

BOSSSES' MARKET NO CHOICE BOSSSES' BRITAIN DON'T VOTE!

Wilson hits out as Con- trick loses its grip

SIFTING THE OPTIONS FOR A WAGE CUT

THE GOVERNMENT, the CBI and the trade union leaders are at sixes and sevens as to how to curb wage rises. All they are agreed on is that the 'social contract' is not working and that whatever replaces it must force the working class to bear the brunt of the bosses' present crisis.

The TUC has claimed it will not be party to any 'wage vetting'. All that it will agree to is emphasising the need to stick to the 'social contract' guidelines and denouncing any union which tries to go beyond them. Len Murray has declared that he will have no more 'special cases' — but from the capitalists', and probably from Murray's point of view, this is more 'showing willing' than an effective stand.

Ideas aired by the government, by union leaders, and by employers' associations, for more effectively restraining wages and thus helping profits along, follow four main courses.

The first idea is a revamped social contract with sharper packing: a sort of attempt to get back to the early '60s, when dewy-eyed 'leftists' were writing Fabian pamphlets on 'socialist incomes policy'.

IF SOLEMN agreements between the Labour Party and the TUC, resounding conference resolutions, and hypocritical speeches by well-fed bureaucrats could kill the class struggle, then the Social Contract would be triumphant ten times over. In fact, however, the determination of workers to defend living standards is causing a tremendous scurrying around of Ministers and TUC leaders trying to find some new formula that will keep wages down.

"Amoral"

Harold Wilson led the way with an attack on the Chrysler workers. If they had the "politico industrial ambition" to force the Government to nationalise Chryslers, this, he said, would be "fundamentally amoral".

He was speaking at the annual dinner of the Confederation of British Industry. The millionaires who sat around him knew that if Rolls Royce, or Ferrantis, or

Leylands, or Alfred Herberts, were finding trouble in making profits, then the Government would come in with generous assistance to the shareholders. They knew that if they wanted to influence Government policy, they need only lean hard on Harold Wilson, or have a word in his ear as he sat beside them. But for workers to defend their interests ... that was not "moral".

Eric Varley, Secretary of State for Energy, followed Wilson the next day by attacking the miners for "ludicrously excessive pay demands, pushed through with excessive force". And the big businessmen, who would consider they were feeling the pinch at three times the miners' claim, all nodded.

But prices have risen 22 per cent over the last year even by the official Retail Price Index, and the rate could rise to 35 per cent over the next year. A cost of living index calculated by workers and housewives on the reality of workers' spending would

undoubtedly show a much higher figure. Since over 40p of each £1 pay increase goes in tax and national insurance, the 30 per cent figure being mentioned in many current claims is a bare minimum to keep up with prices.

Drowned

And workers are being attacked, not just directly through price increases, but also more indirectly through the cuts in social expenditure. The workers in the public sector, taking up the fight against those cuts, face the hardest struggle.

The steelworkers' claim of 30 per cent came in for special denunciation even from the 'left winger' Benn, before being drowned in the relief at the apparent reprieve for steel jobs. NUPE members, claiming an increase in minimum rates from £30 to £40, will have to mount big fights against cut backs, speed ups, and the bleeding of the Health Service, by cuts and

private practice. Trade union leaders, both of the right and of the 'left', try to convince workers that we must pay one way or the other for the capitalists' crisis; the best we can hope for is to snatch this or that crumb, perhaps through productivity dealing, job evaluation, or bonus schemes. The effect of all the schemes is to split workers for the sake of leaving employers' profits intact. That can't be the right way. We should not take responsibility for the capitalists' crisis, whether through the 'social contract' or through any new scheme of wage curbs.

Against cuts in social services, we should fight for a sliding scale of expenditure, rising to keep pace with prices. Against rising prices, we should fight for a sliding scale of wages: a 'zero threshold' of at least 65p for each 1 per cent increase in the cost of living. Against unemployment, we should fight for work or full pay.

Workers' fight

5p

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JENKINS
Two tier plan

JACK JONES
The kite that sank...

WILSON
From Contract to Divi

VARLEY
Half his own salary
'ludicrously excessive'

HEALEY
Favours wage freeze
with unemployment

Oliver Jenkins has proposed a two-tier plan, whereby workers and people on fixed incomes would receive a set increase according to variations in the cost of living — this to be reviewed every three months — while skilled workers would receive an additional payment "according to the value of the work" ... that is, to maintain differentials.

This was little more than the skilled man's response to Jack Jones's plan of a flat rate increase for everyone calculated according to the cost of living. Jenkins plan has the additional feature that it would give a massive field to the expansion of job evaluation.

Jones's idea can't have been more than kite flying. Despite an initial enthusiastic greeting, it looks like sinking after a brief three day voyage to nowhere. It could never work, because it runs contrary to one basic principle of capitalist wage curbing policy — that is, to split workers up — and it would build up a massive pressure over differentials. Indeed, in the hands of militant workers rather than as a policy proposal for the capitalist state, Jones's programme of flat rate increases and automatic cost of living payments could be highly subversive.

Harold Wilson's notion of the 'social dividend', too, seems to be adrift if not sunk. The idea was to fix through joint Government - employer - TUC negotiations each year a certain percentage increase permissible on wages, a certain increase permissible

on social services, etc. What Wilson's concept ignored was this: when shareholders in a capitalist firm discuss their rate of dividend, it's a question of how much of their profits they want to take in cash, how much to plough back in for better profits later. With the so-called 'social dividend', it would be a matter of, how much are workers prepared to let the employers wring out of us in profits. And that's settled not by discussion but by class struggle.

Despairing of getting a better voluntary wage curb formula, Chancellor Denis Healey is personally in favour of a statutory wage policy — that is, a wage freeze. However, many shrewd advisors, fearing damaging confrontation, are recommending otherwise. They advocate two more subtle paths of attack: increased unemployment and cuts in social expenditure.

The bosses themselves have most faith in increased unemployment, in the discipline of the market mechanism upon wage rates. Times' columnist Peter Jay comments that "The drastic decline in the rate of growth of earnings to an annual rate of 8.9 per cent over the three months to March, reported this week, doubtless exaggerates the effect of the recession on settlements, because the figures are much influenced by short time working. But... if the Chancellor maintains the spirit of the position he adopted in the Budget, excessive pay demands will lead to very rapid increases in unemployment.

"... It is unmistakably changing the climate of bargaining; and, despite the high rates of inflation likely to be reported over the next two or three months, it will produce marked easing in settlement levels in the autumn and thereafter..."

This crude law-of-the-jungle beating down of living standards would logically be supplemented by a direct attack on workers in the public services and nationalised industries, including quite sharp confrontations. Already there are many warnings of this, and there are also a number of public sector workers' claims coming up: NUPE with 33 per cent, NALGO with 30 per cent, while the FBU have started limited industrial action on their claim and the railwaymen have gone to arbitration on theirs. Even though the steel claim may be settled, and the miners may not go for the £100 target, there is a serious possibility of many sections of workers demanding threshold payments, or reopening of negotiations, if the pace of inflation continues to rise.

Because no option offers an easy road to the capitalist class, it is difficult to see exactly which way the Government will go; and in any case it will wait to act until after the EEC referendum. Whatever the variant, however, some principles will hold true for the working class response necessary: to reject any wage curbs under capitalism, to fight for workers' unity and solidarity in struggle and for a sliding scale of wages.

PORTUGAL

CP tries to silence Socialist Party paper

THE LISBON pro-Socialist Party paper 'Republica' was closed down on 19th May. The printworkers and journalists, influenced by the Communist Party, shut up the editorial staff (mostly SP supporters) in their offices, and subsequently the premises were occupied by Copcon, the Portuguese internal security force. Both the printworkers and the editorial staff have put out their own editions, duplicated in the case of the editorial staff.

The Ministry of Information stonewalled protests at the closure, declaring that it could not interfere.

The exact cause of these events is obscure, since the newspaper accounts are contradictory. According to

the 'Irish Times' (20.5.75) and the 'Times' (22.5.75), the CP printworkers protested at 'Republica' publishing a CP document. The document urged that more than 70 workers in the state owned television station should be purged because they were "reactionaries or latent homosexuals". (During the recent Constituent Assembly elections, also, the CP's propaganda played on the most backward prejudices by attacking SP leader Soares as being a homosexual).

The Paris daily 'Le Monde' (21.5.75) gives a slightly different account. On 2nd May, they say, the printers refused to work on two articles attacking the Intersindical (the CP contr-

olled Portuguese TUC); and on 16th May they protested against 'Republica' giving a big coverage to the return from China of the leaders of a violently anti-CP Maoist organisation.

If either account is correct, though, the closure was not a matter of workers taking control to silence anti-working class propaganda for NATO and the 'mixed economy' (and there must have been plenty of that in 'Republica'); rather it was a matter of the CP using its influence among the printworkers to silence criticisms from the SP. In any case, Marxists can only oppose the occupation of the 'Republica' premises by Copcon, armed forces of what is still a capitalist state.

The story put out in some of the British press, that the Portuguese press is now all CP controlled, is, however, untrue: apart from the far left press, the SP still has its official (weekly) paper, and another daily, 'Jornal Novo', which has a generally pro-SP editorial staff; and papers like 'Espresso' and 'Capital' carry a variety of political opinions

in their columns.

SP supporters mounted a demonstration outside the offices of 'Republica' — from 4pm on the 19th, through the night in pouring rain. All that SP leader Soares could do, however, was to bleat about 'illegality' and declare the SP ministers would boycott cabinet meetings.

On the same day as 'Republica' closed, 19th May, the AFM declared itself in

favour of "reinforcing the direct relations of the AFM with all the structures of popular participation" — that is, of forming a mass political movement behind the AFM. The obvious reason for this is that the AFM is worried by the increasing development of strikes and workers' committees, and is trying to find a more efficient structure to control the working class. M.T.

IT is 'soft cop' season in the steel industry again.

According to the press, 22,000 jobs have been saved in the steel industry and the plan for closures put forward by the Steel Corporation's chief Sir Monty Finniston has been scrapped. Following on what was widely reported as a big fight between Finniston and Benn, the whole "reprieve" was attributed to Benn's crusade for jobs, and he was greeted by wild cheers from steelworkers when he addressed them at Central Hall, Westminster last Monday.

But have any jobs been saved? Certainly the timetable of closures — such as it was — implied in Finniston's earlier announcement will not be kept to. Certainly the death-by-one-blow fate envisaged by a number of plants will not occur quite like that. But this would be cause for greater rejoicing if the breathing space gained by any delay or deferment could be used to build up forces for a real fight against the closures. The "reprieve" plan, however, it designed to stop that.

And as far as the ISTC (the steelworkers' largest union) is concerned, that is just its merit.

DELAYED

Since the initial 1973 investment plan of a £3 billion investment plan in the industry and the closures that were to make way for the new plants, there has been a repeated shift from 'hard cop' to 'soft cop' tactics. Each 'hard cop' announcement of closure spurred on a further exodus of workers from the industry; while each 'soft cop' follow-up took stock of the new situation and modified plans accordingly.

According to this strategy BSC hoped that when the time came to close any works there would hardly be anybody there to chop. The general rise in unemployment has partly thwarted this hope, but the drain of manpower from the various plants under the shadow of the axe still succeeds in making it difficult for the plants to wage a fight against closure plans, as in many cases it is more militant workers who are leaving.

Two additional BSC factors serve to complicate BSC's strategy. First, there is Wedgwood Benn's campaign to build a power base for himself within the Labour Party and its rank and file. And second, there is the fact that the building programme of new works which were in part to displace the doomed older plants is itself delayed, thus prolonging the death agony of the old works.

VOLUNTARY

The plan which is reputed to save 22,000 jobs in the steel industry centres on the question of reductions in what it calls "over-manning". The unions have agreed — did anyone think they wouldn't? — to voluntary redundancy" in

BSC HAVE THEIR CAKE AND EAT IT



Steelworkers and their wives follow the Scots flag in their protest at cuts in the steel industry. The contingents on the march on May 19th came from Wales and Scotland — no serious attempt seems to have been made to mobilise support in England — and were marked by very strong nationalistic sentiments.

cases of over-manning. They have agreed to campaign with management against absenteeism and to engage in joint productivity reviews. They have agreed to cut back on stand-by working and recruitment.

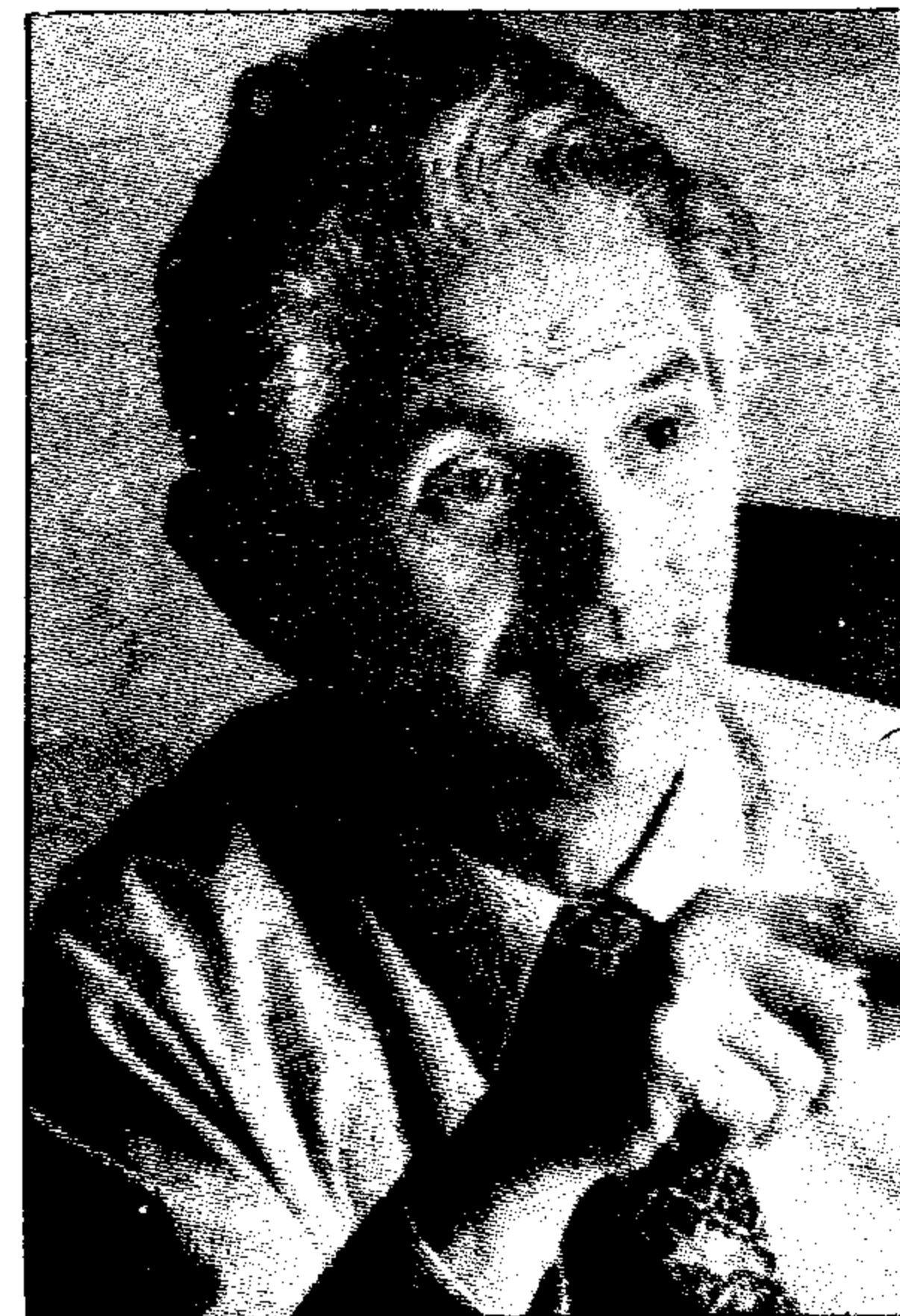
The Government must be laughing! After all, it will save a huge amount in the wage bill: many will be made redundant now without a fight, for the "reprieve" has by no means been total; and large numbers of men will find themselves working for their guaranteed week payment. At Lackenby now, beam, plate and rod mills are paying only 80% of the average wages for non-rolling shifts.

And all this to implement a closure schedule introduced not as the result of determined bargaining last week, but as a result of Lord Beswick's review of the steel industry published early in February. That report concluded that the closures could not take place at the pace originally scheduled. In the context of a deep

recession in the steel industry this meant that unless drastic action was taken by BSC its £2.5 million per week losses would easily be surpassed. The job now for BSC was to try to frighten the steel unions into huge concessions and stampede a large number out of the industry, thereby foregoing the cost of redundancy pay etc.

Now BSC will be able to have its cake and eat it: it will save money, increase productivity, reduce manning and still make the redundancies it planned — only a little later.

It must not be forgotten that the announcement of the cuts by Finniston was timed to coincide with a big production workers' pay — one which Finniston warned in advance he was going to hammer. The ISTC is now going to accept about 10% off what it might otherwise have settled for, "as a mark of gratitude", thus further increasing BSC's savings. The cuts in overtime working are estimated as meaning about a 20%



Monty "Finish'em"



Benn

cut in the wage bill on top of the other savings.

All in all, then, the new plan, while it does for a short time save jobs, also saves a huge amount for the BSC. If it were just tit-for-tat, it would not be so bad. But the productivity drive the ISTC has agreed to will be used against the workers in the modern plants as well as in those scheduled for closure.

In short, they have agreed on the policy that killed the mines as a way of redemption of the steel industry!

JACK PRICE

Court denies right of protest

THE right of free speech suffered a blow from the Appeal Court last week when they upheld a Judge's denial of the right of protest.

While workers are still allowed to picket in an industrial dispute, this judgment means that no legal right exists for people to mount a picket on a non-industrial issue.

This case, which arose out of a campaign against Prebbles Estate Agents in Islington, is another in a series of court cases where rulings have diminished the legal rights of the picket and protest.

The Shrewsbury trials reflected the desire of the ruling class to intimidate pickets. Another blow was struck by the Law Lords in the Broome case, where they ruled that even in a peaceful and lawful picket, there is no right to stop traffic (such as by standing in the road with a placard) to communicate information — even though the law explicitly says that people are allowed to picket in order

to communicate information.

In the Appeal Court in London last week, by a majority of two to one, three High Court judges upheld the judgment that picketing, other than in furtherance of a trade union dispute, is illegal and that getting together to organise such a picket could amount to unlawful conspiracy.

The case concerned the picketing of the offices of Prebble and Co, a north London estate agents which had been singled out by the Islington Tenants Association because of Prebble's prominence in the ripe property speculation in the area. Three days of concentrated picketing were followed up by a three hour stint every Saturday morning.

Dirty work

Prebbles took out a Writ against some of the tenants, alleging defamation, conspiracy and nuisance. The case is not expected to be heard for another two years, and meanwhile, by a temporary order which was last week upheld, Prebbles has been able to enforce a blanket of silence over its activities.

Thus the Appeal Court has done two things to snuff out protest. First, anyone being picketed (or otherwise continuously 'defamed') can take out a simple Writ, and then sit back shielded from criticism — getting on with whatever dirty work was being attacked — until some far-off trial date. Second, even without any Writ being taken out or any civil proceedings being started, people engaged in picketing can be hauled away by the police on a dozen charges of obstruction and suchlike, and not be able to argue in defence that they were engaged in legal picketing.

Shortly after the original High Court judgment on Prebbles, the Islington police gave a graphic demonstration of what it could mean. A primary school headmistress had organised some parents and teachers for a 'road obstructing' demonstration, in protest against dangerous road conditions near the school (a couple of kids had been injured). The woman was dragged off to court by police citing the recent Prebbles judgment.

Free speech

If that can happen to a respectable headmistress after such an innocuous protest, it doesn't take much imagination to see how this judgment affects more political demonstrations.

Lord Denning, who spoke and voted against the ruling in the Appeal Court, claimed that the element relating to temporary injunctions against 'defamation' is tantamount to a restriction of free speech. The defendants would be restrained from picketing until the far distant date of the trial, by which time the campaign could be obsolete.

The split between the three judges reflects the conflict between the ideals the laws claim to uphold, i.e. freedom of speech and the right to picket, and the class interests they in fact uphold. Hence the majority judges' ruling that "interference with the right of free speech ... might be regarded as minimal when weighed against the damage ... done to ... business."

JAN WILDE

Jackie Cleary on the situation in the north of Ireland

Back to square one — WITH A VENGEANCE!

RESTORATION of the "Loyalist" ascendancy in Northern Ireland is an option which the Wilson government insists it has ruled out. But it remains the one equally insistent demand of those militant Orangemen who dominate — and could be foreseen to dominate — the constitutional Convention which Britain hoped would buy it time to evade this demand.

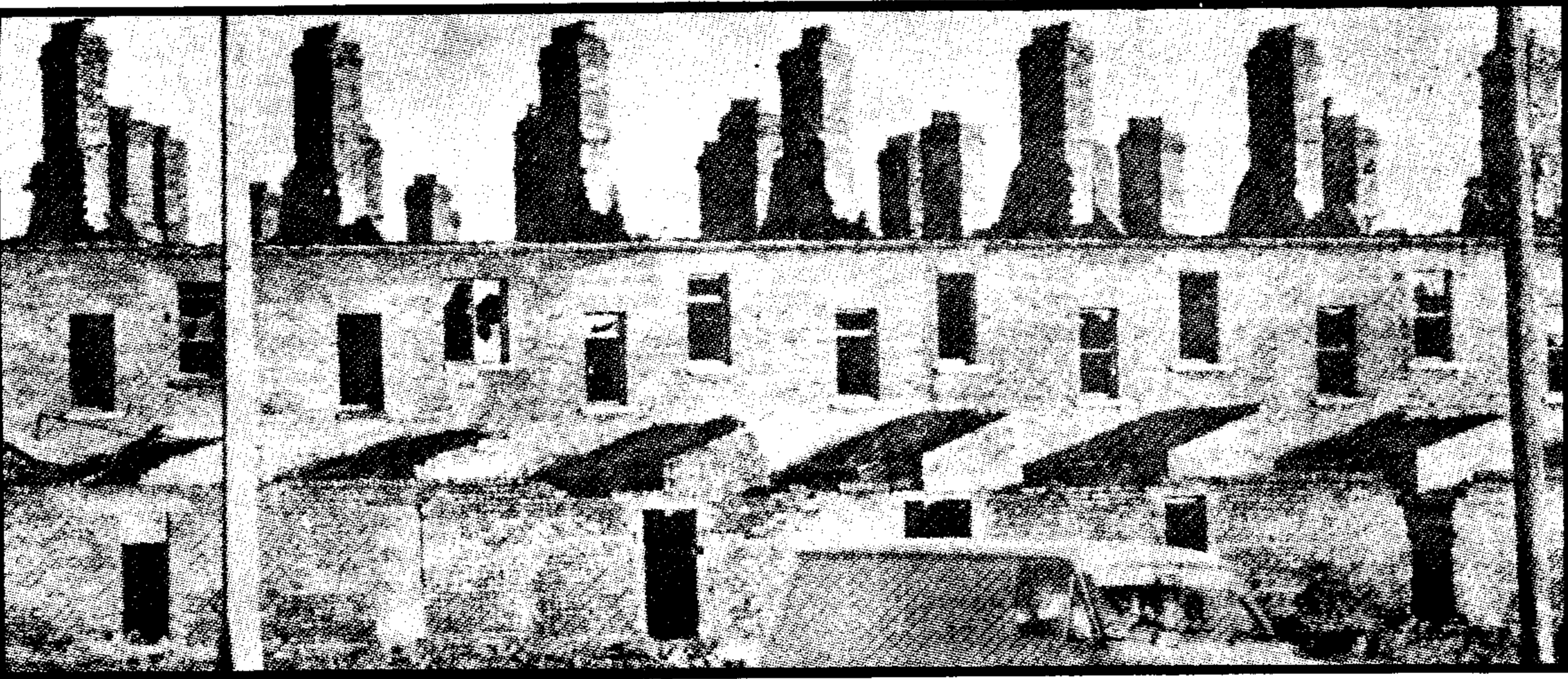
What is it they are talking of restoring? And why is it something that will only be "restored" by the destruction of the Northern Ireland Catholic community — and therefore, by definition, cannot be restored at all?

Before 1969 the Protestants ruled supreme in the one-party statelet of Northern Ireland. They controlled the provincial parliament — Stormont; the police (RUC, plus the notorious sectarian B-Specials, a 'reserve' force that allowed Protestants to keep a gun at home and conduct authorised pogroms at will against the Catholics); the state's electoral system; and of course the allocation of social services.

Blatant

Voting in all but Westminster elections (and Westminster never interfered to redress the local balance of power it had created) was gerrymandered to reduce the representation of the Catholic population: given proportional representation, which was abolished early on, the Catholic 40% would have produced a powerful minority, with majorities on some local bodies. In addition, votes were allocated on the basis of property (a system abolished in this country in the last century) — an incentive, if such were needed, to the Protestant controlled housing authorities to make sure Catholics had no housing that might give them a vote. The most blatant example of this was Derry city, which has a substantial Catholic majority, yet maintained a permanent Protestant majority in local government.

Discrimination in job allocation was rife, and with chronic high unemployment meant emigration or perm-



FOR most of the press, the source of violence in northern Ireland is the IRA. But for the last five months the Provisionals have maintained a ceasefire — and still the Orange sectarian killings continue. Over forty Catholics have been murdered since the beginning of the year. The British Army has done very little to give any protection to the Catholics — indeed, all Loyalist internees have been released, while 300 Republican men and women remain in the internment camps. Harassment by soldiers and police and arrests in Catholic areas have continued.

LONDON Workers Fight meeting: Ireland after the Convention Elections. Speaker: Sean Matgamna. 8.30pm, Sunday 25th May, at the 'George', Liverpool Rd, N1. (Angel underground).

anent joblessness for very many Catholics. If the situation was ever an embarrassment to Westminster, it said nothing and kept its nose out of the affairs of its own apartheid province. No institutions were untouched by sectarianism; the Labour and trade union movement was sectarian to the core.

Murderous

These conditions formed the basis of the revolt of the Catholics in 1969. Initially demanding reforms (one man, one vote etc) it quickly went beyond that when it met with murderous repression from the Orange state. Repeatedly, the RUC and B-Specials invaded Catholic areas, smashing up houses, beating people up and saturating the air with

riot gas that could put a baby or less robust adult in hospital. Demonstrations were put down bloodily, with Orange thugs joining the police — as in the Burntollet ambush.

Finally in August 1969 the repression turned into a full pogrom, with whole streets burned down by Orange mobs, and the Catholic ghettos turning out as a united community of self defence.

Catholics who had previously demanded reforms, and cared little for Republican ideals (or at least ceased to see them as a practical need) now turned en masse to the demand for an end to Stormont and the whole artificial state it presided over. And they threw their support behind the re-emerging IRA that provided their only defence against the

Protestant bully-boys and the British Army.

Britain had to do more than just repress the Catholics. With an eye to its trade relations with the Irish 'Republic' and to rationalising the situation, it made feeble concessions, first suspending Stormont, later trying 'power sharing' (hoping to string together a viable administration from the increasingly isolated and unrepresentative 'moderates' from both sides).

Legal cover

But for all the tinkering, the Protestants had lost none of their real power. What they had lost in governmental terms they gained in mass mobilisation of increasing potency. They had massively armed and organised them-

selves. Paramilitary gangs armed to the teeth — often under legal cover — grew up under the British army's benevolent eye. They turned to the terror tactics of sectarian assassinations, picking off Catholics at random in the street, standing waiting for a bus, coming from work.

Since they managed to get the Power Sharing Executive scrapped after their 'strike' a year ago, they've been pushing for just one thing — restoration of their ascendancy.

But if every event, every action by Catholics and Protestants since 1969, has served to re-emphasise the impossibility of the Six County state continuing, any attempt to restore its previous character would make any continuation impossible. It would blow apart the precarious structure at present only preserved by the British presence.

Dithering

Even were it possible, a restored Orange ascendancy would look very different today. The mildly conciliatory Terence O'Neill (its Prime Minister in the Sixties) and the dithering Chichester Clark have been replaced by determined bigots and demagogues like Paisley and Craig. The passively dominant Protestant masses have formed up in rank as a fully armed lynch mob.

Any Catholic can see that restoration would mean a massive bloodletting, a terrible vengeance wreaking death, torture and imprisonment on the Catholic community. Isolated or undefended Catholic areas would face wholesale massacres. There would be an unbridled wave of sectarian killings of Catholics. Whole sections of the population would be driven out.

Defence and retaliation by the Catholic militia would mean an eruption of full scale, open warfare.

Which is why restoration isn't possible.

The very description of what the chief demand of the Orange politicians and their mass supporters would entail, shows its practical impossibility. Whether it was attempted by a midnight coup or with the full go-ahead of the British Government, it would mean an immediate escalation of the presently simmering civil war to the point where the entire contours of the state Britain spawned in 1922 would be shattered in a violent, chaotic re-partition.

Boiling

That Britain's 'strategy, such as it has been, over the past 6 years, has brought Northern Ireland so close to all-out civil war is an indictment that can't be lessened with vague talk about having tried to contain the violence. Britain created the basic ingredients for the blow-up; Britain has helped to stir them up and bring them to boiling point. British troops have tried to destroy the Catholics' self defence, have provided the conditions for the Orange arming, and have provided a lid over the cauldron to cover it from sight. But they cannot stop it boiling over. They are not part of the solution. They are part of the problem. Britain and her army should get out of Ireland and stop trying to keep its six north eastern counties together as a separate state.

A lesson for the T.O.M. Labour Movement Conference

No short cuts to success for TOM

FEW SITUATIONS offer so little ground for easy optimism as that in Ireland today. It is all too easy to collapse into hoping for some saving factor to emerge that will smooth out all the difficulties. The Militant tendency rely on a 'trade union defence force' to transform the conflict in the north into a straightforward working class mobilisation; the International Socialists tend to place their trust in the development of trade union struggle in the south.

The Troops Out Movement, being organised for action rather than hopeful speculation, makes a hundred times more real contribution. Yet the TOM, also, unfortunately, has its share of illusions.

TOM was started, in late 1973, on the model of the movement in the USA demanding withdrawal from Vietnam. The people involved in starting TOM, notably the International Marxist Group (IMG), felt that the lesson from previous attempts to build a movement on the Irish question in Britain (the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign, the Anti Internment League, the Irish Solidarity Campaign), was to adopt a minimum basis of 'troops out' and 'self determination for Ireland'. To raise the question of solidarity with the struggle to smash the Six County state and win self determination for Ireland would confine the movement to a small section of leftists and would block the possibility of building a mass campaign out of the growing mass feeling in favour of troop withdrawal.

Evade

But that mass feeling is amorphous and often pro-imperialist ("let the Irish kill each other"), rather than anti-imperialist even

in the most confused way. WORKERS FIGHT argued at the time that to confine the movement to demanding 'troops out' and 'self determination' would not gain rapid mass influence; it would merely make the movement less effective by watering down its politics. We argued that the question of being for or against the national struggle in Ireland was a practical question raised daily by the hard reality of military conflict. The 'simplification' of TOM's aims would therefore only lead to confusion.

TOM's attempt to evade hard realities made it not so much 'broad' as narrower. In the fight to defend the Irish political prisoners on hunger strike in British jails, TOM, as such, played no part. In the Loyalist 'general strike' of May 1974, TOM played a marginal part in attempts to get a relief committee going. TOM, also, has been marginal in the fight against the Jenkins law; indeed one faction in TOM, the Revolutionary Communist Group, has argued against any campaigning over the Jenkins law, and even against anti-Army recruitment activity, as a 'diversion' from Troops Out activity.

Silence

At each turn, the barbs and sharp corners of the Irish struggle tear holes in the bland scenarios of TOM.

The IMG, which hailed the May 1974 conference of TOM as "an impressive new departure in British politics", reached the peak of its overestimation of TOM in the immediate aftermath of the Loyalist 'general strike'. As press speculations about troop withdrawal mounted, they directed a scornful attack at those who continued to advocate a position of solidarity with the Irish national struggle.

'Red Weekly' wrote (30.5.74) 'The TOM will win more people to solidarity with the IRA in six months, than the 'solidarity first' merchants have done in four years.'

In the six months until then, the main achievement of TOM had been to silence the solidarity position where before it had appeared most stridently — in the press of the IMG! In the six months following, little was gained, and the IMG majority decided that TOM would not, after all, become a mass movement. They turned from TOM to pushing for broad ad hoc mobilisations, and the chief TOM activists split from IMG.

Aiding

However, for all its weaknesses, TOM is the best there is in terms of a framework for aiding the struggle for self determination for Ireland. A great deal of useful work has been done, in organising activities like the Labour Movement conference this weekend; and it is the elementary duty of revolutionary socialists to take an active part in that work. Particularly in the trade union movement and the Labour Party Young Socialists, an energetic campaign must be waged to secure affiliations to TOM.

In building TOM, however, it would be utterly irresponsible to overlook its limitations. The present leadership of TOM, the ex-IMG people round Gery Lawless, devote a great deal of time to cultivating influence with prominent people such as Labour MPs; while much of this work is useful, it is often done in a thoroughly opportunist way scarcely distinguishable from the methods of Communist Party-run bodies like the British Peace Committee. The draft resolution they have prepared for the Labour Movement

conference contains not one concrete reference to what is actually going on now in Ireland; just historical generalities and hopeful scenarios for TOM gaining mass influence, presumably posited on no sharp crises in Ireland disturbing this steady progress.

Now, of all times, it is necessary for TOM to have a sharp and clear position. TOM must 'take sides' unambiguously; must commit itself to propaganda for relief committees in the event of communal civil war; must involve itself actively in campaigns such as against the Jenkins law; must focus its activity clearly on work in the rank and file of the labour movement (with attempts to influence MPs and suchlike being secondary). That perspective will not be a magic key to mass influence. But it could lay the basis for a serious movement that will stand up to the test of the crises to come.

Chris Reynolds

Where were 70 Tribune MPs when Jenkins Act renewed?

ON 19th MAY the House of Commons voted to renew for six months the "Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act". When the Act first went through six months ago, there was no division in Parliament. This time, however, some ten MPs voted against the "draconian measures". While nowhere near enough to kick out the Act, this vote did push Home Secretary Roy Jenkins into saying he would not renew the Act again in six months' time, but "if necessary" would introduce a new and different Act. The campaign against the Act must continue, and make sure it is ended for

good in six months' time, with no replacement.

These were the MPs who voted against renewal: Andrew Bennett, Syd Bidwell, James Callaghan (not the Foreign Secretary...), Martin Flannery, Eddie Loyden, Jo Richardson, Harry Selby, Ron Thomas, Gwynfor Evans, Gerry Fitt, Stan Thorne and Joan Maynard.

Although TRIBUNE (9th May) carried an article arguing against renewal, a number of prominent names from the Labour left are absent from the list: Jeff Rooker, Maureen Colquhoun, Audrey Wise, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer, Arthur Latham...

THE MORNING STAR recently carried a cartoon showing the Pound suffering under the effects of the Common Market. In the past it has carried similar cartoons on other 'British institutions' — the Union Jack, Parliament, and even the Crown.

But what is really at stake when "the pound" is "in a bad way"? In fact a decline of the pound does have adverse effects for the British working class. However, the remedies for that decline advocated by the capitalist class have effects which are just as bad, if not worse.

From 1971 the pound has no longer been 'pegged' at a fixed rate of exchange with the dollar, and the rate has steadily 'floated' downwards. Recently the pound reached its all-time record low — \$1.1985, or 15% down against European currencies in a space of three and a half years. An immediate effect of this decline is to cut the purchasing power of the pound in the wage packet, and to put pressure on employment.

Decline

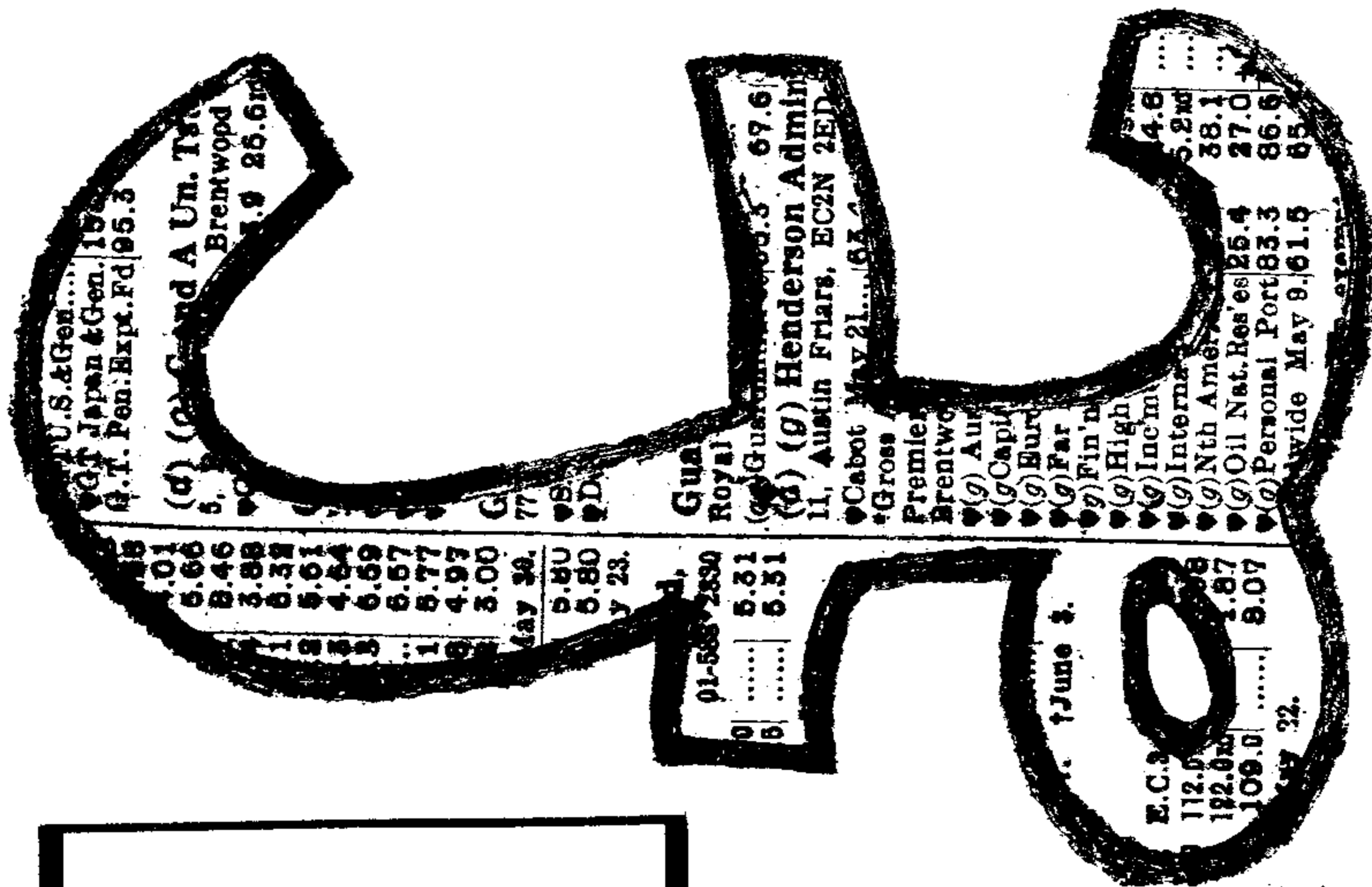
The traditional bogeymen — the City, speculators, people who undergo 'confidence crises' and make 'runs on the pound' — can't really be given the responsibility for the steady and consistent slide, even though from day to day it is they who engage in the buying and selling of currency. The real reason is that, in the world situation of declining trade and increased competition for profits, British commodities have steadily fallen in value.

In the 19th century Britain was the first industrial capitalist power. But as new technologies developed, later-developing capitalist powers such as the USA and Germany 'overtook' Britain. This process of the relative decline of British capitalism has accelerated since the Second World War, leaving it with outdated technology, a low rate of investment, too small a scale of production, and relative inefficiency and uncompetitiveness.

So now, when even the

IF THE POUND IS FLAT ON ITS BACK ...

should we try to prop it up?



by **BOB SUGDEN**

German giants' profits are squeezed — Volkswagen is making a loss this year for the first time in the history of the company — British products have a hard time surviving in world markets.

Some fall in the exchange rate of the pound is not unwelcome to some sections of the capitalist class. They benefit from a slowing down of inflation and an improvement in the balance of payments. However, for commerce, and for any manufacturing industry which relies heavily on imports, a steep decline can be disastrous.

Battalions

But the effects on our class can only be worse — while the international rise in prices hits workers everywhere, the

prolonged sterling crisis means that in Britain imported goods rise even more than home-produced. Remember the 1967 devaluation of 11%? According to Harold Wilson, the "pound in your pocket" wasn't devalued — but we all know that it was. All the more so by a devaluation of twice that much since, coming over a longer period.

But the attempts the capitalist class makes to 'stabilise the currency' can hit us just as hard. The very biggest battalions of big business, the Bank of England and the International Monetary Fund, come in here, to force upon the Labour government measures for currency stability. These include increasing unemployment (to the US level of 9%, or the Danish level of 14%), and the curbing of wages so that they do not even keep pace with the international rate of inflation, let alone the considerably higher rate in Britain.

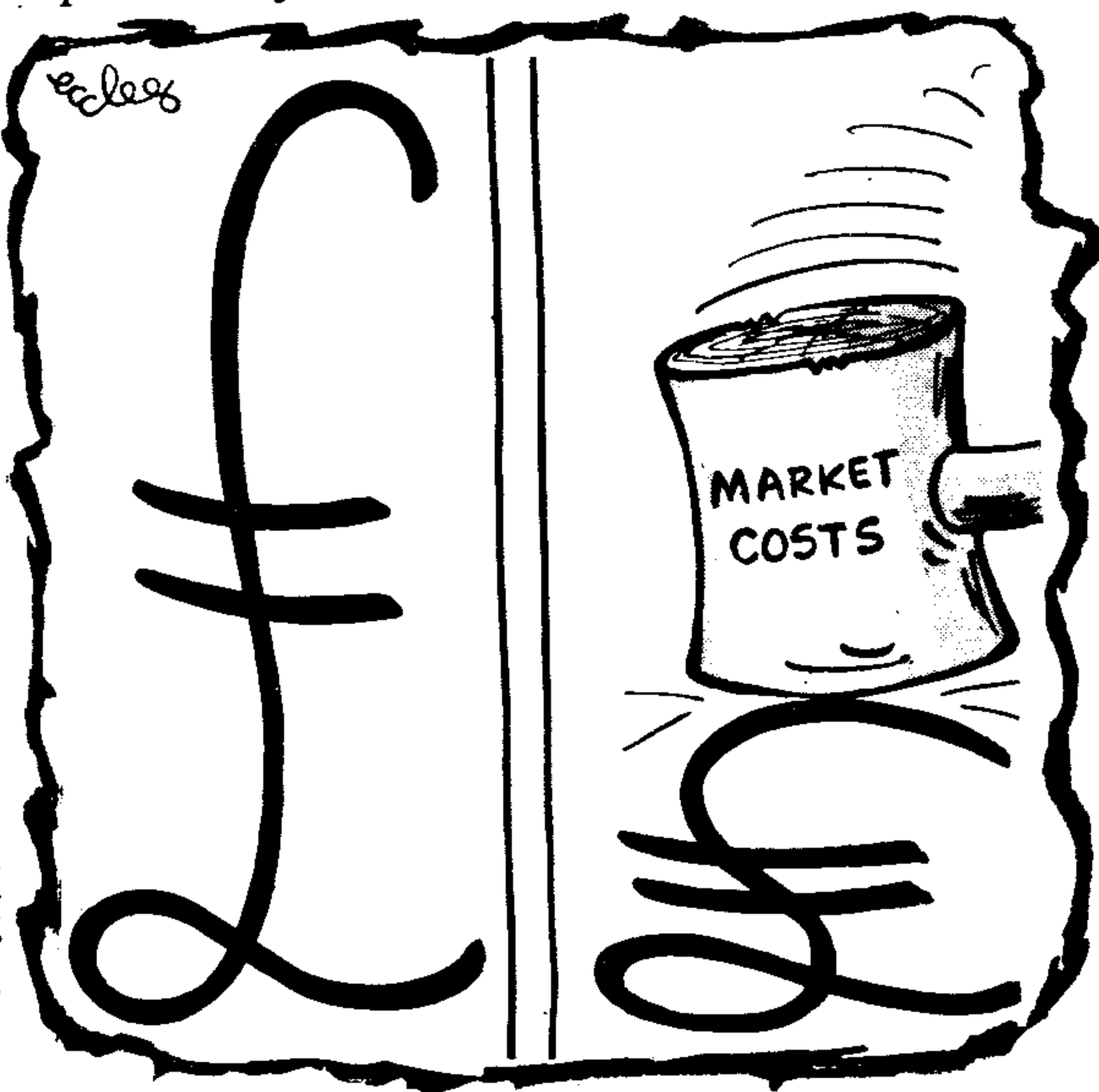
These 'deflationary' policies cannot reverse the funda-

mental factors underlying the decline of British capitalism; but they can improve the relative position of the pound for a while — at workers' expense. A more long term policy is that represented by such measures as the National Enterprise Board — a programme of state capitalist investment and rationalisation to regenerate British capitalism.

But this policy, too, operates at the expense of the working class: at the expense of jobs,

living standards, and social services. And even the biggest British state capitalist enterprises will lag behind in the modern-day competition of economic giants. As long as we are tied to the chariot wheels of the capitalist world market, the choice of inflation or deflation is the choice of hacksaw or razor/blade to cut the throat of the working class. The solution is not to defend the pound, but to defend the conditions and living standards of the working class.

The Pound sterling — one of those British institutions so dear to patriots like Her Majesty's Communist Party, as demonstrated in this Morning Star Cartoon.



COUCHED as it is in the most appalling technocratic language, "The Crisis in British Economic Planning", a new discussion document from ASTMS, is not exactly riveting stuff to read. It is, however, worth paying some attention to, especially since many of the same ideas are being pushed in the latest Labour Party document drawn up by the Research Dept. at Transport House.

The document's language is indicative of its intent, which is to provide a perspective for effective bureaucratic arrangements between trade union leaders and capitalist governments. Significantly, it sets out to be a 'critique' of the British economy, in a situation where "most of the free enterprise mechanisms and systems are now worn out or failing to operate".

It locates the crisis of British capitalism in ways familiar to those who suffer the speeches of trade union chiefs — blaming high unemployment and inflation, low growth rate and high balance of payments deficit upon Treasury mismanagement, investment that has been "random or utterly divorced from Britain's needs" and under-development of the manufacturing sector of the economy. Pointing out quite rightly the dependence of the UK upon world economic factors, it concludes, with moving loyalty to The Nation, that: "Policies are required to strengthen the UK's industrial structure and to reduce the country's degree of exposure to a world in which economic co-operation cannot be guaranteed".

Weapon

The solution to these problems is seen in direct government intervention in the economy, with selective company or industry-based assistance, combined with selective import controls to "shield" British industry in a recession.

The booklet sees the National Enterprise Board (NEB)

as a central tool, planning and directing investments into "growth, export-orientated areas" and away from obsolescent sectors, with the aim of stimulating the level of production in key industries such as telecommunications, motors and machine tools. Meanwhile the Manpower Services Commission will be turning out a workforce that is 'flexible' and responsive to technological change. And the Government will direct investment in those areas where companies are holding back because of economic difficulties.

"Planning agreements" with major companies will enable the government, by consulting "both sides of industry", to co-ordinate its policy with that of private industry, with the NEB assisting companies with "a growth future" and the potential for 'substantial export levels'.

All this, says the ASTMS, should somehow produce greater social equality, higher living standards and improved social services.

These supposed benefits are not just a measure of the bland optimism of the document, but

J.W.HARDING looks at the ASTMS document on PLANNING AGREEMENTS

"Mirages and blind alleys"

a 'working class' afterthought, but the very same sweetener for tying up the working class as made the Social Contract such a potent weapon. And an indispensable element here is the trade union leadership itself: "The Social Contract is significant in that it recognises as a central theme that the UK economy can only develop if government comes to some accord with the representatives of organised labour."

Homeland

And yet for all the jargon and the "sober", 'responsible' tone, the thinking behind it all is quite utopian. It assumes capitalism's ability to direct its policies and overcome its crises on a rational basis, in the "national interest", without regard to its fundamental dynamic of profitability. It assumes that it is possible for consistent economic and social planning to take place under a system that lives by competition, especially on the world market — from which Clive Jenkins and his ilk, under their bluster of "leave Europe, join the world", pathetically

wish to 'shield' their beloved homeland by protectionist measures.

Basing itself upon this splendid confidence in a capitalism converted to the right ideas, the document's most cherished assumption is the ability of the trade union bureaucracy to serve both the interests of its members and the "national interest".

You will look in vain in this document for any mention of the activity of workers themselves. But with the deepening economic crisis which the booklet itself describes, struggles, occupations to stop closures etc, will increase — upsetting the class collaboration for which this document is a guideline, and making nonsense of its prattling about "this country needs targets", or the waving of "planning agreements" that would involve workers' "participating" in their own exploitation and redundancy.

Head-on

The ASTMS leaders' conception of the national interest would inexorably bring them into head-on

conflict with their members' interests and struggles.

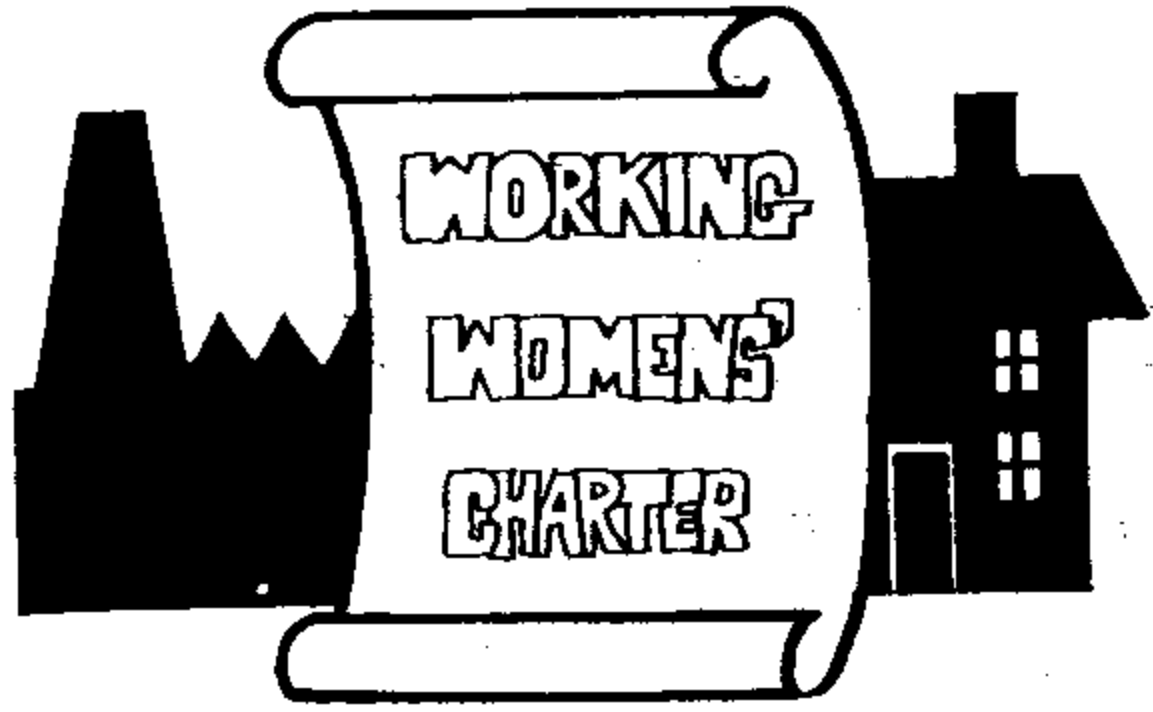
Insofar as the ASTMS leadership has not had to face any serious challenge from a largely satisfied membership, its economic ideas may seem somewhat academic. But the white-collar membership for whom ideas about "bad management" and "increased participation" are held dear are going to be faced with very serious struggles on unemployment, on wages and — not to put too fine a point on it — on democracy in the union. How will the ASTMS officials, with their trendy 'radical' image, relate to these?

The very friendly relations between Clive Jenkins and Wedgwood Benn may help us to formulate an answer. For if we discount Jenkins' starry-eyed hopes for the future of a British economy directed by his ideas, the co-operation of the trade union machinery with the government means co-operating in increasing unemployment and boosting productivity on the basis of capitalist exploitation.

Elitist

ASTMS members have yet to put their leaders really to the test. But they should take heed from the fact that, decked out in language appropriate to the union's elitist image, every worn-out idea of British reformism is contained in this document — the most backward looking nationalism; non-sensical appeals to capitalism to act rationally and equitably ("British industry and commerce must be made to recognise that it has responsibilities to Britain over and above the highest financial return..."); and "responsible" trade union leadership as the repository of the best interests of the working class.

As such it offers nothing but a series of mirages and blind alleys.



Charter campaign or TUC inaction

THE conference of the Working Women's Charter Campaign on 17th and 18th May in London was a better organised occasion than the previous one six months ago at LSE. Of the 106 delegates, two thirds were from union branches and trades councils, and the rest were from Charter groups, women's groups, tenants' associations or political tendencies.

The conference agreed to organise a full scale annual delegate conference at which policy guidelines for the 13-woman co-ordinating committee will be decided; but a motion for a more centralised delegate body to make policy was defeated, and the initiative remains with local Charter groups.

This improved organisation should make the campaign more effective, though the level of political discussion at conference suggests that not all women activists are aware of the obstacles they face.

BRANCHES

Some Charter groups are sub-committees of Trades Councils, as in Islington or Hackney, while others are independent. Several delegates referred to Trades Councils as "branches of the TUC" and stressed the business of "getting TUC support", and some clearly were seeing the integration of the women's struggle with the labour movement largely in terms of seeking leadership from the powerful full-time officials.

The limits of this were touched on in the discussion of the "TUC Women's Charter". This 12-point statement was introduced on 8th March this year as an alternative to the

Working Women's Charter. (The WWC was launched in March 1974 at London Trades Council, which was itself later wound up and replaced by the South East Regional Committee of the TUC.)

The TUC 'Charter' misses out minimum wage, contraception and abortion, Family allowances, protective legislation, and any active role for the unions. Nor does it suggest how the aims might be implemented. Yet people were advocating dual support for the WWC and the TUC Charter, in order to "increase unity of the working class", and there was some support for "backing the TUC campaign". In reality, the TUC "Campaign" does not exist as such, and the TUC will not try to head a mass movement of militant women. Rather, the TUC 'Charter' is a passive alternative to building an active, self reliant women's movement.

Finally, however, the conference did take a decisive stand, voting to counterpose the WWC to the TUC Charter wherever possible.



An ASTMS Division 15 motion spelled out policies for women to combat unemployment: formation of women's action committees in workplaces and trade unions, five days' work or five days' pay, work sharing, and occupation of workplaces when redundancy is threatened. This was passed easily, while a GMWU motion calling for training unemployed men in housework was defeated. Three motions from the Maoist tendency Union of Women for Liberation were lost: some good points they made about social facilities and the socialisation of housework were lost amid sectarian attacks on "Trotskyites" and statements that abortion would be unnecessary under socialism.

Apart from the coordinating committee, four sub-committees were agreed on, to organise publicity, fund-raising, solidarity and the production of a newsletter. It was hoped that a bulletin would initially be produced every two months, but more nominations to the sub-committee are needed to make it viable.

If the WWC Campaign is really going to take a leading role in struggles, and not just be a passive token as the Communist Party and the TUC would prefer, women must be prepared to take an active part in the committees of the WWC. If you can offer help, contact Working Women's Charter, c/o Liz Hableton, 49 Lowther Hill, London S.E.23.

TRADE UNION SUPPORT NEEDED IN CAMPAIGN AGAINST 'WHITE BILL'

THE National Abortion Campaign's concerted effort to stop the Abortion (Amendment) Bill going through parliament is well under way in Manchester.

Representatives from all the women's and political groups involved in the campaign meet weekly to discuss the progress of the campaign. Thousands of leaflets have gone out, explaining the worst effects the Bill

would have if it were passed, and how it would wipe out the few rights granted to women by the 1967 Abortion Act.

Salford and Hazel Grove LPYSs have both passed resolutions condemning the Bill, supporting a woman's right to choose if and when she has children, and giving support to the NAC.

Labour Party wards and trade union branches are being

informed of what the Bill would mean to working class women, as it is felt that some people in the labour movement have an unfortunate tendency to see abortion as merely a "moral" question and not a class one: yet working class women, with no means to pay for a private abortion or travel abroad to places where it is easier to obtain, are the most affected by legal restrictions.

One of the problems the campaign faces in Manchester (and no doubt in other places too) is in drawing working class women — and men too — into a campaign which is staffed mainly by women's Liberation groups. Members of the Women's Liberation Movement are slowly becoming aware that their style of politics — mostly concentrating on group discussions and consciousness raising — has little appeal for working class women, and by its very nature (they often exclude men) cannot involve male trade unionists.

Driven

Yet the most urgent task of NAC is to rally this support. Given the hysterical lobbying of reactionaries like the Catholic hierarchy and SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child), it will require a very vigorous campaign in the labour movement to preserve the few rights women have at the moment. Many Labour MPs, acting totally irresponsibly in the light of the fact that an estimated 80,000 women a year will be driven to back street abortionists by this Bill, are nevertheless supporting it in Parliament for purely vote-saving reasons: hardly any MPs in marginal constituencies have dared to come out in opposition to the Bill.

If NAC is to create a movement in defence of a woman's right to choose, and a movement which has a lasting effect on our class, socialists must urge upon it the need to fight forcefully in trade union branches and Labour Party wards, to take the message to schools, factories and community associations, and to show how this fight is related to the overall struggle for women to escape from the shadow of home and take an equal part in social life.

This means building an effective movement for abortion on demand, a movement which should pursue these aims in conjunction with the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

N.W.

Shrewsbury to Newcastle

McAlpine's law courts

TEN SCAFFOLDERS are to appear before the Crown Court in Newcastle upon Tyne in the near future. They were arrested for picketing a McAlpine building site in the town where scab labour was being used. On January 29th 1975, the police suddenly descended in force and flanked the rows of pickets. Before the scab vans had moved a few yards out of the gate, the ten men had been arrested. The police on the picket line made immediate beelines for the most active branch members.

Most of the charges brought against the pickets are for threatening behaviour likely to occasion a breach of the peace. Many of the men are accused of such violent crimes as swearing and attempting to hit the side of the scab vans. These crimes are deemed so serious that they have all been sent for trial at the Crown Court. The police tried to charge one picket with using a shoe that came off whilst he was thrown into the back of a police van. But they dropped this charge at the Magistrates' Court.

Let us be clear about one thing. There are two Shrewsbury building workers at present in jail. It was McAlpine who was instrumental in bringing about their court cases. Here in Newcastle we can see the same involvement occurring again. The trade union movement was slow to bring pressure to bear to free the two, but they must not lose any time in supporting the Newcastle ten. The Transport and General Workers Union 8214 Scaffolders' Branch are calling for a national response to a call for a mass picket outside the Newcastle Crown Court as and when the pickets are called to attend.

Brothers

We ask all those brothers who are able to send a delegation to the mass picket to inform us. Because the courts will not give advance notice of the date of the trial, arrangements can only be vague at this point; however, all delegates will be given the maximum possible notice.

The scaffolders are now facing a major confrontation over their basic right to picket. If sufficient trade union support is shown on the day of the trial, then not only will the pickets realise that they have the support of their brothers in other trade unions and in all parts of the country but also it will be seen throughout the area that whenever the police try to jail men for basic trade union activities, they will be met with the other trade unionists who will be willing to stand alongside their brothers as a sign of protest.

The Defence Committee, which sent us the above statement, can be contacted c/o Eddie Brady, 86 Benwell Lane, Newcastle on Tyne.

"INNOCENT MEN GO TO JAIL" — M.P.

One of the most reassuring things about British justice is supposed to be the scrupulousness of its identification procedures. So scrupulous that about 74% of the cases taken up by the NCCL last year involved dubious identification after police have used a combination of photographs and identification parades to make a quick snatch and close a case.

Albert Warrington and Thomas Madgin are serving sentences of 8 years each for alleged armed robbery of a Swindon bingo hall in February 1972. The bingo hall manager had described one of the robbers as having dark hair, a large broken nose and turned out ears. Albert Warrington, who is serving that man's sentence, has fair hair, a small unbroken nose and normal ears. The manager's assistant gave a description of a man said to be Madgin which omitted to mention that Madgin has three fingers missing and a

tattoo on the back of one hand — not things you'd normally miss. But he had seen Madgin's photograph ten days before the parade at which he picked him out.

Both men had fairly solid alibis (Warrington, for instance, was seen in his garden in Fulham 45 minutes after he was supposed to be robbing the Bingo hall in Swindon). But both men also had previous convictions — which was also a factor in getting Luke Dougherty and Laszlo Virag convicted on the basis of wrong identification despite good alibis: both men have now been freed and "compensated" for spending years in jail. And it was also a factor in the conviction of George Davis for armed robbery, and friends fighting on his behalf have raised serious points which indicate his non-involvement.

Warrington's common law wife Lea Ward has fought ever since their conviction to clear both men. On 30th January 1973 the Court of Appeal refused an application

by Warrington for leave to appeal, and Roy Jenkins has said flatly that there were 'no grounds' on which he could refer the case back to the courts. Yet there would seem to be sufficient grounds purely in the fact that large sections of the legal profession are expressing doubts about convictions based purely on identification. Incredibly, Michael Stewart MP replied to an appeal by Lea Ward for help with the complacent statement: "Innocent men go to jail, it's part of the system and you must accept it".

Other MPs, however, have been persuaded to take up the case, largely through the efforts of PROP, the prisoners' rights organisation. But already the men have spent nearly three years in jail.

Other, similar cases exist of conviction on the basis of identification of men who are still protesting their innocence, and whose protests are going the rounds of Home Office in-trays. Another is Gus Thatcher, sentenced to life for the murder of a Co-op worker during a raid in 1962. Witnesses said the killer was five foot nine — Thatcher is six foot four! Michael Hunt was sentenced to 12 years in 1968 for armed robbery, after being identified by a witness who changed her evidence between the Magistrates' Court and the trial.

The point is that the police have various subtle means of 'helping' a witness to make the identification they have decided is right or convenient for them. Anyone who is on their files is vulnerable.

PROP are particularly keen to obtain support from the trade union and labour movement in their campaign on behalf of such prisoners, who often have no other way at all of making their voices heard. PROP will willingly send a speaker to union branches or LP wards, and can be contacted at 339a Finchley Road, London NW3.

SOCIALISTS AND THE E.E.C. A public debate on the Referendum

BETWEEN

International Marxist Group

and

Workers Fight



Speaker: Brian Grogan

**BOSSES' MARKET
BOSSES' BRITAIN
NO CHOICE
DON'T VOTE!**

Speaker: Andrew Hornung

7.30pm Monday June 2nd

at
Islington South Library, 115/117 Essex Road, N.1
Tubes: Essex Road, Angel. Buses 38, 73, 171.
Admission 10p.

NOT SO RED UNDER THE CHRYSLER BED

CHRYSLER workers once again gave their overwhelming support to their stewards' call for a continuation of their strike until the company agrees to pay them an increase of £8 as an interim award.

The strike by the engine workers from the Chrysler Stoke plant has come under considerable fire not only from Harold Wilson — for whom the car workers of today are the "politically motivated men" of yesterday — but also from the trade union leadership. Hugh Scanlon and Bob Wright have signed a letter sent to the Coventry office of the AUEW calling the men back to work.

Wilson's attack seems to have stirred up a hornet's nest, though. Replying to his speech to the Confederation of British Industry earlier this week, Bob Morris, Chrysler Stoke convenor, said, "We want Chrysler to stay in business in Britain. In 40 years in the industry I have never known a socialist Prime Minister to take the part of an American company against underpaid and exploited British workers. I most sincerely hope I start something that will topple Harold from the top of the tree". If Bro. Morris taxed his



Morris

memory more, he would surely remember dozens of cases of Labour Prime Ministers backing companies of all nationalities against workers of all nationalities.

CHRYSLER RYTON workers have put in for a new pay claim of 30 per cent across the board (£16 per week) as from July 1st, and CHRYSLER LINWOOD workers have put in a similar claim. Other elements in the claim are a consolidation of a £1.20 threshold payment, holiday pay at 125 per cent of basic, and an increase in the night shift allowance from 20 per cent to 33 per cent.

PRESS WORKERS' CONFERENCE

Craft divisions hold back fight against redundancies

FALLING SALES; loss of advertising; rising paper costs have strewn Fleet Street with the corpses of newspapers which have disappeared from the newsstands, chopping thousands of jobs in the process. The big print magnates like Pearsons and Thompsons aim to bring in new printing techniques now widely used in America, making thousands more unemployed.

Many workers have insisted that technological advance should not be at their expense and have replied with strikes and occupations: EAV, Stratford Express, and now Mabbutt and Johnson, colour platemakers, at Ironmonger Row, where 30 SLADE members are occupying after being laid off with no warning and with only two weeks money.

The REDUNDANCIES IN THE MEDIA conference held on May 17th brought together over 100 trade unionists from all the media unions, including many active in these recent struggles.

FIGHT AFTER ANOTHER PAPER CLOSES

50 NUJ journalists in a small provincial newspaper group, South Lancashire Newspapers, are involved in a dispute over the closure of one of their district offices. On Thursday morning May 15th, the five NUJ members on the Leigh Reporter were informed that the issue of the paper they were working on was to be the last — three of them would be re-employed, and two not.

The Chapel met immediately this announcement was made, and as a result chief editor Ted Hart was informed that he was in breach of a national agreement in the case of one of the redundancy notices he had issued. The NUJ area official, Ken Holman, has been called in — and the Chapel has given official notice of strike action in 28 days if negotiations do not bring about a satisfactory result in terms of finding jobs for all five journalists.

One of the most important items in the resolution passed by the conference was the formation of federated chapels, uniting all media unions. The print is riddled with craft conscious unions, anxious to protect their rights and privileges and rigid job demarcation lines, and this necessarily militates against inter union cooperation. It is no coincidence that the Kentish Times, one of the few newspapers to have a federated chapel, has also been one of the most successful in fighting against redundancies.

In contrast, workers at Stratford Express found that when they accepted voluntary redundancies and natural wastage, the employers were able to dispose of seven jobs instead of the three redundancies originally proposed. The conference resolution called for "fixed staffing levels... to be established... to resist speed-up and redundancies".

Scottish Daily News

The conference discussed the Scottish Daily News "workers' cooperative". The venture has failed to save jobs or to break down the established hierarchical structure in the newspaper industry. It depends for finance on Maxwell and Beaverbrook, who now have large shareholdings and make sure that it is run as a 'viable concern' in capitalist terms.

The conference rejected 'viability' arguments — which workers from Penguin and the Stratford Express also said they had found an obstacle — and declared for nationalisation, without compensation, and under workers' control.

The conference noted that at the Scottish Daily News the content of the paper is by no means under workers' control, and differs little from other dailies. A number of speakers argued that media workers should recognise the fact that present day "freedom of the press" is the freedom of millionaire press barons to use the media to aid other millionaires in class struggle, and should fight to black propaganda aimed against workers in struggle.

PAT LONGMAN

Union Ballots

A SHAMELESS HYPOCRISY FROM THE RIGHT

THE RESULTS of the elections in the main engineering union, the AUEW, are of comfort neither to the Left nor to the Right.

Most important of all, however, was the election of the General Secretary to replace right winger Jim Conway who died in a plane crash, and this was won by another cold warrior, John Boyd, executive member for Scotland and the National Officer for the steel industry.

Boyd's victory over Broad Left candidate Bob Wright was expected. Still, it must be admitted that the enormous margin underlines the depth of this defeat for the Left. Bob Wright blamed his defeat on "the massive intervention of journalists and a very biased press" ... which hardly squares with the *Morning Star's* headline of "Anti Left press campaign fails in union poll."

The defeat has to be faced and learned from, not fobbed off with idle bravado like this.

In the national organisers elections, John Foster, the Broad Left candidate, kept his position, while another left winger, Laurie Smith, won over John Weakley from South Wales, one of the two delegates recently excluded from the union's rules revision conference because it was ruled his credentials were not in order. In Scotland, rightwinger Gavin Laird beat UCS leader Jimmy Airlie for the job of regional organiser.

Bob Walmsley defeated Gina Morgan for a national organiser's post while right winger E T Hepple trounced Bernard Panter, who had to be disavowed by the Broad Left

when it turned out he had applied for a full time job in another union, the EPEA, before the results were announced. (As it happens, Panter now has neither job).

The Left suffered set-backs in the loss of the Barrow office held by Eddie Montgomery and the first round defeat of Ken Brett in the ballot for assistant general secretary. This is to be balloted again.

In the wake of these results a furor has broken out over the methods of union balloting. By the casting vote of the President, Hugh Scanlon, the AUEW rules revision conference decided to revert back to branch ballots instead of the present system of postal ballots.

This battle centred round the clearly felt advantage the right wing has with the present system and the advantage the Left felt with the old one. But while the right wing argued that the very small numbers taking part in branch ballots made postal voting preferable, the left put up the lame argument of "high costs".

Of course this just played into the hands of the right wing Labour MPs, particularly those in the Manifesto group, who immediately suggested that money be given to unions to carry out postal voting.

UNELECTED

For such people to claim to be bothered about democratic voting, though, is really shameful. They do not believe in following the majority in the Labour Party conference or even in the Parliamentary Labour Party. And when it comes to trade unions, the men whose eyes pop at the idea of Hugh Scanlon being elected on a very low poll seem quite happy sitting with Frank Chapple of the EPTU or Dai Davies of the ISTC — not to mention Jack Jones — who have never been elected by the rank and file of their membership.

Let's get it straight: the AUEW is one of the leftest unions in Britain and it is probably the most democratic. Arguably its technical and supervisory section, TASS, is more left wing and more democratic, too.

The traditionally right wing unions are the least democratic: some like the ISTC have no elections at all — indeed the ISTC until recently didn't even have an annual, bi-annual, or anything-else-annual conference. Let the Manifesto group roar around the House about that if it wishes.

For all that, it must be stated that maximum involvement in union affairs is desirable even if in the short term it results in right wing victories. Postal balloting ensures a greater participation in the vote — that cannot be denied — but it does not ensure greater participation in the union's affairs as a whole. In fact the growing tendency towards the check off system of dues payment and postal voting both decrease the importance of the branch and of branch life. This is an example of a case where the plebiscite is not in the interests of democracy.

HOMEBOUND

Basically, though, socialists should argue against the isolated, often home-bound, type of voting. The right wing-go on about intimidation at mass meetings and small numbers at branches, but we need to argue that voting in front of fellow trade unionists ought to be encouraged. Voting, saying where you stand, is a responsible activity, and a trade unionist ought to be ready to say to his brothers and sisters where he stands in any vote. As for intimidation, this is just a scare story: there are not unions banning right wingers from office... although the opposite does exist.

Probably the best kind of ballot would be at the work place. This is where the greatest participation could be guaranteed — far greater than by post. This system could be supplemented by branch balloting for those trade unionists who do not work among fellow unionists from the same union.

If the Left put that forward they would be standing for trade union democracy and dealing a blow to the right wing all at the same time.

Jack Price

Chemical workers occupy after 30 years with no strike

Magnesium Elektron, in Manchester, has been occupied since May 5th, and the workers are confident of success on account of their strategic position, supplying specialist chemicals to Pilkingtons. The 450 workers are demanding 30 per cent increase on their present wages averaging £38.75 gross, and the right to negotiate locally. The bosses (Magnesium Elektron is owned by the British Aluminium Co., which in its turn is owned by Tube Investments), are offering

an interim 12 per cent pending national negotiations. The dispute started with a strike, the first for 30 years, from April 24th, and escalated into an occupation when there was little response from management. Since the occupation began the bosses have stubbornly refused to negotiate.

Wide support has been gained in the area, including from Gardners engineering, Eccles, and from Chloride, another chemical company, where the workers have promised they will come out in support of Magnesium Elektron should the police harrass them. Donations to Strike fund, c/o 113 Falcon Cres., Clifton, Swinton, near Manchester.

Pickets all over the town

STRIKERS at the Coventry factory of Massey Ferguson are stepping up picketing all over town. They are picketing hotels where staff are working since the plant is occupied, and picketing technical colleges where management are on courses.

Picketing at the Post House Hotel and the Berkeley Hotel were particularly successful. In the latter case, the owner, a Mr Kilpatrick, a well known local racist, found himself without beer when brewery lorries refused to cross picket lines.

Workers occupying one of the three striking plants have found a memo dated last year which strongly suggests that management were planning to provoke a strike just now.

Prentice the Axe

A FEW FACTS on Education Minister Prentice's warning of further cuts:

In 1973, the Tories cut £182 million from the education budget. The Labour Government restored only £31 million. Healey's budget has projected a further £75m cut.

55 per cent of all primary school classes are over 30. The NUT estimate that to get all classes under 30 by 1981 would require 580,000 teachers. Prentice has decided the target should be 480,000 - 490,000.

By 1981 the total places available for the training of teachers will be cut from 110,000 to 60,000.

Meanwhile in Glasgow, students are paying £7 each to share a room with three beds. Board and lodging in halls of residence, not including all meals, comes to £15, which is 80 per cent of the total grant.

The Inner London Education Authority refuses to take advantage of falling rolls to improve staffing in schools, and instead insists on reducing the number of teachers with the number of pupils. They forecast that by 1984 one in three of the teachers currently employed will have lost their job.

BRITISH LEYLAND is closing its car painting plant at Trentham, Longbridge, Birmingham, completed only two years ago. The 180 workers employed there have been guaranteed other jobs, but British Leyland is also asking for 3100 voluntary redundancies among the 23,000 employed at Longbridge.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY demonstration: organised by the TUC. Assemble 2pm, Sunday 25th April, at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park.

MANCHESTER National Abortion Campaign Day of Action: Saturday June 7th. This will include a rally and demonstration: details from 061 792 1070. On the Friday night — June 6th — there will be a social in aid of NAC at the West Indian Centre, Carmoor Rd, Rusholme, Manchester.

Articles on WOMEN'S LIBERATION Equal Pay — Working Womens Charter — Abortion — Wages for Housework. 15p from 98 Gifford St, N1.

Working Womens Charter fundraising disco: 7.30pm to 12.30pm, Saturday June 7th, at the Sols Arms, 77 Hampstead Rd, London NW1. 40p. Men welcome.

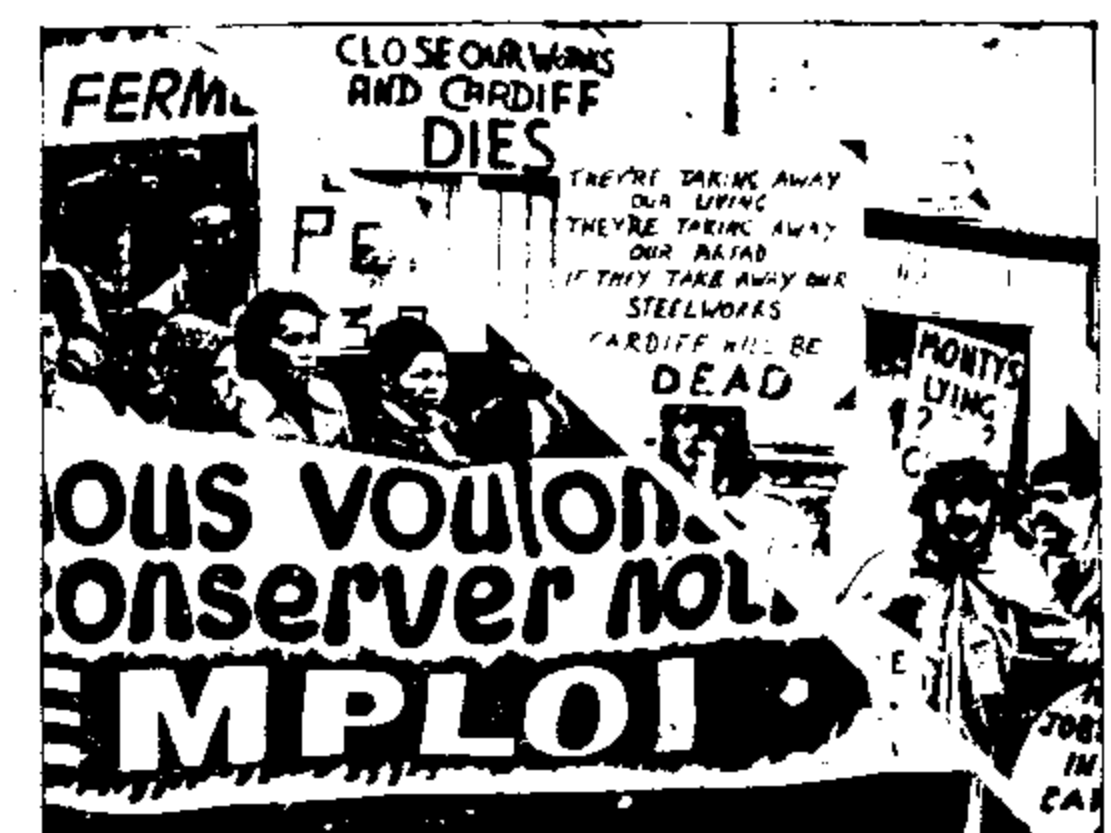
BOSSSES' MARKET BOSSSES' BRITAIN NO CHOICE DON'T VOTE!

MEETINGS

COVENTRY: 7.30pm, Thursday 29th May, at the Elastic Inn, Lower Ford St. Speaker: Sean Matgamna.

LIVERPOOL: 8pm, Thursday 29th May, at Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 8.

THE EEC IN OR OUT



THE FIGHT GOES ON 5p

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