

libertarian struggle



● **TORY LAW : PHASE 2**

● **EUROPE ?**

● **PRINTWORKER VICTIMISED** ● **FAKENHAM WORK-IN**

● **ASIANS IN ACTION**

● **"ANGRIES"**

● **CIVIL SERVANTS STRIKE**

ONE [NEW] LAW FOR THE RICH

The Heath Government's new Bill has been introduced as one concerned with lower paid workers and pensioners; a Bill which will keep prices steady and promote the Nation's growth by its control of inflation. It has been welcomed by most industrialists, yet the Trade Union leaders eventually came out against it. Why?

The law for the Rich

The pay increase limit is across the board. The Confederation of British Industry has complained that this will 'bear down more heavily on staff and managers above the £5,000 a year bracket (£100 plus, a week), and most of the big National papers have been quick to point out that limits on pay are imposed on management and workers alike.

Less has been made of the fact that while prices and pay will be under the new Price Commission and Pay Board, in the case of rents and dividends, control will be by Ministers (who will no doubt be able to appreciate keenly the unavoidable nature of many rent and dividend increases). Dividends are to be limited to 5% increases on the previous year. Apart from the fact that there are very numerous exceptions to this clause, this is not as 'fair' as it first appears. An investor does not lose any money above that 5%, as it is just added to the rest of his investment, to increase his next dividends, and all of it can be paid off at the end of the freeze. Wage-earners denied any increase will be getting the same pay at the end of the freeze, only it won't buy as much.

Even a minor clause such as the one exempting increases in goods sold second hand and in auctions gives more to those that have. When currency is unstable, and markets shaky, the rich re-discover their love of art - they invest in antiques and paintings. There were rumours rec-

ently of a levelling off in the house price boom, they appear to have been unfounded. The growing tendency to auction houses will no doubt be encouraged by this particular clause.

There is a clause in the Appendices to the Bill which has not been mentioned in the National Press. It reads, 'the policy applies to all other employment incomes... save for re-imbursement allowances in respect of expenses necessarily incurred in the course of employment'. You might think a few business lunches were all that was meant here, but in 1972 Trust Houses Forte paid for half the cost of Sir Charles Forte's Berkshire pheasant shoot, to the tune of £9,500 a year, as a 'business expense'. Add to that the other perks such as 'necessary' town apartments, business trips, public school fees for the children of top paid directors, chauffeur driven limousines, and non-contributory 'top hat' pension schemes.

Profit margins are limited to the average of the best two of the previous five years. This is obviously biased towards business when compared to pay regulations based on the previous day's wage, without overtime. Presumably to encourage our balance of payments, profit mar-



'WE MUST ALL MAKE SACRIFICES..'

gins on overseas exports are unlimited. From the profits, managers salaries, business expenses, and dividends are paid. The workers who produce those exports are, of course subject to the usual pay increase limit.

Business rents are to be frozen, for these 'enter into the costs of many goods and services', but the policy on house rents is of phased increases towards 'Fair Rents'. In other words, house rents will increase but the pay limit will mean this will be at the expense of other things in the household budget, like food, clothing, etc. Business rents are frozen so that the profit margins of businesses will not be eaten into.

In case these points weren't 'fair' enough on the rich, the Sunday Times Business News (21.1.73) comforts them by pointing out that 'in the long term...the outlook...for shares is magnificent', 'the policy is designed to hold prices, not penalise profits'. The definition of profit margin 'opens a whole sieveful of loopholes to the bright finance director', and finally, 'Boom-time companies which face turning in margins higher than they can justify have escape routes open'.

The law for the Poor

The Pay Board has the power to set in motion imposition of unlimited fines on anyone who even threatens any kind of industrial action, to gain an increase over £250 a year (about £5 a year before tax). A precedent has already been set however, the miners, gasworkers, etc, have been offered the lower alternative of the £1 plus 4% increase, which works out at about £3 a week, before tax. Of course, if the management refuse to enter negotiations, or refuse a particular demand, there is nothing the workers will be able to do legally to press the a higher claim.

The National Press has also omitted to mention that improvements in 'other terms and conditions of employment' are included in the limitations, and are to be negotiated as alternatives to a straight pay increase. This looks as if any kind of industrial action over conditions would be illegal, if the cost was greater than the limit.

Rent increases have been mentioned. We have the consolation that Exchequer contri-

tribution, will 'keep the average increase in rates down to a level consistent with the need to control inflation'. But further in the same clause, our confidence is shaken by the promise that '...where rate demands appear to be at an unnecessarily high level they reserve the right to call in the local authority concerned and require them to reconsider their proposal' (Emphasis added) Confidence evaporates completely when faced with the Sunday Times article (21.1.73) 'Why Rates will still soar', which explains that increases of 20-25% are expected in the Northern industrial cities in the next two months.

No shopper needs to be told that the increase in food prices is going to continue. We are not boycotting foods as a point of principle, but because we haven't got the money. Offal and cuts of meat that haven't been seen for years are appearing in butchers' shops as an indication both in the fall in the standard of living and of the probable level of malnutrition in the future. Rickets, a deficiency disease, never died out in Glasgow, and is on the increase again.

The Bill lays down that in cases other than the specific exemptions, manufacturers will not be allowed to increase prices, 'except to the extent that they have to meet unavoidable cost increases'. It is to be hoped that this will prevent another firm doing what Whitbread managed on December 12th. last year, during phase 1 of the freeze. They demanded an increase in beer prices as 'costs continue to rise at a rate which cannot be absorbed by increasing productivity'. The rise of 21% in pre-tax profits was never pointed out. Of course, Whitbreads do contribute to Tory party funds...

Much has been said about the Bill's 'generosity' to the lower paid. The Tories have even been called Socialist because of it! In the whole Bill, appendices and all, there is no statement of action to be enforced on their behalf, the Prime Minister 'hopes', and when it comes down to it that's all he's prepared to do. The limit on pay could have been declared as being just a percentage, and the fact that it has been laid down as '£1 plus 4%' allows Heath to claim he has the interests of the lower paid at heart. This means that such workers could be up to £1 a week better off than they would be under a solely percentage based limit. It does not mean either that they will actually get

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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.

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.

EUROPE?

Beef prices have been much in the news, and a lot of talk about the power of the housewife floated around. Even that 'Voice of the People', the Daily Express, was on about it. But in fact it is not just beef, but all meat, that is going up. It's just that a convenient world beef shortage means beef is getting dearer, quicker.

According to the plans for our balancing with the prices inside the Common Market, we've got a five year programme to reach the level of European prices. In fact we look like making some of them in five months. Beef is not far off already. In December alone, manufacturers prices went up 3¼% because of food price rises, which we can be sure were more. And this is the tip of the iceberg. Confectionery, jam and honey manufacturers are all pushing for increases. And they aren't the only ones. The main bakers are trying to get the same; they are telling us they'll be making a loss if prices don't go up.

The talk about food prices has been a vast con. All the time we are told we've had it easy up to now, that the real price of food is the kind of prices that are paid in Common Market countries. This is simply not true. At present our prices reflect world market value. By the time we are on a par with the other EEC members we shall be somewhere between 35 and 50% above everyone else. The Market has a simple device for ensuring this.

Take butter for example; there is a minimum price for all food entering the Common Market. Thus at present New Zealand butter costs about £460 a ton in the world market. European butter is set at a minimum of £852. Therefore New Zealand butter entering Europe is levied around £392. Nor are prices going to be allowed to fall. If by chance the surplus of butter can bring its price below £787 a ton, then the EEC authorities buy up the surplus - at vast expense to us as taxpayers. At present there is a stockpile

of 350,000 tons of butter. The accumulated surpluses are exported and sold at whatever price they can get. The taxpayer forks out the balance. In 1973 we will pay £120 million towards these food subsidies and British farmers will get £20 million of it. This example of protectionism on a giant scale is to safeguard high costs caused by the inefficiency of French agriculture.

Meanwhile we are being told that some industry or another has a boom just round the corner, or even under way. The simple fact is none of the European countries have solved the problem of inflation. They can't. The system is trapped in a spiral. Speculation on the money market has wreaked havoc and helped to take away enough of the bosses' profit margin to restrict their elbow room. As soon as the promised boom arrives, the trade unions stake in their claim.

German steel last year faced falling profits and sales, a decline in international demand and Italian, East German and Japanese capitalists penetrating their markets. Come the end of the year, the bosses, including the beleaguered and often changing managers of Krupps, declared that things were picking up. This indeed was the general view put forward by capitalist economists. Immediately the union put in for an 11% rise and negotiated around 8½%.

The reaction to these sort of facts on the Left has been opposition to entry. This simply ignores the fact British bosses no choice. If they had they wouldn't go in. The whole economy has been shaking at its foundation since the slump hit us at the beginning of the 1960s. The Commonwealth may offer lower food prices. It does not offer any protection or area of growth for the people who run the country, with their need to continually raise their level of profit - up around 13% at the end of last year on the previous year. The defeated amalgamation of Bowater-Trafalgar simply allowed a merger between Bowater and Ralli. We can expect former British Fascist supporter Lord Inchape to come up with something instead of the P & O-Bovis merger: he's been contemplating it for long enough. But this is nothing compared with the pickings offered in the Common Market, where already more than just France is 'expressing concern' at British takeovers in its industries. The British bosses have to believe they can pull it off - otherwise they will go under.

The reason for profits and sales picking up is not difficult to find. Mannesmann, a major German steel firm, sacked 1500 workers last year. The British Steel Corporation plans to dump 8000 in the next ten years. Any industry faced with falling profits tries to 'rationalise' - i.e. cut its costs. In practical terms this means thousands of men out of work.

The fight-back against redundancy brought into use a technique hitherto ignored: the occupation. This was only used to defend jobs though; not to take control. This was seen in the tragic betrayal of the UCS occupation. Despite its cloak of left phrases the 'work-in' meant following the government rep's orders and not getting paid for it. This was true of most of the occupations, even where the rank-and-file retained some control - which was definitely not the case with UCS. The occupations culminated in the great Skelmersdale farce. Here the British Steel bosses announced that, because of labour troubles, they were closing their Skelmersdale works. The condition for keeping it open was a no-strike agreement

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IN THE WAKE OF THE STATE OFFENSIVE

Four people acquitted. Stuart Christie, Chris Bott, Kate MacLean and Angela Weir. Four sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Anna Mendelson, Hilary Creek, John Barker and Jim Greenfield.

The Political Trial

The trial took a hundred and eleven days and cost the sum of £750,000. The State has gone to great lengths to pin its alleged case on the eight defendants. It has been estimated that three million words have been spoken in the five and a half months at the Old Bailey's No. 1 Court.

From the beginning of the arrests at Amhurst Rd. the defence has made it quite clear that the trial was a political one. Organised to 'get the 'Angry Brigade' and caring nothing for the evidence to establish guilt or innocence. The trial was organised on the basis of 'guilt by association'. Eight militants arrested, planted with weapons and explosives, and forced to defend themselves against this plant. The jury were offered a straight choice - believe the political police (Special Branch) or believe the defendants.

The prosecution repeatedly emphasised the fact that the eight defendants were revolutionaries in that they believed 'society would have to be overthrown by violence some time in history'. The prosecution attempted time and time again to establish not that the defendants had carried out the bombings but that, asserting them to be both 'anarchists and revolutionaries', they were capable of doing the bombings. The prosecution thought that if it could establish that the eight had the 'right political motives' their case was proved. It was a trial of the politics of the defendants. The concrete evidence was that of the police who carried out the planting, and the Home Office forensic report, subsequently demolished by experts.

The State Case Nearly Fails

The defence of the Stoke Newington 8 was brilliantly organised in the courts. A system of taking transcripts and attendance in the gallery at court was set up, which ran throughout the trial. The defendants (3 of whom defended themselves) were consistently briefed. The defendants claimed throughout that the explosives were planted by the police and, in the final analysis, the jury accepted that this was possible, because Stuart Christie was acquitted.

The way the jury prevaricated for two and a half days over their decisions, showed a hesitancy to convict on the police evidence. They achieved a conclusion with a shoddy compromise. It was heard that, when they returned to ask questions on the day before coming to their decision, they were split 7-5. Finally they acquitted four of the accused

and found four guilty of conspiracy to cause explosions by majority verdicts (10-2), and their reticence to do this was summed up by the foreman of the jury:-

'Us members of the jury would ask your lordship for leniency or clemency or whatever it is. But that is what I would ask for'.

The judge said that he would take this into account, and sentenced the four to 10 years apiece. The pressure in court to acquit was great but with the lack of external pressure the State nearly succeeded in its aim of gaoling all 8.

The Politics of Defeat

The defence proved that it was a political trial. The Court became a battleground for the State's politics versus the politics of 8 militants. A battle which the defendants drew in Court, but lost outside.

Justice James could have dismissed the case but there was no pressure from outside the court to make him. The State faced little mobilisation against its attack on the 8 and James carried out his orders. To have forced an acquittal of the 8 more than just a brilliant defence in court was required. Only a large political mobilisation could have could have done that. The failure of the campaign to reach those proportions was the critical factor.

Very little progress was made to organise a campaign to organise the public outcry that would force the State to accept acquittal. The failure lay in the disorganised way the Libertarian Left and the Stoke Newington 8 Defence Group tried to build a campaign. A fact which the Defence Group tacitly admitted in its political statement.

The trial is now only 8 weeks away. We as the Defence Group have neither the organisation nor the energy to act as a focal point for all aspects of this campaign. Neither is this a position which is really politically viable or acceptable within a movement as diverse as ours. If other groups independently of ourselves can begin putting out their own leaflets (or reproductions of those from the Defence Group), and organising their own meetings then certainly the solidarity campaign will have considerably more impact on the trial and the movement.

and later

We stand with the Stoke Newington 8.

This trial is a crucial point in all our struggles with the ruling class. These struggles continue on many different fronts, and it may not be possible for us to come together at this point in a concrete expression of solidarity with the Stoke Newington 8.

This failure of the Defence Group brought little response from the libertarian left and other left movements. They couldn't respond - 'Conspiracy Notes' and other literature were widely circulated by the Defence group but it was not enough. They were handing out some belated tools and telling each contact to 'do it yourself'. Very few organisational initiatives were available to create the vast campaign to spring the 8. And the campaign foundered.

The weak and badly organised demonstrations that had little pre-planning or even notification were the hallmark of the campaign. The small number of people in the Defence group were overworked because they were organised.



'We are all angry'? Brixton demo 1971

The aspect of the campaign's failure that had more far-reaching effect was the politics of the Defence Group. They fell into the political trap of defending the terrorism of the Angry Brigade instead of defending the Stoke Newington 8. Thus implying that the 8 were guilty.

It was this principle that prevented hundreds of militants from joining in the campaign. Nearly every piece of literature coming from the Defence Group was pro-terrorist and the Defence Group adopted a pro-terrorist symbol, consisting of Men's Lib and Women's Lib fists clutching an automatic rifle.

Anyone joining the campaign would inevitably have to support terrorism in one way or another, or be seen associating with it. As far back as September 1971, the main banner on a badly organised demonstration just before the trial of Jake Prescott and Ian Purdie said 'It's a lovely day for an uprising', while leaflets were handed out 'Fight back with the Angry Brigade'.

Calling for armed insurrection then, and pro-claiming terrorist politics, were the worst tactics, when two comrades were denying in the court that they had committed terrorist acts.

If you want Peace prepare for War

The basic political position of the Defence Group was expressed clearly in their pamphlet. 'If you want Peace prepare for War'. It defended terrorism and the politics of the Angry Brigade. On occasion the pamphlet apologised for some deficiencies of 'angryism' but it still, literally, stuck to its guns.

The Stoke Newington 8 were in court defending themselves, and fighting on a platform that denied terrorism as a viable or useful tactic in Britain, while the Defence Group issued a pro-terrorist manifesto.

The Defence Group claimed that the left were incredibly mystified about terrorism when in fact it was themselves that suffered from this malady. The pamphlet claimed that 'armed revolution always has to begin somewhere' and argued that the successful violence of Cuban and Tupamaro guerrillas is a viable model today in Britain.

Under chapter headings of 'Beating Illegality Fetishism' and 'Revolutionary Criminality', the Defence Group defended terrorism and the tactics of going underground. The section of the Revolutionary Criminality chapter was a series of lessons to be put into practice now. It gave advice on hiding stolen notepaper and info away from police and said, 'don't use the phones', 'keep your mouth shut', etc. In fact it was the tactical expression of demobilisation. They failed to notice the fact that a militant must be widely known in the area in which he works and acts if progress is to be made. The cry of the pamphlet was 'Armed electric love' and 'the cops are coming'.

This campaign dragged in the worst elements of the left. One pamphlet called 'Amagaddon Chronicle' circulated by the 'Southern Anarchist Column in training' introduced us to the 'recreational sniper's guide' in which the following statement was made:

With a 303 rifle you can have a bolt fed mechanism or an automatic type. The bolt fed is better for psychological satisfaction.

The campaign to free the Stoke Newington 8 was doomed in this atmosphere. The vast majority of those who wished to campaign for their release were blocked from activity because of the politics of the Defence Group.

Terrorism and Revolutionary Struggle

Terrorism in this society, when 30% of the working class vote Tory and the rest still believe that Labour is for them, is the politics of suicide. It is the result of those with middle class backgrounds not understanding the growth of a far more effective attack on the State - the beginnings of a revolutionary working class movement, eg. the Miner's Strike, the freeing of the London dockers, the growth of 'occupations' in however watered down a form - showing the way to workers' control.

It is isolation from this struggle that gives rise to terrorism. Frustration and impatience with the passage of events lead the terrorist to the astronomical leap ahead in time, to the period of revolutionary violence. Terrorism is substituting spectacular events for the patient and hard work that has to be done within the working class movement. To withdraw from all public activity to underground isolation.

The only practical position now is to 'become partisans of working class revolutionary struggle'. Armed revolution to establish a free and just society will occur when the mass of the working people want it, not when individuals decide to set examples.

The most appalling result of this trial and the campaign is that through disorganisation and political incompetence we see four innocent people in gaol. If we do not recognise what went wrong they will not be released until their sentences have been completed.

ORA

groups & contact addresses

Bristol:
Mac, 10, Whitley Road, Clifton, Bristol 8

Colchester:
Peter Newell, 'Aegean', Spring Lane, Eight Ash Green, Colchester.

Dundee:
Mike Malet, 1, Lynnewood Place, Dundee.

Glasgow:
Gordon Sykes, 32, Queen Elisabeth Square, Glasgow.

Hull:
Marion McCartney, 21d, Pearson Avenue, Hull.

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

Leeds:
Trevor Bavage, Flat 3, 35, Richmond Road, Leeds 6.

Manchester:
Andrew Himelfield, 249, Manchester Road, Heywood, Lancs.

North London:
Doug Durrant, 68a, Chingford Road, Walthamstow, London E.17.

Nottingham:
Jim Collins, Flat 3, 59, Forest Road, Nottingham.

Sheffield:
Ian Neary, c/o Students Union, Sheffield 10.

York:
Neil Hunt, 24, Moss Street, York.

There are also contacts in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Huddersfield, Leicester, London Universities Federation, East London, South London, West London, Norwich, Oakham, Oxford, Plymouth, Poole, Southampton, Southend, Swansea and Wellington. If you want to be put in touch, write to the National Secretary, c/o North London group to whom all enquiries about ORA should be addressed.



HEY!

LET'S
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Make all cheques/P.O.s payable to: ORA General Fund.

On the 17th. of March 1972 a group of workers took over their factory. At first they occupied - but a few days later they started a work-in. Soon they were producing goods regularly again - but this time under Workers' Management. Now, nearly 10 months later they are still producing a variety of goods - still under Workers' Management.

The factory, at Fakenham in Norfolk, used to be owned by Sextons and Everards and manufactured shoe-uppers. Even though all the regular workers were women (constantly used by bosses as cheap labour), Sextons and Everards decided that their profits were not big enough, so they sold their factories at Norwich and Fakenham to a Mr. Taubmann, who is believed to be a property developer who spends most of his time on Miami Beach. Taubmann's plans for the factories included kicking out a large number of workers, including all of the women at Fakenham.

So on what was supposed to be their last day at the factory, the women took over. They managed to stitch together some scraps of leather and make twenty handbags. After much searching they eventually got hold of some more leather. This had to be bought through friends and sympathisers, as the suppliers were 'unofficially' boycotting the factory, they didn't want to offend the 'tycoon from Miami' (Honour among thieves!). With this leather the workers started to make skirts, coats and a whole variety of garments, most of which had to be designed or worked out by the workers themselves.

During their struggle the workers faced many problems. A lot of these problems were directly due to lack of planning. But they were determined to win. The following is a very small part of an interview with some of the workers at the factory in Fakenham, recorded by a member of ORA.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - BACKGROUND AND REACTIONS

Q. Did you get much local support?

EDNA. No. Not from around here no. Most of the support came from away, where people are far more aware. You see this is a backward area - its purposely kept so... the whole thing hinges on the agricultural workers wages in this area, and their wage is a downright disgrace! But then again the MP for this area is a farmer, they're all landowners, they purposely keep it (the wage) down. Well once the landworkers wage is kept down, you get somebody coming here and offering £2 a week more, its marvellous, honestly. All they come here for is slave labour at the minimum they can get, and they make their profits.

Q. Thats because of the large 'pool' of unemployed workers...

EDNA. ...and low paid.

Q. Somebody I interviewed in the street said that most of you had husbands bringing money into the house, so why make all the fuss about keeping your jobs? What do you say to that?

NANCY. The money the husbands earn in this area doesn't keep anybody. It might.. at the existence level. But the money the husbands earn is a pittance. Up to just a very short time ago a farmworker earned £14 a week, perhaps a bit more now. If you live in a council house - say somebody working on a farm lived in this house, this is £6.85 a week. What have you got left out of £14 if you've 3 or 4 children to bring up?

Q. Were the families here helping?

EDNA. Yes. Of course they were!

Q. What did your husband do during the occupation?

NANCY. He came down the first night and helped us to board up all the windows, and he helped me afterwards mainly by looking after things in the house, for a long, long time. For weeks and weeks I used to leave here (that's if I did get home the previous night at all) about 7am and I was lucky if I got home two nights later at about midnight.

Q. What do you say to those people who say 'why make all the fuss?' or 'you shouldn't make a fuss' about being made redundant?

NANCY. I say to hell with them! Maybe some day they'll be made redundant, see what they feel about it then, see if they care to make a fuss about it then, or whether they'll just sit meekly down and accept it, which is what a hell of a lot of Norfolk people seem to do. Oh Hell! This is the thing that makes me raving mad, people accept so meekly...It annoys me, always has. When I was a shop steward, I insisted on regular meetings, and I was lucky to get, out of 50 people, 13 to attend a meeting....They couldn't care enough to come and see those blasted union people and listen to what they had to say or what I had to say to them. Apathy! And Indifference! And 'I'm alright Jack'.

Q. How did the Fakenham people react?

NANCY. Well we were an embarrassment to them because its a nice little conservative town, and in a town like Fakenham this sort of thing has never happened before. It's interesting that in the last couple of months in one of the food factory, there was a dispute, they were all women. I think it was for extra money, and they got a settlement and went back. But this has never happened in a factory in Fakenham before.

EDNA. Oh they just ignored us..I've had some laughs over that. I think its pathetic. But you certainly find out who your friends are.....Well I thought it was funny. I thought to myself 'damn you lot'..... we were doing something that perhaps some of them ought to have had the guts to do.



'UNITED WE STAND' - low wages and bad conditions for women and blacks must be fought by all workers. Cheap labour is a threat to all jobs - 'DIVIDED WE FALL'

FAKENHAM OCCUPATION

Q. You said before that the attitude of the local community has changed. What are they like now?

EDNA. Well - we're on speaking terms now, put it that way. Now we are legalised we're back in the community.

Q. So they were mainly worried about you kicking the bosses out?

EDNA. Oh yes, of course! Well its never been done. You can't do that sort of thing!

THE UNIONS & THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY.

Q. What did the union do when you asked them for support?

EDNA. Well the union called us 'a silly lot of girls' and told us to 'go back to the kitchen sink'....They didn't know what to do with us....they were embarrassed. They weren't going to pay us our out-of-work benefit at first, but then they did. We went up to the union meeting, and we just about took that one over as well (they also took over a DHSS office - see below) and that's the only time the Union doors have ever been locked, because we had a load of the Women's Liberation Movement outside, and they wouldn't let them in. They were dead scared of them getting in, and anyone who wanted to attend the meeting had to knock and be recognised. I wrote and asked for financial and moral support. And the letter I got back said they did not agree with what we were doing, they couldn't give us financial or moral support except in that they were paying us out-of-work benefit - which was £1.35 a week! That was the sum total of the help from the union....and thats not good enough, its just not good enough.

NANCY. I will never forget that I was one lone ASTMS member in Fakenham, and as such I was discounted. It wasn't until I rang Clive Jenkins (General Secretary of ASTMS) and said 'Look all the people at Norwich were represented at the 'hearing' (in St. Andrews Hall when Taubmann decided he was going to keep a handful of people at Norwich and completely forget about Fakenham). So I said 'Who spoke up for me? What's my divisional officer doing?' And it wasn't until then that they sent him out to see me. He came out to see me and said 'There's nothing you can do Nancy - you close the doors - you walk out - you hand over the keys.' So I said 'Maybe you can do nothing - but I can do something'. They took the credit for the work-in, they said that they had organised it - they didn't. They backed us when we had done it.

After about a month my union did pay me dispute money. They paid me £10 a week which was quite good, although I didn't take it myself. I threw it into the fund that we had.

Q. The NUFLAT union in fact tried to stop you communicating with other branches, in an attempt to stop you getting support from other branches didn't they?

NANCY. The NUFLAT union circularised the Trades Council at Fakenham and at Norwich, and said that under no circumstances are these people to be supported. That was a rather...horrid thing to do.

EDNA. Oh yes. We were told that it was against union rules for us to contact any other branches to get support.

There's too many full-time paid executives in the unions sitting pretty with a nice £40 a week job, there for life. They're away from the shopfloor and they just haven't any idea of whats going on.

NANCY. They have a system in the NUFLAT union where the President either retires or dies and then they elect a new Vice-President and the old Vice-President takes over as President. And 25 years later he's still there

....he's there for ever. I don't think this should be so. I think they should come up for re-election every two years, and stand or fall by what they've done for their members. But the people on the shopfloor should.... demand an accounting and a very good one from their union representative.

Q. Have you heard from the unions lately?

NANCY. My divisional officer hasn't been near me since we founded the company. EDNA. Well I'm the steward here, the branch is Norwich, and I just send in the subs. I've not really heard anything from them. I think they've died up there.. No, they can't have died they're still taking the money.

The trouble is most people aren't interested in the union, quite frankly I wasn't, but you should be. Oh they're still as dead as doornails. But we're still in the union, lets face it, you can't do anything about it if you are outside it....You have still got to be in the union if you expect to do anything about it.

NANCY. If you have a union make sure the union works for you. Make sure the union, your union representative, who you pay, is aware not just of the facts handed out to him, he has the right to demand facts and figures, if he's a good shop steward and he knows what he is doing. You have to make sure they work for you.

Q. During the first 18 weeks, when you were not receiving any wages, you tried to claim from the DHSS, but they refused. What did you do about that?

EDNA. We took the office over. We went up and sat-in for the Friday afternoon - and thats the only time its ever closed early. Everytime they closed the section we were on. So we finally took over the main office. The point is they recognised the fact that we were unemployed because we had to go up there and sign on. They accepted our signatures but they wouldn't give us any money. So what the hell. ...just go up there and protest.

It's a big con, anyway, Unemployment benefit - especially for a married woman. If anyone plays a confidence trick, they'd have the law on them, but they can get away with it. A married woman pays the same stamp as a single girl, you go for unemployment, you don't get as much. It's all one big confidence trick.

Q. The workers here are not worried about the SS(social security), or taking this sort of action, anymore?

EDNA. Not flippin' likely. The SS up there is next door to the police station - but what the Hell.

REORGANISATION AND THE NEW ATTITUDE TO WORK

Q. You have managed to solve most of the problems that have occurred, or that have been put in your way, haven't you?

NANCY. Yes, but we have been getting more problems than we did in the early days. Suddenly all these problems are dropped in your lap and you have to solve them yourself. For instance, at the factory in Norwich they had 3 or 4 mechanics and if you had problems on the machines, then they would send you a mechanic. And if you had problems with leather they could put that right. So, you have to find your own mechanic, you have to check with the...the tanneries, and find the places that will supply you at a realistic price. It's a hell of a responsibility.

Sometimes you sit and think 'god! Is it going to pay off?' You see if you think in terms of £400 a week, it doesn't sound a lot until you come to think that at the end of the year it is going to add up to something like £20,000 that you're going to have to turn-over in order



'UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL' - the women workers of Fakenham fight back

to keep going...But I'm convinced it can be done. In various ways. We can't do it though, at this particular stage, just manufacturing our own goods, but we can do it by keeping the contracts going and manufacturing at the same time, and one will complement the other.

There's far more responsibility attached to each one of these girls, than there would be if we were working for an employer. Unfortunately, we don't just stand or fall by our own efforts. There's a whole load of factors, availability of contracts, the saleability of the goods, the cost of leather, a whole load of things that have to be considered, which could influence whether we go up...

Q. How do you organise wages.
EDNA. We all get the same.

Q. The surplus presumably goes back into buying new machines, stocks etc?
EDNA. Oh yes, must do. If we find that we can give ourselves a pay rise, I dare say we will. But I am quite happy. We get a good wage, and I look at it in the long term not the short term.

Q. You obviously have to compete with other firms, has that created any special problems for you?

NANCY. Well, in the sales of some of the clothes we make, it does. We were making patchwork handbags and we found that we would have to sell them at 60p each to compete with the people in the East End of London, with half-a-dozen people in the back room, stitching like mad. Exploitation, that's what you have to contend with most of the time, and you're exploited if you're not very careful.

I could write a book about the sharks who come down, people calling themselves Merchant Bankers, offering us contracts at slave rates of labour. One fella came down from Northampton and wanted us to make skirts for him at 7p a skirt, believe it or not. And he was a man with 10 agents on the road, paying them £50 a week commission, selling his stuff at a pound a time.

This means that a workers got to produce enough skirts, at 7p a time, to cover her 90p an hour. We take 90p an hour now, because it's a flat rate week with an hourly rate, there's no differentials.

If you think of it in terms of 7p an item, she's going to have to do a hell of a lot of 7p, with her nose glued to the machine, to earn that 90p. Alright she has to do some skirts now, but at least she's doing them for herself. She's not doing them so some little fat slob from the Midlands can sell them and make a massive profit, so that he can buy another Aston Martin, or whatever, at the end of next year.

What we are selling is our own and we sell at a realistic price. We get a decent price for them, enough to pay the workers here well over the guaranteed wage, which is the union guaranteed rate, for the job. In fact I think we are paying the highest rates in Fakenham now. The flat rate wage is £18.62. That's mine as well. I used to take home £25 before the takeover.

Q. Before you said that everybody was learning how to do all the different jobs.
EDNA. Yes, everybody's interchangeable.

Q. And is everybody happy about that?
EDNA. Yes, well it makes variety and you don't get bored on one job. In a factory you are doing one job all the time, but here if somebody is wanted over somewhere else they change over. Variety is the spice of life.

Q. What about the 'managerial' side of things?
EDNA. Well, Pat does the accounts, she's had to learn book-keeping (Pat used to be a machinist).

Q. Taking over the 'managerial' side of the

factory must have been very important.
NANCY. Well you see most of these things (sit ins, work-ins, etc.) end up with somebody stepping in and taking you over. But we were lucky enough to avoid that, because that was one of the pitfalls I could foresee, and we didn't want to go back to square one, after 18 weeks without anything, and have some other board of management, or whatever they call themselves stepping in and taking our skills.

Q. Starting all over again..

NANCY. Yes.. and using our skills, our brains and our labour to swell their profits, and then if, for some unknown reason they found that we weren't a 'paying proposition', they'd just pull the props out from under us again.

Q. Were the workers very apprehensive about taking over? Was it difficult taking over the managers jobs?

NANCY. We were apprehensive. Maybe I had an advantage there, because I used to virtually manage the place before.

Q. So the owners, Sextons and Everards, didn't really DO anything?

NANCY. THEY DID! They let us go bust and they sold us out to Jack Taubmann!

Q. What about if someone wants to do overtime, they just do it and lock up themselves?

EDNA. Yes, everybody knows how to lock up and what to do with the keys.

Q. And if someone wants a day off they just take a day off?

EDNA. Well we like to know - so that we can rearrange.

Q. And when people are off sick, they don't have to bring in sick notes?

EDNA. There's one girl off sick now, but she brings in her sick notes so that I can claim her union benefit for her (Edna is the shop steward).

Q. It's only for the union benefit, nothing else?

EDNA. No. It's only for the benefit. We know she's off sick, so that's that. Nobody stays off sick unless they have to.

Q. Is your organisation of production the same as when you first started working-in?

NANCY. If we have some contract work it's a little bit different because the things we are making are more specialised, and you have to spread them out a bit. One girl will do one operation and another will do the next operation, but they still earn much the same money. In the early stages I think maybe some of the best machinists resented it a bit, because they could do perhaps three times as much as the younger girls who hadn't the experience. But they realise now that they have a responsibility to those inexperienced girls, the same way that the inexperienced girls have a responsibility to try. For everybody's sake, not just for her sake because it's adding 25p bonus to her wages. To try without gluing your nose to the machine again, and not having time to live or breathe.

It's a process of education for all of us that's the only way I can put it. This is the interesting thing about it. We make a hell of a lot of mistakes, but it's exciting and it's a challenge.

Q. Do you think the factory is more efficient now, because of the organisation and the atmosphere?

NANCY. Yes. It may not look like it to people who come in, who are used to seeing workers with their heads down all the time. You stop for 5 mins., you can make it up again AND be more happy and relaxed. Some people think they have got to chain you down even when you are drinking coffee, and that you've got to have the chain gang atmosphere around you.

Q. You have meetings every fortnight to discuss things and to make the decisions?

EDNA. We have meetings to discuss...we talk the right way round things. You can't expect decisions to be made 'up above'. We would never accept it again, we'd want to know what was going on. When you are working in a factory you don't make your own decisions.... you just get rusty....you just look at things and think 'what the hell'.

Once you've had your eyes open - you'd never accept it again.

Q. Does everybody here take an active part in the meetings?

PAT. Oh yes. Everybody that's here. In fact we usually wait until everybody is here.

NANCY. One girl decides she is going to do this, or everybody decides this and that. If we can't decide we'll have a show of hands. We decide everything. big things and little things. But they are decisions taken by everybody that's the important thing, not just one person floating around saying 'you do this and you do that'.

Q. Workers taking over their factories has serious political implications doesn't it?

EDNA. Well at the time I did not think of it as political. But let's face it none of the political parties would agree with what we have done...because when people do this there is something radically wrong.

And you get whiz kids like blimmin' Bentley (Triang) who goes around shutting this factory, buying that one. You just can't play ducks and drakes with people's lives. He's a millionaire at thirty, but he's a millionaire on somebody's sweat and blood!

And the politicians just sit in the House of Commons and take the money. They have no idea what the people of this country are thinking.

NANCY. Alright, politics did enter into it, but you weren't thinking of it from a purist political angle. What we were struggling for was to stay alive.

Q. Do you think it is a good idea for other workers to do this?

NANCY. Of course it is a good idea!

Q. But do you think it is only to be done to fight redundancies?

EDNA. The trouble is some people couldn't care a damn until they come smack up against it and they haven't got a job. But the point is it is too late to start thinking about it then, you've GOT TO START THINKING ABOUT IT BEFORE.

NANCY. You know there is a whole load of junk being talked about 'worker participation', and there are a few other terms. But they just a cover up for, you know, hand the workers

a bonus, maybe £10, at the end of three months, and that's workers-participation. That's not what it's about, not at all.

I think basically people have to realise their own potential. But it's very difficult because people are indoctrinated, they're conditioned.

The workers at Fakenham realised that the bosses were responsible for the redundancies and low wages, and that a new set of bosses was not the solution to their problems. They chose real control, real freedom and equality-Workers Management.

Most people now realise that the capitalist system is the bosses' system. It means that the majority remain poor, hard-working slaves whilst the bosses can live in luxury and freedom. But for too long the workers have demanded reforms, and have then defended their reforms when the bosses have tried to make those reforms useless.

Some workers have realised that this system is impossible to reform. It is the bosses system from start to finish. It is their Parliament and their laws, and they 'own' all the wealth,

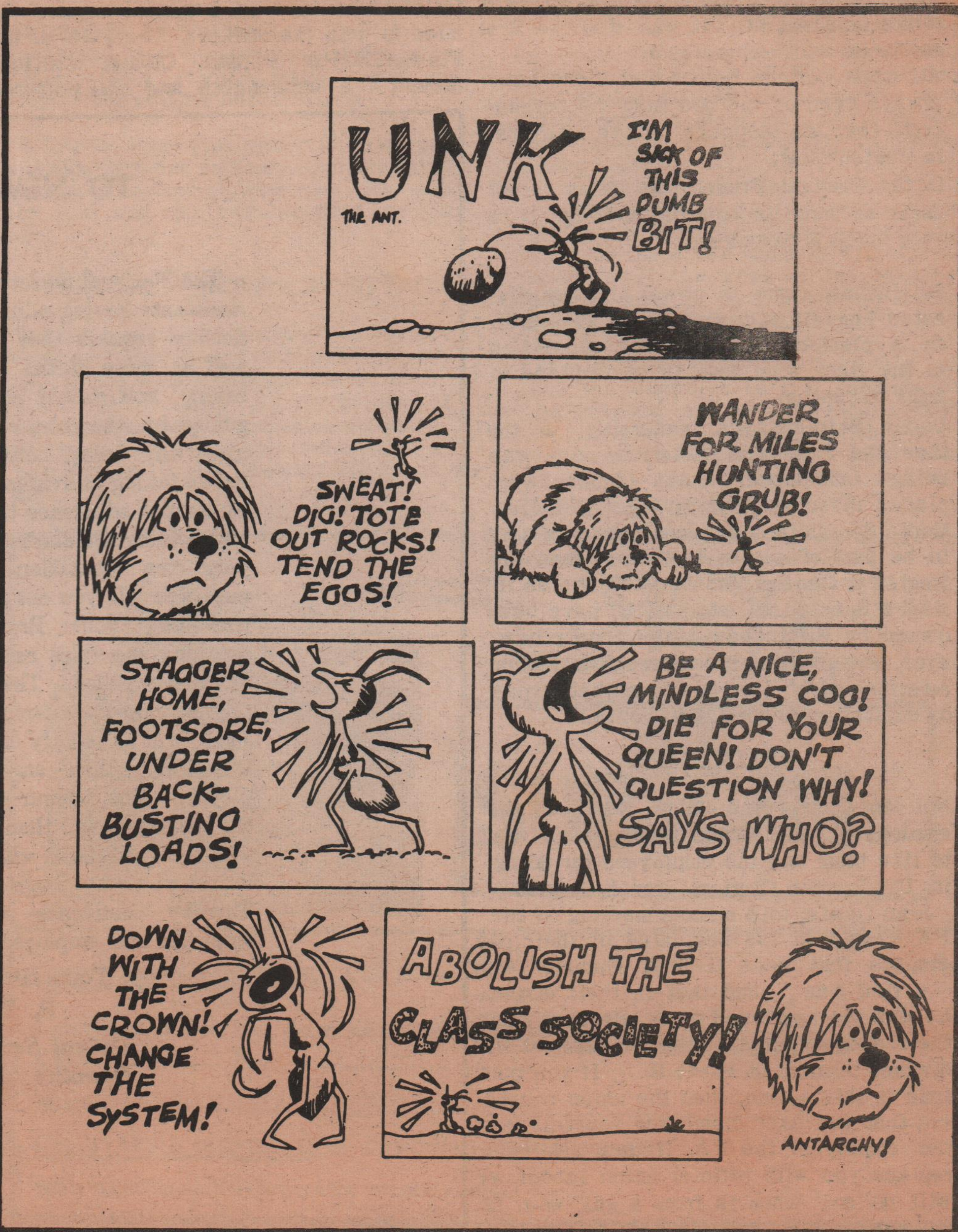
Reforms are useless, only a complete change, transferring real power to working people, - a revolution -, will create a really free and equal society.

Workers Management is of course an important part of this new society. The workers at Fakenham might regret that they are small in number and are isolated. But any attempt by a LARGE section of the working class at self management will meet massive resistance from the bosses. They will use every weapon in their arsenal. Everyday they use most of these weapons to keep workers passive:-

- they use their laws to attack workers (a particular favourite of the present Tory government..)
- they use their newspapers to lie and distort the facts.
- and in the face of any large and organised resistance (or attack) from workers they will resort to their army.

The power of the bosses (represented by the State) is vast. But it can be defeated if it is attacked consistently by a united working class.

Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your bosses!



UNION-MANAGEMENT VICTIMISATION DEAL

DID HE FALL OR WAS HE PUSHED ?

Three and a half months ago, the management of the Press Association sacked the FOC (chief steward) of the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants (NATSOPA) Clerical Chapel for being on unofficial strike over a pay claim.

On the 9th of January the Executive Council of NATSOPA decided to take no action demanding his reinstatement. The case made quite a stir at the time as it was not only gross victimisation of one striker (out of two hundred and twenty) but also because the sacked man, John Lawrence, was an anarchist militant.

NATSOPA is run by a warring coalition of Stalinists and Catholic Action freaks. The EC has refused to demand his reinstatement despite the London Clerical Branch twice recommending this.

In fact, the EC has actively connived at his dismissal throughout. Rumour abounds that Briginshaw, General Secretary of NATSOPA and darling of the Morning Star, instructed Bloom, PA General Manager, on the best tactics to follow. This is very likely as Briginshaw has a personal and political grudge against Lawrence, especially since he clashed with the union over NATSOPA splitting from SOGAT, the one time joint print union.

No-one in NATSOPA can stand up and say so however, since people have been expelled for less - which, in a closed shop industry, means no job.

UNION CONTROL

In Fleet St., the union Machine Branch controls the work process, has hiring and firing power and says who earns the big money.

As will be seen from the Lawrence case there is a great deal of difference between this Mafia-like union control and any form of workers' control. In fact the union acts as the bosses' overseers and labour suppliers.... 'as long as you buy your labour from us, then we'll give you a workforce that will be reasonably docile'. Proof of this is the fact that not only was the PA strike the first Clerk's strike in Fleet St. it was also the first unofficial strike there ever.

All other actions before and since have always been on the nod from the bureaucrats (eg. the stoppage for the Dockers in Pentonville).

In the Clerical Branch, the union is not quite as much in control, although it is very much a closed shop.

Briginshaw came to power (having divested himself of his awkward CP card), on a platform of principled opposition to the right wing then in control and to fight corruption.

Under Briginshaw's leadership, at the time the Industrial Relations Act was being introduced, union funds were placed in an employment agency called Media Specialists Bureau. This was said to be part of a plan to hide it from the Registrar General. Most of the shares in Media Specialists are said to have been owned by Briginshaw junior. Sadly however, this exciting breakthrough in labour relations didn't last due to market forces of capitalism beyond their control.

HATCHETMEN

Not only does the union work as the employers' hatchetman, it also asks you to like them and the employers for doing it. The London Clerical Branch Secretary, John Lewis, told a mass meeting of the PA Chapel at the beginning of their pay dispute that their General Manager was 'a fine man', and that in their dispute he was the aggrieved party. He then made the statement which caused amazement and disgust throughout Fleet St. 'If you continue in this action, then the union considers that you have dismissed yourself from the employ of the PA. If they ask us to replace you with official union labour we will do so.' This is from a guy who, up till the time he was elected, was making

cooing noises at the International Socialists.

The original dispute was over grossly disparate wage offers from the PA to the NATSOPA Clerical Chapel and the NUJ Chapel (the journalists - otherwise known as the National Union of Judases, for their fine record of blacklegging wherever possible). The clerks went on strike despite similar threats from the Branch Sec. and allegations that the Chapel were 'blackshirts' and 'gangsters'. Their crime was that they didn't ask the EC for permission to strike.

PURGE

Just to have their political bread buttered on both sides, the union also denounced the chapel as 'anarchistic'. This was in a circular letter from London Joint Branch secretary, O'Brien, which contained five complete lies and several deliberate distortions. Appropriately enough it began 'Because of the lies, omissions, and misrepresentation of fact...' It was however referring to PA leaflets setting out the background to their unofficial dispute. This letter, of a type popular at the Moscow trials, ended... 'The Society is under attack here and it is necessary to ask all members for their loyal support in trying to control this chaotic and anarchic situation, and no support either moral or financial should be given to these people, either by chapels or individuals.'

In furtherance of this policy, threats and intimidation were used against anyone who tried to help the strikers. The FOC of the PA-NATSOPA RIRMA Chapel (which groups the messengers and hall-porters)



JOHN LAWRENCE, victimised militant

was actually expelled from the union for calling a Chapel meeting which resulted in the RIRMA Chapel coming out in sympathy with the Clerical Chapel. He was later reinstated on appeal but has been barred from holding office in the union for life and fined £20 each.

The News of the World RIRMA Chapel, which held a collection for the strikers in defiance of the bureaucracy's orders, were fined £20 apiece, and the FOC was also barred from holding office for life. This kind of tactic ensured that the PA strikers were almost completely isolated from their fellow workers in the industry. Isolated not only from financial support but also from any practical expression of solidarity, such as help on the picket-line or sympathy action and blacking. This was especially necessary for clerks on strike for the first time.

FIGHT BACK

Faced with this isolation and with well-timed letters from the PA management threatening all workers with the sack, the strike gradually collapsed. First the supervisors went back following a defeat of

their motion for a return to work. Support from Extel (Exchange Telegraph Co) was forthcoming, but the effect of this didn't manifest itself in time. If the strike had lasted for another four days all racing results would have been stopped by Extel. This would have been a big boost for the strikers. 'Might-have-beens' don't win battles though.

Such is the fear that union bureaucrats have of the rank and file workers deciding when they will go on strike and how. There are strong similarities between the managerial big business elite and the ruling clique of the union. Both have common lifestyles and the one is as scared by workers control of their unions as the other is of workers control of society.

A common cry of the PA strikers and of other workers in the print is 'it's our union we want to run it'. Despite the attempted formation of a breakaway news agency workers' union, which is supposed to have foundered on whether or not to register under the IR Act, the only way forward for printworkers is to liberate the union from the bureaucracy, in order to be able to fight the bosses in strength.

A further ironic footnote to this story is the fact that the Department of Employment have decided that John Lawrence was victimised by the PA and have not only paid him back pay of dole suspended originally, but have advised him that he has a good case for damages against them under the Industrial Relations Act. Not that he will take it up.

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: 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. 1 plus equals 10: Computer Ethics. 5p. plus post.

ORA 7. Bakunin - Essays on Revolution 5p. plus post.

ORA 8. Free Speech and Social Revolution. 5p. plus post.

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

LOCAL GROUP PUBLICATIONS.

Suppressed Report of the Derry Massacre. 2p N. London group.

Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists. 10p. N. London.

Anarchism and Ecology. 10p. Lancaster

Revolution: Past and Present. 10p Leeds.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

NORWICH. Tuesday Feb 6th. 8pm at the University. Members of the ORA on ANARCHISM.

SOUTH LONDON. Wednesday Feb 7th 8pm at 3, Belmont Road, London SW4 on WHAT IS ORA ?

HARLECH. Thursday Feb 8th. 8pm the 'Courtyard Hut', Coleg Harlech. Keith Nathan on ORA AND LIBERTARIAN ACTION.

YORK. Thursday March 8th. 8pm at the University. LIBERTARIANISM NOT LIBERALISM. Speakers Ro Atkins, Steve Kibble and Tony Fleming.

TO NEW MEMBERS.

The National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants having admitted you a member of the Society request that in your own interests as well as those of the Society to which you now belong, you should conform strictly to, and be guided by, the rules of the Society. If in doubt upon any point, consult the Branch Secretary before taking individual action. By so doing, and by careful adherence to the rules, you will aid in maintaining the status of the Society, and uphold your own reputation and that of your fellow members. If you act independently and without consulting your Branch Secretary, you are breaking the rules and are liable to be heavily fined or expelled. The Society, while contending unyieldingly for a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, will as strictly compel its members to fulfil honourably their engagements with their employers. The honour of the Society, as well as the members, will then be upheld, and employers will recognise that while guarding the rights of labour we do not forget our duties nor shirk them. Thereby confidence will be created between employer and employed.

Yours faithfully,

R. W. BRIGINSHAW,

General Secretary, National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants.

LOVE THY BOSS AND DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.
First page of the NATSOPA rule book.

CHEAP LABOUR REVOLTS EAST MIDLANDS ASIANS STRIKE

The struggle of the Asian workers at the Mansfield Hosiery factory at Loughborough, and the history behind it, illustrate important lessons for militants wherever there is a high population of black people. The two strikes in the area that preceded it are virtually unknown.

The first was in Nottingham at the Crepe Sizes factory. 44 Pakistani workers were working an 84 hour week, made up of 12 hour shifts, seven days a week. 'Overtime' was compulsory and gross pay for the week about £40.

The few white workers formed a privileged elite within the factory. Three workers who lost a part or a whole finger in their machines got the sack. One of the workers started trying to unionise the factory and was sacked. The others came out on strike demanding reinstatement of the unofficial shop steward and union recognition.

The local Black People's Freedom Movement initiated a Strike Solidarity Committee (SSC) a united front of revolutionary groups in the area, which organised financial support, a public meeting, and pressure on a very unhelpful Transport and General Workers Union to make the strike official. The TGWU would not go further than black the firm.

After two weeks, just as the Union prepared to attempt a sell-out, the management at Crepe Sizes gave into the demands of the workers.

A further strike took place a few weeks later at Joan Stroud in Long Eaton near Nottingham. This is again a textiles factory with a long history of avoiding militancy. Before it took on Asians, it had employed young people whom it sacked as soon as they qualified as skilled. Here, most workers did a 60 hour week and took home between £20 and £23. An attempt at unionisation met with the same result - a sacking, the same response from the T&G and support from the SSC. This time the public meeting was badly-organised, the T&G effectively played a much more active strike-breaking role during the strike (such as pressurizing the strikers not to attend the SSC public meeting). The strike failed. This in spite of impressive financial and other support from the Crepe Sizes workers, who had advanced incredibly during their own strike. Here again the white workers formed a privileged elite and only one came out in support. The occupation of the Union offices was contemplated in this strike, but the victimised shop steward opposed it.

The Mansfield Hosiery strike at Loughborough very clearly represents a development of the

methods and approach of the first two strikes. The racial conflict has been much more blatant with the National Front giving support to the privileged white workers, the knitters, as the Asians were on the picket line attempting to breakdown the entrenched segregation.

The Mansfield Hosiery factory has a very similar past to the Crepe Sizes and Joan Stroud. In 1962 it was employing women workers. Then it recruited an Asian man to a woman's job at a woman's wage. The Asians were more amenable and buckled under more easily. Because the Asians were displacing the women, the latter struck. The management stood firm. It compromised by reserving some of the marginally better jobs for the women. The knitting section remained invincibly male and white.

In March 1972 the Asian workers complained to the Race Relations Board about lack of opportunities to become knitters. In July the Board found both management and the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers (NUHKW) guilty of racism.

In June the Asians had demanded that the District Secretary, Carter put in a claim for a £5 rise. He didn't pass it on. They waited till September before they called a meeting and ordered Carter to attend, (by this time they had formed a shopfloor committee.) and gave him a strike notice to pass on, which he failed to do. On October 3, the day the strike was due to begin, he told them they hadn't waited the 7 days required by a previous Union Management agreement.

In response to the £5 claim, the management demanded three men do four men's work. They did secure a return to work but faced with a strike by white knitters the management went back on the settlement.

On October 27 400 Asians came out on strike and were ordered to return to work and sacked almost with the same breath. The Union refused to make the strike official. A month

and another agreement led them back to work to find 107 whites, presumably sent by the Employment Exchange, had moved in, including 41 training for the vacant knitters posts.

At this stage, faced with the spread of Asian militancy across the Midlands, the government intervened and set up an 'impartial' enquiry, under Kenneth Robinson. A former right-wing Minister of Health, he had been an unsuccessful enemy of homeless families while in office. As long ago as 1954, he had made a speech against West Indian immigration in the House of Commons. His role was not to see justice done, but to patch up an agreement which would prevent the spread of the conflict. Not until December 4, when the workers occupied the Union offices, was the strike made official.

The government succeeded in its aim, at least temporarily. A pool was created, from which the 41 knitters were to be selected. The scab workers, probably pressurized into taking the jobs by the threat of having their unemployment money cut off, were all placed in it. The Asians also insisted on Asian women applying - an important step.

The pool involves yet another splitting of the workers, making them compete against each other, and blurring the realisation of who the real enemy is. The Asians demand a sizeable whack of the knitting jobs. Otherwise 'peace' will break down again.

Perhaps the most significant thing to come out of the strike was the creation of an action committee. Its purpose is to travel to other black workers in the Midlands and even beyond, talk about the strike and the lessons, and generate as much determination on the part of other workers as they themselves have shown.

So we move forward from the financial and moral support impressively given to Joan Stroud workers by the victors of the Crepe Sizes strike to positive intervention. Already the committee has had calls for help from others attempting to get themselves out of the same sort of intolerable conditions. It is vital this sort of initiative is sustained, and that it is taken up by women workers as well. The whole area of cheap labour, sweat shop factories which blacks and women most of all have to cope with, needs to be attacked and finally smashed.

The role of groups like the Black People's

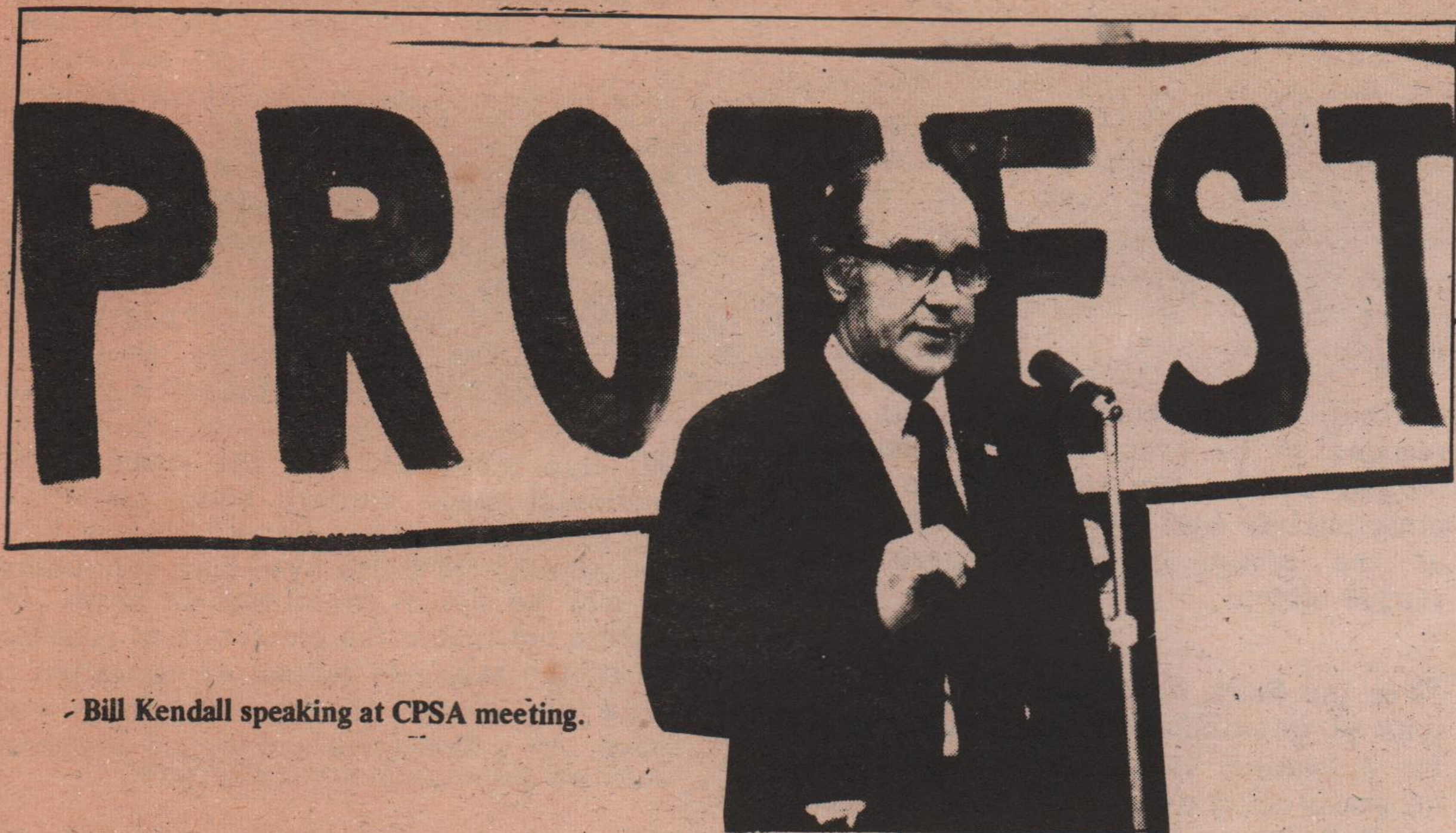
Freedom Movement is clearly vital. It is only when these act in support of their fellow-blacks that there is any possibility of creating a real fight against racism which splits the working class. Black freedom groups confront the white worker with the with the fact he cannot ignore the black - he must either see him as a comrade or an enemy. And that if he takes the latter view he ends up siding with the boss. The lesson of South Africa is immediate and obvious at a time when the white unions there are having to compromise their racial domination to prevent being economically undercut. The role of the black groups is much the same as women's liberation should play for women.

One of the lessons that comes out of the history of the Mansfield Hosiery strike is the way in which bosses use the most exploited workers - women and blacks - against each other. One criticism of the strike has been the subsidiary role of Asian women as supporters only of the strike. It demonstrates the need for black workers in their turn to support women.

The Asians' introduction of women into the pool of candidates for knitting jobs represents an important step toward this. It is vital that intervening action groups develop among women workers, and that a high level of co-ordination between women and blacks takes place. The role of white male militants in this situation is to give consistent support, and fight in turn to bring already active steward combines and the like into these networks to assist and strengthen the struggle.

The role of the trade union bureaucracies as enemies of the workers in struggle is at its most exposed in this, the raw end of capitalism. As we settle into the Industrial Relations Act this becomes increasingly clear at all levels. The simple fact is that workers have only themselves and their class solidarity, linking with other rank-and-file workers to depend on.

The struggle for better wages and conditions has to become the starting point for a revolutionary struggle. Capitalism can't give workers control of their jobs, or even still maintain their living standards any longer. The smallest demands of the working class lead either to defeat, to new price increases, new restrictions of freedom, or they lead to socialism based on workers' councils.



Bill Kendall speaking at CPSA meeting.

The present unrest in the Civil Service has come as a surprise to a lot of people. It should not have done so. For a long time their wages have trailed those of similar workers in private enterprise. The last straw was the freezing of their agreed payrise due on January 1st.

There are four unions in the Civil Service. The Civil Service Union, which covers industrial staff, such as cleaners, was the union involved in the women cleaners strike at the Ministry of Defence last year. It is not involved in the current dispute. Nor is the Institute of Civil Servants, the top management 'union'.

The two involved are the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), the union of clerical officers and assistants - the counter clerks and so on; and the Society of Civil Servants (SCS), the executive staff union - for supervisors.

The body that puts forward the guidelines for pay increases is the Pay Research Unit, originally set up to report every four years on civil servants pay. In the 1960s as inflation set in, this was altered to every two years. For clerical staff, the Unit's approach is to study comparable pay levels in banking, insurance and the like; it is supposed to take into account all figures, including fringe benefits. The figures thus arrived at form the basis for negotiation between the Civil Service Department, which deals with pay, and the joint 'A Committee' of the CPSA and SCS. In 1971 it was a non-negotiating year, but the soaring inflation made for an 'interim pay award' averaging 7.2%.

Civil servants now lag 20% behind, and the wage freeze has meant they don't even catch up. The result is a rising tide of militancy, more among the younger workers than the middle aged who are still appalled

at the prospect of industrial action.

Within CPSA, the most important of the unions for its class position, the Communist Party hold control. Not surprisingly, it has to contend with an anti Communist faction called 'The Group'. Less prominent is its battle against the left wing Redder Tape group. The union, as typical of CP-controlled bodies, is stagnantly bureaucratic. The current tactic of protests is a traditional technique designed to release militant feeling harmlessly. Though it has to be said that the level of militancy is uneven, to say the least.

It is obviously essential to intensify the struggle for shopfloor control of the conflict between workers and management, and to link up resulting action committees with shopfloor and shop steward combines within and beyond the Civil Service.

The CPSA's attitude to Claimants Unions was also somewhat surprising. The CPSA executives have sent out an instruction to branches saying that where Claimants Unions exist their members should co-operate with the CU to co-ordinate action and achieve a better understanding between the staff and CUs. The General Secretary of the CPSA, Bill Kendall, was secretary of the Unemployed Workers Union in the 1930s and several other union officials were active in the UWW. The officials Time Out spoke to also said that at several local offices their members met regularly with Claimants Unions to discuss various kinds of action.

The Claimants Unions have in the past resorted to blanket condemnations of everyone the other side of the counter, in dole offices and the S.S. Even in reformist terms this is suicidal. It is vital claimants understand the contradictions within the structure of the Civil Service. And that they realise that their enemies are not the people across

the counter, who often take home little more than they get when they're not working, but those at the top - the supervisors, the office managers and upwards.

The first breakthrough with this was the decision of London Claimants Unions to collectively support the CPSA in its struggle. Other groups did the same, although one London Claimants Union was criticised by others for 'going too far'. In places the CPSA made the first move. At the National Federation of Claimants Unions Conference in Newcastle, a decision was made to give national support to the CPSA. Each C.U. was to write to the local branch of the CPSA offering support and asking them to reciprocate and support the Claimants Unions in their campaign on winter heating. This marked a crucial development. A grasp of the necessity of class solidarity both in theory and practice was at last reached.

It is essential that the Claimants Unions support the struggle of counter clerks; it is equally important that they point out the class contradictions within the Civil Service and repeatedly remind the clerks who the real enemy are. They are justified in criticising the reactionary behaviour of many clerks. But it is meaningless to do so unless they explain why and are prepared to suggest ways forward.

IN LEEDS members of the Claimants Union leafleted the January 10th protest meeting for the DHSS workers jointly organised by the CPSA/SCS. (There were other meetings for other departments). The leaflet stressed the need for a united front of employed and unemployed workers for a decent living income. The leaflet asked the DHSS staff to support the Claimants Union. The leaflets were generally welcomed by the members of the CPSA who were attending the meeting.

ONE (NEW) LAW FOR THE RICH

CONT. FROM P.2

this rise, or that they will be better off under the restriction than they would have been under no restriction at all! Management have always taken advantage of the low level of militancy of low paid workers to continue sweatshops, dangerous work conditions and the rest. They will not have a sudden change of heart during the freeze, and 'pay regard to the importance the Government attaches to the plight of the lower paid'. The Government does not really want them to. If they had they would have laid down fines and penalties for unco-operative managements, as they have for suspected strikers.

The big deal for pensioners is also so much air. The government can claim that their pledge to 'maintain their purchasing power' has been upheld within the Bill as it stands, since it is supposed to keep prices level. They have promised to increase pensions again in the autumn. As Vic Feather points out, this wouldn't cover the price rises from their last pension increase to the present. The Press found the death of an old-age pensioner newsworthy at Christmas. They have apparently forgotten the continuing death toll from starvation and cold. Perhaps this is because there is no Miners' Strike to blame, and people might realise that pensions were to blame.

The lowest paid workers are women. Under the Equal Pay Act, they were promised to have 90% of the corresponding male rate by 1973. The loopholes in it were many, but it gave women something to unite around. The government will not enforce this Act, so nothing will be done. Instead the govt. 'wish' progress towards a reduction of the male/female differential by up to one third. They won't even enforce this, so it won't happen unless women fight for it. The entry into the Common Market because of the serious World economic crisis, means that the British industrialists face tough competition for profits. They need a docile and low-paid workforce which is, of course, why this Bill is being introduced. Since the govt. has announced that it refuses to enforce equal pay, it is clear that they hope women will be forced out to work for low wages, to supplement their husband's limited pay. The milk-snatcher, Thatcher, showed out-of-character

benevolence in enlarging nursery education. This can be understood now, it helps to release women into the workforce.

The sincere-sounding speeches of Heath and co. are a cover for their intention to take us back to the 30's. Unemployment will increase even further, as British capitalists feel the squeeze and turn more to investing abroad. Cuts in Welfare benefits will continue - school milk has gone, school dinners are going up, and changes in Family Allowances are being proposed.

The Bill is a second major attempt to clamp down on the living standards of working people. When the British bosses were among those leading the world market, they could afford to allow people a stake in the big pie. Now British industry is low down in the list of major manufacturers and traders, they can no longer afford it. To safeguard profits they must cut back on the living standards of workers and their families, who will need more than the permitted pay increase to buy the essentials of food, rent, rates, clothing and so on. To prevent people getting this money, the government must take away the negotiating rights, won by years of militant action. The Law is always the bosses law, and their new law makes it illegal to even threaten to organise.

Once again the class war comes out into the open. The only way we can fight it is as a class. If they want women as cheap, docile labour, we will show them - as Fakenham women have - that we aren't docile and we refuse to accept subsistence wages. The male workers will realise that our fight for equal pay is not to take money away from them, but to stop us being used as strike-breakers and cheap substitutes. White workers will realise the same for Asians and Blacks - racialism is another way the bosses divide and rule. And if the industrialists are looking to the million unemployed to provide a pool of labour ready to step into the jobs of sacked militants, they will find the Claimants' Unions standing with the employed.

The freeing of the Dockers reminds us of our strength when united. It convinced the Tories that we weren't so docile, and that they needed stronger measures. This act is an example of their ability to learn from events. We must learn too. United and with the will to fight we can defeat any Tory Bill. If we do more than that and learn in the

process how to organise ourselves and keep all our decisions and control of our actions in our own hands, then we can go one better. We can start on the road to finishing the Tories forever. We can throw aside all their would-be replacements - liberal, labour or 'revolutionary' and working people can start to plan a society in which we work for the common good and our own needs. And we organise it ourselves.

For the moment this means starting with the slogan **An injury to one is an injury to all.** And carrying it into practice by giving all support we can to working people in struggle. Black or white, men or women, pensioners or kids.

EUROPE?

CONT. FROM P.2

In all this the CP has exposed itself as a group which attempts to keep all struggles within the bounds of the union bureaucracy. This is exactly what they have been doing to the French and Italian workers especially since 1968.

British Steel has not just clobbered its own workforce. It has also turned the screws on its British competitors so hard that they were talking of going to the Common Market bureaucrats to complain about 'unfair practices'.

Going international has not been a bed of roses, even though this is the only way capitalism can sustain growth. Michelin who are planning to soak up three West German firms, one Austrian and a French one, face the unions co-ordinating. This is after it has already been hit by transnational strikes in Clermont in France and and Vittoria in Spain.

Dunlop-Pirelli also faces trouble. The 'threat' of Dunlop dumping Pirelli wasn't true, but Pirelli in Italy has been at a standstill for a long time now. Dunlop-Pirelli covers 12 countries, including Yugoslavia. In Britain it has made 8000 redundant over the past two years. Everywhere it is trying to solve its problems by massive lay-offs and short-time working.

Dunlop, whatever its problems, does see its need is to go international. It is precisely this that has taken us into Europe. The statement of Agnelli, boss of Fiat, that Italizrnl capitalism had to use Europe to go multi-national, applies as much to British capitalism, although the crisis is perhaps not so acute.

British bosses have faced three problems all apparently insoluble. Industry has to sustain a 5% national growth, but if it does so the balance of payments deficit will spiral upwards. Last years deficit was £40 million and at the end of this year it could be £1,000,000 million. Even if its only a deficit of £650 million, another run on the pound is still likely. With a currency still fragile, although floating, another attack by speculators is always on the cards. The bosses need more investment and less consumption.

Whether British bosses will pull it off remains to be seen. Herman Kahn, futurologist and the man who loves to contemplate nuclear war, promises Britain a place at the bottom of the European income league tables.

Even the Stock Exchange, one of the bastions of international finance capital, is in for a beating. It just hasn't got the right geographical or political position to become the Wall Street of Europe.

Meanwhile the Common Market Commission is working hard on establishing an integrated industrial framework for European capitalism to operate in. In spite of backward elements of the bosses, they understand clearly that they've got to con the workers into thinking it is their Europe and their industry. Hence the demand for workers' participation. It isn't just being discussed in Europe, our own TUC is studying it with interest.

This sort of structure is just a more liberal version of our own Industrial Relations Act. Hitler inaugurated the same concept, but his political cover was pretty shaky. The march to the corporate state was got under way by the last Labour government, with Barbara Castle's **In Place of Strife**. Labour, faced with a trade union revolt and loss of votes, lost its nerve. The Tories, with less to lose took it up and are in the process of enforcing it. We now have a political consensus, where Labour and Tory are virtually indistinguishable and both committed to making

capitalism work. They talk about the 'national interest'. Crudely, this is the idea of boss scratching workers back as long as worker scratches boss's. And the boss keeps firm control of the backscratcher-

Whatever the current disagreements of international chemical unions and Dunlop-Pirelli and Michelin, the simple fact is that every trade union leadership talks to the government while their members are economically slaughtered. This is true whether its the right wing Labour TUC or the Communist run CGT. In Italy the unions introduced appointed shop stewards, called 'line delegates', to head off worker militancy. But because of their ultimate dependence on the workers there was trouble. Although they attempted to play a reformist role, the level of militancy forced them to demand so much the bosses wanted to abolish them when the contracts came up for review.

While the workers struggle to keep their noses above water, we have the press doing its bit for Europe. Strasbourg's helpless parliament is apparently a new development for Western democracy and is where its all going to happen.

American capitalism also has problems, and therefore lines up for a pitched battle with the EEC. It has penetrated Eastern Europe with its Import-Export Aid agreements, starting with Russia. This cost the Soviet Union several million dollars in 'repaying' lend-lease debts. This was the logic of peaceful competition between ideological systems. State capitalism is increasingly outdated in an age of multi-national corporations. And America is a conglomerate of multi-national companies spreading outwards supported if necessary by its Army. In fighting Europe it has several things going for it. It is more advanced technologically. Europe depends on the American market for its exports. And the divisions within the Common Market partners on agriculture, on the ex-colonial territories of some, provide it with a divided enemy.

Added to this is the ineffectiveness of the the EEC's anti-monopolism. Firms have to grow to survive. In a period of greatly reduced profit margins they have to expand by absorbing other firms, whether because they simply provide something which may give more profits - the economic dinosaurs called conglomerates then emerge. Previous mention has been made of Bowaters and P & O's moves in these directions. Britain has scared more than just the French by taking over their indigenous firms. But, although this may not be in the interests of the bosses who are gobbled up, it is certainly necessary for the expansion and attempted stabilisation of European capital.

The failure of the Commission to stop the takeover of a sector of the metal industry in Europe by American firm Continental Can was far more important. Americans also control the computer industry, and a sizeable section of the British motor industry.

In its turn, the EEC is building a Mediterranean trade block; anticipating trade pacts with India and Brazil (although refusing to admit fascist Brazil's friends Spain and Greece to the Market), and negotiating with the Far East's private enterprise Association of South East Asian Nations.

All this indicates, with the massive protectionist trade barriers being attempted, the move towards a corporate continent is outdated before it has even been constructed. It may be partly an attempt to grow. We should not ignore the protectionist elements of it, the hopeless refusal of capitalism to face the fact that the world market is wide open, the nation-state and organs of parliamentary democracy are ineffective.

The battle is now an international one. As the bosses become more internationalized the workers inevitably do so too. Patriotism nationalism and racism are proving useless ideas to the working class in this situation. As the union bosses sell out increasingly on an international level, so the struggle will inevitably crystallize as one between the bosses and the workers on the factory floor and in their communities.

It is crucial that the workers rapidly build up international contacts and co-ordination at the level of shopfloor organisation: these have to reach across every firm, every industry, every frontier and continent.

This is the level to which the struggle has now moved.

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