

workers' ACTION

No. 82

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10p

"THE FIREMEN'S STRIKE AND THE 10% LIMIT"

Workers' Action public meeting

Speakers: Doug Mackay (FBU branch secretary), Pete Radcliff (GMWU strike committee, BSC Stanton), and Stephen Corbishley (branch secretary, CPSA British Library), all in personal capacity.

7.45pm, Sunday 4th December, at the 'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd, London WC1 [Warren St tube].

FOLLOWING their meeting with Prime Minister James Callaghan, the Fire Brigades Union executive said on 29th November that they would be calling on all other unions to help them win their strike. They had found Callaghan stubborn. "He sees this as Stage 3, and after that there'll be a Stage 4 and a Stage 5", said one disgusted Executive member. "He is against any return to free collective bargaining".

Energetic, rapid help from the other unions — and from the TUC, which rejected the 10% limit — can make Callaghan back down and see that the firemen win their money with minimum further risk to life. Sympathy strikers, demonstrations, rallies, collections, and joint committees should go ahead.

But firemen should take note of the fact that the Executive took so long to get round to calling for help. Beware sell-outs! should be their slogan.

The FBU leaders' attitude came out clearly on the 10,000 strong firemen's demonstration in London last Saturday, 26th. The firemen's chants and placards made it clear that they wanted the 30% increase, now, and that they understood that meant smashing the 10% rule. Slogans like "in case of fire, break 10% limit" were common.

Yet every one of the five speakers at the rally which ended the demonstration was evasive. Three Labour MPs and two FBU bureaucrats said they thought the 10% limit should not be rigid, and the firemen should get a 'substantial' rise. Terry Parry told the rally that schemes were being discussed to stretch the 10% limit. Perhaps shift allowances, perhaps a shorter work week now and extra pay for compulsory overtime, perhaps this, perhaps that.

The Union executive has not so much been leading the strike as sitting it out. They haven't been able to

ACTION NOW TO HELP THE FIREMEN!



get round to putting out any strike news bulletins. They haven't got loans from other unions so that strike pay can be given at least to the most needy cases

(though loans have been offered).

Yet they have found time to put out a leaflet witch-hunting revolutionary militants inside the union. They have found time to discuss with Jim Callaghan about ways of finding a compromise.

Firemen booed Parry when he got up to speak at the London demonstration, remembering his role in trying to head off the strike. That mistrust of Parry must continue, strong and keen! And firemen must make up for the yellowness of their own leaders by enlisting further support from the rank and file of other unions. We all have an interest in breaking the 10% limit!

workplaces that are not willing to strike should be encouraged to send delegations.

It's about time the sympathy for the firemen was given some punch. A big show of solidarity on December 7th can strengthen the firemen and push the government to move quicker.

Dec. 7: Day of Action

AT A "RANK AND FILE" conference in Manchester last Saturday, 26th, 500 trade union delegates voted unanimously to try to get one day stoppages in sympathy with the firemen on Wednesday December 7th.

This call should be taken up everywhere. Demonstrations and rallies should be organised in major cities and

Labour must break with Smith

RHODESIA's Ian Smith knows how to combine words and action. Last week he said he would accept 'one man, one vote' — and launched his troops into Mozambique, killing, so he claims, 1200.

The 'one man, one vote' promise means nothing. Everyone but the most bone-headed bigot knows that the present regime in Rhodesia can't last. The issue is how long it will take to go, and how much of the privileges of the white minority will be preserved.

To try to preserve those privileges, Smith sends troops against the militant black nationalists and at the same time tries to build up 'tame' black leaders.

Britain's Labour Government has its own combination of words and action. In words, committed to supporting the rights of the black majority in Southern Africa. In action, playing diplomacy with Smith.

It is the responsibility of Labour militants to change that.

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, HELMUT SCHMIDT!



A MONTH after the death of 'Red Army Faction' members Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe in Stammheim prison, in West Germany, more and more questions are being asked about the official story of their suicides.

□ What guns killed Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe?

On the afternoon of October 18th, the Ministry of Justice for Baden-Wurttemberg stated that 'according to first information it is certain that the terrorists Baader and Raspe have shot themselves, each with a 7.65 calibre pistol'. The same afternoon, it was report-

ed at a press conference that Raspe used a 9 calibre pistol, and Baader a 7.65 calibre pistol — both of a make, 'Heckler and Koch', used by the police throughout West Germany.

On the 19th it was officially denied that the pistols were 'Heckler and Koch'.

Besides, Baader and Raspe, in killing themselves, are supposed to have fired four shots. The cells were under permanent acoustic control so that every noise in them could be heard. Yet none of the guards heard any of the four shots.

Stripped

□ If they shot themselves, how did they get the guns?

It was said that explosives, headphones, plaster (for covering up holes in walls where things were hidden), razor blades, and pistols were found in the cells after the deaths. The state says they were smuggled in through the lawyers. (This fits in with an already long-standing witch-hunt against 'RAF' defence lawyers).

But on each visit the lawyers were strip-searched, and, for example, their cigarettes were checked one by one. The prisoners were searched before and after all visits.

In any case, the prisoners were in total isolation from the outside world from September 9th, and were moved into different cells on September 14th. And the cells were thoroughly searched daily.

How, between September 14th and October 18th, did the 'RAF' prisoners manage to smuggle weapons and communications equipment in, and conceal them from daily searches?

□ If it was a collective suicide, how did the prisoners communicate with each other?

It was claimed that 'Raspe could inform his cell neighbours by knocking on the wall', but the cells were soundproof and separated from each other by empty cells and a corridor.

Autopsy

□ How did Gudrun Ensslin hang herself?

Supposedly, with the cable of her record player. Yet record players had been taken out of the cell. The official version is that the cable had been forgotten.

□ Was there something to hide at the autopsy?

The doctors did not attempt to determine the exact times of death. The official reason was simply that they had no orders to do so. Yet all official medical books say that determination of the exact time of death is part of the autopsy.

A delegation from 'Amnesty International' was invited. Amnesty asked that the autopsy be delayed three hours because their delegate could not arrive earlier. The authorities did not wait.

□ Finally, is it just coincidence that all the deaths of 'RAF' prisoners have come at a time when they were politically advantageous for the West German government?

Holger Meins' death after force feeding broke a common hunger strike over prison conditions.

Siegfried Hausner was one of an 'RAF' group which seized the German embassy in Stockholm. The embassy was blown up, but Hausner survived. He died after being moved from Stockholm hospital to Stammheim jail.

According to the official story

the RAF blew up the embassy themselves. Some people say Hausner could in fact have proved that West German state security blew up the embassy themselves.

Ulrike Meinhof died just before the point in the trial of the 'RAF' prisoners when it was intended to bring evidence on prison conditions.

Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe died at a time when there was sure to be little public reaction to their deaths, and when the West German government must have wanted very much to make sure there were no further efforts to force their release. The same goes for Ingrid Schubert — who, having recently been moved from Stammheim jail, was also a possible witness on conditions there.

Hi-jacked into Germany



THE 'MODERATE' EXECUTIONERS

FOREIGN correspondents in Peking have been reporting an increasing number of executions in China. The most conservative tally for the last eight months is 98 death sentences. More realistic estimates, according to the 'Observer', run into thousands, because many more are unreported and occur in regions off-limits to foreigners.

The first notable executions were in March, when 26 people were shot by firing squad in Shanghai, former stronghold of the now purged 'Gang of Four'. Since the reinstatement of Teng Hsiao-ping and the convening of the 11th Chinese Communist Party congress in August, the pace has clearly increased.



Certainly, China's toll of executions is tiny in comparison with Russia's in the '30s, when millions were killed. However, the Chinese regime has in the past seldom publicised executions, preferring to tell the outside world that criminals and counter-revolutionaries are 're-educated and reformed'. In the period immediately after Mao's death, when the relationship of forces between the factions remained unclear, Chairman Hua repeatedly appealed against 'excessive factionalism' and the 'settling of old scores'. The present situation therefore marks a significant change.

There is no written criminal code in China, and the 'People's Courts', especially in the last decade, have handed out widely varying punishments. It is not easy to distinguish between executions for

criminal offences and political executions. For example, the ten prisoners recently executed in Hangchow (according to Newsweek) were charged with murder, arson and rape. Yet the crowds were reported to have shouted, 'Down with the counter-revolutionaries!'

Other reports suggest that previous crimes which might have warranted a few years' 'reform' now often receive the death sentence. But whatever the proportion of political and criminal executions, the leadership's aim is clear: to restore discipline to a nation plagued by social disorder resulting from a decade of political upheaval, and to weed out supporters of the 'Gang of Four'.

It is true that the 11th Party Congress gave the impression of a unified leadership at the top, accompanied by the final political death-blow to the Gang of four. However, weeding out dissidents (supporters of the 'Gang' or not) will take a long time. On the Politburo itself, several key figures have been and are still opposed to Teng and his policies: Peking mayor Wu Teh, Peking military region commander Chen Hsi-lien and Northeast military region commander Li Teh-sheng. Chen and Li between them command one third of the airforce and the 'People's Liberation Army', because it is their regions which guard the northern border facing Russia.

Further down the hierarchy, in the Central Committee and in the regions, there are still many who owe their positions to the 'Gang of Four'. Of the 37 million CCP members, one third joined during the Cultural Revolution, in the hey-day of the 'Gang'.

Many of them have yet to make self-criticisms and are stubbornly holding out.

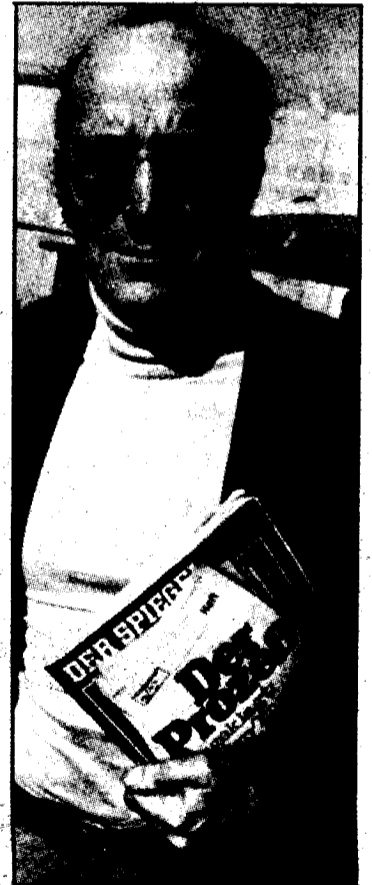
Having set out plans for the economy, granted wage increases to industrial workers, and revamped the education system to something more like the Russian system, the present leaders have little time left to wait for dissidents to recant. Teng has been foremost in pressing for the present opinion of physically uprooting the rebels in the bureaucracy. Failure to implement policies quickly will result in a prolonging of the economic doldrums, which will lead to more strikes by the workers, thereby threatening the rule of the entire bureaucratic caste.



This policy faces a twin danger. Hua and Teng may well be over-estimating their strength vis-à-vis the Gang's supporters, and a prolonged factional conflict could spill out of control. Secondly, the atmosphere of mass executions, where those charged receive no right to defend themselves, could lose the support so far given to the leadership by the masses, who want a return to quiet times and steady improvements in living standards, and more say in the day-to-day running of workplaces and communes.

Teng and Hua are surely aware of these dangers; the fact that the purges are nevertheless going ahead only indicates their lack of room and time for manoeuvring, and the precarious hold the present leaders have over a fifth of the world's people.

CHEUNG SIU MING



'RAF' defence lawyer Klaus Croissant. He fled to France in July and the West German government demanded his extradition. He was arrested on 29th September and on 16th November the court granted the demand in respect of the charge that Croissant had 'established a system of communication between prisoners belonging to an association of malefactors'. Croissant was hustled over the frontier at once, before an appeal could be made! 20,000 people joined a protest demonstration in Paris on 18th November. Many lawyers in France have also protested at the extradition.

TUC decides to drop Grunwicks

GEORGE Ward, the tinpot dictator of Grunwicks, is still cock of the walk at the North London photographic processing plant where over 100 members have been locked out for 15 months.

Last Wednesday, 23rd, the General Council decided to do NOTHING to support the locked-out workers.

Though the leaders of APEX, whose members are locked out, don't seem to have any plans for dealing with Ward, they have launched themselves into action — against six of the locked-out workers! They were suspended without strike pay for four weeks for organising or taking part in the hunger strike outside TUC headquarters.

The vigil and hunger strike which began on Monday 21st was a protest at the TUC's complete failure to take action to cut off essential supplies and services for Grunwicks, despite the unanimous promises at the

TUC Congress in September.

Strike Committee chairman Mahmoud Ahmed, who was suspended, accused the union: "APEX is trying to silence our voice... All we are trying to do is to focus attention upon those in the leadership of our movement who are not carrying out this year's Congress decision".

And the Labour Government has again and again sent thousands of picket-bashing policemen in Ward's support. Mass picketing on November 7th met with the worst and most vicious police violence so far. Now two jail sentences have been imposed on participants in the mass picket convicted of assaulting policemen!

It is quite clear that the APEX leadership is looking for an excuse to get rid of the embarrassment which the Grunwick dispute has become to them. These heroes of the official labour movement reserve their 'tough-

ness' for the union's militants. They want to silence and demoralise militants who have been driven to a hunger strike as the only means they feel will express their bitterness at the betrayal of their cause by the TUC.

Grunwicks has been a test of strength, a test of determination between the labour movement and the anti-trade union sharpshooters of the far right, like the 'National Association for Freedom' which fuels George Ward. If the workers lose, it will be because the trade union



George Ward smiling after a picket has been beaten up



Vic Seadon — jailed for picketing Grunwicks.



The police — just doing their job... of defending the bosses

AUGUST 8. 3,000 turn up on the picket line nonetheless.

AUGUST 26. Scarman Court of Inquiry reports, recommending union recognition and reinstatement of the workers "if at all practicable". It also condemns mass picketing and blacking. APEX accepts the report. Ward rejects it.

SEPTEMBER 5. TUC. Len Murray promises "no holds barred" offensive against Ward.

SEPTEMBER 23. 'Times' reports that APEX is planning to drop the Grunwick strikers. Grantham publicly denies it — but still no action to win the dispute.

UPW does nothing TUC does nothing.

MARCH 18. First mass picket. **MAY 19.** Shirley Williams, Denis Howell, and Fred Mulley join picket line.

May. Ex-Chief Inspector Johnson of Willesden police becomes personnel manager at Grunwick.

APEX conference at Scarborough calls for all services to be cut off.

JUNE 13. Mass picketing; 84 pickets arrested. Court of Inquiry ordered.

JUNE 16. Willesden and Cricklewood UPW members impose blacking of mail.

JUNE 22. Audrey Wise MP arrested on picket line.

London Area Council of NUBE calls for freezing of Grunwicks bank account. NATSOPA and NGA members impose blacking of postal packets and anti-strike press articles.

JUNE. Strike committee calls on FBU members to cut off Grunwicks water, PO engineers to disconnect phones.

Jackson puts pressure on his union members at Cricklewood and Willesden to lift blacking.

JULY 11. Mass picket, the biggest yet.

JULY 12. High Court finds for ACAS in action over ballot. But Ward refuses to budge.

JULY 21. Ward sacks seven drivers for joining TGWU and refusing to cross picket line.

JULY 29. The trade union bureaucracy turns decisively against the strikers. The strike committee are pressured by APEX into calling off the Day of Action on August 8th. The UPW leadership force the Cricklewood postmen to end their blacking. On the same day the Appeal Court reverses the July 12th High Court decision in favour of ACAS. (The case now goes to final appeal at the House of Lords).

The long road to the big betrayal

AUGUST 23, 1976. Over 200 workers walk out in protest against bad conditions and join the union. They are sacked.

SEPTEMBER. At TUC, APEX general secretary Roy Grantham appeals for support. Tom Jackson pledges UPW backing.

OCTOBER. APEX refers the dispute to the government arbitration service ACAS, but Ward refuses to cooperate. Possibility of ACAS recommending recognition of section 11 noted by Albert Booth.

OCTOBER 28. UPW executive instructs union members not to handle Grunwick mail.

NOVEMBER. Ward agrees to let ACAS rule on the dispute — Jackson and the UPW executive lift blacking. But Ward, advised by NAFF, gets a court injunction against blacking of mail. ACAS announces an informal ballot of the workforce.

DECEMBER 12. Grunwick strike support meeting addressed by Len Murray, Roy Grantham, and Maurice Styles of the UPW exec. Grantham calls for the mail boycott to be reimposed; Styles gives a guarded promise to that effect. Murray declares that the 'full force of the trade union movement must be brought to bear'.

DECEMBER 15. UPW exec. decide to delay re-imposition of blacking until ACAS reports.

JANUARY 1977. Strike Committee calls on TUC to secure boycott of Grunwick services and subsidiaries (Cooper and Pearson, Monk Colour, etc.).

MARCH 11. ACAS recommends recognition of APEX at Grunwicks. Ward, having previously objected to the inclusion of the 'sacked' strikers in the ballot, announces he will fight the decision through the courts.

leaders have betrayed the struggle.

The official Scarman Inquiry asked Ward to recognise a union and to reinstate some strikers, at least. Ward simply refused. The House of Lords may overrule Ward's legal objection to the Government arbitration service recommendation that the union be recognised. Even if it does, Ward can still refuse.

And that is the end of the story — short of the strikers physically occupying and holding the factory, or the Labour Government confiscating Ward's property. And why not? That would be more like justice than all the court proceedings. Ward has 'confiscated' the jobs of over 100 people, after 'confiscating' massive profits from them.

Ward deserves to be starved into submission by the locked-out workers and the trade union movement; but throughout the 15 months the trade union leaders have been long on words and short on action.

If Ward can sit it out — and he thinks he can — until the pickets go away and give up, then a serious blow will have been struck against the right of workers in Britain to organise, and for the 'freedom' of the capitalist jungle for which George Ward stands.

But George Ward and his backers haven't earned a victory, for all their vicious determination. It is being given to them by the weak-kneed leaders of the labour movement. If the leaders of APEX, or any other large union, had one-tenth of the fighting spirit of the Grunwick strikers, then Ward would have been crushed long ago. But they preferred to see their members crushed rather than take the risks of mass picketing and possibly illegal blacking. A great cry of anger against this sell-out must be raised from every factory and every trade union branch!

Editorial

Tyneside workers stand up to blackmail

HYPOCRISY doesn't come worse than the self-righteous media gloating over British Shipbuilders' withdrawal from Swan Hunter, Tyneside, of their share of a 24-vessel Polish contract, and the resulting threat of 700 redundancies at Swan Hunter.

The Establishment declared with one voice that it was the fault of the outfitters at Swan Hunter for continuing with their overtime ban — which, Swan Hunter said, would make it impossible to meet schedules — and that it served them right.

No-one suggested that the just solution would have been for the outfitters to have been granted the claim in pursuit of which they undertook the overtime ban: parity with the boilermakers.

No-one said it was monstrous that workers should be browbeaten and penalised when they were simply doing their job normally. The outfitters aren't on strike. They just aren't doing overtime — that is, extra work above their normal quota.

No-one asked why Swan Hunter was relying on overtime working to meet its schedules, especially in an area with high unemployment and in an industry which has shed thousands of jobs. No-one asked why they couldn't just take on extra labour.

The 2,000 outfitters had been banning overtime for nine weeks. They faced constantly mounting threats from Swan Hunter. The Boilermakers' Amalgamation and the GMWU gave them no backing. Finally, their own shop stewards cracked and agreed to recommend ending the ban. But at a mass meeting on 29th November the outfitters resolved to continue their action.

With a few more workers with that sort of courage, the drain of jobs from British shipbuilding could be halted. The industry could be forced to adopt the solution: cut hours, not jobs. More than that. With more of that sort of determination, we could end forever the system which considers the right to take industrial action unreasonable, but depriving 700 workers of their livelihood entirely reasonable.

A general case for a living wage

A MILITANT from a West Midlands colliery told Workers Action about the reactions to the firemen's strike from miners in his district.

■ What is the feeling at rank and file level about the firemen's strike?

□ There is widespread sympathy. They deserve every penny they get.

■ Are miners seeing the firemen as a special case?

□ I think most miners understand that firemen are an example of a general case, i.e. workers trying to get a living wage. They are special in the sense that at the moment they are in the front line in the battle against the 10%.

■ What is the local NUM doing?

□ The only official move so far has been a circular telling miners who are part-time firemen not to cross official pickets or to obstruct the dispute in any way. An area donation of £50 has been made to the FBU. In other words, little more than a token gesture. There has been no attempt to



organise pithead meetings addressed by firemen.

■ We have been producing a fortnightly Workers' Action bulletin for the pit. What has been its role in this situation?

□ We've argued the firemen's case and tried to organise rank and file action in solidarity. A collection is being organised in our pit and we are trying to arrange speaking tours of firemen to pithead canteens and union meetings.

We are also approaching rank and file workers in other industries in an attempt to build a support committee.

■ Will the Christmas break pose any special problems for solidarity action?

□ We are approaching working men's clubs to see if we can arrange some sort of entertainment during the Christmas break for firemen's families. It's important not to lose any steam at all in our solidarity action during the break.

■ What about the prospects of a miners' strike?

□ The feeling is that we'll be out after Christmas.

THE THIRD week of the firemen's strike — and the Government still holds obstinately to the 10% limit!

They know that once the firemen have broken the limit, there will be no holding back hundreds of thousands of other workers. It's up to us to be as aware of that fact as the Government is, and to realise that the firemen are a test case for us all.

WORKERS ACTION talked last week to militants from three industries now confronting, or soon to confront, the 10% limit.

UP AG



A MILLION LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANUAL WORKERS CLAIM

NOT 10pc BUT A £50 M

THE BIGGEST group coming up for wage increases behind the firemen is the local government manual workers. One million workers, represented by NUPE, TGWU, and GMWU, have claimed a minimum wage of £50. Workers' Action talked to Tim Thorpe, Nottingham NUPE Social Services Branch secretary [speaking in his personal capacity].

■ What have the employers offered?

□ 10%, which means rises of between £3.90 and £4.50 for 40 hours. Parts of the last two supplements have been con-

solidated and bonus has been improved.

The offer is derisory when you compare it with the objectives laid down by the conference in May. Conference called for a £50 minimum wage (the offer is £7.50 short), improved sick pay (not offered), four weeks' minimum holiday (they say that will "be examined without commitment"), and full consolidation of previous rises. Conference also called for threshold payments. The offer on this last point is that "if the value of the settlement becomes eroded by inflation the situation will be

reviewed".

Every NUPE area committee except Cornwall has rejected the offer.

■ How do your members feel about the offer?

□ Most of them are absolutely disgusted. The offer barely covers increases in transport costs, let alone anything else. The feeling is that we are at the bottom of the barrel again, and in a period like the present that means real hardship for most members.

■ What's the feeling about the demand for cost of living protection?

□ The membership are fed with wondering whether or they will be able to keep with the cost of living. Our branch policy is for £1 wage increase for every 1% rise in cost of living.

■ What about the other unions, the TGWU and GMWU?

□ There is a problem there. It's said that the GMWU is likely to accept the offer, but they have eleven representatives on the negotiational committee as against six for NUPE and eight for TGWU, although NUPE has the majority of the membership.

■ How do your members feel about the firemen's strike?

□ Most people say, "they're fighting for a living wage like us", or "they're out to break the 10% and that's what we want to do, too". I have heard anyone say they're against the firemen, but some people do seem to have a view of firemen as a 'special case'. At the branch we had a fireman speak and we were unanimously to give it. We'll have a fireman speak again at the next branch meeting.

■ What does your branch cover?

□ We have 650 members old people's homes, day centres, day nurseries, etc., which 380 are covered by manual workers' agreements.

■ Has NUPE at national level supported the firemen?

□ We've had a circular telling us not to do any extra duties for the strike, but that's all.

■ And what has the union leadership done about your claim?

□ The leadership have done nothing since May to prepare for action.

It's true that at the moment the membership is not prepared for strike action. People say "we can't strike like miners". Many women feel that their husbands will react unfavourably if they went on strike. Members held back by a sense of duty and by the feeling that have no industrial strength.

STEELWORKS STRIKERS — 'WE ALL SUPPORT THE FIREMEN'

1,000 workers at the Stanton Ironworks of the British Steel Corporation have been on strike for 4 weeks. Workers Action talked to Pete Radcliff, a member of the GMWU strike committee.

■ Have you been able to establish any links with the firemen?

□ We had a joint demonstration in Nottingham last Saturday with the slogan 'No to the 10% limit'. There were about 250 people there, 60 firemen and 80 from Stanton.

The men from Stanton were pleased with the demonstration, but the firemen were much quieter. The ones we spoke to supported our case, but some of them seemed to feel they had a special case

and risked losing public support if they associated too closely with other strikers.

As far as we're concerned we all support the firemen.

■ What else have you got planned?

□ We are going to have a demonstration in Ilkeston and we'll invite the firemen to join that, too.

■ Your strike is for £15 increase plus 40p for each 1% rise in the cost of living. British Steel have offered only 5% increase on basic. Have there been any new developments?

□ No. But the strikers remain determined. The argument that we should have waited to exhaust procedure completely before going on strike has collapsed now, because the workers at the Central Melting Plant waited and still

only got offered 5%. At the mass meeting on Monday 28th nobody spoke for a return to work.

■ Has there been any progress in getting the Central Melting Plant and the Concrete Linings Plant to join the strike?

□ Last Friday the Central Melting Plant stewards met management and were told they wouldn't be offered more than 5%. Each shift then voted to back the stewards' call to join the strike. But at a mass meeting on Sunday they decided to delay the decision until after a joint meeting with the NUB members. That meeting should take place tomorrow (Tuesday 29th).

The stewards and a few others have walked out, and we are picketing the plant.



■ And the Concrete Linings Plant?

□ Two-thirds of the workers there are still out, and they intend to transfer from their present branch, whose secretary has opposed the strike, to our GMWU branch.

■ Has the strike been made official yet?

□ No. At the mass meeting the union officials took a real battering. Geoff Soames, the district officer, was forced to blame the union rule book for the fact that at first he was unwilling and now is unable to get the strike made official by the union executive.

■ So what next?

□ We've sent representatives from the strike committee to Sheffield and we're going to Corby tomorrow (29th). From Sheffield we got financial support and news they may be striking in the New Year. The dispute isn't just linked to the fight against the 10% limit. It's been often said in the mass meetings that the strike is as much about jobs as it is about wages.

Before the strike management were offering a productivity deal involving the loss of 200 jobs. British Steel currently want to cut 15,000 jobs nationally. The stewards refused to discuss the productivity deal and insisted on the wages demand. That's how we came to be on strike.

10pc of the boss's wealth

ONE OF the banners on last Saturday's demonstration by London firemen read "10% of Merlyn's wages — Yes!"

And if the firemen got an increase of 10% of a company chairman's pay, their wages would go up by over £90 a week! Recent figures published by the Labour Research Department showed that 13 company chairmen received a total of £617,693 in salaries last year — an average of nearly £1,000 a week each.

That £1,000 a week is only for starters, of course. Above and beyond that the top bosses have their income from property. Rents, dividends, and interest are over 10%

of all personal income — and the great bulk of that 10% goes into the pockets of the wealthy few.

How can anyone spend over £1,000 a week? Of course, the bosses often don't spend that much. They invest their wealth in property, stocks, and shares — and then see their millions increase, and along with that their power.

● The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Wealth reported recently. The top 10% of the population gets 27% of all personal income and owns 60% of all personal wealth. The top 1% of the population owns 27% of all personal wealth.

Even these figures are misleading. A lot of slightly better-off workers own a house or a car. That counts as 'personal wealth'. But obviously it is a different sort of wealth from the wealth that yields power — ownership of factories, banks, shops, or land. That sort of wealth is even more concentrated in a few hands.

Wealth in a few hands means poverty in many families. Soon after the Royal Commission, the Supplementary Benefits Commission put out a report. 34% of families in Northern Ireland, 30% in Wales, 24% in Yorkshire and Humberside, and 17% in the West Midlands, are below the poverty line!

AGAINST THE 10% LIMIT

MINIMUM WAGE!

But Fisher encourages this fatalism. At the conference he said that in a period of free collective bargaining "the weakest go to the wall". This kind of argument is self-defeating and demoralising for the membership.

The more militant sections of the union, like the dustbin-men, should be encouraged to give a lead to the others.

What about action at rank and file level?

In Nottingham the district branch committees have voted to accept; yet my own branch unanimously voted for rejection! So even before we come to the question of strike action the militancy is being dampened down through the bureaucratic structures.

We need a campaign for shop stewards' committees, or where these are not possible for better liaison between branches and for branch autonomy.

Even sections who won't strike must be pushed towards a decision. The members must be made to realise that it is they who hold the cards and not Alan Fisher waving some magic wand. More and more people are beginning to see the need for strike action, but they are atomised and hampered by the bureaucrats.

In the future NUPE should not be sitting around waiting for the firemen but with them from the beginning!

One practical thing which can be done now is to support the 'Campaign for Action in NUPE' conference in London on December 10th.

Finally: you are claiming a £50 minimum wage. What are the present wage levels?

Take my own wages as an example. Two years ago I got £31 a week. Last year I got £2.50 increase, and the year before £5.50 (not the full £6, because I only work 37 hours: a lot of our members are affected by this. That makes £39 gross, and about £28 take-home.

You can see why we have a common interest with the firemen in breaking the 10% limit!



★ Campaign for Action in NUPE National Conference. 11.30am, Saturday 10th December, at NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, Theobalds Rd, London WC1. Credentials: Ron Pearson, 98 Stride Rd, Portsmouth.

Fire news gets censored

HAVE you noticed there have been fewer reports of fires in the papers recently?

Yet firemen at Mount Pleasant station, London, who are keeping a tally of fire damage during the strike through connections they have with insurance people, reckon £312 million for losses up to the 14th day. In the whole of 1976 fire dam-

age totalled £231 million (and the firemen's claim comes to £48 million per year!)



There must be some reason for the press silence. And Workers' Action has heard from many different sources that in fact news is being censored.

Fire news — like any other news the government wants to keep quiet — is being sent to the press in 'D-notices', which are warnings to editors not to publish that item of news.

There has also been a clampdown on news of discontent inside the Army. Last Thursday, 24th, Lt-col Morgan Llewellyn, in charge of the soldier scabs in Manchester, declared that troops' morale was "well below that [minimum] level". Two days later a tiny item appeared in the papers saying that disciplinary action against Col. Llewellyn would be kept secret.

Does this silence mean that more and more soldiers are becoming convinced that their job of strike-breaking, terrorising, and slaughtering to order in the interests of British capitalism, and risking their lives and health in the process, is a job any self-respecting human being should refuse?

"THE JEWS were blamed for Germany's problems. Hitler rose to power by giving easy answers and by making the Jews the scapegoats. ... It used to be the Jew. Now it's the blacks."

So say the British Council of Churches in a leaflet about the National Front.

The simple equation "Hitler blamed the Jews, the NF blame the blacks" may be useful as a warning. But, argues David Edgar (author of the play about fascism, "Destiny") — such an equation misses out a lot about fascist ideology, and the fact that the Front are anti-semitic as well as anti-black racists.

The Front, he writes in a new pamphlet ("Racism, fascism and the politics of the National Front") have taken their ideas straight from the Hitler Nazis. They still cling to the theory of the "International Jewish Conspiracy", according to which the ubiquitous Jews were the force behind both Wall Street and Communism. Thus the butt of both the right-wing nationalist agitation was conveniently also the target of the pseudo-radical demagoguery against "Finance Capital".

Edgar argues that this conspiracy theory is a vital part of the NF ideology; and in this world-picture, the blacks cannot be substituted for the Jews. Whereas Germany's Jews were the International Conspirators, the blacks in Britain are only partial scapegoats for the Front, merely the tools of the Jewish conspiracy.

Edgar is, however, far too concerned with finding and defining a "pure" fascist ideology. By definition, the search for such a thing, and laborious comparisons of points of similarity or sameness in the thinking of different fascist formations, can mean missing the central point: that the ideology of fascism is bound to be an opportunistically concocted demagoguery complete with 'appropriate' demonology. It is quite futile to measure and rationally compare precise points in such a nightmarish and irrational ideological concoction.

If the present leaders of the NF had not pushed their cherished anti-semitism into the background, they would be still on the far fringes with former allies like Colin Jordan.

The conspiracy theories are

Blame the Blacks or Blame the Jews?

James Ryan reviews David Edgar's pamphlet, "Racism, Fascism, & the Politics of the National Front". (30p plus postage from IRR, 247 Pentonville Rd, London N1).

still important to them. They are endlessly chewing them over, trying to fit them to the new situation. In last month's *Spearhead* Richard Verrall of all people sounds a warning against pushing anti-semitism too hard. This author of the Hitler-whitewashing pamphlet "Did Six Million Really Die?" now writes that he thinks the USSR is not "today" controlled by Jews and that "Zionists" aren't the only conspirators. He also says that "conspiracy can never be a total explanation".

But in case all this is taken in the wrong spirit he puts most of the pieces together again: "Political conspiracy is a fact of international power politics..." and "Zionism" has "probably provided the real driving force" of the conspiracy.

The Front are also capable of casting blacks as conspirators. The latest issue of *National Front News* quotes "top crime-buster 'Nipper' Reed of the Yard" (Martin Webster must still be read in *Beano!*) in connection with a supposed outbreak of "mugging" in Peckham as saying "I think the International Black Power movement, with its hallmarks of Afro hairstyle and woolly hats, plays a part".

David Edgar goes on to contrast the racism of the National Front with the attitude to blacks of the Labour and Tory parties and people like Enoch Powell.

These traditional capitalist politicians, he says, are not concerned about immigration as such, but worried by the prospect of black militancy. The spectre of Watts and Detroit haunted them as they argued that

and the 'liberals' was about whether the blacks should be appeased through Race Relations Acts as well as disciplined through Immigration Acts.

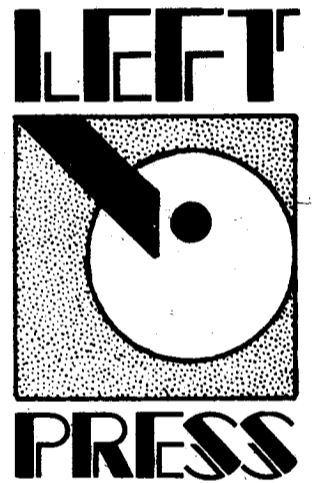
The Front, on the other hand, isn't interested in these problems of British capitalism, and sees black immigration only as an issue to exploit in building a fascist movement.

Yet all this is a rather ponderous way to say that the British state is not fascist; and that true but obvious observation does not at all exhaust the question of the relation between the state and the fascists.

Edgar's concerns with finding a "pure" fascist ideology and with the basic motivations behind the state's racism lead him to some questionable conclusions. The fact that the racism of the state and the demagoguery of Powell or Mellish have helped the Front immeasurably is ignored in Edgar's scheme of distinguishing the fascist strategy on race from the racism of the state. And he concludes that the fight against the state's racism and the fight against fascism have no intrinsic connection whatever.

Defeating the one, he says, will hardly affect the other. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that "the failure of the State's racist strategy will make the threat to blacks from the fascists themselves acute" — a line which is positively reactionary in any of its meanings.

Edgar is rightly concerned to knock on the head some of the more lunatic ideas about racism being hawked around, but as that is merely the



organised expression of racism, or even that the State and/or Labour Party are themselves fascist. But he finishes by denying any connection between fascism, reformist politics and the State.

He doesn't think a fight against racism would undermine the fascists' base, and conversely that the NF can be defeated without a fight against racism, including the racism of the state (e.g., without opposing immigration laws). This in fact could only mean reducing anti-fascist strategy to a series of military operations, together perhaps with rather abstract propaganda about the threat of fascism to the organisations of the working class.

Edgar himself is obviously uncomfortable about where his argument is leading him. He finishes by saying "Paradoxically, the fact that defeating one [fascism or state racism] does not necessarily undermine the other may mean that the united and contemporaneous struggle against both is made more and not less urgent by an understanding of the differences between them."

He clearly, however, sees anti-fascist or anti-racist struggle as 'specialities', quite distinct from the class struggle. In reality, to fight fascism or to fight racism, the essential work is to unite black and white workers, to prepare them to defend themselves, to raise the self-confidence of the black community and defend its rights, and to show a socialist way out of the crisis; and this work hits both racism and fascism, whatever their internal differences.

Rise of the first King Henry

MICK WOODS writes about Upton Sinclair's classic, "THE FLIVVER KING"

TO MANY people (especially those who have worked there) Fords represents the ugliest face of capitalism possible. Anyone who wants to learn more about the rise of the Ford corporation would do well to read "The Flivver King" by Upton Sinclair.

Sinclair's novel combines a biography of Ford with the story of Abner Shutt, a Ford worker, and his family. It gives an account of Ford's rise from building his first car in his garden shed, through his phase of humane management and pacifism, to his being the man who owned Dearborn, its cops, and half of Detroit.

Particularly interesting is the little known story of Ford's own paper, 'The Dearborn Independent' (sic). After buying this paper at a knock-down price, Ford was collared by a former Tsarist agent who managed to convince him that his problems (and the world's problems) were caused by a conspiracy of Bolsheviks and Jewish financiers. Ford was naive (or bigoted) enough to take this, and the notorious 'Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion', at face value, and started to publish anti-Semitic articles like there was no tomorrow.

"All the world's troubles, wars, strikes, insurrections, revolutions, crime, drunkenness, epidemics and disasters" were caused by Jews, claimed the 'Dearborn Independent', and it published this tripe for 20 weeks. When Jews protested Ford published a series on Jews in America.

Klan

This continued for three years; in the meantime, Ku Klux Klan activity increased and any bigot that crawled out of the wood was capable of justifying his particular prejudice with the backing of Henry Ford. This only stopped when William Fox, the film producer, launched a campaign against Ford's cars, claiming they were defective and dangerous. Ford apologised to the Jews and shut up shop.

The book tells Ford's story well — but Abner Shutt, Ford's victim, is nothing but a cameo, a stupid, arse-licking boss' man, who feels sorry for Ford even after having been demoted, sacked, and finally shot at by Ford's goon squads. The character of Ford is lightly sketched: what emerges is a somewhat stupid, unoriginal philistine who built his empire on blood and finally became little more than the puppet of his own profits. The book is worth a read but not worth buying — order it from your library.

MOST OF US will remember the days when there were ten or twenty car firms in Britain. Now there is only one wholly-owned British car firm in the mass production league [Leyland], and three American-owned firms: General Motors [Vauxhall], Ford and Chrysler.

The trend to giant monopolies has of course taken place in all capitalist countries and in all industries. Most of these giant firms have spread to the far corners of the earth in their search for cheap labour, increased profits, and a way of outdoing their competitors.

One reason for the Common Market is that — with tariff barriers down in Europe — cut-throat competition can be given a boost. Logically, the result of this competition must be the survival of only

How to survive in the cars rat-race

by Dave Spencer

one or two of Fiat, Volkswagen, Renault, Leyland, etc. and the closure of the rest.

The Financial Times (11th November 1977) commented on Volkswagen's announcement of a £1.2 billion investment programme over the next four years: "The plan will be seen as further evi-

dence that motor manufacturers are having to maintain a high level of investment to stay at the top of the European industry, where six leading companies — Volkswagen, General Motors, Renault, Ford, Fiat, and Peugeot-Citroen — are locked in a tough battle for sales. Each of these companies seems pre-

pared to spend between £1.5 billion and £2 billion in the near future".

The FT doesn't mention Chrysler and Leyland, apparently thinking they are non-starters!



NEIL COBBETT reviews Jon Bloomfield's Communist Party pamphlet, "BRITISH LEYLAND: SAVE IT!"

"THIS pamphlet argues that retention of British Leyland as a publicly owned company and the implementation of the 10-year investment programme as outlined in the Ryder report is vital both for the British economy and the workforce of BL...."

"Leyland is so central a part of Britain's manufacturing industry that its rundown would have enormous economic and social consequences. Most important it would swiftly accelerate the downward spiral of Britain's industrial decline. While there is endless talk about 'the national interest', the major companies invest great sums abroad, while much industry in Britain continues to plod on with out-dated, inefficient machinery. The maintenance of BL at full capacity is crucial to the strength and future prospects of manufacturing industry in Britain...."

The whole of Jon Bloomfield's pamphlet is written from the standpoint of the interests of British industry. It's the same tune as the bosses' apologists have always sung: back us against overseas capitalists (and overseas workers), build up our capitalist industry and our profits, and then there'll be some crumbs from the cake for you.

The Communist Party's case is that this servile attitude is justified in the case of Leyland because it is 'publicly owned'. Bloomfield does not dare assert that this makes the corporation 'socialist',

but instead speaks vaguely of "the economic and democratic strengths of nationalisation". What he means, in plain words, is that workers should not see a nationalised company as exploitative, and that they should not fight their exploitation at its hands.

But in fact Bloomfield's own argument shows the capitalist nature of British Leyland, when he describes its dependence on a favourable competitive position on the international market as being crucial.

Bloomfield argues that it has been lack of re-investment in new plant over the last 30 years which has brought Leyland to a situation where it is unable to compete profitably on the world market with its American, European, and Japanese rivals, who have built up a superior technological base for vehicle manufacturing. As evidence he quotes the fact that between 1968 and 1974 Leyland made a profit of £74 million, of which £70 million was distributed as dividends to shareholders.

The moral of the story? We must persuade the capitalists to be virtuous and invest more in Britain, instead of speculating and investing overseas.

It is not a sufficient explanation. British industry has been in decline relative to its international rivals, and especially US capitalism, for at

least 70 years. The lack of investment is a result of the decline, and not vice versa.

But to go into a proper analysis of the world economy would necessitate a complete inversion of Bloomfield's narrow, national-chauvinist outlook.

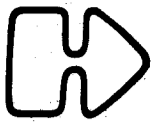
Starting from his non-Marxist analysis, Bloomfield concludes that the findings of the Ryder report are 'progressive'. But the gist of Ryder's proposals was that BL should be 'rationalised'. This means that the government will pump money into BL on condition that productivity improves and that there is a massive reduction of industrial disputes, i.e. that workers' power to organise and fight their exploitation is subordinated to the needs of British capitalism, a fair amount of which depends on British Leyland. Basically Bloomfield argues that Ryder's proposals were OK, but that they need to be applied more forcefully — against government interference (though it is the government which will implement the proposals!)

Bloomfield also backs Ryder's plans for 'participation'. The CP recommends that workers help to manage their own exploitation, under the guise of extending workers' control over the nationalised industries. The game is really given away by Bloomfield's insistence all along the line that the workers' 'representatives' and the bosses

can reach compromises on investment, redundancies, location of industry, and so on. He recommends that shop stewards "come forward with constructive proposals".

Nowhere is it suggested that workers organise and fight back, to defend their own living standards and to provide solidarity, for example with the Leyland workers in South Africa. There is no call for a united mobilisation of workers for any purpose but to follow the CP into this bureaucratic death-trap.

A striking and important omission from the pamphlet is Leyland's interests in South Africa. Although Bloomfield argues that workers' wages should be raised (not for any subversive reasons! no — in order to create a larger home market for the produce of British capitalism!), in reality the revamping of BL must be to make it more competitive on the international market. If workers "participate" here in order to increase the exploitative powers of the bosses, then that can only help the bosses in their super-exploitation of black workers in South Africa, Leyland South Africa being a main area for Leyland investment. Thus British workers would be forced to pit themselves against the interests of their fellow workers, for the sake of trying to prop up decaying British capitalism.



In Europe, Peugeot have merged with Citroen, with links with Michelin tyres. Volvo has taken over Daf (Holland) and is being pressurised in Sweden to link with Saab. In Japan, Mazda are in trouble, while Ford have links with Honda, Chrysler with Mitsubishi and General Motors with Isuzu trucks. In the USA both American Motors, with only 3% of the home market, and Chrysler, with a falling share of the market, have closed assembly plants for a number of weeks recently.

Straight mergers and closures are not the only moves available.

One trend is for different firms to share the same component parts. Renault and Leyland have been discussing shared components; Chrysler and Mitsubishi already have this policy. Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler are developing the "Europeanisation" of their operations, with components from one country being used and assembled elsewhere. With the Detroit "down-sizing" policy — smaller cars being built in the USA because of fuel regulations — it is likely that US-built cars will be exported in direct competition with European cars, and we will see the sharing of components on a world-wide basis.

Another trend is for local assembly of cars in the Third World. Brazil, for example, now ranks eighth in the world in car production, with 600,000 cars a year, mainly VW and Ford. Governments in Iran, South Korea and Nigeria have encouraged national car plants. The advantages to the multi-nationals of cheaper labour and transport costs are obvious.

Cushion

Fords have recently been in the news because of their aim to build new plants in Venezuela, Egypt, Tunisia and Greece, while Renault have plans for Pakistan and Portugal. Meanwhile Honda and VW are to build assembly plants in the USA.

In order to cushion the effects of recession in cars, most firms attempt to diversify their interests. Fiat, for example, are now only 64% dependent on cars, and aim to be only 50% cars by 1985. Leyland Special Products Division recently turned in a 57% increase in profits, from such things as arms production, fork lift trucks, Prestcold fridges, and so on.

Britain's car industry is going to the wall in this sharpening competition, despite its importance in the British economy.

The UK motor industry employs 300,000 workers directly, with one million in the components industry — that is, 5% of the UK workforce. A large proportion of these is concentrated in the West Midlands.

The industry is the UK's biggest single export earner — £1,300 million a year. In 1955 the UK produced 25% of world cars outside the USA; in 1975, it produced 10%. In 1965, of all cars bought in the UK, 95% were UK-produced; in 1974 this was down to 72%. This year imports will take over 40% of the UK home market. Leyland is down from over 30% in 1974 to little more than 20% of the home market.

Leyland's attempt to link with Renault is a sign of its weakness. The official 'Central Policy Review Staff' report stated that the government, through the NEB, must take a lead in dealing with the problems — too many firms, too many plants, too many workers!

Blind

Tom Litterick MP, a leading Tribuneite, has claimed that import controls, particularly against Japanese firms, will help Leyland. Such a nationalist policy is not only reactionary, with nothing in common with socialism, but it blindly ignores the whole multi-national race that is taking place. A declining national industry propped up by a protected home market will simply fall further and further behind world competition, and collapse all the more drastically in the end, like the British shipbuilding industry.

'Participation' schemes just mean tying ourselves to decaying British capitalism and collaborating in the closure of plants and the sacking of thousands of our workmates. The Labour government's policy, with the subsidies to Chrysler and the buying-out of Leyland, attempts to bail out the bosses at the workers' expense.

A policy to defend workers' interests in this crisis must be based on the following principles:

□ We take no responsibility for our employers' profitability or competitiveness. Otherwise we will get dragged down with them in their inevitable decline. Only a fighting, militant workforce can defend jobs and conditions.

□ An end to 'compensation without nationalisation' — instead, nationalisation without compensation of all the car and car components industries.

□ Democratically elected and accountable combine and industry-wide stewards' committees, extending internationally, fighting for workers' control in the industry.

The SWP's penny wisdom

JAMES RYAN REPORTS ON THE 'RANK AND FILE' DELEGATE CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER LAST SATURDAY, 26th.

IN THE presence of 522 trade union delegates, the socialist Workers Party relaunched their National Rank and File Organisation, which was first set up at a conference in March 1974, but has been merely a shadowy 'double' of the Right to Work Campaign for most of the time since then.

The conference was weaker than 1974's. Then, there were 307 delegating trade union bodies; this time, there were 251. Then, 40 stewards' committees sent delegates; this time, 28. Then, the strongest trade union contingent was from the AUEW (58 branches); this time, from the white collar unions. Only 18 AUEW branches sent delegates.

Politically, the drift of the conference was summed up in the enthusiastic applause given to a delegate who said "Take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves". If

the conference took care of the 'little things' of militant trade unionism, then the 'big things' of socialism would take care of themselves.

Resolutions proposing a deliberate political effort to lead the struggle on from the 'little things' to the 'big things' were rejected. Workers Action supporter Pete Leyden, an AUEW member from Longbridge, moved an amendment to write "work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay" into the conference policy on unemployment.

PROTESTS

This amendment points the way forward to a revolutionary struggle to unite the employed and unemployed; but for the SWP it was presumably 'too advanced'. I must say 'presumably' because no attempt whatsoever was made to argue against it. The SWP votes were rallied against it at voting time simply by announcing "This amendment is the sliding scale", and only reading it out after protests from the floor.

Thus the hint was given

A STEP TOWARDS WOMEN'S TRADE UNION CAUCUSES

LAST SATURDAY, 26th, 80 women attended a Working Women's Charter school on women in the trade unions.

LINDA COLLINS and CLARE RUSSELL report.

THE AIM of the school was to exchange experiences, to provide the sort of information necessary for organising in the unions, and to begin to organise groups round the Charter in the trade unions. It ran into two main problems. Inadequate organisation led to the workshops scheduled for the morning, on maternity leave and other issues, being scrubbed, and to rather rambling discussions in the afternoon workshops. And the whole school was partly sidetracked into a debate with sectarians from the International Spartacist Tendency and the Workers Socialist League.

The IST moved that all the workshops be cancelled and the whole day given over to a debate on the programme of the Charter. The school rejected that because people had come for another purpose, to discuss the problems of organising inside the unions. (Moreover, those like the IST or the WSL who flatly oppose the Charter campaign can scarcely at the same time claim the right to participate in the movement's discussions on its programme!)

So two reports were heard in the morning: from Hounslow hospital (occupied to stop closure under the Government's cuts plans) and the Yardleys dispute. Joyce Garner

from the Hounslow occupation committee spoke of the support they had had from Trico women workers, who won a major equal pay strike victory last year. The Trico women have also been to the fore on the Grunwicks picket line.

The most promising of the afternoon workshops, grouping women from particular unions or industries, was the one concerned with the public sector (SPCS, the CPSA, NUPE, and NALGO). Names and addresses were collected for organising further meetings of Charter activists in NALGO.

The most commonly mentioned problem in that workshop, and in the others, was poorly-attended, male-dominated union branches. One woman from TSSA (the railways white collar workers' union) described her efforts to get the Charter adopted by her union branch. She had been the only woman at her branch meeting; three men had voted for the Charter, but it had been defeated. Yet she worked with 200 women, none of whom had been willing to attend the branch.

A report from the Department of Health and Social Security branch of the civil servants' union CPSA in Oxford pointed to the answer: union meetings in work time. Almost 100% attendance had been achieved.

The National Union of Students members at the school decided to meet again to draw up a resolution on women's rights for NUS conference. Other workshops were held for NUT and NATFHE; ASTMS; the

that it was an unacceptable Trotskyist proposition, and at the third show of hands the amendment was finally defeated by a 3-2 margin.

Fred Laplat, an IMG member from TASS Building Design Staff branch, moved an amendment for "clauses to guarantee £1 increases monthly for each 1% rise in the cost of living index; working class monitoring of the cost of living index". Workers' Action supporter Jim Denham (TGWU, Longbridge) also spoke in support of this proposal. The SWP line of "£15 now" didn't answer the problem of inflation, nor even the problem of restoring 1974-5 living standards for many workers. Nor did an arbitrary figure like £15 have the same potential as the "automatic cost of living increases" demand for unifying the working class.

Pete Glatter, an SWP member from Tottenham bus garage, spoke against the amendment. He said we should not propose clever demands cooked up in our heads, but select a demand (£15) which workers are fighting for now. Apart from its cynical opportunism, this argument was discredited by the fact that Glatter spoke soon after Geordie Barclay had reported from the Stanton steelworks strike, where the workers' demands include a cost of living clause!

Nevertheless the amendment was defeated by a four-to-one margin.

Much of conference was given over to delegates from strike committees explaining about their disputes and calling for solidarity. An emergency resolution supporting the firemen was also carried. That much was useful. But even as an SWP industrial rally this was a lack-lustre affair, and as an attempt to launch a genuine rank and file movement it was a non-starter.

health unions; and the manual unions represented there (AUEW, TGWU, GMWU).

The Hull Charter group said they would organise a regional school on women in the unions, going into the factories to get support for it.

In summing up, Jill Daniels (editor of the Charter paper *Women's Fight*) urged women workers to form caucuses to work out a strategy of action. She argued that women are worst hit by the economic crisis and the Labour Government's social contract, with women's wages lagging even more than men's. She called for a fight against all wage controls and for women's right to work.

The debate with the sectarians came up again at the end of the school. Celia Pugh of the International Marxist Group argued that the Charter had to be supported as it was because it was one of the whole range of struggles developing against the Labour Government. Workers' Action supporter Mary Corbishley posed the issues differently. By opposing any amendment of the Working Women's Charter, the IMG set the task of just sitting back politically and letting the experience of women workers' struggles wash over us. They are the opportunist mirror image of the sectarians. Instead of trying to give a lead for rank and file struggle, they are running after an illusory united front with the trade union bureaucracy.

An effort to shift the Charter campaign's focus to rank and file organising in the unions will be the necessary follow-up to the school.

Longbridge Action Group meeting

AFTER THE BALLOT, WHICH WAY FORWARD?

12.30pm, Saturday 10th December, at the Labour Club, Bristol St, Birmingham.

Chairman: Frank McGuirk [Longbridge steward]; speakers include militants from Rover [Pat Hickey], Cowley [Alan Thornett], and Longbridge [Jim Denham].

WORKERS IN

ACTION



LEYLAND PAY RISES BLOCKED

LEYLAND workers should not get the 10% increase which management has conceded them until their current plant agreements expire. This ruling was made, not by the Leyland bosses, not even by the Labour Government, but by the TUC General Council. Only the TGWU, the NUSMW, and TASS voted to advise the Govern-

ment that the workers should get the money now. The rest of the General Council stood by the 12 month rule.

Leyland were prepared to pay everyone the money as from November 1st for the sake of moving towards a single bargaining system for the whole of Leyland Cars. Longbridge is

unaffected by the TUC ruling, since the plant agreement there ended on November 1st anyway, but Rover and Cowley, for example, now stand to wait until the New Year to get their increase.

There's a lot of anger on the shop floor about this, but no action yet.

Thousands organise on rents

THOUSANDS of tenants in Northampton are organising to withhold 17% rent increases ordered by the Borough and the Development Corporation recently.

The campaign started with left wingers on the Eastern Development organising mass meetings and demonstrations, and forming an Action Group with representatives from 12 estates. To date over 2,000 tenants have given the Action Group pledges to withhold the increases.

Labour Party activists then spread the campaign to the Borough tenants. Action Committees

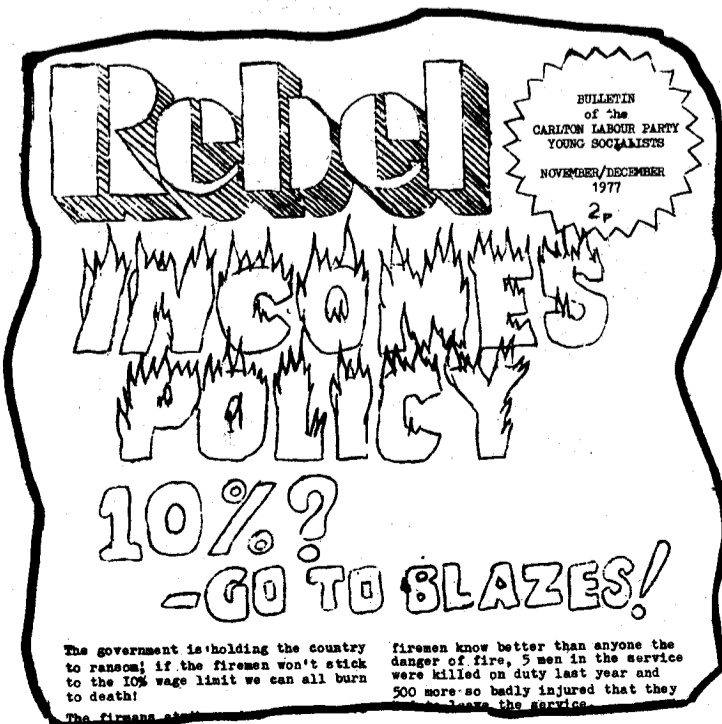
have so far been formed in Weston, Delapre, and Duston wards. With more meetings to come, the protest could become town-wide. Once they see they will not be isolated, many tenants are ready to take direct action.

Labour councillors are supporting the campaign and scoring points against the Tory-controlled council. What they don't mention is that the original cause of the rent increases is the Labour Government's cut in financial support to local authorities.

ROSS CATLIN

YOUNG SOCIALISTS BULLETIN ANGERS TORIES AND PRESS

TORIES ENRAGED



"WHAT worries me is that these young people cannot see anything except from their own biased standpoint. They seem to be practically at war with society". That was the response that the latest issue of *Rebel*, Carlton Labour Party Young Socialists' monthly bulletin, brought from the Tory chairman of Nottingham Council, Howard Noble.

The main article in the bulletin was one supporting the firemen's strike and attacking the 10% limit.

Councillor Noble's indignation was echoed by the *Nottingham Evening Post*, which ran a front page "exposé" of the bulletin. Another feature that earned Cllr Noble's denunciation in the council chamber was that *Rebel* "urges school children, under the most offensive headline, to start what amounts to secret branches of the so-called National Union of School Students, and among other things campaigns to protect teachers' jobs".

After claiming that "no comment was available from Carlton LPYS", the *Post* refused to interview YS members or to print a letter in reply.

'Tough' boss gives in after three weeks

THE SUTTONS workers have won their fight against victimisation after a three week lock out. The TGWU made the dispute official on Friday 25th, and on Sunday 27th Sutton surrendered unconditionally.

The national negotiating committee, and convenor Tommy Hackett, have been recognised; all the workers have been reinstated, including the three shop stewards Sutton said

he would not take back. Wage negotiations will go ahead, aiming to reach an agreement by January 3rd which will then be backdated to December 1st.

The workers were unable to secure pay for the period of the lock-out, so they still need funds. Send donations to Jim McKenna, 4 Fairywell Rd, Grange estate, Timperley, Cheshire.

LABOUR ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

No more Whites, no more Benyons

Ann Kingsbury of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign describes what the campaign has been doing and what its plans are.

This year at Labour Party Conference abortion was debated for the first time as an issue in its own rights and a resolution calling on the Parliamentary Labour Party to legislate for a woman's right of choice in law was carried overwhelmingly.

The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign has worked very actively over the last few months to ensure that abortion was debated and the success of the resolution shows how much support there is within the Labour Party for the organisation and its aims. LARC was set up a little less than a year ago for Labour Party members within the pro-abortion movement. It has never seen itself as a rival organisation to the National Abortion Campaign; the two organisations have strong links and have co-operated in campaigning activities. LARC has set out to use its special relationship with the Labour Party and owes some of its success to the campaigning activities of NAC as well as to pro-abortion Labour MPs.

There is no doubt that in the coming parliamentary session LARC will have to join the other pro-abortion organisations in fighting off yet another attempt at restrictive legislation. Of immediate concern to LARC

is the news that the Government is preparing a Bill to be agreed with the supporters of White and Benyon and one which will be guaranteed Parliamentary time. LARC supporters inside the House of Commons are agreed that any attempts to compromise must be restricted. To support them, LARC intends to arrange meetings between these MPs, who support a woman's right to choose and pro-abortion organisations.

The question of support for individual MPs has become important now that the Labour Party is fully in support of abortion on request. Members of Parliament in marginal constituencies are going to come under attack from the Churches and the anti-abortion organisations. Energetic campaigning is needed if the possible loss of votes is not to weaken the position of Conference resolution and make a Government compromise more likely.

For the future, LARC intends to concentrate on enlarging its contacts and building up support within the Labour Party and Trade Union Movement. LARC appeals to the readership of *Workers' Action* to join actively with the pro-abortion movement to help to build the future campaign, to support women's rights when they come under attack and to help plan future positive legislation for a woman's right to choose.

★ Contact LARC at 73 Albion Road, London N16.

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*, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER. Broadside Mobile Theatre benefit for FBU strike fund. 8pm at Brent Trades & Labour Hall, 375 High Rd, Willesden, London NW10. Admission 50p.

SUNDAY 4 DECEMBER. London Workers Action meeting on "The Firemen's Strike and the 10% Limit". 7.45pm at the 'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd.

SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER. Longbridge Action Group meeting, 'After the Ballot, What Way Forward?' 12.30pm at the Labour Club, Bristol St, Birmingham.

SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER. 'Campaign for Action in NUPE' conference. 11.30am at NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, London WC1.

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER. The International-Communist League public meeting advertised for this date, on 'Marxism and Terrorism', has been postponed. A new date will be announced later.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER. Cardiff Workers' Action meeting: 'Violence, the State, and Revolution'. 7.30pm at VCS, St Mary Street.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER. Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting: 'Ireland: the Law and the Working Class'. Speakers: Jennifer Tait (ACG), Brian Rose-Smith, and a speaker from the TUCPTA. 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. Adm. 20p.

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