

workers' ACTION

No.128

Dec.9-16, 1978

10p

- ■ Labour, break all links with the Shah!
- ■ Stop Arms Sales to Iran!
- ■ Down with the Shah!

Demonstration, Sunday 17th December
Assemble 1pm, Speakers Corner.

Called by Committee Against
Repression in Iran



Stop arms for Iran

LAST FRIDAY the Shah's army again massacred hundreds in the streets of Iran.

Huge mass demonstrations have continued daily since then, defying the troops. Strikes have re-started in the strategic oil industry.

Two powerful forces confront each other. Both, so far, appear inexhaustible.

On one side, the courage and determination of the Iranian people, fuelled by anger which has built up over 25 years of the Shah's brutal and corrupt rule. On the other side, a large,

heavily-equipped army.

The army is virtually the only reliable support the Shah has inside the country. The richest capitalists have fled the country taking much of their money with them. The judges are on strike. The employees in several key ministries are also on strike.

ARMY

The army owes its solidity to the fact that huge proportions of Iran's big oil profits have been spent on it.

American arms supplies to Iran total \$8,000 million since 1973, with another \$12,000 million on the order books. **British arms sales to the Shah are about \$1800 million EACH YEAR.**

A team of several thousand US military advisers provides a backbone for the Iranian army. In effect it is the British and American governments which are shooting down the people in Iran — with the Iranian army acting as their proxy.

Blood is being spilt on the streets of Iran to protect profits: the key profits made from Iran-

ian oil, controlled by British and US interests, and amounting to 9% of world production; and the profits from extensive US and British trade with and contracts in Iran.

REBELLED

The power of profit is not inexhaustible. Already individual conscript soldiers in the Iranian army have rebelled on several occasions. And the example of Vietnam stands to show the Iranian people that a

fight for freedom can be won against the worst military odds.

In the Vietnamese struggle, a key factor was the revolt of a mass movement in the USA against their government's war-making. Now we need a movement in Britain to insist that the Government ends its backing for the Shah.

Join the demonstration on 17th December in solidarity with the Iranian struggle, to demand that Labour break all links with the Shah's regime, and to end all arms sales to the Shah.

Time's running out at the Times

THE TIMES and the SUNDAY TIMES have closed down. On December 14th their workers are due to be given notice (varying in length from 2½ weeks to four months) unless by then they have agreed to drastic management ultimatums on job cuts, work conditions, and disputes and negotiating procedure.

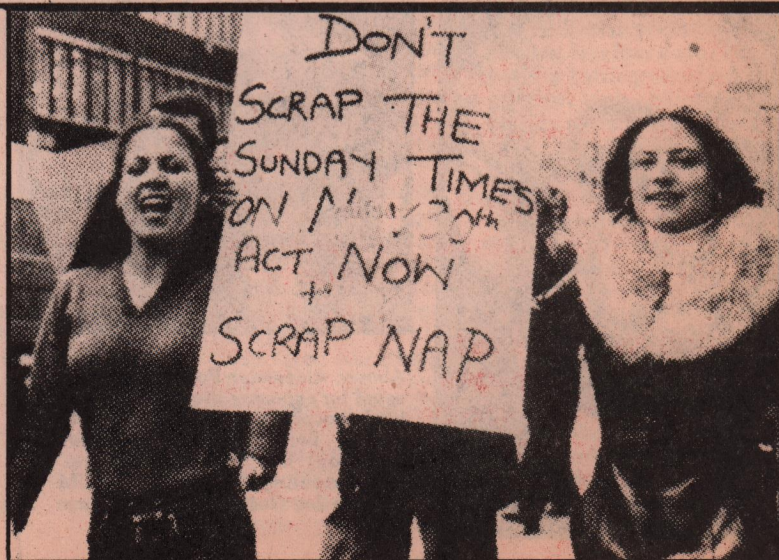
But still the unions are doing nothing to organise concerted resistance.

All except the NGA are still negotiating with the bosses. Some groups of Sogat, AUEW, and NUJ members have signed the agreements.

Having made the fine 'concession' of postponing the lockout for two weeks (the workers are currently going into work but not producing any papers), the bosses are now

whittling down union strength bit by bit. They must reckon that by the time the first dismissal notices expire (early January) they will have managed to isolate the militant resistance.

But nothing is irrevocably lost yet. The provincial journalists' strike gives the print unions a great chance to help both themselves and the striking journalists by calling out their members in (at least) Thomson Regional Newspapers, the chain of provincial papers owned by the same firm as the Times. And the postponement of the lockout gives more time in which to argue and organise for the workers to occupy the Times and use the premises to produce their own strike paper at the service of the labour movement.



'Act now', workers demanded: but even after the closure, union leaders are still dithering

workers' ACTION

No.127

Dec.2-9, 1978

10p

Bread strike

SHUT DOWN THE FLOUR MILLS

THE NOOSE is tightening around the necks of the two big bakery firms still holding out against the Bakers' Union £10 claim. Pickets on the flour mills can stop the supplies that allow Rank Hovis and ABF to produce some bread, and block their most profitable business.

More of the independent bakers have been forced to settle. Firms who control 30% of bread production have settled for amounts between £8.50 and the full £10, while RHM and ABF are trying to hold out on their £5.50 offer.

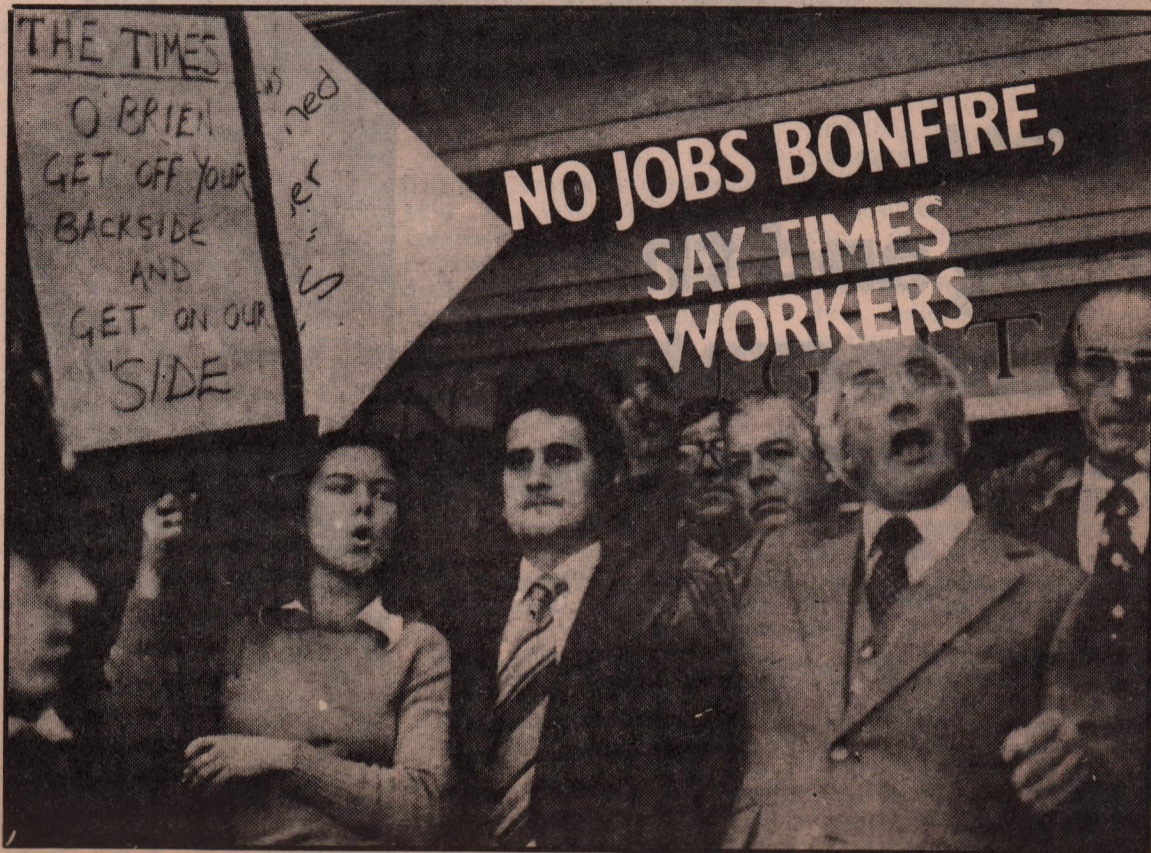
Much of the RHM/ABF bread still getting out comes from dwindling stockpiles of frozen loaves. But, despite instructions from shop stewards in the mills, flour is still being moved, using non-union labour and scabs driving unmarked tankers who are paid £100 or more a load. This has to be stopped. The GMWU nat-

ionally has given the bakers official support, and there needs to be action on it.

With continued clashes with police on the picket lines, and with the flying pickets, new militants are taking the lead in many areas, rather than the officials. Often women workers and black workers who are given little consideration by the official union structure have come to the fore.

Now this rank and file leadership must be organised. There should be strike committees in all bakeries, regional coordinating committees of shop stewards, and a national shop stewards conference of the Bakers Union.

The bread barons' factories and flour mills must be brought to a halt. And that action has to be organised from the picket lines, not from armchairs in the union offices.



'HUSSY MUST GO' was the cry on a demonstration of Times workers on Tuesday 28th, two days before the lockout deadline. Duke Hussy is the chairman of Times Newspapers, the man who delivered the 'buckle under or we close' threat to the workers.

After the demonstration, more than 2,000 people packed into Central Hall, Westminster for a rally called by Natsopa. Left wing MPs and leaders from the print and other unions all came to pledge their support for the Times workers.

Many speakers urged workers to

lobby their MPs. But the biggest cheer from the audience came when Ron Thomas MP declared that the essential battle would be waged on the industrial front.

Jack Dunn, from the Kent miners, was also loudly cheered when he said new technology must benefit the working class and not the bosses' profit accounts. There must be more newspapers, not less.

George Willoughby (SOGAT), Reg Williams (CPSA) and Denis McShane (NUJ) pledged support from their unions.

Alan Sapper (ACTT) compared

the threat at the Times with events at Technicolour in Rome. After an 8-week lockout management sacked all the workers and then re-opened, re-employing only those workers that they wanted back in.

The weakest speech came from Natsopa leader Owen O'Brien. His slogan was 'negotiation, not dictation'. He announced that he has agreed a disputes procedure with the management if only they drop their lockout threat.

More on the Times: see centre pages.

MAO AND HUA-TARGETS FOR TENG

WALL POSTERS have appeared in Peking attacking Mao, the Cultural Revolution — and the current top leader Chairman Hua. Thus the pace of 'de-Maoisation' has been stepped up, and the factional struggle within the Chinese leadership has apparently sharpened.

The coalition leadership which took over after the downfall of the Maoist "Gang of Four" struck a compromise between rehabilitated victims of the Cultural Revolution (like Teng Tsiao-ping) and people who owe their power to those stormy last years of Mao (like Hua Kuo-feng). The two groups needed to stabilise popular unrest and economic chaos, and begin a drive to industrialise.

Material incentives were used to buy time to work out compromise solutions for the short term; a limited purge of regional supporters of the "Gang of Four" was carried out. A Party Congress and a National People's Congress were held to consolidate the compromises worked out.

Now those compromises are no longer enough. The technocrats around Teng are setting a furious pace for modernisation, stressing material incentives, and

opening up China to investment from and trade with the capitalist powers.

Others may prefer a slower pace of change, but have no answer to the arguments that China cannot afford to take her time to re-equip the army, to industrialise, and to catch up with years of neglect in scientific research.

Teng, who now seems to be 'on top' in China, has long been one of the most resolute opponents of the ideas typified by the Cultural Revolution: i.e. autarchy, hostility to science, and reliance on state-organised willpower to ensure economic development.

In 1967, as Party Secretary, he was no.2 on the Cultural Revolution's purge list. After the Tien An Men square demonstration in April 1976 — when 100,000 occupied China's equivalent of Red Square, mourning Chou En-lai's death — he was purged again. The Tien An Men demonstration quickly became a protest against the whole bureaucracy, and was followed by similar protests in other cities. Wu Teh (Mayor of Peking) and the "Four" blamed it on Teng, who was unable to mobilise support for him-

self because by then the whole bureaucracy was alarmed.

Now the Cultural Revolution is a huge embarrassment. The 'technocrats' are out to discredit it. Last month there were reports that Liu Shao-chi was alive and well in Peking. Liu, the former Head of State and the No.1 "capitalist-roader" toppled by the Cultural Revolution, had long been thought to be dead or exiled in some remote province.

Then came official news that Wu Teh had been sacked as Mayor of Peking. Wu has long been known as an opponent of Teng with strong sympathies for the "Gang of Four". He was responsible for suppressing the Tien An Men demonstration.

Wu was responsible for suppressing the Tien An Men demonstration; and his dismissal came together with the new official verdict that the Tien An Men demonstrators were heroic revolutionaries struggling against the Gang of Four. But Wu, and several more powerful allies, are still on the Politburo.

In the next stage, one of the national dailies carried a first-ever criticism of a famous article

continued on page 2

workers' ACTION

No. 126

Nov. 26-Dec. 2, 1978

10p

Flying pickets can beat the bread barons

AT THE BAKERS' union conference last Saturday [18th], every speaker really ripped into the leadership's poor planning of the strike and the TUC's lack of action to support us.

The conference voted unanimously to continue the strike, and drew up plans to organise flying pickets to stop supplies of flour from the mills. The two large bakers holding out against the workers' pay claim, Rank Hovis MacDougall and Allied Bakeries control (together with Spillers) 80% of flour milling.

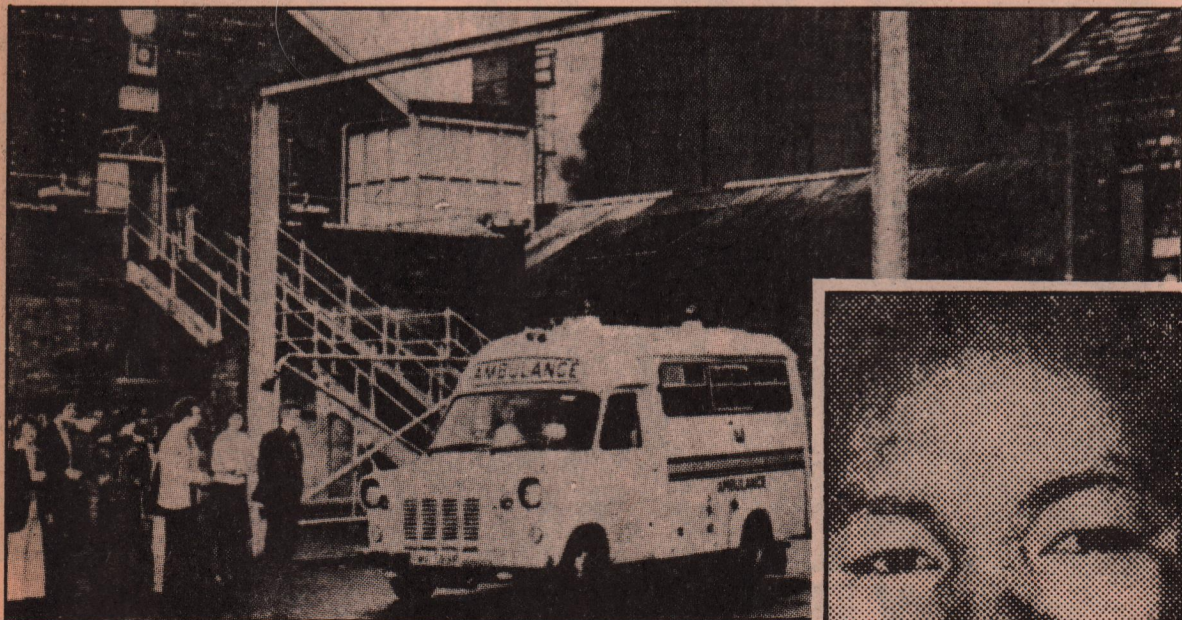
Flying pickets had already been active before the conference in a number of areas such as Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry and Cardiff, against the few big bakeries still operating with scab labour, and against the flour mills. In South Wales bakery workers from three factories in Cardiff, Swansea and Taffs Wells have jointly picketed the Tewkesbury mill that supplies the factories. On Wednesday 22nd they finally cut off all flour supplies to South Wales.

Now every region of the

union is hiring minibuses, and our determination is already winning a response from the workers in the mills. Workers in Rank Hovis and Spillers mills have agreed not to cross Bakers' Union picket lines. In the Allied Bakeries mills, where the GMWU is the major union (rather than the TGWU), the officials have been dragging their feet and have made no recommendation to support the bakers' strike.

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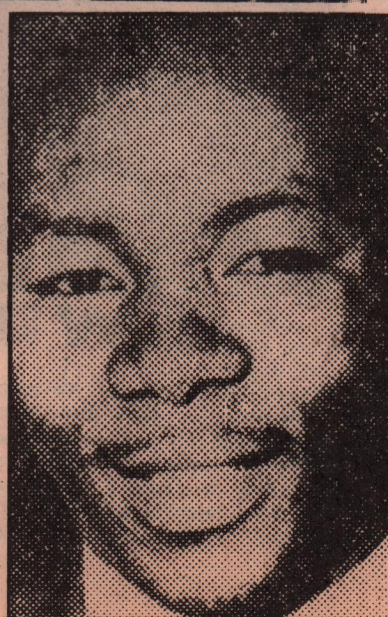
MORE VICTIMS OF PIT PRODUCTIVITY?



Seven miners were killed and 48 injured in an accident at Bentley Colliery, south Yorkshire, on Tuesday 21st.

The cause of the accident is unknown. It may have nothing to do with the productivity bonus schemes introduced this year. Militant miners will, however, now be even more convinced that safety should not be sold for easy cash. This year's pay claim is submitted to the Coal Board this week. It must be won in full so that the productivity bonuses can be abolished.

(Right: Kenneth Green, one of the seven killed).



Inside

TWO SPECIAL FEATURES

Pages 2-3: BRITISH REPRESSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Pages 4-5: INTERVIEW WITH AN IRANIAN MARXIST; THE ABADAN OIL WORKERS' STRIKE

Page 6: A Bangladeshi socialist describes the role of the police in Brick Lane

Page 7: Leyland; Page 8: Ford, ABC trial, more on the bakers' strike



Prayer won't help...

TUC REBUFFS HEALEY - NOW BACK THE BAKERS

LAST WEEK the TUC General Council rejected two statements carefully concocted by 'senior TUC representatives' and the Government.

The statements were worded about as forcefully as a bowl of alphabet soup. Tom Jackson says he thought they would go through on the nod, no need for a vote. Yet, in what appears to have been a heated meeting, the General Council split 14-14.

The vote reflects the bitter resentment felt by millions of workers at the last few years of wage restraint. Even the most extreme evangelists of moderation, like Bill Sirs of the steelworkers' union, opposed the statement.

Write off

The fourteen voting against were reported to be Ray Buckton (ASLEF), Ken Gill (TASS), Ken Thomas (CPSA), three TGWU delegates (Moss Eyans himself was on holiday), Albert Spanswick (CoHSE), Bill Sirs (ISTC), Alan Sapper (cine technicians), Doug Grieve (tobacco workers), Terry Parry (firemen), and Alan Fisher (NUPE).

Len Murray was, of course, disappointed. But, he insisted, it would be wrong to write off the TUC's

"special relationship" with the Labour Government.

"Co-operation with the Government is never as easy as confrontation, nor is skilful negotiation as easy as walking off the job". What a load of rubbish!

Haggling

Co-operation with the Government has been precisely the easy way out for the TUC. Indeed, one of the main problems that many trade union officials saw in the repeated TUC-Government agreements was the fact that the trade union official was hardly left with a job at all... unless he was one of the few who were clinking glasses at Downing Street every couple of weeks.

The idea that the negotiator has a harder time than the striker belongs to the same school of thought as the idea that the Queen has an arduous job. Negotiation is only really complex and difficult when you are negotiating from a position of weakness. The real task of the trade union leader should be not so much negotiation as organisation.

And what the TUC should do now is set about organising support for the bakers - not start another round of haggling with the Government.

workers' ACTION

No.125

Nov.19-26, 1978

10p

No respite for the Shah

NOT EVEN the Shah can believe David Owen's smarmy apologies for the brutal repression in Iran.

Owen still declares that the Iranian regime has been modernising and liberalising the country, and that the opposition is dominated by right-wing religious fanatics bent on turning the clock back for reasons

of sheer superstition. But on November 6th the Shah admitted to "past mistakes of unlawfulness, cruelty and corruption" and declared to the Iranian people: "In the course of the last two years, you have risen up against tyranny and corruption..."

The Iranian people have not been fooled by the Shah's efforts to regain control. The Shah declared, "I am with you in the struggle to re-establish fundamental liberties"; but the Iranian people know who took away those "fundamental liberties", and whom they are struggling against. The Shah tried to scapegoat a former SAVAK chief and several former ministers; but as he put the country under military rule, the crowds still chanted: "Death to the Shah".

The strikes have continued. Almost every day there are press reports of the oilworkers strike ending ... followed by reports that it has not in fact ended at all. Other strikes affect the press, Iran Air, the electricity and car industries, and the Finance, Justice and Trade ministries.

The basic demands remain the same: removal of the Shah, the end of martial law, the right to form genuine trade unions, the expulsion of the foreign oil companies, and the release of all political prisoners.

Of the thousand political prisoners whose release was announced by the regime at the end of October, it turns out that many were just finishing their sentences, some had already been released ... and some have not been released at all, despite the announcement.

Meanwhile, new prisoners are packed into the jails: from Karim Sanjabi, leader of the bourgeois 'National Front' opposition, to leaders of the Abadan oil refinery workers' strike.

Demonstrations have continued, despite the stricter martial law, and despite some 50 deaths reported in new army attacks on these demonstrations.

The demonstrators have begun to develop self-defence. "In Amol ... the youth formed a defence guard 3,000 strong on October 29th. Armed with sticks, they began to patrol the city..." (Intercontinental Press). According to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, leaflets have been distributed in south Tehran calling on the population to arm itself.

With the economic situation fast deteriorating — capital to the tune of \$1,500 million has fled the country since June — the Shah and the military rulers may be driven to attempt a showdown with the opposition.

The people are determined to defend themselves and go on fighting, and many rank and file soldiers are unwilling any longer to fire on their brothers and sisters on the streets. The showdown could be the end for the Shah and the generals.

After that it will be a fight for power between the bourgeois opposition and the Muslim clerics on the one side, and the Iranian working class on the other.

Decent wages: the best thing since sliced bread



Full report on centre pages

DAY IN, day out, the media moan about so-called 'greedy' workers — carworkers, miners, printers.

What about the low-paid, they ask, as if they care. What about the unions with less industrial muscle?

Now low-paid workers are on strike. Press sympathy? Nothing of the kind. Just stories about bread not getting through to hospitals, and gleeful reports about every case of scabbing, blown up into suggestions that the strike is crumbling quicker than a week-old loaf.

What hypocrisy! We say: the bakers must win. They must take steps to counter the demoralising propaganda from the press and TV. Picketing must be stepped up. And the whole labour movement must back them to the hilt.

Like the Ford workers, the bakery workers are facing the same enemy as all of us: the tight-fisted profiteering employers for whose benefit the 5% limit is designed.

Inside

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Iran: Islam and the opposition

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'System X' and the threat to telecommunications jobs

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Last Sunday, Nov.12th, 150 Ford workers in the electricians' union [EETPU] demonstrated outside their union HQ to demand full strike pay. EETPU boss Frank Chapple proposes to give strike pay only from October 25th, not from the beginning of the strike on September 21st.

Ford workers need to watch the other union leaders involved, too, though for different reasons. This Wednesday, 15th, a new round of negotiations with Ford bosses is starting. The union negotiators will be going all out to find a bridge between the workers' determination — shown by the overwhelming votes to reject the employers' last offer — and Ford's stubborn refusal to give way.

With Ford production crippled all across Europe, the workers can win the full £20 increase and 35 hour week. No retreat on the full claim!

Another apartheid

Most people know about apartheid in South Africa and white domination in Rhodesia. Less well known is the long history of genocide, oppression and plunder suffered by the indigenous peoples in the other 'white dominions' of the former British Empire: the Eskimos and Indians in Canada, and the Aborigines in Australia.

JO THWAITES describes how the Aborigines are still forced to live in poverty and often without the most minimal human rights.

AUSTRALIAN PRIME Minister Malcolm Fraser has attacked apartheid in South Africa. He has given warnings of blood baths unless the tyrannical rule of Ian Smith is ended quickly. He has demanded black rule for Zimbabwe and Namibia.

He has described Vorster and Ian Smith as "scourges" and "offences to human dignity". He has pledged money for overseas aid, harangued the world's rich to meet their responsibility to the poor, and, in short, posed as the champion of the oppressed and downtrodden.

Back in Australia, in his own constituency of Wannon, however, there are several thousand Aborigines living well below the poverty line, without adequate housing or health facilities.

Queensland state premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen also condemns apartheid in South Africa. But his own policy of 'separate development' under the notorious Queensland Act is in no way distinguishable from apartheid.

The Queensland Act allows the state government to exercise a virtually complete control over Aborigines' lives. The reserves and missions, into which Aborigines have been in most cases forcibly driven are controlled by white managers.

Wage

The director of the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs has almost total control over the entry of outsiders on reserves and missions. He can recommend that those who are old, sick or 'slow' be paid less wages. He can enter Aborigines' homes on demand, demand to see their private documents, 'manage' their properties, and decide how much of their wages be directly paid to them (the balance of money is paid into a trust account whose operation is a mystery to the majority of Aborigines).

The director also decides whether a reserve can have alcohol on it and, if there are bars, how long they will be open. He can decide how to dispose of the property of people who die, and who shall inherit it.

The director also has the power to grant mining leases for mining companies to exploit the vast mineral wealth of bauxite, aluminium and uranium — 20% of the world's known uranium deposits lie in Australia, much of it in land which the Aborigines consider sacred.

This legislation exists and is implemented now in Queensland. In the rest of Australia there has been slightly more progress — but only since the 1960s. Aborigines were only granted the vote in 1967!

Aboriginal protest has developed in the past five years, primarily through the Land Rights movement, whereby Aborigines are claiming compensation from



RANGER CAN BE STOPPED LAND RIGHTS NOT URANIUM

Mining companies got control of the Ranger site by riding roughshod over Aborigines' rights.

the Government for the expropriated land taken from them since white settlement began in 1788. Logically, this means the whole of Australia.

Three years ago in the Senate, Senator Neville Bonner moved the following motion on behalf of his people — "That the Senate accepts the fact that the indigenous people of Australia, now known as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, were in possession of the entire nation prior to the 1788 First Fleet landing at Botany Bay, and urges the Australian Government to admit prior ownership by the said indigenous people and introduce legislation to compensate the peoples now known as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders for dispossession of their land".

This motion was passed un-animously.

In an address soon after at the conference of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Senator Bonner stressed that

while it was impossible to put a price on human suffering, the loss of human dignity, the loss of culture and a traditional way of life and the destruction of Aboriginal society, it was possible to ask for compensation to be paid for the loss of the land.

This money, he urged, must be firm compensation for dispossession, not merely an 'allocation' to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders from within the national welfare budget; such an allocation had all the degrading connotations of charity.

Forcible

Well, fine words... The next year, Senator Bonner's own party, the Liberal Party, in government, reduced the funding of Aboriginal programmes by \$33 million — hardly compensation for anything!

The Mapoon people, of Cape York in the extreme north of Australia, have also fought back.

They were forcibly removed from their land by armed police as recently as 1964. Comalco and Alcan, the mining companies involved, refused to pay the people any direct compensation and have refused to pay any royalties.

In 1974 the Mapoon leaders began to move back to their own land and others have followed them since, despite threats, periodic harassment and attempts at coercion from government officials. The Mapoon people are now, legally, squatters on their own land, which remains a mining lease.

Under the Whitlam Labour Government a commission was set up to inquire into Aboriginal land rights, which resulted in the first land rights legislation. It 'gave' Aborigines their own body — the Northern Land Council — with which anyone who wanted to use Aboriginal land was obliged to negotiate.

Veto

In 1975 the new Fraser government watered down the Land Rights Bill. The new version no longer gave Aborigines the power to veto mining on their land, but merely to negotiate the terms and conditions under which it could take place.

This 'negotiation' usually consists of the mining company placing a notice in the local press, alongside dozens of other similar notices, giving warning of a prospective claim. If it is not challenged by the Land Council, they go ahead with the mining operation.

The first 'agreement' between the Federal Government (acting on behalf of the mining companies, as it has a 50% interest in the project) and the Northern Land Council was reached only two weeks ago, approving mining at the Ranger site 150 miles east of Darwin. The Aborigines will receive a lump sum of £4 million and royalties of £5.7 million a year, most of which will go into a trust fund. This sum represents a mere 4.25% of Ranger's annual sales.

This 'agreement' was reached only by government pressure and threats on the Aborigines, and some dissident Land Council members tried to take out an injunction against the agreement.

Healey wins votes for the Tories

THIS TUESDAY (14th) the TUC General Council voted to reject the Government's compromise formulas on curbing wage rises. Rank and file union feeling bound their hands. But even before that the Government had decided on its policy 'in case of emergency', with the 2 1/2% rise in the Minimum Lending Rate (Bank Rate).

This Government policy will have two results. It will slow down the feeble economic recovery, and maybe even send it sliding back into recession. And it will probably lose Labour the general election.

The increase in the MLR, and thus in other interest rates, will cut back investment and credit. By cutting back credit it should slow down the rate of inflation. It is also calculated to put a 'squeeze' on employers which will make them take a harder line on wage demands.

Its most immediate effect for ordinary people is the big rise in mortgage rates.

The Ford strike is not the only reason for the MLR increase: the recent rise in the Federal Reserve discount rate (the equivalent basic state-fixed interest rate in the USA) also played a part. But the end result is that Callaghan and Healey have lost all the arguments with the Tories on economic policy.

CURBS

They used to fob off every complaint about the Labour government's wage-curbing and job-cutting with the story that things would be far, far worse if the mad Tory monetarists got into power. Now we have wage curbs plus the "mad Tory monetarist" policy.

Solidly class-conscious workers will still vote Labour, though more reluctantly than ever. But for the 'floating voter' everything the Labour Government is now doing is a reason for voting Tory.

The Labour leaders have become so concerned with being responsible capitalist statesmen that they ride roughshod not only over working class interests but also over Labour's electoral interests.

Their only argument is: "There's no alternative". But there is an alternative: a policy which starts by making drastic inroads into capitalist wealth. The great banks and financial institutions should be nationalised without compensation. Jobs for all — on the basis of a shorter working week, with no loss of pay — and decent wage rates, protected against inflation by cost-of-living clauses, should be guaranteed at the expense of the bosses and the bankers.

That is hardly a policy which Jim Callaghan could recount to the bloated millionaires round the table at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, or get the Queen to announce at the opening of Parliament. But local Labour Parties and Labour activists can start campaigning for it now.



Iranian students in Birmingham last Saturday (11th) recall the massacre by the Shah's troops in Jaleh Square, Tehran, on Black Friday, September 8.

Sshh... you don't know who

IN THE QUEEN'S Speech the Prime Minister announced that he intended introducing more 'open government' in the next parliamentary session. Good. That's entirely in line with the view of the Labour Party conference. But will he do it?

Well, actions speak louder than words, and within two days his actions had spoken. The answer was 'no'.

In the course of a Commons Committee's questioning of Chancellor Dennis Healey, Brian Sedgemore MP quoted the contents of a secret Treasury memo on the European Monetary System.

Healey was embarrassed. Callaghan was furious. So Sedgemore was sacked from his job as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Wedgwood Benn.

Sedgemore, a Tribune MP, insists that the Treasury should not make information available to the Government while keeping it secret from Parliament. A reasonable view if you want to see any degree of 'open government'. But Callaghan does not agree. He doesn't want people who question government leaders to be in a position to do anything but nod agreement.

Benn, himself a loud advocate of 'open government', said nothing in defence of Sedgemore.

Yet the Home Policy Committee of the Labour Party, a committee Benn chairs, decided

LAST WEEK

to add its ha'p'orth to the cause of 'open government' and press for an inquiry into security and in the meantime press ahead with an unofficial inquiry of its own.

This is a result of some of the revelations of the ABC secrets trial, in which two journalists (Aubrey and Campbell) and an ex-soldier (Berry) are charged with breaking the Official Secrets Act.

What this case has made clear is the degree to which the enormous build-up in the state's secret war against the public — surveillance, bugging, infiltration — has gone unchecked. For instance, it is over twenty years since the last official figures were given for the number of phones tapped.

The ABC trial, however, is not simply a trial about official secrets. As E.P. Thompson, the historian, points out in the *New Statesman* last week, almost every page of *Daily Expressman* Chapman Pincher's new book



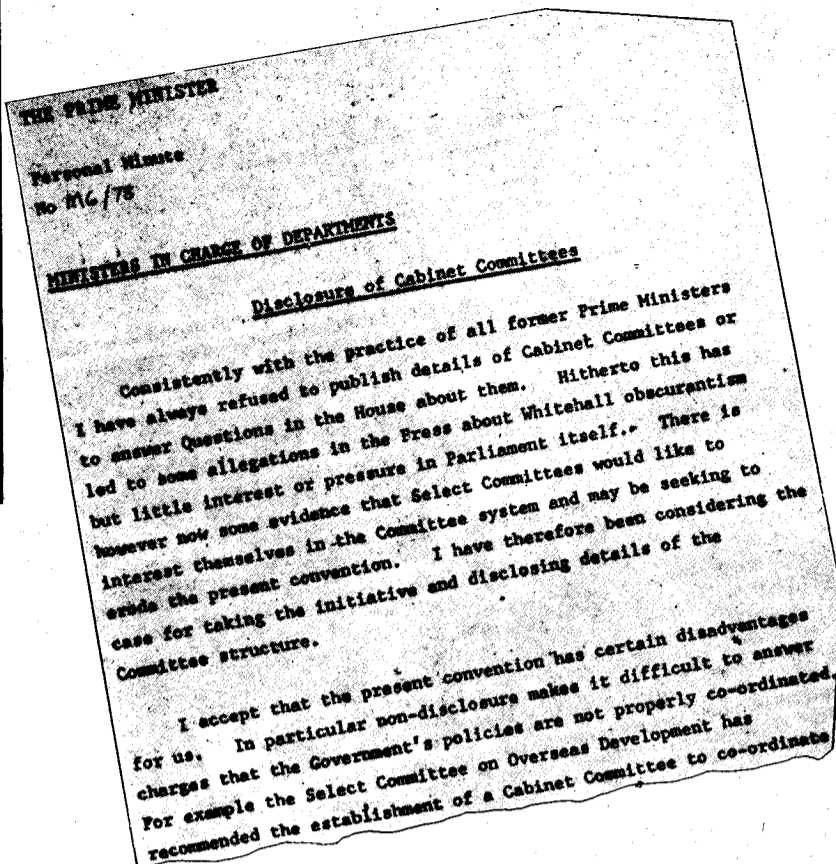
Callaghan: 'it works better if you keep people in the dark'.

contains a boast that what he is publishing is a secret that has been leaked to him by someone in M15 or M16 or some other bureau. But Aubrey and Campbell are radicals, while Chapman Pincher is an arch-right-winger.

That same issue of the *New Statesman* contains more evidence of Callaghan's real intentions as far as 'open government' is concerned. It publishes a secret memo from Callaghan in which he explains why he will not reveal what Cabinet Committees are in existence, who chairs them, who is on them, or what they are doing.

In the memo Callaghan admits that when MPs don't know what Cabinet Committees exist this has 'certain disadvantages'. "For instance, the Select Committee on Overseas Development has recommended the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to coordinate political, trade and aid policies towards the developing world largely because the Overseas Development Ministry were not allowed to disclose that such a committee already exists".

But, Callaghan thinks, it is better to keep this all a big secret. "It allows matters of lesser importance to be decided without troubling the whole Cabinet".



This, he thinks, will "save the time of the Cabinet".

He is right, of course. Having sub-committees does save time. But he is dodging the real issue: why are these committees so secret? According to Callaghan's argument you could institute one-man dictatorship straight away and save Parliament even more time!

What makes this secrecy both more absurd and more threatening is that it binds even those who are not party to the secrets being discussed. According to the memo: "A decision by a Cabinet Committee, unless referred to the Cabinet, engages the collective responsibility of all the Ministers and has exactly the same authority as a decision by the Cabinet itself".

Obviously what Callaghan doesn't give a damn about is the idea of the government's business being scrutinised and checked. Yet last week's Parliamentary debate on the Rhodesian sanctions-busting revelations showed just what does happen when government actions are not checked. In the debate several ex-Ministers and Prime Ministers sounded slippery as an oil leak as they excused themselves and insisted that they didn't know what was going on.

Harold Wilson says he didn't know. Edward Heath didn't know. And James Callaghan

didn't know either. The public was being asked to believe that neither the Labour nor the Tory governments knew of the sanctions-busting that has been documented in the Bingham report. We were, in other words, being asked to believe that our elected representatives are feeble but not fiendish, criminally stupid but not stupidly criminal and... very forgetful.

A very comforting thought. So comforting, in fact, for *Guardian* columnist Peter Jenkins that he doesn't want an inquiry into sanctions-busting. So long as the government is only incompetent, foolish, lazy, naive and bungling, he thinks, we can rest easy... it's not as if they're evil.

What all these attitudes — Callaghan's, Jenkins', M15's, and so on — have in common is contempt for the democratic side of Parliamentary life. This is not the contempt of socialist revolutionaries who understand how limited that democracy is and which class it serves; it is the contempt of those who claim to serve it, who draw a living from it, and are doing their level best to make it even more limited.

These events of last week — Sedgemore's sacking, the ABC trial, Callaghan's secret memo — all demonstrate that power does not lie within parliament. Extra-parliamentary state power is growing, with the aid of those who lead parliament, and parliament is less and less in a position even to find out what is going on, never mind decide things for itself.

PUTTING OUT THE POLITICAL LIFEBOATS

FOR FOURTEEN years he was a director of ICI. Then he became a Labour MP and ended up as Trade Secretary. Then Edmund Dell decided to treble his income and join the board of Guinness Peat, the merchant bankers. Obviously waiting for socialism from Dell was an act of faith equivalent to waiting for an insect to lay ostrich eggs.

There were movements last week on the left wing of the government, too.

Callaghan sacked Brian Sedgemore, the Tribunes' leading economic day-dreamer. Sedgemore had leaked a secret Treasury memo on the European Monetary system during a Commons Committee questioning of Denis Healey. Callaghan's anger wasn't at Sedgemore's position on the EMS, but at the fact that he was challenging the Prime Minister over something the Labour Party conference took a strong line on — 'open government'.

Gradually the group round Benn is staking out its claims. Benn wrote to Sedgemore 'regretting' the sacking, directing a polite sneer at Callaghan, and referring to Sedgemore's services 'to the party' rather than to the Government.

Benn's drive to build himself up for a bid for the Labour lead-

ership started at the Labour Party conference in October, where a 'Labour Coordinating Committee' was formed by his side-kicks, Michael Meacher and Frances Morrell. Then he staged a little clash with Callaghan on the Labour Party National Executive Committee, over the EMS.

Now, as chairperson of the Labour Party's Home Policy Committee, Benn is trying to get a manifesto drafted that will reflect the more radical line of the NEC as against the conservative influence of the Cabinet.

He has, however, uttered not a single word of opposition about Iran, the 5% limit, or unemployment. The 'left wing rebel' act is kept within very careful limits.

Dell and Benn have each come to the same conclusion: that Jim Callaghan is heading for political débacle with his King Canute act in the face of working class militancy. Each has chosen his own line of action.

Militants in the labour movement need to draw the same conclusion... and to work out our line of action: organising a socialist opposition in the Labour Party, oriented not to Benn-type careerism, but to fighting here and now on the key class-struggle issues.



Benn: furthering his career



Sedgemore: flew a kite on the EMS

A fight for Little England

THE ISSUE on which Wedgwood Benn and Brian Sedgemore have chosen to join battle with Callaghan is not arms supplies to the Shah, nor the 5% pay limit, but the European Monetary System.

To permit the free flow of investment and trade among its member countries, the Common Market needs at least some coordination of its currencies. An additional reason for this coordination is the increasing instability of the dollar, and the need for some other currency unit to be used for international payments and reserves.

But state economic intervention to slow down slumps and booms is standard practice in every capitalist country today. That intervention affects relative currency levels. And what this or that state needs in order to keep its economy afloat may not fit in with what the Common Market needs to keep its currencies coordinated.

For Britain, involvement in the European Monetary System would probably mean severe deflation,

with numerous bankruptcies and rising unemployment.

It shows you how chaotic capitalism is. You can fly goods to Germany in little more time than it would take to transport them across London; on the 'phone you can reach any major city in Western Europe as easily as next door. But under the profit system the business of distributing goods across Europe requires all this complex witchdoctor work with coloured pieces of paper... and if the witchdoctor work goes wrong, as it always does, millions of people lose their livelihoods.

Benn and Sedgemore oppose the EMS, however, not because it is capitalist but because it is European. They draw no socialist conclusions, only the conclusion 'keep out'. Since a large section of the British capitalist class, plus Jim Callaghan himself, have apparently reached that same conclusion, Benn and Sedgemore's struggle is less than heroic. And it is a struggle, not for a Socialist Europe, but for Little England.

Islam in Iran

The sigh of the oppressed

Foreign Secretary David Owen, and the other supporters of the Shah of Iran, take cover behind the argument that the opposition is a religious movement.

It's a strange argument coming from Owen, the representative of a government which upholds links between Church and State in Britain and which does not hesitate to refer to the principles of Christianity when they might come in useful to dampen down the class struggle.

The arrogant, cynical thinking behind this attitude is that all religions are just a bundle of cranky or primitive superstitions ... except Church of England Christianity, which is a reasonable religion because noone takes it seriously any longer as a guide to action!

Even more cynically, the Shah of Iran is presented as a beacon of modern secular civilisation. The Shah himself claims regularly to converse with god and to have been saved in his youth by an archangel.

In any case, the argument is ignorant. For every social movement tends to express itself in the ideological terms it finds ready to hand — often terms inherited from previous generations. Religious terms and forms in no way prove that the movement is exclusively or even largely religious in content.

Often the traditional religion and culture of oppressed peoples gains value in their eyes as a symbol of resistance. When the oppressors are of a different religion, the religion of the oppressed is a symbol of national identity against foreign domination.

In Iran, Islam is seen as the people's cause against the American and British profiteers who stand behind the Shah.

Thus peoples of many Eastern countries (and a part of the black movement in the USA) have expressed their revolt against imperialism in Islamic terms. At the same time, nationalist leaders have used Islamic philosophy to divert the masses from revolutionary socialism; and established ruling classes have used it to justify their rule.

One of the results of this is the growth of theories of "Muslim Socialism" — or of Islam as a third way, neither capitalist nor socialist but 'in between'. But the only society actually governed by 'Islamic law' is Saudi Arabia — a pillar of world capitalism!

Is Islam anti-capitalist? Not at all. Its sacred texts condemn neither profit nor inequality. Commercial profit is "God's bounty".

Just like Christianity and Judaism its holy texts attack usury — money-lending at interest. But

the opposition to usury in Islam means no more than in other religions. As money-lending classes became more powerful, theology (whether Islamic, Christian or Jewish) obediently changed. And soon the priests of all these religions found that bankers were as godly as anyone else.

Capitalism has been thrust on countries like Iran abruptly, rather than growing up gradually over centuries, as it did in Europe. Consequently Islam has remained a living faith among the masses, who express their longing for democracy and justice

ABOUT 80 people assembled last Friday evening (10th) for a picket of the Foreign Office in Whitehall called by the Campaign Against Repression in Iran to protest at the British Government's economic and military support for the Shah's regime.

Soon after the picket assembled the police arrived in force to move us on. CARI was not allowed to hold its picket anywhere in Whitehall, and before the organisers had a chance to tell of this verdict the police began to move people along the pavement and snatch our placards. Those who showed any kind of resistance were roughly dealt with, and two comrades were arrested, manhandled across the pavement onto the road and roughed up.

After this we moved on to Piccadilly, where we picketed the London offices of Iranian Airways for an hour or so. Many passers-by responded sympathetically.

NEIL COBBETT

CARI can provide speakers on Iran for trade union branches and Labour Parties. Contact: CARI, Box 4, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1.

through the egalitarian doctrines which exist within Islam as within other religions.

A bourgeois "Islamic Government" will swindle the Iranian workers and peasants just as ruthlessly as the Shah does.

The task of socialists, nevertheless, is to support the struggle of the masses against the Shah, even when these struggles take such a government to be their aim. In Iran, of course, revolutionary socialists will fight to convince the workers and peasants that their aspirations for democracy and justice can only be betrayed by the bourgeoisie and by Islam. Only socialism can make those aspirations a fact on earth rather than in prayer.

GETTING THE BREAD

SINCE Spillers French went to the wall in April, two companies have controlled 75% of bread production in this country: Rank Hovis McDougall and Associated British Foods.

They are massive companies. Ranks had sales of over £1,000 million in Britain in 1976-77, covering every aspect of baking from flour milling to cakes — not to mention photocopyers, entertainment, etc. ABF's sales last year were almost as high at £877 million, from various operations in Britain and other countries such as South Africa, New Zealand and West Germany. In Britain ABF owns, alongside Allied Bakeries, Fine Fare supermarkets, Allied Mills, Twinings-Crossfields, Food Securities and Weston Foods.

Almost alone since this week, RHM and ABF make up the Federation of Master Bakers, the main negotiating body of the employers. Most of the small bakeries have negotiated individually on pay and conditions and abandoned the Federation. Some of these, employing some 6,000 bakery workers, have already given way on the full £10 claim.

The two big bakeries think they are strong enough to win.

While workers in the two big companies have seen their standard of living fall to well below that of workers in the independent bakeries, the two companies' profits have been booming.

Last year ABF made profits of £78 million in Britain. In the first half of this year they have gone

up further. Rank's profits 1976-7 were £39 million.

Ranks turned a large part of profits into a handout to shareholders, as dividends total over £9 million in the last year.

The bread bosses also themselves good money. Rank's highest paid director is £41,723 a year — 15 times earnings of the average bakery worker.

The former boss of ABF, Geoffrey Weston, died leaving a £40 million private fortune. He thought that "the only way South African government survive is for us to realise blacks in South Africa are class citizens, and should be treated as such". The same philosophy, of course, is applied to their workers in Britain.

The RHM bosses are especially class-conscious. They give sizeable donations to people who are outspoken in defence of the ruling class. Last year they gave £20,000 to the Tory Party, £7,000 to the Economic League, £7,000 to Aims of Freedom, and similar donations totalling over £40,000 to a range of right wing pressure groups.

Since bakery workers have been asked not to be treated as 2nd class citizens anymore, the bosses have been hit hard. ABF's Gary Weston lamented in the Financial Times recently while profits had risen early in the year, the strike made the company's outlook bleak. They lost £13 million in sales on the day.

The bread bosses may be multi-millionaires, multi-national giants. But the bread workers united, can defeat them.

OFF THE FLOOR AND INTO THE BREAD MIX

GEOFF WILLIAMS works in Merritts Bakery, Cardiff. Below he tells why, when he comes home from a shift at the Bakery, he makes his own bread:

What is the bread that's been missing from the supermarket shelves? Made the way only Associated British Foods and Rank Hovis MacDougall know how, it's a mixture of water, gluten, bleach and flour, puffed up with a lot of air. It doesn't do much for you — probably more harm than good, in any case.

The flour that goes into Mother's Rubbish, Bankblest and Plunderloaf has been milled at high speeds by a process that not only removes three quarters of the protein content but also all the vitamins. The fibre content in wheat, which is necessary for good digestion, is also all but taken out.

Some vitamins are added back in — but they don't go near compensating for what been lost; some of them are simply useless, like the ferric compound which substitutes for the iron lost from the wheat: this is difficult for the body to absorb, and most of the iron added will go straight through you.

Conditions in the big bakeries are often unhygienic. Waste dough finds its way back into the next batch of bread, after being left exposed to bacteria and dirt. Overflows are scraped up off the dirty floors and thrown back into the mixing machines.

Now, during the strike, bread is left lying on the factory floors. If this happened during normal working, all hell would be let loose! But the bosses and the scabs don't mind.

Scab-produced bread is also going out of the factories unwrapped, in dirty vans.

The big bakeries' methods are as bad for the bakery workers as for the consumers. The relentless drive for faster production that has reduced bread to useless and tasteless blotting paper has also increased one of the worst dangers to bakery workers — noise. Machines are run so fast that, with noise exceeding 90 decibels, workers can hardly hear themselves think.

With the noise and the heat, the floors slippery from waste dough, and slicing machines recklessly speeded up in the name of efficiency, it's little wonder the big bread lines take their toll in accidents and deaths.

More money on the dole than for a 40 hr week

OUR STRIKE was not well organised for by the union leaders. Many branches were told to come out in a very bureaucratic way. But after they were pulled out the mass meetings which were held proved that the support for the strike was very solid.

Only two large bakeries have gone back, in Plymouth and Northampton. Many of the small, independent bakeries outside the 'Federation' have gone back, but workers there have won anything from a £8 increase to the full £10 claim.

The bosses' profits have been hit hard, and they're pretty frantic, putting around all sorts of stories about how the strike is collapsing. To most people the strike's effect is not too obvious. Bread is still around. But little

BOSSES

of it is coming from bakeries owned by the big two companies of the 'Federation', Rank Hovis MacDougall and Associated British Foods.

These bakeries are running, if at all, by using managerial staff, and their production is a minute fraction of the seven million plus loaves a day that the

companies normally produce. The independent bakers have increased their production but that is no consolation to big companies.

The bosses have been forced to approach ACAS [the government's arbitration service] after saying how firm they would be on a maximum offer of



Ayatollah Khomeini, the chief leader of the Muslim opposition

OFF AD LINE



Bakers' union general secretary Sam Maddox.

FLYING PICKETS OUT IN SOUTH WALES

GEOFF WILLIAMS reports on how pickets have been organised at his bakery, Merritts [ABF] in Cardiff.

IN South Wales, flying pickets have been in action, to turn flour and other supplies away from the bakeries (the independents as well as the giants), and also to picket the flour mills.

T&GWU drivers at the local mills have now agreed to respect our picket lines. Flying pickets have also been sent from Cardiff to Tewkesbury, and to Cardiff and Barry docks to stop flour shipments.

At Tewkesbury we were unable to stop the supply; the GMWU District Officer there has refused to instruct his members not to cross our pickets, and the other union concerned, the T&GWU, has still to reply to our request.

The mill-workers' own pay claim is already running two months behind schedule. Yet their union official declares that any action taken by them now in support of the bakery workers would bring them into conflict with the bosses 'too early'.

This response is typical of a District Officer keen to keep his negotiations quiet and leisurely. It may not be shared by our brothers and sisters at the mills.

★ ★ ★

POLICE have been out in force to get the scabs and supplies through the picket lines. They have attacked and arrested pickets and tried to keep pickets away from the gates.

When a flour lorry arrived last Monday, the driver told us he had been instructed by his bosses to arrive by 10am at the end of the motorway, where the police would meet him and escort him to the bakery. An escort of more than 80 police, with a senior inspector, turned out to escort the lorry in.

The police justified their large numbers by referring to violent scuffles the previous Friday. In fact, Merritts has been a central

target in Cardiff for strike-breaking attempts.

Yet only 4 shop floor workers out of over 400 are going into work.

Other scabs are van salesmen who are in the Bakers & Allied Workers' Union, but whose wage claim doesn't come up for a few more weeks. At first they supported the strike, but in many areas they have withdrawn their support.

For scabbing, the bosses have offered them job security and full lay-off pay if the bakery closes completely during the strike. We on the picket have made our position clear: one of our demands is that these scabs are thrown out of the union and of their jobs. Machinery they are using will be blacked by the shop-floor workers until they are removed.

The four shop floor scabs will also be dealt with when we return.

Reports from around the country give much the same picture, of a tiny fraction only breaking the strike. Even the bosses claim no more, in terms of hard figures, than 2,000 or 3,000 scabs out of 26,000 workers. The union's figure is 1000 scabs.

At Coventry, ABF pickets allowed a limited bread supply to be produced for hospitals and old-age homes. The bosses used the opportunity to produce far more than was necessary for these places. Pickets got wise to this and refused to let the surplus out, so ABF ended up having to give it away free to pensioners.

Now their ruse has been spotted, they've lost interest in baking for the hospitals.

PICKET KNOCKED DOWN BY VAN

FRIDAY 3rd. Workers at Sunblest and Betabake, Norwich, refuse to handle cakes from other bakeries being stockpiled against the coming strike. Management threaten to send them home. Workers occupy canteens and refuse to go. Eventually they are evicted by police and begin their strike early.

Tuesday 7th. Bakers' Union begins official strike, solid amongst workers in both of the major bakeries, RHM and ABF.

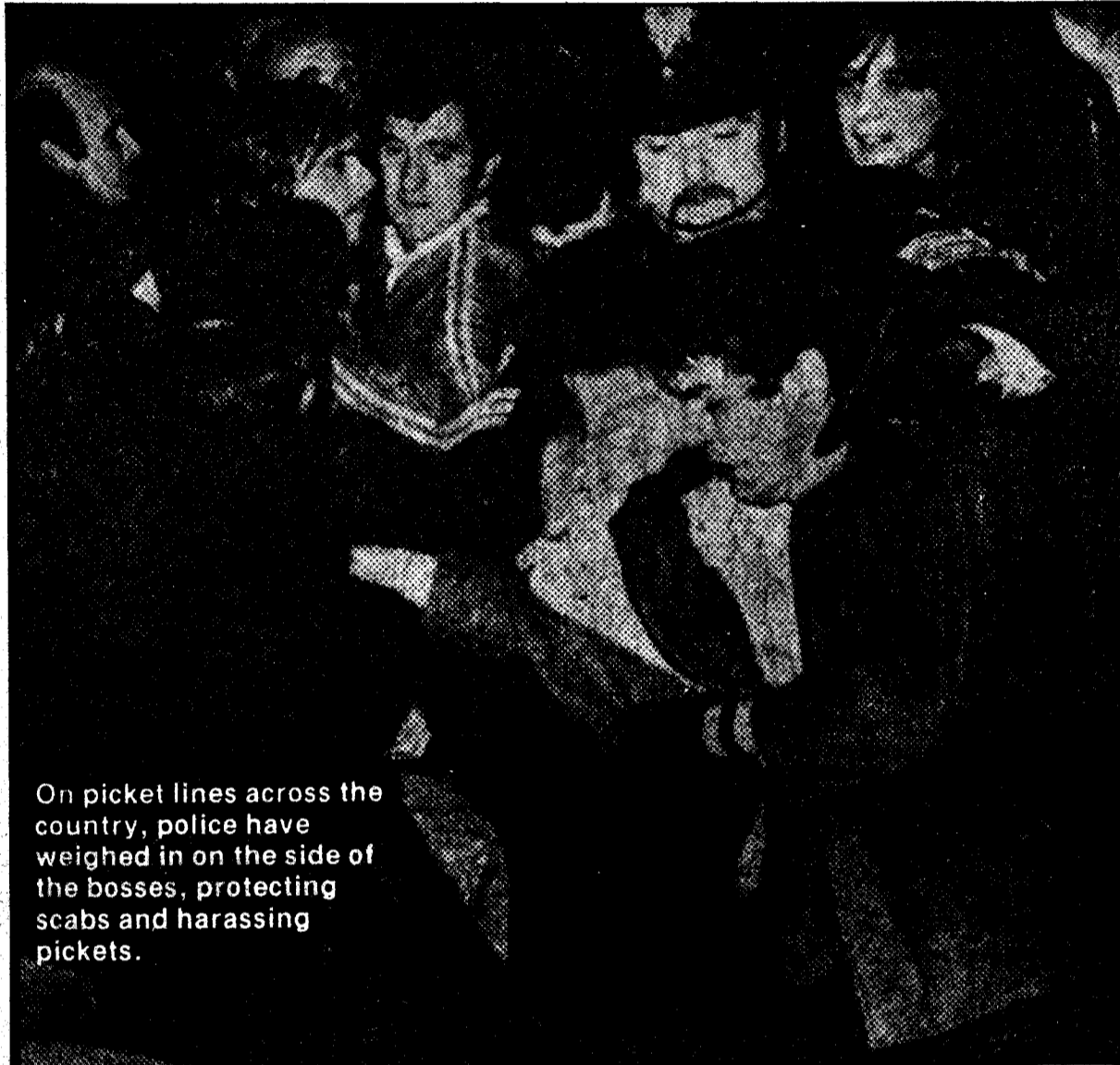
Wednesday 8th. Leo Higginson, union secretary at Mothers Pride, Wythenshawe, is knocked down by a van on the picket line and taken to hospital. Scuffles on the picket line at the Sunblest bakery in Laisterbyke, near Bradford, when pickets try to turn back flour supplies.

Thursday 9th. Five pickets at Mothers Pride, Wythenshawe — where delivery drivers are also on strike — are arrested and charged with trespass during an attempt to occupy the bakery. Police break picket lines at Took's Bakery, Ipswich, to let delivery vans leave, and arrest six pickets. Almonds Mothers Pride bakery, Bradford: three pickets arrested for attempting to stop firemen putting out bonfires on the picket lines.

Friday 10th. More pickets arrested at Mothers Pride, Wythenshawe. They are stopped while walking along, handcuffed, and thrown into the back of a police van.

Monday 13th. Police and pickets clash outside a bakery in Ipswich. Royston Maddox, a baker and son of union general secretary Sam Maddox, is arrested. Pickets claim it was a deliberate move by the police.

Tuesday 14th. Pickets attempt to stop delivery drivers working at Sunblest bakery in Bredbury, near Manchester.



On picket lines across the country, police have weighed in on the side of the bosses, protecting scabs and harassing pickets.

WORKERS' ACTION interviewed RICHARD MEARS, a dough-maker at Associated British Foods' main Cardiff bakery.

■ ■ The Government says 'the country can't afford' wage rises over 5%...

□ □ I earn £69 before tax by working six eight hour shifts, one shift on Sunday being at double time. My take-home pay is £51.50. Out of this I have to keep myself, my wife, and three kids. I pay £17.30 a week rent, food costs on average £23 a week, and school dinners for the kids are £3.75 a week.

Also, I've got to pay the gas, electricity, and bus fares out of this. If I didn't work overtime it would be impossible to live. I would only take home £39.50. I'd

get more money on social security than working a forty hour week.

■ ■ What do you think about the strike? What does it mean to workers here?

□ □ We should stick by our guns. Since I've been working here there have been a few changes because of the union's action, but it needs more organising and support. To accept the bosses' offer would be to go back to the old conditions.

■ ■ What do you think of the leadership of the strike?

□ □ We haven't seen it down here yet. But a strike was inevitable whether Maddox called it or not.

As far as the bosses are concerned we're just part of the machinery. Do the job, get paid, and that's the end. But the rank and

file should take up more issues on the shop floor. We come to work and there's always something wrong.

■ ■ The police on the picket line have been very quick to deal with pickets trying to keep the gates shut.

□ □ It looks as if they're just protecting the bosses' interests. The arrests and injuries have all been on our side.

■ ■ What about getting support from other trade unionists on the picket line?

□ □ There shouldn't have to be other pickets. Our own members should be more active.

■ ■ What do you think of the claim and the bosses' offer of a productivity deal?

□ □ £10 isn't enough. Basic pay should be at least £60 for every worker. No way can we accept a productivity deal. Any increase should be on the basic rate.

Last year we went on strike for three weeks to secure payment for non-working of bank holidays. Now one clause in the productivity deal reverses that.

■ ■ What do you reckon we have gained from the strike so far?

□ □ Besides backache, it's been a little demoralising because of lack of support from shop floor workers for the picket line. Also, we don't get strike pay, which makes it harsher. I think in future a levy of 10p per member minimum in the factory would help us in future disputes. At least it would put a few bob in the strike kitty.

are on the run

by Geoff Williams

plus a productivity bonus of 6% with strings including permanent night work, stricter time-keeping, more mobility, and an end to the post-entry closed shop. They have had to admit that they can't win everything they want.

But the new offer the bosses may make after talks with ACAS

almost certainly won't be worth much. ACAS arbitrates for the bosses. We simply want the full 26% claim with no strings. Who needs to arbitrate?

The strike could last a long time, but it looks like the TUC and the bureaucrats in some unions will never get round to helping us. The TUC has been so

slow in instructing other unions to recognise the strike that many of our rank and file members are getting really dismayed at the continual problems on the picket line.

When you stand there and watch fellow trade unionists crossing the picket lines with supplies for scab production, it

makes you wonder whose side the TUC is on.

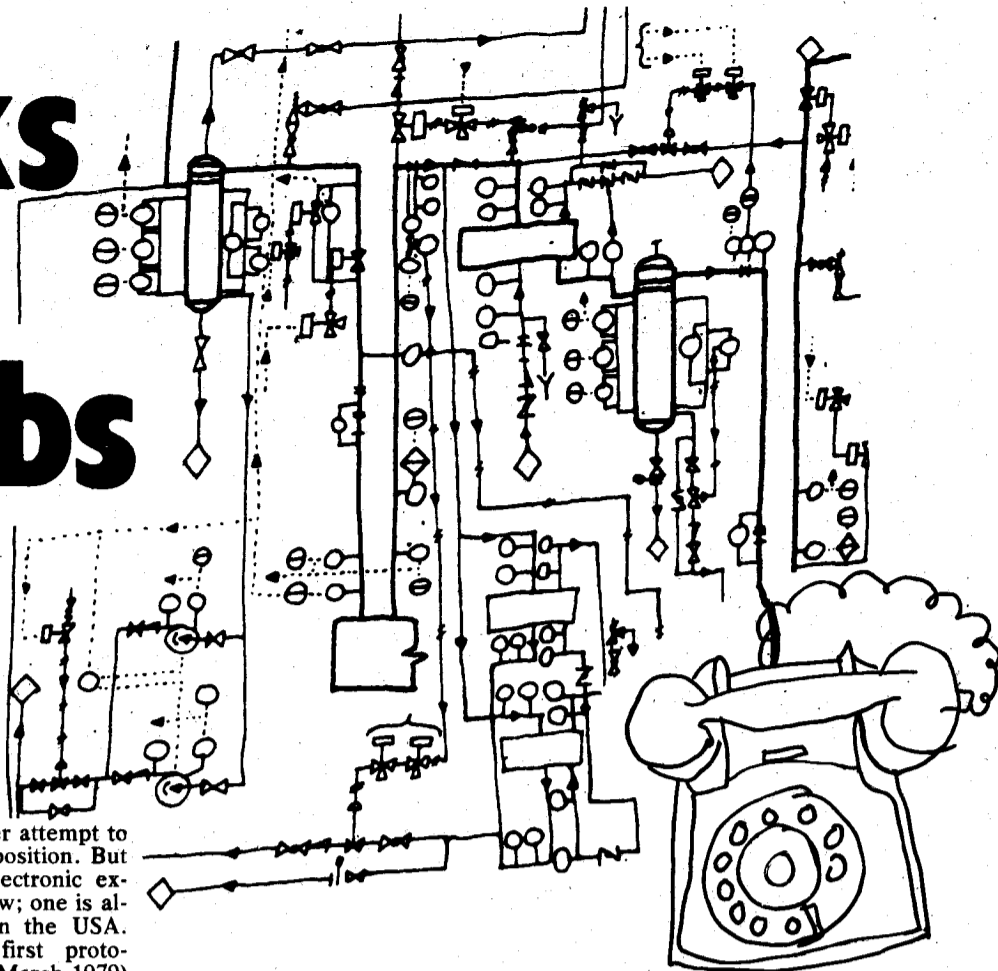
We've got a lot to lose now. The bosses have put out letters saying that anyone who scabs will have their jobs protected. This means the bosses are out to smash the post-entry closed shop.

That closed shop is our defence against bosses who are some of the most ruthless going. If they get away with it, if they win, most of the militants in the industry will find themselves out of a job.

Although the pickets have been bashed about by the police, bosses, Government, and TUC, the morale and determination is still high. We need financial and physical support. If this strike is going to be won, the gates of every large bakery will have to be shut.

'X' marks the spot where jobs vanish

by ROB MCGONIGLE



'System X' is supposed to be the telephone exchange of the eighties: the most advanced, solid state, computerised system ever. It does lots more than existing equipment, it is easier to maintain, and it is smaller.

It is also supposed to be the saviour of the British Telecommunications industry.

For an industry that has gone from world domination to insignificance in just 25 years, it is the last hope.

Early this century the first automatic exchange was invented by the American, Strowger. Strowger exchanges lasted in their own right until after the war, when new "crossbar" exchanges introduced by Leif Ericsson & Co cut down the number of switches from one per digit to one per connection.

CROSSBAR

That the old Strowger exchanges are still common in Britain is a telling reflection on the state of the British telecommunications industry. The crossbar exchanges challenged the British 60% of the world telecoms market, and the British industry was slow to react, waiting for Post Office guarantees of the home market before investing in crossbar exchange production. Eventually they decided to hang onto Strowger until a totally new electronic exchange was available.

The first of these ultra-new exchanges, at Highgate Hill, was a total disaster. It didn't work. So, belatedly, they turned to crossbar and tried to catch the field.

Today, they still haven't caught up, and have lost almost all the world market to ITT, Ericsson and the Japanese.

System X is another attempt to leapfrog over the opposition. But by now, a totally electronic exchange is nothing new; one is already being made in the USA. System X (whose first prototype is not due until March 1979) may be better, but for how long? Meanwhile, ITT are developing their 'System 12'.

The British bosses must rationalise on a grand scale if they are to keep up. Tens of thousands of jobs are in danger.

The telecoms industry workforce in Britain has been halved in the past five years; yet one Plessey manager wants to cut 90% of those who remain. In the United States, only 6% of the workforce once producing electromechanical equipment are still working in the industry.

When the new systems are introduced, most servicing will also be cut, and what's left will be so complicated that machines will be used to test them. A POEU joke puts the new System X manning levels at one man and a dog: the man feeds the dog and the dog makes sure the man doesn't touch the equipment.

There's enough truth in that to see why many POEU rank and file members feel that a reduction in hours to a 35-hour week is nowhere near enough.

Rationalisation is a polite word for all this job-cutting. But there's nothing rational about the way the telecoms industry is run. The Post Office has divided the designing of the System X exchange between GEC, Plessey and STC (Standard Telephone & Cable, an ITT subsidiary). Already these competing companies are duplicating work and withholding information from each other rather than co-operating.

Not one of the companies on its

own can produce System X until the late 1980s. Only the Post Office can understand the whole system and how it will be used.

This means the Post Office's know-how is needed for selling the system — but it has no sales network it can use.

ASTMS leader Clive Jenkins' answer is a holding company to sell System X, with three suppliers. But it is unlikely the three companies would cooperate in such a scheme. One daft idea discussed is for the Post Office to divide up the markets on a map!

In the face of this vivid proof of the wastefulness of capitalist competition, nationalisation is actually being seriously considered by the bosses — with the companies no doubt being sold back again later.

According to the POEU, talks on rationalisation are now three years old and not getting very far.

Recent attempts to merge Plessey (the weakest company) with STC (the smallest but most streamlined) have failed: STC's parent company ITT just aren't interested. Plessey will thus be left open to takeover from the vast and wealthy GEC, or other vultures. The old 'devil take the hindmost' method will see a whole lot more jobs eliminated.

Would even a rationalised industry be able to compete internationally? British companies have little experience in modern world markets, and will find most other countries well and truly tied up in other systems before System X is finished. Even if it is better, produced earlier and compatible with other systems like System 12, more experienced back-up will probably win out over the 'latest thing'.

In System X's life, rationalisation globally will also be neces-

sary. The USA, Sweden, Japan, Holland, West Germany and the UK produce for a crowded marketplace and international link-ups will be necessary to compete.

So who wins? Probably for some time, GEC. Like the others, they have their System X research bill paid by the Post Office. Asset stripping is also second nature to them.

STC have rationalised and recovered and can produce a 'British' System 12 when X fails (for the conservative Post Office bureaucracy is unlikely to get a saleable system).

Plessey will lose. And so, if the bosses get their way, will most telecoms workers. This is the first major industry to be hit by the microprocessor age, and capitalism has absolutely no answer.

How the workers react and fight will be a lesson to the whole class, win or lose. And the fight will have to pose fundamental questions.

BENEFITS

As capitalism sees it, new technology has little to do with benefitting mankind, and even less to do with making work lighter or briefer. It's purely and simply a matter of maximising profits. And if there's a crisis or a problem, it's the workers who suffer.

For telecoms workers, the definition must be the opposite: if the bosses have a crisis, that's their affair and they must pay. And if there's new technology (developed by fellow workers, at public expense in this case) it should be used to make a massive cut in working hours and to produce new goods to meet social needs, not to make more profits and to create mass unemployment.

The new technology can work to make want a thing of the past — or it can make more profits and larger dole queues.

It must be used for us. We must take over the plants and demand nationalisation, so that skilled women and men can produce what workers need, not what's profitable.

'Save our comprehensives', say Liverpool teachers

Teachers in Liverpool, backed up by a broader campaign called *Save Our Comprehensive Schools*, are organising against the threat of an anti-comprehensive drive by the Liberal/Tory controlled City Council.

The scheme currently under discussion on the Council would close two inner-city comprehensives, Paddington — the only purpose-built comprehensive in the city — and Arundel. "11 to 16" comprehensives, without sixth forms, would continue alongside grammar schools, and the "11 to 18" comprehensives would have pupils siphoned off into a new city-wide sixth-form college.

CAROL HARRISON, from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) Action Committee, told *Workers' Action*:

If the proposals go through it will mean that there will be no 11-to-18 comprehensives left in the centre of Liverpool. It is not yet clear where the kids are to be moved to, but in reality it can only result in 'bussing' them to 11-16 single-sex secondaries, or to outlying comprehensives.

In particular we are concerned about the fact that the schools to be closed have the most experience in teaching immigrant pupils. Arundel, where I teach, takes 45% of its pupils from West Indian, African or Asian families.

The school has geared itself to multi-racialism and multi-culturalism, with textbooks and material aimed at multi-racial learning,

with foreign dishes on the cookery course, and so on.

Last year our school was visited by the inspectors and was singled out as a good example of dealing with the problems of discipline and truancy in inner city schools. Arundel was quoted as one of five schools in the country which had mastered these problems.

Generally the atmosphere in the school is quite good, with little racial tension and healthy staff attitudes which we have developed through experience as a multi-racial school.

Creamed

On the other hand, the school has never had a fair chance to prove itself, as a lot of the kids are creamed off to the Institute Grammar School and to other comprehensives further out. As a result, the school has been under constant attack. In fact it has already been reduced from two sites to one.

The staff were not consulted by the Education Committee until after notices had been served of the closure. Even before this, parents had been unofficially told not to send their children to Arundel because the school was going to be closed.

There is a lot of support locally for both Paddington and Arundel, and a lot of opposition to the closures. 1300 signatures have been collected on petitions for the two schools. Our campaign has support from parents' organisations

and from anti-racist groups, and the District Labour Party proposes to call a conference on the issue in January.

The NUT Action Committee has more or less one representative from each school, both junior and secondary. We have been making sure that the junior schools are involved and well informed, especially as some of the teachers there appear to be biased against comprehensives and ignorant of the issues involved.

As a result of our campaign, a ballot among Liverpool NUT members has resulted in a two-to-one vote for action against the scheme. The union is now proposing that teachers refuse to cover for absences and vacancies, and there is also a possibility of strike action. The final decision will be taken at a special meeting on 16th November.

The NUT Action Committee is opposed to the scheme on a number of counts. We oppose single-sex schools; we support '11-to-18' comprehensives with their own sixth form; and we want neighbourhood comprehensives.

The projected reorganisation would result in 47% of children going to single-sex school (and that's not counting the Roman Catholic schools).

And we feel that the councillors have not really thought out the consequences of splitting the children — especially the black kids — away from their communities, and dispersing them all over the city.

WORKERS' ACTION

supporters' groups

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



Outside the court: squatters arrested at Huntley St after being evicted by 500 police with riot shields and bulldozers.

How the anti-squatter, anti-sit-in, law works

IN MARCH this year workers at the Smiths Crisps depot in Aintree staged an occupation in protest against sackings. The police soon arrived — and told the workers and stewards that they would be immediately arrested if they did not leave.

As a convincer, the police showed the workers a piece of paper headed 'Criminal Law Act 1977'. Unsure of their legal position, the workers left.

In fact there was no way the workers were breaking the Criminal Law Act 1977, its Part 2 (the Criminal Trespass law) or any other law.

So far, since the Criminal Trespass law came into force on 1st December 1977, there have been no prosecutions of workers involved in occupations. But the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL), which held a conference last weekend to sum up the recent experience, reckons that the threat of the law has had a real deterrent effect.

Against squatters, too, the threat of the law has been used more than actual criminal proceedings.

When the law came into effect, many people thought squatting had become illegal. The squatters movement countered with stickers saying "Squatting is still legal". But often landlords, police and local authorities have been able to bluff squatters with the threat of criminal action.

Bluff

Eviction of squatters still takes place mainly under civil law. But two important provisions of the Criminal Trespass Act allow eviction under criminal law: Section 6 of the Act gives a right to evict to 'displaced residential occupiers' and to 'protected intending occupiers'.

CACTL reports: "The use of 'Displaced Residential Occupier' affidavits to evict squatters has been sufficiently rare that its effect can be said to be minimal." (So much for the fairy tale of people getting back from holiday to find squatters have moved in!) "Squatters have, however, been 'bluffed' out of squats by people claiming that there are Displaced Residential Occupiers.

"The use of Protected Intending Occupier certificates has been more widespread. There have been only two cases in the private sector which have come to CACTL's attention. In both cases, the authenticity of the Protected Intending Occupier is open to doubt as neither property was subsequently occupied."

"Councils have used (and grossly abused) the Protected Intending Occupier procedure. In Manchester it is common for a Council official to turn up with a police officer and say, 'We'll arrest you if you're not out by tomorrow'.

"Some councils have a policy of not using any part of the Criminal Law Act (e.g. Lambeth and Brent)

"Croydon Council claims to have used the Protected Intending Occupier procedure ten times. In one case in Ealing, the Protected Intending Occupier was never seen and did not move into the property. Hillingdon Council attempted to use the procedure to evict a woman who had paid rent for the week in which the eviction was attempted. Eventually the civil eviction procedure was used.

"Harrow Council attempted to use the procedure before the Act came into force!"

The most significant criminal charges brought under the Criminal Trespass law have all been under section 10: resisting a bailiff or sheriff. "The three successful convictions under section 10 arose from two separate evictions of members of Battersea Squatters' Association.

"The magistrates have sought to place the 'offence' as being of a serious nature. The first person was given a one month suspended sentence with £50 costs; the other two were fined £100 each.

"After the police attack on 160 squatters at Huntley Street, London, 14 people were arrested and charged with 'resisting the sheriff between 26th July and 16th August. One of the 14 was arrested when he went to negotiate the release of property belonging to the squatters. The charges do not relate to any of the incidents at the eviction itself, but are an attempt by the authorities to create the precedent that being behind barricades constitutes an offence under section 10.

"The defendants are due to appear at Marylebone Magistrates Court on December 4th."

ROB MCGONIGLE

THE Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law is also agitating against proposals for a new law to require seven days' notice for demonstrations.

Three private Bills, submitted by Cheshire, Merseyside and West Midlands County Councils, contain clauses calling for the seven days' notice. The Bills have already been through the House of Lords and are likely to be debated in the House of Commons very soon.

If passed into law, they would extend police powers and make spontaneous demonstrations, or marches organised in immediate response to events, illegal. The Scarman Inquiry (set up after the death of Kevin Gately on an anti-fascist demonstration at Red Lion Square in 1974) rejected the idea of requiring seven days' notice, but CACTL fears that these County Council Bills may simply be 'nodded through'.

For more information, contact CACTL at 35 Wellington Street, WC2 (01-289-3877).

The Front's night out

The National Front held a 'local meeting' in Basingstoke last Tuesday, November 7th. Only eight local Nazis turned up to hear a 15-minute talk on 'Patriotism' from the organiser of *Bulldog* — but 50-60 other Front members from as far as Ealing and Portsmouth were shipped into the town.

It was an attempt by the Front to boost their sagging local morale and numbers after a humiliating defeat at the hands of anti-fascists the last time they tried to hold a meeting in the town.

The Basingstoke Anti-Fascist Committee/Anti-Nazi League, with only 24 hours' notice, mustered a picket of 24 people. We were unable to stop their meeting.

But the Nazis hadn't really come for the meeting anyway. They spent the evening going on the rampage in the town, unchecked by the police.

One of the leading figures in the Nazis' activities that night was the former chief steward of the National Front's 'Honour Guard', Tony Newlands. Newlands claims to have left the Front — presumably so that he can carry out his less public activities without implicating the Front directly.

The fascists started by wandering around the main shopping precinct looking for the anti-fascists. Quickly getting bored, they invaded a local pub and demanded to know who was an anti-fascist. The landlord called the police, who didn't turn up for over an hour.

Meanwhile the fascists marched off to the Cosmopolitan Association Club, a West Indian

social club in Essex Road. They tried to storm the club, charging up its narrow entrance stairs shouting 'Down with the black man, up with the white'. They were beaten back by eight West Indians in the club who hurled bottles down on them.

Again the police did nothing, except threaten to arrest a few of the club members and stop a few of them as they made their way home.

The local press refused to report the incidents of that Tuesday night, because the police would make no comment. As far as the police were concerned the National Front were never there.

The next day the Front were active again in Basingstoke. They

leafleted a housing estate where they have some support with fake 'Anti Nazi League' leaflets — badly printed and scarcely legible, packed with statements like "The ANL wants to let in the six million Asians from Vietnam" and "The union jack is a nazi flag, if you see one anywhere pull it down".

The Nazis also harassed people. Three men began banging at a woman's door, demanding to be let in and claiming that they were ANL members.

Basingstoke Trades Council will be issuing a press statement and a special trade union newsletter to get these facts known widely, and is calling a local labour movement conference.

NEW N.F. ATTACKS IN BURY

JACK Aspinall and Jim Riley were walking home last Saturday afternoon after selling Socialist Worker in Bury town centre. A van drew up and six National Front members leapt out and attacked them.

Jim Riley was kicked to the ground and kicked repeatedly, and then the fascists threw bricks at him. Jack Aspinall was badly hurt when the fascists threw a paraffin lamp from a nearby building site in his face; he needed 16 stitches around one eye.

The attack was part of a whole series against anti-fascists. The weekend before, on Saturday 4th November, National Front thugs

attacked a group of ANL leafletters in the town centre, and then ran off before anti-fascist reinforcements arrived.

On Thursday 9th November ANL members were again attacked, outside a synagogue. That Thursday was the 40th anniversary of "Crystal Night" when the Nazi Party broke up the German synagogues. The ANL members had taken up their positions outside the synagogue in Bury to defend it against a possible NF 'commemoration' of that event.

The NF don't even bother to pretend any more than they are not Nazis. And their methods stay the same.

Big police guard for nazis' poppy day march



Each year on the second Sunday in November, a parade of hypocritical imperialists turns out, with their Christian mumbo-jumbo, to heap crocodile tears over the memory of those sacrificed in two world wars for the British Empire. Last Sunday they were followed by the ladies and gentlemen of the National Front.

In fact the NF have been coming to the Cenotaph in Whitehall for a number of years: it is the occasion when their patriotic British Empire respectability is paraded, rather than the apologies for and glorification of Adolf Hitler which these days increasingly drowns out their other pretensions.

As far as socialists are concerned, the NF are unwelcome at the Cenotaph on 'Remembrance Sunday' just as they are at any other street at any other time.

And although a number of liberals and Stalinists who attended the anti-fascist picket of the events sought to drum up some special indignation at the way the fascists were 'sully'ing the British imperialists' war memorial, most of the 1,000 or so who came to oppose the Front simply wanted "Fascists off the Streets". Workers' Action underlined the point with placards which said: Remember Dresden [Churchill's chief war atrocity] as well as: Remember Belsen.

The police made a special effort for the National Front. With a helicopter overhead and cavalry in the wings, they pinned the bulk of the picket into a corner scarcely visible from Victoria Street, having first snatched a number of demonstrators for no reason at all other than to intimidate the others.

Holy Alliance against Leyland strikers

The strikers leading the British Leyland Cars Division fight on pay are up against a hard-faced Holy Alliance of BL bosses [backed by the Labour Government] and union officials trying to force them back to work.

Workers at the Drows Lane, Birmingham plant [Tractors & Transmissions] struck on Friday November 3rd immediately after hearing about the BL bosses' "5% with strings" offer. Now BL chief Michael Edwardes is saying that if the Drows Lane strike goes on for any length of time then there will be mass sackings [on top of the 7,000 jobs Edwardes already wants to cut] and factory closures.

To drive the point home, BL has issued a call for 500 voluntary redundancies at its Speke No.1 plant, on Merseyside, and has announced the closure of its AEC truck plant in Southall, West London. It has halted construction work on its Rover Solihull plant until workers there agree to a night shift.

Union officials are helping BL's anti-strike drive. The Birmingham East District Committee has instructed the Drows Lane strikers to return to work. Ironically, Drows Lane convenor Arthur Harper was party to the

same District Committee's attempt to break the toolmakers' strike at SU Carburetors in September.

The BL Cars Combine Committee has voted to back the Drows Lane strikers and reject the 7000 redundancies; but it remains to be seen how much this vote will mean in action. At Longbridge, where Combine Committee leader Derek Robinson is the convenor, the Works Committee has come up with a scheme for work-sharing in place of the redundancies.

Workers would be laid off on full pay for one week in four, until an "aggressive sales campaign for the Allegro" makes it possible to restore full employment. The Works Committee tell the bosses that the "company policy will surrender the market to the competition" and call on them to mount a joint union/bosses campaign for "selective import controls". What the Works Committee will do if the bosses won't listen to this advice, or if the Allegro sales remain low, they don't say.

The Longbridge Works Committee also seems to be dropping any idea of a pay rise over and above the 5%.

The BL bosses' offer amount to

Workers' ACTION



Mass meeting of Cowley Assembly Plant workers, who have voted to take industrial action on pay as soon as their present lay-off ends. Both Cowley and Longbridge are laid off because of the Drows Lane strike.

5% ... on condition that every BL car plant accepts the bosses' pay parity plan. The pay parity plan would give uniform wages in all BL car plants from November 1st 1979 [something already granted in the 1977 agreement] on condition that the workers accept 7,000 job cuts and a new grading system. The bosses' offer also includes an incentive scheme which would demand increased production on the basis of the reduced workforce.

The workers' claim is £100 for line workers and a 35-hour week.

Workers at Longbridge and Cowley have been laid off because of the Drows Lane strike, but a mass meeting at Cowley last Thursday [9th] passed a resolution calling for industrial action on pay as soon as the lay-offs end.

SEAN MALONE and MICKEY HOGAN, secretary and chairman of the Saltley AUEW branch, talked to Workers Action about the Drows Lane strike:

□HOGAN: The main thing about this strike is that for the first time in years everyone's been united — labourers, tradesmen — the lot. Only a few of the women, mainly foremen's wives, were against striking. But many of the women have been great — especially those who depend on their wages, widows and single women.

□MALONE: Shortly after we came out the company sent everyone a letter describing the offer and more or less suggesting we turn against the stewards. Some of the electricians were taken in by this and started barracking the stewards to go back.

But when they realised that even if they accepted the offer they'd still get nothing, there was no more talk about going back.

■WA: So the main objection to the offer is that it has to be accepted by all the plants before anyone gets anything?

□HOGAN: Yes, I think 5% on the table would have been reluctantly accepted. What swung the shop floor was the impossibility of us actually getting the money, given all the strings.

■WA: What's your attitude to the parity side of the offer?

□MALONE: It's a joke. Everyone knows that re-grading will never be accepted, so we'll never see any parity.

□HOGAN: Last September we gave up an agreement worth 30-bob a week in exchange for a promise of immediate parity. We never got it. Now they're offering us parity as the basis of this year's offer!

■WA: What about the job loss and increased productivity that management are demanding?

□HOGAN: Listen, the Monday before the strike, the labourers went to see management because they were eight men short and just couldn't do the job. Management said 'we want you to lose another 23 men! It's not on.'

□MALONE: That's the kind of situation all the sections are in. For a long while they've not been filling vacancies. We're already undermanned and they want 18% more work and job loss. It can't be done.

■WA: What attitude has the local AUEW taken?

□MALONE: Well, you know that the Birmingham East District has told us to get back to work. Ken Cure [District Committee President] is meeting the senior stewards this week. He'll be pressing them to get us back.

□HOGAN: You don't see an official from one year to the next. Normally, try to get Ken Cure down to help with some problem and you can't find him. But as soon as there's a strike on, there he is telling you to go back in.

■WA: What about the day-to-day organisation of the strike? Arthur Harper told us that he won't be calling any mass meetings.

□HOGAN: I don't see the point of another mass meeting for the moment unless we get a new offer. Obviously if it goes on for any length of time there'll have to be more meetings.

□MALONE: Picketing is being organised by word of mouth, and so far there's been a good turnout.

■WA: So you're pleased with the way the factory leadership is handling things?

□HOGAN: On the whole, yes. Harper and Ernie Smith [the deputy convenor] were really good at the mass meeting. I've not been very happy with some of Harper's positions lately — but he's been good over this.

□MALONE: Mind you, he was jeered at a meeting the week before when he argued against a strike...

□HOGAN: We're the vanguard of the BL struggle now. Robinson [Longbridge convenor] and the others are letting us do the fighting to see how we get on. Well, so far we're dead solid.

EVENTS

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

Saturday 18 November. Manchester and Stockport Chile Solidarity Committee demonstration. 12 noon, St Peters Square, Manchester. Speakers to include Andrew Bennett MP and Frank Allauw MP.

Sunday 19 November. Merseyside Anti Nazi League day-school. 10am at Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 8.

Thursday 23 November. London Workers' Action meeting: "Zimbabwe: After Smith's defeat, whose victory?" 8pm, 'The Metropolitan', Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd.

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

Saturday 2 December. British Argentina Campaign conference, 12 to 6pm at Student Union, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool. All welcome: conference fee £1, to BAC, 52 Acre Lane, London SW2.

Sunday 2 December. Anti Nazi League trade union conference. 10am to 4pm at TUC headquarters, Congress House, Gt Russell St, London WC1. Three delegates each from trade union and workplace organisations: credentials from ANL, PO Box 151, London WC2.

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

UNION ADVICE ON JOB THREATS: READ THE DOLE LEAFLETS

ON THURSDAY 9th November the Boilermakers at Cammell Lairds held their second mass meeting on the question of the 790 redundancies threatened in the yard. The meeting was opened by the chairman of the shop stewards' committee, Tommy Webb, who outlined the wage claim which had been submitted to management by the stewards: a 35 hour week, a 5% wage rise, an incentive bonus, and other benefits.

No discussion was taken, and there was little reaction from the meeting. There was no hint of leading a fight. The next speaker — Harry Murt, the union's full-time district delegate — dealt with the redundancies in a speech mostly given over to telling us to read the leaflets on redundancy available from the dole offices!

Murt also said a special Social Security office should be set up in the yard to give out information. He seemed worried about undermanning in the Department of Employment, which might cause delays in receiving payments.

Murt justified accepting voluntary redundancies by saying that some older people might be ill

and deserve to get out of the industry with a decent payment. What about fighting for a living wage for pensioners and people unable to work through illness, rather than selling jobs to get the money? Is that beyond Bro. Murt's reasoning?

The shop stewards' recommendation was: no enforced redundancies; a ban on overtime, except in emergency situations approved by the shop stewards; and a shorter working week. Voluntary redundancies were not to be opposed; and nothing was said about how this shorter work-week was to be won.

Tommy Webb said he would take no amendments. "You either vote for or against". A vote was called on whether to decide on the recommendations without discussion; that vote was carried, and then the recommendation was accepted... with many people not voting.

The problem does not stop with 790 redundancies at Cammell Lairds. There is talk of 15,000 redundancies over the next few years in British shipyards. A fight back has got to start somewhere: and it doesn't look like coming from the official leadership.

LOL DUFFY

£2.50 rise — and a £2.50 pay cut

One hundred workers walked out at Smiths Wallis in Sparkbrook, Birmingham, when they were offered a £2.50 rise — and told they would lose their £2.50 bonus at the same time!

The strikers, mainly women, have been out for seven weeks now in an official T&GWU strike, demanding a £15 rise on their measly £45 a week. 40 scabs are still working inside — some of them part-time old age pensioners who are grateful for what they can get and who would only lose their pension money if they were to get a decent rise.

Some of those working inside enjoy perks of the job — like the

foreman who started six months ago in an old banger and who now drives a company car.

On Thursday 9th November the strikers organised a mass picket. Three pickets were hurt when a car drove at them on the picket line. The workers are very determined to win the strike, and have the support of dockers who are refusing to handle Smiths Wallis aluminium fasteners and door handles.

Donations and messages of support to: Pat Glenholmes, 144 Sunny Avenue, off Clifton Road, Moseley, Birmingham 12.
MARIAN MOUND