

workers' ACTION

No.132

Jan.27-Feb.3, 1979

10p

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ALL
OUT
NOW
TO
BEAT
LOW
PAY

"WE'RE FED UP of being treated like slaves". For years the low-paid public service workers have been treated as inferior beings. Hospital porters and ambulancemen are no less essential to the Health Service than consultants — but the fact that their work is essential has just been used as an excuse for telling them that they can't take industrial action however hard their living standards are squeezed.

It's a microcosm of the whole capitalist set-up. The people who do the essential work get meagre wages. The people who sit at the top doing very little but reaping the credit get all the profits.

Now the workers who have been taken for granted for so long are fighting back. And the bosses' press outcry about 'chaos' and 'emergency' is a sign that real gains can be won by united working-class action

The main obstacle is the Government. As a Labour Government, it is linked to the unions and pretends to protect workers' interests. Yet prime minister Jim Callaghan says it is every worker's duty to cross picket lines!



The public sector unions are campaigning for the Government to 'change course'. And it's right that the labour movement should try to bring the Labour Government to account. But the policies pushed by NUPE and other unions are often no good at all: import controls, price controls, and other measures which are harmful or irrelevant in terms of the struggle going on now. And the union leaders' focus is on 'persuading' the Government, with rank and file mobilisation simply as a makeweight.

We should demand the Labour Government scraps all wage controls, declares a £60 minimum wage, introduces automatic cost of living protection as part of all wage agreements, orders a shorter working week to end unemployment, and reverses the social spending cuts — nationalising profitable capitalist businesses and axing arms spending in order to do so. But it will all be day-dreaming unless we understand that only powerful industrial action will force Labour's pro-capitalist leaders to take the most crabwise steps in that direction.

All-out united action now is the key.

The public sector union leaders think that selective strikes are a clever tactic which saves on strike funds. On the contrary. The selective action is a recipe for wearing out militancy and frittering away solidarity, with no result except general mild irritation.



Public service workers are weakened industrially by not being able to hit directly at profits. So we need all-out action, plus coordination with other groups of workers. The fact that the drivers' strike came up during the low pay campaign has already improved the public service workers' chances.

The unions' attitude that the water workers — the most powerful group of public service workers — can settle separately for a higher offer than others have got, is the direct opposite of what we need.

Busworkers in Manchester who timed their strike action for their own demands to coincide with the public service workers' strike on the 22nd had the right idea. The rail strikes would be another example, if only they were focused on a major across-the-board rise for all railworkers, rather than claims based as much on inter-union jockeying as on workers' interests.

For every group of workers with a claim outstanding, now is the time to act.

Coordinating committees — based on rank and file strike committees for each dispute — should be set up between drivers, public service workers, and others in as many areas as possible. The strike committees should decide on emergency cover or emergency supplies, rather than yielding to blackmail or allowing troops to get an apparently legitimate excuse for intervention in the disputes.

Pay controls can be finished. The 35 hour week can be won. All-out united action is the way to do it.



SOLIDARITY WITH IRANIAN WORKERS: DEMONSTRATE SAT 3rd FEB, 1pm TRAFALGAR SQUARE

ACCORDING to the former US Attorney General Ramsay Clark, visiting Tehran, the Bakhtiar government has no chance of survival and the US should start trying to come to an agreement with the Ayatollah Khomeiny.

Government spokesmen in the USA have expressed the same idea in more cautious words. And the CIA have shown their pessimism more practically, dismantling the spy-posts beamed at the USSR which they maintain in Iran.

If the US government — his most powerful supporter — thinks that way, then there is indeed a bleak future for Shapur Bakhtiar, the politician selected to try to continue the Shah's regime without the Shah. Now that the Shah's rigid dictatorship has at last cracked, the political sands of Iran are shifting very fast.

On January 1st the Prime Minister, General Azhari, resigned in favour of Bakhtiar. On the 2nd Bakhtiar said that the Shah would be leaving Iran and appointing a 'Regency Council'. On the 4th, the army chief General Oveissi resigned and left the country, and six days later General Jam, the chief military figure in Bakhtiar's government, resigned.

Quit

The US responded by sending a top general to Iran and making public calls on Iran's generals to support Bakhtiar.

On January 6th, Khomeiny condemned the Bakhtiar government. He has called on members of the Shah's Regency Council and the Parliament (Majlis) to resign; 20 members of the Majlis have done so.

The Shah left Iran on the 16th. Khomeiny had already called for an 'Islamic Revolu-

Iran's army — itching for a blitzkrieg on the masses

IAN HAMSTER REVIEWS THE EVENTS IN IRAN SINCE THE START OF 1979

tionary Council' to take over the government of Iran and organise elections for a constituent assembly. Different lists of members for this 'Islamic Revolutionary Council' have been circulated; a definite one is expected when Khomeiny returns to Iran this Friday, 26th. Its backbone will probably be provided by the bourgeois opposition party, the National Front.

A huge demonstration in favour of the 'Islamic Republic', organised on Friday 19th by the Muslim leaders, brought out up to four million people.

Ever since Iran became a centralised state, the Army has been its central political force. But now the army is at sixes and sevens. Dissent is strong in the rank and file (40% of the army are conscripts). Their supreme commander, the Shah, has fled; some top generals have also quit the country, and others have been arrested for corruption.

For the moment, the army's commanders are doing what they have been told to do by the Shah and by the USA: backing Bakhtiar. But they are itching to try a blitzkrieg against the mass movement, an attempt to drown the opposition in blood once and for all.

On Wednesday 17th, troops rampaged through the



oil town of Ahwaz. It started when gangs of right-wing thugs, shipped into the town by lorry, attacked the tail-end of celebrations following the Shah's departure. The army took this clash as an opportunity to machine-gun the demonstrators and then spread terror through the streets. The local army commander said that the soldiers' nerves had been set on edge when demonstrators 'provoked' them by shouting 'anti-patriotic' slogans all night.

The same day soldiers stormed through the streets of Dezful, in south-western Iran, trying to force people to shout 'Long live the Shah'. Scores of deaths are reported

from Dezful and Ahwaz.

The Muslim leaders, who appear to be in the strongest position now, are weaker than they seem. Up to now, religious slogans have served to unite all strands of opposition to the Shah with catch-all mystical formulas. Now each group will start defining what they mean by an Islamic Republic and what they want from it.

Mullahs

Khomeiny has scornfully referred to the Ayatollah Shariat Madari, of Qom, as a 'moderate'; Shariat Madari replied by calling Khomeiny an 'extremist'.

Islam does not have the sort of priestly hierarchy found in the Catholic church — and even the Catholic hierarchy often has difficulty enough in controlling its faithful when the class struggle is running strongly. Khomeiny's predecessor as the foremost Ayatollah in Iran, Kashani, supported Mossadeq in 1951, then switched sides in 1953 — without taking any major part of Mossadeq's support with him. The Mullahs were also divided in Iran's previous revolutionary period, 1906-11.

The Muslim leaders will try to hand power to the bourgeois National Front politicians, and to stop the revolution moving in a socialist direction. Slogans for the huge demonstration on January 19th included: 'Our movement is Islamic, not communist', and 'The only party is the party of Allah'.

Indeed, the demonstration was defined as Islamic, not as against other religions, but against the Shah, against imperialism, and ... against socialism and communism. Contingents of Jews, Zoroastrians and Armenians took part in the demonstration, with slogans like 'The unity of Muslims and Jews is blessed by the one and only God'. But left-wing banners were chased off the demonstration.

Trying to answer the workers' aspirations, the Muslim leaders put forward the slogan 'Only an Islamic Republic can end the exploitation of man by man'.

But how? The oil workers have already started the struggle for workers' control, which has little to do with the Koran. Workers in Amol and other cities have formed defence squads, while the National Front and the Muslim leaders call on them to show sympathy with the army. Islam confers its blessing on private property and trade; but capitalist exploitation is nothing but the developed form of private property and trade.

Coup

The working class is the only force in Iran socially capable of going further than some unstable reformist republic likely to be soon overthrown by the army hardliners. The Muslim domination of January 19th's demonstration shows that the workers are not yet ready politically to take the lead. Everything now hangs on how quickly the Iranian workers are able to generalise the sort of struggle started by the oil workers, and establish their own independent political programme.

Among the students, socialist ideas are already strong. A French journalist described Tehran University after its re-opening on 13th January as like the Sorbonne in May 1968.

The students and workers need time to organise and debate their political ideas. Our solidarity can give them that time. An army coup in Iran is very unlikely to succeed without the assured support of the Western powers. A strong solidarity movement can make sure that the army does not get that support.

BACKING UNIONS AND HELPING IAN SMITH

"The American union leaders such as Meany ... can afford directly and openly to execute government and particularly CIA policy". So a British cabinet paper summed up the way that the American AFL-CIO, together with the British TUC, exerted imperialist control over African trade unions through the agency of the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions].

A recent study by the Zimbabwe Information Group [ZIG]* has exposed some of the workings of this strategy in Zimbabwe [Rhodesia].

The latest turn came in November 1977, when a new union federation was set up, the Zimbabwe Federation of Labour [ZFL].

Black workers' unions in Zimbabwe are already bound hand and foot. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1959 lays down a long procedure which any dispute must go through before a strike can be legal... and every strike since 1959 has been illegal! When 800 black busworkers in Salisbury struck in 1976, every single one was arrested and convicted under the Act.

The Industrial Conciliation Act also lays down strict conditions for state registration of trade unions. Result: less than 5% of African workers are covered by union-negotiated agreements. Workers in agriculture, forestry, and domestic service — over half the total African workforce — are banned under the Act from joining or forming unions. [Before 1959, ALL black workers were banned from joining unions!]

Some African workers are organised in white-dominated unions. In the United Steel Workers of Central Africa, for example, 300 whites elect 20 members of the union executive, while over 1500 Africans elect 10.

Alongside this, the Rhodes-

ian government, in league with the ICFTU and the AFL-CIO, has tried to make sure that any African-led unions are tame stooge set-ups. The ZFL is another move in this game. At its head is Reuben Jamela ... who, in the early 1960s, provided what workers called "capitalist and imperialist stooge" leadership to the African Trades Union Congress [ATUC] of Zimbabwe.

Jamela's links with right-wing Cold War union leaders had been established through visits of representatives of the ICFTU in 1960. Jamela secured the affiliation of the Rhodesian ATUC to the ICFTU and turned the ATUC's paper into a mouthpiece for the policies of the ICFTU and its dominant force, the American AFL-CIO.

He worked closely with Irving Brown... a man who was once seen in the corridors of a conference openly handing out money to African trade union leaders, and whose previous exploits for the AFL-CIO included engineering the cold-war split in the French trade union movement.

The ATUC sent African trade unionists to an ICFTU training school in Uganda, which was later closed by the Ugandan government on the grounds that it was a training centre for American spies.

By 1961 Jamela had gone so far as to recommend that unions should work within the Industrial Conciliation Act. He was suspected of accepting bribes to sell out his union members. In 1963 Jamela was kicked out of the ATUC. A new ATUC has since been set up, under the leadership of Phineas Sithole, who is hostile to ICFTU or AFL-CIO involvement.

In the late '60s and early '70s, the ICFTU, through one Bill Lawrence, tried to set up a rival organisation, the 'National African Trades Union Congress'. Sithole commented:

"Regrettably indiscriminate financial handouts to individual trade union leaders outside the control of their unions by the ICFTU in Rhodesia are reasons for dividing and retarding the growth of the African Labour Movement... It is appalling to watch African trade union leaders being tossed around from one union to another by international aid..."

Lawrence failed. The ICFTU has now abandoned Zimbabwe. The Americans [who left the ICFTU in 1967] have moved back in. In November 1977 the ZFL was set up. The ATUC commented: "We have been advised that the AFL-CIO is attempting to disrupt the existing trade unions so that it may impose another centre which will be used to fight for, or against, foreign ideologies rather than represent the interests of the African workers".

In June 1978 an AFL-CIO 'fact-finding' mission turned up in Salisbury... and was somewhat embarrassed when the Smith government let it slip out that they had been invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The activity of the AFL-CIO and [through the ICFTU] of the TUC has little to do with workers' interests. It does, however, have a great deal to do with the interests of American and British bosses.

Two of the top four companies in Zimbabwe are British: Rio Tinto and Lonrho. Other major British interests in the country include Turner and Newall, GKN, GEC, ICI, British Leyland, and British Steel. Total British capital in Zimbabwe is over £400 million; and US interests are estimated to be almost as big.

* The Zimbabwe Information Group bulletin is available (30p per issue, £1 sub. for 5 issues) from ZIG, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

1978

January 7-9: About 60 people killed in Qom when troops fire on a demonstration protesting at the official press insults against Khomeiny.

February 18: Protests on the 40th day following the Qom massacre, in accordance with Muslim custom. Several deaths when troops open fire in Tabriz.

End of March [40 days later]: further protests.

Early May: A new, bigger wave of protests, affecting central Tehran for the first time. Army occupies the Tehran Bazaar.

June 7: Shah makes an attempt to conciliate the opposition by sacking General Nassiri, head of SAVAK secret police.

July 22: About 40 killed when troops suppress protests in Mashhad.

August 19: More than 400 killed in a cinema fire in Abadan. The Shah's regime blames the fire on the opposition; but most people in Iran believe the regime was responsible.

August 27: A new government, under Sharif-Emami, promises reforms.

September 7: Huge peaceful demonstration in Iran.

September 8: 'Black Friday'.

Another demonstration is called in Tehran but banned under martial law. Troops fire on the demonstration, killing hundreds, perhaps thousands. Strike wave begins.

October 16: General strike. Oil workers strike from October 23rd. Anti-Shah demonstrations almost daily until —

November 5: mass demonstration takes over Tehran, burning banks, Government buildings, and the British Embassy. Troops stand by or show sympathy. The Shah responds by appointing armoured chief General Azhari as prime minister and arresting Abbas Hoveyda, formerly the Shah's prime minister for 14 years.

Mid-November: Abadan refinery strike committee is arrested; troops occupy the city, and oil production increases. Big pay increases granted, but other strikes continue. Wealthy Iranians pour out of the country, taking their money with them.

Early December: Demonstrations every day in Tehran, oil workers' strike re-starts.

December 11: Between two and four million people march through Tehran, crying 'Death to the Shah'.

December 24-25: More big



Bakhtiar — backed by US

demonstrations.

1979

January 2: General Azhari resigns in favour of Shapur Bakhtiar, former no.2 of the National Front. Bakhtiar announces that the Shah is 'going on holiday'. Khomeiny denounces Bakhtiar but calls on oil workers to produce for domestic consumption. Oil workers demand — and win — workers' control over distribution, and reinstatement of all sacked strikers.

January 6: Newspapers reappear in Iran, after Bakhtiar lifts press censorship.

January 16: Shah leaves Iran.

January 19: Huge pro-Khomeiny demonstration in Tehran.

US workers set an example

Anthony Mazzocchi, vice-president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union [OCAW] of the United States, published the following message to the Iranian government in support of the striking oil workers of Iran:

As an officer of an international union which represents more than 180,000 workers in the oil, chemical and atomic industries in the United States and Canada, I wish to state to you that I strongly oppose your military government's brutal and bloody attacks on the 38,000 Iranian oil workers.

I sincerely believe that the strike of the Iranian oil workers is toward the restoration of human rights in Iran, and I protest any reprisals against them. I am in full support of the oil workers' efforts to organise and defend their lives in face of the Iranian military government's attacks.

I therefore demand the release of all the arrested striking oil workers and the 20 leaders arrested on December 17th now facing military court.

As a trade unionist, I further believe that workers anywhere in the world must have the right to help form a government in their own country

which will afford them the legitimate right to organise for the purpose of demanding better wages and conditions of work. I therefore fully support the Iranian workers' struggle for political freedom and for a democratic government which will serve their interests and the interests of all the people in Iran.

Finally, it is also my belief that the United States government has for too long intervened unjustly in the internal affairs of Iran and that it should immediately withdraw any and all support — political and material — for the Shah's military regime.

Myth of union power

EVERYONE knows the unions are too strong. The press says they are. Phone-in comperees and TV 'personalities' take it for granted. Even trade unionists believe it — if the Opinion Polls can be trusted.

Some of these people, of course, think there should be no unions at all, or else that they should be hamstrung and used, like company unions, just to control the working class.

But many of those who think the unions are 'too strong' or 'above the law' are not in that league. They may even want more workers to be in unions so that wages, working conditions and living standards can be defended.

So why do they join the outcry about 'too strong' unions?

Most people still see 'the good of society' as something that is the same for workers and for bosses. They are led to think that trade union power will harm 'the battle against inflation' or 'the economy' — matters in which bosses and workers supposedly have a common interest. They feel that governments, however unpopular, are acting in this common interest and that the unions should generally toe the line and not gatecrash into the government's sphere of 'responsibility'.

But in a class-divided society there is no 'common good'. Any claim by government to concern itself with the common good is a lie. Any claim that the class war can be settled 'justly', 'impartial-

WHAT WE THINK

ly' or 'without bias' while one class owns all wealth and industrial resources and another owns none, is a silly dream.

That being so, you either back the workers' side in the struggle or you back the bosses' side. And if you back the workers' side, it makes absolutely no sense to want only half a victory.

To say that 'the unions are too strong' is to say that the workers should lose or stop short of winning.

It is of course true that many unions are totally undemocratic — mostly the right-wing ones which sell out to the bosses most quickly and shamelessly, and are least criticised in the press.

LACK

No union is as democratic as it should be. None has its officials elected, receiving the same sort of pay as the members, and subject to immediate recall if they go against members' wishes.

But this lack of democracy in the unions makes them weaker in the workers' interests, not 'too strong' at all. It means that the top layer in the unions has become closer in outlook and interests to the bosses' state than to its members.

Those who rant about union power claim that the unions are in a position to dictate to

the Government. Of course, unions do influence government policy — even when it is a Tory government — as any organisation representing 11 million citizens should. The bosses' establishment and organisations dictate to the government all the time, but they mostly do it behind the scenes.

Those who raise a hue and cry over the trade unions as a 'dictatorial' minority (of eleven million...) think it quite natural that the CBI, representing a few dozen or hundred exploiters, should have its way with governments.

But so far from dictating government policy, the TUC has proved incapable of winning even modest reforms like higher pensions, union recognition for the Grunwick workers, or a national minimum wage.

And would it be wrong if the unions did dictate government policy? Would it be wrong if the unions were the government?

RULE

With trade union leaders dedicated to the continuation of capitalism, a trade union government would basically be just another version of a Labour government. We would be against it only because it would mean the union leaders merging their interests even more with the bosses' state and making themselves res-

ponsible for the bosses' profits

If we are against a trade union government it is not because the trade unions (at least at rank and file level) are biased in favour of one class in society. We are for the unqualified class rule of the workers.

But even after a revolution, the workers will still need unions independent of the state as their defensive organisations. Workers' rule is best operated not through unions, but the more all-embracing and unifying workers' councils

MISERY

The problem is not that the workers' organisations are too strong. The problem is that trade unions only include about half of the workforce, and that these unions and the Labour Party based on them are dominated by pro-capitalist conservatism.

And because of that, many workers feel helpless and powerless, overwhelmed by capitalism and fearful of any new knocks and bruises — such as 'strike chaos', 'picket violence', 'rail go-slow misery' or even failure of... road-gritting due to industrial action.

Such people seek shelter from every storm, and become unable to distinguish a storm unleashed against them by their enemies and one unleashed by their friends against their enemies.

EDITORIAL

NO NEW CON-TRICK

ACCORDING TO the *Observer*, the Tories are offering sites to the Labour Party to put up its farcical poster: 'Keep Britain Labour and it will keep getting better'. The Tories' Director of Publicity said gleefully 'We believe their poster deserves the widest possible exposure'.

A lot of the fury and panic in the Tory press is strictly for effect. They hope the warnings of chaos will frighten off strikers, stiffen the Tory ranks, and discredit the Labour Government.

If the Tories fail, it won't be for lack of help from Jim Callaghan. True, profits were 15% up in 1978, after rising 30% in 1976 and 20% in 1977. But the bosses are not going to return thanks by voting Labour. And it's difficult to think of anyone else for whom 'Britain is getting better'.

While the popular press was following as if strikes were the worst disaster since the Black Death, the house journals of the capitalist class were making quiet calculations. "The end of three years of rigid controls must inevitably cause some pay explosion...", noted the *Financial Times*. The *FT* concluded that earnings would rise by about 11 to 15% this year, with bigger increases in the public than in the private sector.

This they considered to be 'not sensational'. And they're right about that! That sort of earnings increase will mean only marginal gains in real wages for most workers this year.

The Stock Exchange confirmed the judgment of the *Financial Times* by sending share prices up during the week of January 15th to 19th.

The bosses' private calculations are based on them riding the wave of the present strike movement. Here again the Labour Government is helping them out — with its plans for a new social contract.

The formula proposed by Jim Callaghan on January 16th was:

- Low paid workers to be allowed increases above the (now dead!) 5% limit, up to £3.50.
- Shutting the biggest loophole in the price controls.
- A scheme to fix public sector pay by comparison with private sector wages — like the Civil Service Pay Research Unit.

Militant civil service workers have for years been campaigning against the Pay Research Unit scheme — because it makes them parasitic on other workers' militancy, and turns their pay battles into haggling over comparative rates rather than a straight fight for a decent across-the-board increase. And the rest of Callaghan's plan is not worth much more.

Even David Basnett of the GMWU rejected the 3-point plan when it was first announced. But the Government will be putting heavy pressure on union leaders, telling them that they must either agree or face chaos followed by an aggressive Tory government. After doling out a few more sops, the Government may well get the union leaders on its side. Already Alan Fisher of NUPE is saying 'We don't expect to go straight to £60 in one go'.

Patching up pay controls and preaching feeble optimism — that's the sum total of the Government's policy now. No wonder the Tories and the bosses are quietly gleeful behind their concern about the strikes!

Trade unionists should insist that the unions don't fall for this con-trick. Labour Party members should insist the Labour Party backs the strikers. If we break out from the web of deceptions and con-tricks being spun by the Tories, the press and the Government, we can make real gains on wages and hours, at the bosses' expense.

We should link the struggles, and put forward general slogans for the whole working class: £60 minimum for all, automatic cost-of-living protection for wages, and a shorter working week to end unemployment. If 100,000 or so lorry drivers can throw the bosses into crisis, what could united action by a few million workers do?

Press v. pickets

ACCORDING to The Sun it's 'The Battle of Britain '79'. One and a half million miserably low paid workers fighting for a better deal for themselves and their families was seen as 'Misery Monday', and even 'Black Monday'. After two weeks of foaming at the mouth over the drivers' pickets the Press was quite capable of turning white to black. They all but blamed strikers for the filthy weather!

John Knight of the Sunday Mirror wrote of the 'ugly face of the picket line'. But a driver who refused to join the strike (but would happily pocket the pay rise won by the strikers) was 'a handsome tough chap'.

Also in the Sunday Mirror Woodrow Wyatt managed to claim that trade unionists are 'armed by the law with machine guns' with which they can annihilate

society. 'Thugs', 'threats' and 'pick-axe handles' were also in abundance.

The next morning's press focused on the striking school caretakers and 'dinner ladies' who were to picket the schools that day. By now, a gullible parent might be really anxious about whether the children might be facing machine guns and pick-axe handles at the school gates...

The Express's George Gale worked hard on this one: 'You might think it difficult to imagine an uglier demonstration of union power than this, directed by greedy jackals against children'. Sensibly, he did not expand right there and then on what Fleet Street and the Tory Party want to do to strikers' children by cutting off Social Security benefits to them...

Of course, the press can be cool and unemotional when the

occasion suits. When Bob Watson was killed by a scab lorry outside the Shell depot in Torry, Aberdeen, the news was reported with restraint.

Subtly the murder was woven into the general tapestry of strike horrors as embroidered by the press. Instead of Bob Watson's death forcing attention on the real problem of picketing (how to keep it effective against strike-breaking thugs armed with 20-ton trucks) it was written up as one more proof of 'picket line violence': 'Now it's death on the picket line', as the Daily Express headlined it, no doubt hoping that a casual reader would think the pickets had done it.

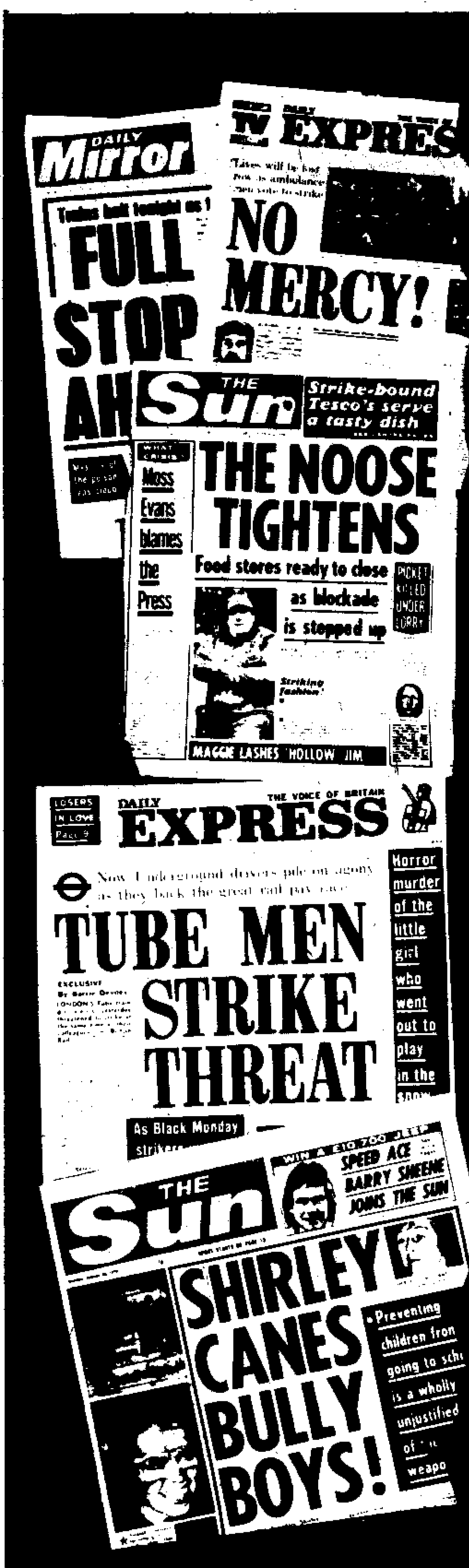
And the Express managed to decide it was an 'accident'. Try to imagine what words would have been used if the pickets had killed a strike-breaker!

The press can also be very understanding. Workers at Cadbury's who belaboured pickets on their factory gates were 'showing their frustration'. And the placard carried by anti-strike women in Bury, proclaiming 'Death to Secondary Pickets' was of course entirely non-violent.

The Bury demo was actually the creation of the press, as was the catchphrase 'secondary picketing'. People who couldn't tell a trade union from a tonsillectomy found it a new target for hatred.

But the press is really happiest when life is at risk. Their Public Enemy No. One early last week was Bill Dunn. He is the ambulance workers' convenor reported as saying 'If it [refusal to answer emergency calls] means lives lost, that is how it must be'.

According to the News Line, he has no recollection of making such a comment'. Apparently what he actually said was 'If we don't stand up now the people won't have a service. If I am a villain for taking one-day action in order to fight for a proper service for London, after all the caring I have given to the people over the years, then OK, I'm a villain. How do you think I feel?'



"Speed up your lorry and to hell with the consequences" seems to have been the motto of the driver who crushed Bob Watson beneath the wheels of his truck. Perhaps he was taking the anti-picket advice of the venerable Lord Hailsham, the one-time Tory Lord Chancellor, the highest legal authority in the land: "Go as fast as you can through picket lines with your lights on". Since the death of Bob Watson and the promise of an 'immediate police inquiry', there has been a total press blackout on the incident.

While the press was lambasting every striker from Falmouth to Fort William, the papers remained silent on a story about the Ford workers of Liverpool's Halewood plant — ordinarily a favourite subject for newspaper ranting.

Some 5,000 workers at the body and press shops there were paid a total of £190,000 back pay. At a series of meetings they voted to donate the whole sum to the kidney unit at the Royal Liverpool Hospital.



'Union bullies' at the London rally

The splitters

THE important new element in the low-paid workers' action is the unity between the unions concerned — NUPE, CoHSE, the GMWU and the TGWU.

Between them they represent the organised workers among the 1,100,000 local authority manual workers, the quarter of a million hospital ancillaries, 30,000 water and sewage workers, 18,000 ambulance men and 24,000 non-teaching university staff.

Most of these workers are weak because strike action by them does not directly affect production and profits — and whatever the government and press say, they are concerned about profits, not lives.

Water and Sewage workers, however, are in a strong position. It is all the more alarming, therefore, that the G&M, which represents most of them, is already pushing to have their claim settled separately and so weaken the entire low-paid claim.

The G&M has argued that

they should not be part of the general claim. But in some areas, notably in North Manchester, water-workers have taken unofficial action, making it clear that they stand shoulder to shoulder with their weaker fellow workers.

Another way that the G&M leadership is trying to crack the present unity is in its push for a 'comparability commission'. In effect, GMWU leader David Basnett is arguing for a new version of the Tories' discredited 'Relativities Board'. The point of this is to impose on public sector workers a permanent wages board and a permanent wage control. The carrot is a promised comparability with workers in the private sector.

If such a board were set up, that would take away from public sector workers their reliance on free collective bargaining in favour of reliance on government-influenced arbitration — a sure-fire formula for continued poverty wages.

£60 FOR A 35 HOUR WEEK

No joy for union officials at huge London low pay rally

IN A massive show of determination, 35,000 workers marched in London on the Low Pay Day, January 22nd.

At the rally following the massive march in London, the union bureaucrats were heckled and finally had to abandon the platform.

The tide of rank and file hostility built up as the afternoon wore on and speaker after speaker came out with patronising banalities about how bad it was to be low-paid. Unfortunately for the union leaders, they were not pleading the case against low pay with a group of well-meaning liberals, but with workers who have had to live with low pay and who had found solidarity, strength, and a belief they could win, through the demonstration.

The bureaucrats pointed out that for the first time there

was unity among the public sector unions. Loud applause. "So we don't want to rock the boat", said CoHSE general secretary Albert Spanswick. The audience protested loudly: they wanted rank and file unity, not unity meaning that the struggle moves at the speed of the slowest union bureaucrat.

A number of workers came forward asking to speak from the floor. The chairman denied their requests, and tried to isolate the hecklers and the people who wanted to speak out from the rest of the workers. This tactic failed, as the chant went round the hall: "Let them speak".

As Albert Spanswick spoke, slow hand-clapping began. When he listed the various public and Government inquiries into the Health Service, and then said that they needed another inquiry,

a chant started for all-out strike action.

From that point on, the demands for speakers from the floor increased, making the bureaucrats inaudible. The chairman appealed for order: "These people will have to sit round the table with the Government at the end of it all". Reply: chants of "We don't want to be sold out".

The bureaucrats finished rapidly and beat a hasty retreat, turning off and taking away the microphones. About 700 workers were left in the hall, and carried on the meeting, asking for and getting silence so that the speakers could be heard.

Though the initial impetus for this action had come from the revolutionary left, the audience remaining encompassed a much broader spectrum of workers.

The union leaders believ-

ed they had mobilised their 'foot soldiers' to demonstrate to the Labour Government 'the need to change course'. They found that they had provided a focal point for the expression of militancy by public sector workers which went far beyond their horizons. The workers at the rally showed that they were well aware of the likely attempts by their leaders to sell out... and determined not to be sold out.

They wanted rank and file control of the strike. A coordinated national rank and file grouping to organise the strike movement from below is the necessary next step, to strengthen the members against attacks from the bosses' press and from the government, and to protect them against the likely behind-the-scenes deals by the union leaderships.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

End low pay now

1-day strike solid in Coventry

ALL LOCAL government manual workers were out on the 22nd in COVENTRY and throughout Warwickshire. There was no road-gritting, no dustbin collections, no street cleaning, no burials, no cremations. Coventry airport stayed open, but art galleries, carparks, sports centres, and baths were all closed.

The West Midlands had 60,000 NUPE members on strike, and 5,000 went to London. From tomorrow, NUPE members throughout the region will be operating overtime bans and work-to-rules, and will hold one-day stoppages every week.

Health workers in Coventry NUPE closed all the hospitals, with a double row of pickets outside Walsgrave hospital, one of the largest in the region. 60 ambulances were off the road, without even emergency cover. Five volunteer Red Cross and St Johns ambulances did operate.

Schools were more patchily covered, with some union members staying at work, but in Warwickshire 57 schools did close, mainly in the Nuneaton area.

In Stratford on Avon, the strike was 100% on the 22nd, with every single member out and everything closed.

JENNIE LONG

EVERY MAJ Britain has fe of the one-da the public sec paid workers. In most big hospitals wer porters and n many school cause caretak teen staff ref Some left Lab instructed tea cross picket li schools and e The Nation Teachers told to respect the workers' pick support their In a few pla and sewage w struck for the men refused collections, a ers did nothin snow fell. But the mo ed workers w health servic the angriest o the ambulanc Behind the show of deter however, the union leader glaring. Only done anything a large contin 35,000 strong Parliament, a NUPE had gi like the lead r organise a str roots movem of the unions members out one day!

Yet it is cle workers are le lead. In Many are going mu that they hav structured to. The strateg and guerilla s wrong. The w now is 'All ou must be rank committees in ties to coordin spread the st

EDINBURGH: STRESS ON SOLIDARITY

FOUR HUNDRED public service workers demonstrated in Edinburgh on the 22nd. The demonstration, which was backed by a strike of hospital ancillary workers and nurses, was organised by NUPE Edinburgh South Hospitals branch, with support from other unions including CoHSE, T&GWU, NALGO, FBU and the school teachers' union, EIS.

It seems that the low turnout at the demonstration was more a result of the short notice at which it had been called than any lack of support. At the rally afterwards, speakers from NUPE who had been on the picket lines from early morning reported that the strike was 100% successful.

As from the 22nd, NUPE and CoHSE will be operating a work to rule in Edinburgh's hospitals.

The good thing about the rally was that the major part of it was given over to speeches from the floor, so that a real discussion could take place about the way forward.

Mick Napier, a senior stew-

ard from Edinburgh South Hospitals NUPE, and a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), warned that the bureaucrats would use 'comparability' as a pretext for a settlement.

The attitude of the NUPE leaders was like someone going into a fight with one hand tied behind his back and desperately hoping his adversary will tie up the other one! If the work to rule was going to be effective, it would have to be rigidly adhered to. At the first sign of victimisation, the workers could have only one answer: all-out strike action.

This was backed up by a speaker from Princess Margaret Rose Hospital who pointed out the uselessness of one day strikes. All that happens is that next day you do the work you haven't done the day before.

If the low pay campaign is to win, the greatest stress must be put on solidarity. This was emphasised by speakers from NALGO, the FBU, and the CPSA. No sect-

ion of public sector workers could win on their own. Standing together we can smash the Government's efforts to hold down wages.

Feeling the need for some 'politics', Trades Council secretary (and SWP member) Dave Loughney spoke of the need for debate on political issues and for the Government to implement Socialist policies. This unhappy attempt to marry Socialist Worker with the Scottish TUC could only come across as an endorsement of the union's 'alternative economic strategy'... a piece of economic day-dreaming designed to introduce 'socialist' (actually, state-capitalist) policies in the form of tinkering with the capitalist system.

NUPE shop steward Pat Heely argued that as long as the £60 claim was met we could forget about the 35 hour week. But a fight for the 35 hour week, coupled with decent wages, is the best way to link up unemployed with employed workers in the fight for jobs. JOHN MACDONALD

BIG SHUTDOWN BUT FEW LINKS FORGED

TO THE casual observer, it might seem that a general strike had been declared in Manchester. The lorry drivers' strike has been so effective that whole sections of industry are on the verge of shutting down or have already done so. Many shops are running out of goods.

Social workers, members of NALGO, are on strike over their claim for re-grading. 600 water workers in the Pennine Division have been out over their wage claim. Manchester's busmen are holding lightning strikes against the 5% limit and against a plan to introduce multi-ride tickets which would lead to redundancies.

The one-day strikes by ASLEF members have thrown the region's rail system into chaos, and tens of thousands of local government workers walked out on Monday 22nd.

After four years of wage cuts with nothing to show for it, Manchester's workers have had enough, and are voting against pay curbs with their

feet. And the lead is coming from the lower-paid, not from the traditionally militant engineering industry. This more than anything else gives the lie to Callaghan's claim that his policies have helped the lower-paid.

The blame for the disruption to life in the area must be firmly laid at the door of the Labour Government. It's their policy of helping big business at the expense of the working class which is responsible.

Predictably, the local right-wing rag, the Manchester Evening News, has been trying to whip up anti-strike sentiment by giving acres of space to any Tory nut who writes in saying that the unions are too powerful, and how the whole thing is a conspiracy.

Unfortunately this is far from the truth! Apart from the decision of the busmen to come out on the same day as the local government workers, nothing has been done to link up the various strikes, even though they are all over the same issue. The leaders of

the unions concerned are doing their best to play the whole thing down.

In most cases it's the rank and file who are having to make all the running. Members of the United Road Transport Union on the drivers' picket lines told me that they hadn't seen their union officials since the strike began.

The Stalinist-led Manchester Trades Council at its meeting last Wednesday passed a resolution supporting the lorry drivers, calling on the TUC to help them in their fight... and saying nothing about the Trades Council itself doing anything at all.

Manchester's "left" MPs such as Stan Orme and Frank Allaun have also been strangely quiet. Normally they are willing to speak loud and long on most topics, given the chance. On the issue of strikes against Government pay limits they have temporarily lost their voices.

Fighting rank and file unity must be the starting point for building a new leadership.

PETE KEENLYSIDE

Land of Hope and Glory and death to secondary pickets

"DEATH TO secondary pickets", said the placard carried round Bury's shopping precinct by a well-known local Tory woman.

But the anti-strike demonstration in Bury last Saturday [20th] got wide coverage — both while it was being organised and after the event — from the media as a 'non-political' protest. Plugs on the Jimmy Young Show, on local radio, and on TV helped to bring out over 200 people, mostly middle-class women, to march twice round the

shopping precinct in freezing snow, demanding curbs on pickets and government action to avoid 'total economic collapse'. They ended by singing "Land of Hope and Glory", and got glowing reports in the Manchester Evening News and on national BBC News.

The women also put out an anti-strike petition, which at least two local National Front members hurried to sign.

What was not reported in detail by press and TV was the counter-demonstra-

tion, about 50 strong, backed by the local LPYS, Communist Party, SWP, Anti Nazi League, Workers' Action, and Bury Women's Group, which supported the right of workers to strike for a decent wage.

We talked and argued with many passers-by, and won over some of them.

Bury CLP and LPYS have both come out publicly in support of the drivers' strike and the NUPE demand for a minimum of £60.

SUE ARNALL



These are the people the press calls 'greedy jackals'

UNITE THE STRUGGLES

They've got the cheek to call us murderers

An ambulance man picketing the Canonbury ambulance station in North London.

I'VE WORKED in the ambulance service for ten years now. Everybody here has worked in the service for at least four years. But when we said we were striking for the day, our officers called us 'murderers'. Some of us nearly chucked it in there and then.

I'm disgusted. They call us 'murderers' and blame us for shutting down the ambulance service, but the health service is collapsing because of what the Government is doing. If anyone ought to be called 'murderers', it's them!

With the cuts, hospitals are closing down, and soon there won't be an ambulance service. The services round here are all down in number because the blokes won't stay with the pay as bad as it is. If it doesn't get better, they won't have an ambulance service.

For instance, a woman down the road from me fell over and cracked her thigh. She was only in hospital for a week, and they told her to go home because they needed the bed. There'll be no health service left soon.

Another thing that gets me is what Ennals said. Ennals and Callaghan are saying we are not an emergency service. If we were, we wouldn't have to go by the pay code. An essential service is what they say, but not an emergency service.

But if ambulances aren't an emergency, then I don't know what is. If we go on a total strike, they soon say it's an emergency and want us to do emergency calls. They talk about a state of emergency, yet they turn around and tell ambulance crews that they're not an emergency service.

Who'd want to work for less than fifty quid a week basic these days? With the lorry drivers striking there are people saying the kiddies won't be getting any good, but they don't seem to care about our kids. If we don't get this rise, we won't be able to provide for our kids properly, lorry drivers' strike or no lorry drivers' strike.

Of course, you can do overtime and that but you shouldn't have to. They used to ask us to do it, now they are begging us. That's what it's come to with the run-down.

But like this you don't get time with your family. For instance, we have one Christmas at home in eight. My daughter will be fourteen when I spend my next Christmas at home — that's in six years' time. And my boy's always asking me to come and watch him play football for the school, but I can't. They should pay us a proper wage without overtime. This way it's not really voluntary at all.

We didn't want this strike. Nobody does, but it's the only way. Now Ford are in a strong position when they strike because of exports and all that — and good luck to them, I say — but the Government take advantage of us. They play on our consciences.

And this fuss about not doing emergency calls is all wrong. We said we'd do them, but a lot of depots are not doing them and we're not going to cross their picket lines. We're just going to do work around this area.

But it's ridiculous really, because we know that the St John's and the army are stand-



Ambulance crews — the angriest section of the big London march

BRING THE OTHERS OUT IN SUPPORT!

TIM THORPE, a Nottingham NUPE branch secretary, talks about the threat of victimisation

Like a lot of other branch secretaries I have been threatened with victimisation. An Area Officer of the union went to management to negotiate time off with pay so I could work on organising the action in my branch. The result was a visit last week from two characters from County Hall who warned me 'unofficially' that I'd already had too much time off and should watch my step.

I think this was because it's well known that I have been arguing for an all-out strike. There were some Matrons of Old People's Homes who tried to sabotage the day of action by ringing round to say they were staying open and then threatening members with the sack if they struck.

Despite all this the day was a great start. I don't know one member of my branch who went to work.

However, there was a feeling on the day that a lot more could have been done in the areas as well as having the big march in London. The day could have been used for mass meetings to decide on future action.

In Nottingham we have set up a strike committee from the District branch of NUPE and are trying to spread it to other NUPE, GMWU and T&G branches. The committee aims to do two things: to build up mass support for the action in the branches and to keep control of the action in the hands of the rank and file. My branch is going to hold

weekly meetings to keep the members informed, and the Strike Committee is calling for weekly workplace meetings to report back to branches and the committee. The Committee is producing a regular strike bulletin. My branch has circulated members with their official job descriptions so they can put the national work to rule into effect properly.

A problem is that some of our union's full-timers have been useless, issuing vague and contradictory instructions. But they still want to keep a tight grip. At present we need Divisional level approval for official strike action and they control strike pay very firmly.

Our strike committee bulletin has raised the idea of having

a further all-out one day strike in the next few weeks in Nottingham. The Division's attitude seems to be that we were trying to move too fast — and they control the union's funds, which we would need in order to organise support meetings and rallies for such action.

The strike committee is arguing for rotating one-day strikes every week in social service establishments. The strike committee will also be trying to link up the places that are taking indefinite strike action. One dustcart depot in Broxtowe is taking strike action and we need to move the pickets around to bring other depots out in support. That way we can build up a real strike wave to win our claim.

The old and sick will suffer more if we don't fight

A Workers' Action supporter describes the work of the Leicester 'Hospital Worker' group.

WE'VE ORGANISED for the strike by having sectional meetings to discuss the issues and decide whether to strike or not... and to find out how many were coming to the demonstration on the 22nd. A lot of people couldn't come because the school caretakers, also in NUPE, were out and so they had to look after their kids.

The Hospital Worker group produced two bulletins. We found that the NUPE officials worked much too slowly.

The lead has already been taken by the rank and file to some extent. The workers at the City General Hospital called for a picket, then the

officials made it official afterwards. I don't know if the gap between the rank and file and the officials will become as wide as in the lorry-drivers' dispute. It's difficult to tell.

Fisher is saying 'I do not believe that we will go to £60 in just one jump'. To prove wrong, we really need support from other workers. If you have a claim coming up, strike now. Help us on the picket line. And, of course, take collections.

Our case must be explained, against the press attacks. Who the hell has been cutting the Health Service to bits ever since 1948? The Government, the ruling class... they have been cutting until we are driven out to argue, not for massive increases, but for a decent wage for our work.

The old and sick will suffer more if we don't fight now.

I'm totally behind the ambulance workers' decision, especially since I know how much it takes to get hospital workers to come out on strike even with emergency cover. It shows how much the ambulance men have been pushed around, that in Manchester and Coventry (and almost in London) they have all come out.

People ought to recognise that these ambulance men care, and their job is directly about saving life. If their job is destroyed, then life will be lost on a massive scale.

Now, for one day, they have shown what might happen without them... and look at the outcry. I'm right behind them.

WORKERS CONTROL OF STAFFING

A nurse from Edinburgh geriatric hospital.

NUPE DID NOT do much officially to bring nurses into the day of action on the 22nd. We were left in the dark until Friday 19th, when we got an official letter calling for our support for the ancillary workers' claim. But a full-time official told us at a branch meeting last year that the ancillaries' claim should not concern the nurses in NUPE!

Because of this sluggishness, some hospitals have been unable to mobilise their nurses and get meetings off the ground.

In our hospital, we worked out the number of nurses needed for emergency cover. We got the nursing officers to agree on these rules, which included a balance of trained and auxiliary nurses. We also got them to agree on how to spread the emergency cover over the wards.

NUPE to come out and join the picket line. In fact it was workers' control of staffing levels for the day.

Among the NUPE nurses, response was 100%. Everyone shared picket duties. It showed the nurses what the picket line is all about. We were out with the porters and cleaners. It proved we aren't some special type of worker, apart from everyone else. It made it very clear that we can strike in a highly organised way, judging the necessary safety levels for ourselves.

When we went to the ancillary workers' meeting to offer our support, it really boosted their morale. They felt they were not fighting by themselves, but had some concrete support.

It means we will definitely get them to come out in support of the nurses' claim, which comes up at the end of the public sector workers' claims, in April.

The nursing officers were very cooperative during the

strike. But as for the senior nursing officer, she thought it was 'a disgrace that nurses should strike and go on picket lines'. She claimed that there were phone calls from 'local residents' complaining about nurses being on the picket line.

We want much more participation by nurses in this pay campaign. We could be pulled out like any other section, but that wouldn't be on the cards as far as Fisher is concerned.

The union strategy of work to rules and selective action is totally inadequate as far as we are concerned. The notice has been far too short, and since the union levy only covers strikes, it is going to be hard to get workers to accept any loss of pay that comes through a work to rule. They are unlikely to get social security benefits.

It should be a strike to get all the workers out at the same time.

But Fisher thinks he is

letting off steam in the public sector while using the publicity to boost his image as a left wing leader. He sways with the militancy of the union members, but always one step behind. The lesson to be learnt is that our union leadership can't be relied on. If we depend on that lot, we'll never force the Government's hand.

We have got a joint shop stewards' committee off the ground in Edinburgh, including all the health unions. Elected low pay committees and broader strike committees will also be necessary so that we can gain the support of other groups of workers.

Strike committees and Trades Councils could produce weekly strike papers to counteract the media.

The full timers have got to be made to work for us, and not us for them. They are not the workers who are on low pay!

Fed up being treated like slaves

Charlie Sorell, NUPE shop steward, Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Hospital workers are fed up with being treated like slaves. We need a living wage, that is, £60 a week, and we need a 35 hour week. There is very little overtime done by hospital workers; most work a 40 hour week most weeks.

We also want four week's holiday each year after one year's employment. We don't see why we shouldn't have a decent holiday, when we have to make sacrifices for the patients at Christmas and New Year, not to mention that we work two weekends in three.

Conditions in the hospital are generally not bad, but there are some bits which are awful, like the hours, and the fact you don't know what shift you are on until five days before. And the attitude of many doctors and some nurses is so snobbish. They just don't seem to see the ancillary staff.

In the kitchens, conditions are generally bad. Sometimes it takes only one word from the shop steward to get certain things done like mending a

gas leak. At other times it has taken a threat of industrial action.

Management's attitude is that if the meals come out OK, then everything is OK. It didn't matter to them that a girl almost broke her wrist because the floors got slippery so quickly, or that a kitchen porter was almost killed by an electric shock.

Senior management seem to be under the impression that labour relations are still the same as they were in the 1900s. Trade unions are tolerated... until they start doing something.

The management will not recognise the joint shop stewards committee, nor even the Health and Safety committee (despite the fact that they are legally bound to do so). They have not yet implemented an assisted travel scheme which is in use all over the rest of the country. And they oppose time off for union work whenever they can.

I think the only solution can be putting the hospital under workers' control.

TWO hundred million people in India live in absolute poverty. 170 million of them are landless peasants who earn between 4p and 10p a day.

Their numbers are growing: in the 1960s the landless were 18% of the rural population. Now they are over a third. One third of all cultivated land is owned by 4% of the farmers, while the poorest 51% own only 8% of the land.

India has had many land reforms. But their effect has been to put agriculture on a more capitalist basis, benefitting a rural middle class. In 1978, India had 18 million tons of surplus grain — but none of it ever reached the rural poor.

As an Indian economist puts it: "This new class is not restricted by any sense of obligation to the larger community or to the weaker sections of society. Thus exploitation of the rural poor has only assumed new forms and in fact has been intensified, leading to widespread social unrest in rural India".

In the cities, too, millions live at starvation level. Meanwhile profits rise — by around 60 to 70% between 1972 and 1975, for instance.

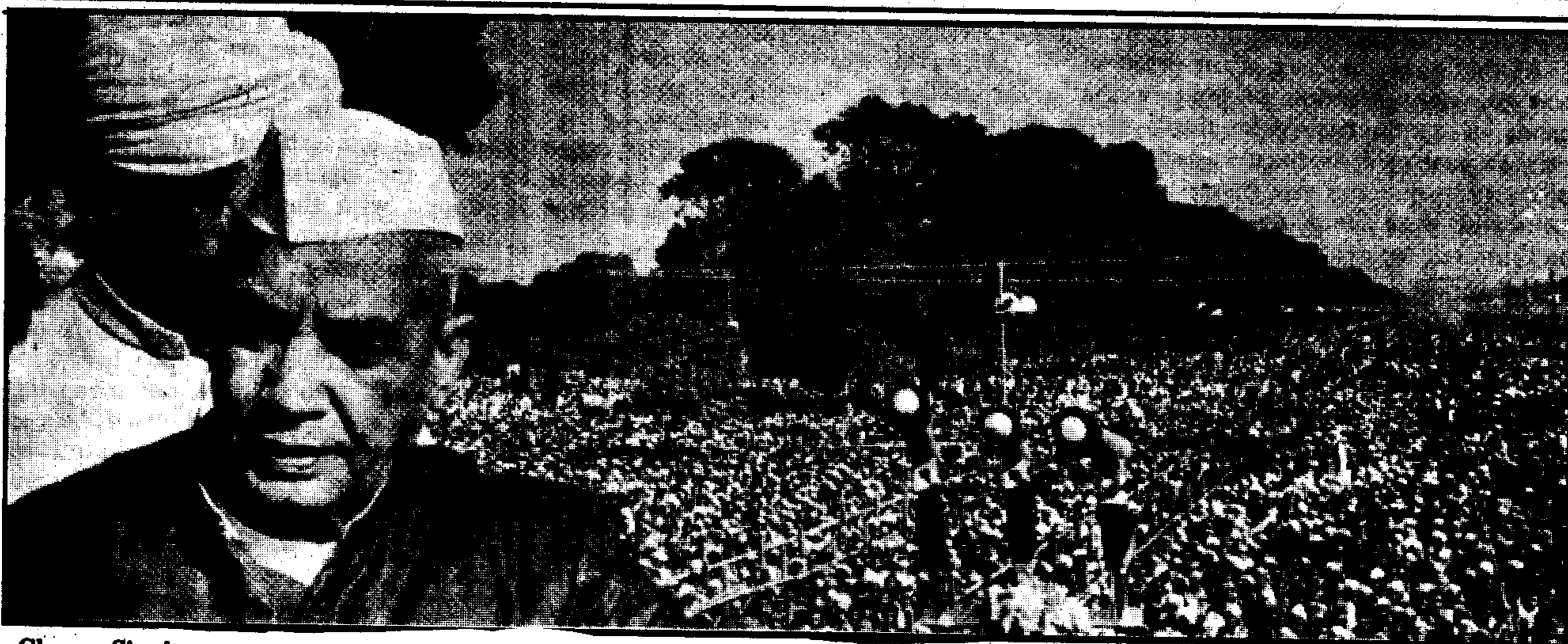
When the ruling class politicians whip up caste and religious conflicts, it is this inequality that they are trying to protect. BIRENDRA SINGH describes the people's response to the politicians.

LAST summer I went home. My village in Bihar, India, is twelve miles away from Siwan, the central town of its district.

Siwan's population is about half Muslim, half Hindu, but they have lived in peace and harmony for many years — until recently. Last summer they had their first communal riots.

I asked why. The usual answer was "It must be politics". In the district council elections just prior to the riots the Siwan district council had acquired a majority of Jansangh members.

Jansangh used to be an extreme Hindu party, anti-Muslim and ultra-nationalist.



Charan Singh — representing the richer peasants

India: Exchanging one set of vultures for another

It gained popularity among the fanatical section of the unemployed, poverty-stricken Hindu population by appealing to their discontent with Indira Gandhi's government.

BASIC

Jansangh is now consolidating its position by mousing slogans in favour of the poor, and underplaying, at least in public, its anti-Muslim stance. Its leaders claim to be faithful members of the ruling Janata coalition. But in truth they remain in basic belief Jansanghi, busily employing volunteers from their paramilitary youth organisation RSS to break strikes.

During Indira Gandhi's rule the railwaymen's strike

was broken by the police. Now strikes are broken by RSS men, who can be disowned more easily because they have no official status.

Jansangh is the dominant partner in the Janata coalition, and the one which has benefited most from it. Janata also includes ex-Congress Party politicians, Charan Singh's BLD (a party based mainly on richer peasants), and a tiny group of social democrats under the leadership of Madhu Limaye.

The Janata government has withdrawn the emergency declared by Indira Gandhi, curbed police powers, and ended forced vasectomies. But that's about all. Prices have risen faster, bureaucracy has become worse, communal conflict has become sharper, and

trade unionism has been weakened by the insertion of RSS men in the unions and by anti-Muslim ideas being made respectable.

From my talks with the people in my village, I gathered that they feel that they have exchanged one set of vultures for another. With this lot they have, perhaps, a little more freedom, but no hope for any other betterment.

CHOICE

I asked: what about the left alternative? The left are hopelessly split. They seem still to be arguing about whether the Janata leader Moraji Desai is better than Gandhi or vice versa. This is the main argument prevent-

ing unity between the Moscow-line Communist Party of India and the Communist Party (Marxist), which tries to steer a middle course between Moscow and Peking.

The CPI(M) insist that the CPI should accept that Desai is better than Gandhi, which the CPI are insisting that the CPI(M) should disown Desai. Instead of working towards presenting a real socialist alternative to the people of India, the left is preoccupied with the quarrels of Desai and Indira Gandhi.

In my view, the Indian people have very little real choice between Desai and Gandhi. These two are birds of a feather, and basically they represent the same interests.

We all owe a debt to Joseph Hansen

JOSEPH HANSEN died in New York on January 18th. Rhodri Evans writes:

Over the last few years, Hansen's name had become best-known in Britain through a vile slander campaign waged against him by the paper *Newline* and the so-called 'Workers' Revolutionary Party'. But within the socialist movement, this campaign only served to convince people more firmly than ever that the WRP was an irresponsible sect led by shameless liars.

Far from being an agent of both the FBI and the Russian secret police [or either of them] as the WRP hysterically alleged, Joseph Hansen had been an active revolutionary socialist for over 40 years, and a leading figure in the American socialist movement for 30.

Hansen joined the American Trotskyist movement in the 1930s. As a young militant, he was drawn into a grouping around Martin Abern.

In 1938-40, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) split, over the issue of defence of the USSR against the imperialist powers in the war. Abern and his tightly knit group of friends agreed with the 'defencists' but took the other side, because they thought the 'defencist' majority was bureaucratic.

Hansen had to choose between political principles and personal loyalties. He proved himself as a revolutionary by choosing in favour of politics and writing a pamphlet, 'The Abern Clique', against his former allies.

After World War Two, he started to play a role in the movement as a theorist. He was one of the first to argue the view that later became accepted by almost the whole Trotskyist movement, that capitalism had been overthrown in Eastern Europe.

Then in 1953 the Trotskyist movement in the USA split under the pressure of terrible isolation and persecution. Militants in the car factories sometimes had to run out of the works at the end of the day to avoid getting beaten up by right wing thugs. Many people started arguing that the Trotskyist programme was a utopian and distant ideal.

Hansen was to the forefront in upholding the basic truths of Marxism against this retreat. After the split in 1953 he became the leading theoretical writer of the SWP, alongside Tom Kerry.

In the early 1960s he was responsible for developing the SWP's assessment of the Cuban revolution. During the 1970s he was the leading polemicist for the SWP and its international co-thinkers in a wide-ranging debate within the Fourth International [United Secretariat].

Especially through the weekly journal *Intercontinental Press*, which he edited, Hansen became the theorist of a quite distinctive version of post-Trotsky Trotskyism, counterposed to the other influential version of Ernest Mandel.

Workers' Action's conception of Trotskyist politics differs seriously from Hansen's — indeed, from many of the assumptions which Hansen took as common ground with Mandel in his recent polemics. But every revolutionary today owes a debt to Hansen as to the other militants who kept the traditions of Marxist analysis alive in the most difficult years, when Stalinist scholasticism and social democratic complacency apparently reigned supreme.

HELL AT HULL

OVER two years after the Hull prison revolt in September 1976, twelve prison officers have finally been brought to trial charged with conspiring to "assault and beat" prisoners. An assistant governor at Hull is also charged with 'willful neglect of duty in not stopping, or reporting, the assaults'.

An investigation by the prisoners' rights organisation PROP, chaired by John Platts-Mills QC, has already reported on the background to the revolt: "Clear warnings of trouble at Hull, passed to the Home Office nine months before the riot, were ignored ... the increased harshness of the regime was the immediate precursor of the riot and ... the beating of a prisoner, Martin Clifford, was the spark that ignited it".

After Clifford was beaten up, prisoners protesting at brutality took over part of the jail and occupied the roof from August 30th to September 3rd. A 'surrender' was negotiated, and in the following days, according to both prisoners and former prison officers, the screws systematically beat up and terrorised the militant prisoners.

The prison authorities did their best to stave off the trial, and their stalling made it difficult to carry out investigations. The prisoners' allegations of extraordinary brutality against them were not even looked into until five

months had gone by since the riot. To make things more difficult, almost all the prisoners involved have been dispersed to other prisons, and are frequently moved about from prison to prison by the Home Office, causing further difficulties in collecting evidence.

Meanwhile the Home Office brought out its own report into the events. It completely ignored the allegations against the officers. Claiming that the whole affair was *sub judice*, the report simply made one comment about the uniformed thugs: 'excessive zeal'.

RARE

Only after continued revelations and mounting public pressure has the trial taken place at all. It is a rare event: whatever its final outcome, the fact that prisoners are able to tell their story — and have it reported in the papers daily — is a massive breach in the wall of silence normally built around them.

First evidence came, however, from former prison officer Peter Unwin, as he described what happened the morning after the prisoners surrendered. Talking about John Walker, an IRA prisoner, Unwin recalled: "I hit him a couple of times in the chest and Wilson [one of the accused officers] hit him a

BY NIK BARSTOW



Courage of Jake Prescott

few times in the stomach... no punches were pulled."

He said that as prisoners were let out of their cells, one at a time, they were grabbed and attacked. The prisoners offered no violence.

SING

Another former officer, Craig McLaughlin, told how an Irish political prisoner was held from behind by an officer and order to sing *God Save the Queen*. He refused, but they forced him, as screws stood round him clapping.

McLaughlin also described prisoners being tripped up and repeatedly kicked to the

ground.

Prisoner John Reed described in court four beatings he said he suffered that day. At 'slop out', there were 40 officers on the landing. One of the accused officers, Maurice Dudding, said "When you get into them they've still got to be able to walk."

Reed recalled: "I started to go through the line of officers... he [another of the screws in the dock] started punching and kicking me. I was on my hands and knees and was being beaten by the officers". He was then forced to crawl into his cell with a warden riding on his back as if he was a horse.

TRIAL

Later, at breakfast, Reed was jumped on, kicked and beaten. Someone tried to bang his head against the wall. The next thing he remembered was waking up in his cell, bleeding from his nose.

The trial is likely to go on for another two months. For the Home Office, the fact that it is taking place at all is a defeat. The prison system is dependent on denying prisoners basic legal and civil rights and rendering them generally helpless against assault, forcible drugging and other such maltreatment. In prison disciplinary

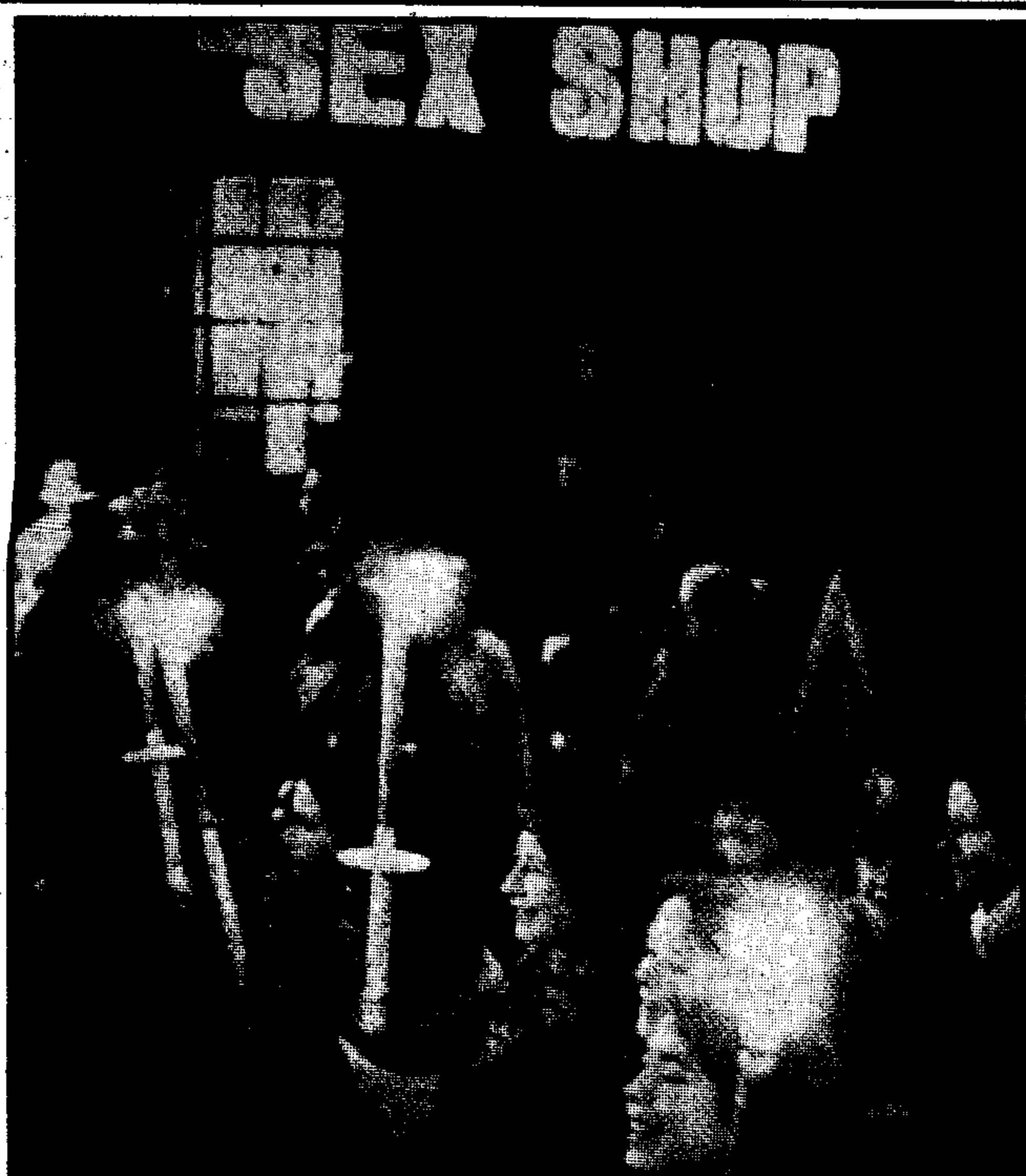
hearings (which can add months or years to a sentence in loss of remission) they get no legal representation and are unable to offer any defence.

Prisoners have no right to speak out in public about prison conditions. They have no way of seeking any redress if their rights are abused except through bodies which are an integral part of the prison system. Despite being denied such rights, prisoners have still succeeded in forcing the Hull trial.

Militant prisoners and their supporters insisted in bringing the scandal to light. They refused to let the issue be dropped. They fought against both the official constraints of prison rules and the unofficial 'rules' of violence and victimisation meted out to those who complained.

Jake Prescott, a prisoner convicted at the 'Angry Brigade' trial, has played an especially courageous role.

If the prison officers are convicted, it may deter some uniformed thugs in the future. It will be much more important, however, if the trial helps to win some basic human rights for the thousands of people whom capitalism has shut away without these rights, mostly because they tried to get their own back against capitalist oppression.



THE 'RECLAIM the Night' demonstration in Soho last Saturday (20th) was attended by well over 1000 women. It was against the degradation of women in pornographic magazines and sex shops.

We marched through Soho to assert our right to go out at night without the fear of being attacked. Sex cinemas and sex shops, with the leering, grab-what-you-can attitude to sex which they encourage, are a direct threat to that right.

Prostitutes and women passers-by in the Soho area were sympathetic to the march — and their attitude contrasted sharply with the hostility of the heavies guarding the porn shops.

The police — who broke up the last 'Reclaim the Night' march in Soho — put on a heavy escort, and were quick to tear down "this offends women" stickers put up on sexist posters.

EVENTS

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

Friday 2 February. Coventry Trades Council international committee meeting on the role of the multinationals. 7.30, D14, Lanchester Poly, with slide and tape show.

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

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

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

DIARY

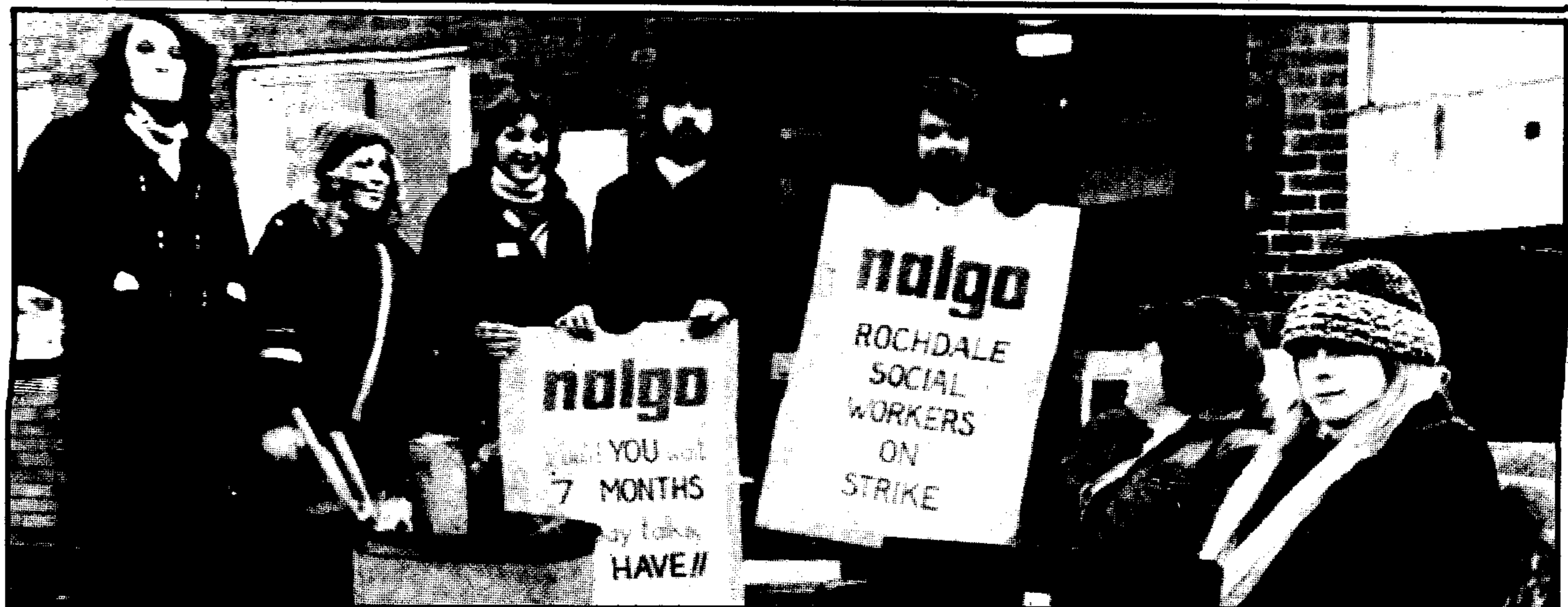
REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY

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

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

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

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



More pay or more Maria Colwells

by SUE ARNALL

IN THE second week of the Social Workers' strike in Rochdale, scabs must be finding it cold work... since thieves stole the heating oil from the tanks of the Social Services Department.

Rochdale's 100 social workers are a recent addition to the 2,600 social workers in NALGO on official strike in 14 local authorities. Other areas are awaiting the result of secret ballots, while some, like Oldham, have decided against strike action.

Poverty

The dispute is essentially about more pay, since social workers are badly paid. Like all workers, under incomes policy they have seen their wages drifting rapidly towards poverty level.

But this dispute is not a simple one, since the demand is for regrading, and a more flexible scale to be decided at local level. The

rationale for this is that the job differs fantastically from area to area. The pressure is far greater in depressed inner city areas.

In addition, the job has changed out of all recognition over the past few years because of government legislation such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, the Children Act 1975, and the furore over the Maria Colwell inquiry... all resulting in extra work with no extra pay.

So social workers are demanding the right to negotiate directly with their employers, the local authorities, rather than be bound by nationally prescribed grades with no right of appeal. They hope this would mean that areas with most pressure could obtain better pay and working conditions, to attract qualified staff who would be prepared to stay. The strikers are aware of the possible dangers of dividing themselves up, but feel confident that this dispute has hardened the militancy of their members and made them more pre-

pared to take on the local authorities.

Health Minister David Ennals has declared that the social workers are "cruelly hurting the weakest members of society", and are "damaging their profession" by showing the general public that society can do without them.

Moralists

Like the press attacks on nurses, firemen, and hospital workers when they strike, this blackmail stinks... because the strikers are much better aware of the drastic effects of their withdrawal of labour than the Westminster politicians or the well-heeled moralists of Fleet Street.

There is serious damage as a result of the social workers' strike, for children, elderly people, and disabled people, who will have to suffer or make do with help from the WVS and church charity. No doubt many have suffered without anyone even noticing.

The press are rubbing it, and many councils will be using the dispute as an opportunity to cut back on vital services and blame it on the strikers. Workers in Bury have been warned — by the very authority that tried to cut so many services only two years ago — that if they strike they will be causing irreparable damage.

This blackmail has often worked in the past, but this time social workers are telling their employers what to do if they really care about the needy: settle the claim. After years of believing themselves to be professionals with a conscience, they are at last seeing themselves as workers uniting to improve their wages and the service they operate.

If this strike is to win — and thus end quickly — the social workers need the support of other NALGO members and trade unionists. Councils must be pressured into negotiating. The NALGO strike fund is rapidly being stretched beyond its limits, and funds are also needed.

Not for decent folk

BOXED IN

REVIEWING TV is a pretty depressing business. Most people watch telly because they're simply too washed-out to do anything else. The programmes are just a background rumble, like supermarket muzak.

But when you're a reviewer, you have to take in how bad they really are. I run a sort of Top 20 for really putrid shows, and so far 'Charlie's Angels' has held the top spot for four weeks running, though it's coming under pressure from ITV's new series about World War 2 bomb disposal operatives, 'Danger UXB'.

Every so often, though, you get a shock — a n unquestionably good programme. 'Our People' is about racism. Unlike most programmes supposedly about racism, it isn't about the 'colour problem' (with the built-in assumption that 'individually black people are quite nice, but there are just too many of them'), or about 'nasty people' (with the implicit line: 'in general we're quite nice to them, but there are these nutters like the NF').

'Our People' actually starts from the fact that the state itself is racist. It even shows people being harassed by immigration officials and policemen simply because they are black. No wonder ITV don't put it out until 11pm on Mondays when most decent folk are in bed.

Another example of what TV ought to be like was BBC2's tribute to Charlie Mingus, the black jazz bass player-composer-arranger who died a few weeks ago. There was no sanctimonious commentary, no wittering about 'tone colours' and 'harmonic textures' (the usual stock-in-trade of TV jazz programmes)... just a film of Mingus leading a quintet through a few of his compositions at the Montreux jazz festival.

Ugly

From the sublime to the ridiculous, we move on to 'Midlands Today'. I don't know what your regional TV news programme is like, but I suspect they all follow much

the same formula. 'Midlands Today' is most at home with glamorous granny contests, whistling postmen, and other animals that do tricks.

But they also like strikes, especially when it means they can show film of innocent suffering members of the public and/or aggressive, inarticulate, ugly strikers.

ATV's 'industrial correspondent' Reg Harcourt has come into his own during the lorry-drivers' dispute. He can scarcely control his rage as he talks of 'flying pickets', 'noisy mass meetings', and 'food shortages'. His face turns from its usual rather grey-pink to a greenish-purple as he reports that "militants are defying union instructions to suspend secondary picketing". It's well worth investing in colour just to see this spectacle.

But poor Reg has a problem more serious than his blood pressure — finding an Evil Genius. The most obvious candidate ought to be Alan Law. Every 'Midlands Today' viewer knows Law is a very, very bad man

who thinks nothing of driving road haulage bosses into bankruptcy and starving the good citizens of the ATV area. But Alan Law opposes the strike, and this has thrown Reg into some confusion. Dennis Mills, the unofficial strike leader, is a mild-mannered, grey-haired, favourite-uncle type, and therefore bad television.

Evil

Reg has been reduced to interviewing rank and file lorry drivers on picket duty. Many of these seem pretty nasty individuals, who answer Reg's probing questions with insolent remarks like, 'We've got no choice, we can't afford to live on these wages'.

But none of them seems to be very promising Evil Genius material. It now seems that the strikers are refusing to talk to Reg at all, and so the best entertainment of the evening has been taken from our screens. Clearly such men will stop at nothing!

Jim Denham

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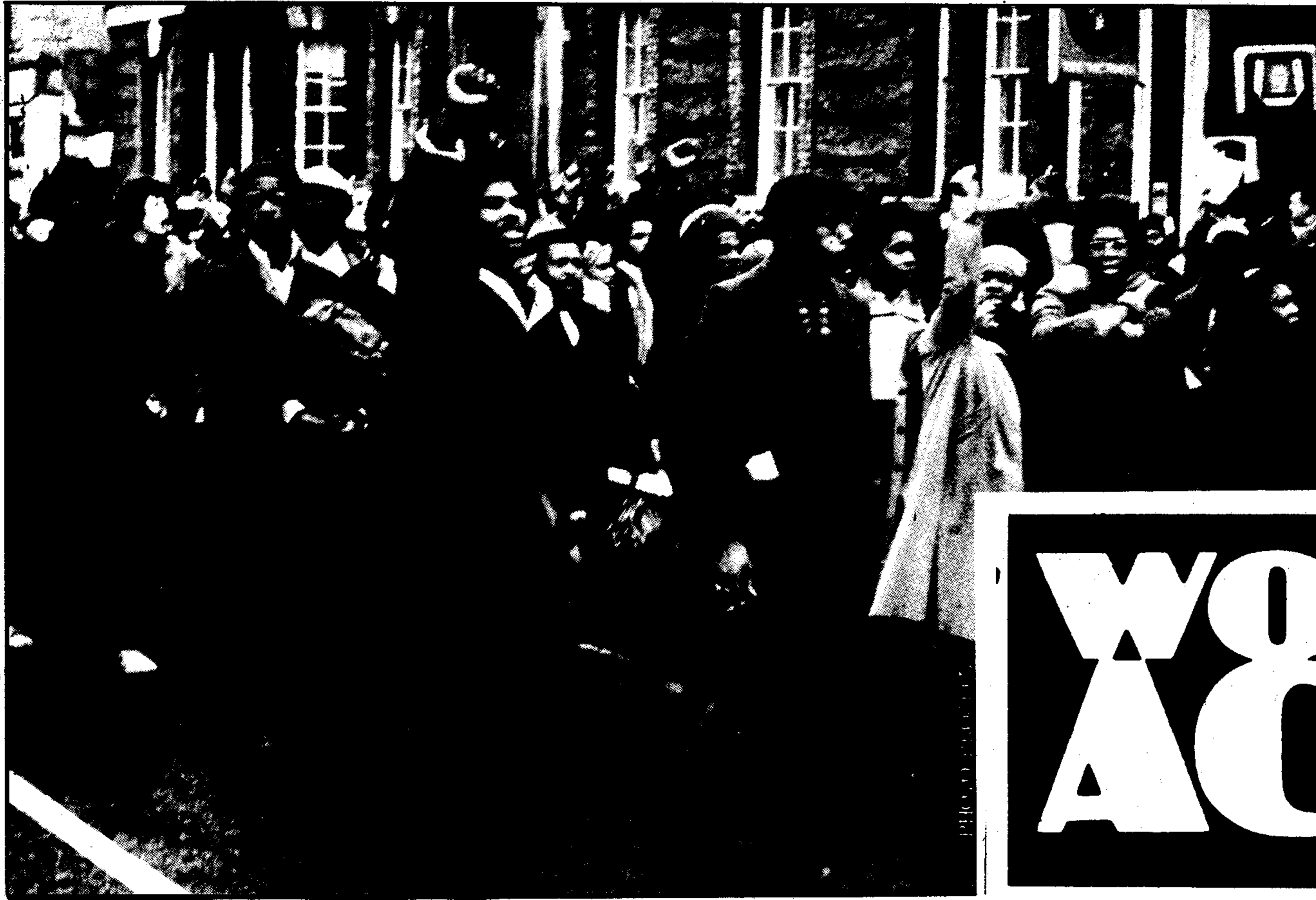
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SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.



Several hundred mourners last Saturday (Jan. 20th) followed a hearse carrying the body of murdered West Indian youth Michael Ferreira from his home to Stoke Newington police station in East London.

Sorrow turned to anger as demonstrators heard reports from Highbury Magistrates' Court, where Michael's self-confessed murderers are appearing before the bench. One of the accused white youths, Peter Campbell, has been granted bail, while the other two are being held in custody for their own safety!

The day before Michael's funeral his mother was thrown into a cell for protesting in court against the magistrate's racist bias. She was roughed up and threatened with charges of contempt of court, but she refused to apologise.

Meanwhile two black supporters were arrested and one was charged with assault and obstruction as police forcibly cleared the court. When granted bail later in the day on these charges, he was instructed to report to a police station every day — a condition that was not imposed on white thug Peter Campbell!

The Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation has called upon supporters to rally outside the Highbury Magistrates' Court on Friday 26th January, when Michael's murderers make their next appearance.

Workers' ACTION

Textile bosses say: £7 wage cut, or you're sacked

TEN YEARS after they got a £29 million handout from the Government to help them open one of the most advanced worsted spinning mills in Europe at Spennymoor, Co. Durham, Courtaulds are shutting the mill down.

In October the bosses demanded 650 redundancies as the price of keeping the mill open. The unions refused. On Friday 19th January, Courtaulds issued an ultimatum: Either the workers accept the 650 sackings and a £7 wage cut, or the whole plant will be closed, and all 1570 workers sacked.

After a mass meeting on Monday 22nd rejected the sackings and wage cut, the bosses said the closure was definite. The unions were mandated by the meeting to negotiate some deal with Courtaulds — but Courtaulds say there is now nothing to negotiate!

The workers have a further meeting on Wednesday 24th. The occupation of the plant, and the building of links with other Courtaulds workers, looks like the only way to stop this closure.

D.P.

Another closure at Speke

AFTER BRITISH Leyland, Western Ship Repair, Cammell Lairds, Birds Eye, GEC, Courtaulds, Lucas, another big firm is axing jobs on Merseyside.

On January 19th, Dunlop announced that they were closing down tyre production at Speke and sacking 2400 workers. 700 other jobs are to go in Birmingham and in Inchnin-an, Renfrewshire.

The reason for the cutback is a sharp downturn on the tyre market. Dunlop's profits were down from £32 million to £22 million over the last half-year. The bosses have decided that £22 million is not enough, and the workers must pay the cost!

Unions and local Labour MPs have denounced the sackings, but no plans for the fight-back have been announced yet. The lessons of the fight at British Leyland, Speke — the need for maximum rank and file involvement, rather than petitions to the bosses; the need for a rapid factory occupation, to be backed up by a drive for combine-wide action — must be learnt if the closure is to be stopped.

Drivers: Strike committees are key to victory

THE LORRY drivers' strike is becoming a race between the union officials and the haulage bosses to see who crumbles first.

Many firms have been forced to grant the drivers' claim for £65 basic, especially in the South West. The die-hard element on the bosses' side is provided by some of the haulage firms in the big industrial centres. But they are under severe pressure. The docks at Tilbury, Southampton, and elsewhere, still have only a trickle of goods going through the picket lines.

The T&GWU leaders have tried to prove their 'responsibility' by imposing a code of conduct on pickets, trying to minimise disruption... as if strikes had any other way of succeeding but disrupting the bosses' business! This picketing code, if strictly obeyed, would mean there were no pickets wherever food was going in and out. There would be no control of company transport depots doing work normally carried out by the striking drivers.

And there would be no way of checking on whether BRS, Freightliner, or firms that have already settled, were doing the strikers' work.

On top of that, the code is an attempt to put the control of the strike in the hands of regional secretaries rather than the strike committees.

The bosses' press now has it both ways. They say that the strike is biting less, and at the same time they attack branches like the Birmingham 5/35 TGWU, which have rejected the code, as industrial thugs.

'Back to work rebels' have been feted by the press — though some of their efforts have been pure farce. In Northampton, a group of drivers — led, oddly enough, by a local solicitor and a local magistrate! — held a well-publicised meeting at the 'Saints' rugby ground. 65 'back to work' men were swamped by 200 strikers who held a counter-meeting and then ceremonially burnt papers handed out for a

TWO PICKETS were shot at on Monday 15th January. Lorry drivers Keith Williams and Denis Bruton were injured by shotgun pellets outside a feed mill in Abergavenny, South Wales.

The mill is owned by a farmer, J.T. Williams, who is also the local organiser of the National Front. Last year Williams broke through a strike picket in Ebbw Vale, threatening that the next time he turned up he would have a gun and would bring the NF with him. His lorry has been blacked by the TGWU since then.

'supposed secret ballot.

Signs that the press was becoming desperate could be seen in the Birmingham Evening Mail's insinuation that the pickets had been 'trained in Moscow' (perhaps they brought the snow with them, too?). But the real threat to the strike is coming from union officials desperate to keep control. The running of the strike needs to be kept in the hands of elected local strike committees — and those committees need to link up on a national level.

SIMON TEMPLE

West Midlands: More sabotage from the officials

THE SELL-OUT deal made in the West Midlands by T&GWU district officer Alan Law, promising no strike in return for receiving the same increase as won by other striking lorry drivers, was thrown out last week.

An official conference of

West Midlands drivers voted on Tuesday 15th January to throw it out. Negotiations held the next day got no higher offer out of the bosses than elsewhere. A recall conference on Thursday 17th made the strike official in the region and elected an official strike committee.

The union full-timers, however, forced through their own nominee as chairman of the strike committee. He is Barry Foley, who was chairman of the committee of nine full-time officials and five lay members who agreed to the original scab deal.

Officials insisted that he had to be 'retained' as chairman before they would allow a strike committee to exist. In doing this, they made sure a scab has become chairman of the strike committee!

Foley is a shop steward at Richard Hampton & Sons, which has a contract with the Patent Shaft steelworks in West Bromwich. The steelworks was picketed from January 8th by striking drivers. But at 6.20 on the morning of the 11th, the entire fleet drove through the picket at 30mph, with Foley in the leading lorry.

In the course of the next few days, Foley went to Hull, where he was stopped by pickets. He told them he was an owner driver and got through the picket line. When they found out the truth, the Hull strike committee asked for him to be blacked in future.

While putting a scab in charge of the strike, the West Midlands officials are trying to victimise militant strikers. A resolution is coming up at the February 1st meeting of the regional committee to withdraw the stewards' cards of four militants, and prohibit them from holding union office. Paddy Moore, Mick Reagan, Johnny Groves and Jimmy Hill were involved in an occupation of the T&GWU office in Birmingham to protest at Alan Law's deal with the bosses.

Whose side are the officials on?

GARNERS STEAK HOUSES STRIKE COMMITTEE

Garners' ANNIVERSARY PICKETS SATURDAY 27 JAN.

ASSEMBLY POINTS:
LUNCHTIME: 11.30 onwards 399 OXFORD ST.
EVENING: 6.00 " 56 WYTCOMBE ST.

Workers' Action Forum

Fighting low pay

Speakers: Simon Temple (TGWU 5/35), Jennie Long (NUPE, Coventry).

8pm, Friday 26th January, at the General Picton, Caledonian Rd/Wharfdale Rd, London N1.

Car militants focus on jobs fight

ABOUT 40 car and motor component workers met at the CDLM [Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement] cars conference in Birmingham last Saturday, 20th.

Reports were given from Ford, British Leyland, and Vauxhall Ellesmere Port. The presence of several members of the Ford Workers' Group, which has not previously had any contact with the largely BL-based CDLM, was particularly encouraging.

The exchange of experiences from different plants was useful, but the general discussion disappointing. The unstructured debate jumped back and forth from descriptions of particular shop floor problems to general criticisms of the programme of the CDLM — with the result that neither was adequately dealt with.

It was generally agreed that the CDLM should work

more closely with other militant groups in the car industry, particularly the Ford Workers' Group. It was also agreed that the campaign should give more emphasis to the struggle against redundancies, stressing the need for a 35 hour week and work-sharing on full pay.

The conference organisers accepted that recent developments in BL meant that the campaign would have to move away from its emphasis on plant bargaining, and a special meeting to discuss strategy in BL will be held next month.

The conference organisers were evasive on the question of establishing international links. From the chair, Tony Richardson argued that such contact "were best made around particular struggles"... hardly an adequate response given the increasingly international nature of the car bosses' plans.

JIM DENHAM