

BIG FLAME

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HOW INFLATION BACKFIRED ON THE BOSSES

NOW THEY'RE CRYING BECAUSE INFLATION IS GETTING OUT OF HAND AND HITTING THEM— THEIR PROFITS, INVESTMENT AND LIQUIDITY.

The Second Battle of Britain. That's how the papers describe the present economic crisis. Another dark hour in which to pull together and show our British grit to the world.

This time, though, they've got a new slogan. Never will so many (the working class) give so much (sweat) to so few (the bosses). Because all this talk about national effort is one big cover up to hide the real war going on. The class war, in which the present crisis is only a new and more decisive stage.

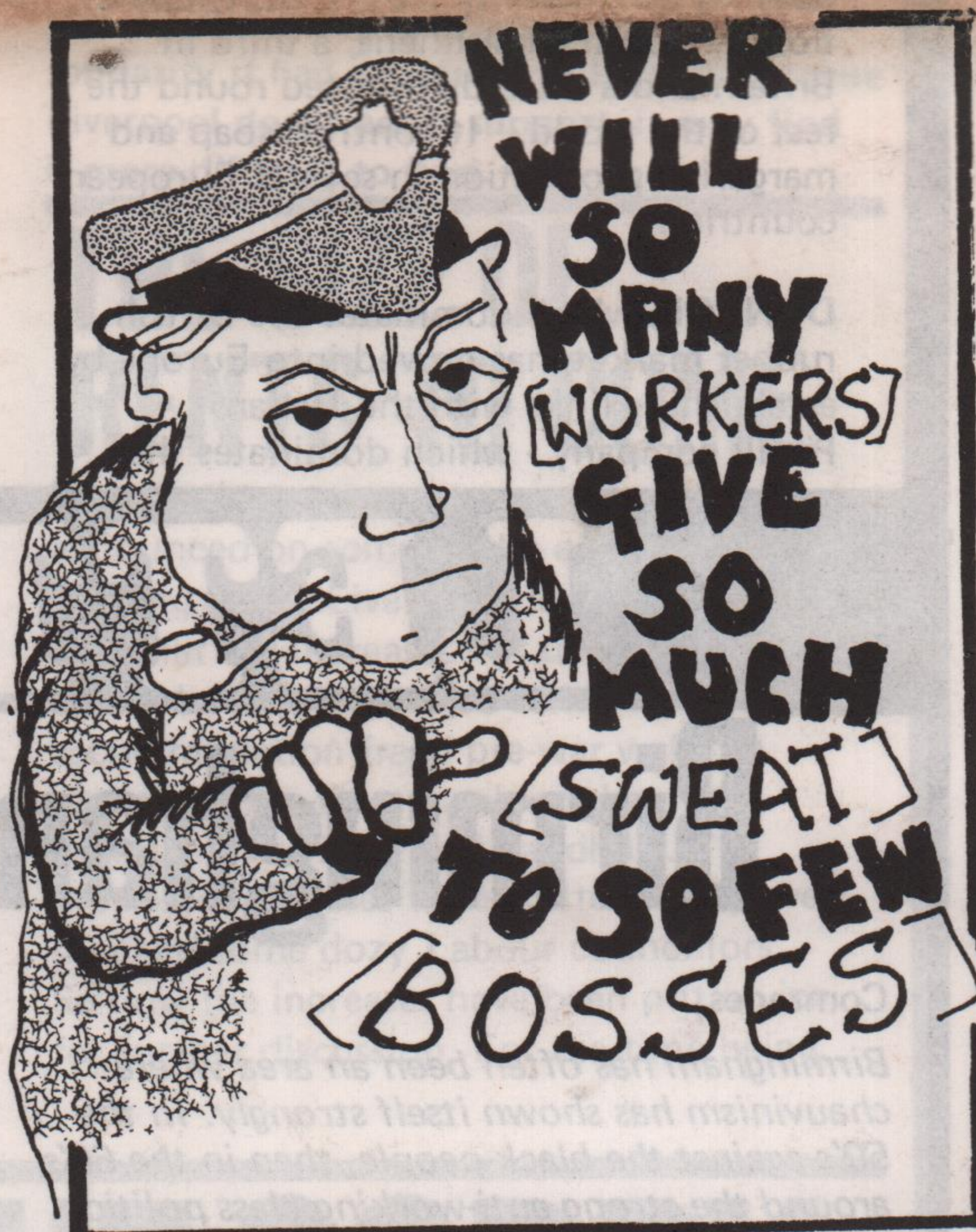
Take inflation. Now they say it's national enemy number one — nitting the whole community, especially the pensioners and the lower paid. But the poor and lower paid have been unable to cope for years! The whole working class has been hit for a long time by price rises. And hardly a murmur was heard from the press, politicians or bosses. Because the bosses for a long time used and increased inflation to claw back the wealth they couldn't screw out of us at work. But now they're crying because inflation is getting out of hand and hitting them — their profits, investment and liquidity.

At the centre of the inflation/profits crisis has been the strength of the working class. Winning more for itself — in wages, living and working conditions — than the bosses wanted to give, and refusing to cooperate enough in productivity deals. Of course, the crisis also comes from the inbuilt chaos of the capitalist system. It never has been and never will be rational or humane, but it has been much more profitable.

But at the heart of the crisis is the fight between the ruling class and the working class for their own needs and interests, which now, more than ever, are directly opposed. This makes talk of a 'national solution' so-much eyewash. This is not to say that the crisis is leading directly to the collapse of capitalism. Unfortunately, it will not just collapse of its own accord. It will only go when the organised working class has the power to put the last nail in its coffin.

But for the moment, the ruling class still has the power to use and control its own crisis. This power has been weakened, as we've seen with the collapse of inflation as a mechanism to be used against us, for their benefit. Their system is still chaotic enough to prevent them having complete control.

But the increased power of the state, built up over decades, allows them the chance to use the crisis to try to build an even stronger, more 'efficient' system. Firstly, they'll use blackmail and threats of national crisis and



disaster to try to push the working class onto the defensive, to push down wage claims and strengthen the social contract.

This blackmail seems to have worked well at Checkmate, Leicester, Textiles and clothing have been among the first sections of industry to introduce large scale redundancies and short time working — 30,000 laid off at Christmas. So Checkmate's workers turned down a pay rise to stave off a similar fate for themselves.

TAX LAWS

They'll also use blackmail to pressure the Labour Party to the right. Already, North Sea oil and gas companies are threatening a production shutdown if the Government doesn't modify its proposed taxes on fuel extraction. This is how the bosses try to influence the way policies are made inside the Government. And it's clear they're

succeeding. Wilson complains of 'manifestly avoidable strikes', Healey warns us its either our jobs or our wages and Heffer tells IPD to compete or go under.

The threat and actual use of redundancy, short time and the sack is being used more and more to force through a long term re-organisation of the work force which will mean new production methods, greater discipline on the shop floor and higher mobility of labour. The aim is to raise productivity.

Keith Joseph summed up the bosses' approach when talked about sections of industry being overmanned. In other words, he was attacking workers who had been strong enough to save jobs from the axe and make their work load more bearable by spreading the load. Our Keith would like these 'surplus' workers to pack their bags and move out to where the boss needs them most — to the growth industries which are short of labour, like the mines and oil development.

DE-CENTRALISED

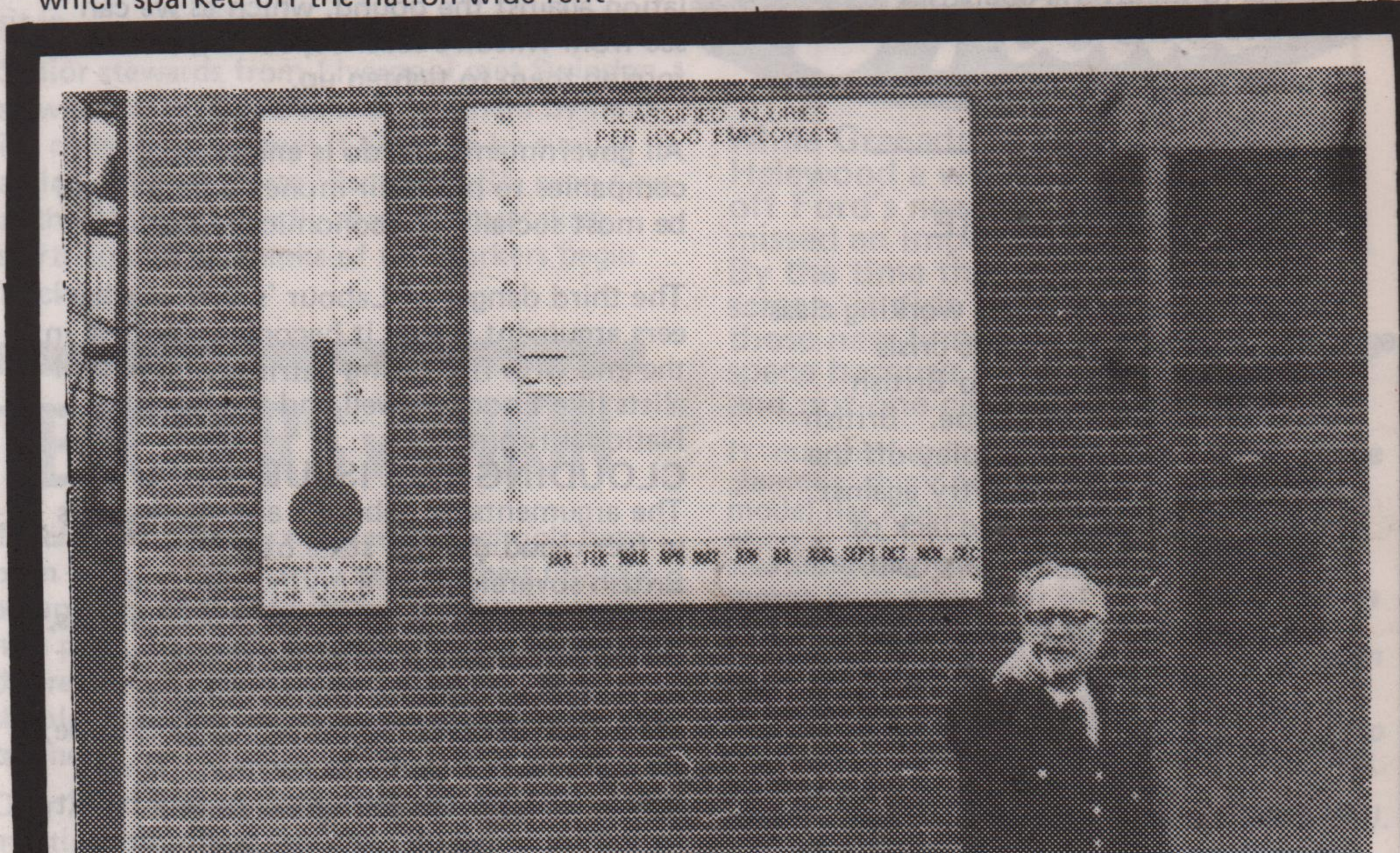
So, we can expect to hear more about re-training and re-deployment. And unemployment will be the stick to make it happen. Social legislation will have a similar aim. One of the designs of the Housing Finance Act, which sparked off the nation-wide rent

strikes of 1972-3, was to encourage mobility so that workers would move to where a job waited for them. This was to be done by removing the 'tie' of cheap council rents.

Where the working class is strongest we can expect to see the most determined attempts to change work organisation. This is what has been happening to Liverpool dockers for the last few years. The political leadership of the Merseyside working class is being whittled away by, for example, putting the stewards on different rates from the rank and file docker. (See the report on page 8)

This is what the employers, led by the Labour Government, want to do, but whether they manage to do it depends on what we do. The solutions to the crisis which the bosses attempt will be shaped by our struggles. At the moment, what really concerns them is the looseness of the social contract. They can't afford to lose the battle over wages, but then neither can we.

One thing is certain. If we allow wage control and the re-structuring of industry to go through, we might well have solved the bosses' crisis, but we won't have solved ours.



A SIGN OF THE TIMES — 'You can't take photos of that!' yelled the security guard in our picture. Why's he so worried about the injury board at ICI's Widnes plant? After all, it's the only sign in Widnes to show any recognition that this is one of the most dangerous towns to live and work in throughout the North West. See page 7 for an investigation into the conditions that make us sick in *The Treatment We Deserve*.

Free the Shrewsbury Two

1975 is the year when we're all going to be asked "Do you want Britain to be in the Common Market?" The politicians and the press are getting ready to launch another massive campaign of confusion and phoney debates on this issue. But the basic fact is this: Economically, Britain has been in Europe for many years. Entry into the EEC is merely a political recognition of what is already an established economic fact.



NOW ABOUT THIS 'COMMON MARKET'...

In fact British executives have been commuting, buying, building and merging their way into Europe for the last 20 years. Today scarcely a week goes by without reports in the financial press of a new link forged between a British company and a European counter-part.

EEC is merely a political recognition of what is already an established economic fact. And if Labour's referendum comes down in favour of Britain leaving the EEC, Britain's bosses are not going to pull out. They are there to stay.

The Labour Party's anti-marketters like Peter Shore and Michael Foot campaign against the EEC on the grounds that it disrupts the balance of trade and opens the way for an invasion of foreign companies into Britain. Furthermore, they argue, it threatens our political independence; Parliament will no longer be the supreme ruling body - our whole way of life will be put on the line.

GOVERNMENTS CHEEK TO CHEEK

Even at governmental level, economic co-operation between Britain and the EEC countries was well advanced, five years before Britain joined. In 1967, the business weekly, The Economist, reported that Britain was co-operating in no less than 11 large European projects, any of which could have a major impact on the British economy and the employment situation. These included Concorde, the Anglo-French strike aircraft Jaguar, an Anglo-French helicopter and the Channel Tunnel.

EEC TRADE BOOM

The economic ties are reflected in trade figures, which show that Britain was becoming increasingly reliant on trade with the EEC, well before we joined. Between 1958 and 1965, Britain's exports looked like this:

Exports to the Commonwealth increased 30%

Exports to the EFTA countries increased 109%

Exports to the EEC countries increased 116%

WORKERS' PRESSURE

In the last couple of years working class struggles and the economic crisis have added a new push to British business's move into Europe. British employers have begun to play off the working class of one country against another and to play on the lack of international working class organisation.

THORN ELECTRICS packs up its Fisher Bendix factory in Kirkby and moves to Spain, where labour is cheaper and less organised.

PLESSEY Alexandria, in Scotland, closes down and the work is moved to Portugal for the same reasons.

FORD (EUROPE) is planning to build a new mini car for the European market in Spain, for the same reasons. All its European factories are fully integrated; Cortinas and Capris are built in both Britain and the Continent. Parts, dies etc. can be moved from country to country.

In short, economically, Britain has been in Europe for many years. Entry into the

'Britain has been in Europe for years...'

Secondly, there is no political independence without economic independence. Governments and government policies, like everything else, are controlled by money and the British Government doesn't hold the purse strings. These are controlled, first and foremost by the big international financial and industrial corporations, which by shifting money from country to country or region to region, can influence the future of a country's economy and determine who shall work and who won't.

MASSIVE SPECULATION

The 1964 - 70 Labour Government was forced to devalue the currency because of international speculation against the pound. December 1974 saw another massive speculation against the pound, which as we can see from Wilson's recent speeches, is forcing them to tighten up.

All governments can do is encourage companies to put their money where it will be most socially or economically useful.

The third danger of Labour's anti-marketters argument is that it becomes identical in the end with right-wing patriots and nationalists like Enoch Powell and the fascist National Front.

CLOUDING THE ISSUE

The arguments of Labour's anti-marketters in fact cloud the real state of affairs. British sovereignty is a myth. Such arguments cloud the fact that the working class, whatever the outcome of the referendum, must start to organise internationally. They hide the fact that in or out of Europe, we still live in a capitalist society. If we stay in Europe the working class will be hit by international mergers, rationalisations and redundancies. If we pull out, it will be hit by fierce attempts to make it pay for British capitalism's backwardness - productivity deals, cut-backs, lay-offs, redundancies.

The arguments of Labour's anti-marketters like those of right-wing anti-marketters like Powell and the National Front - are irrelevant and hide the real issues. In or out - we still live in a capitalist society. The working class must organise internationally.

THE EUROPEAN CONNECTION

PLESSEY tightened its ties with the Common Market by announcing a link up with France's largest electronics concern CGE (Compagnie Generale d'Electricité), to co-operate on building computer controlled telephone exchanges for the European market.

UNILEVER (which is partly Dutch owned) has two headquarters - one in London and one in Rotterdam. The company prides itself on being international and has boasted that roughly a third of its operations are on the continent, a third in Britain and a third distributed round the rest of the world. It controls soap and margarine production in several European countries.

DUNLOP, which dominates the British rubber market, has moved into Europe by establishing links with the Italian Pirelli company - which dominates the

rubber market there.

BIBBY has recently sold its grocery division in Britain to Buitoni, a Common Market Italian food company, and has been flirting, often unsuccessfully, with the Italian food market.

Britain's banks and finance houses, which can have huge influences on the British economy, have not been dragging their heels in the dash for Europe either.

BARCLAYS BANK in conjunction with five continental banks set up a European bank in 1967 to specialise in financing European companies.

MIDLAND BANK co-operated with five European counterparts in setting up the European Bank for Medium Term Credits in 1968.

LETTERS

Birmingham Bombings

Comrades

Birmingham has often been an area where chauvinism has shown itself strongly. In the 50's against the black people, then in the 60's around the strong anti-working class politics of Powellism. And now in the 70's, with a strong anti-Irish development.

The outbreak of anti-Irish chauvinism after the Birmingham bombings has given the British state a good cover for its imperialist violence in Ireland. The job of socialists is to firmly oppose this chauvinism and expose it. But in the last issue of Big Flame, the beginning of your headline on the Birmingham incident ("We condemn the Birmingham bombings but...") was opportunist and in effect tagged along with the unthinking chauvinism of the British working class.

Socialists use socialist papers as a springboard for discussion with people. But not on this occasion.

We don't know who painted the Birmingham bombs, and it's true that we cannot in any way support them. As socialists, we are sickened by all such deaths. But the general outrage against the Birmingham bombs went further than that and was an overall back lash against the justifiable violence of the republican population in Northern Ireland against British imperialism. By making a big show of your condemnation of Birmingham, Big Flame failed to stand up, loudly and

clearly, in favour of that struggle against the British state. And that is what socialists should be doing first and foremost. We cannot shy away from explaining that the overall struggle of the anti-imperialist people in the North is necessary and revolutionary - and one day the working class in this country will have to protect and defend itself from the military forces of the state.

The British working class must not be scared off by the fact that there is a war in Northern Ireland. As Padraig Pearse said in 1915, "War is a terrible thing...but this war is not more terrible than the evils which it will end or help to end."

For five years, British imperialism has openly and savagely oppressed the catholic working class in the six counties - from the batons of the 'B' Specials, to RUV guns, to the CS gas and internment camps, and the SAS murder squads of the British Army. There is no question that against this the anti-imperialist violence should be supported by the British working class.

The fight for Ireland, independent of the political interference of the British state, has been ignored by the majority of the labour movement for too long. The dangers of this are now clear for this country as well. The National Front are taking up the issue and using it to gain support which one day may be used against the working class here.

(Name and address supplied.)

THE MONTH ON Merseyside

GANGSTER METHODS AT SCOTTS

Seventeen men who refused to work with scab labour at Scotts Bakery, Netherton, are still out of work, a month after being sacked. This is the sequel to our report in last months paper on the strength and militancy of the bakers' strike.

Scotts in Netherton was one of the strongest bakeries in the strike. They came out first, and gave a lead to other Liverpool bakery workers. So as soon as the Scotts workers were back, the management started a campaign to get rid of the known militants and divide the workers. Management know that just after Christmas most people are looking for overtime, not strikes, especially after being out for five weeks with no money coming in.

They started laying down the law and provoking the men when they went back - cutting down break time, sending some home etc. The last straw came when they sacked 17 men for refusing to work with the kind of scabs who kept production going during the strike. The workers responded by occupying the dough house - implementing branch policy on victimisation.

The company responded by sending in 60 men, including strong arm men from Kirkland Security Services, with eight alsations. The 17 were ready to come out and gave no resistance, but the heavies broke through all the same and several men were bitten and manhandled.

The 17 have taken legal action against Scotts and the security firm, and are fighting the case in an industrial tribunal. They need messages of support and would appreciate invitations to speak at meetings about the affair.

They are calling for a boycott of Sunblest and blacking supplies to Scotts at Dunningbridge Road.

Meanwhile, there's plenty to fight about in the industry. The strike meant just a couple of quid more and another two days holiday. Nothings happened about equal pay or full rate at 18. The difference between men and womens' pay has risen with the settlement.

Support to: Scotts 17 Action Committee, c/o Millie Hughes, 30 Deerbar Drive, Netherton

Phone: 526 9179.

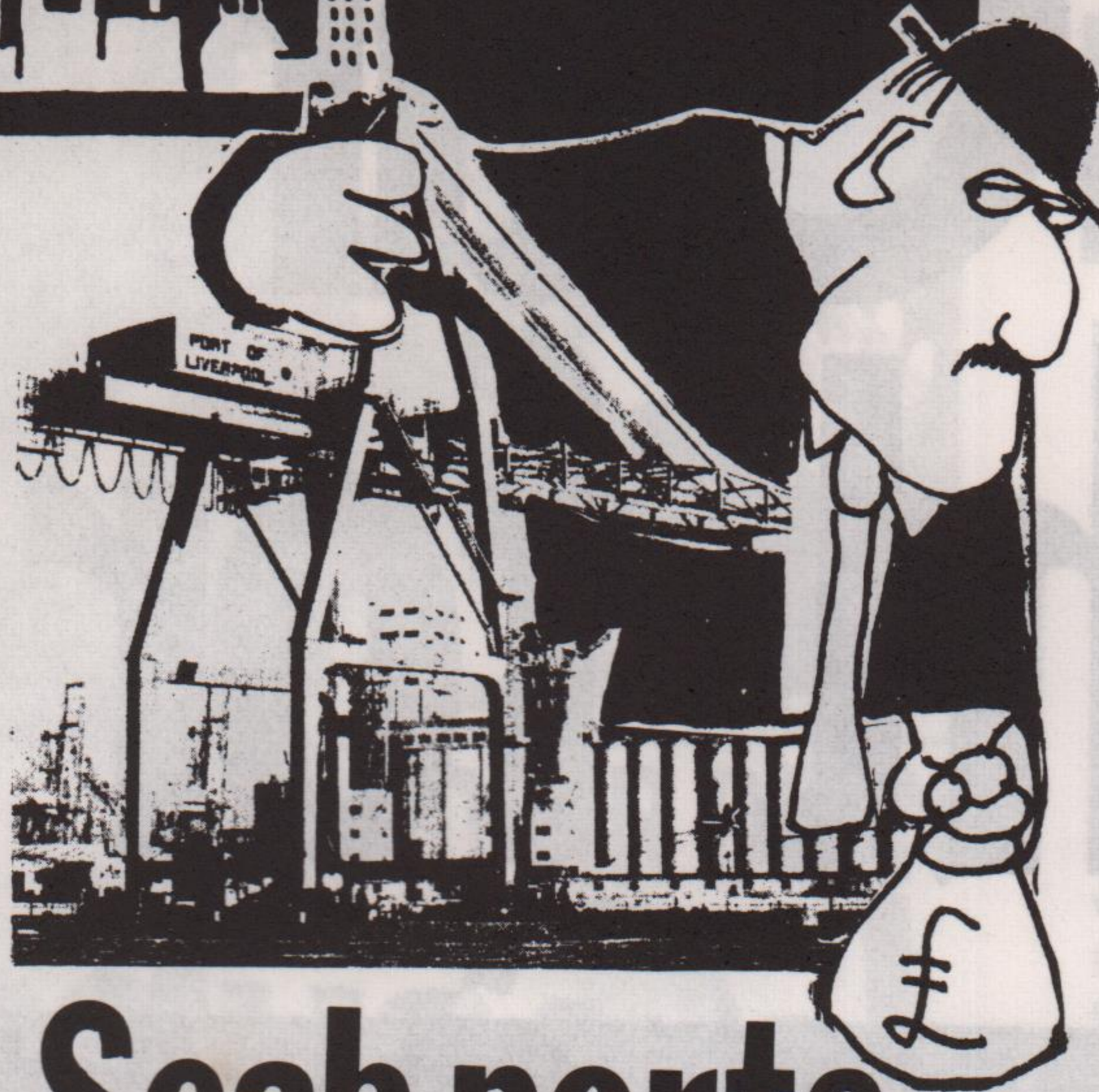
SUEING THE CORPY

Liverpool Corpy are beginning to make regular court appearances - not as prosecutors, but as defendants.

Over the last six months, at least six organised groups of Corpy tenants have prosecuted the Corpy for their failure as landlord to maintain property in which there were tenants. Some cases are still going through the courts and others are being planned.

Last year, tenants of Haigh Heights, Everton Brow, won an action against the Corpy for housing maintenance. Since then the Corporation has started to appeal, using our rates money to clear their name. If the appeal reaches the House of Lords, it could cost £10,000 plus - money which we pay to have our houses maintained, and not to clear the name of a crappy landlord.

Not far from Haigh Heights are Woodstock



Scab ports to stay?

Hints from the Government that the Labour Party is back-peddling on its proposals to nationalise ALL ports in Britain. A delegation of dockers stewards, who went to London recently, came away with the strong impression that the Government is thinking about introducing somekind of two tier port structure, which would leave all railway ports, like Heysham and Dover, outside the nationalisation proposals. These ports would continue to operate independently, and of course continue to be a threat to the large nationalised ports like Liverpool and London.

There's alot of bitterness on the Hull fish docks, where the men have just won a ten week strike. During the strike, the employers sent the trawlers to ports round the country to be unloaded and serviced. Hull port workers refused to handle them. But one of the ports they came to was Liverpool, where at least two large trawlers were unloaded at the Gladstone docks. The Echo was so pleased at this break down of dock solidarity it had a picture of them. Next time Liverpool docks needs support, it may find it more difficult to find.

THE SIZE OF RENTS TO COME

Two weeks ago huge rent increases were announced on some of the older pre-war housing in the Liverpool dock area. It was said that the increases - of up to £5 per week - would be confined to so-called 'low rent' accommodation (read pre-war walk-up tenements) in the area along the docks between the Dingle and Sandhills. The proposed increases were so steep they even shocked some dozy Labour councillors. So now the increases have been put on ice, for further discussion. For the time being,

Gardens, the Four Squares (Soho St) and Gerard Gardens which are also after the Corpy through the courts for their consistent failure to carry out a landlord's duties.

In Northwood, Kirkby, six tenants won a test case involving over 200 dwellings and they are now about to take another 30 cases through the courts.

The increasing use of legal methods to fight the Corporation has a lot to do with the existence of a well-informed neighbourhood law centre in Liverpool's North End. Most Merseyside lawyers are totally ignorant of council tenants legal rights.

Although using the State's legal machinery against the Corpy is a bit like trying to get lemonade out of a weed-killer factory, the tenants organisations behind these prosecutions should be built up as the means to carry this fight way beyond the courtroom.

Plesseys FIGHTING LAYOFFS

KIRKBY SACKING LEADS TO LAY OFF

At Kirkby, a strike was caused by management who refused to replace a worker who had been sacked. This led to a strike by the Transport and General workers. This is a further indication of the way Plessey is trying to cut down on its labour force and have the remaining workers work harder. Two hundred workers were laid off indefinitely as a result of Plessey's attitude.

A senior steward, who addressed the meeting of the laid off workers, admitted that there would be an increase in lay offs in the future. This raises the question of lay off pay. If workers are going to get laid off, especially if its through no fault of their own, then they are going to want paying for it. The more Plessey resorts to lay offs, the more the workers will demand lay off pay.

So far no lay offs have occurred as a result of the joint staff unions strike. The staff, who are striking over increases in pay, sick pay and holidays, are using selective strikes in areas where they think it will cause the most disruption.

At the moment they are using the staff transport drivers, which short lead to lay off of hourly paid workers very shortly. There is a lot of animosity between staff and hourly paid workers because the staff judge their claim on the results of the hourly paid claim, instead of joining together with the hourly paid unions on a common claim.

UNEMPLOYMENT THREATS: PLESSEY

As the pleas for wage restraint give way to threats of unemployment, more and more bosses are trying to force workers to see capitalism's crisis as being a workers' crisis as well. On Merseyside, Plessey workers, along with the rest of the working class, turned their backs on the ruling class' plea for wage restraint and a lower standard of living and went ahead with their wage claim.

A further rise is expected in April as the workers constantly demand a higher standard of living, regardless of capital's needs. So, now Plessey is trying to hit back at workers through the threat of unemployment. The firm is looking for ways to make the workers work harder in an attempt to offset the higher wages recently won.

SOLIDARITY WITH SWINDON WORKERS

Plessey is trying to move work and machinery from their Swindon plant to one in Northampton. This would mean the loss of up to 1000 jobs. The workers have decided that their needs come before Plessey's and have staged a sit in.

Senior stewards from Liverpool met Swindon stewards and agreed to support them by holding collections. There is likely to be similar action at other Plessey factories. So, even now as the smiling, friendly mask of capitalism starts to slip, the ranks of the workers begin to close up.

TEACHERS v UNION

Teachers from several Liverpool schools have been on unofficial strike against their union's acceptance of the Houghton Report on teachers pay. They are particularly incensed by the recommendation that the biggest rises should go to the longest serving, best paid teachers.

Over 300 teachers pledged themselves, at a meeting called last week by Liverpool Teachers Action Committee to carry on their fight against Houghton by demanding that the union, the NUT, lodges in the next claim a starting salary of at least £2,500 and re-grading to give the younger teachers a better deal in relation to senior staff and head teachers.

The Teachers Action Committee is campaigning to build up support for these demands in the weeks before the next claim.

(You can find out the time and place of their next meeting from E. Caines, Quarry Bank Comprehensive, Harthill Rd, Liverpool 18.)



TATES: SWEET AND SOUR

Tate and Lyle workers can get some satisfaction from the £40.8 million profit made by the company last year - but the price of suagr will rise again this year.

For Tates workers, profits this size mean that there can be no reason for redundancies in the refining areas of the Tate's international empire; since Tate's can in no way use the excuse of 'economic necessity' to rationalise their work force without exposing themselves as the most ruthless profit-seekers since Attila the Hun.

WRONG PRICE

Meanwhile, Common Market horsetrading over future sugar supplies continues at our expense. While European suagr bosses fight each other over the 'right price', consumers from England to Italy continue to pay the wrong price - in our case, 27p for 21b. of suagr.

OUR EXPENSE

Tate's have been congratulating themselves via adverts in the national press, and through a special film for their employees. But the bosses' delight is at our expense. By using last year's phoney world shortage to their own advantage, a large part of their success rests on the fact that we are paying three times as much for a bag of sugar as we did in 1973.

NASTY MEDICINE

Redundancies have begun to hit Sangers, the wholesale chemists in Dale St, Liverpool which employs 100. So far four drivers have gone - two of them with only two days' notice! More cut backs are expected. The management are believed to be worried that if staff are given more notice, they'll steal the stock on their way out.

Sangers, owned by merchant bank and property investors, Hill, Samuel - the biggest merchant bank in Britain - are rationalising and streamlining their Liverpool depot. The work is being moved to sub-depots around the north west - all of them handily situated to get maximum government development grants. At the same time, fewer drivers are being asked to do the same amount of work.

The workers are hoping to call a meeting of all north west branches of the company to organise a fight back.



While Granada Reports was down at Halewood a week or so ago, showing off Ford's new Escort model, they missed an important part of the story. By the time the report reached the screen, it didn't really matter about those new lines or the increased luggage space because the plant was laid off and not one car was getting built.

It may be hard to picture, but behind all the glamour, shiny paint and chrome of a new model lies a busy hive of relentless exploitation - the modern car factory. Some poor sod has got to build those cars, and that means hour after hour of exhausting, zombie like monotony. Of course, Fords are always trying to improve this situation - to get even more effort out of their work force.

That's especially true now when they need to produce at maximum efficiency to carve out their share of a shrinking market (see our centre pages for the state of the car industry). The new model has provided an excuse for bringing in sweeping changes, for raising line speeds and lowering manning. And that's how the plant came to be laid off.

Solderers, like everyone else, were asked to deal with more cars - 25 rather than 20 an hour. They refused, since they couldn't see why they should help out Fords for the same wage. The union's intervention brought a temporary agreement and the men went back to produce the 25 an hour management had asked for. But by then, the bosses had decided to demand 28 or 29. This was unmistakably the thin edge of a large wedge. Now the solderers are hitting back by refusing all repair work and letting some cars go past unattended.

Throughout the world, the anxious

RIISING OIL PRICES WERE THE FINAL STRAW. YEARS OF WORKERS RESISTANCE HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL OF THE CAR COMPANIES PROFITS BUT NOW THE CAR BOSSES WANT TO USE THE CRISIS AS A COVER FOR SORTING OUT THE SHOP FLOOR.

Car

bosses fight for control

Wilson's New Year Cowley speech marks a new phase in the class struggle in Britain. Aimed at British Leyland workers, it was an attack on the whole of the working class. 'Strike bashing' was the term of praise accorded to it by the right-wing magazine, The Economist.

So why did Wilson choose the car workers for his New Year resolution?

CRISIS

We all realise by now the gravity of the capitalist crisis. The very word has entered everyday language. The rocketing prices, the dole queues, the appeals in the press to the national interest — only a few union leaders, such as Len Murray of the TUC, could still be blind to the seriousness of things. What brought this home to the rest of us was when the car industry began to show signs of collapse.

Since the 1940's, the automobile industry has been the heart of capitalism. The car, the symbol of progress, has become an item of mass consumption and the measure of the increased buying power of the working class.

MULTINATIONALS

In this country alone, over 300,000 people are employed in the industry. That's not counting the many thousands working in linked industries — components and the supply firms for steel, rubber, glass. On Merseyside, besides the Ford, Vauxhall and Standard Triumph plants, you have Pilkington (glass), Dunlop (tyres), Girling (brakes). Not to mention all those employed as traffic wardens, petrol station attendants and road tax collectors.

Not only has the industry been the driving sector of the economy, but it has also wielded enormous political power. The bosses of the big multinationals are certainly the most powerful political men, outside of the chief leaders of the major powers and the oil men, whose decisions on questions of labour relations and investment often set the lead for the entire economy.

BATTLEFIELD

At the same time, it's clear that in most countries where they exist in strength, it is the



car workers who have been in the forefront of the fight with the bosses. Nearly everywhere, the industry holds the record for number of days lost through industrial action per worker.

Even Brian Clough, commenting on his unhappy days with Leeds United, said, 'The players were holding more meetings than Ford shop stewards'. The size of the plants, the unbearable conditions, the total lack of interest of most workers for a boring, repetitive job, have transformed the shop floor into a battlefield, at the same time creating a worker who knows that he or she doesn't (and never will in this kind of society) own or control the means of production. 'none of us have any pride at all when it comes down to the job', is the comment of a body worker in Halewood.

SHORT TIME OR THE SACK

Given the importance of the car industry and the struggles of its workers, it's not surprising that the present situation in it should have caused such a panic. When Renault sneezes, France catches a cold, is what they say in France, but it could apply equally to Italy where Agnelli, boss of FIAT, seems to own everything including Juventus, the football team. And to Britain. No wonder Wilson set his sights on the car workers at Cowley.

What is the situation? In 1974, car sales were 33% down in Japan, 24% in the UK, 23% in the US, 17% in West Germany, 14% in France and 12% in Italy. Car production had fallen by 25% in the US, 23% in Germany, 18% in Japan, 8% in Italy, 5% in France.

Renault is on a four day week and FIAT on a three day week. Volkswagen has had massive lay offs, whilst in Detroit, more than 200,000 car workers were laid off at the end of December. So far not so bad in Britain, the crisis is beginning to bite deep here too. Chrysler's

Almost exactly three years ago, British paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed demonstrators on Derry's 'Bloody Sunday'. This year the anniversary is marked by a 300 strong rally in Manchester and a thousands-strong torchlight procession in London, organised by the Troops Out Movement. These mobilisations represent the first major rejection of British policy in Ireland by British people themselves, since the Birmingham bombings. They show that the TOM refuses to be intimidated by the so-called counter-terrorist legislation, which is in reality aimed at all the opponents of British rule in Ireland.

People's Democracy is the largest revolutionary socialist organisation in Ireland. Below we print an interview with a member of the organisation who has just returned from Ireland. This is his analysis of recent events, and his views are not necessarily ours.

Linwood and Ryton plants are now on a three day week, like Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port. Jaguar is on a four day week. A large part of the components industry, like GKN and Lucas, is also working short time.

CAUSES

One of the underlying causes of the present crisis of capitalism, and especially of the car sector, lies in the new wave of struggles fought by workers in Europe and the US, since 1968. In Spain, France and, above all, Italy, the car workers have taken over the political leadership of the class from older sectors of the work force like the miners.

It is the Seat (Spanish FIAT) workers in Barcelona who take the lead against Franco's dying fascism. In Italy, the FIAT workers have succeeded in involving all the other workers in the struggle by posing general demands like

- * equal wage rises for all (ie helping workers in small factories to win bigger rises)
- * abolition of grading and incentives
- * refusal to accept factory discipline
- * fight for guaranteed income.

It's no accident that now Turin, the HQ of the FIAT empire, is in the forefront of the campaigns against prices, through 'self-reduction of rent and fares' and squatting.

Although in Germany, Britain and the US, the car workers have failed to become so far the leading and politically conscious sector that they are in other parts of Europe, there is no mistaking their rejection — not always well organised or very coherent — of wage labour, of the way production is organised in a capitalist factory — supervision, hierarchy, unsafe conditions, speed ups.

OIL

The other main cause of the crisis is to be found in the underdeveloped world. One of the

* What do you think of the ceasefire?

It could have been one of two things — a military tactic or a political manoeuvre. But it underlined the misconceptions of the Provo leadership and heightened differences between the leadership and the rank and file. Most of the guerillas see the war as the only way of driving the British out of Ireland. They don't have a complex analysis of British imperialism, but their experience of the anti-imperialist mass movement has politicised most.

They realise that not only must they kick out the British, but that the new united Ireland must be a better society. Some might support a Workers Republic, but most really want to end the foreign exploitation of their country. They want decent homes, jobs and the right to hold up their heads in their own country without fear of the British or religious discrimination. Most of the IRA Army Council during the ceasefire had the respect of the volunteers. Most were experienced guerillas themselves. Both they — men like Kevin Mallon — and the rank and file, understand their duty is to fight, NOT to defend their ideals but to transfer them into reality. When persuaded

NO LOSS OF

Just at the moment, car workers are well workers in the fight to force the bosses to being able to put forward and fight for a ions of the working class will be able to u HOW CAN CAR WORKERS SHOW EVE HEALEY BLACKMAIL — LOWER WAGE

- * By fighting for 40 hours pay, work or twice before putting us on the three d
- * No loss of jobs, no redundancies.
- * No mobility of labour, which leads easi
- * By fighting the car bosses attempts to c restructuring and efficiency deals.
- * By defending all the gains made by the



pressures on the sheiks and shahs to raise oil prices has been the national liberation struggles and the demand for better conditions by the new working classes of the Third World. The defeat of the Americans in Vietnam has been very costly in terms of its effects on the dollar as a world currency and in setting off a spiral of inflation which is now out of control.



Will the car companies go bust? Some of the smaller ones, like Aston Martin, might, but more likely there will be mergers, take overs or State rescue operations. But the huge multinationals are safe, for the moment. They have vast capital reserves and, let's not forget, the world car market is still expected to expand for at least another decade.

And it must be remembered that Ford made in 1974 their biggest profits ever and invested more capital in Britain than any year since 1965.

What is already beginning to happen is that the car bosses are using the excuse of the crisis to bring about the biggest changes in the way they exploit workers since the early 1920's.

by people like O'Connell and the Sinn Feiners to call a ceasefire, the volunteers obeyed. As soldiers, once they laid down their guns they gave up their ability to transform their just demands into reality. So two different currents emerged. The aspiring politicians, like O'Connell and O'Bradlaigh, and the mass of the guerillas who saw that the ceasefire chaged nothing.

* What is British strategy now?

Overall British strategy is to 'Ulsterise' the war. They have no intention of withdrawing if their investments are threatened. Their biggest fear is a resurgence of mass struggle on the streets. So, they either want to get the guerillas to enter the parliamentary ring and stop fighting, or to split them from the community that supports them. These two tactics are equally dangerous in the present situation in the North — a decline of mass resistance, the powerful position of the loyalists and the fear amongst the Catholics of civil war.

The ending of the ceasefire only gave pro-British elements a field day. It certainly left the majority of Catholics confused, not surp-

INTERVIEW WITH PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY — IRELAND

AFTER THE CEASE FIRE

JOBS

placed to give a lead to millions of other
pay for the crisis. But doing this means
programme of demands which all sect-
se in their fight against redundancies.
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S OR MORE UNEMPLOYMENT?
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ismantle shop floor power through
shop floor in recent years.

DESKILLING

In the early 1920's a very strong working class movement swept across the industrialised world, on the wave of the Russian revolution. The workers councils in Germany, the factory councils in Italy, and the shop stewards movement in Britain grew strong and threatened to overthrow capitalism everywhere. The way the bosses defeated those movements was not just by blatant repression, but also by undermining their whole basis. They made wholesale changes in plant and machinery, reorganised the system of production so that the face of the working class was changed.

Those were the years when Ford introduced the assembly line which quickly spread far beyond Detroit and the car industry. One of its main effects was to decrease the importance of the skilled workers — until then the unrivalled political leaders of the workers — down-grading the craft and pride and capability in doing a skilled job. Instead, the factories were moulding a new mass of unskilled workers, lacking a specific job and performing a simple, monotonous task. Thousands went through a process of deskilling in the engineering industry. Until the late 30's, few of these deskilled workers were members of a trade union. They were cut off from the craft workers, separated in a way which the employers encouraged as much as they could.

VASELINE

Now, once again, the employers seek to bring about a new era in the industry. On the one hand the multinationals are shifting large chunks of capital to newly industrialised countries — Brazil, the Middle East, India and Nigeria. These countries are nearer to the new markets, they guarantee a cheaper and more docile work force, and their governments promise continuity of production in a way Harold Wilson cannot.

At the same time, production is being streamlined in the western countries, through lay-offs, redundancies and the threat of unemployment. FIAT's policies show us what the bosses are out to achieve. In the past year they have reduced the world's most troublesome workforce by 10,000. They introduced a three day week in August. TV cameras have been mounted on the shop floor and the lines are patrolled by sociologists carrying out surveys on workers' grievances (the workers have nicknamed them 'vaseline'). Whole sections, like spot welding, have been automated and paint spraying is now mostly done by robots. They are trying to break down the unity of the last few years by giving the skilled workers staff status, using lay offs to isolate militant sections, and insisting on full mobility within and also between plants.

risingly, given the confusion amongst the Provos themselves.

* *What do you think of the call for workers unity across the sectarian divide, and for the reform of the Six Counties?*

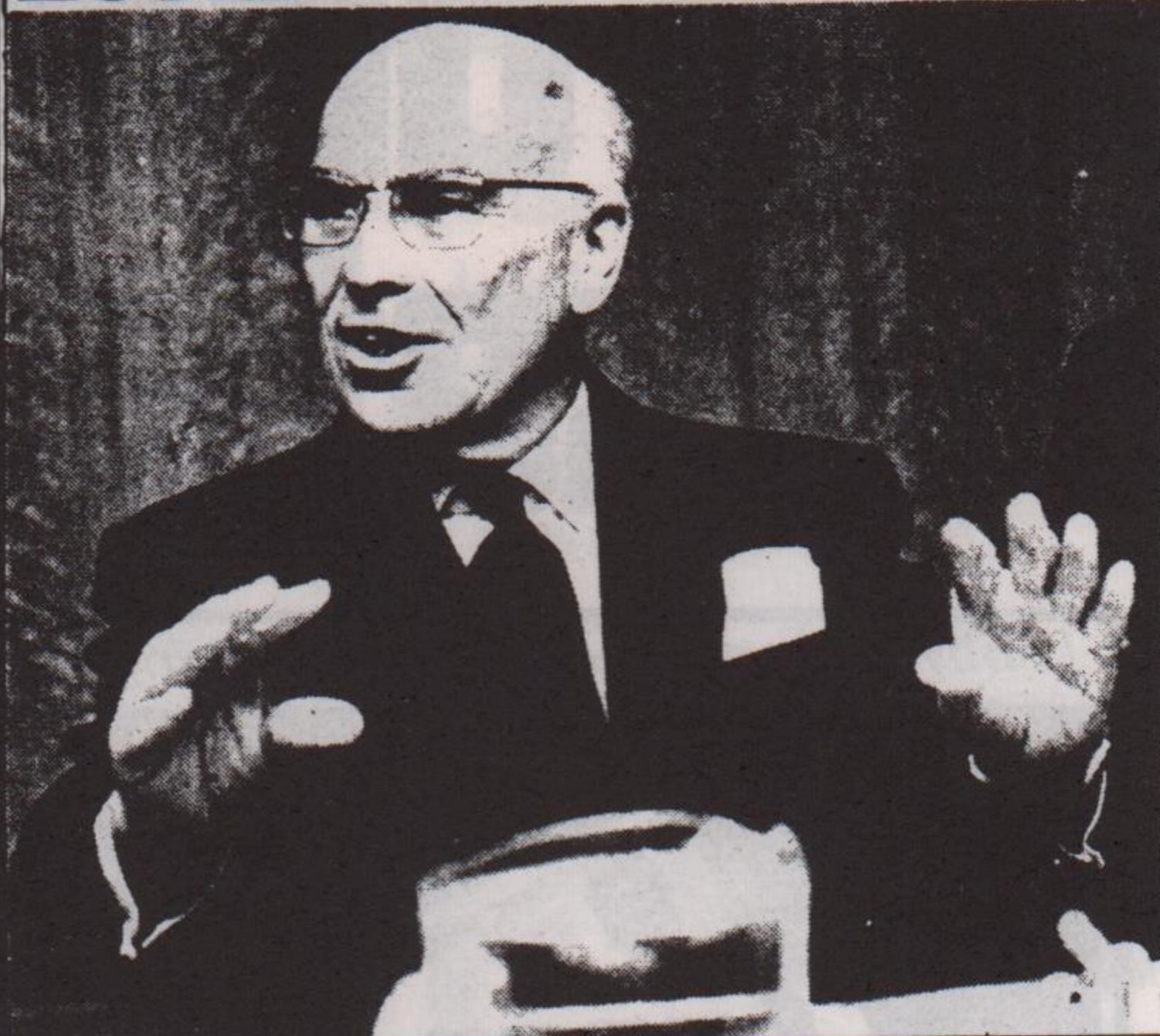
The UWC strike showed that the majority of the Protestant workers adamantly cling to the Protestant Ascendancy. The Six Counties was founded by force. Its reactionary Unionist rulers use religious discrimination to create a privileged section of the population (the Protestants) to protect themselves. This gave new life to the CASTE consciousness of Protestant workers.

Even attempts by British imperialism to de-sectarianise the state failed. So to call for the end of sectarianism is to call for the end of the state. Only the ending of the Six Counties will open the way for the unity of Protestant and Catholic workers.

* *The Official Republican movement have recently lost many of their members to the new Irish Republican Socialist Party. What is PD's assessment of this new grouping?*

The IRSP have so far produced no policy

LORD STOKES —



—AND MR BENN



MAKE AN OFFER...

The social contract, workers participation, nationalisation — the key-stones of Labour's industrial policy in a period of economic crisis, and once again the testing ground is British Leyland, the shaky remains of the non-American car industry in this country.

COLLAPSE

The problems workers face in BLMC can be traced back directly to Harold Wilson's last attempt to use the company to strengthen the economy. That was in 1968 when the Labour Government put up the cash to bail out Austin-Morris and merge them and the prestige manufacturers — Jaguar, Bentley — with thriving Leyland Motors, under Donald Stokes. At the same time, the Government gave its full backing to Stokes plan to sort out labour 'problems' by abolishing piece-work. The aim was to transform a vast, rambling empire of largely out of date factories into a profitable, unified corporation with much higher productivity. And the methods they adopted to do that explain a lot about why the company is on the point of collapse again.

It's true, there have been many disputes at BLMC in the last few years, and the work-force hasn't been producing as many cars per worker as the Japanese (or Ford workers, for that matter). This is partly the result of the lack of investment in BLMC, but we want to stress that it is also the consequence of workers struggles against the Stokes streamline and damn 'em regime of the '70's.

SLAVERY

The task Stokes set the new corporation was to abolish incentive payments, and the whole piecework system, and replace it with measured day work (MDW), a system of flat payment by the hour, introduced in Britain by Ford. What was at stake was much more than wage levels. Measured Day Work means much more supervision and more management control over every aspect of production.

documents but we welcome their formation as a progressive move. For some time, a split was growing inside the Officials as many of the genuine socialists saw the leadership's total betrayal on the national question and on the question of the loyalists. We are sure that there is ground for badly needed cooperation between our groups as many people in the IRSP use the arguments that PD have held for so long.

* *You have criticised the Provisional leadership for their role in the struggle in the North. What are their failings in the South. What is the level of class struggle amongst the southern working class?*

The greatest failing of the Provo leadership is its total lack of understanding of the class struggle and its relationship to the anti-imperialist struggle.

They seem to see the south as a friendly but misguided state. This attitude became a major issue amongst the volunteers during the ceasefire. They were infuriated by the arrest of two Army Council members in the south. But basically the ideas of the leadership won't change. They claim to be socialist but their

RESPONSIBILITY BUT NO POWER AT BLMC

No wonder one of the system's pioneers, George Cattell, ex-manager of Rootes, called it 'a modern form of slavery'.

What made things worse for the workers was that the company had to press ahead with the abolition of piecework to make up for its lack of modern equipment. On top of this, inflation meant that wages were losing their value month by month, so that the initial by-out bonus, when workers finally agreed to MDW, was soon worth very little and by giving up piecework they had also surrendered the most effective way conceivable of raising their wages when they needed to. The result has been a continuous series of battles over wages, manning levels and shop floor organisation.

LAY OFFS

The strike which is finally supposed to have forced BLMC into the arms of the Government was the dispute over lay off money at Triumph, Coventry.

The car industry is particularly prone to lay-offs — but lay offs aren't just accidents. Whatever the situation, lay off is used as a political weapon against the shop floor. The threat of instant casualisation is one of the bosses most effective way of restoring law and order in the factory. When one section of a plant is in dispute, management lays everybody off in the hope that it will turn the majority against the strikers. Component shortages can lead to lay offs, but more often what happens is that management wriggle out of their lay off agreement (usually an undertaking to pay about 70% of the basic if the lay off is caused by an external dispute or a parts shortage) by provoking a dispute to get everybody off the pay

roll until they've sorted out their problems.

So, when Triumph workers went on strike for FULL lay off money they were challenging the right of the bosses to cut the weekly wage whenever they felt like it. This may be one of the 'manifestly avoidable stoppages' that Wilson harped on about in his 3 January speech on the car industry. But for car workers and workers in general, what option is there but to fight for a regular income and against the status and conditions of casual workers.

SECTIONAL

But what about the engine tuners dispute at Cowley? We wholeheartedly supported the lay off strike at Triumphs because the demand for a guaranteed wage is not only a rejection of the way capitalism organises our lives for its own benefit, but also a demand which can be taken up throughout industry. In other words, its a demand around which we can begin to fight for unity of the working class. We have reservations, however, about the engine tuners whose aim is to manoeuvre themselves into a better bargaining position in relation to the company and their fellow workers.

This type of dispute happens at BLMC partly because of the diversity of wages. But it is also a result of short sighted trade union practices. Unions have been reluctant to generalise the disputes and demands of various sections for fear of upsetting their own applecart. The rank and file often have to fight for better wages and conditions through the restricted channels open to them.

ALL AT SEA IN FORD'S POOL

In the few weeks since the Christmas shut down, while the jigs and other new machinery required for the new Escort are finished off, Ford has created a labour pool in Halewood, with men taken off sections throughout the main plants. For the moment, production is running at about two-thirds normal, so the atmosphere on the lines is tense whilst the time and motion experts get on with re-timing jobs. But once the re-timing is completed and the plant tooled up fully to run the new Escort, workers expect there to be about 1,000 surplus men.. These men will be paid to do odd jobs or to fill in for absent workers, but eventually through 'natural wastage' the jobs will just vanish.

Just like over 1,000 jobs have disappeared from the neighbouring Transmission plant over the years. Done like this, Ford avoids a challenge from the unions over redundancies, avoids paying redundancy compensation and gradually speeds up the lines. A body plant worker, who has been transferred to the pool, took notes on one morning's work —

At 8am we are told to report to the general foreman. He took us across the plant to near the press shop and left us, saying that someone would give us a job. An hour later a foreman appeared, took all our names; by this time, the group had built up to about 150 men, and it was like a cattle market. He split us up into two groups and left. At 9.50 he reappeared with the janitor foreman who wanted six men to clean the toilet walls! He took them and returned and then took one group for clean up duties in the press shop basement. There was about 50 of us left when five of us were told to report to the KD [knock-down, where cars are crated for export]. The time was 10.30. We arrived at 10.45 and sat down in the tea area playing cards, waiting. No-one seems anxious to see us, and we've been told to see a man called A. Bee. By now, it is 11am and A. Bee hasn't shown. 'We've been stood up', we thought. At 11.30 a janitor was brushing the floor around us and told us he was to clean out a corner because the cat had pissed in it and the men are complaining that the smell is going down the line. He offered the job to one of us. At 11.50 the janitor foreman appeared yet again, with...A. Bee. He told us to go for dinner, he had a job for us to do when we came back. None of went back.*

programme, Eire Nua, has no relation to the real struggle, north and south.

Their lack of class orientation is especially dangerous today when the class struggle in the south is escalating. Increased unemployment. Factory occupations spreading. And a militant rank and file movement attacking the sell outs of the trade union leaders.

For marxists, like PD, this militancy amongst southern workers is the key to the victorious solution to the national liberation struggle. We must link the struggle against imperialism's military domination of the north with its economic domination of the south. This is the only way the national struggle can become the struggle for a workers republic.

* *What is PD's task in the coming confrontations?*

As socialists, we believe the only solution for the Irish people is a 32 county republic under workers control. Our task is to educate and organise for this. Over the past few years we have constantly posed mass activity and workers self defence as the alternative to purely elitist violence. We have won influence and

respect.

The only alternative to the faltering leadership of the Provos is a revolutionary marxist party which intervenes to give lead to the militant workers and guerilla fighters.

* *What can be done in Britain to assist the fight for socialism in Ireland?*

We call on all British workers to support the demands of the Troops Out Movement, for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army and for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. The British Army is systematically interning anyone who might use a weapon to defend the Catholic community. They are encouraging the fascist and ultra-loyalist groups to join the RUC reserve and the Ulster Defence Regiment, directly arming the loyalists. Withdraw the British Army and give the Catholics a chance of survival.

British workers must begin to help those who would defend the Catholic areas against loyalist attacks. Most necessary is welfare aid for the beleaguered ghettos. The PD has set up a national welfare committee in Dublin and begun to create a network in Britain.

On this page we report on serious developments in the way the law is being used against the working class movement in Britain. Less publicised than the jailing of the Shrewsbury Two for picketing during the 1972 builders strike, a recent High Court judgment has now outlawed non-industrial picketing. On top of that, the Law Commission is now working on a change in the law which would make factory occupations and squatting a criminal act.

There is also the first attempt to use the 1971 Immigration Act to deport an Italian worker and revolutionary, active in organising immigrant workers in London. Finally we warn against the new police powers verging on internment which are part and parcel of Jenkins Counter Terrorism Act.

CONSPIRACY: Laws made to order

You are unlikely to have heard of the North London estate agents, Prebble & Co., but they have brought about a change in the law of picketing which has been overshadowed by the fight to release the Shrewsbury Two. The change could very well effect you if you ever picket a supermarket or a rent office or block a road.

Islington Tenants Campaign has been campaigning since last March to get local estate agents to adopt a code of practice to help prevent the harassment of tenants by landlords who wanted to sell or rent to more profitable tenants. This is called 'gentrification' in London. As the largest estate agents in Islington, Prebble and Co were picketed by the tenants every Saturday — until a High Court judge decided that pickets not connected with an industrial dispute were illegal.

SHEER NUMBERS

But the Shrewsbury Two, Des Warren and Rick Tomlinson, now serving lengthy prison sentences, can testify that there's a great deal of doubt about whether any picket is legal in Britain. The Two were sent down on charges arising out of the flying picketing organised by North Wales building workers during the 1972 builders strike. They were acquitted of all the charges of violence but found guilty of 'conspiring to intimidate'.

The point about this charge is that it provides for a punishment 12 times heavier than for simply 'intimidating', and at the same time the prosecution is released from its usual obligation to prove that intimidation actually took place. It merely needs to show that there was an agreement to do so. Besides, as Robert Carr pointed out as Tory Home Secretary, 'sheer numbers attending can of itself constitute intimidation'.

IRELAND

The devastating success of the flying picket in the miners, builders and dockers strikes in 1972 took the employers and the Tories by surprise. They reacted by prosecuting the weakest group of workers involved, builders from North Wales where the Lump is widespread, and by setting up a police anti-picket organisation, coordinated from New Scotland Yard. Two sergeants there keep an eye on disputes all over the country and can move squads of police reinforcements from

area to area. Most forces now have one of these specially trained squads. Merseyside is no exception—

During the latter part of the year, the force was committed to forming 8 Police Support Units for duty in the event of emergency situations arising. Each unit consisted of 35 personnel, and short training courses were provided for the purpose of acquainting them with the type of situation which may be encountered, and to coordinate the movement of units. (Chief Constable's Report 1973)

All these measures, plus the eventual abolition of the jury which some top policemen want, are aimed at balancing out the strength of the working class. Some of the most drastic changes have come as a result of the war in Northern Ireland.

90 DAY DETENTION RULE

Roy Jenkins Counter-Terrorism Act creates many precedents Hitler would have appreciated. For centuries, no one could be held without charge for longer than 48 hours. Now the limit rises to a week; a step closer to South Africa's 90 day detention rule and, of course, internment. All this is done in the name of the fight against terrorism, but few can believe that it will make any difference on this score. The real question is whether or when the Act will be extended for use against the working class movement in this country.

14 for trial

14 people, two of them from Liverpool, go for trial on March 3, accused of 'conspiring to contravene the Incitement to Disaffection Act'. Their crime? Being in possession of leaflets which tell British soldiers their legal rights; leaflets that suggest to British soldiers that what they are being ordered to do to the Irish people might not be just justified.

British conspiracy laws being what they are, you don't have to do anything to get convicted. You just have to conspire to do it. Worse, you can be convicted of conspiracy without having met the people you're supposed to have conspired with.

In fact, some of the 14 have never met each other before, let alone conspired together. The maximum sentence is life imprisonment. Life imprisonment for not doing something with people you've never met before.

Police picket?

No, but it took 300 Islington coppers to enforce a High Court Judge's no picketing ruling last December.

The Law Commission is a group of lawyers—appointed, not elected—who 'advise' the government on changes in the law. But only one out of 58 'suggestions' made by them has failed to become law in recent times.

These new repressive measures hang on the proposal to turn trespass into a criminal act. At present, trespass is a civil offence and any prosecutions over it must be brought privately. If it becomes a criminal act, the police and the State would be able to intervene directly. This would affect sit-ins in Social Security offices as well as pickets on private premises, where the police can only intervene if called in by the owners of the premises.

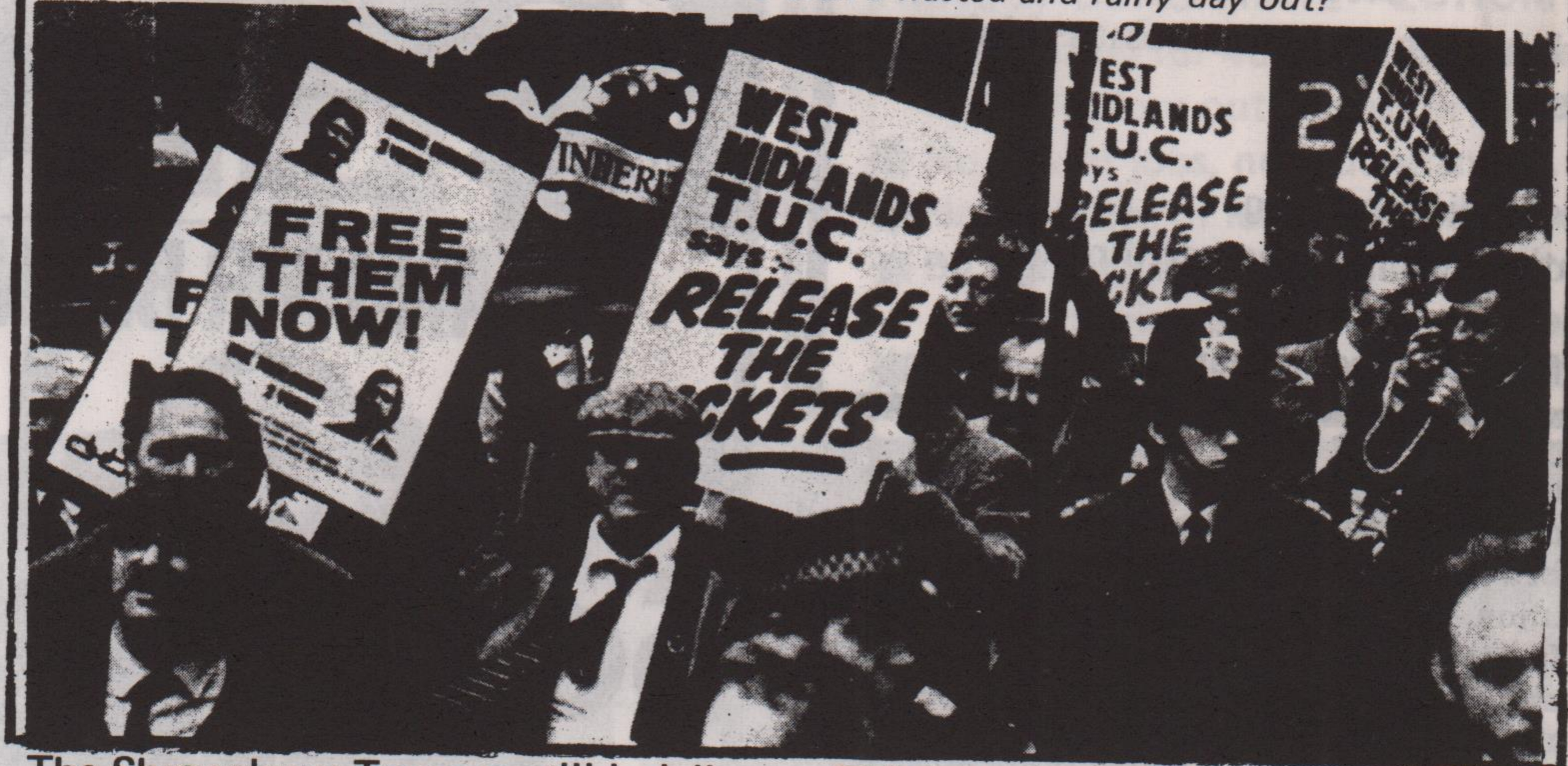


WITH ANOTHER WAVE OF SIT-INS IN THE OFFING, AS WORKERS FIGHT REDUNDANCIES, LABOUR IS THINKING OF OUTLAWING THE OCCUPATION OF FACTORIES AND HOUSES.

Pickets, factory occupations and squatting may soon become criminal acts, carrying fines and six month jail sentences. These latest proposals for anti-working class laws were suggested to the Government last June.

Fits and Starts in Pickets Struggle

Lobbying parliament: was it anything more than a wasted and rainy day out?



The Shrewsbury Two are still in jail. This month's march to lobby parliament by over 6,000 workers did not free the lads, predictably. But, then, the lobby's leaders in the TUC never intended that it should. For them, it was an attempt to defuse the build up of pressure on the issue in the labour movement.

It was not totally successful in doing that.

After last November's stillborn try at mobilising on the issue — which was sabotaged by the UCATT leadership, the campaign to free the two was in danger of losing its momentum. But the lobby has aired the question yet again. But now, with the TUC's unwilling seal of approval, it has become harder for union officials and the press and tv to pass off the Two as criminals. The lobby lifted the blackout on the case in the media.

This is an important step towards developing a wider movement of support for freeing the Two. The lobby has also increased the pressure on Wilson not only to release them, but also to revoke the conspiracy laws.

At a time when the Labour Party faces serious splits over the Common Market, Wilson may prefer to give way on this issue in return for the support of his left wing on the EEC. All this makes it more important now that the campaign over the Two should be stepped up, not allowed to die.

This is why we support the Wigan building workers march to London in February, and why we back the call for further strike action. Every part of the workers movement should take up a position of public support for these initiatives.



Des Warren's speech from the dock before he was sentenced in Shrewsbury to three years imprisonment for conspiring to intimidate workers on building sites to abstain from work and for unlawful assembly.

Was there conspiracy? Yes, there was, but not by the pickets. The conspiracy began when the miners gave the government a good hiding last year, and I hope they do the same again.

in picketing laws.

It developed when the government was forced to perform legal gymnastics to get five dockers out of prison after having only just put them there. The conspiracy was one between the Home Secretary, the employers and the police. It was not done with a nod or a wink. It was conceived after pressure from Tory MPs who demanded changes

There is a very good reason why no police witness said that he had seen any evidence of conspiracy, unlawful assembly or affray. The question was hovering over the case from the very first day: 'Why no arrests on September 6?'

That would have led to even more important questions: 'When was the decision to proceed taken? Where did it come from? What instructions were issued to the police and by whom?'

There was your conspiracy.



FRANCO'S OUT

Franco Caprino will not be deported. But after five weeks in Pentonville Prison, he is no wiser about why the Home Secretary wanted to deport him or about why he's now changed his mind.

Immigrant and workers organisation, like the International Branch of the TGWU, which Franco has worked to build, were shocked by the order, the first under the Act, which was carried by the Tories. The order's been lifted but the threat remains. It's easy to see how the Act could be used to stymie workers' organisation where a large part of the workforce is immigrant — in the hotel and catering industry in London where Franco has been most active since he came to Britain six years ago.

Now he's free and it's no thanks to the national keeper of the liberal conscience, *The Guardian*, which claimed that Franco Caprino faced political charges in Italy, was linked to an Italian organisation some of whose members face bomb charges currently and which had connections with the Price Sisters. The facts are that neither Franco or any member of Lotta Continua face terrorist charges in Italy. Lotta Continua, a mass revolutionary organisation of 25,000, arranged a speaking tour for Doloures Price a few years ago, and its newspaper has been active in uncovering the links between bombings in Italy since 1969 and the higher reaches of the armed forces.

This month we look at the conditions at home and at work which can put us in hospital. Most of them need not exist. But to challenge the right of industry to ruin our health means fighting a system which at every level favours the boss and penalises the people who have to work for him. The cases on this page are not in any way exceptional: they are typical examples of what is going on every industrial town in 'Great' Britain. IS THIS THE TREATMENT WE DESERVE?

Widnes: Stop this Chemical Warfare

Every week, 19 different dangerous chemicals are trundled through Widnes town centre, past people's houses, in bulk tankers going to local factories. If one of them crashed, passers by could be blown up, covered in liquid fire or swiftly gassed to death.

'If a tanker with liquid chlorine was fractured, several hundred people might well be gassed to death and several hundred more would be hospitalised with lung oedema', warned a scientist from the local action committee fighting the chemical warfare threat.

The local council claim they have no legal right to control dangerous loads — and they still can't agree on building a by-pass.

EXPLOSION

Besides playing host to 21 factories, all producing poisonous pollution, the Widnes area contains factories which use and manufacture explosive products. One local councillor said, 'We are sitting on a bomb in Widnes'.

When local tenants invaded the Council chamber to protest against the rent Act in 1972, they heard the first item on the night's agenda — how near to site a TNT dump to the main road. (Some years ago a dump exploded.)

FLIXBORO

1 June 1974 — At Flixborough, near Hull, an explosion at a Nypro factory killed 28 workers, injured more than 100 and left 200 houses uninhabitable. The explosion was caused by an unsafe storage system used in a 'cheaper' — and therefore more unsafe) method of making nylon.

AIR

In Widnes they say even the sparrows wake up coughing. Not surprisingly since the level of sulphur dioxide in the Widnes air is well over the 'recommended maximum'. Sulphur dioxide is an irritant which burns the eyes, nose, throat and skin — every city has it.

There are several more ingredients in this poisonous cocktail which does for air in Widnes. In Widnes alone, there are 11 factories discharging offensive gases, smoke dust or grit — chemical plants, aluminium works, concrete factories.

One of the problems, as a local councillor explains, is that 'only sulphur dioxide or smoke are officially measured. There are other things far more dangerous.'

TRAFFIC

Even if you hold your breath in Widnes, you may be one of the 65% of residents who are exposed to 'unacceptable noise levels'. So, add to this 'glimpse of hell' the traffic factor. Residents action groups continue to fight a council without the money or the will to beat the traffic problem — and local firms who are only interested in squeezing a profit out of one beat up working class town in Lancashire.

Out of every exhaust pipe comes the dangerous lead additive which accumulates in the body of every city dweller — from Spaghetti Junction to Los Angeles, taking in Tokyo and Widnes on the way.

THE REASONS

An inspector on industrial safety matters says,

We have the technical knowledge to absorb gases, arrest grit, dust and fumes and prevent smoke formation. The chief reason why we still permit the escape of these pollutants is because economics are still an important part of the word practicable.

For 'economics — read profit. As we can see from the cases on this page, the law on factory safety and pollution control is one big loophole for the bosses. Firms do not expect to be prosecuted for breaking safety regulations. And they're right — the average factory is inspected only once every four years. Plenty of time for a clean-up, as every worker knows. Anyway, the maximum fine is £300, hardly a deterrent to a company of any size. The average fine is £40, roughly equivalent to the cost of the ICI directors' lunch on a frugal day. Besides, safety rules are simply out of date for dealing with the laest in domestic chemical warfare devices. So far, only 4% of British factories have a safety committee. Local authorities have almost no real power to control pollution once a factory has been built.

In safety matters, the bosses have their own law, which they follow religiously: **do only what is profitable**. And our safety is not a profitable matter. The state agrees. So, the only way to change these conditions comes from our own power and organisation.

THIS BOOK COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!

Pluto Press
Workers' Handbook No.1

The Hazards of Work: How to Fight Them.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely an absence of disease and infirmity'. (World Health Organisation)

That's the start of a book called **The Hazards of Work: How To Fight Them** by Pat Kinnersley (Pluto Press, 90p). The hazards it deals with are not just the obvious dangers caused by productivity speed-ups, shift work and ruthless bosses who refuse to spend any of their profits on many basic safety measures. It is also the first book to investigate, in a readable way, the often disguised threats from noise, heat, stress: and the growing number of poisonous chemicals in industrial use which can cause a quick, nasty death, or growing disease and disability with the years.

It's **hazards** the book talks about, not accidents, since almost all injuries and deaths which take place at work occur as a result of our working for a capitalist profit system which is careful to avoid paying any attention to 'irrelevant' issues like the well-being of workers, unless it is forced to — by the workers. For the working class, the

possibility of death and injury at work, is part and parcel of the capitalist system. If you don't believe this, read the book.

Kinnersley spends a lot of time on how to fight back against hazards at work, through developing shop organisation on safety; by researching possible dangers; by using what legal machinery is available to us to win compensation for injuries.

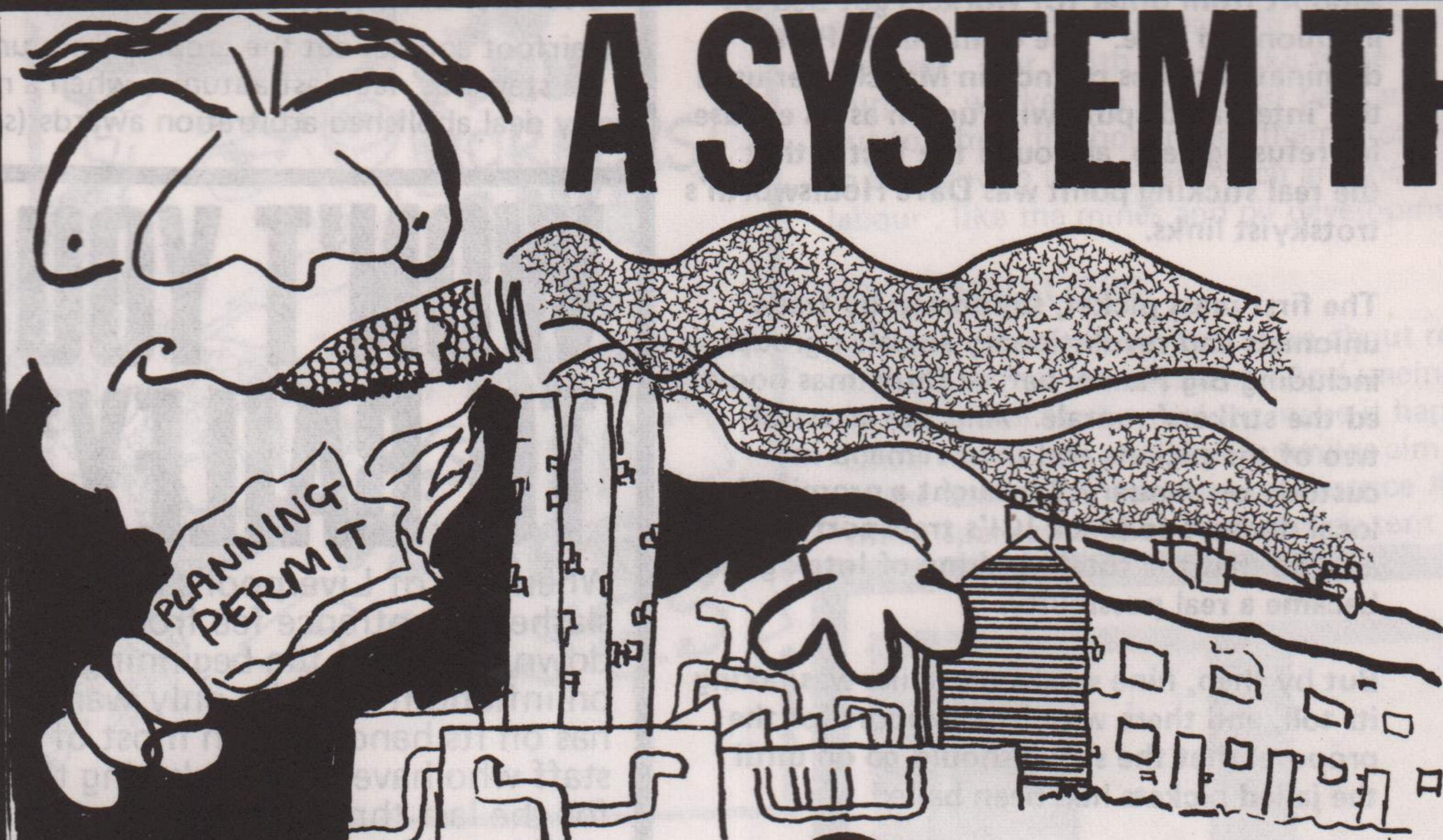
Clearly, the scope for using laws created for capitalists is limited and so is the system of factory inspection. The employers' liability for the damage they cause to workers is similarly limited. This book shows convincingly that the only effective way to deal with work hazards is through action on the shop floor, in the office.

Certainly, the ability of any workers' organisation to combat the growing danger of industrial execution or maiming will be greatly improved if this book is close to hand. It's not going to far to say, **this book could save your life.**

* You can buy it in Liverpool from News From Nowhere, Manchester St.

Our thanks to all those who contributed to The Treatment We Deserve this month. In particular, our Widnes Correspondent who has to live there. Next month we are concluding the series with a look at mental health and the treatment women deserve. All contributions are welcome.

A SYSTEM THAT STINKS



CASE 2 LEATHERS CHEMICALS, St Helens

Leathers Chemicals came to Sutton, near St Helens six years ago by kind permission of the then Labour council. They make sulphuric acid. For local residents, this means regular fallouts of a fine smog of concentrated acid which causes people to collapse choking their faces burning with pain. The fallout can produce this effect up to a mile away from the factory.

The fight to remove the factory has occupied the residents for four years. The councillors' proposed solution is ingenious. They want to demolish the houses surrounding Leathers. This, of course, would cost a whole lot more than the capitalist legal system demands should be paid in compensation if Leathers is closed down — a mere £2,000,000. It is reliably reported that none of the firm's bosses live within a mile of their plant.

CASE 1 VINES CHEMICALS, Widnes

Vines is part of the multinational Rio Tinto Zinc company. Its factory lies in the centre of town, 100 yards from the shopping centre. On two sides, terraced houses look out onto an open barium waste tip, and enjoy an ever-present rotten eggs smell from the factory. In February 1974 residents complained about the dust blowing off the tip all over the district, ruining carpets and filling houses with dirt. People were afraid to leave their windows open.

The tip was removed, with ratepayers' money, but then the bosses discovered that they were entitled to tip waste to the height of the factory fence. Now the tip has grown again. Some residents have managed to win a £8 rate reduction, but the firm which causes all the trouble accepts no responsibility.

CASE 3 Carbon Black, Swansea

In 1971, the Carbon Black factory was as usual pumping out dirt over the houses around it in a working class district of Swansea — ruining washing, damaging the health of kids, making housework twice the job it already is. The council did nothing so local housewives blockaded the factory. After a blockade lasting over five months, the company caved in and agreed to make substantial reductions in the level of pollution, with checks to be carried out by the workers, some of them local residents themselves.

LET'S FIGHT THE CONDITIONS THAT MAKE US SICK!

BIG FLAME

DOCKS: BRINGING

IN THE HATCHET MEN



Intex(ICI): Stabbing in mill strike

Workers at Intex Yarns, a wholly owned subsidiary of ICI, have gone back to work after ten weeks of bitter struggle. ICI thought the strike would crumble with the approach of Christmas, but they lost £3m. production merely for the satisfaction of dismissing one militant.

They now face a work force strengthened by the experience of carrying out a week-long occupation of their union HQ, fighting the National Front, organising mass pickets and going out to get rank and file support, as well as taking on one of Britain's largest multi-nationals.

COMPLACENT

Ashton Under Lyne is a mill town with a tradition of peaceful labour relations which the complacent and undemocratic textile unions have done their best to foster. Struggles like this one at Intex where the workers have to fight the management and the union bureaucracy at the same time are bound to recur in the future in this area as the textile industry slips further into economic crisis and redundancies become widespread,

It's against this background that the victimisation and sacking of Dave Houlsworth has taken place.

WHITE MAN'S STRIKE

Upset by his role in starting a rank and file bulletin on the shop floor, management fabricated sabotage charges to get him off their back. The union, the Dyers and Bleachers, cooperated by backdating his expulsion from the union. The walkout of production workers which followed included a sizable number of Asian workers who had been warned off taking part in any 'white man's strike' by the management a week previously.

The union, which thought it had washed its hands of the affair by expelling Houlsworth, was embarrassed to find its offices occupied by 50 strikers. After a week, the union managed to deal with the sit-in with a bomb-scare.

Then, a third front in the struggle was opened up by the National Front which intervened to beat up some of the strike leaders and carry out a razor slashing attack on another. It was only now that the strikers, who had previously felt over-awed by the long-standing system of oppression in the mill, felt the need to organise outside help.

TRADES COUNCIL

The first problem was that the right-wing Dyers union had not affiliated to the ICI shop stewards combine committee. The potential support from other ICI workers got tied up in union red tape. The Communist Party dominated trades council in Manchester used the 'internal' dispute with union as its excuse for refusing help, although the fact is that the real sticking point was Dave Houlsworth's trotskyist links.

The first mass picket, supported by trade unionists and revolutionary socialist groups, including Big Flame, before Christmas boosted the strikers' morale. And the arrest of two of the pickets and their remand in custody on January 2 brought a promise from local dockers to black ICI's transport company, so that the total blacking of Intex goods became a real possibility.

But by then, nine weeks on strike was taking its toll, and there was little support for the proposal that the strike should go on until the jailed pickets had been bailed.

Now, the Intex management face a work force hardened by the struggle, with a greater degree of unity between Asian and white workers. And in the months ahead, that experience is going to spread to the other local textile mills. The Intex bosses must be wondering whether ridding themselves of one nuisance was worth all that.

Manchester Big Flame

Port employers in Liverpool are clearing the way for a series of new proposals which would change the face of the docks.

Taking advantage of the drop in trade - which means that up to 1000 dockers can be signing on in a bad week - the employers are planning to:

- * Cut the number of Dock Company stewards by about one third (ie 30).
- * Double the number of supervisors and hatch bosses per ship.
- * Put the remaining stewards on a guaranteed weekly 'salary', above the wage of the average docker. (To divide the stewards from the men.
- * Erect security fences and barriers at the entrance of each avenue on the dock. They say it's to stop robbing. In fact it will turn the docks into a factory, where you practically have to clock on and off everytime you leave the dock estate.
- * Finally, once the labour force is nicely boxed off, there are very strong hints the employers want to cut the labour force - including dockworkers and clerical staff - by around 20 per cent or about 1000 men. (The figures are approx.)

BOSSSES' STOOGES

The whole scheme has been masterminded by a certain ex-car worker turned management stooge - a Mr Fairfoot. Formerly a car factory convenor in the Midlands, he now hires himself out as an industrial advisor. Mr Fairfoot, of course, has the inside griff. He knows that in order to reorganise a job - flexibility, new working methods, lower manning levels, and to tighten discipline, more supervisors, better timekeeping, no welt - the first step is to smash job organisation, and, on the Liverpool docks, that means the stewards.

Fairfoot and co. cut the ground from under the stewards' feet last autumn, when a new pay deal abolished arbitration awards (ship

side negotiations) and undermined the job of the stewards. Overnight, they found their job - and contact with the men - had been halved.

TROUBLE SHOOTERS

Now Fairfoot and the Dock Company are pushing home their advantage by separating the stewards from the men, by putting them on different rates of pay, and cutting their numbers.

Where this has happened in other places, for instance in some car factories, it's meant the end of the stewards as a fighting force - who gradually become more privileged and less in touch with the job. Finally, they become the lowest rung of the labour relations department; shop floor trouble shooters.

At the same time, the company wants to double supervision, both from the point of view of more supervisors, and by erecting barriers and gates to keep men on the quays.

It's important that this attack on the stewards is resisted. You may not think that your steward in the past has done the best job in the world. But once he's smashed, there is no organisation which will prevent the employers doing practically what they want. And we know that they want a smaller, harder working and more profitable labour force in the future.

ORGANISE ON THE JOB

This is why every docker has recently received a polite little note in his pay packet asking him to help increase productivity.

Dock stewards must vote down these proposals. And dockers must begin to organise on the job to prevent the introduction of new working practices under tighter supervision, which will turn Liverpool docks into a bosses' Ideal Home.

The docks don't look like a factory. But they will pretty soon feel like one if these proposals get under way.

It took a long hard struggle to reach a high level of bargaining power and control over working conditions. It would be a sick joke if 20 years of successful struggle were allowed to disappear in 18 months.

WON'T YOU COME BACK TO BAILEY'S

When one of Liverpool's biggest clubs slashes its entrance fee from over £1 down to 10p, is the beginning of a war on inflation? No, the only war Baileys has on its hands is with most of its own staff who have been picketing the club for the last three weeks.

Baileys admit that they've lost £40,000 in that time. The pickets claim that the attendance has gone down 75%. In an attempt to break the picket line, the club has tried to put an injunction on the strikers not to hand out a leaflet the management call 'malicious'; and their latest move is to cut the entrance fee.

The strike is over the sacking of staff and the introduction of what amounts to a speed-up by the new management. The picketers are also fighting their bosses' racist policy of excluding black people from the club.



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POLICE PROTECT FASCIST

After being arrested for distributing leaflets during a picket outside a National Front meeting, a supporter of the Merseyside Anti-Fascist Committee has been fined £100 by Chester magistrates.

The police, keen enough to prosecute those who oppose fascism, have somehow forgotten to bring charges against the West Derby

man whose car hit several people during the demonstration, resulting in three people being taken to hospital. This is especially surprising because two of those seriously injured were policemen!

The driver of the car is a long standing member of the National Front and an ex-member of the nazi British National Party.