

BIG FLAME

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p.

No 49 April 1977

SO WHEN DID YOU EVER VOTE FOR THIS?

- FOOD PRICES UP 50% SINCE 1975
- REAL WAGES DOWN £10 SINCE 1974
- UNEMPLOYMENT UP BY 1,000,000
- BUT RECORD SHAREHOLDERS HAND-OUT

THE GOVERNMENT looks like it's going to have a fight on its hands to try and palm us off with yet another year of 'sacrifice'. More and more people are saying: "We've been forced to keep our side of the bargain, but prices and unemployment have shot up just the same".

The present social contract is beginning to look a bit threadbare. People who've been led to believe they were making *short-term sacrifices* for the *long term good* of us all are now seeing through the sham. The facts speak for themselves.

If you had told a worker in 1974 that he'd be getting paid nearly £10 less by 1977, he would probably have laughed at you. But that's exactly what has happened, and the only people who are laughing now are the employers and their faithful watchdog Jim Callaghan.

PRICES: Whilst wage increases are limited to 4½% a year, prices are rising at 16.6% a year

DIVIDENDS: (i.e. the bosses' rake-off) Despite 10% controls the average dividend declared in February 1977 was 34.2%.

UNEMPLOYMENT: 593,000

were on the dole when Labour took office. In January this year it was 1,448,000

SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS: Today there are 6,000 nurses on the dole and 20,000 teachers.

RENTS: By 1979 tenants will have had further big rent in-

creases, and mortgage payments are sky-high with very few houses being built.

SACRIFICES

So where has all this sacrifice got us? Inflation is still raging despite wage controls and cuts in services mainly due to things like the *devaluation of the pound* pushing up the price of imports (especially food), the general world inflation, speculation by international capitalists in the wheat, coffee markets

The only thing that's changed is that the working class is much more badly off. The bosses' magazine, 'The Economist' reported with glee: "Britain is now a cheap labour country

country and fast becoming cheaper" (1975).

Then again in 1976: "British manufacturing industry has the lowest labour costs in the EEC".

Ever been had? For two long years we've been soaked in promises and seen our living standards fall on every front.

But they haven't had it all their own way, though. If we look around we can see signs in recent months that the tide is beginning to turn.

Under pressure from the rank and file, union leaders have for the first time since the Labour Government took office, said they want either an end to wage restraint or a more flexible deal starting in the summer.

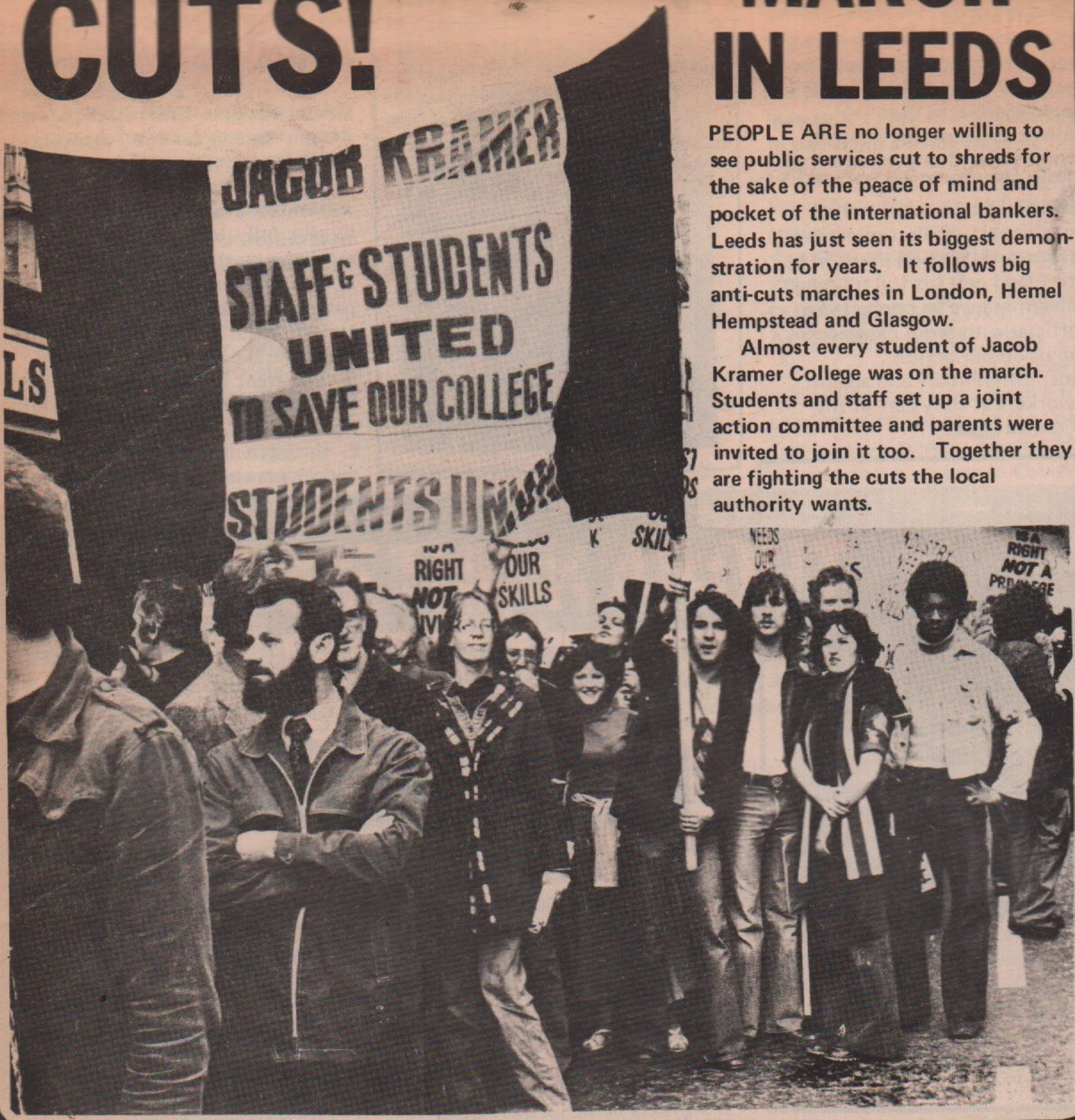
No doubt some deal will be struck, probably based on the Jones/Scanlon/Gormley/ & co. such as the restoration of *incentives and productivity dealing*. But even that won't be tight enough for the Government because once you start the ball rolling in the direction of lifting pay controls it's very difficult to stop. The union leaders have opened the lid a little, which gives the rest of us the chance to prise the can wide open. (cont. on page 3)

STOP THE CUTS!

8,000 MARCH IN LEEDS

PEOPLE ARE no longer willing to see public services cut to shreds for the sake of the peace of mind and pocket of the international bankers. Leeds has just seen its biggest demonstration for years. It follows big anti-cuts marches in London, Hemel Hempstead and Glasgow.

Almost every student of Jacob Kramer College was on the march. Students and staff set up a joint action committee and parents were invited to join it too. Together they are fighting the cuts the local authority wants.



Big Flame Photo

Secret Report Condemns Hospital Hygiene

SPEND MORE ON HEALTH!

AN ENVIRONMENTAL Health Officer in Leeds has been suspended for leaking to the press his report about worsening hygiene in NHS hospitals

His report shows that in many hospitals (153 out of 1943 surveyed), hygiene is so bad that they would have been prosecuted, but for their peculiar legal position. Two-thirds of the hospitals had "food handling areas below the standards of the Food Hygiene Regulations."

As Mr North, the suspended EHO says 'Hygiene will always remain an academic subject while there is no threat of prosecution. The manager of a hospital shares the Queen's immunity. How can hospitals get away with deteriorating to such appalling conditions when a hotel

would be prosecuted for the same thing? These dual standards are unacceptable and contrary to the procedures of good law.'

STANDARDS FALL

NUPE, one of the main health service unions, says that the report backs up what their members have been saying for years. It shows the need for hospital workers to fight for the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act to the NHS.

The report reveals a 9% drop in standards since 1975. The DHSS refuses to make these reports public, and is engaged in spending cuts which can only make things worse.

So many of Britain's hospitals date from the last century that only a massive spending programme will make them safe to stay in.

"One of Those Women's Libbers"

3 women talk about the impact of the womens movement in Britain

see page 6

Recently the National Coal Board announced plans to close Rockingham Colliery, Barnsley. The Coal Board claim the work-ins are exhausted but local miners have other ideas. We talked to one of them

“The Coal Board give three reasons which more or less add up to them saying we’re moving on.

There’s loads of coal supposed to be ‘gas-bound’ (you can’t get to it because of old workings filled with gas). They say it’s costing them a fortune to pay off claims due to subsidence in the area, and they say there’s no tipping space at the pit.

With this retirement coming in at 62 in April, they had a look round the area and picked a pit that’s been having a bad time... we’ve had two lean years... mainly because of bad planning. They’ve just said ‘well, there’s 1,200 trained men at this pit, we could use them elsewhere to solve manning problems.

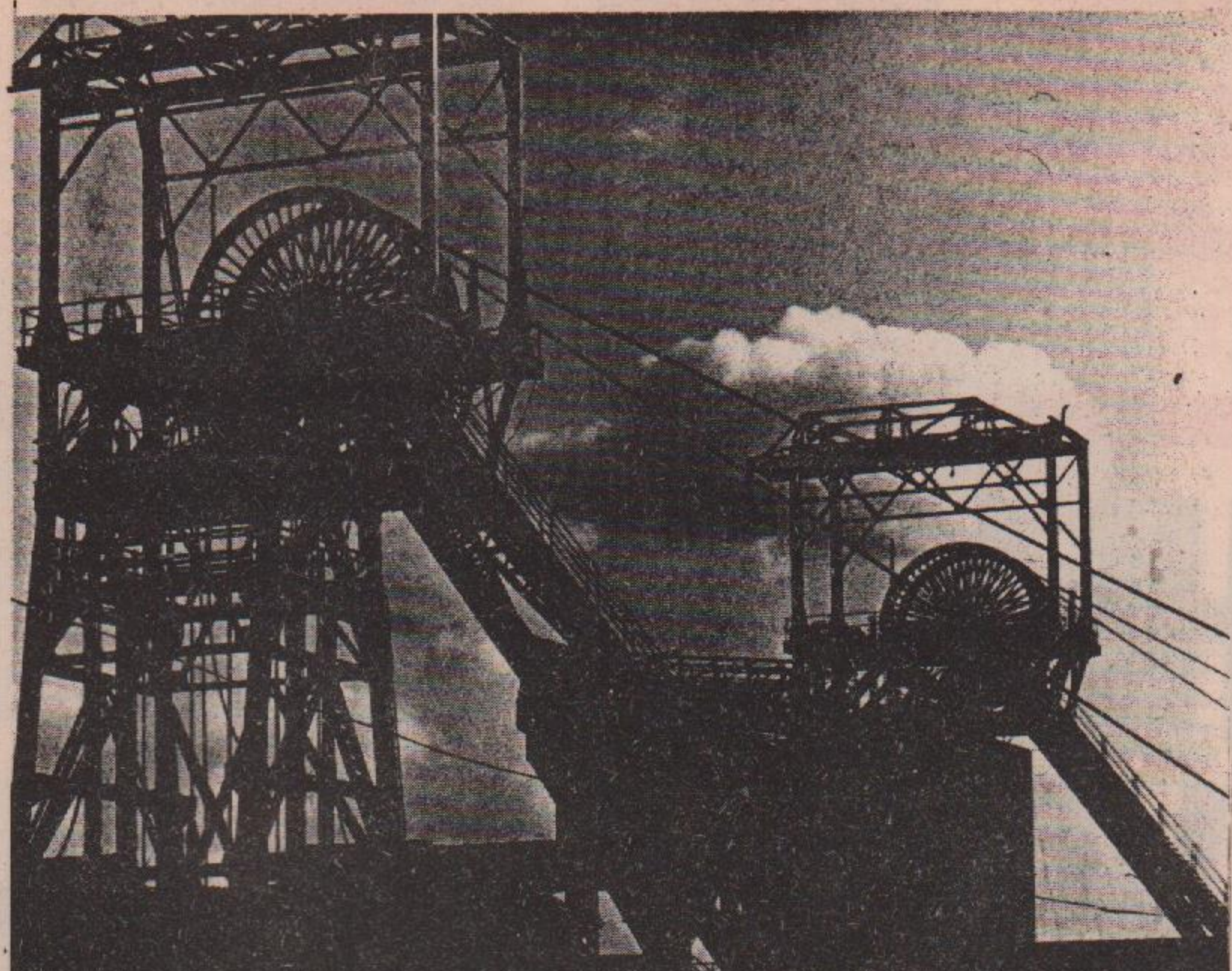
If we have to move 7 miles away or more then we’ll be out of the house for 10 hours. Yet we’ll only be getting paid for 7¼ hours.

The union will get no help from the NCB in their investigations. They have brought a union team up from South Wales who have overcome similar ‘gas-bound’ problems before.

Just 6 months ago there was a general meeting held at our welfare, and they paid us £1 a time to hear about the bright future of the pit. A manager said there were 31 faces planned... now all of a sudden, 6 months later, there’s no coal at all.

The union say they’ll fight any closure where there’s reserves that can be worked safely. If the union engineers say there’s coal to be had safely then Yorkshire area will fight it all the way.

I see Rockingham as the thin end of the wedge. There’s lots of pits in the Barnsley area where it’s touch



YORKSHIRE PIT CLOSURE THREAT

If they get away with this..... they’ll have the whip hand”

and go... shut them down and get blokes to move to Selby.

They just can’t get men to work at a pit for £70 a week. They won’t pay enough... so they get what they can out of the existing workforce.

I think we’ve got the confidence to get something done about this.

We’ve been lumbered with pay policies we didn’t want and the NCB is trying to sap our strength... if we let them get away with it they’ll be jumping on our backs all the way... they’ll have the whip hand.”

Engineering firm

BY ALL accounts Brays light engineering works in Leeds is a dreadful place to work. Hazardous, out-dated machinery is responsible for dozens of accidents a week. Some minor, some serious — seven stitches in an arm, a severed thumb, ½ ton coil of metal landing on someone’s foot. Several women work a 6½ day week and take home £46.50! Workers are forced to take terrible risks with machinery in order to boost their otherwise inadequate pay packets.

Workers at Brays are engaged in two struggles at the moment.

SEMI-SKILLED RATE FOR ALL
After the last GMWU meeting a motion was passed demanding a semi-

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

skilled rate. They are giving management one month to do this. As Millie, a press operator, told us:

“Of course, we want a semi-skilled rate for all. We all swap jobs and anyway we don’t believe in differentials.”

RACISM

All Brays workers get a 6 week so-called training period when they start. At the end of that time the bosses decide if they want you.

On March 14th Claud, a West Indian school leaver, started work. He was given his notice that same Friday because he was “too slow”. He had been given no training at all because the trainer was off sick. He had been harassed by foremen to speed up and

was never left alone.

A group of press operators in the same section decided that this was a blatant case of discrimination and got up a delegation to the management. Because they didn’t have a shop steward one volunteered to deputise and told the boss:

“Members of our union won’t stand for this sort of discrimination. We will repeat this action every Friday until Claud gets his full training. In the meantime we’ve contacted a union official with more experience to advise us on our action.”

Against differentials and against racism workers at Brays are at the head of the struggle.

In Birmingham, Oxford and Sheffield workers of the Trust House Forte catering combine are on strike for union recognition.

The catering industry has traditionally opposed unionisation and continues to make super-profits.

Now, with the summer season coming up, pickets hope their presence will affect the tourist trade. The strikers have asked their union, the T&GWU, for a national blacking of Trust House Forte’s — but the union leadership is in no hurry to get things moving.

The latest group of Trust House Forte workers to come out are those from the the Night Out Club in Birmingham — there is a mass picket of the club every Saturday night at 7 o’clock.

Donations to Night Out strikers: Transport House, Broad St. Birmingham.

Who would Trust Houses Forte ?



Profits Note: it’s obvious why Trust House Forte don’t like their workers getting organised. They have a lot to lose by it. Like pre-tax profits of nearly £24m., an increase of 78% on the previous year.

Leeds Tribunal

A LEEDS bookshop assistant, Marian Marianne Schmidt, was sacked last October for wearing trousers at work. She took the case to an industrial tribunal under the Sex Discrimination Act. She has now been informed that the tribunal has decided against her. One of their reasons given in a 7-page document was that if they found in favour of her then it might bring

a case about being allowed to wear a skirt. An I that would never do!

But Marianne’s point is that men had no rules and were allowed to use their common sense. It seems that women aren’t credited with common sense by industrial tribunals.

She plans to appeal and the decision will be binding on all employees. If they reverse the decision it will mean all women might enjoy a

ago. No boss should have a right to tell us how we dress.

If you feel you’ve been discriminated against in this or any other way you can contact: Rights for Women, c/o National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 Kings Cross Rd. London W.C.1, who can take up your case. You can also try Women’s Information, Referral and Enquiry Service (WIRES), 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. tel:

HOSPITAL TECHNICIANS Beat Blackmail

MASS SUPPORT for hospital technicians at Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport, has won their struggle over manning level levels.

For years, the theatre technicians have said they are under-manned and unable to do their work properly. With only 3 technicians for the 3 operating theatres they cannot follow the rules strictly over changing clothes between ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ areas. Even when they worked right through their meal-breaks they were unable to carry out maintenance work — cleaning theatres between operations, checking oxygen cylinders. The infection rate has been steadily rising but promises of more workers failed to materialise.

Finally they declared enough was enough. They wanted more workers immediately or they would go on all-out strike. More staff were promised but technicians said that they would only work one operating theatre for emergency until the new staff arriv-

ed. Management wouldn’t accept this and sacked the technicians.

After two days both sides were preparing for a show-down. The theatres were manned by nursing officers and other untrained staff. The technicians called a mass meeting and toured hospitals in Manchester for support.

They were refusing to work in conditions that were a burden to themselves and a danger to patients. Management meanwhile were using patients lives to blackmail the technicians back to work.

200 NUPE members turned up and voted total support for the technicians. The overwhelming feeling was for all-out strike action.

Finally management cracked and promised 5 new theatre technicians immediately, and agreed that until all new staff are fully trained only emergency operations will be carried out.

It was a great victory — not only for the technicians but also for the working class of Stockport whose health was at stake.

DON’T CALL US MENTAL GIVE US HOUSES

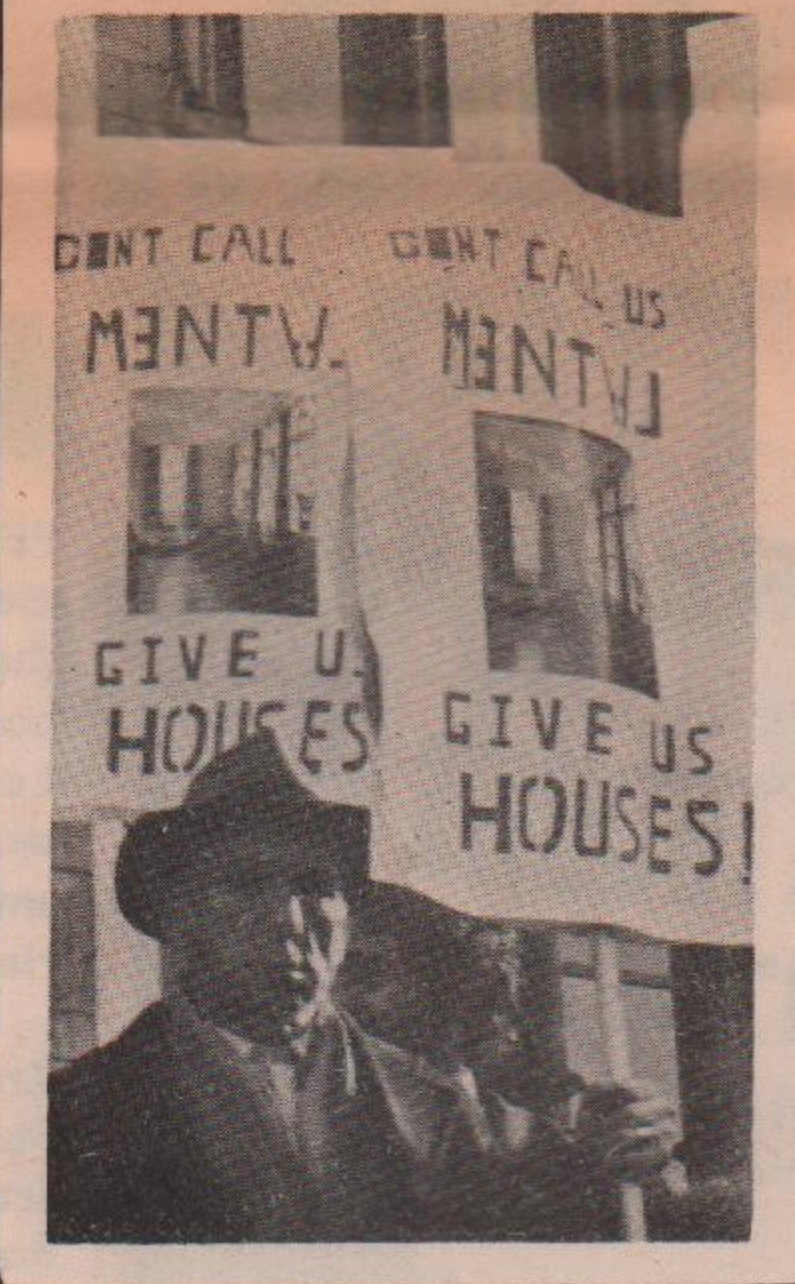
FOR ALMOST a year now, members of the Patient’s Action Committee (PAC) have been fighting Manchester Council to make houses available to be used as half-way houses for patients leaving mental hospital. At present in the Manchester area,

Mr Watson, one of their directors, has made it quite clear that he will not support a scheme in which the patients have any say in who they live with, how the house is run and when they leave hospital; he wants all the decisions to be decided by ‘experts’

The PAC which consists of patients, nurses and social workers, has already had a successful demo at the March meeting of the council housing committee — they plan a Day of Action on April 15th and will picket the next council Housing Committee meeting on April 18th.

The Group is affiliated to the Mental Patients Union (MPU) which is campaigning for the following rights for mental patients:

1. The right to receive full information on available treatments and to give fully informed consent before receiving treatment.
2. The creation of a body, including patients and nurses, to monitor experimental treatments. This body should have power of veto.
3. The right to assemble, organise and petition for redress of grievances: e.g. the right to hold union meetings.
4. The right to personal possessions and uncensored reading matter, mail and telephone calls.
5. A decent wage for industrial therapy.
6. The creation of training and education schemes for in-patients leading to jobs.
7. The provision of housing for patients who are able to leave hospital.



there are many patients who have been waiting 10 to 20 years to get out of hospital — they fill in their time working in the laundry for 50p a week or in the bakehouse for 10p a week.

The Social Service department of the Council has been the main obstacle in getting a half-way house.

Staff Strike

THE THREAT of blacking from Leyland and Ford workers forced the CAV-Lucas management of Acton (West London) to make an offer that was acceptable to the 550 white collar workers (members of APEX) in the the production control department (PCD). The workers had been out for 8 weeks.

The dispute had begun with the PCD workers being locked out: it then escalated into a very effective picket that covered all the entrances and exits of the factory.

Management’s strategy was to try to divide manual from white collar workers — they hoped to do this by keeping the whole shop floor in attendance on full pay with no work to do.

A great help was the intervention of the West London Claimants Union

tance which enabled the strikers to get state-benefits which eased the strain of the strike fund.

Management were not reckoning with the combined threat of blacking by other workers and the determination of the APEX workers to stick it out. Their offer of 20th March which was accepted included:

1. A cash award to the seventy PCD workers originally suspended.
2. The matter to be referred to an arbitrator acceptable to the union.
3. All National Insurance and Pension Contributions to be paid in full.
4. That the union do not use the settlement as a precedent for the next 12 months.

The strike showed the determination of APEX workers who are also centrally involved in the hard and bitter struggle going on at Grunwick Processing Labs in

Socialist alternative to Labour's bankruptcy

IN THE STECHFORD by-election Big Flame supported Brian Heron, the IMG candidate. We did so because we believe that Brian Heron ran a campaign that tried to give as much space as possible to the development of class struggle forces in the area — in particular the struggle against social contract, the anti-racist fight of immigrants and the movement for women's liberation. The fact that Brian Heron is a Leyland shop steward opposed to the Labour candidate who is a Leyland manager is, we think, an accurate reflection of where the Labour Party stands.

We interviewed Brian Heron about the campaign.

It's one thing to raise these issues; it's another to get action around them. How do you hope to bridge the gap?

We want the issues that are being raised to be channelled into ongoing activity. For instance, our electoral work in the Asian community has led to us making contact with Asian trade unionists and shop stewards. These contacts are arranging the production of an anti-racist newspaper that will challenge racism in the local factories and, hopefully, lead to the establishment of black caucuses in these factories. At our anti-racist rally there will be militants from the Asian community, from Trico and a

found many militants have to the policies of the Labour Government.

Some of the militants will still vote Labour since they feel that the Tories are the main enemy. A large number will abstain because they feel that in practical terms there is no alternative — some are toying with the idea of voting for a fringe candidate (Liberal, NF, revolutionary left). When there is no clear alternative, there is a big danger of moving to the right. Our impression is that lots of workers are prepared to challenge Labour's policies on the shop floor but what they do at election elections is separated from their experience on the shop floor. This

Shop steward takes his boss on

STECHFORD BY-ELECTION

What is the aim of your campaign, and how does it relate to the on-going class struggle in Stechford?

The most important priority is to show ways to challenge the Labour Government's policies. The central way to do this is to encourage the growth of real forces on the ground — against cuts in public expenditure, for women's rights, against racism; all these forces are represented in my campaign.

woman from the Grunwick struggle will speak at our women's rights meeting. We are making the platforms at our meetings open to militants — from these meetings will come ways of taking the struggle forward.

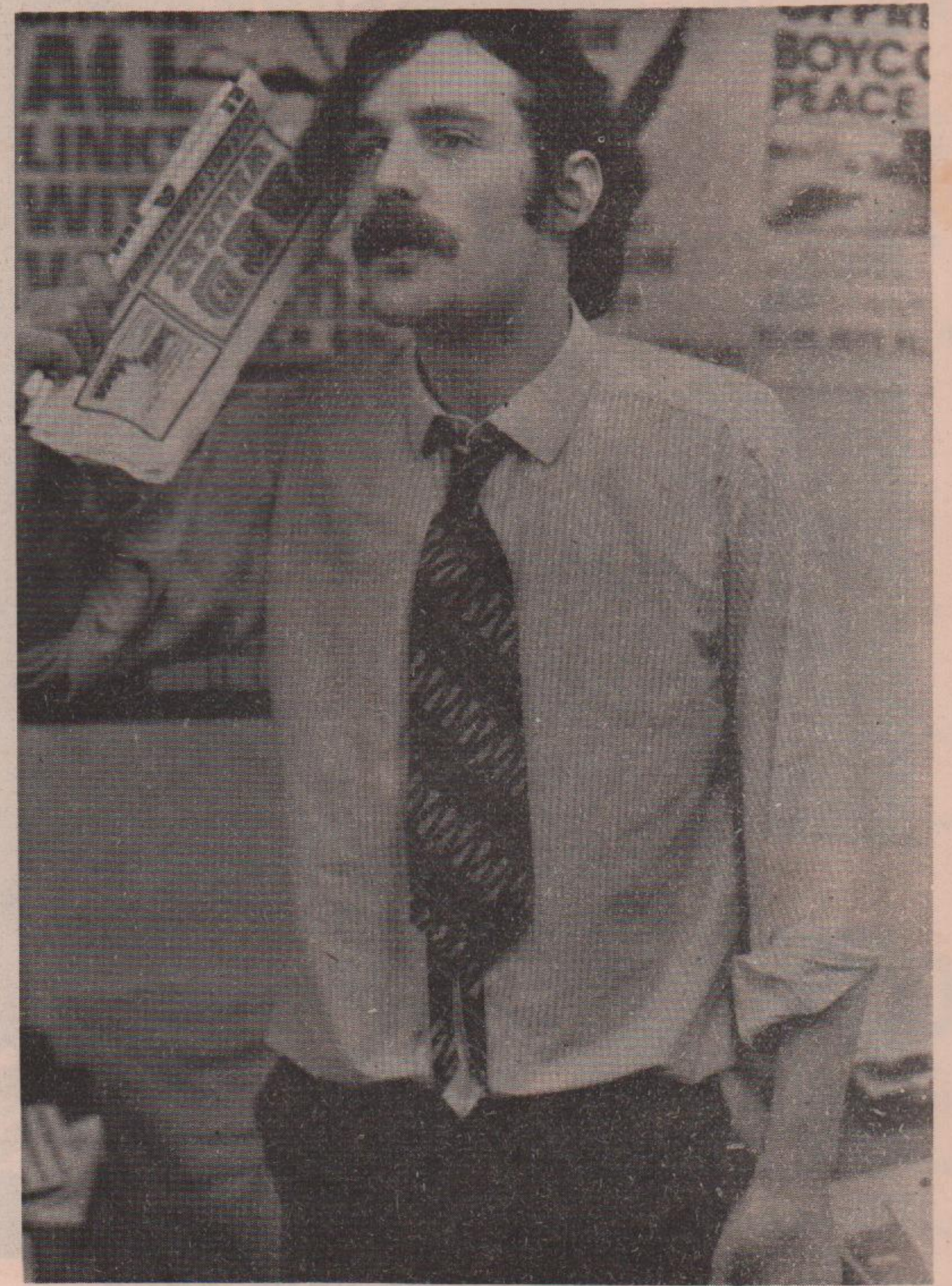
In these days of high political activity, what has been your experience canvassing?

Our main experience canvassing has been the complete hostility we have

proves the urgent need for real class struggle candidates in the next general election to connect these two levels. Our campaign is trying to develop ways in which class struggle candidates can make this connection.

What has been the response from militants to your campaign?

There has been a very good response from militants from the Asian community — Asians are quite aware of



Brian Heron: 'We can't have two left candidates again'.

SOCIAL CONTRACT cont. from front page

* The Leyland stewards have called a conference on April 3rd to try and get some concerted action to defeat the social contract. Workers from all other unions, industries etc. are invited along.

* A national day of action is being called for April 19th.

* In the public sector we've seen the massive demonstration on November 17th followed up by very large demonstrations around the country — in the Midlands, Glasgow, Hemel Hempstead, Leeds etc. (An expected turnout of 4,000 in Leeds turned out to be 8,000 on the day)

* At Massey Ferguson in Coventry the workers have won an outright victory. The way this struggle was carried out has lessons for us all. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

* The determined strike of the Leyland toolmakers threw the Gov-

ernment back on its heels for the first time in a long while. Their whole plan for Leyland and the National Enterprise Board is beginning to look a bit battle-weary.

YOU CAN'T GO IT ALONE AND WIN — WE NEED COMMON DEMANDS TO FIGHT TOGETHER

There are weaknesses in the Leyland strike and other struggles up and down the country that can't be overlooked.

The demand for increased differentials — more pay than fellow workers — is hardly likely to win the support of men and women in the same factory, never mind the lower paid, hospital workers or the unemployed.

WHAT WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING FOR IS AN ACROSS THE BOARD BIG WAGE INCREASE AND A 35 HOUR WEEK PAID 40.

The industrial unions (with some exceptions) have very little to say about, nor given much support to workers in the public services. All

over the country workers in the public services are fighting tooth and nail for the good of us all it's time industrial workers actively supported them

NO TO THE PUBLIC SPENDING CUTS..... BETTER SERVICES NOT WORSE

The unemployed the forgotten millions. The Trade Union leaders scarcely mention them these days — it's just an embarrassment they try to forget. It's the bosses who want them on the dole so it's they who should have to pay them a living income.

£15 rise in Unemployment and Social Securityan end to means testing

SMASH THE SOCIAL CONTRACT SUPPORT THE DAY OF ACTION — APRIL 19th

(Some of the facts and figures in this article were taken from a forthcoming pamphlet about the Social Contract, written by a group of independent socialists in Coventry)

the Labour Government's refusal to take a strong, principled position on the race issue. We have got support from individual members of the Communist Party and also 2 members of the selection committee of the local Labour Party who do not agree with the selection of Davies, a Leyland manager. Shop stewards versus manager: it's a clear class confrontation.

Do you see yourself as a class struggle candidate?

I do not feel I am — to be honest. I am a candidate of the IMG. While it's true that Leyland has been at the centre of militancy in this area, we cannot say that the struggle is throwing up militants who are prepared to stand as class struggle candidates. We are running a Leyland shop steward in this by-election to illustrate what a class struggle candidate could be like — to encourage the process.

Obviously, the presence of two revolutionary left candidates will confuse potential supporters. Do you think there are ways of avoiding this in future?

The SWP is running a candidate to

build its own organisation. When we talk with rank and file SWP members — they recognise the lunacy of having two revolutionary left candidates. We sent the SWP a letter 4 months ago to discuss a joint candidate — they did not bother to reply. We felt that a joint campaign with a local militant as candidate could have made an important contribution to building the struggle in the area.

By the way they dumped Ken Appleby and replaced him with Paul Foot, the leadership of the SWP has shown that their main concern is to get more votes than us — to show they are the biggest force on the revolutionary left. For us the priority is to demonstrate the challenge to Labour's policies in the election and beyond the election. We think that in the coming period many workers will be opposing the policies of the Government and the trade union leadership — the pressure for a united electoral presence of the revolutionary left will increase enormously. Already comrades are comparing the good results of the united revolutionary left in France with the lunacy of having two candidates in Stechford. We must try to make sure it doesn't happen again.

WHAT WE THINK ABOUT

The Lib-Lab Coalition

THE DEAL recently concluded between the Labour government and the Liberal Party should make quite clear what the Labour government stands for: it is clearly and openly a government in the class interests of those who have, against those who have not.

WHY A COALITION?

By agreeing to do a deal with the Liberals, Labour has quite clearly shown that it puts staying in power above everything else. In the Labour manifesto it said 'A coalition government by its very nature needs to trim its policies, and to judge its issues and in the present circumstances, it just won't do It would be a cruel farce to pretend the future of this country would be helped by a shuffling, compromising administration.' But now the Labour government has discovered that it has no policies to trim, that it is a completely bankrupt grouping who welcome the reactionary ideas and policies that the Liberals will bring to the coalition.

WHAT THE RULING CLASS SAID

When there was a possibility of a government defeat and a general election that would bring in the Tories, the Stock Market collapsed. Now, with that danger over, the Market has recovered. This is because the ruling class knows that a Labour government stands a better chance of extending the social contract for a third year. It realises that some concessions will have to be made to working class militancy but desperately wanted to avoid the class confrontation a Thatcher government would have caused.

KEEPING THE TORIES OUT

Many times we are asked 'Shouldn't we support the Lib-Lab coalition to keep the Tories out?' Of course we agree that a Tory government will be rough, but it is not our responsibility if it gets in. A Tory government will get in because the working class vote does not turn out for Labour. And this will be because millions of

working class people will not support a Labour government that has sold out once again. We cannot be blamed for this — the blame lies clearly with the Labour government

OUR TASK NOW

For revolutionaries there can be no hesitation. We must use this period of the Lib-Lab coalition to convince militants that the way forward does not lie in supporting a Labour Party that does not represent their class interests. We must present a socialist alternative that includes a presence at elections but sees as the main aim the mobilisation of the masses on the shop-floor and in the communities.

CAN WE DO IT?

It is clear to all of us that in terms of numbers and finance, our resources are very limited — but then these factors have never been decisive in political struggles.

We are politically active in a situation where the working class is being made to pay for the crisis (wages have fallen back to their buying power of six years ago) and the organisations that they look to for leadership — the Trade Unions — are collaborating with the government. We must say loud and clear that it is economically possible for this country to have schools, hospitals, public transport, decent housing and to provide jobs for all those who want one — it depends on how you run the country; on how you use its enormous wealth.

THE WAY FORWARD

Before anything else, the revolutionary left must show to itself and its followers that it is mature enough to avoid the cock-ups of Stechford, where we stood two candidates. In the coming months, Big Flame will be working for an electoral unity of the revolutionary left that is flexible enough for organisations to be part of, without feeling in any way threatened. At the same time, we will be continuing to discuss with groups and isolated militants the possibility of forming a new revolutionary socialist organisation.



Chloracne
this could happen to your child

DERBYSHIRE-SEVESO

The Same Chemical

THE TERRIBLE consequences of the chemical bomb that exploded in Seveso, Northern Italy, were described in our last edition.

The impression has been created that Seveso people were the victims of an isolated accident for which a few individual managers were responsible.

But as Charlie Clutterbuck shows this is far from the case. In fact, it's already happening in Britain.

Now that the Health and Safety Executive has ordered the closing of part of Staveley Chemicals Derbyshire plant, we can be sure that the Chloracne menace isn't confined to one small Italian town.

Chloracne is a persistent form of acne which itches, is very unpleasant to look at, and can be passed to other members of the family. In the past it has been treated by the occupational health establishment and management as an unfortunate but not very serious

disease. This is despite the fact that liver disorders are also associated with exposure to the same chemicals.

Although chloracne began to be taken seriously after Seveso, nobody had attempted to find out how widespread it is in industry. Then, in November, the US journal 'Science' published evidence showing that chloracne was caused by a chemical used to make the weed killer Divron.

30 or 40 suspects

The various authorities and management at Staveley Chemicals in Derbyshire were notified of the 'Science' paper in November, yet very little appears to have been done about it until we notified a local journalist. He immediately notified the union officials in the area, who then became concerned. After hurried meetings, an outside expert (Dr Crow) was called in and a thorough check undertaken to find out how many people had chloracne. The journalist had found three cases, but now there were 30-40 suspects.

But as with many of these sort of issues, there is great reluctance to

admit there could be anything else wrong. It is Catch 22. It's not really hazardous until you can prove it, and to prove it you need to research, but the research won't be done until you can prove a hazard exists.

It's taken time, but workers and unions are now more and more anxious about chemical disaster. The employers argue of course, that 100% safety guarantees would amount to having to close the plants down. It may very well be that some processes are potentially so deadly that they should be stopped.

On the other hand, if the chemical firms had to submit themselves to control by the local community and the workers, then many disasters could be averted. After all, the failure to take proper precautions is more often than not the result of a calculated gamble in the cause of greater profits, rather than personal negligence as the chemical firms would prefer us to believe.

Charlie Clutterbuck works on *Hazards Bulletin* a listing of dangers to health and safety at work published by the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS).

to fight other powers. It is there to ensure the retention of state power in capitalist hands

IT'S QUITE clear that science and technology are not neutral in this society. They are used against the working class. The army and police make full use of technology to maintain law and order.

A new book has just come out about these new inventions - 'The Technology of Political Control' Penguin £1.25. The authors are members of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), a group of left-wing scientists who are trying to make their knowledge available to the working class movement. In this article, Jonathan Rosenhead, one of the authors, introduces the subject.

When all else fails what ultimately keeps the ruling class in power in a capitalist economy is the repression of the police, the law, the prisons, and, finally, the army.

This defence system for capitalism transforms itself continuously, responding to threats with fresh innovations. The technology of political control is one such development. Gradually over the years of colonial warfare of the 1950's and 60's, and with a rush over the last ten years, the State has equipped itself with a new



arsenal. The weapons are dangerous, but they are not intended to kill. Their aim is control without overt repression.

The Army's campaign in Northern Ireland has relied heavily on this technology. Take riot control. First it was CS gas and water cannon, then rubber bullets, and now plastic bullets. Sensory deprivation interrogation techniques, involving hooding, wall-standing, sleep and food deprivation and exposure to 'white noise', have been another major development. And there is the massive data bank in the Army's intelligence computer, reported to contain information (down to the type of furniture in the

First, they are all inherently unsafe. Rubber and plastic bullets have killed at least four people in Ireland, and blinded and maimed many more. The sensory deprivation interrogation techniques (now condemned as torture by the European Commission of Human Rights) have left psychological scars of their victims which still persist. Second, the government will go to great lengths to cover-up their true nature. The Himsworth report on CS gas, the Compton and Parker reports on the interrogation techniques, all produced white-washes. And when a group of Belfast surgeons collated reports of casualties from rubber bullets, the

FROM WELFARE TO WARFARE

living room, and the colour of the wall-paper) on one-third of the province's inhabitants.

The list of technologies developed by the Army or police, in Britain and the United States, to contain dissent or prevent it from surfacing, is much more extensive than this. There are bugging and telephone tapping devices, sensors to detect movement, night vision devices for surveillance. There are computerized 'command-and-control' systems to get the police to the scene of a disturbance in time to nip it in the bud. There are drug and behavioural techniques to control political prisoners or politicising prisoners. As Karl Marx wrote "It would be possible to write quite a history of the inventions, made since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against the revolt of the working class."

DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES

Much of the technology of political control is for information collection and processing - to intercept movements before they can grow, or to make their operations ineffective. The other techniques are for use should these prophylactic measures fail. These more 'active' technologies share a number of common features.

Army impounded their report and obstructed its publication by the threat of the Official Secrets Act.

This governmental cover-up has had some success because the technology is designed to appear less severe than it is. While the effect on those subjected to it can be quite drastic, to those who only hear about it at second-hand or through the media it can appear comparatively mild. In this way, it is hoped, groups involved in active struggle can be held down, without a display of repressive violence which could produce a backlash.

FROM WOOD TO RUBBER

Consider the brief history of the rubber bullet. Originally it was a wooden bullet, reinforced with a metal core, used by Hong Kong police. This was held to be unacceptable for use in the United Kingdom, and a crash research programme produced the rubber variant. The reason for the change was not because the Irish have softer skulls than the Chinese. It was a difference in political structure, between a colonial regime and a liberal democracy wishing to preserve at least the illusion of 'government by consent.'



Advanced capitalist states, and Britain more than most, are suffering a prolonged crisis. As their economies fail to produce the goods which help to buy the acquiescence of the working class, sharp confrontations between organised workers and the State become harder to avoid. If the State has to choose between surrender and massacre it has already lost, because (as Bloody Sunday showed) open repression in a democracy is self-defeating. The technology of political control offers the State a possible way out of this dilemma.

Development of this novel arsenal is, of course, only one of the ways in which the State is strengthening itself. Step-by-step legal encroachments, like the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Criminal Trespass Bill are of equal importance. Recent revelations about the training of senior civil servants at the Army's 'psyops' centre at Old Sarum, and about the 'dirty tricks' of the Army in Northern Ireland add another dimension. There have been security service reports on trade union leaders. And the current attacks on radical journalists are part of the same picture.

Neither the technology of political control, nor the moves

towards a 'strong state', are invincible. They can be beaten by the concerted action of the organised working class. But before this can happen there has to be much greater awareness of the nature of the States' new defences. Our aim in writing *The Technology of Political Control* is to try and stimulate discussion out of which such an awareness can grow.

The BSSRS can be contacted at 9 Poland Street, London W.1



CAMPAIGN AGAINST the CRIMINAL TRESPASS LAW



Picket at Upper Street, sit-down until people were released on bail.
John Sturrock: Report

T.U.C. must pull their fingers out

A BILL to outlaw sit-ins has almost finished its journey through parliament to the statute book. And hardly anyone even knows of its existence.

Formally, the TUC and several unions have stated their opposition to the Criminal Trespass Law but theirs is the most inconspicuous campaign of all time. So far organised opposition has been confined to the squatting community.

It's certainly true that squatters will be his hard by the law, but part of the smokescreen put up by the bill's backers is that it's really only aimed at squatters. This is a million miles away from the truth, which is why public ignorance of its real intentions is so serious.

OCCUPY TO SAVE JOBS

Workers occupying a factory to save jobs, women occupying a housing office to force the council to do repairs, students sitting-in against fee rises — and these are all recent cases — could all be sent to prison under the terms of the Criminal Trespass Bill. The bill gives the employer or the owner the right to use violence to get people to leave their premises or to call on police assistance. To refuse to budge once you've been asked to, that's when the crime begins.

The law is regaining its old popularity among the bosses as a way of dealing with working class struggle. This law is aimed at one of the most

successful tactics, the sit-in, whoever uses it: workers, tenants, unemployed, students or squatters. Normally the maximum penalty proposed is two years jail, but this can be trebled if the police decide to charge you with conspiracy to commit criminal trespass.

Even if the law doesn't lead to dozens of militants being locked-up, it will be a mighty powerful threat against the use of the occupation. Meanwhile, the most urgent problem to be faced is the conspiracy of silence which blankets the bill's progress to law.

IGNORED

The recent national demonstration was generally ignored by the press. There is still time to turn it into a live issue for the working class.

The Campaign needs affiliations to support its work. Just as important, if you think you might be affected by the bill, organise against it with people you are in contact with. Meetings in colleges, factories, tenants centres plus firm pressure on Labour MPs could kill this bill. It's only got this far because nobody knew about it.

Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law, c/o 6 Bowden St, London SE11, tel. 01.289.3877 will put you in touch with your local CACTL group and also provide more information and speakers for meetings.

EXAMPLE OF THE LAW

Using or threatening violence to secure entry into premises where another is present, opposing your entry.

Maximum sentence: Two Years Jail.

No violence need occur for this offence to be committed. Just outnumbering the opposition as every occupation, will whether at work, at college or in the community, is a 'threat of violence'. What's more, if any security guard or caretaker rang the police and claimed that they had been 'threatened', the police could raid any occupation and make arrests. Any squatter or ex-licencee could be evicted without a court order at any time, if they were out of their home.

THE WORLDS MOST DANGEROUS FERRY CROSSING

midate the Irish Community in England.

It was passed in the wake of the Birmingham pub bombing of 1974 and made official the witchunt of the Irish living in Britain which was then being whipped up by the press and the fascists.

Liverpool Special Branch have become notorious for their hatred of the Irish. Detainees are held in filthy conditions, denied essential medicines and prevented from contacting friends and solicitors. Needless to say, the Branch has so far failed to pick anybody off the Belfast ferry with their pockets bulging with bombs.

What they have done is to make the ferry crossing a hazardous business. Ultimately, the aim is to keep people in this country ignorant of the conditions created in Ireland by the British Army of occupation.

A FORMER SCOTLAND Yard detective, picked up on his way home from a holiday in Ireland, spent two days in the lock-up at Liverpool Bridewell. He and two friends, both Irishmen, were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

With just 15 votes against, the PTA has been renewed for another year by parliament. This means constant repetitions of the kind of incident just mentioned. During its first three years, the Act has led to nearly 2,500 arrests, involving just eleven charges under the PTA.

Yet bombing and other acts of war have always been against the law. The purpose of the Prevention of Terrorism Act is to terrorise all those who oppose what Britain is doing in Ireland. The Act gives the police authority to harass and inti-

THE MONTHS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

NO EVENT is more central to the development of world revolution than the Russian Revolution of 1917. In this edition, 60 years on, we begin a month by month account of the events leading up to October 1917.

Under the rule of the Tsar, Russia had entered World War I. By February 1917, things were at crisis point in Imperial Russia — the army was in retreat all along the Front and the workers and peasants faced starvation. Opposition to the war had grown to breaking point. On the 18th February, a strike began at the giant Putilov steelworks at St. Petersburg (Petrograd) — within five days, this had spread into a nationwide general strike. On the 27th, the Tsar's government ordered troops to fire on the strikers but most of the troops joined up with the strikers. Having lost control of the forces of repression, the Tsar was forced to flee.

The Provisional Government under Kerensky came to power — it was an unstable alliance between Parliament (the Douma) which represented the interests of the Russian middle-classes and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers which represented the interests of the revolutionary masses. In March, the balance of forces did not permit the Petrograd Soviet to seize

power but it was 'the control organ of revolutionary democracy.' And because it had the support of large sections of the troops, it held the power of veto over the Provisional Government. At this time, the Bolshevik party was one of the smallest revolutionary parties (with only 80,000 members) and out of the 3,000 delegates to the Petrograd Soviet only 40 were Bolsheviks!

Under the leadership of Stalin and Kamenev, it supported the Provisional Government — believing that there was a need to build bourgeois democracy in Russia before there could be any possibility of a socialist revolution. This policy of the Bolsheviks was to be turned upside down by the arrival of Lenin, who arrived at the Finland railway station in Petrograd on April 3rd.

is ended and counts upon an immediate transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution.'

In April 1917, as is often the case, revolutionary leaders were lagging behind the vanguards of the masses, who throughout the Russian provinces were building the workers councils (soviets) into organs of revolutionary self-government. The argument of the other Bolshevik leaders was that the soviets were organs of local power and that what was necessary was to capture 'central state power'. To this, Lenin's reply was 'We must be for centralisation, but there are times that this can only be achieved locally.'

At the Bolshevik conference of April 1917, Lenin's views were accepted not because of his personal charisma but because his views ref-



Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev.

1917

APRIL

Lenin returns to Russia declaring implacable hostility to the continuance of war and to the Provisional Government. His policies begin to attract the support of the masses.

THE APRIL THESES

At the Finland Station, Lenin's message to the people was short and sharp: "You must struggle for the socialist revolution, struggle to the end, till the complete victory of the proletariat. Long live the socialist revolution!" For the vanguard workers, soldiers and sailors, Lenin's message of 'All power to the Soviets' was only putting into words what they already knew — that state power was theirs for the taking. But the problem for Lenin was to convince his own party. Lenin's ideas, which have become known as the 'April Theses' were presented to the Petrograd Committee of the Bolshevik Party and rejected by 13 votes to 2, with one abstention. On April 8th, the editorial in Pravda the party's newspaper said: 'As for the general scheme of Lenin, it seems to us unacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois democratic revolution

lected what the mass vanguards were doing. The final resolution from that conference gives a clear picture of what was happening in the country.

In many parts of the provinces, the revolution goes forward, through the spontaneous organisation of the proletariat and peasantry in soviets, by the elimination through rank and file activity of the old authorities, by the creation of a workers and peasants militia, by the seizure of all land by the peasants, by the introduction of workers control in the provinces. This growth of the revolution in width and depth in the provinces indicates, on the one hand, the movement towards all power to the soviets, on the other hand, it makes it possible for forces to organise throughout the country for the second stage of the revolution, in which all power will pass into the hands of the soviets or other organs expressing the will of the majority of the people. (next month 'All power to the Soviets'.)

One of those women's libbers'

3 WOMEN TALK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

"ARE YOU one of these women's libbers?" It's usually asked with suspicion or as an insult. But behind it lies a very serious issue. There is no denying that as a political movement, Women's Liberation has had a great impact on the lives of many women and men, and continues to do so. On the 2nd and 3rd of this month, the 9th Women's Liberation National Conference will be held in London. The national conferences have grown from the unexpected 400 who arrived at the first one in Oxford in 1970, to regular National Conferences of over 1,000 women and children. We interviewed three members of Big Flame about their first encounters with the Women's Movement, how it affected them and how they see the relationship between class struggle and women's struggle developing: The three women speak from different experiences: one works in a Women's Aid refuge, one is a domestic shop steward in a London Hospital, one is a housewife from Liverpool who does an evening cleaning job.

IDEAS OF MY OWN

"I joined a women's liberation group when I was a student in 1970. As soon as the ideas came up it became obvious that I should be in it. I didn't want to be a housewife, like my mother, stuck at home, told what to do, never getting any help with the housework. In left-wing groups that I'd been in I was expected to do the cooking and typing, but it hadn't occurred to me before that I could refuse it. The women's movement made you begin to realise that you could have ideas of your own. There were plenty of things that you knew about that other people didn't.

In those days most of the women were students, ex-students or women married to left wing men or lecturers. We talked in small groups about the family, our parents, sex — but somehow it never really got off the ground. There didn't seem to be any clear way to change our situation in an organised way. It came down to individual fights at home with the blokes we lived with."

MY WHOLE LIFE

"When I heard about the first conference I thought it was the most stupid thing I'd heard of. I thought it'll just be intellectual women rabbiting on. I did a lot of work later in Notting Hill (London) organising with other women around playgroups. Then a friend got me to go to the Women's conference in Manchester in 1972. People were talking about housework and money and the conditions of women. It all fell into place and I became an immediate and enthusiastic supporter of the idea of Womens Liberation. I thought it's about my whole life not just one part of it. It relates to all the ways people are trying to change society."

I WAS AMAZED

"I never really heard much about the Women's Movement till I started mixing with middle class people like teachers. I never even knew there was a movement going on in this country. Things like the abortion demo in the last couple of years brought it to the tele but before that I'd never seen or heard sign or light of any women's movement. They didn't seem to be involved in areas where there's working class women. No leaflets get put round here about it.

Last year was the first conference I'd ever heard about. I was really amazed at the idea of so many women being together in one place especially the dance on the Saturday. I've never been to a dance in my life before where there's just been women there. Another thing that struck me was the way nobody seemed ashamed of their bodies. Women I know tend to be a bit shy and don't even get undressed in front of other women. I went into the toilets and all these women were stripped off

having a wash. So I did the same just for the experiment. I've never done anything like that in my life before. It was smashing to be able to do that and feel so natural."

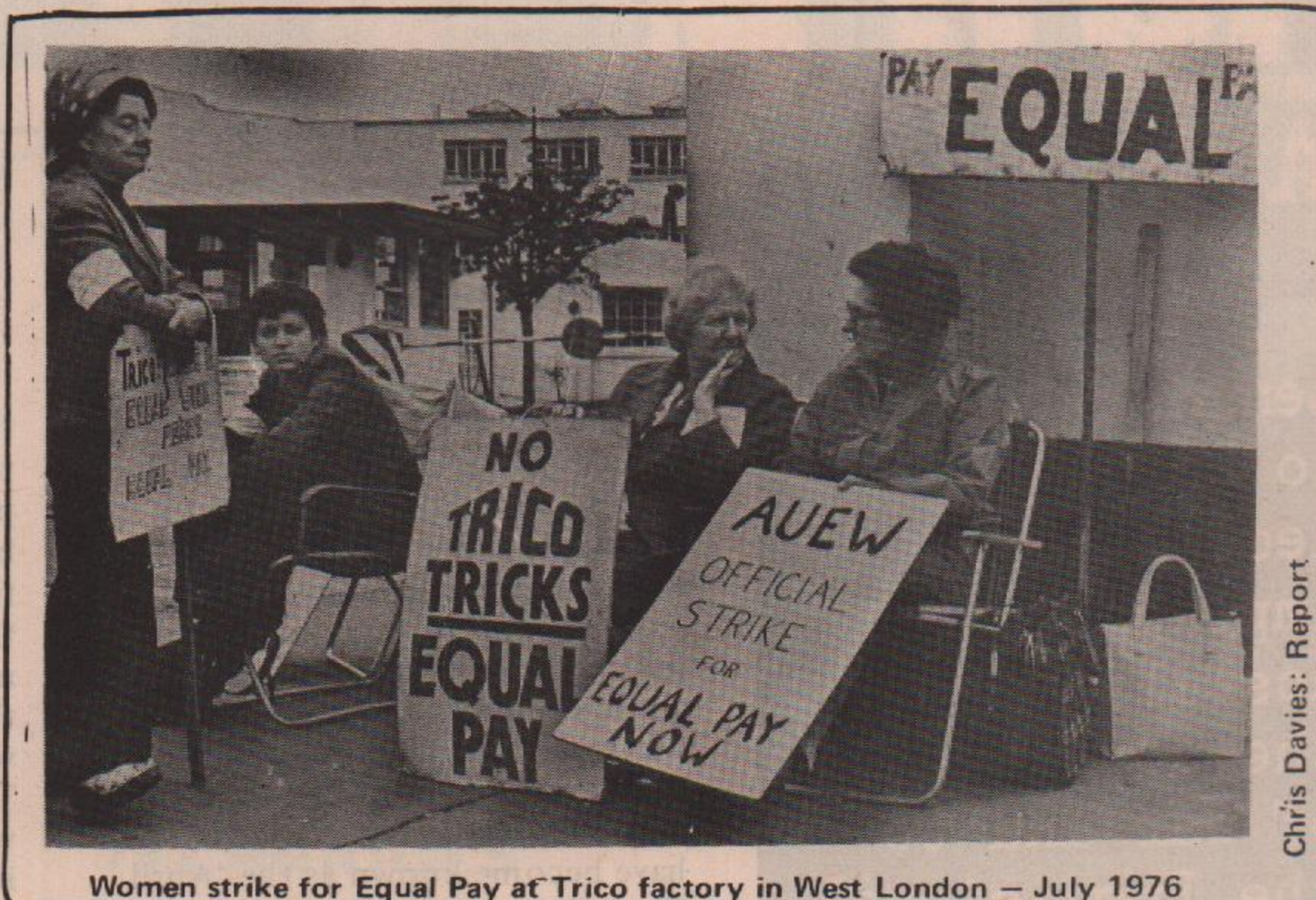
SIX DEMANDS

At the first conference four demands were worked out and two more were added in 1974:

1. Equal pay
2. Equal education and job opportunity.
3. Free nurseries available to all.
4. Free contraception and abortion on demand.
5. The end to all discrimination against lesbians and the right to define our own sexuality.
6. Legal and financial independence.

The intention was to move into campaigns from these, but only the abortion campaign really got off the ground.

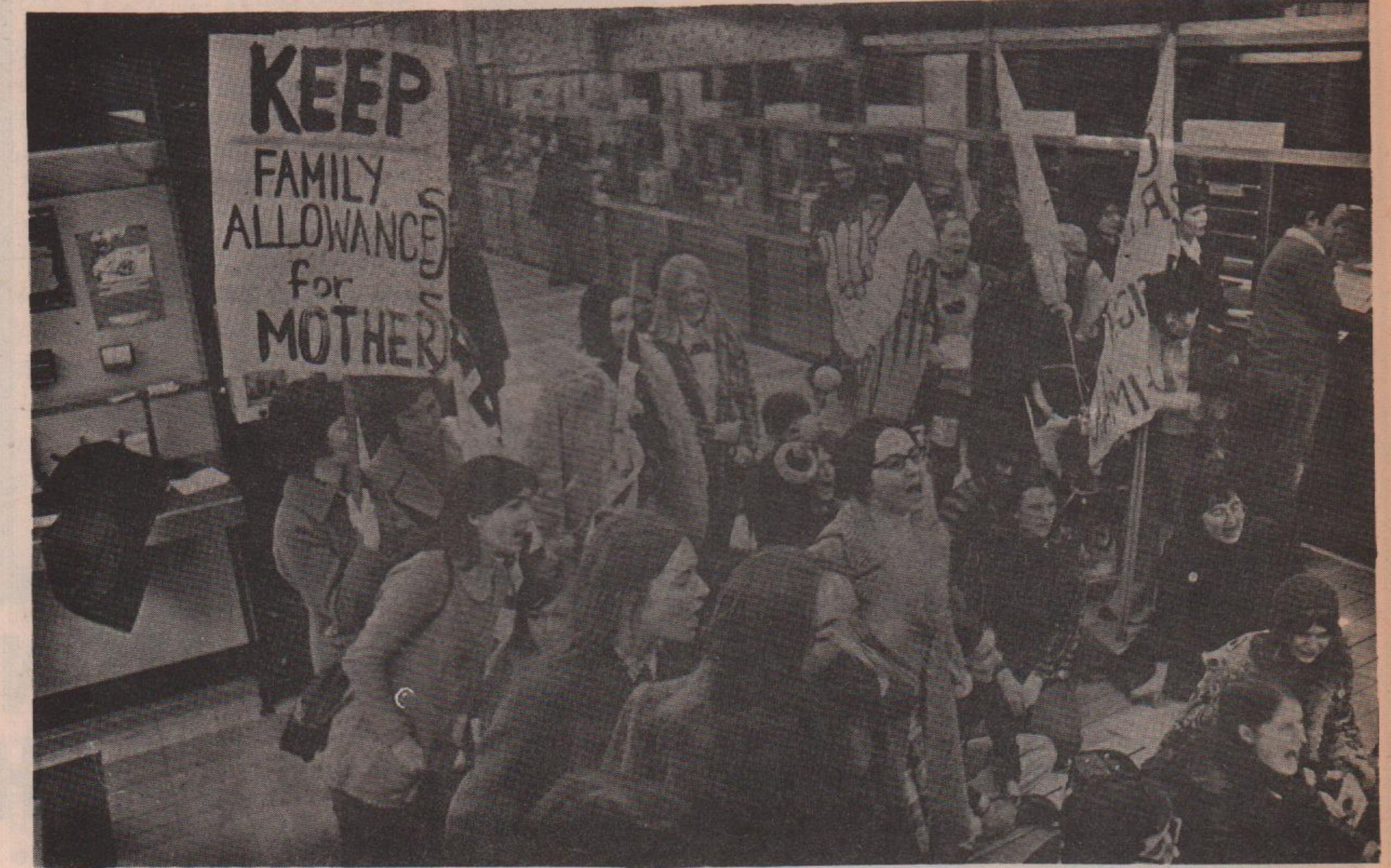
"A lot of women in the movement had benefitted from the growth of contraceptive facilities. We were part of the pill generation and the move to be more open about sexuality. So we felt confident about organising something which was fighting for more control over our bodies. Later when the abortion act was being attacked, it gave the impetus to really get organised and the women who formed the National Abortion Campaign had already learnt a lot through organising in other things like the Family Allowance Campaign. The problem was and still is about whether you form a pressure group of women who know the score or whether you try and reach more working class women so the campaign has more of a mass base. Within the National Abortion Campaign, we've been fighting for the second one."



Women strike for Equal Pay at Trico factory in West London — July 1976

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

"It's taken a long time for the women's movement to develop a form of activity and organisation which linked them with working class women and provided ways they could challenge the overall position of women."



Sit-in at Central London Post Office to demand that family allowance continue to be paid to the mother.

"To a lot of women, Women's Liberation still means simply challenging everything in your own personal life and not building a social movement of women on a massive scale which might be challenging all sorts of other things in the lives of women who are different from themselves."

"A lot of women in the Women's Liberation Movement are 'liberated' in their heads but they're not doing anything about trying to liberate other women. It's no good turning round and saying working class women should do it themselves — if they haven't got the know-how or the support or the education of other women. We can't go on and on struggling without being identified with a body of women."

WOMEN AT HOME

There were women in the movement who realised that for a change to take place in their own position, a change had to take place in the position of working class women, but they were a minority.

"There was the campaign to unionise night cleaners who worked a 40 hour week for £10, didn't get sick pay or unemployment, and could be sacked without notice. When a strike took place in three of the buildings perhaps 20 women from the movement in London went and helped out on the strike. There must have been 200 or 300 women in the movement in London at the time and that's all that turned out."

think about how we could organise with housewives because their struggle is central to the struggle of all women. That's the thing which large sections of the womens movement have never accepted — it's either been for personal change or changing things through the Trade Unions but never for changing womens situation at home"

I'M FOR THAT'

There's a lot of talk about 'bringing more women into the movement' but the real issue is how we can broaden out the women's movement to include all the women who are fighting to change things for themselves.

"When I went to the TUC Women's Conference I was staggered to find so many women who are battling against the conditions they're in. Those were working class women who don't call themselves 'Womens Liberation', but they're on your side and when you mention it they say 'Oh yes I'm for that', but they've never been to one of the conferences. The struggles of working class women often take a different form from the struggles of most women in the movement — fighting for better housing, against rent rises, for nurseries, leaving their violent husbands. In the period 1973 to

1974 there were dozens of struggles of women in factories, canteens, hospitals, communities for basic rights."

"Working class women are fighting but they're still unconscious of themselves as being part of a movement of women. That's what needs to be done — to make it clear that their struggle is a part of the womens Liberation struggle."

WOMEN'S POWER

"The job of revolutionary feminists is to find some way of uniting the struggles in the women's movement with the struggles of working class women."

"The only way it will change is by getting the two together, through talking, listening to and being with other women who've had different experiences from yourself. If I had never met these women from the Women's movement I'd have never thought of myself as having these ideas even though I did."

"The most important thing is to get as many people from all walks of life involved in it. Get more women to the conferences because when you see the solidarity of women there, you realise how much power women have when they're all together."

ABORTION CONFERENCE

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

WHAT CHOICE does a woman have at the moment on the question of abortion.

The demand calls for a real choice for a woman in what happens to her body and whether she has a child or not. The choice to use safe, reliable contraceptives, the choice not to have a child, the choice to bring her children up decent conditions with enough money to live on.

At the moment all these things are under attack: the Benyon Bill, which is going through Parliament at the moment is yet another attempt to restrict abortion facilities. It may even make contraceptives like the coil illegal.

If this bill becomes law the already inadequate abortion facilities will become even worse. The women who are now forced to use charitable agencies like The British Pregnancy Advisory Service because the NHS doesn't provide sufficient services will find it even harder to get an abortion.

Cuts in public spending mean that maternity and nursery facilities are

being cut. Kids are put on short time school because of cuts in the number of teachers. Everyday women find it harder to make ends meet on the money they are getting.

At the NAC Conference it was decided that NAC should keep its open structure, which means that anyone can go to meetings if they agree with the demands — A woman's right to choose - Free abortion on demand.

We also talked about the bill the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) has drafted to go before Parliament. The bill would not give women the right to demand an abortion but it would improve the situation a lot. Unfortunately, for women, the problem is convincing MPs who seem to have little idea of the situation faced by women who don't want to be pregnant.

There is still a long way to go before women get a real choice about what happens to them. One of the main fights is to stop the Benyon Bill, but on the positive side there is the fight to improve NHS facilities.

HOUSING: WRECKING OUR FUTURE

HIGH INTEREST RATES HELP TO KEEP A MILLION ON THE WAITING LIST

While the Government continues to control wage increases, householders of all kinds are continually paying out more money. This hidden hole in the social contract — rent, rate and mortgage payment rises — is never taken into account. Meanwhile, 25,120 homeless people a day apply for temporary accommodation, and 1,000,000 wait on council waiting lists throughout England.

Blackmail

All over the country, the annual round of rate and rent increases are starting again. While council tenants rents are rising between 30p-£1.50p a week, rate rises will be as high as 40%-50% in some areas. Although the details vary from town to town as City Councils pursue their pathetic blackmails, one common thread runs through all our cities. The Labour Government demand these rises, expect them and threaten to withdraw Government subsidies unless they take place.

Cutting our throats

If this isn't bad enough, the whole basis of council housing is being undermined — continuing a joint Tory/Labour/Liberal policy begun in the late '60s. How is this being done?

- * Massive national cuts in council house building. Spending on public sector housing went down by £350 million between 1970 and 1975. It is still declining.

- * Meanwhile more than one million tenants are on council waiting lists throughout England. In London alone, the figure is touching 300,000.

- * Dramatic cuts in maintenance and repair services mean that existing housing is declining in quality — often beyond repair, while council houses remain empty.

- * An increasing cut in the employment of direct workers employed by councils. This move is at present being strongly resisted in cities like Manchester and Liverpool by council workers, supported by council tenants.

- * The increase in "Council Houses for Sale" policies. 196,166 council houses were sold between 1960-1975. Nearly 23,000 were built purely for sale, though the majority of those being sold are the best quality pre-war council housing which are much in demand. Current figures show that most of these sales are beyond the present means of most council tenants.

- * In Glasgow, despite a waiting list of 30,000 tenants and a transfer list of 40,000. Glasgow Council is considering selling council houses!

Bye Bye

Council housing

The situation is getting worse — and it's not just a temporary situation. It is part of a political move to increase the number of home owners and mortgage buyers, and change council housing from being a traditional right of the working class to being a welfare service for "special (i.e. poor) cases." The state hopes to drive a wedge between home owners and small ghettos of council tenants in the worst housing areas.

Mortgage Con

Not that the majority of home owners are in a particularly privileged position. Rises in rates and mortgages hit hard — and though wages are held down by the social contract, there is no check on these rises. And first time home buyers, often working class people forced out of finding a reasonable home in the public sector, are supporting the mortgage interest racket run by the finance companies; as a result they are making the largest financial contribution to the mortgage industry.

The Big Lie

In this situation, the rats in councilors' clothing are trying to put about the Big Lie — that home owners and rate payers are subsidising council tenants. This is wrong. All householders pay rates. In our cities, most council tenants enjoy less facilities and a worse environment than private home owners, despite paying rates and rents. In fact council tenants pay more in rent and rates with no return than home-owners on a mortgage — who are currently receiving government subsidies through tax relief to the tune of over £1,000 million (1976 figures). So who is subsidising who??

Fighting back

Recently in Liverpool an organisation called Liverpool Tenants Action Group formed to combat rent and rate increases has changed its name to the Liverpool Tenants and Residents Action Group. It is now open to

householders of all kinds, and is trying to build a united front to fight for decent housing for all — whether they are at the mercy of council sharks or mortgage and finance company sharks.

The government and local councils are trying to completely change the face of housing in this country. It is only on the basis of unity between the different sectors that we can overcome the divide and rule tactics of the state, and begin the fight against bad housing conditions — and the increasing and uncontrolled drain on our incomes caused by present housing policy.

A Home is a Right Not a Privilege

(Thanks to Community Action Magazine for many of the figures used in this article.)

Huyton, Merseyside: campaign against empty houses.

BIG FLAME PHOTO



WIVES SUPPORT 24 HOUR PICKET

THE OCCUPATION to save jobs at the Wildt Mellor factory in Leicester, reported in last month's Big Flame, has ended after the bosses took legal action. Since then, the workers have mounted a 24 hour picket. Crucial to the struggle is the active support given by the workers wives. We went to talk to some of them about how they had organised themselves.

"We set up the Support Group because we love our husbands and our kids. If the men are going to fight we're also going to fight. It's a family matter and we've got to stick together. What problems he's got are mine and what are mine are his," says Lily, one of the group.

There are about 40 women in the support group but not all of those can get to meetings, as Lynne points out "Many go out to work and it's not always easy to get a babysitter." But now they've set up a rota for sharing the babysitting. What do the kids think about it all? "They love it. My kids go to school and say 'my dad's on strike, but for a good reason. They may take his job off him, but it's his job'".

The women have been campaigning against the distorted reports of the struggle in the local press. When they went to the paper to complain "we were told we'd get more coverage if we went against our husbands". The implication was that the men weren't justified in being on strike. "But we think our husbands are justified. Our men are losing their jobs and that just isn't fair. They're trying to move the jobs to Bookham in Surrey where the pay's lower."

They've been out leafletting in the City Centre, preparing for a demonstration on 19th March. "When you're just an ordinary housewife" says Lily, "and a mum and you just do a little thing like this it grows and grows and grows and you have to be wary — you know, some of the things said and the big words they use. I mean, we all look at each other and say, what's that bloody mean." For some of the women they're having their first contact with socialist groups.

"A lot try just to flog papers and get us to go to their meetings. Women's Liberation were very helpful. They gave us some addresses to write to, to put our case over in London. They didn't try to convert us. We went purely for help and advice and we got it."

THE OCCUPATION AT Wildt Mellor Leicester was ended by a High Court writ, one of a growing number of cases of the civil law being used against workers in struggle. The Post Office workers ban on mail to South Africa and NUPE's strike in Scotland against the cuts were both stopped by writs.

So, for five weeks, they've been picketing the factory around the clock. This isn't the easiest form of action to keep going. It's hard work and not very exciting, and the burden is carried by about 280 activists.

Out of a workforce of about 800, about 160 workers have already decided to accept redundancy voluntarily, but the rest are fighting to prevent the company transferring the jobs to low pay Surrey.

The workers are receiving more and more support, including a donation of £20 from the Bookham Surrey factory the company want to send the work to. The men's union, the AUEW, has organised a local levy and miners from as far away as Northumberland have sent in money.

Maybe because they're thinking of their own pay claim and possible TUC membership, the police on duty with the pickets have been straining themselves to be friendly. The local press, on the other hand, has gone out of its way to be nasty. Wildt Mellor's convenor, Paul Anderson, points out that their managing director is a personal friend of the Leicester Mercury's editor.

The bosses began by claiming the closure was due to falling orders. The workers showed that there had been a growing order book throughout the 1970s for the firms specialised knitting machines. So now the company talks about "low productivity".

Paul Anderson suggests the real reasons behind the attempted closure. His was the first Leicester factory to set up a closed shop. So wages are higher than Wildt Mellor want to pay, and they can't push their workers around as they would like to.



"But what if the Smiths at No. 3 don't buy theirs? I don't fancy living next door to council tenants!"

Weighing it up, there is even less to support the myth of parasitism. The council house in which I live was built at a cost of £1,000 back in the early 1950s. After 20 years of being a council tenant I must have paid £2,800 in rent and maybe more. Unless the capitalist system is more extortionate than I think it is, that should have taken care of the interest, administration and maintenance charges. So for the next 20 years, most of what I pay in rent should go to generate more council housing. If I were conservative-minded I suppose I should be bitter and twisted about it and demand a reduction in rent. But I can't work up any excitement about it either way. It just seems to be normal to want other people to have the same decent housing that I have had.

New Statesman 17 September 1976

Left Students Organise

STUDENT MILITANCY is growing — over issues like the closure of teacher training colleges and discriminatory fees for overseas students. Now there has been a change in the National Union of Students (NUS). The new influence of the Federation of Conservative Students has received a lot of comment. But while some students are swinging to the right (or being more open about their Conservative views), others are moving to the left.

This has meant a challenge to the Broad Left's (Communist and Labour Party) control of the NUS.

The 'Socialist Students Alliance' (SSA) a broad grouping of socialist students has been formed to develop a militant, mass-based fighting alternative in the student movement. It is putting forward a slate of candidates for the NUS Executive election.

The SSA accuses the Broad Left of 'peddling illusions in progressive college authorities, a myth that was exploded by the intervention of 400 police at the London School of Economics'.

The Broad Left strategy is to wait on the actions of the Labour Party left wing, rather than creating a unified mass movement of students against the cuts in education.

The SSA hopes to become a broad-based group open to all left tendencies. One political group on its own cannot be the self-proclaimed alternative.

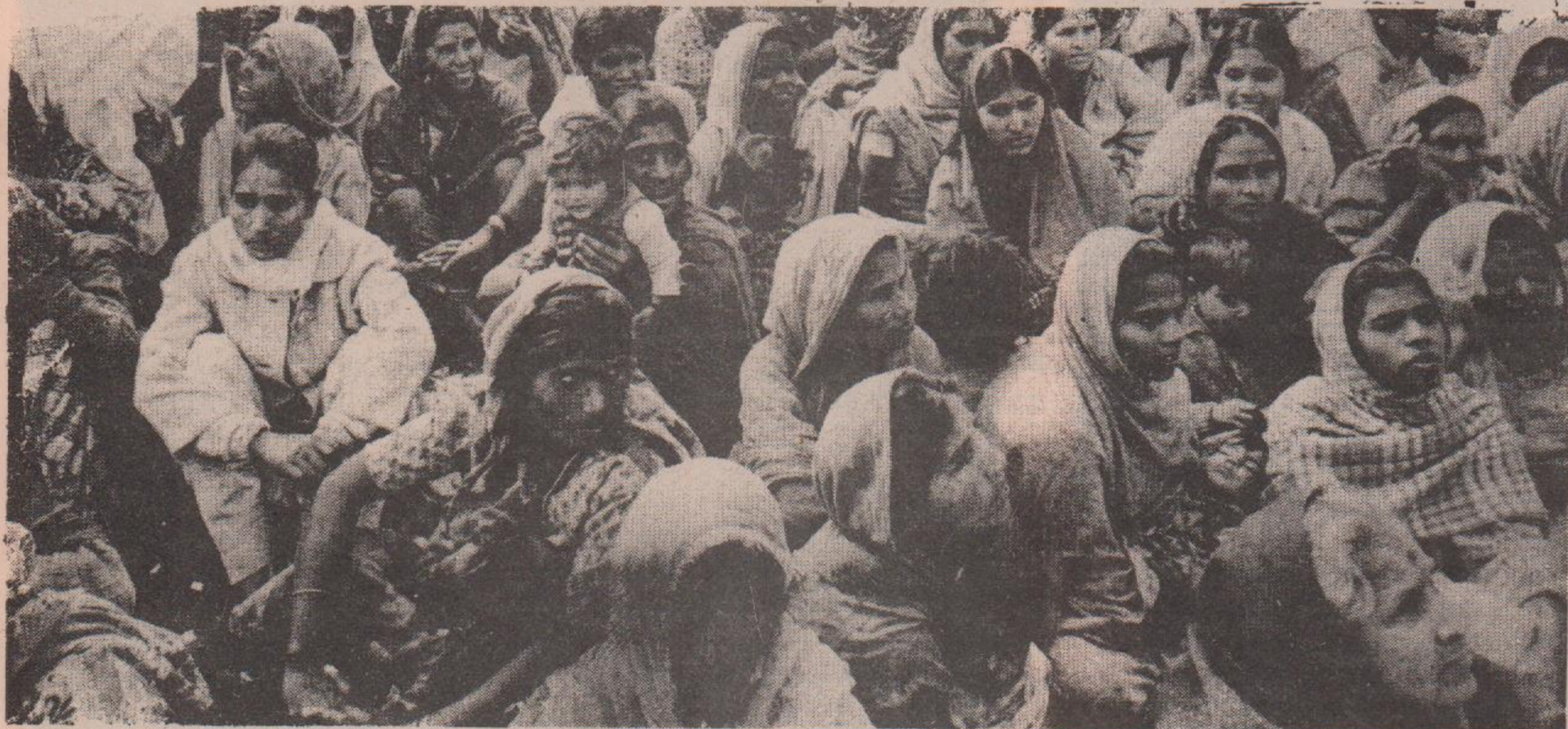
A National Conference of the SSA will be held in Birmingham on April 30th-May 1st.

Further details from Mick Archer and Andy Housley, Joint Secretaries SSA, Birmingham Polytechnic South Centre, Bristol Rd. South, Birmingham B31 2A

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



INDIA MASS DISCONTENT UNSEATS GANDHI



IN AN UPSURGE of mass discontent, Indhira Gandhi, India's Prime minister, and her Congress Party have been thrown out of office. Their defeat at the general election is a direct result of mass opposition to widespread repression.

The Congress Party claimed to be waging war on poverty. It claimed to be on the side of the people against the interests of big business and imperialism. But it has become obvious to the people that these were lies.

The State of Emergency declared in 1975 was an attempt to crush all opposition to the regime. The forcible sterilisation programmes,

STERILISATION

led by Gandhi's son Sanjay, have been attempts to solve the problem of poverty by getting rid of the poor.

Opposition to the Gandhi government goes back to 1972 when there was a naval mutiny. It culminated in the massive railway strike in 1974. In order to defeat the strike the government made indiscriminate attacks on strikers families. In the same year a movement against the government corruption began to spread. When in April 1975, Indhira Gandhi herself was found guilty of corruption, her response

But where next?

was to imprison her accusers and declare a State of Emergency.

LEGISLATION

With the State of Emergency the government tried to show its foreign creditors (which included both Russia and the USA) that it meant business. Strikes were made illegal and a whole series of incentives conjured up to attract capital. The whole thing was popular with big business. Their views are summed up in the words of this works director from Ashok Leyland, the Indian subsidiary of Leyland: "Yes we have an improvement in industrial relations since the Emergency. Now we can call the police in a second to take away the trouble makers."

"In a second" is no exaggeration because there's a police station on the premises.

In response to this repression there have been massive strikes in jute, tea, engineering and the mines, and massive opposition to the sterilisation programme. The fact that anti-Gandhi feeling was enough to sweep her out of office in the election is extremely significant.

Gandhi had carried out her repressive measures in the name of "socialism" - her party, the Congress Party, belongs to the "Socialist International" along with the British Labour Party. Although she was championed in this country by people like Michael Foot, the only support she received in India was from the pro-Moscow Communist Party, who saw in her the only chance of developing close links with Moscow.

The new government, headed by the right-winger Morarji Desai, is likely to be clearly pro-American. There is no doubt that Janata is dominated by right-wing forces and will quickly adopt anti-working class policies. However because of the tremendous wave of mass resistance

WAVE OF RESISTANCE

which threw out the ruling Congress Party after 30 years in power, the new government's main problem is likely to be how to contain the developing popular and democratic movement so that it does not begin to challenge the interests of big business.

FOR THE last four years, the workers of the LIP watch factory in Besancon, a garrison town in East France, have been a focal point of the class struggle. Their special contribution to the class struggle has been their ability to publicise and popularise their struggle - they have produced newspapers about their struggle, they have taken a film of their struggle around the country, they have had 'open door' days when they occupied the factory and they have sold LIP watches during a factory occupation. Central to the struggle at LIP have been the women workers. This extract, translated from a pamphlet called 'LIP - the women' is a LIP worker describing how she experienced the occupation.

"Fighting for a world where we will no longer be the outcasts. I am an unmarried mother - that is to say I have already had to fight hard to be tolerated by society. I brought my daughter up well in spite of other's hostility. I thought I was the only outcast.

The MLAC (the French NAC) was successful in forcing the government to legalise abortion in France. Last month, 6 members of the MLAC were on trial in Aix for carrying out abortions themselves. An enormous national mobilisation in the small town made sure that the judge would act carefully - they all got short, suspended sentences. Now the MLAC is regathering and taking up the wider issues of health and the class nature of medicine.

SHARP LEFT TURN IN FRENCH ELECTIONS

IN LAST month's local elections in France, there was a large swing to the Left which showed itself in three ways:

- * the increase in votes that the alliance between the Socialist and Communist parties got (they captured almost all large towns except Paris and Toulouse)
- * the large vote obtained by a united slate of the revolutionary left (5% on average, up to 13% in Orleans - town of Joan of Arc)
- * the even larger vote (8% on average) by ecology candidates who were against nuclear power, motorways and property speculation that is destroying the centres of most French cities.

MOVE LEFT

This move to the Left is very worrying for the ruling-classes of Europe because it reflects the failure of their strategy of making certain concessions to the native working-class whilst making 'marginal' sectors (immigrant workers, the unemployed, the young) pay for the crisis. Without doubt, this is a very powerful strategy but, in a time of crisis, the government does not have precise enough policies to make sure that it is only the 'marginals' who cop it.

GRASS ROOTS

The programme of the revolutionary left in the elections was

called 'for socialism - power to the workers'. Three revolutionary groups supported this programme. The idea behind the campaign was to get as candidates, unaligned militants who had been involved in the many grass-roots struggles over the last months. This was not often possible and too many of 'Power to the Workers' candidates were seen as 'party members'. Even so, the very large support the programme got in working class areas shows the large number of class vanguards who are looking for a revolutionary alternative to social democracy, which in France includes the Communist Party.

Both in Montbeliard which is the factory town where Peugeot cars are made, and in Venissieux, a working-class suburb of Lyon where Berliet truck workers live, the revolutionary slate got 10% and this figure was repeated in many working-class districts. Even with a similar degree of class militancy, there is no possibility of

CLASS STRUGGLE

repeating these figures in this country - because the French two ballot electoral system encourages voters to vote for 'fringe' candidates on the first round. But the success or failure of a revolutionary election campaign cannot be measured by the number of votes it gets - it must be measured in the amount of support and encouragement it does or does not give to the class struggle.



A mass meeting during the LIP occupation.

FRANCE

"One day I hope all this injustice will disappear"

A Woman's experience of an occupation

When we occupied the factory, I thought it was great - so many people came to encourage and support us. We were right to not accept being pushed around. And above all, people talking sympathetically to each other; that wasn't so bad - I hadn't come across it much before. They weren't just being nicer to me, but I was so happy!

And all my friends from LIP that I could have known, since I have been working there 20 years but didn't know them before! A polite hello and goodbye, and that was all. And now we were talking together and telling each other about our families. And when I came on guard at night, I felt I was defending my happiness. As for me, I was no longer alone; I had a whole crowd of friends.

When the police attacked us, I tell you I cried myself sick, and I don't think I was the only one. As far as I could see, we hadn't hurt anyone and to see that mob beating up all those great people, I just boiled up in a rage; I think if I'd been able to lay my hands on anything more than rocks, I wouldn't have been able to control

At last, I felt alive, I got myself together. Before I kept myself to myself, I accepted all the nasty things people could do to me, without fighting back.

And now I went to meetings leaving my daughter to get on with it and look after herself. She really understood our struggle.

'I MUST BE DREAMING'

How many times had I asked myself 'It's not possible, I must be dreaming; it can't be me who's saying and doing all these things?'

I know that for me, nothing can be as it used to be. Now I know that if you want something good in this life, you have to fight for it, and most important, you mustn't hide on your own in a corner. You have to go out and find friends, argue with them not to be selfish, help all those who are fighting; workers, peasants, immigrants. And most important, side with all those who suffer. Because our opponents aren't alone; they have power.

One day, I hope all this injustice



Italy: Will the Government Survive the Student Onslaught?

IN THE last 2 months, a wave of struggles has swept through Italian universities and high schools. A new student movement has grown to levels comparable to those of 1968-69. The student's target has been the government and its economic policies - the Italian social contract. Their fight has been directed against the policies of sacrifice and belt tightening that the capitalist class wants to impose on the working class: against inflation, unemployment and underemployment. Alrea-

dy their struggle has shaken to its foundations the main pillar of political stability - the Historic Compromise. This is a tacit alliance between the Communist Party (PCI) and the ruling Christian Democrats. In return for guaranteeing social peace and getting working class agreement for the social contract, the PCI is given a major say in running the country, even if it is not in the government. The government has answered the school and university occupations

with mass repression, often encouraged or supported by the PCI. But the movement hasn't stopped. And now, like in '69, it's developing links with the working class. Here we reprint extracts from a series of letters which we received from Italy. The events described happened in Bologna, a city controlled by the PCI since the war. That's probably why one of the letters began: 'Today we've seen the burial of the historic compromise'.

They killed our comrade

BOLOGNA, 17 March

Dear Comrades,
Last Friday in the morning they killed comrade Francesco. A few comrades were running away from the riot police, after clashing with some Christian Democrat youth. The police shot about 20 times. Francesco was shot dead.
I got a phone call from a comrade when I got back from work at around 2pm. She told me that a comrade had been killed and that I should go to the city centre. When I got to the part of the city where there are all the university buildings, I saw the first barricades. Many comrades were there; white-faced, tears in their eyes. Total silence. You could hear only the noise of the cobbles being dug out and the bottles being prepared. Someone told me who the dead comrade was. I knew him, like all of us. I felt sick.
The demo started - it tried to get to the headquarters of the Christian Democratic party. But the riot police charged. There was a general scattering in all directions. All sorts of objects were flying in different directions. Some comrades were trying to calm down others.

SATURDAY

General strike with demonstration called by the unions. The PCI behaves in the most disgusting way. Very heavy stewarding, no comrade of Francesco, no student is allowed to speak from the platform. In the main square people discuss what has been going on. Many of the rank and file of the PCI criticise us for smashing the shop windows, but they also criticise the behaviour of the Communist Party.

SUNDAY

Lots of us spend the day in a working class district. We hold a huge open air meeting, just outside a local PCI social centre. The whole university area is full of police with armoured cars and even some army tanks. A friend of mine, who lives in the university area, hasn't been able to get out of her flat since Saturday after-

noon. Her mother and grandmother try to get to her flat to give her some cigarettes, but the police don't allow them in.

MONDAY

All demonstrations, public assemblies and gatherings are banned for the day of Francesco's funeral. They only allow a short march from the football ground to the cemetery - 500 yards through the suburbs. 10,000 of us are there at the funeral. We march in silence. We just whistle the Internationale and another revolutionary tune softly. At the graveside we are crying a lot. At the end we read out the list of all the comrades killed by the police in recent years in Italy. We decide to gather in a working class district in the afternoon.

From now on we can feel the strength of the movement. We don't respond to any provocation. The police are everywhere. They control our movements with helicopters. Several thousand of us gather in the afternoon to organise the propaganda work in the factories and communities - the necessary counter-information.

The police arrive and try to disperse us. We move and scatter before they charge. All of us know our tasks. We all go to the factories and communities. We will all gather at 6 o'clock in another working class district.

It is immediately clear that there is a big split between the rank and file workers and the union and PCI bureaucrats. The majority of the workers want to talk, to find out. Many keep on criticising us for the shop windows and in some places it's hard to get beyond this point of discussion.

TUESDAY

The city is still in a state of siege. 200 comrades have been arrested altogether. One who is now in jail in Mantua was arrested merely because she had two lemons in her pocket, and everybody knows that you use lemons *only* to protect yourself against teargas. All the radio stations are now closed.

It is clear that ours hasn't been a total victory yet. The movement is still isolated to a certain extent. But we've shown strength and maturity, and our political work in the past 2 days has gone really well. It is important to continue like that.



Bologna • State of Siege

"WHY IS it always the working-class people who get killed? This is a question many people ask about Ireland and it was once asked on TV, by a relative of one of the nine soldiers killed by the M62 coach bomb.

The best explanation is because we are the biggest class in society and we always get used as cannon-fodder in the wars caused by our rulers. We end up in the front line in one army or another while the real war-mongers stay in the background saying what a terrible thing it is.

Take the war in Ireland. Over 1,500 people have died, enormous damage has been caused. Yet the owners of the major companies making up the Northern Irish economy, like Courtaulds, Goodyear, Gallaghers Tobacco, Harland and Wolff and Dupont Chemicals, continue to reap massive profits almost as if the war wasn't happening. Not only that, but the vast bulk of the wealth created by the workers in those companies leaves Ireland altogether.

Nearly 80% of the biggest Northern Irish firms aren't even owned and controlled from Northern Ireland itself.

When we wonder how the Irish people ever allowed their own economy to be taken out of Irish hands we begin to discover the real reasons for the violence.

For hundreds of years the British state has kept the Irish divided, fighting among themselves to stop them fighting their real enemy. Jobs in the biggest firms always went to Protestant workers, and Catholics were kept out. *This is still going on today.* Look at the percentage of Catholics employed in high wage industries like ship-building and Aerospace compared to the numbers in badly paid or unpleasant industries like building or clothing and footwear.

INDUSTRY	NO. EMPLOYED	% CATHOLICS
Shipbuilding	9,654	4.8
Electrical Engineering	13,796	12
Aerospace	8,371	9.8
Building	58,058	37
Clothing & Footwear	25,289	40

On top of this, unemployment and bad housing, bad enough in the whole of Northern Ireland, is much worse in Catholic communities.

In this situation the Protestant workers have become pretty determined never to be a badly-off as the Catholics. In fact, when Catholics started to demand equality a few years ago they found their communities being attacked by mobs of Protestant workers, stirred up by the Orange Lodges, and led by the Protestant police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That's how the war started and it's still going on.

The only difference is that British troops were sent in to make sure that the rotten and corrupt system wasn't overthrown by the Catholics.

THE GUILTY MEN

In the last few months the Irish Republican Army has started a campaign against businessmen. They know that the reason their country remains occupied and controlled by Britain is the power of the businessmen who make so much money out of the system. Their first victim was Jeffrey Agate, an American executive at the huge Dupont plant near Derry. The TV and papers said what a wonderful man he was, how he had given so much to Northern Ireland etc. etc.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Agate, and men like him, were involved in exporting millions of pounds in profits out of the country, away from the workers who created it.

We are not saying that the answer lies in just shooting the corrupt men at the top. Far from it. They will always be replaced unless the mass of people destroy the system that creates men who exploit others.

But we understand why the IRA is taking revenge on the men who have exploited them for years. A lot of people who have died in Ireland in the last few years were completely innocent. These businessmen weren't.

IRELAND: The Price the Bosses Pay

Dear Editors,

The Prices Secretary, Roy Hattersley said recently, "I believe the Labour Party in particular has to become more and more concerned about what profits are used for, and less and less concerned with how high they are."

"So the company that wants to put down new machinery to make more and better products is going to get a very warm welcome from me."

The leeches in the Stock Exchange must have been cheering their heads off and singing 'Rule Britannia' in between making calls to their bank manager in Geneva.

Some gullible working class people may also have been thinking there was something in it - a reduction in unemployment perhaps.

Until the Prices Secretary was asked would more output and bigger profits mean lower prices and a better deal for the working class, that is. His reply was "It is a question of world economic forces." (Shades of Edward Heath) He has no control over prices, and coal and steel prices are set by the Common Market. There are no import controls on raw materials or manufactured goods.

The conclusion I draw from this is that if we the working class do not challenge this so-called 'socialist' government in the coming months and get rid of the social contract then we condemn our children to another generation of misery and total servitude to the capitalist system.

Ford Shop Steward,
Halewood.

Dear Big Flame,

I am writing on behalf of the Time Liberation Front against the new digital watches. Since these new watches started being worn, it is now impossible to lean over casually on a bus or train and



find out the time from your neighbour's wrist without being drawn into a long conversation about how marvellous the watch is, and getting a complete guided tour of all the tricks it can perform.

Also, if you are a bit slow like me, before you have had a chance to work out the time, the numbers have changed and the watch is telling you when to expect the next eclipse of the moon, or what is the present Olympic record for the 1,500 metres.

They say these watches last forever which is suspicious. Why didn't the bosses design them like light bulbs which, after years of research, were deliberately made to have a limited life? Is there a plot behind this? Maybe now we can no longer afford to have a TV set they expect us to sit for hours staring at our digital watches which will then continually flash on the latest wage limits we can expect for the year.

Yours Fraternally,
T. Tompion.

P.S. Have you ever had to deal with one that went wrong?

Dear Big Flame,

Three weeks before Christmas I was offered a job pricing invoices at Baddeley Cash and Carry, Leeds.

I soon realised that there were

things I didn't like - employing O.A.P.s who seemed to have an 'arrangement' about their pay which I suspect involved tax evasion, pressuring people to work Saturday mornings for a bare rate, rapid turnover of staff and no sign of a union. The thing that most irritated me was the way one old man used to go on about 'welfare scroungers'. I told them just how little I got as a widow for my two sons and how I'd paid the state twice as much as I ever got in return.

This conversation was reported to John Pinder, the managing director's son, and I suppose I was defined as a troublemaker because I was soon accused of doing nothing. This was unfair because there was nothing to do, I had dealt with all the outstanding invoices. I told Pinder that if he didn't think I was doing my job properly I might as well leave. He replied, 'you do as you like'. After that nothing more was said.

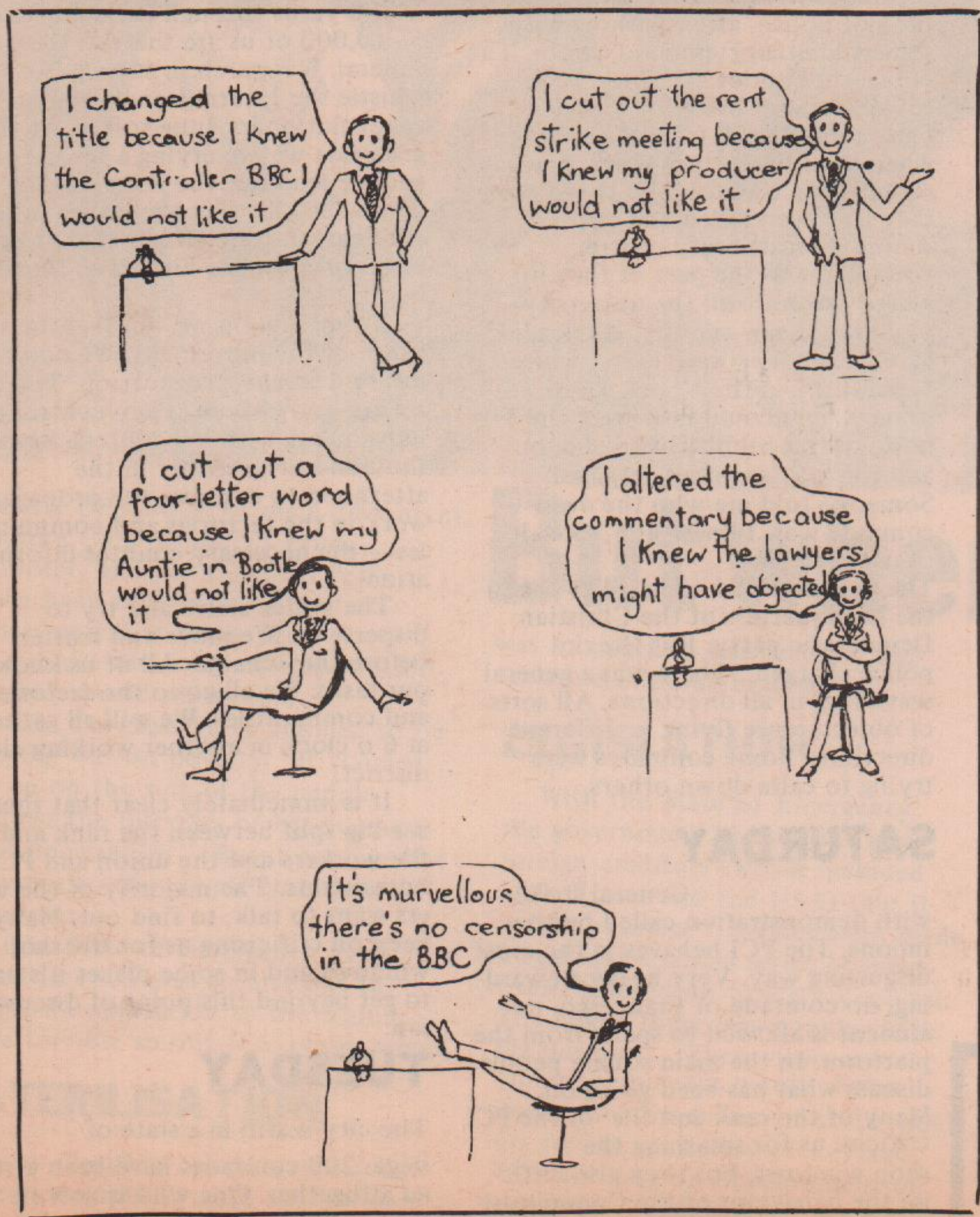
A week later I had to stay off work with bronchitis and I sent my son up to the wages clerk at Baddeley's with a sick note. (Not, of course, that I was entitled to sick pay). When he returned he said he'd been told 'as far as we're concerned your mother left last Friday'. I'd been given no notice, no verbal or written explanation, no P 45.

Then I found out I couldn't sue for unfair dismissal because I hadn't been working 26 weeks. It's taken months to get my proper benefit from the Dept. of Employment. In the meantime I'm £40 out of pocket and I'm worried that my so-called 'dismissal' will prejudice my chance of another job.

A company can do what they like, they walk all over you. If you don't suit them they get rid of you and then by saying you were dismissed they stop you from getting benefit. While a tiny handful of people have power over the rest of us these injustices will continue.

Mrs. N. Stewart, Leeds.
P.S. I liked your article 'The Bosses are the Scroungers'. That's why I wrote.

TIME OFF



BAD NEWS: 'AUNTY' IS SLEEPING WITH BIG BROTHER

THE FACTS ABOUT TV AND RADIO

RADIO AND television have always been used by Capitalism as weapons against the working class; after the 1926 General Strike, the BBC's Lord Reith admitted that "since the BBC was a national institution, and since the government in this crisis was acting for the people, the BBC was for the government in the crisis."

BAD NEWS

And yet a BBC survey in 1962 showed that 68% of the population interviewed believed that television news was the most trustworthy news medium, whereas only 6% were fooled by the newspapers. Since 58% of us rely on television as our main source of news, what are we getting for our licence fees? Facts or propaganda? A book called 'Bad News' by the Glasgow University Media Group did a blow-by-blow analysis of BBC and ITN news throughout the first three months of 1975, and goes some way to making the picture clearer.

TV news bulletins are basically a sequence of unconnected stories. 48% of people questioned immediately after viewing could recall nothing of the content. The programmes never raise basic questions about the society we live in; they merely try to explain it away. Complex economic problems are dealt with in an average of 50 seconds per item, and in the same trivial way as everything else. Foreign and domestic events are rigidly separated, thus hiding the international nature of both capitalism and working class struggle even when the same multinational company is involved, as with British Leyland workers here and in Italy (Innocenti is a subsidiary of British Leyland). Overall, TV news hinders rather than helps us understand the world. Two and two don't go together at the BBC or the ITV.

The newsmen interpret the world for us, deciding who are the 'goodies' and the 'Baddies', and working class

people in struggle almost always come over as 'baddies'. Take this: "they are having a bad time with things in Scotland this morning" (ITN's 'First Report', 13 January 1975). The 'bad' news was that the Glasgow ambulancemen and dustcart drivers had the 'Nerve' to strike for parity with other HGV drivers.

NEWS AT TEN

Never fear, though: the next week on ITN's 'News at Ten', it's "Good evening. For the first time in many months we have some good news - in the city, the value of shares went up by about two thousand million pounds when the financial index jumped by 19.9 points to close this evening at 217" (Immediate cheers were heard from every council estate in the land!)

Workers views hardly ever get across: in the whole of the Glasgow Dustcart drivers' strike, which lasted for three months, not one of the strikers was interviewed on the national news. Instead, we got the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Lord Provost of Glasgow and a succession of MPs, army officers and tame trade union leaders. In the first 12 weeks of 'International Women's Year' only 65 out of the 843 named people interviewed on the news were women.

Even when we are allowed our say, the questions are always biased, like "But is it not true that a large number of your members want to return to work?" Management, though, get asked "How much is the strike disrupting production?"

The Media Group say in their book "We have found only one clear instance where a person demanding a wage rise was interrupted sympathetically. The person was Eric Moonman, speaking for MPs. 'How much do you want?' asked Leonard Parkin. Moonman hastily replied that they hadn't had a rise for ages and that £1,000 was a minimum. He was

going on to justify this when Parkin broke in with 'I would have thought that was very reasonable in fact.' (ITN 13.00, 7th March 1975).

Whenever the news reports what workers have to say, you can bet they won't make it sound very convincing. Have you ever noticed how workers always 'claim that' whereas bosses 'explain that'?

Altogether, TV news upholds the Capitalist view of the world - class struggle is always 'angled' to look like something else, even at its 'most intense': coverage of the Portuguese revolution concentrated not on the achievements of the workers, but on the threat of nationalisation of UK interests in the Portuguese wine industry. Any mention of the cause of a struggle is rare: it is usually assumed to be money, thus backstaging the anti-capitalist content of any dispute. The impression always given is that conflict is the result not of the contradictions of Capitalism, but of particular industries being 'strike-prone' due to a small minority of troublemakers'. As the Assistant General Secretary of NUPE said, the hospitals pay beds dispute was portrayed as 'a lot of hospital porters, led by Bolshie agitators who think they can tell important people like consultants what to do'.

SHEEP?

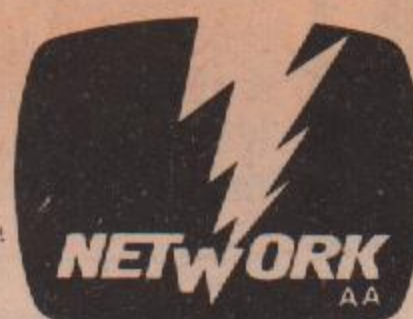
The most insulting aspect of the capitalists' eye view on the world they call TV news is the constant portrayal of working class people as a load of sheep who need 'good' leaders like Jack Jones to tell us what is best, or else the 'bad' left wing leaders will lead us astray. Jack Jones in fact appeared on the TV news no less than 15 times in the first three months of 1975, doing his commercials for the Social Contract.

Next time you switch on the television news, make sure you've got a full salt cellar handy.

FILMS

"A licence to print money"

A Review of....



"I'M MAD AS HELL AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANY MORE!"

60 million people from coast to coast open their windows and shout into the night air of America.

They are responding to the call of Howard Beale, the TV prophet. Played by Peter Finch, he threatens to commit suicide during a newscast. As the ratings soar, he is kept on to help win the war of the advertising revenues.

The main theme of 'NETWORK' is the power of TV to manipulate and make money. During his shows, Beale rages against this, showing the way the media is so expert at using 'tame' radicalism.

When he oversteps the mark, the boss calls him in for a lecture on the realities of corporate power. There are no more nations or ideologies he says. The world is ruled by the multinationals. An easy argument to

accept at face value, but wrong when we see the way the people who run American multinationals are part of one class who use the nation state to maintain their power.

In America a TV corporation like NBC made record profits last year of 57½ million dollars. And in case we think that the film does not apply to Britain, the founder of ITV, Sidney Bernstein, said "Commercial TV was a license to print money."

The TV audiences in the film are assumed to be completely at the mercy of its gimmicks. If this is true in real life, then socialists might as well give up. And the Left are portrayed either as gun-toting clowns, or mouthing revolutionary cliches while making sure that they get their full percentage on a TV contract.

The merit of 'Network' is to at least raise certain questions - it cannot answer them, but that's not surprising.

The EGA Stays OK!

THE NEWSREEL COLLECTIVE

The Newsreel Collective have just finished their latest film called "EGA Stays OK." This film was made with the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital workers and documents their fight to keep their hospital open. It shows when threatened with closure how they occupied the hospital maintaining all services to patients, mobilising external support from workers in the area to picket the hospital to stop patients and equipment from being forcibly removed.

Workers outside the Health Service and stewards and workers from other hospitals explain why

it is essential to unite and fight to save the EGA and draw out valuable lessons for Hospital workers everywhere fighting the government's cuts in the NHS.

The film is being shown regularly to mass meetings in hospitals throughout London. If you are organising a campaign inside or outside a Hospital, this film is a valuable asset for any meeting. Telephone 01.794.2825 to book. This film is being shown on BBC2 at 10.50pm On Monday 18th April, so if you want to preview it before booking it, that's your chance. The film is 27 minutes long, 16mm and in colour.

WHO RUNS THE TV COMPANIES?

ATV



Managing Director: Lord Grade. Also director of Berman (Holdings) Ltd, Bentray Investments Ltd., Ambassador Bowling Ltd, Pye Records Ltd., Planned Holdings Ltd. etc.

GRANADA



Director: Lord Bernstein. Also Chairman of Granada Theatres, Granada TV rental, Granada Properties, Granada Motorway Services Ltd.

THAMES



Chairman: Lord Shawcross P.C., Q.C. Also Chairman of Dominion Lincoln Assurance Co. Ltd. and Director of Shell, E.M.I., Rank Hovis McDougall, Times Newspapers, Hawker Siddley Group, BSA, European Entreprises Development Co. of South Africa etc.

HTV



Chairman: Lord Harlech P.C., KCMG. Ex-Eton and Oxford University. Conservative MP 1950-61. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs 1957-61.

ANGLIA



Chairman: The Marquess of Townsend. Also director of Norwich Union Life Insurance Co. Ltd., London Merchant Securities, East Coast Grain Silos Ltd. etc.

SCOTTISH STV

Chairman: James Coltart also chairman of Highland printers Ltd., Deputy Chairman of Thompson Organisation Ltd., Director of Thompson Printers Ltd., Welsh Dragon Securities Ltd.

GRAMPIAN



Chairman: Capt. Ian M. Tennant J.P. Ex-Eton and Cambridge University. Ex-Chairman Board of Governors of Gordonstoun School. Director of Clydesdale Bank, Chairman of Glenlivet Distillers Ltd. Crown Estate Commissioner.

SOUTHERN



Chairman: Sir John Davis, also chairman of Rank Organisation Ltd and director of Eagle Star Insurance Co Ltd., and Xerox Corporation.

TYNE TEES



Senior Director: Viscount Ridley T.D. D.L. Ex-Eton and Oxford University. Bt.-Col. Northumberland Hussars. Also Director of Northern Rock Building Society and Barclays Bank (NE) Ltd. Another previous director: T. Dan Smith

WESTWARD



Chairman: Peter Cadbury BA., MA., Chairman of Alfred Hays Ltd, TTM Holdings Ltd, Keith Prowse and Co. Ltd., Director of Willett Investments Ltd.

[Taken from 'TV Handbook'. Copies available from BF, 217 Wavertree Rd. Liverpool 7 for 20 p including postage.]

Lily Allen, the woman who led it all, has thrown in her steward's credentials and now the workers at Plessey Kirkby wait for the end. The vote to end the occupation wasn't that close, but it did show that there were about 80 workers in the factory who thought it was still worth having a go. But after the ending of the staff occupations at two other Plessey factories on Merseyside, Edge Lane and Speke, the Kirkby workers knew they were alone. There was also the constant threat that the work-in would be brought to an end once supplies from Edge Lane were cut off.

Bosses Free Hand

FREE HAND FOR BOSSES
On the other hand, as one woman worker put it just after the vote to allow the bosses back, "May as well not go back in there. They'll be shifting the lot out now". The vote in effect gives a free hand to the bosses to dismantle the plant, but also to impose their own redundancy terms.

Staff workers at the Lane have discovered something similar since they ended their sit-in. Once back in control, the bosses have shown no quarter. They threaten instant redundancies if the staff don't agree to their terms. They try to avoid paying workers for the period of the shut-out. And they try to block the flow of supplies to Kirkby.

It's not all bad news though. The staff sit-in compelled the manual workers stewards to take a firmer line on the redundancy issue. If the occupation had gone on longer at Edge Lane, the manual workers might have been drawn into fuller support.

That's a possibility that can't be ruled out for the future. After all, the Plessey workers have had to overcome years of disunity and pessimism and all this at a time when it's not easy to believe that redundancies can be fought successfully.

On Merseyside, the next few months are likely to see several battles over jobs: at Tate and Lyle, Lucas Aerospace, at Meccano and at GEC. Maybe one of these will provide the spark for the Plessey workers.



Why they gave up the fight

Lack of UNITY

"EVERYONE in their little mind thinks: 'It won't happen to me'," says one of the women who work in the Edge Lane Plessey factory in Liverpool. We asked her what it has been like during the lock-out of the management.

"The first day, a couple of the management got in and announced that all staff and hourly paid were clocked off. After this a lot of people

were not too keen on the lock-out, but they still continued to come in in case they got paid. Work was normal. Only stewards went to meetings. Our steward, Pat, used to tell us the position.

The problem is the lack of unity. "No-one wants to know unless it concerns them. The cable-makers have been on strike for a couple of weeks but no-one will support them because their work doesn't affect any-one.

"One minute people are saying: 'we know we are going to go', the next minute they're saying 'we're all right for five years'.

SHOCK IN STORE FOR SHOPKEEPERS

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION of the Self Employed, not normally a very dramatic body, hit the headlines recently in Bebington, Wirral

Hardly had a recent meeting begun, when a member of the audience stood up to point out that the Chairman, John Fishwick, is also secretary of the National Front. This caused a stir because Fishwick had only just pointed out that the Federation was "open to people of all races and creeds." It seems hardly likely that a member of the anti-black, anti-Jewish National Front would encourage an Indian shop-keeper to join the Federation.

This must have been running through the mind of Dr Stuart Lindsay, another of the platform speakers. Lindsay combines his position as a local Tory candidate with support for the anti-apartheid movement. The revelation about Fishwick evidently came as an embarrassing surprise to Lindsay—or a bolt from the blue, as he put it. Ten people walked out of the meeting in disgust, but Lindsay stayed put. He says he's going to raise Fishwick's position with the Federation's executive. "This man's activities", another Federation official later told the press, "are inimical to our interests!"

Fishwick, who claims to be completely neutral as chairman, says he was staggered "to hear the conservative speaker be sympathetic to those Communists present." This is a reference to the socialists who exposed Fishwick's fascist views. Together with other local anti-fascists they have for some time been tracing the links between the fascist organisations and the National Federation of the Self-Employed.



Kirkby, Plessey factory occupied

Big Flame Photo

DETERMINATION WINS AT MASSEY FERGUSONS

MASSEY FERGUSON STEWARD TELLS WHAT HAPPENED

DESPITE THE gloom of the pay freeze, cuts in services, price rises, a determined fight can still win.

Workers at the Massey Ferguson tractor factory in Coventry were on strike, harassed the management, occupied and picketed the plant for 11 weeks. And at the end. THEY WON ALL THEIR DEMANDS!

At issue was productivity — the manning levels to be established while jobs were being timed for piecework.

Choosing their time well, immediately before Christmas, the company set out to provoke a strike which would split the workforce. How should the men respond?

To allow a strike now or to try to delay things till a better time? But the company have played high cards, we will just have to trump them.

The assembly shop seized the initiative and within a few days the factory was more or less stopped. The problem that the stewards had was to keep the strike going for several weeks, and to ensure all the time that the strikers held the initiative.

The company's response to this was to try and regain the initiative. This they tried to do by getting a High Court writ to stop the occupation of the factory.

It was decided to end the occupation but continue the strike. Blanking of the movement of tractors off the docks was stepped up. Fund raising was increased and a campaign was begun to make the strike official.

Strong Organisation

Without a militant lobby of the AUEW Executive, the strike would not have been made official. In fact, we had been told that the strike was not even on the agenda of the meeting.

Although making the strike official gave the officials of the union some influence over the running of the strike, it was good for the morale of the men. It meant that all the people who were still working inside the factory — maintenance people etc. — had to refuse to cross the picket lines.

From then on it really was a case of who was going to last out the longest.

The strength of the organisation of the assembly shop was shown by two examples. One a small one.

In the second week of the occupation, one of the older assembly line workers, who was off sick, turned up the factory with a sick note from a doctor, which allowed him to do nothing so long as it wasn't outside cold.

A much more important example was the vote at the mass meeting for the full-time officials recommending a return to work, with the implicit threat that if there wasn't, the strike might not be official any more. The vote was 1,000 to 20 against their recommendation.

The cave-in of the management came out of the blue.

They conceded on the principle that they were not allowed to

suspend people during the negotiation of piecework prices without going through a full procedure.

They agreed to repay all the holiday pay lost at Christmas and that there was no commitment by the men in the cab shop area to any fixed number of tractors, say 48 a day.

And they also agreed, under protest, that there should not be a phased return to work, but that everybody should go back together to avoid any splits.

The final mass meeting was fantastic, with standing ovations for the strike committee and shouting and cheering all the way through.

The lessons to be learned from this success story are clear. Always keep the initiative

"In the middle of the strike things were getting a bit dull, so a couple of dozen lads would turn up at the factory one morning, shut all the gates, turn all the cars away, and create absolute traffic chaos — everyone going completely berserk, with the road jammed up for a mile. And then they would just vanish.

The next morning they sent someone down to see what was happening — there were loads of police, expecting the same thing to happen. But it didn't. The word got around. One up to us!"

And maximum involvement of everyone in the day to day running of the strike.

Mass Meetings

"The organisation of the strike was very democratic. Mass meetings and bulletins at least every two weeks, including some to the wives. We had a well-organised social security claims committee. Not a single person was evicted or had any fuel cut off during the 11 weeks of the dispute.

The mass meetings themselves were very democratic. Anybody from the floor could use the microphone, and only a small proportion of time was taken up by the platform speakers.

A special strike executive committee was elected, and for the duration of the strike a number of non-stewards were co-opted onto the stewards committee from amongst the most active of the pickets.

A well-organised strike with a clear goal can win!



"There were loads of police at the gates"

John Sturrock: Report

BIG FLAME

KNOWSLEY : Vendetta Against Direct Works



Elm St. Direct Works depot vandalised by Knowsley Council

Big Flame Photo

"LET THEM ROT". That seems to be the attitude of Knowsley council on Merseyside to the thousands of houses in its area which lie empty or are in desperate need of repair and modernisation.

A proper programme of repair would need scores more Direct workers, a much better supply of materials to do the job and a large number of Direct Works depots scattered throughout the borough.

But look what the council are doing. Recently they built two temporary huts in Elm St., Huyton, to act as a depot. The huts cost £4,000 and thousands more was spent on laying on water, electricity and sanitation, laying concrete and erecting fences. Today, less than a year later, the huts have been demolished. A pile of rubble!

But what about the best depot in the borough, 3 miles away in Whiston. It has a good canteen and a very good machine shop. The council is thinking of closing it - along with another depot at Ingoe Lane, Kirkby!

ALADDIN'S CAVE?

So is there no money for the Direct Works? Far from it. The council recently bought a former bakery, owned by Sayers, in Link Rd, Huyton, to act as a major new Direct Works depot. It cost £300,000.

SCANDAL

Many long-suffering Direct Works workers suspect that the councillors bought the huge bakery so that they would know where everything is. A recent scandal in the borough revealed that the people's 'representatives' hadn't a clue how their own Direct Works Department functions.

PRESS CAMPAIGN

It happened like this. Police, chasing a stolen car, discovered a lock-up garage full of Direct Works tools and equipment. "An Alladin's Cave" screamed the local press, leading a campaign of attack on council workers, hinting at theft on a large scale.

Local councillors joined in. After all, they were busy making as many Direct workers redundant as possible. And planning to cut the bonuses of

those left so there would be less incentive to carry out repairs. A nice scandal - making council workers look bad, would be very useful.

But they should have done their homework. Because it was the agreed policy of the Direct Works Dept. to use council garages as local stores. The property had never been stolen in the first place!

TWO PRONGED ATTACK

Knowsley council, dominated by Labour right-wingers, needs to be taught a lesson. For too long they have run down the Direct Works department so that repairs and modernisation schemes can be farmed out to private contractors to make a profit. Their attempt to cut the bonuses of the remaining council workers is the last straw. As you read this, the council workers will be fighting tooth and nail to defend their jobs and the very existence of a repair and remodernisation service.

The local tenants themselves can act as a second prong of attack. By demanding that MORE Direct Workers be employed, and by demanding that there should be no more closures of local Direct Works departments.

DIRECT WORKS - Or Builders Profits ?



Bruton Road, Huyton.

Big Flame Photo

ONE OF the key conditions that Steel, the leader of the Liberal Party, put on a Lib-Lab deal was that the Labour Government would shelve its plans to allow Direct Labour building organisations (DLOs) to tender for contracts outside their own area. And it is in no way surprising that this demand came from the Liberal Party which has traditionally been the party of estate agents and small building contractors.

WHY THE ATTACK ON DIRECT LABOUR?

In the present recession there is a squeeze on orders in the construction industry and all contractors are desperate for whatever trade there is going. In this situation the extension or maintenance of direct labour is a threat to the private builders who are not as cheap or efficient.

All over the country there is a political campaign against Direct Labour which needs to be answered by a national rank and file campaign.

MANCHESTER

In Manchester, Direct Works workers held a mass meeting at which a Direct Works Action Committee was set up, whose job is to put across the case for Direct Works. There can be no doubt that DLOs are an important working class acquisition. They are one step on the way to the complete nationalisation of the building industry, which is the only way to end what has traditionally been a casual labour force.

TORY LIES

The Tories are putting it about that DLOs are costly and inefficient. The facts, taking Manchester as an example, show just the opposite.

● **New construction:** Manchester's Direct Works have produced 1.33 dwellings per worker per year over the past five years, a productivity record a third higher than the private industry which produces one dwelling per worker per year.

● Out of the 5,000 workers, over 10% (650) were apprentices (this has been increased to take unemployed school leavers). This number is greater than the combined total of all private builders in Manchester.

● **Maintenance of buildings:** Private contractors cost 40% more than Direct Works.

● Between 4% and 5% of its workforce are registered disabled (leading to high or costs). In the building trade generally, less than 1% are disabled.

● Paid £1.3 million more on benefits to its 5,000 workers (eg. Superannuation, Sick Pay, Long Service Bonus) than any similar size of building contractor.

● Accident rates in the Direct Works Department are half the rate in the building industry as a whole.

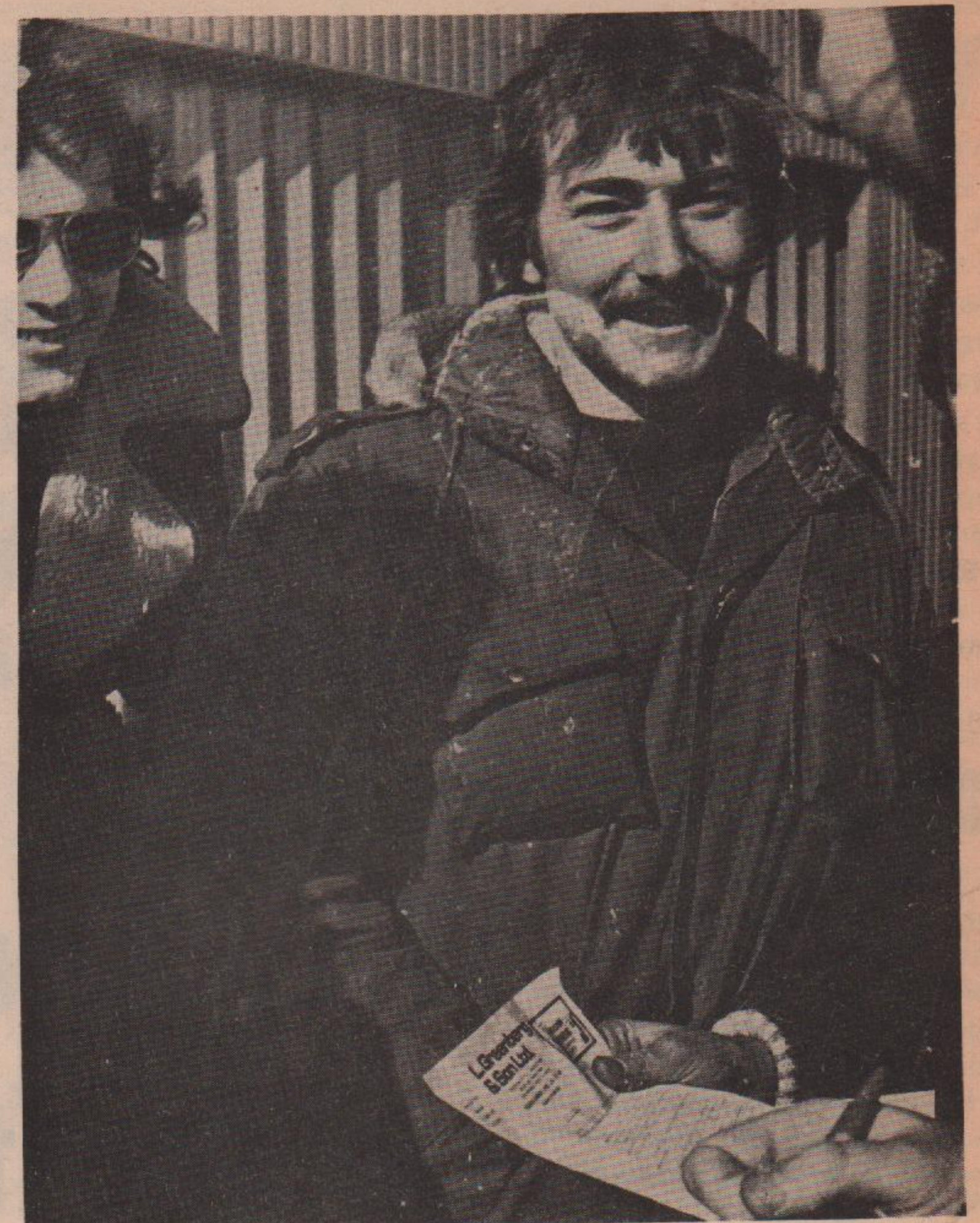
[From 'Community Action' No. 29]

ACTION COMMITTEE

One of the tasks of the newly-formed Action Committee is to liaise with tenants and ratepayers to get their support. The Action Committee plans to leaflet council estates and address meetings of tenants' groups. There is a very clear community of interests since less DLO workers mean less council housing built and fewer repairs carried out.

The mass meeting attended by 600 DLO workers shows the fight that is there - what is needed now is a campaign that pulls no punches.

No redundancies, voluntary or otherwise. No sale of job. No subbies. No natural wastage. Mass meetings on sites. Direct action to save Direct Labour. A rank and conference to co-ordinate a national fight-back campaign.



Picket line of Greenbergs

Big Flame Photo

GLASSWORKERS in two Merseyside factories struck recently against management attempts to break their organisation. At Greenbergs, Old Swan, 4 men were sacked for allegedly being a few minutes late back from lunch. And at City Glass, Huyton, 7 men were made redundant even though the present workforce is overstretched to meet orders. At both plants workers struck at once and picketed around the clock. Though the two firms are not connected they both make toughened glass for windscreens and double glazing, and workers are members of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades. (FTAT)

It seems that management in both cases have been following a policy of petty harassment and provocation. Like many small family firms the bosses still haven't reconciled themselves to the existence of trade unions.

But already, Greenbergs have backed down and re-instated the victimised men. But as we go to press the City Glass strike is going into its 6th week with continuous picketing.

WOULD YOU PUT UP WITH THIS ?

Asks

Margaret Friel Of Bruton Rd., Huyton



BIG FLAME PHOTO

Next month will be our 50th issue. We urgently need money. In the last year since it started our fighting fund has raised £330. This is a lot of money and we are very grateful to all those who contributed to it.

PLEASE REMEMBER US DURING THE COMING YEAR. THE RULING CLASS IS HAVING A JUBILEE - SO MUST WE

Feb-March contributions: £34.30 - Susan Clayton £3; Manchester B.F. £10; Liverpool supporter £3; Cambridge supporter £1; Huyton supporter £7; Tameside supporter £1; London supporter £3; Kirkby supporters £1.05; Sheffield B.F. £3; Leeds B.F. £2

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