

Workers' fight

5p

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MOTOR BOSSES DEMAND

SACKINGS

ON A

MASSIVE

SCALE

by
JACK PRICE

11,000 workers at Fords plants throughout the country go onto short time working on March 3rd. At Dagenham, 8,000 men will work alternating weeks of 3 and 4 days.

Meanwhile Vauxhall motors, not content with putting 6,000 on short time for the past five weeks, is now demanding a cut-back in the work force of 2,000 workers.

At the same time British Leyland are putting their 11,000 workers at Austin Longbridge plant on a four and a half day week and have leaked threats of closing the Cowley plant and throwing another 25,000 out of work over a period of some five years. In the Group's Jaguar plant in Coventry 1,000 redundancies have already been announced.

These are only the latest figures. They follow hard on the heels of the sackings of hundreds of white collar workers in every single company.

For every job lost in the car industry there are five jobs in the car components sector that become redundant. In many cases these effects were anticipated by the big component suppliers: Wilmot Breeden declared five hundred redundancies last December, while Lucas extended its Christmas shut down and put almost all its Midlands workers on short-time working.

Overtime

The Chrysler executive, which is responsible for putting 10,000 on short time (3 or 4 day week in some cases), is putting 5,000 Linwood workers on a three day week and for sacking 1,700 white collar workers in the Midlands, has sent an ultimatum to Wedgwood Benn demanding guarantees of higher profits. Against this background there has been no single cohesive struggle. Different plants are fighting along different lines. But three main lines of response stand out.

The one that gets the most space in the Communist Party's paper the *Morning Star* is perhaps the most dead-end of all the roads. Their main theme is the ending of vehicle imports and the stopping of investment abroad by British firms. CP shop steward at Fords, Sid Harraway, is quoted as saying "the profits made out of British workers ought to be

Shrewsbury Two

THE T.U.C. FILLIBUSTER

WHILE Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson put up a desperate and solitary fight to be treated as political prisoners, the TUC is putting up a backs to the wall fight to do nothing to free them.

At the last General Council meeting on February 26th, the question of a one-day strike to free the Two was referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

This blatant buck-passing makes no sense — unless it means that the TUC is determined to delay action until it can argue that the action is no longer relevant. In other words, a right bureaucratic fillibuster.

First, the matter was referred to the General Council by UCATT then the General Council referred it to the Construction sub-committee (i.e. more or less back where it came from). Next, that sub-committee referred it back to the General Council, and now it is being referred to another — the most powerful — sub-

Even a one-day general strike would very likely rock the 'Law and Order' Ministers, led by Jenkins, who insist on keeping the Two locked up while mumbling reassuring promises to change the law so it won't happen again. But when two Labour MPs, Stan Thorne and Martin Flannery, jointly sponsored a Commons motion to introduce a Bill that would, if passed, mean that conspiracy charges like those brought against Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson could not be used against trade unionists going about trade union business, it was defeated due to abstentions on the Labour side.

On March 8th, demonstrations are to take place outside Leicester Prison where Ricky is held, and Lincoln, where Des is being kept. There will be coaches leaving large cities to support these demonstrations organised by the Rank and File Organising Committee. Ring 01-249-1207 for details.

Any inquiry which is not a workers' inquiry carried out by the directly elected representatives of the employees at every level will only be used to back up the bosses' case. The aim of a workers' inquiry is to expose the dealings of the bosses and expose their otherwise hidden connections with other firms and the state.

Plan

The reliance on Wedgwood Benn is a complete blind alley. Delegation after delegation of workers has been to see him and each has returned with the same message in its ears: work out an alternative plan.

Instead of the state accepting the responsibility for the chaotic and ruinous system it supports, its leading lieutenants like Benn demand that the workers take responsibility for the bankruptcy of the bosses. This approach should be firmly rejected.

At a few places, a third alternative has emerged, sometimes as the main line of struggle and sometimes mingled with orthodox approaches to a mass plant of Automotive Products, the workers fought and won on this programme: all overtime banned; all sub-contract work blocked; all agency staff out; work to rule and weekly

CONTD. ON BACK PAGE

Inquiry

When that nationalist line isn't being peddled, what comes to the fore is the call for an inquiry. Inevitably the call is for the inquiry to be instituted by Wedgwood Benn in his role as one-man economic miracle maker. But what is the inquiry supposed to achieve?

At BLMC there has already been a limited inquiry. And this has only added weight to the management's demand to increase the number of job cuts. National Enterprise Board Chairman Don Ryder has indicated that when the final report is published it will call for the massive so-called rationalisation plan involving the loss of thousands more jobs.

WHEN Vauxhall stewards representing 6,000 men at the Ellesmere Port plant agreed in January to the workforce going onto a three day week they felt that the sacrifice was not enough. But the firm's appetite for redundancies was not satiated. Last week management told union leaders that it needed to cut its total 26,000 workforce by 2,000, offering wage rises to those who stayed, and "generous" severance pay-outs to those accepting redundancy.

In response to this stinking deal the union side of the Joint Negotiating Committee has put forward a plan rejecting the blood money and demanding instead "more jobs, and work sharing".

The Company claim that a reduction from 40 to 35 hours would not be enough to spread the work around. But they would not discuss in detail with workers' representatives, saying "It is a company decision that we have the programme of redundancies, and we are not negotiating on it."

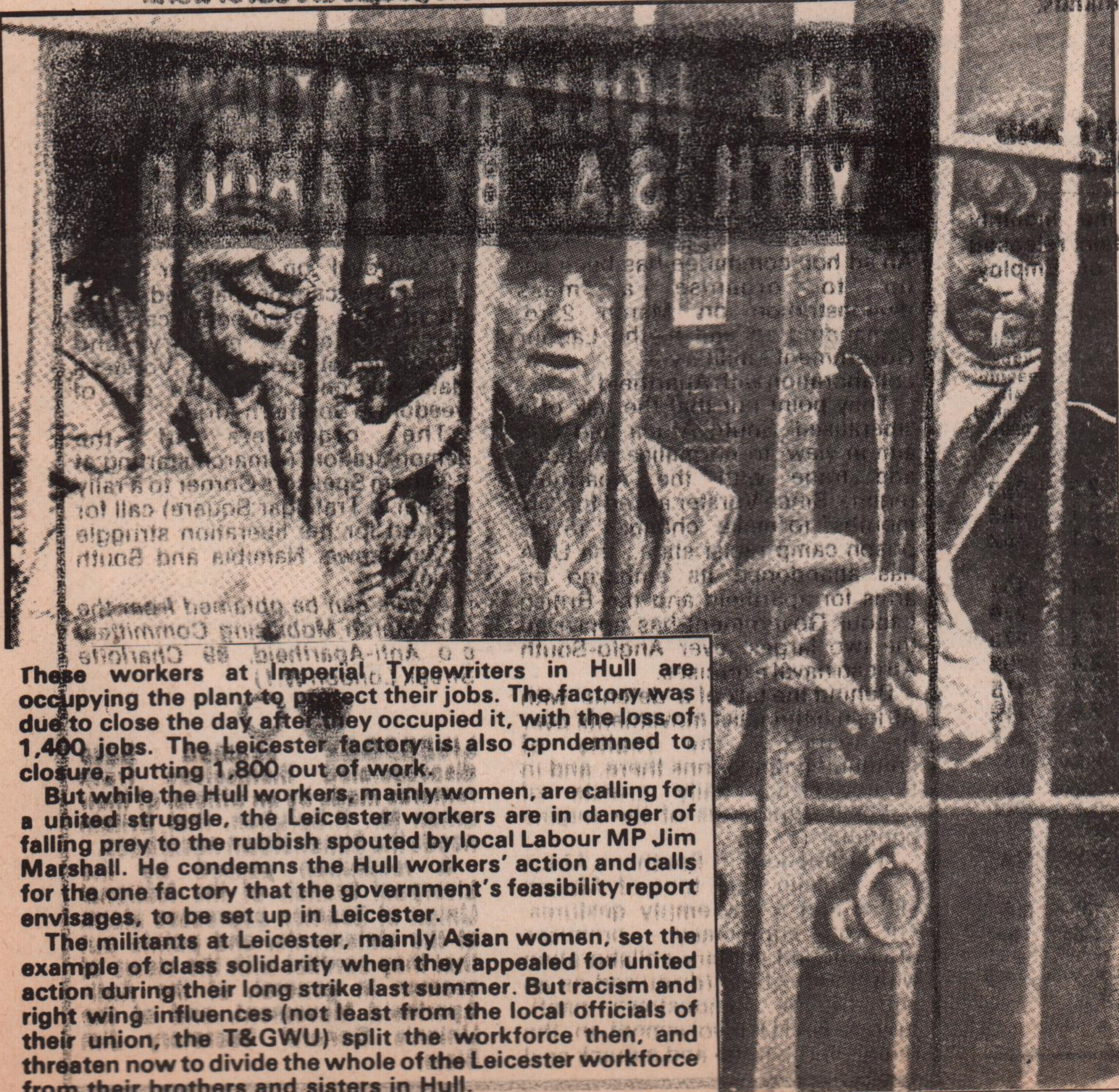
But as one steward said after the meeting with management, "Whatever happens WE WON'T STAND REDUNDANCIES."

Management went ahead, putting up notices advising workers to accept the "golden handshake" quickly. The rewards for this kind of suicide are £677 for a 21 year old with two years' service (or is it servitude?); £877 for a 25 year old after 5 years; and £1,307 for a 31 year old with 10 years behind him.

At a mass meeting, AUEW stewards representing 6,000 workers refused the proposed redundancies, and a decision was taken for a mass lobby of local MPs at Westminster on March 6th. (This seemed the only way to catch them as all but one right-wing Tory MP stayed away from the mass meeting three weeks to which they were invited.)

Len Collingwood

OCCUPY - THAT'S THE WAY!



These workers at Imperial Typewriters in Hull are occupying the plant to protect their jobs. The factory was due to close the day after they occupied it, with the loss of 1,400 jobs. The Leicester factory is also condemned to closure, putting 1,800 out of work.

But while the Hull workers, mainly women, are calling for a united struggle, the Leicester workers are in danger of falling prey to the rubbish spouted by local Labour MP Jim Marshall. He condemns the Hull workers' action and calls for the one factory that the government's feasibility report envisages, to be set up in Leicester.

The militants at Leicester, mainly Asian women, set the example of class solidarity when they appealed for united action during their long strike last summer. But racism and right wing influences (not least from the local officials of their union, the T&GWU) split the workforce then, and threaten now to divide the whole of the Leicester workforce from their brothers and sisters in Hull.

POVERTY IN THE 'LAND OF PLENTY'

J.W. Harding

IN HIS State of the Union message on January 15th, President Gerald Ford of the United States made the claim that all Americans "do have a fairer chance to pursue happiness."

For seven and a half million Americans and their dependents, however, the 'pursuit of happiness' has been reduced to the hopeless pursuit of a job. And even for those still in the 'happiness business', the steeply climbing rate of unemployment means a growing sense of insecurity and threats of a wage cut.

On the same day as the President was making his reassuring assertions, demonstrations against the fearsome rise in unemployment were taking place in cities all over the country.

Unemployment is now rising in the United States at a pace which has not been experienced since the Depression of the 1930s. The January figure of 7.5 million accounts for 8.2% of the workforce; compared with 5% last April and 6% in October. There are widespread predictions, not least from George Meany, President of the trade union federation the AFL/CIO, that this will reach 10% by July.

Permanent

The Ford administration itself has admitted that the rate will not fall below 8% for at least a year, and more alarming voices, such as that of Senator Humphrey, have spoken of a permanent 6 million jobless for the rest of the decade.

Behind the cold percentages is an INCREASE of 2,800,000 jobless since August 1974.

Who are the people hardest hit? The most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class are the first to be laid off: among women workers, 8.1% are without jobs; 13.4% of black workers are unemployed, as are 20.8% of teenage workers. Certain industries are especially badly hit: nearly a quarter of all car workers have lost their jobs, in the construction industry more than a fifth are out of work, and in textiles, 19.4% of the workforce has been laid off.

Although unemployment is not evenly spread throughout the working class, and also varies from one region to another, the general economic recession is now becoming too severe for anyone to take any solace from such variations.

Ford's State of the Union message made no proposals for reducing unemployment. In fact the Administration is actively resisting such proposals — with

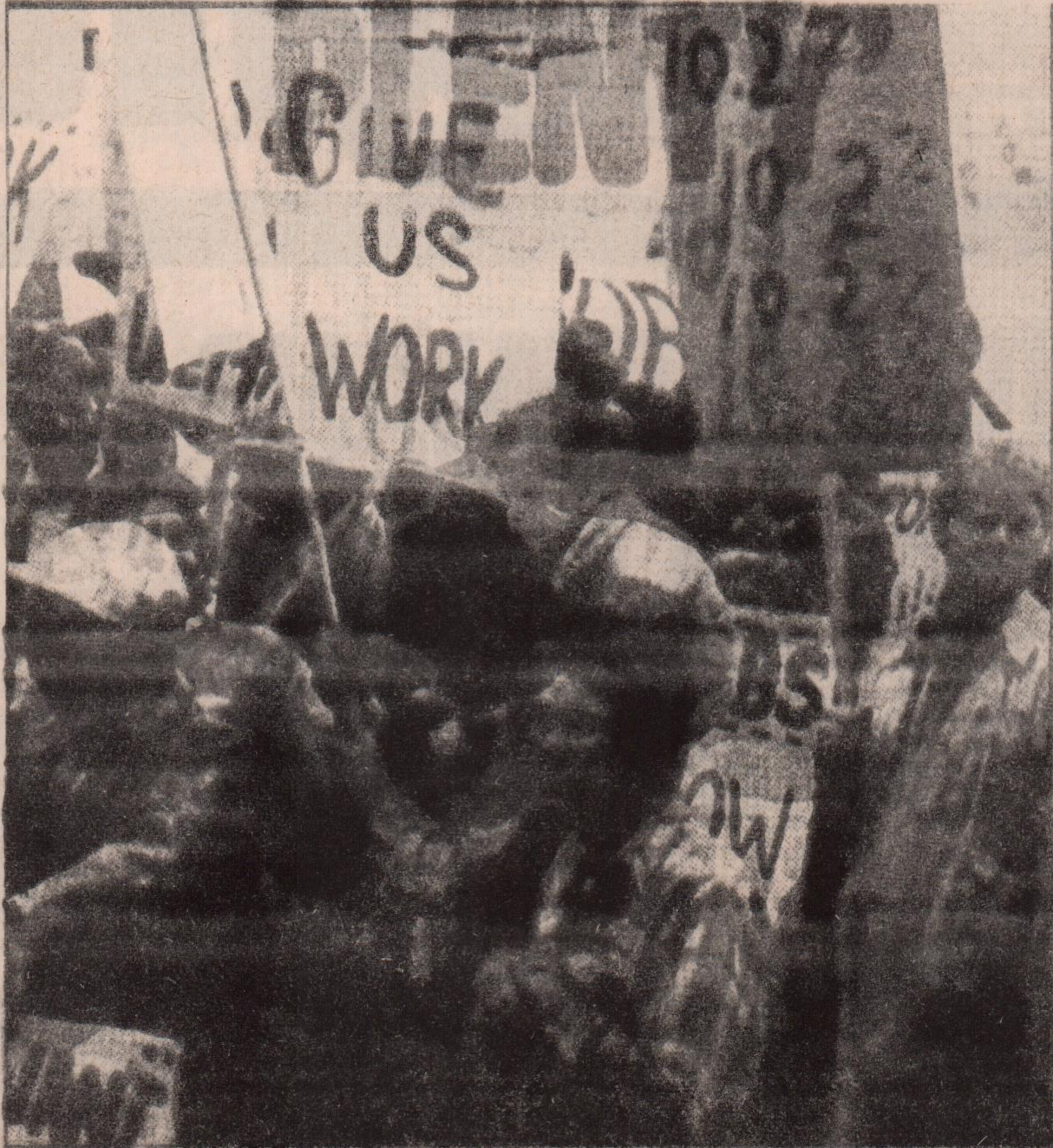
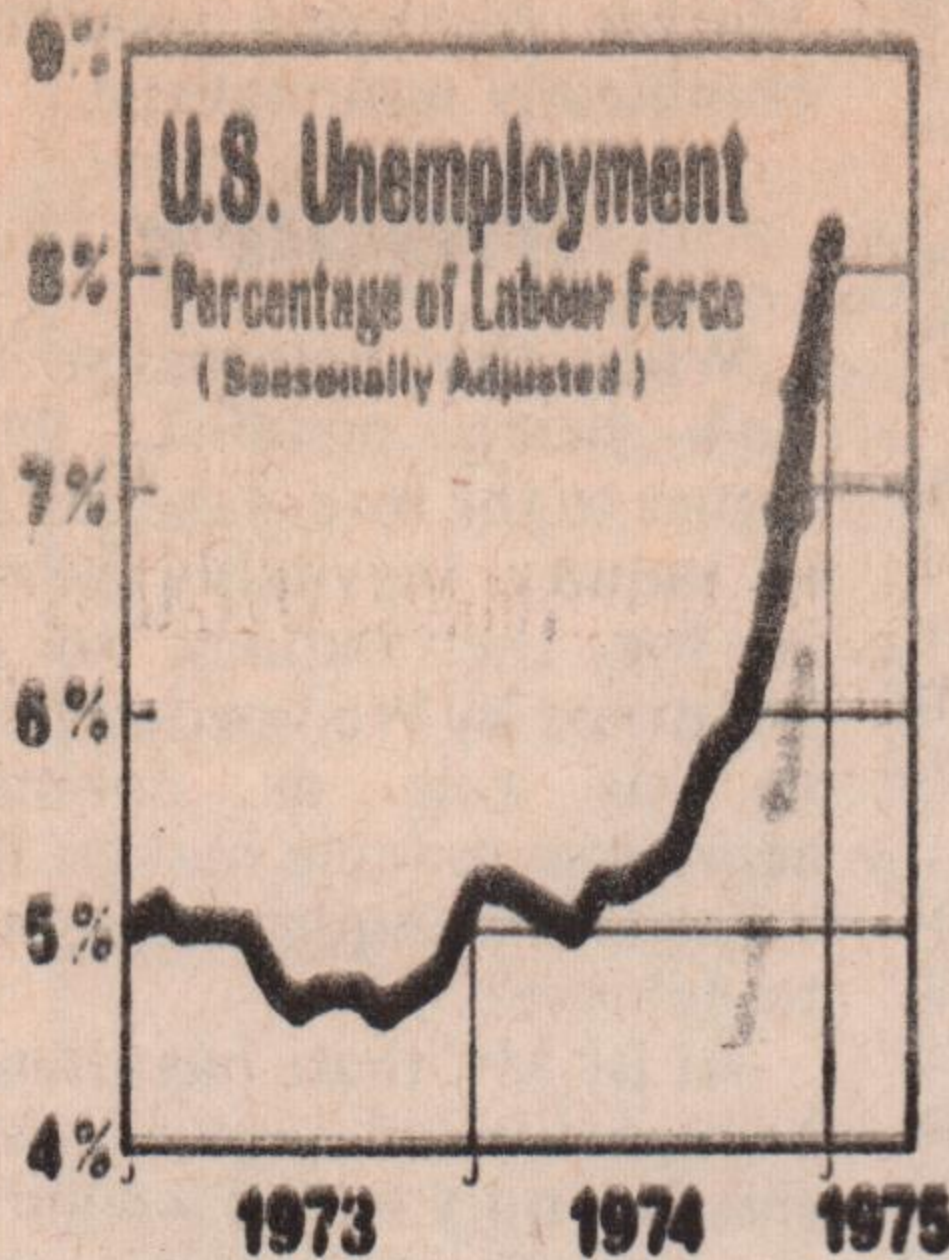
the cynical argument that relief programmes would cost more than unemployment itself and result in higher inflation. Further, after throwing in an insignificant tax rebate proposal, Ford demanded that government workers' wage increases be limited to 5% in 1975, and that a moratorium be placed on all new government programmes in the field of education, health and welfare. (Arms spending was of course exempted from the cutback: Ford is trying to get approval for an extra \$222 million military aid for Cambodia, and \$300 million for South Vietnam.)

Drained

These measures, along with relentless price increases, make the Administration's deliberate policy of rising unemployment into a savage attack on the US working class. Many states are running out of money to pay the unemployed and are asking the federal government to bail them out. Washington has been forced to bring in legislation to supplement the state-run unemployment insurance schemes, which currently protect only two thirds of the country's 95 million workforce.

However, hundreds of thousands of people in American could well see the end of their unemployment relief under existing laws within the next 2 months, unless the Administration takes further measures to prevent this.

Furthermore, the unions' own unemployment relief funds are also rapidly being drained, and it is believed that anything between ten and twenty million people are already going hungry. State Governors meeting in Washington last week warned that state taxes will have to be raised if social security and unemployment benefits are to be paid for, unless more cash comes from the federal government. This of course would put even tighter screws on workers' wages.



Union chief George Meany has said that the jobless rate " spells tragedy for American families and disaster for the American economy". But the union bosses have used unemployment to launch into an unbridled campaign of racism and chauvinism.

For the AFL/CIO leadership, its General Board, the cause of unemployment is not the capitalist system, but "Arab oil" and "foreign" workers. Meany has demanded that the US ban oil imports from the Arab countries, and with well-practised hysteria called for "No tribute, no foreign aid, no trade, no jet fighters to these people — (nothing until the blackmail stops)". The General Board have proposed an action programme which can solve none of the problems facing the working class, calling for tax cuts, reduction of interest rates, protection of US industry, modest improvements in unemployment benefit and the creation of a million public service jobs.

In contrast to these racist hoodlums, the programme put forward by the National Co-ordinating Committee of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) in January gives a real lead in organising against the layoffs. Their resolution demands:

- * a shorter working week with no loss of pay;
- * no overtime as long as anyone is laid off;
- * no wage controls, and support for the concept of cost-of-living clauses in all contracts;
- * no speed-up or any other form of job harassment.

The various sections (chapters) of the CLUW in America are preparing to fight for these demands throughout the trade union movement. With women workers being hit so hard by unemployment, this campaign is of tremendous importance and can be the start of a major fight-back to defend the interests of all American workers.

Unemployment is rising almost as spectacularly in Western Europe as it is in the USA. The latest figures from the EEC Commission show 4 million jobless in the Common Market countries in January of this year, an increase of over a million in the last twelve months.

In Germany, 11.6% of the workforce is unemployed, more than double the total a year ago.

In West Germany the jobless figures have leapt up by 86%; 1,100,000 workers, or 5.1% of the workforce, are without work. 57% more French workers are now out of a job — 723,000 in all, or 4.3% of the working population.

In Ireland, the South has a rate of 8.1%, an increase of 26% since last January, while in the North 6.7% are out of work.

The story is much the same in Italy, with over a million unemployed, in Belgium where the number has gone up by 43% and in the Netherlands, where 32% more people are out of work.

TUC warns of huge rise in jobless total

IN ITS latest economic report, the TUC warns: "All the evidence suggests that the employment position will deteriorate during 1975 unless remedial action is taken. Although it is hazardous to forecast unemployment, it seems likely that on present trends unemployment will be in the region of one and a quarter million or more by 1976."

They added too that the present figures of just over 4 million would rise very steeply soon. This is because there has been a massive

number of voluntary redundancies amongst those over 55. These were listed as retirements in most cases and not added to the number of unemployed. Soon, the report stressed, the pressure for sackings will increase, and the job shortage will hit very hard at school leavers in July. Then the jobs slaughter hidden by 'retirements' will begin to show up in the government's figures.

Of course these figures in any case always underestimate greatly the level of unemployment, particularly because they list only a fraction of the women out of work and seeking employment.

The TUC, however, had no policy for stopping this trend. In fact it foresaw that the government would have to borrow from the International Monetary Fund which would make borrowing conditional on a cut in public expenditure. That cut would not only mean a deterioration in living standards of the working class but an increase in unemployment.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND VACANCIES

The following are the monthly figures for Great Britain released by the Department of Employment yesterday:

	Unemployed Total	Seasonally adjusted	%	Adult vacancies seasonally adjusted
	'000s	'000s		'000s
1973				
Oct	510	512	2.3	363
Nov	494	486	2.1	368
Dec	488	470	2.1	382
1974				
Jan	606	535	2.4	304
Feb	599	552	2.4	279
March	590	547	2.4	275
April	647	546	2.4	298
May	635	548	2.4	315
June	618	569	2.5	319
July	647	577	2.5	317
Aug	656	597	2.5	301
Sept	647	603	2.7	301
Oct	613	607	2.7	294
Nov	621	613	2.7	273
Dec	NA	NA	NA	NA
1975				
Jan 1	742	678	3.0	NA
Feb p	758	703	3.1	182

* Excluding school leavers and adult students.
p Provisional.
† Estimate.

US cops train for food riots

THE LOS ANGELES Police Department is conducting a special training programme to deal with food riots.

More than 600 police supervisors have already gone through the programme. Plans call for all 7,200 members of the force to take food riot control drills.

The programme is being conducted under the direction of Commander Frank Brittell, formerly a captain in charge of the notorious Special Weapons and Tactics force (SWAT).

It was SWAT that led the bloody police shootout against the trapped Symbionese Liberation Army members in Los Angeles last Spring. It also conducted a shootout against the Black Panther Party headquarters there several years ago.

Explaining the present training programme, Brittell told the media: "I don't know if we're going to have food riots or not. But the potential, because of the economy, inflation, and the recession, is such that the department has got to be prepared." Brittell said the programme was initiated by Police Chief Edward Davis.

The experts are making differing predictions about prospects for the economy, Brittell said, "but the ones who see things getting worse predict major civil disturbances. Food riots would be one such problem. A major unemployment problem could lead to major labour troubles: civil disturbances by people who are out of work."

One reason advance training is needed, he explained, is because of the peculiar emotional problems involved if a deep-going depression hits.

The problem seems to be that the cops won't be simply beating the heads of Chicanos and Blacks. Jobless whites may need to be "controlled" as well.

The official jobless rate in California is 9 percent; the rate for Chicanos and Blacks is much higher. Last month there were 787,600 Californians listed as out of work. Of these, only 471,128 qualified for unemployment compensation.

from the American socialist paper THE MILITANT

NON-COOPERATION WITH APARTHEID

MISS A. B. BOU.

An ad hoc committee has been set up to organise a mass demonstration on March 23rd, demanding an end to the Labour Government's military collaboration with Apartheid.

They point out that the talk of a 'liberalised' South Africa had one aim in view: to normalise relations and trade with the Apartheid regime. Since Vorster asked for "six months" to make 'changes' in his prison camp racist state, the USA has abandoned its embargo on arms for apartheid and the British Labour Government has approved the two largest ever Anglo-South African naval exercises.

Behind the talk of a 'detente' with African nationalist movements over Rhodesia is the reality of continuing detentions there, and in South Africa daily arrests of political opponents of the regime continue.

"For freedom in Southern Africa a whistle stop tour of African states and a law empty gesture. For white supremacy — promises of continued military collaboration with South Africa (disguised as an end to the Simonstown pact), further NATO involvement in the region, more trade and a quick seal

of approval on whatever paper agreement can be patched up in Rhodesia... everybody can see that continued military and economic support for Vorster's state will only delay the day of freedom in Southern Africa."

The organisers of the demonstration, (a march starting at 1.30 from Speakers Corner to a rally at 3pm in Trafalgar Square) call for support for the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

(Leaflets can be obtained from the 23rd March Mobilising Committee, c/o Anti-Apartheid, 89 Charlotte Street, London W.1)

LIVERPOOL seamen have dissociated themselves from remarks made by an official of their union Mr. R. Savuhan, that Britain needs the Simonstown naval base.

A resolution passed by the Liverpool branch of the National Union of Seamen expresses alarm at the statements, and points out that they conflict with the views of seamen in general, of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and of the Union's General Secretary Jim Slater.

SPAIN

The down-at-heel Jackboot

IN A Spain rocked to its foundations by mass workers' strikes and works occupations, together with student action and significant movements among sections of the middle class against the Franco regime, the ten trade unionists imprisoned in Carabanchel jail had their sentences greatly reduced a fortnight ago in Madrid.

Four of them were freed (after nearly three years inside), and of the others, Marcellino Camacho's twenty year sentence was cut to six years and Eduardo Sabardino's twenty years came down to five and a half; two other sentences were reduced from 19 years to five, and another two from seventeen and eighteen years to four years.

The Supreme Court's formula for their reduction of the sentences was that the ten, who were sentenced in December 1973 for their membership of the illegal workers' commissions, could not adequately be proved to be "founders, organisers or directors" of the commissions.

The real force behind the retreat of the authorities has been the mass upsurge of strike action from the Spanish working class, and the deep fear of this combativity felt by a senile regime visibly rotting on its feet.

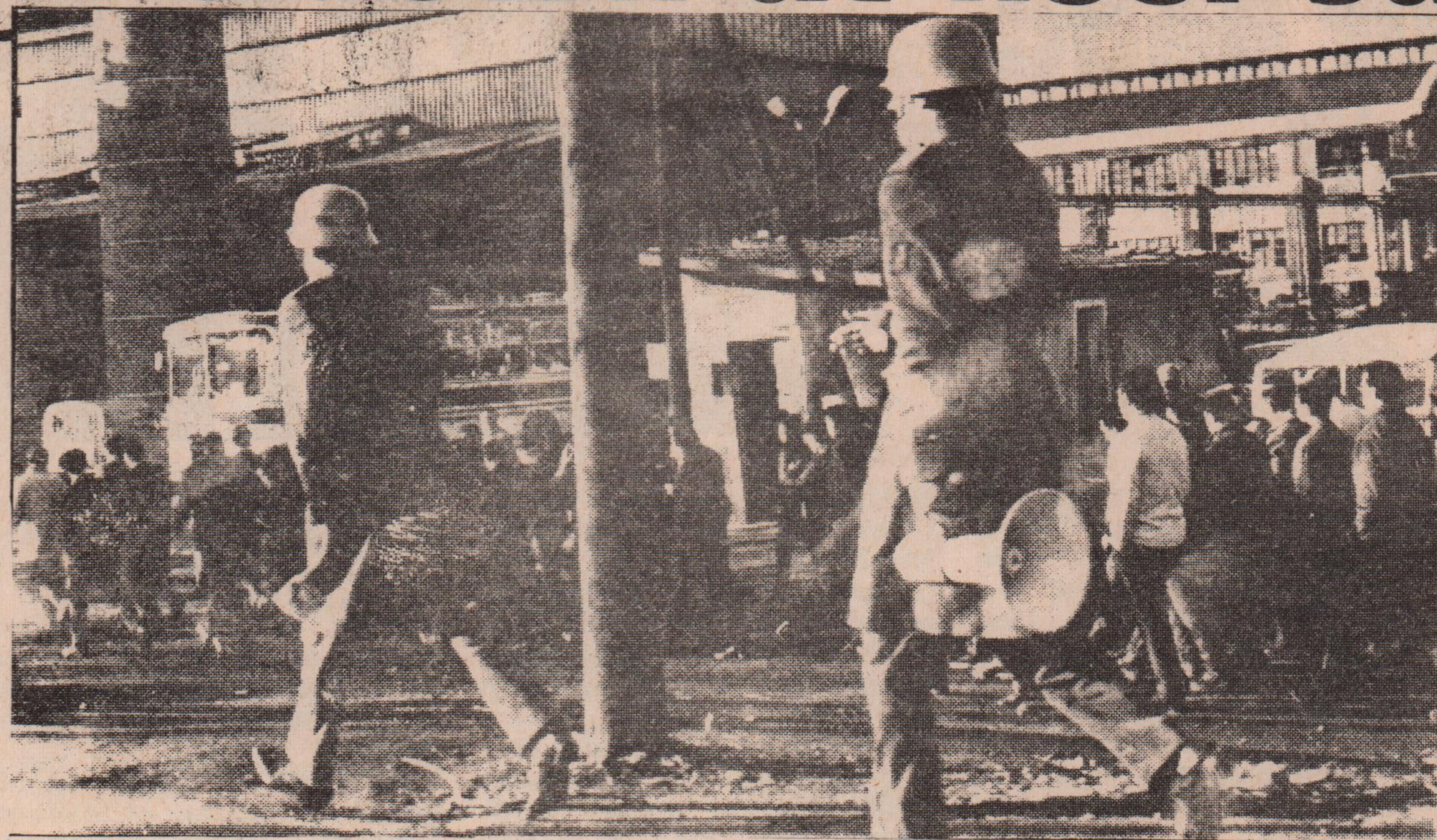
Retreats

With further mobilisation, it is highly likely that further retreats can be forced on the regime, winning the release of all other jailed workers and political prisoners. In fact, events since the Carabanchel Appeal indicate that not only the prisons, but the regime itself, will not be around for much longer.

Over 100,000 workers are reported to have struck before the appeal last week, in solidarity with the Ten (most of whom had been on hunger strike at the time). And this took place in a context of rapidly escalating disputes, involving both industrial workers and also students, actors, journalists and civil servants.

Taking in only some of the events, the last few weeks have seen:-

*Mass strikes - the state owned mining company. Hunosa,



Spanish workers won't be regimented any more

declared its suspension of 5,000 workers for persistent strike action; the recent strike of Pamplona miners brought a huge solidarity response in the region; after a lock-out of the entire Seat workforce in Barcelona, following large scale sackings for striking, there were street battles between police and workers; in San Sebastian, 100 teachers were locked out for more than a week after having taken part in strikes; in Vizcaya province, over twenty companies have stopped production due to strikes or lockouts, with 800 workers at the Gijon Construction Company sacked for strike action.

*Mass sit-ins - 300 construction workers sat-in last week at Malaga, and in the same region over 5,000 construction workers went on strike in support of thousands of their unemployed brothers; at the Firestone-Hispania factory in Bilbao, over 3,000 workers staged a sit-in last week, while in Vigo hundreds of shipyard workers, up in arms over suspensions, attacked the headquarters of their "union" (which is run by the state).

*Student sit-ins and demonstrations - Valladolid University has been closed until next October, because of "subversive activity",

and groups of students have been touring other colleges asking for solidarity action; two faculties at the University of Malaga have been shut indefinitely, after riot police were used against left wing students.

*Police state violence - at Bilbao, more than fifty arrests were made during a 5,000 strong demonstration in commemoration of a worker shot by the police for distributing leaflets in support of the Pamplona strikers; in Valencia, lawyers were hauled out of their offices where they were holding a sit-in in protest at the Government's holding of political prisoners (there are some 2,000 political prisoners in the jails); at Lerida, nine such prisoners announced an indefinite hunger strike; four priests were arrested and fined in Pamplona for supporting the strikers there, and the police entered churches to evict large numbers of strikers who had sought refuge in them;

Workers staging a stay-down protest at the potash mines near Barcelona were forcibly ejected by the police; several foreign journalists were arrested for attending an illegal meeting of the oppositionist movement, 'Democratic Junta', and arrests followed the refusal of the

government to allow the actors' elected representatives to negotiate a new wage agreement.

To add to the anxieties of the regime a letter signed by 500 senior civil servants, demanding 'democratisation' of the regime, was made public two days after hundreds of government employees stopped work at five ministries.

Basques

Since the Carabanchel decision, the upsurge has continued. Seventeen underground organisations called a one-day general strike in the northern Basque provinces last week, in memory of a worker shot during the Pamplona strike, linking this to the struggle to link wage rises to the rising cost of living, and for democratic liberties and self determination for the Basques.

At the same time, police with sub-machine guns and riot control equipment attacked a student demonstration which was protesting against the closure of Valladolid University; and large numbers of housewives in Madrid boycotted the shops and markets for a day in protest against food prices. Some of the women pelted a police patrol with tomatoes, and

two of them were fined £376 each without trial.

Police admitted that 90 people had been arrested in connection with these events, and there have been more arrests of workers and political activists in other cities.

In view of last year's events in Portugal, we may see considerably more significance in the jittery arrests of two army officers for being involved in political discussions with 'centre left' political groups.

Prime Minister Arias Navarro's brave words about "never yielding" to the strikes and protests cannot conceal the deep internal crisis of the regime, as the ultra-Right in the government strive to prevent the limited 'liberalisation' that Arias' supporters desire in order, they hope, to defuse the situation and restore business confidence. In the words of one banker, "democracy is something we are doomed to try".

With a 20% inflation rate, and unemployment rising sharply, the ruling class know that a limited 'democratisation', in terms of allowing the right to strike and organise, would lead to an even greater wave of mass activity, as in Portugal since last year. And yet the present repression cannot dampen the workers' will to struggle in Spain — to the dismay of the Right in the military cabinet, who have called for the introduction of even wider powers of arrest and detention for the police and more rigid censorship for the press.

Potential

The tremendous pressure of this mass movement has completely transformed the political atmosphere in Spain. However much the Spanish Communist Party strive to present themselves as a respectable opposition within the 'democratised' bourgeois regime they envisage, it is clear that the concessions won for the Carabanchel Ten are only a tiny part of the profoundly revolutionary potential of the Spanish working class.

J.W.HARDING

Portugal

PLESSEY BOSSES LOCKED OUT

'Watch out for these Portuguese workers'; a member of the Plessey Sites Co-ordinating Committee was told by management last week. 'Don't get involved in any agreements with them, and we may shift some work your way from Portugal'.

If this delegate to the meeting of Plessey plants shop stewards was shocked by such a sordid attempt at a corrupt divisiveness, he was yet more horrified by the story related by Henri di Nizchorreia, who attended the meeting as a fraternal delegate from Plessey's three Portuguese plants.

400 workers, all suffering varying degrees of sight loss and some nearly blind as a result of work for Plesseys, were threatened with redundancy by the company. With little chance of another job and no dole money, they would be left facing the most abject poverty.

Their case, he told the meeting, had been taken up by all the 3,800 workers on Plessey's payroll in Portugal. Now, British Plessey workers are involved too.

BLINDED

The 400 work in the Matrix Department at the Princesa plant, threading and weaving very fine wire through thousands of washers on a board, while keeping an eye on complex diagrams — and all this is done under microscopes! Such work, even under the best conditions, means eventual blindness.

But Plesseys made things worse: their methods meant that instead of the workers' eyesight being damaged over a matter of years, it only took months before the women were visiting the firm's optician.

The workers had to fight even for better lighting. In a 47-hour week, their demand for hourly breaks of ten minutes was strenuously resisted by management. Near impossible work-norms were set,

bevy of supervisors. Failure to meet norms meant dismissal.

For those starting with perfect sight, it was a matter of no more than 6 months before they needed glasses, which then needed strengthening twice a year. **Three years after the matrix plant was opened, some workers have practically lost their sight.**

Under the fascist regime, the factory was riddled with informers. Contact with other workers was cut to a minimum — even a group of people gathered in a coffee bar talking about work conditions would be reported on, and there was no protection against the sackings which followed.

Even so, in December 1973 the entire workforce came out in a spontaneous strike for better wages, winning an extra £5 a month to add to their weekly £7-8.

Four months after that, following the April 25th coup, Portuguese workers were able to organise properly for the first time in nearly 50 years. Going on the offensive, the Plessey workers won 100% wage rises, and also the hourly breaks they'd been demanding for the matrix workers.

These wages and conditions would be considered very bad in this country. Yet the Plessey management started pleading poverty, and announced to the workers that due to falling demand, the matrix workers would "have to" lose their jobs. Tempting redundancy pay was offered — tempting if there were any other job prospects or, at least, decent unemployment benefit. But there is as yet no dole at all paid in Portugal; and though the Provisional Government's new 3-year economic plan 'envisages' reforms here, it's reckoned that dole payments won't be more than a

minimum wage which workers call starvation wages.

But there is also a general drive in the Portuguese working class to reject redundancies, however 'voluntary' and prevent 'job wastage': they feel that jobs must be saved to prevent the weakening of the class as a whole through division and job competition.

Suspecting that the management (which ten months ago was planning expansion in Portugal) was merely looking for better pickings elsewhere, the Plessey Workers Committee (a cross-union committee of workers elected from every shop, department or section) got in contact with Plessey workers in Britain. As a result of their enquiries (which were aided by the London based Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee) they were able to confront an embarrassed management with the knowledge that production of matrices was to be transferred to Malta.

REFUGE

However, as far as the Workers Committee is concerned, what matters is not so much where the matrix work is done (they consider it should not be done at all because of the terrible damage it does to eyesight) but the principle of no redundancies. These workers, they say, who have been so tragically damaged by just a few years work for the company, will not just be discarded now to suit the Plessey management's convenience. And a committee of four, set up to examine possibilities, concluded that for a mere £35,000 investment over and above the redundancy money, work on new products could absorb all the "redundant" Matrix workers.



Henri di Nizchorreia Above: Plessey workers demonstrate in Lisbon

took refuge behind the UK 'parent company'. And since the British bosses have been involved, the Portuguese workers have taken a number of measures to show they mean business.

In response to a refusal to conduct the negotiations on a basis of no redundancies, the most

of the management found themselves locked out of the plant and unable to use company vehicles. Clerical and accounting staff stopped payment of their salaries, subsidies and expense claims.

Plesseys backed down — but when the negotiations re-started, at the Ministry of Labour offices, every Plessey worker from the three plants downed tools and demonstrated outside, despite a law which condemns demonstrations in working time.

After the attendance of Bro. di Nizchorreia and another member of the Workers Committee at the British Plessey shop stewards meeting, contact and solidarity between these workers will strengthen the position of Plessey workers in both countries. The company would of course prefer that these workers, who produce different components and parts for the same machinery, should not even know of each other's existence. Instead of such international solidarity (which started with a telegram of support and a donation from the Portuguese Workers Committee to the Plessey Interconnect occupation at Swindon) they would prefer to see such a nationalist demonstration as was staged by Liverpool Plessey workers last week, who demanded that work on a Post Office contract should have been given to them and not to workers in Sweden.

It is that kind of thinking that allows the sort of poisonous whispering from the management that went on before the shop stewards meeting last week, and which can only hopelessly weaken workers in the fight against redundancies.

'Get out, or have your head kicked in!'

CLANN AND THE JENKINS LAW

SINCE THE passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, one of the organisations most harassed has been Clann na h'Eireann, the British section of the Official Republican

Movement. Throughout the country members of Clann have been arrested, held and then released. Members selling Clann's paper *Rosc Catha* have been harassed and arrested by the police in spite of assurances from the Home Office that it is legal to sell it. Most seriously, a number of its leading members have been imprisoned for several weeks without trial and then deported to Ireland.

In Bristol, Clann have been raided at least five times by police. Sometimes they have been armed, and several door panels are now missing where police have kicked them in. Over and over, they take papers and documents which aren't returned for several days. But nothing 'incriminating' has been found.

Nearly every Bristol member of Clann has been arrested or stopped by the police, and one has lost his job.

LONDON

Jim Flynn and Adrian Gallagher, two Bristol members of Clann's Executive (Coiste Seasta) were actually arrested at an Executive meeting in Birmingham. On being refused the right to contact a solicitor, Adrian Gallagher said he wouldn't answer any questions about his family background or about other members of Clann, and asked whether they were going to deport him to North or South London — where he was born. The police replied by testing him for explosives (negative, of course), fingerprinting and photographing him and then handing him over (after a night in the cells) to two British Transport Policemen. He was told never to return to Birmingham or he would 'have his head kicked in', and then put on a train for Bristol.

Jim Flynn, meanwhile, was on his way to a 3-week stay in Horsfield Prison at Bristol before being deported. In that time his appeal was heard by Lord Alport — company director, public school educated, one-time Director of the Tory Party Political Centre and ex-Army

Danny Ryan (left) and George Anderson



officer) who turned it down, and Jim was shipped off to Belfast, though he asked to go to Dublin. In Belfast he was arrested and questioned for 24 hours, then released.

When Danny Ryan, a prominent trade unionist and Irish activist in the Bristol area, gave a press conference some time ago on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the local police said "...we are not interested in Danny Ryan. He is not wanted by us." Now Danny Ryan has been deported.

Ryan was well known in the Bristol labour movement. In the 1950s he'd been British organiser for Sinn Fein and a leading member of the local Communist Party. He split with the CP in the late 1960s to join the CPB(ML). He was also a member of the AUEW District Committee, and a

delegate to the Bristol Trades Council. He'd lived in Britain at least 20 years.

Danny also met Lord Alport for an interview on his appeal, who concluded by saying "...well, now I will go and hear what the Police have to say".

The most recent exclusion case in the area was that of Brendan Phelan. He was arrested at his home on January 28th, questioned, and taken to the Bridewell Police Station. He was held there for 7 days, and as his solicitor was on the point of getting him freed, the police turned up with an exclusion order hot from London.

Brendan wasn't a prominent member of Clann, which is perhaps why the police thought they could approach him with bribes and threats. They asked him

to act as an informer, and, he says, threatened that if he didn't they would get him as they had Kenneth Lennon and blame it on the IRA.

When they finally deported Brendan to Dublin, they boasted that he would soon be joined by his friends from Bristol including Pat Keane.

Pat Keane is a leading AUEW member, a convenor of MST, an engineering factory. Last week, along with 40 others, he was threatened with redundancy but got the notices withdrawn by occupying the plant. How delighted the management would be to get a helping hand from the police to get rid of such a 'troublemaker'!

The right wing, too, have been glad to use the anti-Irish feeling that this Act has intensified. George Anderson used to work at

Spillers in Avonmouth — until some people from work saw a picture of him in the local paper attending a picket of Horsfield Prison while Jim Flynn was held there. They demanded his removal from the job, though after negotiations conducted by his shop steward, Charlie Horton, the management had to pay him 9 months' wages for his 'resignation'. Then the right wingers went for Charlie Horton, and forced him to resign as shop steward.

Horton is now getting the support of his T&G branch and of the local Trades Council in his fight for re-instatement. And Bristol Trades Council has called for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Clifton Ward Labour Party has also condemned the Act, and called for the withdrawal of the exclusion order that have been served under it.

Whatever our disagreements with Clann, and they are considerable (illustrated, for instance, by the statement of their national organiser Gerry Docherty when he was deported, that he blamed the Provisionals more than the British government), we must stand with Clann against this continual harassment, and organise against any further deportations. The Act is due for renewal in May; we must campaign to put the greatest possible pressure on Labour MPs to vote against its renewal.

Send cash to help the families of those deported to Clann na h'Eireann, 7 Highbury Villas, Bristol 2.

Building a mass movement by proxy?

IN THE last few months, the Troops Out Movement has had some important successes. It has gained the support of several Trades Councils and union branches, organised two major demonstrations, and won the International Socialists away from its previous policy of building its own movement, to a position of supporting the TOM.

But TOM's activists are still mainly made up of those already committed to the revolutionary left, while its base in the labour movement remains very limited. The next period will pose several problems if the TOM is to grow further.

First, the chauvinism of most British workers has been massively reinforced by the Birmingham bombings and the Anti-Terrorism Act, making it far more difficult to raise the question of Ireland. At the same time, the Communist Party, which has done absolutely nothing about Ireland in the last few years, has begun to organise against the TOM for its ridiculous demand of a Bill of Rights, which accepts that the Northern Ireland state can be democratic. They have also recently begun to demand that the British Army should implement this democracy!

In this situation of rampant chauvinism it is utopian to believe that the TOM can become a mass movement for the withdrawal of British troops, because the only basis on which such a movement would be built is the reactionary one of "letting the Irish kill each other". It is also utopian to believe that TOM can directly influence British government policy.

What the TOM can do is win sections of the Labour, student and women's movements to an understanding of the Irish question, and lead a battle against the ingrained chauvinism of the British working class. It can also fight over aspects of the Irish war which have spilled over into Britain: army recruitment, Jenkins' draconian laws and the harassment of Irish republicans here.

The recent delegate conference of the TOM in fact took place when the struggle in the North was reaching a crucial phase. The ceasefire cannot, given the relative cohesion and determination of the Loyalists, lead to any real and lasting agreement between the British and the Provisional IRA. The forthcoming elections to the constitutional convention are seen by the Loyalists as an opportunity

to settle the question for once and all by launching an attack on the nationalist community (with or without the support of the British Army).

The changed situation in Britain and Ireland formed the basis of the two resolutions put to the conference by Workers Fight delegates. The first was one of several to take up the question of the Prevention of Terrorism Act: drawing the links between the Act and what the TOM has always stressed — namely that repression in Ireland would spill over into Britain — it proposed that the TOM should take up the issue in its propaganda and give support to campaigns against the Act.

It is a step forward that the TOM has now explicitly accepted this position, with no opposition.

The second motion was a response to the probability of civil war in Ireland in the near future. The WF resolution proposed that the TOM prepare to take an active part in relief work for the North. In a civil war situation one possibility is that the British government will remove the troops and leave the Loyalists to crush the resistance in the north, later intervening again to impose a 'cold' solution, possibly re-partition.

In such a situation the TOM cannot simply continue "business as usual" or insist that the demand for self determination needs to be repeated; it must react to a changed situation. One of the main arguments against TOM adopting an explicit solidarity position was that TOM would give more solidarity in practical terms on the basis of its two demands, Troops Out and self-determination. In a civil war situation practical solidarity would be expressed by relief work. Despite the absence of any opposition other than vague fears that relief would be a "diversion", this motion was defeated.

PROXY

Two fundamentally false positions were put forward in the discussions on perspectives for TOM. One, put by the International Marxist Group, was that TOM's role should be the initiation of "broad mobilisations" which TOM would coordinate. This would have the essential effect of watering down the demands of the TOM, as now most of the forces which have even a vaguely principled position on Ireland work in and through TOM. To advocate accommodation with other major forces on the left, specifically the Communist Party, means simple opportunism.

The other incorrect perspective was based on the idea that TOM can become a mass movement by proxy; i.e. that there is some kind of vague feeling among the working class for "peace" or for a settlement in Ireland, and that TOM can use this to force British withdrawal. One conference delegate said "When workers come home and watch the news, they don't think about Jenkins' law, they think about how peace can be achieved in Ireland."

PEACE

This "wishful thinking" leads to rejecting anti Army recruitment work, relief work, or work against Jenkins' law — all are diversions. Unfortunately it is simply not true that great things can be built out of this amorphous feeling for peace.

This Conference made some decisions about extending the work of the TOM. Two important steps towards this are the demonstration on 6th April and the Labour Movement conference in London on 24th May.

The fight to win support for the demonstration and the conference in the trade union movement and in the Labour Party will not be easy, and it will not be helped by over optimistic perspectives. Nevertheless it must be a high priority for revolutionary socialists in the coming months.

BRUCE ROBINSON

3,000 EMPTY HOUSES — BUT ONLY 'LUCKY 18' GET HOME

SQUATTING organisations in East London's Tower Hamlet's combined on February 17th to outdo the council in supplying homes.

In the second round of their new 'House from a Hat' lottery scheme, Tower Hamlets Council were offering the chance of a home to 18 'lucky' couples — out of 1,200!

Not any 1,200, though. The couples had to be under 30, and had to have lived in the area for more than two years — the man, that is; the woman doesn't count...

Not any 18 flats either; the properties offered are not new and include some flats which have as yet proved impossible to let. Eight people in the January ballot, for instance, refused to accept their 'prize' homes.

The February 'housey housey' took only fifteen minutes to allocate these eight rejects and this month's ten houses. As the couples trooped out dejectedly at the end, the representatives of squatters' organisations picketing the gathering embarrassed the councillors by offering homes immediately to everybody present. A major embarrassment especially to the councillor who introduced

the proceedings in the hall, because he had opposed the ballot scheme from the outset.

Over the last ten years, 50,000 people have left Tower Hamlets, but the housing list has grown by 6,000 and now stands at 7,800.

1,333 people are in temporary welfare accommodation.

And little wonder. The council has converted only 400 homes over the last 4 years, and in 1973 built only 250 new homes.

Yet at the present time, there are 3,000 empty houses in the Borough.

The Council is not entirely inactive. It spends a great deal of time, energy and money on evicting squatters like those at Sumner House who have housed over 200 families since last summer.

Sumner House itself is run on the basis of a co-operative which organises the management and modernisation of the buildings.

Squatting is of course not the final solution to the housing problem. But it is important in organising people to fight for their rights. And it unites people, rather than dividing them in a sordid and cynically orchestrated squabble over a few crumbs.

MARY CORBISHLEY



Pomp and circumstance at Tower Hamlets homes lottery

NUT report tries to head off fight on overtime issue

FOR SOME TIME there has been growing anger among militant classroom teachers at the vagueness of a teacher's contract of service which allows a headmaster to do with his staff whatever he thinks fit for 'his' school. In response to this anger an NUT report for the Easter Conference has attempted to head off any idea that one of the areas where abuse is most common — unpaid, 'voluntary' overtime such as staff meetings, parents' evenings, exam invigilation, preparation and marking etc — should be controlled by stipulation and/or payment.

The reason it gives is that it would be divisive — between teachers within the same school, between teachers from primary and secondary schools — and that it would depress the lower scale.

Such a touching dislike for 'divisiveness' amongst teachers comes as empty rhetoric in the wake of the NUT Executive's acceptance of the Houghton Report — a thoroughly

divisive settlement if ever there was one. To confuse the issue still further the Report says that what is needed is a professional scale for all teachers... a sentiment that very few teachers would disagree with. But of course if the Report meant a SINGLE scale for all teachers (which it doesn't) then any or at least most of the divisiveness would be ironed out because the overtime RATE would be more or less the same for everybody.

Overtime

So as not to appear too negative the Report does offer some sops. It recommends that:

*instead of overtime pay for outside school hours activities, travelling expenses should be allowed; (why instead?)

*a right to lunch and other breaks should be written into a teacher's contract of service (a good illustration of a teacher's vulnerability is that even

these aren't guaranteed now);

*5 days a year should be set aside for in-service training and staff meetings;

*the NUT negotiate a minimum of preparation and marking periods.

But these mild recommendations, if implemented, would be real gains for teachers shows what a state teachers find themselves in now! But the report counterposes them to an all round specification of class contact and preparation time with pay for any overtime (with responsibility shared) — which is all inter-linked in the same issue.

The Report fears to tread in this area because it states that it would "inevitably lead to erosion of professionalism". Exactly! It is precisely for this reason that any hedging on the issue is pandering to the type of 'professionalism' that makes a teacher so vulnerable to the pressure of headmasters and Education Authorities.

The NUT must fight for (and not just "canvass and try to get adopted") a union based teachers' charter of conditions of service that will be an absolutely clear and mandatory protection for the classroom teacher.

The NUT's Report might have been less superficial and more convincing if it had mentioned Further Education, since the ATTI (the Tech College and Further Education teachers' union) is affiliated to the NUT. For these teachers overtime pay has been in existence for some time and class contact and preparation times are fixed and specified.

IVAN WELS

THE LIB-LAB, BROAD-BASED, FLAT-BOTTOMED, HOT-AIR, MISH-MASH.

Blackley Labour MP Paul Rose's efforts to build a popular front against Fascism got off to a not-so-rosy start in Manchester's Free Trade Hall on February 16th. Although it is necessary that more people be involved in the fight against fascism, the organisation set up from this meeting looks so broad-based as to be positively flat-bottomed.

One of the platform speakers was Trevor Jones, a Merseyside Liberal councillor known as 'Jones the Vote' for his feats as the Liberals' electoral campaign manager. He spoke, bafflingly, not about Fascism, but about how we must avert any threat to 'democracy' by giving people a feeling of involvement in running the country.

Ruth Addison, Young Liberals' chairman, followed this by warning against the 'moral dangers' of opposing fascism 'with its own weapons'.

ENERGIES

"They are human too" she opined "and we must persuade them by rational argument that we are right."

But Martin Bobker from Blackley Labour Party reminded the meeting of the battles in London's East End during the thirties, when thousands of working class people organised on the streets to rout Mosley's blackshirts.

And Maurice Ludmer, from Birmingham Trades Council, asked a direct question to those

who defend 'free speech for fascists' — "You may guarantee democratic rights for the fascist gangs, but can you guarantee the rights of their victims?"

Attendance was in fact poor considering that the organisers claim to represent large sections of the labour movement. In fact, if the 'Democratic Defence' grows, it will only channel energies from a real and meaningful working class fight against fascism into a hot-air shop for use as a platform for opportunists like Paul Rose (who supports Israel's savagery against the Palestinian people), a political mish-mash aimed at defending some vague concept of democracy.

HYSTERIA

Instead, we must build a united front of working class organisations which will fight to defend our class, and particularly the vulnerable sections such as Blacks and Irish, against right wing attack.

We must also argue for an understanding of the role of the Labour and Trade Union leaders in actually promoting racism (such as by passing and operating racist Immigration Acts, while now the Jenkins Prevention of Terrorism Act singles out Irish people in this country and has helped to whip up anti-Irish hysteria; any dirty little fascist can go to the police with tall stories about some Irish person, who will then face several days' in the hands of the police, questioning and possible deportation.)

NHS - A CAMPAIGN FOR ALL

Several hundred people picketed the Royal College of Surgeons in London on 22nd February as part of a campaign against private practice.

The picket was organised by the Medical Committee Against Private Practice, which is composed of doctors, medical students and other health workers. Speakers included Bernice Beaumont, Steve Johnson (of Nalgo), Bob Pennington, Jack Collins of Kent NUM, and Steve Ludlam of NUPE.

Bro. Ludlam, a shop steward at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, described how the workers' ban had totally removed private practice from their hospital, which had previously had the largest proportion of any in the country. However, the ban forward has been countered by the concession to open a clinic in the Wellington private hospital.

The effect of action by hospital trade unions in Hammarland and at Morriston Hospital, Swansea, has

successfully expelled pay beds from NHS hospitals in these these places. But the concessions are returning in greater numbers to the safer fortresses of private hospitals like the Wellington and the Harley Street Clinic.

A much bigger campaign by trade unionists outside the NHS is needed to move these hospitals are built or converted by building workers, serviced by engineers, cleaners, porters etc. The rich rewards for top doctors are not even passed on to other workers in private hospitals. For instance, the chief pharmacist at the Wellington earns £3,000 a year, while even in the underpaid NHS a head pharmacist would get under £1,000. The lower paid workers and cleaners who do the dirty work have their level of pay with private medicine either — or else perhaps a little cheap factory.

Only 5% of the population are covered by BUPA and other medical insurance schemes. While half a million NHS patients are waiting for

hospital treatment (20% have to wait for up to two years, 40% for as long as one year) private beds in NHS hospitals are empty — waiting for the private queue jumpers. And it's been reckoned that private patients are subsidised by the NHS to the tune of £25m each year.

More and more, as the NHS declines, private medicine helps to speed that decline. The great majority of the population has no interest at all in private medicine and a very major interest in ending it. And it is in the hands of workers to do so.

Ed Conduit

CLEVELAND LABOUR COUNCILLOR BACKS BUPA

AT A time when social services generally are being cut back, and several Cleveland hospital wards are threatened with closure, the Labour controlled Cleveland Planning Committee recently voted by a narrow majority to let two blocks of flats at Norton Grange, Stockton, be turned into a BUPA-sponsored private nursing home.

Labour Councillor and BUPA member John Hudson Junior was one of those who swung the vote to 9-7 in favour of the scheme. "I made my decision because I would like to see a private nursing hospital in the area on Socialist grounds", this worthy man stated. "I don't like to see any involvement by private patients in the National Health Service — but you can't remove them unless private homes like these are provided."

The Durham Health Services branch of the ASTMS has attacked the planning committee's decision, and pledged to wage a struggle to stop the scheme. Branch Secretary Mike Parker has complained that the plans would give an inadequate service — "Are they going to supplement their deficiencies with NHS facilities at nearby hospitals?" he asked. "We also fear that trained medical staff could be creamed off from local hospitals by the prospect of higher pay in a private unit. The training of staff costs millions to ratepayers and taxpayers, and our staff is too valuable to our hospitals without going to private concerns."

Action is still confined to verbal protests and a letter of appeal to the Cleveland County Council. 3 local Labour MPs, and planning Committee Chairwoman Maureen Taylor, have stated that they will support the ASTMS campaign.

But gentlemanly pressure is not the way to be sure of results. What is needed is an ad hoc action committee against private practice, linking health workers, local trades councils, residents (some have already protested about the scheme) and other interested groups, like the LPYS.

Such a committee could organise an embargo on all conversion work on the flats, demand more abortion and contraception facilities on the NHS, and mount a local campaign for the outright abolition of private practice and against welfare cuts.

PETER CONLAN



NUS nursery campaign

Visiting a brand new college campus in Canada last year, I was delighted to see a small group of kids wander across the green to join an audience listening to one of the college pop groups. The beautifully equipped 'day-care' centre seemed to contribute immeasurably to the harmonious atmosphere enjoyed by students and staff alike.

In this country, only 30 out of 700 colleges and universities have any facilities for the care of young children. The lack of them discriminates very seriously against mature students, who tend to be working class. And it adds to the penalisation that society imposes on women who have children — despite all the false 'honour' that's supposed to sugar the bitter pill.

Even those creches that do exist never seem to fulfill the demand, and always operate with a long waiting list. As soon as they are set

up, the vast need becomes apparent, among students and also academic, technical and ancillary staff. The nurseries often complain of male parents trying to "sneak" babies in (thus fitting in with all the assumptions that babies are purely their mothers' concern). And they tend to close down as soon as term ends, making it difficult to get holiday work or do vacation studies.

The 'national baby demo' organised last week by the National Union of Students should help to draw attention to this problem. Students brought babies into lectures, and organised protests and pickets.

In a separate action the week before that, students at Charley College of Education topped a months long campaign for nursery facilities by occupying a special experimental 'baby-watching' unit at the college that was lying empty.

R.L.

YOU will never be 'anything from a shop steward to a works manager, professor or director. You will not make scientific, medical or technical advances, you will not be a composer, train driver, engineer or inventor unless you are extraordinarily talented and determined.

This is the self-fulfilling prophecy that girl children grow up with. LEE COMER, in her new book 'Wedlocked Women' (Feminist Books, £1) sets this stultifying self-image into the context of the family under capitalism, showing its function in servicing and sustaining present and future generations of a correctly conditioned workforce.

And women are drawn into perpetuating and conditioning the next generation of women, too, into the self-image they themselves have learned: girls mustn't get muddy, they play with tea-sets, prams, dollies and miniature house-keeping tools. While boys indulge in escapism and toys that encourage adventure, girls' 'play' narrows their horizons to a narrow life.

When it comes to the effects of motherhood and child-rearing, Lee Comer does a useful job on the surveys and statistics that are supposed to explain truancy, vandalism and various forms of 'delinquency', yet always start from their own prejudice of seeing the

The making of a wedlocked woman

child as relating only to its mother and not to other adults.

Other aspects of women's oppression — status, identity, careers and division of labour — are adequately dealt with. But the question of the ideology of the family is really the crux of the question for women's liberation.

The destruction of the family is the most feared and suspected of all aspects of women's struggle, which is why it is often 'tactfully' treated by socialists who assume it will 'all come out in the wash' in the course of the general liberation of all working class people — clinging meanwhile to the comfort, security and ego-boosting that a submissive wife can provide amidst the rigours of capitalism.

S.C.

Working Women's Charter CO-ORDINATING GROUP SET UP IN LIVERPOOL

ABOUT 50 women attended a meeting in Liverpool recently to set up a co-ordinating group for doing work around the Working Women's Charter.

National conferences of the Charter are planned, and hopefully a national co-ordinating committee will be set up, to organise the many Charter groups in the country — which are only organised on a local level at the moment.

The Liverpool group plans to start activities by concentrating on the abortion and contraception campaign, and also the nurseries campaign in conjunction with the nurseries campaign at Liverpool University. Already there are plans for a full discussion of the Working Women's Charter at the Trades Council, and hopefully the Charter will get the Trades Council's support. This will make it easier to

fight for the Charter in the trade union movement by getting speakers along to trade union meetings and opening out the whole question of women's rights and problems.

The Working Women's Charter, although in need of strengthening in several aspects (eg in the demand for nurseries we think the Charter should include the demand for nurseries to be community controlled) provides a basis on which women can work together in taking the questions raised by the Women's Liberation Movement into the trade union and labour movement, thus fighting for concrete improvements in their conditions and at the same time raising consciousness about the general oppression of women and how to end it.

JULIE CANNON

DOCKS: NEED UNITY, NOT A WORKERS' WAR

by S. Corbishley

SINCE the end of January London dockers have effectively closed down many container depots in their picketing campaign to win the jobs inside the depots for dockers faced with the threat of being returned to the pool. On Tuesday February 25th the London dock stewards met and decided to extend the campaign, and on Saturday March 1st the NPSSC will be meeting, for the first time for many months, to discuss what must be done.

As a result of the downturn in world trade, the run down in London docks, intensified over the past two years, has created an enormous job crisis on London docks. The stepping up of containerisation after the

end of the national docks strike in 1972 has also worsened the overall crisis of dockland. Since Jones Aldington over one third of dockers have left, wages have increased very slowly, and productivity has risen sharply.

And the situation dockers face now is very much different from the situation in 1972. Then the dockers were faced with the need to throw out the non union and scab labour doing most of the "stuffing and stripping" in the container depots, as part of a fight to get the jobs into the Dock Labour Scheme. Now many of the scab depots are closed down, and most of the major ones are unionised into the same union as the dockers, the Transport and General Workers Union. The fight to escape the effects of the chaos the

bosses have created in dockland has, unfortunately, led to a fratricidal war between the dockers and drivers. Counter picketing by drivers has effectively closed Tilbury, and is threatening to close Southampton and Hull. The scene is set for a vicious war between workers, at the very time unity is most needed against the bosses.

UNIFORM

It would be fatal to rely on the intervention of the Conciliation and Arbitration Service at the invitation of Jack Jones, or the hint by Michael Foot that he will speed up the process of extending the registered dockworkers' scheme to all ports. The only policy that can point any constructive way forward is for uniform pay and conditions for all workers engaged in stuffing and stripping, work to be shared with a general cut in hours and an increase in fall back pay, opposition to any more productivity dealing, and the nationalisation of both industries. These are the points which the NPSSC meeting must take up.

TEESSIDE WORKERS STRUGGLE RIG WORKERS

Several hundred oil rig construction workers at Laing Offshore's Graythorpe base walked out after management refused to agree to the immediate renegotiation of the annual pay agreement — not due to be discussed until May. By the evening the site's 2,000 direct labour force, including some subcontractors, was out as a "united force".

An offered interim payment was rejected, and the men stayed out until the following Tuesday. A mass meeting was organised on Wednesday to hear a report of any progress made in the discussions, and a joint inter union committee has been set up to coordinate further action.

SMITH'S DOCK

On the same day as the Laing walk out started, over 1500 workers at Smiths Dock shipbuilding and repair yard at South Bank, Middlesbrough, held a one day token strike to back up their demand for an interim cost of living payment.

The management said that the claim was "contrary" to the existing wage deal, which includes a clause agreeing to a year's standstill on all wage claims, then they offered £2 now and £2 in June, when the present agreement ends. The men regard this as unacceptable, as they want an award in line with that given to Tyneside shipyard workers, who won £4 now and a further £3 later in the year.

PRINT

At Easton 47 print workers at the WW Web Offset North Riding Publishing Company, owned by Woodrow Wyatt, struck after four men had been sent home on Thursday night for refusing to operate an undermanned machine. NAITOPA FOC Ian Brown told all union members to stop work in protest. NAITOPA is demanding the reinstatement of the four sacked operators.

BUSES

Drivers at United Northams Redcar bus depot held a lightning strike on Monday — one of a series to get rid of old and decrepit buses. The T&GWU branch has blacked the old buses, but United refuses to replace them. Branch chairman Paul Harford pinned the blame for any inconvenience to the public on the management, and pointed out that passengers deserve decent transport, especially as fares are so high and always going up. David Anyar

MOTOR INDUSTRY SACKINGS

Redundancy notices were withdrawn; no covering for voluntary redundancy, sickness or absence; occupation of the plant in the event of any worker being declared redundant.

At Chrysler's Linwood plant in Renfrewshire, they've been through all the Bennyry with nothing to show for it but Chrysler's "higher profits" ultimatum. But they have combined this with a firm refusal to cut production levels any further.

The working class as a whole cannot afford to accept a single redundancy. It makes no difference whether it is 'voluntary' or not; it means a job lost.

In the fight against these merciless attacks three key demands need emphasising: Five days' work or five days' pay! Cut the hours, not the workers or the wages. No short-time should be agreed without a fall-back wage, which should be no less than average earnings. Work sharing should be organised and controlled by the workers.

No acceptance of redundancy! Most firms start by asking for voluntary redundancies, with the bait of state-aided hand-outs. In the meantime, enough workers are sacked, in either case, those that are left should refuse to cover these vacancies, forcing the firm to fill them again. Obvious productivity deals that result in lost jobs should be turned down flat.

Occupy the plant! In the event of a total shutdown or the closure of a whole section, an occupation will deny the bosses access to what was "their empire" and stop them disposing of the machinery or moving it.

South London Politics of Sexuality Group: first discussion, on 'Freud & child sexuality' at 8 Falcon Rd, Battersea, 4th March, 8pm. More info from 228-1559.

Published by Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1. Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

Union sides with bosses in Eldon Squ. fight

FOR OVER 16 weeks 200 North East scaffolders have resisted the employers' attempts to break trade union organisation on Newcastle upon Tyne building sites.

The employers spearheading the offensive, McAlpines, have imported 40 scabs from London, with union cards from the T&G!

The local building union officials have issued a joint statement with McAlpines condemning the strike.

The centre of this struggle is a £40 million Council development in Eldon Square. It started when 14 men were sacked. The introduction of scabs provoked a 100% walkout by scaffolders throughout Tyneside.

The length of the strike, and the solidarity it has attracted from workers all over the country and locally in the North East was probably one of the reasons why the local police have stepped up their efforts to prevent effective picketing. On January 29th, the police arrested 10 of the strikers, and one has been charged with having an "offensive weapon", namely his shoe, which fell off when he was being dragged to the police van.

This struggle must be supported. Newcastle is not the only area where the collapse of building industry profits has led to sharp attacks on effective trade union organisation on the sites. Support the Eldon Square scaffolders, and send money to 86 Benwell Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Stephen Corbishley

12 teachers face the cane

12 militant teachers in Liverpool pool are to face disciplinary charges from the National Union of Teachers on March 15th.

The charges arose from an incident at NUT branch meeting where the chairman refused to let the meeting decide whether to discuss support for those teachers then on strike against Houghton. Twenty five out of sixty teachers present stood up to protest, and 12 of them have been singled out for disciplinary charges. The disciplinary panel has the power to suspend these teachers from the union.

Already local Labour Party bodies, including Ellesmere Port EPYS, have pledged support. Send donations and messages of support to the Defence Committee, c/o Rob Pooley, 160 North Hill Street, Liverpool 8.

Militant is as militant does

14 RESOLUTIONS were submitted at the East Midlands regional conference of the Labour Party

Militant and magic

AT THE Labour Party Young Socialists Southern Region conference, on 23rd March, about 60 people attended from 25 branches.

The most heated debate was over the question of Ireland. Militant supporters repeated again and again the case for a "Trade Union Defence Force" as the magic solution. In opposition, the Wokingham LPYS delegate argued that the first precondition for eradicating sectarianism was the smashing of the Six County State. The LPYS should support the Troops Out Movement, and campaign energetically against the Jenkins law.

In the end, a naive (or not so naive) observer innocently asked whether this "Trade Union Defence Force" consisted of Catholics or of Protestants, as he could not imagine the possibility of a mixed non sectarian force!

On the Shrewsbury 2, the Militant resolution demanded the release of the two, but was less than precise on the question of action:

"Conference endorses the call for industrial action to back up these demands and urges all sections of the movement to add their support."

One delegate asked, whose call for industrial action? Did the resolution support the Wigan Building Workers' Action Committee? The leading Militant supporter present then amended the resolution to read "the call of a one day strike from the TUC general council" — whereupon he was hard put to explain how this "bold socialist" position differed from the reformist line of the Communist Party.

Other resolutions dealt with questions of housing and the economy. The Wokingham LPYS delegate argued for a fight against the Social Contract and for support for the fight of building workers against the employers in places such as Eldon Square. The dominant Militant tendency, however, comfortably smothered the problem with the usual calls for the nationalisation of the 250 monopolies.

Cheung Siu Ming (Wokingham LPYS)

Young Socialists on 22nd February. Dominated by the political ideas of the Militant, most of them could have been composed into one single resolution, demanding the government nationalise the 250 monopolies and thus solve the various problems facing the working class such as equal pay, bad housing, unemployment, and one parent families.

The reality of life scarcely permeated into the conference rhetoric. Ideas as to what the LPYS themselves should be doing were not forthcoming from the Militant proposals. That the YS should actively campaign on these issues itself, that it should involve itself with rank and file trade union struggles, the women's movement, or the Troops Out Movement, is all out of the question. The Militant use the excuse that these movements are not "the mass organisations of the working class" as an excuse for sticking only to the Labour Party. That the Labour Party does very little apparently concerns them not at all. In true armchair socialist fashion, the problems are left for others to solve.

The most interesting debate was over the question of the EEC. Ross Catlin, a Northampton delegate, argued that the correct policy was "fight the bosses, in or out". There were, he pointed out, not three choices on the ballot paper "in", "out", and "United Socialist States of Europe"; there are only two, and socialists who are concerned with telling the truth cannot argue that either offers any advantages for workers.

Against this, the Militant could find only the most abject opportunist reasons for supporting a "no" vote in the referendum: "we must go along with the mass organisations of the working class".

The other occasion which could have opened up debate a bit was quickly smoothed over by the Militant. The Labour Party bureaucrat chairing the meeting threatened to leave the room if a vote was moved on the proposal that visitors be allowed to speak. Without the slightest protest, Tony Saunio's proposer of the resolution, withdrew it.

That incident summed up the central theme of the whole conference: the fact that Militant requires the limitations of the official Labour movement as a sacrifice to its own narrow interests.

FRINGE THEATRE GROUPS PROTEST AGAINST CUTS

Representatives of many fringe theatre groups and community theatre groups met at the Arts Council meeting on Wednesday to protest against the proposed cuts in the grant to the Council and to demand that it be completely different to the way in which they are brought with them. Copies of the motion passed unanimously by the fringe groups at a meeting of the Council and the Association of Community Theatres were presented to the Arts Council meeting on Wednesday.

The proposed cuts would reduce the grant to a minimum of £10,000 per annum, and would be a serious blow to the fringe theatre movement. The Arts Council has a responsibility to support the fringe theatre movement, and the proposed cuts would be a serious blow to the fringe theatre movement. The Arts Council has a responsibility to support the fringe theatre movement, and the proposed cuts would be a serious blow to the fringe theatre movement.

MEETINGS

South East Regional Working Women's Charter, Saturday 3rd March, starting 10.30 a.m. at Congress House, Great Russell St. Delegates from Trades Councils and Trade Union branches may obtain credentials from Stuart Mackenzie, 71, Chalfont Ave., Wembley, Middlesex.

British Troops Out of Oman Demonstration, against Britain's continuing colonial war in Dhofar, 2pm, Sunday 9th March, starting from Horse

NEWS BRIEF

The deportation order served on Joe Gallagher has been reversed on appeal.

A protest letter had been sent to Roy Jenkins, signed by 3 Labour councillors, the LPYS, the IS, the CP, ICRA, and Workers Fight. Further protests had come from Joe Gallagher's union branch in Bletchley, the UCATT regional council, and the Trades Council in Bletchley. In addition there was talk of strike action at the building site where Gallagher, a well known trade union militant of Republican views, was working.

Members of AUEW-TASS and clerical staff walked out at Express Lift Co. in Northampton after receiving an inadequate offer in response to their £10 claim. After three months negotiation, management had offered just £2 down and £2.30 in April.

The mass picket carried placards such as "Kilroy was here but left to earn some money". The shop floor are at present still working in this subsidiary of the GEC empire which, like many Northampton firms, has up to now, had little union opposition to low wages.

21 workers at the Ruston Paxman diesel works in Newton le Willows, near Wigan, are being charged with malicious damage and have been threatened with conspiracy charges. This legal attack, reminiscent of the Shrewsbury building workers' case, comes eight months after the dispute during which the alleged offences took place.

National Front thugs attempted to wreck an anti fascist public meeting called by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council on 26th February. About 15 National Front 'heavies' entered the meeting in two groups as it was about to start. The organisers refused to start the meeting until the fascists obeyed a request to leave. After ten minutes' arguing with Trades Council stewards, the first group stood up as if to go. Instead of going, however, they lashed out with chairs and fists at the stewards.

Fighting continued for five minutes before police arrived and the situation cooled. The police refused to arrest the fascists, although one was clearly seen to punch a black man in the face after five minutes of guests protesting against the fascist charge.

The Women's Liberation Group is organising a day of activities for the International Women's Day. These include a play group, a dance, a rally with speakers, and a meeting to discuss the development of the women's liberation group.

A meeting of the Women's Liberation Group will be held on Thursday, 2nd March, at 5.30 pm, at the headquarters, Hamilton House, 14, Smith Street, Weybridge, Middlesex.

Rochdale Trades Council Working Women's Charter committee meeting on Thursday 3rd March, 5.30 pm. Thursday 6th March, All London Rank and File meeting on the April claim, 5.30 pm, Thursday 13th March, All London NUT meeting on the April claim. Delegates from schools and branches plus observers.

The last two meetings are provisionally at Hamilton House, but phone Jeff Hurford, 607 8067, to check. I.H.