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FACT FILE



A.I.T.

Dry-roasted people

Would society really have a few days' - or even a few minutes' - warning of a nuclear attack? Jeremy Stone, director of the Federation of American Scientists warns: 'Even if you get people out and they survive, if the cities and the economy are gone, there will be mass starvation and epidemics.' City shelters, critics claim, would be subjected to temperatures of 1,472°F and would become crematoria in which people would be 'dry-roasted'.

Soon after Jimmy Carter took office, he learnt that the plan for evacuating the President had never been tested. Carter ordered a dry run, with Brzezinski (Carter's National Security Adviser) sitting in for him. Telephones rang and aides scrambled. After 15 minutes Brzezinski was still waiting for the helicopter to arrive.

In the Soviet Union, GROB, the acronym for civil defense, brings rueful laughter: it also means coffin.

Thoughts on bureaucracy

Bureaucrats are the defenders of the status quo. And since what *is* is mostly what has been, they are the keepers of the past. They see themselves as doing 'public service'. The reality is that the service is not to you and to me, but to their masters, those who pay their salaries and decide on their promotions. Their responsibility being directed upwards, they have nothing but disdain for those below them.

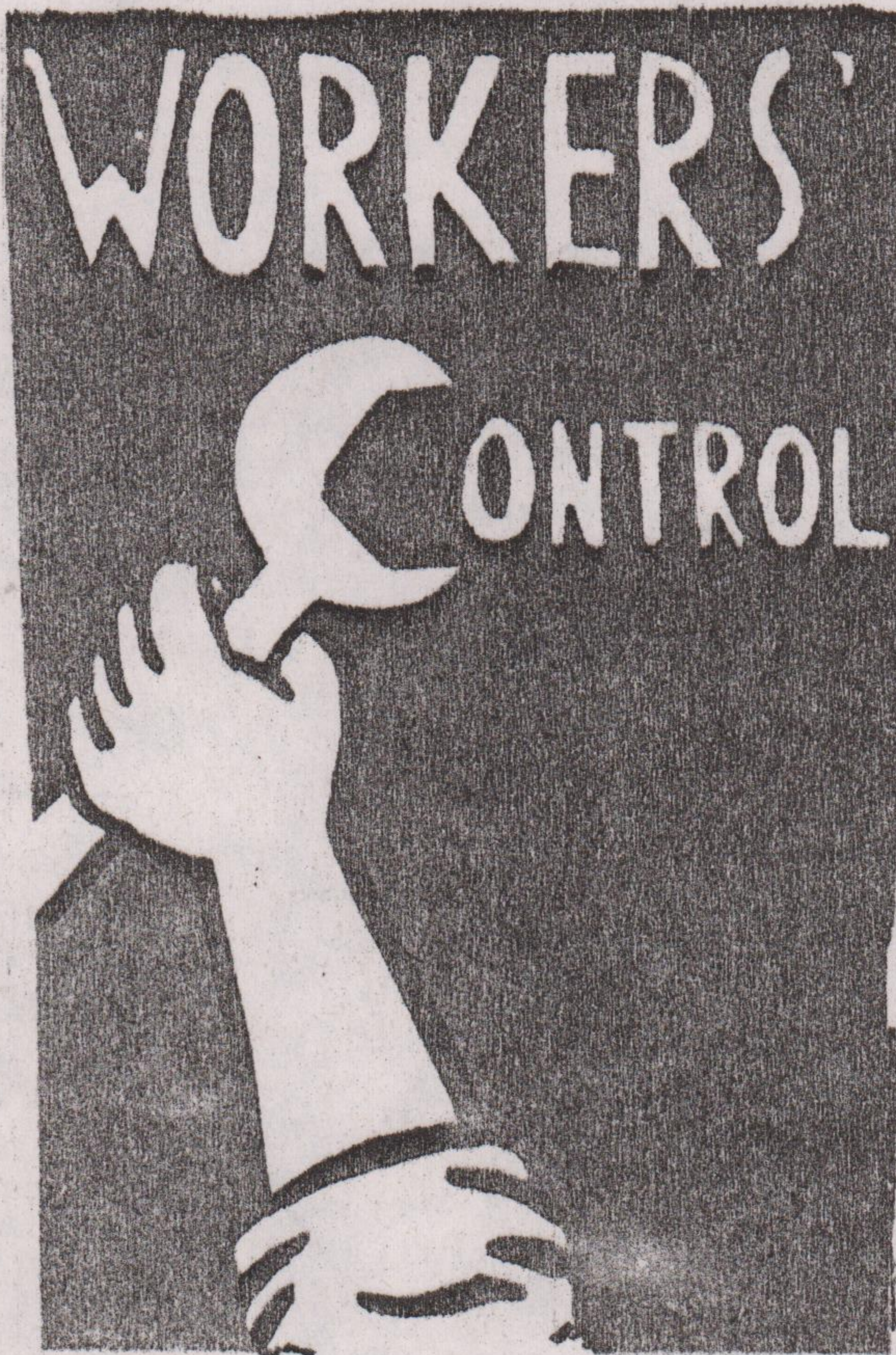
'Bureaucracy is by nature a colonising mechanism. And since colonising or wielding power over other people's lives is the most popular human past-time, the world cannot do without bureaucrats.'



JOBLESS AT RISK

Unemployed people are twice as likely to become mentally ill as those in jobs. The group most at risk is middle aged married men with families, says a study from Sheffield University.

The seven-year study sponsored by the Medical Research Council and the Social Services Research Council was based on a sample of 6,000 people with respondents mainly living in large cities with high levels of unemployment.



Socialist Intelligentsia

The aims of the early working class movement were almost instinctive—social and economic equality, suspicion of all leaders, expropriation of the expropriators, liberty, brotherhood and communism (in its uncorrupted sense). It has been the hellish aim of the middle-class intelligentsia to take the name of these aspirations and corrupt them into class privilege.

Of course, there are many middle-class persons who abandon their class interests and, accepting the aims of the revolutionary working class, work sincerely for those aims, but the majority of middle-class persons join a social or political movement to achieve middle-class aims.

The Bolshevik party was a party of the middle class using working class names and phrases to overthrow the capitalist class, deceive the workers and institute a dictatorship of the middle class party for the further exploitation of the workers.

In their pursuit of these aims in most countries the Communists make much use of the Marxian phrase "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat." When questioned, the Communists usually admit that dictatorship means government by the minority. When it is pointed out that the proletariat is the vast majority and that therefore the phrase is a contradiction in terms, the Communists reply in this way: "Who are the proletariat? Not miners, dockers, and factory workers. The proletariat are those who understand Marxism and Leninist-Stalinism. Those who have the knowledge exercise a benevolent dictatorship on behalf of the workers."

But suppose the workers took over?

At a conference about 'incentives' in industry, the writer Nigel Balchin remarked that: 'Industrial psychologists must stop messing about with tricky and ingenious bonus schemes and find out why a man, after a hard day's work, went home and enjoyed digging in his garden.'

But we can already make a good guess why. He enjoys going home and digging in his garden because there he is free from foremen, managers and bosses. He is free from the slavery of doing the same thing day in day out, and is in control of the whole thing from start to finish. He is free to decide for himself how and when to set about it. He is responsible to himself and not to somebody else. He is working because he *wants* to and not because he *has* to. He is doing his own thing. He is his own man.

If people could pick and choose whether or where to work or not, they would choose to work for themselves.

Easy enough when a man works on his own, but could it happen when people work in larger numbers? Would they want to go on making the same product in the same way for the same market? Years ago a young French girl, Simone Weil, wanting to find out what work was really like, persuaded a mine-owner to let her go down the pit and find out what it felt like to use a pneumatic drill all day. Then she got a job on the assembly line at the Renault factory. She concluded that it was not enough for the miners to take over the pit and the car workers to take over the factory. They would also have to change the whole technical process to suit the way they *wanted* to work, and would have to ask: Who am I producing this for? Is it worth producing?

way forward

Bad practice; bad health

Well there we have it. Asbestos, no matter what the colour can be a killer. All the talk about only blue Asbestos being dangerous is just rubbish. The use of Asbestos of all types should be banned outright. Both government and management have refrained from doing this because to replace the widely used white Asbestos with a safe material would cost a fortune. Instead both have continued to claim that Asbestos is not dangerous and have done everything in their power to stop the truth becoming known. The longer they maintain this position the more people will end up dying.

Trade Union leaders are also guilty, they with all their resources have done nothing to protect the workers they claim to represent. The use of Asbestos could have been blacked, warning the people of the dangers involved and all union members urged not to work with the deadly stuff. This, of course, will never happen. The TUC is not about to encourage workers to take independent action on their own behalf. The Trade Union bureaucrat will only urge workers to take industrial action when they know they will remain in control and only then as a last resort to strengthen their negotiating position and maintain their power and influence. In the case of Asbestos, so safer for union leaders to do what they do best, sit on endless committees discussing ways of reducing the use of Asbestos, and achieving nothing.

This, of course, leaves workers in an isolated and weak position, just how weak can be seen from two separate incidents which took place where I work for British Rail. The first incident involved workers in the signals and telephone dept., when they were called out to work on a signal box they found to be full of Asbestos. The men refused to work on it and were later backed by the rest of the dept. The next day the Management called a meeting where they wheeled out a top BR scientist (with a long list of initials after his name) he managed to convince enough people that they were in no danger and they agreed to work normally. The second incident occurred with Asbestos which was found on a class 303 passenger train after a fire. The guards refused to work on the train, at first management tried to force two guards, who had worked during the last strike, to work normally but even they refused. When it became evident the action was spreading they changed their tactics. The next day a meeting was called, again a scientist was produced and people convinced they were in no danger. In both cases if people had refused to work normally there can be little doubt that management would have called in union officials, who would have tried to take control of the situation, persuading people to work normally while they negotiated on their own behalf. In the case of the guards we did get in touch with the Union bureaucrats at the highest levels. Jimmy Napp, the NUR General Secretary, was speaking in Manchester, when he was approached by the guards he assured them he knew all about Asbestos and promised his full support. Needless to say nothing was heard from him until a few weeks ago when he sent out a letter to all branches instructing members to stop sending samples of Asbestos to NUR headquarters because the stuff was highly dangerous and a health hazard.

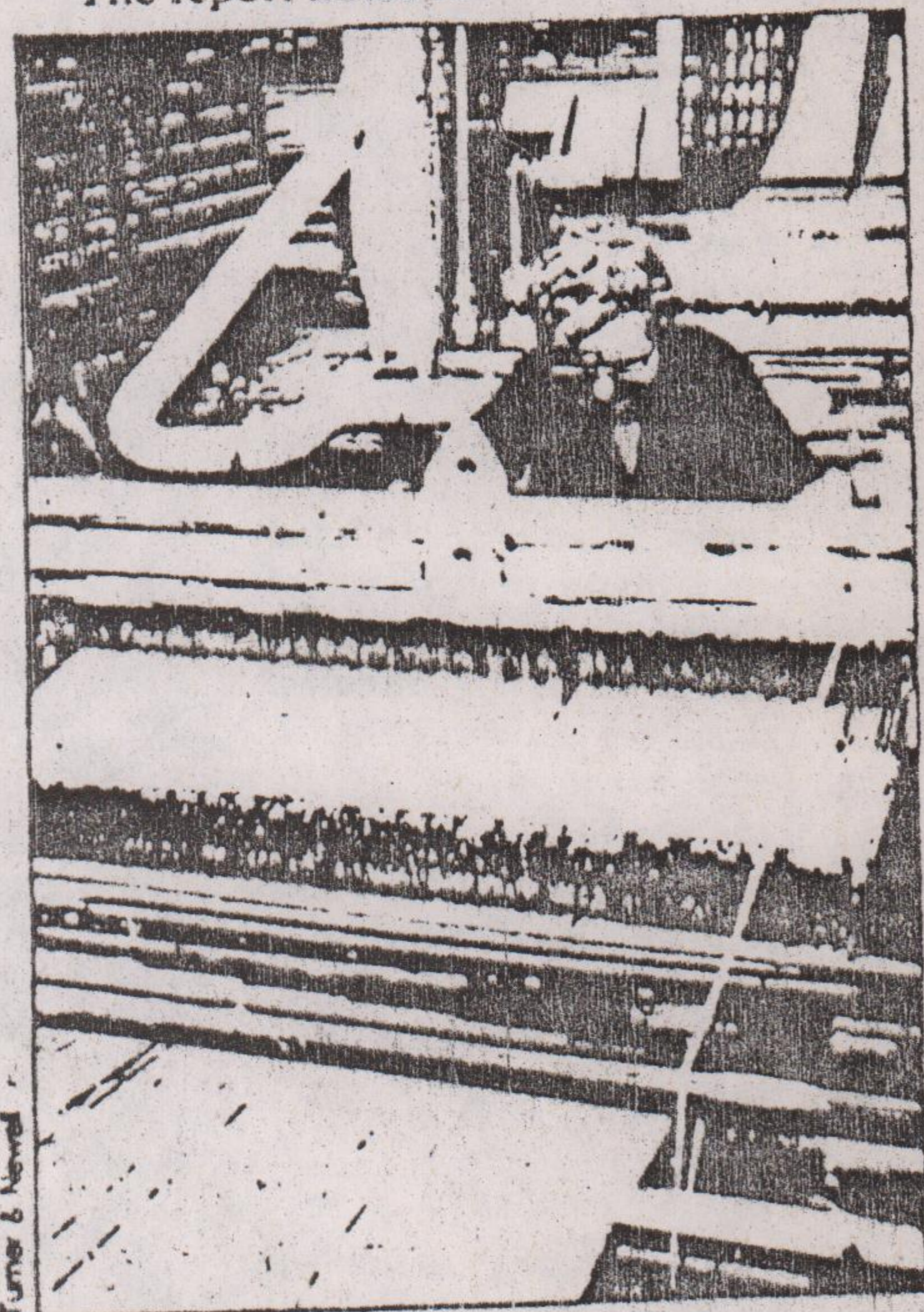
It's clear that a growing number of people are becoming aware of the danger Asbestos poses. Workers must start relying on themselves, they alone have the power to force managements to remove Asbestos from the workplace and it's only when they start to use it will the danger from Asbestos be overcome.

THE GRANT report singles out Britain's two asbestos textile mills in Rochdale and West Auckland as a "particular problem". Turner and Newall's Rochdale plant (referred to only as Factory D, but clearly identifiable) takes the brunt of the criticism.

This "large old factory employing 1500 persons" requires workers to fill hoppers with fibres by hand, even though Factory E (Scandura's West Auckland plant) does the job automatically. Rochdale workers use oiled brushes to clean round cards and spinning machines "even in areas where vacuum cleaning would be acceptable as this is a practice which should cease", the report says.

Spinning (see photograph) is identified as "major problem areas" at both factories. There are still in use "old machines at which no precautions are taken". Turner and Newall is "experimenting" with improved ventilation around its spinning frames, but at Scandura "it is not clear whether it intends to re-equip".

The report notes that: "Total enclosure



Spinning fibre at the Rochdale mill

of the frames would be possible but would greatly reduce the output per frame". This is because the operator frequently has to get at the frame to mend broken ends of yarn. Winding and doubling operations "suffer the same problems as spinning". Ventilation hoods are often "of poor design and poorly maintained". As a result average air samples exceed the current fibres limits more than half the time in the hopper-filling, spinning and detritus-handling sections.

One way of highlighting problems is to film the dust using video equipment. Turner and Newall has developed the technique but now, says the report "cutbacks... have curtailed the use of the method".

A second category of factories with problems is those making friction materials such as brake pads. Here Factory F has provided "no ventilation" for disc brake pad manufacture, gives workers 'excessive exposure' to asbestos during pressing and moulding and its machine room is "not adequate". Factory F is the Mintex plant in Cleckheaton. □

MANCHESTER DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT

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