

# libertarian struggle



workers'  
power



## — NO SUBSTITUTE

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ORGANISE,  
FASCISTS  
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# THE FIRST MAY DAY :

The story of the first May Day is important to more than historians. It is important because it is part of working class history, a part among the many others that we are kept in ignorance of, or encouraged to forget. We need to know our history so that we don't make the same mistakes again, and so that we learn from the successes.

The story of the Haymarket Martyrs is important because of certain parallels with our present situation. These include: rising class conflict, a police force with access to arms working openly as strike-breakers, the papers (now includes the t.v.) going on about militants being killers and murderers and calling for violence against strikers, police agents being used to frame political enemies of the ruling class, mysterious explosions that serve only the ruling class's interests. The lawnmob baying etc. etc. Working class history will repeat itself over and over again, unless we consciously make our own history by taking charge of it ourselves.

The '80's in America saw an upsurge in unionisation. With it came the call for an eight hour day. One of the leading figures in Chicago was A.L. Parsons, a former confederate cavalryman. After the Civil War he came to believe that he had been fighting on the wrong side and set up a paper to fight for black rights. The paper eventually folded through lack of funds and he moved north, where he met and married a Mexican Indian, Lucy Gonzales. They moved back to Chicago, where experience of the '73 depression made them life-long socialists.



Police open fire on strikers

The ruling class used this bombing incident to break labour's organisation once more. The papers demanded that labour leaders and union officials, including Spies and Parsons, be hanged first and tried after. Other officials were indicted on conspiracy charges. John Swinton, New York labour journalist, wrote that the working class was living under "a reign of terror. Corrupt judges and police, who are slaves of monopoly, are now dragging citizens to prison wholesale."

Parsons, realising that the State wanted his life, left Chicago. Spies, Fielden, Engel, Schwab, Adolph Fischer, Louis Lings and Oscar Neebe were indicted for conspiracy to murder. Of these, only Spies and Fielden had been on the scene at the time of the explosion.

Parsons turned up at the beginning of the trial, claiming he couldn't bear to see his comrades, who were as innocent as he, be 'legally' murdered.

Despite the fact that the jury consisted of businessmen, their clerks and one relative of the dead policeman, the prosecution's case still had to be changed, because of contradictions in the fabricated evidence. The court now charged that the bomb was thrown by an unknown person who had been inspired by the writings of the accused. During the trial Judge Garry had business men and Chicago high society with him on the bench, with whom he played paper games when the defendants were giving their evidence. It was a foregone conclusion that they would hang.

Sentence was passed. All would hang, except Neebe. The Supreme Court refused to review the case and the date for execution was set for November 11th 1887 at noon.

All over the world there were protests. Meetings were held in France, Italy, Spain, Russia, Holland and in England, where Shaw and William Morris worked to save their lives.

Louis Lingg committed suicide in his cell. Adolph Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer and George Engel were hanged.

In 1888 the American Federation of Labour continued the 8-hour movement with May 1st as the day for action. The Paris Conference of the Second International, in 1890, fixed May Day for an international show of solidarity for the 8-hour day. That year demonstrations took place all over Europe and America.

Lucy Parsons remained an activist in the anarchist movement until her death in 1942.

## ABOUT 'LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE'

This paper is written and produced by people all over the country, who are active in their trade unions, tenants' associations, claimants' unions, women's liberation groups, schools and universities.

We are united by our membership of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists - a democratically organised group which believes in a socialist revolution, but a revolution brought about, and firmly controlled, by the majority of the working people. We work to encourage contacts and understanding between the different aspects of working class struggle.

We oppose all groups and parties who take the initiative and control of their struggle from ordinary people. We think that the way forward to a better society is not through any kind of 'new' leadership, but through working people discovering their own history, their own ability to organise themselves, their confidence in themselves and their mates.

As part of our attempt to put this kind of politics into practice, we have rotating editorship of each issue. This issue was edited by York group. Previous issues were edited by Leeds, North London and Hull.

We are producing this paper (none of us are professional journalists) to provide one means of spreading some hidden facts, of publicising what workers are thinking and doing, to workers in other industries and other parts of the country, to talk about what claimants, women, immigrants, pensioners and schoolkids are doing, and how these battles can't be separated.

We won't give you the familiar crap of 'this is your paper', 'without this paper the working class is leaderless' etc. What we do say is that if you want to USE this paper - to pass on things you've learnt, to ask for help from other people, or just to make contact with others in a similar situation, then please do so. We know that lots of people have no practice at writing articles - but who needs literary genius? We promise to improve its appearance as we get more practised. The contents are up to you so please write to us, whether its an article or a letter.

Along with August Spies, Parsons helped form the International Working Peoples' Association and later became secretary of the 8-Hour League.

The Labour Movement at this time was on the offensive. 1885 saw the culmination of a successful strike against the Wabash and Southwestern railway systems and, as a result of this, the Knights of Labour, (an early Trade Union) had grown from 100,000 to 700,000 in a year. Labour's mood in 1886 was militant, despite the attempts of T. Powderly, Grand Master Workman, to prevent the proposed May 1st strikes to force the 8-hour day.

In the face of this agitation, developing monopoly capital and the ruling class put out a constant barrage of propaganda and armed a vigilante militia. The press were predicting a repeat of the Paris Commune 'riots', and that Judge Lynch would be hanging every communist from a lamp post to prevent it.

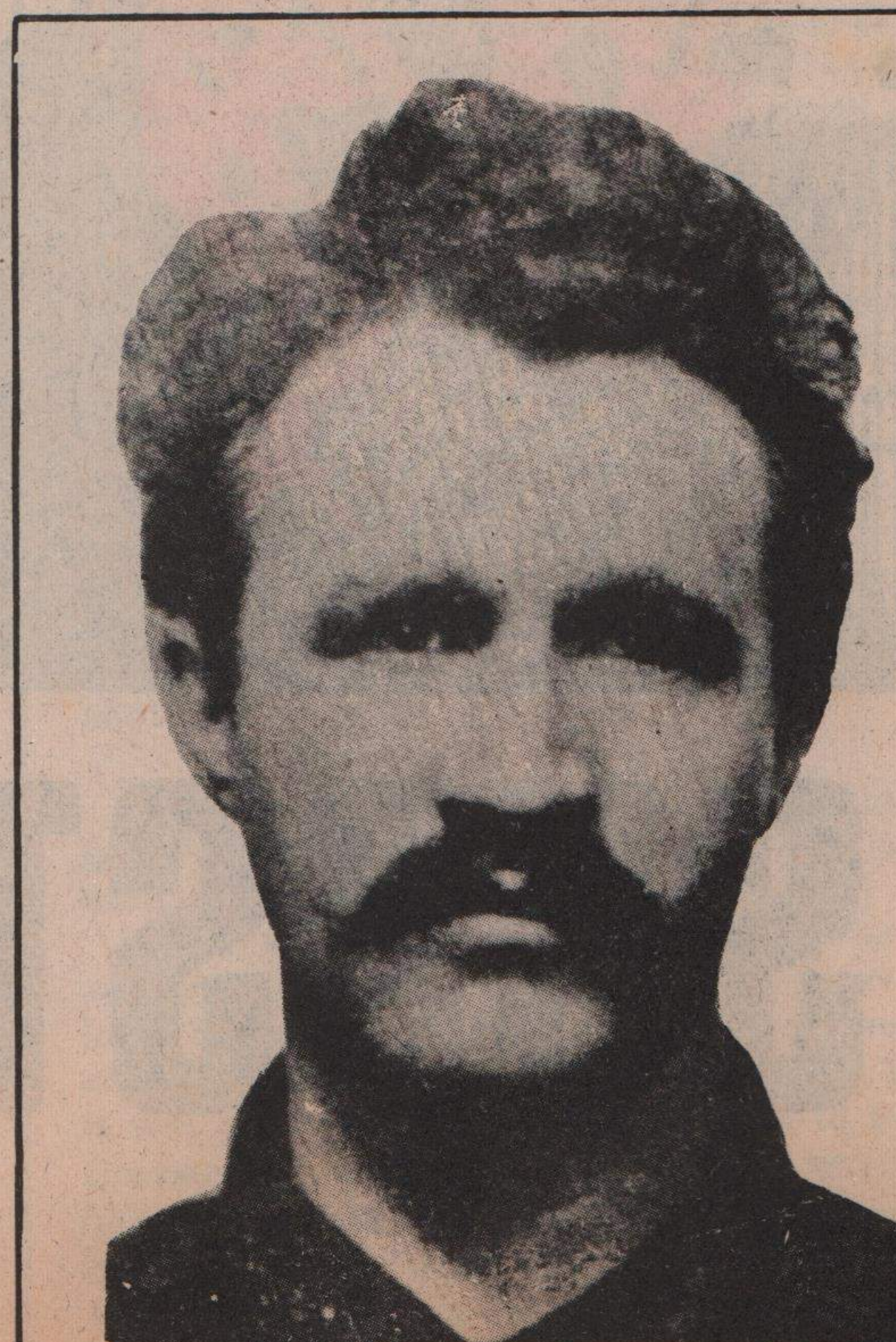
Parsons and Spies threw all their efforts into the strike movement. Parsons was by now acknowledged as Chicago's labour leader. He constantly addressed union locals urging them to strike on May 1st. In April 35,000 stockyard workers voted to join, and by the end of the month it was estimated that 62,000 Chicago workers would come out while 25,000 had demanded the 8-hour day without threatening to strike and 20,000 had already gained it. By this time the papers were demanding Parsons' life for fermenting the "8-hour madness", which they predicted would impoverish the working class and leave them prone to drunkenness and debauchery.

May 1st saw 340,000 workers striking all over the country. In Chicago alone, 80,000 came out, most of whom took part in the parade. The Chicago Mail, in an editorial had named Parsons and Spies, saying "Mark them for today. Keep them in view. Hold them personally responsible for any trouble that occurs. Make an example of them if trouble does occur."

The State had also mobilised. In the side streets 1,350 National Guardsmen were at the ready, equipped with Gatling guns, as well as the Chicago police, known for their brutality against strikers. A Citizens' Committee sat ready to bring them into action should the need arise, to save Chicago from Anarchy.

The Commune did not arrive of course. The march, after a mass show of solidarity dispersed. On the Monday following, the strike spread and the Chicago police got their chance. They clubbed workers at the McCormick Harvester works as they rushed in 300 scabs. In the evening, when the scabs were leaving, the police charged the pickets firing their revolvers into the fleeing crowd. Six died.

Spies called a meeting the following night to protest at the murders. The meeting was small and Parsons did not arrive until late. He spoke, and after he had gone only Sam Fielden was left speaking, and the meeting began to dwindle. Suddenly 180 policemen truncheon-charged the meeting; a bomb was thrown, killing one policeman outright and fatally wounded seven others. The police went berserk, clubbing and shooting into the darkness. Evidence came to light later, that the bomb had been thrown by a police agent.



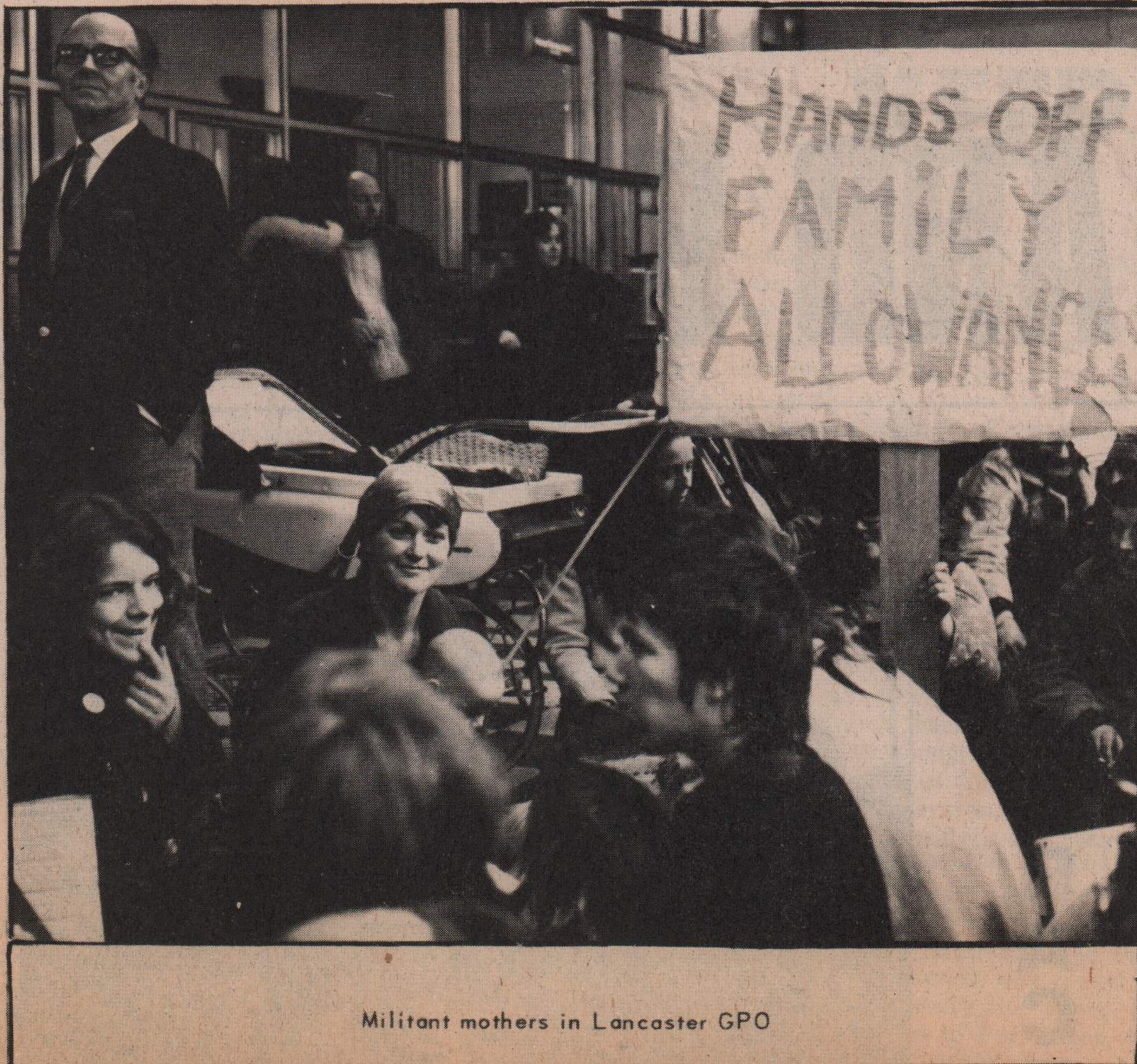
August Spies

"If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement... the movement from the down-trodden millions, the millions who toil in want and misery, expect salvation - if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread on a spark, but there and there, behind you and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out..."

"And now these are my ideas. They constitute a part of myself. I cannot divest myself of them, nor would I, if I could. And if you think you can crush out these ideas that are gaining ground more and more every day, if you think you can crush them out by sending us to the gallows... if you would once more have people suffer the penalty of death because they have dared to tell the truth... then I will proudly and defiantly pay the costly price! Call your hangman!... Truth crucified in Socrates, in Christ, in Giordano Bruno, in Galileo still lives - they and others whose number is legion have preceded us on this path. We are ready to follow!"



# FAMILIES OCCUPY G.P.O.



Militant mothers in Lancaster GPO

One of the most militant protests of the national day of action against the Government proposals to abolish family allowance books, was held in Lancaster on 27th. March. A demonstration was organised by the Lancaster Women's Liberation and Socialist Women groups and was supported by the Claimants' Union and other local left-wing groups. Over 60 people, many of them mothers with their children, assembled in the shopping centre. Leaflets handed out to shoppers explained that the Tory plans to tie family allowances to a tax credit system, made women more dependent on their husbands, by abolishing what is the only source of independent income for many working class mothers. Apart from giving the Government ample opportunity to tamper with the amounts of money allowed, as income tax goes up and down, the new system could trick many workers into believing they had bigger wage packets. (Child credits are to be paid to the father in his wage packet.)

Believing that the demonstration would be a pretty tame affair, the police thought that a couple of jovial policewomen would be sufficient 'to keep the mums in order.' Their dismay was obvious when the women marched straight up the main street, and into the G.P.O., waving their family allowance books and chanting "Hands off family allowances!" The occupation which followed was soon joined by a number of women from a nearby factory, who decided to spend their dinner break in the Post Office. Everyone enjoyed the next hour, what with the community singing, beer, crisps and fish and chips.

The post office staff took the whole thing quite well, and were visibly amused by the antics of the manager helplessly buzzing

around, like the proverbial blue-arsed fly. He appealed to one woman "as an intelligent student", to stop placing placards on the counter. Woman (indignantly): I'm not a student. Manager: Well, you look like a student. Woman :: Ah. You shouldn't go by appearances. You look like a bank manager, but I know that you're really only a post office manager.

The reaction from customers was sympathetic. Many of them had not heard of the Government's plans, and agreed with many of the points the demonstration was making. As the demonstration ended, some demonstrators offered to clear up the litter that had been left. The manager declined the offer, saying that "we have our own women to do that sort of thing."

The demonstration moved back through the centre of town and into the local Mothercare shop. This development was quite spontaneous. Many women felt that the point of the protest would be made more forcefully by the occupation of this symbol of the exploitation of women as mothers. The police did not delay in intervening this time. Occupation of public property was one thing, but interfering with the pursuit of profit was a different matter altogether. When the women refused to leave, they were seized by policemen and flung out onto the pavement. Fighting broke out when a policeman attempted to force one mother who had resisted, into a police car. As people attempted to

protect her, the police made a general attack on the crowd, showing little regard for the numbers of young children who were present. Six people - including one ORA member - were arrested. Afterwards the police attempted to arrest a photographer whom they thought had taken shots of the whole thing. Their nervousness of public exposure was understandable, as the local paper reported a few days later that it had received a number of letters from onlookers "alleging unnecessary police violence". They even went so far as to put a cordon around the police station entrance, apparently fearing a rescue attempt! The six arrested were charged with threatening behaviour and the obstruction of one, (would-you-believe) Police Constable Hogg.

A few days later the women's groups gave out leaflets in the town, explaining that Mothercare had been occupied because "it really exploits mothers and children, making mothers feel they have to buy everything for their kids - and then feel guilty if they can't afford to."

All in all the demonstration was a success, in making people aware of the threat to family allowances, and in showing the Government that women would resist its schemes. It also had a great effect on the women who took part, many of whom had never engaged in protest action before. The feeling was that this sort of action should be increased to win higher family allowances, and to demand that they should not be deducted from Social Security benefits.

## CAPITALIST ECONOMICS:

### drunk fish

The song goes:  
"Campbelltown loch, I wish you were whisky,  
Campbelltown loch, I'd drink you dry."  
and, according to recent reports, this could well be possible. On Scottish television it was reported that 180 million gallons of grain whisky will have to be poured away, because the demand for this type of whisky has fallen drastically over the last ten years. The shareholders in the distilling companies, it was reported, decided that it would be more economical (for them of course) if it was poured away; rather than flood the market with cheap whisky.

The reason for this vast surplus was the whisky boom of ten years ago, which a falling living standard perhaps has curtailed.

To add to this, the distillers estimate that by the 1980's there will be a shortage of malt whisky.

Well, that's supply and demand folks - it seems more like a capitalist planned economy. Large supply equals prices down? Afraid not - whisky goes down all right - down the drain.

### bosses are to blame

is the headline for a short article in a reactionary local newspaper. The article states that an American businessman, Dr. Norman S. Sigband, Professor of Business Communications at the University of Southern California, told a meeting of the British Association of Industrial Editors: "The ultimate responsibility for much of the poor workmanship, high product-rejection rates, rising pilferage, increased employee apathy and absenteeism and frequent labour unrest, belongs to those who run today's industrial world."

"In our desire to secure high production, effective data distribution and efficiently automated services, we have forgotten that people are involved" he said.

Let us hope that too many of the bosses don't catch on to this type of industrial whizz-kid talk - reformist attempts to fob the workers off with two-faced improvements are not the answer to the problem. The real answer to this state of affairs lies not in the hands of the more farsighted capitalist bosses, but in the hands of the workers through 'industrial unrest.' We have the power - we must use it!!

## ORA

### groups & contact addresses

The Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists was formed in November 1971. It exists to coordinate work and develop coherent libertarian socialist policies based in day-to-day struggles.

In some areas, where there are enough people, members have formed ORA groups. Both within the groups and within ORA nationally, collective discussion helps people learn from each other's successes and failures. At the same time, more work can be carried on locally, as resources can be drawn from other groups. Functions of the national organisation, such as editing the paper, the treasurership etc. are rotated between groups, to prevent bureaucracy.

#### LOCAL GROUPS.

**Glasgow:** Gordon Sykes, 32 Queen Elisabeth Square, Glasgow C3.  
**Hull:** Marion McCartney, 21d Pearson Ave.  
**Leeds:** Trevor Bavage, flat 3, 35 Richmond Rd. Leeds 8.

**North London:** Doug Durrant, 68a Chingford Rd., London E.17.  
**York:** Neil Hunt, 24 Moss St. York.

#### CONTACTS

**Bristol:** Mac, 10 Whatley Rd. Clifton, Bristol 8.  
**Colchester:** Peter Newell, 'Aegean', Spring Lane, Eight Ash Green.  
**Dundee:** Mike Malet, 1 Lynnewood Place.

**Lancaster:** Joe Thornberry, 56 Norfolk Street.  
**Sheffield:**

There are also contacts in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Harlech, Huddersfield, Leicester, Liverpool, West, East and South London, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Poole, Reading, Rochdale, Salford, Southampton, Stirling, Swansea and Wellington. If you want to be put in touch, write to the North London group, who are currently handling contact work. All enquiries about the ORA should be sent to them.



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# HOUSING: DIVIDE AND RULE

The government has stepped in with a £15-18 million gift to the building societies, to prevent a further rise in mortgages, from the recently established level of 9%, to 10%.

The government's differing policies towards council tenants and owner-occupiers is an attempt to divide sections of workers; to set the council tenant, fighting rent rises, against the mortgage payer, enslaved to a building society for 25-30 years.

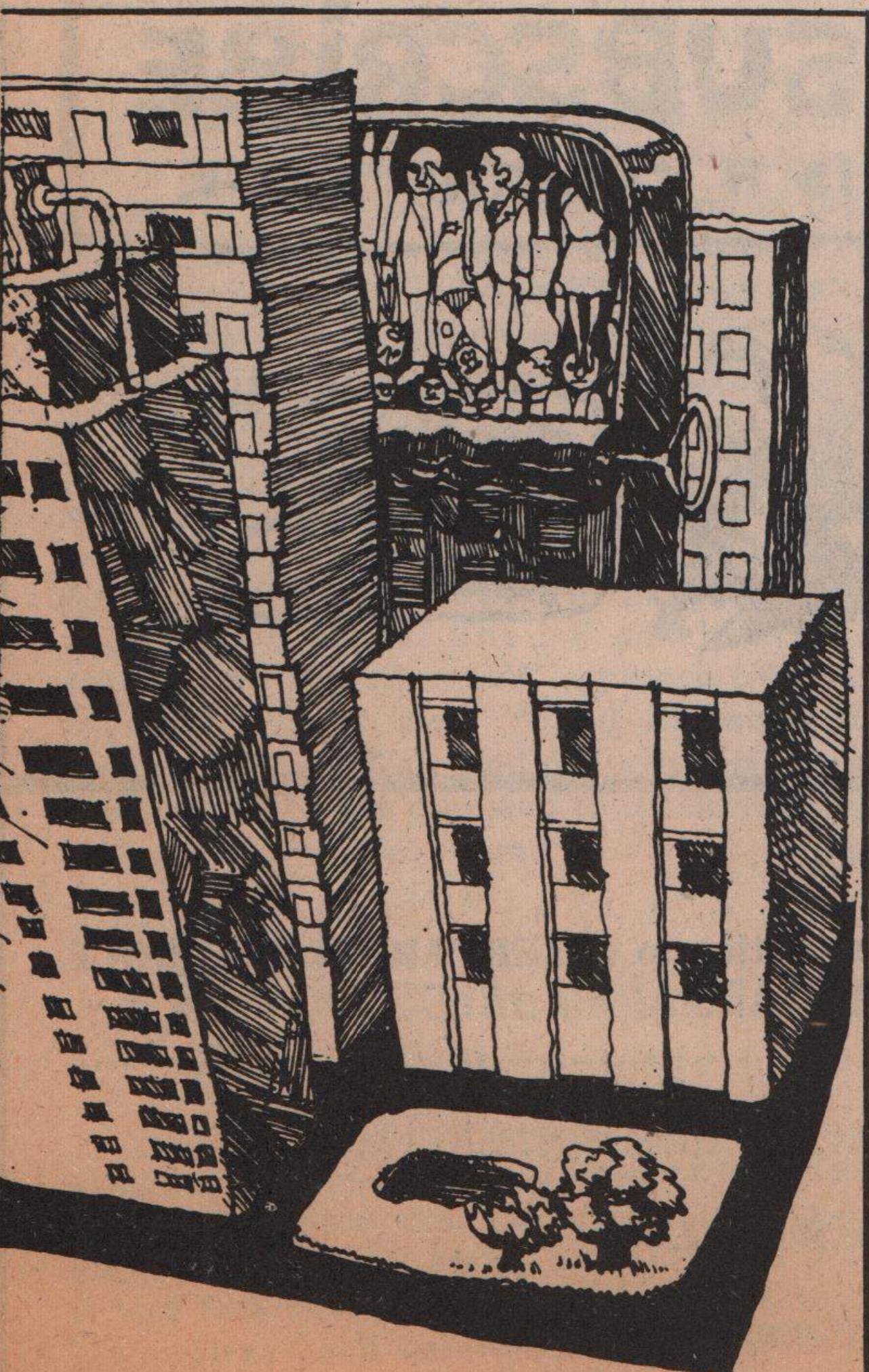
The Labour Party has said very little about this straight case of bribing the electorate. Probably because it wishes to be associated and itself get a few votes. Owner occupiers should look this gift-horse very carefully in the mouth. Firstly, it is only for a few months - surprisingly enough the months of the local regional authority and council elections. Secondly, all the financial sources in the ruling class papers predict the rise to 10% this summer.

One group who need no telling about the crooked and (ruling) class biased nature of this government, are the 5½ million families in council houses subject to the Unfair Rents Act. Since working class families spend most of their income on food and rent it's obvious who are hardest hit by the government's Freeze. Since the Tories came to power in June 1970, rents have risen 30% and food 27%.

What we are seeing is a blatant discrimination between owner-occupiers and tenants. It is essential that we do not fall into the trap of blaming the working class mortgage holder. This division is exactly what the Tories are aiming at. When all is said and done it must be noted that mortgage rates have gone up from just over 7% in 1966. - a £6.60 weekly repayment on a £3978 mortgage - to 9½% in 1973 - £18.34 per week for the same mortgage. At present house prices a £3978 house in 1966 would now cost £9000

The Tories' £15m. subsidy is therefore a drop in an ocean of profit. It is a political gesture to maintain Tory power in local elections. It is necessary to show the discrepancy in State 'handouts' to illustrate how the major burden falls on tenants.

In Glasgow last year, with a total of 152,000 council owned houses, 2,000 people absconded because of inability to pay rent while 400 were evicted. The Alliance Building Society, on the other hand, with 119,000 people buying houses from them, had only 22 cases where 12 or more monthly payments were in arrears. This is an indication of where relief should go. The Tories however have increased rents. They are to go up again in the summer despite the freeze in the endeavour to reach the sacred 'economic rent'. At the same time, the Tories have made a donation to the building societies to prevent the 'economic level' of 10% interest being reached, for the time being.



“DISGRACEFUL?”

This means a person with an £8,000 mortgage will be saved more than 50p a week in repayments. If he pays at the same rate and just extends the length of the mortgage he may even gain through this relief. Nobody should forget that state subsidies in the form of tax rebates already run to the tune of £300 million a year and benefit the rich most of all. The person buying a £25,000 house and paying surtax, gains far more than the worker who bought a £2,000 terraced house five years ago and is earning £25 per week.

The banks are actively encouraging the rich to take out second mortgages to improve already luxurious homes because of this relief and the money to be made. Opposed to this are the extra £100 million that the Tories hoped to raise from the last increases in rents and the same figure for the ensuing increases.

## GLASGOW

The housing situation in Glasgow is desperate. It can boast some of the worst slums in Western Europe. Some people have been waiting 15 years for council accommodation.

High unemployment and low wages mean that people can ill-afford the £25 a month, 4-roomed houses on offer from the council. This is in spite of being subsidised by an £8 million housing deficit. What few people realise is that this rent is largely interest, and is paid to the same people who profit from the average mortgagee, who is not earning enough or well informed enough in accountancy fraud to make a real killing from the tax relief.

A house built by Glasgow Corporation for £10,000 is financed by a loan raised for 60 years at 9% interest, leaving the final cost at a staggering £53,000. Glasgow at present has a loan of £265 million. Last year it paid nearly £3 million towards reducing it, and a further £17 million in interest charges. Around 80% of rent collected is going to interest. It means that out of a 50p increase 40p goes into the money lender's pocket.

It also means the subsidised housing being built at the moment, will be due for demolition long before it is paid for. The first Corporation houses built in 1920 are

still being paid for. Council tenants have to suffer continual abuse about being subsidised. Yet they are subsidising the money lenders.

In the year 1969-70 council tenants received an average of £20 from the state. The owner-occupier received £36. In 1973 the latter figure is approaching £100. Though no figures have been published since the Fair Rents Act, council tenants are clearly receiving much less.

This trend is a consequence of Tory ideology. The remarks made by John Owen, M.P. during a debate on the Housing Bill illustrate this. He claimed 'In striking contrast to the privately owned houses, when we go round council houses we find them in a pretty disgraceful state'. The blame for this he lays on the tenant. Mr. Owen is a builder, Vice-President of the National Federation of Building Employers. He sits on the Housing Committee.

The Tories have made the council tenant even worse off. They have directed their slanders at him/her. Meanwhile they throw the occasional crumb to the owner-occupier to get electoral support. It is a classic example of divide and rule.

## WORKERS CONTROL

All this points to the necessity for tenants associations, many formed after the Fair Rents Act, to link with working-class owner occupiers. The struggle must be directed at the real culprits; the people like Harry Hyams who make £15 million by leaving Centre Point empty, and who make millions from a network of organised exploitation called estate agents and building societies; while 400 people are evicted from Glasgow slums alone, and there are an estimated 500,000 homeless.

In Britain we have the resources to beat the so-called 'housing problem' that has always been with us. But it is only when we have workers control of production that we will have decent housing; when all production is for use and for people's needs rather than every act in the lives of millions of people being just another means of making a handful richer and more powerful.

# CAPITALIST ECONOMICS:

## boots for bairns

The effects of the Government attacks on the working class are at last having effect. A headmaster in Leeds has complained of the results amongst the children attending his school.

The headmaster appealed for shoes after complaining that the current inflationary situation hit hardest at low-income families. He directed the appeal to schools in the more wealthy areas, and sent a letter home with the pupils for the bourgeois parents to read. One part of the letter said 'Many families on low incomes are now finding it almost impossible to keep their children well shod. We are finding an increasing number of children who are unable to come to school, as they have no adequate shoes. If you can help us by letting us have the shoes which your children have outgrown, we will ensure that a needy child is supplied with them.'

Perhaps this appeal brings home even more clearly the burden low-income families are carrying under the 'lame duck' policies of the present Tory government. These children are already oppressed by so many aspects of Tory penny-pinching (e.g. the return of rickets in some poor areas because of Margaret Thatcher-Milk Snatcher - see the previous issue of Libertarian Struggle). Are they supposed to 'stand on their own two feet' - how can they?

The Department of Health and Social Security (a misnomer if ever there was one) is able to give discretionary grants for shoes and clothing, and we all know what discretionary means - you have to lick arses to get it. The scales for these grants were under review this year but have not been increased. The allowance given depends on parents' income. For example, a working parent with a net income (after rent, rates allowances, etc.) of £13.40 with 3 children, would receive £4 for each child a year for clothing and shoes. A parent receiving social security may get a grant for shoes but at the discretion of the authority, because benefits are normally expected to allow for shoes and clothing. However, children's shoes are an extremely expensive item and one cannot be expected to buy only 1 pair of shoes per year for a fast-growing child. Perhaps this is another Tory measure to cripple the working class?



This 'Boots for Bairns' appeal highlights yet again the attack by the Tories being waged against the Welfare State. They propose to abolish the family allowance (see last issue of Libertarian Struggle) and make this money, at present a statutory right, payable as a means-tested benefit. By refusing to increase the clothing and footwear grant and keeping it at such a pitiful level, they will ensure that fewer and fewer families have the heart to grovel and beg for it. Instead, such families keep what little pride they have in their independence and prefer to do without. Which is worse - Welfare benefits presented as favours, or secondhand charity goods donated by the wealthy as a sop to their guilty conscience? We don't want a redistribution of the handouts given to poor families by State or bourgeoisie - what we want is a just redistribution of wealth. And we know what that will take.



# C.U.'s meet

Few decisions emerged from the Swansea conference of the National Federation of Claimants Unions held on April 7-8th. Symptomatic of this was the decision taken, after conference discussed the failure of the national campaign to end the S.S. cohabitation rule. It was decided to run no national campaigns. To most of the activists in CUs this seemed the right answer, because their political basis is that local autonomy comes before national efficiency. Because of their well-founded distrust of Leninist organisation and lack of knowledge of or desire for organised and democratic libertarian structures, these two principles of autonomy and national efficiency are seen as opposites. Thus any NFCU conference decision only means anything if the local unions will carry it out.

North London CU spoke of their being asked to take part in the Public Sectors Alliance of striking hospital workers, civil servants and gas workers. Unfortunately, the Civil Service union (CPSA) was not represented on the Alliance by anyone from the S.S. However, the Alliance did accept the CU position that the best strike-winning tactic for S.S. clerks was not to walk out of work. Instead the example of Ballards Lane office should be followed. There they stayed in work and paid out to claimants on trust. This was a far more effective way of sabotaging the Supplementary Benefits Commission - in fact it makes them irrelevant in this situation, as their reason for existence is not to pay all the money to which people are entitled. It also ensured that claimants were not divided from the strikers by being



Part of the reason for the failure of this campaign was that local unions were unsure of its aims, intended effects, and who it was aimed at.

This conference, like preceding ones, was not primarily a conference at which decisions were reached on the issues facing claimants, but a general meeting for involved people. As such, some good discussions and descriptions of local activity took place.

Unsupported mothers from Handsworth in Birmingham grouped in SMASH - Socialist Mothers for Active Self-Help - described their Family Allowance campaign. This had included a sit-down demonstration which blocked most of the traffic in Birmingham. No driver was allowed through the barricade of people and prams until they signed the petition against the proposals to take away Family Allowances.

made to suffer in any way (quite the reverse).

Similar, if not so effective, local activity was reported. But owing to the time taken up with wrangling with Swansea University authorities, organising meals and cresses, and discussions running over time, there was not time for workshops to discuss the points raised by conference. Conference discussion of the tax credit proposals, of the Fisher Report (on 'abuse' of Social Security) and on the CPSA strike was valuable. There was a general awareness that the Fisher report, that changes in paying strikers, that the new tax system, were part and parcel of the all-out government attack on the working class.

But, as the conference broke up, there seemed to be few who knew how the Claimants' movement was going to be able to organise effectively to help beat off these attacks.

# ON WITH THE SHOW

For those presently involved in workers' struggles, the names of the more militant unions (those with a growing rank and file) such as AUEW, NUPE, etc. are frequently used, but how many know of the name NATTKE (National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees) and use it in their everyday vocabulary - not very many!

NATTKE is a large union which keeps industrial disputes on a national scale to a bare minimum. At first glance it would appear to be in a very chaotic situation, because of the various and numerous jobs held by its members. It includes every worker in the entertainment business - from cinema attendants right through the spectrum of work to stage managers, T.V. and film crews; literally every facet of work involved.

This situation creates many contradictions. The relationship to the means of production is of a very obscure nature, compared to that of the factory floor. As one NATTKE brother put it to me rather coldly: 'They need factory

workers, they need hospital workers but they don't need theatre workers'. True words I'm afraid. The second contradiction (mainly in my field of work, theatre) is that often the workers are unmarried and without children, which means that the nuclear family oppression is cancelled out, nobody has anyone to worry about but themselves - these two situations create apathy.

The fact remains that working awkward hours (and we put up with and sacrifice a lot in those terms, particularly with touring shows); the phenomenally low wages (compared to other industries - about £1.50 a show, which is about 2½ to 3 hours; and day staff are not paid much more); etc. give rise to discontent from time to time. The Sadlers Wells company, due to tour the country, recently had a walk-out when pay negotiations were still going on and the production was due to start. NATTKE's reaction was pathetic. Not only did the National Executive refuse immediate solidarity with this action, but they actually sent other NATTKE

# KEEP RIGHT

The Communist Party's new publication which is meant to update the 'British Road to Socialism' is just one more electoral manifesto. Beneath a stream of left rhetoric and self-congratulation lies a series of totally reactionary conclusions that confirm the bankruptcy of the Party's leadership.

The book begins with an analysis of recent developments in the attack on workers standards of living and the struggle against this. Moving on to the nature of the State and Parliament, Mr. Woddiss sees the Tories as the instrument of Monopoly Capital. Labour, though not an agent of Capital, is seen as its weakly protesting servant. The theoretical bankruptcy arises in the conclusions Mr. Woddiss draws from this analysis. Having stated that Parliament is part and parcel of the system, he makes the statement that the vehicle of change (for the CP and the mythical 'Labour lefts') is to be the seizure of the state after electoral victory.

The whole sickening somersault can be seen in the Party's opportunism with regard to the Common Market. Democracy plus power, we are told, must be restored to Parliament. We always believed the only democracy revolutionaries can entertain is workers' power. When Mr. Woddiss, has the British working class ever expressed itself through Parliament?

The Party's logic on this issue (no doubt unintentionally) has made them bedfellows of the British Movement and National Front. They did in fact appear together at an anti-Common Market rally in London.

To be fair, Mr. Woddiss does entertain independent class activity, but its scope and purpose centres around creating the conditions for a Tory defeat and the election of the CP-Labour coalition, and then defending the Holy Alliance from right reaction.

What about workers' participation in the National (ised) State? Workers, we are told, will be encouraged to participate, and in best Edward Heath traditions this new government will 'consult the people' on all major issues.

On a more local level this new democratic participation means that a worker will need the permission of his Trade Union before he can be sacked.

Mr. Woddiss has obviously read 'State and Revolution', for he quotes (unacknowledged) Lenin's recipe for workers' control - 'every cook will be an administrator'. However, we suggest he refers to it again and perhaps he will see his plan to democratise the standing army and police for the fraud it is. 'A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power' - page 11 of the CP's own edition of 'State and Revolution'. Now why should this body increasingly trained for combatting internal war (i.e. class war), be-

come the tame pet of a revolutionary government? We can only raise the question of why it is being maintained, for the defence of democracy no doubt, but bourgeois democracy of course.

The only hint given as to the parliamentary road is so ideal for Britain is that 1/3 of the world is socialist. Now even if this were true he does not explain why this means we can vote in the revolution.

We are informed that Lenin said the British workers must wage a many-sided struggle, which is undoubtedly true but, unfortunately, it is stretching things a bit far to claim that a cross on a ballot paper for the CP, or left Labour, MP's, is a form of class struggle.

To be fair there seems one provision which puts Mr. Woddiss to the left of the British Road to Socialism. Early on in the book he calls for nationalisation without compensation. However, later when reverently referring to the British Road, recalls its provision for life annuities for those who have exploited us for so long.

By the way, students may wish to know: the CP claims credit for rescuing their union from both the right and ultra-left and also for the provision that in the educational sector the NUS can have responsibility for drawing up 'the rules of discipline'.

Enough said. This book is essential reading for all those who wish to see and savour the ideology of a degenerated revolutionary party and the logical contortions it employs in blending revolutionary rhetoric with reformist dreaming.



Councillors Brown (Labour)

and Reid (Communist)

vote together for 'Fair Rents'

employees to fill the gap. An official scabbing. The undoubted excuse will be that spontaneous action, without consultation and go ahead from the National Executive, contravenes union regulations: clause 4 of NATTKE rules, 1963.

A brother from Bolton put it very well in a reply letter to another NATTKE member, who thought that deregistration from the Industrial Relations Act was an undesirable action for NATTKE to have taken, printed in 'NATTKE News'. "The greatest danger to the Trade Union movement is that it can be fragmented - each union seeing its own interests distinct and separate from those of other unions. This is precisely the situation the Tories are trying to create. They know, it seems, better than some of us, that the strength of our movement lies in its unity. Whatever the complexities of the Industrial Relations Act, its aims are simple - to split the Trade Union movement up and rob it of its most effective weapon - the strike." "We are not two different kinds of animals, we are one - workers. Whether we work in the theatre or on the factory floor makes not a scrap of difference, we are all working men and women trying to squeeze a decent standard of living out of employers whose interests lie in keeping profits up and wages down."

At present 12 theatres, along with Covent Garden, are to be pulled down due to the increasing activities of property speculation in the West End of London. Equity, which despite its phenomenally high unemployment rate has a right-wing leadership against any form of direct action - the big guns are glamourised business men - is the only body calling for action over this issue.

With one hand on their hearts and the other

on the cash register, big names like Lew Grade (who has his monetary finger in every theatrical and television pie) shout about what a disgrace this is, they will lose money. If there were profits in it for them, they would keep quiet and support it. Unemployment and the money-grabbing effects of capitalism don't enter into the subject for such people.

So, where and what will be the next move in NATTKE? It is up to the rank and file members to make it work and carry the struggle through, consistently, to the union executive. To amend the rules preventing spontaneous struggle and free communication of branches with each other. To fight for union democracy. To call on solidarity with other unions, in an effort to further our demands and win them. Some branches of the International Socialists are doing good work in helping with the formation of shop workers' unions, in various localities, which is a good sign. Activities of this kind should be extended, where possible, to the weaker unions such as NATTKE, as unity and solidarity have been proved crucial features in the public sector workers' struggles recently.

P.S. On a point of information concerning the comrade's article on football in the previous issue of L.S. he says that theatre audiences are by and large from the vocal middle classes. This may be true if we view theatre as a total concept, but from the point of view of the grasping theatre managements, money is to be made out of the working classes with cut rate musicals in the West End of London - that's where 'the racket' actually exists.





# RANDALL

On Tuesday 3rd of April John Randall gained the presidency of the National Union of Students. He takes over from the Stalinist Digby Jacks in September. Randall proclaims himself an 'independent revolutionary socialist'. This new theory of individual revolutionary action needs investigating. Randall has no bright record of revolutionary politics. His proclamation must come as a surprise for the students at York University, who had to suffer his procrastination and sellout politics while he was President of the Student Representative Council 1969-1970.

During that year, students at Warwick University occupied the administration building on discovering that secret files were being kept on students. Letters taken from the Warwick files brought to light a clandestine system of information-gathering by the University authorities. Copies of the letters were sent to many student unions, who acted promptly by occupying in solidarity with Warwick and demanding that files be opened to students in their own universities. Randall refused to publish the letters, claiming they were 'subjudice' pending an enquiry at Warwick, and that money for printing and duplicating copies of the spy letters would be considered 'ultra vires' (i.e. outside the area of concern of the SRC).

In a general meeting of the students, Randall ruled that the calling for the publication of the Warwick files letters was illegal due to an 'injunction'. The ruling was challenged. To quote from the minutes of the SRC meeting

Mr. Randall spoke for his ruling saying that when the SRC published some of the letters they did not know about the injunction, and

whatever (the challenger) thought about the Constitution it still remained, and so did the law of the land, which was the supreme constitution.'

This from an 'independent revolutionary socialist'!

A group of anarchists, RSSF (Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation), and I.S. members funded the printing of letters to start a campaign to force the administration to condemn the activities of Warwick University and open secret/confidential files on students at York. The campaign lasted three weeks.

During the campaign Randall fought the left by taking a 'responsible moderate position' in that he used every possible tactic to fight the initiation of an occupation, while trying to preserve his post as President. At no time did he ever sanction a move for an occupation, and he covertly fought against it when after three weeks, a General Meeting finally forced the issue and Heslington Hall (administration building) was occupied.

The occupation lasted four days, during which Randall acceded to the calling of three general meetings by the right wing, when the Constitution required a week to legally call one. Randall, backed by right wing members of his executive, slandered the most vocal members of the occupation. He quietly approved motions from his Treasurer Tony Edginton at one of these three meetings. The motions read :-

'The student body instructs the SRC to express its appreciation to the porters working in Heslington Hall during the present difficulties and thanks the administration and porters for the restraint they have shown so far.' Proposed T. Edginton.

'The student body abhors any action which will endanger the employees or the property of the University'. Proposed T. Edginton.

The occupation was finally broken on its fourth day (6th of March 1970) by 499 against and 406 for. Randall had cut the debate at a crucial point for the left at the meeting, and had ensured, through his covert leadership, that a massive anti-occupation campaign was a success. This campaign was led by the Monday Club Vice-President of the SRC and the reactionary Treasurer Edginton. Randall never condemned these two leaders of the right, or even came out against them or their activities.

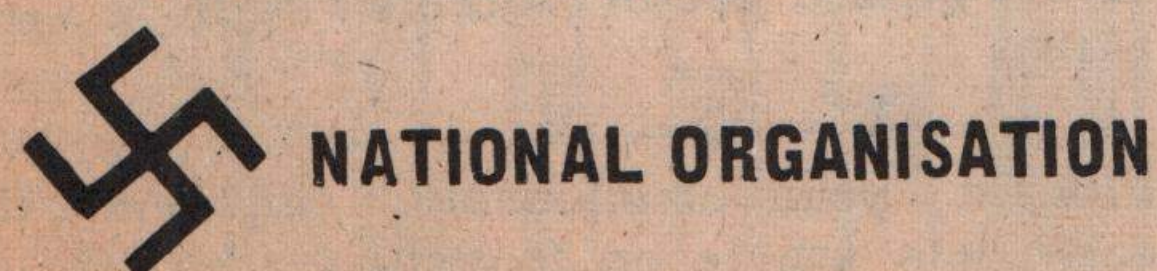
This is the meaning of 'independent revolutionary socialism'. You sit on the fence and gain ground in personal power while crucial struggles go to the wall. The students who were at York at the time cannot recall Randall involved in any revolution-socialist activity during his four years there, and amongst the real revolutionaries there was angry resentment at the Randall-backed sellout.

A year of that 'independent revolutionary socialist' leadership is about to take control of the NUS. Students meet your new President.

## NAZI FRONT'S COLLEGE 'FRONT'

During the last thirty years or so, the extreme right has made very little impact on student politics. The National Front, however, is now attempting to get its jackboot into a number of colleges and universities. It has also set up a student organisation, controlled from its headquarters in Pawsons Road, in Croydon.

In an article in the April, 1972 issue of 'Spearhead', entitled "Nationalism and the Universities" by Stephen Sherwin-Daniel, the writer bemoaned the fact that "students appear to be one of the few sections of the population among whom the nationalist message is not making significant progress". He claimed that there was potential for a 'Nationalist movement' in the universities, provided that the National Front do three things. It must jettison its "reactionary" image, as most students disliked the "so-called fascist policies of the NF"; he did not, however, suggest that it should "liberalise" its policies. The NF should develop a more "intellectual" approach towards students. And it must "build an energetic group, with a dynamic and different approach to politics, who are prepared to clash head-on with the left at every turn."



In August the Front announced that it intended to set up a national student organisation. It admitted that hitherto it had made almost no headway among students, but that it had now made a number of recruits in a few colleges and universities. Furthermore, the NF was organising a conference during the summer holidays.

On September 10th 1972, the National Front Students' Association (NFSA) was launched. Its aim was to promote the NF in Britain's universities, colleges and all other centres of education. NF students were advised to work within political groupings outside the left-wing spectrum (presumably the Conservative and Monday Clubs), and to promote the NF case by the written and spoken word. It was also resolved that a thrice-yearly National Front student paper be produced. It would be given away. The NFSA would not be an independent organisation, but would be an "integral department" of the National Front, "keeping broadly within the lines of NF policy, but allowed considerable autonomy in the operational field". It was also announced that the chairman of the NFSA was to be Denis Pirie, a member of the NF Directorate, and an economics student at Sussex University.

Early this year, Richard Lawson, formerly of Plymouth, and now a Law student at Chelmsford Polytechnic, was appointed National Secretary and Organiser of the National Front Students' Association. He will work, during the weekends, at the NF headquarters, when he is not away visiting universities and colleges in the provinces. He is to be assisted by two other NF students, Peter Hone and Elizabeth Wallwark. He will edit the NF student paper, which is to be called 'Spark'. At Chelmsford Polytechnic, Lawson edits his own journal, 'Anglo Saxon Chronicle'.

The NF is now obviously making a determined bid for student support. You have been warned!

## N.U.S. '73

The fifty-first conference of the National Union of Students took place at Exeter University during the first week of April. The emphasis at these Easter Conferences is on the elections for the new executive. The results this year are now well known - a victory for John Randall as President and then a mixture of 'moderates' and 'left caucus' candidates down the line, with two IS members in at the bottom as executive officers. The 'Alternative Left' (dominated by IS) slate presented the main opposition to the 'Left Caucus' (Communist Party) slate, with the IMG and SLL (Trotskyists) slates making an attempt at putting their lines over.

The disunity of the left was caused by the CP dominated 'Left Caucus', originally conceived to defeat right wing candidates, deciding before the elections to exclude IS, IMG and SLL from the caucus, "until such time as they could demonstrate a responsible attitude to the Student Union movement" - ie until they agreed to stop exposing the CP's compromises and lack of gumption.

John Randall, of course, was in the 'Left Caucus' until it decided to adopt Mike Terry as official candidate. Then, after years of being a creature of the CP-controlled NUS bureaucracy, he suddenly turned against 'machine politics' and stood as an 'independent socialist' against the Caucus whose nomination had been refused him.

Motions on Gay Rights and the White Paper 'Education - a Framework for Expansion' were predictable and well reported elsewhere. The real sectarian in-fighting was during the Union Autonomy and the Grants Campaign motions. Much of the work on these motions is done at the amendment stage where every sectarian group, from the Flat Earth Society upwards, attempts to have its own particular 'line' expressed in the substantive motion. One welcome amendment to the Grants motion, tabled by IS and vigorously opposed by the CP, was that no settlement should be agreed on increased grants until the discretionary awards system is abolished. The discretionary grants system works directly against working class students in further edu-

## ORA Publications

- ORA 1. *Towards a History and Critique of the Anarchist Movement in Recent Times* 5p plus post.
- ORA 2. *Theory and Praxis in Anarchist Organisation*. 3p plus post.
- ORA 3. *The Bombthrowers: a study of terrorism*. 10p plus post.
- ORA 4. *Neither Washington nor Hanoi but Libertarian Socialism*. 2p plus post.
- ORA 5. *Introduction to Revolutionary Anarchism*. 10p plus post.
- ORA 6. *1plus1equals10: Computer Ethics*. 5p plus post.
- ORA 7. *Bakunin - Essays on Revolution*. 5p plus post.
- ORA 8. *Free Speech and Social Revolution* 5p plus post.

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Available from 68a Chingford Road, London E.17.

### LOCAL GROUP PUBLICATIONS

*Suppressed Report on the Derry Massacre* - 2p from North London group.  
*Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. 10p from N. London group.  
*Anarchism and Ecology*. 10p from Lancaster  
*Revolution: Past and Present*. 10p from Leeds group.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS & EVENTS

**LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST DISCUSSION**  
 Meetings at Leeds Trades Hall, Upper Fountains Street, Leeds 1, alternate Wednesdays at 8pm. All welcome.  
 May 2nd. "ANGRY BRIGADE AND AFTER-MATH". Topics for May 16th and 30th not settled. Future topics will be on the Womens Movement, Student Politics, Workers Control and Trade Union Democracy.

cation colleges and technical colleges. With these students the Local Education Authorities can use their 'discretion' and pay, on average, £20 to £40 less than the mandatory grants issued to university and college of education students. They can also use their discretion not to pay a grant.

While much discussion was sectarian in origin, it is important to realise that in a federated body such as the NUS, where there is no recall on executive officers, it is necessary to give as clear a mandate as possible. Beyond that, the Executive can go its own sweet way, and often does, until the general cynicism of the delegates causes them to support a system of recallable executive officers.

Probably the sanest comment came from a 'joke' candidate in the elections. 'Remember NUS is your Union. It's just that the Executive wants to borrow it for a year'.

### LIBERTARIAN STUDENTS' FEDERATION?

Anyone interested in "a Student Federation within ORA, mainly those involved in Union work" ?  
 Write to Box L, 29, Cardigan Rd. Leeds 6. and your letter will be forwarded.

## LAPDOG BARKS

A motion of condemnation on Bradford University and its Students Union Executive regarding the dispute with 'Bradford Black' - the Bradford Anarchist newsheet - (see previous issues of Libertarian Struggle) was unfortunately not prioritized for discussion in the emergency motions ballot. However, after a copy of the motion had been distributed to each delegate, the Bradford President issued a statement in defence to the Conference Steering Committee.

In his letter, he stated that the events itemized in the motion (i.e. Bradford Black barred from campus, harassment of distributors, limited printing facilities) were no longer in operation. Despite this fact, at least 10% of the colleges and universities within NUS voted to have the motion discussed in open conference.

**EDS:**  
 The latest news is that Bradford Black is still effectively banned, and that the Union is still not putting up any fight against this.



# blacks unite ?

At the beginning of the year, the strike of Asian workers at the Mansfield Hosiery factory at Loughborough came to an end. During its course it had involved an occupation of the Union offices to force the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers to make the strike official. The strike had been essentially an attack on the allocation of the best paid jobs to white workers. Faced with a growth of racial conflict, and the possibility of their militancy spreading across the Midlands, the government intervened and appointed an enquiry. In due course the Inquiry ordered that a pool of workers be created, from which a 'fair selection' would be made for the jobs available. This pool consisted largely of white workers, who had scabbed during the strike, as well as black strikers and others. This obviously precipitated a situation in which workers were brought into open competition with each other, thus producing further tension. The strike committee decided to form itself into an action committee, which would visit other black workers in the Midlands and even beyond, talk about the strike and its lessons and help strengthen their militancy.

A conference has now been called in Birmingham in June, supposedly by the Mansfield Hosiery committee. In fact this does not seem to be the case. During the strike a Mr. Bunsee, described by the press as a 'Maoist' and a student from Nottingham University, acted as spokesman for the strikers. He is apparently behind the conference.

This is not a case of leftwing militants 'using' ordinary workers to propagate radical views. Certainly it looks as if Bunsee has used the workers. But radical views don't enter into it! The idea of inviting dear old Vic Feather, TUC boss, to talk has fortunately been abandoned. But the main aim of the conference has been defined as the creation of local anti-racist committees.

There are already scores of these scattered across the country, marginally more militant than the government's own Community Relations Councils, beloved of white liberals.

Community Relations Councils have, under their various covers, from time to time drawn in militants. This is in spite of the fact, that although designed to promote harmony between black and white (ignoring the nature of society completely), there is not a single CRC that has a black majority on its management. The blacks chosen are invariably middle class leaders of conservative immigrant organisations. Churches usually get in on the act somewhere along the line. In spite of all this, they occasionally appoint Officers more radical than they they can contend with. In one locality an Officer resigned in part because of the local CRC's conservatism - he himself favoured working for good relations between police and youth. How reactionary does that make them ?

It goes without saying that no ordinary white worker is appointed to these Councils either. In 1971 the government hypocritically called upon the CRCs to make 'a year of harmony...while it introduced the Aliens Act, making blacks even more legally insecure. The aim is obvious enough - to pacify blacks.

The anti-racist committees already in existence are, of course, independent groups. They claim to be leftwing, though this varies. In uniting groups rather than individuals, they repeat the Popular Front formula of the 1930s. They are negative coalitions, aiming against racism rather than for anything. Although they sometimes include Liberal Party radicals, their support usually ranges from Tribune Labourite to the various revolutionary groups. Like the Popular Front they often talk in class terms, but their practice is rather different. They spend a lot of time avoiding alienating the Labour radicals, who frequently include local Councilors where Labour is in control. The net result is that they act as a force against real working-class militancy, serving to head it off and defuse it. Revolutionary groups either ignore them for sectarian reasons (Socialist Labour League & the Communist Party of Britain, Marxist-Leninist), or join them to reach other activists (IS and IMG). Demons-

trations may involve workers, as did the one in Leeds, where a building worker was stabbed by a member of the British Movement.

The Committees are dominated by white intellectuals, so blacks again find themselves permanently in a minority. For militants they are an organisational substitute for getting out and doing the hard graft of building and arguing inside the working class.

There are already many autonomous black groups scattered across the Midlands in particular. They tend to be divided on cultural lines. The Indian Workers Association although leftwing, usually retains its independence. West Indian-based groups have always been the most notably active and militant; from the days of the West Indian Standing Committee up to the present Panthers; the Black Unity and Freedom Party and others in London; Black Peoples Freedom Movement in Nottingham; groups in Birmingham and elsewhere. Many of the immigrant groups, including the West Indian ones, are more social institutions than political organisations. With the growing attack on black workers in this country it is essential they transform themselves, as some do temporarily under pressure, into militant activist bodies.

Yet it has been the Asian workers who have been involved in the recent spate of cheap labour strikes. Up to now their organisations have either been middle class student groups - as the Bangladesh nationalists - or intensely conservative, controlled by 'respectable citizens' - as for example, the Pakistani Friendship League.

If the June conference is to serve any

useful purpose, it must be to bring black militants together, and to begin to build a united national organisation. Inevitably the main battles for the present will be fought out within the local, sectional bodies. But Birmingham must provide a direction and a thrust to speed up the process.

It is therefore essential that as many black militants as possible attend the conference, and press for decisions on national co-ordination, and on pushing cultural groups within the black community together into local black liberation groups. It is equally vital that the conference represent black workers, and that future organisation should be clearly seen in class terms. The bourgeoisies from the different cultural groups are the only blacks to gain from cultural divisions. They have to be dumped.

Years of black middle class militancy, from the years before the formation of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, which itself split on the issue of white control, have demonstrated their bankruptcy. The only chance for blacks is to unite on class lines with a class perspective. The bosses are the only whites to gain from black divisions.

At this stage the formation of autonomous black networks is not 'black racism' but a recognition of current necessity. Pretending white racism within the working class doesn't exist by ignoring it, is simple insanity. Unity on the picket line is of course vital. The building strike is proof enough of that. But on its own it can't smash racism. Autonomous black workers' power is a vital factor in doing so. The more coherent it is, the more effective it is going to be.

organisation run by the neo-Nazi Colin Jordan) had been also leafletting the city calling for 'white power' and stating that Britain should become a 'no-go area' for immigration.



**THE NATIONAL FRONT  
NEEDS YOU - IN THE  
BATTLE FOR BRITAIN**

**STICKERS FOUND IN LEEDS PRIOR TO  
FIRE-BOMB ATTACK ON IMMIGRANTS.**

Late in the evening of March 30th a West Indian general food store in Hyde Park, Leeds was destroyed in an explosion. The shop was completely gutted. Neighbours saw a white man dash from the back of the building to a car. The police are investigating the incident but, as yet, there are no 'known' reasons for the bombing, except the obvious motive; fascist violence. Similar incidents, with little police action to discover the culprits, have occurred in Bradford, where the NF have been organising campaigns against immigration.

In all these activities the finger of suspicion points directly at the extreme right wing. The police have made no serious attempt to investigate the local fascist organisations. If the bombings had been of another type, in which it could be construed that the left had been involved, police action would have been rapid; as in the case of the Angry Brigade bombings against property.

The immigrants cannot rely on the police to protect them from these attacks. They can only rely on their self-activity and their self-defence, and on the solidarity of other workers; who must be prepared to counter fascist attacks, before they escalate to full-scale strike-breaking, assassinations and beatings of militants: as has happened in the past.

## FASCIST VIOLENCE SPREADS

Unknown persons have attacked, with fire-bombs and explosives, numbers of shops, cinemas and pubs throughout the country over the last two months. All of these premises were owned or used by immigrants.

At the end of February, 5 immigrant shops in South London were petrol-bombed while in mid-March six more premises were burnt out and bombed in Brixton, Tooting and Twickenham. Similar incidents occurred in Leeds and a series of similar 'unexplained' fire bombings have been happening in Bradford over the past year.

In all of the bombings, the police have made no investigation of the local rightwing neo-fascist organisations - the National Front (NF), and the British Movement (BM), who have been carrying out intensive anti-immigrant campaigns where the bombing occurred.

The Black Panther Unity Centre bookshop, where community self-help and information was organised, was a victim of one of the fire bombings. The local Tooting cinema which showed Indian films, and a local pub in Brixton where West Indian residents often drank, were also badly damaged in the attacks.

London is not the only city in which the fascists are ready to use violence. In mid-March the National Front (NF) were covering the streets of Leeds with stickers calling for people to join in 'the Battle for Britain'. The British Movement (a small



Dear Friends,

Noticing the article in last month's *Libertarian Struggle* about Trust House Forte, I would like to add a few comments having worked for some time at the PostHouse in York. I made numerous attempts while I was there to persuade the kitchen workers, porters, waitresses etc., that the best thing they could effectively do, to combat all the problems they endlessly complained about, would be to join a union; so that they might have some chance of seeing that their demands were met.

The reactions I got were of two very distinct kinds. The waitresses and receptionists did not want to know, as their wages were higher than union rates anyway, and the kitchen staff and porters were either totally passive in their acceptance of their lot, or were very frightened of pressing for unionisation for fear that they might lose their jobs. The split between these reactions was about 50-50.

Some very hard work will have to be done (a) to make the caterers' union more effective than it has been to date and (b) to persuade people that they do need union backing if they are to win success in any of their demands. If they fight alone they will invariably suffer, if they do not fight they will achieve nothing either.

J.N.

York.

Dear Comrades,

I refer to the article in your March edition about the Freeze and Public Sector workers, where you make the statement: "It will be disastrous if militants think that it is enough to build groups like Nalgo Action". I think this formulation may have been unintentional, but it is certainly misleading in so far as it suggests that we in Nalgo Action do think it enough. We do not.

We seek links with other groups such as LASH and Case Con. We intend to exchange lists of regional convenors etc with them, and build towards a national conference of Public sector rank and file groups. We encourage the exchanging of speakers between our groups and others. The front page of the last edition of Nalgo Action News was mainly taken up with the Hospital, Gas and Civil Servant strikes, none of which involve Nalgo members, under the headline 'Unite to Beat Phase 2'; and the main article urged the calling of Special Meetings of Nalgo Branches, to call for support with solidarity action, for all groups fighting the Freeze.

For these reasons I urge all readers of your paper to join NAG, or the equivalent in their industry, while endorsing your sentiment that building such groups in isolation is futile.

Fratemally,  
Peter Household  
Joint Yorkshire Convenor, NAG





# DEMOCRATISE THE RANK & FILE ?!

The current appalling situation that most teachers now find themselves in, as regards pay, must be analysed not only from the aspect of the union's (NUT) inability to serve the interests of its members, but also its inability to respect the wishes of teachers from local association level upwards.

First of all the facts. The union drew up a National Salary Claim recently which estimated that £172million would cover teachers' needs at present. This was debatable anyway, considering that the scale system of payment allows for gross inequalities - for instance, a first year probationary teacher from a teachers training college may take home £16 a week and a head teacher well over £60. However, the government decided to offer just £52million to be shared out as the Union wished.

Here, the Union because of its non-democratic nature has totally fouled things up for its members, and because of its actions has done its best to pit teacher against teacher.

The Union has supposedly for months been fighting for an increase of the London weighting to £300 a year for all teachers. The obvious need for an extra London allowance can be seen when you look at the high turnover rate of London teachers - up to 40-50% in some boroughs. In some schools all the posts except for the Headmaster and one or two Heads of Department are occupied by probationary or supply teachers, (that is, teachers who are used to fill vacancies and moved from school to school).

However the Union executive decided that the London teachers should only be allowed to fight their case on the allowance itself, and not bring in the obvious broader fight of combatting the Freeze and the Industrial Relations Act. In spite of this, many local teachers' associations in London joined

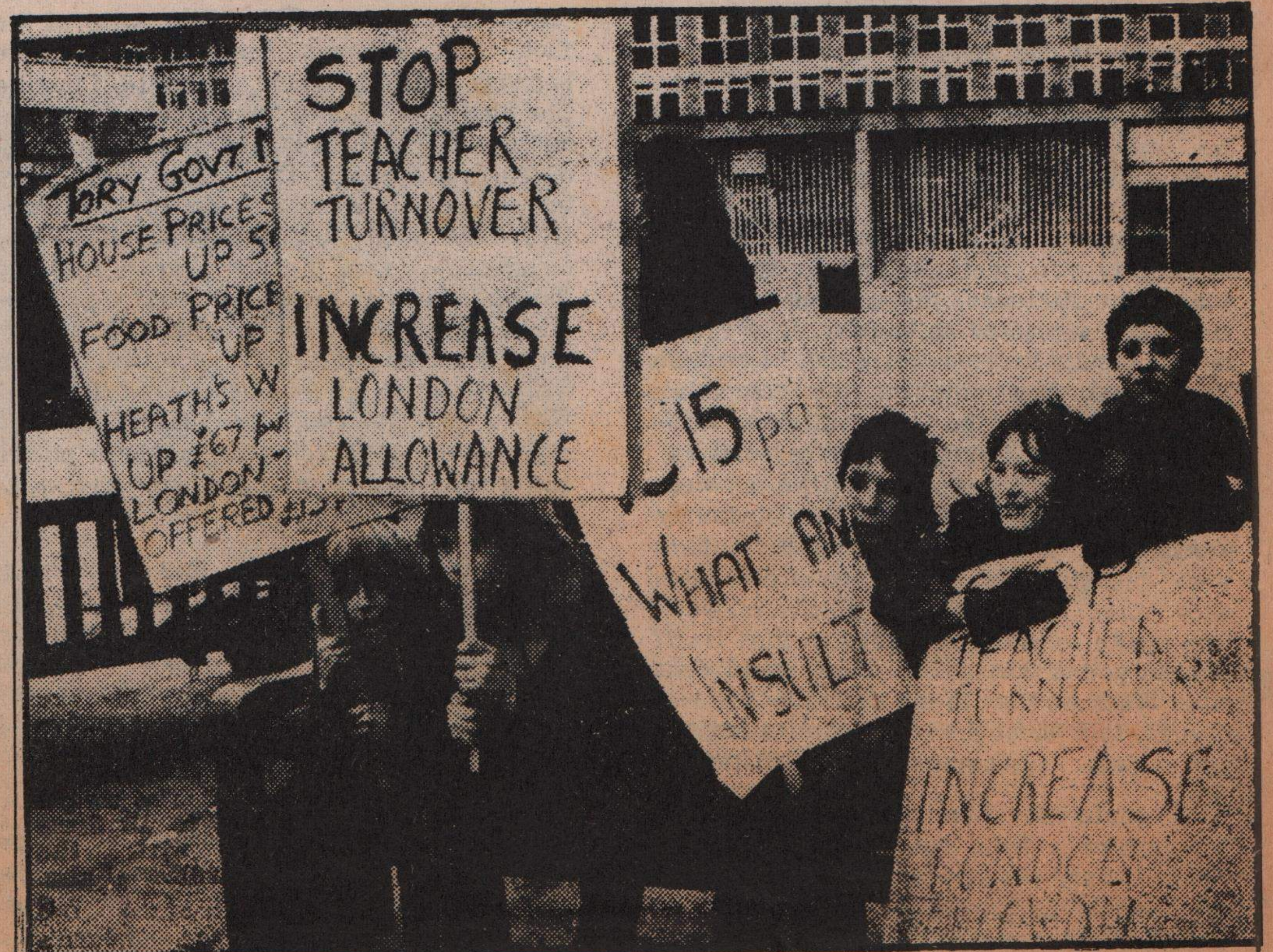
ed forces with NUPE, the CPSA and the gasworkers local branches and organised cooperative action such as joint demonstrations on an area basis with the main theme of Fighting the Freeze. This situation of area militancy and the NUT executive's myopia could be seen in its most absurd light when, on a local march that I went on, you had Hackney teachers and hospital workers singing "if you can't eat meat, eat the rich", and on the recent all London teachers one day strike (a massive turnout of 20,000 teachers) you were not allowed officially to display on your banner any 'Fight the Freeze' slogans.

On a more serious level it has meant that London teachers have become isolated from teachers in the rest of England, and it has given the impression to the majority of non-London teachers not prone to political analysis, that London teachers are making demands for unfair privileges.

The outcome of this is that the executive has recommended that the Union accepts the current offer and proposes to divide the comparatively small amount up thus: a flat rate increase for all teachers on a scale of £127 a year increasing as scales go higher, so that at Headmaster level there is an increase of over £170 a year. The executive has recommended that there should be no increase in the London allowance at all; so throwing down the drain the magnificent solidarity of London teachers shown in the recent demonstrations, the time and effort made in the 3 day area strikes and the solidarity shown to the other unions in their struggle against the government and the Freeze.

The reasons for this sellout lie in the undemocratic nature of the NUT and to this extent this analysis applies to most other trade union structures.

First of all, inherent in the NUT is the



KIDS SUPPORT LONDON TEACHERS STRIKE IN MARCH

feeling among many teachers that it should be a professional association, not wishing to strike but conducting negotiations through the Burnham structure in a gentlemanly way. This feeling of 'negotiators knowing what's best' for their rank and file members, permeates the upper echelons of the NUT bureaucracy and the whole of the National Association of Schoolmasters which has been laying back in the current series of strikes and letting the NUT do the dirty work for them.

The professional attitude comes out in the fact that most local associations have postal ballots for the election of officers on the committees, very few general members' meetings and many policy making committee meetings. The effect of this is that caucuses of militants of every shade fight for the positions of power on the committees; elections are conducted on a personality rather than policy basis; the few general meetings are very disillusioning affairs where only a few motions are discussed because of the time limit, and the rest are left for the committee to discuss. In short, you have the old established personalities building up power bases within local associations; dogfights in the rare general members' meetings between knowledgeable egotists using the intricate constitution as a time delay and weapon - "a point of order Mr. Chairman" - and precious little chance for the new members to make policy.

In short even at the base of the pyramid there is no popular democracy. In the few associations that have managed a comprehensive rules revision; ie. monthly members meetings which have total policy making powers; a purely administrative committee and elections of officers at these meetings by a show of hands, with a provision for proxy votes, attendance and militancy has shot up.

What is the position of the Rank and File grouping within the NUT and in particular on the issue of popular democracy?

Rank and File was set up some years ago by a group of teachers, mainly International Socialists, on this issue of non-representation of teachers views within the NUT. It was set up primarily in opposition to the Communist dominated bureaucracy which had sold out on the divisive scales system of payment which has weakened Union solidarity since. A caucus of the many dissatisfied militants was formed mainly to present to a disillusioned and apathetic membership a method by which they could change the situation. A magazine is produced called 'Rank and File' - a journal for socialist teachers. So far, so good.

IS however see Rank and File as a 'broad front' organisation, which means that you join Rank and File acknowledging, if not accepting, their line put out in the single Rank and File perspectives document 'Democracy in Schools'. In it is contained basically the IS attitude on the 'Education Issue'. Although IS would vigorously deny that they see Rank and File as a projection of themselves, in the teaching body it could only be such, considering that IS operate on a Party basis and must if they are honest with their own analysis, operate a 'slate' system of voting when challenged on their policies. At this year's National Conference of Rank and File, the committee had decided the agenda to be discussed so rigidly, that many of the issues members wanted discussed were not touched on or only alluded to through the amendments to the set out motions. At the end of the conference the largest minority grouping (IS) managed to get all but three IS members or sympathisers onto the executive. The Editorial Committee of the journal is selected by the Executive through interviews and not elected by the meeting.

The IS influence has meant (yes folks, you've heard it all before!), caucuses of militants of every shade fighting for positions of power on the committee, too few conferences where only a few motions are discussed because of the time limit and the rest are left for the committee to discuss, and dogfights between members... "a point of order Mr. Chairman" etc. etc. etc.

How can a Rank and File group in a local association advocate the undermining of the NUT bureaucracy by eliminating parliamentary democracy in favour of popular democracy, when it practices parliamentary democracy in its own organisation?

Unionists must learn that they are the power, that conferences and meetings of members are sovereign, and that committees and executives should only exist to put conference decisions into practice.

Only in this way can strong trade unionism be built up; the government and the State combatted, and another sellout like the one teachers have just experienced be prevented.

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PS. The NUT is not even supporting the TUC invitation to strike on May Day. So individual associations and militants who decide to take action are left wide open to getting the chop for breaking contract by striking.

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