Prices, mortgages, rents— and those juicy profits too

ON SUNDAY Peter Walker, Minister of Industry, boasted that ‘the prospects for British industry and commerce are better than ever before' and spoke of ‘prosperity' ahead.

Five days earlier mortgage rates had risen to a record figure. As a result, millions of working class families will see £1 a week transferred from their pockets to those of wealthy moneylenders.

Three days earlier, the Prices Commission had let through another wave of price increases, cutting into the spending power of every housewife in Britain.

Two days after Peter Walker's statement, bank interest rates also rose to a record level— ensuring that the extra 50p a week council tenants will have to fork out in increased rent in five weeks' time is handed over by the council as increased interest payments to the rich.

'GREEDY'

When Peter Walker talks of ‘prosperity', it is a prosperity which has passed by most people, whose living standards are being cut by rising prices.

Until recently, the government story was that increased prices were caused by 'greedy workers' and rising wages. Their own figures now prove them wrong. Between October and March, wage costs for industry fell for the first time since 1973. Yet prices rose faster than ever.

Now they are resorting to a different tale. They claim price increases are inevitable because of the pressure of international markets.

But this is only a small part of the explanation. It certainly does not apply to council rents—raised by British government action—or to mortgage rates—raised by builders' societies' action.

It does not explain many food price increases either. After all, most of the wheat and beet, rents in this country is also produced here.

The government keeps quiet about the massive increase in profits by the over-procifying companies which have not been left out. Unilever, which gets permission from the Prices Commission to increase the price of washing powder,67p, every three months, every week, has announced that its prices will rise by 12 per cent this year (apart from a quarter this year).

The government has announced that the profits earned by the big groups, ICI, ICI, Philips, Unilever, etc., have been exceptionally good.

The big banks have been doing even better. Barclays, of which Minister of Defence Lord Carrington used to be a director, recently announced that its profits were up from £16 to £15 million. The recent rise in interest rates will have boosted them even more.

Big farmers have not missed out on the profits boom either. Farm profits rose by 50 per cent last year and about another 40 per cent this year. So the government ministers who own large farms—such as Heath's closest friends, James Prior, who owns 370 acres at £1,000 an acre, and Lord Carrington, who has 700 acres—will have seen not only their incomes more than double since they took over the government.

ANGER

It is high time that ministers talk so often about 'unparalleled prosperity'.

It is not surprising, either, that large numbers of working people are hearing such talk with increasing anger and resentment. When Jack Jones, head of the Transport Workers' Union, said on Sunday that if workers were squeezed any further, they would resort to industrial action to maintain their living standards, there was no doubt that he was telling the truth.

The trouble is, Jones and the other leaders of the main unions show no signs of making any preparations for such action. This week they have devoted their energies to coolness in yet another friendly chat with Edward Heath.

They have shown by their meek acceptance of Phases One and Two of the wage freeze that they are unable and unwilling to defend their members' interests.

So it is up to rank, and file activists in the unions to take the initiative and prepare.

End the talks with the government now.

P3 BLACKMAIL

ASSASSINATION

THREAT BY ARMY

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AND

TROUBLEMAKERS
A GREAT wave of working-class solidarity has followed the occupation of the Lip watch factory by police in Besançon in eastern France.

Although the police chose to move in on the day before a major public holiday in the middle of August, when many French workers are on holiday already, the response was immediate. Five thousand workers demonstrated in Besançon the next day, and another 5000 attended a solidarity meeting in Paris.

Among the many solidarity stoppages, a 24-hour strike by railwaymen paralyzed major railway centres such as Toulouse and Dijon, and held up traffic at the main Paris stations.

Even workers on holiday took part: 700 workers at a factory holiday camp near President Pompidou's summer castle in Brittany sent a deputation of 60 demonstrators to his gates.

SHOCKED

The regular police who at first occupied the factory have been replaced by the notorious CRS, the special riot police. There have been street battles every day, and a large area from the factory has been sealed off. Respectable opinion has been shocked by police behaviour in beating up three journalists and attacking nearby flats and a railway depot without provocation.

While there are the usual accusations that sinister outsiders are responsible for 'provoking' the police, informed eyewitnesses believe that most of those throwing stones and even molotov cocktails at the hated CRS are local youths, expressing solidarity with the Lip workers and trying to get even with the forces of law and order.

The four demonstrations convicted of assaulting the police are all young workers from the district. The local working people can be seen applauding the demonstrations and warning them of approaching CRS charges which they can see from their barracks.

The Lip factory had been occupied by its 1300 workers for almost four months, since the management threatened to close it down in April.

The method of occupation won widespread support. The workers took over the entire running of the factory and democratically elected committees carried out all the tasks which were formerly management's, such as control of the assembly line and safety. The workers produced were sold through trade unions and factory committees to other workers at cut prices, by-passing the usual middlemen.

There was no question of the workers co-operating with the legal process. Bank accounts were opened and gold sovereigns were sold to pay their wages and to keep the factory running. The fact that did emerge when the company was legally investigated showed that Lip, which was a French firm taken over by a big Swiss company, had been highly profitable. Lip was heavily in debt.

The trade union leaders of both the social democratic CFDT, the majority union at Lip, and the Communist Party-led CGT were caught off-guard by the workers' control, and preferred to see the workers in a demonstration that the 'French watch-making heritage' was being preserved under new management.

But there is no doubt that most French workers regarded the Lip workers in as a demonstration that workers can run a factory just as well, if not better, without the bosses.

For months the trade union leaders pleased with the French government to intervene and set up a new company to run Lip. They used the work-in as a bargaining token and sought publicity for the workers' efforts as a 'means of persuasion'.

Now the government, in the person of Charbonnel, the Minister of Industrial and Scientific Development, has intervened—with a plan which means sacrificing a quarter of the workers.

The naked use of force by the police and CRS to back up the minister's 'negotiations' shows just what workers are up against if they believed that the challenge of the work in could be kept within peaceful bounds as a negotiating point, that the government could act as a neutral authority.

This is the real issue of the Lip work-in: to keep the factory small, the most significant event in the sense of the general strike of May 1968.

Laurie Flynn

BRAZIL—150 armed peasants have taken over a market town in the remote Maranhão state, with the help of local landowners who emigrated from a life of poverty in the more crowded provinces to escape a maquiladora subsistence in difficult conditions at a time when the whole area was 'state property'.

But some of the wealthy businessmen of São Paulo city began to take an interest in Manaus. In the Manaus, the Brazilian government has been selling off 'property rights' to companies and speculators, who want to use the area mainly for stock raising and turn out its present 'possessors'.

The struggle against the companies, by both the peasants and the agricultural labourers who work for the companies at alienation wages, is continuous. In May a French priest, Father Jentel, who worked among the displaced peasants and workers in his work in the Maro Grosso, was sentenced to 10 years in prison by a Brazilian court.

CHILE—The Christian Democratic Party, the main opposition to President Allende's Popular Unity coalition, has now come out in full support of the 'labor-owned' strike which is threatening to bring down the government. Christian Democratic members of parliament have been demonstrating their support for the labor owners on the unit, and professional associations of doctors and trades have also called out their members in support.

Meanwhile, the fall of the rate for American dollars on the Chilean black market is said to have been caused by the CIA hand-out circulating.

Despite Allende's sharp swing to the right and the present party base of up to 250 military men in his cabinet, the army has been used to break this 'strike' of reactionary middle-class elements. Troops who turned up at a ferry depot near Santiago last week in full battle-dress limited their action to a search for arms, and did not get any troops moving.

CHINA—There are still rumours that the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of China is about to take place, though August, the month initially tipped by Peking foreign press circles, is nearly over.

There have been only two congresses since 1945: the eighth was adourned from 1958 to 1958, and the ninth was held in 1969, marking the close of the Cultural Revolution episode.

At the Ninth Congress the name of Lin Piao, the then Minister of Defence, was emphasized in the party constitution as the only possible successor to Mao Tsetung as party leader. Now Lin is dead and denounced, and it is thought that the Tenth Congress will be largely devoted to finishing off his reputation and using him as a scapegoat to denounce all sorts of opposition within the party.

A spate of recent articles about Lin Piao in the leading Peking publications include accusations that he tried to kill Mao no less than three times, and a denunciation of his rule as a military strategy.

There are many important issues to be faced by the Chinese leadership: the country's economic future, foreign policy, and the restoration of many officials denounced at the time of the Cultural Revolution. It is often claimed that factions exist within the party on these questions, but it is unlikely that any real debate will take place at the Tenth Congress, whichever it is eventually held.
ASSASSINATION THREAT

Use in attempt to get youth to spy for army

On Thursday, the Sunday Edition released a story about a potential assassination threat against a British army figure. The threat was purportedly communicated through a phone call, and the individual in question was contacted by a youth who was to be used as an informant.

The individual in question is a prominent figure in the British military, with a long history of service and a notable position in the army's intelligence operations. The youth, a local youth leader, was contacted by a mysterious individual who offered to provide valuable information in exchange for a substantial payment.

The youth was promised a large sum of money if he could successfully complete the task. The individual provided a phone number, and the youth was instructed to make contact to provide information.

The youth was told that the individual was to be contacted at a specific time and date, and that the information was to be relayed to a high-level official within the British government. The youth was also warned to be discreet and to take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of himself and his family.

The youth was instructed to contact the individual through a secure phone line, and was given a specific code word to use as confirmation. The youth was also told to provide a detailed report of his conversation, including any parameters that were discussed.

The youth was instructed to remain vigilant and to report any suspicious activity to the authorities. The youth was also warned to keep all information confidential and to never disclose the details of the conversation to anyone.
A Right Honourable activity

APPEARING on television recently, the Rt Hon Jeremy Thorpe, the Liberal Party's working-class leader, poured scorn on the left wing of the Labour Party.

"I don't think the nationalisation of the banks is an answer to any of our problems," he said.

It would certainly not answer the problems of Jeremy Thorpe, who is a highly-paid director of one of the biggest banks in the nation. Angry shareholders of London and County Security, which hit the headlines this year for its 200 per cent second mortgages and of which Mr Thorpe is a director, are gathering for a storm attack on the directors at the annual meeting on 30 August.

Although the company shows a healthy increase in profits to £3.6 million, much of this "increase" is overseas and some "unprofitable" keeping.

A hefty loss on the taking over of Deakins Ltd last December is written into the books as an "asset".

Another curious feature of the London and County's accounts is that the bank owns 10 per cent of its own equity shares. The Daily Telegraph of 13 August explained what this could mean:

"This raises some quite fundamental questions. For instance, if the London and County is forced on default to foreclose on the loans it will end up owning its own shares--a state of affairs rendered illegal by the last Companies Act."

What's that? The Right Hon Jeremy Thorpe's director of a company which could be breaking company law? What a fine day that would be for community politics!

Cheapest of them all?

I AM always sorry to report bad news from our main competitors, but it appears that the Daily Mirror is in this one.

Mr Murrow told the council that if they didn't institute harassment proceedings, he would.

And that, for the moment, is the end of the matter, except for a curious drawing which is circulating the Bailey Street area. It portrays two locals observing a bird in a birdshop. One character is saying to the other:

"Do you, yer, that Bird's got two heads? To which his mate replies: "But ain't we!"

NO GALE WARNING

Two detections in Bedford have been made in a case involving an application by Alderman Gale for planning permission on land owned by Joseph Gale and Jones, who are great friends, with some friendly plaudits about Alderman Gale not to embarrass the Labour Party.

The workers have decided on a no-consultation as they are anxious not to embarrass the Labour Party.

HEATH'S HAYWARD

EDITORIAL and public relations workers for the Labour Party are having a little trouble with their employers over a pay award. The National Union of Journalists chapel has put in a substantial claim, but have been told by the Party's Salaries Board that they can only get an extra £1 plus 4 per cent.

When the chapel pointed out that it has fewer than 10 members, any pay award does not even have to be reported to the Pay Board, the Salaries Board took legal advice and on the matter.

The claim was that 81 plus 4 per cent was the absolute limit. All firms, even those without the code, also had to follow it.

The complaint is being followed. The Salaries Board consists of party general secretary Ron Hayward, treasurer Jim Callaghan and leading left-winger Ian Mikardo.

The workers have decided on no-consultations with Alderman Gale not to embarrass the Labour Party.

"They told us," says Ken Bullock, leader of the Labour Party, "that they didn't want to know about it." Mr Bullock told the council that if they didn't institute harassment proceedings, he would.

And that, for the moment, is the end of the matter, except for a curious drawing which is circulating the Bailey Street area. It portrays two locals observing a bird in a birdshop. One character is saying to the other:

"Do you, yer, that Bird's got two heads? To which his mate replies: "But ain't we!"

TERROR OF THE BOSSES

ONCE upon a time, there was a print union official in Manchester who struck for all the hearts of all newspaper executives. A whisper of the news disturbed the waters, the waters this believer-in-the-rights-of-the-working man roaring into action.

He was the arch trade unionist; his members had a guaranteed wage and he was to worry the management with a vengeance. He was right and justifiedly remunerated. He never lost an opportunity to strike, and the papers had it soft, sitting in their marts. When they struck out company profits, while their men stayed away at unlabor, respectable hours, wondering whether they had enough cash in their pockets to buy a pint and a half.

His rating was high on both sides of the negotiating table on the management side because he was a man of principles, and clever with it, and on the union side because he usually was.

So clearly are his virtues in those few days remembered that at a recent old boys' dinner he was presented with, in the person of a glass, glases were raised to the glory of the newspaper world. Mr John Collier.

But the toast was drunk with some delicacy—for Collier, that man whose work was always right, seemed to have seen the error of his ways. He had become a business man. He had, once he worked to raise the workmen up, the decency that he was located to himself.

SWORE

Where once he would have kicked militia-like the wrongdoers like Rupert Murdoch was in the teeth rather than accept a drink from them, he now sings the dirty diger's praises and takes £15,000 without his money without blinking.

And wherever once he swore that everyone who worked on the newspaper who were the souls of the earth, he now excused them of industrial sabotage.

It was worth excusing them of all the workmen—people that brought the machines at stake, our to a standoff with the local public.

The NGA and SOGAT man was funny with Collier who—incidentally is in charge of industrial relations at the Sun and News of the World, because it seemed to him that he had not been completely honest when telling the management—side of the story to the Newspaper Publishers Association (NPA).

In all statements put out by the management, say the NGA and SOGAT, he had, as usual, been painted as grasping, greedy man, wanting every more money in their already lavish wage packets while Collier and Rupert Murdoch were sleeping in their cars.

Fortunately for Collier, all this has happened while Murdoch is living in New York. He may not be too pleased to come home to find his industrial relations director has just divorced him from the NPA.

Leonard Hill
Blackguard Enemies of the People

When farmers become gentlemen, their labourers become slaves, wrote William Cobbett 150 years ago.

Just as those who were employed in the new factories in Britain during the industrial revolution experienced dramatic changes in their lives, so too did those who worked in agriculture.

This should not surprise us. For the doctrine of the “free market” economy found its first disciples not in Manchester or Wolverhampton, but in the great corn-growing belt of the southern and eastern counties.

By 1750 English agriculture was basically capitalist, with a few thousand landlords leasing out their land to some tens of thousands of farmers. In their turn farmers employed hundreds of thousands of labourers. Life for these agricultural workers reached extremes of misery and poverty—wages were abominably low, 16 hours were often worked each day, and their diet, housing and health was barely sufficient to exist.

The exploitation and starvation they suffered has been hidden by the historians and little was ever recorded of their lives. But riots, disturbances, hayrick burning and threatening letters all revealed the brave attempts to fight back.

Heroic

The gentlemen farmers attacked by William Cobbett rarely had it all their own way. Wage slavery in the fields of Suffolk and Sussex was hated by the rural poor just as much as in the new factories of Lancashire and the Midlands.

After years of unrest and defeat the agricultural workers had no alternative but to organize, to strike, to go on the run, to murder the landlord, the “heroic Captain Swing.”

The letters they wrote to their masters tell their own tale.

Sir,

Your name is down amongst the Black Hearts in the Black Book and this is to advise you and the like of you, who are Parson Justices, to make your mind.

Ye have been the Blackguard denying the People on all occasions. Ye have not yet done as ye ought.

Swing

What were the conditions which drove farm workers to such bitterness? How had their lives been changed?

For most of the 18th century the quality of their conditions was substantially better. In some areas of the country markets were still regulated by magistrates to ensure that the poor got adequate supplies of cheap bread and other food.

May Days, fairs, harvest festivals and the like brought the whole village together to celebrate and sports, dancing and various other forms of merrymaking took place.

All these events had been under pressure for centuries and, compared to what they had been in the past, they were now only fragments. Taken individually they might not always amount to much, but together they made the essential framework in which most of the rural poor lived their lives.

Their importance lay above all in the fact that they were living emblems of the belief that those at the bottom of the social scale had got not just obligations, but also rights.

On the land, farmers were hired not by the week but by the year and were thus guaranteed a regular income whether work was available or not. Common land was also used by labourers who would add to their income by keeping a sheep, pig, or perhaps a few geese.

Also still strong was the belief that those unable to support themselves should be supported at home by the parish, money and goods being provided out of the parish relief fund and local charities.

By the 1790s, however, most of this was disappearing as the rural poor were reduced to subservient wage slaves with virtually no rights at all.

As the demand for food increased in the new industrial towns and under the impact of the Napoleonic blockade of British ports, profits boomed for the farmers and landlords. Living after more and more profit they became more and more ruthless.

In addition the rulers of the countryside, panic-stricken that the events of the French Revolution might repeat themselves in Britain, tried to suppress all forms of militancy.

The attacks on the village poor were multiple. There was enclosure. The previously common or open fields were turned into private fields, and the common, but uncultivated, woodlands, rough grazing and waste into private property.

The cottagers lost greatly. They could not afford the legal and other costs involved and so had to sell up. The squatters lost all they had in the past when they had only customary, not legal title to the land.

And the labourer now had nowhere to graze his animals, since enclosure was often accompanied by attempts to prevent the use of roadside verges for grazing.

The effects of this open class robbery and the feelings it aroused are well illustrated by the following excerpt from an anonymous letter sent to the gentlemen of Ashill in Norfolk in 1815:

"You do as you like, you rob the poor of their rights through the grass up that God sent to grow, that a poor man may feed a cow, pig, sheep, or horse and that a poor man may walk along the road to prevent the grass growing . . . There is five or six of you have gotten all of the whole of the land in this parish to your own hands and you would wish to be rich and starve all the other part of the people.

But enclosure was not the only way the poor were forced into wage slavery. In most parts of the country 'living in' was abandoned, labourers being now considered too lowly to share their masters' house. Hiring by the year was replaced by hiring by the week, the day and even the hour. In bad weather the labourer would get nothing.

With this went attacks on all forms of popular leisure. Fairs were closed down, supposedly because they were too rowdy, and sports were discouraged on the grounds that they led to drunkenness and vice.

Vicious

In 1844 the Rev Henslowe, of Hitcham, Suffolk, could write of his parish: "They have no village greens or common for active sports. Some 30 years ago, I am told, they had a right to a playground in a particular field at certain times of the year and were then celebrated for their football, but somehow or other the field has been lost to them and is now under the plough."

The final vicious blow came in 1834 with the passing of the New Poor Law. The administration of relief for those in need was already chaotic and involved much degradation, but the New Poor Law was deliberately designed to be as nasty as possible. No relief was to be given at home, only in the workhouse where bawdy houses were separated from wives and brothers from sisters and where military discipline reigned supreme.

Against all this, the village poor hit back. There were riots in East Anglia in 1816 and 1823, and all over England in the Swing riots of 1830. Enclosure fences were pulled up, popular attempts were made to regulate the sports the poor would play, the grass was burnt down, cattle were maltreated, attempts were made to start trade unions. But in the end the rural poor were not to be scared.

Streaming into the new towns and cities, where their masters employed them, the labourers would face a new challenge, and that was the weavers of Lancashire.
IT&T busts trust-busters

ONE of the most fundamental policies which brought President Nixon to the White House in 1968 was his call for "more powerful anti-trust laws". Nixon and his side-kicks, Mitchell and Khadim, who both later became Attorney General, made emotional speeches to small businessmen about the dangerous powers of the great mergers and monopolies.

Soon after his election Nixon appointed Richard McLaren, whose political life had been devoted to a war on the trusts, as chief of the government's "trust-busting" operation. McLaren turned his attention to the biggest merger in the history of the world: between IT&T and the Hartford Fire Insurance Company. IT&T needed Hartford desperately, but McLaren was determined to bust the merger. A bitter legal battle developed, and McLaren swore that he would take IT&T to the Supreme Court.

Suddenly, one day in 1971, McLaren gave in. IT&T kept Hartford, and McLaren was appointed a federal judge. Nine days previously, IT&T had promised 400,000 dollars for the financing of the Republican Party convention in San Diego. McLaren and Nixon and all their "anti-trust" rhetoric had been bought for 400 grand.

All the time, IT&T was buying governments and local authorities. It employs an army of lawyers to twist the law, pressure officers and public relations men who are paid 100 million dollars a year to "win the press", speculators to fix foreign exchange rates, lobbyists—10,000 in Washington alone—to bribe Senators, Congressmen, deputies, councillors, MPs, with everything from a prostitute to a free taxi service.

Lord Caccia: "The IT&T-Bevin Correspondence"

ITAL and Macmillan

IN 1954 Admiral Ellery Stone, a formidable figure in the IT&T hierarchy, started to lobby in Britain for lending rights for an IT&T transatlantic cable. The cable would have been in competition with a similar cable run by the British nationalized Cable and Wireless company.

Nevertheless, the Admiral lobbied hard, especially his old war friend, Harold Macmillan. He was Defence Minister and Foreign Secretary in the Tory government from 1954 to 1956. In both positions, Macmillan was more than friendly with IT&T, seeing the Admiral twice and expressing his support for the IT&T project.

In 1956, Macmillan's senior civil servant in the Foreign Office, Sir Harold Caccia, sent the Admiral a ten-page "waxwork" letter signed "Bevin", and also a 25-page "Bevin" letter on IT&T's behalf, which employed 15,000 workers and was a subsidiary of IT&T. Lord Caccia, as he now is, also wrote a lengthy letter to STC, which employs 15,000 workers and is a subsidiary of IT&T.

The land

FOR all their power over the private enterprise governments of the West, Gennan and IT&T are happiest when doing business with Russia and Eastern Europe. The two sides' involves Anthony Sampson, 'can reveal a mutual attraction: the Russians need a disciplined and centralized system to deal with while the multinationalies see in Russia the longed-for prospect of orders for markets, strike-free factories and predictable five-year plans. Russia... could be the ultimate land of no surprises.' In other words, Russia represents for IT&T the ultimate in capitalist government. It can assure the monopsonistic and ideological the highest rate of profit at the lowest risk. There is in Russia no anti-trust competition which makes all those lawyers and PR men necessary in the West. More important, there is apparently no threat from the workers. IT&T's factories in Russia are protected by strikes' clause against the government. "If it's hard", Sampson, "not to strike at the prospect of a system and no more disturbance by anti-trust. True enough Russia but all the other multinational's Molson, Ford, ITT and others, too..."
Today I had lunch with our contact at the McLean agency, and I summarise for you the result of our conversation. He is still trying to boost the support for the government when the congressional vote takes place on October 26. Approaches continue to be made to select members of the Armed Forces in an attempt to have them lead some sort of uprising -- no success to date.

Economic Pressure

Some business sectors are encouraging economic collapse, hoping this eventually will necessitate a military take-over, or strengthen Allende in the congressional run-off. Undercover efforts are being made to bring about the bankruptcy of one or two of the major savings and loan associations. This is expected to trigger a run on banks and the closure of some factories resulting in more unemployment.

I indicated that certain steps were being taken, but that I was looking for additional help aimed at inducing economic collapse. I discussed the suggestions with Gullfoyle. He contacted a couple of companies who said they had been given advice which is directly contrary to the suggestions I received.

CHIPPING AWAY

3. Savings and loan companies are in trouble. If pressure were applied they would have to shut their doors, thereby creating stronger pressure.

HOW AMERICAN AID TO ECUADOR WAS STOPT

In 1971, ITT's subsidiary all American Cable and Radio was taken over by the Ecuadorian government. After much negotiation, the government agreed to pay $600,000 a year and hand over valuable land as 'compensation'.

The government delayed in paying and subsequent demands promptly demanded that the US AID fund cut off all development loans and grants to Ecuador. The AID department at first refused, so ITT's top officials 'implied the names of top Nixon administration officials to the bureaucrats in ITT's will' (Business Week, 9 August 1973).

The net result was that 415 million dollars in aid to Ecuador was held up for two years.

The second document resulted: 'some business sectors are encouraging economic collapse this eventuality will necessitate a military take-over, or strengthen Allende in the congressional run-off. Undercover efforts are being made to bring about the bankruptcy of one or two of the major savings and loan associations.

American aid to Ecuador was stopped.

The 'Act of God' that's hit the buses

by Jack Aldrich
and Pete Glazer (TGWU)

London newspapers have been giving the public the opportunity to complain about the city's bus services. Passengers complained long waiting times were added on to the working day. Outside rush hour, services were often out of order.

London Transport's only response is a sorrowful admission of helplessness in the face of the staff shortage, which they treat as an Act of God. For some mysterious reason, they are 4000 busmen short.

Strong medicine, such as one-man buses and cutting the service to ribbons, have been forced down the Government's throats. Although this has not helped, it has become a habit. London Transport has proudly announced that the new 'geminal' project means no change in staff levels through a more efficient use of buses.

London Transport's notices only point out that there is a general shortage of labour in the city. But the staff shortage on the buses is as old as the rotten wages and conditions. That is why the Industrial Society Union of Imperial College, London, is doing a survey of unemployed men to see if they will apply for jobs on London Transport.

The new driver may be memorised by the £41 wage plus £2 a week for transport union recruiting posters. He is brought down from the actual basic rate of £29. The only extra is a £10 full pension. The bus is a £2000 car which is whirled away by new black buses and drivers.

Precedent

The world reality is that the one bus in sight is run on overtime, as busmen valuable try to catch up with the cost of living. Compulsory overtime is included in some strikes.

This is a unhealthy job and management are quite prepared to make it worse by speeding up running times. Drivers tell us that complaints are made.

Millions of pounds have been spent on a modern fleet of air-conditioned buses and spare parts. Because of this drivers are considered to be in some kind of standard or dangerous job.

Management's attitude has been: whatever we want, we'll get what we want. A recent example was that in Richard Way, chairman of the London Transport Executive. A meeting between 10 members get an average of £200 a week. Sir Richard himself knows all about public transport: That's why he travels in a chauffeur-driven £9900 Jaguar.

The executive takes the credit for success like the £300,000 that was made by working busmen harder and faster through the Oxford Street 'bus and taxi only' area. It is the executive that makes headlines like the yearly £400,000 to Harry Hyams for the use of Tefal House, which he has been sorry for 10 years.

It is to this executive that the Transport and General Workers Union annually sells hard-cone conditions for reasonable pay. Every day the petty officials of management and union get together to carve up the jobs and the workers. One of the bitter fruits of this partnership is clause 17 of the 1967 agreement. This is a penalty clause against strike-breakers who strike for one day, such as May Day, can lose up to £20 of their week's earnings.

Disembarked busmen are beginning to turn away from leaders who collaborate with the other side. Some have started the Platform, a militant rank-and-file group.

The aims of the Platform include: a £40 basic wage, four weeks holiday, shorter working week, competitive payment for sickness, abolition of clause 17, and the struggle for full-time officials.

The struggle for these aims is just beginning.

Unilateral, and Shell-BP, are just as unoccupied.

What can be done about it? The nation is the only institution strong enough to stand up to the multinational, and to insist comparability for, the foreseeable future', he writes. So must all stand united to strengthen the power of the nation state, to revive our national parliament, our national press, our national culture and, no doubt, our national monarch.

Sampson's conclusion is not only reactionary. It is futile. For how is national power to be exercised? Through parliaments, already hopeless, bandied and corrupted by the power of the capitalist giants? Through the press, itself owned and controlled by these same monopolies?

There is a power capable of confronting the multinationals and the monopolies, a power which could bring about a peaceful and just society, a power which has not been used in the past, a power which could bring about the world that we will not be able to keep up and their fellow barbarians to power.

Unilateral, and Shell-BP, are just as unoccupied.

What can be done about it? The nation is the only institution strong enough to stand up to the multinational, and to insist comparability for, the foreseeable future', he writes. So must all stand united to strengthen the power of the nation state, to revive our national parliament, our national press, our national culture and, no doubt, our national monarch.

Sampson's conclusion is not only reactionary. It is futile. For how is national power to be exercised? Through parliaments, already hopeless, bandied and corrupted by the power of the capitalist giants? Through the press, itself owned and controlled by these same monopolies?

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WHERE THE CHURCH STANDS

THE MILLION POUND STRIKE

Tariq's arrest

Squatters
DAVE MARSON is a Hull docker. Researching at Ruskin College, Oxford, into the history of his own people, he accidentally discovered the big wave of school strikes in September 1911.

"It was a photograph that really affected me," he said. "It was a picture of the children picketing the gates of Courtyard Street Primary School. But both of my children I had to myself. I identified myself with the school and with the parents that might have been the parents of the children I went to school with.

He went on to follow the course of the strike through 62 towns in England, Scotland and Ireland, and presents us with a fascinating, moving, and often humorous account of this pamphlet.

"The strikers" were mostly children from the poorest quarters of towns. "I was the youngest of 5. My mother had died when I was 8. I was brought up in the community where the author was born, and, he says, it is where the author was born. They suffered from all the children alongside; the most obvious being "nits in the hair," which straight away marked them as "fags" and "slops," because they had their heads shaved. "They were thin, their eyes bulged... Some had no shoes. In some cases boys and girls and even teachers were involved in the strike, in the summer time their thicker clothes were generally perceived because they were safer there.

To the newspaper columnists they were the 'dunces'. The Traint Class."

"An old worker, Harry Burns, remembered the strike. "The teachers treated the poor kids as if they were the dumbest pupils. They were not so dumb. They could see on them because if any trouble started in the class, it was assumed that the poorer children who started it: simply because they could not concentrate."

"When they got bored they would start writing notes. The teacher would walk across and hit them with whatever he had in his hands at the time or throw things, as the best way of dealing with any insurrection."

DEMANDS

The strike started in Bigyn School in September 1911, after a deputy headmaster punished a boy for writing a letter around his class urging his colleagues to stop work. It spread to Liverpool next day, where a strike committee was elected which presented its demands to the teachers: abolition of the cane, an extra half-day holiday per week, payment for monitors. They marched through the town and attacked 'scab' pupils with sticks. It spread to Manchester, where it stayed for weeks. "Pickets were appointed and provided with badges, and tickets were put on their coats as they went round to schools and persuaded the boys to strike in sympathy, carrying out their operations with great seriousness."

There were the first of the flying pickets. "The idea quickly spread. In June, July and August 1911 there was a huge wave of unauthorized strikes all over the country. The lesson and the method was not lost on these new young rebels. As one boy said: "Our fathers starved to get what they wanted; what our fathers have done we can do."

BLACKLEGS

And they did. The strikes now spread south as far as Portsmouth and Southamption, north to Glasgow and Dundee, east to Hull and Sunderland, and west to Wales and Dublin.

In Hull the strike started on 13 September in St Mary's Roman Catholic School, and quickly spread to working-class East End. "Soon there were crowds of boys standing outside their respective school gates, howling and shouting "come out!" and "blacklegs!" to the pupils who were returning to their classrooms."

There were demonstrations with banners throughout the country, marching to the most popular songs of the strike. "Tramp, tramp, tramp!" "Fall in and follow me."

"The film features some of these. "Blues Like a Shower of Rain" is one. "Blues Like a Shower of Rain" is the latest in the 'Yesterday's Witness' series is on the Spanish Civil War. "A Cause Worth Fighting For". It deals with the 20,000-strong British Battalion of the International Brigade, of which 500 were killed in the battle against Franco's fascists. According to the BBC the film contradicts the belief that most volunteers were radical romantics and middle-class Marxists. Most of the volunteers were workers, and the capitalistic, well-educated enjoyed playing an active role in their life. I am one of the adolescents in 1930s ageing but superficially not prohibited by capitalism—but they are working as a formidable group with a well-organized system.

"In there is tolerance within the system, of which a corollary individuals and individualism exist not only freedom to develop but the participation of existing social relations, and the potential as adequate work and leisure can be achieved.

"Milligan's list of basic demands—for an end to job discrimination, abolition of the trades laws relating to consent, end of police and medical harassment—are excellent and should be part of any socialist programme. So too is his contention that such a struggle must be a part of the overall fight against sexism in the system in general."

"They must be backed up by a thorough analysis of how the system works, and by the pressures of how long do the demands may be granted within the system, and by the class stance quo, and on precisely the social freedoms that we are fighting for."

JOCK YOUNG

TELEVISION PREVIEW

NEXT Monday BBC-2 has a couple of programmes that might be worth watching.

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A LAW designed to protect traders is being used by the police as an excuse to harass left-wing groups in Guildford.

The Guildford Corporation Act requires anybody wishing to sell anything in Guildford to have a licence from the local council. This law was designed to prevent the number of street traders from growing so large that they drove each other out of business through competition.

The Guildford branch of the Communist Party and the International Socialists had been regularly selling their papers in Guildford High Street on Saturdays, without a licence, until the police warned them several weeks running that they were breaking the Guildford Corporation Act by selling.

Then a plain-clothes man threatened to arrest the next person seen selling papers in the town centre. Each of the two groups then applied to the council for a licence to sell their papers. Predictably, Guildford's overwhelmingly Tory council rejected both applications. As the grounds for the rejections were the only possible grounds allowed by the Guildford Corporation Act—sufficient licence to sell the type of article in question had already been granted.

The only other news stand in Guildford High Street sells the Evening News, and the seller has said that he doesn't regard Socialist Worker or the Morning Star as in competition with his.

Both the Communist Party and the IS branch decided to continue selling papers despite the ban, and members of both groups have several times had-not only their names, addresses, dates of birth and occupations taken by the police. These details, say the police, go on a form which will be drawn to the attention of the council, which in turn will decide whether or not to prosecute the sellers.

At least one council meeting has been held since the first names were taken, and the matter has not yet been raised.

John Nightingale, IS member, was delivering copies of Socialist Worker to regular readers on a Guildford housing estate when he was stopped by a policeman who noted his personal details. The policeman said certain papers were "banned" by the council and he thought Socialist Worker and the Morning Star were. The council had no power to "ban" the newspapers, only the police.

Last Saturday, as well as taking the names and personal details of the street sellers, the police told them with arrest for "obstructing the free flow of traffic" if they continued to sell in the High Street. It is doubtful whether that particular charge could be made stick, but the continued Guildford's magistrate would have no choice.

The High Street is closed to traffic on Saturdays, which leaves well over 420 of roadway free for pedestrians to pass. The average paper seller is no more than .1% wide.

120 at ‘Fight Racism’ meeting

MORE THAN 120 people packed into the London Muslim Cultural Centre last Thursday for a meeting organised by the IS North London group, entitled "Anti-racist resistance to fascism.

The speakers were Henry Hard, the black community organizer, and Mr. Moore, the local trade unionist and former councillor. In the audience were three speakers emphasized the need to fight fascism and to develop a radical black community. After the meeting distributed over 500 leaflets.

The London Muslim Cultural Centre is a meeting place for all people and is open to all communities. The centre is a community centre run by the Muslim community.

GEY STRIKER puts case

COVENTRY—George Peake, area organiser of the picket strikers, said that the pickets outside the Coventry main factory last week were the result of a meeting of Coventry District IS. He spoke about the politics of the company, the struggle against fascism, and the importance of the pickets.

A speaker from the IS Coventry Branch also spoke on the same topic line, briefly putting the case to the people and the IS.

The previous evening, Coventry Trades Council had decided to organise a large public meeting with national and local speakers to discuss the Coventry pickets and the House of Lords decision on illegal immigration. This is an important step which should be followed up by trade unionists elsewhere.

GEY RENDERS NEWSPAPER SELLERS

COVENTRY—The picketing at GEC's Spun Street plant has really begun this week. The Union committee has Met and they have agreed to send a picket list to the rest of the workers who have refused to work.

The behaviour of Albert Fawcett, a leader of the picketing, is to cause outrage to the women production workers. The IS Coventry branch and IS members have approached the local district officials to inform them about Albert Fawcett's activities.

This week the union district committee has decided to put Albert Fawcett on the run away and have not appeared since.

With a shutdown of the plant expected soon, the picketing women will be turning their attention to other GEC factories and locally. The picketing at the joint union committee is covering all Spun Street plants.

Money has started to come in for the group, which has taken over the women on strike and some have families to think about. The IS Coventry committee will be sending a letter to the district committee. The union district committee is now thinking of ways of helping stranded women.

100 join mass picket

SHEFFIELD—100 engineering union members met at Footprint Tool engineering works at 9am on Thursday for a meeting organised by the IS North Sheffield group, and marched to the GEC works with the IS Sheffield group.

The speakers were Henry Hard, the black community organizer, and Mr. Moore, the local trade unionist and former councillor. In the audience were three speakers emphasized the need to fight fascism and to develop a radical black community. After the meeting distributed over 500 leaflets.

The London Muslim Cultural Centre is a meeting place for all people and is open to all communities. The centre is a community centre run by the Muslim community.
MANCHESTER—After less than a week on the first strike ever at James Halliday's vinyl flooring factory, Whitefield, the 400 workers have won a complete victory.

The socialist Halliday union officers, convenor John Nicholson and branch secretary, Frank Logan, have been reinstated.

The two men were sacked after demanding payment of £12,000 under a production bonus agreement made several months ago. The management had overlooked this and the union—The Rubber, Plastics and Allied Workers—had "lost." The employers' total representation on the factory payroll is £28,000.

The reason for the sacking was given as "blatant disobedience of the firm's instructions." But John Nicholson and Frank Logan's real crime was to organize the workers for their rights, and to demand an improvement in the factory's industrial strength to satisfy their demands. On August 1, the factory was completely shut down. The next day the workers barricaded the entrance with pickets to stop all materials into the factory, but were turned down flat.

Management then offered to take back the strikers on condition they lost their stewards' credentials and took a three-month "education course in union matters."

The same day, the management offered to take back the strikers if they paid off their rent and were reinstated. Both these suggestions were contemptuously rejected as "impermissible."

TOUGH

Finally, last Thursday, the management offered a final compromise, and both men were reinstated.

The socialist Workers' Committee: "We are fed up with dictatorial methods in the factory. We are beginning to get organised, and to find out how to hit them where it hurts them most."

In the meantime, said Nicholson: "If government laws and tough companies, have to be forced to pay for a decent standard of living, then we must do this for our members."

The strike has been unfruitful. When the strikers' leaders went to the union offices on the afternoon after the strike started, they were told that the relevant official, Bro Walsh, was not in. The convenor waited outside, and was surprised a few minutes later to see the two top men at headquarters.

He pushed his way past the secretaries and discovered Bro Walsh sitting at his desk.

Rents: Shadow boxing again

By Hugh Kerr

WITH another snowball due in October under the Housing Finance Act, Labour councils are beginning a repeat performance of last year's wobbling.

A meeting of Labour councillors on Saturday, including some from Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, Bradford, Halifax, New York, Derby and Taunton, discussed a common approach to the rents. After some hours' deliberation, they adopted their "fighting" strategy: they are going to seek a rent council—see Heath and Barber! Some Labour councils must have short memories, for they asked to meet Heath last year and were ignored! In fact, they are going to ask all Labour councils to hold off with any rent increases until they have had a reply. This miserable attempt to save the tenants, indeed, could confuse the situation in the same way as last year's Frozen.

The only possible action for Labour councils is to go on about the rent ceilings anyway. They are serious about defying the rent rises to follow the lead of Clay Cross and refuse to implement the rent rises.

Tenants' organisations can put no trust in the promises of these Labour councils, which threatened to prosecute rent strikers last year. They must begin to organise all tenants to fight the rent rises in October by rent strikes backed by industrial action. With prices shooting up, it is not now that they will have the background of mass action, or the strength. But the tenants can organise themselves to produce a fighting strategy for October.

Crescent champions for unity

This makes the job of the National Tenants' Union in Manchester on 23 September even more important. This conference is sponsored by some of the tenants' organisations which have put up the stiffest fight against the rent rises—this conference, including Dudley, Liverpool, Oldham and Kirkby. It is the most serious of their campaigns, and will attempt to co-ordinate the most militant of the tenants' organisation, and produce a fighting strategy for October.

Credentials for delegates from tenants' organisations are available from the Organising Committee, c/o 61 Tyndale Court, Manchester, Essex.

Chocolate workers stage walk-out

NORTH LONDON—A walk-out by chocolate workers at Lister's in Wood Green, on Monday forced the company to bring in a workman from a different shop without consulting the union, USDAW.

The dispute ended after seven hours as chocolate workers at the nearby Williams and Harvey factory and 80 at Tinsley's of Forever made the sack over closer terms.

The strike was the result of a new contract this year, which did not cover three years.

I would like to join the International Socialists

Name
Address
Trade Union
Send to: 1S, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

"My petrol was well on the way to being empty, when the Benetton's went by and I had to get in and await the next one."
"Sabotage’ cry for excuse for witch-hunt against miners",

George Hill, an expelled member of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, is expected to go back to the pay court soon to get an order to seize union funds or property to the value of £200 as "compensation" for exercising his right to expel him.

Hill, the latest Tory stooge to use the National Industrial Relations Court against the union, lodged a strike at the International Syntactic Refineria factory in Southampton. After the strike AUW members refused to work with him.

Two days ago the Lambeth County Court ordered the AUW to pay the compensation order which the union had ignored a similar order from an industrial tribunal. The union was not represented in court. The county court order should be served by this weekend. But the union has no intention of altering established policy and paying up.

Hill is therefore likely to go back to the court for an order to seize the money from the union's bank account. Alternatively the court may decide to seize in bailiffs to take union money.

Detectives from Walsall Borough police are searching Goldthorpe pit, Mexborough.

They are not checking on the worstly inadequate safety precautions in the wake of the disaster at Marham.

They are not looking for water leaks in the pit which killed seven miners at Goldthorpe-collory-not far from Goldthorpe.

They are not testing the strength of the pit props which are bringing so much profit to mining machinery firms, but whose weakness helped to kill four miners at Scalford Colliery, this earlier this year.

No, the West Yorkshire police are hunting "subverts" among the miners, who, according to the statements of Mr John Mills, Coal Board chief of the Doncaster area, have been tampering with equipment in the pit in order to steal and murder their fellow-workers.

Mr Mills and all the newspapers have no hesitation in claiming that there has been "sabotage" at Goldthorpe—ever since the police have finished their inquiries. But miners at Goldthorpe and other pits are complaining that the much-publicised police hunt and the Coal Board statements are a lot of nonsense.

They claim the view of Dennis Skinner, Labour MP for Bolsover, who, unlike

STC strike picket spreads

North London—Strikers at the lengthened by these tactics by the Coal Board at the Industrial Strikers Office and the掠夺or black workers who were sacking while training as a set.

At a meeting progress the strike committee reported that STC, a subsidiary of the multi-national ITT, had to pay for 3000 hours lost because of lack of work. Picketing was reported to have been successful with the help of drivers and Post Office engineers giving support. The strikers called for more support from the

STC strike picket spreads

North London—Strikers at the Industrial Strikers Office and the Enderby Hotels, owned by ITT near Heathrow Airport. London. STC are negotiating to supply 280 million worth of equipment to Nigeria and strikers also have the option to take the contract elsewhere. Next week the strikers will be appealing to other factories and STC plants for support. The strikers have positioned the AEIU district committee to discipline some white workers who are not only strike-breaking but openly taking the bosses side.

FIGHT THE RENT RISES
Demonstrate
Saturday 1 September
Assembly at 2pm