

# workers' ACTION

No.13 April 8th - 14th 1976 8p

THE bosses' press says that Healey's budget is one of 'give and take'. They forget to add that it is the workers who will be giving and the bosses who will be taking.

This budget is no less anti-working class because it has been carefully tailored to suit the plans of Murray and Jones: as everyone knows, these plans are to impose another year of wage curbs.

The effect of just such measures last year was a decline in real wages of 6%. This budget will try to go further.

Many workers, especially the lower paid, may be lulled by tax concessions into thinking that something is being given away. But the bosses are under no illusions. Their journal 'The Economist' describes Healey as "going fishing". The fish he is after is a mixed flat rate and percentage wage deal which will hold wages below the present £6 level. And the tax concessions will be clawed back by increases in indirect taxation on items such as drink, petrol and tobacco, and by increases in National Insurance contributions.

All these measures will hit workers the hardest.

The other side of the coin is the £7,600 million which has been handed back to private industry in tax relief over the past two years, and the £2½ billion returned to the middle class in tax relief for occupational pension schemes and mortgage repayments.

■ ■ All this is sold to workers under the guise of fighting inflation. Healey says he aims to reduce this to around 5% a year. But he can't even believe it himself: in the last year, despite all the austerity measures, world inflation has continued to soar. Food prices have gone up by 25%, and industrial prices by 33%. The fast sinking pound will continue to increase the cost of imported goods, and any recovery from the world recession will probably add further fuel to inflation.

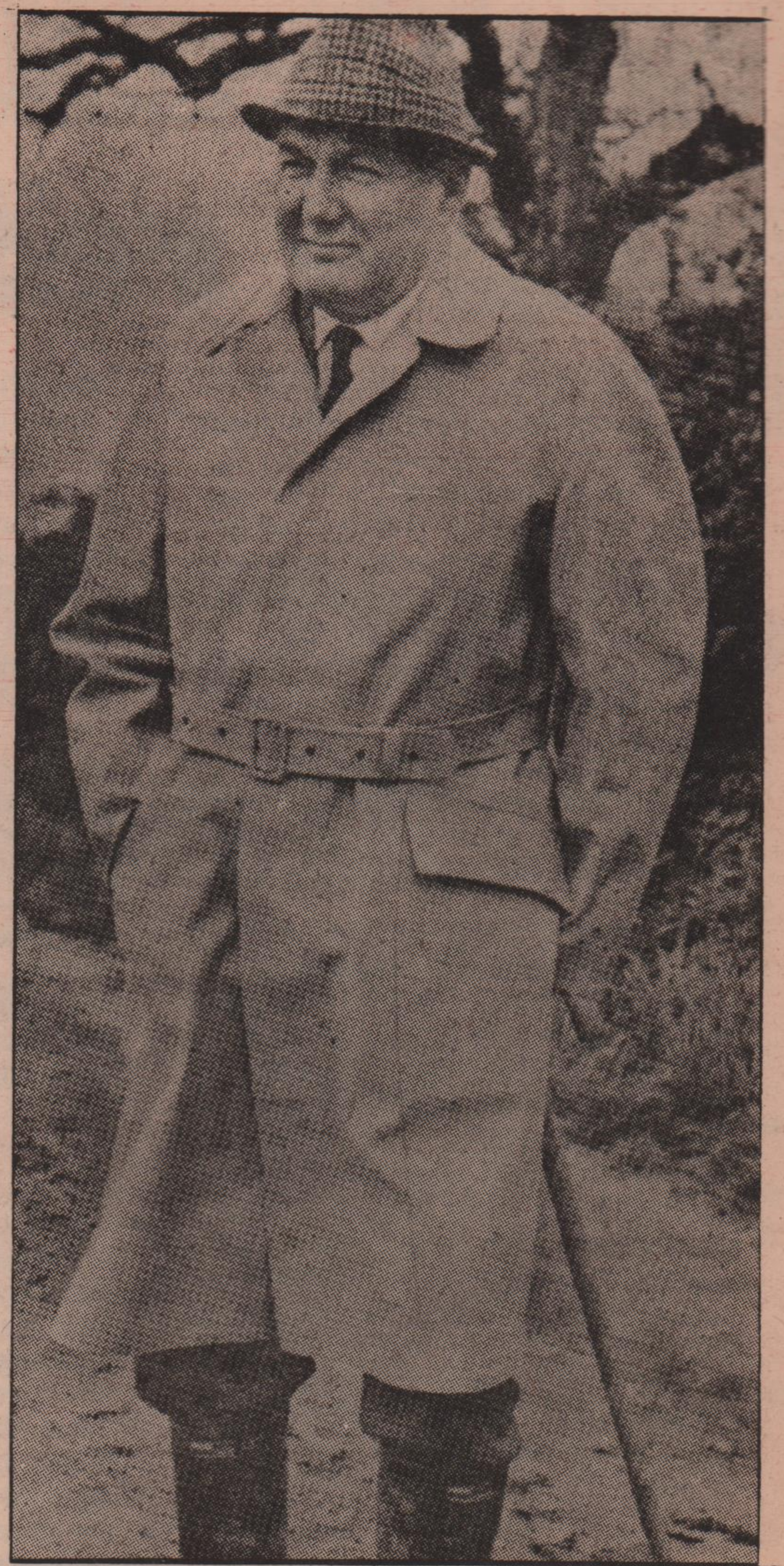
Those hardest hit, whatever small benefits the budget seems to offer them, will be people on a low fixed income. And working class wage-earners will have to fight very hard to hold onto their present living standards, in face of the attacks on wages and on vital social services.

Healey has wielded the axe — again. Workers' living standards are on the block. The victims include workers and their families, the young, the old, the sick, the unemployed — just those people that Labour claims to care the most about.

**THE LABOUR MOVEMENT MUST REJECT THIS BUDGET.** Trade unionists and rank and file members of the Labour Party must demand that their MPs vote against it and against any vote of confidence in the Government that tries to push it through.

## The Victor

# THE VICTIMS



**CALLAGHAN'S VICTORY** in the contest for the Labour leadership and the office of Prime Minister is in itself of small importance to the Labour movement. Whoever won, Foot or Callaghan, government policy would be unchanged. Foot will continue to be the central figure in policing the trade unions for the government, shoulder to shoulder with union leaders like Jack Jones.

For us the interest of the contest lies in that it holds up a mirror for the labour movement to look at itself and its condition.

Callaghan is of the labour movement, bred in it and attuned to it — in his sentiments probably even concerned for it. The one act of his career for which he might be respected was his opposition to the anti-trade union legislation contained in 'In Place of Strife'. Even here, though, it was not the interests of the working class that guided him, but a canny appreciation of the militant strength of the labour movement and a recognition of what was not possible for a Labour government to force through against the determined opposition of the unions.

Callaghan — the fourth Labour Prime Minister, and the first for nearly half a century to come from a working class background — does not embody loyalty to the working class. Instead he sums up all that is servile and pro-capitalist in the labour movement

□ He epitomises the philosophy of living with capitalism, and the slavish respect for the parliamentary puppet show behind which capitalism rules our lives. Everything, in fact that has led us to the present outrageous situation where a Labour Government put into office by direct working class action is now cutting living standards more drastically than the Tories would dare try — and getting away with it.

A full-time union official from his 20s, Callaghan learnt early to trim his sails to the prevailing winds inside the bureaucracy of the labour movement, learned about 'getting on' in the machine politics of the Labour Party. Becoming an MP in the Labour 'landslide' of 1945, he followed the line of the big union bosses who dominated the movement in the '40s and '50s.

When Hugh Gaitskell attempted, after Labour's defeat in the 1959 election, to drop

Clause 4 from the Labour Party Constitution, Callaghan opposed him. Like Wilson, he understood that Clause 4 committed the party leaders to nothing concrete and was a useful bauble to keep sections of the party happy.

As Home Secretary his handling of the eruption in Northern Ireland in 1969 was typical of him and the section of Labour officialdom of which he is a part. He deployed the army to stop pogroms and began to push through small reforms in the interests of the oppressed Catholics. Edging along cautiously, he tinkered with the Six County state — instead of recognising that it was the very existence of that state which had to be challenged. He found the only solution — immediate British withdrawal — unthinkable.

□ Callaghan, moulded and schooled within the right wing Labour Party and trade union machine to act as a broker between bosses and workers, is now Prime Minister in a period of major crisis. The fact that he recognises the class struggle as something to be fought for the bosses means that he will probably serve them as well as Wilson.

But was Foot an alternative? The bankruptcy of the Tribune lefts can be measured by the fact that the 'impressive' vote for its standard-bearer, Foot, was given because he was standing for the same policies as Wilson, rescuing the capitalist system at working class expense.

Foot is generally acknowledged to be the heir of Aneurin Bevan. In 1955 Callaghan proposed Bevan's expulsion from the Labour Party for advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament. But Foot will get on well with Callaghan. Foot represents the burnt-out Labour left that has no policy left except helping capitalism to muddle through a crisis. The rank and file Tribunites may occasionally protest — but they will DO nothing.

Workers can expect nothing but treachery and sell-outs from either Foot or Callaghan. Socialist militants in the trade unions and the Labour Party must fight to make sure that next time there is an election for leader of the Labour Party it will be decided by the whole labour movement — and not by a handful of time-servers in Westminster. This time they have elected a perfect specimen of their own type.

## TROTTER: NOW SET HIM FREE



THE INTERNATIONAL campaign to save the life of Desmond Trotter has finally been successful. At almost the very last moment a reprieve was announced by Dominican Prime Minister Patrick John, who had recently appointed himself to be chairman of the 'Mercy Commission' looking into Trotter's case.

The next step is to secure Trotter's release, since his sentence has merely been commuted to life imprisonment. This will not be achieved through the processes of Dominican law. In the past the rulers of this Caribbean island have made it quite clear that they were out to get Trotter

for his revolutionary activities. He was only spared the hangman's noose because worldwide publicity and campaigning exposed the way he had been framed and brought pressure on the Dominican regime.

This pressure must now be kept up for Trotter's release. He will not be safe until he is free — and life imprisonment in an unhealthy jail is not the end which Trotter's supporters have been fighting for.

We demand the unconditional release of Desmond Trotter, and call on all our readers and supporters to give the campaign their maximum backing.



# Galilee and West Bank riots show real Israel

WITHIN THE last week, a new front has been opened in the conflict between the Israelis and the Arabs — inside Israel itself. At the beginning of last week, violent clashes between Arabs and Israeli troops led to the deaths of six Arab villagers. Many others were injured.

For a long time Israel has prided itself on the benefits it has showered on its Arab community — both in the occupied West Bank areas and in other areas of Israel. The events of the last month have dramatically exposed what a myth this view is.

The reality has been one of discrimination against the Arabs and their subjection to all kinds of racist and repressive legislation and practices. In the area of Galilee, where the killings occurred, it has in the past been common practice to drive Arab villagers off their land by force and establish Jewish settlements. This policy was once correctly described by the then Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion as the 'Judaisation of Galilee'. Now it is rather coyly referred to as "re-population". Of course, there always was a population there — only it was Arab and not Jewish.

## Plans

It is the continuation of this practice that has led to the recent protests amongst the Arabs and the Israeli atrocities. The immediate reason for the outbreak of the protests was the decision of the Israeli government to decree compulsory purchase of 2,000 acres of Arab land for Jewish settlement.

Rakah, the one of Israel's two Communist Parties which is dominated by Arabs, called a one-day strike — a 'day of Arab land', to oppose the plans. Before the strike the Israeli government decided to put on a massive show of strength to intimidate the strikers. Armed police moved into Galilee in force, and the day before the strike army units moved into the area, setting up machine-gun posts.

Despite this, the Arab community was not intimidated and over

60,000 Arab workers came out on strike. In several towns, Arab workers and youths attacked the troops with stones. It was then that the 'show of force' turned into massive repression. In the fighting that followed, six Arabs were shot, one of them a 15-year old youth. They did not stand a chance. Against the guns and armoured cars of the Israeli troops, all they had was sticks, stones, and petrol bombs.

As news of the killings spread, Arab workers and shopkeepers on the West Bank and the Gaza strip went on strike in sympathy. Some of them were already striking in solidarity with the 'day of Arab land', but as the news spread so did the solidarity actions. They were met with the same brutal treatment.

## Paltry

The Palestinians of the West Bank have lived under strict military rule since Israel occupied the area as a result of the 1967 war. After the war, Israel offered to withdraw from the area, but only on condition that they remained in Jerusalem and 'key strategic areas'. When this paltry offer was turned down, they began a systematic policy of Jewish settlement.

After the 1973 war the policy was accelerated, and defined as 'the establishment of security outposts and permanent settlements... on the soil of the homeland'. Top priority has been given to building Jewish estates in the north and east of Jerusalem to seal Arab Jerusalem off from the West Bank. In the rest of the West Bank settlement has been stepped up. This month the Israeli government gave its approval for the establishment of 20 new settlements.

## Riots

Now the same policy has been re-adopted for Galilee. Although settlement was common in that area, it has been eight years since the last orders were made for the requisition of Arab land. In Galilee and the



Israeli soldiers on the rampage in Galilee

West Bank, it is this policy that has sparked off the riots of the last two months. Israeli officials have responded in the same way in both cases. As Arabs in Nazareth were told, "If you behave like West Bankers, we will treat you the same"

On the West Bank this has meant that hardly a family has not suffered from heavy fines, confiscation of property, or some other form of collective punishment. But their resistance to the occupation has not been broken. The mother whose 11-year old son was shot

two weeks ago declared at his funeral that all her remaining sons would become fighters in the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

## Fatah

Now the same militancy is spreading to Arabs in other areas of Israel. Mourners at similar funerals in Galilee last week were chanting "There is no Israel here, only Palestine, and we are all Fatah now".

Neal Smith

# RTZ tricks Labour into Namibian uranium deal

DETAILS have just emerged of a Labour government scheme to buy uranium from the Rio Tinto Zinc mine at Rossing in Namibia (South-West Africa). This runs counter to United Nations and Labour Party policy.

The original deal was signed in 1968 by Wedgwood Benn, who was then Minister of Technology, with Rio Algom, a Canadian subsidiary of RTZ. The contract was then re-assigned to Rossing without the knowledge of the Government. The new deal went ahead, but by the time the Conservatives came to power Labour's programme stated that "Labour will terminate the atomic energy contract with Rio Tinto Zinc for uranium in Namibia." In September 1970 Benn wrote a letter to the Guardian in which he said, "We have already decided to terminate the Atomic Energy Authority-Rio Tinto Zinc contract".

Earlier this year Benn participated in discussions which led up to the production of a Labour Party NEC statement on Namibia which said the government should terminate or alter the contract so that "we do not receive uranium supplies from Namibia".

Despite all this the deal is still going ahead.

## Nonsense

The only excuse that the government can come up with is that alternative sources of uranium are not available. This has already been condemned by Frank Hooley, MP and a member of the Labour Party's South Africa study group, as "absolute nonsense".

Benn himself appears to have recognised this. Apparently he wrote to the Cabinet in an internal memo saying that the then Energy Minister, Eric Varley, was ignoring the whole question of alternative supplies.

The South-West African People's Organisation has denounced the deal, pointing out that the mine is situated in an area designated by South Africa as a Bantustan. The mine itself is protected by about 50 South African police.

Labour Party members and trade unionists must demand that the Labour government drop this scandalous deal immediately.

## CAIRO MARCHES DEMAND WAGES KEEP UP WITH PRICES

FOR TWENTY MILLION Egyptian workers the main food of the day is bread. The average Egyptian worker survives on a diet of about six pieces of bread a day, supplemented by a few vegetables, sweet tea and ful (cooked broad beans).

So far the Egyptian government has had to subsidise the price of bread heavily, keeping it steady at the 1952 price. Other foods have rocketed in price as world inflation has hit the economy. In the last two years the price of chicken and lamb has risen by 50 to 70%, and beef has nearly tripled.

Although the legal minimum wage was raised earlier this year from 18 to 24 dollars a month, wages have lagged well behind prices.

Since Sadat came to power he has tried to 'liberalise' the state-capitalist economy allowing more room for individual capitalists to operate and make bigger profits. His hope was that this would boost the productivity of the Egyptian economy.

Instead the rich have spent their money on conspicuous consumption. Rather than ploughing their money into the economy, they have begun to spend on a wild and extravagant scale. Floods of luxury goods have appeared in Cairo and Alexandria — continental cars, TV sets, Paris dresses, perfumes, and so on.

Workers in the textile town of Damietta at the mouth of the Nile have been on strike protesting over the withholding of annual bonuses. In Cairo several hundred workers have marched through the streets calling for wages to keep up with the cost of living. Sadat must now be afraid of a repetition of last year, when there were massive workers' demonstrations in Cairo and the delta towns.

IN MADRID AND BARCELONA last week, working class demonstrators once again clashed violently with the paramilitary police forces of the Juan Carlos regime.

In Madrid 1500 demonstrators were subjected to tear gas, sustained beatings, and rubber bullets. After this demonstration was broken up and many arrests were made, a demonstration by motorists in the Plaza de Cibeles, with motorists sound their horns in time to the slogans "Liberty — Amnesty", was set upon by the riot police. They battered in the roofs of cars, fired rubber bullets through car windscreens and bludgeoned passers-by who gathered in the square. Some people were seriously injured.

In the previous week, the two major opposition groupings had fused: the Democratic Junta, involving the Spanish Communist Party, and the Democratic Convergence, dominated by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. The newly combined formation — the 'Democratic Coordination' — was immediately subjected to severe harassment from the regime. Six of its leading members, including Marcelino Camacho, leader of the Workers' Commissions, who were gathering to publish its manifesto, were arrested on the orders of Manuel Fraga, the Minister of the Interior.

Some of the six have subsequently been released, but Camacho remains in Carabanchel jail and faces a 30-year sentence under the Franco laws for "advocating a change in the form of Government".

The demonstrations in Barcelona had been called as part of "four days of struggle" by the underground Assembly of Catalonia, a combination of the CP, Socialists, and representatives of Catalan big business. For weeks beforehand they had been discussing beforehand with Barcelona's civil governor, who avoided rejecting outright their plans for a legal demonstration until the Friday preceding it, leaving the demonstration much smaller than earlier ones.

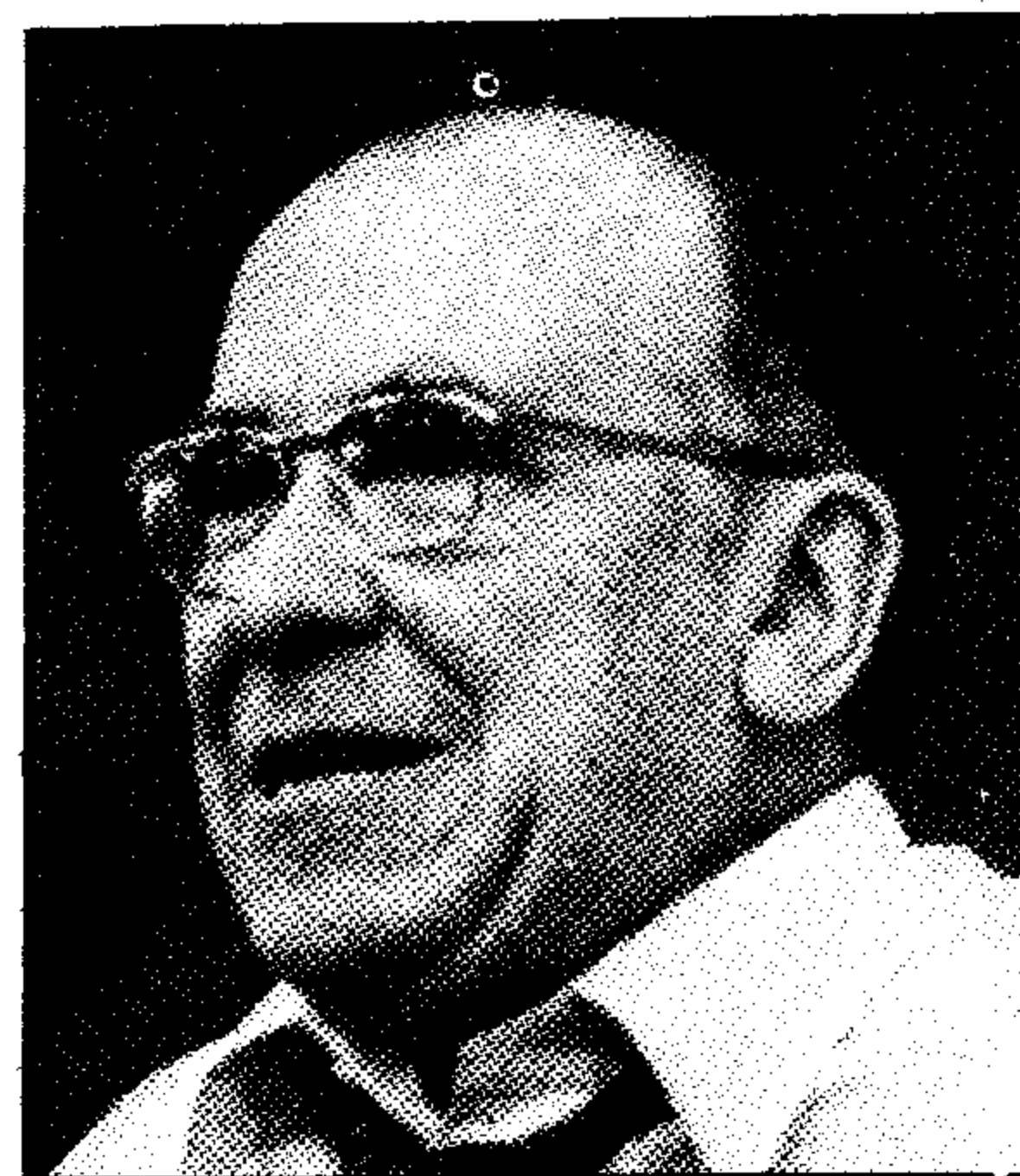
In Madrid similar confusion reigned amongst the Democratic Co-ordination. At the beginning of the week they had predicted a demonstration of 200,000.

## Spain: left-wing leaders arrested

When Fraga eventually banned the demonstration and arrested the leaders of the Democratic Coordination, the organisers called it off, leaving the revolutionary left and rank and file workers to take to the streets against the riot police.

The chronic weakness of the Democratic Coordination stems from the politics of this 'popular front'. Firstly, they claim to be trying to open up a "democratic dialogue" with the government. Fraga's response shows that batons, rubber bullets, and tear gas are the language of the Juan Carlos regime.

The Democratic Coordination demand an 'independent judiciary' and 'neutral armed forces'. They call on the Francoist state to disband and proscribe the



Carrillo

fascist organisations.

Relying on the fact that sections of the Spanish bourgeoisie want certain democratic forms to speed their entry into the EEC and clean out the worst corruption and political impotence to which the Franco regime condemned them, the Communist Party, especially, subordinates the workers' movement to these

timid and treacherous allies. Santiago Carrillo, the CP general Secretary, in an interview given to the Anglo-American Press Association in Paris, said: "In one word we are asking for democracy with big D, not subversion, nor the dictatorship of the proletariat".

But the massive apparatus of repression inherited from the civil war — the army high command, the massive fascist bands (claiming 600,000 members) all testify to a regime that can neither be peacefully reformed by dialogue nor dismantled by 'liberal' ministers.

No reliance can be placed on the liberal pro-EEC bourgeoisie. Spain's mini-economic miracle of the '50s and '60s, with a Gross National Product growing at 7% a year (bettered only by Japan, among the leading capitalist countries) was based on the illegality of trade unions and on low wages. Now Spain's growth rate has tailed off, unemployment is mounting, and democratic rights like free trade unions would allow Spain's workers to go on the offensive, with results which would ruin the industrialists' competitiveness.

They would also allow the downtrodden rural workers and small peasants to fight for improvements in their miserable standard of living and to wrest control from the big landowners.

## Strong

The liberal bourgeoisie want democracy with a very little "d". Indeed, they want very little democracy, just enough to put them and their representatives in charge of a strong constitutional monarchy able to freeze wages and bureaucratically control the workers' movement. And they cannot themselves break the shell of the Franco regime.

Only the masses, largely under the direction of the CP and the Socialists, have the strength to do this. Yet the history of Spain itself — and more rec-

ently, events in Portugal, demonstrate yet again that once the working class is mobilised and gains decisive victories by its own strength over the forces of reaction, it will not rest content with democracy with a little or a big "d". In creating the organisations necessary to overthrow the Francoist apparatus, and in the hard and bloody battles this will necessitate, the workers will forge weapons of workers' democracy, weapons that will strike at the liberal bourgeoisie as well as the right

The liberal bourgeois of today is the fascist bourgeois of yesterday. Faced with an insurgent working class they will quickly revert to their previous guise.

The CP believe this can be averted by striking off the agenda the question of socialism, by restricting the class struggle to the horizons of a "really democratic Spain".

Fortunately there exist forces in Spain who do not accept this limitation. The Trotskyist and other far-left forces in Spain are no longer negligible, especially in the Basque country (Euskadi). These groups — the LCR/ETA(VI), the Liga Comunista, and Accion Comunista, as well as smaller groups, will be tested by the heavy responsibility of winning workers to a programme of struggle to overthrow the present regime and open up the road to working class power in Spain.

In Britain in its clear duty of working class militants and socialists to translate the verbal solidarity of the Michael Foots and Jack Joneses into concrete acts of solidarity with Spanish workers. The International Metal-Workers Federation, based in Geneva, has called for 'protests' against the repression in Spain. These protests must be made concrete in the form of blocking of Spanish imports, and sympathy action by workers in the multi-nationals such as Chrysler, Michelin, GEC and Philips.

DAVE STOCKING.



# Scottish Council of the Labour Party Happy to follow the 'tartan herring'

AT THEIR conference two weeks ago, the Scottish Council of the Labour Party finally accepted the demand for a Scottish Assembly with powers over trade and industry.

They have been unable to find a sufficiently glamorous alternative electoral package to rally their dwindling supporters against the 'Little Scotland' of the Scottish National Party and the newly-formed Scottish Labour Party. Now they are vainly trying to steal the nationalists' clothes.

This was at least recognised by Willie Hamilton, who, amid roars of protest from indignant delegates, pointed out that: 'Not one of us can put his hand on his heart and say he is here out of conviction. We are here out of blatant appeasement'.

The motion passed at the conference called for a 'Scottish Assembly'. This comes at the end of a long battle within the Labour Party over devolution. As late as last August, when the Labour Party NEC had come out in support of devolution, the Scottish Executive declared its objection to any form of Assembly. It was only at an NEC-promoted special conference in late August that the Labour Party in Scotland came out in favour of any form of Assembly.

They have been driven to this position by the growing influence of the SNP and by the creation of the breakaway SLP. What it really represents in the chronic inability of the Labour Party to provide an attractive reformist answer to the nationalists' policies, let alone a real working class alternative to capitalism.

## Region

For decades Scotland has been a chronically depressed region, suffering unemployment and poverty on a larger scale than most parts of Britain. Glasgow, the city with the highest infant mortality rate in the country, also accounts for 75% of the total of overcrowded British homes and 95% of the houses which lack their own supply of hot water and lavatories.

Traditional industries such as coal and ship-building have been run down. Very little has been set

up to replace them. One government incentive scheme after another has not basically changed this situation. The Scottish working class, along with its English and Welsh counterparts, is faced with



Willie Hamilton

a whole series of attacks being carried out by the Labour Government.

In Scotland this has hit particularly hard at the levels of employment. Although recently unemployment figures for the whole of Britain have decreased slightly, in Scotland they have carried on increasing; faced with these attacks Scottish workers are looking for alternatives. It is this frustration and discontent that the SNP has latched onto.

For years the Scottish National Party offered Scottish workers nothing except empty rhetoric. Now they have a 'magic answer' to the crisis — oil. In electoral terms, this appeal has paid off.

In February 1974 the SNP won 21.9% of the Scottish vote — much of it taken from the Labour Party. Despite the fact that its backers include big business men such as Hugh Fraser, and despite the recent leak of confidential SNP documents calling for wage freeze and unemployment to secure the viability of an independent Scotland, the SNP has continued to attract growing support from Scottish workers.

Alex Neill and Jim Sillars formed the SLP [Scottish Labour Party] in response to the SNP threat. They talk demagogically about "reviving the old Scottish socialist tradition". Sillars' contributions to that "revival" include denouncing the striking Glasgow firemen in the pages of the

Scottish Daily Express.

Socialists in the Scottish Labour Party must fight for the fullest possible internal debate in preparation for its October conference. Sillars' confused mish-mash of patriotic chants and Tribune reformism must be challenged; a workers' answer to the crisis must be fought for.

A Scottish Assembly can be no answer. As long as the oil remains in the hands of big business, and not in the hands of the workers, it will not matter whether it is administered from Edinburgh or from London.

## Oil

If the majority in Scotland should want an Assembly, or even independence, socialists would not stand in their way. We hold no brief for the existing state. But we would argue with Scottish workers against independence and against a Scottish Assembly. The division of government will inevitably lead to a division in the labour movement.

The Scottish Labour Party has on occasion called for the nationalisation of oil, and for a fight against unemployment and the cuts, but they have never said how these are to be achieved, and it is certainly a capitalist state they would see as nationalising the oil.

Both the SNP and the SLP see the answer as being through parliamentary skirmishes in a Scottish Assembly. There, in league with revitalised Scottish capitalism, they will spirit away the world recession.

There is another way. That has been shown by the recent struggle of the Personna workers in Glasgow and the magnificent one-day general strike in Dundee. It is the way of independent working class action.

For that action we need now, more than ever, the maximum unity of workers throughout Britain. Illusions in a Scottish Assembly must be firmly opposed. None of our problems can be solved by arguing about the best way for the bosses to govern us. The 'great debate' on devolution is a gigantic 'tartan herring', and one with serious potential dangers for all British workers.

ROBERT ASCAL.

# Easing their grip the better to tighten it later



THE TOOLROOM strikes and the scores of motions piling up in union head offices demanding an end to the £6 limit are the latest warnings to the trade union bureaucracy that if they don't loosen their grip the rank and file will break it.

Given that choice, they loosen it — a bit. After the repeated calls for a recall TUC Conference, the tight-lipped announcement from the General Council only said: "While gen-

erally favouring a recall of the full Congress, the Council agreed to leave it to the economic committee to recommend, after the Budget, whether there should be a recall, or a special conference of trade union executives".

While we waited, the bigger barons of the General Council, Jones, Basnett, Murray and others were in the drawing room of No. 11 working out what concessions in the Budget would be enough to sell a stage two pay deal to their members when the £6 limit is over.

Now the shape of that package is becoming clearer. The TUC will probably propose acceptance of a small flat-rate amount (part of which will be in the form of a budget tax concession) topped up by a percentage increase plus productivity and special differential and parity payments.

The TUC hopes that this 'flexible' approach will allow them to keep their grip.

But we want no incomes policy at all! Neither flat-rate, nor percentage!

The line the rank and file was fed nine months ago when the £6 limit first came out was that this form of agreement would "disproportionately" favour the poorest paid. Certainly militants should support wage increases that do not discriminate against the lowest paid.

## Curbs

By all means have lump sum increases and through them build up effective class unity. But these should not be within the framework of any wage curbs.

Rather than fighting within the limits Jones and his juniors want to impose for bargaining, we ought to fight for lump sum increases at least enough to compensate for the fall in the real wage over the last year.

These demands ought to be coupled with the demand that the real value of wage increases is guaranteed against erosion from rising prices by automatic cost of living rises.

It has become quite common now to advertise savings schemes with the slogan "Its inflation-proof!". It's time the same was made true of wages.

One thing none of the union leaders seems to have quarrelled with — and how it reveals their true nature! — is the idea of a time limit on pay claims, one every 12 months and no more. We must reject this. Workers shouldn't tie themselves to any fixed period. If the need is there, we ought to be banging on the door. Oliver Twist was right.

Against the flexible road to poverty (after Jones' straight and narrow £6) we advocate:

No incomes policy under capitalism! For free collective bargaining! Lump sum increases, to be guaranteed against cost-of-living erosion!

Maximum unity: safeguard the living standards of the low-paid. For a £40 national minimum wage, also guaranteed against cost-of-living erosion! Full vigilance to ensure equal pay and equal opportunity for women!

No "time bans" on wage demands!

## LAW GEARS UP FOR AN ATTACK ON SQUATTERS AND SIT-INS

The Law Commission report published last week showed a retreat from proposals for a criminal trespass law. But its recommendations still contain serious dangers for squatters and for workers or students occupying workplaces or college premises.

'Trespass' at present comes under civil law. Until 1970, a property owner had to give notice of proceedings against any trespasser before he could get police or court action. Since then successive legal judgments have made it possible to get court orders against "Persons unknown".

In an earlier working paper the Law Commission proposed simply to create a criminal offence of trespass. Their present proposal, while recommending that in future sentences for 'conspiracy' should not exceed the maximum for the offence 'conspired' for, and saying that 'conspiracy' should be limited to 'conspiracy' to commit criminal offences, would create two new offences.

It will be a crime to 'threaten violence to secure entry to premises', or 'refuse to leave premises after being asked to by the people entitled to live there'.

## Sit-in

These charges could easily be 'stretched' to include almost any case of bosses or property-owners wanting to evict sit-in strikers or squatters. "Determined employers with a cooperative police force could well use the violent entry and offensive weapon offences to end a sit-in, as there would be tools lying around in any factory that could be regarded as offensive weapons."

All these laws against squatters or sit-ins should be resisted.

# Irish stewards set sights on £1 a point

WITH America sneezing, and the rest of the world catching a cold, the Irish economy has lately been in the throes of pneumonia. Ireland is now faced with the price of the "Lemass Miracle" of the sixties, when Prime Minister Sean Lemass reversed his country's traditional protectionist policies and allowed foreign companies to open up plants in Ireland with generous government concessions.

Now, in the cold wind of recession, these plants are often the first to be closed by the vast corporations that own them.

One blot on the bosses' horizon in the sixties was the extraordinary combativity of the Irish working class, which chalked up the highest strike-rate in Europe. In order to tame them, the bosses and the bureaucrats of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) collaborated in a series of National Wage Agreements from 1970.

Although these agreements held down the standard of living efficiently enough, the bosses were unwise in including threshold payments in the 1975 NWG.

The inflation rate then began to take off, despite subsidies which were brought in specifically to keep the threshold payments to a minimum.

All this left the Irish bosses with problems that could only be solved by further swingeing attacks on working class living standards.

Prime Minister Liam Cosgrave's last budget (coupled with an announcement



Irish Prime Minister Cosgrave

that there would be no wage rises at all until 1977) brought huge tax increases to claw back the thresholds — with threats of worse to come if the unions didn't cooperate in the wage freeze. And it sought to introduce a new Consumer Price Index which would not reflect increases in the CPI caused by indirect tax increases. This

new Index was for use specifically in relation to wage bargaining.

Even the ICTU could not stomach this, especially as they were coming under increasing pressure with unofficial strikes on the increase and a groundswell of revulsion at the government's treachery in simply wiping out Equal Pay provisions just as they were due to take effect.

Talks on the next National Wage Agreement have now broken down.

Settlements under the 1975 National Agreement for 134,000 workers expired on 31st March; wage demands have begun to pile up. 55,000 building workers are asking for a 20% rise, 23,000 transport workers have claimed £10 a week more, and 23 craft unions are seeking rises of £15 a week.

As these demands were mounting up, an important meeting in Dublin a week ago attended by shop stewards and militants from most of the country's trade unions, served notice of the intentions of the rank and file workers. They elected a committee pledged to fight for increases of £1 for every 1% rise in the CPI with no restrictions on the right to fight for bigger increases as often as needed. They also resolved to put up a fight against all redundancies and unemployment, and to seek equal pay for women. They also called for a ban on overtime.

JAMES TANDY



# LOCAL 574 FIGHTS THE WHOLE DAMN SYSTEM

MINNEAPOLIS was once an 'open shop, anti-union town. The famous 1934 Teamsters Strike transformed it into a place whose name is now synonymous with the term 'unionisation'. Two books by Farrell Dobbs, 'Teamster Rebellion' and 'Teamster Power' describe the events of 1934. Now Dobbs has written a third volume about the struggles that the teamsters — lorry drivers — faced after their big strike was over.

The period leading up to the Second World War was a time of unabated class struggle. The great strikes of 1934 and 1936, the San Francisco general strike, the upheavals in Toledo, Detroit and Minneapolis, established industrial unionism and the CIO as a fact of life in the USA.

But the American working class had to keep fighting, as Roosevelt put the US economy on a war footing. Unemployment was still very high and in the end it was only the 'necessity' for weapons of destruction that swallowed up the unemployed and the breadlines.

For Local 574, headed by Dobbs, the period from 1934 to the war was one of constant struggle for their right to survive. Centres of resistance to capitalist control, such as Minneapolis, were marked down to be broken.

To do this, the full arsenal of capitalist dirty tricks were brought out. Frame-ups, coercion and false witness were all used to indict prominent Teamster organisers and jail them.

One such frame-up was that of Howard Fouts and Ralph Johnson. A trucking company had dynamited one of its own trucks, and with the active participation of the FBI tried to pin it on these two leading union organisers. Fouts and Johnson won that case on appeal in 1940, but were framed again, this time with four other Teamster officials. This time they were unable to clear themselves, and were sentenced to two years in May 1940.

Though the labour movement was defeated in that case, its vigorous defence campaign prevented further such attacks for the time being.

With the local Minneapolis capitalists' 'federation' against them, in league with the Federal Roosevelt administration and the FBI, one might ask, who needs more enemies? Local 574 had to put up with two more — the official bureaucracy of the Teamsters' unions (the International Brotherhood of Teamsters) and



Jobless men protesting in Chicago



frontation with Local 574. After a vicious anti-red witchhunt, he revoked its charter, effectively taking away the members' union cards, and set up a 'yellow' local, 500.

Local 500 consisted mainly of yes-men and right wingers; few members of the militant Local 574 joined it. Instead, under Dobbs' leadership, they mounted a campaign for reinstatement coupled with a recruitment drive. After a brief resort to knuckle-duster tactics (which were repelled in like fashion)

elections.

The FLP represented a healthy move away from the mainstream capitalist parties, an attempt to set up a political organisation of labour. Yet it was still a reformist party, a party operating entirely within the framework of capitalism.

The Trotskyists had to face the question of how to relate to it. It was a party that many of thousands of workers, small farmers and middle class voters regularly supported. To ignore the FLP in a sectarian way meant to isolate yourself from such people. But direct support would mean the subordination of revolutionary politics to a reformist party.

The Minneapolis Trotskyists decided that FLP candidates could be given critical support. Dobbs puts it like this:

"[critical support] ... meant that the FLP could be backed in election campaigns, as against their capitalist opponents; but such support at the polls would be accompanied by criticism of the FLP's reformist program and of the policies followed by its elected representatives. This course which was taken flexibly did not exclude revolutionary opposition to the reformists in the electoral area. Whether the Trotskyist party would run its own candidates against both the capitalists and reformists for the purpose of emphasising programmatic issues, was left

Party) published in 'The Militant' of May 19th 1935.

In the last section on the FLP, Dobbs describes how the Stalinist Communist Party entered the FLP en masse around 1935, in accordance with their new 'Popular Front' period.

Following the collapse of the German Communist Party in 1933 after a total refusal to fight together with the Social Democrats against the looming threat of fascism, the Kremlin bureaucrats who dictated policy swung the other way. Erstwhile enemies were embraced as allies without a word of criticism of their politics.

## Fascist

The various Communist Parties around the world, not least that in the USA, moved quickly into line.

In Minnesota, the Stalinists responded by entering the FLP, which had always been 'soft' on Roosevelt. In a short time they turned it into a political bearpit, with cynical manoeuvres which included swamping the FLP conventions with papier-mache 'front' organisations. By 1938 the FLP had lost half a million votes, and the capitalists were able to reassert direct control of Minnesota's governmental machinery.

Fascist movements first made their appearance on the American scene in the 30s. The great labour upsurges of 1934 prevented them getting more than a minute toehold, but even so, by 1937/8 (with the 'New Deal' wearing thin and continuing high unemployment) they were able to put in an appearance again.

In Minneapolis, a movement called the 'Silver Shirts' emerged. When this began to align itself with local capitalist organisations, the threat to union organisation in Minneapolis became only too apparent.

"An iron necessity was thus imposed upon the workers. If they were to defend themselves they had to use their own organisations for the purpose. In that respect Local 544's pioneer action in forming a union defence guard not only served its own needs: the step blazed a trail for trade unionists everywhere in the country.

"The guard was not envisaged as a narrow formation of a single union. It was viewed rather as a nucleus around which to build the broadest possible united defence movement. From the outset, efforts were made to involve other unions in the project. It was expected that time and events could also make it possible to extend the united front to include the unemployed, minority peoples, youth — all potential victims of the fascists, vigilantes or other reactionaries."

Though not an official part of Local 544, the defence guard's initial nucleus came from that body. The activities of the guard were conducted only with the consent of the membership of the unions involved and under their supervision.

## Defence

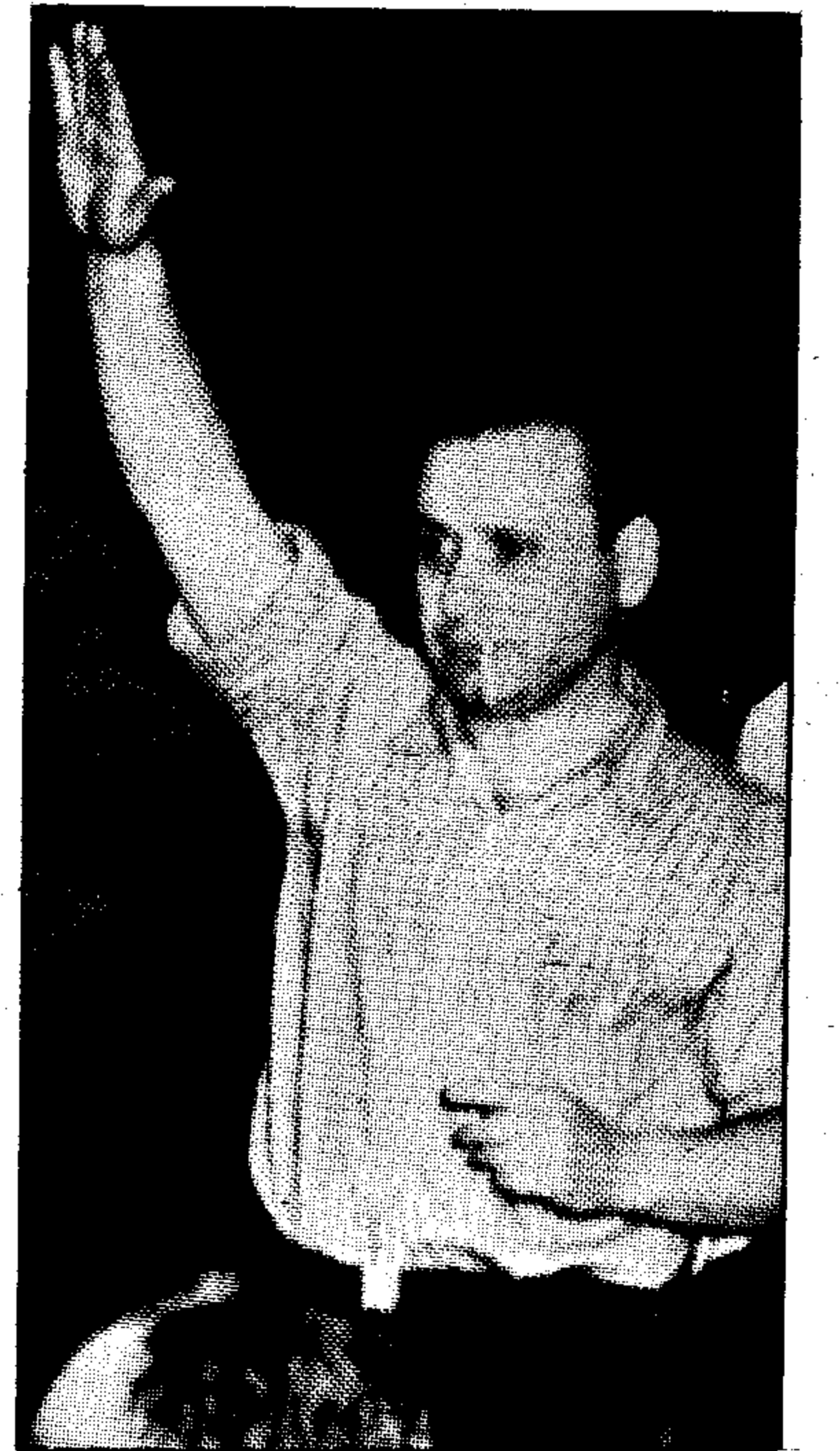
Officers were elected, rifles and pistols were purchased and training given in firearms use. Practice and regular drills were also carried out so that the guard would be ready to respond to whatever situation arose. An intelligence department was also set up to monitor fascist movements.

John Cunningham reviews 'Teamster Politics', the third in a series of four volumes by Trotskyist ex-union organiser Farrell Dobbs.

To demonstrate the Defence Guard's readiness to face the fascists at all times, a public display of strength was organised. An emergency call went out, and in one hour 300 members of the Guard, ready for action, had turned up. They assembled in the centre of town where everyone could see them. In fact it was a false alarm, intended only to show the Guard's strength to the public and the fascists.

The sum result of the formation of the Guard was that the Silver Shirts were literally run out of town. But the Guard was still not disbanded, and kept up a presence at union functions and socials.

The example of the Teamsters' reaction to the fascist threat remains a model for trade unionists and militants all over the world.



Max Geldman quietens hecklers during a WPA demonstration.

Dobbs concludes this third volume on the Teamsters with a section on the struggle of the unemployed.

Right back in the days of the 1934 strike the leadership of Local 574 realised the need to forge links with the unemployed. 'Help us to win our fight and we in turn will help you in your fight', they had said. Many hundreds of jobless had joined the picket lines, and refused to be used as scabs. One jobless worker, John Belar, gave his life, shot down by cops in one of the many pitched battles of the strike.

Under the Roosevelt 'New Deal' the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was set up. It doled out boring, useless and unsatisfying work on its various projects, for a subsistence wage "too much to die on, but not enough to live on".

## Women

Local 574 took the initiative now in forming an organisation for the unemployed — the Federal Workers Section (FWS). This had auxiliary status vis-a-vis Local 574; its political leadership fell to Max Geldman, an experienced organiser of the unemployed and, like Dobbs, a Trotskyist.

The FWS included a women's section — particularly important as many of those working in WPA projects in Minneapolis were women.

A determined struggle by the FWS, which included storming a council meeting, forced the authorities to make concessions on allowances for food, rent, fuel, medicine and other utilities. Encouraged by this success, the jobless began to enrol in the FWS in their hundreds.

In mid-1938, the FWS made a major step forward by organising a Youth Committee, whose first rally



These seamstresses got work through the WPA (Works Progress Administration)

Tobin admitted defeat in August 1936. To save face, a new charter was issued to Local 544 — which became Local 574 under a new name, but with the same militant politics.

## Ignore

Dobbs goes on to recount the attitude of the Minneapolis Trotskyists to the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party.

Unlike the US Communist Party, which has at various times given its support to the Democratic Party, the American Trotskyists always argued that the US working class has no interest in supporting either of the two capitalist parties.

What were the other choices for working class voters in the 1930s? There was the Communist Party, which stood its own candidates AND supported Roosevelt; there was the Socialist Party led by Norman Thomas; and in the mid-west, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, formed in 1918, regularly fought

open for determination according to specific conditions in each election period.

"Through such a procedure encouragement could be given to the trend towards independent political action in opposition to the capitalist parties ... without giving a mistaken impression that revolutionists saw some virtue in reformist concepts. And at the same time well-intentioned FLP supporters could be induced to give open-minded consideration to revolutionary ideas."

In fact the Farmer-Labor Party only fought for the workers when it was forced to do so by the mass pressure of the Minneapolis working class, with Local 574 in the vanguard. The Trotskyists, both independently in their press, 'The Militant', and within the Teamster movement, warned constantly against relying on the FLP: "Workers of Minneapolis — Elect the Farmer-Laborites to office, but watch their every move, do not trust them. They will serve the workers' movement only if the workers' organisations force them" ... so ran a statement issued by the Minneapolis branch of the Workers Party (forerunner of the Socialist Workers

the potentially deadly threat of fascism.

Daniel J. Tobin, Teamster President, represented everything bad in the American labour movement — class collaboration, thuggery and defeatism, the type of approach characterised for many years by American radicals as 'business unionism'.

Here is Farrell Dobbs on "the mentality of a Union Bureaucrat":

"Since 1907 Daniel J. Tobin sat astride the Teamster organisation as its General President. During those years he became wholly committed to the concepts of business unionism. As the term implies, that outlook is designed to assure the capitalists of organised labor's cooperation, both within industry and at the governmental level. In return it is fatuously assumed grateful employers will make a few significant concessions to the workers. On that premise the ruling hierarchy in the trade unions — today as yesterday — displays 'statesmanlike' sensitivity to ruling class needs, thereby stripping itself of any capacity to lead struggles in defence of the workers' interests."

Tobin entered into a major con-



filled the Teamster Hall in Minneapolis. Among the demands adopted were for WPA projects for young people between 16 and 25 based on their right to work; benefits for all youth whether or not their families were on relief; free text books in high school, free tuition in universities; a minimum wage of 15 dollars a month for High School students, and 60 dollars a month for university students; no deduction of youth earnings from the budgets of families on relief; and for a diversion of all military funds to work relief.

As Congress voted more money to be allocated to arms spending, so the WPA programme was cut back. Steps were then taken to cut back on all aspects of WPA work. Foreign born workers and women bore the brunt of this attack.

The centre point of the government's attack was the Woodrum Bill, a vicious measure which increased hours and cut wages drastically. This Bill was passed in June 1939.

## Picket

The answer of the workers on WPA projects was a spontaneous strike, described here by the 'North-west Organiser', the Teamsters' paper:

The strike of WPA workers continued to mount and roll across the country like a tidal wave this week as fresh thousands of desperate and disgusted workers downed tools and brought the number of men and women on strike close to 500,000 with still more to come out.

America has never seen such a popular strike. Not even the great nationwide strike for the 8-hour day in 1886 approached the present strike in numbers.

In Minneapolis all the major bodies of the labour movement sanctioned the strike. Mass meetings were held and picket squads sent out. The city was shut down completely.

As the hard-core centre of resistance Minneapolis, not for the first time, came in for special treatment. A mass picket of some 5,000 outside a sewing project was attacked by police using armoured cars, tear gas and rifles. One jobless worker, Emil Bengstrom, was killed, and 17 pickets taken to hospital injured.

Thousands of workers turned out to escort Bengstrom's body in a funeral demonstration. Max Geldman gave the oration, urging his audience to "struggle not only to repeal the vicious Woodrum Relief Bill ... we must also build for a society where labor shall not have to ask for relief, where labor may enjoy those blessings which it now produces for others."

But even while the workers of Minneapolis were burying their dead, the seeds of defeat for the WPA workers were being sown.

The Communist Party dominated Workers Alliance of America, led by its President David Lasser, had been instrumental in pressuring the official bodies of both the AFL and IO in many areas to support the strike. But the Workers' Alliance will basically supported the clapped-out 'New Deal'. Lasser paid a brief visit to Minneapolis where he stated to the capitalist press that the strikers should go back. (Militants immediately dubbed him "the man with the 18-inch tongue" — long enough for constant bootlicking.)

In the rest of the country, many WPA workers were being forced back through the default of the workers Alliance. Minneapolis was coming dangerously isolated.

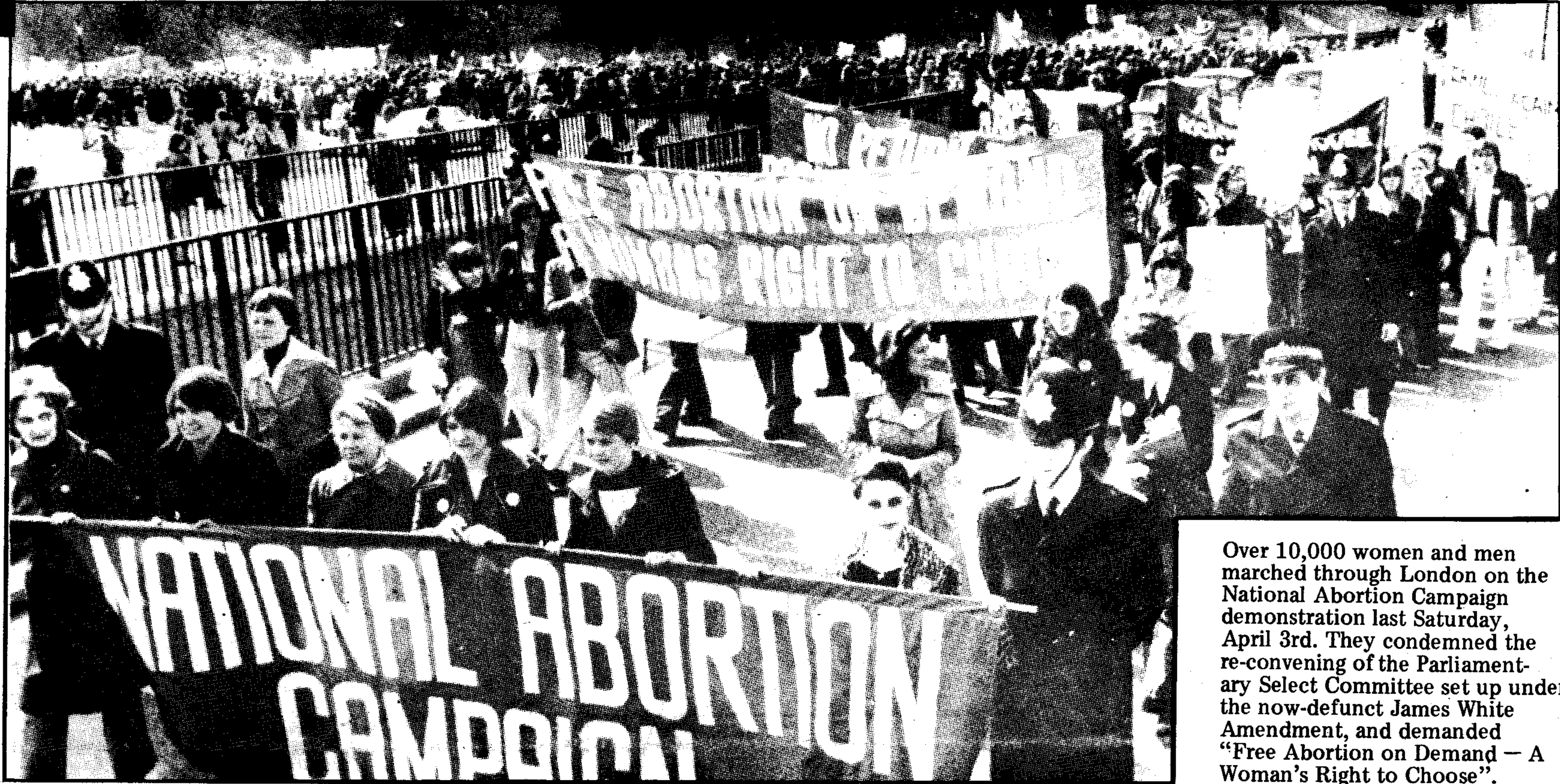
Fifteen days after the first walk-out the strike ended on relatively favourable terms except for one thing: there was no "no victimisation" agreement.

Thus again workers in Minneapolis were faced with frame-ups and charges arising out of the strike. A fence campaign prevented large scale railroading, but Geldman and others were jailed for a year, and one woman striker, Minnie Kolm, was jailed for 45 days.

## Saga

By mid-1941 there were few WPA jobs left. The ultimate capitalist solution to unemployment had already made the WPA redundant. The USA was being made ready for war.

Opposition to Roosevelt's war policy was again to push Farrell Dobbs to the Minneapolis Teamsters into the front line of the class struggle. In an account of this we must wait for the fourth and final volume of the saga of one union organiser's fight against the system.



Over 10,000 women and men marched through London on the National Abortion Campaign demonstration last Saturday, April 3rd. They condemned the re-convening of the Parliamentary Select Committee set up under the now-defunct James White Amendment, and demanded "Free Abortion on Demand — A Woman's Right to Choose".

# Battered wives: No room at the refuge?

FOURTEEN year old Penny's last sight of her father was of him bashing her mother's head in with a hammer. Penny had become accustomed to such scenes. They were a regular part of her home life. Night time was the worst — "I used to get out of bed to help my mother when I heard the thuds and screams."

Finally, after the hammer attack, her mother managed to escape to the Chiswick refuge for battered women.

Many women cannot get away. Every year, about a hundred women are murdered by their husbands. For many of these, their death is the end of a long process of battering.

Why didn't they leave?

## Escape

Women are trapped by lack of money and lack of anywhere safe to go. Most women want to escape — most cannot. The difficulties facing battered women who try to leave home are enormous. It is almost impossible for a woman with children to get private rented accommodation, and local councils will not recognise her as being eligible for council housing unless she first has legal proof of separation and custody of her child-

ren. On top of that she will not get Social Security unless she has an independent address ... yet without some money she cannot get that address: a truly vicious circle!

Even if she manages to get away, a job will be very hard to find these days, and a job also means the problem of what to do with small children. Private minders or nurseries will take a substantial bite of a woman's wages, and council nursery places are almost impossible to get into. Nursery hours are often completely unrealistic in relation to working hours.

Confronted with this array of obstacles, many women have little option but to stay — and until they have the option to go, it will be impossible to know the extent of the problem. Before any of the refuges existed, the problem itself was virtually invisible. Yet Chiswick alone has had 6,000 women through its doors in the 4 years since it opened.

This is one of the reasons why local councils are so reluctant to provide refuges, even when other groups offer to run them: once you have a refuge, then suddenly there are all these women demanding housing. Better to leave the lid on and look the other way...

Like so many people, local councillors and officials are so indoctrinated with ideas about the sanctity of the family that they spend most of their efforts in trying to 'preserve the unity of the family' rather than help the woman to get away. A report recently published by the National Women's Aid Federation reveals just how deep the smug prejudice of some councils runs. Bath City Council, for example, turned down the idea of a refuge on the grounds that "it would encourage wives to leave their husbands". That's just what refuges are meant to do!

## Refuge

At the moment there are about 50 refuges for battered wives run by the Women's Aid groups. Many more are being set up. All have been filled to overflowing since the day they opened.

Over seven months ago, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence in Marriage produced a report in which it recommended:

- \* Crisis centres open 24 hours a day in 350 regional areas.
- \* A national network of refuges where women and children could go from the crisis centres.
- \* Public finance for refuges which would be run by groups like the Women's Aid Federation.
- \* Greater police protection for battered wives.

These were good proposals — but for seven months almost nothing has been done.

Despite the recommendation that refuges should be more available, many that do exist are finding themselves running low on funds, and unable to get help from local councils. Hounslow Council, demanding that the Chiswick refuge lowers its intake and turns away women once it is 'full', has stopped the entire urban aid grant to the refuge until its conditions are met. But as its founder Erin Pizzey says "You can't tell a woman with blood on her face from some fresh wound: Go home — there's no room here. You might be sending her back to be murdered."

## Suffer

Some Women's Aid groups such as Hammersmith are still having difficulty even finding the initial money for a refuge. They were offered a house that would have needed £10,000 to make habitable. The local council would not give them a penny.

Hammersmith council have 200 empty houses — but have refused to let any of these be used as a refuge.

Such behaviour cannot simply be explained by pointing to the squeeze on local council budgets. The cuts in spending on social services have certainly hit hard at women, but underlying the decisive attitudes of many authorities is the feeling that battered women are a 'domestic problem'. Their attitude is to leave matters well alone ... and let the woman suffer.

Why do men beat the women they live with? Social workers explain that it is because they cannot break out from the pattern set by their own violent fathers. This view is also emphasised by Pizzey — the most vocal of the Women's Aid campaigners, and a woman isolated by strong disagreements from the Women's Aid Federation.

Clearly this is not an explanation, but rather another aspect of the problem — one of its mechanisms, but not its cause.

The fundamental cause lies with the position of all women in 'a man's world'. The problems facing wives who try to leave their husbands — low pay, poor training, legal impediments and hopelessly inadequate child care facilities — are the same as those facing any woman challenging her status as a social dependent of a man.

Given this status, a woman who lives with a man, almost inevitably on unequal terms, lays her safety on the line.

## Anvil

The idea that a woman's place is in the home and that 'family unity' is more important than the needs of a woman — or a few broken bones — is built into every authority to whom a bullied and frightened woman may turn for help.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the attitudes of the police. They are always proclaiming the need to wipe out violence on the streets. Yet about the violence that occurs at home they do nothing. As one of their spokesmen explained to the Select Committee, they are concerned to protect the 'unity of the spouses'. In the case of many women that 'unity' is like that of the hammer and the anvil...

## Trapped

As long as ideas prevail that a woman's mission in life is to keep house for a man and remain dependent on him, the scene is set to allow men to batter women and for women to either accept it as a fact of life or to be hopelessly trapped.

The recent legislation on Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination are a tiny start along the road to changing this — a start already undermined by the lack of facilities for women to be free to fight for their rights. But the fundamental changes go a long way beyond what could be contained in even the best legislation — and these laws are far from that.

It is no accident that much of the impetus for refuges has come not from social workers but from women in the Women's Movement, expressing their determination that women will not be pushed around for much longer.

This sort of fight and this sort of attitude — carried into every sphere of life — will be necessary before women no longer need special refuges from violent men.

## The facts of inequality



THE Equal Pay Act is useless to most women — that is one of the facts revealed by the survey of 5,000 women published in Woman's Own on March 20th.

The average pay packet of the full time working woman was £33.46, while the average pay packet of her husband was £52.15. Only two thirds of those readers doing similar work to a man were being paid at the same rate. The excuses they were given ranged from men having higher qualifications to the plea that they had worked longer in a job.

The Engineering Employers Federation in their handbook on ways to get around the EPA used ideas exactly like these.

Only 43% of the sample were doing the same job as men; the other 57% were left to the mercy of the job evaluation 'experts' who constantly downgrade the jobs that women do. The result was that those women doing full time jobs alongside men averaged £38.26 a week take-home pay, while those doing "women's work" averaged only £28.99.

Yet three out of five women stated that their pay packet was essential to the upkeep of the family, and one quarter of the sample (14% of all working women) were actually the main breadwinners. The so-called joys of motherhood came

in for a battering too. More than one third of mothers of under 5s went out to work to escape the isolation and boredom which they suffered at home. Four in five mothers in the sample who were forced to stay at home to look after children said they would take a job if they could. And one woman in three said the main reason for not going out to work was that she could not find adequate care for her children.

The survey also exposed female 'hidden unemployment'. Only three out of 10 women in this sample who were looking for jobs had bothered to register. This means that no less than 70% of women looking for work are left out of the Government statistics, and that the national unemployment figure is nearer 2 million than the official 1.4 million.

Equality for women will not be won through laws like the Equal Pay Act or the Sex Discrimination Act. Although women can gain some advantage by fighting for their full implementation, they are full of loopholes and they leave untouched the basic root of women's inequality — the present family structure. Only women organising themselves in a fighting movement can win equality: That is why the conference of the Working Women's Charter this weekend is so important.



# WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER?

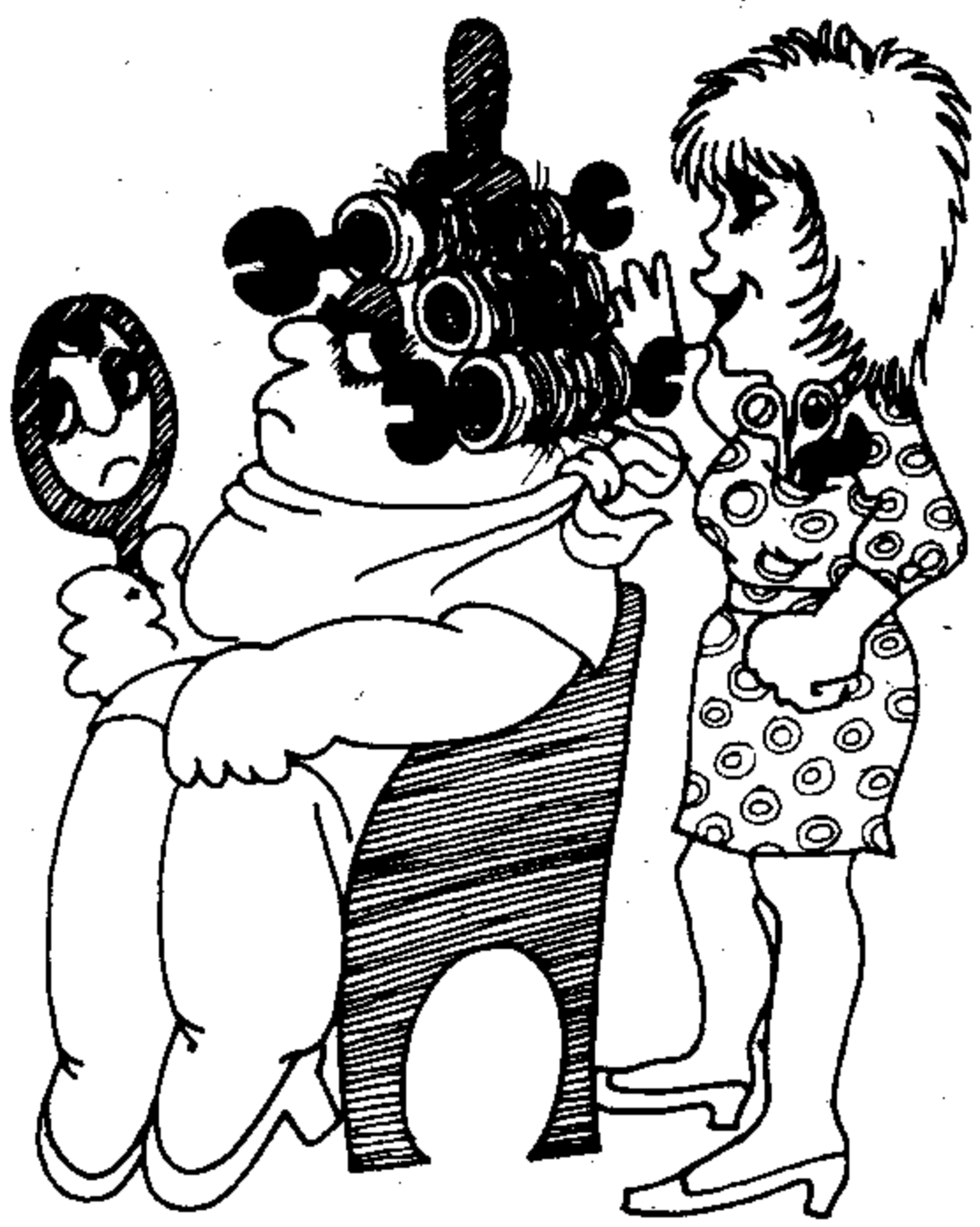
SINCE THE Working Women's Charter was passed by the London Trades Council in 1974, the Charter movement has gained in strength, both in terms of affiliations from trade union branches and other working class organisations, and in actual grass roots support.

This has to be matched against the massive attacks on the living standards of the whole working class, and particularly women, by the Labour Government hand-in-hand with the TUC. The Charter campaign cannot be seen in isolation from the needs of women at a particular time, or from the programme of action needed to fight capitalist attacks on the whole of the working class.

The Working Women's Charter makes the links between the oppression of women at home in the family, and our oppression at work. Around it we can organise to fight back against our double oppression and exploitation, and against the ideology that sees a woman's rightful place as in the home, which is an integral part of class society and the family structure based on it.

We cannot see the Working Women's Charter as a perfect document or a blueprint for a future society, but rather an outline of the basic prerequisites for complete equality at all levels of a woman's social, political, and economic life.

The new legislation on Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination will by itself do little to provide such things as the nursery facilities which are a precondition for freeing women from the confines of the home, and will therefore have little effect on the lives of working women.



I REALLY WANTED TO BE A MECHANIC BUT THERE WERE NO APPRENTICESHIPS FOR WOMEN

The position of women will only begin to change if the organisation at a grass roots level becomes effective and if the labour movement takes up all the aspects of women's oppression, and not just those relating to employment and training. A struggle round the demands of the Charter could become the means of stimulating a real fighting women's movement both within and without the trade union movement.

The victory and defeat of working class women is inextricably tied to the victory and defeat of the working-class as a whole.

Women are hit twice as hard as men in the current economic crisis. The rate of unemployment is rising twice as fast among women as amongst men. We are the first to be put on the redundancy list — the ones who are seen to be the least important section of the labour force to hold a job. Capitalism uses women as a reserve pool of cheap labour to be sent back to the home when the system needs to preserve its profits.

We need to defend the right of women to work, to reject the idea that women go out the door first, and to actively involve ourselves in the unions as a part of defending our jobs and attacking such backward ideas.

The vicious cutbacks in social expenditure hit women especially hard. As hospitals, old people's homes and nurseries are closed

down, women especially are thrown out of work and we are forced back into the home to take on the burden of caring for the sick, the old and the young.

The working class is divided and weakened in any fight back to save jobs as men and women alike accept the "need" for women's jobs to go first, and women are usually the least organised sector of the labour movement and thus the least prepared to organise against those attacks.

In 1976 we can see just how precarious the hold of the woman on life outside the home really is. We especially need the organisation and self-activity of women at a rank-and-file level as well as our participation in committees set up locally and nationally in initiatives to fight the cuts and unemployment.

"Just as the working-class movement gave up socialism for the price of social legislation, women abandoned their emancipation for equality under law. The ruling class won out in each case by taking their demands for reform at face value, and proclaimed that the reformed conditions were the very best that could be achieved".

## What use?

We must not follow the path of the suffragettes into focusing on legal reforms, with the tokenism of the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. The Working Women's Charter takes up two vital questions: what's the use of insisting that a woman with equal qualifications should stand an equal chance for any job if the education system itself fails to give women equal qualifications? And what use is the rate for the job if women with children can't get out of the home to take the job?

Women still only get a little over half of a man's wage; we still don't get the training or skills required for the better jobs; we still lose out on promotion prospects through taking time off for domestic responsibilities or just through changing jobs for sheer boredom; we are still brainwashed into thinking the better paid jobs are for men only; we are still forced to take part-time, casual and night jobs which give us an even narrower choice and result in a lower hourly rate than even full-time women in the same job take home.

On top of all this, the bosses have found numerous ways of getting round the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act by creating separate "women's jobs" or by grading men's jobs which require physical strength higher than women's jobs which require manual dexterity. In the very first battle to win equal pay under the new Acts, a woman office worker who took her case to the Industrial Tribunal lost her fight, and was told her male fellow worker should continue to receive £500 more a year for his "heavier responsibilities".

## Valve

The Acts are a mere sop thrown to dampen the militancy of working women, raising the expectations of women about our rights as women, but at the same time denying us these rights. We need to look at examples of fight-backs such as the equal pay strike by women at GEC Birelec in Birmingham.

At best the Acts may work for the individual career women with the time, money and know-how to go through the complicated and costly court and tribunal system; at worst, the tribunal system becomes an escape valve for the militant activity of working women.

We must make the Working Women's Charter a focus for a struggle for women workers to organise and fight for even the limited reforms bourgeois legis-

lation offers us. But clearly legislation is not going to tackle the roots of our oppression in class society.

In the past the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) has mistakenly seen the only obstacle to "freely available abortion" as shortcomings in the 1967 Abortion Act, and has taken a purely defensive position in relation to the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill. As a single-issue campaign NAC will be limited in what it can offer women, therefore we need to link NAC to the Working Women's Charter in order to place the campaign in the context of the broader struggle for women's emancipation on every front.

This does not mean diffusing the aims of NAC or submerging it in the Working Women's Charter, but rather strengthening it through connecting the campaign with the need for a fight against private practice in the NHS, and for the provision of day-care out-patient abortion facilities. How can we achieve "A woman's right to choose — abortion on demand" while watching the closure of hospitals (the first social facility to go) as part of the cut-backs in the National Health Service, and while we are denied the use of abortion facilities!



Voting at Charter's London Cuts Conference. Photo Angela Phillips (IFL)

Women are also faced by a barrage of reactionary ideas from groups like SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and LIFE, who claim that a foetus is more important than the life of a woman, and by the right-wing supporters of the present-day family as a pillar of present-day society, who say that women should be denied the right to have a say as to whether they want to have a child or not. The Working Women's Charter takes up the fight for free abortion on demand as one aspect of the fight against all areas of women's oppression.

Women have been accurately described as "the slaves". The source of our double oppression is rooted in the family in our dual role as worker on the one hand and as wife and mother on the other.

As long as women are tied to the narrow confines of the home and weighed down by domestic drudgery, by a million trivialities, we will be crippled and stunted in our development, isolated from one another in our individual kitchens. At the present time, millions of women up and down the country repeat the same process millions upon millions of times — wiping up dust, washing

dishes, cooking and cleaning for families.

Those women who can afford to send their children to the few nurseries that there are, or to pay childminders, can afford to pay for a private abortion, and can afford to pay other women to do their housework, have neither the interest nor the will to struggle for equal pay.

For the rest of us, this position of housewife is responsible for the attitudes that regard us as irrational, weak, irresponsible, and inferior. To be freed from domestic work is to lay the only real material basis of our own emancipation. To this end we campaign for the socialisation of housework: free 24 hour nurseries, cheap public restaurants, public house-cleaning services, and so on.

The demand "Wages for Housework" is an attempt to turn the clock back and to reconcile women to the idea "a woman's place is in the home" — the idea which is pushed at us by the Church, the State, and all those who wish to maintain women's position of inferiority in society. To demand "wages for housework" is to see the home as some sort of peaceful idyll, a retreat from the storms outside, while for the working-class woman it is the prison that keeps

her locked up in the institution of the patriarchal family.

Women are made to think we were born into this world for the chief purpose of fighting dust. We believe we are fit for better things than to wrestle with pots and pans.

"Wages for housework" is positively reactionary in its attempts to reconcile us to all the myths of womanhood and motherhood, an integral part of which is the belief that "a woman's place is in the home" — beliefs that appear as natural to society as the existence of the grass, trees, the sky, sun and moon. To call housework what it is — stupefying, degrading and boring work — is not to downgrade women themselves. Rather, it is to attack the system which confines women to such a menial role in society, and to demand something better for ourselves!

## Unions

Our aim must be to free women from the family, and to achieve this the tasks performed within it must be socialised and taken over by society as a whole.

The Charter argues for women to become more involved in trade union life. This is because for all workers the trade unions are the first and most basic means of

organisation to defend our living standards under capitalism. Trade unions are permeated right through by male domination, reflecting society as a whole, and are top-heavy with bureaucratic officialdom — but we think that this is no reason to dismiss them or refuse to work inside them.

Since the spark of the Ford women's strike in 1969, we have seen an increase in the militancy of women and the growing involvement of women in the trade unions. Even the nurses, who are subject to the most vile propaganda, have come out on strike. We have seen a number of women's strikes — SEL, GEC, Personna. In some cases, male trade unionists have supported such actions, but how far we have to go was shown by the long-drawn-out fight of women at SEL, Heywood, Lancashire, where the AUEW did nothing to discipline male members who scabbed on an elementary equal pay strike.

Trade unions are generally apathetic or positively hostile to the struggles and involvement of women workers in trade unions. The National Graphical Association's ban on women becoming keyboard operators is an example. However, we do not think male workers can carry through a fight for women's rights on our behalf, we have to do this ourselves as women — and most men will be forced out of apathy or hostility only when given a lead by militant women.

## Ghetto

Men's attitude is often to blame women themselves for their lack of interest, but this is to disregard the specific difficulties of women workers.

This year's TUC Women's Conference passed resolutions calling for trade union resistance to the cuts and unemployment, and criticised the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act for not going far enough; but these resolutions can be quite happily ignored by the TUC itself as long as women are ghettoised in such ineffectual, non-policy-making bodies. We need to strengthen women's position inside the trade union movement.

We need policies of positive discrimination in favour of women on the leading bodies of trade unions (including shop stewards' committees). We need union meetings to be held during working hours so that women who have family responsibilities can attend. Where this is not possible creches must be organised at union meetings.

Most of all, through women's caucuses in the unions, we must organise around our own specific oppression and strengthen the self-activity and organisation of women, and with this our combativity and consciousness, at a rank and file level.

The demands of the Working Women's Charter are inextricably linked with the fight against redundancies, unemployment and the £6 limit. The demands for maternity leave, equal pay, nursery facilities, training and abortion cannot be seen as luxuries we only get when capitalism can afford them.

## Fronts

Any attempt to extend facilities for women is resisted by the government and bosses at every stage. It is vital that we organise and fight for the whole of the labour movement to take up these questions, and to campaign around the Working Women's Charter in a way that takes up the real questions of women's liberation, that recognises the way in which the different aspects of women's oppression all interconnect: the ideology of the home and family, child care facilities, legal status, job and educational opportunities.

For even the most minimal start to women's emancipation we need a fight on all these fronts. The Working Women's Charter is the only starting point to build such a fighting women's movement.

Build the Working Women's Charter!

Build a fighting women's movement!

MARIAN MOUND



# Losinska rules, OK? OK by me, says judge

KATE Losinska, President of the Civil & Public Services Association (CPSA) has taken her own executive to court to stop them criticising her... and won! And after doing that, she got another injunction stopping motions criticising her from appearing on the agenda of the CPSA's annual conference due to start on May 3rd.

The storm erupted after Losinska, a fanatical anti-communist, contributed to a Reader's Digest collection (along with such other extreme right wingers as Frank Chapple of the EEPTU). The collection was entitled "Marxists battle for Britain", and in her piece Losinska attacked official CPSA strike policy and then went on to accuse the left in the CPSA and the IRSA (Inland Revenue Staff Association) of being prepared to use state secrets and personal disclosures to "blackmail rich people".

The intention of the article was not just to discredit the left. It was also meant to invite a repeat of the 1962 Radcliffe Inquiry which would result, she hoped, in the weeding out of left wingers and a tightening up of job screening procedures.

It was an open invitation to victimise her opponents.

In response, the NEC meeting of March 3rd passed the following resolution by 17 votes to 8: "This National Executive Committee deplors the improper use of the office of President of the CPSA to attack the properly authorised industrial activities of some members of both this Association and other public sector

unions. We consider the publication of the Reader's Digest article (Feb. 1976) to be a public demonstration of gross irresponsibility and, therefore, agree to immediately issue an 'all members' circular disassociating the NEC from the views expressed and to write immediately to all other trade unions, either directly or indirectly criticised by the President, expressing unqualified regret.

"Since the offending article and subsequent reprint leaflets have received a circulation far beyond the boundaries of the Association, both at home and abroad, the Executive Committee additionally recognise that such widespread injury done to the Association must be effectively countered by existing means. It is therefore agreed that an authoritative report of the official decision thus far taken be produced in 'Red Tape' (the union's official journal)."

## Ruling

Now a judge steps in and says the NEC can't do that. In a ridiculous decision that would implicitly outlaw thousands of trade union actions and resolutions, the judge ruled that there was no such practice as censure — all the NEC could do was to invoke the more serious charge of "bringing the Association into disrepute".

But it is not just the Judge's ruling that is wrong. Going to the court in the first place was the act of an unashamed scab. We must always oppose the intervention of the state in trade union affairs — in principle.

# What the press didn't say about Frank Stagg death

YOUR readers will no doubt have read about how the Irish government hijacked the body of hunger striker Frank Stagg and force-buried it outside the Republican plot at Ballina. Do they know about the workers' protest actions in response to this? And have they heard about how the Irish government sent in the same troops and police they used in that operation to try to smash a strike of AUEW members in Galway?

12,000 people poured into Ballina for the Republican funeral ceremony held the day after the police buried Stagg. The power station workers in North Kerry downed tools; building workers in Castlebar refused to pass pickets placed by the Provisionals; building workers erecting the site of the Burlington synthetic fibre plant at Ballina struck. 100 workers came to a hastily called meeting of the Galway Anti-Repression Committee. The police station there was picketed.

Meanwhile the year-old strike at Crown Controls in Galway was reaching crisis point. This strike was called by the Galway AUEW when a shop steward was sacked for fighting against the Crown bosses' interpretation of a redundancy agreement (a fight which resulted in 11 workers being reinstated).

## Melt the ice

Early on in the strike, 45 AUEW members began to scab, and from then on, the 57 strikers faced a solid bloc of bosses, scabs and a hostile press.

As the strikers still held out, police and special branch were sent in. They escorted scab lorries without registration plates across the picket lines at reckless speeds. They arbitrarily arrested strikers when scab lorries were stoned and smashed.

After a year-long battle, the heroism of the strikers began to melt the ice in which

the bureaucracy had frozen the rank and file. Mass pickets came to boost the strikers' morale.

On the Friday night before Stagg's funeral, strikers at a meeting were saying that if the Government got away with putting the boot into Republicans and body-snatching Stagg, without a fight-back from workers, then their pickets would have the boot put into them the following week. They were right.

The day after Stagg's burial, vanloads of police and Branchmen moved in. When they attempted to escort a scab lorry into the factory they were met with mass sit-down pickets. These stopped the lorry. Then the police dragged men and women away and smashed into the pickets. An AUEW officer, Jim Aherne, was badly beaten by scabs as police looked on.

The mass sit-down picket re-formed later to stop the scab lorry getting out with fork lift trucks. The police roughed-up AUEW Branch Secretary Brendan Goegheghan when he arrived to protest their general harassment.

The next day Army units were deployed in the streets in Renmore a few hundred yards from Crown.

It seemed like the turning point of the strike. Workers struck in sympathy at Galway docks, at the Crystal glass factory (a Wedgwood subsidiary) and at the Electricity station. The AUEW were forced to call an all-Ireland strike.

But at the British end of the Union the officials not only refused to call for solidarity action, they pulled the rug from under the strikers by stopping strike pay, on the pretext that proper returns had not been submitted for 1974.

Victory was in sight. The Busmen, the dockers and the ATGWU had decided not to pass AUEW pickets wherever they may

## Democracy at the Assembly

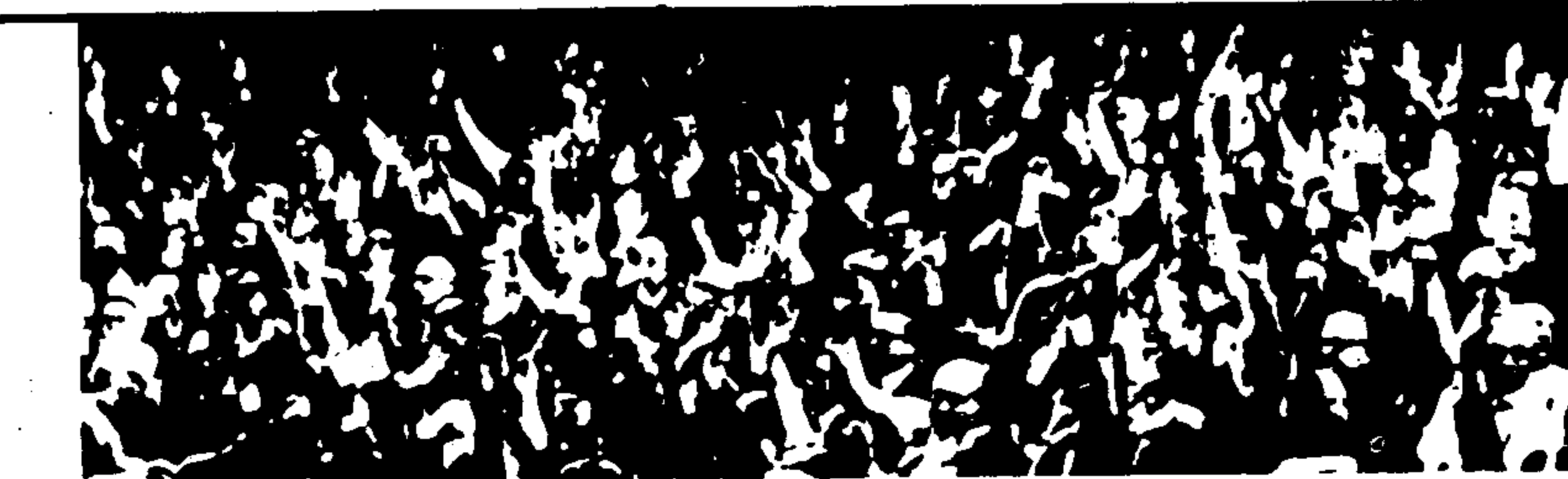
I MUST protest at the article in last week's WA about the Labour Assembly.

The article in my opinion gave too favourable an impression both of the democracy and of the worth of the Assembly.

While it is correct, and very important, that all stress is laid on the focus for action around May 26th, boosting the Assembly will give no help to the development of a serious opposition to the TUC and Labour Government policies.

As a delegate from a trade union branch which submitted a motion, in line with branch policy, for a day of action, it made me feel very cynical to sit through a conference where anyone could see (and very openly and clearly see) the selection of speakers which was such that, with a couple of exceptions, every speaker was either from the CP or Tribune.

I was delegated from the British Library CPSA; yet the individual 'chosen' to speak on 'behalf' of this category of workers — Margaret Witham — was not herself a delegate from any CPSA body, despite being a member of the NEC of the CPSA!



## THE UNIONS

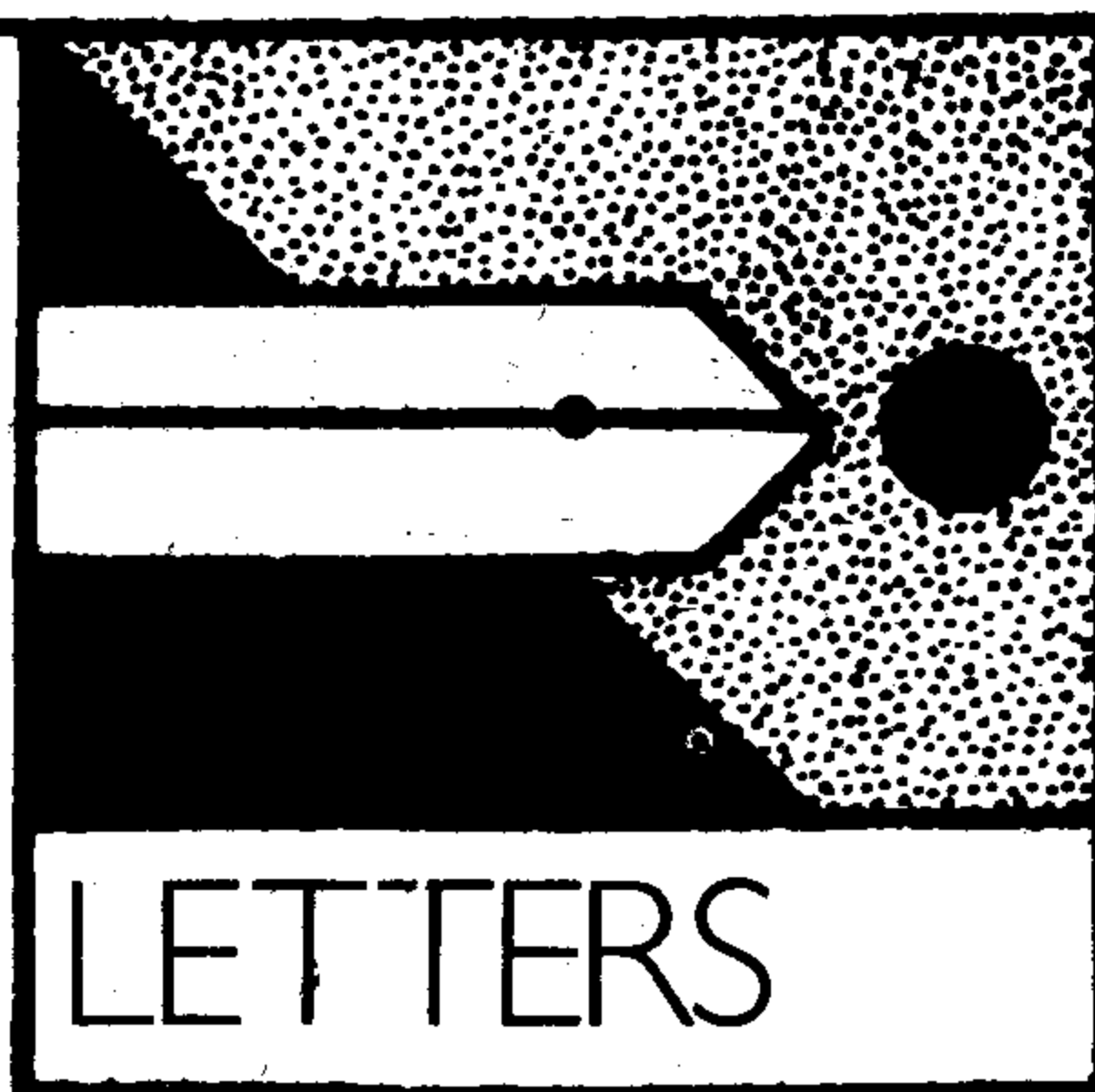


The Judge's own class bias of course made him the natural supporter of Losinska's attempt at petty dictatorship. The response of the trade union movement should be to urge the NEC of the CPSA to go ahead with its original decision.

Trade unionists cannot allow our rule books, our conference agendas, our committee decisions and our union journals to be censored by any judge, or written to the order of the courts. The Left within the CPSA, especially those grouped around the paper "Redder Tape", should spearhead this insistence on union democracy not courtroom dictatorship.

One side-effect of Losinska's diatribe against the Left and her attacks on the elected officials of her own union has been to strengthen opposition to the extreme right within the union. This underlines the correctness of Workers Action supporters pushing for a 'Redder Tape' candidate for the Presidency, instead of settling for the "Broad Left" candidate, Len Lever — who is no more left wing than Losinska (indeed on certain issues, such as abortion, he has been to the right of the President).

Given the open discrediting of the right and its obscenely lying claims to be fighting for union democracy (!) the Left should use this opportunity to make a clear political fight of the battle for the Presidency, putting forward a militant perspective for the union, and supporting the 'Redder Tape' candidate Mike McGrath.



be placed. TASS had said the same. Galway was set for an almost general strike. With this strength behind them, the strikers' demand "Scabs Out! Unemployed trade unionists IN" could have been forced through and scabbery in Galway and in Ireland dealt a fatal blow.

But the half-starved strikers, out for almost a year, had to go back to work on the basis of the Labour Court recommendations, which leave the scabs intact and concede that the dismissed steward, though reinstated in the job, may not hold office for two years.

This is not the first time that the Boyds and the British MBI Trade Unionists have knifed a watershed strike in Ireland in the back. The AUEW rank and file in England and Ireland must make sure that it's the last time Boyd and Co. can do it. We should raise the call for Boyd's resignation and push for the principle of immediate recallability of all officials.

ANDY JOHNSTON  
GALWAY

Further more in her speech she committed herself to trying to convince the majority of the CPSA NEC to the policies and decisions of the Labour Assembly (including presumably, support for the Day of Action), yet a few days before, as a member of the CPSA NEC, she had voted down a call for a one day strike against cuts and job losses within the Civil Service.

The selection of such a speaker was typical of the Labour Assembly and the politics of its organisers.

For your readers' interest, my branch has a motion going to our annual conference, in the last week of May, calling for a one-day official strike. If it is successful, this will strengthen the action taken on May 26th; if not, the failure will in the main be due to the Broad Left who dominate our NEC for their refusal to fight for the action that could provide a major thrust against the Labour Government's attacks.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY  
British Library CPSA

# Tories slated

THE discovery of Tory Party intervention in union elections brought a predictable bout of ham acting from some trade union officials and the 'Morning Star'.

Bill Kendall of the CPSA put on a look of shock and naive surprise (and applied some green greasepaint behind the ears) to exclaim: "direct influence of a political party headquarters" was unknown in the CPSA. And on behalf of AUEW (TASS), John Forrester put on a similar tone of outraged surprise.

What is Kendall talking about? His union, which used to be dominated by Catholic Action and now has strong currents both of the "broad Left" and the revolutionary left around 'Redder Tape', has slates circulating at election time, many of which find their origins in political headquarters. The same of course is true of the AUEW where the 'Broad Left' slates originates not a million miles from the headquarters of the Communist Party.

And there is nothing wrong with that! Political intervention in union elections is desirable. Slates which are politically motivated are desirable. What is undesirable is this false naivete which seems to say "keep politics out of it".

The only thing wrong with a Tory slate is that it is Tory.

## Rule 14: Camden T.C. disaffiliated

THE secretary of Camden Trades Council just couldn't wait to have the organisation suspended by the TUC for not accepting the now notorious Rule 14. So when left wingers on the Council refused for the second time to accept Rule 14, he simply disbanded the Trades Council.

In a letter dated 18th March, Sid Gregory, the Secretary (a Communist Party member) wrote to the Trades Council delegates as follows: "At our last meeting the Trades Council again discussed the question of Model Rule 14, and again it was rejected. As a consequence of this impasse, it has been decided to cancel our activities for April to give affiliated branches the opportunity to reconsider their decision, and to reconvene in May, accepting only delegates from branches which have indicated that they have accepted Model Rule 14."

"In view of the TUC's decision to suspend the Trades Council the above was the only action that the Chairman and Secretary could think of taking."

But as late as the morning of March 25th, no notice of suspension of the Council by the TUC had been issued — in fact the TUC press office had explicitly denied such action.

What this means is that Gregory, not able to win the vote on the acceptance of Rule 14, is going to re-constitute the Trades Council on the basis of only having delegates who agree with him!

This letter was followed up by another from Gregory on 23rd March announcing

the suspension — which still had not taken place. When the letter arrived at Congress House, however, the TUC no doubt felt forced to back up Sid Gregory, since he was backing their policy. Consequently on the same day as their press office had denied the suspension, 25th March, the TUC wrote another letter to Gregory announcing the suspension and endorsing his action.

Model Rule 14 is designed to prevent Trades Councils cooperating with any organisations in opposition to either TUC or Labour Party policy. Up and down the country the Communist Party has appointed itself the guardian of this right wing policy, joining with the traditional right wing to ram this rule through.

Camden Trades Council will appeal through its delegate to the Greater London Association of Trades Councils at the forthcoming GLATC meeting, asking it to support them against the suspensions. But it is yet to be seen whether the GLATC will even recognise the delegate, let alone agree with him or her.

If the GLATC stood firm and supported the fight against suspensions this would be an important lever against the TUC policy of imposing this rule. But in itself not even this would be enough. Other trades councils elsewhere in the country must take up the same stand.

Given the very weak situation of trades councils within the TUC, the main fight must be taken up through the trade unions themselves.

# workers' ACTION supporters' groups are being formed in the following places:

Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Durham, Edinburgh, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newtown, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Rochdale, Sheffield, Stafford, Stoke

Write for details of meetings & activities to:  
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27



# WORKERS IN ACTION

## Lessons of the Leyland strikes

LEYLAND workers in plants throughout the country have been forced back to work after important strikes. Not only have they been up against the Leyland employers. They have been up against the Labour government and the leadership of the AUEW.

The strikes have common threads. Firstly, the Labour Government has insisted under the £6 limit that all installment wage deals secured before the limit became operative must be scrapped if they give workers more than £6 wage rise. This verdict has been upheld by Michael Foot's Advisory, Conciliation, and Arbitration Service [ACAS]. As a result, the Labour Government and ACAS have stood firm in insisting that 32 toolmakers at SU Carburettors in Birmingham are not entitled to pay rises promised last April that would have brought their pay in line with rates paid at Austin Longbridge.

Secondly, the £6 limit has eroded traditional differentials between skilled and unskilled workers. Pressure has been building up in the skilled workforce to maintain the traditional benefits and differentials.

At Triumph in Coventry, 350 toolroom workers struck for £1.85 parity with tinnmakers. 70 toolroom workers at the Transmissions plant, Drews Lane, Birmingham, blacked machines in a parity dispute and have now come out on strike when management attempted to order them to work the machines.

### Break

And, as we have reported before, toolroom workers in Rover plants throughout the country have been fighting for benefits that would traditionally have been owing them.

Thirdly, the Leyland employers have deliberately used a Measured Day Work system to break with accepted procedures of shop-floor bargaining and accepted manning levels.

650 press operators in the Llanelli plants struck because of management plans to trample on recognis-

ed procedures to transferring workers from semi-skilled to skilled work.

40 Cowley cleaners struck a fortnight ago to force management to maintain manning levels. They in fact managed to push Leyland into putting four new workers on their work.

At the time of writing all the workers have returned to work except those in the Transmissions



Scanlon

plant, who are still sticking out.

The reasons for the return to work are complicated, but they contain lessons for all workers.

Toolroom workers in Leyland, as elsewhere in the car industry, have traditionally had their earnings calculated in proportion to those won by semi-skilled and unskilled workers. They have a tradition of isolation from less skilled workers. The £6 limit eroded their traditional craft benefits and privileges. But the craft perks and traditions were the undoing of the toolroom workers in several plants.

In many areas their picket lines were broken by other members of their own union. In Cardiff, where toolroom workers last year did not support a wage claim of semi- and unskilled workers, they had to call off their picket line before the dispute had ended. In Birmingham, too, Rover toolroom picket lines

were being crossed right from the start of the dispute.

This isolation was added to by the hysteria stoked up by the Press. As was to be expected, the Coventry Evening Telegraph and the Birmingham Evening Mail daily condemned the 'disruptive and selfish minority'. Michael Foot announced that the workers had no hope. The return to work of the Triumph workers in Coventry on April 1st, against the advice of the AUEW district committee, added to the isolation of the Rover workers. One day later the Rover toolroom workers agreed to go back to work on terms that were not yet clear to the workforce.

But the decisive fact in securing the return to work for the Leyland employers was the AUEW leadership. On Tuesday 30th March the AUEW Executive unanimously called for the SU Carburettors and Coventry Triumph workers to return to work. They refused to make the Rover dispute official and set out to sabotage the battles in Triumph and SU Carburettors.

### Blaming

Blaming the AUEW National Committee's Right-wing majority (which had been supported by the toolrooms at SU Carburettors and at Triumph, Coventry) and its acceptance of the £6 limit, Scanlon argued to the workers concerned that the Executive could not conceivably support the SU Carburettors and Triumph disputes. The SU Carburettors workers at first refused to accept Scanlon's orders. But faced with the return to work at Triumph, in Llanelli, and in Rover plants, they were forced to climb down too.

Scanlon has it too easy in laming the National Committee for his return-to-work orders. His support for the Labour Government, his acceptance of its policies of unemployment, wage cuts and social service cuts, make it impossible to escape blame for not supporting this group of workers.

A victory for any of these work-

ers threatened to break through the £6 limit. In Leyland it would have stood as an example to other workers. At a time when pressure is building up against wage restraint, it could have stood as an inspiration to workers who have felt the effect of wage cuts and speed-up. That's why Scanlon and the AUEW Executive, tied as they are to the Labour Government, moved so decisively against the strikes.

The press has made much of differentials and craft-ism. As socialists we are for the maximum unity of the workforce, for flat rate increases, and against the separation and aloofness of craft and skilled workers. The isolation of these workers in struggle shows exactly how the old traditions of craft sectionalism play into the employers' hands.

But a breakthrough for these groups of workers would have opened a breach for all workers in or out of Leyland. In battling for differentials they were challenging pay laws that are holding us all back. While arguing against sectionalism and craft-ism, because of its effects on the united strength of the workers' movement, we support all strikes and struggles against wage restraint.

The AUEW leadership has managed to hold the £6 pay policy together for the Labour Government and the employers. The lessons to be drawn are clear. All the talk by the Trade Union leaders of more flexible pay policy shows their concern to devise a policy that will effectively hold back wages in the period ahead, not push them up. They realise that the flat-rate system undermines traditional differentials. They want a pay policy that maintains differential increases in the context of generally holding wages down.

The behaviour of Scanlon and the AUEW Executive in this dispute shows once again clearly and sharply the need to organise independently and not to rely on the trade union bureaucracy, if wages and conditions are to be protected.

JAMES ROGERS

### Sussex Campaign

A SUSSEX area labour movement conference on unemployment, on Saturday 3rd April, voted to fight for an area overtime ban, for local Action Committees against unemployment, and for strike action on May 26th.

The proposals came from Len Formby (TASS), the main speaker, with amendments from the floor. Formby also, however, urged the conference to pressure the Labour Government to adopt policies of reflation and selective import controls.

These proposals were carried to absurdity by a speaker from a floor, a Communist Party member, who claimed that import controls were an internationalist policy, since they stopped the exploitation of the Third World labour — by putting enterprises in those countries out of business!

The conference also heard that unemployment in Sussex is running at 5.9% (12,250), as compared with an average of 4% for the South-East. THOMAS FRITH.

### Dartmouth Auto

150 dressers are fighting victimisation of their shop steward at Dartmouth Auto Castings, Smethwick, Birmingham. The men have been laid off since 16th March, with 300 laid off at present, fighting the victimisation of their steward Harry Berg. Berg was sacked for trying to establish a closed shop. Jack Cleary, district officer of the Foundry section of the AUEW, is refusing to support the strike.

The strikers have called off their picket after the lay-offs, but are continuing their struggle and have approached the local Labour Party for support.

Donations and messages of support to the Strike Committee, c/o 27 Moate Rd, Langley, Oldbury, West Midlands.

### NF Bradford demo

MAY 6th is the date when the National Front hope to achieve their first electoral success anywhere in the country. In Leicester on that day the Front will be standing 48 candidates in the local council elections — a candidate in every ward. In a number of wards the Front candidates were within a hundred votes of possible victory at the last election. It needs only a handful of abstentions by Labour voters to let the fascists in.

For the last five years Leicester has been a major growth area for the Front. In the last General Election they got a total of 8,000 votes from three constituencies. Today, the deteriorating social services, the cuts, and unemployment provide a background against which these fascists are attempting to whip up a campaign of division and racial conflict within the Leicester labour movement.

Attacks on blacks in the immigrant areas have increased, and the racist propaganda has been mounting to a frenzy. The situation has been made even worse by the well-known racist attitude of the local leadership of the main union in the city — the T&GWU.

At the same time the Front are desperately trying to conceal their fascist identity and present themselves as respectable candidates. It is for this reason that they have switched the march they originally planned to hold on St George's Day (April 24th) from Leicester to Bradford. They are afraid the inevitable confrontation with anti-fascists would ruin their image.

On the initiative of WORKERS ACTION supporters, an anti-fascist committee has been formed in Leicester. This has set itself the task of denying a platform to fascists in the city. The Leicester Anti-Fascist Committee will be mobilising support for a counter-demonstration in Bradford, or anywhere else that these fascists crawl out from their holes.

DAVE JEWSON

## FIGHTING FUND

WORKERS' ACTION's £6000 fund has got off to a good start. A total of £112.60 has come in during the first week.

A reader in South London has sent us £100. He writes: "I have just been made redundant. I think sending my redundancy money to you is the best way of aiding the fight of all workers against unemployment". Other contributions

were £7.60 from a meeting of public service workers, and £5 from a reader in Leicester.

This response is encouraging but there is still a long way to go to our target of £1500 by May 1st. We have just heard that our new type-setting machine should be available by the end of June, so it is essential that we raise the full £6000 by then.

Unemployment and the Cuts. 7.30pm, 'Star and Garter', Fairfield St, Manchester (near Piccadilly station).

Wednesday 14th April. Public meeting called by Leicester Anti-Fascist committee: 'Smash the Front!' 8pm at the AUEW Hall, Vaughan Way.

Saturday 24th April. North-West Regional Council TUC march against cuts and unemployment, starting 1pm from AUEW offices, The Crescent, Salford.

Friday-Saturday-Sunday 23rd-24th-25th April: National Women's Liberation conference 1976. Registration forms and information from 46 Simonside Tce, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 6.

Friday-Saturday-Sunday 23rd-24th-25th April. Delegate conference to make the 50th anniversary of the General Strike, at Sussex University. Registration: Peter Cresswell, Trade Union Group, Sussex University Union, Falmer, Brighton.

Saturday 24th April. Songs and music from Spain, organised by Manchester Spanish Solidarity Committee. 7.30pm in Reynolds Theatre, UMIST. Price of admission, 60p.

Sunday 25th April. National Demonstration called by the National Coordinating Committee against the Cuts in the NHS. Assemble 1pm at Hyde Park Corner. Details from P. Stern, 55, Bridge Lane, London NW10.

"Fight the Cuts" film made by a group of film-makers in ACTT. Available free for all meetings and conferences against the cuts. Phone 01-794 2825. 55 minutes, black and white, 16mm optical sound

### Leicester combine goes into action

IN LEICESTER 2,000 engineering workers are on strike as a result of the sacking of 18 workers at the New Bridge Street factory — a hosiery and knitting machine manufacturers.

The workers were sacked when they refused to accept flexible hours while they were on a four-day week. If flexibility had been accepted, it would have led to part of the workforce working a 5-day week with overtime, while others were retained on the same 4-day week. The New Bridge Street factory is

part of the Bentley engineering group. The group combine committee unites all Bentley workers in the Leicester area. Its speed in moving to defend the sacked men was tremendous.

Three factories came out at the same time as the New Bridge Street workers, quickly followed by three other factories. Now they are attempting to spread the strike to other Bentley factories around the country.

Prior to the strike management had refused to discuss the sackings. They are now willing to take part in discussion — but only on the basis of a return to work. The position of the strikers, however, is quite clear. They will not return to work until their 18 brothers are reinstated.

One factory — Parker Drive no.1 — has laid off its workers, although they have made no move to support the strikers. It was claimed that the lay-off was necessary to avoid trouble on the picket line. But there has been no sign of such trouble. Parker Drive no.1 is in fact totally dependent on the New Bridge St plant. By not supporting the strike the Parker Drive no.1 workers are cutting their own throats.

Already rumours are circulating of redundancies affecting a third of the workforce in the near future. Last week Bentley management approached the unions and gave the statutory 90-day notice of impending redundancies. They are well aware that the factory is the weak link in the Bentley Combine Committee. Any precedents created there will be used in future by management elsewhere.

This strike is about whether or not management has the right to arbitrarily sack workers. In itself it is a magnificent testimony to the ability and willingness of the city's best-organised workers to respond quickly and effectively to attack. But the unions have made it perfectly clear that they are prepared to accept voluntary redundancies, and they have already accepted the 4-day week in a number of factories. What is needed is a fight against all redundancy: and for five days' work or five days' pay.

DAVE JEWSON.

### Automat strike

FORTY-THREE members of the AUEW are now entering their twelfth week on strike for union recognition at 'Automat' Swinton, near Manchester. The boss of this small electrical firm has insistently denied the very existence of the union, and refused to talk to AUEW officials.

Inside the factory production continues. Non-union labour is still working, and office staff have been drafted onto the benches. At the gate the picket stops union drivers, but materials are still being moved by the firm's three non-union drivers.

In organised firms in the surrounding area, such as GEC, Automat products have been blacked. However, the firm has many smaller customers, which are not unionised. At one of these — B.E.L., Accrington — the American owners have threatened the workers with closure if they black Automat goods.

The key to success is obviously to bottle up Automat tight and get really effective blacking. Many of the strikers are women — as are many of those still working. The only advice the AUEW official has offered them is to stay off the picket line! This would leave the women strikers isolated at home, when instead they must be drawn into the running of the strike.

Four weeks ago a mass picket shut down the firm for a day. More pickets and demonstrations are planned. Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Mr T.A Smith, 549 Liverpool Rd, Irlam, Manchester. BILL COPPOCK

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Thursday 8th April. Greater London Tribune group meeting on 'Where is Labour going?' 7.45pm at Caxton Hall, Westminster. Speakers: Brian Sedgmore and Richard Clements.

Saturday and Sunday 10th-11th April: Working Women's Charter national conference, starts 10am at Lanchester Poly, Coventry. Details from Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Tce, Leamington Spa, Warks.

Sunday 11th April. Campaign to Repeal The Immigration Act demonstration, assembling 2.30pm at Speakers Corner.

Monday 12th April. Meeting on Portugal with the Newsreel Collective's new film 'On the side of the people'. Speaker from Liverpool Big Flame. 7.30pm at Charlton House, London SE7.

Tuesday 13th April. 'Revolutionary organisation in the present class struggle' — Big Flame meeting with a speaker from Liverpool. 7.30pm Stockwell Hall, Stockwell Park Walk, London SW9.

Tuesday 13th April. Red Weekly/Chartist/Workers Action public meeting on

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Published by Workers Action, 49 Carnac St, London SE27. Printed by Prestagore of Reading (TU). Registered as a newspaper with the GPO.