

workers' ACTION

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10p

DEFEND THE PICKETS

LAST YEAR profits in the transport and trading industry totalled £437 million. Top bosses in that industry — like in others — were personally raking in £100,000 or £200,000 a year.

Yet those bosses say that their drivers — who earn £53 for a basic 40 hour week — are ruining the country by being too greedy and too powerful.

The top 10% which owns 60% of all the wealth, and practically all the shares in industry, accuses these workers of aggressive money-grabbing.

The wealthy minority which controls all the top jobs in industry, in the banks, in the state bureaucracy and in the armed forces, cries out that the lorry drivers are tyrants!

Jim Callaghan said that the drivers' claimed increase totalled £19 a week — which is as much as the whole of an old age pension.

£19 is also about as

much as the bosses routinely spend on a 'business lunch'. And who fixes pensions so low? Who has just given nationalised industry bosses an increase of £120 a week?

'Secondary picketing' — the picketing by the drivers of the factories, docks or warehouses where they normally deliver or collect — is the action which has touched a nerve of naked class fury among the Tories and the bosses.

Secondary picketing is essential for the drivers to have an effective strike. Unless they picket the factories and docks, they have no protection against scabs coming in to do their jobs.

Secondary pickets — and mobile pickets in general — are also a fundamental weapon of working-class unity in the face of the bosses. They spread the struggle, drawing in other sections of the labour movement,

and hitting at the bosses' interests on as wide a scale as possible.

The bosses have their 'secondary pickets' in blue and khaki: the police and the army, whom they call in to batter pickets or break strikes when they need to. And now, taking up an incident at Cadburys in Birmingham, the media are openly encouraging workers deceived by their crisis-shouting to use violence against pickets.

The law of capitalism is the law of the jungle; and the bosses hunt in packs. That's why we need solidarity.

While the Tories rage, Jim Callaghan has tried to create an impression of being the elder statesman whom the bosses can trust to keep the workers under control. It's just "a spasm the workers are having", he told Parliament.

He has offered some miserable sops to try to damp down the struggle:

a rise in the 'permitted' increase for low-paid council workers from £1.80 to £3.50; a promise of tighter price controls [but when have price controls ever been anything but a sham]; and a promise of 'comparability' with the private sector for public-sector workers [which could mean anything or nothing]. Then he lined up with the Tories, saying that he would declare a state of emergency unless the trade union leaders managed to control secondary picketing.

The bosses are screaming so loud because they see workers beginning to score victories. Support the drivers. Defend the pickets, against scabs, against the police, and against the army. Black strike-breakers — including strike-breakers in uniform. Make sure the bosses pay the cost of strike disruption, by demanding 100% lay-off pay.



The Grunwick pickets faced police batons; pickets from the 1972 builders' strike faced the Shrewsbury trials; drivers' pickets face press witch-hunting. Why? Because pickets are the life-blood of an effective strike.



The Shah goes. Now to end his system

LAST WEEK the American magazine *Newsweek* reported: "Khomeiny sent emissaries to Iran's idle oil fields to urge workers to lift production enough to meet domestic needs.

"The workers demanded — and got — more than Khomeiny had asked for: promises from the authorities that arrested strikers would be freed and that the workers would control distribution. Diplomats in Tehran agreed that the strike had been taken over by young leftists who might no longer take orders from their elders."

The future of the Iranian revolution depends on how true this report is.

The courage of the Iranian people, defying army massacres again and again, has beaten the Shah. Now, with the Shah gone, the revolution comes face to face with itself.

The ayatollah Khomeiny is reported to be returning to Iran. He and the other Muslim leaders can no longer leave their call for an Islamic Republic as vague talk, overshadowed by the immediate slogan, 'Down with the Shah'.

Khomeiny has announced that he has established an Islamic Revolutionary Council — made up mostly of people close to the bourgeois National Front. He wants

this Islamic Revolutionary Council to become the provisional government and call elections for a constituent assembly.

As to the social policies of this 'Islamic government', nothing clear is said. The presence within it of the National Front guarantees that nothing will be done against profits and private property. And the Muslim leaders say they want cooperation with the army chiefs — those same army chiefs who have shot, killed and terrorised Iranians on behalf of the Shah for the last 25 years.

Back in the early 1960s Khomeiny opposed votes for women and denounced land

reform as violating 'the sanctity of private property'. He talks differently now. But for the workers the 'Islamic Republic' can only offer phrases.

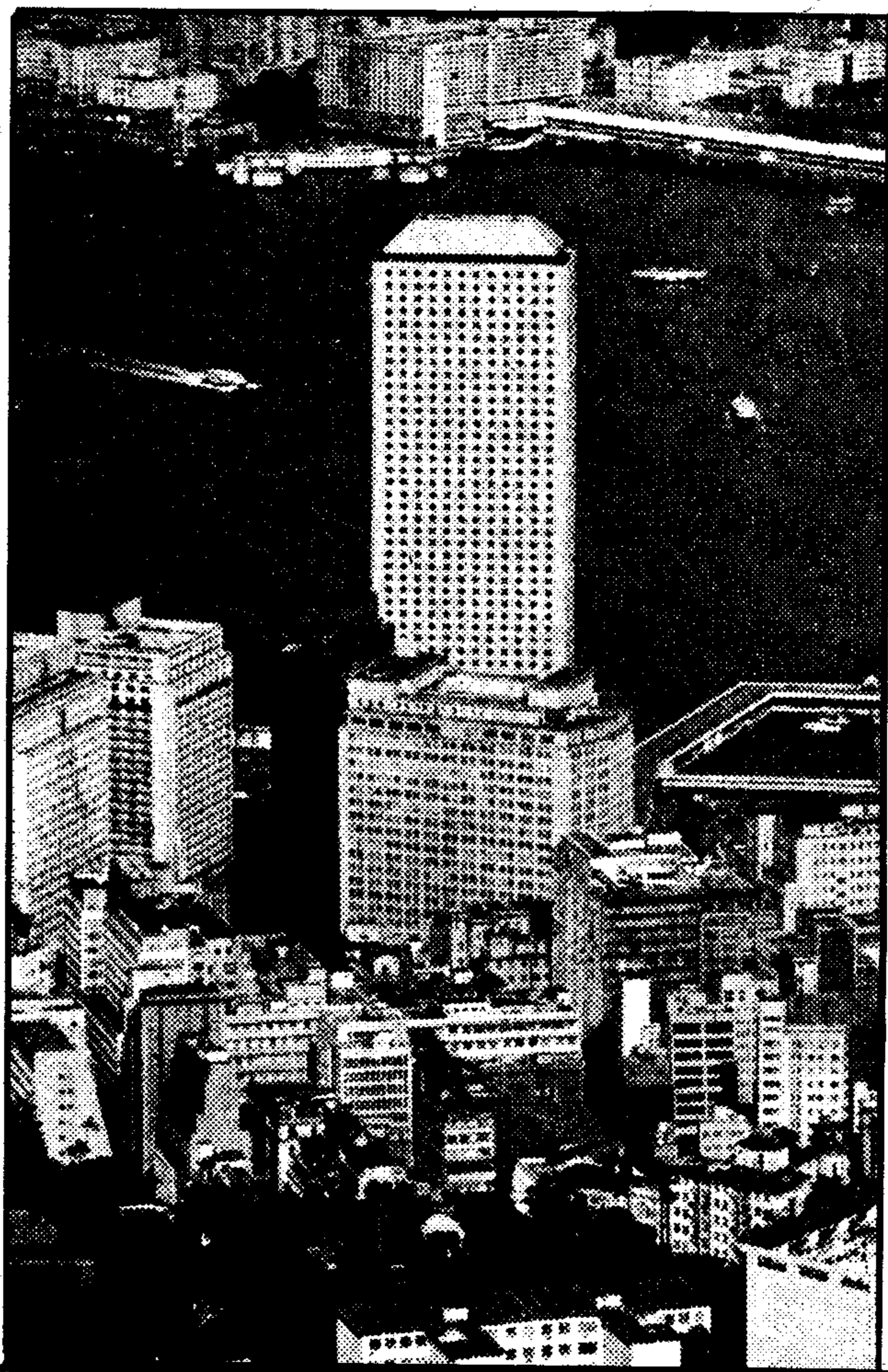
If the revolution goes no further than whatever compromise reforms are worked out in the five-cornered joust which will now ensue between the Muslim leaders, the anti-Shah bourgeoisie, the army chiefs, the USA, and the Shah's nominee Bakhtiar — then the heroism and martyrdom of thousands will have been largely wasted.

The oil wealth of Iran needs to be taken under workers' control. Social

planning for the people's needs must govern the distribution of the oil revenues. The major industries must be nationalised so that Iran no longer suffers profiteering and exploitation alongside poverty. The Shah's army and police forces must be dissolved and replaced by workers' militias.

Only a working class conscious of its own independent interests, and free from illusions in the bourgeois opposition leaders and their religious allies, can carry through those measures.

SEE PAGE 6:
'IRAN, THE RICHES AND THE REVOLT'



Britain's own China Connection

FOR THE USA, links with China meant a downgrading of Taiwan, the offshore island which the US had recognised as 'the real China' since 1949. But Britain's Chinese colony, Hong Kong, is set for increased trade.

Hong Kong's original function as an entrepot now increases in importance, mainly because China's own ports are not likely to be able to cope with the explosion in trade with the West. So far, China's finger in the Hong Kong pie has been earning about a third of Peking's foreign exchange. China supplies food to the colony and owns numerous shops,

factories and banks there. Many Hong Kong workers remit funds to relatives in the mainland.

Hong Kong has also been, especially in the past decade, the financial centre and speculators' paradise of the Far East. Its low taxation and minimal company legislation makes it a unique haven for international capitalism, while Britain gains from the banking of the colony's huge budget surplus with the Bank of England, and through various privileges for British firms.

Hong Kong used to be the textile 'sweatshop of the world', but this too has changed as the textile industry (once accounting for half the colony's exports) has continued to stagnate. Squeezed by EEC and USA import restrictions and undercut by cheaper goods from Taiwan and South Korea (which have even more exploitative conditions) Hong Kong is following the example of Japan by producing goods of greater technical complexity, especially in electronics.

The face of Hong Kong has changed too. The government has encouraged and led an expansion of the construction industry, in order to avert

stagnation resulting from the decline of manufacturing exports. An underground rail system, highways, land reclamation and New Town building programmes have been initiated.

The shanty town population (refugees from China, and outlying village communities) have been re-housed in high-rise block estates, usually near factory zones. This has cleared land for roads and office blocks, and makes for greater social control.

For instance, the government increased rents in these 'low-cost' estates once the squatters and villagers had moved in and were at the government's mercy. The latest increase ranges from 25% to 30%.

For Hong Kong's poor, the outlook is not good. Inflation is expected to be in double figures. The trade unions are weak, and tightly controlled by a pro-Peking bureaucracy that believes a militant workers' movement can only harm China's share of the Hong Kong spoils. Probably less than 20% of workers are unionised.

Many workers look to education as their children's only chance of a better future. But

the education system suffers from years of underspending, corruption and bureaucratic neglect.

There is compulsory education up to the 3rd year of secondary schooling. A highly competitive exam allows about a quarter through to 5th and 6th year public examinations. The small minority who survive to this stage then compete for the university places — about one place for every ten students with sufficient entry qualifications.

The system is not even adequate to provide the trained workforce now needed by the economy.

The Hong Kong workers' movement has remained dormant since the great strike waves in the 1920s, when it was crushed alongside the defeated revolution in China in 1927. The task of arousing the students and reviving the political life of the workers' movement falls on the tiny forces of the Trotskyists, the Revolutionary Marxist League. Yet despite their smallness, they have been credited with 'infiltrating' every sizable struggle in the colony recently — a distinction which previously belonged to the Maoists in the 1950s and '60s.

The business press is talking about China as the new traders' honey-pot, now that revolution has cut the flow of super-profits from Iran. China's bureaucrats are putting on a show of stability and tolerance to encourage trade. But the news is not so good for China's workers and peasants — nor for workers in Hong Kong, which functions as an entrepot for Chinese-Western trade. CHEUNG SIU MING reports.

CHINA People will still be purged 'simply for having different opinions'

THE WALL posters have not yet been curbed in Peking, and their contents circulate freely in China's national press and in the pro-Peking press in Hong Kong.

Western journalists have commented in surprise on how easily they have been able to visit the main areas where people are coming to write and read the posters, and the numerous candid conversations they have had with the poster-readers. Underground journals are rumoured to be circulating.

It is tempting to conclude that a spontaneous current of protest has broken out, with too much popularity to be crushed by the regime at present. Another interpretation suggests that the regime is making a genuine attempt to democratise its rule and undo previous bureaucratic injustices.

A closer look shows that the picture is rather more complicated.

Mouthpiece

Several journals have appeared in Hong Kong over the past year, which according to the Far Eastern Economic Review are probably written by journalists from the pro-Peking newspapers in Hong Kong. One of these, Cheng Ming, a monthly magazine, has carried for many months articles in support of Vice-Premier Deng's policies, and with such detailed information that one can reasonably suppose that it is an unofficial mouthpiece of the Deng grouping.

The major themes of the wall-posters have all been raised in this magazine be-

fore they appeared on the walls.

In November 1978, for example, before wall posters appeared in China, Cheng Ming carried articles in support of rehabilitating Liu Shao-chi, the chief victim of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Other articles voiced the importance of democratic rights.

Yet another article suggested that 'Mao's thoughts' should not be accepted word for word but judged 'in the light of practice'. It then openly attacked Mao's role in suppressing the Tien An-men demonstration and the second

purge of Deng as totally wrong.

Additional evidence that the wallposters are not as spontaneous as they seem is the fact that the appearance of wall-posters in the last two weeks of November coincided with the convening of top-level discussions, including the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee. They subsided as soon as Deng announced that there will be no changes at the top, and that 'stability and unity' must prevail.

Earlier, the ferocity of the posters' attack on anti-Deng Politburo members like Mao's one-time bodyguard Wang Tung-hsing had led Western observers to speculate on purges.

Apart from the fact that wall poster themes like rehabilitation, democratic rights, and criticism of Mao's late policies, have all been preceded by articles in magazines like Cheng Ming, the absence of wall posters (or, rather, of reports of wall posters) in other parts of China supports the view that the campaign did not start 'spontaneously', even though it has since generated some unexpected liveliness.

The liveliness shows up most in the unusually plain-spoken character of the post-

ers. Previous campaigns were usually obscure and metaphorically worded, like the campaign to criticise Confucius and Lin Biao.

The present one is more forthright: 'It is said that Chairman Mao lead the Chinese revolution to victory. But did Chairman Mao create history, or the people?' ... 'Without Premier Chou's selfless struggle, China would not be what it is today' ... 'Chou En-lai is China's greatest Marxist' ... 'Comrade Deng says that without Chairman Mao, there would have been no new China. Without the Chinese Communist Party there would have been no new China' ... 'Did Liu Shao-chi really want to lead China into darkness, or did he just have disagreements with the Chairman? Why are people purged simply for having different opinions?' ...

Deng has been able to present himself as the chief victim of the bad days of the Cultural Revolution, and therefore the great hope for the future. By deciding against purges of Deng's opponents, and by not clamping down on the wall posters at present, the regime is maintaining an image of 'stability and unity' and open government, while bringing more anti-Cultural Revolution leaders into top positions.

Reality

The regime has taken care so far to remove only the most polemical posters, and presents itself as tolerant and democratic. Decisions made by the 3rd Plenum include the rehabilitation of Marshall Peng Teh-hua (purged for criticising Mao in 1959); the exoneration of those arrested at the 1976 Tien An-men riots; and the election of several pro-Deng members of the Politburo, including the widow of Chou En-lai.

Socialists should not be misled by these attempts to win Western sympathy for China. The bourgeois press reports the present events in China in such a way as to help smooth the way for extensive trade with China and alliances against the USSR. To think that the repressive apparatus and bureaucratic control of the Chinese regime has weakened or liberalised would be a mistake.

Amnesty International's recent report on political prisoners in China is a chilling reminder of the reality. And while the top bureaucrats and their agents and pawns are released and re-habilitated when their faction is riding high, to this day we have heard not a word of the fate of over 200 Chinese Trotskyists who were arrested in 1952, without ever being tried.

First murder, now strike-breaking

Last week the British Army in Northern Ireland showed that it has another use apart from imperialist repression: strike-breaking.

Roy Mason declared a State of Emergency on Thursday 11th, and troops began delivering oil in an attempt to break the tanker drivers' strike, which had continued longer in Northern Ireland than in Britain. Each tanker had an armed escort.

The strikers decided to go back on Saturday. Their struggle had been undermined not so much by the troops as by the return to work in Britain. But some Protestant workers may have got a clearer idea of the nature of the British Army.

Increasing opposition to the Army is indicated by the fact that the 'Peace People' — a movement much welcomed by the British Government when it was set up, not least because of its approval of the British Army — has felt moved to condemn the Army. The 'Peace' movement has denounced the use of the clandestine Special Air Services squads.

The SAS are 'specialists': 'Specialists in what?' the 'Peace People' asks. 'In shooting unarmed, innocent 16-year old kids? Unarmed suspects? The short word for such specialism is murder'.

Official manuals in fact include 'assassinations' as one of the SAS's special tasks. And many people in Northern Ireland think that is what the SAS is being used for there.

Take the case of Jack McCarten. In 1977 he was shot while leaving a social club in Andersonstown, Belfast. His family claimed that it was an

army assassination. The inquest was delayed until last month, and then came up with an 'open verdict'.

★★★
The Dublin government is meanwhile doing its best to keep alive Protestant workers' fears about Irish unity.

Giving in to the most reactionary clerical pressures, the Fianna Fail government's new Family Planning Bill will make contraceptives available only through chemists' shops — on prescription, and only for 'bona fide family planning purposes' [i.e. for married people].

And this is a reform! At present the sale of contraceptives is illegal in southern Ireland, but several family planning clinics supply contraceptives and get round the law by asking for 'donations'.

★★★
Another blow for the Right has been struck by the southern state with the jailing of Osgur Breatnach and others in the 'Great Train Robbery' case. Breatnach is a leading member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

Ireland's 'Great Train Robbery' took place on the Cork-Dublin line in March 1976. Breatnach was arrested four separate times — twice illegally — within the next nine days. (The 'Offences Against the State' Act, under which he was first arrested, requires the police to release detained prisoners within 48 hours and forbids re-arrest).

After his second arrest Breatnach was — he says — severely beaten and forced to sign a confession. This confession was practically the only evidence against him.

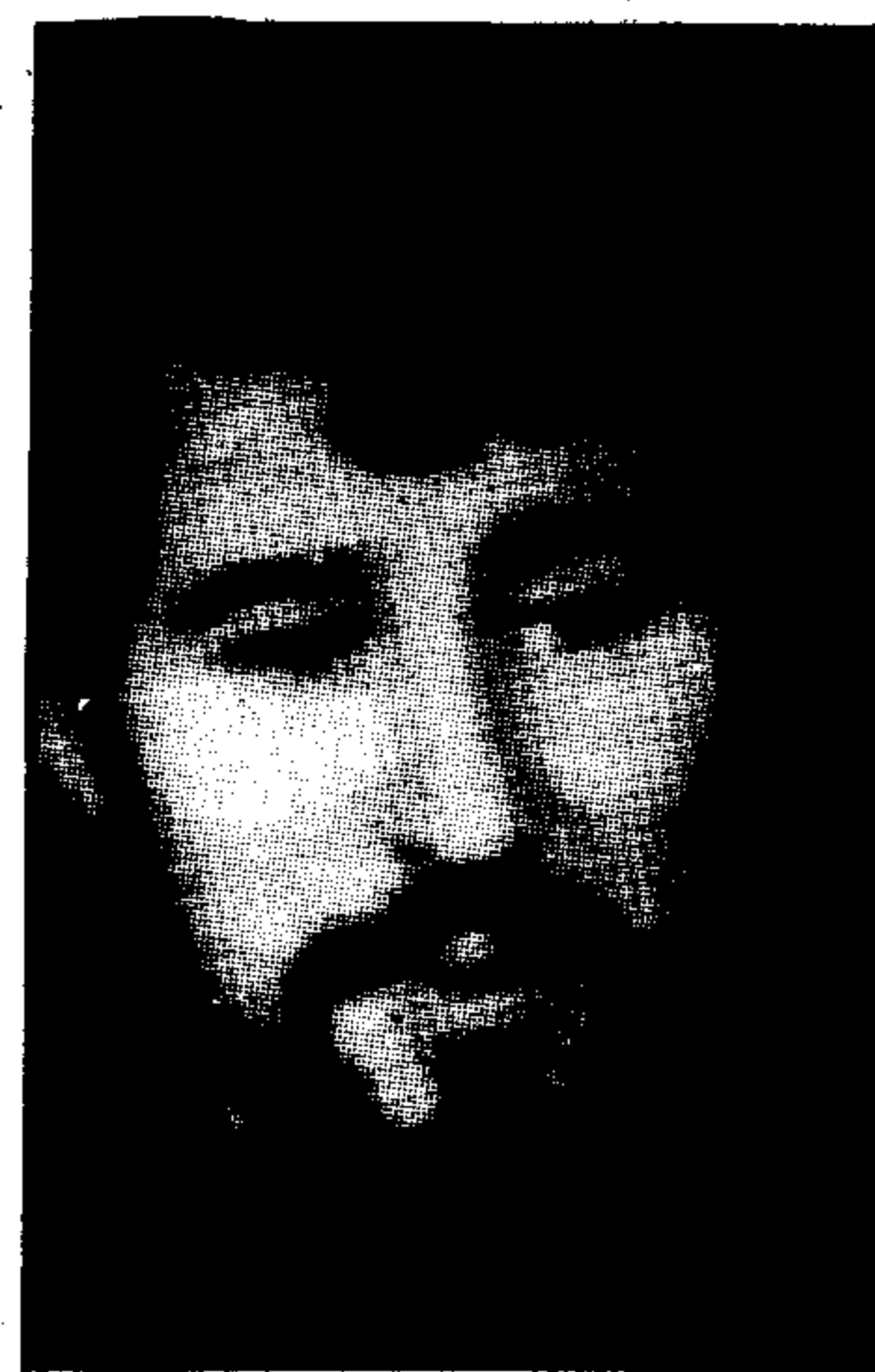
The police claim Breatnach's injuries were self-inflicted. But a Portlaoise prison doctor gave evidence that they could not have been self-inflicted; and policemen who were guarding Breatnach's cell during the time he is supposed to have injured himself testified that they looked in regularly but neither saw nor heard anything unusual.

After those four arrests Breatnach was released on bail while the prosecution case was prepared. Six months later the prosecution case was still not ready, and Breatnach had to be discharged. Then he was arrested again.

The trial — in the no-jury Special Criminal Court — finally opened in January 1978, and Breatnach was convicted last month.

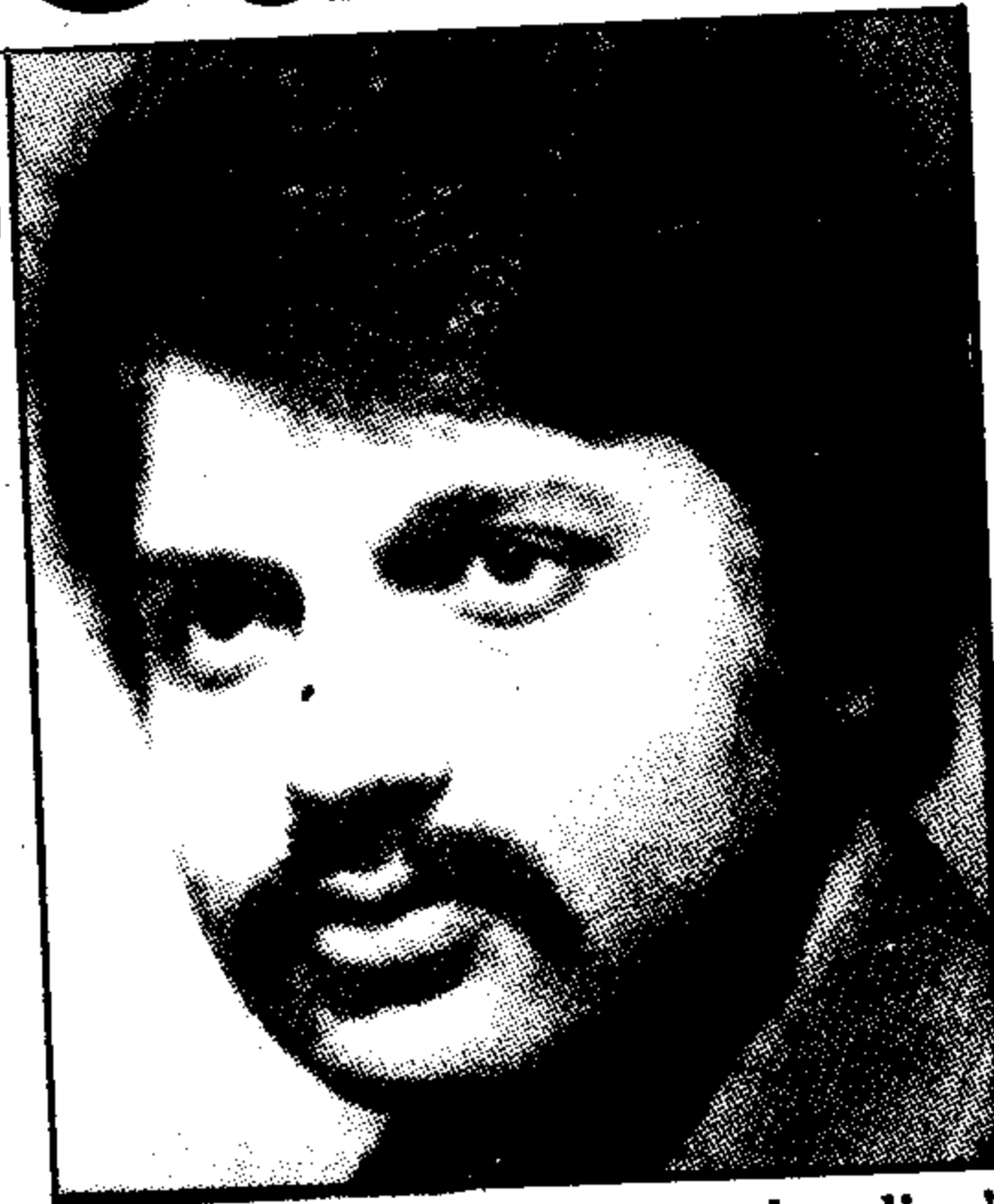


'Democracy wall'. But the democracy is intended above all as a show for Western journalists.



Osgur Breatnach

A milestone in bourgeois justice Asian cleared after being half killed by racists



Mohammed Ahmad: 'lucky to be alive'

Mohammed Ahmad works at Fords, Dagenham. He lives in Manor Park Newham, an area where black families are fairly isolated. He is married with a small child. He and his family have regularly been abused by racists, bricks have been thrown through the windows of his home and in other ways they have been continually pestered by local white kids. But in the light of recent experience, Mr. Ahmad is 'lucky' — lucky to be alive, and lucky not to be in jail.

Many times Mr. Ahmad and his wife Riaz complained to the police about the kids smashing their windows. Always they were told that nothing could be done unless they caught their attackers red-handed and brought them to the police.

On the morning of October 22nd last year, following yet another bout of window smashing, Mr. Ahmad did just that. He rushed out of the house, wearing only his pyjamas, caught one of the culprits and brought him back to the house and asked

his wife to call the police.

But before she could do that, the boy's parents arrived with a large dog and brandishing a knife. They smashed another window and broke down the front door, and, he says, threatened to burn down the house. The man also threatened Riaz Ahmad with the knife.

Mr. Ahmad let the boy go, but when the police arrived they took no interest in the threats and damage caused by the racists and instead took a statement from the whites accusing Mr. Ahmad of assaulting their son. Two days later Mr. Ahmad was charged.

Six days later, the Ahmads were celebrating their son's first birthday. At 6 o'clock the doorbell rang. As Mr. Ahmad opened the door he was hit in the eye, dragged outside and beaten on the head with an iron bar.

The attackers then fled in a van. Friends of the Ahmads took the van's number and also identified one of the assailants.

Mr. Ahmad was in hospital for 2½ weeks. He may need a brain operation, as he still suffers from headaches. The hospital said he was lucky to be alive.

Despite persistent reminders, the police have been 'unable' to track down the assailants. In fear of their lives, the Ahmads have had to leave their house. They are now effectively homeless.

On 8th January Mohammed Ahmad came up for trial, fearing that on top of everything else he would be convicted of assault and probably (like the Virk brothers sent down for self-defence against racists) jailed.

Fortunately, black people in Newham had recently formed a Defence Committee to fight police and fascist attacks, and they were in court to give him support. The magistrate found that there was 'reasonable doubt' of Mr. Ahmad's guilt, and he was discharged.

His attackers, of course, remain at large.

A Day of Mourning for Michael Ferreira

SATURDAY 20th January has been declared a day of mourning by organisations representing the black people of Hackney in East London. Michael Ferreira, a 19-year-old West Indian, will be remembered in a procession and motorcade which are expected to attract hundreds of local residents.

Michael was stabbed to death in the early hours of Sunday morning, 10th December.

Together with five friends he was returning home from a party when three white youths began shouting racist abuse. Michael's friends shied away from a confrontation, but Michael stood his ground. Then Mark Sullivan — according to his own confession — drew a knife and stabbed Michael

until he fell to the ground.

Sullivan has been identified as a regular seller of *National Front News* in Chapel Market, Islington.

Michael's friends carried him into Stoke Newington police station. The police were in no hurry to bring him medical attention. For more than three quarters of an hour they held him in the station, questioning him about what he was doing on the street late at night. Eventually Michael was taken the 200 yards from the police station to St. Leonard's Hospital — but it was too late. He died in hospital of a ruptured liver.

This was the fourth known racist killing in the East End in eight months — and it has created great anger and bitterness among the black

community. A meeting on 21st December attracted more than 200 people, white and black.

The majority feeling among the blacks was that they needed to build an organisation of their own. Another meeting on 27th December decided to form the Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation.

As they have put it, 'Black people must be in the forefront of their own defence'. They believe that effective joint activity by blacks and white anti-racists can only come about after blacks have first developed their own independent organisation.

The Defence Organisation aims to mobilise not only against the National Front but also against the racist police and judicial system. Next Saturday's events will therefore not be simply an expression of grief and anger at Michael's death, but a sign of the community's determination to fight back.

Supporters are asked to assemble outside Michael's home at 125 Rushmore Road, E5, at 9.30am, to proceed on foot to Stoke Newington Police Station. If you have a car, leave it near the police station, so that you can then follow the cortege from Stoke Newington to the cemetery in Leyton by car.

The organisers ask that no posters or banners be carried, nor should papers or literature be sold.

Both events are supported by the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee, the West Indian Standing Conference, Hackney and Tower Hamlets Trades Councils and local West Indian, Asian and Bangladeshi groups as well as the Black People's Defence Organisation.

JAMES RYAN

Fascists' victim
Michael Ferreira



THE GREAT WHITE BRUTE

BOXING'S new 'great white hope' is Kaille Knoetze, who last Saturday stopped Bill Sharkey in the fourth round of a non-title heavyweight contest at Miami Beach.

Knoetze is a national hero for white South Africa. But in other ways he hardly fits the old image of a clean-living gentleman, conservative-minded but civilised, who demonstrates the whites' superiority over the brawny but stupid black race.

Knoetze is a cop and a criminal.

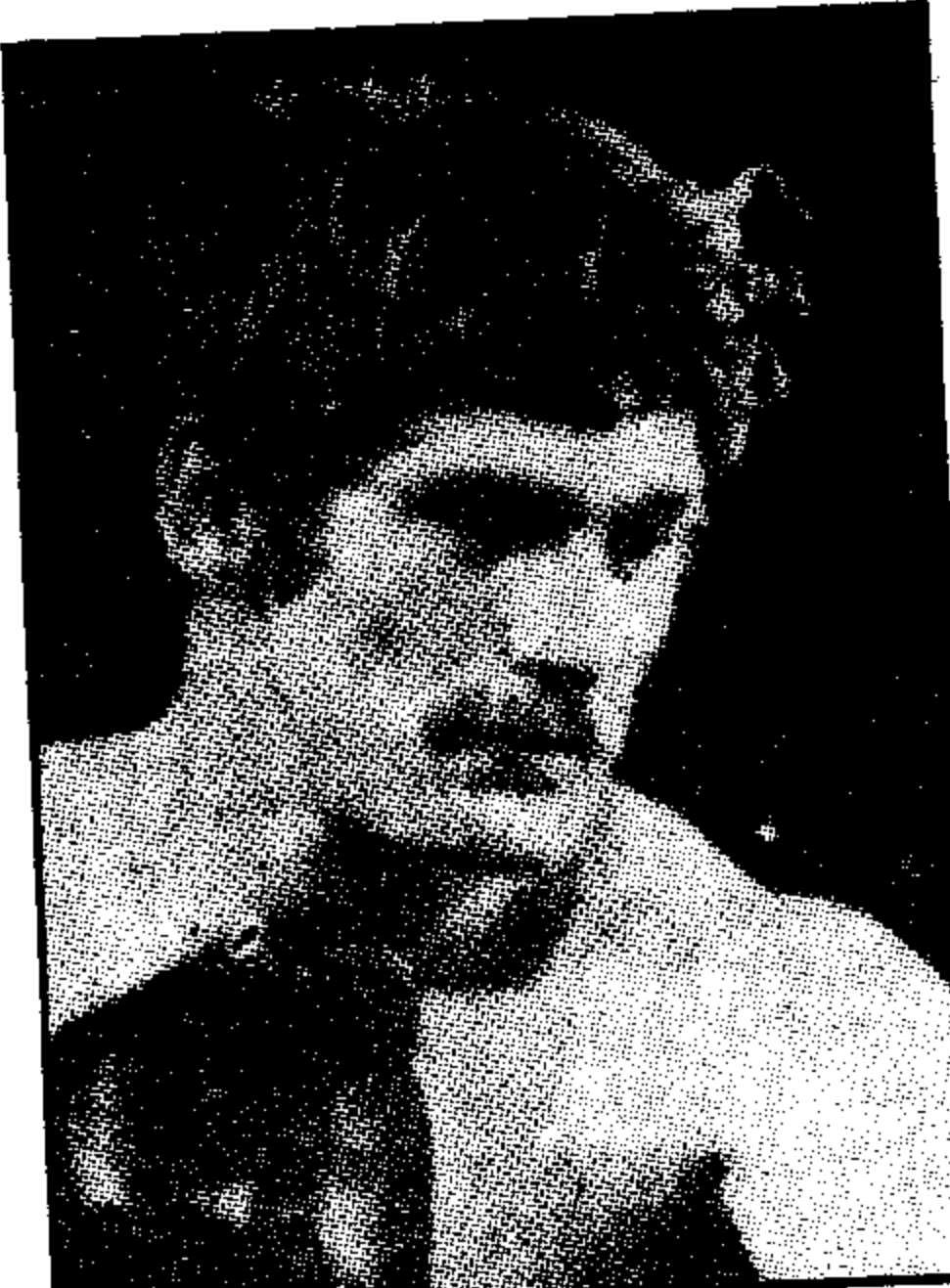
During riots in South Africa in October 1977, he cornered a black high school student, Stanley Ndlovu, and shot him twice. Ndlovu lost his left leg because of the resulting injuries.

In an attempt to justify Knoetze, Ndlovu was charged with assault. The magistrate found Ndlovu not guilty, criticised Knoetze as 'a bad witness', and refused his request for the hearing to take place in secret.

Later Knoetze tried out his brutality on two white school students, trying to 'dissuade' them from giving evidence against another policeman. As a result he was convicted of obstruction of justice.

When the Knoetze-Sharkey fight was announced, a campaign started to keep Knoetze out of the USA. Knoetze's visa was withdrawn by the State Department and then restored by order of Judge Norman Roettger.

The Miami Beach boxing commission remained steadfastly in favour of the fight, saying that they refused "to be swayed by political pressure".



White Savage Knoetze

[It was a different story for Muhammad Ali, disqualified from boxing for refusing to fight in Vietnam.]

Even if some boxing fans look for genuine skill, the mass audience which brings in the money looks for blood and brutality. And that's what Knoetze could provide, on top of a special draw for the racists.

The fact is that generally you have to be very hard up before you consider getting thumped as a way to earn your living. Since there are more poor blacks with few outlets for their talents than there are poor whites, the skilled and intelligent boxers are mostly black.

Some of them, like Ali, are black and militant. After Ali, the call for a 'great white hope' is more urgent than ever among the racists. And Knoetze makes a fine representative for last-ditch racism.

TOM CASHMAN

The costs of being nicked for nothing

FIVE anti-fascists were cleared last week in Tottenham Magistrates Courts on charges of obstruction and of contravening the Public Order Act in July last year.

They had been part of a hastily assembled group that turned out in opposition to about 30 to 40 fascists in Tottenham High Road.

Soon after moving the anti-fascist picket to the other side of the road from the chanting racists, the police waded in and arrested the five.

Magistrates courts are notoriously biased towards the police (they used to be called Police Courts) and it is always an uphill battle to win an acquittal. This time, the magistrates were faced with an overwhelming weight of evidence from passers by, as well as the sort of respectable witnesses whose evidence they are more inclined to believe — including an ex-JP and local MP Norman Atkinson.

Even then the victory was not total. The police got their consolation prize when costs were awarded against the defendants on the obscure legal logic that while they were innocent the police were not themselves 'guilty' but had acted correctly in arresting the five.

One of the defendants at least will be challenging that idea when she brings her own action for assault against the policeman who arrested her.

ASTRID PROLL - THE FIGHT AGAINST EXTRADITION

THE FIGHT against the extradition of Astrid Proll must continue, writes BRUCE ROBINSON.

ASTRID PROLL has been kept in the top-security wing of Brixton prison since her arrest last September. She had to wait for over three

months while the West German government looked for some evidence to offer to the British courts in order to get her extradited as a former member of the Red Army Fraction ('Baader-Meinhof group').

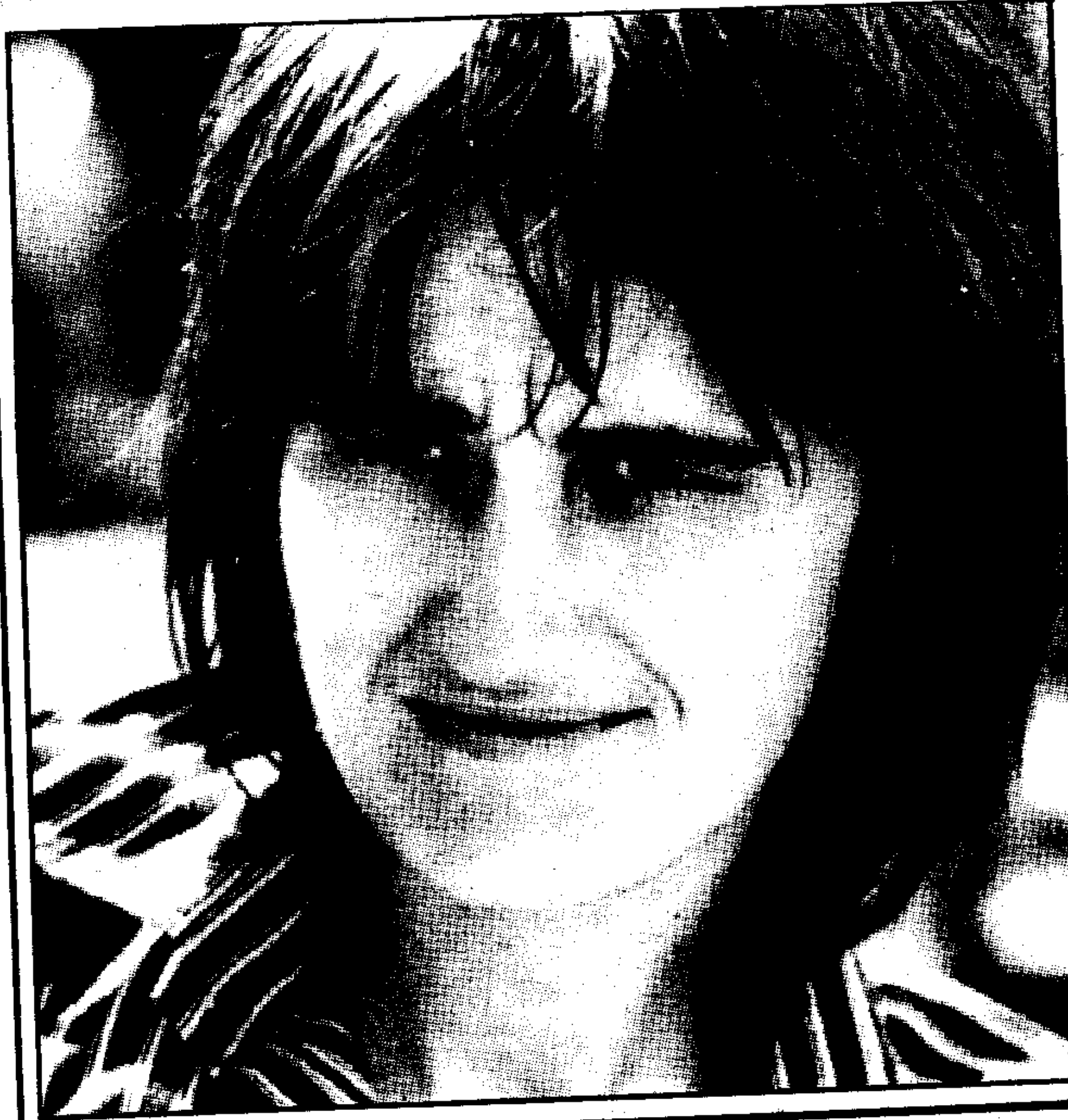
The case has at last come to court, and the magistrate

will rule this Wednesday (17th) on whether there is a case to answer. If he says there is, then the next legal fight will be over Astrid Proll's claim to British nationality.

The main evidence the West German government produced came from the testimony of Karl-Heinz Ruhland, a former member of the RAF who cooperated with the police and gave prosecution evidence in other cases after his arrest. Ruhland claims that Proll took part in a bank robbery with him in 1970. This charge was part of the prosecution case against Proll when she went on trial in West Germany in 1974, before escaping to England.

Whatever the court rules, we must continue to campaign against the extradition of Astrid Proll to West Germany. There she will face a rigged trial (with the control of the defence case taken out of her hands) and years in the 'isolation cells' where she was driven beyond endurance in 1974.

If Astrid Proll is handed over to the German government it will be the equivalent of a death sentence.



LOWWPR

THE GOVERNMENT has made repeated commitments to the low-paid. Trade union supporters of incomes policies invoke the plight of the low-paid in order to shame the champions of free collective bargaining. Even the Tories point their fingers hypocritically at the low-paid, blaming the 'greedy' higher-paid workers.

Yet the facts speak for themselves. Low paid workers have not benefited from incomes policies. They have suffered. Between 1975 and 1978, the average earnings of male local authority manual workers fell from 85.3% to 82.6% of the average for all manual workers.

The industrial muscle of the Ford workers, who smashed any hope of the Government imposing another round of wage

EDITORIAL

manual full-time workers, 37% of men and 88% of women earn less than £60 a week. Incomes policies just have not delivered the goods as far as NUPE members are concerned".

The present claim for a £60 minimum Grade A rate would, if met in full, do nothing but restore the pay position of 1974 — the last agreement reached before the government's series of incomes policies.

If NUPE members were to rely on the Government's generosity... and took a big-hearted 5%, all they would get, on average, would be an extra £1.84 for a 40 hour week.

Of course, many groups of low-paid workers do not have the strength of motor workers or tanker drivers.

don't look like improving.

Much of NUPE's agitation, however, has been taken up trying to convince its members of its version of the TUC's alternative economic strategy. The pay and hours claim is weakened by being tied to a utopian, nationalist exercise in economic day-dreaming.

For January 22nd, it has been left up to NUPE divisions as to whether they strike, but clearly most will strike as well as send delegates to London.

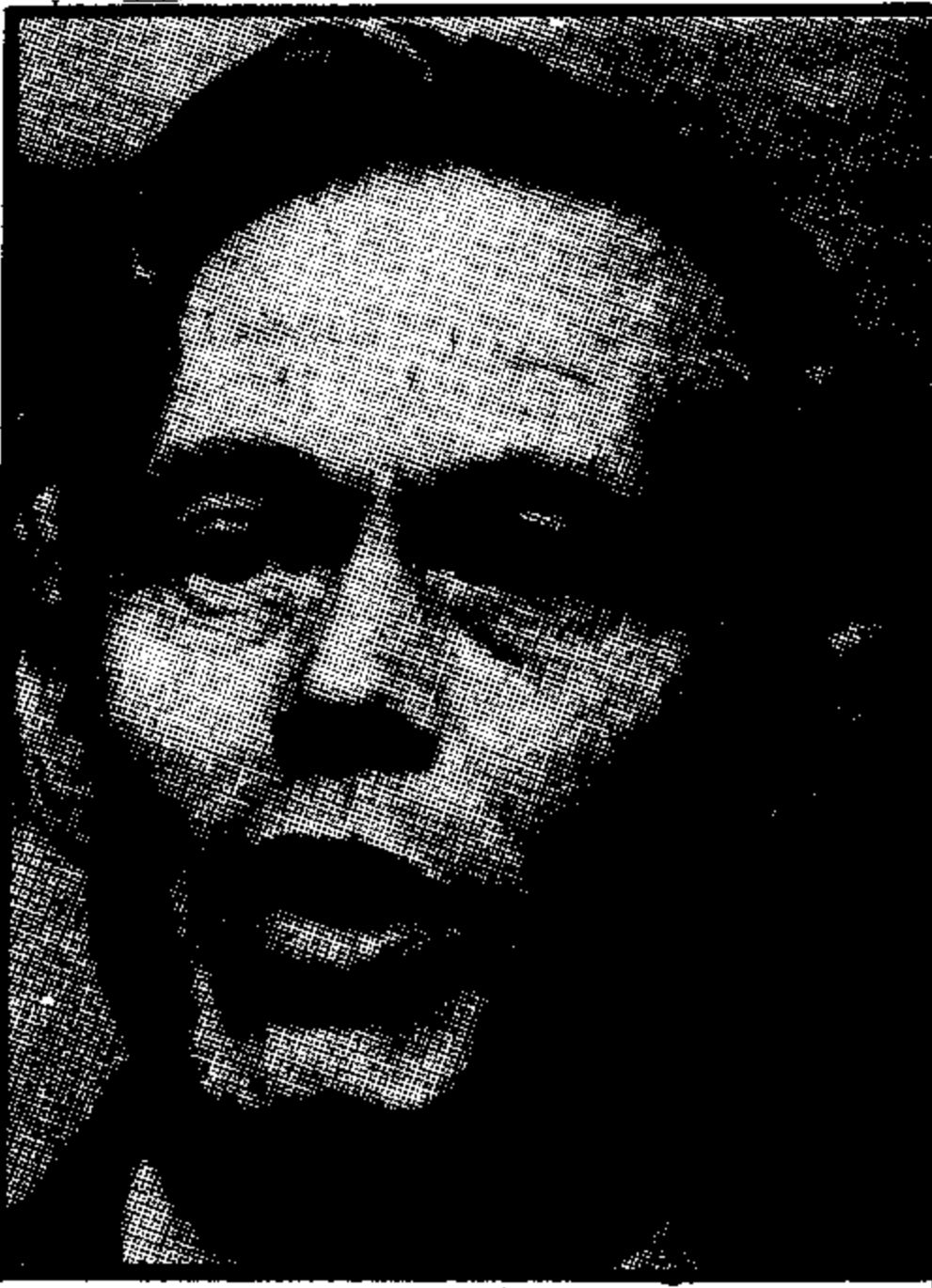
The perspective after January 22nd is less clear. In different areas, different groups of workers will be on all-out strike. Others will be working to rule. It is essential that committees are created to coordinate this action — bodies that include all unions and sections striking — and spread it. There is growing impatience with poverty-level pay packets, and every likelihood that the fight will spread.

With the government now talking about a new package, including gestures of help for the low paid, there is reason to fear the strike will be called off before it has achieved its aims. The union leaders are likely to seize on the prospect of some measure of comparability with workers in the private sector to slam on the brakes. This must be resisted.

Other public sector workers, teachers, local government officers and others, should not only respect the strikers' picket lines, but help man them.

When better paid workers strike, the excuse of those not supporting them is that they are harming the low-paid. Now that it is the low-paid who are striking, the excuse will be that they are harming the public. While the friends of the bosses use this hypocritically, it is important that the strike is organised to hit the ruling class first and foremost.

The general public are bound to be affected, but it will be possible, if there are strongly organised committees coordinating the industrial action, to direct it so that the real enemy bears the brunt of the attack.



NUPE leader Alan Fisher is taking militant, but his tactic of scattered selective strikes has only produced defeat in the past.

THE STATE - THE M

THE LATEST Inland Revenue statistics tell a simple tale: the richest 1% of the population increased their share of wealth from 22½% to 25% between 1974 and 1976. The share of the poorer half of the population actually fell from 7 to 5½%.

So much for Labour's manifesto promise to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in the interest of working people and their families!

1979 shows no sign of reversing this trend in favour of the rich. In fact the year opened with a sharp slap in the face for low-paid workers. Several heads of nationalised industries saw their pay shoot up by over £6,000 a year... backdated a whole year! That's just the first stage of a pay rise of over £27,000 by 1980.

Despite repeated vows by government ministers that the low-paid are a priority, the record shows that little has been done

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Getting at the management, not the patients

Edinburgh

MANAGEMENT IN the majority of Edinburgh's hospitals can expect a rude shock if they have any hopes left that industrial unrest for the £60 pay claim will consist of a few token stoppages to back up the negotiating efforts of the NUPE national leadership.

Edinburgh South Hospitals branch of NUPE, the largest hospital workers' branch, has already held a 500-strong special meeting, which unanimously threw out the Government's pay offer, and voted to empower the shop stewards' committee to call industrial action for the £60 claim and the 35 hour week.

This action will consist of strict work-to-rules, selective strike action in key sectors, and general overtime bans. Because of the atrocious staffing levels, these actions are likely to bite from the start.

There have also been workplace meetings in all of the South Edinburgh hospitals, and a Low Pay Campaign bulletin is produced regularly by a committee elected from the branch.

Selective industrial action is due to start immediately as a lead-up to the all-out strike of ancillary and manual workers called by NUPE and other public sector unions on January 22nd. While supporting the national demonstration in London, we have also called a demonstration and rally in Edinburgh on the 22nd. We can expect support from other health service unions, the Trades Council, and the shop stewards' committee from a local engineering factory.

Another encouraging dev-

elopment from our branch has been the setting up of a joint shop stewards' committee for all the health sector unions. The joint committee is already supported by the Edinburgh CoHSE and ASTMS health branches and stewards from NALGO. The involvement of CoHSE stewards is especially significant, with some hospitals carved up between the two unions and a history of inter-union disputes and member-snatching between CoHSE and NUPE.

The formation of the committee was strongly — but ineffectively — opposed by the union full-timers, who are Communist Party members.

Management has already tested our strength by attempting to break agreements with the porters in the City Hospital and shifting them to other work without providing cover. An overtime ban and a four-hour strike saw the end of this ploy.

Shop stewards in other hospitals have made sure that management gives full pay to workers who have lost time because of the snow and difficulty getting to work.

A well-based, democratically organised 'Hospital Worker' group has played an important role in many of these developments.

JOHN MACDONALD
[NUPE, Edinburgh South Hospitals].

Leicester

THE GOVERNMENT'S 5% offer has angered ancillary staff in Leicester hospitals, and the general feeling is that some form of action must now be taken. Despite this, there has been a total failure

by CoHSE to provide any lead for the day of action on the 22nd. CoHSE stewards are taking the line that if you want to go to London to demonstrate, then go. Otherwise, don't.

NUPE has held sectional meetings to discuss action and has succeeded in answering some of the demands put on it.

But the main work of organising has fallen to the newly formed 'Rank and File Hospital Worker' group. We produced a leaflet a week before NUPE and it has been circulated throughout City General Hospital and the Royal Infirmary. CoHSE has not produced anything yet.

Despite confusion as to whether the strike is official [because of rumours stemming from CoHSE stewards], the response has been encouraging, with workers at City General hospital calling for a picket of the hospital on the day.

We are organising the action so as to avoid causing any harm to the patients, while causing maximum disruption for the NHS management.

CHARLIE SORELL
[NUPE shop steward, Leicester Royal Infirmary].

Manchester

HUNDREDS OF schools in Manchester, Bury and Bolton will be shut on the Day of Action, 22nd January. Pickets will be out outside Manchester Royal Infirmary, and the airport and university will also be hit.

Water workers in the city are stepping up their action and have issued a call for other areas to support them and come out on strike.



control after the pattern of the previous three, has been of more help to the low-paid than any government incomes policy.

Ron Keating, Assistant General Secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, put the union's view clearly in a recent article: "In 17 out of 33 post-war years, there has been some form of incomes policy in Britain — sometimes imposed by the Government, sometimes agreed by the TUC.

"Yet NUPE members in the public services are today on a basic minimum wage of £42.40, compared with the subsistence level of £50 for a family with two children... "Among local authority

But among local authority manual workers there are several groups — in particular sewage and water workers — who do have real industrial strength. The importance of the present struggle is that all these groups are in struggle together, the strong with the weak.

The unions that are supposed to be leading the action are dragging their feet. NUPE, the union that has spearheaded the whole anti low pay campaign, has opted for a tactic of selective strikes after the January 22nd day of action... a tactic which has produced defeat in the past. The other unions, like the GMWU and the TGWU, have played a really miserably role so far and



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their position. wages inspectors 'blitzed' Cheltenham in order to find out whether people were being paid less than the level agreed by the wages councils. Most of the places visited were retail outlets, hairdressers, and catering establishments. They found that 36% of employers visited were paying below the odds.

The Daily Telegraph attacked the wages inspectors as 'busy-bodies' and complained: "It is not as though many firms are now making vast prof-

its at the expense of an exploited work force... On the contrary, underpaid employers are a problem that the minister might fruitfully turn his attention to".

The next 'blitz', in the middle of 1977, showed that the situation had hardly changed. A quarter of all employers visited in Cardiff, Wolverhampton, Skegness, Bury St Edmunds, Swansea and Blackburn were paying below the legal minimum set by the wages councils. In Southport

38% were paying below the rate.

These sweat-shop barons were breaking the law. Thousands of them were robbing workers of their legal entitlement, yet only seven cases came to court. Small fines were imposed on five... and two just got told off!

The government employs more of the unionised poor than anyone else. Remember last year when they got tough with the industrial civil servants, 23,000 of whom receive a basic rate of £32.50. In the end they offered them a princely £36 basic.

Contrast this with the forces of law and order. Field Marshals, frothing at industrial disorder in civvy street, are on an ample £28,000; major generals maddened by militancy are soothed by a cool £16,000 a year; judges ready to punish the powerless don't need to picket when they've got £15,250 a year; and police sergeants laying into the lobbyists outside Parliament get a little over £140 a week.

That shows the real priorities of the government. Now, when there are 2.6 million women and one million men getting less than £55 a week (the official poverty line), the government has decided to raise the pay of these top state employees still further... and at the same time to fight its low paid employees.

Fed up with blackmail

Workers' Action spoke to JEREMY CORBYN, an area officer in London for the National Union of Public Employees, about the low pay campaign.

We asked him what NUPE's plans were after the January 22nd one-day strike.

AFTER THE day of action there will be guerilla strikes and flying pickets to create as much disruption as possible.

We will maintain emergency services, but create maximum disruption with the minimum cost to the union through action such as work-to-rules. Essential to this is tying the water workers' claim into the general claim.

The press and TV campaign has already started against your action. What effect do you think it will have?

Where workers have been involved in the campaign, they are fed up at being blackmailed by the press and the Government. They

give enough as it is. They also feel that many Labour councils which are ready to increase social services seem to forget about the workers who maintain those services. We will be looking for support from Labour Parties and Councils to help end the scandal of NUPE members getting £40 a week.

How successful has the Low Pay Campaign been so far?

The Low Pay Campaign has been fairly effective in terms of the pressure it has created to get the membership to understand the claim. Its failure has been in the lack of support from other unions: it's a similar situation to the cuts campaign.

The response for the 22nd has been excellent. We have been arranging special workplace meetings to get support for the Day of Action, and they have had a tremendous response.

Has strike action been made more difficult by the

prospect of taking on a Labour Government?

No. We are not in the business of special pleading. We are against the 5% full stop. The only way the Government is going to restore its credibility is by ending the 5% and helping low-paid workers.

Many NUPE members are below the official poverty line. The only way it is possible to end low pay is through a higher basic wage.

The strike is directly a consequence of the last few years of the Labour Government accepting the IMF's conditions. The Government is attempting to keep wages down. They no longer have any support from the Labour Party or trade unions.

We are looking to the rest of the movement for full support. Our resolution on low pay was passed at both Labour Party and TUC conferences.

INTERVIEWER: Michael O'Sullivan

Next low-pay action - by central government workers

by STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

CENTRAL Government workers are also low-paid. But their pay fight is moving at a much slower pace, especially since the right wing regained control of the main white-collar civil service union, the CPSA.

The CPSA leadership are currently seeking the members' rubber-stamp for their action plans. A national one-day stoppage "hopefully in conjunction with other civil service unions" is to be followed by selective strike action at some computer centres.

Very few members - less than 1,000 out of the CPSA's 200,000 - will be involved in these selective strikes, though it is possible that overtime bans and other token actions will also be organised.

The fight is for the full implementation of Pay Research Unit findings. PRU is a system whereby civil service workers' pay is supposed to be pegged to the pay of comparable workers in

private industry. The left opposes this system on principle because it makes civil service workers parasitic on other workers' militancy, and because it diverts class struggle into haggling about differentials and relative wage rates.

Official CPSA leaflets suggest that the claim based on PRU could be a 15 to 20% increase. But the provisional figures presented to the CPSA National Executive in mid-December - and not sent out to rank and file members - show a different picture.

The figures in the table give CPSA Research Department estimates of median (average) pay figures likely to be arrived at by PRU. "It could be assumed at this stage", the document says, "that the pessimistic result is the 'realistic' one".

That means increases more like 10%, or less, for most CPSA members.

The PRU system - in contrast to a simple claim for a straight wage increase - gives the full-time officials

great control over the claim and the negotiations. But a campaign inside the CPSA for a Special Delegate conference on pay failed to win enough branches. So attempts to campaign now for an alternative claim (as the Redder Tape group is doing) mis-estimate the situation.

CPSA militants must build the official campaign, ensure that the one-day stoppage is a bigger success than the bureaucrats really want, and, through the union's Area Committees, organise support for those branches taking part in the selective strikes: mass pickets and sympathetic action.

The Area Committees should hold meetings to discuss the pay campaign and the possibilities of unofficial action - and there should be a national meeting of the Area Committees as soon as possible after the national one-day stoppage. Only in this way can a rank and file challenge be mobilised to the bureaucrats' grip over the pay campaign.

| Grade | Increment Level | Present Rate | MEDIAN WAGE LEVEL | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| | | | Optimistic | Pessimistic | | |
| Clerical Assistant | 16 years | 29.68 per week | 34.25 | 15.3% rise | 34.23 | 15.3% |
| | Min. | 44.13 | 51.31 | 16.3% | 48.15 | 9.1% |
| | Max. | 50.15 | 61.31 | 22.3% | 55.28 | 10.2% |
| Clerical Officer | 16 years | 1698 per year | 1920 | 13.1% rise | 1920 | 13.1% |
| | Min. | 2599 | 3206 | 23.4% | 3021 | 16.2% |
| | Max. | 3280 | 3818 | 16.4% | 3503 | 6.8% |
| Typist | 16 years | 29.42 per week | 33.41 | 13.6% | 34.65 | 17.8% |
| | Min. | 41.39 | 48.00 | 16.0% | 45.55 | 10.1% |
| | Max. | 50.15 | 55.88 | 11.4% | 54.53 | 8.7% |

Every member's vote must count

FOLLOWING THE right-wing victory in the re-run elections for the CPSA National Executive Committee (NEC), a Campaign for Union Democracy has been organised by 80 activists in the civil service workers' union and is distributing 10,000 copies of a campaign leaflet.

The CPSA's Executive was sacked last October by union president Len Lever. Threatened with legal action by the right wing, Lever ruled that the vice-presidential election had been irregular and the NEC election would also have to be re-run.

In an unexpected turnaround, the previous Left majority of 22-6 became a right-wing majority of 17-11.

Most left-wing candidates lost votes, but usually not many. The right-wing gains were from new votes, from

branches which apparently had abstained in the conference ballot.

The strong press campaign and the open accusations of ballot-rigging against the left helped to rally passive support for the right - despite the fact that the irregularities in the vice-presidential election mostly concerned right-wing branches. The recent press campaign against the Anti-Nazi League also helped the right, who campaigned against the left-wing NEC's support for the ANL.

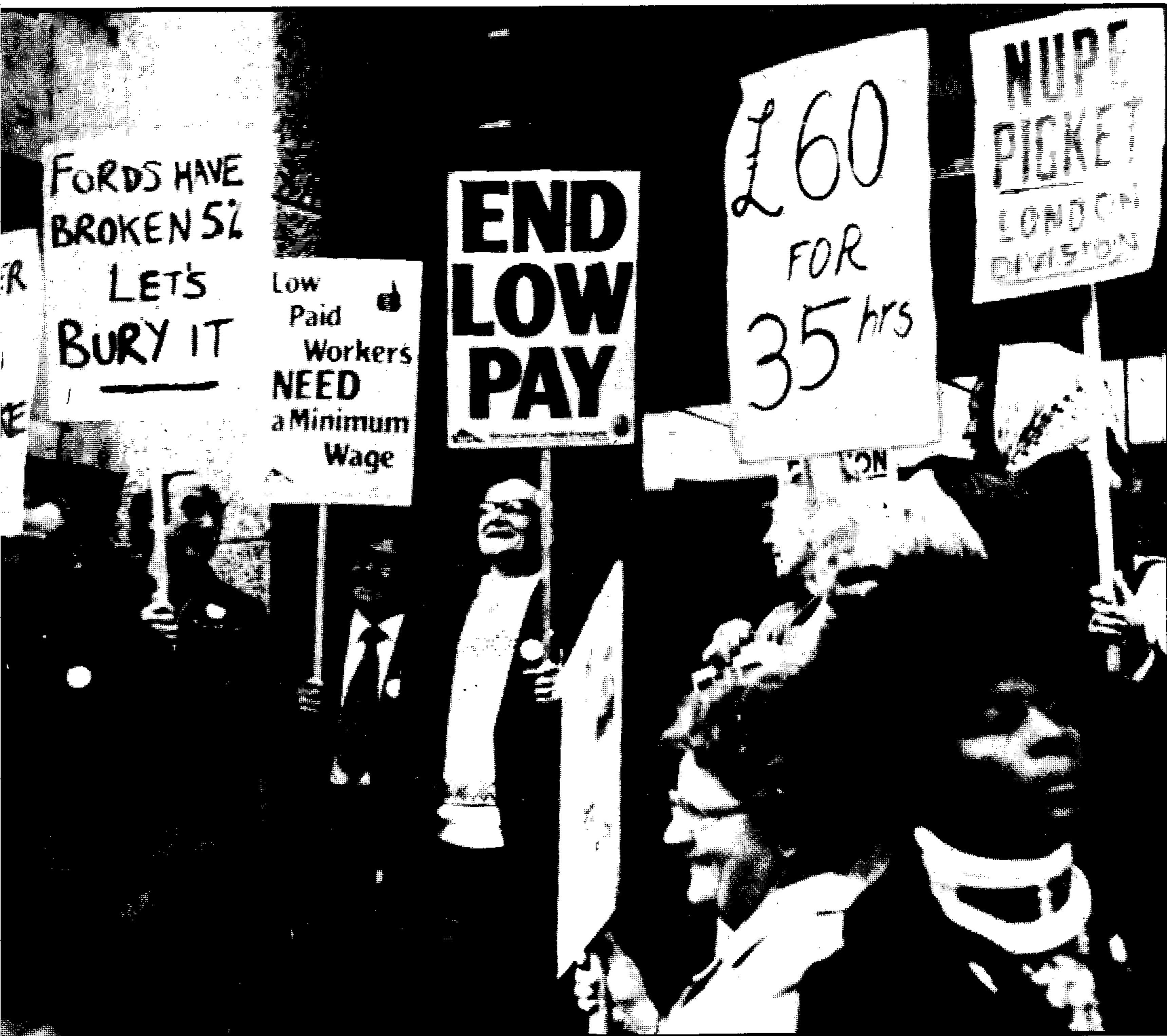
The organisational key to the right-wing's success was the full-time officials. Previously full-time officials were formally forbidden by the Standing Orders of the NEC from taking part in the 'political' activity of the union. The left-wing NEC scrapped

ed this ruling, bringing the full-timers' factional activity out into the open. But the full-timers helped to mobilise new voters for the right wing.

Some of the CPSA right-wingers want to bring in postal balloting. The Campaign for Union Democracy opposes both postal balloting and the present branch block-vote system (which is defended by the 'Militant' tendency).

"The answer", says the Campaign for Union Democracy, "lies in individual voting at branch meetings held in work time. Meetings could be held at different times and places so that all members could attend. It ensures the maximum involvement as every member knows that his or her vote counts equally towards the result"

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



ANOTHER GROUP of low-paid workers - the bakers - was defeated in its strike last year.

But now, after the strike, militant bakers are organising and trying to make sure of victory next time. For the bakers, as for council workers, the active involvement of women workers is vital, as GLYNIS GABRIEL, a Bakers' Union shop steward in Cardiff, told Workers Action.

The full-time women workers in this branch of the union feel very strongly about being

members. Without the union things would be worse.

"Already since the strike our shift hours have changed and this means more inconvenience, especially for married women with children. The majority of the women annoy me because they won't fight and we can be much stronger than the men. Women shouldn't be working for pin-money, the jobs should be made full-time to enable more people to earn a living.

"If we are to build a strong union, more women

need to organise in the factory. We should be able to organise and discuss our own problems and then take them to the branch for support.

There should be a women's shop stewards' committee organised locally. In this area alone, women workers in our union form quite a big percentage.

At the moment we are kept in the dark. Unless you're nose, you won't get to know anything. I'm the only woman shop steward in our factory. It shows how out of it women are.

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Fred Halliday's recently published Penguin, 'Iran: Dictatorship and Development' [£1.50], documents the inequality and brutality of the Shah's regime. But, argues Colin Foster, its political analysis is seriously wrong.

IRAN IS imperialism's big failure-point of the late 1970s for much the same reasons as it was a big success story in the 1960s and early '70s.

In 1962-4 — responding to internal revolt and US pressure — the Shah pushed through a land reform and started energetic state sponsoring of industrial capitalist development.

The land reform "created a new rural bourgeoisie and a new proletariat". Millions of workers flocked into the cities.

Around \$470 million was paid out by peasants and by the state to landowners; some of this money was traded for shares in government-owned factories, and another chunk found its way into financing urban property development and commercial enterprises.

Especially after oil revenue increased sharply in 1973, the state became a honey-pot for the bourgeoisie. In 1975, "a full 60% of all industrial investment was directly by the state". The state has also financed much of the private investment, through its banks and credit institutions.

Very Rich

A minority of Iran's population became very rich, very fast. Alongside the sudden rise in oil revenues — from \$1,000 million in 1970 to \$5,600 million in 1973, and over \$20,000 million in the following years — a new industrial sector grew up, oriented mainly to luxury consumer-goods production.

Production of cars increased from 28,000 in 1969 to 68,000 in the first nine months of 1975; of television sets, from 87,000 to 230,000; and of refrigerators, from 177,000 to 333,000.

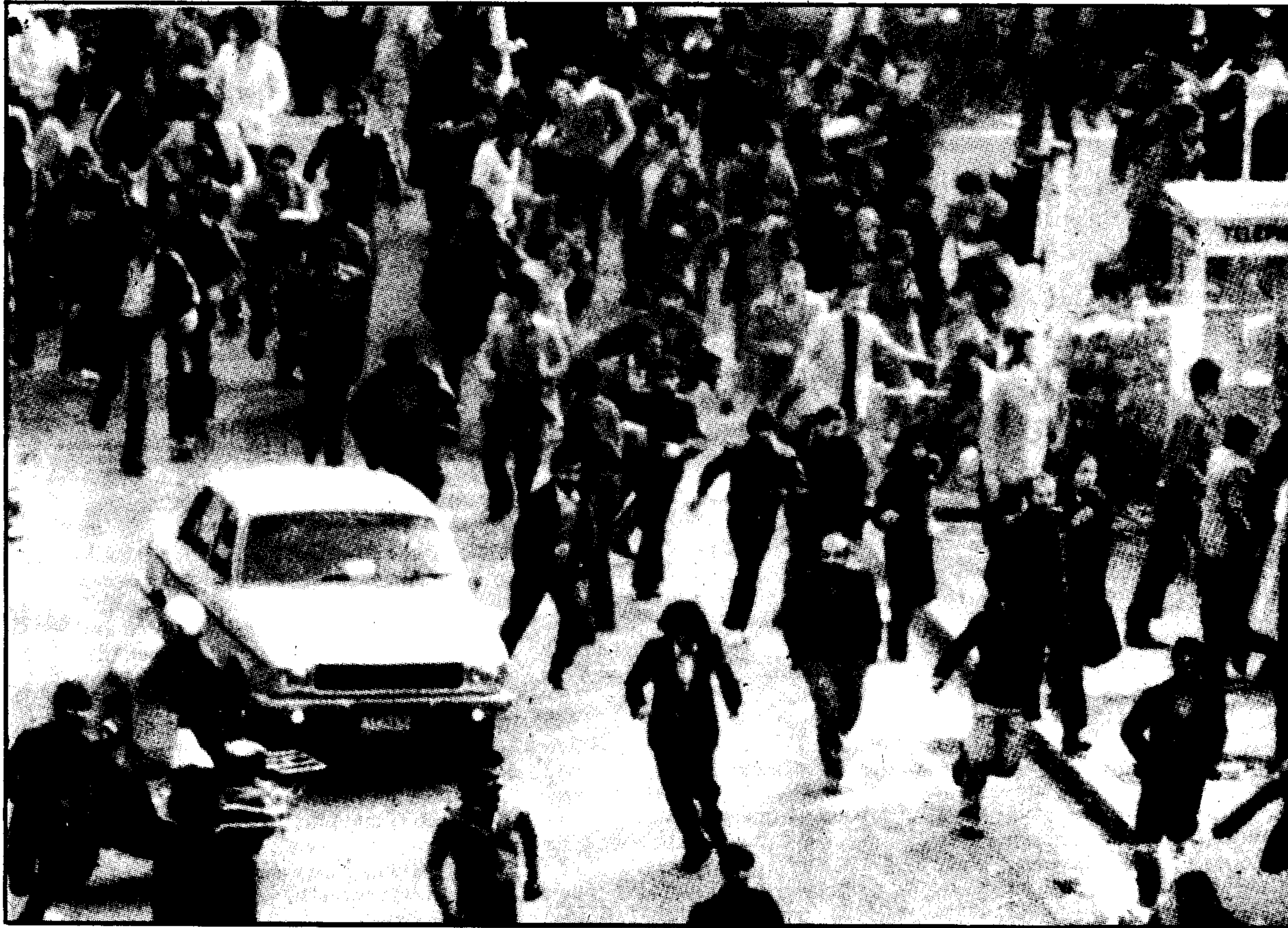
Profit rates were high. Halliday reports: "A US State Department official responsible for Iran, whom I interviewed in October 1976, pointed out that US firms in Iran worked on a 'get it while you can' basis; they assumed that an investment was only worthwhile if they could get their money back in four to five years [i.e. get a profit rate of 20 or 25%]. Many Iranian businessmen operate at a higher rate, requiring returns of 30% or over from an investment".

Oil boom

The biggest profits went to very few: in 1974, 45 families controlled 85% of the sizeable businesses. But Iran's profiteers did not depend mainly on their own productive enterprise. Oil revenues amounted to 38% of the national income in 1978-79 — and, on the whole, the people who became rich from the Shah's oil boom were those who got a cut of those revenues, through milking the state, through trading, or through corruption. US officials reckon on a 40% "waste factor" for the Iranian economy.

The top 10% of the population was estimated in 1976 to account for 40% of con-

Iran, the riches and the revolt



It took 20 weeks, not 20 years

sumption. They were helped by the fact that something like 85% of taxes on business were evaded. By the end of 1976, 20,000 Iranians had bought houses in or near London... and there many of them now cower, hoping that the army or the National Front can bring their golden profit-snatching days back again.

While the rich were buying their Mercedes and their London houses, a revolt was brewing. The industrial working class grew from 800,000 in 1956 to 2,500,000 in 1976. Although 72% of those two and a half million are still employed in small workplaces (with less than 10 workers), the number of workers in modern industrial enterprises has grown to several hundred thousand.

Trip up

"The number of strikes reported rose from a handful in 1971-3 to as many as 20 or 30 in 1975" [though all strikes were still illegal] — and many of the strikes were well-organised and successful. The workers could see that wealth was flooding into the country; they could see that a real improvement in conditions was possible, and was taking place for the top 10%; yet "for the working population as a whole, 73% received less than the legal minimum" wages, while rents in Tehran rose 100% or 200% a year.

Other problems helped trip up the Shah's boom. The peasants who got land in the 1962-4 reform were given little credit assistance by the government. As a result they often had to sell their land to richer farmers — and production stagnated.

"Agricultural production has risen by, at most, 2.5 to 3% per annum since the early 1960s. This is below the rate of increase in population (3%) and far below the demand for agricultural pro-

duce, which has been rising at 12.5% per annum". By 1977 Iran was spending 10 to 15% of its oil revenues on food imports.

Productivity in industry also remained low. "In 1976 it took 45 hours to assemble a GM Chevrolet in Iran, whilst the same process could be done in 25 hours in West Germany... an estimate for 1972 discovered that Iranian-manufactured goods were 25 to 33% more expensive than world prices". Exports of modern industrially manufactured goods from Iran are negligible.

With the high duties on imports — averaging 80% — Iranian industry has still had a safe home market, though imports have soared: from \$400 million in 1958-9 to \$18,450 million in 1975-6. Iranian capitalists have little incentive to increase productivity seriously. They can make quick profits and then invest elsewhere. Even before the political crisis led to economic panic last year, it was estimated that the outflow of Iranian capitalist funds was running at 15% of the oil revenue each year.

Run short

On top of this: "the relationship between the state and its [capitalist] partners is in many ways an uneasy one, and this unease restricts industrial growth. First of all, private capitalists have to spend a considerable amount of time and energy simply dealing with the state machine — getting permissions, bribing, coping with new and contradictory regulations and so on. Even in the early 1970s, foreign firms complained a good deal, but when the Iranian state began to run short of cash in 1976-7 and default on payments, the difficulties got much worse. Some firms pulled out of Iran altogether".

And, in a country where the state dominated the eco-

nomy, "the only kind of planning in Iran is what the Shah wants".

The biggest unproductive drain on the state was the armed forces — taking over 30% of the state budget. Iran's army is roughly twice the size of Britain's — and its sole purpose is to protect Iran's grossly unequal society, to maintain Iran as a base for imperialism, and to 'police' the surrounding area.

Elite corps

Iran is the US's biggest military customer, and the sums involved are huge: \$4,200 million worth of purchases in 1977. In 1976 there were 4,000 US military personnel in Iran, and the US and Iran have been jointly developing a \$500 million system (called 'Ibex') for spying on the USSR.

Besides the army, there are Iran's police forces. SAVAK is the most notorious, but there are others. "The Imperial Guard is a unit of about 2,000 men, all officers, stationed in Tehran, guarding the Shah... part of an elite corps of 70,000 men, including the parachutists and counter-insurgency rangers, deployed in and around the capital..."

"The Inspectorate is the Shah's personal instrument for watching the armed forces and ensuring that no conspiracies are hatched. The Special Bureau has wider powers: among other functions, it has responsibility for keeping an eye on SAVAK."

"The imperial Iranian Gendarmerie is, by contrast, a highly visible para-military force", specialised in rural counter-insurgency.

For the Shah, for those who have profited from his system, this huge and sinister build-up was the only way to maintain stability. But it could only keep Iran stable

for so long. Now all the underlying conflicts and tensions have exploded.

Fred Halliday's book supplies these basic facts. But beyond that it is, unfortunately, unlikely to be much help to readers who want to gain a political understanding of the struggle in Iran.

Halliday's book is avowedly Marxist. Yet its analysis is curiously wooden and static. The Penguin blurb-writer says that "Fred Halliday proffers some surprising conclusions"... probably because s/he found it difficult to see exactly what Halliday's conclusions are.

On every question, Halliday steers a murky middle way. Iran is dependent on imperialism but not as dependent as some Marxists make out. Iran's development has been limited, but not as limited as some Marxists say.

The book is clumsily written. It is specially unfortunate for a book which will reach a large audience that it contains a lot of neo-Marxist phraseology dressing up not-very-profound empirical observations.

Crisis

The general drift is towards an analysis which flatly describes the trends in Iran between 1962 and 1977 and extrapolates them into the future. Snags and problems are mentioned, but never tied together in a coherent theory of the limits of Iranian capitalism.

In a throwaway remark, Halliday implies that imperialism today no longer retards "Third World" development. His analysis of Iran is not put into the context of the capitalist world market and its crises; there is not even any major discussion of the world oil industry.

Although Halliday's preface is dated September 1978, and the text is presumably revised up to that date,

page after page gives figures for the Iranian economy in the 1980s or 1990s based on 'business as usual' continuing pretty well unchanged. The Penguin blurb-writer, searching through the book to find what Halliday had to say about the barriers facing capitalism in Iran, ended up highlighting the fact that "by 2000 Iran will no longer have the oil to export".

On the working class, Halliday has this to say: "It would be naive to undervalue the limits of the strike movement [after 1973] which has a mainly economic as opposed to political character. No workers' movement will be able to emerge under conditions of severe repression such as exist in Iran. On the other hand the material capacity of the regime to satisfy popular demands will necessarily shrink in the years ahead. The opposition of the working class, fragmented as it must be for a time, may well add to the difficulties which the state encounters".

The concluding chapter, which covers 1978's events up to the Jaleh Square massacre of September 8th, does not revise this estimate. Discussing the possibility of a socialist revolution, Halliday writes, "Such an eventuality is conceivable [!], and there appears to be a possibility [!] that as crisis and discontent grow in the last two decades of this century [emphasis added] the regime will not be able to buy loyalty and quiet with its promises".

Instead of focusing on the chances of revolution in the present crisis, Halliday retreats to vague speculation about the likelihood of the regime running into some sort of difficulties some time in the next 20 years!

True enough, the problems on the road to socialist revolution in Iran are immense. But they will be bigger if any Iranian socialists follow Halliday's advice.

Left unity

Fred Halliday's politics are an addled version of the ideas of his mentor Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher was a Trotskyist before World War 2. After the war he wrote a great biography of Trotsky, but concluded that Trotsky's struggle for the Fourth International had been wasted effort. The future, he thought, would belong not to Trotskyism but to a 'new synthesis' taking elements from both Trotskyism and Stalinism.

Deutscher died in August 1967. If he had lived to see the events of 1968 and the following years, he might very probably have moved closer to Trotskyism again. But Halliday continues the attitude of being 'above the struggle' in a period when the struggles are much more intense.

He describes the USSR and the Moscow-line Tudeh party of Iran as 'communist' — without qualification, though he bemoans the "failure of the international communist movement to resolve the question" of democracy. He is at pains to stress that the Tudeh Party, although it has made mistakes, "remains a constituent of the left in Iran, and the only one that has avoided the temptations of optimistic rhetoric". He advocates broad unity of all the Iranian left.

There will scarcely be a place in that 'broad unity' for Iranian workers who want to fight for revolution now rather than waiting to observe the difficulties the regime may face in 20 years' time.

LEFT PRESS

Institutionalising whose legitimacy?

ON 7th January the Cambodian government fell to a Vietnamese invasion.

In *Socialist Worker*, Nigel Harris commented sagely: "The hopes of all (the) years of liberation war have disintegrated". Why? "Despair makes the poor kill each other — and keeps the world safe for the rich". And SW left the matter there ... apart from a prediction (already refuted) that the Vietnamese would not advance beyond the Mekong river.

This little piece of homespun wisdom is in line with SW's coverage 3½ years ago, when they greeted the revolutionary victories in Indochina with no criticism (and little interest). It follows from SW's theory of 'state capitalism' as the inevitable outcome of revolutions like those in Vietnam. All one can do is greet whatever victories there are ... and shrug one's shoulders when setbacks follow.

Socialist Challenge made more effort to produce a political analysis. Tariq Ali's article came down quite firmly on the Vietnamese side, apparently on the basis of vulgar liberalism: "Socialist Challenge has maintained that the central dilemma of the post-revolutionary regimes in Indochina was the establishment of organs of power which institutionalised their legitimacy."

"This involves the estab-

lishment of democratic rights, elections, a plurality of parties, access to a press, freedom of religion, no cultural restraints, etc."

Tariq Ali noted that the new Cambodian regime will probably be less tyrannical than Pol Pot's, though "these rights do not exist in Vietnam (and) it would be utopian to expect the Vietnamese or their supporters to institute them in Cambodia."

A Marxist case for taking the Vietnamese side could be made on the basis that their intervention was simply assistance to a progressive movement of the Cambodian people, or on the basis that Cambodia risked becoming a base for counter-revolutionary aggression against the new Vietnamese state. No adequate evidence exists for either of these arguments, or to prove that the Cambodians will not now suffer national oppression at the hands of the Vietnamese.

The problem with Tariq Ali's argument is that for Marxists democratic rights are not a checklist on the basis of which to give good or bad marks to whatever governments history may bring along. They are tools of class struggle.

In the backward economies of Indochina, after years of war, even the best workers'

state would probably have to resort to harsh, dictatorial methods. The problem in Vietnam is that the dictatorial political power is not in the hands of the workers, but in the hands of a bureaucracy ruling the deformed workers' state.

Tariq Ali points out correctly that the Stalinist theory of building socialism in one country is at the root of the matter. It remains to say that theories become forces moulding history only when they get a real social base, and that the social base for 'socialism in one country' is the bureaucracy.

The conclusion which *Socialist Challenge* evades is the need to build revolutionary workers' parties in Indochina to overthrow the bureaucracies — indeed, Tariq Ali's list of central issues, while including all the usual bourgeois democratic rights, omits the issue of workers' democracy, or workers' councils.

It may be that workers' councils are what he means by the phrase 'organs of power'. But then the workers' councils are given the role of "institutionalising the legitimacy" of the existing regimes!

The combination of their old enthusiasm for the Vietnamese regime and their new enthusiasm for Eurocommunist-type democracy-fetishism is creating some strange results in the columns of *Socialist Challenge*.



Grunwick — tearing off the straitjacket

"The most brutal racism is that of H.M. Government"

ASIAN women talking about themselves, their lives, their feelings, their past and future: Amrit Wilson's book, in which the most traditionally silent and submissive members of our society speak out, is aptly titled 'Finding a Voice'.

Many women speaking in this book are painfully aware of the contradictions of their lives. On the one hand they are forced by an ignorant and hostile white population to uphold and defend their traditional family structures, and on the other they are presented with an entirely new set of economic and social circumstances which is in direct conflict with that tradition.

The main groups of Asians who have come to Britain are Sylhetis from Bangladesh; Sikhs from Punjab; Gujarati Hindus from western India; and Muslims from Pakistan. In the case of the Gujarati Hindus many have been living in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda for generations, until they were expelled in 1968-75. They had to bring their entire families to Britain at once.

For the other groups, immigration has been a longer process. When Sikh men came to Britain in the fifties it was with the hope of making some money (usually to buy more land for the family) and returning. Once here, the racism they faced in employment often forced them to start their own small businesses as a means of livelihood.

Having built up their businesses and gained an accompanying status, they were reluctant to leave, and gradually in the sixties more and more men started sending for their wives.

After the 1965 Immigration Act the practice of sending one son at a time to Britain to work for a short period became extremely difficult. There was no choice other than to settle in Britain, and so the Muslim Mirpuri and Bangladeshi women came to join their husbands and fathers.

Once here these women were faced with almost total isolation. They were deprived of the close relationship between them and the other women in their families, and thrown into an often hostile host community. The hold of Izzat (defined in the book as a mixture of family pride, honour, self respect and male ego) was strengthened.

In fact the book largely centres on the question of Izzat, and the contradictions it presents to the women who are now forced, against their traditions, to work outside the home.

In her introduction Amrit Wilson states: "Having indirectly and inadvertently brought Asian women to Britain, the racism of the state and the racism of British society now defines the wider position.



Amrit Wilson

CARLA JAMISON and MARY GLEASON review 'Finding a Voice' by Amrit Wilson [Virago £2.50].

of Asian women in this country — as the lowest paid and most exploited workers or as the wives and daughters of such workers — an unstable and unacceptable situation full of conflict and contradictions."

In one chapter a woman teacher describes how older women in her husband's family insisted that she wear the traditional Salwar Kamiz (trousers and long top), headscarf and bright make-up, which she rubbed off as soon as she was at work.

However, worse than this is the racism and low pay allotted to Asian women at work. In some London and Bradford sweatshops Asian women were considered ideal workers — many had come from peasant backgrounds, hadn't had much dealings with money, and had been socialised into politeness, modesty and deference.

Now, faced with the fact that they often earn less than their white counterparts and goaded by racist insults, the 'docile' and easily exploited workforce is gradually becoming more defiant and angry.

The example to them all was Grunwicks. As Amrit Wilson comments "Women in sweatshops are still talking about Grunwicks. It's a symbol of what they can do". But her interviews with some of the Grunwick strike leaders, including Kalaben Patel and Jayaben Desai, show that their rejection of traditional submissiveness and passivity did not necessarily imply 'westernisation'.

Her section on immigration is uncompromising: "In Britain" she writes "the most brutal and wide ranging racism which occurs day after day is not the work of fascist minority parties but of Her Majesty's Government. It is the racism written into, and demanded by, Britain's Immigration laws. New black immigration has long ago been stopped, but any black man or woman who wants to bring dependents over, or to be visited by relatives at home, is now afraid of what these people will have to suffer."

Women face especial humiliations, abused and interrogated by immigration officials, sometimes made to undergo virginity checks (if they are coming as fiancées rather than wives) and even now can be excluded or detained if the Immigration Officer is not satisfied of their intentions.

Finding a Voice gives a rich and valuable insight into the lives and feelings of Asian women in Britain, all the better for being by them rather than about them. It testifies to their growing awareness of their oppression, accentuated by the conflict between the traditional social structure and the reality of living as low paid victims of racism in a capitalist Britain. For them, finding a voice is the beginning of a fightback on many fronts.



Ideal workers — but not for long

DIARY

Saturday 20 January. Car-workers' conference: the crisis in the car industry. Called by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement. 11am to 5pm, at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham.

Monday 22 January. Trade Union day of action: End Low Pay! Assemble 11.30am at Speakers' Corner.

Thursday 25 January. Times workers' march and rally. Assemble 11.30am at Arundel St, just off Temple Place, London WC2.

Sunday 28 January. Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration, called by Provisional Sinn Fein. Assemble 2.30pm at Speakers' Corner.

Saturday 3 February. Demonstrate in solidarity with the Iranian workers. 1pm from Trafalgar Square (provisional arrangements). Called by February 3rd Committee; supported by CP, SWP, IMG, Workers Action, Big Flame, and NUS.

Wednesday 24 January. Lobby Labour's NEC to demand that the Party, not the Government, decide on the Manifesto. From 8.45am at Transport House, Smith Square. Organised by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, Box 1960, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Saturday 20 January. National Union of Teachers women's conference. 10.30 to 5 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. Conference fee £1. Afterwards: disco from 8pm at Stephenson Room, Euston Station.

Saturday 10 February. Trade Union and Labour conference on the Times, in London. Details: John Mitchell, 01-928 1481.

Saturday 10 March. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference, at Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Credentials for TU delegates £1 from J.Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

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Second issue out now! Single copies 15p plus 7p postage, bundles of 10 for £1 post free, from SCLV, Box 127, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1.

REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY

Commemoration of the victims of the British Army massacre in Derry, 1972

Demonstrate, Sunday 28 January: 1.30 from Speakers Corner, Hyde Park

LETTERS

NAC's lost opportunities

Dear Workers' Action, I was surprised that your report on the National Abortion Campaign trade union conference failed to mention the opportunities which were lost on that occasion.

The Conference was organised in such a way that it was very difficult to influence either its organisation or conclusions through local NAC groups or trade union branches. Resolutions were not called for, so there was no real opportunity for delegates to participate in discussion about what we mean by a woman's right to choose and how we achieve

this. There was confusion about how workshops could be used for this purpose, and a cynicism on the part of the NAC Steering Committee towards those groups who did try to influence the course of events.

The action proposals did nothing to reorientate NAC into a properly coordinated body with roots in the working class. If NAC continues on the defensive it will have no base to properly stave off further attacks. What is more, we do not have a woman's right to choose, as is clear from your report on Leicester's situa-

tion, and we should be working to embarrass the Labour government into legislating on this.

The conference should also have been used to establish NAC caucuses in the trade unions which could do ongoing work. Its failure to do so at a time when we have no national working-class women's movement indicates a lack of seriousness and understanding on the part of the organisers [and those who didn't try to influence it] as to how we really will achieve abortion on demand.

CHRIS GOODWIN
Leicester



Haulage bosses are crumbling already

by
SIMON TEMPLE

THE LORRY drivers' strike is now official in most areas, and is really starting to bite.

Nearly all the major ports are at a standstill. Leyland car production has nearly stopped because of component shortages. ICI is grinding to a halt, and many other firms are closing down.

The dispute started between the Transport and General Workers' Union and the employers of the Road Haulage Association, but it has now spread a lot further. Many firms that do not belong to the RHA have been stopped, and British Road Services drivers in London, Birmingham and Leeds have struck. They will soon be followed by other areas.

The drivers' common cause is to end the industry's traditional burden of low basic wages and long hours. Under the present agreement with the RHA, lorry drivers get a basic of £53 for 40 hours, and have to work the longest hours of any industry in Britain in order to make up their pay packets with overtime money. The TGWU is demanding £65 basic for a 35 hour week, plus fringe benefits.

The bosses' offer so far is £60 basic, nothing on hours, and nothing on the major fringe benefits.

At Dartford a parcels depot has come out although they work to quite different agreements. Even the generally conservative United Road Transport Union (URTU) has been forced to call its 35,000 members out on official strike.

Despite brave statements from the Road Haulage Association, the employers are beginning to crumble. Reports from all over the country show some firms settling and indicate that the bosses mostly haven't got the stomach for a long fight.

According to the magazine *Motor Trader*, it costs over £50 a day to keep a 32-ton artic. standing. Not many transport firms can afford to keep their fleets idle for long.

In fact, the biggest danger facing the strike is the attitude of the TGWU's own paid officials. The rapid spread of unofficial action throughout England caught them completely by surprise, and they are desperately trying to regain control of the situation.

If anything, they are even more scared than the bosses. They are already trying to restrict the picketing and allow scab firms outside the RHA to operate. They are likely to come to a sell-out agreement with the employers, and then try to use it to split the strike and get us back to work.

The only way to stop such a move is to make sure that local strike committees continue to run the struggle and to strengthen the links between the various committees. Some national links already exist, especially through the container haulage industry, and they must be extended.

For the moment the Government has more faith in the TGWU leadership's ability to control the strike than it has in its own ability to use troops to break it. That can quickly change. If the army is used, every driver in the country should come out, and every vehicle and all goods moved by the troops must be blacked permanently.

The other danger is that workers laid off as a result of the strike will be turned against the drivers. Lorry drivers' branches and strike committees should commit themselves publicly to supporting struggles for 100% lay-off pay, so that it will be the bosses, not the workers, who pay the penalty.

MIDLANDS STRIKERS LOCKED OUT OF UNION OFFICE

THE WEST Midlands is the one important area where the haulage strike is still unofficial. But the Birmingham and Wolverhampton branches have been out in defiance of union advice for the last two weeks. Last Sunday the West Bromwich branch narrowly voted to join in too.

Regional officials have so far refused to ask Head Office to make the strike official. They claim that an adequate offer has already been made. *In fact it is a total sell-out.*

The officials had agreed that there would be no strike and no wage increase until the rest of the country settles. The highest RHA regional rate which results is then to be matched in the West Midlands.

A recall conference of Midlands drivers' delegates on Monday 15th rejected this scabby deal, and ordered a further meeting with the employers to demand a cash offer. At the same time militants occupied Transport House in Birmingham, demanding official recognition for the strike and access to the Commercial Transport Office for use as strike headquarters.

So far the strike committee have been forced to use an office at the strike-bound Brain Haulage Yard.

Meanwhile district officer Alan Law has locked up his office and vanished, after failing to sabotage the strike.

A mass lobby of the union's regional committee was planned for Tuesday 16th to demand Law's replacement and official backing for the strike. But when 1,000 strikers arrived at the regional office, they were faced with a line of police, locked doors, and the news that the meeting had been postponed 'because of the rail strike'.

Workers' ACTION

Necessary picketing The life-blood of the strike

THE PRESS, the employers, and the Government have found an angle to attack the road haulage strike.

The last week has seen innumerable attacks on secondary picketing and demands for it to be banned by law, a move which Labour ministers are said to be 'considering'.

They have certainly chosen the right issue. Secondary picketing is the life-blood of the strike. In most transport strikes, there is not much point in picketing the depots themselves unless there is a threat of some drivers scabbing. Picketing is needed at the factories, warehouses, and docks from which the firm normally gets its loads. That is the only way to stop scabs or unsuspecting union members being brought in to do the strikers' work.

The strike-breaking can be organised in two ways: either the firm whose goods are not being moved calls in another contractor or the transport firm itself may sub-contract the work, taking a 10% commission.

In the present national strike, the picketing is ev-

en more important. It is the only way to check that the company fleets are not being diverted to do the strikers' work. It has also been important in spreading the strike from area to area. Drivers who have attempted to scab know that they will be found out and if they don't turn back they will be blacked.

But the TGWU officials are trying to undermine the effectiveness of the picketing. They have agreed with the Government on a list of essential supplies and are telling pickets to let them through.

Some, like medical supplies, genuinely are urgent, and were being let through anyway. Others, like supplies of newsprint to the bosses' press, are not so vital.

However, the bureaucrats are finding out that issuing orders and getting them obeyed are two different things.

In Manchester, pickets are refusing to lift the block on the movement of food, while in Hull the drivers stopped picketing the factories, and moved to the main roads leading into the

town, where they have turned back most lorries.

The situation is similar in other areas. The defence of effective picketing is important, not just for lorry drivers, but for all workers.

The 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, which won by going to the power stations; the dockers' fight for the extension of the National Dock Labour Scheme by blockading scab ports; factory workers' pickets on scab suppliers and sub-contractors; the bakers' pickets on the flour mills — all these would be threatened by the anti-picket measures now urged by the Tories.

Any limitation on the right to picket (there are plenty already) is an attack on workers' rights to act in defence of their jobs and living standards. If the bosses get away with this attack, they won't be satisfied. They will look for the opportunity to press home their advantage by further measures.

The whole working class needs to fight any legal restrictions on the right to picket.

CARS CONFERENCE WIDER LINKS NEEDED

THIS SATURDAY, 20th, militant carworkers from all the big firms — Ford, BL, Vauxhall, Chrysler — will be meeting in Birmingham at a conference on the crisis in the car industry, called by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement. JIM DENHAM reports.

THROUGHOUT THE motor industry, workers and their organisations are under attack. Wage levels have declined, manning levels have been slashed, and track speeds have been raised as the bosses fight it out for pre-eminence — or for survival — on the international car market.

Meanwhile the union leaderships in the industry have gone along with almost all the bosses' arguments about 'viability', 'rationalisation', and 'continuous production'. In British Leyland and Chrysler, participation schemes enthusiastically supported by convenors and senior stewards have sapped the fighting strength of shop-floor organisation.

In the face of all this, the need for a rank and file organisation basing itself on the interests of the workers, rejecting all considerations of capitalist 'viability', and fighting for the removal of

the spineless officials and convenors, is painfully obvious.

Some progress towards building such a movement should be made at the carworkers' conference called this weekend (20th January) by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement (CDLM).

The CDLM's previous cars conference adopted a generally good programme, including:

- Automatic cost of living protection clauses in wage agreements
- Full support to any section fighting wage controls
- Opposition to participation schemes
- Defence of 'mutuality' agreements
- 100% lay-off pay
- Direct control of negotiations by mass meetings
- Combine committees directly answerable to the shop floor
- Nationalisation of the cars and car components industry.

The CDLM, however, has a very limited influence in the car industry, and almost none outside British Leyland. Links between the CDLM and the Ford Workers' Group — which played a major role in the Ford strike — must urgently be set up.

There are two key weak-

nesses in the CDLM's political approach in the car industry. The first is its failure (indeed, refusal) to look towards building international links. At the last CDLM cars conference, *Workers' Action* supporters proposed that contacts be established with overseas carworkers with the long-term aim of establishing an international carworkers' committee. The conference organisers rejected this as 'pretentious' and ensured its defeat in the voting.

After the Peugeot-Chrysler deal and the experience of the Ford strike, it should now be obvious that international links are the only practical way of developing an effective working-class strategy in face of the international manoeuvres of the car giants.

The second problem is the CDLM's obsession with plant bargaining. The last conference adopted the slogan, "No to corporate bargaining". This may have made some sense in the context of the fight then taking place in Leyland against the employers' plan to replace plant negotiations with remote and bureaucratic national negotiations... but the demand makes no sense when applied to the other motor companies, where national negotiations have

long been a fact of life, and the struggle is to democratise these negotiations, not return to plant bargaining.

Even in BL, plant bargaining ended last November, and it would now be a futile diversion to waste energy trying to resurrect it. The fight in BL must now be for a combine committee under the direct control of the rank and file throughout the plants to draw up national claims and coordinate national strike action to achieve them.

The isolated Dreads Lane strike last November, where workers in other BL plants had, in effect, to wait for Dreads Lane to return before it would have been possible to get any action elsewhere, shows the limits of the plant by plant approach.

If the CDLM can overcome these two blind-spots, and make a serious effort to establish cooperation with other unofficial groupings, it could play an important role in building a genuine rank and file movement in cars. The Ford strike, and even the recent ballot in BL (where 20,000 workers abstained, and another 25% voted against the "5% plus parity, with strings" deal backed by the bosses and union leaders) show that the 'raw material' for such a movement exists.

