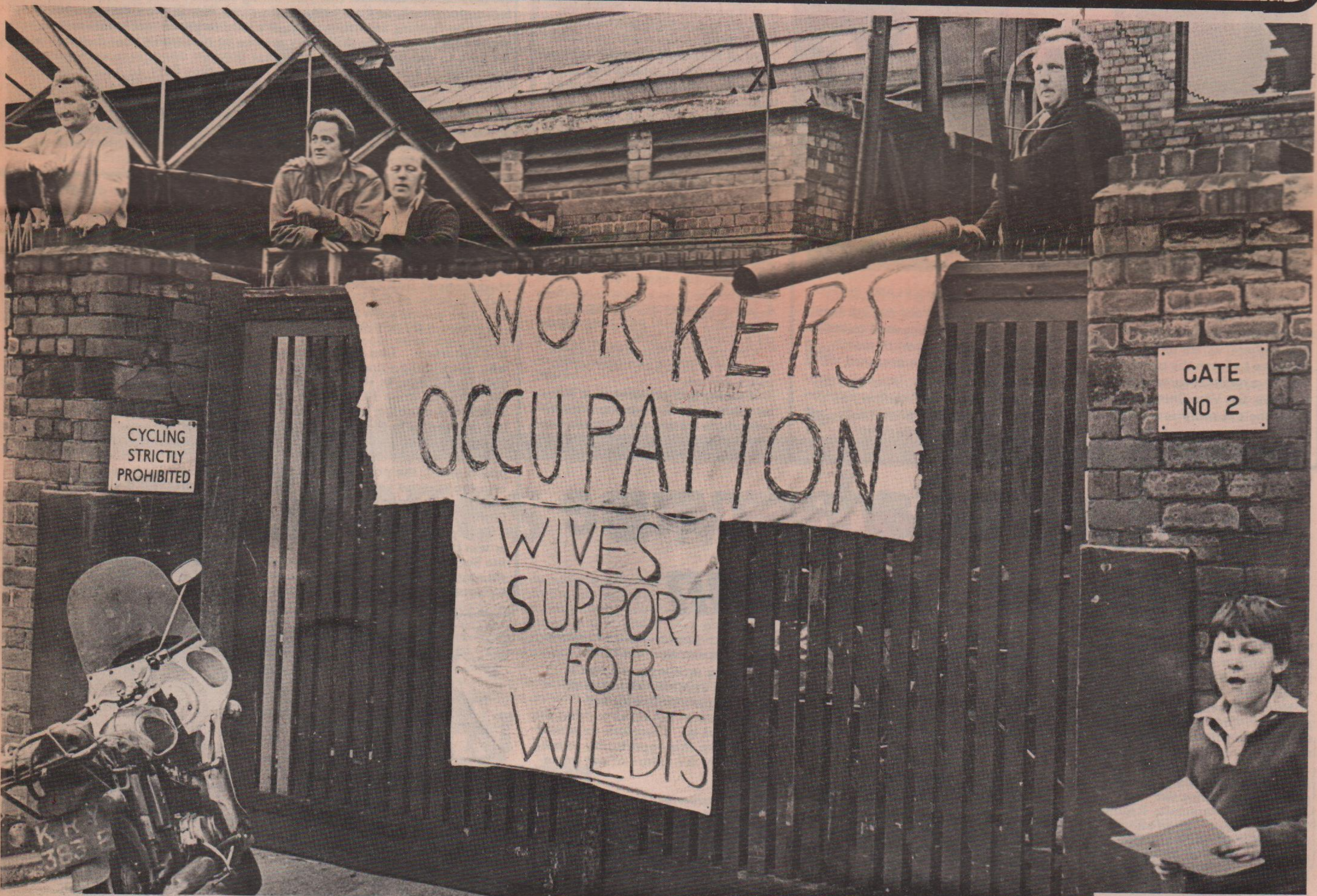


REVEALED INSIDE

CIA SPY CENTRE IN

BRITAIN

Read the story Government tried to ban — turn to page 3



**Leicester -
800 Workers Sit-in
'No jobs will
be lost here'**

"No jobs are going to be lost here." The workers occupying the Wildt Mellor textile machinery factory, Leicester, have taken a hard line from the start. The bosses claim that 400 of the 800 jobs will be transferred to another Leicester plant. The workers believe that the real plan is to transfer all the work to another low wage factory in Surrey.

SUPPORT

Convenor Alf Wilson says that the closure is simply a disguised attack on wage levels,

an attack which could spread to affect other Leicester factories if it isn't halted now.

The Wildt Mellor workers are well placed to win. They are using the factory as a base for organising local support, with everybody sitting in on a three shift rota. Apart from official support from the Engineers Union, they've had a bottle of sherry from an old lady and £100 from the university students. And the wives of the workers have set up a support committee.

It's not a desperate occupation: they fully expect to win.

John Sturrock (Report)

They point to the firm's order books. They recall how often bosses try on the closure threat to force a productivity

**Why They Sat-in
-see back page**

drive. And they say that they're fighting for thousands of other workers. If they win, it could put a different complexion on the national battle against closures and wage cutting.

Stupid old school rules

Sheffield

THE GIRLS OF Westfield Comprehensive in Sheffield have been feeling the cold recently, and asked that they be allowed to wear trousers in school. They organised a petition signed by most of the older girls and some of the boys. On taking the petition to the Senior Mistress, they were told that they would not be allowed to wear trousers because in cold, wet weather trousers get wet at the bottoms and would be very difficult to dry in school; and in any case most trousers are made of thinner material than skirts!!

Unconvinced by the brilliance of this piece of logic, three of the sixth form girls are writing to the equal opportunities Commission to see if a case can be made for a charge of sex discrimination against the school authorities. Until now there has little sign of outright rebellion against the ruling, partly because the school is very large, and the students have not yet developed a feeling of unity of interest. However, feeling against the ruling is strong among parents and

teachers many of whom are usually in favour of uniform. Hopefully a favourable ruling by the Commission will give the students the confidence to take direct action on this issue.

Ripon

POLICE WERE called to disperse pupils outside a Ripon school last week while their parents protested to the head about his decision to send pupils home for being 'improperly dressed'. Many parents objected to buying approved clothing for the few remaining weeks their children will be at school.

Newham

Parents of pupils at Essex Junior School, Newham, claim girls have to change in and out of trousers at play-time and dinner hour. This is to bide by the head's alleged insistence that trousers shall not be worn in class.

The controversy is particularly important for Asian girls who wear trousers for cultural reasons rather than for choice.

Leeds arrests

TWO YOUNG people have recently been arrested for distributing a leaflet outside a Leeds school. Yet another step in the campaign to stop young people thinking, criticising and organising for change. The arrests followed hysterical front page publicity in the Yorkshire Evening Post against a group calling for Youth Power which had leafleted the schools pointing out the oppression of young people. The latest leaflet attacked the ridiculous rules at City of Leeds School, where girls can't wear sleeveless tops, where you can't wear woolly hats or walk around eating, where girls' trousers can't be more than 12 inches wide.

Quoting two headmasters, the leaflet says, 'they think you're at school to learn to do what you're told, to take orders and shut up'. It then goes on to show how schools students can organise to win their demands, giving examples both of strikes in England and the heroic struggles of black school students in Southern Africa.

Big Flame stands by its statement in the last issue, and we offer our solidarity to the two people arrested

EDUCATION CUTS

The Essex Education Authority is responsible for 800 schools. This is how it proposes to cut £7 million from its annual budget:—

TEACHERS

155 full time staff will go. 1,479 part time staff will go. In this way the authority will save an estimated £5 million.

FURTHER EDUCATION

By raising the fees in further education by one third it is hoped that the consequent shortage of applicants will mean the axing of 120 part time jobs.

SCHOOL MEALS

School meals will go up to 25p and it is hoped that takers will drop by 25%. This will mean the loss of 125 part time workers and 75 'dinner ladies'.

CLEANING

A 20% reduction in cleaning hours will mean that 400 part time cleaners will lose their jobs.

On top of all this the authority proposes to take £215,000 off the youth service.

Teacher and public service unions have responded by passing resolutions which totally reject these proposals.

EDUCATION- THE GREAT NON-DEBATE

AS SCORES of industrialists, Local Education Authority officials, religious representatives and a tiny handful of teachers discuss the country's education with Shirley Williams, we are distracted yet again from the real issues.

The Great Debate, or non debate, attempts to discuss some of the ideas in a new Department of Education pamphlet called 'Educating our Children'. These include:—

CURRICULUM Should there be a common core curriculum? This is an attempt at greater order, control and standardisation of the syllabuses that are being taught. As a result it would be easier to suppress dissident thought.

MONITORING OF STANDARDS

This is a proposal to introduce new centrally controlled and regular assessments of school students' standards and performance. It aims to be a more precise indicator than existing assessments which are often in the control of teachers, and it would all-

Socialist teachers have neglected the issues raised in the so-called 'Great Debate' on education for too long. Having concentrated on trade union issues such as wages and conditions, we have been unprepared to debate the educational issues which are close to teachers' hearts, and which are just as 'political' as the material demands.

All the more reason for us to enter into this debate now. The recent Radical Education conference, and some of the Socialist Teachers Alliance meetings are beginning this work. It is essential that we show how both the Tories and the Labour Party people who are at present calling the tune in this debate have no real answers. Both are taking comfort from the fact that teachers feel under attack, and are being demoralised just at the moment when they should be fighting against the cuts. We have to prove that teachers do care about kids learning the skills they require to participate in and change society. We have to oppose the implication that teachers can be responsible for that task alone. If kids are going to want to learn, they have to believe there's some reason for learning. The prospect of a lousy job, which often does not require reading, writing or arithmetic, or the prospect of unemployment, is the biggest obstacle to learning at school. Everyone, inside and outside the schools, is responsible for changing the alienated society which causes the problems in the first place. The 'Great Debate' should not be about education: it must be about the nature of capitalist society.

ow for schools which are 'under achieving' to be investigated.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

The DES offers new proposals for raising the standards of teachers going into the profession and to provide existing teachers with in-service training. This is all very well but adds fuel to the argument that the teachers themselves are to blame for the crisis in education. It also obscures the issues when 20 more training colleges are to be closed.

SCHOOL AND WORKING LIFE

How can the education system better serve the needs of industry? In abstract it is right that school should bear some relation to the outside world. But we reject totally the idea that schools should process students to fit easily into a capitalist economy



workers inside town BIG FLAME PHOTO

FORGET THE idea that universities are centres of enlightenment. At Birmingham, where technicians are on strike to force the university to honour a national agreement on holidays, the Vice-Chancellor has shown he's as nasty as any other boss.

Cars have been driven at pickets,

lorries manned by "convoy" drivers are some of the tactics used to break the strike, now in its sixth month. Now the strikers have occupied the administration block. And on 25th February, technician members of ASTMS throughout British universities struck for the day in Birmingham's support.

NORTHERN IRELAND Paras cause death of old man

Will 1977 be the year in which Britain finally stops interfering in Irish affairs? Many people hope so, not least the war-weary people of Northern Ireland's Catholic ghettos. Only a fortnight ago every single person except 3 from the Clonard of Belfast, a working class inner city community of small, terraced houses, signed a petition demanding the withdrawal of the Parachute Regiment from their area. This followed an incident in which the Paras raided the home of 68 year old Mr Frank Moyna of Bombay St. As they turned over the house, Mr Moyna suffered a heart attack. His wife tried to call for help from the window several times but was pulled back by the soldiers each time. Mr Moyna finally died in agony on the floor as his home was being ransacked around him.

As a result hand-to-hand fighting broke out between local people and the troops and attempts were made to keep them out with barricades.

This is the mass feeling in the ghettos, but many Irish socialists and republicans have noticed how divisions between different organisations fighting to free their country from foreign occupation have made the people cynical and pessimistic. As the war dragged on and on, much of the mass support fell away, only being revived

Masons new "get tough" policy, causing the deaths of innocent people like Frank Moyna.

But recently there has been an important new move in Derry to unite all the groups fighting British occupation and to revive the mass movement in the ghettos. This was the formation of the Irish Front. Below we reprint an article from the Front's Bulletin issued on this year's Bloody Sunday Anniversary in Derry.

Throughout our little island's sad history the words of that famous ballad, "The Bold Fenian Men" must surely have passed through the minds of many a young freedom fighter, political activist, and every honest Irish person who dreamed a dream of an Ireland free and independent. This great ballad tells us "Our Foes were united, but we were divided" and certainly our imperialist 'masters' have on every occasion took steps to turn Irishperson against Irishperson, group against group, if England's imperial interests was protected, by Irish blood flowing, as in the days of 1922-3.

In recent weeks the IRISH FRONT has established local area committees to propagate the agreed aims and objectives of the Front and bring home to the people the vital necessity for unity in this phase of the struggle against British imperialism. From its inception the Front had tried to make clear the reason for its

structure. However, one common factor has emerged from our initial area meetings, and that is there still exists in the minds of many people a confusing and contradictory notion as to what the Irish Front is. Therefore we would like to take this opportunity to spell out clearly the nature of our organisation.

- 1) End harassment, torture and repression.
- 2) Full support for the political status campaign leading to an unconditional general amnesty for all political prisoners at home and abroad.
- 3) The repatriation of all Irish political prisoners in British jails.
- 4) The withdrawal of British occupation troops and an end to British interference in the political, cultural and economic life of our nation.

At this point and time, the political groups and tendencies represented in the Irish Front are — The Provisional Republican Movement, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Irish Nationalist Party, the Political Prisoners Action Committee, the Magilligan Prisoners Welfare Committee, ex-members of the Republican Clubs, and many other individuals who are active in tenant, trade union, and cultural groups. It has been that approaches were made to individuals of other political viewpoints inviting them

STRIKE BEHIND BARS

FOLLOWING the hushed-up facts about the appalling conditions in the Workshops at Hull Prison), see previous issues of Big Flame), we now have information about a strike at LONG LARTIN Prison. According

to a Panorama film crew member, who was filming a documentary about conditions in the jail in December last year, some 30 prisoners were involved in a protest against petrol fumes escaping in the prison's engineering workshop. When their grievance was not entertained by a prison guard, the prisoners broke out into the exercise yard to mount a protest near where Panorama was filming.

The protest dispersed, but a prisoner was taken away the next day to the Segregation Unit (a psycho-control unit whose inhumanity amounts to torture) for disciplining. Prisoners

all over the country are fighting to close these units: and the Long Lartin engineering department prisoners promptly went on strike in solidarity with their victimised workmate. Despite intimidation, the strike continued until the following day when the victimised prisoner was released from the Unit. A neutral verdict, but a considerable victory for the prisoners.

The strike lasted 3 days. It involved over 30 prisoners. Apparently they have prepared a petition to the Governor about bad conditions in the workshops. Their health and safety struggle has led to a near riot in the exercise yard, escalating into industrial action. Two questions remain: first, how conditions in prison workshops can be exposed and improved; second, why will the Panorama film NOT be portraying the true side of 'Life at Long Lartin'?



was any group excluded. The Irish Front has set itself the task of mobilising support amongst the people for the demands already stated. This in effect means the creation of a mass movement. The logic being that a mass movement cannot be realised unless there is mass grass

root participation, which can only come about after the necessary groundwork has been completed. It is our intention to call a conference at an early date of all area committees, plus others, to further hammer out a programme of practical action based on the agreed objectives.

In common with other socialist papers, and despite a government ban on publication, we print here part of the statement of an ex-soldier about the giant intelligence centre run by the CIA in Britain. We think people are entitled to know of its existence. After all, there can't be a spy in the world who doesn't.

I was directly concerned with processing information gained from the illegal inter-

ception of the military and diplomatic radio traffic of other countries. The result of these activities, collectively identified as SIGINT, has the advantage over other intelligence of always being accurate and having no need of corroboration from other sources.

In view of this the demand for such intelligence in military quarters is scarcely surprising. But like all intelligence it is capable of extensive abuse. The following facts are certainly not common knowledge and in my opinion should be.

1. Approximately 1/2 of the personnel of the Intelligence Corps (a regular Brit-

ish Army unit) is employed full-time on SIGINT duties.

2. At least 4,000 civil servants working for the Ministry of Defence are similarly engaged.

3. GCHQ (the headquarters responsible for SIGINT activities) is part of an international set-up created to facilitate exchange of information and avoid duplication of effort.

4. To a large degree the American National Security Agency is responsible for overall direction of this agency, including CGHQ. This of course means the CIA, the senior intelligence apparatus, has consid-

erable influence over the activities of a British Government agency.

5. That the considerable expense of maintaining the service personnel engaged in this work would not appear on GCHQ's balance sheet, falling instead in the category of ordinary military expenditure.

6. That anyone, civilian or military, who has worked in this area is subjected to a series of threats backed up by the full force of the Official Secrets Act, should they at any time disclose any aspect of their activities, and that such people are actively encouraged to report on each other's social activities should their suspicions be aroused in any way.

7. That in addition to intercepting the

communications of potentially 'hostile' nations, also monitors the radio networks of so-called 'friend' countries and even the commercial signals of UK companies.

The paranoid reaction of the British Government in response to the recent disclosures by Mark Hosenball and Philip Agee demonstrates quite clearly its very real fear that certain murky facts from which it will derive no credit and which may lead to exposure of the apparatus that could transform Britain into a police state overnight should the need arise, are not so far from the public eye as it had previously thought.

Any action which tends towards realising those fears should be encouraged

A GIANT INTELLIGENCE CENTRE UNDER CIA CONTROL

WE PRINT THE STATEMENT THE GOVERNMENT BANNED

WAVE OF ARRESTS AND WRITS

There're ready to take us on

Civil rights, and especially freedom of the press, have taken a real battering in Britain in the last few weeks. There is a campaign to silence those who want to reveal the extent of American control in this country. At the same time, the law is being used against the working class movement to defeat occupations and other actions against government policy.

Already, two American journalists, Phil Agee and Mark Hosenball, are to be deported, supposedly for passing on information of value to a foreign power. Two more journalists and an ex-soldier have been charged with receiving and passing on information classified under the Official Secrets Act. And, more recently, *the Guardian* was ordered not to print a statement by another ex-soldier. This reveals the existence of a giant radio monitoring station in Britain, staffed by thousands of soldiers and civil servants, and controlled by the American Central Intelligence Agency.

Some readers may wonder whether our decision to publish doesn't aid 'enemies of the country', or whether Agee and Hosenball did endanger 'national security' by their activities.

By the use of libel laws and the threat of the Official Secrets Act, the state in Britain prevents publication of information which is freely available in the foreign press. Many of these so-called 'secrets' are well-known in Fleet St. and are easily accessible to the most incompetent foreign spy.

All the journalists who have been harassed by the government have been trying to reveal the extent of CIA and British Intelligence involvement in running this country behind the scenes. Phil Agee has revealed the existence of 70 CIA officials in the US Embassy in London. Are these people operating in the interests of the British working class, or are they developing the means to destabilise any future socialist government here, as they did in Chile, Guyana, Jamaica and many other countries?

In the US, press freedom enabled reporters to expose the Watergate scandal. Faceless men in Britain are trying hard to make sure that there can never be a British Watergate.

Britain is often portrayed as a land of liberty and justice. Ask yourself, are you not entitled to know the facts reprinted here? Yet, it is

ON THE ROAD TO 1984



It's 1974 and the government scares the country into accepting the sight of soldiers acting as policemen with its claims that terrorists planned to shoot planes out of the sky. Why they should have chosen to do that at Heathrow Airport when they could have launched their missiles from any one of a million secluded spots all over the London area, was never explained at the time. In fact, the Heathrow exercise was the start of new security preparations to defeat the political threat from the working class.

only the socialist press which has dared to publish them.

We believe that the greatest threat to the working class comes not from 'Soviet invasion' or nuclear strike, but from the people who rule this country in their own class interests.

Alarmed by the disintegration of the social contract, they are preparing a battery of weapons with which to keep working class people in check.

We've already see their press censorship in action. A dangerous precedent has been created by the legal

decision that allows Sir James Goldsmith to strangle *Private Eye* (which has been revealing the truth about his sordid financial interests) by getting writs against the magazine's distributors.

On another front the use of legal action against the working class movement is growing.

The extreme right wing National Association for Freedom took out a writ to stop the Postmen's boycott of South African mail.

A writ was used to end the Massey-Ferguson occupation

in Coventry and the student occupation at the LSE, and one has been applied for against the sit-in at Wildt Mellor, Leicester.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act continues to be used to disrupt the movement to end British domination in Ireland.

The Government plan to introduce a Criminal Trespass Law is a further part of a concerted preparation against a renewed wave of working class struggle. But if we recognise this, our fight back will be more united.

Wages - a way forward

At the present time more and more working class people are demanding an end to the social contract. While wages haven't been allowed to rise more than a pathetic 4 1/2% in the last year, prices have continued to rise at a yearly average of around 18%. In the month of January alone wholesale prices have gone up an enormous 3%, a yearly rate of 36%. And this does not include rent, fares, bills etc. In addition to this people are aware that their 'belt-tightening' hasn't saved any job, with unemployment rising all the time.

Trade union officials are aware of the growing discontent among the rank and file - they know they've got to do something soon, in order to avoid a class-wide rank and

PAYDAM AT BREAKING POINT

file revolt to win high wage rises, which would threaten them and the Labour Government. They also know how hard it's been for them to sell the social contract last time round, especially in the mining, car and engineering industries. That's why in the past few weeks we've been hit by a growing chorus of trade union officials and convenors calling for the scrapping of the social contract and a return to 'free collective bargaining'.

We think that it is vital to put an end to the social contract. We also think that the working class must go on the offensive on the question of wages to improve its living standards. We think that this must be part of a total offensive against the capitalist attempt to make the working class pay for the crisis. An offensive on all fronts - wages, prices, rents, productivity, public spending etc. Not by some sections of the working class, but by the whole of the working class.

Of course, we support the return to free collective bargaining as a way to smash the social contract. But there are dangers in the way some sectors of the working class want to use this demand.

-Percentage Rises/ The restoration of differentials. Many skilled workers are demanding a return to free collective bargaining because of the erosion of their differentials. They know that if such a situation arose their bargaining power would ensure that they would get a higher rise than semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

This is the same as a percentage rise, i.e. those with higher wages would get even more, while those with lower wages would get relatively less. Do toolmakers need more money than assembly line workers? Do technicians or foremen need more money than domestics in a hospital? Obviously the answer is no. We want to abolish differentials and privileges, not increase them.

-Productivity deals. This is the way that governments and the ruling class best like to increase wages. They know that low wages cause disputes. They are willing to allow wages to rise but only on the condition of increased productivity. Some kind of wages/productivity package is what the Labour Government would like to force on the

But they have problems in this respect as well. The majority of British industry now has a wage structure which does not allow bargaining related to output. From the point of view of the working class productivity deals are always a disaster - nowadays more than ever. More productivity means less people doing less work, productivity means a deterioration in working conditions, and more people on the dole.

- 'Weak' sectors. Free collective bargaining will not help workers in small workplaces, weak sectors or sectors. For them, free collective bargaining has always been a myth they have neither the economic muscle nor organisation to take advantage of it.

- The way forward. The last couple of years have shown just how many ways there are for the capitalists to attack the working class - the social contract has been the main tool of this attack. Anything short of a wholesale counter-attack from the working class will have only limited results.

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

The job of revolutionaries inside this struggle is clear. To fight for progressive demands that unite the working class (skilled and unskilled workers, men and women, industry and public sector workers) and to oppose those sectional demands like the return to larger wage differentials. It is for this reason that Big Flame militants will continue to fight for:-

- * A substantial across the board wage rise including claimants.
- * The 35 hour week with no loss of pay.
- * The elimination of differentials.
- * Workers' democracy.
- * Health and safety at work.

Already the government has told the employers' union, the CBI, that it is prepared to negotiate on the way in which it implements the Bullock report. Amongst those who signed the minority report was the Chairman of GKN Sankey. Already GKN has begun to implement a piss-weak form of 'workers' participation' that is not worth the paper it is written on. We believe that workers' democracy is something worth fighting for, but it is quite clear that a scheme that is agreed to by the government, the unions and the employers will be a cosmetic job that in no fundamental way will alter the balance of power on the shop floor. ■

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL ELECTION

This month a vital election is taking place to determine who will succeed Jack Jones as the General Secretary of the Transport Union. The candidate of the right is Moss Evans, who car workers remember as the official who sold out the 1971 Ford Strike. The candidates of the left are Kitson (Broad Left), Thornett (Workers Socialist League) and Riley (Socialist Workers Party). Our opinion is that it is up to militants in their own workplace to decide which of these candidates they support.



Thousands against cuts in Hemel

SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

A Step Towards Socialism... or a Return to the Past?



NO POLITICAL issue is currently of more importance than the demand of Scotland and Wales for self-determination of 'devolution' as it is politely called. In these articles, we look at Scottish nationalism and the contradictory interests it is composed of.

IN THE period since 1945 we have seen the rapid growth of trans-national capitalist firms that operate in many countries and, at the same time, the development of supra-national political institutions like NATO and the Common Market.

For people living in remote regions of Europe that are constantly being under-developed, this has meant an increasing sense of frustration and the feeling of having been done. In regions like Corsica, Brittany, Scotland and Wales, this has led to a re-birth of nationalism and the rapid growth of political organisations that represent this nationalism: the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Labour Party (SLP), and in Wales Plaid Cymru.

The responses of the revolutionary left in Britain to the re-birth of Scottish nationalism reflect arguments in socialist theory that go back to the founding of the First International in Karl Marx's time. In a recent SWP pamphlet 'Nationalism or Socialism', Allan Armstrong takes up the mistaken position of Rosa Luxemburg (a German revolutionary leader at the turn of the century) that counterposes nationalism to socialism. But as Lenin and Mao, among others, pointed out in theory and practice, the struggle for national self-determination and the struggle for socialism should not be seen as incompatible — the former carries within it the seed of the latter.

NO GUARANTEE

Of course, there is no guarantee that revolutionary socialist elements will gain ascendancy within the struggle for self-determination in Scotland, but win or lose, it is *within* that struggle that they have to be.

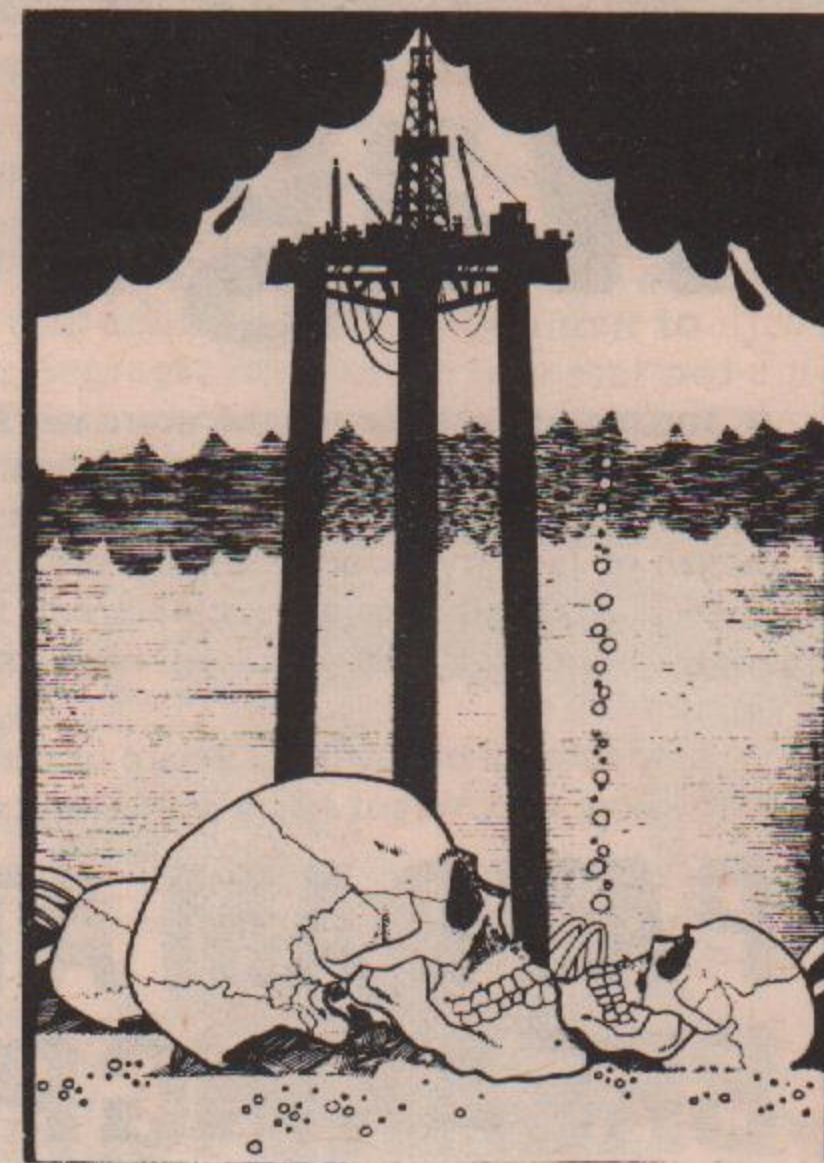
As can be expected, political organisations like the SNP reflect the ambiguity of the national struggle. Their leadership reflects the desire of

The SNP's programme causes very few members of the ruling class to lose much sleep.

Scottish capitalism to negotiate a better deal for itself in relation to English capitalism. Their rank and file organisation reflects the refusal of large sections of the Scottish working class to continue to be the victims of English imperialism.

HOTCH POTCH

The SNP is a hotch-potch of people ranging from millionaire employers like Hugh Frazer, to managers and professional people who hope to make a career in the new



Scottish bureaucracy, to workers. Its political programme causes very few members of the ruling class to lose much sleep; it recently gained a number of supporters by opposing Labour's plans to abolish private schools. And, perhaps worst of all, while the capitalist system continues to run down Scotland, Scottish nationalism doesn't point the finger at the system, but at England. While England bears a lot of responsibility for Scotland's decline, Scottish capitalism, which is only part of an inter-linked world capitalism, will only perpetuate the system of inequality.

The only glimmer of radicalism on any significant scale could possibly have been found in the new Scottish Labour Party. But this was very firmly stamped on several months ago.

But it's one thing to be critical of nationalism as expressed by the SNP and many of its supporters, it's another to say the whole debate about Scotland's future — and in particular the referendum over whether or not to have a Scottish Assembly — is a waste of time. We need to know whether in any tactical way, the referendum and the Assembly can be used by socialists to build on and with the discontent of working class people.

BUYING VOTES

Both the referendum and the Assembly started life as sops. The referendum was a sop to the Labour left, who in principle opposed devolution, but have been persuaded to vote for it if a referendum shows that the majority of the Scottish people want it. The Assembly is an even more important sop. Without Scottish votes the Labour Party would be out of government at the next election and would stay out for some time. The Assembly is an attempt to buy all-important Scottish votes, and channel discontent back into the Labour Party. Sop it may be, but could a local assembly be used. Would an Assembly in Edinburgh be sufficiently close and tied into Scottish life to be obliged to respond to working class pressure? Many socialists in Scotland think so.

QUESTIONS

What is certainly the case is (as the interview shows) that questions are being raised inside the Scottish working class that are the essential pre-conditions for the formation of a revolutionary consciousness. And as the examples of China, Cuba and Angola make clear, these questions are often raised in a nationalist context.

'Things are going to change'

In Scotland, the nationalists are winning a lot of working class support. Amongst them are Margo and Mick, whom we interviewed in Paisley.

'This is what annoys me, the English don't want to give us a chance. They want to be so bloody dominant all the time.' This is how Mick, who comes from a traditionally Labour voting family, explains why he now votes for the Scottish Nationalist Party. Both he and his wife Margo have voted for the SNP since they were able to vote four years ago. 'I thought about it quite a bit: my parents couldn't understand', remembers Mick, a clerical worker in a Paisley mill.

INDEPENDENCE

Like many other working class people in Scotland, Mick and Margo have got caught up in the debate about Scotland's future, Devolution, an Assembly, the referendum, nationalism, the various nationalist parties, independence. With so much choice around there is more than the usual amount of political discussion going on. Yet it's doubtful whether much of it is getting to the heart of the matter. For many working class people in Scotland the issue is, perhaps dangerously, clear and straightforward.

Mick and Margo explain: 'Voting Labour or Tory is quite valueless to Scotland; they don't do nearly enough for the country. The fact that they are based in England has got a lot to do with it. We voted SNP

because we want independence for Scotland. It's as simple as that; more done in Scotland, for Scotland, by Scotland.'

'If you've got your own parliament, obviously it's going to take more steps to ensure that if there are going to be more jobs, they're going to be in this country and not south of the border.'

Neither of them are quite sure what independence will mean, but they argue: 'The main thing is we're willing to give the SNP a chance; they can't make any more a mess of things. The way we're thinking is; let's get independence first and then take it from there. We feel we've got absolutely no control at the moment. We should get a reasonable amount of say over the activities of a Scottish parliament. It's easier to fight against something nearer to home if you don't like it.'

NEXT ELECTION

Both expect the crunch to come at the next general election. 'A lot of people who are traditional Labour voters are going to be switching to the SNP at the next election. A lot of people we know personally. It should come to a head by then. We will know if we're going to get independence ever. We'll get enough MP's in the House of Commons to kick up a hell of a fuss; the English will be quite glad to give us independ-

ence.'

They are quite clear they want independence — not devolution and a Scottish Assembly. 'The Scottish Assembly would be completely controlled by England. We'll only be able to make our own laws if the Parliament in England agrees. We'll vote against it in the referendum for this reason, and a lot of other people will also be voting against it. It's just a sop.'

Although their nationalism appears to be mostly emotional, they deny it. At the same time they don't claim to have all the answers. But there are some quite big questions which need answers.

For instance, why should a Scottish parliament be more responsive to demands from the Scottish working class? Mick's not certain. 'The fact is it's nearer home. That would make it slightly easier.' And he falls back on the idea: 'I just don't like the idea of the English Parliament or English bosses running anything up here.'

DRASTIC CHANGES

Which in turn begs the question; how much control would a Scottish parliament have, anyway, over Scotland. For instance, 85% of North Sea oil, according to Mick, is owned by US companies. So are most of Scotland's major industries and much of the land owned by outsiders. How would an independent Scotland control so many outside interests? Margo says: 'there'll have to be some drastic changes. A lot of things are going to change when we're independent.'

you are meant to get. There is no encouragement for the view that the working class can force capital to change its plans. To keep factories open when it would rather close them, or to open new ones where it isn't very profitable to site them. In truth, there aren't that many victories to record of that kind. Nonetheless, socialist accounts of industrial decline should recall them so as to break the spell of inevitability that capitalists like to cast over their actions. This is an omission from two very readable and useful recent pamphlets. *The Costs of Industrial Change* deals with the deliberate run-down of Batley West Yorkshire, Saltley in Birmingham, Canning Town, East London, Benwell, West Newcastle and North Shields at the mouth of the river Tyne. It has been compiled by wor-

kers in the government's community development projects. Ron Wiener, together with a group of adult education class students, has done a similar treatment of Leeds. *The Economic Base of Leeds*.

Both show clearly how capital ups and goes when there's no pressing reason to stay put. The CDP pamphlet spends a lot of time detailing how government grants to the declining regions aren't worth a carrot. On the contrary, in fact, because the kind of industry new investment is going into, only creates a handful of jobs. So what's the solution? Wiener is very weak on this. His conclusions hardly refer to the role of the state at all. The CDP pamphlet, which apart from anything else is a powerful case for a rational socialist society, points to the need for centralised control of

investment. Which is only another way of saying that the working class has to get its hands on all the capital if we're going to say goodbye to slumps, urban blight and unemployment.

Searchlight 30p, AF & R Publication 21 Great Western Buildings, 6 Livery Street, Birmingham 3.

Searchlight has made a name for itself for its campaign of exposure of the activities of fascists and racists. It uncovered the links between the Territorial Army and Column 88, a Nazi military group in Britain. Every month it reveals the contrast between the public and private faces of organisations like the National Front which in their internal bulletins betray their longing for a British Final Solution

REVIEWS

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN

The Costs of Industrial Change 80p from the Urban Deprivation Unit, Horseferry House (Room 137) Dean Ryle Street, London SW1P 2 AW
The Economic Base of Leeds, Ron Wiener, 50p., from WEA, 7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3.

One of the differences between this economic crisis and the 1930's is that today few people look on unemployment as inevitable. In any case, Denis Healey, the Chancellor,

has made it plain that he is using unemployment to lower wages and to raise profits.

What that does is to hasten the economic decline of what used to be the country's industrial centres Mersey side, the North-East, South Wales. As the industries decay, so do the cities, then we have the 'urban crisis'. Behind these processes is always profit. Profit is to capitalism as blood is to Dracula. Nothing stands in the way of the continuing flow.

Or, at least, that's the impression



ONE DAY A FACTORY BLEW UP

"We saw the cloud come over our house, but it was 15 days later that the newspapers began talking about the danger that babies might be deformed. I thought abortion was the only solution but when I visited the clinic some people were telling me not to worry.....I was confused."

SEVEN MONTHS ago a chemical plant exploded in Seveso, Northern Italy. It polluted the area with poisonous dioxin and it is only now after all this time that the government has approved a £13.5 m. decontamination programme. It may already be much too late.

- * So far 4 malformed children have been born to women who were pregnant at the time.
- * So far 342 children are suffering from the disfiguring skin condition known as chloracne — a dioxin related disease.

WHAT IS DIOXIN?

- * One of the deadliest chemicals known.
- * Can cause cancer and leukaemia.
- * Reduces body's resistance to disease.
- * Cause deformities as terrible as thalidomide perhaps for generations.
- * Indestructible even by fire.

The ICMESSA plant, a subsidiary of that well-known drug firm, la Roche, was producing dangerous quantities of dioxin in the Seveso plant. There is evidence that this was being supplied to NATO for use as a chemical warfare agent. Dioxin was used in Vietnam, by the U.S. with disastrous consequences for the Vietnamese people. Officially ICMESSA were manufacturing weed-killer, but they made it at high temperatures so that it produced a large amount of dioxin as a by-product. Instead of destroying this dangerous by-product by washing it down with glycol — it was stored. A factory Council member at ICMESSA said:

"We used to produce bags of a yellow powder — the bags had 'ICM 110' stamped on them. I was not able to find out from which part of the plant they came. All I know is that after the explosion when I went back to look for them, the bags had disappeared.."

The production of chemical warfare agents is illegal in Italy — we haven't however heard of any of the directors being prosecuted. After the explosion — despite the fact that the firm and the local authorities must have known about the dangers — no official warnings were given to the people of the area. Pregnant women found out through newspapers that their babies might be born deformed but even

then were often refused abortions by doctors who said dioxin did not exist. The official state of emergency was not declared till five days after the disaster already too late for the scores of kids who had played in the contaminated ground. They now have

chloracne, the hideous skin disease, and have to spend up to 8 hours a day in shrouded gauze masks. Doctors are uncertain how long a cure will take.

Even before the disaster, conditions in the factory were unsafe. None of the workers were informed about the dioxin they were producing, so they were unable to ensure proper safety regulations. If they had known of its dangers they would have been better able to warn their families of its effects after the explosion.

The events at Seveso are typical of countless other disasters, the people who suffer most are the last to know the dangers they are working with or living near. It is only when it's too late that the truth comes out and the victims live with it for the rest of their lives.

We'll never be safe from disasters like Seveso until all chemical factories or factories using dangerous processes and materials are forced to make that public and be subject to a public enquiry in which the workers at the factory and people living in the vicinity make decisions about safety controls and about whether the factory should be allowed to operate.

As if the impact of natural disasters isn't bad enough, now come reports that the US military are exploring the uses of earthquake and weather warfare.

Counterspy, the American journal that has made its special concern the uncovering of CIA activities, recently looked at top level plans for artificially inducing earthquakes.

Is earthquake warfare on the Pentagon's drawing boards? Far-fetched as the idea may seem, seismologists — many of them working under contract with the Defence Department — have learned over the past decade of at least two ways of causing earthquakes. While the Pentagon's Advanced

DISASTERS Unnatural & 'Natural'

"If they had told me it was very dangerous I would have had an abortion. I would prefer to cry for a month than to cry for the rest of my life."

"I was so sad. My baby was the first one due. There was so much anguish and so much hoping. I don't want to remember any more."

"My worry was not so much that the baby would be deformed, but that he may get cancer or leukaemia in the years to come. Even his children could be affected. If I had killed him immediately I could perhaps have forgotten him. But if I have to watch him suffer it will be like dying with him."

"What dioxin I have absorbed must have been in the first 15 days when we did not know the danger. Wherever I go, Dioxin will go with me. It is in my body. It is part of me now. I will never have another child."



"If anyone tells me it doesn't exist, I just look at the faces of my children. They are a mirror to dioxin."

Why the quake and famine death toll goes on rising

THE POOR GET HIT WORST OF ALL

1976 was one of the worst years for disasters — and the poor of Asia and Latin America got hit worst of all.

Shorter life expectancy, shorter physical stature, more dangerous working conditions: all these mark the life of the working class. In the less developed countries there is one more hazard of life to be faced, death by natural disaster.

CLASS QUAKE

Last February an earthquake shattered Guatemala city. It left 2,000 dead and 1.2 million homeless. The survivors called it a class quake because the only people who were hit were the poor, the people who can't afford quake-proofed housing.

There are signs that the disaster death toll is rising, especially in Asia and Latin America. The main reason seems to be overcrowding. Deaths were higher than they might have been in Guatemala because lack of space forced people to build high with cement. The collapse of the traditional one-storey mud huts caused fewer casualties. In 1970 cyclones and floods caused 225,000 deaths in Bangladesh and made 600,000 homeless. Again the main culprits were lack of warning and overcrowding onto a flood-prone plain.

SECURITY IN NUMBERS

Overcrowding throughout the third world is having catastrophic results. People are being forced to live in dangerous places — on flood plains, on the sides of mountains, on the edge of the desert. Vulnerability to floods, earthquakes and famine is rising. The root cause of the rapid population growth is economic insecurity.

Rule by big business is actually increasing the poverty of much of Latin America, Asia and Africa. When people get poorer they tend to surround themselves with more children so that there are more breadwinners in the family.

Poverty makes people more disaster-prone in other less obvious ways. You lack reserves of cash or food to carry you through. You are more vulnerable to disease. It all suggests that it's time to drop the term 'natural' disaster. Of course, it's not easy to see how earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and floods could be prevented, but it's easy to see how their consequences can be made less disastrous.

Compare China and India. India and Pakistan have more than their fair share of disaster deaths from floods and famine. The Chinese revolution has almost entirely wiped out these two traditional enemies of life. But even when the Tangshan earthquake occurred in China last July, the importance of socialism was proved. Relief work on an enormous scale was rapidly organised. Quite unlike after the Nicaraguan earthquake of 1972 when the National Guard, nominally in charge, made off with most of the rescue supplies.

U.S. manufactures disasters

Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which funded some of the research, says that the US does not now have the military capability of setting off earthquakes, it does admit that it has explored the possibility of seismological warfare.

Counterspy's interest in artificial earthquakes began when former Lt. Col. Anthony Herbert — who was forced out of the army in 1972 for trying to expose war crimes in Vietnam — revealed in an interview that he had been assigned in the mid-1960s to gather intelligence on potential sites for planting underground and underwater nuclear devices. According to Herbert, these devices were to be placed along a fault running up from Kenya through the Persian Gulf with the specific purpose of triggering off earthquakes. The US

planned to activate the bombs, Herbert said, as a final military strategy should the region be lost to hostile forces.

But that's not all:

"In a recent book on weather modification, *The Cooling*, Lowell Ponte writes: 'The Pentagon has studied ways to detect and cause earthquakes through PRIME ARGUS, a project of the Pentagon's ARPA. It has studied lightning through the resources of Project SKYFIRE and hurricane manipulation through Project STORMFURY.'

A clue to what lies behind this came in a report in *The Guardian* early in February this year:

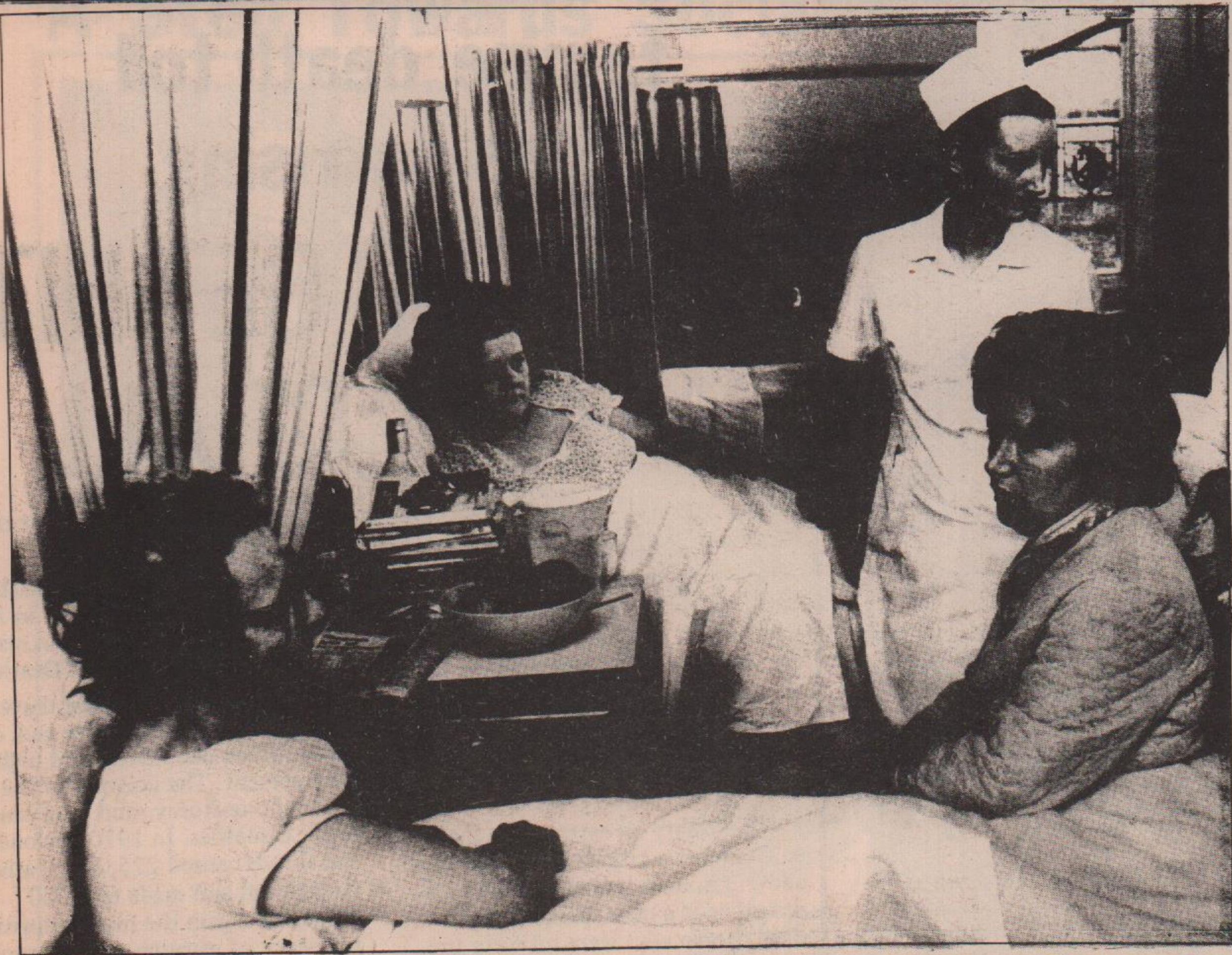
A group of US Government experts met quietly in January at the National War College at Fort McNair, Washington DC, to assess the latest

report by the CIA on the likely impact of climatic change on relationships between the US and USSR (changes can drastically affect the requirements and stresses of a nation — a drop of one degree F in Britain's average winter temperature would increase snow cover in the Midlands by more than 20 days.)

The reason for the CIA re-appraisal of the effect of climatic change on Russia is that a critical factor in international relations is food. Among the important political levers in the maintenance of detente, and a source of power which may swing one way or the other through the presence or absence of snow during the Siberian winter, is the state of the East-West bread basket.

Whilst the US is the greatest food producer in the world, the Soviet Union has to rely invariably on grain imports, except in good years. Many other countries find themselves in a similar position. The Americans intend to use starvation as a weapon in the world power struggle.

AGAINST THE CUTS ACTION AGAINST THE CUTS



Management get free lunch while we get closed wards

OVER THE last month at Withington Hospital in South Manchester there has been a battle over the fate of a 20 bed gynaecological ward. This is a ward that deals with women's operations like when the womb is taken away or women want sterilisation. Management haven't closed the ward. No, they're not that daft. They've just moved all the patients out while other wards are re-decorated or cleaned.

What will happen when the cleaning has finished?

A worker from the hospital has fought for information about future plans and has brought up these main grievances.

- * A lack of consultation with the trade unions. The area health authority knew about the plans 11 months ago, but the first the workers at the hospital knew of the proposed closure was when the story was in the Evening News before Christmas.

- * No-one will give a clear answer to the level of staffing needed for the ward. The staff of the ward have been moved, not always to areas of their choice. One nurse who left has not been replaced. Will this 'natural wastage' continue until there are not enough nurses to re-open the ward at the end of decorating?

- * No guarantee of future services. One doctor has been told that the workload is not enough to re-open the ward as a gynaecological one. Yet women are known who have been on the waiting list for months for operations. Beds are needed to provide the services needed, not to add to some consultant's empire!

- * Will the ward be re-opened for private patients? There have been private patients there previously. Private patients can jump the waiting list and come from any area. NHS patients can only join the long, slow queue in their own area.

Stories like this are coming from many hospitals. What seem like small re-organisations creep up on us to become cuts in services and loss of jobs. It takes a lot of determination to find the facts and build a struggle.

NO CREEPING CUTS

One fight leads to another. The porters at Withington are fed up with being overworked while services are cut. They have called a halt to wheeling trolleys loaded with free sandwiches to management offices for conferences of top level staff. After finding out that the cost of £16,000 in

time and labour to make the sandwiches and deliver them), the porters have blacked these free binges. Now all round Manchester hospital workers are eyeing the sherry trifles in management's offices as their own canteen prices are steadily rising, and their tempers with them.

Hospital workers are fighting to defend and control the NHS. Some of us have memories of what it was like during the thirties and know what suffering the bosses will inflict on the working class if we let them get away with it. This is what one porter from Withington said at a meeting held in support of the E.G.A.

'I can remember when I was a kid

how we didn't dare to be ill. You couldn't scratch yourself or hold the side of your face in case your mother thought you had a rash or toothache. When I went to the dentist to have a tooth out, he'd say 'One shilling with with chloroform - 9 pence without'. My mum would look at me and she'd say 'We'll have it without, and if you show me up by crying, I'll thump you one'.

A group whose aim is to bring together health workers in the Manchester area has started meeting regularly. It can be contacted at: - Health Workers Action Group, 14 Piccadilly (3rd floor) 061 223-4515



Pensioners protesting about the Sefton Council's plan to withdraw bus passes recently. Despite protests and petitions the council decided to phase out the passes replacing them with £15 worth of tokens. The Sefton Pensioners and Workers Association intend to continue their protest against Bus cuts; reduction in services and unemployment. They will be approaching the National Federation of Old Age Pensioners to pressurise government into deciding on a National Policy on bus passes. See "Meetings" for more information.

Withdrawing the passes is just one of the false economies Merseyside Council is making in its bus services. Year by year the number of passengers carried goes down and, naturally, the cost of running the buses goes up. In Sheffield a deliberate low fares policy has meant an increasing number of passengers. This year Sheffield's bus service will

MILL ROAD STAYS, OK!

"It's a lovely hospital. Not impersonal like these big general ones. It's handy for me and loads of women living all round about. We're used to the place."

"My mother had all her babies there. She always swore by the place."

"I go there every year, it's a smashing hospital, really friendly and you can trust them"

ANOTHER HOSPITAL threatened.

Another set-back for women. Thousands of local women have had their babies there, been to the gynae and obstetric clinics. They know the staff are kind and there are enough of them. And it's handy for many many women, being on so many bus routes.

CUTS AGAINST WOMEN

Mill Road Maternity Hospital was scheduled for closure in about two years time as part of the programme to make drastic cuts in the NHS in Liverpool. But it's just been announced that the Area Health Authority can no longer afford to keep the hospital open. They want all in-patients out by the 1st July. Advertisements for jobs elsewhere are up on the noticeboards. Wards have closed.

The AHA quote the falling birthrate, the empty beds, over staffing and the ease with which they can transfer services to four other Liverpool hospitals: Broadgreen, Oxford St. Maternity, Sefton General and Fazakerley. But in the immediate area of Mill Road, new housing estates are being built - so there'll be more young women needing a local maternity hospital. All but Oxford St., are miles away, and that hospital is already taking in three times more women

per medical worker than Mill Road. Wards to be used at Broadgreen and Sefton General would have to be upgraded; this would cost £600,000 at Broadgreen alone. It would take at least three years for improvements to be completed. Yet the AHA propose to transfer

services there before upgrading has taken place. This would mean a disastrous drop in standards.

And yet Mill Road itself has recently undergone extensive up-

grading and it is well stocked with up-to-date equipment. Reasons of economy always outweigh the needs of the people.

THE CAMPAIGN SO FAR AGAINST CLOSURE

The hospital workers and people around have got 11,000 signatures to a petition. They've got support of 216 G.P.s, city councillors and local Labour M.P.s. The closure has been raised in the House of Commons. But what next?

Arthur Churchleigh, a shop steward at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women in London, which has been occupied by the workers against closure since November, has spoken in Liverpool twice last month. His message on behalf of everyone involved in the campaign to keep that hospital open is **OCCUPY!** Organise to outflank the bosses. Don't believe what they say. Recognise that what they want and what we want are opposed, whatever they may say. Realise that transferring services will mean the breakup of a well functioning unit, inconvenience to the women patients and users of clinics (3,800 women attend the out-patient clinics per month at Mill Rd), a drop in standards and loss of jobs.

The workers at the EGA say they were never well organised. They hardly ever had branch meetings. No one bothered with the union much. It was only after they'd been conned a few times that they really began organising: after a surprise visit by management to declare the main lift unsafe so the top wards and theatre had to be closed; and then the whole maternity ward being emptied without warning between 9 and 10 am one morning last July. Then all the different grades of workers got together at the EGA and thrashed out a plan of action. They got support from other hospitals and groups and individuals all over London, who wanted to see this hospital run by and for women kept open. There's a 24 hour picket manned by supporters to see that no equipment is sneaked out of the hospital.

We hope that the Mill Road workers decide to take militant action. Otherwise closure is certain. The sooner they close it the worse the conditions will be for women who have to go elsewhere. Thousands of women would support them, some actively. There's a lot that hospital workers whose hospitals are threatened with closure, can learn from the EGA.

Some Big Flame women are involved already in opposing the cuts in the Health Service on Merseyside. We are now involved in trying to set up a support group for Mill Road. If you are interested contact us at 217 Wavertree Rd. Liverpool 7 tel. 263.1350

Send messages of support from your union branch, or any other group or individual to: Mill Road Action Committee, Mill Road Maternity Hospital, Liverpool 6.

One way of keeping Mill Rd open is to get GPs to refer women to the hospital. So tell your friends and relatives about the threatened closure.

ACTION AGAINST THE CUTS ACTION AGAINST THE



Big Flame photo

The NUPE-called day of action over the cuts closed 144 out of Stockport's 156 schools — most schools remained closed as headmasters refused to take over the striking caretakers' job of opening up. In the afternoon, striking council workers, including teachers who have been operating a no-cover policy for weeks, marched through the town to the Town Hall.

Stockport is a town near Manchester where the Tory-controlled council has been carrying out a 'get-tough' policy which consists of a refusal to provide services to those most in need. This policy has the support of the middle class residents of those areas of Stockport which are the 'stock-broker' belt of Manchester. The effect of the Labour Government's decision to cut the amount of money central government gives to local councils (the rate support grant) has been to encourage Tory councillors all over the country to put the boot in on the working class areas.

Last month, Stockport Council wrecked the house of a squatter and took her child into care while she was out shopping: they had not bothered to get a court order for the eviction. The judge, a local Tory, decided in the council's favour and awarded costs against the squatter! Stockport council have also made it quite clear that they will not carry out their legal responsibility to house the homeless. The fight against the cuts in Stockport will be big and hard.

Strike for Sacked nurse

MEMBERS OF the 1,400 strong Doncaster branch of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) have voted for strike action in support of a nurse sacked from Doncaster Infirmary.

The Doncaster Area Health Authority rejected a plea from NUPE to reinstate Mrs Margaret Millar. She had been sacked after refusing to do duty in a children's diseases ward because she did not feel she was properly qualified.

NUPE's action highlights the chronic shortage of nurses in many hospitals in the region. Yet at the same time student nurses in Doncaster, Derbyshire, Sheffield and many other places are being told that there are no jobs for them when they finish their training. Hospitals are using student nurses and auxiliaries to save money. Only one third of nurses in Sheffield are qualified. The Doncaster case is by no means unusual either — it is not uncommon in Sheffield for entire wards to be left at night in charge of a student nurse.

Hospital Workers describe real conditions as 400 LOCK MANAGEMENT IN

'For more than an hour, our 'managers' were forced to listen to a stream of nurses, porters, doctors and ancillaries, as well as white collar workers, describing the real conditions in hospitals and in the area due to the cutbacks. Their response to this slice of hard reality was to call in the police to protect them and escort them out — in case they got contaminated by the truth.'

FEBRUARY 9TH was a great day for hospital workers in Ealing, Hounslow and Hammer-smith. It was the day 400 of us locked in our Area Health Authority and forced them to listen to what we had to say about the closures of hospitals and clinics in our area.

After lining the street up to the Town Hall in Hounslow with our banners, and listening to what the people from all the different hospitals had to say, we crowded into the monthly meeting of the AHA in Hounslow Town Hall.

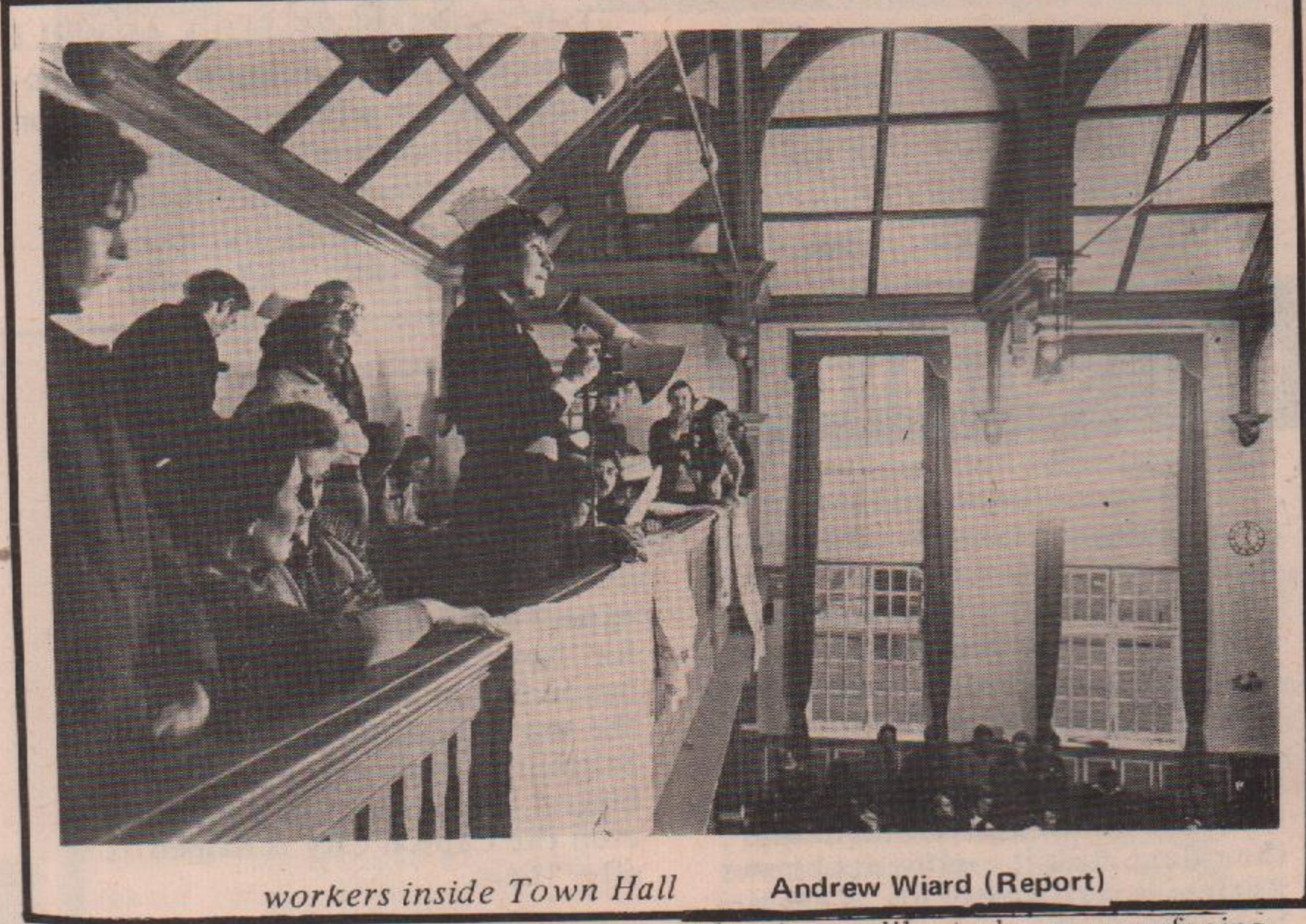
These meetings are open to the public, who are not allowed to speak. In fact, there is never any discussion and you get the idea that the decisions have already been taken.

But this time we were there in force. There were only chairs for 200, so we all moved up and brought down the rest of the chairs which had been stacked up and hidden away at the back. By this time we were feeling pretty powerful as we clearly outnumbered them about 15:1.

They looked nervous as we asked them to wait until we had all settled down, and then they began their meeting.

We sat quietly at first as planned, waiting for the decision on closures to come up on the agenda.

Our signal was Item 5. As soon as the chairman announced it, our spokesperson, Carl Brecker from



workers inside Town Hall Andrew Wiard (Report)

Hounslow, stood up from the gallery to address the Authority. The Chairman told him to be quiet and that he couldn't speak. But we were well prepared. Out came our megaphones and banners which we had smuggled into the meeting.

Groups of us moved towards the doors to prevent our 'managers' from escaping, (although a few managed to get away, looking like scared rabbits). Then, one by one, local hospital workers and representatives from the airport trades council and a local doctor addressed the authority and told them how we felt.

There was a great feeling among us as we listened to people talking about the conditions they work in, what it's like to be faced with fewer jobs, what people in the area will face as hospitals are closed.

Each point was greeted with loud applause and shouts of agreement. And in between the speeches, individual members of the AHA were subjected to the rare treat of being told

MERSEYSIDE CUTS CONFERENCE

What stand between survival and closure for London's only remaining women's hospital, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, is the workers occupation and the support their campaign to keep it open is getting all over Britain. In London, many GPs and the Emergency Bed Service, which allocates patients to hospitals, are making sure that the EGA will never run short of women to be looked after.

But the EGA's survival has a lot to do with the uncompromising stand taken by its workers against the cuts. Don't negotiate, that is the advice relayed to a conference in Liverpool on the cuts, by Arthur Churchleigh, a shop steward at the EGA.

The point was underlined by other speakers at the conference who compared the enormous wealth we see around us all the time with the talk of the cuts being "economically necessary". The problem is that the wealth exists.....as profits, interest, dividends, rents, luxury office suites, but little of it is available for making life worth living for the working class.

Liverpool Trades Council had organised the conference to fight the cuts in wages jobs and public services on Merseyside. 100 delegates from trade unions and political groups voted for a motion calling for an end to the social contract, but rejected one which demanded a "fairer" incomes policy. You can't turn anything fair by negotiating. But you can impose policies favourable to the working class through struggle.

The Conference also decided to support the Leyland Shop Stewards call for a national conference against the Social Contract on 3rd April. Otherwise, this first meeting had little to say politically or practically about fighting the cuts. But then, the whole thing was put together very rapidly.

In Kirkby alone, 60 shop stewards have been meeting to plan a local demonstration. If the Pensioners and Workers Committee has held public meetings of over 200 people as part of its campaign against the local bus cuts. There should be plenty of support for the Trades Council's initiative in holding these meetings — provided they reach rapid agreement on some policies for united action against the cuts.

A motion from the Workers Revolutionary Party, was defeated. This called for the Labour Government to resign, for a special Labour Party conference to adopt Socialist policies and expell the right-wing, and then for an election to defeat the Tories.

Some delegates opposed this because they believed we should fight to uphold the Labour government, as bad as it is. But many delegates including those in Big Flame, opposed the motion for different reasons.

For us, it is not a question of upholding a right-wing government. If the government falls then that is Callaghans problem. But the idea of a special Labour Party Conference adopting socialist policies and kicking out the right-wing, is Utopian. The left in the party do not have that power and a few revolutionaries shouting for them to build

it, is not going to change that fact in the next few months. And if the left did have that power, then we wouldn't be putting the emphasis on an election to defeat the Tories. We could talk about much more advanced forms of working class direct action.

The WRP motion would mean organising a struggle no more serious and realistic, than trying to push a camel through the eye of a needle. And in practice, the call for the Labour Government to resign at the moment means calling for a Tory government.

23rd, the AHA held an emergency meeting to take their decisions on the closures. This time we went as a delegation of stewards from the Area Joint Union Committee as we could not mobilise a big enough force of people at four days' notice. Again we told them to join us and say No to the cuts. But instead, they took the coward's way out and sided with the Government, saying they had no power to refuse. (Meaning they just didn't have the guts.)

So now the AHA will go ahead with trying to implement the cuts, and we will fight to resist them by any means necessary. It seems our struggle has only just started.

HOW WE ARE ORGANISED

In Ealing, Hounslow and Hammer-smith we have tried to organise ourselves hospital by hospital, as well as on an area basis.

Traditionally, hospitals have not been well organised, and it is a very long, hard process to bring together all the different workers and unions and begin to make links with workers outside and with local people.

There are now several joint union committees and shop steward committees inside local hospitals, and in the last 5 months we have been building an Area Joint Union Committee, through which we organised our protest on February 9th.

We have really tried to encourage each other to build a strong bases of ALL workers in hospitals in all the small local districts, because basically we feel the cuts will only be defeated by the collective and massive strength of hospital workers themselves, who can then forge links with the local communities and workplaces.

Written by a member of the Area Joint Union Committee.

RENTS UP

RENT AND RATES of council tenants will increase by between 90p and £1.50 a week if city councillors have their way in Spring. With Callaghan and Co. screaming for more wage control, the council wants details of this new 'wage cut' to be kept very quiet until they arrive through the letter box.

In Liverpool a council committee meeting on March 8th will consider increases and plans are being made by tenants' groups throughout the city against them.

Next month's Big Flame will publish an in-depth survey on the housing crisis.



The Truth About Angola

How Cubans helped in South African rout

THERE IS little doubt that one of the greatest acts of international solidarity of recent times has been the military support that Cuba gave the MPLA in its fight for the liberation of Angola. Little is known of 'Operation Charlotte', which is the code name given by the Cubans to the operation. What follows are extracts of a long article on Operation Charlotte by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a revolutionary journalist from Colombia. Marquez, who wrote the wonderful 'Hundred Years of Solitude' is now Colombian rep of 'Prensa Latin', the Cuban newsagency.



CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA

The Cuban presence in Africa is old and strong. There is no better indication of this than the departure of Che Guevara for the Congo. At the height of his life, he went to fight alongside the Congolese freedom fighters for the National Council of the Revolution (C.N.R.) that was fighting Moises Tshombe, the puppet backed by the Belgian colonialists and the international mining companies.

CONSEQUENCES

By November 1975, it was clear that it was no longer enough to send aid but that we would have to get involved in a war on a large scale 7,000 miles from Cuba — this meant human and economic costs that were limitless and unpredictable practical consequences.

Would not the United States intervene in an open manner instead of indirectly as they were with mercenaries and South African troops? This was one of the most worrying possibilities. A quick analysis of the situation led us to believe that they would hesitate before intervening openly — seeing as how they had just got out of the Vietnam fiasco and the Watergate scandal....

On the other hand, the Cubans knew that they could count on solidarity and material aid from the USSR and the other socialist countries. But they were conscious of the repercussions their action could have on peaceful co-existence and international detente. It was a decision that would have consequences that could not be reversed. It took no longer than 24 hours for the leadership of the Cuban Communist party to decide. **Their decision**

was taken on the 5th November after a long and harmonious meeting. Contrary to what has often been said, the decision was taken independently by Cuba. It was after the decision was taken, and not before, that the USSR was informed.

OPERATION CHARLOTTE BEGINS

It began with the sending of a battalion of special troops - it consisted of 650 men. They were transported by an airplane shuttle service which lasted 13 days - from Havana to the airport of Luanda, still occupied by Portuguese troops. Their mission was to stop the enemy's offensive and to make sure that the capital of Angola did not fall to the enemy before the departure of the Portuguese. Then they were to support the resistance until reinforcements came by sea.

SECRET MOBILISATION

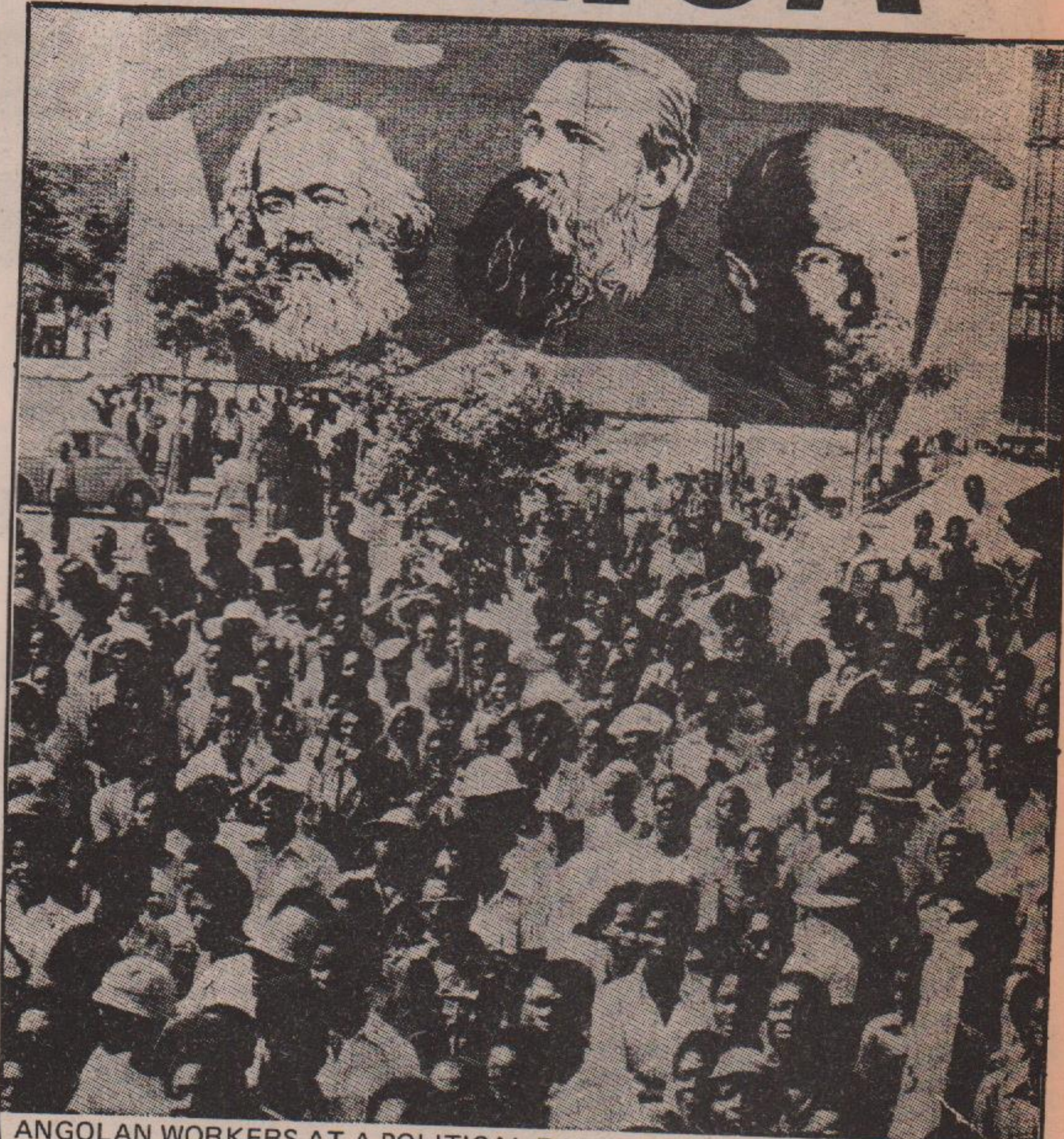
To set up units of volunteers, personal notices were sent to all men between the age of 17 and 25 and all those who had served in the revolutionary armed forces. Telegrams which contained no explanations told them to report to their military committee. However, the reason for the call was so obvious that all those who thought they had sufficient military experience rushed to the committees without waiting for a telegram. The authorities had to work hard to make sure that this enthusiasm did not bring about national chaos.

NO LANDING IN BARBADOS

The United States knew the weakness of the Britannia planes that were used — their need to re-fuel often. They forced the government of Barbados to refuse refuelling rights.

THE SHIPS WERE FULL AS WELL

The cargo ships equipped with accommodation for a crew of 80, transported 1,000 soldiers as well as tanks, arms and ammunition. Kitchens were set up in holds and lounges, paper plates were used to save



ANGOLAN WORKERS AT A POLITICAL RALLY IN LUANDA: MARX, ENGELS and LENIN LOOK ON.

water and temporary latrines were set up on deck. The crossing lasted up to 20 days in very hard conditions; even so there were no serious medical or sanitary problems....

A WAR THAT WAS ALMOST LOST

The historical truth is that, by the time the Cubans got there, the war seemed almost lost. In the first week of December, the situation was so desperate that the plan was to retreat into the enclave of Cabinda and to only leave a holding operation near Luanda, whose job it would be to organise the evacuation.... The military set-backs of December were mainly due to the fire-power of the enemy, who had already got over £25 m. of American aid. They were also due to delays in the Angolans asking for assistance from Cuba and to the slowness in getting stuff from Havana to Luanda.

A HORRIBLE WAR

It was a horrible war in which snakes were as great a threat as mercenaries and cannibals as great a threat as snakes. One day a Cuban officer got caught in an elephant trap!

In the beginning, the black people, conditioned by their hatred of the Portuguese were hostile to the white Cubans. Very often, especially in Cabinda, the Cuban sappers would hear the tam-tams announce their presence over a distance of 20 miles.

TO ATTACK SOUTH AFRICA

In January, the MPLA counter-attacked and was able to roll back the enemy on all the fronts — the possibility of attacking South Africa arose

Since the middle of March, the South African troops began to disperse, fearing that the MPLA would continue its offensive through colonised Namibia and take the war into South Africa. Such an offensive would no doubt have been supported by the whole of Black Africa and the large majority of U.N. members who are hostile to racial discrimination. The Cuban fighters had no doubt that this was their objective when they were ordered south. But on the 27th March when the South Africans fled into Namibia, the only order the forces of the MPLA got was to take over the abandoned dams and to guarantee the security of the workers whatever their nationality.

Time up for Smith

The British press has given immense coverage to the murders of missionaries. Their reports directly claim that these murders are the work of nationalist guerillas operating on ZIPA command. Similarly the massacre of 27 plantation workers in December was attributed to the guerillas. But consistently the statements of Robert Mugabe, leader of ZIPA and the Nationalist Forces have denied these allegations. Their reports assert that the responsibility for the atrocities lies directly with the Smith regime. The murders were performed by a group of black mercenaries known as the Selous Scouts and were engineered to discredit the nationalists

internationally. There are substantial reasons to believe Mugabe is right. For what benefit could the guerillas get from killing missionaries and nuns, when in the past these people have been in the forefront of the anti-racist cause and have publicly backed the nationalist organisations and have donated huge sums of money. On the other hand Ian Smith's government and the ruling class it represents knows its time is very nearly up. They are losing the civil war they are fighting. The guerillas now attack on several fronts, more and more Africans are joining them and many whites are leaving the country. With the failure of the Geneva negotiations

Smith has decided to make a last ditch stand. He is desperately trying to get the so called free world on his side and has launched a propaganda effort against the freedom fighters.

Nor is there much better to expect from the TV news. The film for 'News at Ten' on what is happening in Zimbabwe is made by the son of Lord Salisbury — the Salisbury family are one of the biggest land-owners in Zimbabwe, even the Capital City is named after them.

MEDICAL AID

The guerillas are winning but the war isn't over and real support is needed. The African Liberation Committee has begun a campaign to raise medical aid for Zimbabwean refugees living in Mozambique. This campaign will be broad based and enables us to make a real contribution. Its function will be to purchase medical supplies for refugees.

WHAT WE CAN DO

- 1) Contact the ALC for further information or pledge active support for the campaign.
- 2) Support campaign activity in local communities.
- 3) Raise the campaign with your family, school friends, fellow workers and trade unions and friends etc.
- 4) Remember that a 50p contribution can save a life.

ADDRESS: ALC, 83 Astbury Road, Peckham, London, SE15.

Our man in Uganda



IDI AMIN

IT WAS in 1972, while Milton Obote, the then President of Uganda was abroad attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, that the Coup came which brought Amin to power. His most important qualification for high office was his readiness to take orders from the men who put him there. Obote had been causing increasing alarm from the day of his election in government circles in Britain, Israel and the U.S.A.

When the coup came it was led by the white British commanders of the Uganda army and police force. It was the British government which installed Idi Amin in power. And now they would dearly love him to go.

That's bad enough for ingratitude but it's the hypocrisy of it all that really irks Idi. After all, he's not the first ruler who's butchered and uses genocide on his opponents. The problem is that he doesn't do it in the name of one of those appealing causes or principles. The American forces in Vietnam killed more people in a day than Amin can in a year, but the slaughter was carried out in the name of freedom. No wonder Amin's looking so grumpy these days. But there's one consolation. The satisfaction that comes from biting very hard the hand that fed you.



ZIMBABWE FREEDOM FIGHTER

Students In Occupations

Against Racist Policy

In the 'good old days' when the sun never set on the British Empire — thousands of students would come from the colonies and the under-developing countries to study at the universities, polytechnics and military institutes. Not surprisingly, in those days the government did not complain about the cost of overseas students — because it knew what a good investment for British capitalism these students were. Many became the local rulers which Britain needed to keep things sweet and nice for its imperialist domination. But now most of the colonies have gone and, in any case, Marxism is constantly making headway amongst the students and intellectuals of the third world. The government no longer is sure that after their education over here any of the overseas students will remain followers of the British way of doing things. Put in cost-benefit language terms, the government is no longer sure that overseas students are a good deal.

STUDENT ...

And to get rid of them it intends to raise fees over 100% from £400 to £850 and to extend the vetting procedures that immigration officials will carry out. The details of the new procedures which are circulating in a Home Office circular are both racist — they give more powers to immigration officials to let in who they want — and anti-working class — by raising fees so high they make sure that only the sons and daughters of the very rich will be able to come over to study. The proposals also demand of techs that they reduce the number of overseas students to 10% and if this is not done, the government (or the local council for polys) will hold back back money for the wages for staff.

... PRESSURE

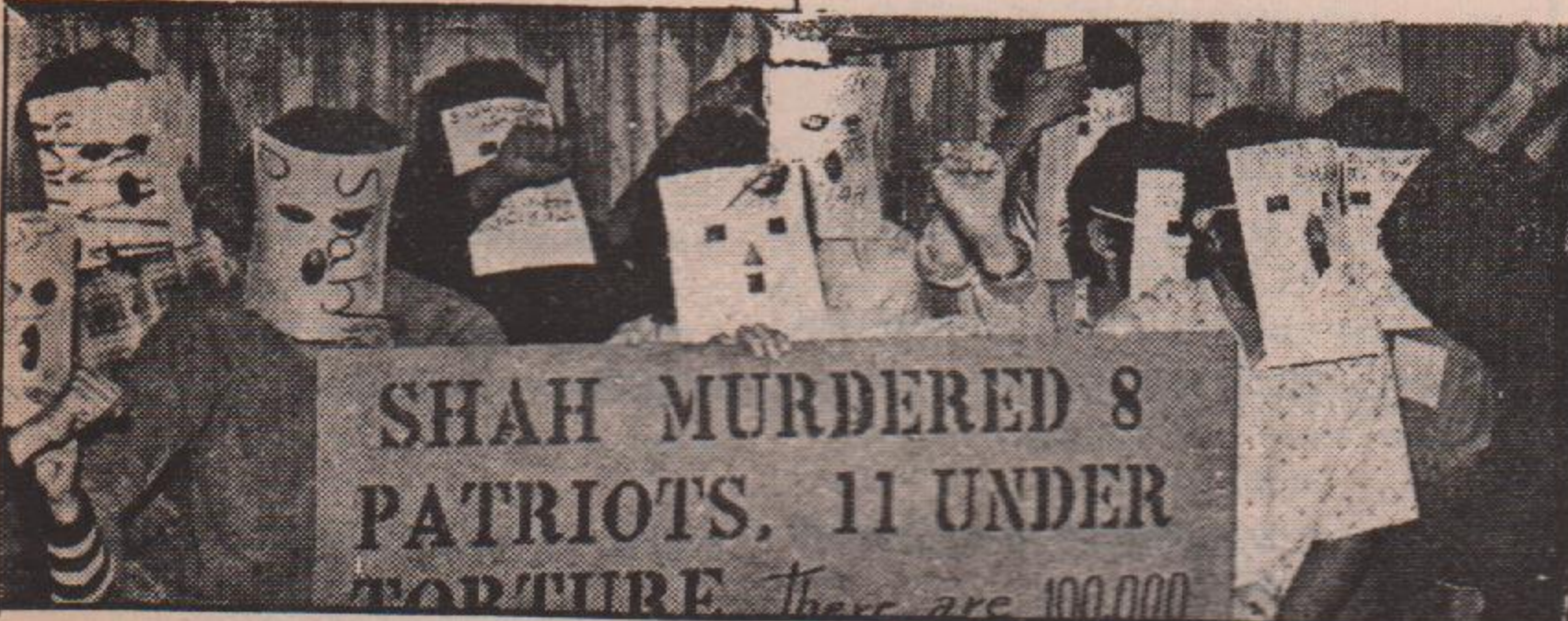
The problem of carrying out the proposals from the government's point of view is that it exposes the 'independence' of the universities and polys — this is annoying for the staff and the governing bodies of the universities who like to think of themselves as independent of government control. Under pressure from the students union, management at Bradford University has agreed to charge overseas and home students at the same rate and management at 4 London Polys have said they will not operate a quota system. Already they have been threatened with a loss of staff — 7 in the case of the Poly of the South Bank in London.

One of the Polys that has agreed to implement the racist policy of the government is Thames Polytechnic in London, and in fact the administration has already begun to implement the policy.

DISCRIMINATION

This year the following acts of discrimination against overseas students have been carried out

- Holding application forms from overseas students in the Registry, and not sending them on to course tutors.



The latest circular from the government on the issue of fees contains the following points amongst others;

As authorities will be aware, the Secretary of State regards some restriction in the total overseas student numbers as essential. She recognises that the imposition of a specific national ceiling is not practicable for 1977-78, but now asks authorities in consultation with colleges to begin to restrict their intakes in the expectation that they will need to reduce total numbers at least to the level of enrolments reached in 1975-76.

The application of the Race Relations Act, 1976, to the above guidance will be dealt with in a subsequent document. Which means that the government knows that its policy is racially discriminatory and violates the Race Relation Act and it is thinking up ways to get round this 'problem'!

- Instructing members of staff sitting on an information desk and telephone in late September that certain courses were full to overseas applicants.

- Being prepared to turn down an applicant with 4 A-levels for a degree in sociology on the grounds she was an overseas student.

- Being prepared in practice to be more flexible in cases involving white applicants from affluent countries.

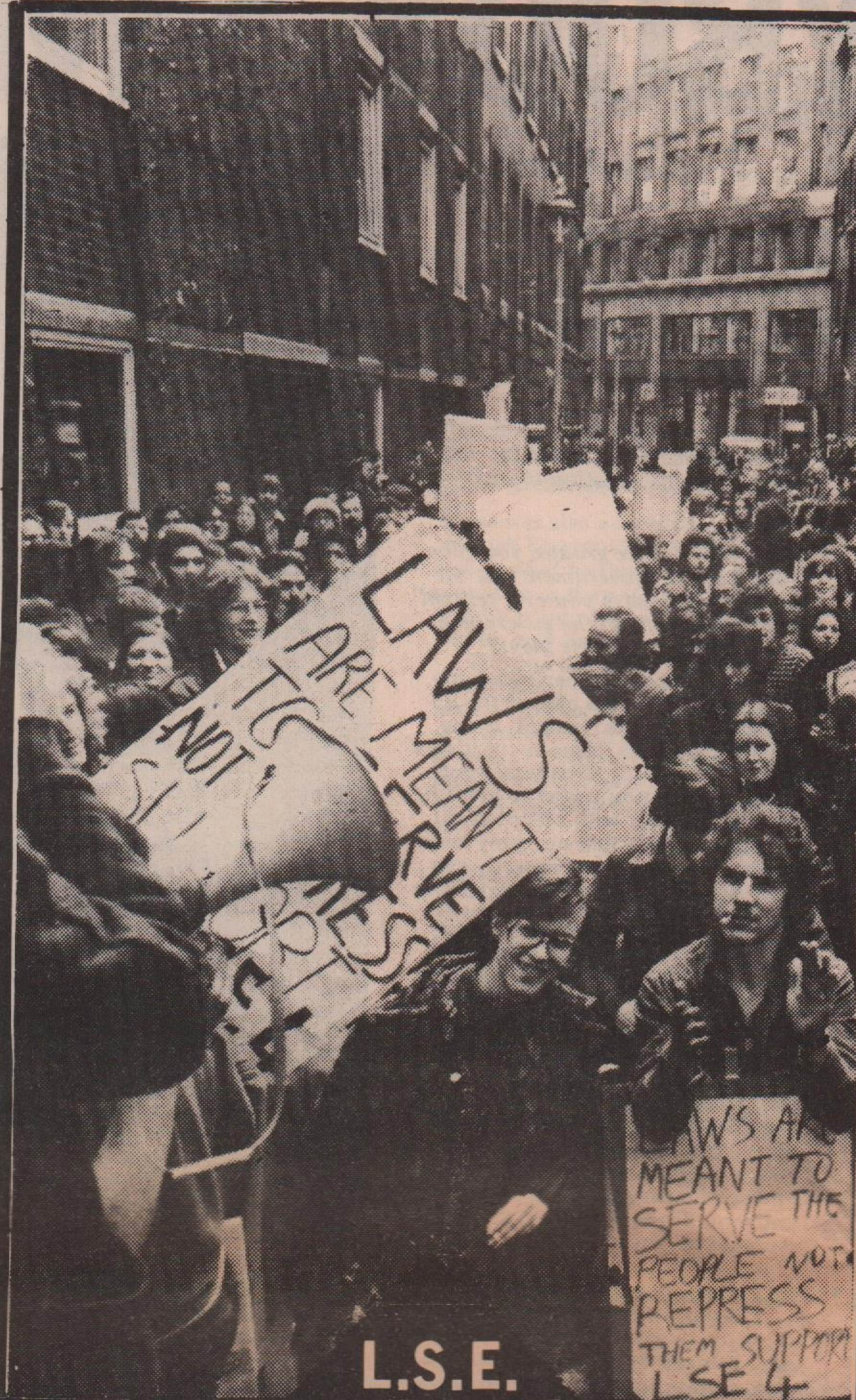
OCCUPATION

The response of the students and staff has been immediate — the students have begun an occupation of the Poly and the teachers union branch (NATFHE) voted 45:0 against the decisions of the governors to carry out the government's policy — some of the lecturers are supporting the occupation.

The occupation of Thames Poly is part of a national mobilisation which has included the occupation of Teesside Poly Middlesex Poly, the London School of Economics and Sheffield University. Taken by surprise by the force of the mobilisation, the bureaucracy of the National Union of Students has responded by calling for a day of action on the overseas students issue on March 2, and already 11 students unions nationally have occupied in preparation to the day of action. The NUS demonstration on cuts and tuition fees is in London on March 9.

Secret Police

Those overseas students who do get here are under constant surveillance by the security police of their home country; for instance BOSS of South Africa or SAVAK of Iran. These security police have their agents on every campus. One of the functions of the Committee Against Repression in Iran (CARI) is to fight the activities of the Iranian secret police, SAVAK, on the campuses in this country. CARI can be contacted at Box 4, 142 Drummond St., London NW1



DIRECT ACTION

Sheffield South Bank

Students at Sheffield University occupied parts of the administration building on February 22nd. They were protesting against the raising of tuition fees — a move which will affect all students, but overseas students particularly harshly.

The sit-in was endorsed at a union meeting on February 24th. At this meeting — the largest in the University for six years — students voted by 791 to 620 to back the occupation. But it was made clear that emergency phone calls would be allowed through and that nothing would be done to stop the porters and other weekly paid workers from getting their wages.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The Sheffield sit-in gives a big boost to the national campaign against Shirley Williams' decision to raise students fees for home and overseas students. The students argue that this move can only have the effect of restricting entry to the wealthy overseas students, or those whose governments will pay the whole fee. For years British companies have been making huge profits from third world countries like Malaysia and Singapore where many overseas students come from. Their profits and the foreign exchange brought in by the students themselves, pay many times over for their education here.

WIDER CAMPAIGN

But the issue is wider even than this. The Government's move is part of the whole policy of cuts in the public sector — cuts which are affecting all of us. If the students can win their campaign and join with parents, teachers and students fighting the cuts in other sectors of education, then we will all gain.

THE DECISION of the Inner London Education Authority to impose its policy to reduce the number of overseas students in the South Bank, has met with great opposition. The academic board have decided not to carry-out the ILEA's ruling, and have been given until 1st March 1977 to reconsider their position. If there is no change, control will be established over appointment of teaching staff with reduction of staff to what it would be if the cut in overseas student's numbers had taken place. The Teachers Union (NATFHE) Regional Council condemns the latest ILEA action and demands counter action against it. The ILEA has made a political decision that will shatter the oft-stated assumption regarding the academic freedom of its Polytechnics. The response of the ILEA is seen by staff as one of blackmail; at SBP the number of staff calculated to go will be seven. This will affect home as well as overseas students as courses may have to be cut.

STRIKE

The ILEA reaction will produce a greater desire among weaker spots in the Poly (i.e. the Director) to modify opposition to overseas students policy. In fact, the director of SBP before Christmas produced a paper for the academic board which advocated such a modification. After pressure from the Student's Union and some of the staff, he has dropped this and following a meeting two weeks ago has agreed to make no decision without consulting the Students Union.

The Students Union has called a one day strike on March 1st which includes a picket of all sites of the South Bank Poly. They are asking all the other unions on site not to cross their picket lines.

LETTERS



Dear Big Flame,
In your January issue, Peter Bacon said in a letter that he was disappointed at the lack of interest amongst socialists in the dangers of nuclear power, and other environmental issues.

One group trying to do something about this is the Socialist Environment & Resources Association (SERA). In particular, we've been publicising the ideas of the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards on the 'right to work on socially useful production'. We've also been active on the nuclear power issue.

Although most SERA members are on the left of the Labour Party, SERA is open to all socialists — and Big Flame supporters would be very welcome! Details: SERA, 312 Devonshire Road, London SE 23.

Yours,
Victor Anderson.
Birmingham 12.

Dear Big Flame,
As the front page article in last month's Big Flame says, "not everybody can fight as well as the car-workers" and other stronger sections of the working class. But it is unrealistic in the current situation to demand that these sections fight for a return to free collective bargaining only on condition that they "make sure that there's also a national minimum wage" to help the lower-paid.

The type of class struggle which replaces the Social Contract will be defined not by the demands that are made now — like restoring differentials — but by the struggles that emerge when and if the stronger sections smash that Contract. The struggles of the lower paid in the early seventies show that they will follow the lead of the stronger sections just as readily as they will "become cynical about the unions and welcome a return to wage-controls".

It is far too simple to make a blanket condemnation of differentials as disuniting the working class; they also can act as a motor of the class struggle. Remember the struggles for Parity and Equal Pay? Class unity will not come from the skilled workers 'helping out' the weaker sections, but by the weaker sections imposing their demands from a position of strength gained in struggle.

Neither can we have a 'socialist' social contract under Capitalism, with some kind of national minimum wage. Minimum Wage agreements in other countries have had a tendency to become maximum wages for the weaker sections of the working class. In Big Flame, we push for demands which express the needs of the working class independent of the needs of Capitalism. All the Bullock Reports, Equal Opportunities Commissions, Race Relations Acts and Health and Safety inspectors achieve is to preserve working class illusions in reformism. We must show up these fake bargaining counters for what they are, not be conned into swapping them for wage controls. Anyway, many low paid workers have never got their full legal entitlement under the Social Contract, and how many workers have we heard saying "My boss is O.K. — he'd give us the extra but the government won't let him"?

Free Collective Bargaining is not a mixed blessing! It will take the lid of the Social Contract off all forms of working-class struggle, and give us the chance to address revolutionary politics to actual struggles, rather than to a vacuum. We cannot say "fight for collective bargaining only if you tell the state in advance that you will have no truck with differentials" — no struggle will get off the ground that way.

J.T. (Manchester Big Flame)

We deal with some of the points in your letter in our editorial on page 3. — Ed.

RED LADDER THEATRE GROUP ARE ON TOUR WITH THEIR NEW PUB SHOW: 'ANYBODY SWEATING?'

Throughout Europe, there has been since 1968 an explosion of the left wing political theatre; in this country 'Red Ladder' are one of the most loved of the theatre groups. Since their formation in 1968, they have performed their different shows to working class audiences up and down the country. Currently, 'Red Ladder' are touring with their pub show 'Anybody Sweating?', which is a political revue made up of sketches and songs. Big Flame interviewed members of 'Red Ladder' to find out what they saw were the aims and hopes of political theatre.

When you write your plays, who do you write them for? Do you have a specific audience in mind?

Unlike certain other theatre groups we do not write our plays for the advanced sector of the working class only. We hope to reach working class people who are not already involved politically — also sectors of the working class like women who are not usually seen as vanguards.

Presumably this affects the forms that you use in your plays?

Yes, we often use cultural forms that are already popular with working class audiences like country and western music and the bingo game in 'Anybody Sweating?' With all our plays we hope to entertain people — that is very important — though there is always the danger that in our efforts to be funny we may swamp the political point we are trying to get across. We realise the danger and that's one of the reasons we constantly revise any show we tour with.

One of the most attractive features of your plays is the strong feminist perspective that comes across — on the other hand, there is lacking a strong anti-racist perspective. Is this because there are women comrades in the group but no black comrades?

It is quite true that the demand for a strong feminist content starts with the women members of 'Red Ladder', but it is fully supported by the men in the group — our aim is to make 'every play a women's play'. You're probably right in saying that our failure to develop an equally strong anti-racist perspective comes, at least in part, from not having black members in the group. But that presents problems in the sense that it would be 'token' for us to have one or two black members and, also, it would put them in a difficult position in relation to the black movement.

Some theatre groups give their time and support to a group of black performers as the General Will from Bradford did with 'Me See It Gonna Blow'; that is one way out of the dilemma, though the intensity of our

performing schedule tends to preclude such a solution for us.

Like other theatre groups, you get a grant from the government (via the Arts Council); have you ever felt political pressure from the government over the content of the plays?

No, we have never experienced any direct pressure — it's part of the liberalism of the Arts Council. If any theatre group has its grant cut it's usually officially for 'artistic reasons'. However, if a group were to identify itself exclusively with one political organisation it would probably be in trouble. We don't, but nevertheless the day could come when we get our grant removed.

Obviously, you are not writing and performing in a political vacuum? How are your shows affected by the political climate?

We have to make sure that our plays are not too far ahead of the level of class struggle. Plays like 'Big Con' and 'The Industrial Relations Act' were written during an upsurge of class struggle with the working class on the offensive against a Tory government. We now have a Labour government in power pursuing capitalist policies. The working class is in retreat and the left is in disarray.

Some of us believe that it is not the right time for overtly revolutionary art forms and that what is needed is a more cunning subversion of the mass media's mode of artistic presentation, but this is a necessary on-going debate within Red Ladder, which must continually assess and respond to the political climate.

After 'Anybody Sweating' what next?

We plan to do another revue and then a play about the textile industry that is firmly rooted in working class experience in the West Yorkshire area. That's one of the reasons we moved out of London. Also, it will give us the opportunity of writing about a period when the mechanisms of exploitation were more obvious and class consciousness was clearer.



RED LADDER PHOTO A Scene from 'Anybody Sweating'

BIG FLAME TALKED TO THEM ABOUT THE AIMS AND HOPES OF POLITICAL THEATRE

TIME OFF



RED LADDER PHOTO A Scene from 'Anybody Sweating'

THE BALLAD OF LEN MURRAY
(Words and music copyright Red Ladder Theatre)

A SONG FROM THE NEW SHOW

This is the ballad of Lionel Murray
Who always seems to be in a hurry
Rushing from Chequers to Number Ten

He tells the truth don't tell no lies
Keeping an eye on the national pie
A week in Blackpool then home again
Tells us to hold back wage demands
Faithfully obeys Big Jim's commands
Says he understands that bosses need their profits.

Well the six pound limit seemed a pretty good deal
But it had to be lower so he came to heel

Called in the dockers and said 'now lads come off it!'
'My day starts well with a cup of tea.
See if the P.M.'s written to me
Get a card from Jack Jones on the Costa Brava.

Papers waiting on the breakfast table
Miners threaten a strike so he sends a cable

You see all workers think of him as a father.

'Don't do nothing lads I'll come at once

And talk with Jo and the bosses at lunch

You see he likes to do things nice and quiet

With Tories in power I was all for striking

And in those days days it was right to be fighting

But now there's the social contract so don't defy it.

So he talks with management and does his best

Men want ten pounds he settles for less

And after lunch he tells them he's made a breakthrough

I've won a victory for common sense

I've won a wage increase of five new pence

Which after tax means half a new p. for you.

CHORUS

Len the leader of the TUC
Head of the unions that fight for me
Hero fighting for the working class
Putting our case to nation's top brass
Lionel, Lionel Murray King of the 'steady-on-there'!

Well Len his fame spread far and wide
As the man who took the workers side
By helping to save the Labour government

'I'm for the workers' he told his friends

'Though I'm always quite prepared to lend

a sympathetic ear to management.

Like all of you I get very annoyed

When I read there's two million unemployed

But to keep the boat afloat we can't start rocking'

So the workers all got poorer

As wages dropped and prices soared up

And Len appeared on telly and said: 'Eee it's shocking'!

And then one night as he was going to bed

He happened to hear as the newsman said

Workers occupy canteen at Fords.

'BY gum' he thought 'They're going to fight

I only hope I can hold on tight
Until I get my armchair in the Lords'.



Big Flame Photo Plessey: unite to fight — unfortunately short-lived

NATIONAL TELECOMS DAY OF ACTION BRINGS

TELEPHONE ENQUIRY

One day of unity after months of apathy and division. That was the recent 'Day of Action' called by the EEPTU and AUEW(TASS) for their members in the telecommunications industry.

There was also a local demonstration through Liverpool by Plessey workers. Asked what he thought the outcome would be, a shop steward from the Kirkby plant replied tersely, 'nothing'. But he may have been wrong.

The one day strike together with a mass lobby of Parliament by thousands of workers and a 1,000 strong demonstration in Liverpool, has brought a promise from the government for an enquiry into the massive cuts being made in the telecoms industry.

PROFITS

The chances are against it being anything other than a phoney enquiry. Vital facts will probably be ignored. One of the main companies to be affected by the Post Office cutbacks is Plessey. Yet they recently announced increased profits of over £9 million, including increases in their telecoms division, which makes the telephone exchange equipment threatened by the cuts.

SUFFER

Plessey are determined that the workers, not the employers, will suffer from the government cuts. In the last month alone, 3 sections of workers in Plessey's Edge Lane factory, Liverpool, have been forced to strike

against managements attempts to speed up their work while reducing their pay. Plessey hopes to make

FEWER employees work **MORE** for the same or even **LES** money.

But these recent strikes caused less unity than the one day affair called by the unions. The 3 departments were soon forced back to work awaiting new negotiations while the rest of the factory continued working, hoping that if they kept their mouths shut Plessey's axe would pass them by.

LAUGHING

Unfortunately, no-one is safe from these attacks. But both the unions and the local shop stewards seem to have exhausted all the unity they could muster getting the day of action off the ground. Now they have slumped back into the division and sectionalism of previous years. There are now rumours that stewards from one department in Edge Lane are negotiating for **ALL** cablemaking work in the factory, at present carried out in several other departments.

Meanwhile, the government cuts go ahead. Plessey workers are being defeated section by section with hundreds of redundancies likely in March, while the remaining employees work harder and harder and management is laughing all the way to the bank!

NO SACKINGS BUT PLANT CLOSES BALFOUR DARWIN, SHEFFIELD

THE LONG strike at Edgar Allen Balfour, Sheffield, finally ended when a mass meeting on 7th February voted to accept a peace settlement. The strikers won their main demand, the withdrawal of redundancy notices. But by this time less than 100 were left of the original 480 given the sack.

The settlement means that most of the Capital Tool Works, the plant the workers were fighting to save, will close. Workers remaining are being redeployed to other factories in the group. Most workers active in the strike organisation saw the settlement as a victory in so far as they'd stopped any compulsory redundancies and maintained their organisation intact. Indeed, if anything there is a stronger feeling of solidarity between the 13 different EAB factories now than ever before, and the group shop stewards committee will be more powerful and representative as a result. To keep so many different factories

out for 9 weeks was a considerable achievement.

On the other hand it was clearly a great disappointment that the Capital Works was not saved — the EAB bosses got most of the redundancies they were after and broke up the powerful shop stewards committee at Balfour Darwins tools. And several key questions remain to be settled — such as the question of wages for those redeployed.

The dispute showed the strength of the Sheffield engineering shop stewards movement — its ability to raise a lot of money, and to organise effective solidarity actions like the massive stoppage and demonstration on January 12th. But it also revealed some weaknesses — for example the failure to prevent the employers closing a well-organised factory, and a tendency to rely too much on full-time officials. These weaknesses will have to be tackled if the coming struggles over wage restraint are to be successful

Ford workers at Dagenham have added their weight to the upsurge of resentment among car workers nationally against the decline in living standards and increased work-load. To get the increased work management has been having a continuous drive to crack down on discipline.

After a worker had been sacked in the Body Plant after an incident with a foreman, some sections came out to get him re-instated. As a result on Wednesday 16th February, the PTA (Assembly Plant) night shift was told it was to be laid off from the end of the shift. At first the convenor refused to call a mass meeting to organise a fight against the lay-off. Instead section meetings were held.

The sections on the Trim lines decided to meet together (some 3-400 workers) and adopted a policy of: solidarity with the Body Plant; the Body Plant strike to be made official and the PTA to demand the re-opening of Ford's national wage negotiations, including getting a better lay-off agreement.

Eventually, right at the end of the shift, a mass meeting was agreed to by the convenor and the demands were put, including a demand for work-sharing of 600 workers "unrepresentative" and refused to work-sharing in the event of lay-off. However the convenor declared the meeting of 600 workers "unrepresentative" and refused to consider the proposals.

When the night shift was recalled to work on Tuesday 22nd Feb, several tried to organise a fight for the

How can you fight the Social Contract when you're laid off? FORD, DAGENHAM

money lost during the lay-off and for a guarantee of work for the rest of the week. After a night of much activity, with at one stage most sections involved, the company refused to budge. And how right they were! Because on the Thursday Ford drivers came out over a dispute involving payment for Sunday work. Lay-offs took place in the Engine Plant as well as the Body and PTA.

With the Ford convenors calling for a national stewards conference in April to discuss the next wage agreement due in October and openly opposing the continuation of the Social Contract, the scene is set for continual confrontation

at the shop-floor level as Ford tries to step up production of the best-selling Fiesta. The willingness of workers to fight against increased work-load and discipline and for higher wages and better lay-off agreements is growing, as the actions taken by the PTA workers show. The problem now, and not for the first time at Dagenham, is how to fight against a Ford's strategy of using lay-offs to divide sections from each other, hoping that workers will blame those sections taking the action, instead of the company. This will be the crucial testing ground for shop-floor strength in the coming period.

WOMENS STRUGGLE NOTES No. 1 (new series). Includes; - 'How to beat the Social Workers', 'Hazards of Housework'.... and more. 15p (10p to housewives and unemployed) + 10p postage.

BIG FLAME IRISH BULLETIN - includes the state of T.O.M., how the civil rights movement began and more. 10p + 10p postage

Since we went up to 12 pages — 14 pages just for this month — the response from our readers has been magnificent. We're receiving reports and articles from all over the country. More than we can cope with in 12 pages. Please go on sending articles and letters in. We're sorry if we have to omit, carry over or shorten contributions from time to time. We hope you'll understand.



The faces tell the story: laid off again

BIG FLAME

... and now for a lie-in



Leicester Sit-in (from p.1)

Wives support

When the management turned up for work, they found the gates locked, the locks changed and the workers inside occupying. That was a fortnight ago. The 800 workers at the Wildt Mellor textile machinery factory, Leicester, are steadily gaining local support for their sit-in against redundancies.

Apart from the official backing of the Engineering Union, support has been coming in every section of the community. University students have given £100. On the first night of the occupation, a bottle of sherry was donated by an old lady. And perhaps most vital of all a workers wives support group has been formed.

Said one of the wives, Chris Billingham, "We know the wives would be hard hit, being at home with the kids. It is easy to nag but we need to stick together to support the occupation."

"We started a fund to cover hardship cases and have arranged for social security advice."

★ Legal Point

The Wildt Mellor bosses have applied for a High Court injunction against the sit-in. This could mean a costly and uncertain tussle for them in the courts. If the proposed Criminal Trespass Bill becomes law, things would be very different.

CACTL, the Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law, which has just won the TUC's support, points out that the bill would turn trespass into a criminal act. Workers like those at Wildt Mellor, students, squatters could all find themselves in prison for organising an occupation.

Wives and children have demonstrated their support outside the Holiday Inn, Leicester, where management has set up temporary headquarters.

Unlike many occupations, Wildt Mellor's has been organised to involve all the workers. Every body is on a three shift sit-in rota. The factory is being used to organise support for the occupation throughout the area.

Alf Wilson, the shop stewards convenor says that the closure is a disguised attack on wage levels, not just in Wildt Mellor, but throughout the city. Light engineering and hosiery are the mainstay of Leicester's industry. The workers have no intention of accepting any redundancies.

The factory forms part of the Bentley group, which is owned by Sears Engineering. At the top of Sears is Sir Monty Finiston, ex-head of British Steel, where he made himself notorious with his drastic closure plans. Three years ago, the Bentley group cut its St.Saviours Rd Leicester, work force from 900 to 500. Two years ago, 100 workers were laid off from Wildt Mellor.

The common thread in each case is the company's push for productivity. What confirms this is the fact that the order book at Wildt Mellor is full. Politically, this puts the workers in a very strong position. The confidence to win is certainly high.

The company, which claims it's been hard hit by the recession, talked about transferring several hundred of the Wildt Mellor workers to the St Saviours Rd plant, after throwing nearly 400 onto the dole. The closure announcement came on 21st January. But management were taken by surprise when a few weeks later, completely without warning, they arrived to find the factory occupied and the locks changed.

The workers believe that Sears has no intention of moving part of the workforce to the other Leicester factory. Instead, they plan to shift all the work to another plant, at Bookham, Surrey where wage rates are lower.

SUPPORT THE SIT-IN

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the Wildt Occupation Fund and sent to the Treasurer Mr.D. Billington, 2 Granby Rd, Leicester.

FORGET A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE, SAYS ANTI-ABORTION, TORY MP WILLIAM BENYON' BECAUSE THE PROBLEM IS THAT

"It's the future of the Nordic race at stake"

Benyon's anti-abortion bill has just sailed through its second reading in Parliament. The attack on women is hotting up again. The softly, softly approach is gone - now the anti-abortion campaign is making clear its fear of the power of the Women's Movement and its desire to roll back victories won in struggle by women in the last few years.

The Wit and Wisdom of William Benyon

Benyon says (and you can tell it'd be a man saying this) "I have never accepted the catch phrase 'every child a wanted child'. If a woman doesn't want to keep the child herself she can give it to others."

He's worried about the declining population. But he's clear on which population "We shall be left with too many old people. It's all over the Nordic world, and abortion is partly to blame."

So his bill is full of clauses to make it almost impossible for a woman to get an abortion. At present, it's very hard in some areas, Merseyside, West Midlands, Cardiff and Glasgow, to get an abortion on the NHS. So many women there rely on the charitable clinics where they must pay £66 for an abortion. Benyons bill, if passed, would make it extremely hard for these clinics to function as advice agencies would have no connection with the abortion clinics. There'd be police access to clinical records, a provision that made a 16 year old or under have her mother present at interview, lowering of the upper limit from 28 to 20 weeks, and a clause sayin g

that the two doctors giving consent to abortion must have no connection and one should be of five years standing.

While such backward plans are getting full blown support from middle aged church going, law abiding, self satisfied, hypocritical men and women - the facts about abortion must be argued and forced into the open.

* In the last few years the number of abortions has declined from 167,000 in '74 to 127,000 in '76. Better availability of contraceptives on the NHS has given women a better - though by no means perfect - choice on controlling their own fertility. Abortions are being performed earlier now and so are safer. (it's safer to have an abortion in the first 12 weeks than it is to carry through the pregnancy).

* Contraceptives still do not suit many women, some are victims of rape, some make mistakes or by being too young are scared of obtaining the pill. Abortions becomes necessary for these women. Women from Southern Ireland especially, where contraceptives and abortion are illegal, and the North where abortion is illegal, are forced to come to England for abortion.

2,500 each year attend the charitable clinics.

* Abortion will never 'go away' completely, even with perfect contraceptives. So if Benyons bill, or a similar one in the future goes through, there'll be a return to backstreet abortions and the terrible consequences to women.

The pro-abortion groups, including NAC, are now fighting the bill. But there needs to be a more offensive stand taken - on the streets to involve working class women, to get day care centres on the NHS in every town and city, in parliament to get a pro Womens Right to Choose bill through.



Bletchley National Abortion Campaign supporters march against the Benyon Bill (Angela Phillips [IFL])

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