

3p

HACKNEY GUTTER PRESS

NO.1



Most people in Hackney don't like the way their lives are controlled by work, rents, councillors, police, schools, etc. A lot of us are organising to fight that control - but we feel we don't know enough about each other. For example, with the coming tenants' campaign against the Fair Rents Act we're going to need a united fight if we are going to win - women at home, people going to work, claimants and kids together: we're all tenants.

We want this newspaper to be used as part of getting to know each other. Organising to fight together. We want it to be used as a WEAPON TO FIGHT FOR OUR OWN CONTROL OF HACKNEY.

This first issue was produced by a group of people who are involved in organised activities such as Claimants' Unions, squatting, Womens Liberation, playhouses for children, food co-ops.

We have intense discontent with the Hackney Gazette. Not only do they always report in favour of the rich and those in authority, but even this reporting is inadequate, amateurish and often totally inaccurate.

HACKNEY GUTTER PRESS is non profit making and its policy will be decided upon from issue to issue by open meetings.

The first meeting will be at Centerprise, 34, Dalston Lane on Thursday, May 4th at 8pm. This is open to all wishing to help produce the paper, writing, drawing cartoons, distributing, reporting, etc.



WHY NOT SQUAT?

Walk down any street in Hackney, and you will find several empty houses, often in almost perfect condition. In parts of the borough, whole areas have been boarded up and hundreds of people cleared out. In Homerton, for example, there are row upon row of such houses waiting, maybe forever, for the Hackney Hospital scheme to get off the ground.

THE COUNCIL DESTROYS SQUATTERS REBUILD

Every week, more and more people who are without homes, or whose homes are too shitty to bear, are seizing empty houses. People are squatting and rebuilding houses that the Council, the housing associations and other property agents are letting rot.

COUNCIL SEEKS HIGH COURT WRIT

Hackney Council is getting scared. They are now seeking eviction orders against four homeless families who occupy houses in Grayling Road, Stoke Newington, from the High Court of Justice. The families all include

young children; they have done no harm to anyone. All they want is to be allowed to live in peace in the homes they occupy, preferably as recognised tenants and paying rent for the houses, thus saving the ratepayers money.

However, Hackney Council has found that it has a tiger by the tail at Grayling Road; at the High Court hearing on March 9th, the atmosphere was dominated by the personality of the squatters' representative - Bill Dwyer. Moreover, the Council claimed that they could not identify the occupants of the houses, so the writ was made out Hackney Council v. the People. The People went in; kids and all.

COUNCIL ACCUSED OF PERJURY

The result of the hearing shook the Council representative to the soles of his feet. For Bill asked for the eviction order not to be dismissed, but to be adjourned, remarking that statements handed to the Court for the Council had gone far beyond the bounds of truth, and in fact, had reached those of perjury; a criminal offence worth 3 years.



SQUATTERS' LEGAL NOTES BURGLED

Mr. Dwyer, had his home burgled and the copies of the Court Summons to the squatters were stolen, as were Mr. Dwyer's notes of the legal proceedings. Obviously, someone is very worried. And it isn't the squatters.

HALF A MILLION EMPTY HOUSES

There are over half a million empty dwelling houses in this country, yet there are thousands of homeless people refused accommodation by the housing authorities. The only answer to homelessness, the Council has is "Hostels for Homeless Persons." More and more people are refusing this, and are seeking their own solution. They're squatting.

Help the fight of the Grayling Road families against the loss of their homes. Contact Mrs. Helen Vennard, 32, Grayling Road, Stoke Newington. (106 bus to St. Annes home and Grayling Road is round the corner).

THE STOKE NEWINGTON

EIGHT

In August last year, police took 6 people from a flat in Amhurst Road, Stoke Newington.

They were charged with "conspiracy to cause explosions" and possession of guns and explosives. Two more people from North London are now also on the "conspiracy" charge. Three of the 8 are on bail and 5 of them have been in prison 9 months WITHOUT TRIAL.

Remember Jake Prescott and Ian Purdie? They were tried last November on the same type of charge. The police didn't manage to fit up Purdie, but they got Prescott convicted on hardly any evidence.....he's now doing 15 years for nothing.

The Eight have all been active in movements of the people for some years - squatting, claimants' unions, womens' liberation, gay liberation, supporting workers in strikes

In other words fighting the REAL CONSPIRACY of the groups who have money and power over us all.

Their power over Us

THE STATE IS RUN BY THE STRONG - ARMERS (POLICE) FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE RICH. They will try to smash



anyone who opposes their power-like the Stoke Newington 8! They call them a "Conspiracy" to try and separate them from the rest of us - people fighting the boss, the police and the brainwasher. But they're not separate, they're POLITICAL PRISONERS, and we must stand or fall with them.

In a factory, the employer can put anyone who fights for their rights, on a black list, kick him or her out, and make sure that no jobs are "available" elsewhere. That's a real conspiracy, when bosses can gang up together and agree to keep somebody out of a job. They're doing it to more than ONE MILLION PEOPLE in Britain right now!

FIGHT BACK!

It's no good being afraid of them - they may have lots of police to try and put us down, newspapers to try and brainwash us, and prisons to lock us up in...

BUT WE HAVE THE POWER OF MILLIONS OF US TOGETHER! Our strength is in our numbers - and we must organise. Everywhere that the bosses and the state attack us, we must fight back.

The Social Security treat us like dirt and keep us poor. We have our CLAIMANTS' UNIONS.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7.



KIDS ARE



HACKNEY SCHOOL KIDS KICKED OUT

We'd had enough - kids around the house the whole day, fed up with endless housework and nowhere else to go - so we took action - women and children from Grosvenor Avenue marched on the Council last summer and demanded a house and money - we got both, and started work straight away on repairing and painting the house, learing out the garden.

By January it was ready and we had an opening party - everybody who wanted to use the house came - children, parents, claimants, old people, people who'd come to work on electricity and plumbing.

We decided to run the house through weekly open meetings so that everyone who used the house, particularly the kids, should have a say in what happened.

It's been difficult - kids smashing the house up because they didn't have anything else to do, mothers complaining about the mess, neighbours complaining about the noise - but

Its Getting Better All The Time

We've each got our own room now, one for mothers and babies, one for the Claimants' Union, one for the older boys, one for the older girls

We've had quite a few dances, organised holidays for the kids, built ladders, treehouses and a hut in the back garden - we've had a good time.

Time and time again we've had officials coming round - Education Officer, Health Officer, Housing Officer, coming round and threatening to close it down - so last week we took things into our own hands - went to a Council meeting and demanded more money and a team of workmen to come and do all the necessary repairs - we got a grant for this year of £2,700 and a team of workmen are going to spend two weeks doing the house up.

Now there are plans to use the house as a Free School - a place where the kids can learn what they want to, how they want to - no exams, no "teachers".

The women and babies are going to get another house - they need more peace and quiet. WE KNOW WHAT WE WANT - AND WE'RE GETTING IT - BY ACTING TOGETHER.

The Mildmay Action House is at 26, Mildmay Park, NI - why not come round? Meetings: every Thursday evening.

Trouble has been brewing between Hackney parents and the Inner London Education Authority for a while. It was brought to a head at a public meeting in the Central Hall, Hackney on March 23rd.

At least two schools are to be closed in Hackney within the next few years - Oswald Street (E5) and Edith Cavell.

Angry Parents at

Public Meeting

The representative from ILEA had to face very angry parents and teachers at this meeting. One of the main reasons for anger was ILEA's "consultation" with parents. The parents had earlier been asked by ILEA for their views on the proposed closures. As might have been expected, their views were ignored.

ILEA had at first even refused to be present at this public meeting until it became obvious that the parents and teachers intended to have a meeting with or without their presence.

The ILEA representative explained that the population of Hackney was expected to fall within the next few years. This, combined with the fact that the comprehensive reorganisation of the Borough had to be done within the present schools, meant that some schools would have close. The students from Edith Cavell going to Shoreditch and John Howard combining with Clapton Park.

Neither parents nor teachers were happy. It is clear that both groups are unsatisfied by their role merely as fund raisers for schools, by giving jumble sales and socials to get a few more amenities for their children's education.

ILEA's phoney consultation was not good enough. They now demand that their views on the schools' closures are not ignored.

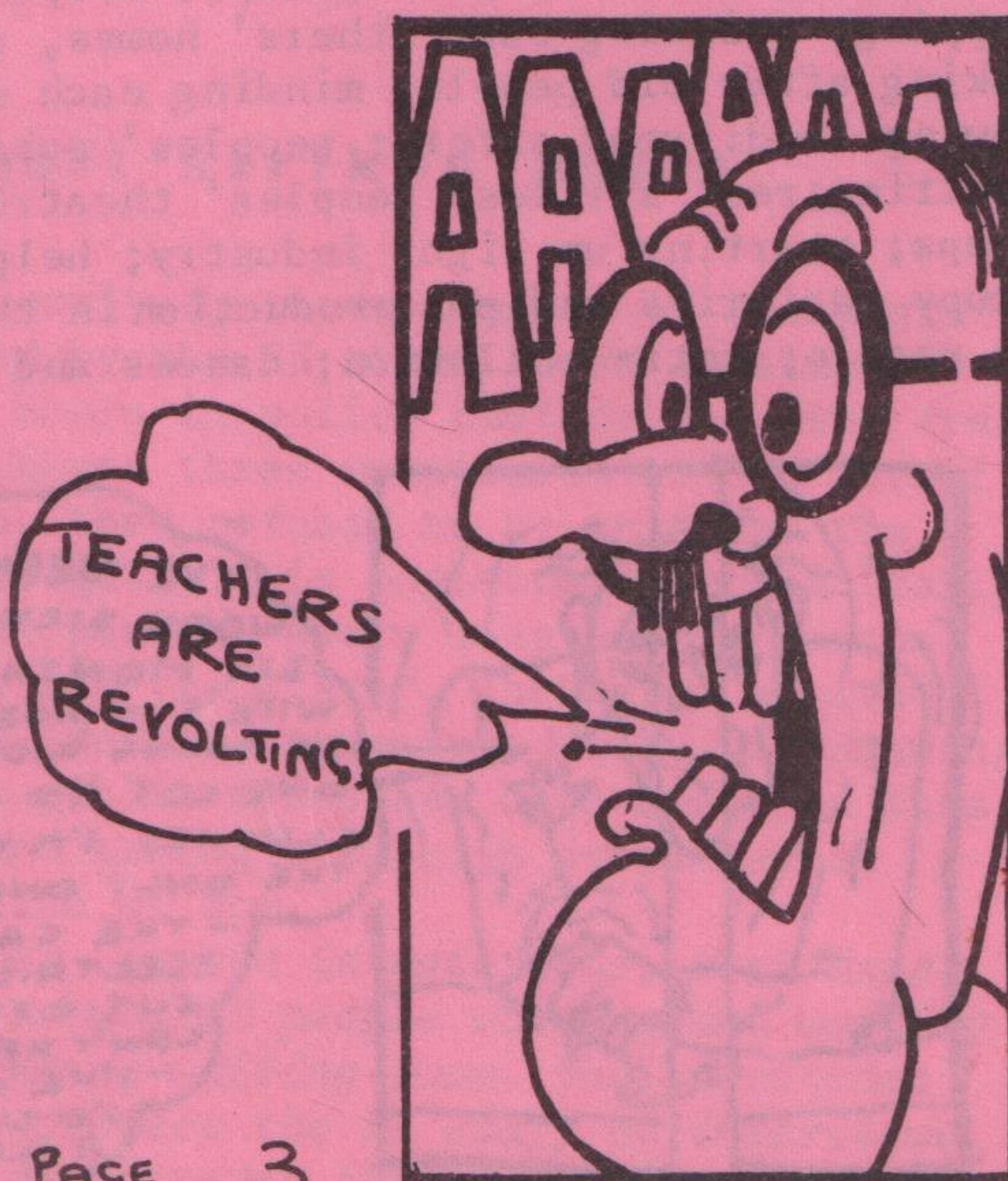
They do not want their children having to bus over Hackney to schools large distances away.

They do not want their children crushed again into small classrooms of large classes.

They see this as a unique opportunity to maximise the potential of the existing schools.

They want full advantage of this opportunity to give their children more space in schools, and for them to have more of the teachers' attention.

Any other parents, teachers or schoolkids wanting to join in the struggle against ILEA's plan for Hackney, come to discuss this further at the meeting at Centerprise (34, Dalston Lane) on April 20th at 7.30pm.



HACKNEY *news from* CLAIMANTS' UNION



4

The idea that most claimants have of us, even if they are sympathetic, is that we go down to the Social Security office in a group and kick up a fuss if the SS cause us trouble.

We've been relying on handing out leaflets and telling people what they are entitled to, representing people in the SS office and at home in order to get them interested in the Hackney Claimants' Union.

But when we talk to other claimants we rarely, if ever, hint at the fantastic possibilities of Claimants' Unions, and neither do our leaflets. While the main purpose of a claimants' union is to get people to fight their claims together - and this is our only way of getting our rights - to limit ourselves to this seriously hampers our power and is self-defeating in the long run. Hackney Claimants' Union must extend this principle of people standing by each other and helping each other out, to the everyday activities of claimants (and hopefully anyone else).



AND WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR COMING TO THIS OFFICE?

Hackney Claimants' Union is at present possibly one of the groups in the best position to improve the quality of peoples' lives in Hackney, since it brings together a very wide range of people - more so if it combines with other groups (Tenants' Associations, Consumers' Association, Squatters, Womens' Liberation, etc....)

For example:-

Food co-operatives; setting up stalls for old clothes, etc. in the market; peoples' transport - free bus/van service (or almost free - make the SS pay for the running costs!); play groups; helping each other shopping; painting each others' homes, gardening, looking after old people; minding each others' kids; growing food; road safety; peoples' pubs and cafes; squatting; rent strikes; peoples' theatre and art groups; starting up light industry; helping workers occupy factories and put production in the hands of the people; anti-pollution; dances and carnivals.



I'VE BEEN OFF WORK SICK FOR SIX MONTHS - MY WIFE'S IN HOSPITAL - MY SIX YOUNG KIDS HAVE ONLY ONE COT TO SLEEP IN - THE CLOTHES I'M WEARING ARE THE ONLY ONES I'VE GOT - THE GAS AND THE ELECTRIC HAVE BEEN CUT OFF BECAUSE WE CAN'T AFFORD THE BILLS - I'VE NO INCOME - I'D LIKE TO MAKE A CLAIM FOR....



ANY MORE RUDENESS FROM YOU AND I'LL HAVE TO TERMINATE THE INTERVIEW!

In other words getting people to help each other, know each other and do things together in their daily lives. People will only be too willing to overcome their crippling isolation, their boredom, their frustration.

You've only got to walk down the streets of Hackney to see for yourself the poverty of our everyday life - the sad, harassed expressions on the faces of the people. Every nervous glance, every agitated gesture, every wrinkle in the skin tells a lifetime of needless hardship, toil, humiliation, loneliness - the story of tranquillisers, traffic fumes and walking sticks. Look in the mirror and you'll see what I mean.

It's up to us, claimant and employed alike, to take control and improve our own lives in Hackney, to make Hackney worth living in. We're the best people to do that - forget our MP, our councillors, and don't leave everything to the social workers. But if we don't do it soon, we'll never be able to do it.

We need as many people as possible to support the Hackney Claimants' Union in the fight to improve the lives of claimants and eventually of everyone.

we want ten quid

UNEMPLOYMENT, PRICES, RENTS, HOUSE PRICES ALL GO UP. SO DO PROFITS!!! (15-5%)

Over 150 claimants from more than forty different claimants' unions met during the second weekend in April at the Albany House, Deptford for the three monthly national conference.

The most significant decision taken by the conference was that initiating a national campaign for a guaranteed income for all, regardless of age, sex or status, with rents, gas and electricity being provided free. Suggestions for tactics and strategies to be used during the campaign included occupation of Social Security offices, dumping of kids, and the jamming of switchboards.

There was a lot of discussion about the increasing police harassment that most Claimants' Unions are now beginning to experience. Consequently, the conference ended with a march to Scotland Yard, where a petition was handed in, demanding the end of police visits to SS offices.

STINKY FURNITURE RETURNED TO BONHILL STREET; FOUR ARRESTED

PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION BROKEN

UP BY POLICE

On Monday, March 6th local Claimants' Unions marched from the Hackney Gazette, where they protested at the paper's violent disregard of claimants' grievances, to the Shoreditch Social Security office in Bonhill Street.

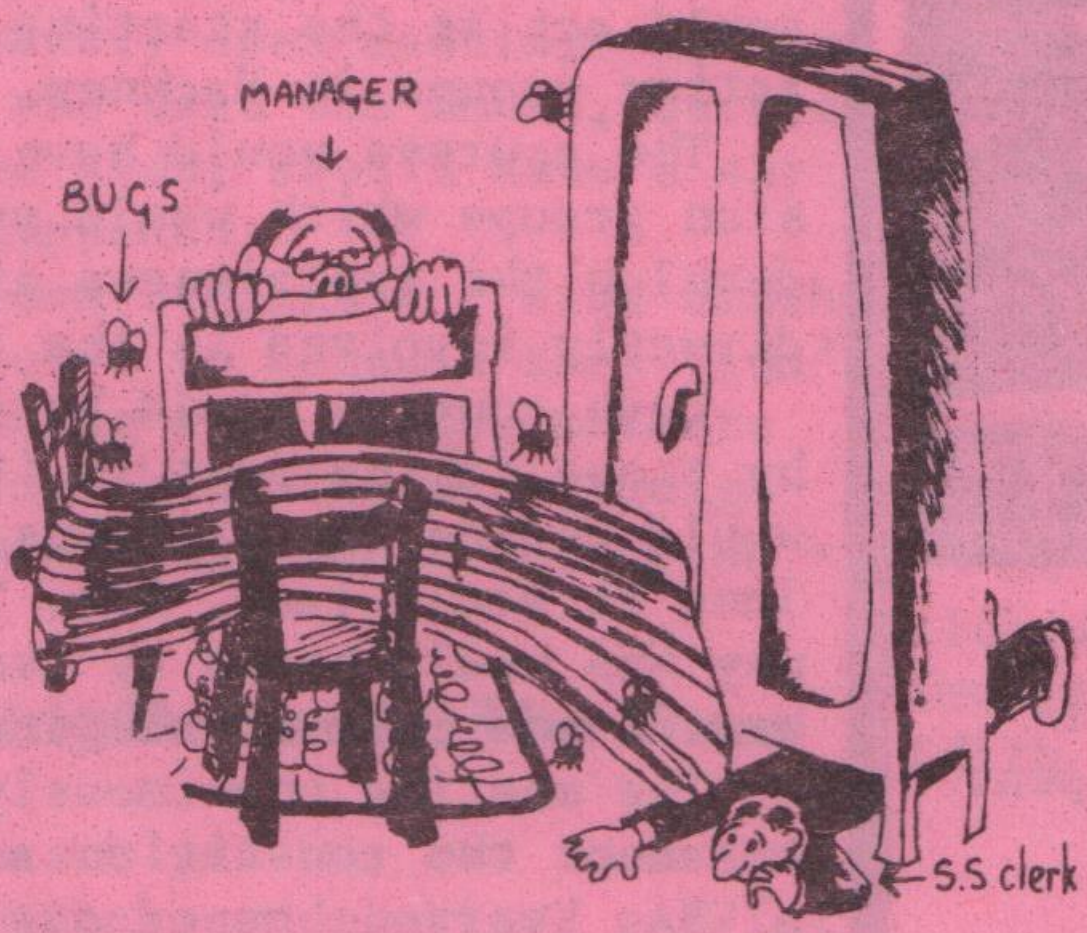
Bonhill Street, has over the past few months, become more and more hostile and abusive towards claimants making legitimate claims. Like Lower Clapton at the other end of the borough, they have erected barricades to protect SS staff from the justified anger of furious claimants. There were about 40 Claimants' Union members at the SS office and with us we returned the stinky, mouldy WRVS furniture they tried to dump on one claimant. Claimants Unions don't accept second hand goods

We arrived peacefully and waited our turn to be called for interviews. As it became apparent that we would not leave without the clerks taking down our claims, police arrived. Within an hour there were about 40 police from three divisions. It only needed a wave of Mr. Hanson's fist (he's the manager) for the police to forcibly and brutally eject most of the claimants. When one claimant attempted to make a citizen's arrest of the manager for behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace, she was viciously assaulted by two large N division policemen. Children were thrown on to the streets, while their mothers kept inside.

Three women, two of them having children, and a man were arrested and eventually charged with threatening behaviour or obstruction.



THREE ARRESTED LOWER CLAPTON SS PROVOKE RIOT;



As one woman was arrested, she had an epileptic fit and the police refused help from friends who knew best how to assist her recovery. Instead, they aggravated her condition by gross neglect and brutality. THE SS WON'T GIVE CLAIMANTS WHAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO. WHEN THEY PROTEST IN A PEACEFUL MANNER, THE SS CALL OUT THEIR HENCHMEN, THE POLICE, TO SET ABOUT US. CLAIMANTS' UNION DEMAND A DECENT LIVING INCOME AS OF RIGHT, WORKING OR NOT.

On Thursday, February 17th, about 10 Claimants' Union members joined 60-80 other claimants at the Lower Clapton Social Security office. The anger was high. Most had been waiting hours by half past two when the Union first arrived. When people started making their claims TOGETHER, backing each other up, the Social Security staff walked off.

Some of the claimants had been there the previous days with no luck. Others had been promised giros that had never come. And were told yet again: "It'll be in the post." Shortly after the office was closed one clerk punched a claimant who was taking pictures, and smashed his camera. This was too much for those who were waiting. Claimants poured into the interview rooms and after the SS clerks had locked themselves in the back office, proceeded to smash up the interview rooms. Two cubicles were destroyed and there was a lot of other damage. The door between the waiting area and the room where the staff had run to was locked. But this was smashed open by claimants who then crowded into their room. The staff couldn't escape. They stood there frozen with terror. The terror that they are so used to inflicting upon claimants. They were forced to listen to the claimants demands.

McElligott strikes again

When the police arrived, three members of Claimants' Unions were selected by the SS staff to be arrested. They each spent 19 hours in police custody and were freed on £350 bail. When these three reappeared at Old Street Court on March 17th, they refused to be tried by the evil, infamous McElligott. This magistrate automatically convicts every black person, every long haired person and all "scroungers off the state". The three elected to be tried by jury. McElligott responded by withdrawing legal aid - "enough public money has been spent on this affair already" - and making them sign every day at Hackney Police Station at 6pm.

The state of Lower Clapton is notorious. Most days there are fifty to a hundred people waiting and waiting in their dingy, stinking waiting room. The barricades have been put up to protect the SS staff at interviews. They close the office whenever they feel like a break.And the money is getting less.



Last Train to Dalston Junction

When they built the tubes, Hackney was about the only London borough they forgot. There is not a single underground station within the borough.

While London Transport promises that a tube may come within the next thirty years or so, half of Hackney Wick is knocked down to build new roads, solving Hackney's transport problems by putting a few thousand more cars on the roads.

More Cars Fewer Buses

The bus system in Hackney raises interesting questions about the role of public transport, such as:

Does the 236 really exist?

Why do 253's never travel in convoys of less than three?

When the Angel is demolished, will the 38 be able to get through in less than half an hour?

What are those twenty five 73's doing on Stoke Newington Common when there's hoardes of people waiting for them down the road?

People would stop asking such fundamental questions, you might say, if they began to use good old efficient British Rail.

North London Line

The *North London Line* runs right across London from Broad Street to Richmond, passing through Hackney at *Dalston Junction*. Compared with the buses, it is efficient. From *Dalston Junction* to Highbury and Islington, where there is a connection with the fast moving Victoria Line, takes less than five minutes. From *Dalston Junction* to Camden takes about eight minutes. The only alternative way to Camden, for example, is the 253 bus route. This takes up to three quarters of an hour depending on the state of the traffic, and whether the driver's finished his tea at Finsbury Park.

So what is the Government going to do with the *North London Line* to improve Hackney's public transport? Increase the service? Make it free? Open new stations?

No. They're going to close it down. If they can get away with it.

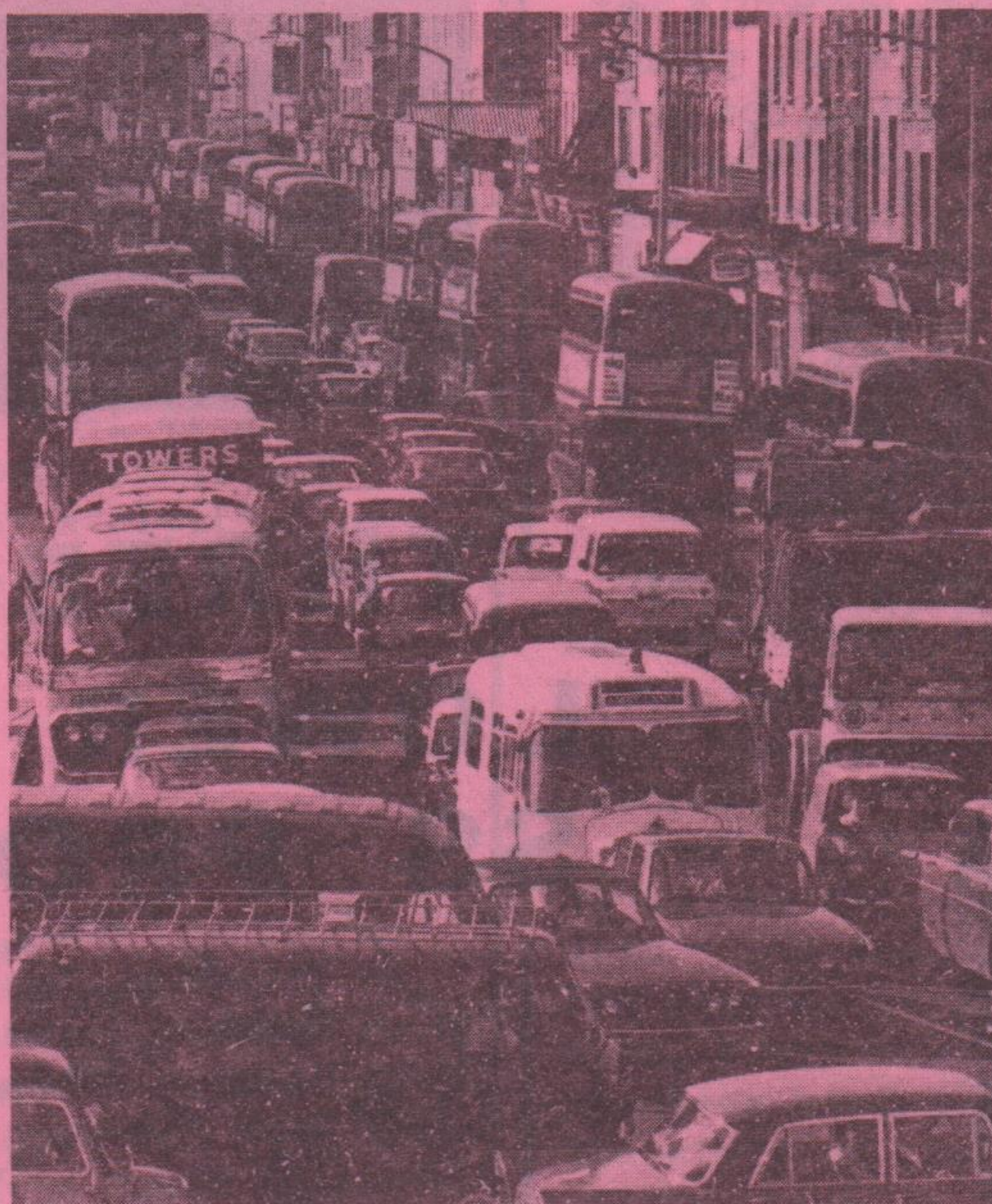
British Railways says the *North London Line* loses £300,000 a year and the Government plans to stop the grant which keeps it open. The so-called Ministry of Environment refuses

to give the money, while at the same time building motorways parallel to the line along most of its length.

Cars Kill People

The motorways don't benefit the people whose houses are destroyed to build them, nor the people left in the desert created who have to suffer the noise and fumes.

The only people they benefit are the fuckers who make the profits on the new cars which are built to decorate the motorways. Those fuckers are the same invisible fuckers who are closing down the *North London Line*. "Because its not making a profit." Don't let them get away with it.



If you miss this one...

There are some groups who might be of 'use' in keeping the line open: The London Transport Passenger's Committee, Middlesex Guildhall, Parliament Square S.W.1. and the Transport Users' Consultant Committee 3/4 Gt, Marlborough St, S.W.1. are both appointed by the government (the one trying to close the line) so they are not likely to do much, but a bit of hassling might stir them up.

Other groups of use may be "Pedestrian Power", C/O Rosemary Chester, 69, Blackfriars Road, S.E.1. and the North London Line Committee, sec. Mrs. Sherbourne, Tel No. 485-4823. Better still start a group in Hackney to keep the line open.

WORKERS EDUCATION

A public meeting of about thirty people set up a Workers' Education Association for Hackney at the Hackney Town Hall on Monday evening, April 11th.

At this meeting there was a representative from the WEA central organization, Rose Terry. She told us about the history of the WEA since it was started up in 1903, what it does and how it does it. From what she was saying it seems that she was thinking of classrooms where qualified academics taught pupils who were more or less learning a subject for the sake of it.

The general feeling of the meeting was that we needed to break away from this traditional idea of a course. People were thinking more on the lines of projects, teach-ins and courses. dealing with local issues and topics which would directly affect the lives of the people living in Hackney, such as housing (the effect of the Housing Finance Bill; tenants' democracy), the Welfare State, industrial relations, squatting, mental illness. Several people thought these courses could act as the starting point for action groups in Hackney.

The courses would have discussion groups which would use and develop the experiences of people directly involved in the issues.

Each course would be governed by those taking part in it. They would decide the syllabus, how long it would last, etc. The Hackney WEA would berun by two-monthly branch meetings of all its members.

The meeting unanimously agreed to adopt the constitution and form a WEA. Everyone hoped our ideas would have an effect on other WEAs all over the country, and eventually be accepted fully by the central organization.

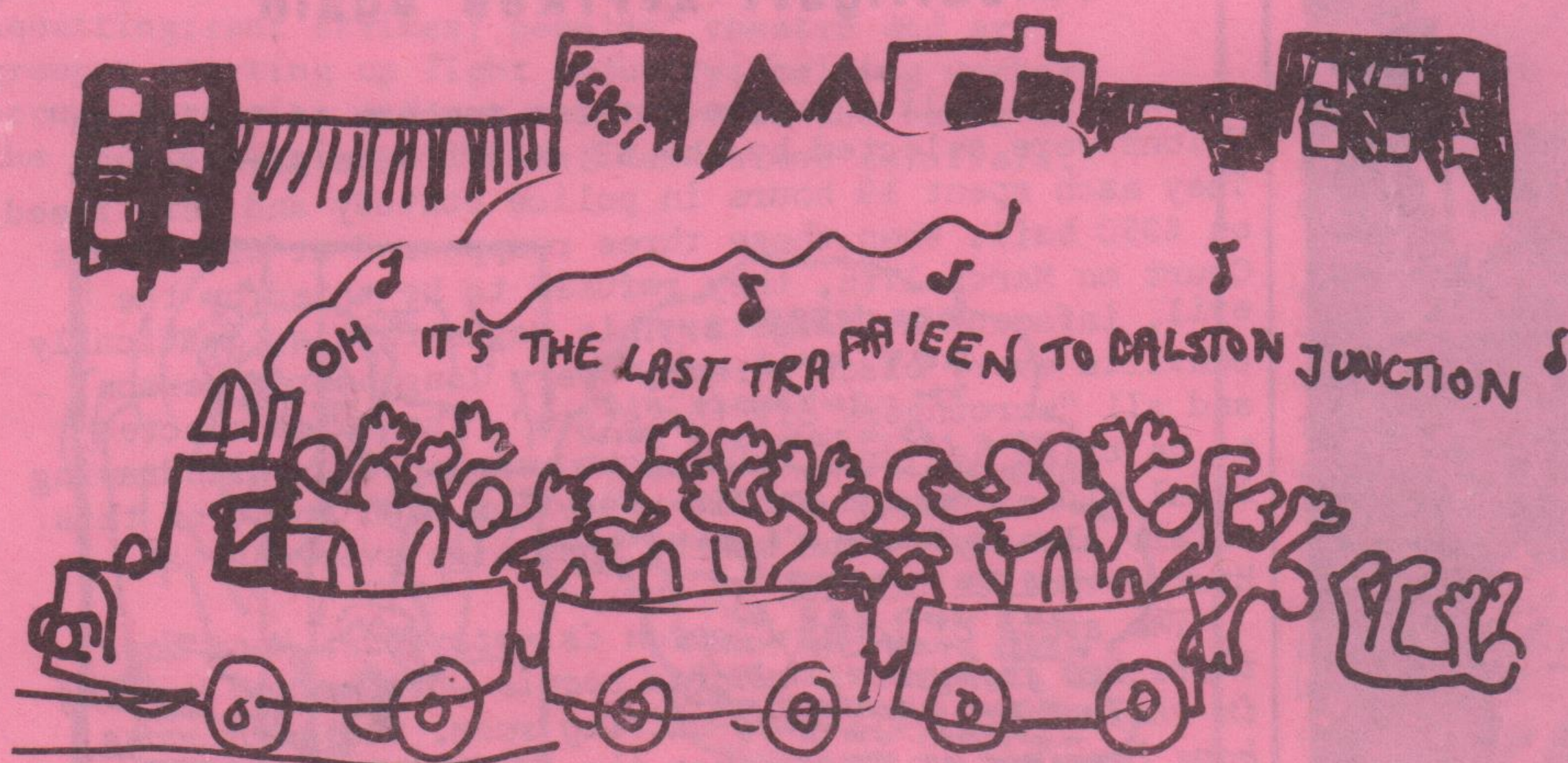
The annual general meeting of the Hackney Workers Educations Association has to be held by the end of May. So it will be at 8pm on Monday, May 15th at Hackney Town Hall, and open to anyone interested.

CENTERPRISE

Centerprise is at 34, Dalston Lane, E8. It is not only a bookshop with a coffee bar, but a place which the community groups of Hackney are using more and more. It has various facilities which it makes available to these groups, such as a meeting room, office space, duplicating and typewriting facilities.

The future and use of Centerprise is now discussed at general meetings of all those who use it, from bookbuyer to typist.

The next meeting is on Monday, April 24th at Centerprise.



IN THE COURTS: DEFEND YOURSELF

WITH McKENZIE ADVISORS

Three people, members of Highbury and Hackney Claimants' Unions, have recently been acquitted of charges of Criminal Damage, at the Crown Court. They had been convicted at North London Court, Stoke Newington and only got off after a lengthy hearing at appeal. Through the case they defended themselves, with the assistance of McKenzie advisors. A McKenzie advisor can be any friend, and this person is allowed to sit in the dock next to you not to speak, but to assist, make notes and give suggestions.

Criminal Damage to Government Buildings

The charges arose out of slogans painted on the walls of Social Security offices and Hackney Labour Exchange saying: "FIGHT BACK WITH THE CLAIMANTS' UNION".

The police case against Jenny, Julie and Chris: conversations that the police claim that Chris had with them (verbals) like

Why did you paint those slogans?

Don't they speak for themselves?

Did anyone help you paint them?

I can't remember

and the fact that they were stopped in a van containing seven cans of spray paint on the night the slogans were painted.

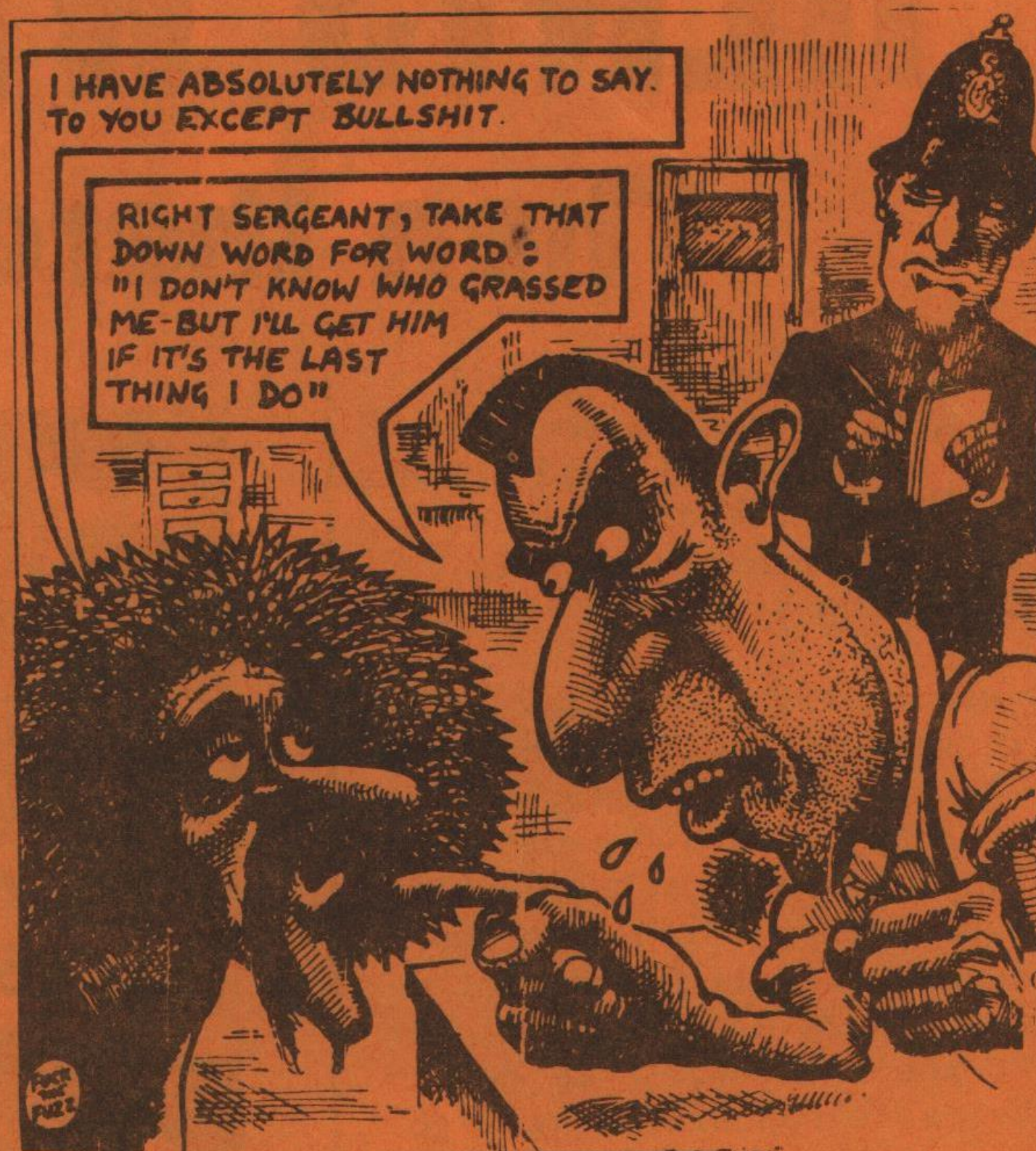
They lost the case in North London Court - the magistrates knew nothing about the law. For example, at an early hearing the magistrate told them to go away and get a lawyer when they had told him they didn't want one, but wanted their McKenzie advisors instead. The next lot dosed through the case, not listening to a word, stirring only at the end when the defendants demanded a minutes' silence to respect the 13 murdered in Derry. In mitigation, the defendants told the magistrates what a load of deathlike, corrupt, prejudiced bastards they were, representing a law designed only to keep people from taking back what is their own. Fined £30 each.

Appeal Court...

Magistrates in the Hackney area always convict on the basis of what the police say, irrespective of the defence. They never have to give reasons for their decisions. They can get away with murder. And they are. The three appealed. Although they weren't enthusiastic, they knew that at least the Crown Court judge has to explain himself.

At the appeal court in Elephant and Castle, there were black robed clerks scurrying around begging everyone to be quiet and looking fearfully at the judge who towered ten feet above in his wooden box looking as if he was about to have a seizure from overeating, irritation and bursting blood pressure.

and beat them at their own game



He started out by trying to persuade July and Jenny to lay it all on Chris. No go. And from then on, took it out on them by telling them that they were behaving like stupid little school girls every time they challenged the police witnesses or court procedure. They hammered away at it for two days saying the police must be lying because they'd proved conclusively they couldn't have done it. They had witnesses to say they were elsewhere. They picked holes in the scientific evidence. On the last day they discovered that the paint was supposed to dry in 7 minutes, whereas the police had said they'd found the slogans still wet when they inspected them an hour after they'd taken the three to the station.

...Judge Acquits

The judge took half an hour to sum up, droning on about, "Here's a group of people obviously obsessed with their rights.....cheeky behaviour in court" and then "because of the aggressive and truculent attitude they've shown in court I must say I entertain some doubt as to whether they were likely to have made the remarks they're alleged to have made.....I find the case against them quashed."

JENNY, JULIE AND CHRIS PLAYED THEIR GAME, AND BEAT THEM AT IT. THEY FORCED THE JUDGE INTO ADMITTING THAT THE POLICE WERE LYING.

The Stoke Newington Eight:

continued from page 2

The Government is trying to raise our rents.

But we have the TENANTS' MOVEMENT!

They keep some of us without homes. But we SQUAT in their empty houses. All day at school, kids are abused and beaten by teachers "acting under orders".

But the SCHOOLS MOVEMENT grows. More and more women are asking "why should we be sex machines? Baby machines? Housework machines?"

And the WOMENS' LIBERATION movement grows!

Black people, the Irish too won't stand for anymore shit.

Their LIBERATION MOVEMENTS grow.

Yes,

We are all ANGRY!

All of us risk getting in trouble with the law, because LAW is for GOVERNMENT, not for THE PEOPLE.

WE ARE THE PEOPLE!

SUPPORT THE STOKE NEWINGTON 8!

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

*For further details and any donations,
Stoke Newington 8 Defence Group,
240, Camden High Street, NW1.
Telephone: 485.8944*

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HACKNEY CLAIMANTS' UNION

meets Wednesdays 12.30 pm at Centerprise, 34, Dalston Lane, E8. The office is open at the same address from two till five on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 254.9787

EAST LONDON CLAIMANTS' UNION

Dame Colet House, Ben Johnson Road E1. 790.3867.

SPITALFIELDS AND WHITECHAPEL CU
48, Hanbury Street, E1. 247.2689

PLAY GROUPS

26, Mildmay Park. Every day.
8, St. Jude's St, N1

123, Holly Street. Wednesdays and Saturdays.

RENTS WILL DOUBLE !

Then there'll be trouble

The new Housing Finance Bill will soon be law. It will mean rent increases for every council and private tenant: according to official estimates, average council rents in London will go up from £3.50 to £7.47 by 1976.

The only way to fight this new law and the increases it will mean is to organise local tenants' associations. In Hackney, many of the tenants' associations have been set up by the local Labour Party, which also controls Hackney Council. Although the Labour councillors have pledged opposition to the new law, it is doubtful whether such opposition will go further than lobbies and petitions. Hackney needs strong tenants' associations run by the tenants themselves, and the only tactic that will work is a RENT STRIKE. A rent strike couldn't be organised by the Labour Party, because it would mean loss of money for the Council, which they run.

RENT STRIKE !

Normally during a rent strike, the tenants association elects a committee to run the show. The committee promptly banks the rent money and repays it to the Council after the battle. If defeated, the tenants have little to show for their struggle....but what if the money withheld was put into a common fund and spent on something useful instead? Even the threat of such action would terrify most councils.



Think of all the repairs that haven't been carried out and the waste areas, that with a bit of money could be converted into playgrounds for the kids.

WHY NOT WITHHOLD THE RENT MONEY IN PROTEST AT THE INCREASES AND SPEND IT ON SOME PROJECT CHOSEN AND MANAGED BY THE COMMUNITY.

Get together a local tenants or street association, perhaps get the support of local trade union branches and take over your housing estate. Just as the workers at Plessey, Bendix, Allis Chalmers, UCS and many other places have realised in industry, the only way for the working class to win is for people to take control of the places they work in... why not also the places they live in?

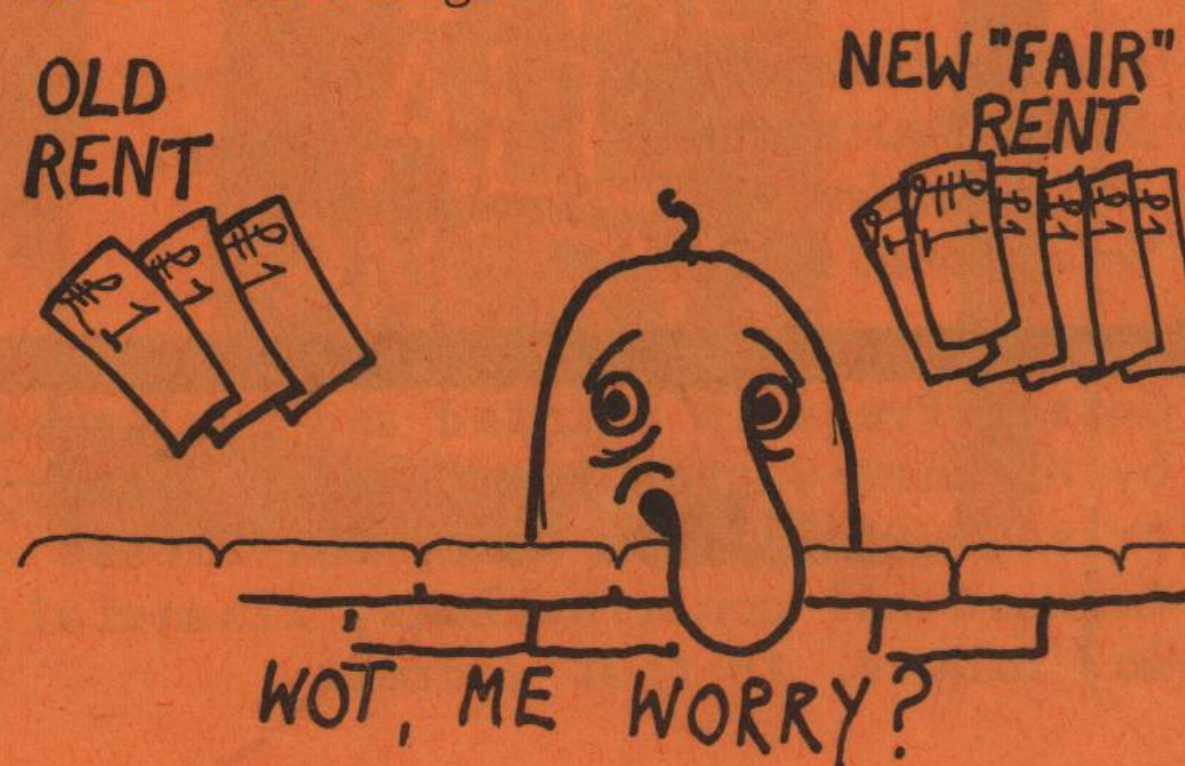


The last big protest against rent increases was seen in London in 1968 when over 10,000 GLC tenants marched to Trafalgar Sq.



TENANTS CONTROL?

Tenants could run their estates with democratic organisations of general meetings to decide on policies. The secrecy of council policies and the officials who are never available could be done away with. Decisions on rents, repairs, maintenance could be controlled directly by tenants. Instead of waiting months for a contractor, or the Council to do the repairs, why couldn't unemployed building workers be given jobs by the community? Money could be put aside to build essential amenities, everything from bus shelters to youth clubs, rooms for nurseries etc. Vandalism could be ended by giving young people facilities and a responsible share in the running of the estate. Even the problem of building new houses for the homeless could be tackled in this way. Empty houses could be rebuilt. Different estates could get together to finance new house building.



Unless we are prepared to take a stand, rents will double in the next four years. We cannot leave the power and the decisions in the hands of the politicians and financiers. The decisions should be taken by the tenants.

Join your local tenants' association and change it. Don't let the Hackney Labour councillors, who we pay rents to, run it. Where there isn't one, start one.



STOP PRESS

Islington Council have already decided to implement the "Fair Rents" Bill...after all their fine words about fighting against it. We can see from this which side the Labour Party's on - not ours! Don't trust them in Hackney either.