



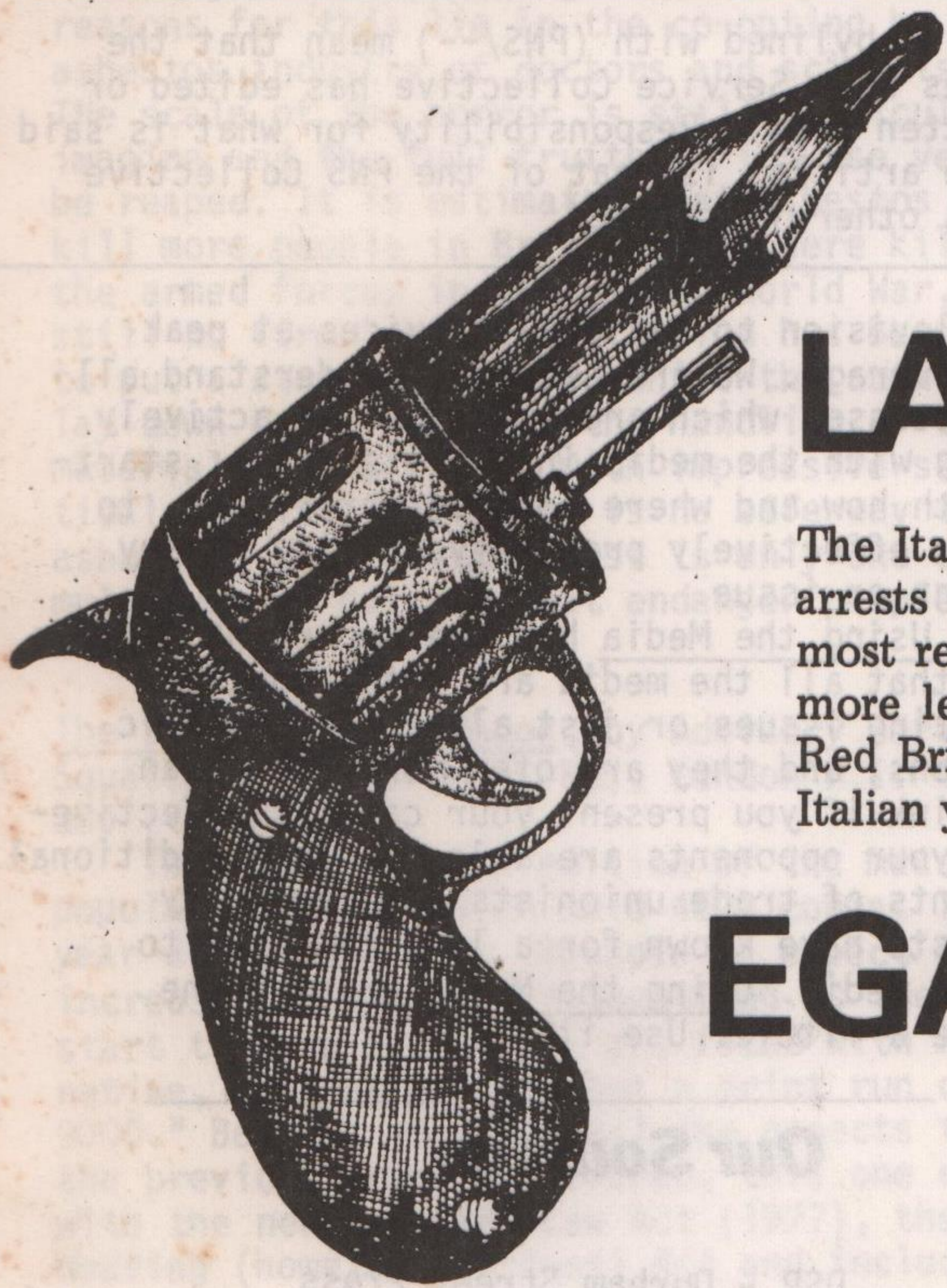
No.176

September 18, 1979

OXFORD HOUSE, DERBYSHIRE STREET, LONDON E2. Tel: 01-739 4568.

Peoples News Service

25p



ITALY -

LAW OF THE GUN

The Italian state's wave of repression, begun in the wake of the Moro murder with arrests on April 7, carries on now with as much fervour as when it began. The most recent consequences have involved the state desperately trying to implicate more left-wing academics and, most surprisingly of all, an apparent split in the Red Brigades. With growing controversy about massive heroin addiction amongst Italian youth, our correspondent in Italy gives the details.

EGA OUTMANOEUVRED

The remaining in-patients at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for women were recently moved out. The move, coming hot on the heels of a recent government promise to inject £1m into the hospital, was instigated by the local Area Health Authority. Faced with several setbacks of late, the campaign to save the hospital aims to launch a major new effort soon to save the hospital.

TUC 'IMPERIALISM'

After a year of constant allegations against it, the TUC has finally replied to charges of trade union 'imperialism'. Their answer? "Lies, smears, innuendoes..." More details on the issue that won't lie down.

SOUTH AFRICA

Envisaging majority rule in South Africa sooner or later, the British and American governments are trying to make sure that it's the rule they will like by training non-whites in the UK and USA.

PERSONS UNKNOWN

The six anarchists charged with conspiracy have just had the first taste of what the prosecution has in store for them with an unprecedented level of vetting planned for the jury.

ALSO:

- USA wants to bring back conscription
- Hackney Marshes to become industrial jungle?
- TUC stands up to Corrie

SHORTS * NEW PUBLICATIONS * EVENTS

What is PNS?

PNS is a left-wing, non-sectarian news service with the aim of providing information that is not readily available in the conventional press. We focus on issues not covered in the national papers, bringing out ignored or distorted details, doing background pieces and researching into national and international stories. We invite other papers to reprint stories from PNS and ask only that they credit us as a source.

Apart from the bulletin, PNS also provides special services for community papers and the alternative press. We index all the community papers that we receive and this index is available on a separate subscription. (An index to PNS itself is also available on request for the cost of postage). We also provide, at a slightly higher subscription rate, special research services; thereby, we hope, encouraging people to investigate stories themselves and helping to find out what they need to know from our contacts in London, our files, libraries, and so on.

PNS is run by a small collective and nobody gets paid for the work they do on the paper. We want to make PNS larger and give our readers more, but this is impossible unless we have more people to write for us and thus ease the production effort.

We particularly need correspondents outside London, but anyone who can help with writing, layout, or distribution is encouraged to contact us at Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E.2. Tel. (01) 739 4568.

We are holding regular meetings at the Oxford House, which are open to anybody, on every other Thursday at 6.30pm (September 20, 27 and so on). The deadline for copy for the next issue is Wednesday September 26. All copy for PNS 177 must reach us by then.

Articles bylined with (PNS/--) mean that the Peoples News Service Collective has edited or rewritten them. Responsibility for what is said in the articles is that of the PNS Collective unless otherwise stated.

Using the Media

For generations, one of the main problems faced by community activists, community pressure groups and trade unionists in dealing with the news media in general has basically been one of communication. Certainly, much of the misrepresentation which community activists and trade unionists have received has been wilful, but a lot is due to lack of understanding of how the media actually work. For instance, what sort of purely non-political pressures does the reporter face in carrying out his or her job?

Using the Media, by Dennis MacShane, (Pluto Press, £2.50, 244pp) starts from this point, describing where the power in the news process actually lies. This power is very often not anti-union or anti-alternatives, but is there waiting to be communicated with. Using the Media tells us, encourages us, that the media are there to be actively used.

This is a handbook in the true sense of the word with chapters containing vital information on all aspects of the media from Fleet Street to the local weekly press, from local radio

and television to national services at peak hour coverage. We are helped to understand all the processes which are important in actively dealing with the media in all its forms; starting with how and where to hold interviews, to how you effectively present your side of any campaign or issue.

If Using the Media has one important message it is that all the media are vital tools in presenting issues or just alternative public relations, and they are often more open than you think if you present your case as effectively as your opponents are able to. The traditional opponents of trade unionists and community activists have known for a long time how to use the media. Using the Media changes the balance a little. Use it.

Our Sources

DSP - Durham Street Press
LOP - Leeds Other Paper

SUBSCRIBE

Subscription rates for left-wing groups and individuals are £2.50 for 10 issues in Britain and Ireland; £3.10 elsewhere.

Subscriptions for 50 issues are £12.00 in Britain and Ireland; £15.00 elsewhere.

Subscriptions which include research and library facilities are £12.50 if you can afford it, or a minimum of £7.50 per year.

Subscriptions for libraries and commercial organisations are £10.00 per year.

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EGA OUTMANOEUVRED

London (PNS Correspondent). With little more than a murmur of protest, the twelve remaining in-patients at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital were quietly transferred to neighbouring hospitals on Tuesday, July 31. Despite the appearance given by the poor response from "Save the EGA" campaigners (largely due to someone going on holiday with the telephone-tree list!), staff and supporters were angered by the action of the Area Health Authority, particularly since negotiations with the Government to save the hospital have been underway since May (See PNS 171).

Justifying their action, the AHA say that there was no longer sufficient staffing to maintain an in-patient service without endangering the lives of patients. But, according to the Action Committee of the hospital staff, this is only as a result of the AHA's policy not to recruit staff for posts that became vacant at the hospital. Now only the out-patients department is operational at the 100-year old site on the Euston Road and even this appears to be threatened by the AHA's determination to with-

draw its commitment to the EGA. It is widely believed among the staff that the pathology department is due to be wound down through a similar policy of attrition. It also seems likely that the surgery ward, in the nearby Whittington Hospital and allocated for EGA patients, will gradually be absorbed into the main hospital.

The Action Committee sees the AHA action as "totally premature" since the official planning process for the future of the hospital buildings has yet to begin. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly likely that renovation of the existing structure will be more viable than rebuilding. The Regional Health Authority architect who visited the site recently expressed surprise at the good state of repair of the hospital, since the supposed dilapidated condition was the original excuse given by the Labour Government for closing the women-only hospital. At the same time the Action Committee is currently considering plans to expand and innovate work in out-patients, (see box opposite).

The AHA move comes at a time when the various support groups for the EGA are in the middle of difficult negotiations with the Department of Health & Social Security. Dr Gerard Vaughan, Minister of State for the DHSS, had promised £2 million to be spent on renovation and capital costs for a new EGA, which was to have a 40-bed gynaecological unit, a day hospital (18 beds) and related out-patient facilities. In response to opposition from supporters of the EGA's principle of a full medical service by and for women, the Government promised that the proposals were not rigid and that a project team would be set up to

A WELL-WOMAN CLINIC

Last year the EGA Well Woman Clinic Committee and the South Camden Community Health Council carried out a survey, interviewing 153 women, to find out how women were using and experiencing local women's health facilities and to assess how a clinic would satisfy their needs.

48% expressed dissatisfaction with, or low expectations of their GP's, claiming lack of sympathy and time, insufficient knowledge, sexist attitudes and class differences. Nearly 50% expressed a preference for seeing a female doctor, while 80% wished to use a well-woman clinic (although only 15% knew what a well-woman clinic was before it was explained to them - an indication of the need to promote easy access to information about this kind of service).

Arising from discussion between the Well-Woman's Clinic Group and doctors at the EGA, a series of proposals has been made for facilities that would be offered:

- * Opportunity for complete physical check up including blood pressure, urine, breast, abdominal, vaginal and cervical examination.

- * Further tests and vaccinations as necessary; e.g. pregnancy testing and rubella vaccination.

- * Opportunity to discuss health-related problems fully (including anxieties and depressions) in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere and to be put in touch with other women with similar concerns who could offer mutual support and information.

- * A personalised follow-up system.

- * People needing specialist attention should be able to be referred on within the EGA without having to return to their GPs.

- * There should be a phone-in advice and information service connected to the Well Woman Clinic.

- * There should be access to advice and information on health and health rights.

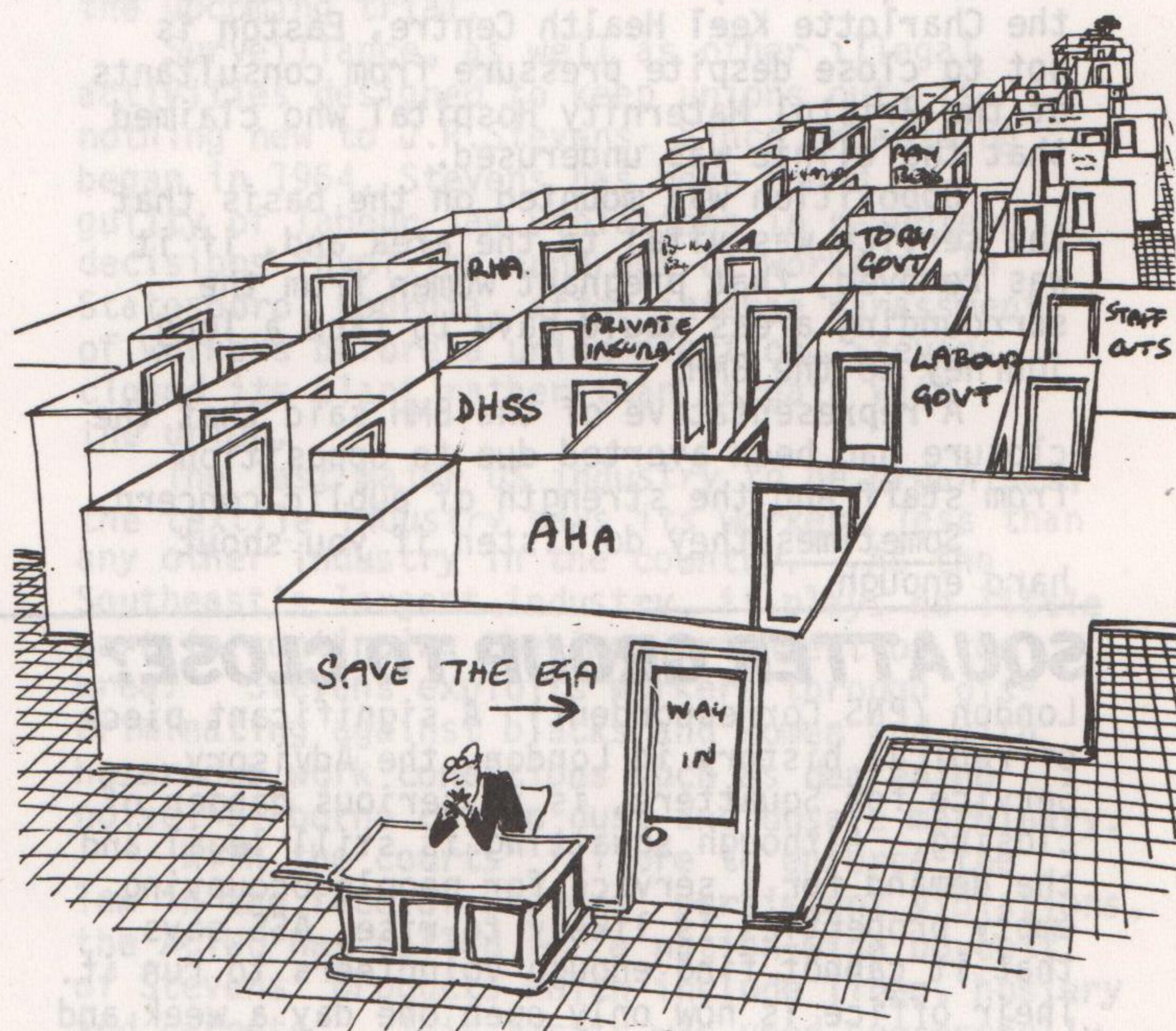
- * There should be access to a range of printed information on the pros and cons of particular treatments and alternative forms of treatment.

- * There should be adequate provision for ethnic minorities, including leaflets and information in the relevant languages.

- * The clinic should be held at an accessible range of times. There should be a creche.

- * Research - The EGA has been a pioneer in women's health. Continuing this tradition, the Well Woman Clinic would research into women's health needs and monitor its own work.

It should be emphasised that this unit would be an integral part of a fully functioning general hospital, e.g. the EGA, and its operation depends on being able to refer to other back-up services



make plans, while the Minister offered to meet staff and supporters regularly to discuss problems.

Widespread dissatisfaction has since been felt at the way it has become obvious that these promises were simply being used to silence the protests. Since the original proposals were made the Government has dropped its offer by

£1 million and demanded that the rest be found from "other sources", including the huge running costs involved. Given the entirely negative view of the EGA held by the AHA, (who administer National Health Service funds) this could only mean survival through finding private sources of money. With a declared policy of transferring health service costs from their present tax base to the private, insured sector, it is clear that the Government hopes to see the EGA become yet another exclusive, private hospital.

It is also becoming clear that offers of consultation are not living up to their expectations. At the two meetings so far held between hospital staff and Dr Vaughan careful chairing by a 'bodyguard' of AHA officials and the District Management Team ensured that difficult questions passed unanswered. The Action Committee also feel that the project team is going to be carefully managed by those who want to implement Government plans. Elections for posts on the team were held only two days after their date was announced and even Dr Vaughan expressed surprise at the extent to which it was being organised by his officials!

At a meeting of the Action Committee on August 22, it was decided to relaunch a major campaign to "Save the EGA", with the main thrust being aimed not just at the EGA but within the context of health service cuts in the area as a whole. Camden & Islington Area Health Authority will soon have to decide on how to allocate £4 million of cuts and already a long list of planned closures and cutbacks is being circulated among interested parties. In keeping with their policy, the Action Committee have embarked on a joint campaign with Islington Community Health Council's Fightback and the local trades council.

Details of how to support the EGA campaign can be obtained from: Candy Unwin at Fightback on 01-485 8610.

Bristol Clinic Saved

Bristol (PNS/BsV). The ante-natal clinic at the Charlotte Keel Health Centre, Easton is not to close despite pressure from consultants at the Bristol Maternity Hospital who claimed that the clinic was underused.

Opposition was mounted on the basis that the service was vital to the area and, if it was removed, that pregnant women from the surrounding areas would have to face a long journey to the BMH.

A representative of the BMH said that the closure had been averted due to opposition from staff and the strength of public concern.

Sometimes they do listen if you shout hard enough.

SQUATTER GROUP TO CLOSE?

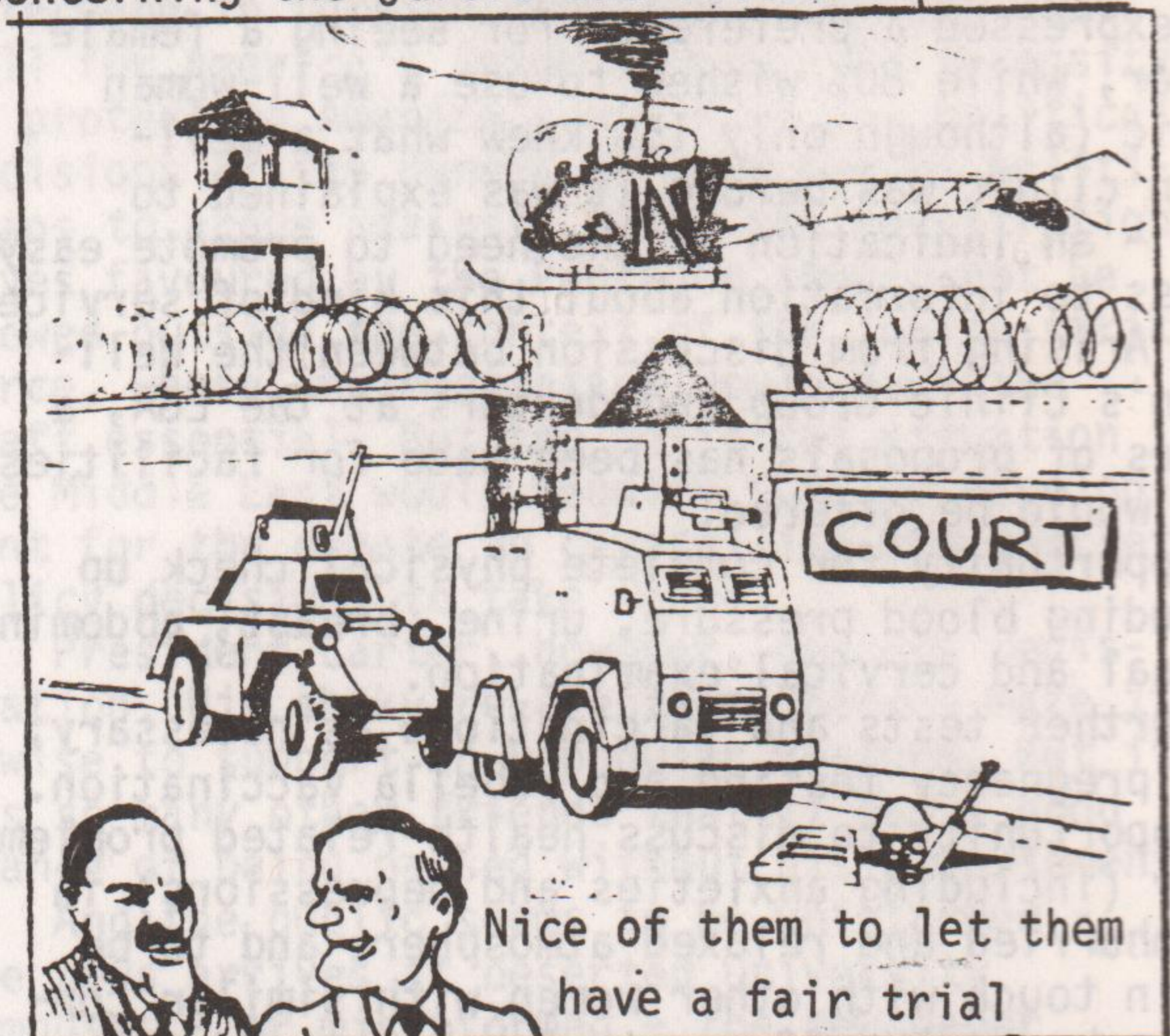
London (PNS Correspondent) A significant piece of radical history in London, the Advisory Service for Squatters, is in serious danger of closing. Although squatting is still legal and the demand for a service for people occupying empty properties is likely to rise, ASS says that it cannot find enough volunteers to run it. Their office is now only open one day a week and they say that they will either have to increase the number of people involved or close it down.

They are calling a meeting at their office on September 18 at 7pm (2 St Paul's Rd, London N1) to try and revive the organisation. ASS said that, having helped thousands of people in its four years of existence, closure would be doubly sad because they have sufficient income for this year and scope for more.

TRIAL BY VETTED JURY

London (PNS Correspondent). Soon we will see the start of what will probably be the most sensational trial in Britain this year when six anarchists, originally charged with "conspiracy to cause explosions", appear before Judge Gibbons at the Old Bailey. While it was as "The British Baader-Meinhofs" that they hit the headlines in May 1978 when the six were first picked up, police evidence against them has weakened considerably over the past fifteen months. This has led to the dropping of the original charge and its replacement with the charges of "conspiracy to rob", "possessing explosive substances", "possessing firearms" and "handling stolen goods".

Meanwhile, the focus of the case has changed once again, the most lively issue to arise being the unprecedented vetting of the jury. In early August the prosecution successfully applied for the jury to be vetted. Although 25 juries have been vetted since 1975, this is to be the most thorough in British legal history. In previous cases the Special Branch and the Criminal Records Office have been used to check juries but this time the local CID also is to be involved. The inclusion of the CID is a surprising move, particularly since any evidence of criminal charges and convictions against any of the jurors will already have been revealed by the CRO. CID files are most likely to bring forward gossip concerning the jurors and little else.



The defence is conducting a protest against the decision to vet the jurors and as we go to press were considering whether to appeal against the vetting.

In court on September 11 the Judge thought that legal aid money being spent on private detectives to vet the jurors for the defence would be a 'waste' (though clearly not for the prosecution), but he thought that the defence should be permitted access to the police information on the jurors. However, just how much the police would hand over to the defence is entirely their own affair.

Since there is no right of access to police records, there would be no way of knowing how much the police had given over and how much they had retained. The vetting procedure follows secret guidelines laid down by the Attorney-General for 'political' trials, and seems likely to become a feature of trials in times to come. Just as, along with other measures, the right of the defence to challenge jurors was reduced from seven to three under the Criminal Law Act, many now fear that the increase in the use of vetting procedures is another shot being fired in the war of attrition on the right to trial by jury.

TUC FORCED TO TAKE ACTION ON ABORTION

London (PNS Correspondent) It took eleven years for the Trades Union Congress to pass a resolution outlining specific actions to protect the 1967 Abortion Act. It reaffirmed the 1978 decision at this year's conference and is now obliged to hold a national demonstration to protest against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill, due for its third reading in February. This collaboration with the women's movement suddenly forced on the TUC has highlighted their erstwhile reluctance - and some future potential.

In accordance with 1978 Congress policy the General Council had to authorise a demonstration or justify their reasons for not doing so. There was no opposition to the move and the demonstration is set for October 28, assembling at Hyde Park at 11.30 am and proceeding to Trafalgar Square. Speakers will include Len Murray, Marie Patterson, chair of the TUC Women's Advisory Committee and twice President of the Congress and Angela Philips, the representative from Campaign Against Corrie (CAC - organised by the National Abortion Campaign). They are trying to get a woman doctor and representatives of each of the three main political parties, although they're having "difficulty getting a conservative Tory".

All affiliated unions and trades councils have been informed of the time and date of the demonstration and arguments against the bill. In addition, Len Murray has sent a letter to the Minister of Health urging opposition to the bill. However, little is expected to result from the communication.

The decision to hold a demonstration was not automatic. Once Corrie's bill appeared, NAC's Trade Union Liaison Committee contacted branch unions to pressure the TUC into complying with Conference policy. Internal lobbying also came from the TUC's Women's Advisory Council. Without such activities the demonstration may never have been organised. After the decision, NAC chose to support it rather than hold its own.

Unofficial co-operation between NAC and the TUC is considerable, though the TUC is careful not to work officially with any non-union organisation. All of CAC's energies are geared toward getting people to attend the march. They have produced a leaflet on why trade unions should join the fight and a poster for the rally is in production. The TUC's leaflet is also being distributed by CAC. As Angela Philips said, "The TUC can use its considerable network to advertise the demonstration, but they can't ensure it is a success."

But the two groups don't agree on abortion policy. The TUC supports the 1967 Abortion Act with minor alterations, placing emphasis on effective contraception and sex education. Their opposition to the Corrie Bill is pragmatic rather than ideological; restricting abortions doesn't make them go away. NAC, however, advocates free abortion without any legal or medical restrictions. The TUC has made it clear this is their demonstration; they will not tolerate the CAC speaker at the rally shouting NAC's slogan: "Free Abortion On Demand!"

The TUC has a poor record on women's issues: it was slow to press for equal pay and has always treated women as second class union members. Though women are

thirty per cent of the trade union movement and forty per cent of the labour force, they remain the least organised and worst paid. And this will never change until women's traditional responsibility for the family is confronted. This includes fighting for control over their fertility, adequate maternity leave and child care facilities.

Only the persistence of the TUC's Women's Advisory Council, certain affiliated unions and NAC forced the TUC to support an abortion resolution. As early as 1975 the TUC's Women's Conference passed a resolution on abortion, though there was a fear it would split the labour movement. NAC has continually pressed for union action.

Though it has been a long time coming, the TUC's support for this feminist issue may open the way to greater co-operation between unions and women. Undoubtedly sexist attitudes persist and only further lobbying will make the TUC view women's concerns as they do unemployment.



The Corrie Bill

1. Corrie's bill will make abortion legal only if continuing the pregnancy involves "grave" risk to the life of the pregnant woman or "substantial" risk of "serious" injury to the health of her or her family, or if there is substantial risk that the child may be born seriously handicapped.

*Ultimately, the courts will decide what is "grave", "substantial" or "serious", thus taking a woman's right to chose out of her control.

2. Except in extreme emergency cases, abortions will be illegal after the twentieth week of pregnancy.

*Most doctors allow from one to four weeks for error in the date of conception, thereby making the effective time limit sixteen weeks. Because most pregnancies are confirmed in the eighth week, a woman may have only eight weeks to obtain an abortion. This, in tandem with the NHS cuts, will make it very difficult to comply with the law. The primary reason women have late abortions now is delays in the system.

3. It will force the closure of abortion charities.

*These charities will have to either give up their consulting work, or give up their abortion services: they can't engage in both activities. They fill in the gaps in NHS service, performing nearly thirty per cent of all abortions each year at a reasonable price and supportive atmosphere.

4. Conscientious objectors in the health service will be exempt from performing abortions.

*Doctors will be able to impose their political views on women seeking abortions; the quality of health service will be of secondary importance. In no other area of health service is this allowed.

***There is a picket planned for the Labour Party Conference, probably on October third, to call for Labour MPs not to be given a free vote on the Bill. For more information, contact NAC, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8BB Tel: 01-278-0153.

MEDIA COMMUNITY CONTROL

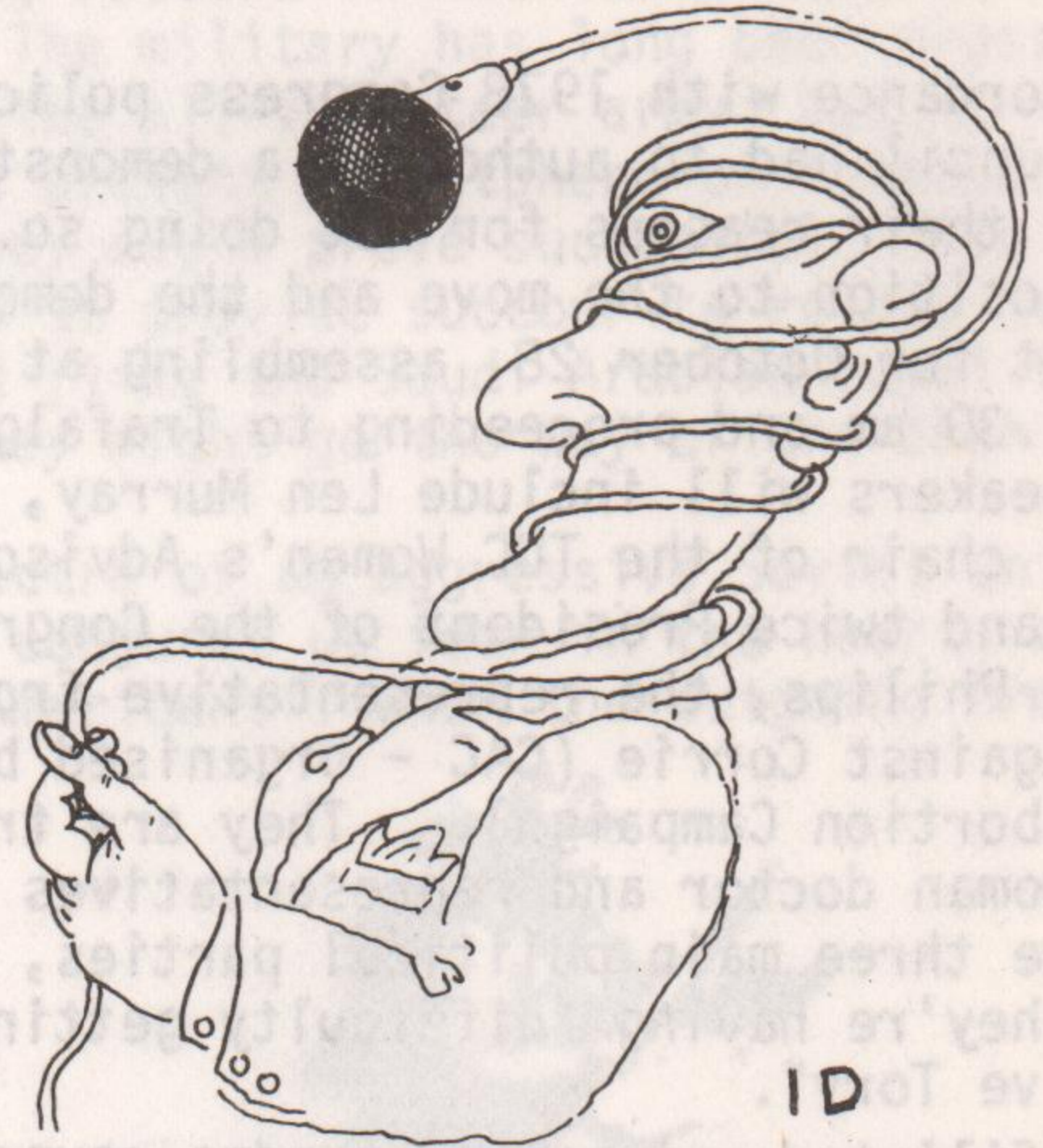
London (PNS Correspondent). The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has made a grant of nearly £4000 to the first phase of a nine month "Broadcasting and Information Project" (BRIP). Simon Partridge, who is running the project, says that it has three main functions. "It's to explain the constitutional obligations of the BBC and the IBA, to explain how to complain when broadcasters don't live up to their obligations, and, more specifically, to push the case for democratic non-profit making alternatives to the present broadcasting duopoly".

The project, which started in May, is not aimed at individual consumers, but at groups such as women, old people, gays, teenagers and so on, who have had a bad deal from broadcasters. It will produce information bulletins and information packs on topics such as applying for an IBA non-profit making franchise, and presenting evidence at public meetings organised by the BBC and IBA about local radio stations.

BRIP will also provide answers to specific questions about broadcasting from groups or individuals. Simon Partridge, a member of the broadcasting pressure group Community Communications, stresses that it will not simply respond to requests for information. "Since many groups are not aware of their rights in this area, BRIP will actively seek to make contacts," he says.

Although the project will provide information about television, it is to concentrate on radio. The IBA is likely to ask for bids for sixteen commercial local radio stations over

the next twelve months, and a major part of BRIP's work will be to produce a handbook for those interested in making applications to run one of those stations on a community-based non-profit making basis. The recent success of Cardiff Community Broadcasting, which won the franchise for Cardiff's commercial station with a proposal for a community-controlled station must have encouraged such applications.



Radio is in any case a growth area. The Managing Director of BBC Radio, Aubrey Singer, recently floated a tentative proposal for a 'fourth tier' of locally based, self-financing community radio stations, which would broadcast for three to four hours a day. The BBC has experimented with such stations in Cumbria and Wales. Mr Singer's view is that neither the IBA nor the BBC is the best organisation to run such a system, but he thinks that the BBC could offer technical, professional and financial advice to the 'fourth tier' stations.

The Annan Committee on Broadcasting, proposed a Local Broadcasting Authority to run all local radio. Community Communications supports this proposal.

The Gulbenkian Foundation hopes that money will be made available to enable the project to survive after the first nine months. BRIP can be contacted at 92, Huddleston Rd., London N.7. (Tel. 01-263-6692)

PARKLAND HITS THE PITS

London (PNS Correspondent). An unspoilt marshland of 80 acres in East London will be turned into a giant gravel pit if the Lea Valley regional park authority goes ahead with its plans. The site, the Walthamstow and Leyton marshes, is wanted for gravel extraction according to a planning application which is currently being processed. A 'Save the Marshes' campaign has been organised by local people who want to see the site left as it is. It is the habitat of an impressive number of birds and there are many varieties of wild flowers, including a specimen found nowhere else in the world. There are 340 listed plant species, 27 breeding species of birds and 17 breeding species of butterflies. Herons, which breed in the reservoirs further north, are often seen feeding there. It is a unique inner city amenity in an area where only 30 per cent of households have cars, where many of the inhabitants live in high-rise flats and there is a general lack of open green space. The gravel is due to be extracted for roads and is highly unlikely to benefit the people of Hackney. It will mean a continuous stream of heavy lorries for at least five, and possibly ten, years. It will also mean the ero-

sion of the towpath alongside the canal and lorries at the rate of about one every ten minutes.

The Lea Valley authority owns the land but must apply to the Greater London Council for planning permission; the two councils in whose boroughs the land lies are allowed to comment on the proposals. The two councils, Hackney and Waltham Forest, have both come out in support of the campaign to save the marshes. Hackney council were unanimous in support and Walthamstow were 6-2 in favour. A spokesperson for the campaign said that an encouraging aspect was that the councils supported the campaign not just as a protest against the proposed traffic menace, but as recognition of the marshes as a valuable local amenity. The two councils have commented unfavourably on planning applications for the marshes several times in the past and the GLC refused permission for transport of gravel by lorries in 1972. However in 1974 they granted an application for transport by barges, but the Lea Valley authority decided that such a method would be too expensive. Planning permission only lasts for five years which is why the renewed applications are coming up now.

A figure of five million pounds has been quoted as the value of the gravel. The Lea Valley authority says that the GLC is putting pressure on them "not to let good gravel land go sterile", when there is a shortage in the South East. But as the Save the Marshes campaign points out, the plans were originally hatched in the affluent sixties when there was plenty of money about and a need for roads, but now the plans are probably not economic. The Lea Valley authority has been accused of being secretive in its methods - local people only found out by accident of the authority's proposals.

The authority says that it plans to fill the gravel pits in and leave an area for a lake. They say, rather glibly, that the wildlife will return, but seem to have no idea of the delicate ecological balance that is necessary to support such a wide variety of plant and bird life. There is also the possibility that the money will run out, the hole will not get filled in, and the people of Hackney will be left with a dangerous gaping hole and the destruction of a unique marshland.

The GLC planning meeting will be in October and a petition will be presented then. A booklet, listing the many species of plants and animals, has also been produced, called "Walthamstow Marshes - our countryside under threat". The contact for the campaign is John or Jane Nash, 01-986-1765, 93 Mayola Road, London E.8.

'DULL IT ISN'T'

Newcastle (PNS/DSP). Trying to lend support to the slogan "Dull it isn't", Northumbria Police Club Squad have taken a leaf from the Starsky and Hutch handbook with lightning raids on working men's and pensioners clubs. Their logbooks must strike fear into the criminal world with 'visits' to the Casablanca Club, the Golden Eagle pub and the Bedlington Old Folks Bingo Club.

Typical of their style was the 40-officer raid at the Casablanca. Nobody was allowed to leave until they had answered questions about their drinking, eating and dancing habits. One man was dragged across the floor and flung against the wall when he refused to answer. Another was told, "If you don't answer the questions sonny, I'll fucking well squeeze them out of you."

Local communities can only guess at the

reasons for all this activity. One suggestion is that the police are under pressure from the brewers. The North-East is the home of clubland and almost all of them sell beer at a lower price than pubs. Another idea is that the large Club Squad are needing to justify their existence. A third reason is that it gives the police the chance to pay off old scores and parade their prejudices.

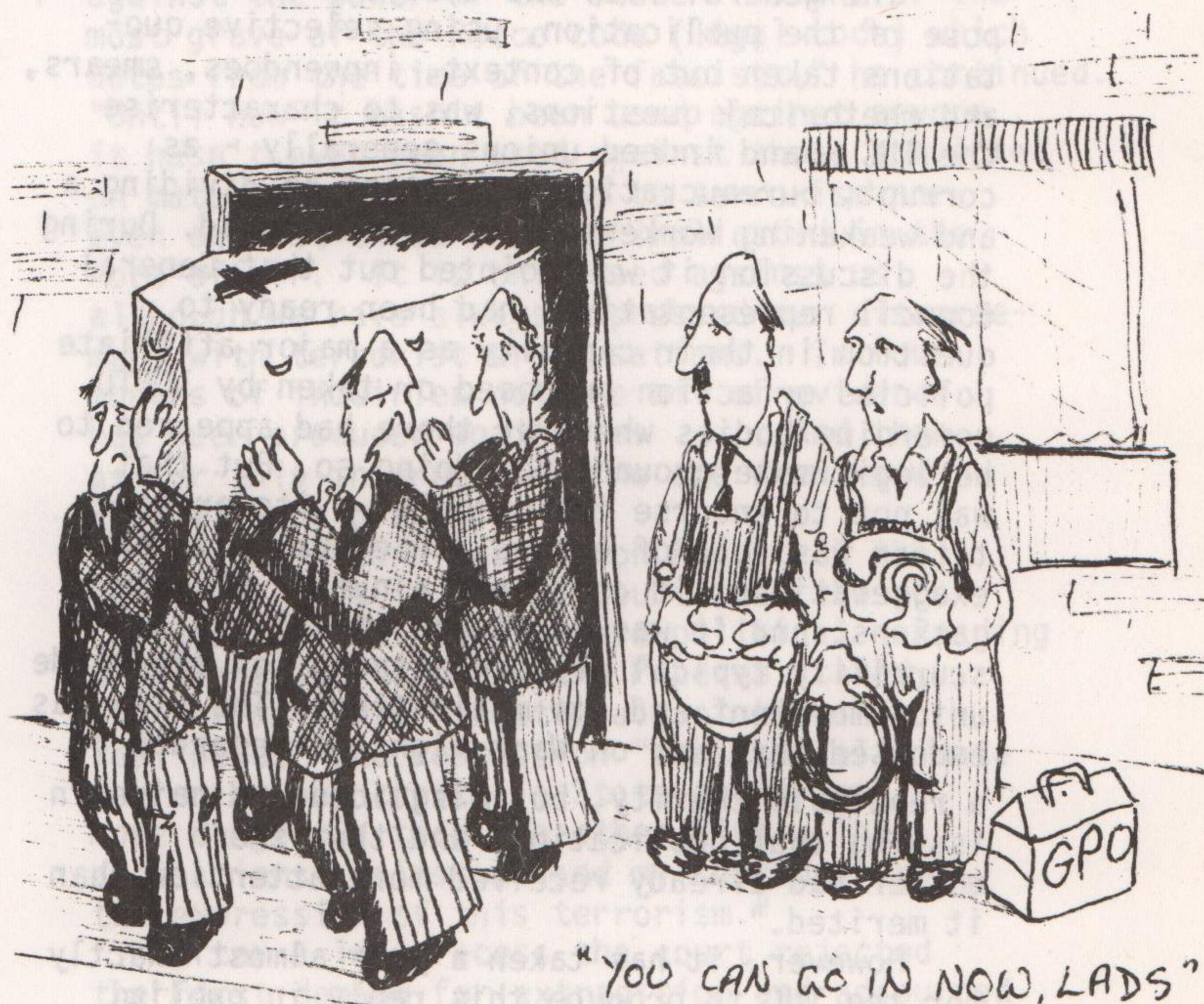
The Casablanca Club, for example, is often frequented by gays. And it is interesting to speculate if the Golden Eagle would have been raided had not its manager made a complaint about the police the previous day, when he claims to have been kicked and beaten up at the station. To make matters worse for the manager, John Taylor, the police maintained their presence around the pub for several months after the raid, and as a result trade has seriously dropped off.

DHSS HUNG UP

Leeds (PNS/LOP). A further episode in the series concerning the couldn't care less attitude shown by those who are supposed to be looking after our well being.

In PNS 175 we told the story of the woman who suffered from agoraphobia and who was refused a mobility allowance from the Department of Health and Social Security. Now we have heard the tale of Jack Crossley who has already suffered a stroke, and because he lives on his own had to spend the night on the floor until the dustbin collectors came round in the morning.

Now Jack is 75% paralysed down one side, but he can't afford a telephone. When a friend applied for a free phone from the Pudsey Social Security Office he was told, "It is very doubtful that Mr Crossley will be given a phone. You've got to be almost dead before we put free phones in."



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TRADE UNION NEWS

TUC 'Answers' Its Critics

Gloucester (PNS Correspondent). At last, the General Council of the TUC has deigned to reply to charges put forward in the War on Want booklet by Don Thomson and Rodney Larson that money allocated by the TUC for international solidarity has been grossly misused. Originally published in August 1978 the booklet alleged that TUC funds went to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and thence to unions used by the CIA as part of its campaign to topple President Allende of Chile. This was the most serious of the allegations which included information about the joint running of TUC overseas programmes with the British Foreign Office and large-scale political corruption and inefficiency in the international labour scene.

The reply came in the report of the General Council to the recent conference in Blackpool, and seemed to have been forced by the refusal of trade unionists to take the TUC's view that the charges did not even merit reply. In May perhaps the most serious challenge yet to the TUC's conspiracy of silence came from the South West Region of the TUC demanding an 'in-depth investigation' into the charges. Also, a Civil and Public Servants Association delegate at Blackpool raised the question of the charges in the booklet drawing from Len Murray a quote from the General Council's report to conference which followed very closely the letter they sent to the South West Region of the TUC in response. Murray had this to say in the letter, having remarked that the General Council had discussed the booklet in "full detail".

"The general view was that the ultimate purpose of the publication, using selective quotations taken out of context, innuendoes, smears, and rhetorical questions, was to characterise the TUC - and indeed unions generally - as corrupt, bureaucratic, and intent on dividing and weakening workers at home and abroad. During the discussion it was pointed out that General Council representatives had been ready to question in their capacity as a major affiliate policies or action proposed or taken by ICFTU governing bodies whenever there had appeared to be legitimate grounds for doing so. But that was not to endorse the pamphlet; its presentation was full of errors, inaccuracies, and exaggerations, it contained a number of allegations, and it was in its polemical style and scurrility typical of such attacks on the trade union movement and its motivations. The view was endorsed that War on Want might be regarded as a reputable charity, but misguided and naive in issuing that publication, and that the matter had already received more attention than it merited."

However, it has taken a year almost exactly for the TUC to produce this reply in public, although leaks from Congress House long ago revealed their consternation at the publication. Nonetheless, in spite of the acrimony of the official response, Don Thomson told PNS that he was pleased that some sort of reply had been made since the TUC, hopefully, would now be forced into enumerating the "errors" and "inaccuracies" to which he is confident he has adequate replies and substantiation. The impression, he told us, that the TUC has something to hide, has been gathering strength in the trade union movement with the silence of the

TUC and the outright refusal of International Secretary Alan Hargreaves to answer any questions whatsoever to enquirers.

Meanwhile, the South West Region of the TUC is far from satisfied with the General Council's response and has reiterated its call for an investigation.

Speaking on behalf of the Gloucestershire County Association of Trades Councils who had originally called for the investigation, Tony Ayland said that the letter gave a false impression of the motivation of the booklet which was clearly to arouse greater interest in the trade union movement about the problems of workers in Third World countries. He suggested that few members of the TUC General Council were likely to have read the booklet, and if they based their views in the report prepared by Mr. Hargreaves of the TUC International Relations Department, they would have been influenced by "selective quotations taken out of context" in a report which virtually ignored the constructive aims of the publication and adopted the method of derisive attacks rather than attempting to answer the questions posed about the international relations activities of the ICFTU and the TUC.

Although the TUC publishes its decisions on a monthly basis for the information of trade unions, trades councils, etc., no mention had



been made of its consideration of this issue, which made it look as if they had something to hide.

Don Bateman of Avon County Association of Trades Councils seconded the proposition at an August 18 meeting to reject the letter, stressing that the Council had not necessarily accepted all the allegations, but said there was a case to answer, and Regional Council Secretary Brian Bailey pointed out that this was precisely the point made in his letter to Lionel Murray. Like the original motion passed in May, the second demand for an investigation was agreed without opposition. So far no reply from the General Council has been received.

ITALIAN 'BUFFOONERY' UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

The events of April 7 1979, when the entire teaching staff of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Padua was arrested in connection with the murder of Aldo Moro, continue to hit the headlines in Italy. On Saturday August 18 Franco Piperno, a former leader of the political group 'Potere Operaio' (Workers Power) and professor of physics at the University of Catanzaro, was arrested by French police while sitting on the terrace of a Paris cafe. Having failed to produce any hard evidence against the 'Autonomia' leader Toni Negri, who is still languishing in prison, the Italian state has managed to produce a number of astonishing charges against Piperno, including having 'fomented an armed insurrection against the State' and the murder of Aldo Moro, in a desperate attempt to ensure his extradition. The PNS correspondent in Italy has sent in a report about the Piperno arrest and the impact that the 'blitz' of April 7 has had on the Red Brigades.

Just after mid-August the police chief of Viareggio reported that Professor Franco Piperno, one of the people wanted on the April 7 charges against Autonomia Operaia, had got off a train, been spotted by policemen on whom he opened fire with a pistol, and then made a get-away with accomplices in a car. One of the policemen said he had recognised the gunman as Piperno "at sixty yards' distance".

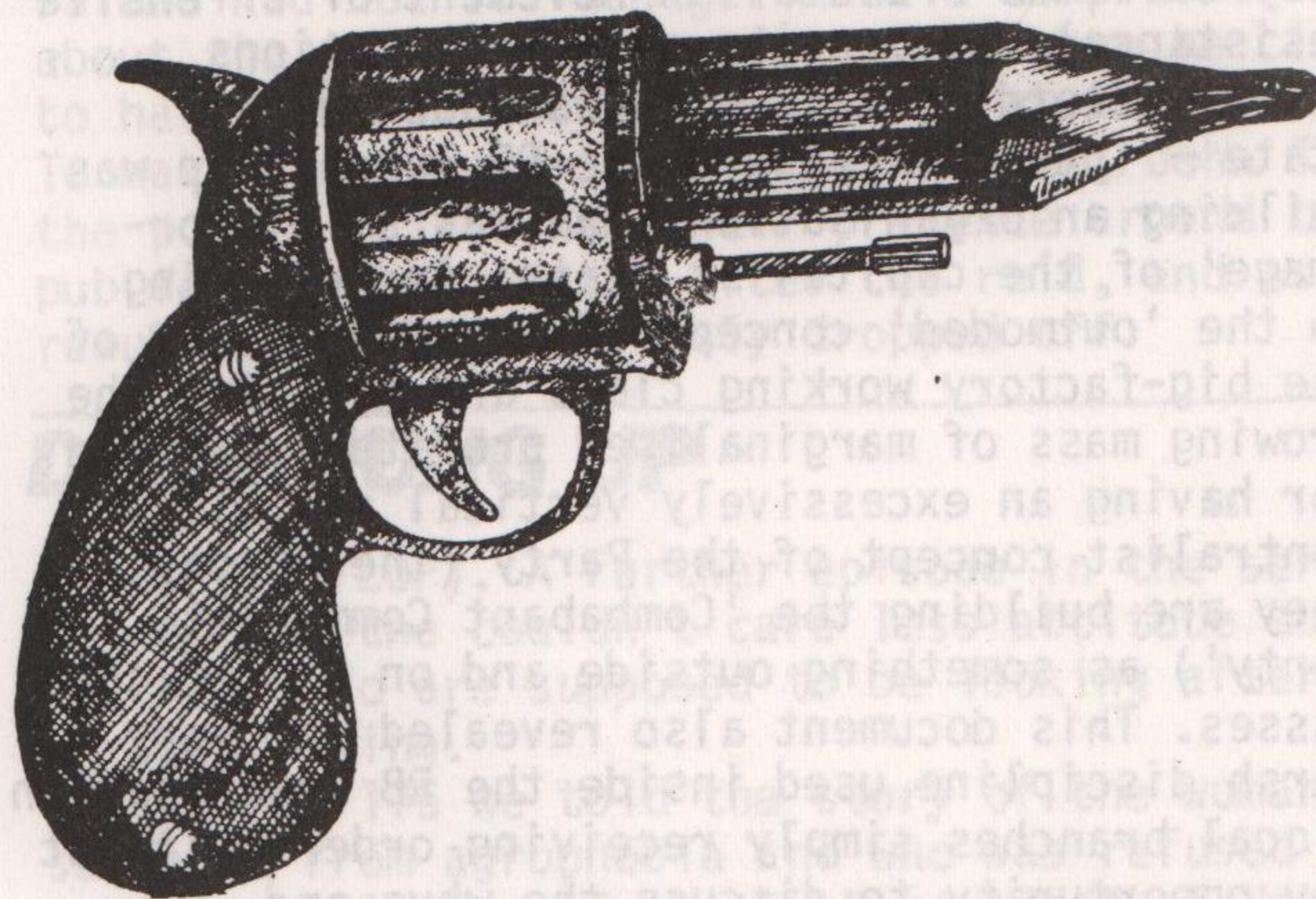
Several newspapers suggested that this was a masquerade prepared by the police either so that when he was actually found he could be shot on sight as a 'dangerous gunman' (and not just an 'intellectual terrorist'), or so as to have common criminal charges against him for which he could be extradited from France.

For in fact Professor Piperno was in Paris, and the following day he was arrested there by French police as he was sitting at a sidewalk cafe near the Opera. Apparently he had been spotted by an over-zealous Italian Communist Party militant, who was in Paris on holiday, and who had informed the French police. This made the Viareggio police story about 'Piperno the gunman' collapse.

The extradition treaty between France and Italy, signed in 1870, expressly forbids it on political grounds. Up till his arrest the only charges against Piperno had been political, notably the charge of "armed insurrection against the State" (brought against him in connection with the confiscated magazine 'Metropoli', in which he suggested an amnesty for political prisoners in Italy, a truce by those conducting the armed struggle, and punishment for the Padua magistrates for framing innocent people). So it was plain that the request for extradition by Achille Gallucci (the Rome magistrate now in charge of the case) was going to be rejected. Then, on the eve of the Paris court hearing Gallucci suddenly produced 46 fresh charges, accusing Piperno of kidnapping and killing Moro and his escort, etc., and almost every other crime in the book except sheep-stealing!

Piperno's French lawyers called the move a 'buffoonery' and this definition was taken up by the French press which up to then (with the exception of Liberation) had largely ignored the case. Criticism of the Rome magistrates also mounted in Italy. A former Chairperson of the Constitutional Court, the Socialist Party and even the Social Democratic Party came out strongly against this all-out attempt by Gallucci to 'get' Piperno at all costs and never mind about the principles of justice. No criticisms have come from the Italian Communist Party, and indeed Trombadori, the PCI's doggerel-writing Senator, has been one of the few voices to be heard approving of Gallucci's operations.

(PNS London adds) In court during the extradition hearing of August 24 Franco Piperno expounded on the reasons behind the charges against him



and the political nature of the April 7 arrests.

"The Italian judges who are accusing me," he stated, "are 'Political' judges in the Italian sense. They are aligned to the parties. Judge Calogero of Padua is a man in the confidence of Pecchioli, the 'minister of the interior of the PCI'. Judge Galluci of Rome, he is linked to the Andreotti family which, in Italy, is a sort of informal party not less familial than the other parties."

"The charge against me - armed insurrection against the power of the state - is one of the most grave of the Rocco code (legal code) which dates from the time of the fascists," he continued. "Until now it hasn't been used against anyone . . . it hasn't even been used against those convicted on material charges linked to terrorism nor even against those who are implicated in the Moro affair. It is only used against us, although we have always expressed our disagreement with terrorist organisations. In four months of inquiries not one bit of evidence has been produced against us . . . And then as for this insurrection, no one even knows when it took place . . ."

At the second hearing on August 31 the court was left in little doubt that the charges against Piperno were political. Reading a declaration to the court Piperno stated, "Terrorism brings irrational solutions to real needs" and repression "does not eliminate terrorism but creates a State terrorism more dangerous than the other kind. The accusations against me and my comrades are the expression of this terrorism."

After a long recess the court rejected the first demand for extradition and adjourned the next extradition hearing till September 19 so as to be able to study Gallucci's new dossier of charges.

Meanwhile two more of the Padua "Autonomists" have been released by the Padua committal judges, after over five months in prison owing to "lack of evidence".

In France a new committee, CENIL has been former to mobilize public opinion on the April 7 arrests. It is linked with the "Italy 79" Committees in various other countries around the world.

Red Brigades Split

In late July and August Lotta Continua published Red Brigade documents that were delivered to the newspaper anonymously.

The first was from the 'dissident' factions inside the RB. While still affirming their belief in armed struggle, they made very heavy criticisms of the RB leadership, on three main counts: for ignoring the autonomous growth and needs of the proletariat (or what they call the Proletarian Movement of Offensive Resistance) and guaging all their actions solely according to the moves made by the state - indeed they said the RB leadership was building an organisation that was a 'mirror-image' of the capitalist state; for clinging to the 'outmoded' concept of the centrality of the big-factory working class and ignoring the growing mass of marginalised proletarians; and for having an excessively vertical and ultra-centralist concept of the Party (the RB say they are building the 'Combabant Communist Party') as something outside and on top of the masses. This document also revealed the very harsh discipline used inside the RB organisation (local branches simply receiving orders without any opportunity to discuss the whys and wherefores of their actions). The dissidents appealed to the 'historic leadership' now detained in the top-security jail of Asinara to make a pronouncement.



A few weeks later the RBers imprisoned in Asinara (who include Renato Curcio) produced their response. They denied that Faranda and Morucci (who are in the dissident faction and are in prison) had ever been in the RB at all, and accused them of collaborating with the political police in an attempt to smear the RB by writing the document. Curcio and the others denied that there was any split. They accused Toni Negri of being a university 'baron' and said he was a middle-class intellectual looking for violent sensations. They poured scorn on Piperno's proposal for an 'amnesty', and dismissed the whole of Autonomia Operaia as 'irrelevant'. They threatened various journalists, including Lotta Continua's director, with a "good ration of lead", and said they would have no qualms about crushing the 'gnats' (i.e. the dissidents and anyone else who annoyed them) "with joy". They then went on to reaffirm their belief in the centrality of the large-factory working class, the traditional Leninist top-down conception of the Party, and the necessity of guaging their actions according to those of the state. This document was followed by an almost equally harsh reply from the dissidents, who also denounced Autonomia Operaia as a 'failure'.

These documents showed that the thinking of the 'dissidents' is influenced by that of the Italian 'workerist' tradition, whereas that of the leadership reeks of a very traditional brand of marxism-leninism-stalinism.; The publication of the split and the revelation of the leadership's very crude and rigid outlook will probably dry up any residual sympathy they may have had up to now in areas

of Italy's revolutionary left. This will cause big problems in their attempts to recruit new members.

New Government

Mr Craxi, the Socialist Party leader, failed to form a government this time. A government has now been set up by the Christian Democrat Francesco Cossiga, with the participation of minor parties from the centre. It is expected to hold together till the Christian Democrat Party Congress at the end of the year, when a clash is expected between those CDs who believe in some form of collaboration with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and those who want to form a government with the PSI, confining the PCI to the opposition. Zaccagnini, the CD secretary, has announced he will resign after the Congress.

Mr Cossiga achieved notoriety as a tough Minister of the Interior in 1977, when he crushed the student movement in Rome and Bologna with armoured cars and battalions of riot police. He was at the time exposed as a liar, when he declared that there had been no plain-clothes policemen present repressing the Radical Party's signature raising drive on May 12, 1977, when a nineteen year old school pupil, Giorgiana Masi, was shot dead in the street. Photographs published by a Rome daily, Il Messagero, showed men dressed in plain-clothes and carrying guns talking to uniformed officers. A film, shown on state TV networks by the Radical Party, even showed uniformed officers firing pistols on the scene of the events.

However, President Pertini said in an interview that Cossiga was the only Minister who had had the decency to resign after Moro's body was found.

Heroin Addiction

There are at present around 100,000 heroin addicts in Italy (the estimate is uncertain and every week the newspapers report several deaths from overdoses or from doses of heroin cut with other, often lethal, substances like strychnine). Many disillusioned revolutionaries are taking heroin, caught up with many young people in the crisis of Italy's traditional value-systems.

Mr. Altissimo, a Liberal Party member and the new Minister for Health, has proposed that the state give free handouts of heroin to registered addicts. At present heroin is totally banned, and is sold on the black market by underworld rackets at enormous price prices. The only chance most addicts have of getting their dose is if they can hook new consumers, in which case the pushers give them a free dose. This obviously leads to an ever-widening spiral. The deep-rooted popular traditions of mistrust for the state make it doubtful whether all of most addicts would accept to be registered under such a scheme. Mr. Altissimo has sent a team from his ministry to London to study the British experience with addict registration.



UK & USA PAVE WAY FOR PLIANT BLACK SAFRICA

London (PNS Correspondent). British and American foreign policy towards South Africa is now being formulated around the assumption that there will either be black majority rule or power-sharing between blacks and whites within the next decade. Both governments have considerably stepped up diplomatic efforts aimed towards assisting moderate blacks and liberal whites to create a non-violent solution so that American and British business interests are protected.

The Foreign Office, for instance, has expanded its programme of inviting moderate blacks to the UK. A high proportion are leaders of the unregistered black trade unions and also black clergy. With political organisations banned, churches are seen as an increasingly important channel of communication to and from the black community in SA.

The British government has also implemented a major programme for the training of black Rhodesians and South Africans. The Rhodesian African Training Department of the British Council is in the process of recruiting up to three thousand black and white Rhodesians, from both inside and outside the country, for training in Britain. The Council has also produced a confidential circular stating that it intends to step up its activities in South Africa, where it has a representative, with the financing of visits to Britain by blacks and whites in technical, academic and cultural spheres, and the introduction of a training programme similar to that operating in Rhodesia.

In America the major thrust of the diplomatic effort is being quietly conducted from a new International Communication Agency (ICA) headed by John Reihardt, a black foreign service officer. Through its international visitors programme, the ICA this year will fund visits to the US of some one hundred SA "leaders" and "opinion-makers". Two-thirds will be African, coloured or Indian. Many are church leaders.

While the ICA's programme of "communication for change" focusses on the established leadership, it is engaged in an even more important effort to educate and train South Africa's black population along Western lines for the future "when they will be running things".

These activities range from sending a multiracial team to Witswatersrand University to help construct an action programme for open admission. The University will be raising black enrollment from two hundred to five hundred. Dr Carl Fields, a black American education consultant has linked with the University to discuss raising the African intake level to two thousand, plainly to help raise the numbers of potential moderate black "leaders".



Meanwhile, the ICA has been working with multinational companies to set up an alternative school system in the black township of Soweto. Control Data is one company involved, although its reputation has been tarnished by sales of computers used by the SA police.

Special efforts are also being made to show SA how the US has resolved conflict situations between black and white, arguing that their own experience is highly relevant. Prominent US blacks with civil rights experience are high on the list of ICA visitors to SA.

There are further striking parallels between these British and American programmes. Both governments, for instance, have quietly been exerting pressure on companies to ensure that SA subsidiaries improve their image and pay wages above the poverty datum line. The UK, for instance, is now operating a code of conduct to regulate UK company behavior in SA, although the code does not cover multinational activity in other countries. For instance, the Department of Industry and the Foreign Office are twisting the arm of Associated Engineering to force its SA subsidiary, Glacier Bearing, to recognise a black trade union. This is why both the British and American governments are known to be anxious about the German government's tardiness over regulating German company behaviour in SA. Official and unofficial pressure is now being exerted on Bonn to try and rectify this (see PNS 174 on German firms in SA).

Underlying these various activities is a growing Western government feeling that the activities of the two main liberation movements, the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress may be marginal to the eventual change they foresee for South Africa. They believe the main thrust for change will come from inside the country and hope to minimise the importance of the ANC and PAC.

To some extent this reflects the unease of some of the African front line states with the ANC and PAC. The Nigerian government, for instance, has been quietly promoting a new movement, the South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO), which was formed by former Soweto students at a national congress held inside the Republic in April. Many of the Council's members were adherents of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement.

Long running discord with the older ANC and PAC is at the core of the birth of SAYRCO. Officials of the new organisation claim they run political seminars inside the country and claim to be recruiting party cadres for military training in an unnamed "progressive" country.

Nigeria has appointed a senior official to liaise with the young South Africans. He has taken SAYRCO leaders to London and the UN to lobby for support.

These and other diplomatic activities point toward a possible scenario where the Thatcher government will be conducting an apparently progressive policy toward South Africa. There are indications that the British government may take the lead, as with Zimbabwe, in joint British and American plans for an independent

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USA: MID-EAST FORCE PUTS DRAFT ON THE CARDS

London (PNS Correspondent). With America's ignominious departure from Vietnam, the United States draft came to an end. The recent talk of re-instituting conscription which is resounding through the halls of Congress and the Pentagon does not bode well for American citizens - or the citizens of countries abroad. For, this renewed mood of interventionism in American foreign policy means another bout of protecting 'the national interest'. As an indication of this renewed belligerence is the formation of a massive force for prompt military intervention in the Middle East.

There are nine bills pending in Congress on conscription. They provide for the registration of everyone over eighteen, some limiting it to men only, or to those between eighteen and twenty-six. All registrants would have to give notification of any change in marital status, address, job or health. Some pieces include waiving the Privacy Act (governing confidentiality of personal records), making social security files, voter registration lists, drivers' licences and school and other records available to the register to locate citizens. The Department of Defence would be given much more control; in sum the Pentagon would judge who qualifies as a conscientious objector and what would constitute alternatives to military service.

The legislation refers to registration, but this will quickly lead to a renewal of the draft, as the debate illustrates. The falling number of recruits is given as evidence of the failure of an all-volunteer army. A Pentagon study showed the army was experiencing the worst recruiting difficulties since the end of the draft in 1973; the investigative arm of Congress, the General Accounting Office, accused the army of lowering its recruiting standards to meet the number of expected volunteers. But the timely appearance of these reports in August hints strongly of political expediency rather than proof. The New York Times had reported earlier in the year that the services were at full strength, and probably would remain so for years to come as more men and women re-enlisted than the Pentagon expected.

Another argument revolves around the quality rather than quantity of recruits. Statistics are volleyed back and forth between those who claim the volunteer army consists of less-qualified, less-disciplined men and those who claim it is manned by better-qualified, better-disciplined men. The criteria used are irrelevant, for most are race and class based. The army is becoming increasingly black - as a result of a forty per cent unemployment rate for black youth - and has always been working class. This argument rests on the manipulation of numbers to suit racist objectives.

(Incidentally, a Department of Defence report in 1978 said that all volunteer army provided a



"full-strength active force of a quality equal to or superior to that achieved under the draft".)

The real reason behind the moves to bring back conscription is America's foreign policy shift. The imminent ratification of SALT 2 and

the 'losses' of Iran and Nicaragua are cited as contributing factors in America's need to prove its might. The military has long been pressing to abolish the all-volunteer army, but it is only in the present atmosphere of interventionism that they might prove successful. Also cited is the need to provide succour to rulers in the Third World (like the Saudi Arabian royal family) who fear they might go the way of the Shah and Somoza.

The spectre of an aggressive Soviet Union has always conjured up fear in the hearts of all 'true Americans'. When the outgoing Army



Chief of Staff General Bernard Rogers speaks of the need for a 'quick strike' force, he refers to a 'need' to match the Soviet Union's ability. When Senator Sam Nunn, primary supporter of registration, cites the need for rapid call-up in the event of national security crises, he is referring to the defence of American interests against Soviet attack.

With SALT 2 up for Senate approval, America's military strength is under strict, if biased, scrutiny. If SALT 2 does establish armament parity - which most believe it cannot - then troop strength becomes of extreme importance to the Americans. The numbers game then begins, whereby the American military is increased on the basis of spurious reports of Soviet strength. It is interesting to note that many Senators supporting registration also oppose SALT2.

Recent world events have cause even more alarm. With the fall of the Shah, America lost its key police force and strategic ally in the Gulf region. The resulting petrol shortages have emphasised the importance of other Middle East countries. Deposed Energy Secretary and former Secretary of Defence James R. Schlesinger described the motivating attitude for America's foreign policy, "We cannot for long acquiesce in a (Middle East) regional preponderance of Soviet military power. A minimum requirement is the establishment within the region of a rough balance of military power. Soviet control of the oil tap in the Middle East would mean the

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BAN THE POM BOMB!

Sydney (PNS/Tribune/Liberation). The 34th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6 has been marked in Australia and the Pacific by the revelation that the areas have been used as nuclear dumping grounds.

In Australia it has been disclosed that the site of the British atom bomb tests during the 1950s will not be safe for at least fifty years. In 1954 the Australian and British governments signed an agreement to establish Maralinga in South Australia as an atomic testing ground. Seven nuclear explosions occurred in 1956/7 as part of Operation Buffalo and Operation Antler. Concern started to mount about the safety of the site when a Royal Australian Air Force worker who had helped to bury 26 lead containers of waste at Maralinga in 1960/1 leaked the information to the media after government authorities had consistently denied that highly radioactive wastes were buried there.

The Maralinga issue became a public controversy in 1976 when the Federal Australian government finally admitted that 800 tonnes of radioactive waste, including plutonium, were buried in the area.



In October last year the Australian government held top-level talks with British counterparts over the waste. A team of high-ranking nuclear scientists from Britain subsequently flew out to investigate the Maralinga site. The public was then informed that the British would remove some radioactive waste containers which the RAF did last March under tight military security. Now the Australian Radiation Advisory Council has informed the government that the Maralinga test site should remain fenced off. Access to should be restricted under control of the Department of Defence and National Development and the site guarded by Commonwealth Police.

The four sites used for the British atomic tests have external dose rates which exceed safe levels as defined by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. In a

revealing passage on the government cover-up and the public protests, the Council report says that the major test areas at Maralinga remain clearly identifiable despite 1967 predictions that they would re-vegetate.

At the same time as the Council's report, the French newspaper 'Le Matin' carried reports of two accidents at the French nuclear research centre on the island of Mururoa in the Pacific. The accidents led to at least two deaths and several people being wounded. Mururoa was the site of French atom bomb tests in 1973. The French tests were a source of concern to the Australian government which at one stage broke off diplomatic relations with France.

The French authorities kept silent about the explosions. The CEA (Centre for Atomic Energy) merely stated that a chemical explosion on Mururoa had resulted in two deaths and four people being wounded. No official information has been released on the second explosion and all activities on the island are classified as 'national defence secrets'.

Meanwhile, it is not thought that President Giscard D'Estaing, on tour in the South Pacific now, will be dropping in at Mururoa.

US UNION-BUSTER BUSTED

Atlanta, Georgia (PNS/Circuit Rider). J.P. Stevens - a notorious anti-union textile company in the south-eastern part of the USA - is on trial again for its illegal moves to block union organising. This time, in Milledgeville, Georgia, another company has agreed to testify against J.P. Stevens.

In a £5 million law suit, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union charges four companies in Milledgeville and certain city officials as co-conspirators in a two and a half year plot to keep unions out of Milledgeville. The ACTWU agreed to drop charges against one company and city officials in exchange for fines and agreements to co-operate with the union in the upcoming trial.

Surveillance, as well as other illegal activities designed to keep unions out, is nothing new to J.P. Stevens. Since organising began in 1964, Stevens has been found guilty of labour law violations in seventeen decisions involving hundreds of workers. In Statesboro, Georgia, after intense harassment of workers before a union election, Stevens closed its plant rather than bargain with the union.

The last major US industry to be organised, the textile industry pays its workers less than any other industry in the country. As the Southeast's largest industry, it plays no little part in continuing the impoverishment of the area. Stevens exploits workers through discriminating against blacks and women and with hazardous work conditions such as deafening noise, airborne cotton dust and unsafe machinery.

With the courts' failure to enforce the law in the face of Stevens' persistent violations, the ACTWU has called for a nation-wide boycott of Stevens' products which include linen, hosiery and carpets. This tactic was used successfully by the United Farm Workers in its lettuce and grape boycotts (renewed recently by the UFW in the face of a new drive to crush the union in California). The J.P. Stevens' boycott has yet to affect the company, which recently announced that its profits for the past quarter had risen 36.7% over the same quarter a year ago, from \$9 million to \$12.3 million. Sales had risen almost 10% to \$448 million in the same quarter.

MAURITIUS SUGAR STRIKES

Paris (PNS/Liberation). A wave of strikes on the sugar plantations of Mauritius has badly shaken the right-wing 'social democrat' government of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

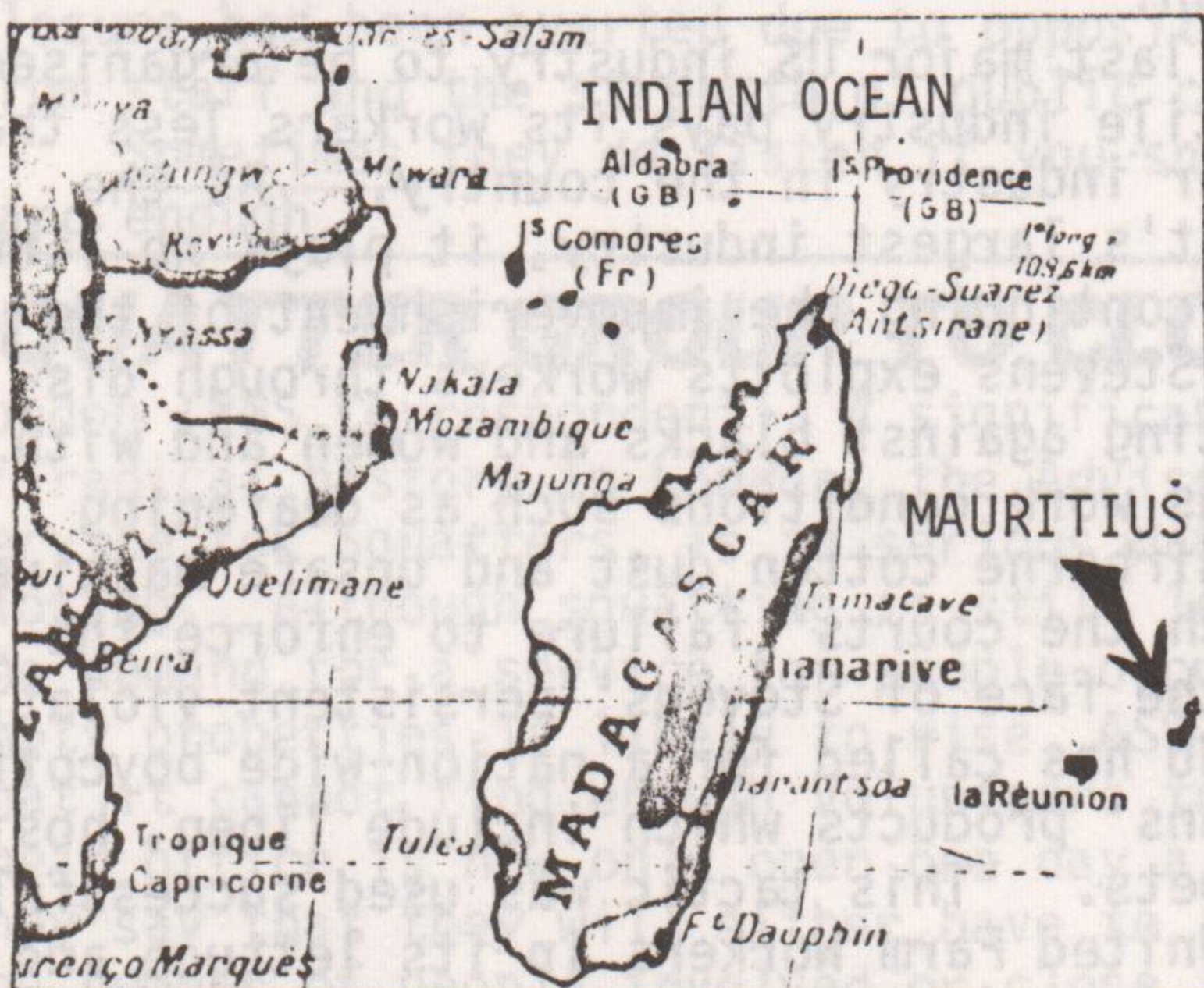
On August 13 the sugar plantations, the port and refineries were paralysed by a general strike. The strike was unprecedented in bringing the first major disruption to the neo-feudal sugar plantations since the island's independence. Throughout August the number of workers absent from the plantations was so great that 17 of the 21 sugar refineries had to close down. The only workers to be seen on the plantations were those setting fire to the cane resulting in a total loss in production of sixty-thousand tons.

The immediate cause of the strikes was the government's refusal to recognise the sugar-workers' trade unions. For eight years the two unions representing the workers have remained illegal. In recent months, however, the situation of workers throughout Mauritius has rapidly deteriorated. Whilst wages have stayed at subsistence levels, prices have risen by twenty to twenty-five per cent. The government, backed by loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, has been implementing a policy of economic austerity in an attempt to stabilise the economy.

Under the 1973 Industrial Relations Act all strikes are forbidden unless they have the authorisation of the Minister of Labour. The sugar plantations continue to be run on a neo-feudal basis and the police are used to quash any signs of resistance. In spite of this intimidation an impressive number of workers have refused to harvest the cane.

In response to the wave of unrest the Port Louis Chief of Police enforced the Public Order Act, forbidding any public gatherings of more than five people. Opposition to the Act led to a number of clashes between demonstrators and police who were patrolling in jeeps throughout the capital. Meanwhile the government has set up a Special Mobile Force on military lines responsible for the internal security of the island. The force is comprised of hand-picked men on secondment from the police force who are trained to the standards of motorised infantrymen.

Although the government has attempted



to stem the strikes by amending the Industrial Relations Act and even offering to employ in the public sector all workers sacked by plantation owners, the sugar campaign is planned to last another two months until the opening of Parliament.

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end of the world as we have known it."

So, America has resolved to protect its interests from appropriation via the military, interpreting, as usual, self-determined revolutions like those of Nicaragua and Iran as victories of the USSR. The top US foreign policy body, the National Security Council Policy Review Committee, ended two days of meetings by agreeing to increase US military forces in the Gulf and Indian Ocean, and probably instituting a Middle East military command. In June General Rogers announced plans for a 'quick strike' force of 110,000 troops to react to crises in the Middle East. Already underway are moves to increase US air and naval forces and military sales to Oman, Sudan, and smaller Gulf states have gone up. Britain has a presence in the Indian Ocean, with which the US seeks to co-ordinate efforts. Success in this venture is probable for Margaret Thatcher has lent a sympathetic ear to American proposals. Although not actually involved in combat, US jet fighters were present during the recent North Yemen/Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen conflict ready to intervene on North Yemen's behalf.

That some protection is needed is agreed on by Congress and the administration; what type is a matter of debate. Although the spectre of a massive American force ready to intervene in foreign countries does not bode well for America's image abroad, the necessity of protecting America's oil from the political decisions of its owners is hard for US politicians to argue against. Also, the registration moves favoured by the Pentagon should not be viewed outside the context of the 'quick strike' force, whose implementation would make the draft essential. But the political situation in the Middle East would require further development for the debate to crystallise and concrete policy decisions to take shape.

President Carter, however, opposes registration. His shaky re-election chances make it unwise to support an unpopular measure. But it has so many other friends that it has a good chance of being passed without his endorsement.

And the public seems to be uninformed - the news arrives at deserted university campuses - or misinformed - the newspaper editorials are read without comprehension. The idea of a crusading army safeguarding petroleum for American Cadillacs may, however, muster great public support.

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black South Africa whose economic links with the West will be maintained.

Meanwhile the UK seems to be hedging its bets. Despite protests, the government is forking out seventy-five thousand pounds to cover the cost of fourteen trade missions to South Africa by British businessmen. On the other hand, it is now giving advice to major British firms to scour the world for new sources of material in case trade with South Africa collapses.

PUBLICATIONS

Books,

Asbestos Killer Dust - a worker/community guide: how to fight the hazards of asbestos and its substitutes, by Alan Dalton. Published by British Society for Social Responsibility in Science. Distributed by Trade Union Bookservice, 265 Seven Sisters Rd., London N.4. 287pp. £2.25 (post free), or £1.20 for orders of five or more from trade unionists and community groups (+£1 p&p).

This book comes at a particularly apposite time with the publication of the new regulations on asbestos, much criticised for their feebleness. BSSRS claims that the book reveals "for the first time the real horror of asbestos - the killer dust." Although asbestos has been known to be a killer since the turn of the century, the dangers have been ignored. Many of the reasons for this lie in the co-opting by the asbestos industry of doctors and scientists. The scale of the horror is still difficult to imagine and the full fruits of its use yet to be reaped. It is estimated that asbestos will kill more people in Britain than were killed in the armed forces in the Second World War, but still no firm legislative action has been taken to put a stop to its use. While the authorities lay down guidelines for the handling of the material, BSSRS claims with impressive statistical backing that there is no safe way to use asbestos, and that the dust is only one of a multitude of hazards that endanger people at work.

The Squatter's Handbook, by Advisory Service for Squatters, 2 St. Paul's Rd., London N.1. 47pp. 30p (+ 12p p&p).

This is the sixth edition of the massively popular handbook which sold 4500 copies last year alone. ASS says "Because we expect an increase in interest in squatting as the cuts start to bite and people are faced with no alternative, the new edition has a print run of 9000." Besides covering all the aspects that the previous editions covered, this one deals with the new Criminal Law Act (1977), the Housing (homeless persons) Act and includes a new section on social security benefits.

My Song Is My Own - 100 Women's Songs, by Kathy Henderson, Frankie Armstrong, Sandra Kerr. Pluto Press 1979. 89pp. £3.95.

A collection of new and old songs from the traditional ballad to the factory floor - revealing some of the hidden culture and history of women - not only of historical interest, but meant for singing, as Frankie Armstrong demonstrated at a concert on September 9 to launch the book.

Pamphlets

Labouring Under the Tories? Or a Socialist Alternative. A Big Flame pamphlet. 24pp. 20p (+10p p&p). Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

"Of course we welcomed the mass struggles of the 1970-74 period which culminated in the miners' strike and the defeat of the Tory Government. But too often it is looked on as the 'golden years' when we grew and knew who the enemy was. They were also years of defeats and political mistakes..." Stating that oppo-

sition to the Tories can lead to "letting Labour off the hook", the pamphlet argues that real alternatives to the reformist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions need to be built by revolutionaries and that they are just as important as attempting to defeat the Tories. The pamphlet also contains an analysis of why the Tories won the last election.

Sell Out in Zimbabwe - a Counter Information Services Report. A4 32pp. 85p. CIS, 9, Poland St., London W.1. (discount for bulk orders).

A complete background to the current situation in Zimbabwe focussing in particular on the relationship between the regime and various British governments, including the present one. With its detailed accounts of the pro-Rhodesia lobby in Britain, the vested interests of Tory MPs in Rhodesia, the visits of Tories to southern Africa and the careers of the men at the Foreign Office, the report outlines the parameters of the problem Thatcher faces in choosing between the traditional 'pragmatic' course of foreign policy, or following the Tory grassroots feelings of uncritical support for the internal settlement. With further sections on British companies in Zimbabwe, the supply of British weapons to the white war machine, 'The Sinking Ship' (white emigration), the April 20 elections, the progress and conduct of the war and the diplomatic history, the report is essential reading for 'readers between the lines' of the British press on what is going on there.

Persons unknown, by Persons Unknown support group, Box 123, 182 Upper Street, London N.1. 64pp. 40p (post free).

The pamphlet "traces the development of the case from the sensational reporting of the initial arrests through the police/media build-up of an international 'terrorist' conspiracy to their subsequent dropping of the major charges while at the same time attempting to criminalise the political aspects of the case." Written in the form of personal narratives, it deals with the legal case, the media treatment, the support group, conditions in prison (Ronan Bennet spent fifteen months on remand) and the raids and harassment meted out by the police after the initial arrests. This will be essential background reading for a trial which will be occupying much of the news in the coming weeks.

Periodicals

International Gay News Agency, 315 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA 94108, USA. \$25-\$100 per month (depending on circulation). Average forty pages and photos per month.

The new IGNA, with its correspondents around the world, is attempting to help correct the long history of "misinformation, bias, and ignorance about homosexuality" by supplying gay news of all types since the subject has been "usually sensationalised, distorted, suppressed, or ignored", claiming 'objective' reporting from correspondents and reporters on the scene of issues and events concerning homosexuality. They are prepared to pay for material they use and potential correspondents should get in touch. Designed to serve Gay and Lesbian publications, the high cost reflects its relationship to papers rather than individuals. (PNS notes- it's certainly beyond our means!)

EVENTS

September

- Tues 18 London. Advisory Service for Squatters, emergency meeting to revive the organisation. Meet at 2 St. Paul's Rd., London N.1. 7pm.
- Thurs 20 London. Discussion on "Third World Third Hand: Media Representation and Developing Countries". ICA, Nash House, 12 Carlton House Terrace, 7.30 pm. Admission 80p.
- Fri 20 London. NAG ten year celebration dance. Accomodation will be available. Details to follow.
- Sat 22 and Sun 23 London. Alix Dobkin, lesbian singer/songwriter. Sat - Risinghill St., N.1., 7pm; Sun - Albany Empire, Deptford S.E.8. Tickets in advance from Sisterwrite, 190 Upper St., N.1. Tel: (01) 226 9782. Or 50 Trafalgar Ave., S.E.15. WOMEN ONLY.
- Wed 26 London. North London Women Against Racism and Facism still exists. Regroup at 374 Gray's Inn Rd., London W.1. 8pm.
- Sat 29 Cumbria. Proposed demonstration against nuclear energy at Whitehaven. For details contact Jim Garrison, Cambridge 50917.

October

- Wed 3 London. Picket the Labour Party Conference to oppose the Corrie Bill. Contact NAC, 374 Gray's Inn Rd., London W.1. Tel: (01) 278 0153.
- Fri 5 Merseyside. Merseyside RTWC social evening, city centre venue. Late bar till 2am, disco, raffles and "Waiting for Lefty", a new play. Details and Tickets, 2a Dawson St. Tel: (051) 709 1844. £1.30, 75p claimants.
- Tues 9 London. Stop sale of council houses. Defend the right to picket. Mass rally and picket, Bow St., Magistrates Court. 9.30am onwards.
- Sun 14 London. My song is my own: Women's songs concert. ICA, Nash House, the Mall, S.W.1. 8pm. Tickets £1.75.
- Fri 19 - Sun 21 Manchester. Manchester Students Against Nuclear Energy National Conference, Manchester Polytechnic Students Union. Contact Martin Goldschmist. Tel: (01) 263 5196.
- Fri 26 - Sun 28 Wilts. Cycling weekend, a ride from Swindon into the Cotswolds. Bring bike and bag. Lower Shaw Farmhouse, Shaw, Swindon, Wilts. Tel: (0793) 771080.
- Sun 28 London. Fight the Corrie Bill. National demonstration. Assemble Hyde Park, 11.30-12.30.

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