

WORKERS' ACTION

No.137

March 17-24, 1979

10p

SUPPORT THE GARNERS STRIKERS

Day of Action, Saturday March 24

Assemble Speakers' Corner, 3pm

And every day: noon to 3pm and 5.30pm to 11 at 399 Oxford St, 243 Oxford St, 40-41 Haymarket, & 56 Whitcombe St.

TORTURE IN IRELAND

THE BRITISH Government may soon be forced to admit that it has been running a torture centre in Northern Ireland.

The people of Northern Ireland have known this for a long time. In May last year many workers struck, and 3,000 marched in Belfast, after Brian Maguire was found hanged in his cell at Castlereagh interrogation centre.

The British Government has tried to maintain a wall of silence. Last year the European Court of Human Rights found Britain guilty of 'degrading and inhuman treatment' in Ireland in 1971. The British Government claimed things had changed since 1971.

In June last year a television programme ('This Week') exposing Castlereagh was banned. The TV technicians struck, refusing to show the alternative broadcast.

Last Sunday, however (March 11th), 'Weekend World' got through with a broadcast quoting former Castlereagh prison doctor Robert Irwin. Prisoners, he said, had "injuries which could not be self-inflicted. Ruptured eardrums, I would say, being one of the most serious, could not possibly be self-inflicted". Irwin had seen some 150 prisoners who showed unmistakable signs of police brutality.

Irwin was soon backed up by Jack Hassard, a Protestant local councillor and former member of the Northern Ireland Police Authority complaints committee: "In my opinion the police authority is guilty of a massive cover-up".

Castlereagh's torture forces confessions out of prisoners which can later be used (without any of the British legal system's normal restrictions) in Northern Ireland's special no-jury courts. 80% of cases in these courts are based on such confessions, and the conviction rate is over 90%.

Last year Amnesty International produced a report documenting police brutality at Castlereagh and other RUC centres in sober detail. The Govern-

ment was forced to set up a public inquiry, the Bennett Committee. It was set up with a view to applying the thickest layer of white-wash possible: there would be no public hearings, and no specific cases of ill-treatment would be investigated. But, according to press advance reports, even the Bennett committee will conclude that there have been unexplained injuries and reforms are needed.

Northern Ireland Minister Roy Mason's office denounced the 'Weekend World' broadcast as "just another thinly disguised attack on the RUC and the Army" — but carefully avoided denying the specific charges.

Mason put up a smoke-screen of bluster: "It does not touch on the violations of human rights embodied in murders, torture, kneecapping, bombings and maimings, all of which are more accurately documented but apparently less interesting to some elements of the TV world".

As if the yellow press in Britain didn't howl, week after week, against violence by Irish Republicans, often without any 'documentation' connecting the violence they report with Republicanism beyond the say-so of the Army.

The Irish Republicans make no claim to be non-violent. They recognise that they are fighting a war — a war of liberation — against greatly superior forces, using what methods they can. Mason's reply amounts to saying that anything goes in the struggle to put down that war of liberation.

There is one grain of truth embedded in Mason's hypocrisy. No oppressor has yet found a way to keep a rebellious people in chains without using the sort of torture practised at Castlereagh.

- Troops out of Ireland now!
- Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole
- Solidarity with the Republicans and Socialists fighting for a united Ireland
- Down with the Orange police state!

TROOPS OUT NOW!



Troops, torture and draconian laws — all in the service of political repression of a community in arms

Miners hit pay swindle

THE QUICK settlement of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) pay claim met little resistance on the NUM Executive. The Coal Board's offer of a 9% rise seemed calculated not only to evade any bust-up with the miners in the run-up to the election, but to block the hope of a higher settlement in the low paid workers' strike.

Now the confident expectations of a quiet acceptance of the offer are being shattered by a grass roots revolt. So far Scotland, Kent, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire

have rejected the offer. The Yorkshire area NUM Executive said a week ago that it would not campaign against the offer, but it thought it was too low. Both Yorkshire and the South Wales area (due to meet soon) are likely to reject the deal.

It was the Nottinghamshire vote that surprised everyone. It is usually a 'moderate' area. Arthur Palmer, Gedling Colliery delegate to the area conference, told Workers' Action what happened there.

"When we arrived there

were two documents on the table. Len Clarke, the area President, waffled on about unsocial hours to begin with. Then, without any discussion on the offer, he just called for 'all those in favour'. A few hands went up. Then he asked, 'all those against', and a forest of hands went up.

"There was pandemonium. Clarkie's cronies were demanding another vote, so we voted again. The result was the same. So the vote was taken twice more, but each time the result was the same. So, at a quarter to ten, the

meeting was closed.

"I think Clarke was relying on the loyalty of the moderates. He might have got somewhere if he'd argued for the offer, but he didn't.

"I'm against the offer myself, and I think a lot of the members were suspicious of the quick acceptance of the Coal Board's offer, and they wondered, why so much secrecy?"

"The productivity deal is the usual kind: the men have to do everything and management don't have to do a

Dragnet law comes up for renewal

THE PREVENTION of Terrorism Act was rushed in as a 'draconian temporary measure' in November 1974. Four and a half years later, it is coming up for renewal in Parliament once again.

The Act has very little to do with terrorism. Its main function is to give the police a licence to pick up people and interrogate them. Under the Act, people can be held without charge for up to seven days inland, or twelve days at a port of entry.

3,782 people have been detained under the Act in Britain, and 583 in Northern Ireland. 149 people have been deported from Britain to Ireland, on the say-so of the Home Secretary. Only 13 people have actually been convicted of offences under the Act.

The Act also gives the police powers — not much used at present, but held in reserve — against organisations sympathetic to Irish Republicanism, and since 1976 it has included a clause which allows people to be prosecuted for 'withholding information on terrorism'. Eleven people are awaiting trial under this clause in Britain, and another 11 in Northern Ireland.

bloody thing. A lot of the members are disenchanted with the results of the last incentive scheme. As far as the hours is concerned, what we are asking for is a 30 hour week — which has been taken to mean a four day week, though it doesn't have to be — and this is an important demand".

Now it looks certain that Gormley's plan to avoid a national pit-head ballot will fail. It is vital that militants in the areas start a campaign for rejection of the Coal Board offer.

SOUTH AFRICA: RACIST WORKERS vs. RACIST BOSSES

THE PROMOTION of three coloured (mixed race) workers to jobs previous done by whites has led to an official national strike by the Mine Workers' Union of South Africa (MWU). The MWU is an all-white union whose major demand is for the maintenance of 'job reservation' by the government to exclude black workers from skilled jobs.

The strike began when 120 white workers at the O'Kiep copper mine in the Cape Province were sacked for protesting at the promotion of three coloured workers. This led, on Wednesday 7th March, to an unofficial strike by 10,000 white mineworkers which the MWU made official two days later. The MWU has now called out all its members in the platinum, coal and gold mines, where it organises about half the 36,000 white workers.

Sacked

Production at the Impala and Rutenburg platinum mines has been halted by the strike, but the majority of white workers in the coal mines have not joined the action. Though the MWU claims that between 60 and 90% of white goldminers have joined the strike, production is still running at 80% of normal. The MWU president Cor de Jager threatened expulsion of any members

not obeying the strike call when it was made official on 10th March.

The mining employers' organisation, the Chamber of Mines, are resisting the MWU's demands, and have sacked all the strikers. The mineowners say that the MWU members will have to re-apply for their jobs and will lose all accumulated pay and holiday entitlements after the strike is over. By Tuesday 13th March the mineowners claimed the strike had crumbled and only 4000 were left on strike.

Squeeze

The employers' resistance and the silence from the apartheid government (which the MWU had hoped would back the strike) are not as remarkable as might seem.

The seven major companies which form the Chamber of Mines are planning a massive investment. Whereas existing capital equipment in the mines is valued at around £150 million, the mineowners are now to spend *four times that sum*, £600 million, on new underground equipment. This investment will mean a cut-back in unskilled labour and a big demand for more skilled workers. The mining companies, who are currently experiencing a squeeze on profits, are anxious to in-

crease the skilled workforce by bringing in black workers at low rates.

The MWU is bitterly opposed to this. It is one of South Africa's most right-wing white unions, and is affiliated to the South African Confederation of Labour, which acts as a pressure

group on the National Party government to deny blacks skilled jobs and the right to organise in unions.

Though the government has often carried out legislation under pressure from militant white union bigots — especially in the mining industry — it has always re-

served for itself the right to temporarily open up skilled jobs to 'coloured' or Indian workers when business interests demand it.

Colour bar restrictions, imposed by law, have existed in the mining industry since 1903 when they were introduced by the British administration after agitation from white workers. The Nationalist government extended the restrictions in 1956 to cover most industries: the Industrial Conciliation Act incorporated the main demands of the Confederation of Labour to prohibit union recruitment of blacks and widen 'job reservation'.

The MWU has been at the centre of white union attempts to preserve these white privileges. It is a key union in the Confederation of Labour which, with 200,000 white members, is marginally bigger than the other white trade union federation, TUCSA. (TUCSA has a more 'liberal' policy of organising 'coloured' workers — though with few rights in the union — in order to guide their unions under white control.)

The Council of Mining Unions, of which the MWU is a member, decided in 1970 to ban its members from training blacks for any skilled or semi-skilled work even in the Bantustans. The MWU has recruited over 1,000 members in the last year from the Engineering Workers Union, which took a softer stand on maintaining the colour bar.

Now this centre of white trade union power, based on the most rigid application of the colour bar, is under attack.

As South African firms suffer from the effects of the economic crisis they see a need to relax — though certainly not to scrap — the job reservation system and make use of cheaper 'coloured' or even black labour in jobs previously done by whites. *With wage rates for 'coloureds' one tenth those of whites, and blacks getting only a twentieth of the white average, the attractions are obvious.*

Black unions

As early as 1970 a survey conducted by the Association of Chambers of Commerce in South Africa found a large majority of SA's 1,500 top bosses felt the job reservation system had a crippling effect on the availability of labour for their businesses. Last year the MWU's paper reported on an alleged secret document of the Anglo-American Mining Corporation (SA's biggest single mining concern) that outlined the need to 'smash' the MWU as an obstacle to reducing labour costs, and to lay the groundwork for establishing black unions integrated into the Government's Industrial Conciliation Act machinery in order to undercut 'political' black unions.

The biggest single factor behind the MWU strike is a report due to appear shortly from the government's Wehlem Commission on Labour Relations, which is expected to signal a consolidated attack on the key all-white unions over job reservation.

Trade unionists in Britain have no common interest with either the MWU's reactionary strike or with the South African government's attempts to find a solution to the problems faced by big business. What we can usefully do in the way of aggravating the tensions in the white racist community is to see they don't solve their problems by recruiting white skilled labour from Britain. South Africa currently operates seven permanent labour recruitment centres in Britain. Trade union action to bring them to a standstill (and continued campaigning for the blacking of South African trade) can help the black workers, organised in illegal unions, who are fighting for the real interests of all workers against the apartheid regime.

NIK BARSTOW



Black miners — how much longer sweated labour?

It happened before: the Rand Revolt, 1922

CONFLICTS within South Africa's white population did not end with the last shot fired during the Boer War.

The temptation always existed for mine-owners in South Africa to employ non-unionised black labour rather than highly paid unionised white labour. In the years of recession after the First World War the pressure on employers to do this increased drastically. They fought to remove the colour bar which prevented blacks from taking skilled jobs which white workers regarded as their exclusive preserve, attempted to lower white workers' wages, and sought to lay off whites as well as blacks.

The attitude of white workers to their employers' moves was not to seek unity with black to fight wage cuts and redundancy threats. They felt that they had more in common with their employers than with the 'uncivilised' black workers. So they fought not only the attempts of the employers and government to abolish the colour bar, but also those of black workers who demanded equality of pay and status with white workers.

The Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy in South Africa called for the setting up of a trade union defence force to protect the colour bar and their employers' property against a black anti-colour bar strike.

Yet there were 'socialists' and 'communists' in South Africa, who ignored the fact that South Africa was a colonial country and indulged in a fantasy that this white, reactionary labour movement could unite the working class. For instance the International Socialist League 'made concessions to prejudice. It was not out to get the native admitted to the white Labour Unions; or to preach equality under capitalism, for this indeed was a contradiction in terms. Equality would only come under socialism when there would be room and plenty for all' (the ISL was the forerunner of the Communist Party of South Africa.)

The outcome was the Rand Revolt in 1922, when the white workers rose, arms in hand, to challenge the government.

The Rand Revolt was a revolt in favour of the colour

bar and the privileges of white workers at the expense of blacks. The revolt, which had as one of its slogans the grotesque formulation 'Workers of the World Unite and fight for a white South Africa', showed the power and militancy of the working class. But, like the Ulster Workers' Council strike of May 1974, this power and militancy was put to a thoroughly reactionary use.

Brutally

The Rand Revolt was brutally crushed by government troops, and many white workers went to the gallows singing *The Red Flag*. But the black masses stood aside from the struggle because they knew that the white workers, despite their 'socialist' slogans and songs, were not fighting for general working class freedom but for the interests of white workers. The blacks knew that the white workers believed that their main interests lay in keeping the black workers in 'their place'.

The violence of the Rand

Revolt shook up the white establishment. Conflict within the white community was very dangerous, for it weakened the community's ability to resist the blacks.

The pro-mineowner government sought to placate the defeated miners by conceding some of their demands concerning the colour bar, and the Afrikaaner farmers sought a political alliance with the Labour party and trade union leaders. A Labour-Nationalist (Afrikaaner) alliance was formed.

This alliance came to power in 1924. Its early legislation was to lay the basis for the future apartheid state. The alliance between Afrikaaner farmers and the white industrial working class laid the basis for the emergence of the racist state of today, rigidly stratified along race-caste lines. (The Labour Party eventually dissolved itself into the right wing National Party.)

The so-called 'civilised labour policy' was one of the early measures adopted by the Labour/Nationalist government. This policy removed blacks from unskilled and semi-

skilled jobs in many industries, for example the railways, and preserved these jobs for white workers — at a 'civilised' rate of pay. The policy virtually eliminated unemployment as a problem for white workers, by transferring it entirely to the black working class.

Racist

Various statutory colour bars were introduced in a whole range of industries and the government also decreed that it would grant protective tariffs only to those industries which had 'satisfactory' labour conditions — that is, conditions advantageous to the whites.

The racist labour policy was accompanied by attacks on black trade union organisations by the state. And wider political and economic dimensions were added as time went on.

by
BAS HARDY

IRAQ

Death penalty
for a 13 year old
— just for
being Kurdish

SHEMAL AHMAD was a 13 year old schoolboy living in Iraqi Kurdistan. Recently he and his family were arrested and imprisoned.

Why? Not for anything they had done, but because Shemal's elder brother Kemal had joined the Pesh Mergas — the guerillas who have taken up arms against the Iraqi regime's policy of systematic destruction of the Kurdish people's national identity.

The Kurdish people are split up between five states. Most of them live in northern Iraq, western Iran, or southern Turkey. In all those countries they have suffered bitter re-

pression. The struggle has been fiercest in Iraq.

In pursuit of its goal of 'Arabisation', the Iraqi regime has to resort to laws whose injustice and arbitrariness place it among the most barbaric tyrannies. One such law is that a Pesh Merga's entire family must be arrested and kept as hostages.

After five months of misery and continual humiliation in jail, Shemal took the only course of protest open to him. He went on hunger strike. The prison officers dragged him

before their so-called 'revolutionary court'.

There Shemal discovered another law he hadn't been aware of: anyone who initiates or provokes a strike or demonstration will be executed. Shemal was too young to know of these rules, and had incited no-one but himself. That was no defence in Iraqi law.

He was taken to Mosul prison, north of Baghdad, and was given another lesson in humiliation. The condemned in Iraq are not allowed to just die. Most of his blood was drained out, leaving just enough for him to retain con-

sciousness for the hanging. The blood is used to provide transfusions for Iraqi soldiers injured in the war in Kurdistan



Shemal was in no position to learn about one final law. The bodies of those executed for political crimes cannot be returned to their families. The eyes and kidneys are removed and placed in the bank of a military hospital, and the relatives are charged 50 dinars [about £100] for the cost of burial.

Shemal's family are still in prison.

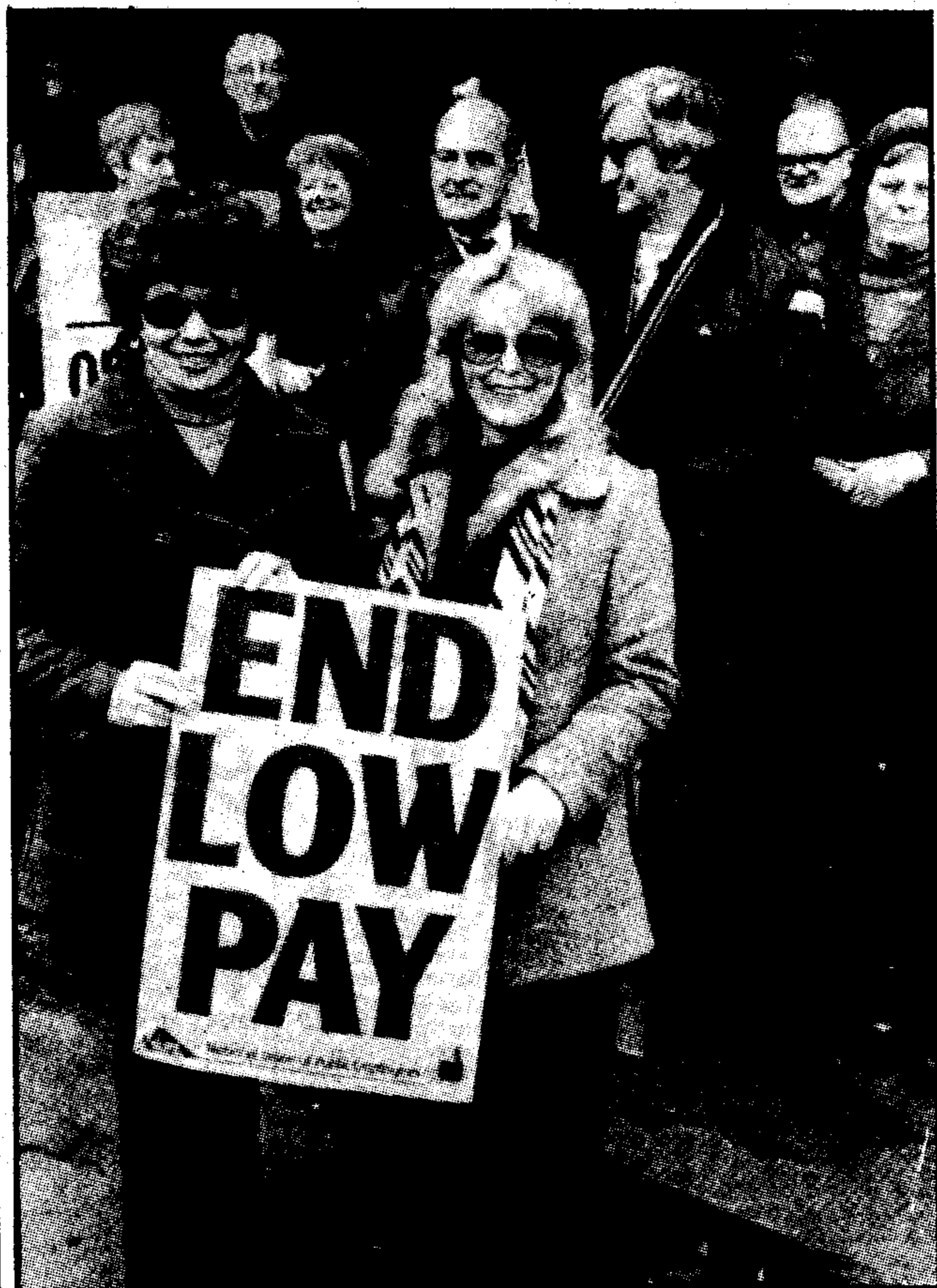
PICKET

of the Iraqi National Dance Company, organised by the Kurdistan Solidarity Campaign in protest against Ba'athist government crimes.

Friday-Saturday 16th-17th, 6pm-8pm, at Sadlers Wells.

HEALTH SERVICE

Don't let the officials end this battle with a whimper



Pickets at Manchester's Monsall Hospital, where indefinite all-out action is planned from next week

HOSPITAL ancillary workers are still continuing their struggle.

Northampton workers are the latest to be pilloried by the press. They are accused of risking patients' lives, and condemning children with ear diseases to permanent deafness, by shutting down three operating theatres.

The theatres were shut down after the porters said they would service only emergency operations. The surgeons refused to cooperate with the 'emergencies only' policy. So the porters forced the issue by shutting down three theatres out of ten. Emergencies are being covered, and in fact surgeons are still doing non-urgent cases, in an effort to re-assert their control.

A 200-strong meeting of domestics at Northampton General Hospital voted two to one in favour of strike action, but NUPE officials have not called them out yet.

Also in Northamptonshire, a central hospital supplies depot for all Britain's hospitals is being hit by a one-week NUPE strike.

In east Scotland the struggle is continuing despite frustration about the way the strike has been run

by the union officials.

There was a three day strike last week at Bangour Hospital, near Edinburgh. Bangour Hospital and Roslyn Lee Hospital are also continuing a policy of lightning strikes. Edinburgh North Hospitals NUPE met on Monday 12th and decided to bring van drivers out on strike.

In Coventry, the NUPE caterers are on strike for a second week, and domestics are coming out on Thursday and Friday, 15th and 16th. The TGWU has decided to cross picket lines, but NUPE insists that anyone crossing its picket will be blacked.

NUPE have gained 93 new members in Coventry over the last two months.

At a Coventry hospitals NUPE branch meeting on Monday 12th, George Watkins, a drivers' shop steward from the Coventry Freightliners depot, brought a message of support. He reported that the drivers, members of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), had staged a two-hour strike last month in support of the nurses, and urged the nurses to go start flying pickets to go round Coventry factories.

That sort of solidarity

action is what the hospital ancillary workers, the ambulance crews, and, even more so, the nurses, need if they are going to win a decent wage rise. Limited walk-outs and demonstrations are being organised by the nurses' unions, but the Government will only be shaken by much more forceful and large-scale industrial action.

The NUPE leadership is still — on paper — encouraging health service workers to step up the action. In practice their 'selective strike' policy will just let the struggle peter out.

This came out clearly at a meeting on Tuesday 13th of the militant Edinburgh South Hospitals branch of NUPE. NUPE Scottish organiser Ron Curran called for more selective action, while the branch shop stewards argued for an all-out strike.

A porter from the City Hospital expressed the feelings of the meeting: "The selective action is hitting us. Why should we consider going on that way? Two people on the picket line aren't going to win the claim". Only four or five out of a thousand workers at the meeting supported the official proposal.

But the branch then voted by a three-to-one margin against an all-out strike and for a return to normal working. Militancy had been frittered away by the officials, who constantly put a brake on the rank and file. And the branch leadership's call for an all-out strike finally came too late in the day.

An all-out strike by all public service workers (with emergency cover under workers' control) was the way to win. Now the Government is prepared to trade cynically on the nurses' reluctance to strike and the hospital workers' feeling of isolation. Rapid solidarity action by other workers is needed to stop this process of wearing down.

NIK BARSTOW

EDINBURGH Council workers have gone back fighting. Dustmen from Edinburgh, Fife and East Lothian all stayed out until they received extra bonuses for clearing up after their strike... while West Lothian dustmen who were offered £135 to clear up said they would do no extra work at all.

Sewage workers stayed out until Lothian Regional Council offered them £50 for exceptional working conditions.

It's official: More power for racist bullies

THE HOME Office has issued secret instructions to immigration officers telling them to exclude representatives of voluntary organisations like the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants from their interrogations of immigrants suspected of having 'marriages of convenience'. The presence of a JCWI representative, says the Home Office, "may inhibit him [the immigration officer] from pursuing his inquiry".

This follows a directive in 1977 advising immigration officers that organisations like the JCWI should be discouraged from accompanying immigrants in interviews — and a letter of the same date to the JCWI saying they could come into interviews only if the immigration officer agreed.

The JCWI has protested and demanded that the Home Office make public its general instructions to immigration officers.

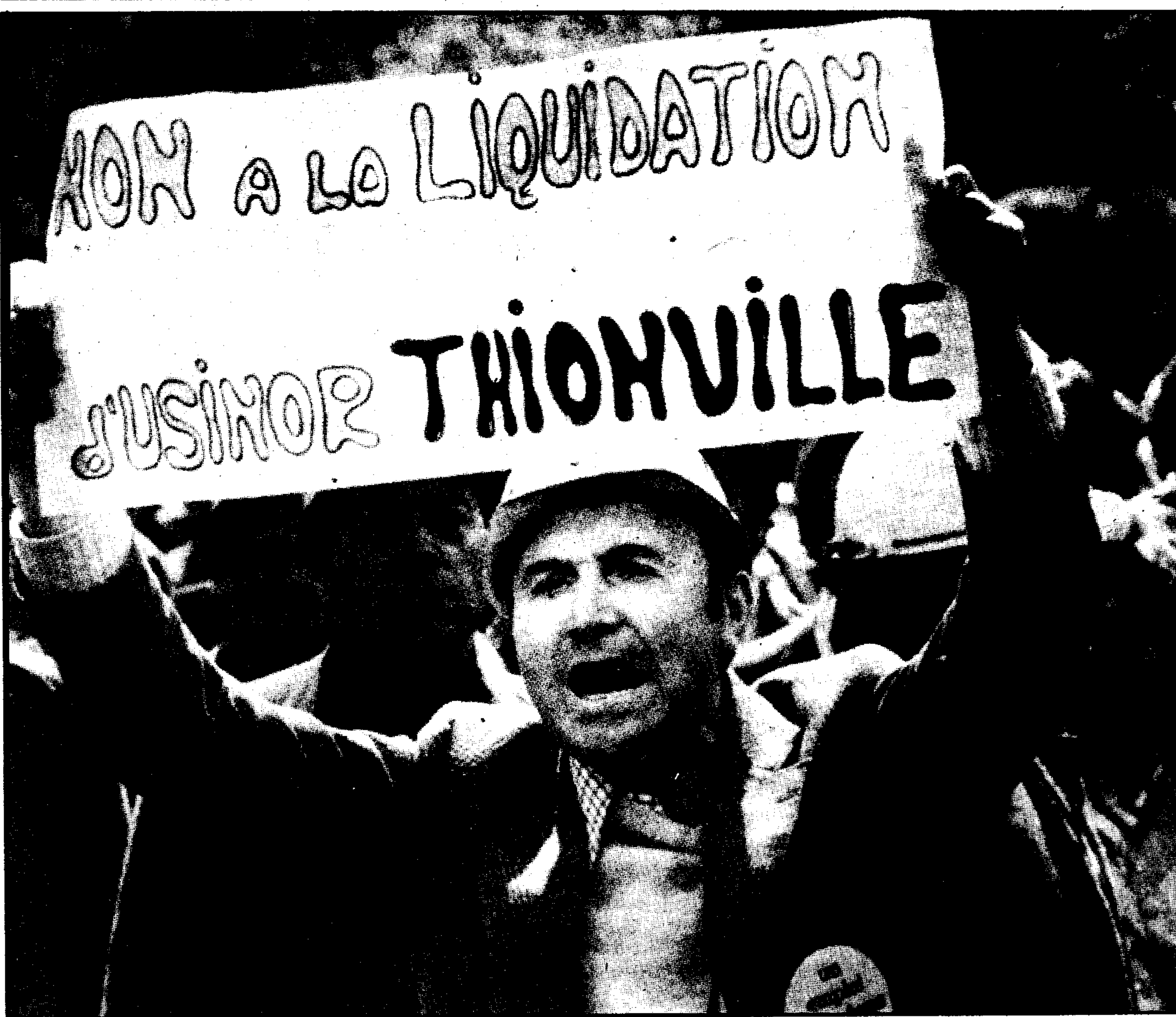
Many of the immigrants interviewed will speak very little English and know little

about British law. They will be questioned and if the immigration officer reckons they are here illegally, they will be imprisoned and deported. Yet the bold, brave immigration officers still can't cope with having a well informed and articulate immigrants' rights adviser in the interview.

Under normal legal due process, it is a basic right for anyone imprisoned to be able to appeal and get released unless there are proper criminal charges against him or her. That right just does not exist for immigrants in Britain.

In the first three quarters of 1978, 634 of them were detained as illegal immigrants. They have no proper legal right of appeal. And now one of the most minimal protections they did have is being stripped away.

That's what immigration control means: people are defined as having no right to be here, therefore having no legal rights here. The answer: Scrap all immigration controls!



Barricades go up in French steel town

AFTER two days of street fighting in Denain, northern France, the French government and steel bosses have finally retreated an inch on their plan to cut 20,000 jobs. The job cuts have been frozen while negotiations continue.

The battle in Denain started after police stopped and roughed up a coachload of steelworkers returning from a demonstration on 6th March. A protest the following day spilled over into an all-out battle between police and thousands of workers. It continued on the 8th, with barricades thrown up in the town centre.

Finally, about midday on the 8th, the police agreed with union leaders that they would

withdraw if the unions dispersed the demonstration. Even after that, there was an attack on the town's police headquarters later in the day by over 100 young workers.

At least 45 people had been injured in the two days of fighting, some seriously. At one point during the events, demonstrators tried to seize guns, and some policemen had bullet wounds.

The concessions have been slight. Not a single job has actually been revived. The Government's other proposals are equally feeble: early retirement; payments for workers who take voluntary redundancy and extra money for immigrant workers who return to their homelands; and re-training schemes for sacked

steelworkers.

The Prime Minister, Raymond Barre, has tried to put a good face on it by blaming the Communist Party for stirring up violence. But even the policemen's unions put the major blame at the door of the government. Strikes and demonstrations on the 8th throughout France, in protest at the police violence in Denain on the 7th, were well supported, and there was another big demonstration in Denain on the 10th.

The Gaullist RPR, who are supposed to be part of Barre's parliamentary majority, have joined in blaming the Government, and together with the Communist and Socialist Parties they have forced a special parliamentary session

to debate the steel situation.

Small scale demonstrations, often very militant, are continuing almost every day in the steelmaking areas of eastern and northern France. Thousands of workers are prepared to carry the fight as far as it need be carried to defeat Barre's hard-faced economic policies.

The great weakness of the movement is still its political leadership. Speaking in Denain on the 9th, CGT union leader Georges Seguy said the problem was that the 'French government and bosses have abandoned the national interest'. The workers' militancy is being diverted into useless anger against German and Swedish steel.

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SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.



THE NEW right wing leadership of the AUEW has suddenly speeded up its drive for a merger with the even more right wing EETPU.

This year's AUEW National Committee meets on 28th April and the Rules Revision Committee is to meet on 2nd May. The Rules Revision Committee is likely to make arrangements to 'transfer the engagements' of the Foundry Section, that is, absorb it into the engineering section. It seems likely that the Construction Section and TASS will be ditched, leaving the floor open for the reopened negotiations with the EETPU which are scheduled to start no later than 1st July.

In 1967 the engineering union, then called the AEU, federated with the Foundry Workers and became the AEF. In 1971 the federation

was expanded to include the Construction Engineering Union and DATA, the Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians' Association (now called TASS). Both CEU and DATA/TASS were dominated by the Communist Party and fellow-travellers. The new federated union was called the AUEW.

Plan

The plan, using a little-known clause in the AUEW rulebook, is to bring in the EETPU as a new section of the union. At first the EETPU and the AUEW Engineering Section will each continue to have their own structure and rulebook, but Duffy and Chapple will quickly set about trying to create a new, undemocratic joint rulebook.

The EETPU conference

AUEW-EETPU

No to the m

takes place early in May, and a ballot of the members before the end of the year looks likely. Rumour has it that the Sheet Metal workers' union is preparing for an emergency conference before the autumn on the possibility of joining in the amalgamation.

Under the present scheme, only unions joining the amalgamation will be putting the matter to the membership. Thus the 1,200,000-strong Engineering Section won't even be balloted on the merger.

It might seem odd that the left is opposing the AUEW-EETPU merger, while the right are doing their damndest to force through amalgamation.

Yet while socialists are in favour of the creation of inclusive industrial unions, we do not regard these big unions as an end in themselves, but as a better weapon with which to fight the bosses. In the case of this merger, it is clear that unity is intended not to forge a more effective weapon, but to blunt the ones that exist.

The merger would create

a massive right wing bloc almost as big as the TGWU, within which the likes of Chapple, Boyd and Duffy can further their careers and earn their knighthoods making sweetheart deals with the bosses.

It may also absorb other unions in the industry, like the Boilermakers.

Duffy sees himself as an apprentice to Chapple. 'From now on', he says 'I will be advocating more power to union executives in order to diminish the dictatorial power of individuals'... that is, give dictatorial power to the big bur-

eaucrats to diminish the rights of the members. And for union full-time officials 'the present three-year term of office should be changed to five years. Being election bound so often is a serious distraction for a union official's

job' (our emphasis). Although the AUEW elects its officials for three years, it seems to be no unity. TASS, I white collar seem 'booted' AUEW on the

Bans

The semi police-state regime in the EETPU has in the past few years been responsible for closing down branches of London plumbers, and Swindon and South Wales electricians, and merging others which have caused any trouble for the leadership with safe branches. In the coming amalgamation, Chapple demands the abolition of the AUEW's district committees, the National Committee and the Final Appeals Court, though it is believed he has compromised on his previous insistence on bans and prescriptions against members of the Communist Party.

AUEW president Terry



How
the
Broad
Left
got
the
AUEW
where
it is

by
PETE LEYDEN

IN 1967, the left in the engineering union rejoiced at the election of Hugh Scanlon as union President.

During the previous 15 years the AEU had been dominated by a vicious gang of right wing officials headed by Lord Bill Carron. During his dictatorial reign Carron had established the notorious package deals arrangement with the Engineering Employers' Federation. Scanlon came to power with the backing of the Broad Left grouping, which had launched a campaign among the rank and file to end these 3-year packages.

Scanlon had campaigned on a militant platform, calling for increased democracy, more rank and file control, and annual wage claims. He was known as a brilliant negotiator and his past membership of the Communist Party stood him in good stead with militants in the union. Manchester was his base of power. He had been a shop steward there, and got massive support there in his election campaign. And Manchester was still the biggest base of the Communist Party in the engineering industry. Almost all the local AUEW officials were Party members.

Slim

But things started to go wrong from the moment of Scanlon's election, when his first act as President was to accept a new package deal lasting up to 1971. His supporters explained that Hughie hadn't had time to learn the ropes and that he should be given another chance.

With a slim left wing majority on the Executive Council, it should have been possible to make some progress on union democracy in this period. But that didn't happen either.

On the contrary. At the 1970 Rules Revision Committee postal ballots were brought in to replace branch ballots for national official posts. Officials 60 years old or over would be

allowed to continued without re-election until retirement at 65. This meant that an official elected at the age of 57 could have an eight-year term of office instead of the normal three years. It also meant that Scanlon had his President's job for life!

Ford

In 1971, Scanlon helped to fix up a sell-out settlement to the big Ford strike, and insisted on a secret ballot to approve it, instead of mass meetings.

By now the three-year package deal had expired, and Scanlon had to do something to retain his credibility with the militants who had elected him. The employers were



no longer willing to concede the big local increases which up to this time had been negotiated by shop stewards' committees in the factories. Now a national fight would be needed.

In the 1950s and '60s, militant union organisation at factory level had been able to co-exist with a rigidly right-wing national leadership, because many struggles could be won at factory level without involving the full-time officials. With the economic crisis of the '70s, there was much less leeway.

Scanlon had promised to give full official backing for militant plant bargaining. But in the 1971-2 struggle, this was to prove totally inadequate as an alternative to an all-out national struggle.

On 15th December 1971 the leaders of the engineering unions broke off their talks

with the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF), after the EEF had made the derisory offer of £1.50 in reply to the unions' demand for a "substantial increase" with more for women as a step towards equal pay, a 35 hour week, and an extra (fourth) week's holiday.

Scanlon did not mobilise the whole union, but instead went for district-by-district action.

Two districts held out for the full claim. In Sheffield a mass meeting of the entire district membership was called, to prepare the fight. But Scanlon intervened, claiming that the mass meeting was against rule and that there would have to be a secret ballot before any action could be taken. The

The Executive made the action official. But it made no attempt to spread it or to raise support from the rest of the country. Soon the Executive announced that the 35-hour claim had been abandoned. Once more, Scanlon's supporters in the Broad Left were reduced to muttering half-hearted excuses, or to embarrassed silence.

The tremendous fight in Manchester was isolated, and petered out with only slight improvements on wages. The engineering bosses were better organised, more united, and more determined than the leaders of the AUEW.

In fact, at the February 1972 meeting of the EEF, one of its leaders, Bamford, made this perfectly clear. "If the

also felt, as John Toc and Bernard Panter left party.

The 1973 and '75 came and went with little struggle and few gains: meanwhile Scanlon was bleating that the membership was willing to put up a fight.

Fine

The one issue on which AUEW hung its militant reputation was opposition to Tories' Industrial Relations Act. Here Scanlon was under the double pressure of rank and file anger and of the real threat to the whole union movement. In May 1974 over half a million engine stopped work to protest at a £50,000 fine imposed on a union under the Act. The fine was quickly paid by an anonymous donor.

But in 1974 also, Scanlon instructed AUEW member Chrysler's Stoke (Coventry) and Linwood plants to work with management scabs to break the electricians' strike.

Under the Heath government, Scanlon had appeared to be a militant opponent of the Tories. After 1974 he became one of the chief agents of the Labour Government's anti-working class policies. He no longer appeared as a left-winger, but simply as a second-rate right wing. At the 1974 TUC, the AUEW abstained on the Social Contract vote despite the union policy of opposition to it, and the following year Scanlon lost the union's vote in favour of Phase Two.

The fruits of eight years Scanlon/Broad Left rule began to be felt in 1975, when right winger John Boyd defeated Bob Wright for the General Secretary's post and the right wing regained its majority on the executive. Throughout the country, the left began to suffer serious defeats at Divisional, District and even factory level.

Carron's old crew scored another major victory when John Weakley (a leading right winger and convenor of Leyland's Llanelli plant) took the union to court to ensure

Final

When the final settlement was reached at national level, in August 1972, it was worth only 7% — and as most engineering workers were already earning more than the minimum time rate, the only real rise was on overtime and shift premiums.

A more serious long term consequence of this sell-out was the virtually complete collapse of the left-wing AUEW leadership in its former stronghold, Manchester. In time the effects on the local CP leadership within the AUEW were

Sheffield struggle was stifled.

In Manchester a mass meeting of 700 stewards decided to go onto day work — that is, to refuse to work piece-work, thus slowing down production — and to organise sit-ins in the event of members being locked out in retaliation. Some 30 factories were occupied in March and April 1972.

In London, where an occupation had started at Stanmore Engineering, Scanlon told stewards that the rank-and-file were at fault for not taking the lead in the union. There was no encouragement to follow Manchester's lead more widely. But the Broad Left and the CP still made half-hearted excuses for Scanlon — saying there wasn't a big enough left majority on the Executive — or was reduced to embarrassed silence.

Merger!

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the EETPU
officials and
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action) is be-
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they continue to appoint their officials by an (elect-ed) electoral college. The real objection of Duffy's gang is that TASS is dominated by the Communist Party.
If TASS had been willing to agree to election of offic-

ials, then probably the right wing would have found some other objection to full amalgamation. But TASS's practice is indefensible, and has given extra leverage to the right wing.

The reaction of the Broad Left to Duffy's new plans has been sluggish, to say the least. Just three months ago a TASS official assured me, off the record, that the merger was just an ultra-left nightmare and would never happen. Most of them are only now coming to realise that it is a danger, and are still doing very little.

Charter

The SWP-led Engineers Charter have done more, organising a picket of 60 people on the National Committee in opposition to the merger, and launching the National Co-ordinating Committee on Amalgamation.

We must make it clear that we are not opposed to amalgamation, but we are opposed to any merger

which threatens our relatively democratic constitution. Engineers and electricians should fight for a merger only on the AUEW rulebook, and for the removal of Chapple, Duffy and Boyd.

In the meantime our £80 for 35 hours claim has gone in. It is essential that the 35 hour week is fought for and won. Unemployment is high and a shorter working week is essential to cut unemployment and improve the quality of life for members who work an average 47 hour week in some areas.

No fight is likely from the leadership. Duffy has put his name, 'in personal capacity', to a pamphlet that



EETPU dictator Chapple

argues for a freeze on wage claims.

It is essential that a real rank and file initiative starts the fight for the full claim. The Engineering Employers' Federation is replying to the claim on March 13th, and engineers

will be outside the EEF HQ to let them know we're going to fight for this one.

Also this month, elections will take place in areas No.4 and 7 for Executive Council members. All members in these areas should vote for John Tocher and Len Choullerton, to get officials who are not in Duffy's pocket.

Claim

But this is not enough. We must build the kind of rank and file movement that can control our officials and remove those who do not represent us. The right wing has had a field day for long enough in the AUEW.

■ No to any merger that changes the rulebook to reduce our rights!

■ Defend the District Committees, the Rules Revision Committee, the Final Appeals Court and the National Conference. Insist on election of all full-timers.

■ All-out fight for the full claim — £80 for 35 hours. No redundancies — shorten the hours and share the work with no loss of pay!

■ Build a movement based on shopfloor strength to make our union fight for us.

by
MICK WOODS

**For more details of the National Co-ordinating Committee on Amalgamation, contact J.Cronin, 151 Corporation Street, Hol-loway, London N.7

Iran: now women take the lead

ONCE AGAIN Iranians are on the streets day after day, defying the forces of repression.

Militant women demanding their rights were out in force on March 8th, 10th, and again on the 11th. On the 10th they were 50,000 strong.

They were protesting against Khomeini's instruction that women must wear the Islamic veil, the *hejab*, and his declaration that the Shah's Family Protection Law was annulled. Before this law, men were allowed to have up to four wives, and men could get a divorce on simple request, with automatic custody of sons over two years old and daughters over seven.

But the women were in no way supporters of the Shah. They claimed their rights as people who had been in the forefront of the movement against the Shah, shoulder to shoulder with the men.

In fact, the Shah's measures for women were minimal. Under his regime, most women remained illiterate. Women's wages were far lower than men's, and most women were confined to traditional carpet-weaving. Women's legal rights at work were even less than those provided for under Franco's labour code in Spain.

The women's demonstrations were harassed by Islamic militiamen, who opened fire on the 8th and attacked some women with knives on the 10th. But the Muslim leaders and the Government have been forced to concede some ground.

The Government has denounced the men who attacked the demonstrations. Tehran's Ayatollah Taleghani has said the *hejab* is

not obligatory and Khomeini, while insisting that wearing the *hejab* is a duty for Muslims, has said that women not wearing it should not be molested.

But Khomeini's declarations on the *hejab* and on the family law certainly reflect the new regime's efforts to use Islamic ideology to rally the forces of reaction and stop the revolution.

Khomeini has also repeatedly denounced 'western democracy'. Islamic militiamen have occupied the paper *Eteelaat* in order to exclude dissident journalists, described both as 'collaborators with the old regime' and 'leftists'.

The Islamic authorities have banned all demonstrations without prior authorisation at Tehran university.

Several men have been summarily executed for homosexuality. And the government hopes to get popular authority behind this reactionary drive with a slanted referendum on March 30th: the question will be, 'Islamic Republic or Monarchy?', with no opportunity for people to say they want a republic, but not one dominated by Khomeini's Islamic despotism.

A lot depends on the extent of support which the militant women get from Iranian workers. A recent report in the *Guardian* singles out the *hejab* as the major issue on which the workers of south Tehran openly disagree with Khomeini. Certainly, many women factory workers long ago found the *hejab* impossibly cumbersome, and will not welcome efforts to force them to wear it again.

They overthrew the Shah for the sake of freedom, not for the sake of Islam.



Freedom from repression — and from Islam too



Chapple avoids heckling members. Top left: Scanlon, Boyd and Duffy

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1972, and Midlands AUEW calls out its members to close Saltley gates during the miners' strike. Six years later,

striking members at the SU Carburettors toolroom (left) were threatened with expulsion.

retention of postal balloting. By 1977, important sections of the rank and file were beginning to launch a fightback against the Social Contract. But the AUEW left, far from supporting groups like the Leyland toolroom and the Heathrow workers, took the lead in forcing them back to work.

Leading Broad Left figures like Bob Wright and Derek Robinson publicly denounced the toolroom strike and went along with Scanlon's threat to expel the toolmakers from the union. Another leading left winger, Reg Birch, played the leading role in selling out the Heathrow strikers.

It was ironic but appropriate

that Scanlon's last significant act as President should have been to flout union democracy in classic Carron fashion: although the National Conference had voted to oppose the Social Contract, and disregarding the protests of the rest of the union's delegation, Scanlon cast the AUEW's block vote in favour of the 12 month rule at the 1977 TUC congress.

Abject

Even the most abject Scanlon worshippers in the Broad Left found this outrage too much to swallow. But the damage had been done. Ten years of 'leave it to Hughie'

had almost totally discredited the left in the eyes of most AUEW members.

The Broad Left's exclusive concentration on getting its friends elected and its complete failure to build a rank and file movement capable of bringing those friends to order when they strayed, rendered it helpless in the face of the right wing resurgence.

Terry Duffy's surprise victory in the presidential elections last May was a stunning blow for the left in the AUEW. Not only was the Broad Left favourite Bob Wright defeated by a man widely considered to be an incompetent buffoon, but the right wing won in 22 of the other 25 elections

as well.

Since then the right has further consolidated its position by winning the EC, District and Divisional elections and gaining the vacant National Organiser post.

Executive attacks on rank and file militancy — by no means unheard of in Scanlon's time — have become commonplace. In September 1978, striking toolmakers at SU Carburettors were threatened with expulsion from the union, and at about the same time 51 stewards leading a strike at BL's Bathgate plant had their credentials removed by Executive member Gavin Laird.

More recently 1500 workers at Rolls Royce Barnoldswick who struck in protest at a 1.8% pay offer were forced back to work by the Executive which cut off their strike pay. In fact, the Executive's instruction to return to work was a breach of union rule — only a District Committee can order a return to work.

Letter

General Secretary Boyd has sent out a letter to all Districts, saying that even in cases of gross management provocation no strike action will be made official until a full time official has been brought in. In practice very few strikes are made official now anyway, and even if they are that does not guarantee strike pay.

The District Committees have long been the backbone of the AUEW's fighting strength. The right wing are determined to reduce the power of the District Committees, and ultimately to do away with them altogether.

The new Procedure Agreement, negotiated last year with the Engineering Employers' Federation, includes two clauses on victimisations that seriously reduce the powers of the DCs to negotiate the wages and hours of the members in their district.

Duffy and Boyd want to build a union in the image of Chapple's EETPU. And their terms for the merger are part of that drive.

A capitalist disaster

by PETE FIRMIN

THE TITLE of the new CIS pamphlet — *The Nuclear Disaster* — and the heading of one section, *Unsafe at Any Cost*, suggest an attempt to prove that nuclear technology should be completely rejected. In fact the argument is less simplistic.

The pamphlet concludes: 'The Atomic Energy Authority should be disbanded, the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor programme stopped, and the reprocessing now going on at Windscale should be completely investigated. The government must reveal what private arrangements it has with the uranium producers. Above all the records of the bodies concerned should be thrown open to public scrutiny.'

The pamphlet sums up the arguments about nuclear power's safety risks. But most of it — 32 out of 37 pages — is not about the technology itself, but about the way it has been developed, chaotically, inefficiently, and unsafely, with private contractors raking in huge profits and the taxpayers footing the bill for huge losses.

The safety issue itself is inescapably tied up with the

★ *'The Nuclear Disaster'*, 65p from CIS, 9 Poland St, London W1.



Anti-nuclear demonstrators clash with police in W. Germany

THE LEFT AND NUCLEAR POWER

ALTHOUGH the nuclear power industry is much more developed in Britain than in continental Europe, anti-nuclear movements on the continent — especially in Germany and France — are much bigger than in Britain. In West Germany, in fact, the anti-nuclear movement is the biggest protest movement on the political scene. In Sweden and Austria, too, the nuclear power question has been centre-stage in national politics.

Reformist working class parties and trade unions have generally supported nuclear power on the ground that it creates more jobs. But the revolutionary left — with a few exceptions — has allowed itself to be influenc-

Official Secrets Act. Employees working on its various projects are subjected to strict security vetting and are bound not to make any unauthorised disclosure of information which has been acquired while working for the AEA.

dominant role of profit-grabbing in nuclear power development. The government agencies responsible for nuclear power and the private contractors — GEC, Babcock and Wilcox, Taylor Woodrow, Rio Tinto Zinc — form a very closely inter-

force is answerable not to the Home Office, but to the AEA. It has the power of armed pursuit, the right to enter any premises at will, and the power to arrest on suspicion.

This 'security' set-up does not improve safety. On the contrary. 'In the US, public pressure alone has ensured that information from the nuclear safety agency is open to scrutiny... This has led to considerable effort and resources being devoted to safety research, including large scale simulations of possible danger situations. It has led to stringent criteria being applied to nuclear plant locations, design and construction, stringent, that is, compared to Britain...

What we think

WORKERS' ACTION is not against nuclear power as such. We are in favour of working class struggle against lack of safety provision for nuclear technology.

In this struggle over safety the enemy is not nuclear technology as such, but capitalism. The struggle must be made part of the general fight to end capitalist control of technology and establish workers' power. The main drive must be directed against the fact that nuclear technology exists — and will continue to exist until we overthrow capitalism — in the most extreme anti-human form of nuclear bombs.

Outside that revolutionary perspective the struggle is utopian, and it risks becoming simply an anti-technology struggle: for under capitalism safety can never be guaranteed for any technology, let alone for nuclear technology. Capitalism always uses technology against the working class.

Thus we support the call for a moratorium on the use of nuclear power while safety is investigated, but we strive to give this call a class character by demanding workers' control of safety investigations and job security for the workers employed in nuclear power stations or on their construction.

'Even Parliament is denied information on aspects of its civilian work, for example the Fast Breeder Reactor project, and no Parliamentary discussion is allowed on the arrangements for moving plutonium around the country.'

'The AEA has its own private armed police force, currently 400 strong. This

woven network, anxious to protect their activities from public scrutiny.

They are given protection by the 'security' shield which the nuclear power industry carried over from its military origins. The AEA (Atomic Energy Authority) ... operates in a climate of strict secrecy with most of its employees subject to the

◆◆◆
"It is a far cry from the situation in Britain."

The US safety standards are far from adequate. An American scientist has recently published a long list of cases where safety mechanisms were faulty, in disrepair, or just not switched on. In Britain, safety is according to all indications even worse — but scientists cannot find out so easily.

An accident at Windscale in 1957 resulted in all milk produced within 200 square miles of the power station having to be destroyed. Then in 1973, 'radiation alarms sounded in the oxide fuel reprocessing plant in building B204. There was no pre-arranged evacuation plan, or loudspeaker system to warn people to leave the building. All 35 people were found to have skin and lung contamination... radiation alarms had sounded so often that workers did not take them seriously'.

Even the most commonplace industrial hazards are not dealt with properly. 'In the power rooms and at almost all stages in the processing there is a deafening level of noise. In most places it ... will cause one-tenth of the workers to lose 20% of their hearing over 15 years.

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"When it is above that level, does the management pull out its available technological resources to solve the problem? No. At Trawsfynydd power station, they put bits of string around the areas and suggest you wear earplugs. The total cost of this piece of high technology is about 20p."

If this is the way the nuclear power bosses deal with noisy engines, then it is horrifying to think how they deal with the much bigger problem of getting rid of radioactive waste. The pamphlet, unfortunately, mentions waste disposal only very briefly.

The 'security' shield doesn't protect health. But it does protect huge profiteers' rip-offs, hiding them behind a smokescreen of comforting propaganda from the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB).

The swindles organised by the suppliers of pit-props and machinery to the National Coal Board are notorious. The nuclear power industry allows for the same sort of profiteering on a far larger scale. The companies who

build the equipment — GEC being the biggest — have their markets and their profits guaranteed by the state. The public purse bears all the risks and pays for all the losses and mishaps.

The AEA has no far consumed about £4 billion at today's prices. The Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactor (AGR) programme is expected to cost about £5½ billion in all to develop.

'The CEGB currently claims that nuclear power... is now some 35% cheaper than coal, and 50% cheaper than oil'. But these figures are arrived at by fiddling the allowances for capital costs, which are enormous for nuclear power. 'Industry figures leaked to the *Electrical Review* (3.2.78) give a total generating cost in January 1977 prices of 1.48-67p per unit. This is over twice what the CEGB claimed in evidence to the Windscale inquiry. It is also much more than the proven cost of generation from coal.'

Resolution from Edinburgh South Hospitals NUPE to Edinburgh Trades Council [to go forward to the Scottish TUC].

The STUC should support:

■ The restoration of full union and civil rights for all workers connected with the nuclear industry with stress on their unqualified right to strike

■ Continuous access by unions and shop stewards committees in the nuclear power industry to all information necessary for those bodies to fight for the highest standards of health and safety and environmental protection.

■ Union implementation of these safety requirements in connection with industrial accidents, radiation levels, low level effluent and high level waste.

All measures judged necessary to be taken even if these make the further development of the nuclear power programme financially unviable compared to other energy options.

■ Action by nuclear power workers to create more jobs such as campaigns to shorten the working week. Action by workers in non-nuclear power plants and accessory industries to fight any redundancies that ensue through the development of the nuclear power programme.

The STUC should campaign:

□ For labour movement investigations of every proposed development in the nuclear industry as regards safety, environmental effects, and overall employment.

The investigations should involve all unions connected with construction, production and transportation in the nuclear and non-nuclear power industries as well as organisations from communities which will be affected by proposed developments.

□ For immediate enquiries on the fast-breeder programme and the Torness station.

A better picture of the chaos is given by the facts about the AGR programme. 'The first, Dungeness B, is still not working — begun in 1965, its completion date has been pushed back further and further. It now stands at 1981. The completion dates on Hartlepool and Heysham, begun in 1968 and 1970, have also been put back to 1981. The AGRs are cumulatively 15 to 20 years behind schedule.

'The price of their fuel has risen eightfold at least since they were ordered. There have already been failures at the two plants that are working, and one is out of operation for repairs for at least a year...'

And so: 'since 1959, despite intense effort, not a single British reactor has been exported.'

But there are still profits to be won from the nuclear power programme. And CEGB's claims that nuclear power is cheaper can still be used to counter miners' wage claims.

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The price of uranium — the raw material for most nuclear power stations — was \$5 a pound in 1971 and is now around \$40 a pound. This is not because uranium is in short supply; in fact world output exceeds demand. Why the price rise?

'In 1972 secret meetings were held in Paris and Johannesburg between uranium producers from Canada, Australia, France, South Africa, and the Rio Tinto Zinc company. These meetings fixed prices, rigged bids, and allocated markets' Then in a House of Lords judgment, the right of RTZ to maintain secrecy over these agreements was upheld.

The CIS pamphlet answers the usual reformist argument that nuclear power creates jobs. 'Between 1967 and 1976 the number of people employed in nuclear power stations did go up by 23% from 2,980 to 3,660. Generating capacity in the same period increased by 41%...' Nuclear power stations need masses of equipment, but relatively few workers, and virtually no unskilled workers. Large numbers of jobs are created only during construction.

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This aspect of nuclear technology is a plus in the long term, from a socialist point of view: the more the labour-time necessary to produce energy and other essentials is reduced, the better. But in capitalist society this increased productivity means a drive for more unemployment.

The biggest fault of the pamphlet is that it doesn't generalise from its exposure of GEC's and RTZ's rip-offs to an overall analysis of how nuclear technology is shaped and directed by capitalism, and how it could be different under socialism. This shows up most when the authors pour scorn on the idea of an energy shortage, noting that demand for energy has slowed down with the world economic crisis. A socialist state, however, might well need to develop energy supply much faster than present-day stagnant, faltering capitalism.

The pamphlet also seems to suggest, in some parts, that just expanding public scrutiny of nuclear power development, within present day society, would solve the problems.

But the evidence collected goes a long way to proving that the pamphlet's title should not be *The Nuclear Disaster* but *The Capitalist Disaster*.

NOTES

5000 Students march for higher grants

ABOUT 5,000 students marched from Waterloo to Hyde Park last Friday, 9th, to demand an end to the means test and a living grant for all students.

The demonstration was organised by the National Union of Students (NUS) as a national mobilisation, and the low turn-out is perhaps a reflection of the way in which the Broad Left leadership of NUS has failed to relate to the needs of students and to involve them in any concerted action.

Further Education colleges in particular were not greatly in evidence on the demonstration, and it is these students — 90% of whom get no grant at all — that it is most important to involve in the grants campaign.

NUS President Trevor Phillips gave us some fine rhetoric as to how the NUS is prepared to 'fight'... but so far this fight has just amounted to the flop 'G-Day' and yet more negotiations. Friday's demonstration was just a token gesture.

If students are to defeat the Government's attempts to cut back education and achieve a living grant for all, the active involvement of the mass of students will be absolutely essential. We need a campaign which — in fact, and not just in speeches — attempts to link up our fight to the fight of the working class, particularly the public sector workers, against the Government.

CLIVE BRADLEY

ABOUT 500 delegates attended the Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trade Unions [LCDTU] conference last Saturday, 10th. There were reports from delegates on the public sector struggles, the Times, Dunlop Speke, and the struggles against redundancies in steel.

However, no plan of action came from the conference platform [dominated by the Communist Party] to defeat the Government's attacks on the working class. The declaration passed at the end was general to the point of greyness and did not call for any actions in support of those fighting for their jobs or against the Government's wages policy. It did, however, include the diversionary nationalist call for import controls.

An attempt by Socialist Workers' Party members to get the LCDTU to call a day of action in support of health service workers was defeated on the grounds that the LCDTU should only support actions called locally by health service unions.

The conference therefore produced nothing except a few more pieces of paper urging would-be left-wing policies. It appears that the LCDTU is just to be kept ticking over in the hope of 'better days to come'.

BRUCE ROBINSON

THE TEN-DAY strike at British Leyland's Canley plant, Coventry, ended on Thursday 8th. The workers agreed that the bosses could shift machinists to assembly jobs as long as they asked for volunteers.

300 machinists had been on strike, causing a shut-down of production at Canley. The dispute started when the bosses tried to transfer 32 machinists to the assembly line without the usual consultation with the unions.

Published by Workers' Action, Box 1960, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1, and printed by Anvil Press [TU]. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

Sellout looms at the Times

THE 1200 members of the EETPU Press Branch in London have been expelled by the union's general secretary, Frank Chapple, for refusing to accept a deal agreed by the Executive in January for the 92 electricians at Times Newspapers. Chapple hopes to reconstitute the branch under the control of his own appoint-

at the same time as the Times bosses and union officials have agreed to preliminary proposals for re-starting publication of the Times.

These proposals state that all the 3,000 workers who have been sacked will be reinstated, at least until April 17th, when the management hopes to resume

The bosses' demands are exactly the same as before, except that the new technology has been shelved for a while. Productivity deals, no-strike clauses, large-scale redundancies, less control over the work process, control over negotiations to be moved from the chapels [office branches] to full-time union officials —

is very little reason why most of the Times workers who have got new permanent jobs on Fleet Street should want to go back at all: they will have nothing to gain.

It may turn out that the Times bosses have got most of the job cuts they wanted 'for free'.

The preliminary proposals also state that people who did not obtain alternative employment during the period they were locked out will receive 50% of their lost earnings immediately... and the balance if and when publication is resumed. If no deal is signed, they lose the second 50%. It's just another little carrot to get the bosses' demands accepted.

The agreement has been hailed by NGA General Secretary Joe Wade as a 'victory for common sense'. Bill Keyes of SOGAT, when asked if he thought his members would accept the preliminary proposals, said that he 'could think of no reason to believe otherwise'.

NATSOPA is recommending acceptance (only three members of the EC voted against). 55 NGA members have already voted for it. But many workers still feel suspicious of the Times bosses' intentions, and are aware that the April 17th deadline is putting the unions at a serious disadvantage.

The main sticking point so far, the attitude of the NGA to new technology, seems to have been partly overcome. The question is to lie on the table. If the bosses' other demands go through, then probably a deal on new technology similar to the one at Express

Newspapers will be worked out.

The NGA insist adamantly that they want control over input to the computer system, instead of allowing journalists and advertising staff direct access. The Express deal gave the NGA



Benn — banned from The Times

that exclusive control, with the proviso that there would be a review after five years.

The chances of the unions signing a sell-out deal have already been noted by other Fleet Street bosses. The lock-out threats at the Evening News are just the beginning of a coordinated employers' offensive to finish off any militancy in the print unions.

Workers on Fleet Street must give our wholehearted support to any chapel at Times Newspapers which rejects the proposals, and to the EETPU members victimised by Chapple. We still need to fight for workers' control over the new technology. Otherwise the bosses' triumph on Fleet Street will only be a matter of time.

CLARE RUSSELL



SOGAT marches pass Times building

ees. Not so long ago he disbanded the plumbers' lodges in the same way.

The Times EETPU members have mounted a picket outside the Times and Sunday Times buildings. They insist that they have not reached agreement with the Times bosses, and they are picketing to stop scabs going in to do their work.

Chapple's move has come

publication (though the workers don't have to report back for work until April 2nd). Talks on the bosses' demands will continue in the meantime. It is unclear what will happen if the unions do not agree to the bosses' proposals by the 17th. Presumably the management will attempt once again to lock out the Times workers.

the essence is still there. This time, too, there will be a great deal more pressure for the unions to buckle under.

If the workers are dismissed again on 17th April, they will technically have been employed by the Times for only 5 weeks. They will have lost all their rights to sickness pay, maternity leave and pensions. In fact there

Birmingham drivers say:

Black the tachos!

THE GOVERNMENT has decided to risk a new confrontation with the lorry drivers. Transport Minister William Rodgers has told Parliament that he intends to make the 'spy in the cab', the tachograph, compulsory in all British lorries.

The 'tacho' is an instrument which combines speedometer and clock. It records speed and distance against time on a paper disc. It allows vehicle speed, drivers' breaks, and distance travelled to be checked. It has been compulsory in the rest of the Common Market for several years, but the Government did not force it through in Britain for fear of opposition from the TGWU.

Eventually the EEC Commission, fed up with British foot-dragging, took the Government to the European Court, which ruled the 'tacho' must go in.

Most lorry drivers are bitterly opposed to it. It would give the employers a constant check on what their drivers were doing, where they stopped for a cup of tea, and every other detail. It could be used as a way to victimise militants on the basis of technical 'offences'.

The legal eight-hour driving day, coming into force in Jan-

uary 1981, will lead to a big push for increased productivity. The 'tacho' will help the bosses crack down on drivers' breaks. It will also be used as a weapon to undermine the TGWU's long-standing policy that journey times should be calculated on an average running speed of 28 mph.

The employers have tried similar devices before. During the '60s several major firms introduced the 'Servis Recorder' (a simple form of tachograph) as a device to check up on their workers. After several big strikes, most bosses decided it was not worth the effort, and the 'Servis Recorder' fell into disuse. That's one of the reasons the employers weren't too keen to try to introduce the tachograph now.

The workers in the best organised firms could no doubt resist the bosses' attempts to use the 'tacho' against them — but it could lead to real problems in the weaker areas. Supporters of the 'tacho' argue that it will increase road safety by stopping drivers from speeding or working excessive hours. The manufacturers claim it will help determine the cause of accidents.

But the 'tacho' will actually increase pressure on drivers. It will not stop cowboys fiddling their records by one means or

another. No doubt the 'tacho' will sometimes reveal the cause of accidents. But it could also be very misleading. For instance, a lorry could be driving down a straight road at 45 mph. A car pulls out straight in front of it. An accident would have been inevitable even at 20 mph. But the 'tacho' could show the driver was speeding and automatically put the blame on him.

One hundred tachographs won't make up for bad brakes or loose steering, and the cost of fitting the 'tacho' could make employers less willing to fit more useful safety devices.

The 'tacho' will also make for worse working conditions in another way. To repair many parts of the lorry, a 'tacho' or its cable would have to be moved, and before a lorry returns to the road the MoT seals will have to be replaced at a special calibration centre. Meanwhile the driver will be left to kick his heels for hours around the depot — or more likely he will be sent out in a old spare vehicle.

Opposition to the 'tacho' goes beyond these piecemeal objections. Most drivers do the job for the sake of the limited independence from

factory routine and constant supervision which it allows. The 'tacho' will change that. It will be like driving with a foreman looking over one shoulder and a policeman over the other.

Why did the unions on the continent accept — or even, so we're told, welcome — the 'tacho'? The reason seems to be just that trade unionism is much weaker among lorry drivers than in Britain. There was some reason to support the 'tacho' as an elementary protection against slave-driving employers who forced drivers to work day and night, exceeding legal driving hours.

The TGWU's national policy is against the introduction of the device, but the union has permitted vehicles to be fitted with 'tachos' provided they are switched off.

That makes it very hard to check whether the policy is being stuck to, and it is more or less guaranteed to collapse when the 'tacho' becomes compulsory. The individual driver who has a 'tacho' fitted but not recording will come right up against the police or the MoT inspectors and will be forced to back down.

In Birmingham the 5/35 branch, which covers most TGWU drivers; has adopted a

policy of refusing to drive any vehicle fitted with the 'tacho' whether the device is switched on or not. Warehousemen in plants producing lorries to refuse to fit 'tachos' to new vehicles. At the same time drivers should undertake to support workers involved in making the devices if they are threatened with redundancy.

This should be the start of a national 'black the tacho' campaign. Attempts should be made to persuade workers in plants producing lorries to refuse to fit 'tachos' to new vehicles. At the same time drivers should undertake to support workers involved in making the devices if they are threatened with redundancy.

On a cold estimate that campaign will not be enough to stop the Government, although it could turn round the creeping defeatism that many drivers are beginning to feel on the issue. We need to fight to commit the TGWU and the URTU to an all-out strike from the day the tacho becomes compulsory.

The strike would have to cover not just road haulage but also manufacturing and trading companies' transport departments. Attempts should be made to involve drivers who are members of other unions, such as SOGAT and NUR.

If this struggle is organised, then the tachograph will never appear in our lorries.

SIMON TEMPLE

CIVIL SERVANTS:

Watch the Officials

by **STEPHEN CORBISHLEY**
WITH the civil service strikers at key computer centres in their third week of action, the government machine is many areas is rapidly being crippled.

Already cries of pain are coming from Scottish lawyers missing their fat fees and legal aid cheques because of the total closure of Scottish courts.

To tighten the action and support outlying courts, flying pickets have been organised.

Pickets at the Sheriff Court told *Workers' Action* that they fully supported the hunger strike protest by thirty prisoners at Barlinnie jail against delays in their trials. The Government, they said, should pay up so that the prisoners get the prompt trial which is their right.

Throughout the country, commercial and business life

With only a small handful out on strike, the vast majority of the 380,000 CPSA and SCPS members are in limbo.

No plans have been put forward by the CPSA leaders to bring these other workers out on any other form of action. The most they are being asked is to 'give moral support'.

Support on some picket lines is welcome, but there is still a real gap between those on strike and those still at work, that can only be filled with strikers organising speaking tours to as many branches as possible. Direct support for the picket lines should be organised, and the action continued until the claim is paid in full and immediately. To finance this a voluntary levy should be raised in every branch, and a call should be made for the NEC to organise such a levy nationally.

Despite the stepping up of the action (with the withdrawal of key computer staff at the Paymaster General's office in Crawley), the CPSA and SCPS bureaucracies are preparing a sell-out. Already, without consulting the rank and file, they have agreed in principle to 'staging' of the pay rise.

And the CPSA NEC is on a 24-hour alert to be called the moment there are more details on the offer. They will call off action at the first opportunity.

The Government's offer of a staged PRU deal contains an implicit threat of job cuts, because the Government intends to continue with its 'cash limits' on public spending. Under the 'cash limits', pay rises can only be achieved by selling jobs. The CPSA and SCPS have said nothing to make their policy clear on this. In fact, CPSA deputy general secretary Alistair Graham has prepared a document for the NEC arguing for productivity deals.

So the slogan for civil service workers must be: Watch the full-time officials! Don't let them sell us out!

has lost nearly £500 million of revenue unprocessed, and an attempt by a private contractor under police escort to break the postal blockade was abandoned when it became clear the contractor would be blacked after the strike was over.

The Government is going to be further embarrassed when it cannot publish key overseas trade figures for February by this Wednesday, nor any more until the dispute is over. Denis Healey himself has had to rely on forecasts in his budget preparation, instead of detailed, up-to-date figures from Southend

PETER WATTS
CPSA Customs & Excise

The action begins to bite

'FEELING on the picket line is enthusiastic, and there is great confidence that providing the CPSA members don't allow the right wing NEC to sell us out to Callaghan, the action can be maintained indefinitely', say strikers at the main Customs and Excise centre at Southend.

There is a 24-hour picket, with support from other areas at weekends.

The action is completely effective. The collection and re-payment of VAT is at a complete standstill. An attempt at routine maintenance of one of the four computers at Southend's Alexander House ended in the computer exploding.

Already the Government

Transport House: 'You vote, we decide'

LAST MONTH the Annual General Meeting of Edge Hill Labour Party decided that the Labour address for the coming by-election should be discussed by the General Management Committee (GMC), instead of being cooked up by the candidate and agent on their own.

So we were surprised at the 9th March GMC when Ernie Collett, on behalf of the Regional Office, told us that the election address had already been sent to the printers!

The candidate, Bob Wareing, could only bluster about his 'socialist' credentials and claim he had been writing 90% of the leaflets the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) put out

anyway. He was not even prepared to let the GMC see the text of the address.

Wareing did admit that Transport House had cut out sections from the draft he had submitted... including a call for 'the nationalisation of banks and finance houses'.

The leaders of the 'Militant' tendency on Merseyside still consider Wareing as a left-winger campaigning on 'socialist policies'. But the left on Edge Hill GMC, including some 'Militant' supporters, forced a vote on whether to ratify the dirty deal Wareing had fixed up with the regional officials. We lost by 13 votes to 7, because middle of the road members swallowed the

old 'don't rock the boat in an election' line.

We won't let the issue drop. Where does Wareing stand on wage curbs? What steps will he take to support the health service workers? Will he encourage occupations to save jobs, and nationalisation without compensation of firms like Plesseys which declare mass redundancies? What is his policy on racialism, and particularly on immigration controls [on which he has been equivocal in the past]? Will he even help fulfill the CLP's commitment to call a joint meeting with the Anti Nazi League as part of the election campaign? K.F.

TEACHERS MUST KEEP UP PRESSURE FOR A FLAT-RATE RISE

A SELL-OUT over the teachers' pay claim looks likely.

After making the headlines with its 35% claim, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) leadership is looking for a face-saving formula to enable it to accept a much lower offer when the Burnham committee (the teachers' negotiating body) reconvenes on 21st March. Even a token half-day strike call looks remote at present.

The NUT leadership has simply not laid plans for militant action. The original contingency plans included half day strikes, withdrawal of good will and voluntary duties, national action on 'no cover' for absences, and extended strike action in several areas. But even before the first Burnham negotiations, on March

had already decided that the two most effective tactics — 'no cover' and extended strikes — would receive 'no further consideration'.

The claim itself was designed to produce no mobilisation. After the NUT advised members to cross the NUPE picket lines, and NUT general secretary Fred Jarvis signed the Concordat, no-one believed the union leaders were going to fight for 35%. On top of that, the claim is divisive, with 26% demanded for young teachers and 43% for top head teachers.

After their militant-sounding claim, the NUT leaders just crumpled up on March 7th. The employers asked for 'more time to study the claim' and a delay to see how the Government's plans for public sector pay comparability would

affect the bargaining — and the teachers' negotiators meekly accepted.

Left-wing teachers have responded with a campaign for a flat-rate increase. If a 10% settlement is forced through, it won't be 10% for everyone (which widens differentials anyway), but more likely 15% for head teachers and much less for the vast majority of class room teachers. About 70% of the NUT's membership would be better off with a flat-rate increase than with a percentage deal.

We must stop the sell-out, and insist on adequate pay rises for the lowest-paid teachers. If the NUT leaders do call any action, however feeble, it must be fully supported so that they don't have an alibi for a sell-out.

CHEUNG SIU MING

Workers' ACTION

Unions plan to black Dunlop

'WE'RE NEAR the end of talking. We're moving into action now, and we're looking for ways to step it up.'

Arthur Todd, AUEW convenor at Dunlop Speke, told *Workers' Action* this week that the fight against Dunlop's shutdown of tyre-making on Merseyside, and against the loss of 2,400 jobs, is gathering momentum.

The TGWU on Thursday 8th decided to give official support to a blacking on all Dunlop goods, which will be put into action soon. National talks between Dunlop and the unions will take place on March 20th, but so far the bosses show no signs of going back on their plans to give 3,100 workers their cards on April 18th.

Every major Dunlop factory in Britain struck on Wednesday 7th in protest at the shutdown plans, which also threaten 700 jobs at Fort Dunlop (Birmingham) and at Inchinnan (Renfrewshire). The Speke Action Committee received telegrams of support from Dunlop-Pirelli workers in Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, the USA, India, and West Germany (where job cutbacks have also been announced).

Italian workers have promised that they will block any transfer of work from Speke to Italy.

At Speke, a picket has been put on the factory by local unemployed workers, with the support of the factory's action committee. The picket has been turning back lorries coming to collect

stocks of tyres held at Speke. If the bosses attempt to move equipment from Speke, that will also be stopped.

Many of those on the picket are from the British Leyland Speke plant (Standards) closed down last year. In *Dunlop Spekes*, the action committee broadsheet, an ex-BL worker's message is quoted: 'Fight. Don't take the money. Even if you don't get official union backing, you should still fight.'

The Trades Council and the local Confed. are backing the fight against closure. Action committee speakers have been addressing shop stewards on the trade union studies course at the Royal Institute in Liverpool. Last Saturday, 10th, there was a demonstration in Liverpool, and in the evening £114 was collected after an action committee speaker addressed the audience at the Everyman Theatre.

The militancy and the broad support is there to stop the closure. Whether the struggle wins depends on whether the lessons of the failure at BL's Speke plant are learned. Only a combine-wide struggle based on an occupation at the Speke plant, and demanding work-sharing under workers' control throughout the combine, will deal with the bosses' plans.

The closure plans follow from an international crisis in the tyre industry. The rise in oil prices and the stagnation of real wages in recent years have meant people buy fewer

cars and fewer new tyres. Also, modern tyres last twice as long as tyres used to. According to the crazy laws of capitalism, this tremendous technical improvement means ... tremendous attacks on the working class, as jobs are cut.

The Speke action committee is demanding import controls. In their broadsheet they particularly single out imports from plants built in Eastern Europe with technology bought from Dunlop.

This line has caused some dilemmas for the Communist Party — which is all for import controls but also all for trade with Eastern Europe! They try to get round it by saying that the East European imports are not very important and the real problem is EEC imports.

Although Arthur Todd stresses 'We don't want to benefit at the expense of any other worker', the import controls demand can only be harmful — and doubly so when it is aimed against the post-capitalist economies of Eastern Europe. It allows the Dunlop bosses to take refuge behind trade statistics, and (even though the action committee don't intend this) directs the fight against a false enemy. *Jobs for British Union, not Soviet Union* said one placard on the day of action.

The problem is not tyre production in Eastern Europe — or the EEC. It is the priority of profits. And that will be dealt with only by a determined class-against-class fight.



Winchester: triumph for the Police

LAST SATURDAY saw three demonstrations in Winchester. By far the most successful was the one organised by the police, who dominated the town throughout the day, and dictated what the National Front and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) could do.

The NF Nazis undoubtedly had a disappointing day. Their attempt to demonstrate outside Winchester jail in solidarity with 'race rebel' Robert Relf was halted by the Public Order Act, and they were restricted to a staging a short march through the town centre, almost deserted except for a small group of counter-

demonstrators. NF leaders Webster and Tyndall were quite clear they had suffered a defeat.

Leaders of the ANL were less honest in their evaluation of the day's events. Socialist Workers' Party member Paul Holborrow declared that the ANL had won a great victory, since (as a result of a deal with the police) we were allowed to demonstrate outside the jail and the Nazis were not.

But the Public Order Act had been imposed on the ANL too, ensuring that the NF could at least march without real opposition. Holborrow's contempt for the rank and file

of the ANL, and his preference for backstage deals with the police, provoked considerable anger among some ANL activists.

For Relf, things have certainly gone badly. In court on Monday 12th to appeal against his sentence, he was told he could rot by the presiding judge, Lord Justice Lawton (himself a former Mosleyite). Languishing in the jail's psychiatric ward, Relf's only viable political option now is to kill himself. If he does so, blacks and anti-racists must be prepared for a violent upsurge from his Nazi supporters.

JAMES RYAN