

Workers' fight

3p

No. 58 — June 8th to June 15th 1974

LET THEM GO HOME NOW!

MILLIONS of people were stunned when, last Saturday, Roy Jenkins baldly stated that, though "it must now be clearly envisaged" that the hunger strikers held in British prisons would die, he had no intention of transferring them to prisons in the north of Ireland.

Two days later, MICHAEL GAUGHAN died. He was 24 years old, and had been on hunger strike since March 31st in support of the original four hunger strikers.

A few days before his death, from pneumonia, he had been forcibly fed. There is a strong probability that this was the direct cause of death, leaving liquid in his lungs. His family have called for a public inquiry into his death.

Even as Jenkins' first victim was being handed over to his parents for burial, and while Gaughan's fellow prisoner at Parkhurst, FRANK STAGG, lay waiting for death, Jenkins showed more concern with keeping face than with these murders on his hands. Labour politicians attempting to save the hunger strikers' lives were to-ing and fro-ing between the Price sisters in Brixton Prison and the Home Office.

And Jenkins was hagglng his terms with

them — bargaining over the lives of Marion and Dolours Price, Frank Stagg, Hugh Feeney and Gerry Kelly.

This grisly process must be stopped at once. Jenkins himself said in his statement that the transfer of the prisoners to Northern Ireland, which they are demanding, is "possible and reasonable". This does away with all the 'arguments' of the Home Office against the prisoners' transfer. His delays and refusals, which have already claimed the

young life of Michael Gaughan, are an act of wanton and calculated murder.

Jenkins can and must be made to back down. The British labour movement must tell him that it will not tolerate having these murders on its hands.

The conference of delegates from Labour Parties and trade union organisations called for June 8th by Clay Cross Labour Party presents an opportunity for a substantial section of the labour movement to tell

Jenkins what it thinks of these murders.

But any and every local branch, ward, committee or trades council can also act by sending immediate telegrams direct to Jenkins at the Home Office.

And this coming Sunday, we must demonstrate in our thousands:

**Protest the murder of Michael Gaughan!
SAVE THE OTHER HUNGER STRIKERS NOW!**

(Maxine Landis writes on the Hunger strikers: inside page)

Below: Michael Gaughan (left), murdered; and Frank Stagg, dying



RALLY: Speakers Corner 2.30pm Sunday June 9th

TWO PICKETS OUT ON BAIL

AFTER nearly six months in jail, Des Warren and Eric Tomlinson were this week finally released on bail, pending their appeal in October.

The four other men jailed in the Shrewsbury pickets trial are still in jail.

Eric Tomlinson said "It was murder inside. We've been battered." The food had been "wholesome and varied ... for rats." Des Warren had been put in a filthy cell which hadn't been cleaned for a year. When he refused to clean it up himself he was fined, lost

remission and was put in the punishment block — "to make me submit".

No doubt Arthur Murray, Mike Pierce Tom Williams, and John McKinsie Jones will have similar tales to tell of their months inside — their punishment for acting as

militant trade unionists.

Warren said the Executives of the T&GWU and UCATT should "start earning their corn" and organise to get all the Shrewsbury convictions completely quashed and the laws of conspiracy abolished. This, however, is something

they have singularly failed to do in the 16 months since the charges were brought, or even in the six months since their members were jailed and fined.

Until this is done, Warren and Tomlinson have a further 2½ years and 1½ years jail respectively hanging over

JUNE 8th. MAKE IT A REAL CONFERENCE OF LABOUR

THERE are two sorts of conferences in the working class movement.

One has as its purpose to stop the rank and file doing anything for themselves. Resounding speeches are made from the platform, fine resolutions are passed, excellent intentions are expressed... and everyone goes home. No detailed working-out of policy, no practical plans for action; the ordinary rank-and-file delegate is just a spectator.

The other has the opposite purpose: for the rank and file to organise themselves to decide policy and get things done.

We have plenty of the first sort already. The conference called by Clay Cross Labour Party this Saturday must be one of the second sort.

Delegates from a number of Labour Party Young Socialists branches and trade union branches will be pressing for the conference to set up a Socialist Alliance to fight within the Labour Party and the Trade Unions — for a start, to fight for the policies decided by the conference, and for further policies as decided by further conferences.

CLAY CROSS

The need for a fighting rank and file movement is clear if we look at the history of the Labour Party.

Labour Party conferences have always been the first sort of conference. At the last conference Michael Foot vigorously defended the principle that the Parliamentary Labour Party is not answerable to the Party conference. That principle has been used again and again to evade left-wing Conference decisions.

The last Labour Party conference decided clearly to support the Clay Cross councillors, particularly against any fines imposed on them. But now we have a Labour government threatening the ex-councillors with £7,000 fines.

Successive conferences after 1966 resolved that Labour should break with US policy in Vietnam. The 1964/70 Labour Government continued to give support — even material aid — to the US war.

As early as 1908 the Labour Party conference passed a resolution stating that "the time has arrived when the Labour Party should have as a definite object the

socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic State in the interest of the entire community; and the complete emancipation of labour from the domination of capitalism and landlordism, with the establishment of social and economic equality of the sexes".

In 1918, Clause 4, restating the aim of common ownership of the means of production, was adopted, and in the 1950s the left fought hard to defend that Clause.

No Labour government has ever made the least effort to put these resolutions into practice.

Even during the first Labour government of 1924, the process of Labour leaders saying one thing in opposition and doing the opposite in office was well developed. In 1923 the Labour Party moved an amendment to Conservative Government policy to give army recruits the right to refuse to strike-break. In 1924 George Lansbury moved the identical amendment and was defeated by the Labour Government. He commented: "I think one of the faults of the system under which affairs are managed in this House is that men, when they accept office, are expected immediately to change their attitude towards great public questions".

1945

What about 1945?

The 1945-51 Labour Government brought in a number of reforms — much, the same sort of reforms as were brought in at the same time by governments of various, often right-wing, political shades throughout western Europe. Its welfare reforms fell markedly short of the proposals of the Liberal Lord Beveridge. Virtually all its nationalisations had already been recommended by Conservative-dominated fact-finding and special investigating committees. The controlling bodies of the newly nationalised industries were stocked up with big businessmen, often the same men who had been running the industries under private ownership.

Troops were used against strikers more than once. The Labour Government took a leading role in setting up NATO, and waged a bloody colonial war in Malaya.

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SEE INSIDE PAGE

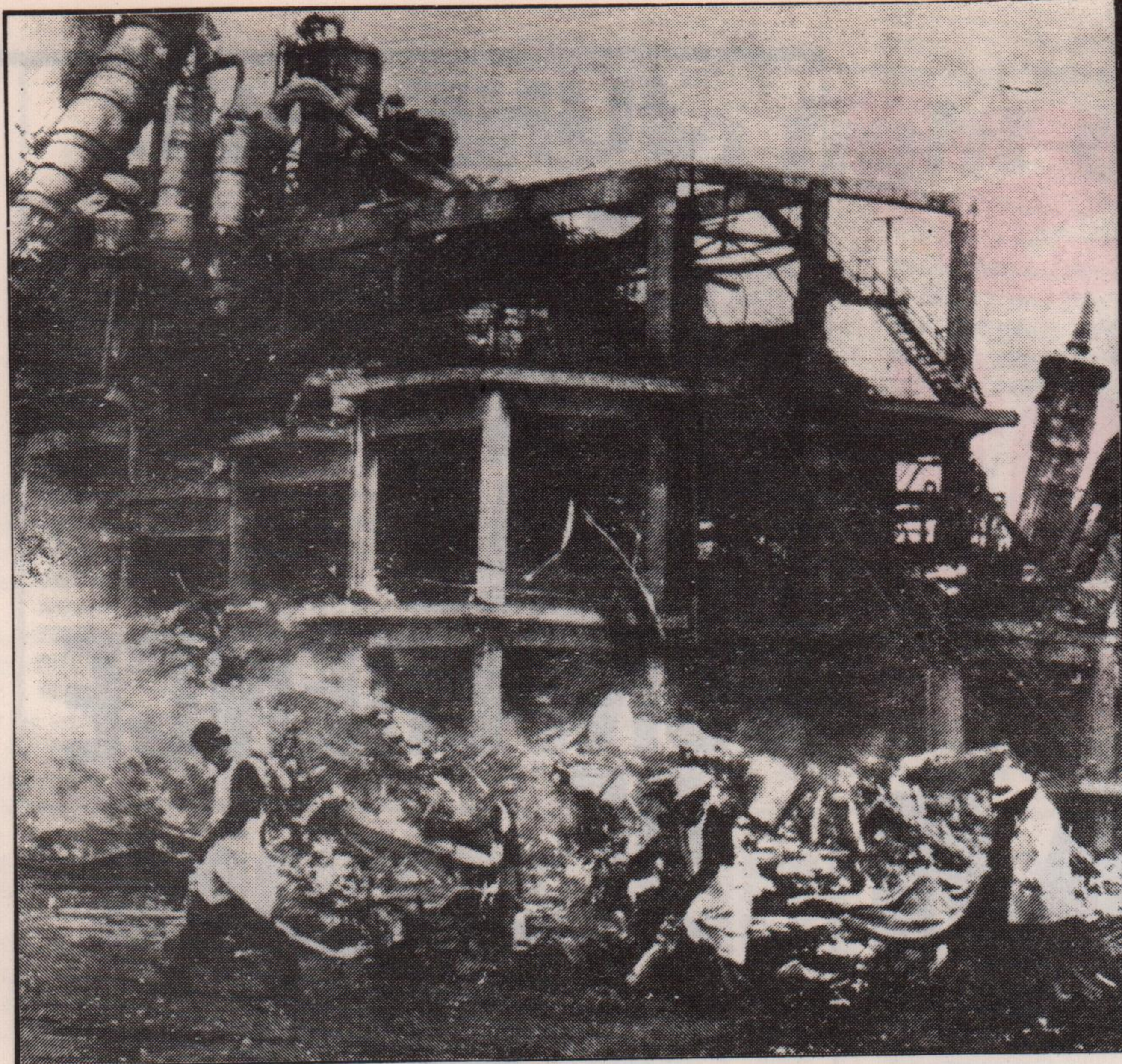
their heads. Not only this. The whole trade union movement in the country will have the weight of these trials hanging about its neck.

General Secretary of the G&MWU, David Basnett, has said the men's release was "a step towards taking the heat out of the situation". This is treacherous rubbish. We must act to put the heat back on,

and keep it on until all the convictions are quashed. In fact, we should demand compensations for the victims of this judicial frame-up.

The next two weeks must see major action. LOBBY the TUC between June 10th and June 14th. LOBBY UCATT on June 19th.

(Inside: Distortions in Shrewsbury Account.)



"It is the responsibility of those who introduce new processes to eliminate these great risks BEFORE THEY ARE IN OPERATION."

HIGH PROFITS, HIGH RISK

THE DEATHS of 29 workers in a poisonous, explosive inferno at Flixborough last Saturday was the last link in a continuous chain going back to the discovery of nylon fibre, and the 'capturing' of the patent for this process by ICI in Britain, thus cutting out Courtaulds from the profitable market for nylon fabrics and clothing.

The nylon fibre produced by ICI (and the American firm Du Pont), was called Nylon 66.

This was the end product of a long, complicated and expensive chemical process.

Such was the profit in Nylon that Courtaulds searched high and low for a way of getting some share of this lucrative market. The chemical answer to their commercial prayers came when a company, called Dutch State Mines (DSM) discovered a way of making a new nylon fibre that was also simpler than the Nylon 66 process. DSM had discovered that a product, caprolactam, when polymerised, formed a nylon fibre — 'nylon 6'. Because this process was so very different from Nylon 66, no patent law was broken.

Once this stage was reached the combination of chemicals which reacted to blow Flixborough apart was not far off the stage of being brought together. Because of the fierce competition, the pressure on the technicians and chemists from their employers to discover even simpler, cheaper ways of making nylon was very high.

One of the first chemical plants to produce caprolactam was a joint effort between DSM and Fisons, under the name of NYPRO (UK). Fisons, mainly concerned with selling fertilisers, was involved because a major by-product of the old process was another chemical usable as a fertiliser. However, this partnership broke up when DSM found that this particular way of making caprolactam was too expensive. In the course of finding a cheaper way, a number of dangerous changes in the process occurred.

Meanwhile, partner, one within the British national NCB had a private enterprise pits up and miners to the... The name... caprolactam... Cyclohexane chemical with dangerous... temperature... 180°C), and if suffocate people... several steps... cheaper to pro... CHEA

The Flixborough... the cyclohexane... However, the... an effort to m... the chemists... changes

One change... the 'chemical... and the capro... poisonous ga... pressurised ta... process wher... fraught with e... At the sa

from front page

Clay Cross conference

That was the response of the 1945-51 Labour government to the aspirations of millions who wanted socialist change.

In short, Labour governments have used their working class support as just so much voting fodder.

This isn't just due to corruption and dishonesty in individuals, though there is plenty of that, and only a more democratic structure will get rid of it. Nor is it a matter of the Labour Party being 'infiltrated' by middle-class politicians. In the first sizeable body of Labour MPs, the 30 elected in 1906, all 30 were of working-class origin, and only 3 could be said to have acquired middle-class positions. Yet only 20 claimed to be socialists in any sense, and only 2 acknowledged any Marxist influence in their political thinking.

The key problem is the political philosophy and method adopted by the Labour Party since its foundation. The first manifesto of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 summed it up.

"Ever since the Trade Union movement has been a power in the country, leading Trade Unionists have foreseen the time when the wage-earner would have to be organised to support Trade Union principles and ideals by political methods" — therefore a Labour group should be formed in Parliament.

BARGAINING

The idea was to extend union bargaining — bargaining for better conditions within the capitalist system — to Parliament. The bargaining in Parliament would not, however, be backed up by industrial action, since that would be "undemocratic". It would rely, therefore, on the skill or the clumsiness, the firmness or the weakness, of Labour's emissaries in the House of Commons. The role of the ordinary working man or woman was just to cast a vote every few years.

The 1900 manifesto declared: "The great battles between capital and labour are to be fought out on the floor and in the division lobbies of the House of Commons". But that was an illusion. The power of Capital rests on mightier pillars than votes at Westminster. Industrialists and financiers, lobbying the Government, or threatening to sabotage its policies; civil servants, connected by a thousand ties to those industrialists and financiers; the domination by the wealthy class

of the control of the armed forces and the legal system — these are the forces acting behind the scenes.

Labour's vain efforts to influence the capitalist state by Parliamentary persuasion have therefore turned out in practice as a means for the capitalist state to influence Labour. In reality, the official apparatus of the Labour Party is far more a representative of that capitalist state than of the rank-and-file.

However, the official apparatus cannot smother the reality of class struggle. Time and time again in Labour's history, independent movements of the rank and file have grown up. The National Left Wing Movement in the 1920s; the ILP and the Socialist League in the '30s; the Bevanite left in the 1940s; 'Victory for Socialism' in the '50s.

REPLACE

In a more or less confused way, they have groped towards a political approach of the working class acting for itself; an approach which involves challenging the capitalist system as a whole, not just looking for a better bargain within that system — and which aims to replace the capitalist state by a workers' state, not just to influence it.

With the possible exception of the National Left Wing Movement (which was destroyed by the sectarian tactics of the Communist Party in its "third period" from 1929 to 1932), none of these movements reached a clear enough political understanding to be able to resist the inevitable assault from the official Labour Leadership. They crumbled under pressure.

For the last ten years there has been no left-wing movement in the Labour Party. Thousands of activists, disgusted (and with good reason) by Labour's record in 1964-70, have turned to concentrating their efforts on the industrial struggle.

ALTERNATIVE

But politics can't be ignored or bypassed. Militant industrial action in 1972-74 made the Tory government a laughing stock and finally brought it down... but there was nothing to replace Heath except Wilson. So Phase 3 is still in force, the pickets jailed at Shrewsbury are still shut up, the slow murder of the Republican hunger strikers continues, warships are still sold to Chile, the British army of occupation remains in Ireland, unions still face fines under the Industrial Relations Act, and the Government still threatens the Clay Cross councillors.

The need for an alternative political leadership in the labour movement is there, however disillusioned people are with politics. The various revolutionary socialist tendencies inside and outside the Labour Party are as yet too small to fill the need, quite apart from most of them also being very inadequate as regards policy.

This Clay Cross conference could take a giant step towards filling that need. It could be the start of a movement which at long last will take socialism in the British labour movement from a vague ideal to a practical fighting objective.

Or it could just be another one-off conference showing nothing but good intentions.

'FREE SPEECH': VIOLENCE IS NOT THE ISSUE

AFTER A hysterical and concerted campaign by the 'liberal' and right wing press and by 'moderates' in a number of colleges not normally noted for interest in NUS affairs, the National Union of Students Executive is to put an amendment to the resolution passed in April banning fascist and racist speakers from students unions. The amendment will be put at a special conference on June 15th, and it is a measure of the sense of triumph of the far right at this move that the National Front is laying on a big, provocative demonstration in London on the same day.

The amendment, which seeks to delete the call for racist and fascist meetings to be stopped "by any means necessary", should be firmly opposed. Not because the original resolution was perfect, but because the amendment is beside the point. It is a blind and unintelligent reaction to the outcry — which was on the general liberal 'free speech' lines — which does nothing to rectify the real faults in the original resolution. Certainly, if the liberals were right about free speech, it would be just as wrong to peacefully refuse them facilities as to break up their meetings. If they are wrong and there is a case for stopping such meetings, then they should certainly be stopped by any means necessary.

What was wrong with the original resolution was not the element of force which the Executive now seeks to delete from it, but the vague open-endedness, and the lack of any campaign of explanation and conscious preparation. The open-endedness has simply produced confusion: where should the line be drawn? Since the April resolution, while right wingers and liberals have campaigned to remove it, others have busied themselves with drawing up long blacklists including the Monday Club (right wing Tories, some of whom have been associated with the National Front) and even the anti-abortion SPUC and LIFE lobbies.

There is, in fact, a reason to decide to stop fascists and racists from speaking. For one thing, their 'speech' is not merely a cosy exchange of ideas to be refuted verbally. It is an attempt to build up organisations that threaten the labour movement and that bring violence, persecution and harassment against immigrants and black people.

It has been said that having to stop them speaking is a sign of weakness, of inability to argue with them. This is not necessarily so. The lies of racism and fascism can of course be answered, and they must be, with facts, arguments and reason. But still, based as these are on cliché and demagoguery, and using as a 'base' much of the established ideology (eg nationalism, reverence for established authority, the 'wrongness' of strikes etc) that is taught in the education system and the mass media, such lies have a tendency to spread like wildfire — especially when they also link up with fears, insecurity and feelings of inadequacy engendered by

capitalism.

"A lie", said Mark Twain, "Can get half way round the world while the truth is putting his boots on." Should we allow it to, just for the sake of 'fair play'?

Fascist politics are obscene and dangerous. They should not be allowed a hearing, or the respectability of entering into 'mainstream' politics. Students have every right to decide by a democratic majority that do not want their union premises defiled by such politics. Fascists are rightly regarded as political pariahs. (Was it not Harold Wilson's phrase, after the election of Tory Peter Griffiths who had used racist propaganda in his Smethwick campaign, that he should be treated as a "Parliamentary leper"?) To let them speak is an insult to those they seek to persecute and annihilate.

However, it is part of the problem that the actions and speeches of Enoch Powell have been in reality a hundred times more dangerous than the straight fascist propaganda, and indeed have enabled the fascists to get to a position where they can be invited to address students. Additionally, Tory and Labour Home Secretaries, who have framed racist immigration Acts, and the cabinets responsible for them, have arguably done more damage still.

Then there are the academic quacks and apologists, whose theories serve and back up the hard-core racists.

In a society in which racism is as widespread and endemic as the one we live in, it is impossible to silence all the voices of racism. If the left were strong enough to do so, then by definition it would probably have little need to. And there really is a danger that such picketing and blockading actions (a necessary part of our political activity where simple refusal of facilities falls short) would come to substitute for the very vital task of propaganda, argument and organisation which must be the essential core and bulk of our attention.

Nevertheless, we can and should deny the right to speak and organise to those organisations which constitute openly racist pressure groups and which openly and unashamedly spread the sickness of race hatred and fascism. Even for the 'free speech' apostles of the bourgeois press, freedom is restricted by the laws of libel and slander, and by what they regard as the requisites of "national security". It is quite right and reasonable to decide that if an individual may not be slandered, then nor should Jews or black people be slandered.

Even the smug and complacent *Observer* has conceded that it was 'excusable' to stop Mosley speaking in the 1930s, because "war was in the air" — i.e., it was something of a 'life or death question'. Today, or at any time, racism remains a life or death question: potentially in real physical terms for oppressed and persecuted races; and politically, for the labour movement.

RACHEL LEVER



Above: scene at the famous 'Battle of Cable Street' when workers in London's East End turned up en masse to stop Mosley marching.

DSM had teamed up with a new more experienced at operating fish market. The new partner was the National Coal Board. The number of fingers in the pies of rise at that time — while closing down the country and sending people to the queues.

YPRO (UK) was kept, but now was made a different way. It was the new ingredient in the 'brew'. Cyclohexane is a very flammable chemical. It will catch alight at a temperature below freezing point (minus 95 degrees) in quantity it can be inhaled. But it cut out of the process, and made Nylon 66.

PAPER PROCESS

rough plant was enlarged when it became part of the process. The company was not satisfied, and in 1967 the process cheaper and faster and technicians discovered new

was to use ammonia to shorten the steps between the cyclohexane and lactam. This meant that a very large tank had to be kept in the plant, while the actual point in the process the ammonia was used was explosive potential.

At the same time, cyclohexane was an

expensive chemical to buy. Thus the bosses decided to go into the business of making it themselves. This meant that benzene, another poisonous, explosive and inflammable chemical, was another element to be stored, pumped and used within the same plant as cyclohexane and ammonia.

The bosses say they knew that it was "a particularly hazardous process", but there is a lot of evidence that those who worked in the midst of it didn't know just how dangerous, how explosive and how poisonous Flixborough really was.

They found out on Saturday afternoon, June 1st.

It is very clear why this plant was so dangerous. But meanwhile, Courtaulds, one of the main consumers, had gained an important part of the nylon fabric market. The DSM company, which sold the product caprolactam (the basis of the Nylon 6 fibre) had with the new, quicker and cheaper product gained almost all of the European market, and by allowing similar 'Flixborough' type plants be built elsewhere captured one sixth of the world market.

For one sixth of the world market in caprolactam, DSM killed 29 men injured dozens of others, and devastated 75 square miles.

The report of the Inspectorate of Factories said last year: "It is the responsibility of those who introduce new processes to eliminate these great — unacceptably great — risks before they

are in operation." But evidently they cannot be trusted with such responsibility when their chief concern is making high profits and capturing markets. Nor is a weak and ill-equipped Inspectorate a sufficient defence for the chemical workers and their families.

It is clear from these facts that safety is a very much deeper and more fundamental question than is often thought. It is not just a matter of keeping a watch on guard rails and oily floors, on protective clothing and proper manning, but on the very planning of the whole productive process. And it is for this reason that managements and owners of industry are solidly opposed to joint union-management safety committees, for fear that such bodies will interfere in the running of the plant.

TOOTHLESS LAWS

Legislation of the type before parliament is of some value. But without the right of the unions, and the members they represent, to interfere in the running of such chemical plants and storage places (not to mention dozens of other industrial processes where similar, if not so explosive, risks exist) then legislation will be a toothless spaniel in the face of very powerful industrial interests.

Workers, both at work and at home, are those with the most to lose — their lives. They are the only force that can really act against the hazards of life and work that are set up and nurtured by capitalism.

STEPHEN CORRISSLEY

DISTORTION AND GAPS IN SHREWSBURY ACCOUNT

EVERYONE who has had any connection with these events will welcome any major source of sympathetic publicity for the North Wales building workers tried at Shrewsbury. If this new book * written by one of the Morning Star's chief industrial reporters succeeds in drumming up support from the working class movement for the victims of the Shrewsbury trials it will be playing an important part in the campaign to free the remaining jailed victims and quash all the frame-up charges.

Given the lively anecdotes that pepper the text, Jim Arnison may succeed in doing this. As no other paper covered the whole of the trials, it could be expected that Arnison would be able to come up with new stories. Like, for instance, the incident where 'One constable ... had known the man who threatened the pickets with a shotgun and knew about the incident. When Platt Mills (the defence counsel) asked him: 'Did you not think "My god, what an explosive thing to have on a building site where pickets are"?' the judge intervened with an opinion that so long as the man had a licence for the gun he was entitled to have it in his possession.'

Serious

But why, we are entitled to ask, has this book only appeared now — so late in the day that four of those who were sentenced to jail at Shrewsbury are due to be released within about six weeks of the book's publication.

In the introduction to the book Bert Ramelson, the industrial organiser of the Communist Party, says that these trials were "probably the most serious in their implications for the labour movement this century." Why, one asks, did he not so much as circulate his own members to build Defence Committees up and down the country!

The answer to both questions is the same: while many individual members of the Communist Party did everything possible to help develop a campaign of defence of the Shrewsbury 24, the Party itself did the least possible. Between the time of the arrests and the first trial on March 15th 1973 (and not March 15th 1972 as the cover picture caption gives) the Morning Star had not given more than a couple of inches to reporting the affair.

After that the Communist Party, whilst seeing that developments were reported, did its best within Charter and outside to stop a Defence Committee getting going. This tack didn't last long, as it was defeated by the North Wales militants' sense of urgency about a campaign. Thereafter the

Communist Party attempted token demonstrations of support but refused to try to make a real movement of the Defence Campaign.

Naturally these are the things that the book does not say. In fact on these questions of the development of the campaign the book is a straightforward pack of lies. On page 19 Arnison alleges that the "super-lefts" (his joke term for those to the left of the C.P. all lumped together) saw Charter, the building workers' rank and file movement, "as the alternative to the established trade union organisation." Later (p.45) he further accuses what he now calls "the lunatic left" of being "more concerned to espouse instant revolution and engage in crazy ultra-left antics than with the urgent task of gaining support from the trade union movement at every level."

Omissions

Why does Arnison spout these filthy slanders and copy the sort of distortion he so ably records on the part of the judiciary? If he were honest he would admit that Workers Fight had proposed to some of the 24 the setting up of a Defence Committee (which C.P. members of Charter opposed!) while he and his paper were maintaining the same wall of silence as the bourgeois press.

The answer is to be found in the book's omissions: the role of the trade union bureaucracy. Arnison knows that the differences over the role and nature of a Defence Committee centred around this question. And the Communist Party was determined to whitewash the bureaucracy, which (with a few notable exceptions of personal stands being taken by officials who are CP members) helped shop the lads by standing in the way of a campaign. Workers Fight has in the past published the disgusting letters and circulars particularly of UCATT leader George Smith. All Arnison can bring himself to say is that "criticism has to be made that much more could have been done by the unions to assist the Defence Committee in its early stages (!)". This soft-peddling leads him to be the mouthpiece of the union officialdom against the revolutionary movement.

Lets welcome this book for its publicity for the Shrewsbury victims, but let us reject it for its slanders about the people who forced the Communist Party to do something in the first place, and reject it for its fawning complacency about the trade union bureaucracy.

Cynthia Baldry

*Pickets and the Law, by Jim Arnison. Published by Lawrence & Wishart. 45p.

A SENTENCE OF DEATH

CAPITAL punishment was abolished in this country in 1967. Yet on Saturday June 1st last the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, pronounced the death sentence on six young prisoners in British jails. Unlike the old, relatively quick and humane method of execution, the six are, one by one, to die slow lingering deaths, by an alternating process of choking and starvation.

Sentence has already been carried out on Michael Gaughan, 24 years old, who died on Monday June 3rd. Frank Stagg, aged 33, is on the point of death. Marion and Dolours Price expect to die in a week or two at the most. Hugh Feeney and Gerard Kelly cannot have much longer to live either.

Obstinate

Those who call it "suicide" seek to absolve the British state of responsibility. They also imply that the hunger strikers were unable to face life, or that they hold their lives to be unimportant. They do not.

Their demand, to be returned to the north of Ireland to serve their sentences, (to be with like minded people is, after all, one of the few compensations of prison life and one that is normally denied — by the imposition of solitary confinement — only as a punishment) was a small one for a Government to grant. But, though the hunger strikers grew up learning of the history of Britain's violent subjection of Ireland down the centuries, and watching Britain's army all around them engaged in continuing that work, they still didn't reckon with the callous and brutal obstinacy of British governments.

Spirit

Of course they, too, are obstinate. But who can have the vulgarity to equate the two. The obstinacy of a prisoner, stripped of all rights and freedoms and virtually deprived of the ability to exercise the power of choice, who yet insists on sticking out against all the odds, against pain and even against the strongest human impulse, the impulse of self-preservation — this obstinacy is surely one of the finest and grandest manifestations of the human spirit.

Can one really say the same for the obduracy of Robert

Carr and Roy Jenkins?

For the hunger strikers, once embarked on the confrontation, to stick it out is a matter of keeping faith — with themselves, with each other, with their national heritage, with others in the struggle. To back down would be for them to lose that dignity and self respect that they have fought to preserve through the long months of degrading forcible feeding.

For Jenkins to back down merely means loss of face — and a good thing too, when that face is the ugly face of murder.

Except for the incredible vindictiveness of the British Tory and Labour governments, it was perfectly reasonable to expect satisfaction of the request for transfer. Though it is not actually a right (prisoners in this country have no rights whatever) neither is it a particular privilege. There have been many other such transfers in the past 5 years. Indeed, the prison rules stipulate that it is desirable for prisoners to be kept near their families — particularly those prisoners serving long sentences.

The refusal is arbitrary and vindictive. Given the situation of the hunger strikers, it is no exaggeration to characterise it as a sentence of death.

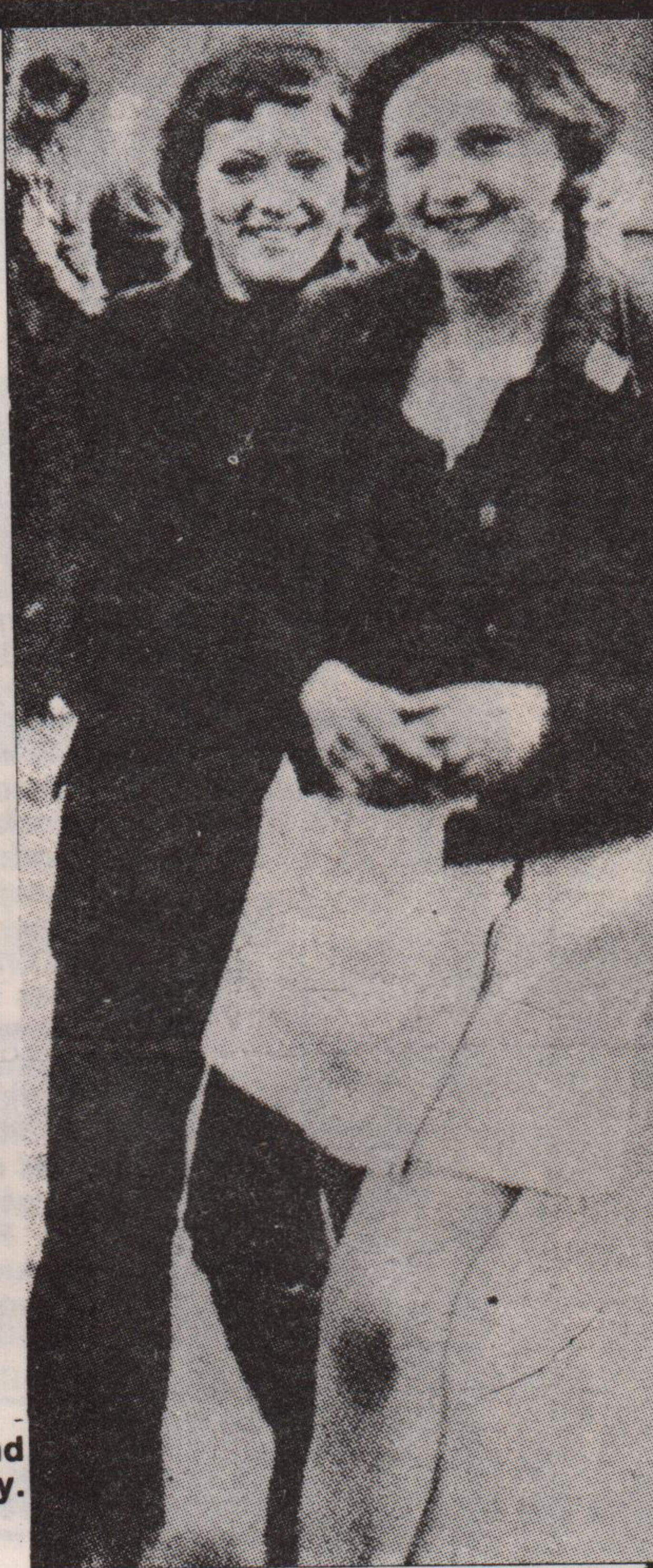
Palach

If they die, they will come eventually to be spoken of with respect, even reverence, by those who killed them, just as Terence MacSweeney did. But for now, they are treated with disdain and derision. Jan Palach, the Czech hero who burned himself to death after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, is revered as a martyr by the British press, while the Irish republican hunger strikers are said to be "seeking martyrdom", to be "in the martyrdom game", and to be merely "committing suicide". But the fatuousness and flimsiness of Jenkins' "reasons" for refusal all testify to an act of calculated murder. And he himself, in saying it would be "possible and reasonable" for them to "serve the bulk of their sentences in Northern Ireland" underlines the unreasonableness of the Home Office in refusing a transfer.

It is said that the 'present situation' would make it dangerous. What situation? Is Jenkins saying that the Loyalists, having just defeated

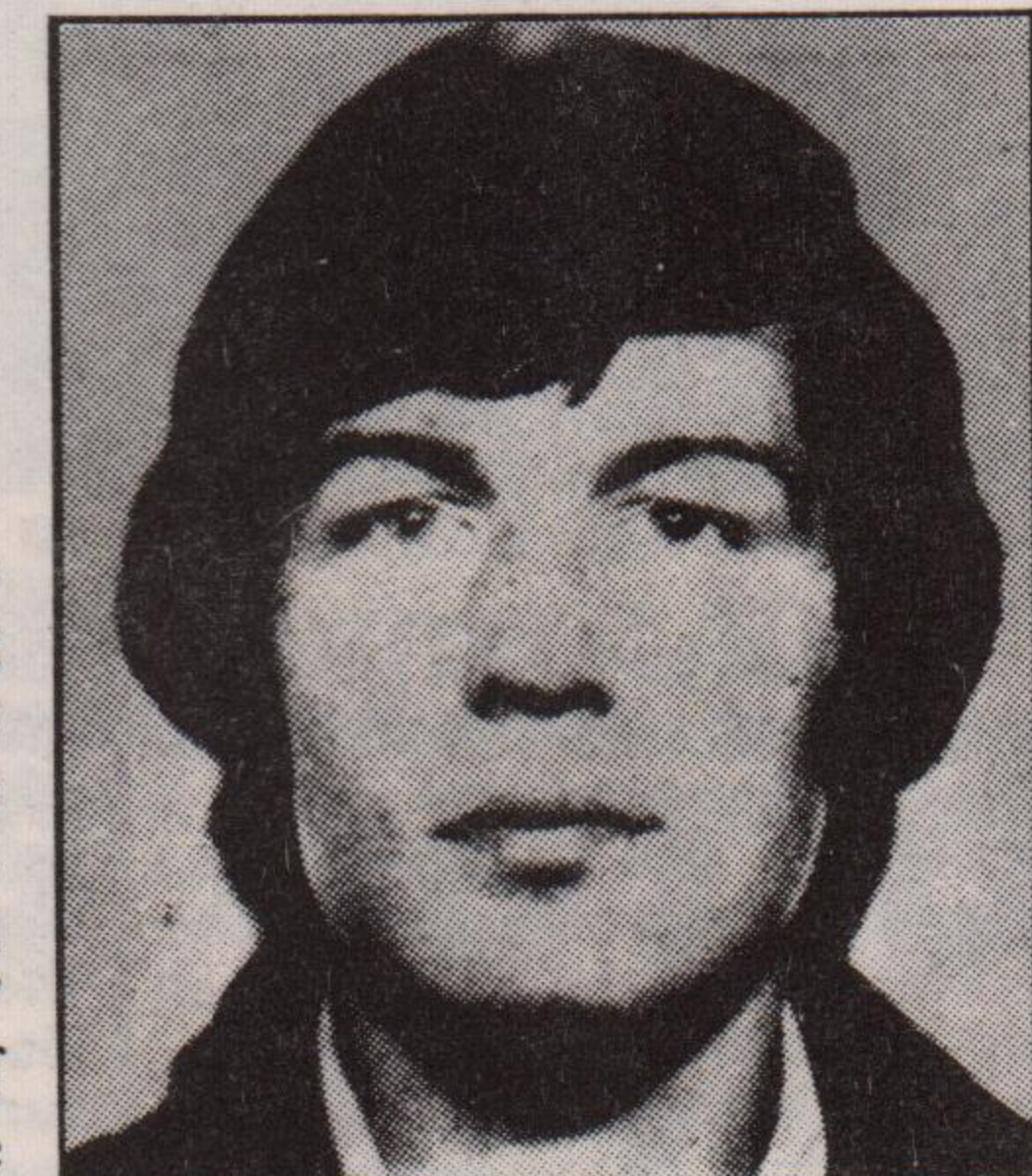


Right: Marion Price (right) and Dolours Price. Above: Hugh Feeney. Below: Gerard Kelly.



the Northern Ireland Executive, are going to take to the streets again if he should dare to transfer the prisoners? Is he saying that he will set his manly jaw rock solid against six dying prisoners but won't say boo to the UDA? Though the latter is certainly the case, the former is not: in fact, even the UDA have said they think these prisoners' demands should be met.

He has said he would not act under pressure. Why then has he not transferred the other prisoners who have asked for transfer but are not on hunger strike? Jenkins goes on to show his total insensitivity and his



ignorance of Republican thinking, when he says that their success will only encourage others. In fact, it was the continued refusal of their demands which brought more prisoners out on hunger strike. The death of Michael Gaughan and the imminent death of Frank Stagg are a direct result of the refusal of the demands of

Feeney, Kelly and the Price sisters. So is the hunger strike in support of them by Pat Arrowsmith and Bridget Dugdale. And it was the death of Michael Gaughan that brought Hugh Feeney back onto his hunger strike.

"Security" has been cited, rather vaguely, throughout the last six months. It is a lie. There hasn't been an escape from Armagh jail, where Marion and Dolours Price would be sent, at any time in the last 35 years.

Jenkins' assertion that those who have been granted transfers hadn't committed serious crimes is another lie. The number includes Albert Baker, convicted UDA murderer, a British soldier who killed a child, has not only been transferred from Northern Ireland but actually released on bail pending appeal.

Besides that, prisoners are not generally treated differentially according to the act for which they are jailed: the differentiation lies in the length of sentence; apart from that, rights, privileges or punishments are meted out with some measure of equality.

The constant reference to the acts for which the hunger strikers were convicted (such as Jenkins' statement that it wouldn't be fair for him to visit the Price sisters as he hadn't visited "their victims") shows, above all, the vindictiveness of the Home Office position. For anyone with the least knowledge of law and the penal system, the answer to all this is

quite simple: at Winchester, the prisoners were given 20 years. That was Judge Sebag Shaw's sentence, and an incredibly vicious one at that. They were not sentenced to death, nor has the Home Office the prerogative to add to the Judge's sentence. Nevertheless, Jenkins has pronounced his own sentence.

Despicable

Jenkins further says he will not be "intimidated". If this is a reference to the Provisional IRA's threats, it is despicable. If he had acted to move the prisoners on March 1st when he first took office, or at any time since, Jenkins would not be in a position where anyone was making threats. The situation is one of his own making — and he decrees that the hunger strikers pay for it with their lives!

Finally, there are the idiot comments and clichés about "not giving in to blackmail." Even the Economist, arrogant journal of hard-nosed British big business, says "It could be

argued that it is not a kind of blackmail that many people are fanatical to imitate, or pointed out that ... (they) are, after all, holding only their own lives to ransom." What on earth kind of blackmail is it where the blackmailer is himself the suffering victim? The hunger strike can't even be compared with the actions of those hijackers who are prepared to lose their own lives along with those of their hostages. Here, the only hostages are themselves.

But whoever coined the term 'moral blackmail' perhaps had a point. With every day that passes, Jenkins and the rest of the government are robbed of every vestige of moral standing, even as the hunger strikers, their bodies draining away, have grown and gained the very heights of moral stature.

As for the rest of us, we cannot just be onlookers. For the labour movement, the odium and the responsibility for these deaths will lie heavy on it for many years to come. We must intervene to stop the murders.

MAXINE LANDIS

Teachers to fight on

RANK AND FILE militants on the NUT Executive are being harrassed only weeks after being voted in. At a joint meeting on Saturday 1st June of the Executive and the London Allowance 'Action' committee, Dick North and Beth Stone were warned by NUT ex-President (and Communist Party member!) Max Morris that if they continued to take notes this would be a breach of "Executive confidentiality" and they would not be allowed to remain at the meeting.

Dick North agreed to tear up "some" of his notes, but Beth Stone refused point blank, in line

with her election manifesto pledge to report back fully to the members. As a result she was forced to leave the meeting before it would carry on. She has had her right of access to confidential Executive material withdrawn.

Wandsworth NUT reacted immediately by passing a motion condemning this reactionary move by the Executive, and it was only the stonewalling tactics of Executive (and Communist Party) member Sam Fisher, trying to head off unofficial action on the London Allowance, at North London Teachers' Association that prevented that branch from passing a similar

emergency resolution.

Even on the Executive's cooked-up calculations to depress the percentage of votes cast for extended strike action, North London still came out with 60% in favour of strikes lasting for more than two weeks. Both Wandsworth and North London branches have passed resolutions condemning the Executive's lack of action and its refusal to publish the results of the strike ballot.

The ad-hoc committee set up at the May 23rd lobby of Hamilton House met on Tuesday night and decided to focus on June 14th as a starting point to indefinite action. An action committee was set up

to organise around a claim for £500 interim London Allowance, cash on the table. This amount is already policy for the Inner London Teachers' Association and several London NUT Associations.

Wandsworth and North London are backing this unofficial strike action and calling on the Executive to make it official.

Schools this week are deciding to what lengths they are prepared to go, and school reps are meeting on Friday at the Rank and File public meeting at the LSE to coordinate action. At that meeting a strike committee will be set up. Strike headquarters are already booked, and leaflets on social security rights printed and ready for distribution.

Ian Hollingworth
Clive Bane

DEMO DEFEATS NF

LAST WEDNESDAY, a picket organised by Basingstoke Anti-Fascist Committee was mounted on a public meeting planned by the National Front in Basingstoke. The picket consisted of forty local trade unionists, students and members of Workers Fight, I.M.G. and I.S.

Several 'interested' people



were successfully turned away before the Police Superintendent arrived to inform us that "I can charge the lot of you with conspiracy." This was the first thing he said, serving notice that he was quite eager to charge militants even when no real charges could be brought.

The picket not only stood its ground, but decided to occupy the room in which the NF meeting was to be held. For half an hour the police hovered around the building, and we got a distinct impression that some of the police operations were being directed by a local NF member. The picket ended both peacefully and successfully. The police announced that the NF meeting was now for members only, and was taking place in a locked room at the back of the main building. The picket then dispersed.

The NF must be made to learn that they will not be allowed to spread their obscene lies and distortions unhindered. Widespread use of the kind of picket seen at Basingstoke (and Preston the week before) will provide a real contribution to the disruption of fascist mobilisation.

DANNY CARROLL

DOCKERS BACK NURSES' FIGHT

THIS week nurses will be receiving their 7% award under Phase 3, and their £1.20 threshold increase. But their revolt against low pay and the running down of the National Health Service continues.

The Halsbury committee of inquiry has not yet published its terms of reference or the names of its members, and it will take two or three months to report. Leaders of COHSE, the union which is carrying forward the 24-

hour strikes, work-to-rules, bans on clerical duties and on overtime, etc, have called for an interim award.

On Monday, June 3rd, Manchester dockers struck in solidarity with the nurses, 4000

workers at Automotive Products, Leamington, struck on May 31st, and Doncaster busmen on May 29th. Building sites round Northwich Park Hospital near London have pledged solidarity action on June 6th.

MANSFIELD PARENTS DEMAND PUBLIC INQUIRY

THE Manuel Moreno affair (see WF 53) has taken a new turn. 800 pupils and 400 parents had signed petitions, 200 people had marched on May 4th, several schools had sent letters of supports from their staffs, to have Manuel reinstated in his old job as Social Studies and Careers Master at Garibaldi School.

On May 9th, he was brought before a hearing of a disciplinary sub-committee of the Nottinghamshire County Council Education Committee which lasted for a marathon eleven and a half hours (the local paper likened it to a "Star Chamber").

At the end of the hearing, it was decided that Manuel was suitable to be a teacher, but for the sake of 'keeping the peace', i.e. the status quo, he was to be transferred to another school in the authority.

As far as Manuel was concerned this meant that the two years he had spent at the school, building up the department and a good relationship with the pupils, had come to nothing. But as far as the school is concerned, the biggest losers are the parents and children who are now going to have a headmaster who is going to patch things up and make sure there is going to be no more 'trouble'. Already 13 children have been caned for refusing to attend some lessons.

Majority

The majority of the staff at the school have finally supported the headmaster rather than Manuel. This is due mainly to the extreme pressure they found themselves under as events unfolded — on the one hand they had a victimised colleague, and on the other they had a headmaster who held their future careers in his hands.

Thanks to the most meagre support from the NUT Area Official, who never informed the NUT staff at the school as to what was happening (after they had asked him if they should substitute for Manuel's now teacher-less lessons, he replied that he did not see how they could refuse!), many of them felt isolated — this in spite of the fact that the headmaster was becoming more hysterical.

So we have a situation of partial victory — Manuel is still a teacher, without loss of pay — but it is a defeat for the school itself. That is why many parents, pupils, and teachers have called for a PUBLIC INQUIRY into the running of the school. Letters have been sent to local MPs and petitions are going round the estates.

Messages of support to: Defence Committee, C/o Mrs I Bentley, 37 Laurel Ave, Forest Town, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

Ivan Wels



ON Friday May 31st, the day after 9 pickets were arrested outside the Imperial Typewriters factory in Copdale Rd, Leicester, over 300 Asian strikers picketed the headquarters of their union, the T&GWU.

They demanded official backing for their strike, now in its fifth week. The local union

official, Bromley, also went to Transport House, and, with Moss Evans, met the strikers' delegates.

As a result the Executive Committee of the T&G ordered an inquiry into the dispute, but no official backing was given. Already the dispute is attracting wide support from the local Asian community, as well as local branches of the T&G.

National demonstration to support Imperial Typewriters strike: Sunday June 16th, 2.30 pm. From Spinney Hill Park, Highfields Leicester

LOOP LINE: Nuttalls beaten

THE STRIKE of workers on Liverpool's Loop Line, being constructed by Nuttalls, made a major breakthrough on Wednesday June 5th, when a delegation lobbied Jack Jones in London. After brief attempts at negotiation with Nuttalls directors, the strike was declared official, and within hours Nuttalls had caved in to most of the demands. These were for the right of stewards to organise in working time. It was also agreed that a senior steward could be elected to co-ordinate the sites, also in working time on full pay. In addition an improved bonus was offered, which will be put to a meeting of all the strikers on Friday June 7th, before making a decision on a return to work.

PAUL BARKER

Meriden Waiting for D.T.I. answer

WORKERS are still occupying the Meriden works of BSA-Triumph, the motor cycle manufacturers.

After the declaration last February of a shutdown of the Meriden works by BSA-Triumph's new owner Manganese Bronze Norton Villiers, the workers decided to resist redundancy by working the plant as a co-operative. The majority of the 1750 workers left the plant for work elsewhere, leaving about 350 workers still involved in the occupation.

The remaining workers still plan to run the co-operative and are waiting for the Department of Trade and Industry to reply to a detailed submission by them, backed by Nuneaton MP Leslie Huckfield and T&GWU official Bill Lapworth.

They hope that if they are given the backing by the DTI, many of the workers who have left will return.

No details have been published of the future plan, but it is clear that a three-way power system is envisaged: the suppliers of labour, the workers, will be represented on the board, as will the suppliers of finance, prospective backers and the DTI, with a third representation for local management which will be hired by the workers representatives.

Despite the fact that it is a waiting game, hopes are still high at the works, where a rota of pickets and occupying workers keeps the plant under their control. Nevertheless time is running out, and there is a fear that the co-operative plan — already a far cry from "workers' control" — will be further whittled down to please the DTI.

Jack Price

CPSA fights on

THE old cry of "the workers are to blame for inflation" was resurrected by the Labour Minister Dennis Healey last week.

This is because he is desperate about the trade union rank and file are not accepting the 'social contract' Labour leaders have made with the trade union leadership.

In two disputes involving the CPSA, one at the Department of Health and Social Security and the other in Post and Telecommunications the pleas of the Labour Government go unheeded.

The DHSS staff are still refusing to go ahead with getting the new increases in pensions out by July 22nd, because the

government still refuses to recognise their case that they are understaffed, working too much overtime, and expected to do the work in half the time. The undoubted necessity of the pensions for the old should not be used as an excuse for the government not paying adequate cash compensation to the civil servants.

Post and Telecommunications workers have just voted, against the wishes of their trade union leaders, to continue their dispute over a special "catching up" award. At the moment the 5-week strike is crippling Kensington, Derby, and Bristol, and demands for telephone bills are not going out.

INFLATION FIGHT AT PLESSEY'S

ON Tuesday 4th June 6,000 workers at Plesseys in Nottingham struck for one day over the question of threshold increases.

Plesseys said they would give no more than £1.60 however much the Retail Price Index rises. Workers are pressing for a full 40p-for-each-1% agreement.

APEX clerical workers and 300 toolroom engineers (with authorisation from AUEW district secretary Fred Wilkins) scabbed, but the great majority of the workforce were out. On Thursday 5th June warehousemen start an indefinite strike.

There will be a 24-hour picket as from the weekend. As soon as Plesseys starts laying workers off in response to the warehousemen's strike, the Joint Union Negotiating Committee will call a mass meeting to discuss all-out strike action or an occupation.

Pete Radcliff

NALGO London fight sabotaged?

ONE of the longest struggles against the 'social contract' looks like coming to an end.

The fight by NALGO members for a London weighting increase of £400 has gone on for over 2 months. For this period 1200 NALGO members from Islington have been out on strike, while selective action and overtime bans are still being carried out by other boroughs, and by electricity workers.

This wave of militancy for the London allowance has spilled over into the struggle for the national claim.

Up to Friday May 31st the employers had refused to negotiate on the national claim while industrial action for the national claim was still on, but on that day they agreed to start negotiations. In return the National Executive Committee of NALGO stopped all industrial action for the national claim.

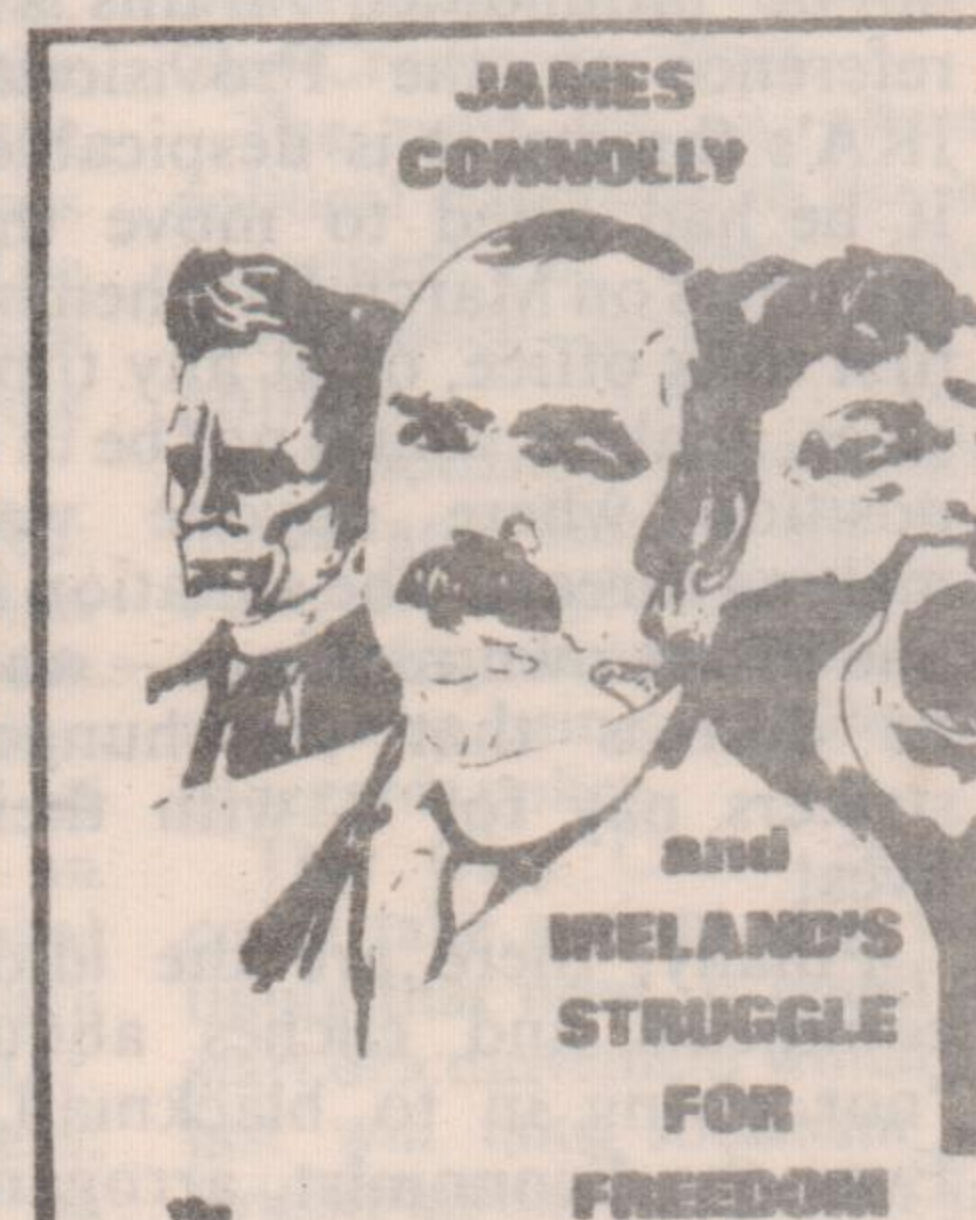
This decision does not yet affect the London action. But there are signs that the NALGO leadership are prepared to let the Pay Board report on 'relativities' due out on June 28th decide that issue.

Tom Ramsey

Permanent Revolution

May-June 1974

articles on Chile; Workers' Government; Stalinism in Vietnam; Rosa Luxemburg on the Belgian general strike of 1902. plus discussion and reviews. 20p plus 5p postage from 98 Gifford St., London N1



10p plus 5p postage, from 98 Gifford Street, London N1

MEETINGS

LONDON Workers Fight forum. Andrew Hornung on "The Second International, revisionism, and the mass strike debate". 7.30pm, Sunday 9th June, 'Golden Lion', Britannia St, near Kings Cross.

LIVERPOOL Workers Fight forum. John Bloxam on the General Strike. 8pm, Wednesday 12th June Stanley House, Upper Parliament St.

NOTTINGHAM Workers Fight forum. Pete Radcliff on the Chinese Revolution. 8pm, Wednesday 12th June, 'The Peacock', Mansfield Rd (near back of Victoria Centre).

MANCHESTER Women's Liberation group. Token hunger strike to support the Price sisters. All day, Saturday 8th June, in Piccadilly.

PORTUGAL OUT OF AFRICA! Solidarity with the liberation movements! Demonstration, 2pm Sunday 16th June, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London.