

workers' ACTION

No. 119

Oct. 7-14, 1978

10p

**SUPPORT THE FORD STRIKERS!
KICK OUT THE FIVE PER CENT LIMIT!**

**Demonstration, Wednesday October 11th
2pm from Tower Hill.**

Called by Ford Dagenham shop stewards, and supported by CSEU no.8 district committee.

5p.c. limit defeated at conference **NOW ORGANISE TO DEFEAT IT IN ACTION**

"THIS CONFERENCE rejects totally any wage restraint by whatever methods, including cash limits, and specifically the Government's 5% and a fifth round, as a means of solving the economic crisis facing the country".

The Wavertree resolution passed by the Labour Party conference last Monday, 2nd, was the most important resolution to be passed by a Labour conference for years. It rejected any pay curbs under capitalism. Most importantly, it did not confine itself to general good intentions. It instructed the Labour Party National Executive to organise a campaign in the trade unions and labour movement against the wage controls.

The question is: will it be implemented? and WHO will implement it?

James Callaghan and Denis Healey arrogantly declared that they would ignore the conference decision. The trade union leaders quickly stated that their vote against the 5% limit should not be taken to mean that they will launch a fight against the Government, and Len Murray proceeded immediately to arrange Government/TUC discussions.

The NEC had tried to get the Wavertree resolution remitted (that is, not voted on). In any case, no-one could trust them to carry out the conference policy after their shameful and direct flouting of last year's conference decision to press for removal of the penalties imposed on the Clay Cross ex-councillors.

As for the Parliamentary Left: Wedgwood Benn was the man who put the idea of remitting the Wavertree resolution to the NEC.

Labour and trade union activists should not leave the carrying out of the resolution to the NEC, the trade union leaders, and the Government. If we do that, then the boost from the resolution will quickly be transformed into cold disillusion, as has

happened with so many left-wing resolutions in the past.

There is a stark contrast already between this Government's record — about the most right wing ever for a Labour government — and the unusually left wing policies adopted by the Labour Party, especially at the 1973 conference.

What is missing is any means to fight for Labour conference policy. Left wing resolutions are as cheap as they are meaningless — unless they are used as a starting point to organise a fight-back.

As of now the Ford workers are the only people who are really fighting to put the resolution into practice. Indeed, without the pressure of the Ford workers' struggle it is doubtful whether the resolution would have got passed at all.

Our job is to organise the left in every Constituency Labour Party and every trade union branch, into a force which will take up the Ford workers' battle as part of a consistent, organised struggle for socialist policies in the labour movement.

Ford

In line with conference policy, CLPs — together with Trades Councils — should organise meetings, demonstrations, and pickets of Ford showrooms, in support of the strike. They should publish leaflets and bulletins explaining the case against the 5% limit. They should shower the National Executive with resolutions demanding that it organises such support nationally.

At the National Executive meeting on Sunday, Callaghan promised that he would resign if the conference decided against wage controls. The National Executive should tell him to stick to his word! Callaghan, Healey, and the other leaders of the Government should carry out Party

See back page: "Against the 5%, Ford workers are fighting for us all". Support for the Ford strike is central to the task of organising for the implementation of the Labour Party conference decision against pay curbs.



policy... or make way for new leaders who will.

Shirley Williams, David Owen, and other right-wingers condemned the vote as a divisive move, splitting the Labour Party and helping the Tories. When Conference condemns their policies, their conclusion is not that they should change their policy or get out... but that the Conference should avoid all split by saying and deciding just what the right wing leaders want!

If Callaghan doesn't carry out his 'threat' to resign, he is merely staying on to fight to frustrate the decision of the Conference. In just that way the Cabinet have defeated the decision of previous Conferences on repealing immigration laws, on abortion rights, against the cuts, and in support of the Clay Cross ex-councillors.

The left must organise to challenge these right-wingers [and their fake left allies], to call them to account, to kick them out, and to get the left-wing policies put into practice.

Tribune

The established left in the Tribune group show no sign of organising. Since their last big "fight" — in the cause of little-England nationalism, against the Common Market — they have done nothing against the Government and its right wing policies.

The biggest organised force of the left in the constituencies, the Militant faction, is just as passive as Tribune. The last years have shown its sterile preachers' socialism to be as irrelevant to class struggle socialism as

the 'state socialist' panaceas of Tribune.

A new organised movement of the left in the Labour Party and unions is needed — with a class struggle programme and with the will to fight rather than getting caught up in careerism and the routine of passive resolution-passing.

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory was set up three months ago to meet that need. In the struggle against the racists and fascists at Brick Lane it has shown its readiness to put its policies into action.

Our task now is to expand the campaign, to put it at the forefront of organising support activity for strikes against the 5% limit, and to link up those strikes with an overall alternative to the Government's pro-capitalist policy.

Save Astrid Proll from the W. German Gulag

ASTRID PROLL is sitting in the top security wing of Brixton prison awaiting extradition to West Germany. She was arrested in London last month after living in London since escaping from Germany in 1974.

Proll was a member of the Red Army Fraction (better known as the 'Baader-Meinhof' group) and faces charges concerning bank raids in 1971 and allegedly shooting at police.

When the news of her arrest became public, the British press showed itself no different in witch-hunting from the notorious Springer press. Proll was described as 'Miss Terror', and assumed to be guilty of the charges against her although no judgement had ever been made on them.

A friend of hers, Karin Monte, was accused by the *Mail* of being a member of the RAF, though she had only met Astrid Proll in London. She got a retraction only with difficulty.

The press used well-known techniques of guilt by association and innuendo about Proll's sexual relationships.

They neglected to mention the reasons why she came to England in the first place, and what she faces if the British courts and Government hand her back. Instead they fastened onto her involvement in the women's movement to try to draw links between feminism and 'terrorism'.

The charges Astrid Proll faces are the same ones that were made when she was first arrested in 1971. They have never been heard in court.

From 1971 to 1974 she was held in prison without a trial. During this period she was subjected to sensory deprivation for a total of four and a half months. She was kept in a cell with all the walls painted white, with a white neon light left on 24 hours a day,

and with no sound from outside. From time to time tapes of loud footsteps were played inside the cells.

When she was eventually brought to trial in 1974, Astrid Proll was so ill that the trial had to be stopped. She was then moved out of prison to convalesce, and managed to escape to Britain. Her arrest and the prospect of a return to West German prison conditions have already affected her health. Friends who have seen her recently say she is subject to fits of shaking.

Conditions in German prisons have not improved since 1974. After last year's kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the Parliament passed the 'Kontakt-sperregesetz' (contact ban law), which retrospectively ratified even more severe measures of isolation for political prisoners.

They can be denied any contact with other prisoners, their lawyers, their relatives, or the outside world. The police and state official have vast power which cannot be challenged.

A right-wing paper wrote of this law that "it legalises a grave

infringement of the rights of the accused which is normally a criterion of dictatorships".

No-one can claim that Astrid Proll will get a fair trial if she is sent back. Quite apart from the hysteria which is encouraged by the state and whipped up by the press, German law denies politically-motivated defendants any effective chance to defend themselves.

The legal framework of political trials is vastly weighted in favour of the prosecution.

The trials take place in special courts. Defence lawyers are prevented by various legal restrictions from presenting a case in their client's defence. If they try to do so, they themselves become the targets of press witch-hunts and defendants in further legal proceedings, and they risk being banned from practising their profession.

Otto Schilly, who defended Gudrun Ensslin, describes what pressures they are under. "There's no lawyer at all in political proceedings who hasn't an investigation against him, in a criminal or a disciplinary court..."

We are called the 'lawyers of terrorism' and so on. In this atmosphere defending is not possible"

Kurt Groenewold, another lawyer, was convicted in the summer on charges which the *Guardian* described as "aiding terrorism by an over-enthusiastic defence of his clients".

Sebastian Cobler has described how political trials have been conducted in the special courts since 1975: "... Counsel who do not limit their activity to a plea for clemency and defendants who invoke the Federal Republic's official title of 'constitutional state' may be removed from the proceedings on the ground that they are obstructing the 'orderly administration of justice' and practising 'procedural sabotage'. Their further presence... is declared unnecessary, and then, to preserve the facade, the trial is allowed to run to the conclusion dictated by public prejudice with the dummy figures of lawyers appointed by the court..."

Common hearsay or rumour can be accepted as evidence without any further proof. Lawyers cannot communicate with their clients in prison; any letters they write can be opened and read by the prosecution, and, under the new law, lawyers can be prevented from ever seeing their clients.

This is what Astrid Proll faces if she is handed back — as she probably will be, especially given that the new 'Suppression of Terrorism Act' considerably narrows the right of appeal against extradition for political offences. It is up to the British left to campaign against the repression going on in West Germany and to prevent the extradition.

The 'Friends of Astrid Proll' are organising a picket of Bow Magistrates Court at 10am on October 26th.

BRUCE ROBINSON



Astrid Proll (with dark hair) outside a 1971 court hearing in West Germany.

Against the system? You're a terrorist!

Seeking to create an atmosphere of anti-left witchhunting, the Austrian courts have fined the Internationale Kommunistische Liga, a Trotskyist organisation, for "approving of terrorism".

This verdict reversed the decision of a lower court last May. The fine amounts to 9,000 sch., about £300.

Workers Action received the following account from the IKL: "On August 31 the publisher of *Permanente Revolution* (central organ of the IKL) stood trial. He was accused of publishing two articles in Special Issue No 2 which allegedly approved of the shooting of Buback (the German chief public prosecutor slain for his part in the Baader-Meinhof trials) and thereby offended against para. 282 of the criminal code. This paragraph says:

(1) Whoever, whether by printing, broadcasting or some other means of publicising, encourages a punishable act, will be imprisoned for a period of up to two years..."

(2) Likewise whoever encourages an act punishable by more than one year's imprisonment in such a way as to outrage public sensibilities or incite a similar act.

"The lower court justified its acquittal by referring among other things to our principled political position on the question of individual terror.

"In the statement of acquittal

the court said: "The setting up of a new social order is also called for — one based on the working class. Indeed, individual terror is criticised in the article. The assassination of individual representatives of the existing social system is also rejected."

The handling of the appeal case showed that the authorities were not going to risk another failure. The case was brought to trial in record time, with the start set for the end of August — in the middle of the summer holidays — so as to minimise publicity.

The court's only problem was

to justify the conclusion that the five cited passages approved of the shooting of Buback and encouraged the repetition of the act. The court solved this problem in a way which showed that these gentlemen are prepared to condemn communists for their opinions irrespective of whether any concrete act can be proven against them.

The president of the court, Dr. Ludwig Csokay, explained in his judgment that there was no point citing individual passages. It was the whole journal, he claimed, that offended

against the spirit of para. 282! Word for word: "The whole issue should constitute the basis of a prosecution". And this in spite of the fact that only 4 out of the journal's 70 pages dealt with the subject of Buback.

In addition to the main fine of 9,000 sch. came a smaller one of 500 sch. The main costs were the court and legal costs, however. These came to a total of 17,000 sch., over £600.

Donations to the IKL should be sent to Permanente Revolution, PSK 2419.730 1010 Wien Austria



The West German police — defenders of the 'constitutional state' against 'terrorism' — prepare for an anti-nuclear power demonstration.

EAST LONDON SCLV PLANS ACTION ON RACISM, JOBS, FORDS

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) in outer East London was launched on Friday 29th September at a lively meeting in Newham North East Labour Party rooms.

Main speakers were Ken Livingstone, the prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hampstead, Hackney Councillor Patrick Kodikara, and a member of the Virk Brothers Defence Committee.

The speakers from the platform outlined the main demands of the campaign and stressed their support for the Ford workers.

Anti-racist activity will be particularly important for the SCLV in the East London area where the agitation of the NF fascists has led to a whole spate of racist attacks on blacks and Asians. The Virk Brothers' case highlights the issue: these four brothers have been jailed for defending themselves against a sudden and completely unprovoked attack by racists outside their home.

With the threatened shutdown of the local docks and the miserable performance of the local Labour council, building the SCLV is really necessary. Otherwise the general disillusionment of the local working class may lead to a growth in the NF with intensifying attacks on black people and on the labour movement.

MIKE FOLEY

SCLV SUPPORTERS' MEETING

Newham N.E. Labour Party rooms, 241E High Street North. Wednesday October 18th at 7.30. [East Ham tube; next door to Burnell Arms.]

NORWOOD CLP VOTES TO SUPPORT FORD STRIKERS

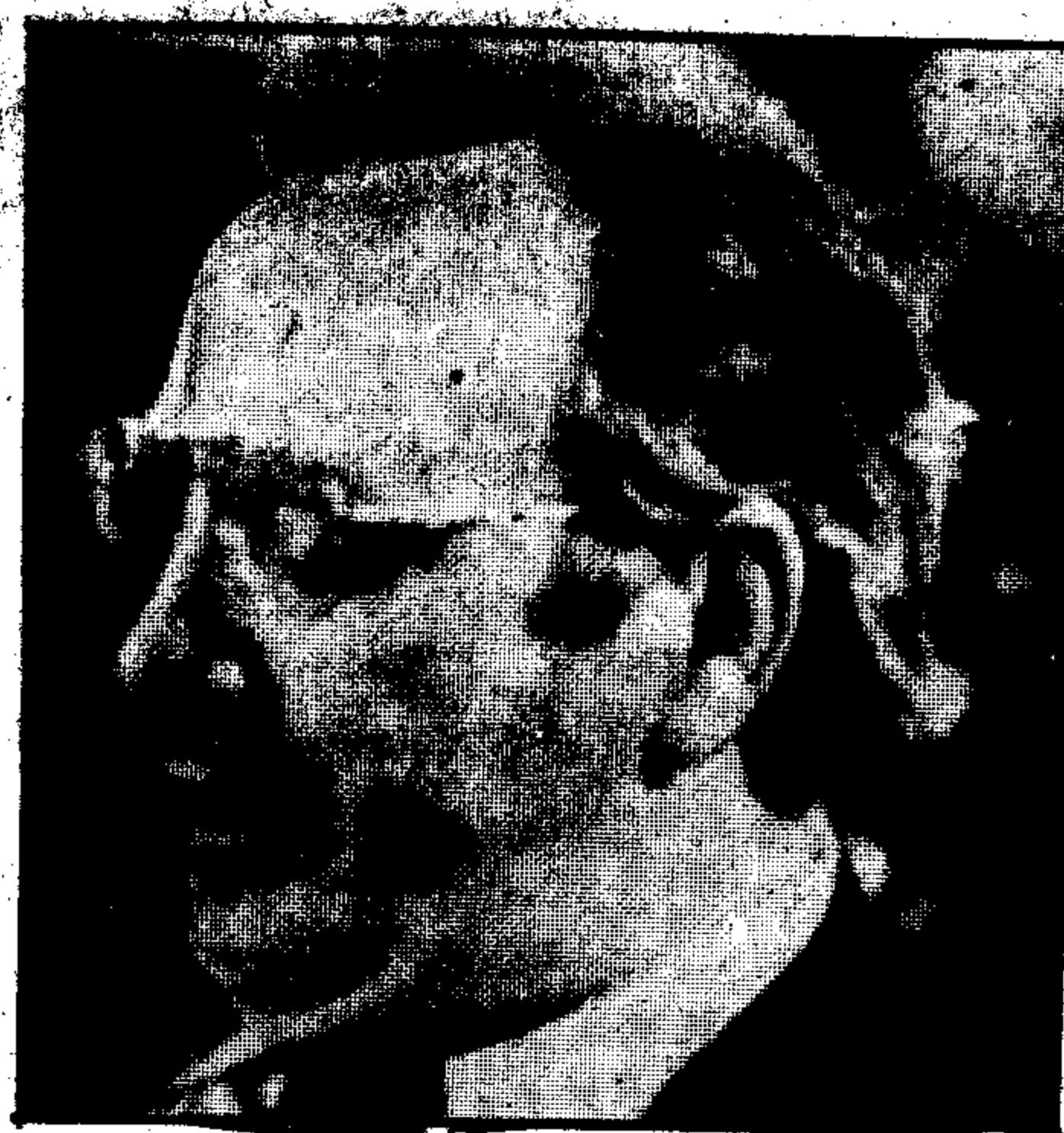
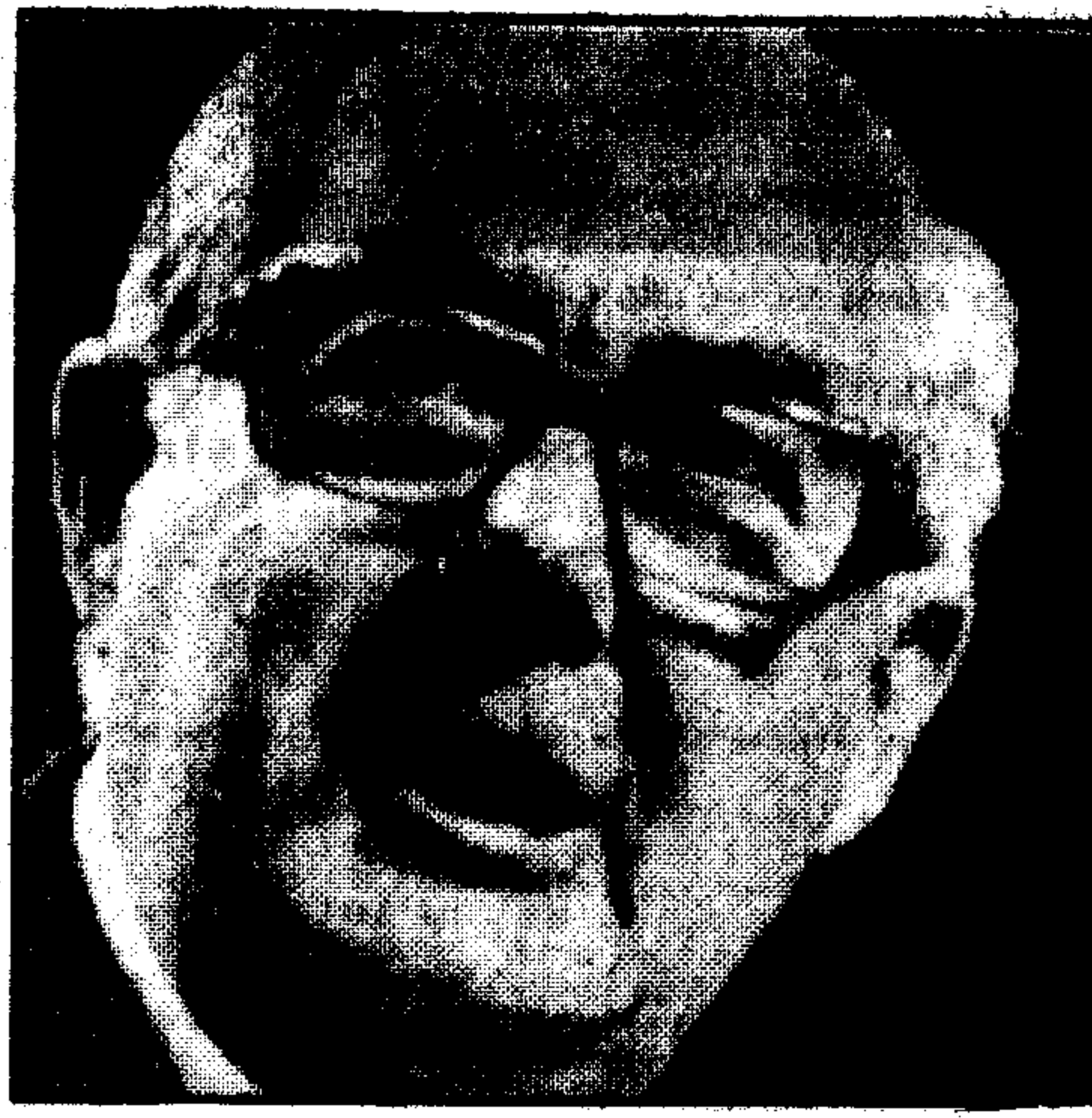
LAST THURSDAY, delegates at Norwood GMC had a difficult choice — two emergency resolutions for LP conference were on the agenda. The first simply said "Conference fully supports the strike of the Ford workers." The second was a condemnation of the repression in Iran and the Labour Government's support of the Shah's regime. It called for trade union backing of all arms to Iran and for the government to break off all arms trade with the regime.

In the end the Ford resolution was preferred by a small majority.

A further motion was passed committing the GMC to circulate its draft election manifesto to all affiliated organisations, and to call a local meeting to discuss this with other organisations.

CHEUNG SIU MING

What is the workers' answer to the crisis?



Moss Evans [right] tells Callaghan that the 5% limit won't work — but he never challenges Callaghan's basic idea that the labour movement must find a way to solve the capitalist crisis for the bosses.

WITH THE WAVERTREE resolution, conference rejected the pay curbs "as a means of solving the economic crisis". And Conference also voted to reject the Government's overall economic policy.

Yet Moss Evans and the other trade union leaders whose block votes were decisive have no really different ideas from the Government on economic policy. If pressed, they mutter about import controls, planning agreements, and state-directed investment — but they long ago gave up pushing for this state-capitalist siege economy programme in any serious way.

The right wing use this failure for their own slimy purposes, to present themselves as the people who look beyond short-term gain and care for the overall interests of the labour movement. Sid Weighell of the rail union even compared trade unionists going out for higher wages to pigs getting their snouts in the trough. Weighell himself, of course, makes sure that his snout is well in the trough, with a general secretary's salary far bigger than any railworker's (or Ford worker's) wages!

But the trade union leaders' ties to the Government's notion of 'coping with the crisis' are a real danger for the working class, too. They mean that whenever the pressure is really put on, the leaders are always liable to sell us out — in the 'national interest'.

The union leaders' basic argument was that the working-class rank and file will not stand for a rigid five per cent limit. In other words, Moss Evans was saying: unless I act militant enough to take the lead of the Ford strike against the 5% limit, I could lose control of my membership in a dangerous way.

Perks

The same argument, from a slightly different angle, can be found in the editorials of the *Times* and the *Financial Times*. There is nothing specially socialist about it. There has been no radical change in the top trade union leaders since the TUC Congress where they spoke in terms of the most slavish support for the Government.

The trade union leaders, with their big salaries, their 'perks', their comfortable offices, their seats on dozens of official committees (and, often enough, on boards of directors too), and their cosy daily chats with the bosses and bankers, are so integrated into the system that it is impossible for them to imagine a really radical change in society as a prospect for action. Their horizon extends no further than getting the best deal they can for their members by bargaining within the profit system.

And so they will be trying to reconcile their stand against the 5% limit with their 'social responsibility' to capitalism. They will be trying to stay at the head of the Ford strike while keeping disruption at a minimum. All this is a recipe for a sell-out.

This way of thinking has some weight in the rank and file, too. There, it can be based on genuine concern for the low-paid, genuine

worry about inflation, or genuine feeling that real wage gains are just impossible, rather than on hypocritical demagoguery like Weighell's.

Now more and more workers are coming to realise that the whole argument is a swindle. The low-paid have done exceptionally badly in the years of pay controls: the number earning less than supplementary benefit rose from 1.4 million in 1974 to 2.3 million in 1976. Gains for the lower-paid will depend on the stronger sections of workers breaking the pay limit.

Wages are not the cause of inflation. The one period in which price rises have slowed down appreciably — the last year — has been the period when the pay limits have most often been

broken. The truth is that wage inflation is mostly a result of general price inflation, rather than a cause.

The main effect — and the main purpose — of wage controls is to increase profits in relation to wages. And that is what has happened over the last few years. Ford is only the most spectacular example.

The Ford strike — if it gets adequate support to enable it to win, and if it is not sold out by the union leaders — can break the idea that real wage gains are impossible.

By boosting workers' self-confidence, it can help make a workers' answer to the crisis possible — while wage curbs and job cuts, even when administered by a Labour Government, are

only a bosses' answer to the crisis.

To arm workers against the appeals to 'national interest', and the warnings of economic chaos, we need to spell out that workers' answer to the crisis:

Rise

■ Wages should be protected against inflation by clauses giving automatic £1 increases for every 1% rise in the cost of living. On top of that, we should fight to improve living standards at the expense of profits.

■ The working week should be cut to prevent any further loss of jobs and provide employment for those now on the dole: work-sharing, under workers' control,

and with no loss of pay. The 35 hour week is a first step.

■ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised without compensation and under workers' control.

■ Make the bosses pay, not the working class! Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'. Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

■ We need to break the rule of profit. That means defeating and breaking up the state machine that guarantees the rule of profit, establishing workers' power throughout society, and making the decisive sectors of industry social property, in a planned economy.

BLACKPOOL NOTEBOOK

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

NIK BARSTOW reports from Blackpool on the Labour Party conference and the activity of the SCLV.

Scanlon blocks re-selection

TUESDAY afternoon's debate on mandatory re-selection of MPs saw a debacle.

Hugh Scanlon simply didn't cast the AUEW delegation's vote, a block vote which the delegation had mandated him to cast for the 67 resolutions in favour of reselection.

Despite the fact that he had been told twice by a teller, who was also a member of the delegation, what the vote was on and what he was mandated to vote for, Scanlon now tries to say he was confused. Is this believable?

It is not the first time that Hugh Scanlon has become 'confused' at a critical moment and defied his delegation in order to allow a motion supported by his union to fall. Remember last year's TUC?

As a leading member of the AUEW delegation said, "The whole thing was a lot of jiggery-pokery". It is reported that when the delegates angrily attacked Scanlon's action, President-elect Terry Duffy immediately leapt to his defence, saying, "When I'm President there won't be this sort of arguing".

The resolutions in favour of automatic reselection would have been passed if Scanlon had cast the AUEW vote. But, because the delegation's mandate was to back the NEC majority report only if the 67 resolutions were defeated, that report got through with AUEW backing.

SCLV gets organised

"WE PHYSICALLY stopped the fascists at Lewisham last summer, and it was that which dented the NF's morale and changed the whole climate on racialism over the last year". Colin Adams, a delegate from Brent East CLP, was speaking at the SCLV's Monday night meeting at Blackpool.

He urged delegates to vote for the composite on racialism, which recognised "the right of black people to organise their own self-defence", and called for the labour movement to physically stop the fascists, with no reliance on state bans.

Ken Livingstone said: "The Cabinet have not just lost a vote on the 5%, but are threatened with finding their central economic policy in ruins. The rank and file of the trade union movement is discovering its muscle again, and should bring new life and confidence into the left of the Labour Party".

Floor discussion concentrated on organising. There was a keen sense that events taking place outside the Labour Party — the Ford strike, the defence of Brick Lane on September 24th — were making themselves powerfully felt within the party, and it was our job to bring the strands together in a fighting opposition.

The NEC & the 5pc.

BY 4,017,000 votes to 1,974,000, the Labour Party conference rejected the 5% limit and "any wage restraint by whatever method".

This marks a real defeat for the right wing of the Party, the Cabinet, and Callaghan. It also showed up how gutless the official left wing of the Party, represented by the National Executive Committee, can be.

Under pressure from Cabinet ministers, the NEC completely caved in, and put up Michael Foot to make their apologies for supporting the Government.

In an abject speech, Foot tried every ploy to get the resolution remitted to the NEC, claiming it would be "seriously considered". Getting more rattled at the end of his speech, he was reduced to calling on union delegates to break their mandates.

The disarray of the Tribune left was spotlighted in a Tribune

fringe meeting the night before the vote. Their platform was split down the middle on the issue.

Dennis Skinner (elected onto the NEC on Tuesday) said: "I say to those on this platform: in July we could have thrown out the 5%. We had to call Callaghan's bluff, make clear we could not put up with the 5% in advance, and challenge him to bring down his own Government on this issue".

By contrast, Norman Atkinson droned on about an alternative economic strategy, evading completely his own voting record on the 5%. From the floor, SCLV sponsor Ted Knight said: "The Tribune group tried to make out it's all right to keep supporting Callaghan now so long as we save our consciences by proposing an alternative economic strategy. The central issue is where we stand with respect to the Ford workers and others fighting on behalf of us all against the 5%".

The real force behind the vote

was the Ford strike. It forced the leaders of the TGWU and AUEW to look over their shoulders and vote down the 5% limit for fear of their members.

The SCLV's daily conference bulletin took up this issue and asked what we could expect now from the trade union leaders and the National Executive Committee. "The simple answer is they will try to get away with doing nothing. The way to stop that is for CLPs and trade union activists to take this Labour Party policy [on the 5%] seriously. To organise support for the Ford strikers, getting financial support, meetings, etc., and making sure that the party policy on wage control forms a major part of every candidate's election manifesto."

"The SCLV is fighting to ensure that candidates' manifestos for the election are decided democratically, and that CLPs campaign against the 5% and back the Ford strikers".

Tribune helps to stifle Clay Cross

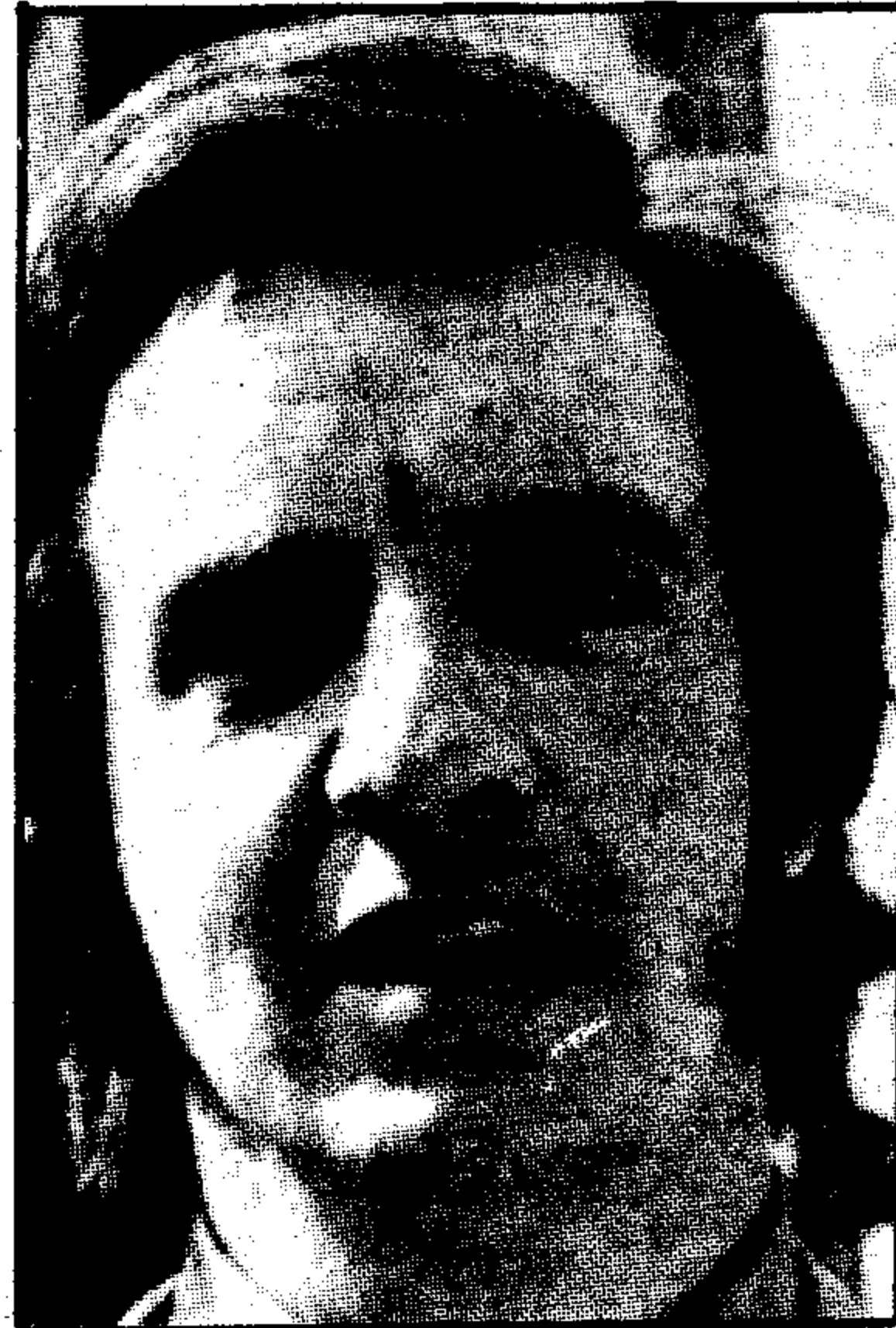
by DAVID SKINNER, one of the first eleven Clay Cross councillors victimised for their fight against the Tory Housing Finance Act

FOR THREE YEARS delegates from North East Derbyshire Constituency Labour Party have gone to the pre-Conference Tribune rallies in the hope of raising the Clay Cross issue. This year was no exception.

The chairman, Ted Fletcher, just like last year's chairman, Arthur Latham, refused to allow any discussion on Clay Cross. Why?

Because members of the Tribune group who are either on the NEC or campaigning for a place on it [with the exception of Dennis Skinner] are embarrassed that they have done nothing apart from overturning Conference decisions and agree with Peter Shore and Ed Miller that the Conference did not know what it was doing when it called for legislation to restore civil rights to the Clay Cross ex-councillors.

Could it be that the chairman of the Tribune meeting deliberately avoided our CLP delegate, or are the speakers hand-picked anyway? Who says that Tribune group members are left wingers? Many of them are only that when it comes to vote-catching.



Dear comrade Cliff,

YOU ADMITTED in last week's *Socialist Worker* that the SWP and the ANL made mistakes in relation to Brick Lane on September 24th.

That is an encouraging sign. It shows that you can't happily shrug off the anger and feelings of betrayal expressed by the Bengali community when they realised that the ANL weren't responding to their calls for help.

It shows also that many of your own members were furious when they discovered what had happened.

In the face of these reactions you have admitted to 'blunders' and have pledged that the SWP will act differently in future.

Unfortunately, we remain doubtful on this last point, and for two reasons. Firstly, September 24th was the *second* time you have failed to mobilise against the Nazis marching into the East End. The first time was May Day, immediately after Carnival 1. You don't mention the fact that 'blundering' in relation to Nazi marches is becoming something of a tradition with the SWP lately.

Secondly and crucially, you completely mis-diagnose what went wrong on the 24th. Your argument is that the general *political* decision — not to disturb arrangements for the Carnival — was quite right; the SWP's and ANL's failings were purely organisational. This is nonsense.

Core

To begin with, you exaggerate the importance of the ANL as the prime target of the Nazi march; this goes together with an over-emphasis on the electoral success or failure of the NF.

As you yourselves have said many times, poor electoral results will do nothing to break the vicious organised core of NF support. And it is those people who are the immediate danger. The NF are nowhere near winning one seat in the coming elections, let alone about to attain a parliamentary majority.

What *does* hurt the Nazis is their inability to march or in other ways dominate the streets. Here, of course, Brick Lane has been very important. SWP and ANL members have been prominent in helping the Bengalis try to sweep NF sellers off the top of the market, and the Nazis don't like that at all. They want to get back in there, and their march was a big step in that direction.

Of course you're right in pointing out that the NF (and the Tory press) would be delighted to see the collapse of the ANL; but

BRICK LANE & THE CARNIVAL

An open letter to Tony Cliff



weren't they also pleased that the NF could go about their business without serious resistance from the ANL?

And this is the crux of the matter. You say quite plainly: 'We have to organise demonstrations against the Nazis and smash them on the streets'. But how does that square with your remark that calling for a mobilisation to take on the fascists in the East End would have disintegrated the ANL?

Won't that *always* be true of a campaign which refuses to define its attitude to the issue of direct confrontation with the

fascists? Aren't many of the ANL's sponsors and leading lights resolutely *opposed* to smashing the fascists on the streets?

And how can the ANL undermine the fascists' base of support when it invites a man like Benn to speak on its behalf? Benn, the staunch defender of racist immigration controls? Benn, the minister in a government which, through its attacks on working class living standards and conditions, provides the Nazis with genuine grievances to exploit?

Your decision to build the ANL

as a pacifist alliance with racists and liberals was a *political* decision, as was your decision not to fight against them at the ANL conference. From these decisions came the behaviour of the SWP in preventing an adequate mobilisation in defence of Brick Lane flowed quite naturally.

It is true that there were 'organisational' aspects to this orientation too, such as threats of physical violence against *Workers Action* supporters who gave out leaflets calling for people to go to Brick Lane.

But the biggest 'blunder' you mention, on the police undertaking not to allow the Nazis into Brick Lane itself, was not organisational, but political. This undertaking, you say, 'led to a complacency among the mass of ANL supporters'.

Your statement is grossly misleading. Firstly, the police said the NF would march to Redchurch Street, *twenty yards* from the top of Brick Lane; is there anything in that to encourage complacency?

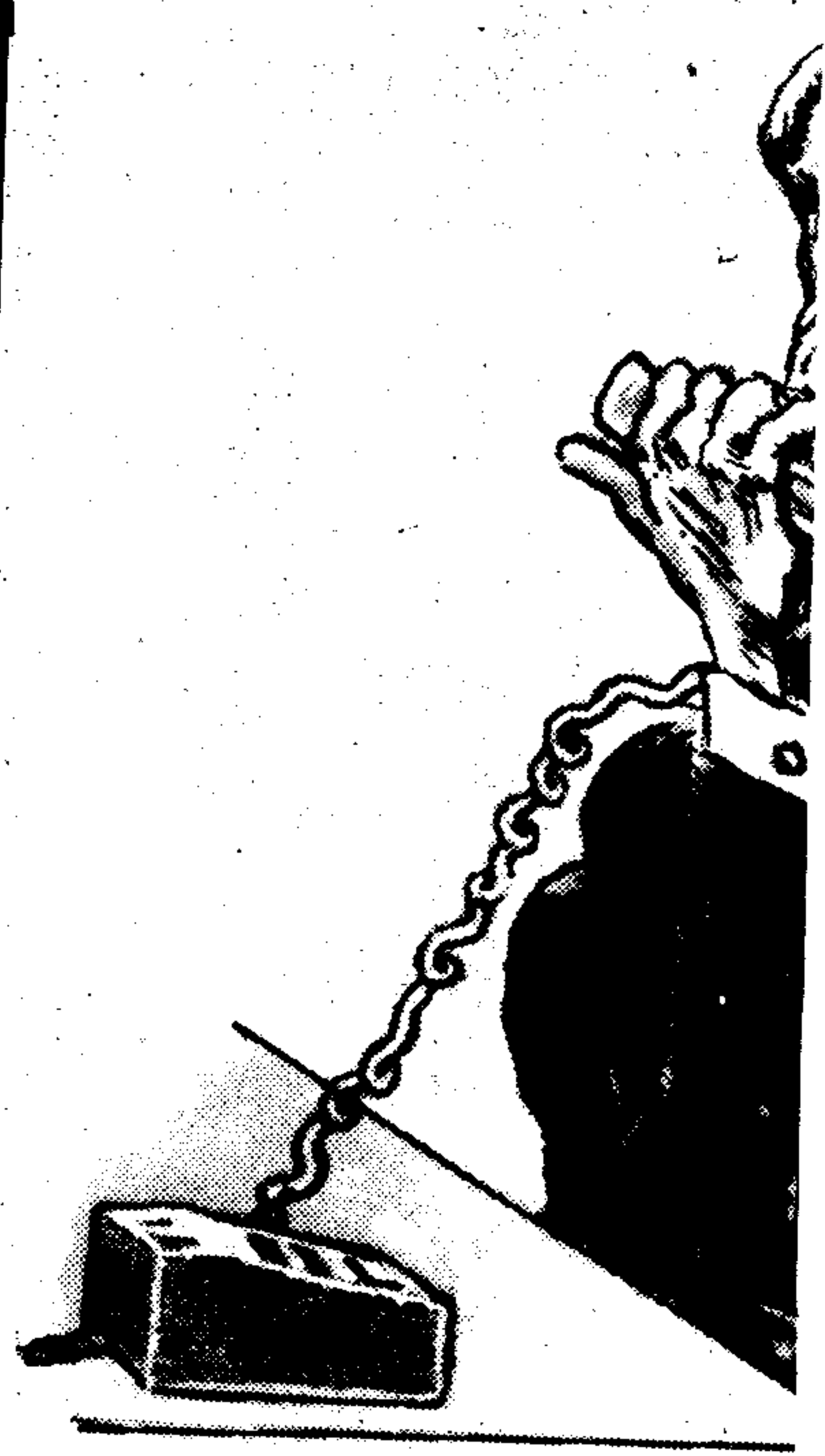
Blunder

And secondly, the 'mass of ANL supporters' *knew nothing* of this promise from the police until SWP member Paul Holborrow announced it from the ANL rostrum in Hyde Park in an attempt to stop people going to Brick Lane. That is a 'blunder' for which your organisation must accept full responsibility.

You talk about your lack of experience in 'leading a really mass movement'. But you know enough about movements like the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign to be aware that a fighting stand by the ANL against the NF march might have brought losses among its bourgeois sponsors, but would have made its base among combative working class youth stronger and more meaningful. And you know enough about the hours of the clock and the geography of London to be aware that calling on people to go to Brick Lane only after the Carnival in Brockwell Park would be little use.

Workers' Action supporters and others will be fighting in the coming weeks for an emergency ANL conference to bring Paul Holborrow and others like him to account for the fiasco of September 24th, and to establish once and for all a clear position of mobilising to smash the Nazis on the streets. If the SWP do seriously intend to prevent a repetition of the events of May 1st and September 24th, they will join us in that fight.

JAMES RYAN



B. O'Connell '78.

"No discussion, it's ti

COLIN FOSTER review "What happened at Speke", by Huw Beyron. Published by the 6/612 Branch of the TGWU; available for 50p plus postage from the Branch Secretary Frank Banton, 38 Calcwell Rd, Allerton, Liverpool 19.

"IF THERE is a major dispute from the toolmakers or another group, we would have an alternative but to slim ourselves down drastically and a number of plants would be directly affected", said Michael Edwardes last month when the British Leyland unofficial tool room committee talked about strike action.

Against the strikers at British Leyland's Bathgate plant, Edwardes used the 'big stick' cutting back investment. A struggle by BL workers this winter for higher wages would face the same threats of closures and redundancies.

A new pamphlet, "What happened at Speke?", shows what lies behind these threats — and how BL workers should respond to them.

The closure of BL's Speke plant, near Liverpool, in May 1977 was coldly planned in advance. One Speke worker put it: "They were dictating our moves. They were forecasting our moves as we made the moves... It was like somebody writing the script for us and we were following the script word for word".

In late 1977 there was a 17-week strike at Speke. The bosses insisted on imposing new manning levels, flouting an agreement which stated that they should be subject to union approval.

The strike was used by the bosses and the press as 'evidence' that the workers' lack of cooperation was making the plant unviable. But it was clearly a strike deliberately provoked by the bosses. As a local journalist wrote: "The figures show that even aft

IMG: "Brick Lane deserved what it got"

UNLIKE *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Challenge* is totally unrepentant about its own and the ANL's policy on September 24th. To justify themselves, they have to use a long series of distortions and shameful arguments. We can only deal with the main points here.

On each point, we summarise the arguments of *Socialist Challenge* rather than quoting directly.

■ ■ "The Defence Committee demoralised anti-fascists; it didn't know what it was doing". The fact is that the only effective defence of the Bengali community on that day would have been to stop the NF march before it ever reached the area. This the Defence Committee explicitly decided to do, provided that the forces were there to attempt it.

They were not there, and the IMG know why. If anti-fascists were demoralised, it was because they understood reality better than the IMG claim to do.

■ ■ "The main problem in the East End is that the Bengalis won't (yet) defend themselves; the ANL can't do the job for them". In this way the IMG turns on its head the principle

that socialists must fight for support for black self-defence; in fact they use it as a weapon against the Bengalis themselves. They say it takes the death of an Altab Ali to arouse the Bengalis to this task. If this apologetic logic were followed through, then the fact that allowing the Nazis to rally outside their headquarters makes further racist murders likely should be welcomed, because it will shake the backward Bengalis into an understanding of the need to defend themselves! In fact the militant Asians of East London showed — at the very least — a better understanding of the need to deal with the NF than the IMG did.

March

■ ■ "Stopping every NF march cannot be a matter of principle". Indeed not, since all depends on the balance of forces — and that depended, on the 24th, on the behaviour of the ANL, the SWP, and, more marginally, the IMG. What is implicit in the IMG's

reasoning here is the 'principle', borrowed from the American SWP, that socialists should never attempt to stop fascist marches (or never unless there is far more mass support than was evident, for example, at Lewisham). Perhaps the IMG will now honestly adopt this position.

■ ■ "Patrick Kodikara of the Defence Committee called for a State ban on the NF march". [This confirms, apparently, what a wretched lot the Defence Committee are].

Indeed, this is to be criticised; but why does the IMG not criticise the ANL, which made the same call?

■ ■ "All the 'sectarian' groups supporting the Defence Committee's call 'oppose the ANL'. Their 'mindless militancy' led to 35 arrests and demoralisation before they went home, leaving Brick Lane vulnerable to fascist attack". The first charge will come as a surprise to *Workers' Action* supporters present at Brick Lane (presumably, as the largest contingent, we are to be identified among the 'sectarians'). Certainly, we have consistently attacked the ANL's

Truth

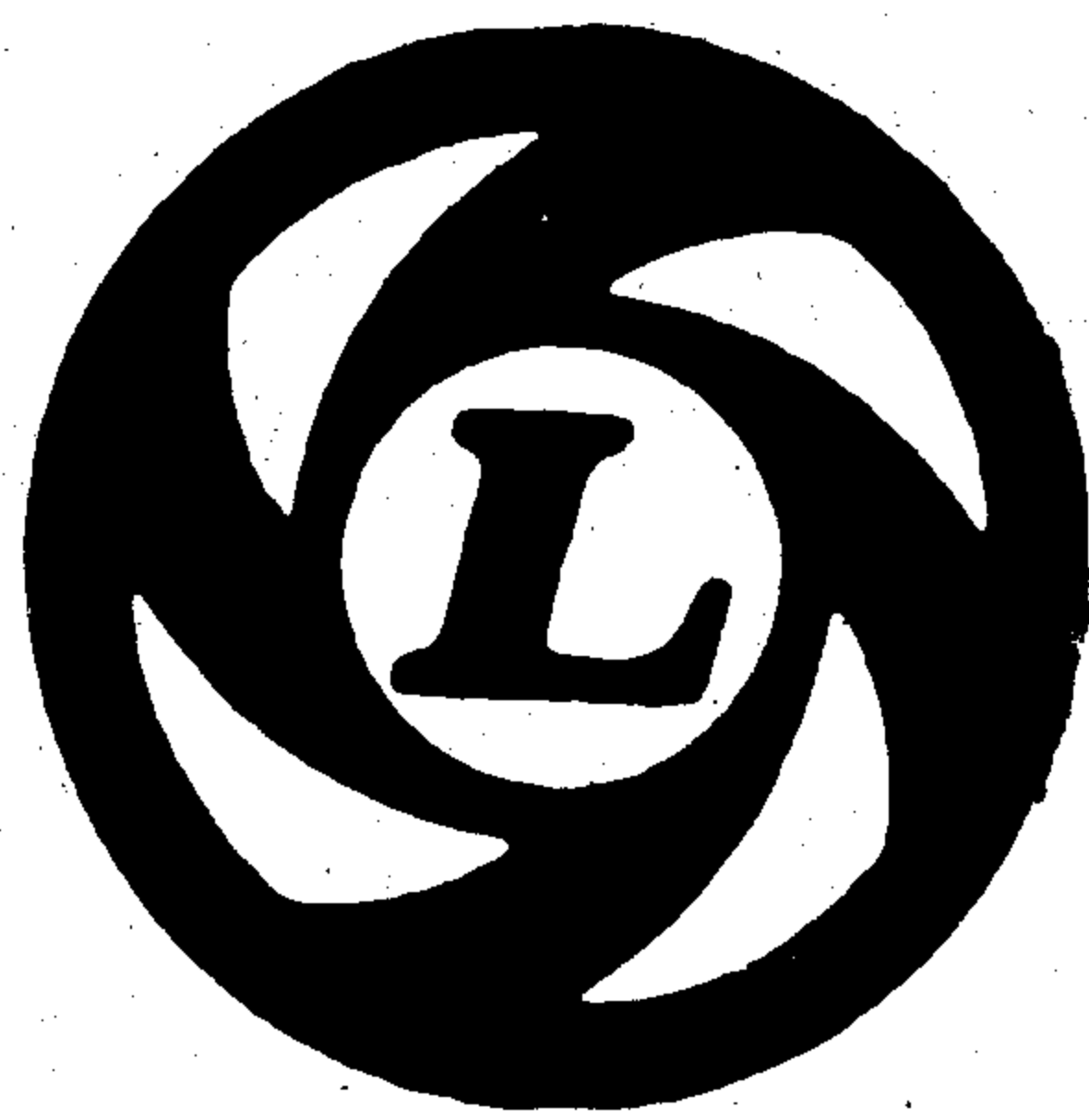
As for the charge that the 'sectarians' had gone home by the time the fascists began their attack, was it then the IMG who helped drive them off? No, comrades, it was not. If you want to know the truth about that incident, you will find the story in last week's *Workers' Action*.

The IMG aren't interested in the truth of this matter, though. Like many an item in their own (verbal) programme, the truth must make way in the face of their over-riding political imperative: 'Hats off to the SWP'.

J.R.



Speke: how they cut the jobs



ised differently. "I think some of us are a bit inclined to want to do things by ourselves if you know what I mean — without the membership. But when you come right down to it you can't do bugger all without the members, your rank and file trade unionist. You certainly can't fight a closure."

"In retrospect, personally, I feel we should have had more mass meetings: not just one or two or even three. In retrospect — even if we'd lost the vote and gone back to work — we would have been in a better position to lead the membership in the fight for their jobs..."

"But we were fed a line by the national officials. Told we were going to win the strike. We were conned in my opinion..."

Another steward regrets that the campaign against closure was not organised more energetically.

"Perhaps we should have gone down there [to the other Leyland factory, at Canley, where the work from Speke was due to be transferred] more often. I believe we should have gone down there with flying pickets and everything."

But once the final vote had gone in favour of accepting Leyland's terms, it was too late. The workers were left to learn one lesson: that redundancy pay runs out quickly, and leaves you with a bleak future.

At first, "away from the pressure, and the night work, people have a chance to live a bit". But a couple of thousand pounds redundancy money soon goes. There are very few jobs available on Merseyside. "In July about forty members of the TGWU branch [covering the Speke plant] had got fixed up, as drivers, caretakers, labourers, the occasional milkman... But that's still not many out of two thousand production workers".

BEER

"Everywhere there is talk of someone or another who has been permanently on the beer since the shutdown". Even those who have got jobs usually have less skilled, worse paid work.

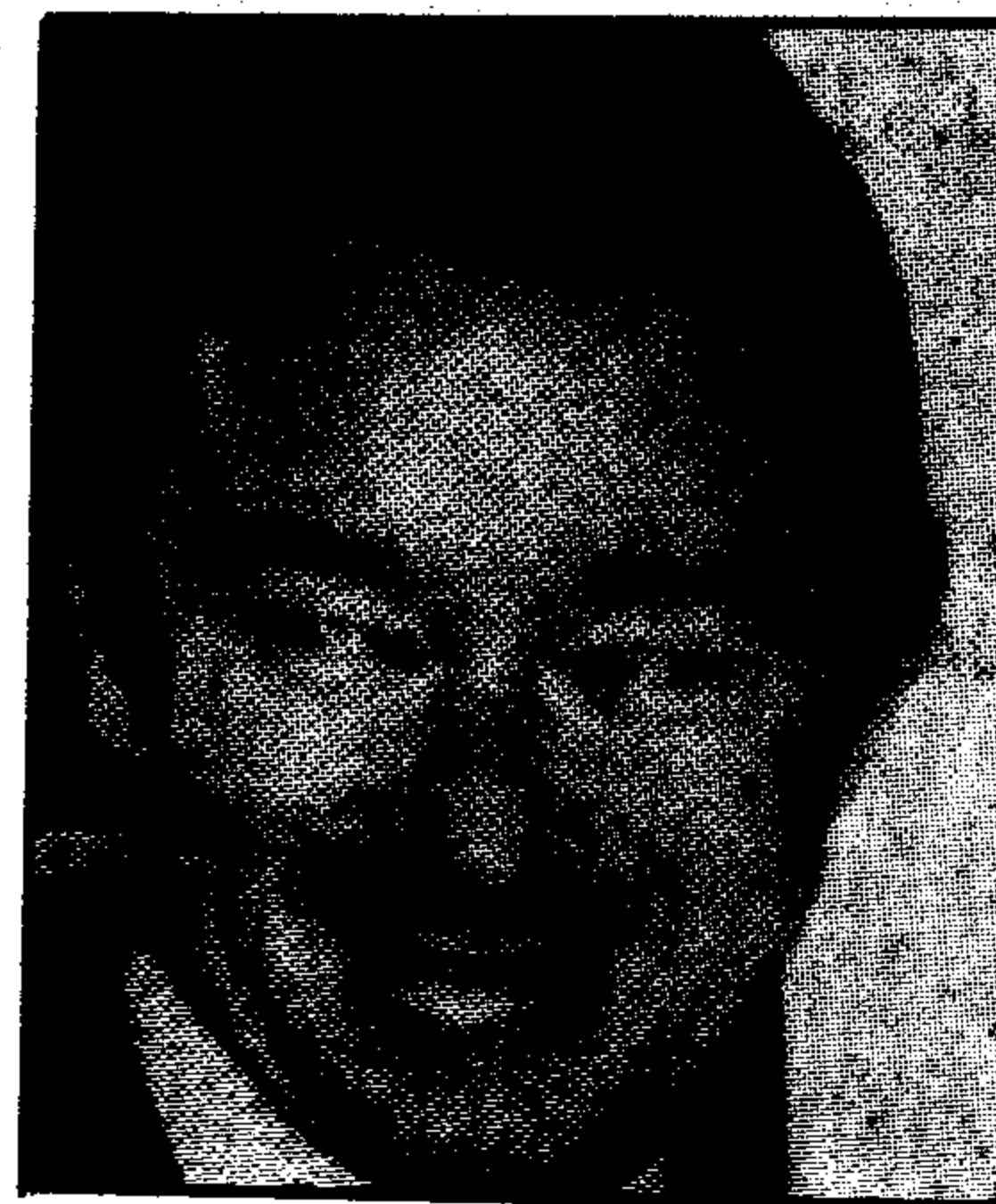
The most important failure at Speke was a failure of political strategy to fight closure. "Once Edwardes' logic was accepted (it

'becomes a question of deciding between the plants') — even to the slightest degree — the door is open for sectional conflicts rather than mass action. The Edwardes logic (the logic of capitalist production) had percolated right through British Leyland from the national officials to the workplace".

Huw Beynon insists that "the logic of the National Enterprise Board has to be exposed for what it is — the logic of capitalist production — and it has to be resisted". He puts forward a two-tier policy. In the long term, nationalisation of the whole of the motor industry; in the shorter term, a workers' plan on the model of the Lucas Aerospace stewards' Alternative Plan.

This answer is inadequate. As Leyland itself shows, nationalisation is no use without a fight to impose workers' control, against the drive for state-capitalist profit. And the Lucas Plan is marred precisely by the fact that it compromises with the logic of capitalist production — trying to put together a 'realistic' mix of profitable and socially useful products.

The idea of a workers' plan as a short-term answer while the workers are not strong enough to impose nationalisation is a real trap. The firm must then remain within the constraints of the capitalist



Edwardes: "a bleeding capitalist"

market. The workers' plan can only be a 'plan' for manoeuvring within the capitalist market. Sooner or later it will lead the workers into redundancies and closures just the same.

Workers' planning has to start from workers' control. The first steps needed against the Speke closure were the occupation of the Speke plant and a combine-wide workers' plan for the reorganisation of production, with work-sharing and no loss of pay or jobs.

That is the only way to save jobs in Leyland. Holding back on wage demands certainly won't do it. As the Speke TGWU branch secretary puts it in his introduction to the pamphlet, "NOBODY will defend your jobs if you as workers won't fight for them".

from workers ACTION bulletins

for £1 for each 1% rise in the cost of living to protect our wages from future inflation.

SO LEYLAND has made a £17 million profit. Edwardes says it's still not good enough. But what does that £17 million really mean? Remember last year, when £48 million was paid out by Leyland to the banks, in the form of interest payments? How much have the banks been paid this year? And how much have the privately owned components firms made out of Leyland?

The official profit figures mean virtually nothing. For instance, Bus and Trucks' profits were kept artificially high for years, simply by failing to invest in new plant. We must get at the true facts by demanding that all the company's books and records are opened up for our inspection.

And the banks and component firms who make massive profits from our labour should be nationalised and the profits used to protect our jobs.

LONGBRIDGE BULLETIN,
5th & 19th September.

SO WE'RE stuck with corporate wage bargaining this year — despite being assured at the time of the ballot that it wouldn't come in until November 1979.

Corporate wage bargaining needn't be a disaster for us if we make sure that the present National Joint Negotiating Committee is booted out and replaced by a democratically elected, recallable body who will refer every stage of the negotiations back to the shop floor.

And for the claim itself, we should follow the example of the Ford workers who are going for:

- Minimum pay rise of £20
 - 5 hours off the working week
 - Full pay for all lay-offs
 - Improved shift premiums.
- In addition, we should press

it: "That membership was looking for guidance. They came to that meeting looking for certain assurances. Assurances that the shop steward committee couldn't give. If we had had one national official on that platform saying 'Liverpool will not close', there is no doubt in my mind that we would not have lost the vote".

The workers felt bitter about the way they had been betrayed by their union leaders — and by the Labour Government. "I don't mind about Edwardes. I know what Edwardes is. He's a bleeding capitalist. I don't mind him carrying out capitalist kind of decisions.

"What I object to is people who are supposed to be on our side, being a party to these decisions. Harold Wilson is a local MP and he played no part whatsoever in our attempt to save the plant. He was too busy making money, writing his memoirs".

The way the stewards had organised left them, and the workers, helpless in the face of this betrayal. During the seventeen week strike there had not been a single mass meeting. After the closure announcement the stewards worked hard on lobbying union officials, MPs, and the Government, and putting proposals to the bosses for alternative production at Speke. But very little effort was put into informing and organising the rank and file workers in Speke. There were no leaflets, no bulletins, no shop meetings.

And so, at the final meeting, "all they (the membership) could see on the platform were the people who had taken them through a 17-week strike without a mass meeting. And they were afraid that something like that would happen again".

LOST

The sense of solidarity essential for a fightback was not built up. "I've got no argument against the shop stewards", said one worker. "I think all in all they did a great job; and I would say that I'm grateful to them. But if there is one thing it was the 17-week strike. It all became a bit impersonal if you know what I mean; we lost touch with each other".

Some of the shop stewards now think that they should have organ-

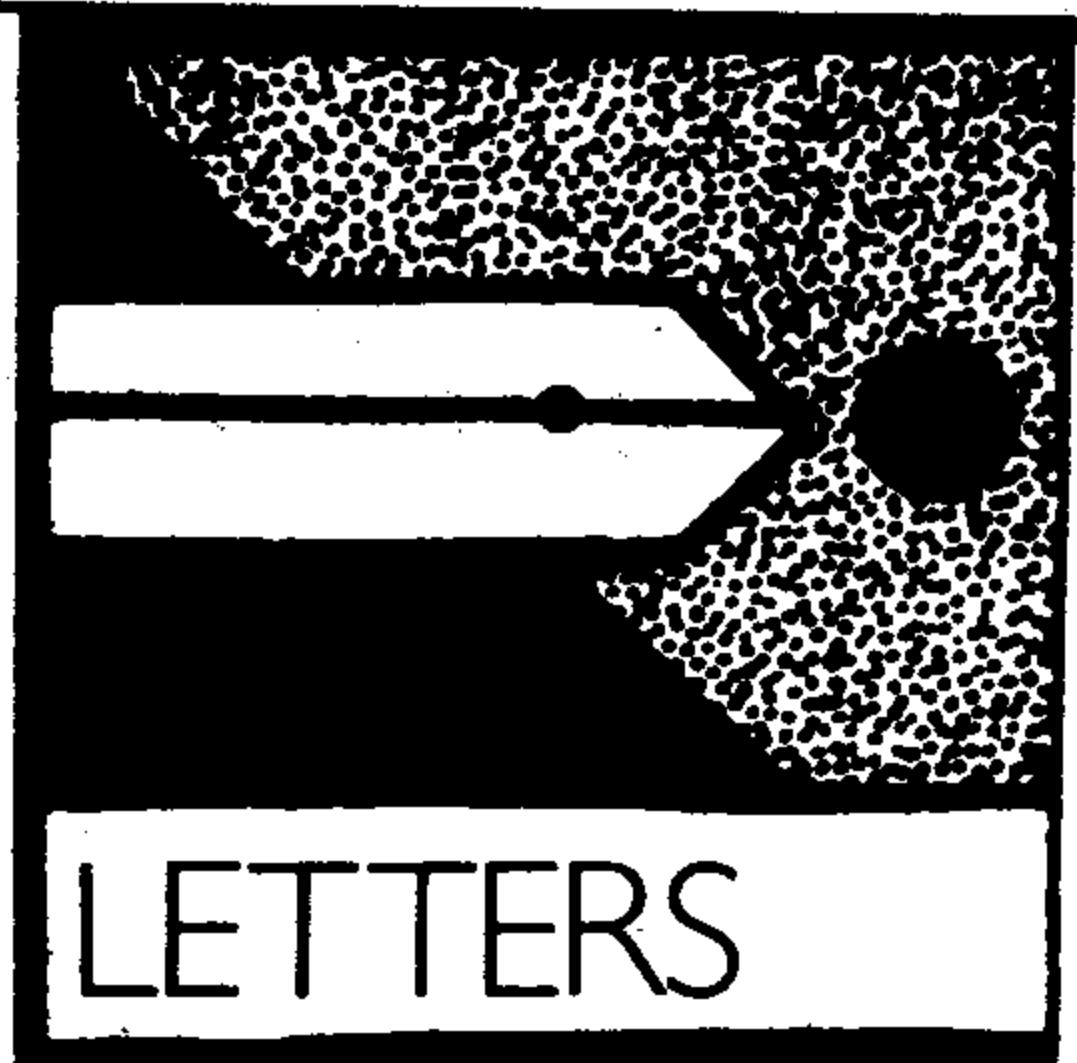
SAPPED

Seventeen weeks of strike (with long lay-offs before that) had already weakened the workers' will to fight. As one man put it: "I believe we were conditioned into accepting it. I was willing to fight to save my job but I've a wife and three kids and we live on £15 social security for about six months altogether. We suffered".

The 'take the money and run' feeling was boosted by vague promises of lavish redundancy pay. (The promised redundancy money, plus the costs of closure and transfer of production, totalled enough to pay the Speke workers' wages for three years...). Yet, when the first definite offer of redundancy terms was made, the workers voted to reject it. A new, slightly improved offer was accepted — against the stewards' advice — only after the workers' confidence had been further sapped by the obvious unwillingness of their official trade union leaders to organise any fight against the closure.

The union officials "were pretty much convinced that Leyland had come to the end of the road. As hardened, rational men they had no anticipation of a mass movement resisting big business. A quiet cynicism best typifies the dominant view..."

So when it came to the final meeting, then, as one steward put



IN Workers' Action no. 118 Bob Fine criticises me for granting the liberation forces in Southern Africa "an unconditional right to deal" — and equally criticises me for saying that socialists in the solidarity movement in Britain should not compromise.

What I wrote in WA 116 was: "SWAPO, and other such forces genuinely fighting for the liberation of their country, have the right to make concessions and deals under the pressure of their enemies, accepting such arrangements as 'phased withdrawal' if they have to. But we in Britain must continue to maintain that South African and UN troops have absolutely no right to interfere in the affairs of Namibia" (emphasis added).

To quote Muzorewa's sell-out to Smith (as Bob Fine does) is scarcely to the point. I did not

Which compromises?

grant the liberation forces "an unconditional right to deal". I argued that we should recognise that they may be forced by superior imperialist might into compromises; that we must nevertheless continue to support them insofar as they fight against imperialism (even if we in their places might not have accepted the compromise); and that we must continue to denounce the imperialist pressure on them unconditionally.

We recognise that workers on strike may have to settle for less than their demands, without for that reasons ceasing to denounce the capitalists who refuse those demands. The Bolsheviks signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty under pressure of German imperialism, but denounced the German Social Democrats for approving the treaty.

I did not consider that we had adequate information on Namibia to condemn SWAPO's attitude to the UN scheme as a sell-out. If comrade Fine has further information which does show that it was a sell-out, then let him bring it forward. That is the only

way the discussion can be advanced.

The solidarity movement in this country may have to make compromises, too. But Bob Fine confuses the issue here, too.

There are two sorts of compromise that we can make. Firstly, practical compromises imposed on us by the relation of forces. For example, if the police ban a demonstration of ours, we may have to call it off, not having the forces to defy the ban. Secondly, compromises of style and presentation, with the purpose of getting our message (or part of it) across to greater numbers of people.

The sort of compromises we cannot make are compromises of political and ideological principle: compromises like the one advocated by the people in the Vietnam solidarity movement who wanted to have the movement endorse the Paris Accords. It is that sort of compromise which my article rejected.

NIK BARSTOW
★ Ros Makin will be replying next week to Sarah Harris's letter on the Politics of Rape.

FOUL! Stop these football hooligans

IN TAMESIDE, Greater Manchester, the National Front have hit on a new way to spread their message. They have formed a football team. The team, who naturally play in all white and are nicknamed the "Superwhites" play in division five of the Hyde Sunday League.

That this move has little to do with sport can be seen not only from their results (they lost their first game 10-0) but also from the acres of publicity they've got from the local press. They obviously hope that this gimmick will give them some respectability they have so far lacked.

Faced with this provocative act, the local Tameside Campaign

against Racism and Fascism have mounted a campaign aimed at stopping them. They have lobbied the League committee to try and get them to bar the nazis, and have approached other teams in the league and asked them to refuse to play them.

So far the league committee is sticking to its position of 'keeping politics out of sport' (!). However one team from a local factory did withdraw from a cup game they were due to play.

But the main efforts of Tameside CARF have gone into trying to physically stop the matches being played. So far two demonstrations have been held. Four weeks ago we managed to stop

the match for half an hour and dispatched two fascists to hospital. However, at the last demonstration three weeks ago we barely outnumbered the Front and had three people arrested, including two stewards who were picked out by the police.

The next demonstration is being called for 8th October at Hattersley at 10a.m. Tameside CARF are calling for a maximum turnout for this. Hattersley is a large working class estate and many of the residents could be persuaded to come out and support the demonstration if they see sufficiently large numbers there.

Buses will be going from all over Greater Manchester and anti-fascists should stop at the corner of the Hyde to Mottram Road (A57) and Hattersley Road West for directions.

Workers Action supporters in Manchester call on all anti-fascists to attend this demonstration. We call on the Manchester Anti-Nazi League to mobilise its many supporters in the area to go along. They got 30,000 to their recent carnival here — let's see how many they can get along on Sunday. If we could stop the match it would severely dent the Front's morale and make them think twice before they embark on some of their less savoury activities such as beating up blacks and socialists.

Pete Keenlyside

GARNERS: NO, THIS STRIKE NEED NOT BE DOOMED

FOR THE strikers facing a winter on the picket lines outside Garners Steak Houses in the West End of London, parallels with Grunwicks are unavoidable.

Garners boss Cyril Margolis said right at the start that he wanted to be 'the George Ward of catering'.

As at Grunwicks, the Garners strike was sparked off by the management's refusal to recognise the workers' union; like Grunwicks also, the majority of the workers are immigrants, channelled into work with long hours, low pay and bad conditions.

More important, a crucial element in the strike, both in its duration and its outcome, is the attitude of the trade union officialdom.

The Garners' strikers' union, the T&GWU, has done little other than give its verbal support. Its actions demonstrate no serious effort to prevent Garners workers following in Grunwicks' footsteps.

Its first action was to encourage the use of ACAS, turned down by Margolis, and seen by the strikers themselves as a hopeless move.

Strike pay is a mere £6 a week. There is no mass levy of regional union membership, and not only is the strike committee forced to work on a shoestring budget, but it is positively hampered by bureaucratic moves — such as demands to inspect the committee's books and then holding onto them indefinitely.

A more threatening move was the agreement between the T&G

and the police (minuted by a recent Regional Committee) to restrict the picket numbers to six outside any restaurant at any time. Where the police are not present throughout the lunchtime or evening picket, spot checks are continual.

A few steps in the wrong direction leads to warnings or arrests, and at least one striker has, as a result of his third conviction for obstruction, an injunction against him which could lead to deportation.

Meanwhile, the management is free to abuse the strikers, sometimes violently, and most recently Whitcomb Street evening pickets have been threatened with knives.

On the picket line the attitude of some supporters has been that Garners is suffering the backwash of Grunwicks, so that failure is inevitable. This defeatism, frequently expressed by CP members, leads to suggestions that rely on gimmickry, rather than to calls for mass pickets: for instance, the suggestion that the sacked workers should wear their old uniforms when picketing, to confuse customers.



However, picketing *even* at its current level has markedly reduced trade. Normally during peak season the Trafalgar Square restaurant (seating about 200) would be packed: now 20 is often the maximum served over the whole 3-hour lunch period. Large parties of tourists have responded well and not crossed the picket line.

Garners trade is reckoned to be down by about 70 per cent.

In addition, blacking is proving effective in some areas, making the quality of the food served unreliable. It appears that Margolis is weakening: there have been rumours that he has approached members of the strike committee to suggest that they all return to work, after which he would hold a binding ballot on the issue of union recognition. This was apparently refused.

Whether or not Garners follows Grunwicks to defeat depends on actions taken *now*: continued and increased picketing can bring the eight-month old strike to victory in the immediate future. Success would strengthen the fightback of migrant workers; improve conditions in the catering industry, and overcome defeatism generated by the undermining of the fight at Grunwicks.

MANDY WILLIAMS

JOIN THE MASS PICKET AND RALLY ON SATURDAY OCT 7
Assemble 3pm

at Speakers Corner and march to Trafalgar Square

- AFTER THAT:**
- Adopt a restaurant — picket regularly.
 - Call for full union support
 - Black all supplies
 - Send funds to Garners Steak Houses Strike Committee at Room 84, 12/13 Henrietta Street, London WC2

MOVE TO BLACK S.A. GOODS IN S.WALES PORTS

40 ACTIVISTS AT THE Welsh Regional Conference of Anti-Apartheid (on Saturday 30th) heard reports from the struggle in Namibia and South Africa — but had all practical proposals for solidarity action stifled or postponed.

Peter Manning of SWAPO outlined the situation in Namibia, stressing SWAPO's scepticism about the UN security Council proposals for Namibia's transition to independence. He also talked about SWAPO's work in organising the people of Namibia and Namibian refugees in Angola for the armed struggle: a film was shown of SWAPO guerrillas in action.

In the afternoon session, Jeterse Choabi from the African National Congress (South Africa) stressed the difficulties of setting up and running an underground movement while facing massive state repression. In recent years the apartheid state, he said, has succeeded in infiltrating the ANC, and this has resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of a number of leading militants.

The Cardiff Medical Aid Cttee. represented the SWAPO and ANC speakers with cheques for £150 and £100 as part of the money they had raised, £400 in all, for medical aid for the liberation forces.

Workers Action supporters put forward a proposal to set up a liaison committee, with local LP and TU delegates and any other labour movement body prepared to send a delegate.

It would publicise the fight for trade union rights in South Africa, get trade union branches to invite SACTU speakers and take copies of the SACTU paper Workers Unity and take up a campaign for blacking action on goods going to South Africa from ports in South Wales.

The Cardiff branch of the Seamen's Union has already taken up this question of blacking within the National Union of Seamen.

Most of the people present were sympathetic to this proposal, but Charlie Smith (secretary of Cardiff Trades Council and a member of the CP) suggested that the committee would be a non-starter until 'the level of consciousness of the working class began to rise from its present low'. He proposed that we raise this level of consciousness by leaving it up to the T&G District Committee to initiate any action!

It was eventually agreed to defer any decision on the proposal to the next branch meeting of Cardiff AAM.

MARTIN BARCLAY

EVENTS

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

Saturday 7 October. Day of action for the Garners strike. Assemble 3pm at Speakers' Corner for a march to Trafalgar Square.

Sunday 8 October. London Workers Action meeting: "Socialists and the next government". 7.45pm. 'General Picton', Wharfedale Rd/Caledonian Rd, Kings Cross.

Tuesday 10 October. Brent SCLV public meeting. "What prospect for a Labour victory?" Speakers: Ernie Roberts (PPC, Hackney North); Colin Adams (Brent East CLP delegate to Labour Party conference); and Ken Livingstone (PPC, Hampstead). Chair: Merle Amory (asst. secretary, Brent Health Area NUPE). 7.45pm, Anson Hall, Anson Rd/Chichele Rd, NW2.

Saturday 4 November. Leicester NAC demonstration: "Out-patient abortion now, free abortion on demand, a woman's right to choose". Assemble 2pm in Victoria Park, Leicester.

Saturday 11 November. "Occupations, criminal trespass, and the use of the law" — national conference of the Campaign against the Criminal Trespass Law. At Conway Hall, London WC1. Credentials £2 from CACTL c/o 35 Wellington St, London WC2.

Saturday 25 November. Trade union conference on abortion, organised by the National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign. At Caxton Hall, London SW1. Delegate forms from NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1.

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



High profits, low profits, the bosses are still robbing you



How the strike is being organised

A shop steward from the Paint, Trim and Assembly plant at Ford Dagenham talked to Workers Action

Were you surprised by the strength and suddenness of the shop floor reaction to Ford sticking within the 5%?

No, I wasn't surprised because I knew something was going to happen. It didn't matter whether the government imposed it or the company — they wouldn't accept that 5% at all.

The only surprise was that I thought we might not get the vote in the mass meeting on the Friday. There was confusion; different reports; blokes we are not going to stop work, we are going to have a mass meeting — and we were counting how many have stopped work.

Taking this into consideration, I thought the mass meeting would be a failure, or at least it would be a 50-50 chance. But it came out a really fantastic majority. Only 12 against!

How has the strike been organised so far?

They set up a strike committee consisting of convenors and deputy convenors. That meets every day at 10.30. This was decided in the shop stewards meeting when the district officials were there, Fred Blake and Mick Murphy and all that.

Many questions were raised, for example, what about this import and export, what shall we do about it? The union says, to leave it to the officials and they will arrange that nothing will go in the docks — they will do something, you don't have to worry about it.

What we have to do is to picket around the plant and see that nothing is moving, neither coming in nor going out.

Has Ford tried to move anything?

They have tried to move nothing

but a few lorries have come from abroad. On Thursday, two lorries came, from Spain or somewhere, and they were turned back. Obviously they couldn't pass. The only people that are allowed in are the apprentices, but they are not supposed to make anything apart from their own tools.

Collings, not Ford, tried to take cars from one of the parks, but we immediately stopped that when we came to know about it.

How are the pickets organised? Is it only militants and stewards involved?

We have organised a rota for the different plants, to come in every three days. But it is difficult to contact the workers once they've gone. Last Thursday was a chance, when they came to collect their money — that was a time we should have organised people for the picket.

What about involving the other workers in the strike?

We said that we must do this from the shop stewards meeting. We discussed with the PTA shop stewards that we must

AT FORD, it is very clear that the obstacle to wage rises is not that "the country can't afford it" or anything like that, but the bosses' thirst for profits.

Ford UK made £246 million profit last year from its 69,500 manual and white collar workers. They gave top manager Terry Beckett an 80% pay rise, from £30,000 to £55,000 a year. They should hardly be surprised when Ford workers don't just tug their forelocks and say "Thank you, sir" to a 5% offer.

But if Ford workers are using Ford's high profits to justify their pay claim, does that mean that bosses who use their low profits (or their losses) to justify low wages are also right?

The nub of the Ford workers' case is that wealth created by their labour is going to boost the riches and power of the Ford bosses. They could create enough

value to cover their wages by working 25, 20 or even 15 hours a week. Instead, they work 40 — and the extra value goes into the bosses' pockets. The huge profits and the big pay-outs for top managers represent unpaid labour by the Ford workers.

Vauxhall and British Leyland workers are equally exploited, equally forced to do unpaid labour. That the bosses of Vauxhall and BL are not able to convert that unpaid labour into high profits is their misfortune — and a tactical difficulty for the workers in those firms — but no more.

It is the capitalist class as a whole which exploits the working class as a whole. Profits, interest, rent, the upkeep of the State, and all the other income of the capitalist class, represent the unpaid labour of the working class, in so far as the capitalists manage to transform it into money by selling their products.

There is bitter competition among the capitalists for the sharing out of this plunder... and some lose out in the competition. But a week's groceries still cost the same for a BL worker as for a Ford worker. A BL worker needs decent pay rises just as much as a Ford worker.

Moreover, profits are rarely as low as they seem to be. A lot is concealed in the form of pay-outs to top managers and directors, in depreciation allowances, and

through accounting tricks.

Then, large sums of would-be profits are diverted into interest payments to financiers. To this day British Leyland pays out about £5 million a month in interest charges.

Until business secrecy has been completely abolished, and workers' representatives are able to tabulate all the bosses' gain with precision, it is foolish ever to believe the bosses' hard-luck stories.

And if the firm really is broke, then that's the fault of the irrational chaos of the capitalist market, not of the workers.

The workers should demand that their livelihoods are safeguarded at the expense of the accumulated riches of the capitalist class, concentrated in the hands of the state. That is the meaning of the call for nationalisation without compensation.

"The country can't afford it" is the cry of the ruling class. But they can always "afford" Rolls Royces, country houses, expensive hotels, and a whole panoply of wasteful luxury for themselves — at the workers' expense. The Government could "afford" to break the pay limits for judges, top civil servants, and armed forces commanders. The truth is that we can't afford to miss a single chance to increase our wages and put some check to the bosses' profit-making.

have a leaflet and get information everywhere so that we can have a big procession, in Fleet Street or somewhere, where we can get thousands of people marching.

We have to organise this. But it is very difficult when the blokes are away from work.

Some of the stewards in the PTA were also saying that we should organise the wives because of the last experience about it. Maybe they'll print leaflets and distribute them when the blokes come to get money.

Has there been any attempt to recall the national shop stewards conference?

No, not that I have heard of.

What do you think are the main problems the workers will face in the strike?

The management is not going to talk for at least two weeks more, because they know we've got our money still. So when we're skint and they know the blokes want something, then they will try to offer something with a productivity deal.

They will keep saying that we

will give you 8%, 9% or 10% in a productivity deal — they will keep to that for a very long period of time in the hope that blokes will have no alternative but to accept it.

What is the feeling about a productivity deal?

We have already said in the shop stewards meeting that no talk will take place behind the curtains about this productivity deal. We clearly mentioned that we were not going to accept any productivity deal.

No way will the shop floor accept it. How far can you go on working too much? They have neither improved the conditions nor have they given us some fantastic tool for doing a very fast job. They want to make more cars with the same conditions they had last year. It's ridiculous.

Will it be a long fight?

Yes, no-one expects it to be over in a week or two.

What is the feeling about the Labour Government?

Of course the workers are disillusioned. They are saying that

they've supported it a long time and now it's too much, they can't go on supporting it on these matters.

The Ford workers are saying, for the last four years we've not got any good rise at all. Even the last time, when the limit was 10%, and we got eleven point something per cent, it wasn't much at all.

All the time we were helping the government in that sense. But this time they say — no matter who is in government, they are doing the same thing, so what's the point in supporting Labour? It's a widespread feeling.

Do you think there are any dangers in using the argument that Ford workers have a special case because of the profits that Ford has made?

Every year we are giving them good profits. As this government said last year — if the Ford company wants to cross the government's pay line, then there's very little we can do about it. So why the hell are they saying now that they'll impose restrictions? Why couldn't they do it last year? Last year was a different statement altogether. So to me it's just an excuse for the company not to give us the claim.

For other workers, it is very difficult to judge their problems — I don't know what their attitude is. You see what is happening at Vauxhalls — they're still working and waiting for another round of discussion.

The Ford workers are the lowest paid workers in the motor industry, especially in Britain, even in Ireland and Spain. We are getting less. So we have every right to demand more money.

20p.c. off hours, £20 on pay: that's the deal for us!

"FIVE PER CENT offer, 100% strike", say the placards on the picket line at Ford's Dagenham site.

Paint, Trim and Assembly plant convenor Brian Elliott told WORKERS' ACTION: "We're staying out until we get the £20".

Last year a settlement far short of the full claim was pushed through by organising a ballot in which each plant, from the smallest to the biggest, had equal weight. The small, less

militant plants were balloted first, creating a momentum in favour of the settlement.

This year, said Brian Elliott, "There's going to be no secret ballots and no plant-by-plant voting. All decisions should be taken by mass meetings".

The union leaders are saying that they would consider a productivity deal favourably. Brian Elliott said: "The only deal that we'd settle for is to reduce the time spent on the line by 20% and increase wages

by £20. Ford bosses can't get any more sweat or blood out of us. We have no more to give".

"We are not a special case. We have earned every penny Ford has. We are entitled to £20 and more. We want a return to free collective bargaining, and we are fighting for every worker in this country.

"Our fight against the 5% is every worker's fight".

"Our grievance is: profit £250 million, Sir Terry Beckett 80%, Ford workers... 5%".

Against the 5 per cent, Ford workers are fighting for us all

IN ITS second week, the Ford strike is solid and has growing support. On the other side, the Ford bosses and the Government are standing firm on the 5% limit. Ford workers are not expecting any movement over the next week or so.

It will be a long fight, but the strength is there to win this strike. Even the plant security guards are out, and when they went in for a day so that wages could be paid out, they insisted that their pay should go to the strike fund. The 12,500 Ford white collar workers are angry about Ford refusing to reply to their wage claim, and their union representatives have said that they will support the manual workers.

Dockers are blacking Ford imports. The International Metalworkers' Federation and union representatives from West German Ford factories have pledged support. Many road transport workers are also blacking Ford cars.

Last Friday two coachloads of Dagenham workers went to Harwich to get support from the dockers there. Firemen in Dagenham have said that they will refuse to do any work normally done by the factory firemen, who are on strike. Contractors on the Dagenham site doing construction work have struck in solidarity, although they are not employed by Ford. We need more and more rank and file initiatives like these.



For once, unions are backing a wages struggle because of its importance for all workers, and not because the particular workers involved are supposed to deserve some special treatment. Announcing the decision by the civil service union CPSA to back the strikers, CPSA general secretary Ken Thomas said: "If the private sector cannot break the pay policy then there is less chance of the public sector doing so."

As a strikers' placard said: "AGAINST THE 5%, FORD WORKERS ARE FIGHTING FOR EVERYONE".

The one million local authority manual workers are next in line after the Ford workers. And, after them, every pay settlement this year will be affected by the outcome of the Ford strike.

Resolutions in support of the strike and collections for the strike fund are essential. It will be far, far better, though, if other workers join the Ford strikers in their battle!

Vauxhall workers have rejected an offer within the 5% limit. Transport union official John Miller says that British Oxygen workers will strike unless they are offered more than 5%.

Negotiations are proceeding over new pay agreements in British Leyland, but it is obvious to every BL worker that they will not get a decent pay rise — let alone the £27 claimed by the Cowley Assembly Plant to make up ground lost since 1974-5, plus a cost-of-living clause — unless the 5% limit is broken.

NOW is the best time to strike to win those claims! Faced with a united front in struggle of so many workers, the bosses and the Government would have to give way.



The trade union leaders prefer to take a different attitude. They say: let's wait until the Ford dispute is over to press our claim.

The trade union leaders in Ford have put themselves at the head of the strike. But the way they are leading the strike is the biggest factor in the Ford bosses' favour! Their answer to every problem from picketing and blacking to organising solidarity is ... 'leave it to us'.

The result of organising a strike that way is that maximum support is not mobilised. The strikers are left at home, idle, isolated, ill-informed, and easy prey for any anti-strike campaign by press and TV. Negotiations remain entirely in the hands of union officials, and could lead to a sell-out.

To make sure of winning, Ford workers must organise to take the strike in their own hands. There should be regular mass meetings. Strikers should be informed in detail and in writing of any new offers from the bosses. Shop stewards should have the right to put their own opinions at the strike meetings if they disagree with the convenors.

Elected strike committees should be formed, drawing in new members alongside the shop stewards. Deputations should be sent round the factories, union branches and Labour Parties, especially to workers who have pay claims outstanding.

Remember: if it had been left to the union officials at the start, there would not have been a strike at all.

WORKERS' ACTION



The lesson from 1971: don't trust the officials

THERE ARE many lessons for the present Ford strike from the last major national stoppage, in 1971.

In 1971, too, there were mass walkouts after a derisory offer from Ford. The unions had claimed parity with Midlands car workers. Ford were paying 'grade B' production workers 62½p an hour, while Midlands rates were about £1 an hour. The company offered £2 a week increase.

1971 was a time of working class upsurge, with mass protests against the hated Industrial Relations Bill. Neither the Tory government nor the bluff and bluster of Henry Ford II could shake the resolve of the strikers.

The picket line remained as firm in the ninth week as in the first.

The company had planned for a strike, cancelling orders from British Steel in advance and using the first few weeks of the strike to reorganise the production line of the new Cortina, with experts flown in from Detroit and Germany. But they had underestimated the determination of the workers.

After eight weeks, Ford was seriously hit. They had to resolve the dispute. They did it through a sell-out engineered by Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon — the two union leaders whom the press were then denouncing as the scourge of the bosses.

CARR

The boss of Ford Europe got on to Employment Minister Robert Carr to arrange a meeting with Jones and Scanlon. It was fixed up through TUC general secretary Vic Feather for the Monday of the ninth week of the strike.

A settlement was worked out on the Tuesday morning, which gave only 1p an hour more than the offer made by the company after four weeks of the strike. The terms were: 9p an hour immediate increase, plus further increases spread over two years to a total of about 30%. Although in advance of the company's original offer, this scheme fell far short of the claim for parity with Midlands car workers — and it was linked to a 'no strike' clause.

If this settlement were put to mass meetings in the normal fashion, it would undoubtedly have been treated with the contempt it deserved. Instead, Jones and Scanlon agreed with Ford that there would be a secret ballot.

They knew that a secret ballot would enable press, TV and company propaganda to have maximum effect. The collective strength and collective decision-making of mass meetings would be missing.

Up to that point the union side of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) had been conducting the strike. Whatever the personal inclinations of the senior union officials of the NJNC — Reg Birch of the AUEW and Moss Evans of the TGWU — the solidarity on the picket line and the rank and file representation on the committee made any manoeuvre against the strike very difficult.

The union side of the NJNC first heard of the deal at a meeting on Wednesday. Moss Evans had already swung round to support his leader, Jack Jones. Finally only 6 votes were cast against the sell-out (with 22 votes for). Reg Birch abstained. The delegates felt (so one of them records) that "we were faced with the prospect of refusing to recommend a settlement that had been negotiated by the General Secretary and the President. We couldn't have them recommending it over our heads — that would show the world how split we were".

The secret ballot was held as quickly as possible, on the Friday, to allow no time for shop-floor organisation against the sell-out. The company drafted and sent out the ballot papers!

Militants in all the Ford plants waged a desperate struggle against the ballot and against the pressure from the press and the Ford bosses. Some militants totally rejected a ballot vote and said the decision would be made at mass meetings; others campaigned for a no vote.

Out of those who voted — about 50% of the strikers — a majority called for a return to work. Yet in Swansea and Halewood the struggle had not ended. Mass meetings on the Saturday (with more members present than had voted in the ballot) agreed to stay out.

EVANS

Once again it was not the press, the Government, or Ford that finally got Swansea and Halewood back, but the trade union leadership, particularly Moss Evans. The Halewood Transmission plant was the last to return to work.

All this happened at a time when people like Jones and Scanlon, along with other left-wing union leaders, were riding high on the wave of militancy which was still gathering momentum against the Tory government, and Moss Evans was talking in much more militant and left-wing terms than now.

The message for the Ford strikers now is clear. Don't trust your leaders, even when they make militant-sounding speeches against the 5% limit. Don't trust Moss Evans, in particular. Organise to make sure that the rank and file controls the strike and an unofficial leadership can take over if the official leadership sells out.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN