should there be such a thing as tastefulness then Mel Brooks, director of the recent 'Western Blazing Saddles, doesn't have it. One of his earlier films, shown tonight, THE

PRODUCERS, centres on the production of a musical, 'Springtime For Hitler' complete with an SS chorus line... THE MOVING TARGET (ITV, 7.55pm, London area only) is a good, Raymond Chandler style private eye film with Paul Newman. The great French writer, Stendhal's novel THE CHARTER HOUSE OF PARMA (RADIO-4, 9.30pm) begins serialisation.

ON THE BOX

MONDAY
BBC-2: 8.35pm. Eric Idle continues RUTLAND WEEKEND TELEVISION. Thames' SADIE IT'S COLD OUTSIDE (ITV, 8pm) on one viewing, seemed far above the average of TV situation comedy, being both funny and having some grasp of the lunacy of marriage, work, authority.
TUESDAY
On BBC-2 (9.10pm) is the much

commended Russian film on the writer of revolutionary and Stalinist Russia, THE CHILDHOOD OF MAXIM GORKY, probably the best view of the week. Same channel's THE TRIBAL EYE (8.10pm) is a new series on 'the World's tribal art'—the cultures it sprang from, the thinking behind it, now that it fetches vast sums in Western dealers' showrooms.
WEDNESDAY
BBC-2: 8.15pm. Claire Bloom stars in AN IMAGINATIVE WOMAN in the WESSEX TALES series. Also on BBC-2 are WORLDS WITHOUT SUN: THE BUFFALOES OF ALTAMIRA (7.5pm) about the 15,000 year old cave paintings of France and Spain, and CHRONICLE THE CELTS (8pm) examines that prehistoric European culture and tribe. Author of the excellent 'Victory In Vietnam', Richard West, narrates INSIDE STORY: LIZ THOMAS (BBC-2 9.40pm) on a nurse who runs an orphans' home in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, or as it was known, Saigon.

US shows its claws are still sharp

A FORTNIGHT AGO Henry Kissinger was making statements about 'atrocities' in Cambodia in which he claimed 'thousands of people' were being killed. He could provide no evidence for these claims.

Last week there were atrocities—organised by Kissinger. For the behaviour of the US government over the case of the freighter Mayaguez was a natural continuation of its previous actions in relation to Cambodia—actions which killed or maimed a tenth of the country's population in less than five years.

The US claimed that its action had only one aim, to release the crew of a ship which had been

seized by an 'act of piracy'.

But the facts of the case point to a different conclusion. Firstly, the Mayaguez was not an 'innocent' victim. It was sailing within sight of Cambodian territory and was carrying supplies destined for US military forces in Thailand. Given that these forces had been aiding the bombing of Cambodia only a few weeks earlier, it was hardly surprising that the Cambodians were not willing to let the ship proceed unhindered.

Secondly, the actions taken by the US were not by any stretch of the imagination designed merely to release the ship's crew. US war planes strafed every fishing boat in the vicinity. We know this because a fishing boat which, unknown

to the US air force, contained the Mayaguez's crew, was subject to rocket and machine-gun fire, and to gas attacks which burnt the skin and caused vomiting.

US bombers continued to hammer the Cambodian mainland, including the city of Sihanoukville, long after the crew had been released. They continued bombing even when the crew were back in the hands of the US Navy.

This was not a rescue operation, but wanton murder. The aim of the murder was simple enough—to prove that the US war machine is still powerful enough, despite its defeat in Indochina, to inflict terrible carnage on any country in the world where people dare defy US orders.

BUT THINGS ARE NOT GOING SO EASY BACK HOME

GROWING numbers of workers in the US are no longer prepared to sit back and accept that they should suffer because of the capitalist crisis.

This was shown dramatically at the end of last month when the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO (the American TUC) organised a 60,000-strong rally against unemployment in Washington. The union bureaucrats put up former Vice-President Hubert Humphrey to speak. But the demonstrators refused to listen to him.

Several thousand demonstrators broke through a cordon of stewards onto the field of the giant football stadium chanting: 'No more promises! We want jobs!'

Congresswoman Bella Abzug appealed to demonstrators to return to their seats 'so that we can continue with our programme'. No one listened to her. The demonstrators shouted down every speaker until the rally ended an hour early. Although most of the audience remained in their seats, they applauded those demonstrating.

Protests

The union bureaucrats later blamed the demonstrations on 'neo-Trotskyists taking advantage of the legitimate anger of workers'.

In fact the protests started spontaneously. But the first organised group to take to the field was a 500-strong contingent from the Rank and File Coalition, a recently formed group of rank and file bodies in several different unions, which is supported by the American International Socialists. Its contingent included carworkers, lorry drivers, steel workers and teachers, from as far afield as Chicago, Detroit, Wisconsin, and Indianapolis, as well as the East Coast.

The Rank and File Coalition was able to hold a very successful meeting after the rally, attended by about 500 workers, including many it had not had contact with before.

Speakers emphasised the need for solidarity. Carworker George Bowen, of the United Black Workers, told the crowd that his local union's leadership is pushing the divisive idea of 'Buy American'.

Ability

'But 25 per cent of the vehicles we make are exported,' Bowen said. 'What if British or French workers said the same thing? Our workers would then be out of work. The problem is not foreign workers, but the capitalist system.'

Fred Hobby, of Workers for Collective Progress, a group of black workers in Louisville, said: 'For the rank and file movement to be successful, it will have to demonstrate its ability to take the lead in the struggles of all workers, regardless of race and sex. We realise a class divided against itself cannot move forward, just further apart.'

Other speakers at the rally included: Ken Doran of the Rank and File Team, United Steel Workers; Bob Grant of Concerned Truckers for a Democratic Union, Chicago Truck Drivers Union; Tom Mullen, President of AFL Local 280; and Barbara Winslow, secretary of the Cleveland Coalition of Labor Union Women.



A member of the Hong Kong Revolutionary Workers League calling on workers to join the May Day rally . . .

from U Chen in Hong Kong

MEMBERS of the Labour government often speak on May Day platforms in Britain. But the colonial administration they run in Hong Kong used the police to prevent a May Day demonstration here. Before the crowd had time to gather, a number of speakers and leafleters were arrested.

The rally was organised by the Revolutionary Marxist League and the Young Socialists in a factory district, to protest at two projected labour laws. One of these gives the Labour Department power to impose a 30-60 day 'cooling off period' in any industrial dispute. In practical terms that means taking from workers the only weapon they have to fight against low pay, which leaves most workers with about £12 for a 50-hour week in a city with a higher cost of living than London.

The other law is supposed to help those declared redundant in a city which already has 300,000 unemployed. But it gives no severance pay at all to those made redundant after working for less than a year and a maximum of 50 days' pay to those made redundant after five years in the same factory.

Socialists arrested -for speaking on May Day



. . . and being arrested by the police

Stalinist thuggery against Irish socialists

REVOLUTIONARY socialists in Ireland are under attack not merely from the state forces north and south of the border, but also from the Stalinist leadership of the Official IRA.

The Socialist Workers Movement, the fraternal organisation of the International Socialists in Ireland, issued the following press statement on 8 May, after a machine gun attack on a car in which Seamus Costello, of the recently organised Irish Socialist Republican Party, was driving.

'The Waterford Branch of the Socialist Workers Movement today stated that some of its members had helped in organising the meeting in Waterford last night after which an assassination attempt was made on Seamus Costello. Members were also in the car which was shot at.

As the press chose not to report the meeting, making clear, however, confusion as to their involvement. At that meeting it was stated that we had agreed to help in organising

the meeting making clear, however, our political independence from the IRSP. We have held joint meetings with other left-wing organisations before this; we have been consistently in favour of socialists and republicans co-operating in the fight against repression.

Right

The present feud between the Official Republicans and the IRSP arises, we believe, mainly from a conscious and deliberate decision by the Officials not to let the IRSP organise. We have defended the IRSP's right to exist and will continue to do so, whatever our criticisms of particular positions they may take.

For this attitude and for daring to criticise the Officials we have earned threats from Official Republicans on a public platform. They have organised a campaign of slander and terror against the IRSP and yet, for all this, they still claim to be in favour of left-wing unity. The hypocrisy of that

claim was shown again last night in a shower of machine-gun bullets.

We were among the first to propose that Michael Mullen (head of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union) act as mediator in the feud. But his efforts have been frustrated by the Officials' refusal to co-operate; the IRSP have always been prepared to meet and talk about the feud. We call for an immediate end to the dispute before it destroys both organisations and the hopes of spreading the socialist movement in this country for some years.

The Waterford attack was not the first attempt by the Officials to intimidate members of the SWM. In the current issue of the SWM's monthly paper, there is a condemnation of earlier threats made by the chairman of the Waterford Official Sinn Fein: he objected to articles in *The Worker* that criticised the Officials' support for the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and the Officials' attacks on the IRSP. Since the machine-gun attack,

further physical threats have been made against the Waterford SWM. And nationally, the leadership of the Officials has indicated that anyone who associates with the IRSP is at risk.

The executive committee of the International Socialists condemns the Official IRA's resort to Stalinist thuggery in an attempt to prevent the spread of revolutionary socialist ideas in Ireland.

Demand

Socialist Worker supporters have often worked alongside supporters of the Communist Party and the Official IRA in opposing imperialism in Ireland. Now we must demand of such people that they oppose their leadership's attempts to prevent physically the propagation of ideas similar to our own.

Due to circumstances beyond the control of the International Socialists, the planned series of meetings for the IRSP in Britain due to begin this week has had to be postponed.

Stonehouse:

The £500,000 question the police won't ask

BY PAUL FOOT

THIS WEEK John Stonehouse, the strong swimmer and former Labour Minister, announced plans to return to Britain. He would face 21 forgery and fraud charges.

Many people in this country who have dealt with Stonehouse in recent years, including a large number of Bengalis, think the charges don't go anything like

far enough—and that Stonehouse is being protected from high up.

The Bengalis complain about Stonehouse's involvement in money-raising activities when Bangladesh was fighting for independence in 1971.

In January 1971, the Awami League, which stood for independence, won 167 out of 169 seats in the National Assembly. In late March, the military dictatorship in West Pakistan responded with a brutal invasion.

In the first week, a quarter of a million Bengalis were killed. The bloodshed and famine attracted large numbers of world charities, notably War on Want, which takes its name from a book written by Harold Wilson in the 1950s.

Its chairman at the time was Donald Chesworth, a Labour Party politician who, like Stonehouse, had been active in the National Association of Labour Students at the London School of Economics, in the International Union of Socialist Youth, and in East Africa.

Chesworth is now in Mauritius, where he is the government's adviser on labour matters, and where John Stonehouse was hoping, until recently, to join him.

Vast sums

In April 1971, Stonehouse, who was getting a consultancy fee of £4000 from International Computers on top of his MP's salary, was taken on at £2000 a year as a consultant to War on Want on matters relating to Bangladesh. During 1971, Stonehouse made at least two visits to the stricken areas.

The terror in Bangladesh caused consternation among the 80,000-strong Bengali community in Britain. Many Bengalis were prepared to give money to help their countrymen, but were worried about handing over vast sums of money to one or other of the warring political and business factions among Bengalis in Britain.

The arrival in Britain of a senior East Pakistan judge, Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, seemed to solve the problem. He agreed to become trustee of a relief fund. So did John Stonehouse and Donald Chesworth.

The formation of this respectable trio of trustees was quickly broadcast across the Bengali communities. Official receipt books were distributed. Collecting committees were set up. Collectors went round the houses and factories. Mass meetings were held to collect money. At one emotional meeting in Birmingham £2500 was collected.

Each Bengali worker was expected to give a minimum of £10 to save his country. Many gave much more.

Paid more

Haffiz Rahman, a garment worker in East London paid £50 out of his savings to the fund, and £1 a week for 11 weeks after that.

Mohammad Abdul Rahim, a London underground train driver, paid the same sum. Mohammad Abdul Hye, a worker at Standard Telephone Cables in Colindale, North London, paid £25. Workers were expected to pay a minimum of £10, and a weekly payment after that. Most paid more.

Soon things began to look wrong. Haffiz Rahman told me: 'It looked to us as though the money was not being used in the proper way. We had no accounts. So we stopped supporting the fund.'

IN SEPTEMBER 1972, the trustees finally published their accounts. They were audited by a chartered accountant called Quazi Muzibir Rahman, who has since left the country.

The accounts are, by any standards, a disgrace. The most blatant error concerns 'missing' receipt books. A summary at the end of the accounts states that 153 receipt books were lost.

Yet a simple addition of the receipt books reported lost in the body of the accounts shows that 356 receipt books were lost.

The account committees—Islam Oldham, for example—submit account books to them. There is a list of such books were or returned.

Many steering committees, the report know how many. Many people do not mentioned in the report.

Mr Sirajul Haque reported in the Janomot (24.10.71) £5000 from 500 donors. Mr Haque and mentioned in the report.

Perhaps the most the accounts is the who are shown to the fund. The fund—the Bangladesh committee at 11 Goodwood collected substantial and in the sale of the fund.

Mohammad Ali, from cheque to the committee May 1971. All paid £500 through the committee.

Bashir Ahmed, East London, and has three re Ali, a leather worker the committee daughter gave 500.

But the account committee gave NO Bangladesh Fund.

The Bangladesh which set up Liverpool, to collect Bengali community as returning NOT.

Absurd

The Bangladesh committee received £2000. The account PENNY went to the committee.

According to what was collected, was transferred to the fund (the difference generous expenses).

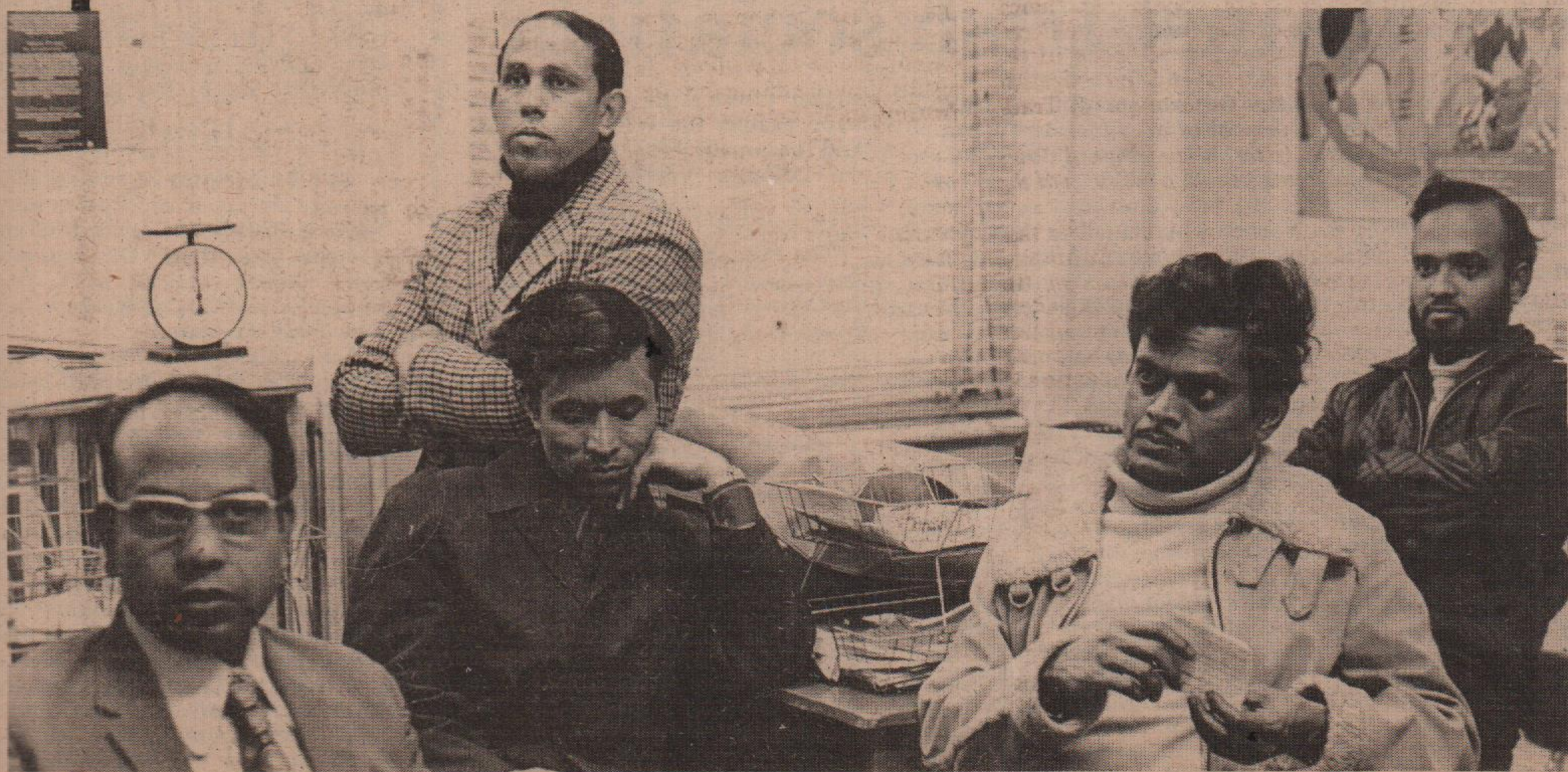
The figure is a total of £10 a head have been collected against the fund at least £1 million absolute minimum.

MOHAMMAD it another way desh. Other people new restaurant.

What happened at least half a million.

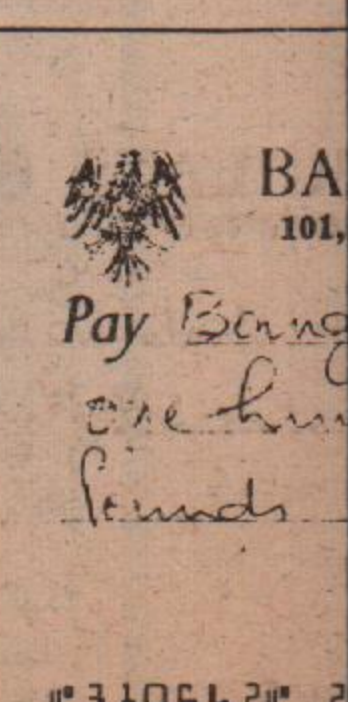
There is, of course, any of the trust of it. But the trust sign the account. The trust insist publicly uniform, or that.

Mr Stonehouse wholly in charge scheme—the special sets of stamps, whose.



Five Bengalis who gave to the Bangladesh Fund: Mohammad Abdul Zabbar (left) gave a total of £125, Mohammad Abdul Rahim, £58, Mohammad Abdul Hye, £25, Haffiz Rahman, £61 and Mohammad Haque, £15.

PICTURE: Peter Harrap (Report)



Two cheques paid to the Bangladesh Fund.

So this is progress...



On the march in Blackburn: 'progress' means demolishing working-class homes

WHO SAYS we can't fight against big business attacks on working class communities? Three weeks ago, plans were announced to spend £50 million on a motorway through Blackburn.

Lower Audley, a working class district with many immigrant families, would be demolished if the central route is chosen.

We immediately called a protest meeting, attended by white and Asian families from the surrounding streets, which agreed to start a campaign called SOS, Save Our Streets.

An anti-motorway petition in English and Urdu brought in 300 signatures and was presented to a Department of Environment official after a protest march through the town a week last Saturday.

Some white families blame the run-down state of the area on the immigrants but successive local councils—formerly Labour and now a Liberal-Tory alliance—are really to blame. They deliberately neglected Lower Audley for

years, knowing the motorway would eventually knock our homes down.

Mrs Cutler, who is 72 and fought for shorter working hours for the weavers back in 1923, put the next stage in the campaign. 'We need a residents' action group', she said. 'If making life harder for ordinary people is progress, we want none of it.'

Other residents' groups are springing up to fight the motorway. To be successful, they must involve as many people as possible and elect

street representatives. All the groups must get together to fight a united campaign. Transport union members are also taking up the issue.

At a time when public transport and other social services are being slashed to pieces, the priorities of the system which is willing to spend £50 million on a motorway for big business, with the noise and pollution workers in other cities already suffer from, must be challenged.—PENNY PARKES, Lower Audley SOS, Campaign Secretary.

THE AUEW AND THE POSTAL BALLOT

WHAT better cure for a hangover than last Sunday morning's news that in future the Engineering Union's full-time officials will be elected by votes at local branch meetings and not by postal ballot!

Already the papers are talking about a 'powerful backlash' by the 'union moderates'

We may soon see the logical extension of their argument... all elections by postal ballot. At least in the AUEW, 180 officials are elected every three years—which is more than one can say about any government institution or the Sunday Express.

The Sunday Express had a particularly nasty little cartoon on its front page—showing Communist Party members jumping up and down with joy, saying 'Brothers! The greatest news since we put down the Hungarian rising!'

Abolishing the postal vote will help us strengthen the AUEW branch. Members of IS would rather be defeated in elections where there are healthy, well-attended union branches, than win in branches which are not much more than a subs collection point.

Worst of all, is the ballot by post. These elections, in the name of democracy, attack one of the important weapons of our class—our ability to discuss, debate and decide.—PETER ROBINSON, Manchester.

LETTERS

What the Healey cuts mean to me

SINCE Denis Healey hit us with his budget, he's said that workers who win pay rises to reduce its crushing effect were stealing the plums, while other workers were getting the crumbs.

Healey also threatened that if workers persist in defending themselves against the cost of living and the budget there will be unemployment and cuts in the social services.

It seems the cuts to the social services have already been worked out. Plans to help children handicapped by spina bifida are being scrapped in September for the want of £6000 of government money. How can any government throw out such spite onto handicapped children?

Spina bifida is a malformation of the spine that mostly working class babies are born with. At best, it is an embarrassment, at worst a crippling disability that causes pain and misery, and often death.

My own wife had spina bifida slightly, until she died of kidney failure, aged 17. In her last few weeks I saw her suffer the pain that spina bifida causes.

So it's up to us. We can't and shall not tolerate unemployment and cuts in the social services. We must defend the handicapped against Healey's spite. PETER SHELLEY, Silkstone Common, Barnsley.

USDAW: Help us to organise

THE REPORT (10 May) of the shopworkers' union conference clearly shows signs that the task of the rank and file in USDAW has become increasingly important.

The union executive were defeated over the Common Market and clearly rattled on the Social Contract.

These encouraging signs must not be forgotten. They must be stimulated in readiness for next year's conference.

We say we can do even better next year, but only if there is an organised and progressive rank and

file movement within our union.

There are several ways to achieve this. The most important is to organise a national rank and file meeting of shop workers every quarter to exchange ideas and plan strategy to bring down the right wing 'leadership' and build a movement which will fight for real socialist policies.

Any USDAW member willing to contribute to this movement should contact us at 64 Queen Street, Glasgow (041 221 3426). JIMMY RAE and WILLIE SOLAM, Glasgow.

THE CUTS in the social services and house spending implemented by our Labour government and councils shows clearly the priorities that Wilson and Co give, when big business is threatened, to the working people who elected them.

In Greenwich, our Labour council has increased the charges for old people's lunches, old people's holidays, and hostel accommodation for working lads.

We are told the solution is to employ more social workers. This is nonsense. Most social workers

come from middle class backgrounds and have no real understanding of working people's problems.

How much effort does our Labour council give to employing working class people on the estates to act as social workers for their community?

The structure of local authority social work more and more reduces social workers to the role of glorified clerks, spending 70 per cent of their time fighting their own bureaucracy and filling in forms.

The only alternative is for rank and file social workers to link up with people to fight, not only their local authorities, but the political system. There must be a joint fight against the cuts, which can best be achieved by local authority union shop stewards' committees being set up and, with the support of local tenants' groups, leading the fight back.

In the end, however, only political change brought about by workers themselves, led by a revolutionary party, will allow us to tackle our social problems, and allow social workers to help and not hinder their clients.

The CASE CON conference for radical social workers, in Bristol from 30 May to 1 June, should be of invaluable assistance. Contact Harry Fletcher 01 555 0542.—NEIL WILLIAMS, Social Worker, Greenwich; Case Con Editorial Collective.

POSTAL POINTS

IN YOUR editorial Vietnam Victory for Solidarity... you nowhere defend the right of the people of Vietnam and Cambodia to purge the parasitic administrators of the old regime... this reinforces the illusions of the peaceful road to socialism... the true revolutionary position is to defend unconditionally the right of the oppressed to shoot their old masters.—MIKE WOODS, Stratford, London.

lism and change, not for charities, which cannot.—BRENDAN SALISBURY, Hitchin.

HAROLD WILSON recently became the longest serving, and by implication, best Prime Minister Labour has ever had. He has another record: he is the best leader and uncrowned Prime Minister the Tories have ever had.

As the superior alter ego of Heath, Wilson has rendered valuable assistance to the Tory Party over the past ten years, both in office and in opposition. When the sum total of human gratitude is recounted, it will be seen that Harold Wilson is deserving of his share, from the Tory Party and from capitalism in general.—SW READER, Bolton.

THE ARMED Forces Movement is moving in a paradoxical fashion... If they

have bourgeois elections they should honour them. If they take a revolutionary line... they should follow the revolutionary process by setting up their own forms of government.

If the AFM is a truly socialist revolutionary force it should arm the working class to defend itself.—JOHN BIRKS, Hillington.

AN ACQUAINTANCE has just returned from Hungary... tailors take cloth over there, get a suit made up for £5, sell it to Burton's for £12-£17, and Burton's then sell it for £40...

Willerby's, the tailors, have just closed a factory in Britain to move production to Hungary, where Russian tanks can guarantee a firmer Social Contract than we have here.—JILL BRANSTON, Swansea.

A NUMBER of young people give up a lot of time to help in charity work. They feel something must be done to help the casualties of the capitalist economy... Every one would agree that something should be done to help...

Socialism means precisely this. It would be a society that would produce for social need, and not for vast profits for the few. We should work for social-

Send your letters to LETTERS, Socialist Worker, Corbridge Works, Corbridge Crescent, London E2 9DS. Let us have your name and address, but specify if you don't want your name published. Please try to keep letters to not more than 250 words.

Consolidated profit & loss account

Consolidated balance sheet

Balance sheet

OPEN THE BOOKS!

For the year ended 31st December 1974
Pearson Longman Limited and its subsidiary companies

Turnover	1,074	1,074
Profit before taxation	6,097,254	6,097,254
Profit after taxation	6,097,254	6,097,254
Profit of the year before extraordinary and in 1975 exceptional items	6,097,254	6,097,254

31st December 1974
Pearson Longman Limited and its subsidiary companies

Fixed assets	17,028,702	18,882,198
Current assets	25,252,148	27,113,229
Deposits, bank balances and cash	4,054,174	6,738,441
Total	46,134,028	46,993,880

31st December 1974
Pearson Longman Limited

Share capital	41,078,344	41,078,344
Reserves	5,915,534	5,915,534
Total	46,993,878	46,993,878

By James Ryan, NUJ, Penguin Books

THE DEMAND 'Open the Books' has a long history in the trade union movement. In disputes, and particularly when redundancies are threatened, many stewards call for the books to be handed over as fast as Jesse James drew his gun. But, in a number of recent redundancy disputes, the demand has directly contributed to disaster.

In a time of booming profits, workers confidently expect management pleas of poverty to be lies or the result of incompetence or crooked dealings. To expose your boss as a rogue or a cretin doesn't raise very deep questions about the capitalist system.

But in a period of economic crisis, many companies are in trouble. A lot of managements are happy to let workers see this for themselves, in the hope that we will be 'more reasonable' once we know the facts.

Even now, though, most managements obviously prefer not to have us prying into their secrets if they can help it. So what can happen when redundancies are announced and the workers demand to see the accounts? Workers at Penguin Books took this demand a long way, and something can be learned from their experience.

Last December, management announced that they wanted 54 redundancies from 1 May 1975.

The stewards' committee called a mass meeting, which totally opposed redundancies, called for the books to be handed over to the workers, and called on the government to investigate the financial dealings of Pearson Longman, the massive empire of Lord Cowdray and the parent company of Penguin Books.

Control

The stewards also organised a publicity campaign around the loss of jobs and 'the responsibility of the state towards the cultural life of the country'—an attempt to confront thirst for profits with non-commercial values.

Inside Penguin, a big debate began on every aspect of the company's activities, including editorial policy and the general competence of the management.

Quite rapidly, and to a certain extent without the stewards intending this, the argument turned into an overall question of control: 'Who runs the company, the management or the unions?'

The stewards weren't able to develop this argument in a positive direction. Detailed ideas and criticism tended to provoke disagreement among the workers themselves. And the management, while retreating rapidly after the shock of this attack, still refused to hand over the current accounts and the 1975 corporate plan.

Meanwhile, the stewards were feeling acutely in need of expert advice on the information they already had. They found an accountant prepared to act for them, and demanded that management allow him complete access.

This was refused and another mass meeting was called at which the question of the accountant and the books dominated the discussion.

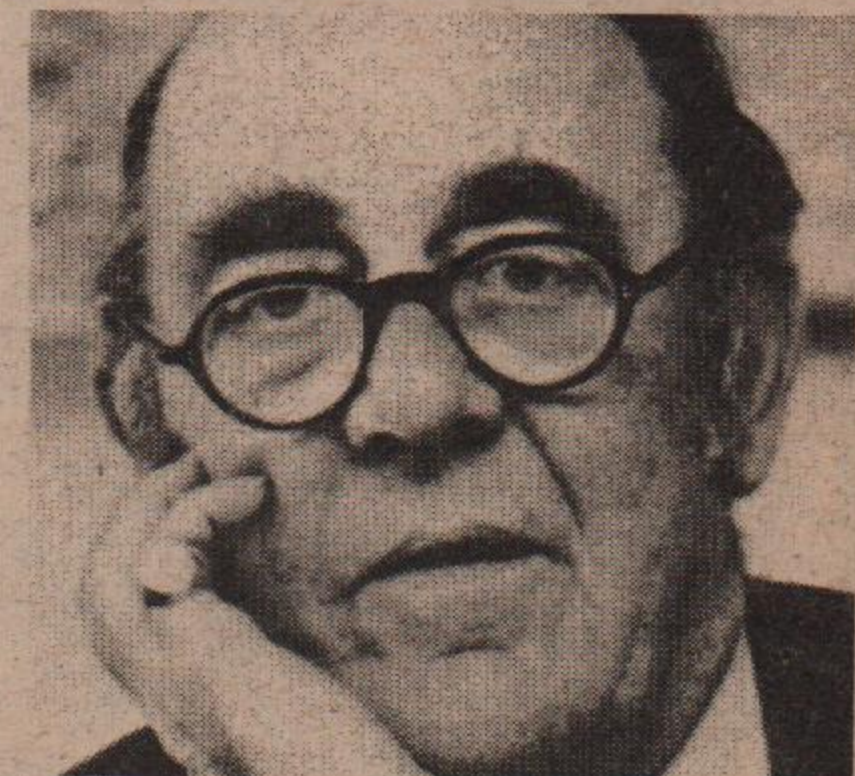
Action

It soon became clear that many workers were alarmed at the way the dispute had developed into a battle for control. And they were, anyway, unclear why an accountant was needed.

The meeting voted to take the issue to the government's Conciliation and Arbitration Service, and only if the management refused to do this would there be industrial action.

The CAS move was disastrous. It was agreed there that, apart from the unions' accountant, there was to be another accountant, appointed by the CAS. The accountants were to be paid jointly by the unions and the company, and they were to report to

We demanded it to save jobs—and just look how we came unstuck...



Penguin boss Lord Cowdray—the richest peer in Britain



Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

both sides, as 'independent' arbiters.

This meant that the workers lost all control over the investigation. Worst of all, the accountants' brief was to decide whether the management's plans were 'realistic to ensure the financial stability of the company'.

They took a month to reach their verdict, not that there was really any doubt as to what it would be. During this time, there were bitter arguments between the accountants and some of the workers about how to interpret the financial data.

The accountants shrugged these arguments off, saying they were 'politics' and nothing to do with them. And meanwhile, all momentum was lost. A mood of defeatism set in, and those threatened with redundancy began to think about where they could get another job.

The accountants' report was catastrophic. They spent a lot of time stressing 'management's right to manage', and gave us a little homily about how the 'long-term interests'

of workers and management were identical. This raised a hollow laugh among those about to join the dole queue.

They ended by saying that cut-backs were essential and that 'it is an inevitable and unfortunate consequence of this decision that some redundancies are necessary'.

Only a handful of the 54 jobs were saved. Management emerged stronger than they had been for a long time.

Demand

Why the defeat? Obviously, mistakes were made. Going to the CAS was the biggest. But this decision was taken by a mass meeting in the face of strong opposition from the stewards, and it was taken because most workers were not prepared to enter a long struggle over the demand to open the books.

Again, this was not primarily because the demand was thought to be irrelevant. The demand to open the books was seen both by management

and workers as a direct blow against the bosses' control.

And in the absence of the strength and determination to push this right through to a full-blooded demand for nationalisation under workers' control, destroying management's control would only leave a frightening void.

Many other firms are in trouble. To challenge redundancies in this situation is to raise the question of private ownership and nationalisation. To demand that the books be handed over to the workers is to raise the question of workers' control.

For workers to turn a gloomy balance sheet to their advantage, they must be in a position of strength (probably already occupying) and they must be able to call on expert advice without handing the initiative over to a capitalist accountant.

Even then, there will be no easy answers. This is only to say that the battle for socialism will not be easy—but it can and must be won.

Demo after police smash student occupation

STUDENTS marching through Coventry on Saturday in support of the Warwick University occupation.

750 police—some armed with riot shields—had earlier invaded the campus to end the three-week sit-in. They surrounded the building and climbed on roofs—only to find the students marching out peacefully and so embarrassing this hysterical display of force.

The rent strike is continuing, however.

This is the second time in two months that police have broken an occupation. Lord Denning's recent High Court ruling makes it possible to clear occupations within a few days.

With savage education cuts coming in the autumn, students may well find themselves in confrontations not seen since the late Sixties.

AN IS STUDENT expelled from Lancaster University toured Scottish universities last week on a successful speakers' tour organised by the National Organisation of IS Societies.

At many universities, students were thinking not only of solidarity with the Lancaster students but how they were going to fight the cut-backs next year.

NOISS organised the tour because of the failure of the NUS executive to implement a resolution instructing them to do so.

Calls have been made for an emergency NUS conference on Lancaster and Warwick. NOISS opposes this since it can only descend into executive-bashing and abstract resolutions.

Until the vice-chancellors' strategy for next term is clear, a conference will serve no useful purpose. The fight back against the cuts will be built up in the colleges and not declared in a motion at conference.

DEFEND THE 21 IRANIAN STUDENTS ON CONSPIRACY CHARGES
MARCH to Downing Street and the Iranian Embassy, Monday 26 May. Assemble 2pm, Bull Ring, near Waterloo Station.
PICKET Bow Street Magistrates' Court, Thursday 29 May, 9am.
All London IS Societies to support.

THE UNIONS

HERE, TAKE IT!

A vital AUEW election – and a Broad Left candidate hands it to the right wing on a plate

By Willie Lee, senior AUEW shop steward, Chrysler Linwood
BERNARD PANTER, Broad Left candidate for the post of AUEW National Organiser and a leading member of the Communist Party, has applied for an appointed position as a full-time organiser in the Electrical Power Engineers' Association.

Since the EPEA bans Communist Party members from holding positions, Panter gave up his membership. But after accepting him, the EPEA has now changed its mind and turned him down. Panter's withdrawal from the AUEW election which he must have foreseen months ago, has come too late for another Left candidate to be found. The right have been given the election.

The affair comes as no surprise. It shows the real weakness of the Broad Left inside the AUEW. Like many other members of the union who have continually supported the Broad Left, I think it time to take stock of what is going on. In Linwood, the shop stewards committee gave full support to the Broad Left candidate in the second ballot, and circulated a list to all AUEW members in the plant giving the names of the Left candidates, including that of Bernard Panter.

Failed to give lead

We encouraged members to vote for Panter and other Broad Left candidates because they were 'more progressive' than right-wing alternatives. Even though these Broad Left candidates have consistently failed to give any lead over national wage claims and the defence of jobs, they at least stood for the election of full-time officials.

But Panter's application for an appointed job in a viciously anti-communist union makes even that look sick. He was paraded as the ideal image of what the Broad Left stood for. At the CP controlled Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference in March, Panter was the key platform speaker to lead the attack on the National Rank and File Movement and what he called the 'sectarian splitters who divide the movement.'

He had already applied for the security of this appointed position in the EPEA when he made that speech. He'd also already resigned from the Communist Party.

It is an ironic justice that after all the fuss in the press, the EPEA have now changed their mind and turned him down.

Needs

These manoeuvrings left the position of AUEW National Organiser uncontested by the left. At a time when the Broad Left is getting electorally hammered by the right wing, this gives the right a further position on a plate.

But it also raises the question: is the Broad Left in any state to fight the right?

It's not enough to denounce Panter personally, although he deserves at least that. His manoeuvrings are a sorry reflection on the Communist Party and Broad Left's pre-occupation with capturing union positions without concern for the development of an active rank and file movement around a series of fighting policies.

Those policies would relate to the needs of the rank and file, in-

cluding the need for meaningful national wage claims, defence of jobs, control of officials, increased rank and file control of internal union life.

Such a movement would control the Panter's of this world and provide the basis of keeping the right wing

at bay.

The Broad Left notion of continued appeals for voting for the 'good progressive' lads without the development of a rank and file movement has proved disastrous. These leading figures within the Broad Left

have consistently attacked the policies outlined here.

All principled AUEW members must now seriously question the past advice of these 'left' leaders.



Bernard Panter: the man who attacked 'splitters' and 'wreckers'—and then destroyed the work of so many militants

PICTURE: Chris Davies (Report)

The Social Contract? Perhaps it'll go away

By Jimmy McCallum
SPINELESSNESS by the AUEW National Committee means the country's second biggest union has no policy on the Social Contract. The discussion was deferred by the Committee's recent meeting in Blackpool to next month's Amalgamated Conference.

So Hugh Scanlon can say what he likes about the Contract while John Boyd can say that he supports it. Both officials are now free to say what they like and Boyd will make full use of the opportunity.

Rightward

This year's National Committee has in fact closely mirrored the rightward slide that has hit the AUEW in the last 12 months. The fact that Boyd's moderates held a sufficient majority to defeat the amalgamation proposals put forward by the left underlines the setbacks that came in the union's recent elections.

Clearly the vote for Boyd against Bob Wright in the ballot for General Secretary was not an isolated incident. The re-emergence of the right wing is based on something more than just organisational effort.

It is true that the Boyd campaign is much more serious and well organised than the Broad Left campaign of 'he's a good lad and a progressive', but that doesn't explain the shift in the union.

MORE AUEW branches have passed resolutions condemning the decision of the Executive to refuse Socialist Worker press credentials to report the meetings of its National Committee.

Socialist Worker urges all AUEW members to raise the question in their branches and district committees. Let us know about resolutions passed.

This week we have heard of resolutions from Wythenshawe No 1, Chiswick 5, Cricklewood 4, Oldham 9, and Stratford No 2 branches.

The wages debate at Blackpool resolved to instruct the EC to push for substantial increases in wages at the next round of negotiations in May 1976. That's right, May 1976, not May 1975.

A whole series of brave, outspoken speeches were made in the three and a half hour debate. Most of the delegates demanding large increases pointed to the futility of putting figures on wage demands in a time of massive inflation.

It must have pleased the engineering employers to know that the claim was going to be substantial and not for a £60 a week national minimum rate and a £20 a week across the board increase.

Disillusioned

For the second year running, the National Committee has ducked the issue of wages and rejected the possibility of leading the membership in a fight. This, more than anything else, has a decisive effect inside the union.

If the National Committee cannot make a clear stand on a wage claim then the rank and file will inevitably become disillusioned.

The overwhelming weakness of the Broad Left has been their inability to come to grips with what a wage fight really means. The issue has been shuttled back and forward between national claims and plant-by-plant initiative until it has been lost.

In the process, the importance of the AUEW's stand for the rest of the trade union movement has declined. Most of the struggle against lay-offs, and redundancies and for wages have found no reflection inside the AUEW.

How we beat a victimisation

NICK RILEY, EETPU shop steward at Rotary Electrical, Sheffield, writes about the attempt to victimise him for helping to organise the union in his workplace, and about the lessons for other trade unionists:

The trouble started in January when a handful of militants began to reintroduce trade unionism into the firm. The response was fantastic.

The workers, fed up with being pushed around by management and supervision, saw the union as a means of getting together to fight them. Before long the membership in our department was nearly 100 per cent.

Action

Things remained relatively quiet until 6 May. Then management went into action. About 10am myself and a workmate were called into the manager's office to be told we were to be made redundant.

The reason they gave was a shortage of work

and yet, that same day, half the shop were on overtime. I called a union meeting and explained what had happened. We decided a delegation, one man from each shop, should confront management that afternoon.

Management bombarded the men with figures that meant nothing to them. We had another meeting when the delegation came back. It was clear that we would not get anywhere talking.

We passed a resolution against accepting this as a redundancy. It was a clear case of victimisation. Yet another meeting was held that night at a pub, a committee was formed and plans drawn up for strike action. As one of the committee, Kev Hinchcliffe, said: 'If we let them get away with this, who knows who will be next?'

By Thursday morning, the managing director was worried. He contacted the union full-time official, who turned up at 4pm and went into a conference with Walker, another director and the other steward.

I literally had to fight my way into the room.

Once there, I argued that the workers were not prepared to pay for the mistakes of the management and unless these notices were withdrawn they would have a strike on their hands.

After a while, the directors left the room. Once they were out, the official told me he agreed with what I had said but there was a way to say it and a way not to say it. Management came back and announced that they had withdrawn the notices unconditionally.

Solidarity

This victory goes to show that you can talk till the cows come home but it is rank and file action that gets results. The solidarity of the men and women in our works was fantastic, that's what won us the victory without the help of union officials.

We are not kidding ourselves that management will lay down and die but this has made us all the stronger to face any more attacks.

Socialist Worker

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

WHO ARE THE WRECKERS NOW?

By SW reporter
WORKERS occupying Massey Ferguson's Coventry complex have stumbled on documents which show the company has been preparing for a dispute for 13 months.

The information contained in a captured memorandum from Massey Ferguson production director H J Hebden and dated 2 April 1974, has astonished many of the workers.

Like all of us, they have been assaulted by years of Fleet Street propaganda about militants wrecking industry and causing strikes. So they find it almost incredible that those militants are, in fact, the employers.

Secret memo exposes firm's plan to force a strike

The secret memo was first disclosed at the workers' mass meeting last week. Then, on Tuesday, management sent out a letter to all hourly-paid employees headlined: The disputes at Coventry. It makes a pathetic attempt to explain away the document and says:
 'At your mass meeting, reference was made to a company document from which it was alleged that the company had picked this

dispute. That document refers to a theoretical study made 13 months ago and has been quoted out of context.'

The 'explanation' has boomeranged. Workers who were sceptical about the authenticity of the document simply do not swallow the 'theoretical study' line of argument. As far as they are concerned, all Massey Ferguson's explanation has done is to admit that the captured document is genuine.

The plan to hold out for a four-week strike has boomeranged, too.

The workers have adopted new tactics, occupying the plants, stopping all operations and sending out flying pickets to visit the hotels where the displaced management have tried to camp.

But why should one of the most profitable firms in Britain plan for a four-week strike and then ensure it took place by offering a pitiful six per cent wage rise out of their £168 million profit? There appear to be two reasons.

Two years ago, after a bitter struggle, Massey Ferguson were forced to concede parity with Coventry at the Perkins plant in Peterborough.

Starve

But it appears they resolved to give Peterborough parity at Coventry's expense, by holding wages down and planning for a strike.

Furthermore, shop-floor organisation in Coventry is extremely powerful, with the assembly workers in particular resisting lay-offs to the hilt. Naturally Masseys are rather keen to do what they can to weaken this organisation.

In two weeks management's plans have been turned upon them. They are prepared to starve the strikers for a month, but not at the cost of disruption to sales. They are reported to be deeply worried at further tactics being discussed—in particular the suggestions of restarting the tracks and selling tractors and spares for strike funds.

The strikers, backed by the District Committees of all three unions, can be sent messages of support at: Secretary, Joint Shop Stewards Committee, Massey Ferguson, Banner Lane, Coventry.

How you can help the Two

WE'VE HAD a number of letters since our story last week that Shrewsbury picket Des Warren is in solitary confinement.

One letter from the Prisoners Wives and Families Association asks to be put in touch with Mrs Warren because they want to organise a picket outside the Home Office. 'A prisoner is a human being,' says the letter, 'and should be treated as such.'

The Rank and File Organising Committee's Dependants' Fund reported a steady trickle of money over the last week—and they've now had more than £500. BUT THIS IS NOTHING LIKE ENOUGH.

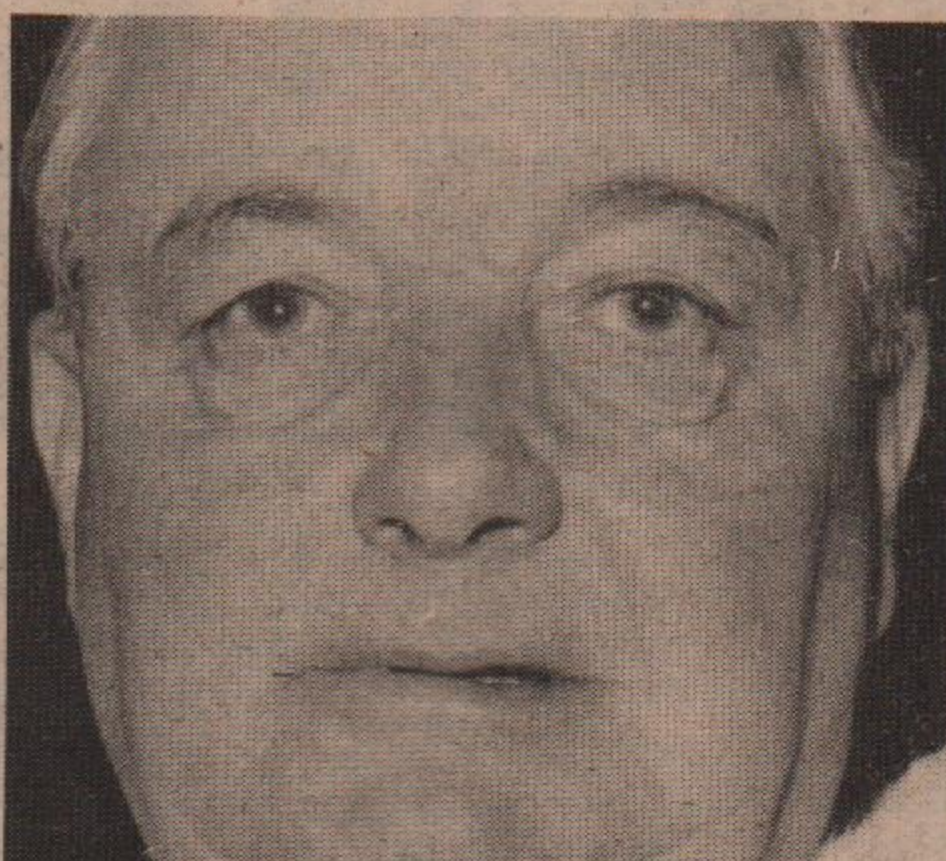
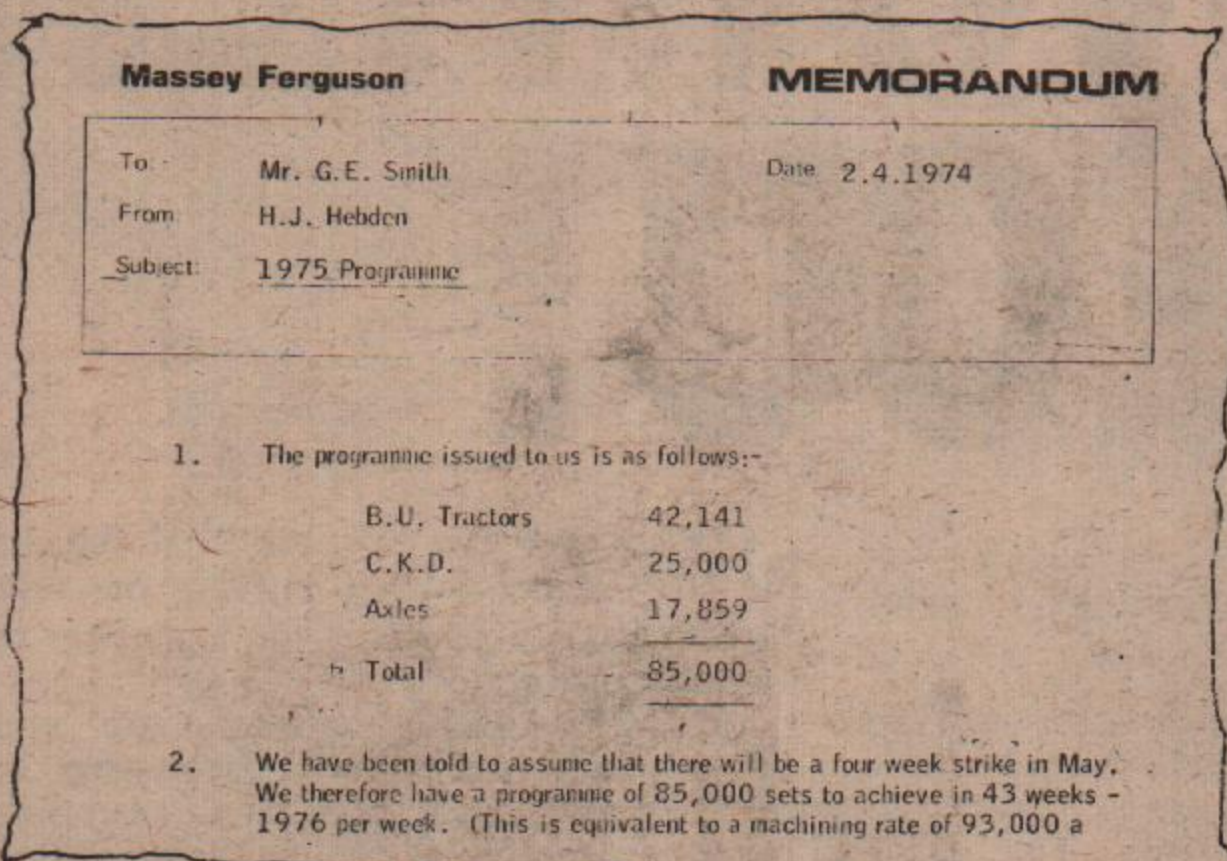
The wives and children of the two jailed pickets are in great distress and need. They can and must be helped by the trade union movement. Send money and organise collections now.

All contributions to RANK AND FILE DEPENDANTS FUND, 214 Roundwood Road, London NW10.

GRAND NATIONAL IS SOCIAL
 Saturday 31 May, 7.30pm

St Pancras Assembly Rooms, London N1.

Cheap 'n Nasty rock band, disco, bar extension till midnight. Tickets 50p on the door or from IS secretaries.



Two of the idlers who sit on Massey's board—and the memo that exposed their plot. Left, the eighth Duke of Wellington and, right, Lord Crathorne.

About this overmanning, Sir Monty Finished...

PART OF the large delegation of steelworkers from Scotland and Wales who marched through London last Monday in defence of their jobs.

The steelworkers gave a black eye to Sir Monty Finniston's plans for 20,000 instant redundancies—but the small print in the 'agreement' between the British Steel Corporation and the steel union leaders needs reading carefully.

It could mean almost as many sackings—'agreed' over a longer period.

Picture: Andrew Wiard (Report)



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OUR FUND: KEEP IT UP!

OUR FUND topped the £1000 mark this week—but we're still a long way from our monthly target of £2000.

We received £394.21 to push May's total up to £1153.55. Now help us push for that extra £850.

We need your pennies—and pounds—to keep ahead of inflation and to strengthen the paper that fights for every worker.

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