

## Council's penny pinching leads to child's death

**KIDS NEED TO PLAY LET THEM PLAY SAFELY**  
METAL BARRIERS PLAY GROUPS & AREAS CROSSINGS & PATROLS ON TOWER HILL NOW!

TOWER HILL, Kirkby, Lancs. After the death of 4 year old Alex Simpson, tenants on the Tower Hill council estate have once again mounted a campaign for road safety. And once again the council have tried to pass the buck.

Road blocks, occupations in council offices, demonstrations to councillors' houses, door to door leaflets, posters and stickers have shown the anger and frustration of the people on the estate.

As in all working-class areas the people face many problems created by council and government policy in the service of employers, builders and speculators. *The death of children on the roads is one, tragic cost of that policy.*

The majority of families are young, with young children. Extra safety precautions and provision for child-care are vital. Instead the estate has been built dangerously and provides next to nothing. Its just a desert built to house 'overspill' from other areas: somewhere to lodge the workforce for the local factories.

Towerhill is ringed by four main roads. Through traffic includes heavy lorries to the woodyards and the industrial estate. On long stretches there are no safety barriers or even pavements. In some areas its only a few yards from your doorstep onto the road.

There are very few facilities for young children to play safely inside the estate. So childcare is made harder. Especially for the housewife.

Children can't and shouldn't be changed up all day. And nobody can guard them every second, especially if you live sky-high in a flat. *You wouldn't have to either if the council did its job.* But they don't, so you have to live on your nerves. It takes one second when you're busy for a young active child to be up and away.

Generally, councillors and council officials duck the issue. Just like those pernicious tv adverts, 'Better under your feet than under a car'. These just load more guilt onto housewives and solve none of the problems.

Take Williams, Chief Engineer of Merseyside County Council: 'I accept that the design of Tower Hill does leave a lot to be desired. But

this is even more reason why there should be greater parental control.'

Mr Williams is not a housewife, and never has, nor never will, live on Tower Hill.

The tenants who do and who want to *change* their conditions show more concern for their own and their children's well-being than the council ever will do.

The problems and the buck passing gets worse as the government orders local councils to stop spending money, and they meekly obey.

Their job more and more becomes to collect rents, evict families in arrears and pay off the bankers. They are forgetting it was ever anything else. When tenants ask for anything its always 'No money.' So they shift the burden onto the tenants. They won't pay for road safety so there will have to be 'more parental control', more work for housewives.

Its the same with everything else. Knowsley council (the borough where Tower Hill is situated) has just demanded 180 redundancies from the direct works department, which does the maintenance and repairs to the houses. But there is already a backlog of 18,000 jobs.

The council have even threatened to close the department down if the men refuse to accept these redundancies.

So while tenants get nothing back, rents and rates soar. More families run up arrears and face eviction. Electric and gas gets cut off. And so it goes on.

### Leeches

And why? Because we have a government which is hell bent on making funds over to private industry and away from the social services. Because we live in a system where nearly 80% of rent goes to the moneylenders to pay back the original money and the extortionate interest on it.

The cost of keeping these leeches and their profits, is human suffering. Face the mother and father of that 4 year old lad, or the brother who cries for him, and try and argue that the cut-backs are fair and inevitable.

You can't put a price on a child's life. You can refuse to implement the cuts. You can refuse to pay back the interest rates to the moneylenders. But where's the labour council who will take this stand for working-people?

For two and a half years the tenants have asked for metal barriers all round the estate on the main roads. If they'd got them Alex might be alive today.

# BARRICADES AGAINST THE CUTS

## MARCH AGAINST RACISM

ASSEMBLE 12 NOON  
SPEAKERS CORNER,  
LONDON, JULY 11.

Called by the Indian Worker-Workers Association and the Bangladeshi Workers Association.



## Black people take on racists

OVER 70 people demonstrated outside Manchester magistrates court last month when a sixteen year old black girl came up on charges of assaulting a policeman and breach of the peace. The demonstrators were protesting against racism and police brutality.

The girl's arrest came after months of police harassment of black kids in Manchester's Moss Side. She was picked up when a group of black kids were going home from a local youth club, the Hideaway. As they walked through the local shopping precinct, one youth was stopped by police on the pretext that they were looking for an air

pistol. The police shoved the girl; she shoved back, and eight policemen jumped on her. She was beaten up and arrested for assault. A black defense committee has been set up at the Hideaway. The girl's trial has been adjourned until July 12.

In many towns now black people are forming their own self-defense groups. The Asian Youth Organisation is already over 150 strong in Blackburn. There is an Indian Defense Council in Southall, the Brixton Defense Council, and the Black Defense Group in Manchester. Asian people in Southall and East London are also

to put up their own candidates in the next elections. And black parents in the North London West Indian Association are fighting for better schools.

All revolutionaries should support these struggles in an unsectarian and unmanipulative way. We need support for the national anti-racist demonstration in London on July 11, called by the Indian Workers Association, the Bangladeshi Workers Association of the UK, and various West Indian and Pakistani organisations. The demonstration starts from Speakers Corner, Hyde Park at 12 noon. ALL OUT ON JULY 11



# Councils against spending cuts?

LABOUR CONTROLLED town halls up and down the country are shying away from a head-on battle with the Government over spending. At least half the local authorities in the country are spending more this year than the Government targets set for them. But none of these Labour councils are prepared to put up a real fight to protect services, housing and education in their areas.

## Impossible

Already at least half a dozen major Labour controlled town halls have said it's impossible for them to implement the spending cuts. Glasgow is, according to Government guidelines, £14 million overspent. The council has said it would have to declare 11,000 redundancies if it was to meet its target.

It's the same on the East coast of Scotland in Dundee, where Tayside Regional Council are £2 million overspent and would need to declare 500 redundancies. And in London most of the large boroughs are overspent to the tune of £5-10 million.

## On the streets

Yet, are our Labour councillors out on the streets, campaigning to fight these ferocious cuts? There's hardly more than a whimper out of them.

Instead, they are placing their reliance on lobbies and hurried meetings with Government Ministers in the back rooms of Westminster.

The nearest any town hall has probably come to building a mass campaign was a recent whimper from Tower Hamlets in inner London. The council, in co-operation with the local church, organised a march

to lobby Parliament. Two hundred people were led through the streets by the local mayor and the Bishop of Stepney, to cries of 'Don't let the East End die', and 'Bring industry to the East End'.

## Press Conference

Still, this was better than neighbouring Harringey, who after cutting about £1 million off their budget, still expect to overspend by some £4 million. Harringey Labour leader Colin Ware called a press conference last month to announce to the world that the council were not prepared to make any cuts in services. What he didn't say was how he was going to do this.

The position of Harringey and similar councils is that the Government has no right to interfere in their budgets, (technically correct) so they don't need to make an issue of it.

## Too late

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Government is quite able, and probably willing, to rapidly pass legislation, making spending targets legally binding. Such legislation would certainly get Tory backing and could be through Parliament in a matter of weeks. And by then it will be too late to build a mass campaign of resistance in local areas. So what is your local Labour council doing about it now?



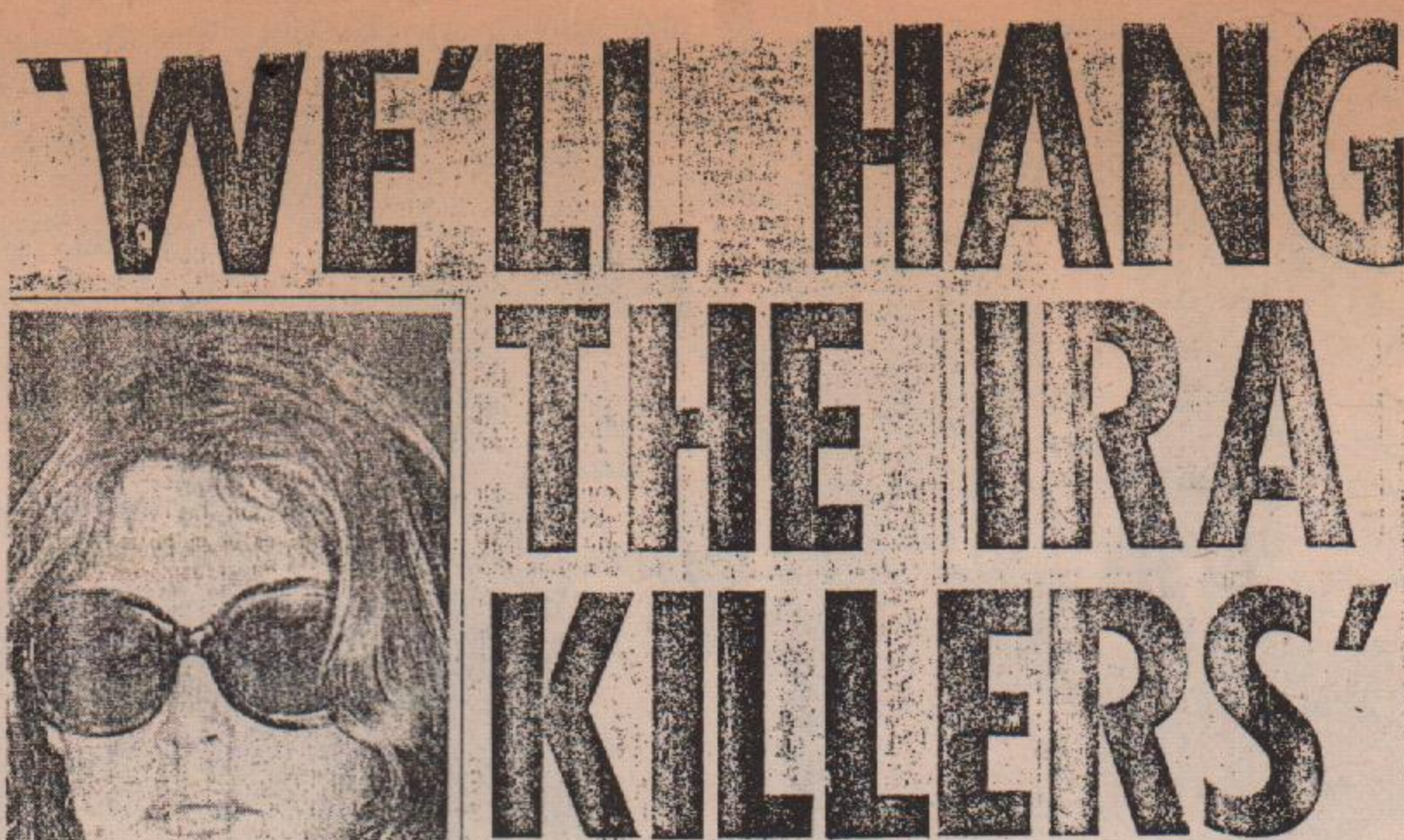
# IRISH PRISONERS SUN LIES ANSWERED

In March the Sun 'discovered' that long-term prisoners in Gartree were planning to hang members or alleged members of the IRA doing time in British prisons. In fact the opposite was true as the following letter from a long-termer in one of Britain's prisons shows.

THAT ARTICLE in the Sun was total lies. I read it here with other prisoners. We were all very angry and felt frustrated and insulted. Frustrated, because it's things like this, when government officials and their functionaries in the yellow press can just construct poison like this and cast all of us in the leading roles and there's not much we can do about it. And this is worse when you realise that all the people who read the Sun will probably believe it. We feel insulted, shamed really, because these people who have fabricated this 'sensational scoop' portray us all a stupid unthinking and prejudiced, capable of coldly sitting and planning to hang some fellow prisoner (or anyone come to that). They put us on a level with them, with all the cold calculating murderers who make up this government; they kill people, they sit and pass life and 35 year sentences on people every other day. Wasn't it Jenkins who sat back, puffing his cigar, patting his ever-expanding gut whilst Frank Stagg slowly got murdered by starvation in Wakefield Prison?

## NO PLOT

We here are all on category A - all doing long sentences. So I guess we are what the Home Office calls 'hardened criminals'. We know of no plot in any jail throughout the whole country aimed at any prisoners, be they Irish or whatever. Two of us were in Gartree with Hugh Feeney so we are in a position to tell you the truth. Feeney was liked throughout the whole prison, and especially among the Category A prisoners. This liking and respect started even before any of us met him. He was in the prison hospital for five months on hunger strike, along with his comrades G. Kelly and the Price sisters. Their struggle was a major political issue then, involving a direct confrontation with Jenkins (the man who controls this whole shithouse they call the British Prison Industry). So we were all extremely interested and, with Hugh in hospital so near, we began to await daily bulletins on his condition. There was a great deal of discussion about what we could/would do if he was left to die - don't forget that just two years before we had a strike that lasted six weeks and culminated



in a three day sit-out over a prisoner who had been beaten up in the prison hospital by the warders. It is extremely likely that the jail would have erupted if Hugh Feeney had been murdered. Anyway, when Hugh came into circulation proper, after they had won their right to a transfer near their homes in Ireland, everyone took to him. He's a nice guy, only 25, facing a lifetime in prison. And he was very straight, always humorous. In short he was a 'model prisoner' - by our terms, not by the authorities'.

## STIR UP TROUBLE

Incidentally, it was and still is the screws and the authorities that hate the Irish prisoners (lots of screws go from Britain to Ireland and do a six month stint at Long Kesh and other Irish prisons. They return like conquering heroes to their mates and generally try to stir up as much trouble as they can). When I was in Gartree we once found out that the Assistant Governor in charge of the block that Hugh was in was telling new guys coming to the wing that they 'should keep away from Hugh Feeney', that he was 'trouble' and that it 'wasn't the best way to start a sentence', that 'association was frowned on' etc. A lot of us went down and told him he had better 'turn it in'. Of course he denied it, even when he was confronted with one of the prisoners he'd said it to.

Another time I remember a screw called Phillingham (who'd just returned from a 'spell of duty' at Long Kesh) had told a prisoner that

'if anything happened to Feeney we'd turn a blind eye'. Well again everyone heard about this, and Phillingham was scared by all the cons slugging him etc that they put him to work in an office over at the main gate. There were numerous incidents like this.

Only once did any prisoner show any dislike or anything other than ordinary friendliness and prison solidarity towards Hugh Feeney. That was the day after the Birmingham bombs when one of our number made coffee during a break, gave us all a cup, but left Hugh out. We realised why, and all of us put our cups down. The fellow got the message and walked away. Later on we made some more coffee, gave everyone a cup and offered him one. He took it. We talked about the Birmingham bombs then. We felt exactly the same, absolutely sickened, but it was not down to Hugh or anybody. We feel particularly vulnerable when bombs go off which are directed at ordinary working class people, precisely because we can do absolutely nothing, not even a phone call to make sure it's not our friends or relatives.

## SOLIDARITY

But we, more than anyone, know what it's like to be in prison and don't take liberties with people (especially those doing long sentences). Don't believe a word of that in the Sun. There are people here who never bothered about the Irish prisoners one way or the other who, on reading the Sun article, make a point of publicly expressing solidarity and fellow prisoner spirit with them.

In the courts



# LEEDS BONFIRE NIGHT

## TRIAL DRAWS TO CLOSE



... a CID car was turned on its back...

THE LEEDS Bonfire Night Trial is drawing to a close after a four week long systematic assault on police credibility, mounted by 7 black and 2 white barristers. Of the original 12 accused only 9 remain in the dock, two having pleaded guilty and one having an acquittal directed by the judge. The 12 were charged with a total of 27 offences including criminal damage, grievous bodily harm and affray, following a massive confrontation between youth, mainly black, and the police in the Chapeltown area last November 5th.

The case has received no national publicity and the judge, Beaumont, was at pains to point out to the lawyers that he understood that race relations in Leeds were good, and he wanted nothing to happen in court that would change that state of affairs. He said this in private - otherwise the laughter from the youth who packed the gallery would still be ringing in his ears.

## Velvet glove

The judge has in fact been the clearest example of the state's mailed fist in a velvet glove. Generally tolerant and smiling, allowing defence barristers more rope than most trial judges would, he quickly tries to slap down any suggestion that the police had a racial motive for their behaviour that night.

The defence case throughout has been that the police provoked the confrontation by driving too fast along a street crowded with young people enjoying Bonfire Night in the usual way. 'Provocative' because the police know that the community feared trouble after a smaller incident in the same place last year. The court has heard of an agreement by the police at a police-community liaison meeting to keep out of the area that night - but some officers have denied that they received any such instruction.

The police claim that they came into the area in force because of an 'officer in distress' call from PCs Horsfall and Carr. Yet PC Carr testified that he never sent such a call, and said he thought there was nothing unlawful going on when they passed down Spencer Place.

Later, however, police cars were stoned and a smashed CID car was turned on its back. The police responded in force and the court has heard about police dogs, some off their leashes, and policemen playing 'cat and mouse' with black youth.

Having only managed three arrests that night, the police proceeded to 'interview' as many youth as they could. They presented 'confessions' from 10 defendants to the court.

The defence maintained that each one was extracted by physical or verbal intimidation. In the case of Danny Cohen, medical evidence of swelling and bruises was presented to back up his testimony. PC Salisbury has been named by successive youth as the man who hit them most often. His repeated cool and arrogant dismissal of this suggestion was shaken when the defence revealed that Salisbury had been suspended from the police force in 1972 during an investigation into allegations that he had received a bribe from a suspect.

## Jury

The defence barristers objected to 56 potential jurors, and the jury which is about to decide the fate of the 9 young men is composed of young working class whites. No black people were available for selection. The defence accepted this jury on the assumption that young working class whites have experiences with the police that are almost as bad as black people's. Watching their faces it looks like their sympathies are with the defence. It remains to be seen whether this will counter the present racist hubbub by leading to the acquittal of the youth.

# Army murder

AN APPEAL court in Belfast has just exposed a case of army murder that everyone in this country should think hard about.

The court was listening to an appeal from Belfast man, Edward McClafferty against an 8 year prison sentence for 'possession of firearms.' McClafferty had always protested his innocence, but had been disbelieved. But at this trial one of the witnesses was a Mr Chris Hendley - a soldier in the parachute regiment who was one of those who arrested McClafferty. And what he admitted was dynamite.

Hendley admitted that the whole affair was an army cover up and that McClafferty had been framed. He said that on the 17th April 1974 he was in a group of soldiers, commanded by a Captain 'Burt' (a notorious man in Belfast whose real name is kept secret). They were hidden in an empty house in the Ardoyne area of the city, watching a group of men on a street corner.

Captain 'Burt' then ordered the soldiers to shoot the men - as simple as that. The soldiers opened up and one man, Brian Smith, was shot dead. Then 'Burt' ordered the soldiers to say that two of the men had been armed. Hendley admits that he obeyed that order, so that at the first trial he helped cover up and get Eddie McClafferty put down for eight years.

But now the truth is out: army murder pure and simple. Army frame-up pure and simple. McClafferty is now out on bail, pending a re-trial, and the soldiers involved could face charges.

But where is the outcry? What does Merlyn Rees and James Callaghan have to say about their army? Where's all the newspaper headlines about 'terrorism'? No. This story has been tucked away from the public eye. Like the whole truth about the British army in N. Ireland, it's not meant to come out.





## FASCIST VOTES..

FOLLOWING THEIR election successes outside London at the beginning of May, the fascists of the National Front and National Party, have recorded an even higher vote in the capital in June.

In the Deptford area of Lewisham borough, South East London, fascist votes totalled 44.5 per cent, while Labour's was 43.5 per cent and the Tories 12 per cent.

Labour held the seat only because both the NF and the NP stood, polling 18.5 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. This represents a considerable advance on what were good results for the fascists in May, when the NP got two councillors elected in Blackburn and the NF polled 18 per cent in Leicester.

### Racist tide

Local Labour Party and Community Relations officials have expressed 'shock' and 'horror' at the support for the fascists in Deptford. Such people refuse to see which way the racist tide is flowing. Some have even blamed the high fascist vote on the Irish - and presumably content with this explanation will take no action to stop the tide.

Labour politicians, community relations 'experts' and liberals of every hue have been telling us for years that 'if only you ignore them they'll go away.' Well, they have been ignored by most of the left and those who claim to be anti-racist, and far from going away, they are going from strength to strength.

### Every means

While we still have the chance the working class movement must strenuously oppose racism and fascism by every means. The NF and the NP must be challenged when they take to the streets. Whenever they stand at elections a specifically anti-fascist campaign of leafletting, posters etc, must be mounted against them. Racism must be opposed in the schools, factories and communities.

To achieve this the anti-fascist committees which are based mainly in the north and south west of England, must be strengthened and spread to areas where they do not yet exist. Only organisations uniting all those prepared to actively

## We have been warned

oppose fascism can effectively organise the campaigns that are necessary.

One event that we need to already prepare is the anti-fascist demonstration in Blackburn in September. This demonstration, on September 11, in support of the Asians in Blackburn against fascist

intimidation by the National Party, is already causing a stir.

The Lancashire Telegraph has called for it to be banned because it is provocative! And Kingsley Read, NP leader, has clearly threatened to physically attack it.

We have been warned.

### Now lets get organised

## Irish delegation

THERE ARE still places for delegates to join the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland, the week-end of the 18/19th September.

The delegation has been organised by the national Troops Out Movement and is open to any trade-union, trade-council, Labour Party, student or tenants' delegate. Over half the 100 places have now been taken.

The aim of the visit is to give representatives from the British working-class movement a chance to examine the Irish situation at first hand and come to a more informed opinion.

It is open to all those who accept the basic right of the Irish people to self-determination. It is not limited to only those who accept the ideas of the Troops Out Movement.

For instance many of the Irish sponsors of the delegation are members of the Irish Communist Party, including their national industrial organiser. The Irish CP though does not support the demand for an immediate troop withdrawal.

The visit has been sponsored by numerous trade-union bodies both in Britain and Ireland, as well

as by a number of Labour MPs. These include Sid Bidwell, Arthur Latham, Tom Litterick and Joan Maynard (who might herself be going on the visit.)

Once in Ireland, the delegation will meet trade-union, political and community representatives, and there will be report-back meetings and conferences throughout the country on their return.

The delegation needs considerable financial support, and this should be sent to TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT, 1, NORTH END ROAD, LONDON W14.

## CAN WE AFFORD THIS HOSPITAL?

HERE IS THE good news. A £1,000,000 hospital is scheduled for the North West of England. Now for the bad news - it's going to be private. 'Orrellfold Hospital, a 24bed, stone built luxury building, will nestle in the heart of a remarkable commercial reconstruction of an 18th century Lancashire village. Here is a concept in patient care and convalescence which will be unique in this country, if not the world.'

But what does this 'positive step along the road to Britain's recovery in the field of alternative medicine' mean for most of us. It means another drain on the resources of the National Health Service. While people with money get 'the bedside manner of days long gone' and 'are afforded the status of a pampered guest' the rest of us have to

## WE THINK

THE CHILD BENEFIT SCHEME which was due to start in April 1977 has been scrapped. Under the scheme Family Allowances and Child Tax Allowances would have been replaced by a single tax-free, child benefit paid direct to the mother.

Now the government say they can't afford it any more - which is a strange excuse, since most of the money paid to the mother would have come out of the wage packets of the wage earner in lost tax allowances. To a large extent the scheme would have involved the working-class sharing out its own poverty.

SO WHY DID THEY SCRAP IT? Both the government and the Trade Union leaders realised that any reduction of men's take-home pay would be a threat to the Pay Deal. Thanks to Trade Union acceptance of successive wage freezes - wages are at pathetic levels. And it would be difficult, they thought to get men to quietly accept what would be a cut in their take-home pay, with the loss of child tax allowances.

### Women made to pay

So it seems that women are being made to pay for the mistakes and weaknesses of a working class which has allowed the government to impose wage freezes. The government and some Trade Union leaders are trying to get away with robbing housewives of the beginnings of an independent income. At the same time the State continues to rely on women's unpaid work in the house to look after the sick, old and kids, while they slash spending on hospitals, social services and education.

THE QUESTION OF CHILD BENEFITS IS VERY CONFUSING' THE GOVERNMENT ARE TRYING TO PLAY MEN AND WOMEN OFF AGAINST EACH OTHER BUT LET'S BE CLEAR. EVERY WOMAN, WHETHER LIVING WITH A MAN OR NOT, IS ENTITLED TO AN INDEPENDENT INCOME. THE CHILD BENEFIT SCHEME WOULD NOT GIVE THEM ENOUGH AND HAS SOME DRAWBACKS - BUT IT'S WORTH FIGHTING FOR ON THE BASIS THAT WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO MONEY OF THEIR OWN.

It's women, mainly, who have the responsibility, worry and work of bringing up and looking after kids. The Child Benefit Scheme would give all women, some money every week. Like the present Family Allowance it would be the only money many women can call their own. Even though it mostly goes on the kids and the house. For families who don't earn enough to pay tax the Scheme would have given £2.64 to the mother of 1 child, and £10.56 to the mother of 4. For women on Social Security it would not mean extra money, because they would have it deducted from their weekly Social Security. But on the other hand it would be money they had as a right, EVERY WEEK - that they didn't have to beg from the Social Security. It couldn't get cut-off like Social Security sometimes is, when they try to prosecute for cohabitation. Through difficult times of separation and divorce, when the woman has to fight the Social Security to get money to live on - at least she would get the Child Benefit independently, every week. (Though the amount that has been suggested at the moment, is so small that it would hardly pay more than her bus-fares to and from the Social Security office.)

The idea of paying independent money to women is a good one but the amount has to be much more. Families as a whole would only be coppers better off and many would lose means-tested benefits as a result - like Family Income Supplement, free school meals, etc. - and possibly be worse off.

Far from the scheme being open to improvement so it benefits the working class more - It is now being scrapped and in its place the government is offering £1 family allowance for the first child with a bonus of 50p for single-parent families. Tax-paying families will lose some of their tax allowances so they will only be 30p better off.

### What we have to fight for

Increasing women's money by reducing their husbands wage packet is no real solution. We want more wealth for the working class as a whole.

• WHY SHOULD WE FIGHT AMONGST OURSELVES OVER THE CRUMBS?

Times are hard for the whole working class and women are increasingly refusing to stand down and let their need be trampled on. Women need the money direct. They need independence from the Social Security and their husbands, whether their husbands hand over the housekeeping or not.

Trade Union leaders who now want the scheme to be dropped are the same ones who pushed the Pay Deal to keep wages down. Men who don't want to see their pay packets reduced any further should start organising a real fight for higher wages.

● FOR AN ADEQUATE INDEPENDENT INCOME FOR WOMEN - ON TOP OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND LINKED TO INFLATION.

● AGAINST THE PAY DEAL. FOR BIG WAGE RISES FOR ALL.

## SPEKE SQUATS

After trying to be rehoused for the last three years, Ray Millet, a Dunlop worker living in a flat in Stapelton Avenue, Speke, Liverpool, squatted a house in Little Heath Road, in the same district. Mr Millet works shifts and has found it impossible sleeping during the day with a main road outside and an adventure playground next door. Mrs Millet haemorrhaged after dragging the pram up to the second floor flat - she's expecting

twice taken an overdose of pills because of the pressures of living in the Stapelton flat. One of the children has fallen out of the window. The Millets had had enough, they were desperate, and like several other families in Speke, they decided to squat. There are approx 150 empty flats in the area. Now, as more and more families are being forced to squat to get a decent house, it's important they get organised so they can't

### L'POOL:

### TILLOTSONS TO CLOSE?

THREATS of closure have been used by management at Tillotsons Commercial Carton Co., in Commercial Road, Liverpool, in an attempt to impose a new wage structure on the workforce. The bosses have also used the 'possible closure' as a way of applying to the Government for financial subsidies.

are in deadlock at the factory, which was the scene of a five week sit-in over redundancies in 1972. More than 300 workers including a large number of women are at present employed there. And the factory is in an area of Liverpool where the unemployment rate is already mass-



'THE OVER-RIDING requirement is to ensure that business has sufficient profit'. That was James Callaghan talking last month. He was followed on June 30 by the Treasury announcement of plans for massive cuts in spending on education, health services and manning levels in the civil service.

And like the third wise monkey, Shirley Williams published her new White Paper: 'The Attack on Inflation: Second Year'. It reads like a Tory manifesto. 'We must make British industry more efficient, more productive...to create conditions for future improvements in living standards and public services, investment in private enterprise has to take priority over any increase in other public spending.'

As someone remarked: 'The price of socialism is capitalism.' This, anyway, is what the Labour Government seems to be trying to get us to believe.

Of course not all public spending is being cut, In fact it has never been higher in this country. £45.6 billion this year. *But it is what it is being spent on.* More and more is going to shore up private enterprise through grants, loans and incentives, and less and less towards general needs - public services, health, education and so on. *In other words more and more of our social wage is going to bail out, in a bigger and bigger way, private enterprise.*

At the sametime foreign governments and bankers, and many employers in this country are still unhappy about the sheer size of that £45 billion, no matter where it's going. Callaghan and Healey are said to have come under great pressure at the recent so-called World Economic Summit in Puerto Rico to introduce much more ruthless cuts in Government spending. It's partly because a sizable chunk of the £45 billion has had to be borrowed (though out taxes pay for it in the end) and partly because of the old capitalist prejudice which doesn't like to see the government interfering in too big a way with the 'laws of the market'. (ie if you go bust and throw thousands of people on the dole it doesn't matter.)

### Public Spending

Most Labour ministers(not to say MPs and misguided members of the Labour Party) share this view. But their problem is a bit more delicate. On the one hand they want to cut what has become an all time high for public spending. On the other they have to tread very carefully. Firstly they have to side-step working class power and anger; too big a cut, too quickly, risks a major political confrontation with working class people. Secondly they have to overcome the fact that most private employers in this country, are, and have been for some time, on a ruthless investment strike. They make bigger returns elsewhere. This leaves the government having to do the investing in new plant and equipment for them. **The sick fact about the situation is that while the basic wealth of the country - the goods that are manufactured - is almost one hundred per cent in private hands, it's being payed for by us.**

The government's way out of this delicate public spending forked stick is to use a little slight of hand. You may have noticed that Denis Healey recently had a number of heated arguments over the future growth rate of the British economy. Others thought his predictions too optimistic. But what appeared to be a simple question of pride, is really much more. The Government's whole plan for the future rests on fast

# You can't buy socialism

## The price of socialism is capitalism say Labour

of hand is to massively cut public spending on public services, education, health etc, next year in the hope that unemployment will also be falling, and so avoid a political showdown. For many of us it is a cheap and shoddy plan typical of this government. **Because you cannot BUY socialism by bailing out capitalism.**

### Job Creation?

You may have noticed, for instance, another slight of hand that has crept into government announcements. Labour 'left' MP Norman Atkinson highlighted it when he asked Shirley Williams: 'If it is the case that the purpose of investment is to create jobs, is she aware of leading manufacturers comments that the investment so generated...will be directed into areas of capital intensity and will not be productive in regard to job creation?'

Of course Norman is right; but this is the cleverness of the slight of hand; suddenly socialism equals jobs, and we all get caught up in discussing how to create more jobs; not how to build a new system. This is *precisely* the slight of hand the TUC has fallen for. It's a road that leads nowhere. If jobs are all we're after, most bosses would be delighted to offer them.

### Soul-destroying

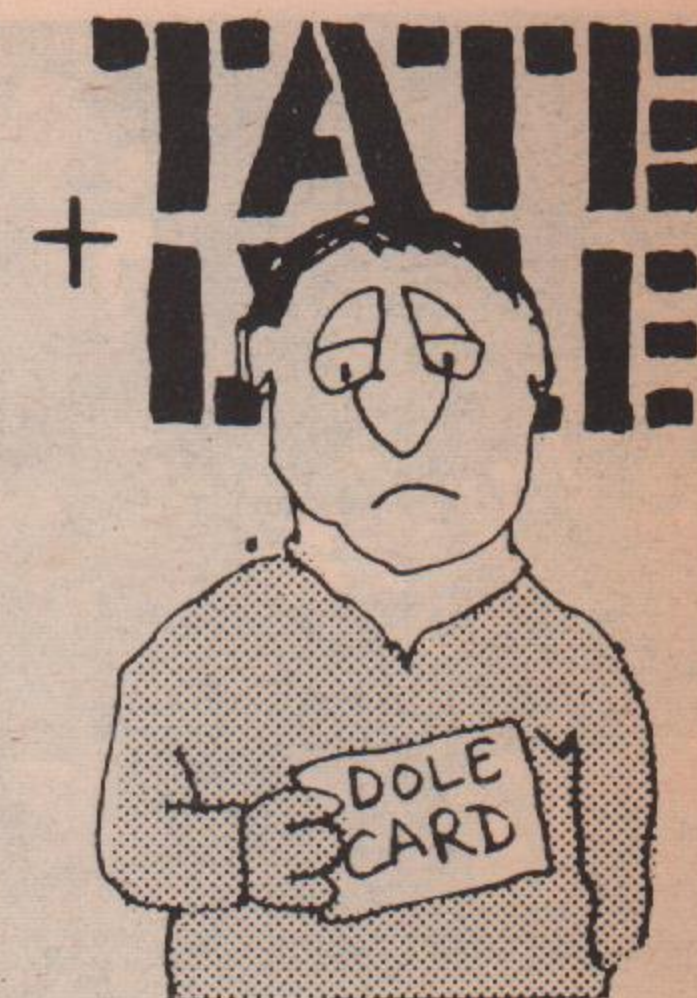
But socialism is not about jobs; it's about control - who controls society; who makes the decisions and in whose interests. Yes we want jobs, but not on any terms. Yes we want jobs but not mindless, body and soul destroying jobs.

Last year we were sold the slogan: jobs or pay. This year it's the same, but a second slogan has been added; jobs or our social wage. Either way we are being asked to buy socialism by bailing out capitalism. We must make it clear

## Bitter outlook for sugar

A MAJOR Cabinet decision is expected later this month on the future of Tate and Lyle's Liverpool refinery. Opinion is divided among the 2,000 workers in the refinery as to whether this will be the 'final decision' on their jobs - but everyone is hoping for an end to the uncertainty which has continually undermined the build-up of the campaign against closure over the last three years.

At present there is no lack of sugar supplies. This refinery, whose future officially depends on cane sugar supplies is proving perfectly able to handle large quantities of raw beet sugar - including a recent 8,000 ton shipment of beet from French farmers. But the majority of the beet coming into the Love Lane refinery is from Tate's chief rival, British Sugar Corporation in which the Government have a large financial interest.



This is why July's Cabinet decision is of such importance to Tate's workers - because if the decision threatens their jobs, the way will be clear for a major political battle against the Government. (Meanwhile Tate and Lyle announced a 10% increase in profits for the first half of this year and Chairman, John, 'Sweet Talk' Lyle forecast that 1976 would be another record year.)

## Building a working class alternative to the crisis



Building the unity of working class people.

THE FOLLOWING is taken from a speech given by Big Flame member Paul Thompson at a recent Big Flame public meeting on the present crisis.

Tonight we need to talk about an offensive strategy that points the way towards a working-class solution to the crisis. At the moment the Labour government is openly acting as the agent of the employers and financiers. And this is backed up by the total capitulation of the union leaderships.....

...This capitulation has opened up great opportunities for the fascists like the National Front, who blame immigrants and racial minorities for the problems we face at work and at home. Rubbish and lies their propoganda may be, but when there is no alternative many people will look for scapegoats.....

...This situation has produced a defensive attitude: a resignation in parts of the working-class to the loss of jobs, the wage-freeze, the cuts in services etc. The lack of political direction leads to bewilderment and cynicism.....

...How do we break out of this? First of all, government propoganda has to be smashed. The lie that it is a 'national effort' to beat inflation and that cuts in living standards will be temporary and lead to a better future.

...The reality is different. The cut-backs on us are a long-term and permanent plan. For instance all economists predict an unemployment figure of 700-800,000 well into the 80's. This is not a 'return to the 30's', but going forward to a new era: the ruling-class wants to

profitability.....

...For instance, from now on, investment will be mainly capital-intensive. Like at Plessey or the Post Office. It means a permanent 'saving' on jobs, wages, and workers militancy. The same with the social spending cuts. The recent levels of welfare have gone for good, though the richer middle-classes are given the escape routes of private medicine, private pension schemes etc.....

### MASS INVOLVEMENT

...The second means of going on the offensive is to open up the struggles that exist to the maximum number of people. This means overcoming the tradition of relying always on delegates or representatives, and fighting in limited and sectional ways. A great example of this was set by the student-teachers occupying colleges in Liverpool. They divided the city up and each college took responsibility for mass leafletting every possible estate, school and hospital in that area.....

Thirdly we can go onto the offensive by widening the political perspectives on fighting the crisis. The struggle to defend jobs, education, social services etc, has to be linked to the struggle to transform them. After all there's a limit to the extent that people will fight simply to keep work they hate doing, an educational system that writes off 80% of our kids, or communities that imprison us in concrete jungles.....

in their fight against health cuts, and against private practice, health workers are forced to ask the questions: What sort of health care?

### UNITED

...Finally, to impose a working-class solution to the crisis means fighting in a united, class-wide way. For instance on wages: its no good talking about differentials or special cases. And there's not much future if strong sections of the working-class - say the miners, whose claim we support fully - ignore the actual position and strength of the rest of our class. The future lies with demands and fights for equal pay rises, for a minimum and guaranteed income for all - including 'hidden' sectors of our class, like housewives.

Another central issue is the 35 hour week. Less work for those with a job, a job for those on the dole. With no loss of pay.....

...To generate such a fight at the moment will not be easy. There is great unevenness and fragmentation. But there are many struggles at the moment, from a class which can never afford to give in like the union leaders. And unity - as in certain cuts committees - is being formed. These have to be built on.....

... And lastly, we consider the role of a revolutionary organisation like Big Flame to be vital. Only in this way can militants develop a continuous revolutionary perspective and make a clear



# RAPE VICTIMS CENTRE IN LONDON

FOR TOO long rape has been jokey fodder for the daily strip cartoon and joke page. It has been romanticised at every level by films, entertainment and literature, and used as a successful selling point in advertising. Yet there is nothing funny about it. For many women it represents a degrading act of violence, a continuation of the patterns of male aggression, female passivity. Rape is all the hatred, contempt and oppression of women in this society concentrated in one act.

Very little of this is reflected in the legal definition. Rape, legally speaking, is 'sexual intercourse

with a woman, without her consent, by force, fear or fraud.' It does not cover forced anal or oral penetration, it does not cover spitting, urinating, defecating on or beating up another human being. Rape can legally only happen to a woman and must be by the penis. The use of objects such as bottles and fingers is not considered to be rape. The rape laws do not cover sexual assaults on men or rape committed by a boy of fourteen or under. For most women, rape is a great deal more than this.

The common reaction to rape, is disbelief, distrust, blame, hostility. There are people who believe that rape is physically impossible "you can't thread a moving needle", that women provoke rape, enjoy rape, deserve rape. These opinions along with "nice women don't get raped" and all "rapists are sex-starved maniacs" are held by many people, men and women alike, many of them in jobs the victim is mostly likely to encounter, the police, doctors and courts.

A Rape Crisis Centre has recently been started in London. This offers rape victims the support of sympathetic, understanding and informed women who make sure they get medical treatment, tests for VD, a pregnancy test and

possibly an abortion. They also offer support to the victim if she goes to the police and court. If victims can talk freely about the rape soon after it happens they are less likely to suffer from long-term feelings of guilt and anxiety which many carry around in silence for a lifetime. For instance, many of the calls the centre first got were from women raped over twenty years ago and who had never told anyone. As far as reporting to the police is concerned, the Centre's policy is to give support to whatever the victim wants to do.

Each stage of a victims progress through doctors, police and courts is likely to open her eyes to the prejudice against her. It is a strength to women to realise that his prejudice is not concentrated against her as an individual, but is part of being a woman. Rape is the only legally recognised crime which is committed consistently by men against women. Rape has little to do with the individuals personality, but every thing to do with the fact that she is a woman.

The Rape Crisis Centre operates a 24 hour service:  
01-340-6913 (office hours)  
01-340-6145 (24hr emergency line)



The demonstration to keep Liverpool Road hospital open.

ALL OVER the country, local hospitals which people have used for years, are threatened with closure. The hospitals that remain get overworked, understaffed and patients just get patched up like cars on a conveyor belt garage. Hospital cuts and closures affect women in a very particular way. When our nationally run Health Service which WE pay for, stops caring for us when we're sick, elderly or cracking up, we go to the only other place we can go...

BACK HOME. And for a woman, whether as a wife, mother, girlfriend, sister, grandmother it means more WORK, less time, more worry, more hardship, MORE BACK-BREAKING BLOODY HARD LABOUR.

That's why it's of vital importance to fight against hospital closures. Some people think that this should be left up to hospital workers. But hospital workers on their own are not strong enough. It's vital to involve people the local area who are past (or future) patients. And it's especially important to find ways in which local women and women's groups and organisations can become involved, for it's basically HOUSEWORK which will be increased. On top of this, the hospital union branches might be weak or small, so ways must be found for all sections of workers like nurses, domestics, porters, clerical staff, doctors to organise together.

Here we talk to LISA VINE about the fight she was involved in against the closure of Liverpool Road Hospital in Islington, London. Although this particular fight was lost, we feel there are still very important lessons to be learned, if we are going to win against hospital cuts over the next few years.



**LISA:** Liverpool Road hospital, like Poplar Hospital in the East End, was one of the first in London to be threatened with closure. We had very little time and very little experience to go on. The bulk of our support came from women ancillary workers, the doctors and a group of us from Essex Road Women's Centre.

Our main failure was in not being able to get enough support from the other workers, especially the nurses. And also not really building support in the area even though many local women were sympathetic. And secondly, I learnt never to trust anything the Community Health Council says (The CHC is meant to be the link between the hospital authorities and local people).

## □ FIRST OF ALL □

The first way you know that a hospital is to be closed is that it gets downgraded. This meant that staff were not replaced when they left; mops got filthy and were not replaced. The linen was old and patched. Equipment is not replaced, wards close, staff gets moved around, lifts break down and are not mended.

We'd heard a rumour about the hospital closing (this was at the end of 1974) but nothing definite. Then we heard that there were no financial plans for 1975. Even the Head of Obstetrics, Professor Douglas, did not know what the financial plans were. He didn't want to move. All the patients were local people and there was strong local feeling. Liverpool Road was an Obstetrics and Gynaecology hospital where nearly all the local women went to have their kids and for women's complaints.

Then Islington Gutter Press (a local community newspaper) ran an article on the state of the hospital and suggested it might close. Immed-

up. We went to the CHC and asked if the rumour was true. They said they didn't know.

The local branch of NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) held a special meeting about the closure. But the branch secretary was a creep and the women ancillaries told him that even if he didn't want to do anything - THEY DID.

So we organised a meeting at the Essex Road Women's Centre and about 10 or 15 women came. Most of these women plus the 3 or 4 of us from the Women's Centre held regular weekly meetings.

Our main push was a propaganda campaign. We flyposter the area with posters saying 'Why travel miles to your local hospital. Keep Liverpool Road open.'

You see, without this hospital, women would have to travel miles to the new Royal Free right up in Hampstead, or to the Whittington in Archway, which is two bus rides away. (The Whittington itself has been downgraded now.)

We decided to have a demonstration which went off very well, and a petition. Many of the women wanted to see local MP's. We wanted to find out why it was being closed and when, and what the plans were

## □ PASS THE BUCK □

But the Area Health Authority said it wasn't their responsibility. The Regional Health Authority said the same. George Cunningham the local MP asked Barbara Castle, who was the Minister for Health at the time. She said it had nothing to do with her. Meanwhile we sent telegrams and picketed meetings. But, of course, the parts of the meetings which discussed Liverpool Road were held in secret.

In fact, we got no definite answers from anyone about whether it would close. The Community Health Council kept saying how worried they were, but they couldn't do any

but in the end, they just toed the line.

The first time the closure was admitted publicly was at the beginning of March, 1975 when the staff were given one month's notice. And even then they were told, it's not really closing. It's only shutting down temporarily. We'll open again in a few months.

People were offered jobs elsewhere. The rumours grew and more people left. And here is an important lesson too - People got quickly demoralised when staff began leaving. We didn't do enough to stop this.

The hospital actually closed at the end of March 1975.

Then, in May, The CHC organised a public meeting to discuss the future use of the building. They spent 2 months doing a big report which recommended day-care geriatric facilities, wards for mentally-handicapped kids and a day-centre for the blind. There were also suggestions for an out-patient abortion clinic.

In the end ALL these recommendations have been ignored and Barbara Castle has recommended geriatric in-patients because she wants to show off that she's 'helping the poor'.

## □ THE MAIN LESSONS □

First of all, we got stalled by the bureaucracy. They kept saying 'You haven't gone through the proper channels'. But there were no proper channels. It made it hard to keep a track of what was going on. We should have gone straight to Barbara Castle and demanded to know what was happening.

Secondly, we should have brought everyone in the hospital together. The union officials were useless. They kept saying 'Oh, we have it all in hand.' and then they did nothing which demoralised people. We tried to get Alan Fisher (head of NUPE) to support, but it was no use.

# 'You've got to get moving fast' to stop hospital closures

## INTERVIEW

Taylor, said a few words. But that was that.

If you've got good stewards in the union, well, that's OK. But in our case, I think it was reassuring that people were prepared to work outside the union as well.

You've got to have regular meetings inside the hospital and you've got to have open meetings in the area and ask other people to come who have been involved in hospital closures.

I think, as well, that people know very little about Regional Health Authorities and Area Health Authorities and how they work. And people believe you've got to go through these channels. But the face of bureaucracy is so massive and so impenetrable, and the language is so impossible, that you must develop your own tactics. Don't wait for an answer. You've got to FORCE THEIR HAND.

People do tend to believe in the CHC, but I hope that our experience shows that basically it's a fight between YOU (workers and local people) and the DHSS (Dept. of Health and Social Security).

You've got to make sure that everyone knows what's happening. You must have good publicity. This means doing a leaflet for patients, taking a petition around local est-

ates and markets. The advantage of a petition is that although it will end up in a Government dustbin, at least the idea gets around.

## □ DONT WAIT □

And the most vital thing of course is that you've got to get moving fast. You can't wait until you've been to all the authorities and seen MP's before you do anything. You must be building your strength at the same time.

Then, if you do have real support and strength, you might have to start thinking about occupations and sit-ins.

I think we lost because we had very little time, only a few months, and very little experience. But no I think people realise more what is happening. Hopefully others will learn from our mistakes so that we can fight the closures more effectively.

For further information concerning the Stop Liverpool Road from closing Campaign or on women's issues in general, contact:  
Essex Road Women's Centre,  
108 Essex Road.,  
London N1.  
(01-226-9936)



## MATERNITY WARD RE-OPENED

As a result of threatened strike action by workers at other hospitals in the area, the maternity ward of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, London, is being reopened. On Monday 5th July there is to be an all day picket of the hospital organised by the Save the EGA campaign in support of workers action.



# Down but not out - Italy's 'tories' hold off left in elections but they haven't stopped the class struggle

They were supposed to be the most important elections in Europe since the War. And yet they have left things unchanged, at least from a view point of parliament. The Communist Party has advanced immensely in votes, but the Christian Democrats remain the ruling party. So we should ask ourselves: does the electoral result, the number of MPs won by each party reflect what is happening in Italian society. Does it reflect the will of the majority of the people as expressed in the struggles in the factories, communities, offices, schools and streets? We don't think so.

## Democrats?

Certainly the elections represent a major victory for the left, but not to the extent that it should have done. The regime that has dominated Italy since the war, the Christian Democracy, has been collapsing under the blows of class struggle and the evidence of its own scandals and corruption. The elections did not make that collapse final and formal. So before we analyse the election results, we must understand what this regime was, and why in the past years it had been crumbling.

When we talk about a 'regime' in Italy, we talk about the Christian Democrats - 'the party which represents the democratic values of the West', they say. The reality is different. The Christian Democratic Party (CD) since the war has represented the continuation of the fascist state in Italy. Despite the lip service paid to the resistance against fascism, Italian 'democracy' has been governed by laws passed under fascism. The main structures of the Italian fascist state apparatus have remained intact: the army, the police, the secret services, the judiciary. The men in position of command - fascists during and before the war - suddenly became Christian Democrats when Mussolini fell.

## Corruption

The CD built a regime based on corruption, bribery, patronage and some of its leading members were also implicated in attempted right wing coups, were linked to the Mafia etc.

Look at the map of Italy. Have you ever wondered why motorways zig zag unnecessarily? Answer...top Christian Democrats want motorways to pass near to their home towns. Remember the recent earthquake? Well there was another one 13 years ago in Sicily. Thousands were left without homes. Despite the government fund that was set up, those people still live in wooden barracks. Money from the fund never found its way into the pockets of the Sicilian workers and peasants.

The two main people involved in the Lockheed scandal were an ex-Prime Minister of Italy, together with one of his ministers. Just before the election, when they were on the point of being found guilty, the enquiry was suspended so as not to damage the ruling party.

Another example. A bomb exploded on a train in the Summer of 1974, killing many people. It's now clear that the bomb was placed by a so-called 'black' unit of the Special police, in contact with fascist organisations. The existence of this unit was known to army headquarters which always protected it.

We could go on and on finding examples of the corruption of the CD regime, of its links with fascism, of its decadence at every level. These

Christian Democrats. Since the war they have represented the coming together of three great powers - the USA, with all their interests both economic and political in the Mediterranean; the Italian bourgeoisie, led by the Agnelli brothers (bosses of Fiat, Pirelli [tyres] and Montedison [petro-chemicals]); plus the Vatican, with its economic interests and its mass following among the most ignorant and backward strata.

## Attacked

This is the regime that working class struggles have directly attacked for the past seven years and brought to the edge of disintegration. This process of disintegration can be delayed but it cannot be stopped. It has been brought about by the struggle of the factory workers in the North and in Naples - against rationalisation, redundancies, closures, for a guaranteed income. By the fight in the communities against high rents (the popular demand here is 'rent one tenth of the wage'), high prices (fought by running unofficial 'red' markets where food is sold at cost price) against bills and high fares (for free transport), for more housing (mass squatting). The fight in the schools against political and ideological control, for free education for all, against unemployment. The struggles of the soldiers (the Italian army is still made up largely of conscripts) for a more democratic army and against its role of repression against the people.

In the last year we've seen the explosion and organisation of the unemployed of Naples, soon spreading to other cities, and the beginnings of a mass feminist movement, deeply rooted amongst working class women. Marches for the legalisation of abortion (which in Italy is still labelled a crime against mankind) have drawn up to 50,000 women. A demonstration of 7,000 women secondary school students a few months ago in Rome was dominated by slogans like 'The women are coming out of the kitchens and are going to change the whole of society'. 'No more machines for reproduction, but women for revolution'. 'We'll abort, yes. We'll abort the Christian Democrats'. No wonder the ruling class was worrying.

## Will to change

Naturally enough, the advance of the working class towards power has also meant the advance of the left in the general elections. The most important of these advances has been made by the Communist Party, which gained 34.5% of the votes, an increase of 7% in relation to the general election of 1972. A lot of people might think that this increase is due to the 'moderate' line of the Italian CP, their wanting an alliance with the CD, their willingness to remain inside NATO, their independence from Moscow. We must be careful not to make the same mistake. It is true that the CP's line will have won them the votes of small sectors of the middle classes, people generally fed up with the corruption of the ruling parties, 'honest' citizens who appreciate the record of efficiency and honesty of the Communist Party in local administrations.

For the working class, though, the CP vote means something else. It represents the will to unite and change. Change society and everything. It is the logical continuation of their struggle. It's the aspiration to have the Christian Democrats out. It's the enthusiasm to feel your power and count your numbers. It's the respect of a party with a great trad-



Unemployed workers demonstrate in Naples, May '76.

fascism and the anti-fascist struggle up to 1945. While the official CP policy is that of an alliance with all the other parties, its rank and file wanted something new, different - a government of the left (communists, socialists and revolutionaries).

And it was especially among workers and other oppressed strata that the Communists won votes from the right wing parties, even from the fascists; people who used to be confused, and then as a result of their direct involvement in struggles, have shown with the vote that they are part of the movement towards socialist revolution.

## Honest fascists

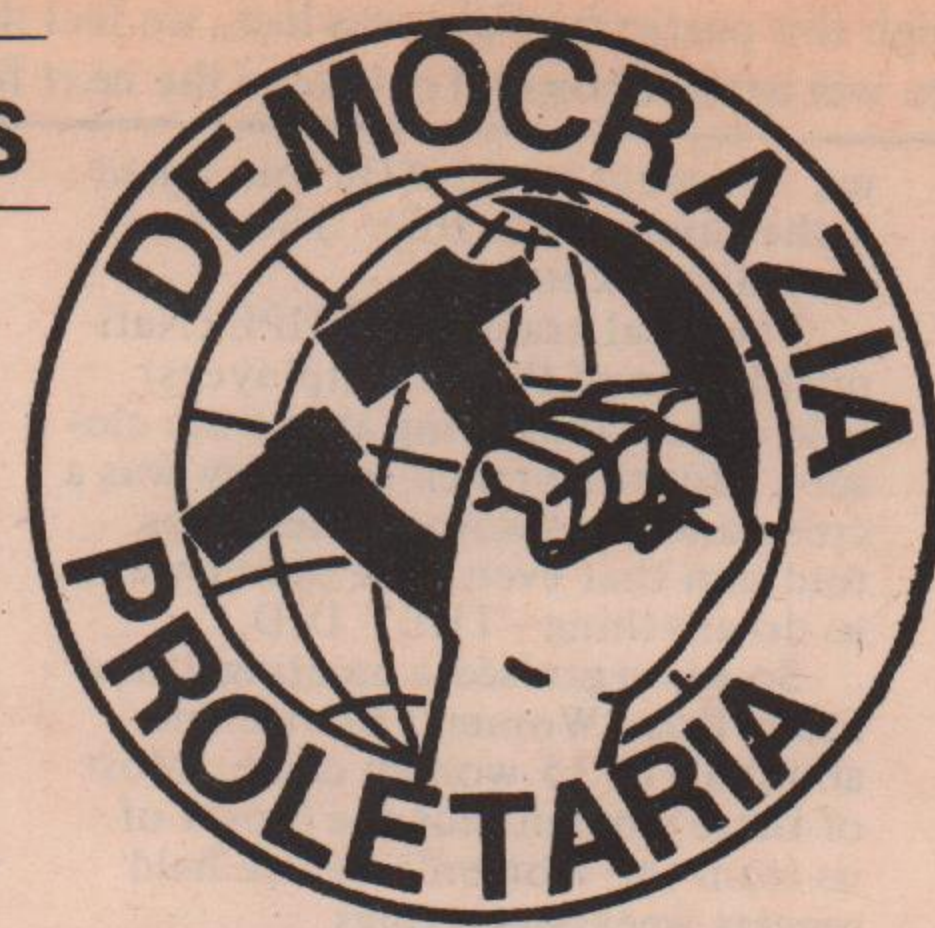
Why then did the CD hold on as the single largest party, maintaining the 38.5% of the vote they had in 1972? First of all because the bourgeoisie, the middle classes are very class conscious. They are very divided some of them disapprove of the scandals and general atmosphere of corruption, but the recent years of class struggle have made them aware of their task: to defeat the working class. One leading journalist, representing big business, chose the following election slogan to convince his readers: 'Hold your nose, close your eyes, and vote Christian Democrat'. In the end when capitalism faces a deep crisis, all talk of reforms, all promises of defeating corruption are forgotten. The working class are the enemies. That's why some leading members of the ruling party appealed to all 'honest' fascists to vote for them.

**'Hold your nose, close your eyes, and vote Christian Democrat'**

So while the CD lost votes to the left, it gained a lot of middle class votes from the right and the small parties of the centre right, which have always constituted its allies. The fascist party, the MSI, for instance, lost almost 3% of its 1972 vote, achieving only 5%.

But if we want to understand the dynamic which moves society, we must add another consideration. The fact that the Communist Party put forward a programme of alliance with the CD certainly did not help to clarify things, but only confused them. Sectors of the working class and peasantry which are only now reaching some political consciousness, which had previously voted for the right, in the end did not

alternative being posed by the CP. It is a mistake that reformists make time and time again, when they think that by allying themselves with their enemies, they will win over larger strata of the working class. The opposite is true. In a period of confrontation large masses of people can be swung, provided that the programme is clear and it provides an alternative which has the power to win total change.



**'We walked out of the house convinced that we would vote for the revolutionary left, but in the end we gave our vote to the Communist Party.'**

What about the revolutionary left? Honestly we must say that things did not go as well as predicted. The joint slate of the revolutionaries (Proletarian Democracy) won 1.5% of the votes and 6 MPs. The Radical Party, another party to the left of the CP, campaigning on civil rights issues, gained another 4 seats. This is the first time that anyone to the left of the CP has sat in Parliament. Even more important is that a leader of the unemployed in Naples, Mimmo Pinto, and one of the leaders of the Rome feminists, Adele Faccia, will sit in Parliament.

But the fact remains that everyone predicted that the revolutionary left would get at least twice as many votes. The revolutionary left in Italy is very strong. It is capable of mobilising up to 150,000 in street demonstrations; it directly influences and affects millions of people. In the factories, in the communities the initiatives taken by the revolutionaries are often followed by large sectors of the CP militants against the line of their party.

'We walked out of the house convinced that we would vote for the revolutionary left, but in the end we gave our vote to the Communist Party'. This was the almost apologetic comment of so many proletarians the day after the results came out.

## Why?

Well, first of all it must be stated once again that elections never reflect the movements and balance of forces expressed in society. Secondly, it must be remembered that the revolutionary left had only 20 minutes on the TV during the whole election campaign, compared with the 10 hours given to the main parties. Finally, and most important, an incredible number of working class people who follow the revolutionary left in everyday struggle, decided in the end to vote CP, because of the wish not to split the vote. This was certainly helped by the 'neutral' instrument called opinion polls. By showing that the Christian Democrats were still winning, the polls made a lot of people revert to a vote for the Communist Party in the hope of getting rid of the CD. Those same people now realise how wrong they were: the main question in fact was to increase the vote of the whole of the left, and make sure that those components more clearly against an alliance between the CD and CP would be strengthened.

But we must not underestimate the victory at these elections for the left and also for the revolutionaries. In their campaign in almost every town, village and city the revolutionaries drew crowds second in numbers only to the CP. They managed to physically prevent the fascists from holding any rallies in squares or streets. They used the campaign to make their programme known more by more people. They angered the CD by intervening in all their rallies with huge plastic airplanes, symbolising the Lockheed scandal.

The task for the revolutionary left now is to build the mass struggle against the regime.

As a headline of the revolutionary daily newspaper *Lotta Continua* stated: 'In this new parliament, every government with the Christian Democrats is in the minority. Every government of the left is also in a parliamentary minority. In real society the former represents the minority - the fascists, the exploiters and the corrupt politicians. The left represents the majority of the



# THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



## PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS SUPPORT FOR POPULAR POWER

The results of the Portuguese elections are now known. The most surprising thing about them is that Otelo, with 16% of the vote, the candidate of popular power and the revolutionary left got more support than both Azevedo, the current prime minister, and Pato, the candidate of the Communist Party, who did very poorly. What this shows is that at the grass roots the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants is alive and well.

But for revolutionaries in Portugal, the success of Otelo's campaign is not to be measured in votes. It is to be measured in the mobilisations that took place during the campaign itself and the forms of organisation built up that will unify and develop the popular movement.

In Otelo's meetings up and down the country, workers and peasants regained the confidence that brought them so close to seiz-

reference points for working class struggle. One GDUP in Porto is pressing ahead with the following programme of struggle:

- the organisation of a campaign in defense of house occupations.
- restarting of a neighbourhood committee in the area, following the collapse of the old one.
- collection of funds.
- support for the organisations of the unemployed in the area.

The GDUPs are intended to co-ordinate the activities of the grass roots organisations, not to be a substitute for them. It is too early to say what the chances are for the popular movement to be able to use the GDUPs to re-build the unity and power it has been losing since November 25th 1975.

The elections in Portugal have clearly shown which organisations support the interests of the masses and which do not.

many rank and file CP members voted for Otelo - only the groups supporting Otelo have shown that they are worthy of being called revolutionary organisations.

Why was Otelo's candidature so important for the revolutionary movement? Not because Otelo is a perfect socialist militant who can lead the masses to victory. He describes himself as a 'Robin Hood', and has made many mistakes in the past. For instance last Autumn at the height of the political crisis, he was the one who tried to compromise, to find an agreement with the right wing. At one stage he even turned up at Radio Renacensa (the radio station under workers control) prepared to seize it off the workers.

Otelo's campaign was important because he is still identified in Portugal - despite everything - as the man of 'popular power': the man who led the overthrow of fascism, and the man who stands for the grass roots power of the workers and the peasants. That was the message - if at times vague and confused - of Otelo's speeches.

### Mass spirit

The campaign for Otelo was the campaign to rebuild that popular movement, which had been in retreat since last November. And only by building the mass mobilisation, the mass spirit, can Portuguese revolutionaries ever hope to develop a clearer and firmer socialist programme among the mass of the people.

As the 'Gazeta de Semana' put it:

*'For the present it is a question of remobilising, reorganising, uniting the popular masses that are at the moment struggling in a dispersed way, divided, and running the risk of defeat. A defeat with historical repercussions. And, on the other hand, preventing the enemy from installing and reuniting sufficient forces to smash the popular movement. If we can achieve this, if we can overcome the 'IOYs', the errors of the revolutionary movement, the way will be open to recommence the revolution. But more seriously than in the spring and summer of 1975. This is the way to look at the Otelo campaign.'*



Otelo canvassing in Setubal

ing power in 1975.

At an organisational level, the centre of the campaign was the 'Dynamising Groups of Popular Unity' (GDUPs) whose function was to draw together working people from all grass roots organisations, irrespective of party affiliation, to discuss and act on common problems. The success of the campaign will, to a large degree, depend on the ability of the GDUPs to continue to be

\* The so-called Socialist Party, supported a candidate who is clearly reactionary, so much so that many of the rank and file refused to support him.

\* The Communist Party in its campaign spent more time attacking Otelo than Eanes, the candidate of the right. The fact that Pato, their candidate, got only 1/5 the votes the CP got in last months elections shows how

the blacks around to suit the needs of the economy. Blacks are forced to live in 'native reserves' called 'bantustans'; there black families have to try to grow crops to avoid starvation. Black men workers are forced to leave the bantustans where there are no jobs to go to the cities to work in the factories and mines. But they are not allowed to live in the cities and must live in camps called 'townships' on the outskirts. So-We-To (South West Township) is one of these. Black workers are only allowed unskilled jobs and their average wage is less than 20p an hour. White workers make up to 20 times as much. Black workers are not allowed to form trade unions and for the smallest offence can be sent back to the bantustan.

What has been happening in the last few weeks in townships like Soweto and Alexandra is not just a riot or an 'uprising of people who have nothing to lose but their chains'. It is the spreading into the urban context of the struggle of the black working class. In 1974-5 there were over 300 strikes in factories in South Africa, involving more than 75,000 black workers. And what happened in Soweto was clearly con-



The German Nazis were so impressed with what the British had set up in South Africa that in 1939 the Nazi Ministry of Interior wanted to see how the South African experience could be adapted to suit the needs of the Third Reich in Europe and Africa.

## SOWETO -

SOWETO IS A CONCENTRATION CAMP about as far from Johannesburg as Warrington is from Liverpool or Manchester. The 'houses' in the camp have no electricity, no sanitation, and on the whole, only male workers live in Soweto - 6 to 8 in every room! Every morning the workers have a two hour journey to the factories and mines in Johannesburg. In the city they are not allowed in the parks, coffee bars, cinemas etc. During their dinner break the pavements are the only place they can sit down.

All these laws that control the movements of black people in Azania (South Africa) are part of the apartheid system developed by the white rulers to make sure that they are able to use the labour of black workers without having to make any economic or political concessions to them. Apartheid was originally introduced by the British Government when South Africa was a British colony - in 1809 the 'pass laws'

element areas' for the blacks. In 1922 the Stallard Commission wrote 'The African should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister'.

## Mercenaries on trial

'I CAUGHT a leopard once, but I've never caught 8 mercenaries before', Joan Antonio told the recent trial of mercenaries in Angola. Joan and his pregnant wife, who come from the North of Angola, had been forced at gunpoint to shelter eight of the mercenaries in their small hut before the men gave themselves up. The couple were among several witnesses who gave evidence of the mercenaries behaviour.



McKenzie, the mercenary with links with Nazis like Colin Jordan.

The trial, held in a large courtroom in Luanda, was, from the beginning, political. 'This is a revolutionary tribunal; truth is revolutionary; our aim is to uncover the truth', explained one of the presiding judges at the opening.

From then on the tone was set and nobody was denied the right to bring in whatever material they desired. And although the trial's main aim was to establish the guilt or otherwise of the mercenary soldiers and pass sentence on them, it was firmly set in the broader context of mercenary activity in Africa.

In Angola mercenaries were a final attempt to shore up a crumbling military position and protect American and European business interests. They were paid, as might be expected, in US dollars. Sadly, some of the mercenary recruits were themselves victims of capitalist society; young, jobless, hopeless kids desperate to snatch at any straw even being hired as killers or to be killed abroad. Others were more hardened veterans of Britain's own armed forces, and especially of the Parachute Regiment and the semi-secret SAS. 8 of those on trial were ex-Paras; Georgiou (Callan to the press) and several others were members of the 1st Battalion of that regiment at the time it took part in the murder of 14 civil rights marchers on Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972. And at least one of them, McKenzie, is suspected of being an ex-member of Colin Jordan's fascist British Movement.

Defence lawyers for the mercenaries, especially the Americans, tried hard to convince the court that it was both unconstitutional and that the crime of being a mercenary was unknown to the law.

### A new law

There was much discussion of the legal niceties of the case. But in the end there was no escaping the fact that the men had come to Angola to kill for money. Or, as one of the witnesses said: 'The law may say one thing, but we know what these men did - they shot, murdered, plundered and robbed our people and their own. If there isn't a law to cover that then we'd better invent one'.



Black South Africans demonstrating against the pass laws.

down was the rent office to make sure that no rents could be paid. In the words of a black militant: 'We have burnt the bars, the government buildings and the football stadium. We don't want bars and football. We want schools and the white bastards are going to be made to feel it.'

**'Do not think we are arming to fight a foreign army, we are not. We are arming to shoot down the black masses'. (South African Minister of Defence)**

The events in Soweto and Alexandra with their focus on cultural oppression (against the use of the Africans language in black schools) reflect the changing leadership amongst the black working class. The African National Congress with its close links to the white South Af-

rican Communist Party is less the dominant force. New Marxist-Leninist organisations, especially the Black Consciousness Movement and the South African Students Organisation have a growing influence. These organisations with their clear perspective on the need for independent black organisations reflect the knowledge of the black working class that unity with white workers in South Africa is a sick joke. There is no possibility of unity with workers whose wages are 20 times those of blacks and whose standard of living is maintained on the backs of the black working class.

The black working class faces an extremely long and hard struggle in South Africa. Every capitalist country will support the white rulers because of South Africa's industrial and mineral wealth and its strategic position - South Africa is an essential link in the imperialist chain.

**DEMAND GOVERNMENT BREAKS**



# All the Capitalists' men

FILM REVIEW



THE FILM, 'All the President's men', is about the early stages of the Washington Post's investigation into the infamous Watergate break-in — the burglary of the Democratic headquarters which eventually led to Nixon's resignation.

The film shows how it was two inexperienced reporters, Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman), who were initially responsible for everything coming out. They, almost alone, refused to accept the news of the break-in as a 'criminal' matter. It was a fight even to get their own editor to believe they were onto something.

The film shows the endless hours of visiting contacts and members of the Campaign to Re-elect the President, and the endless brush-offs and dead ends. It shows the FBI men who know more than they are saying. And it shows the White House contact, who used to meet Woodward secretly in a car park, but who refused to come out and spill the beans. Instead he just gave hints and checked that the reporters were 'on the right track'.

The film is ok as far as it goes. It's interesting enough and if you can afford modern cinema prices, not a bad way to spend an evening.

The problem is that the whole thing is done by liberals. You can understand why so much fuss was made about the 'criminal president', but you can't leave it there. O.K., Nixon broke the rules, but what about the rules in the first place? What about US democracy? Has it ever been clean? When it wiped out the Indians? When it brought over black slaves? When it murdered the Black Panthers? When it napalmed the Vietnamese in the name of freedom?

Which US President wasn't a political crook?

It's these sort of things that the film is not about. It tries to leave us re-assured that in the end there are enough honest politicians and an honest enough press to keep US politics clean and fair.

But it won't do. The liberals in the US — including many actors like Robert Redford — have done a good job in some ways. They've at least restricted the activities of the Richard Nixons and the CIA.

But these people need more than 'restricting'. They need destroying for ever. 'ALL THE CAPITALISTS' MEN' is the film that will really be worth seeing.

R. JONES.



My Lai massacre in Vietnam - President not impeached.

## TIME OFF

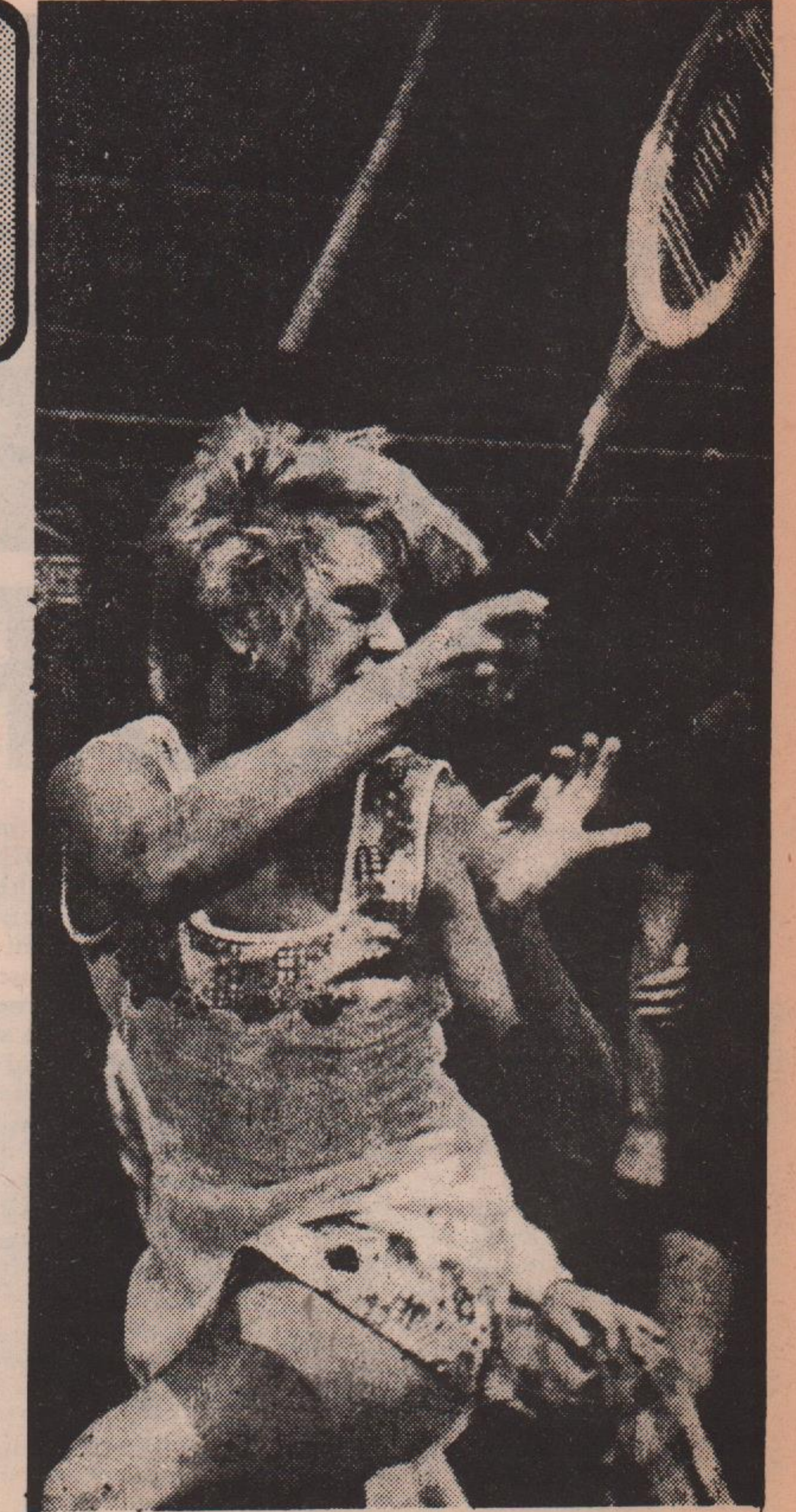
# Taking the Wimbledon out of tennis

'SHE WORE a pretty dress, with red and white matelot stripes above the cleavage... plumper in the thighs this year... her curly hair was cropped short. A beauty contest, a fashion parade? No, Wimbledon 1976 as seen through the eyes of a sports writer.

Wimbledon is days glued to the TV screen; good, often great tennis; and hours of pleasure. It's also, sadly, a bastion of the British ruling class and male supremacy. And despite the usual 'keep politics out of sport', politics and Wimbledon go together like the CIA and 'destabilisation' or South Africa and racism.

Forget, if you can, the loud home county accents, 'Oh good shot', all around you. They can't help it. Forget the strawberries and cream stall, where for the price of two Wimpeys you can pretend you're at a Buckingham Palace garden party. Forget the well-cared for sunbats and the exquisite summer clothes. Forget, even, the four guineas it costs to get into the Centre Court in the first week. All this and more is only, after all, what we expect from a sport so long dominated by the usually rich and often idle.

But what about the aristocracy and ostentation of the Members Enclosure, where the select few sip champagne under South Sea style straw sun shades? The pomp and ceremony of the chauffeur driven Rolls and Daimlers? And the 'select' special box which takes up a third of the seats on one side of the Centre Court? How can we overlook these? Tennis or not, like it or not, Wimbledon stinks and oozes with money, class and privilege.



And like all ruling class institutions, from Eton's playing fields to the House of Lords, it's part of that giant sausage machine which, second by second, year by year, churns out the ideas and values of that ruling class; privilege wealth and rank. Tennis may be neutral, but it says a lot that it's still played under these conditions in Britain.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the arrogant and superior attitudes of Wimbledon's managers, and sports writers, to the women's demand for equal prize money. Not only do they still write about about women in the insulting terms of the opening quote, but also, amazingly, they really believe women don't play as entertainingly as men and should get 20% less in prize money. Here's what one sports writer wrote:

'The presumptuousness of the women's claim was underlined when Ilie Nastase and New Zealand's Onny Parun followed Chris Evert and Betty Stove on to the court. Where Stove and Evert had been entertaining but a little monotonous, here was the real thing, the thundering speed of service, the dramatic exchanges at the net.'

Skill, subtlety, tactics and thought somehow vanish. Good tennis is blood and thunder, muscle and brute force.

Like millions of other people I'll go on watching Wimbledon because I like tennis. But after the revolution let's make sure that we take the Wimbledon out of it.

Nick Davidson.



## TAKE YOUTH SERIOUSLY

Dear Editor, Having sent through the report which appeared in the last Big Flame national paper on the anti-recruitment work of the Birmingham Troops Out Movement, we were annoyed to read the headline 'Keep Our Kids Out of the Army'

The headline implies that we are orientating our campaign to parents — we are not. The emphasis is on the kids taking the lead, not the teachers or parents. We feel it is completely chauvinist to put over such a headline. It's like saying 'Give our women free abortion'.

There is a division in the working class on the question of age, and young people come off worst through this division. If we orientated our campaign in the way the headline suggests the most likely response from schoolkids and young people would be two fingers. We should avoid like the plague taking up issues which affect young people over their heads. This does not mean we are avoiding work with groups like teachers. In B'ham TOM we are getting an open letter round to militant teachers on the anti-recruitment issue. We are asking them to support TOM's attempts to get speakers round the schools, so that the whole question of Army recruitment methods, the role of the Army in Ireland etc can be taken up by the kids, discussed and acted upon.

The authorities generally are scared of militants doing political work with kids on an equal basis. It's about time revolutionary socialists generally learned from this and started to take the needs and struggles of youth a lot more seriously than they do at present.

One interesting point left out of the last report was an article which appeared in the Birmingham Post on this topic written by 'The Police Reporter'(!) Obviously the bosses see work with kids by revolutionaries as criminal activity. Much the same as they see Irish political activists as criminals.

Yours in Solidarity

## BIG FLAME IS...

**BIG FLAME IS A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION.** Socialist because our aim is to build a society in which the working class, the majority of the people, run in their own interests. Revolutionary because we believe we'll only reach that goal by completely

changing society, not by patching it up or by piecemeal reforms. At the moment the working class produces the wealth and the ruling class takes it. In a socialist society we will get all the wealth and the power to control our own lives.

**WE STAND FOR GENUINE MASS INVOLVEMENT.** Every struggle must be controlled and run by the people concerned. We want to put the means of struggling — propaganda, information, ideas and organisation into the hands of the majority of the people. Not just a handful of militants, however committed. Only when people join together and fight do they work out where their interests lie and use their imagination to achieve them.

**CAPITALISM OPPRESSES THE WHOLE OF OUR LIVES.** We are not only exploited at work, we also have to pay high prices and rents; make do with bad housing, schools and hospitals. And it not just those sections of the working class with

engineers, who can fight. Housewives, hospital workers, the unemployed have all proved they can fight — and win!

**THE RULING CLASS TRIES TO DIVIDE OUR CLASS BY SKILL, SEX, RACE AND AGE.** It encourages divisions...skilled and unskilled, black and white, women and men, old and young... to prevent us fighting for our interests as a whole. We recognise these divisions, but try to develop unity among the working class against the common enemy — capitalism.

**CAPITALISM IS INTERNATIONAL.** The struggle for socialism in other countries attacks capitalism internationally and helps the fight in this country. For countries dominated by imperialist powers, the fight for national liberation is a progressive fight and usually inseparable from the struggle for socialism. This is the case in Ireland, a country oppressed by Britain for 800 years. We support these struggles and try to spread information about them.

**WE TRY TO BUILD A MARXIST MOVEMENT FOR TODAY'S NEEDS.** We try to learn from the various Marxist traditions, but we firmly believe in the need to create a politics and organisation

We believe that Big Flame's job is to help the whole working class understand and learn from its power, and so strengthen that power. We see the need for a revolutionary party of the working class that will lead the fight to defeat capitalism, but such an organisation can only be built out of the struggles of the whole of our class.



We fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter workload and for full pay whether there is work or not.

We oppose incomes policies, productivity deals, redundancies and speed-ups.

We encourage links between factory and community struggles, the opening up of

and the taking of rent and housing struggles to the workplace. We back the fight of council tenants, private tenants and squatters against rents and for decent housing for all.

We support the struggle for state-paid community-controlled facilities like nurseries and playgroups, which provide a better life for our children, and are part of the struggles of housewives against their unpaid labour in the home.

We fight against sexism and racism and support the independent organisation of women and black people for their own power.

We support struggles for sexual freedom. Freedom from the law and freedom from social prejudices. In particular we support the independent gay organisations.

We oppose British involvement in Northern Ireland, and support demands for troops out now, for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, and for a united socialist Ireland. Against the army and the British state we give basic support to all the republican and socialist groups fighting in Ireland, whatever criticisms we may have of their political strategy or tactics.

We support and work in the National Abortion Campaign, the Troops Out Movement, the Portuguese Solidarity Movement and local anti-fascist committees.

We want people who agree with us to



# COUNCIL TENANTS FOOT BILL FOR PRIVATE HOUSING

In 1969 89% of council money was spent on new council homes but by 1974-5 this had fallen to 50%.

Local authorities were urged by Circular 24/75 last March to lower standards of construction to erect temporary accommodation and reduce car parking facilities on council estates. In other words build slums of the future.

COUNCIL HOUSING is under sharper attack than at any time in the last 20 years. Fewer houses are being built, rents are rising faster than shop prices, money for repairs and improvements is being slashed.

And now the latest scheme is a threat to the very idea of council housing.

As part of the public spending cuts the Labour Government is proposing the sale of existing council houses and the building of new ones for sale.

They are fast moving away from their commitment to public housing and are trying to find ways of cutting spending in that area. A report due out in October will be advocating that less money be spent on council housing by cutting down

on house building programmes and instead building houses for sale and selling existing ones.

A Tory minister in the recent debate on the matter said:

'A major advantage is the new owners commitment to maintaining and improving his house. Removing the cost of management and maintenance represents a significant saving — something like £100 a year (per house).

In other words you pay more and get less and all for the dubious privilege of owning your own house — after 25 years or more.

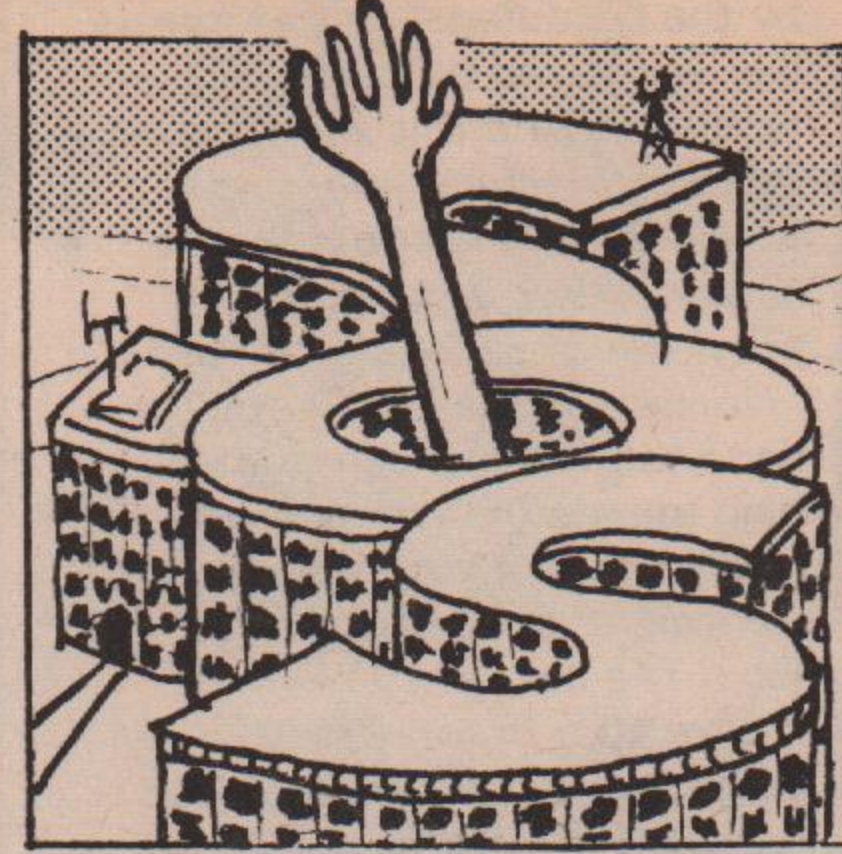
Meanwhile more cuts will be made on repairs and maintenance money so the council housing that is left will deteriorate rapidly. The waiting lists will get even longer as the number of houses available for rent decreases.

Since stopping the sale of rented houses just over two years ago in new towns, the period for which people have had to wait for a house has come tumbling down', so admits Local Government Minister Mr. Silkin. Now they plan to allow sales to begin again where the waiting period is less than three months!

The slightly better off may do extra overtime and scrimp and save to try and get a decent home by buying from the council. In many cases they will be buying homes they've paid for twice over in rent over the years.

And the less well off — the unemployed, the pensioners, women on social security — will be left to rot in what are rapidly becoming slums because of lack of repair.

At the same time council money will be used to build new homes — not for the thousands of homeless families who can't afford to buy, nor to rehouse people from clearance areas or high rise blocks — but to be sold to those who can afford to buy. Housing will become a privilege and with wage packets getting smaller by the minute, there will be only a privileged few.



## PLANS UNDERWAY

These kinds of plans are beyond the thinking stage. They are beginning to be implemented by local councils up and down the country.

● IN LIVERPOOL the combined Tory and Liberal vote has pushed through such a policy which the controlling Labour Party will now have to operate.

The former Liberal Chairman of the Housing Committee, Trevor Jones, has made his intentions clear: 'the whole of the city's housing policy should be directed towards council-sponsored housing for sale with the exception of some categories for the elderly and other special cases.'

In order to implement this policy much needed land and money will be used by the council to provide houses beyond the reach of many working class people. It has been estimated that a weekly income of £50.35 for a one-bedroom and £71.92 for a three-bedroom house would be needed to get a mortgage for a council house for sale. And the weekly payments which could be as much as £20 could be paid over 25 years or more.

On top of this the council is offering to pay legal costs and removal expenses for families moving into one of these houses and the bill for this could amount to £120,000.

This will be paid, according to Liverpool's Housing Manager, by putting up the rents of existing council tenants!!!

## WILL GET WORSE

In Liverpool there are 51,000 families waiting to be housed and rehoused and this scheme will do nothing for them. At the moment people who are desperate are being forced to live in run-down property because there is nothing better. This will get worse — and not only in Liverpool...

● IN GLASGOW the council is recommending the sale of council houses to sitting tenants.

● IN SHEFFIELD there has already been building in order to sell by the local authority.

● IN MANCHESTER they have decided in principle to build for sale.

● IN BIRMINGHAM they have introduced a scheme of combined buying and rental.

● IN LONDON the GLC Labour Housing Chairman has conditionally supported the sale of council houses particularly on a combined rental/buying basis.

The general trend is away from subsidised public housing and towards subsidising the better off so they can buy themselves into private ownership. The Labour Government says this is to save money.

But they don't talk of cutting down on the public money that is used to support the private housing market, through subsidies to builders, landlords and owner-occupiers.

In 1975 30% of total public expenditure went into the private sector through local authority mortgages, improvement grants and mortgage tax relief.

Nor do they mention the vast profits made by financiers, landowners and builders out of public money. If the move towards private housing increases then homes will be provided according to profit not need.

The only way to rid council housing of shortages, bad sites and

In 1974/5 £1,126 million went on interest for housing loans. In the same year only £1,333 was actually spent on new houses.

inadequate building materials is to ensure that the land market, the finance market and the big building firms are brought under public control.

To get council housing was a major victory for the working class and we need to maintain the principle behind it that everybody, no matter what their income, is entitled to a decent home at a reasonable cost. HOUSING IS A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE.

# DEPOTS AND DUSTCARTS MYSTERIOUSLY WRECKED AS SCOTTISH DUSTMEN FIGHT THE CUTS

DUSTMEN in Cumbernauld, outside Glasgow, are in the eighth week of one of the bitterest fights against the cuts in the country. The 80 or so dustmen are on unofficial strike against the Scottish Nationalist

Party controlled town council who want to cut bonus payments by £6 a week.

## Sneaked in

Three weeks ago the council tried to sneak in a fleet of private contractors trucks at five in the morning to clear rubbish from the centre of the town. The vehicles were given a police escort and had all their tax discs and identification marks removed. But they were noticed by pickets, who quickly moved in. In the 'argument' that followed one truck had a brick thrown through its windscreen. After further argument the trucks withdrew. 'It was a blatant act of strike breaking which inflamed an already tense situation', said shop steward John Currie.

## Damage

A week later every rubbish cart in the town was mysteriously damaged in a raid on the council yard. Every window in every one of Cumbernauld's dustcarts was smashed, and windows in the depot were also broken for good measure. The attackers remain a mystery. Now, as

we go to press, the council is offering a compromise solution; a £5 cut in bonus instead of the £6! The men have been let down by their union which accepted the cut in bonus from the staff.

Cumbernauld, like all local authorities, has been told by the Government to cut its spending. Unlike some Labour controlled ones it has agreed to do so, and is now looking for ways to cut £½ million from its

budget. Some of these cuts are in the cleansing department where rubbish collections are being reduced. The council argue that the dustmen have less work to do now. But as one of the dustmen argued, 'We don't accept any of these cuts; the bonus makes up for our low basic wage. We've already been hit by the pay laws. We're not accepting any more'

# And firemen do the same..

FIREMEN in Strathclyde (which includes Glasgow), Europe's most fire prone city, have voted unanimously to occupy 3 fire stations if the city council goes ahead with plans to cut the fire service. 'Any attempt to implement the proposed cuts will meet with industrial action', says James Flockhart, secretary of Strathclyde's B Division.

The 770 firemen are not only taking on the local authority, which wants to close one fire station, reduce manning by nearly 200 in others and withdraw a fireboat: their union, the Fire Brigades Union is threatening to expel many of them!

The decision to occupy was taken at a delegate meeting of staff from all 17 fire stations in the area. The three stations to be occupied are those facing closure or big reductions in manning. In the event of a fire, all three stations would turn out at pre-cut strength. The men are also refusing to accept transfers from one station to another, and are planning a march through the centre of Glasgow.

Last year the Fire Brigades Union expelled nine members of the Strathclyde branch after they took action in support of a pay claim which broke the pay laws.

## Milked by the Mayor

Here's one cut that would save us all a lot of money. Ratepayers in Westminster have discovered it costs £123,000 a year to keep their Mayor in the manner he is accustomed.

Of this total, £44,580 meets the wage bill for a secretariat of five, together with macebearers, two chauffeurs and a housekeeper.

Two Lord Mayoral suites in City Hall and the Marylebone Road council chambers cost £42,000 with a further £10,000 for office space. The Lord Mayors flat adds £1500.

The rest of the £24,680 costs go to meet the running expenses of cars, the flat, dress allowance, and £10,415 of hospitality.

THE NEWSPAPER fund slipped back badly last month. Only £17.93 came in, taking the total upto £94.58. This means that we are well behind our schedule.

We should have around £160 if we are to meet the target of £500 by January 1st 1976.



We appeal to all our readers, particularly the Big Flame members: if you are lucky enough to be getting a holiday this year, send some money off to the appeal before you go. To Big Flame Newspaper Appeal, 217, Wavertree Rd, L'pool 7. Our thanks this month to M'side readers (£2.93); L'pool BF members (£10.00); West London BF (£4.50) Essex reader (50p).



# BIG FLAME

## BATTLES RAGE IN N.W. HOSPITALS

THE CUTS in public spending which mean less money for the National Health Service are being felt in all hospitals in the Manchester area. The fight back is taking the form of mass demonstrations but also is going on at a more localised level - in wards, canteens and on corridors. The fight back of health workers is not only for their jobs, it is also a fight to improve the health and lives of working class people who are the main users of the NHS. The way management attacks workers in the NHS is similar to that of management in industry, and this month in Manchester hospitals there have been four major battles over unemployment, understaffing, sex discrimination and 'natural wastage'.

### OLDHAM

The most striking event has been the work to rule by 600 nurses at Oldham. The reason? 15 out of 22 pupil nurses that have just qualified have been told that there are no jobs for them. Or rather that there is no money to pay them. There are vacancies, but they can't be filled because there is no money to pay the nurses. After two years of being a pupil with very few rights, of trying to study while at the same time working a 40 hour week with shifts and taking exams - you're told it wasn't worth it. Many of the nurses were not militant when they were pupils, now they are angry and ready to fight. At the same time as the



Picket at Crumpsall hospital, Manchester against nursery closures

pupil nurses are being told there are no vacancies, the casualty department at the main Oldham hospital is being closed from 5 pm to 8 am every day because there is not enough staff to keep it open! Casualty patients in the Oldham area now have to go to Ashton, which is a good way.

The work to rule is showing up the threadbare holes in our hospital system. The nurses are no longer

prepared to battle on against all odds. They are carrying out the following action:

- banning of all non-emergency patients, including private patients.
- refusing to work split shifts or do ward clerk duties.
- barring unqualified staff from supervising wards.
- stopping sisters from standing in for nursing officers.

### TAMESIDE

In Tameside, nurses took action with the knowledge that the ward they worked on were dangerously understaffed. Management would have let the situation carry on indefinitely, but the health workers who are in contact with the patients refused to allow it. Members of NUPE and COHSE carried out a ban on overtime, non-emergency admissions and non-nursing duties in the geriatric (old people), orthopaedic (broken limbs) and paediatric (kids) wards.

As a result of this action, some money has been found by management for more staff. The nurses have demanded that they should decide on the level of staffing in the hospitals and not some bureaucrat who is trying to balance the books.

### N.MANCHESTER

At North Manchester General, management is trying to turn the high level of unemployment to their advantage. They know that there are so many unemployed workers applying for hospital jobs that they no longer have to provide nurseries to encourage women with kids to apply. So they have decided to close down the nurseries in the North Manchester group beginning with the one at Ancoats Hospital (which has already been closed), then Monsall

## Automat - 23 weeks on strike for union recognition

23 WEEKS on strike and at last the mighty AUEW are taking steps to bring Chamberlain and his so-called 'Automat happy family' to task.

At the Engineering Confed meeting held on June 7th, militants pushed the officials into setting up an action committee which includes convenors, delegates from the District Committee and the Automat Strike Committee. Organised daily pickets demonstrations and blacking is now being co-ordinated.

### Recruitment

Negotiations with the company by the officials have now completely broken down. Attempts to bring in the ACAS have also failed. The company are simply not prepared to recognise the union or reinstate the dismissed members.

To emphasise this they have recently approached the students union under the name of 'CERTINA LTD' recruiting students for assembly work during the summer holidays, for £24.00 per week!

The students have been advised by the AUEW about refusing any of this scabbing, and they must refuse and show their solidarity with the Automat workers.

### Support

Hundreds of Manchester engineers have participated in the mass pickets. Workers from Massey Ferguson, Gardners and Robinsons have also shown their support.

Workers at Chloride, Manchester successfully ended the Automat contract with Chloride Southampton, where a meeting is being held to make sure that Automat products are blacked.

As the struggle continues, one other problem remains. That is those workers still under Chamberlain's 'influence'. Attempts are being made to circulate a letter to these people explaining the facts.

Mass pickets of Automat continue every Thursday at 7.30. Token pickets on the remaining week-days are to be organised by the Strike Co-ordinating Committee.

Donations and messages of support to Tom Smith, (Convenor) AUEW offices, The Crescent, Salford.

## FORDS MAKES YOU SICK

LEAD IS ONE of the most widespread poisons we come across in society. All of us are poisoned day in day out by lead in the atmosphere from factories and vehicles' exhausts. For people who actually have to work with the stuff, the risks are many times greater.

At FORDS HALEWOOD plant the 'problems' of lead have been at the centre of 'disputes' since the plant was built. Management would like everyone to believe lead was good for you like Scots Porridge Oats, or Guinness, but they have been forced over the years to accept safety measures because of the struggles of the workforce. Their idea has always been safety on the cheap. Despite paying lip service on health and safety (Fords claim a very good record) it is clear that in today's tight economic situation they cut as much of the trimmings to try and make cash out of workers.

### Solderers

Lead discers in Ford's have fought over many years and won certain 'concessions'. The most recent struggles, however, have centred on the solderers, who work extensively with lead but without proper equipment and preparation and clean up time. They won the time (ie the money) only to lose it in the 1974 deal when management said they (and many other sections) weren't entitled. Since then they've fought consistently until only recently Ford's has been forced to admit that the level of lead in the air is dangerous.

### Extra Jobs

The solderers' demanded and won two extra men on the job, to lower the level of contamination per individual over the eight hour shift. This was seen as only a first step - they also want protective gear, time to prepare and time to clean up. The most important thing about this small success is that they pushed initially for more men to spread the work. They are not only protecting their own health and safety, but have created two extra jobs. By winning more jobs on the shop floor you are concretely putting forward a working class solution to unemployment.

There's plenty of dangerous and unhealthy jobs in capitalist society (most of them in fact) and just saying 'some one has got to do them' isn't good enough. Work under capitalism is in itself unhealthy and the less people do the better. It's only by fighting for work sharing - a 35 hour week, more jobs etc - that the working class can start to build within its struggles the seeds of a socialist future.

## HEALTH PLAN IS A CON

IN MID JULY, full time union officials 'representing' health service workers, will attend a meeting with representatives of the Mersey Regional Health Authority, to discuss a ten year plan to cut spending in the NHS. The plan, entitled, the Regional Strategic Plan 1976/86, is not meant for public consumption. But we've got hold of it and are publishing some of the main points because if you know what's happening to you you can fight back better.

The plan is deceptive. It can look acceptable to many people who hate hospitals, because of the emphasis it puts on community care; on training community nurses and health visitors; on building community health centres and on services for the old and the mentally handicapped.

But what's behind this is spending less on health and putting the burden onto women in the community for little or no money.

About hospitals the report states briefly but clearly: 'The Authority aims to reduce hospital revenue expenditure, not only by the reduction of high staffing levels, and the

scale of bed provision, but by the encouragement of five day wards and day care facilities.' And this will happen especially in Liverpool itself where there is supposed to be 'One hundred per cent over provision of general acute beds.'

Nurses are clearly due for the chop too. With the present high unemployment and the higher rates of pay, nurses are wanting to hang onto their jobs. The document says: 'It is clear that in some sectors of activity a real reduction in nursing staff will have to be achieved.' And that upon completion of training, nurses can no longer expect to be taken on. Further, mobility around the country is to be encouraged more.

### Picket

A picket of the meeting is planned by the Merseyside Action Committee Against The Cuts in the NHS. The date isn't known yet (the authorities usually give three or four days notice for these things!), but you can contact Geoff Carroll, 734 0940, or the Merseyside Big Flame hospital group on 207 5400, to find out.

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