

# Workers' fight

5p

No. 81 — Jan. 4th to 11th 1975

**OPEN LETTER FOR A REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT.** The Open Letter calls for a revolutionary regroupment, lays down 12 points as political guidelines and maps out practical steps towards unity. Copies from Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N1 CDF. Please enclose a 4½p stamp.

# UNEMPLOYMENT

**THE WORKING** class goes into 1975 faced with the prospect of unemployment on a scale larger than for over a generation. This is true of Britain and of every capitalist country in the world, and it is true for both manual and white collar workers.

In this country, although official figures are at present unavailable, the total of one million jobless is not far away. What happened last week at Aston Martin is just one example of the way in which the economic recession is breaking up the old conditions.

There is also a strong probability that the already large scale short time working will become more extended. Short time working has so far mainly affected the "consumer durable" industries (cars, washing machines, record players etc).

## STRATEGY

Unlike Edward Heath's political lock-out of early 1974, the present short-time is a direct result of the economic situation.

In the United States, over six million workers are out of a job, and there are forecasts of this rising to ten million before long, which would be ten per cent of the labour force. This will hit mainly manual workers, especially the young, and women; a staggering 35% of all black youth in the USA are unemployed.

In France, unemployment is expected to reach 700,000 this month, while at least half a million other workers are on short time.

Everywhere you look, there are similar developments — recession, inflation, rising unemployment, and a concerted attack on the livelihoods of our class.

No worker, in the aftermath of the New Year celebrations, should under-estimate the seriousness of this situation, and what it means to his or her life and the lives of his or her family. The working class movement needs to unite now around a fighting strategy to defeat the bosses' plans for unemployment.

# The big stick

Otherwise there is a danger of our suffering serious divisions and defeats in the coming year. The burden of such defeats would be heavy indeed for the working class.

We stress — a fighting strategy is needed. This, and not stupid nonsense from Harold Wilson (in his 'New Year message') about "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay", is what will enable us to meet this crisis.

## ROBBERY

For a start, there is no such thing as a "fair day's pay" for workers under capitalism. The working class is the creator of all the wealth in society — the vast profits of capitalist firms are based on robbery of the surplus value so created. It is only class struggle, not

"fairness", that has ever won anything for the working class. even the appearance of a "fair day's pay" is threatened now. Look at the situation. Massive cost inflation and huge balance of payments deficits, accentuated by the oil crisis, have led to a fall in profits and a leap in the cost of new investment, with the result that stock markets have slumped and investment has failed disastrously. The spectacular rise in world commodity and food prices of 1973, and the fourfold rise in the price of oil last year, has led to rapid inflation in every country.

by J.W. HARDING



demand;

\* and all these will affect other areas of engineering, especially machine tools which supplies all other sectors.

In such a situation, workers will not defend their jobs by heeding Wilson's pleas about the social contract. We face the danger that the rise in the number of unemployed will lead on the one hand to serious divisions in the working class, and on the other, enable the magnates at the head of the trade unions to threaten militants with mass unemployment if they push wage claims beyond the social contract. Jack Jones in particular has tried this.

The building union leaders have already

**See back page**

British capitalism, reliant for so long on cheap food and oil, is especially vulnerable. The price of basic necessities has rocketed, leading to militant class struggles as the real value of wages falls. Cut-throat competition on the world market dictates the attacks by the ruling class on our jobs and wages, in a situation where -

\* the building and construction industry is in a state of slump;

\* the crisis in the car industry is enormous;

\* the textile industry has begun a downslide;

\* the electrical industry will suffer from the increase in energy prices and the fall in consumer

## HELP TO BUILD WORKERS FIGHT!

WITH THIS issue the weekly WORKERS FIGHT is a year old. Launched at the beginning of January amidst Heath's 3-day lockout, the response was so encouraging that we decided to continue with weekly publication.

The introduction of photo-typesetting, costly though it is, not only improved the paper's appearance, but also made it possible to increase substantially the amount of copy in the 4 pages.

Even so, the paper has often looked cramped, and coverage of news and workers' struggles has been less than adequate.

Now, after a year of the 4-page weekly, we feel strong enough to increase the size of the paper

to a regular 6 pages, beginning with this issue. It means that coverage will be more extensive, layout less cramped, and there will be more room for reviews, discussion of socialist ideas, and letters from our readers.

The price rise to 5p will just cover the extra cost.

With 6 pages, readers' support and collaboration becomes more important than ever. We need reports and photographs to publicise the work and struggles of socialists and militants, and we need more people prepared to go out and SELL the paper — a paper that tells the truth about the struggles of the working class and oppressed people. And we need money, too!

Help us BUILD the 6-page WORKERS FIGHT.

A NEW Year's resolution which says simply that we are against unemployment is next to useless. What we have to do is map out ACTION.

This means the sit-in tactic at factories and offices where mass redundancies are announced.

It means combining demands for nationalisation without compensation with concrete steps to implement workers' control in those factories and offices.

It means fighting for the opening of the books of all capitalist enterprise in order to see exactly what the situation is, that is, how many swindles are going on that workers don't yet know about and which are playing havoc with our lives.

Inside the unions, we should campaign for a fighting policy against sackings and closures:

■ Spread the work, reduce the hours, 5 days work or 5 days pay: a 30-hour basic week, no loss of pay, a sliding scale of hours within this, no productivity deals.

■ No overtime; instead, a living wage that makes it unnecessary. On top of large wage increases, a rising scale of wages, based on a working class cost of living index, worked out by committees of trade unionists and housewives, to cover price rises adequately. A national minimum wage for all.

■ The development and extension of combine committees, both nationally and internationally, to coordinate the struggle and achieve maximum unity in action. Instead of the anti-Common Market "Little England" campaign of the trade union leaders who fall down on the job of organising the struggle in Britain, we need to develop and consolidate links with the workers of Europe who face conditions like our own.

■ A national rank and file movement has never been more urgent and necessary than now. The trade union leaders not only won't lead, they toady to Wilson's Government. There exists a considerable network of rank and file committees in factories, ports and building sites. There exist rank and file movements like the Building Workers' Charter, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (led by the Communist Party), the National Rank and File movement associated with the International Socialism group. These need to be linked and fused into a strong, democratically controlled rank and file movement to fight for the above policy.

Such a policy can mould a real and conscious class unity in the struggles ahead. Such is the nature of the crisis that it takes demands which consciously challenge capitalist property rights, and raise the question of who is master, to give a lasting direction to the working class in years such as we are living in. Years like 1975!

IF IT had been revealed that Barrabas had written the Gospels, or Goliath composed the Psalms, it would not have seemed as some as bizarre as the news that Lord Stokes, the head of British Leyland, was the first to ask for Government aid under the terms of the newly formed National Enterprise Board.

In fact, Stokes' move was simply a matter of the thunder catching up with the lightning.

BLMC has been in trouble for a long time. Since its record performance of 1972 (itself not all that good) British Leyland management has been sending out a whole series of letters to BLMC workers threatening cuts in wages or cuts in manning; shareholders got warnings of low dividends or none at all.

## Rumours

There had been rumours, too, of deals between the Government and BLMC — though they were always denied. Not long ago at a banquet for big businessmen, Industry Minister Wedgwood Benn jocularly questioned Stokes on how long it would be before they became partners. Cockily, Stokes replied "Not 'til our shares are down to 7p".

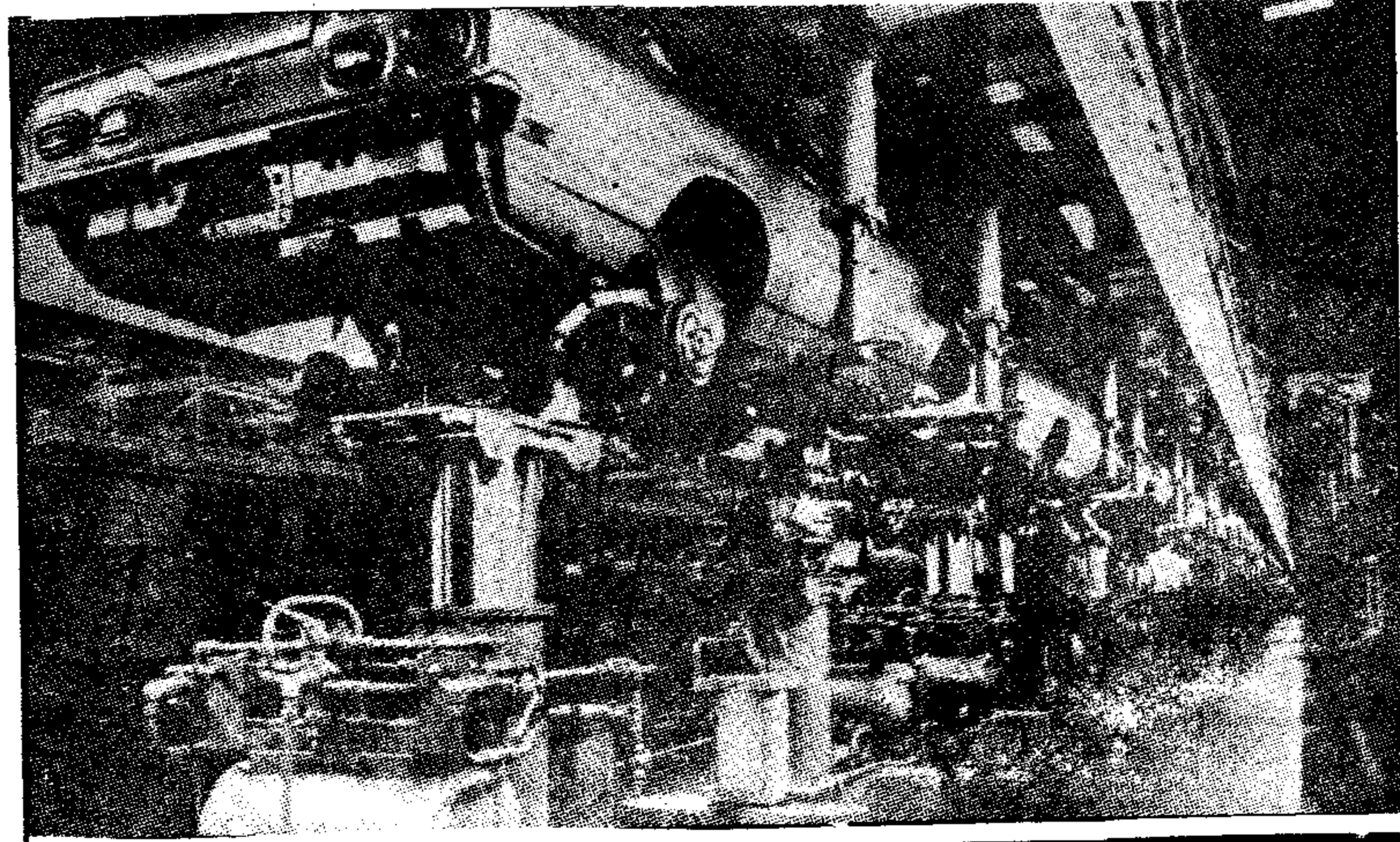
Nobody, then, should be surprised — now that the shares (of which Stokes himself owns 525,037) are well below the derisory 7p mark — if private enterprise's chosen champion has gone to the Government for help.

The timing isn't surprising either. In a single week at the beginning of December, both Ford and Chrysler in Britain announced large scale white-collar redundancies; the French government at the same time pumped £135 million into Citroen to avert collapse; in the German motor industry extensive short-time working was announced, to the accompaniment of a report from Volkswagen indicating that it would take years for it to get back into the black; and in Italy an exhausted Fiat management declared a week's paid shut-down at the end of a three week strike in which workers won concessions on control.

## Judas

The only thing that was surprising was the speed with which the employers' press fell into line with Stokes' move, so soon after their concerted red-baiting attacks on Benn. The same *Economist* that labelled Sir Don Ryder a Judas-sheep for entering the 'slaughterhouse' of the National Enterprise Board could now write: "It is not absurd, or even necessarily harmful — still less, peculiarly left wing — that government should intervene in

# MOTOR INDUSTRY WORKERS CAN'T AFFORD TO CARRY THE CAN



U.S. car-workers queue for dole

industry, or own parts of it that in Britain seem naturally to belong to the private sector. It is, after all, the Tories' Industry Act that Mr. Benn has so far been using. France and Italy, which have had right wing governments for the past 16 and 27 years respectively, both have gigantic public sectors, parts of them such as Renault, the major French clearing banks or ENI, dynamically and, in general, profitably run. Both [governments] intervene extensively in the private sector, and the French at least do it with success; witness the

government guidance that is making Framatome the leading nuclear power firm in Europe. Even West Germany's uninterventionist and unMarxist coalition is busy creating a state instrument, the Veba-Gelsenberg combine, in oil and petrochemicals. **The NEB's ambitions, as they were spelled out in the summer White Paper, will be more modest than this.**

This is the real, considered opinion of the work of Benn ... otherwise referred to as the "scourge of big business" and the "red terror of the neo-Marxist Labour Party".

What the *Economist* recognises is not merely the fact that a state shareholding and part control are no three — "witness British Petroleum" — it recommends its readers — but that the move was absolutely inevitable.

From 1956 the volume of motore vehicle production has increased massively. At the same time, however, the rate of increase (seen as a percentage increase over the previous year) has consistently fallen. And if the rate of growth of car and truck production has declined because of a relative saturation of the market (at a given level of prices, of incomes and of congestion) then that decline will turn into an absolute slump in present conditions.

## Decline

There is in fact evidence that the British motor industry will suffer more than most in this for a number of reasons. If an application now before the Price Commission is agreed, it will add another 10% to the 25% that car prices have risen over the past year. And these prices will go up another 5% when the new year's steel price increases work their way through the pipeline.

The picture in France, Italy and the US is one of plummeting sales as soon as the delayed price rises are felt in the consumers' pockets.

While the decline in the rate of growth of the markets impelled manufacturers to concentrate to compete, leading to mergers and

agreements on co-operation (and sometimes state shareholdings and nationalisation), the message in this period is more drastic: **produce 2 million units per year with a smaller work force — or quit!**

What British Leyland is faced with is the impossibility of increasing production without a massive inflow of cash to retool and develop a new line of models. That is why it has gone to the government, rather than go to the wall. But things will not stop there.

The British share of world passenger car production dropped by 50% in the period 1956 to 1972, and car exports from 21.7% of the world's total in 1964 to 13.4% in 1970. In the period that the output of the 'big six' vehicle producing countries rose from 17 million to 22 million units, Britain's output remained the same; thus its share of production fell from 12.2% of the market to 7.9%.

## B.L.M.C.

Now things are getting worse. In the present climate of far stiffer competition, output is actually falling in absolute terms. For instance output in the first three quarters of 1974 was 1,168,900 units, while in the same three quarters of 1972 it was 1,411,800.

The last time BLMC was in this situation was at its founding. It emerged after a series of mergers as the sponsored god-child of that good fairy of big business, the Industrial Re-organisation Corporation (a creation of the 1966 Labour Government). At that time it had a £25 million silver spoon in its mouth to help it on its way and it also got a £10 million first birthday present after one year.

But that was not enough. As the journal *Management Today* reported in 1972 "Capital expenditure had been very low for many years... The high profits about which so many boasts were made were thus derived from a declining base, and too high a proportion was paid out to shareholders." One year after the merger, for instance, "BLMC's fixed assets per employee were only £964, as against Ford UK's £2,709".

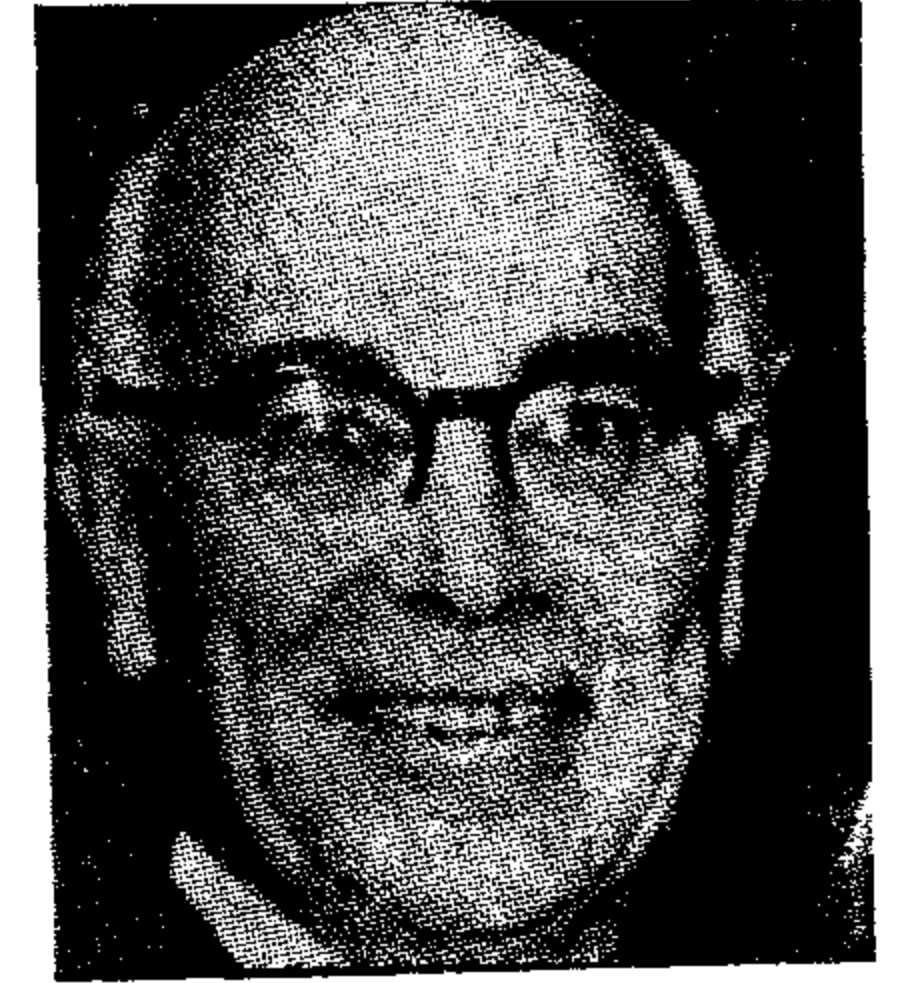
Now the likelihood is that — with government backing and co-operation — the company will try to find an easy niche in the market by concentrating on its most profitable sectors: commercial vehicles, trucks & buses, and Jaguar cars. This will mean swingeing job cuts, with tens of thousands of redundancies here and abroad. The

areas to suffer most will be the low speciality ones, such as Mini production at the Austin Longbridge works, and foreign assembly plants and production units.

When Benn's NEB assumes part control of the company it will be presiding over a capitalisation programme accompanied by slave-driving speed-up for the remnants of the present workforce.

Our attitude flows from this stark prospect. **British Leyland workers must not 'willingly' impose on themselves the kind of conditions that the employers have previously tried — and failed — to impose.** Already there are reports of this happening: at Cowley, donating free overtime to the company's kitty.

That certainly is not the answer.



Stokes

Whether BLMC shareholders own the entire company; whether they own it together with the government; or whether the government 'owns' it entirely — these are not the variables which will, in themselves, determine that workers' jobs and job conditions will be either more safe or less safe. Jobs and conditions can only really be safeguarded by the strength of workers' organisation and by a determination to fight and not to be taken for a ride. The past 30 years have amply shown that this is the case whatever the supposed form of ownership is under capitalism. Nationalisation in the customary bureaucratic-capitalist form is, in fact, no more than a way of feather-bedding Stokes and his kind.

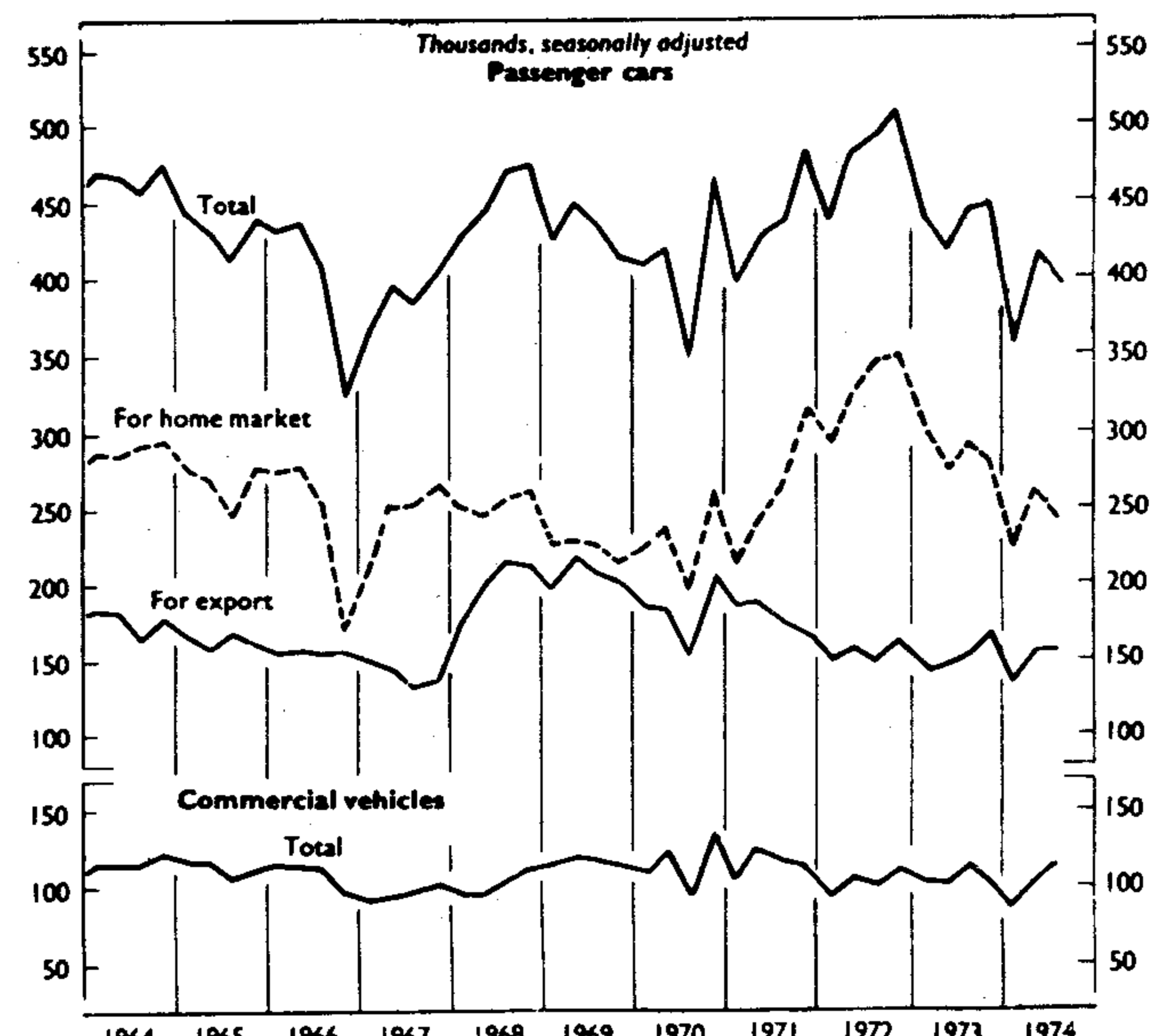
The only answer is to fight to impose our control, the workers' control, over the company. The struggle for control will in any case be at the very centre of the fight against redundancies and speed up. Organising that fight is the priority. **Sooner or later it will be fight — or find your place in the dole queue.**

## ON THE LINE

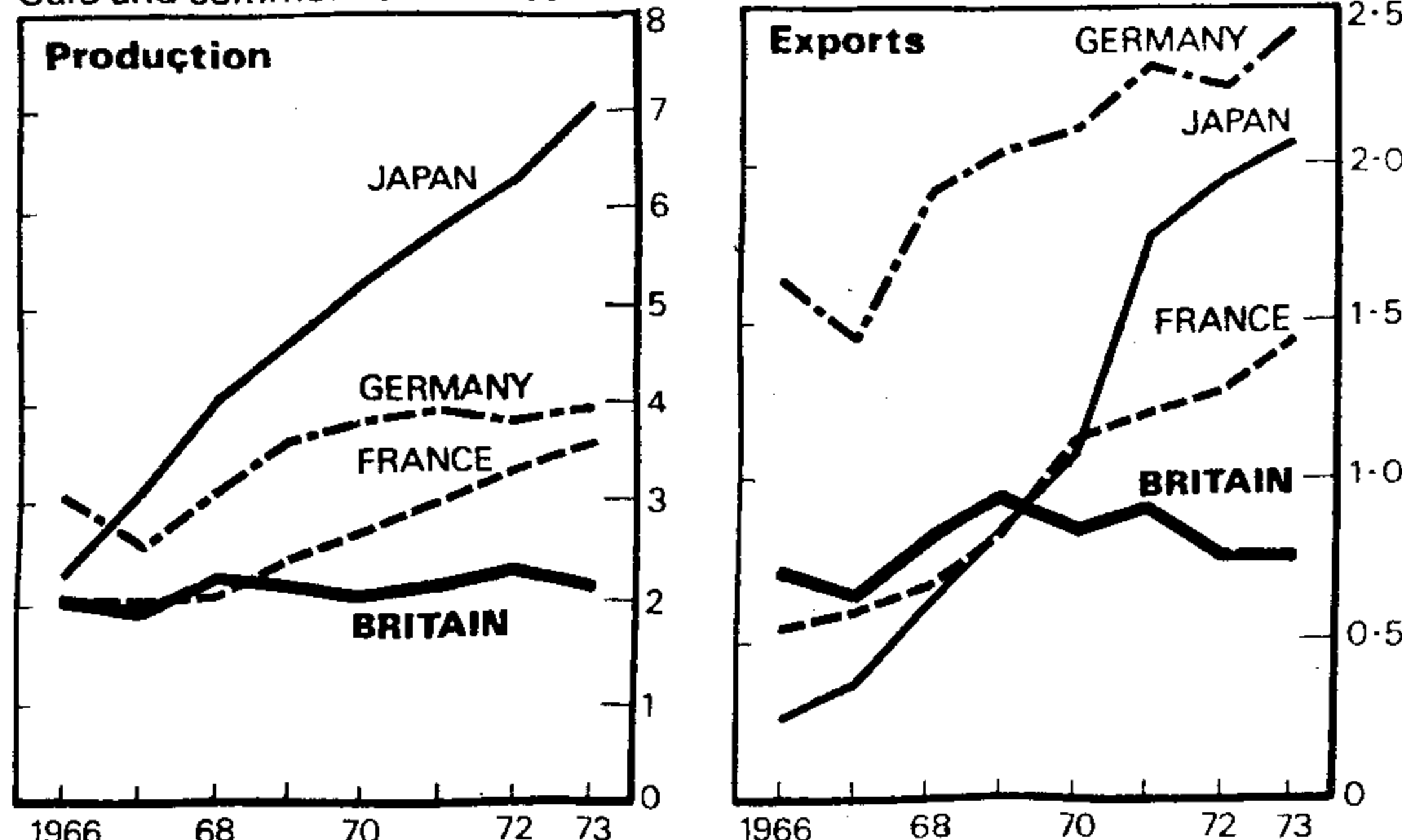
'Around me 600 men dwarfed by the huge presses and guillotines were engulfed in a mindless symphony of earsplitting noise as they cut, drilled and pierced the never-ending metal. . . . At the end of the first fortnight the sheer monotony of the work was turning me into a zombie. I stopped reading books, and slumped in front of the telly at night without selecting the programmes.' (Reporter commissioned by the *Daily Mail* to work in a car plant, 3.6.72.)

'Try putting thirteen little pins in thirteen little holes sixty times an hour, eight hours a day. Spot-weld sixty-seven steel plates an hour, then find yourself one day facing a new assembly line needing 110 an hour. Fit 100 coils to 100 cars every hour, tighten seven bolts three times a minute. Do your work in noise 'at the safety limit', in a fine mist of oil, solvent and metal dust. Negotiate for the right to use the toilet — or relieve yourself furtively behind a big press so that you don't break the rhythm and lose your bonus. Speed up to gain the time to blow your nose or get a bit of grit out of your eye. Bolt your sandwich sitting in a pool of grease because the canteen is ten minutes away and you've only got forty for your lunch break. As you cross the factory threshold, lose the freedom of opinion, the freedom of speech, the right to meet and associate . . . Obey without arguing, suffer punishment without the right of appeal, get the worst jobs if the manager doesn't like your face. Try being an assembly line worker.'

From an article in the French paper *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Both quotes are reproduced from the Counter Information Service anti-report on British Leyland



Cars and commercial vehicles in millions



There are many occasions in history when it is said that this or that period represents a 'watershed' in the history or a particular country or region. To say this of the present period with regard to the Middle East is certainly no exaggeration; in the next few years we are likely to witness an entirely new political situation emerging. Not only will the Palestinian people almost certainly realise their dreams of achieving some form of national self determination; but also the exclusivist Jewish state must certainly undergo a transformation of the entire character of its structure. In the Arab world as a whole there will be such tremendous economic and social changes as a result of the rapid development of new industry that it is hardly possible to imagine such a profound change occurring without some form of political and ultimately social explosion. Thus there is a quite obvious need for constant observation and analysis of these changes as they happen.

As a socialist who has been involved in research and activities connected with the struggle for a socialist Middle East I welcome the opportunity given to me by the editors of this paper to supply occasional articles which I hope will contribute to an understanding of events and developments in the region. As I have some important differences with *Workers Fight*, these articles will aim to provide news rather than analysis or general perspectives (which are in any case more appropriate to the *Paper's* close supporters).

STEPHEN VINES

## TREASON TO SPEAK THE TRUTH - SAY ZIONIST 'LIBERALS'

by Stephen Vines

A GREATER part of the information about Israel's treatment of Palestinian Arabs in occupied territory and within the pre-1967 borders of the State itself — as well as a vast amount of material relating to the denial of civil rights to all citizens of Israel — has come from the Israeli League for Human Rights. Its present chairman and a life-long campaigner, ISRAEL SHAHAK, is now living under the threat of arrest on charges of treason.

Shahak, a Polish born Jew, came to Israel after escaping the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp; once inside the country, however, he soon became active on behalf of the oppressed of his new home.

At the same time he pursued a remarkable academic career, leading to his appointment — in the face of a good deal of opposition — as Professor in the Department of Organic Chemistry at the Hebrew University.

Arabs in Israel know Shahak best as a man they can trust to fight

consistently against the denial of the civil liberties which is a permanent part of the lives of an oppressed people. As a staunch anti-Zionist he has always stood outside of the mainstream of Israeli politics; yet even his critics have had to admit that the activities of the Human Rights League are an impressive testimony to a consistent position of active solidarity with genuine oppositional elements in Israeli society.

Over the last few years of growing awareness, around the world, of the oppressive nature of the Israeli state, the League's reports and actions have received widespread publicity abroad. Its report of conditions in the occupied Territories (primarily Gaza) did much to destroy the Israeli myth of a 'liberal occupation'. And the detailed folios which have been presented to the UN and other bodies have highlighted the plight of political prisoners in Israel.

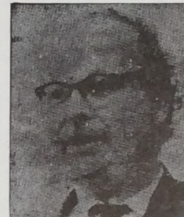
### PARANOIA

Such activities have come up against increasing intolerance inside Israel, as Israeli politics moves inexorably to the right. The mounting general paranoia, stimulated by a new sense of isolation in the world, has brought a closing-in on opposition within the state — especially when that opposition is seen to be at work damaging Israel's already tarnished image abroad.

It is hardly surprising therefore that attention has been focussed on the activities of the League. Shahak himself has been subject to continual personal harassment. It is well known that his concentration camp experiences have left him a permanently sick man — and it seems that those behind the harass-



Arab prisoners under interrogation in Israel (above, and below left). Because he helped to publicise torture and injustice by the Israeli state, Israel Shahak (below) is now threatened with treason charges.



ment may be hoping that a medical collapse will solve the 'problem' that politics alone has failed to remedy.

Earlier this year the campaign against him took a new turn when hired thugs and zealous members of the ruling Labour Party's youth wing came along in a large group to the League's Annual Conference. Taking out instant membership, they proceeded to 'elect' a new committee to replace the genuine representatives of the organisation.

The League appealed to the courts and were in the first instance told that the intruders had the law on their side. It took a decision of the Supreme Court — somewhat

surprisingly to over-rule this decision.

In recent weeks the campaign has taken a new turn — that of an unashamed political witchhunt. The signal for this was Shahak's appearance on the platform of the Dutch Palestine Committee in Amsterdam — an appearance which is hardly new or out of character for Shahak. The fact that he used this platform not only to denounce repression in Israel but also to express serious misgivings and opposition to the terrorist attack on the Israeli school at Maalot (something which his audience was not so happy to hear) was of course overlooked.

### SMEARS

Helping to give it more weight, the witchhunt has largely been moved by a leading member of the liberal Zionist anti-militarist camp, Professor Amnon Rubenstein, who has a regular column in the Israeli daily paper 'Haaretz'.

Rubenstein writes 'As far as I am concerned, I have no doubt that there is plenty of evidence — at least apparently — to charge Shahak with treason...' Rubenstein goes further and calls for Shahak's dismissal from the University, saying 'A tenured job at the university does not mean that it is possible to join with murderers while retaining one's job.' (Haaretz, 10th October).

The campaign of smears and lies is now in full swing. The Zionist liberals are showing their true face, as they attempt to restore their political credibility by showing themselves to be better patriots than the hawks on the right.

Today a file is sitting on the desk of the Minister of Justice, who has yet to decide whether or not to bring charges of treason.

### WEARY

In London, a picket of the Israeli Embassy in defence of Israel Shahak took place on 16th December. A campaign must be mounted to ensure that such charges are not brought — once the legal process starts there is little hope of Shahak winning his case in the courts.

With one of Israel's most significant oppositionists out of the way, the door would be wide open to yet another massive clamp down on the already battle weary and demoralised Israeli opposition.



## LIFE AND DEATH IN THIEU'S VIETNAM

### horrifying account by an observer at quang ngai

Every day new patients come to the Quang Ngai Civilian Rehabilitation Centre, the victims of violence. The story of five year old Tran Thi Be typifies the tragedy of many. She is a shy, tiny child who cuddles in her 19 year old sister's lap, resting from practising walking on her new artificial legs.

Her oldest sister, 21, refused to marry a young soldier who was in love with her. One night, while the whole family was sleeping, the parents on one bed and all seven children on another, the soldier rushed into the house clutching a US-made Claymore mine to his stomach. He jumped onto the bed where the seven youngsters were sleeping; the mine went off, killing himself and six others, and wounding the survivors.

This appalling story is related by Claudia Krich, who works at the Quang Ngai Quaker Rehabilitation Centre in Vietnam, writing in a Wisconsin magazine called *The Progressive*. It is, she says, typical of the everyday violence of a country where the Americans' talk of peace is a bitter joke.

Every man between the ages of 18 and 45 is expected by the Thieu regime to spend a minimum of six years in some sort of military service. The war, of course, goes on, and by Saigon's statistics 50,000 South Vietnamese military have perished since the signing of the ceasefire in 1973 (compared with 45,000 Americans killed in all the time of direct US involvement).

The demoralisation and embitterment in Thieu's army has led, too, to a terrifying prevalence of casual violence throughout the society. Soldiers tend to use violence to solve personal problems, settle old scores or just have a bit of sport.

### Shot for a bet

Ngo Thi Thi, a 34 year old peasant, was working in her field in Mo Duc when a soldier walking along the road apparently bet a companion that he could shoot her with one try. He shot once with his rifle, hitting Thi's left leg.

The soldiers kept walking and laughing, while friends took Thi to the province hospital, where the leg was amputated below the knee. She is now being fitted for an artificial limb.

People often vent grudges by having others jailed as 'Communists' or political offenders.

A young woman in the prison ward at the Quang Ngai Hospital told me she was denounced as a 'Viet Cong' by a young man whom she refused to marry, and as a result she had been imprisoned, tortured with electricity, and forced to drink whitewash lime

until it came out through her nose, while her torturers jumped on her stomach.

Torture and interrogation are the routine first steps in imprisonment. No evidence is necessary to declare someone a Communist.

In his efforts to rally people to his government, Thieu created the Self Defence Forces, usually teenagers who are equipped with black uniforms (to look like the National Liberation Front forces) and M16 rifles. They are supposed to defend the towns and villages, but instead these government sponsored gangs are notorious for their terrorism, arrogance, theft and immorality.

### Protection racket

Recently in the middle of the night, robbers broke into the house of one of our centre workers and the houses of his neighbours. Several dozen young men entered the homes, dressed in black 'pajama' suits, pants rolled up to look like shorts, and wearing rubber-tire 'Ho Chi Minh' sandals.

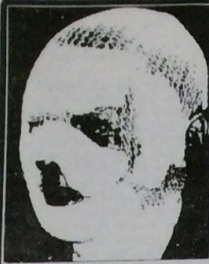
They tried to disguise themselves as Liberation Front soldiers, but the people in the houses recognised them as youths from their own town, local Self Defence Forces, who by day patrolled in the village.

The people were forced to give the soldiers all their money, poultry, clothes and brassware. If they refused, they were warned that the 'liberation soldiers' would shoot them.

In the morning the Self Defence unit announced publicly that the night before, the NLF had raided the town. They privately warned the citizens, who knew it was not true, to keep quiet or be shot.

A set-up, in short, that American would have been proud to put his name to. And all financed by American Government dollars, and armed with American Government issue rifles and bullets.





The front page article in WFW7 on the Birmingham bombings makes the correct point that the criticisms Trotskyists make of the IRA should be made clearly in the context of support for the struggle against British imperialism.

However, this is precisely what the very same article fails to do. It begins by asserting that "Revolutionary socialists... have a duty to denounce (!) and condemn

# Letter: OUR FIRST DUTY?

this indefensible and senseless slaughter". And indeed the whole article was littered with such emotive terms: the "carnage" was "callous"; "impossible to explain" or "justly" "simply indefensible on any grounds—military, political or moral" etc., etc.

What has happened, comrades! Is it the first time in history that civilians have been killed in a war? Did Workers Fight "denounce and condemn" the Vietnamese NLF's attacks on civilian targets in puppet-controlled areas as "indefensible and senseless"? Did Workers Fight ever spend so much space waxing horror struck over UVF pub-bombings in the Six Counties, or over the British provocateurs' bombing in Dublin, for that matter?

Of course not! Because the first duty of revolutionaries is to distinguish between the violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed. The first duty of

revolutionaries is to denounce and condemn the indefensible hypocrisy of the imperialist state and all its allies in the present and future. (The deliberate indiscriminate fire-bombing of the entire city of Dresden in the last war is worthy of more than a mere aside, comrades!)

But on the Birmingham bombings, the hypocrisy you choose to condemn is that of "the workers in the Midlands". Physician heal thyself! How can you demand that the masses see through the hypocrisy of the anti-IRA hysteria whipped up by the press when you yourselves make no attempt whatsoever to unmask it, but in fact merely reinforce it by repeating the same expressions of horror?

But worse! You also join in the universal attribution of responsibility for the bombings to Irish republicans. You say they were "probably the work of Irish republicans".

Where is the evidence for this statement? Admittedly at the time of going to press, you may not have heard the news of the Provos' denial of responsibility. But even without that, what excuse can there be for your statement?

You say yourselves that you cannot see any sense in the bombings. They seem "politically very stupid". If the work of the IRA, they would "signal an entirely new departure". Well then, where is the logic in attributing them to the IRA? Isn't it obvious that there might be something wrong with the premise if the conclusion doesn't make sense? Especially when you know very well, even if the workers in the Midlands don't, that the bombings are copy-book examples not of what the IRA is accustomed to doing, but of what the extreme unionist forces like the UVF regularly do in the north of Ireland. (And we should not, that if the bombings were a right wing provocation, they were by no means "politically very stupid".)

The real lesson of the Birmingham bombings is that the British bourgeoisie have demonstrated

that if someone lets off a couple of bombs, they can rapidly disorientate the workers movement and open it up to extreme right wing agitation through a press campaign blaming the IRA. And under cover of the hysteria thus whipped up, they can introduce draconian legislation planned weeks in advance.

This means that our first duty is not to "firmly (!) dissociate (ourselves) from any bombing campaign aimed at the civilian population", but to firmly dissociate ourselves first and foremost from anti-IRA campaign of the British ruling class.

And you don't do that, simply by re-stating your general position on the IRA. It is the concrete situation you have to confront. It is not possible to disarm the bourgeoisie of its ideological weapons if we do not first train revolutionary cadre to recognise and to resist them. It is this essential task that you editorial failed to carry out. Communist greetings, Lawrie White.

# Reply: FACING THE ISSUES SQUARELY

HOW Lawrie White concludes that we fail to place criticism of the IRA within the context of the struggle against imperialism is rather a mystery.

We have been advised by the NCCL that the etorial he criticises would be illegal now within the terms of the Jenkins police state law!

The only logic to his outpouring is that condemnation of the Birmingham bombings and acceptance of the "probable" responsibility of "Irish republicans" outweighed the four fifths of the article that made the basic case for the republican cause! (But we can't please him there either, since he upbraids us for attacking the double standards of British workers in the Midlands who struck work over the bombings, but never about the terror by the British army in Ireland...) When he says that we never spent as much space expressing horror at the UVF/JDA assassinations and the British army terror, it means he's not been reading the paper or that he is indulging in shoddy and dishonest polemics.

## HERETICAL

He says that the first duty is to denounce the imperialists for their hypocrisy: we think there are other priorities, like explaining as often as necessary, what the republicans fight for, but whatever the first duty of revolutionaries in Britain may be, it is clear that Lawrie White sees denouncing hypocrisy as the only duty here and now.

At one and the same time he elevates denial of possible Republican responsibility into a principle it is treason to depart from in the "concrete situation", and goes on to talk about the "first duty" being to "distinguish between the violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed". So does White think the bombings were "probably" or even "possibly" the work of "the oppressed" — some republicans, perhaps? Even he has so far kept the dreadfully heretical thought locked in his subconscious, clearly he does think so, for at least it has escaped into his letter, if obliquely.

If there be any sense in the letter and if it is other than the IMG sniping (or sniping by a member of the IMG not very happy with the way the line of that organisation has wobbled on the issue of solidarity with the Republicans in the last year, it can only be the belief that "the IRA" are never to be criticised, at least in military matters, and if they do, or may have done, something that is indefensible, then the best policy for British revolutionaries who are in general solidarity with them is to copy the three wise monkeys and hear, see and say nothing.

## CHAUVINISM

White is correct to say that revolutionaries in Britain must fight the bourgeois ideological domination of the working class — specifically, the chauvinism on the Irish question. But for him, the essence of "disarming the bourgeoisie" of its ideological weapons against the working class comes down to... denial that Irish republicans might indeed have been responsible for the Birmingham bombings! That is a very limited, not to say peculiar and bizarre, conception of the nature and depth of the chauvinist disease in the British working class, of the present situation, and of the tasks of revolutionaries.

How do we disarm the bourgeoisie of its ideological weapons in this case? It is certainly not done by a Workers Press-type panic stricken scream of "No... it couldn't have been republicans... wasn't the IRA". Because it might well have been republicans. It might have been elements of the republican population from northern Ireland who, in their justified bitterness and outrage at the British terror, reacted in such a politically senseless, but quite understandable, way.

Our article referred to "Irish republicans", not any specific section of

the IRA, and we would include in that term the smallest sub grouping that takes up the fight in northern Ireland against British imperialism. The Provisionals are the main force fighting, but they have no exclusive licence to fight British imperialism (or to claim the solidarity of revolutionaries in Britain), nor are they the sole custodians of the right of the Irish people to fight British imperialism. Isn't it contradictory, Lawrie White asks, to say the bombings were probably the work of republicans, if they were senseless from a republican point of view? Unfortunately not. White's talk of contradictions is abstract, purely formal logic. We are faced with the logic of the various forms of struggle employed by an oppressed people. Those forms of struggle are not, and can never be, neatly cut to shape in advance. It is entirely consistent with the desperate plight of the catholic people in northern Ireland that such an outbreak could occur, the work of isolated active service units, splinter groups, or previously inactive republican sympathisers.

David O'Connell no doubt "dissociates" from the anti-IRA campaign of the British press. And he knows that any action such as the Birmingham bombings, by any section of the catholic republican population, will be laid at the door of "the IRA" that is, the Provisionals. Yet he condemned the bombings, disclosed that he didn't know whether or not some sections of the Provisional IRA were responsible, said that if it were found that they were, there would be a court of inquiry and possibly courts martial — nor did he suggest by over-stressing the no-doubt real possibility that it was an anti republican provocation (see the last issue of Workers Fight for O'Connell's interview).

Unlike the weekly paper of White's own organisation, *Red Weekly*, the revolutionary nationalist leader had the guts and the seriousness to face the real possibility or probability that it was the work of republicans. He neither condoned it nor did he change sides because of it. He condemns it, which is what we did and do. And we don't change sides either.

## JUSTIFIED?

It is a short, though logical, step, from resting one's supposed assault on British chauvinism and anti-IRA hysteria exclusively on saying it wasn't the IRA, to capitulation to that chauvinism. For it is implied in this weighty, Marxist, principled, non-hypocritical, firm, unflinching, unbending, r.r. revolutionary stance, that if it were really republicans then the general reaction to the bombings, at least, and maybe the wholesale condemnation of everything the IRA stands for, and the war that it is fighting as well, are quite justified.

That is neither to disarm the bourgeoisie, nor to arm the working class ideologically. It is not even to face the issues squarely, with Marxist honesty — it is to hide in a corner. And that is what the IMG did. And from that lofty moral platform, Lawrie White delivers us a lecture on revolutionary seriousness and principles!

If the essence of "disarming" the bourgeoisie is to deny IRA responsibility rather than to reassert the justness of the Republican cause even if the Provisionals were entirely responsible for the bombs — what happens to your credibility with serious workers who read your paper and place confidence in it, if it transpires — say as a result of the Provisional court of inquiry — that Republicans were responsible? What about the crucial problem of educating the vanguard of the British working class to distinguish between the fundamental issues in this war and the "politics of the last atrocity" which, unfortunately, normally determine the ebbs and flows of working class opinion on it? There is only one way to disarm the

bourgeoisie and placate the anger — the justified anger — of the British working class, and that is to confront the reality as you see it. Don't try to be "clever" and slippery. Take sides always according to the fundamental issues in the war — defend what can be defended, and if something occurs which you find indefensible — denounce it. Workers Fight wanted to face the issues squarely as we assessed them in and as they would appear to our readers.

We reiterated our pro-republican stand, irrespective of Birmingham.

## PRESS

Those, like the IMG, who nervously jumped for cover, placed in question what their whole attitude would be if it were shown to be a republican action. Far from arming their readers, they left them floundering with arguments, working class militants not trained in double think would dismiss as contemptible evasions — and which, measured against the slaughter of 21 people and the maiming of over 180 were quite obscene.

Presumably Lawrie White wants to attack press hypocrisy to counter its influence, to talk, in the voice of revolutionary socialism, reasonably and honestly. The press deals wholesale in lies and distortions about Ireland, purveys anti-Irish racist double standards. They suppress and lie about the real facts of the northern Ireland situation. Yet, but in this capacity when the press ragged — hypocritically — it happened that they merely articulated the feelings of the entire working class. We agreed and agree with those feelings, and we use the same words and phrases, that simply means that the stock of language is limited. If White doesn't think the events in Birmingham cause for emotion and emotional terms, the mildest comment one can make is that he should examine the state of his emotions, not to speak of his imagination.

To let oneself be swayed by feelings of horror over civilian casualties like the woman and two children killed in the M62 explosion is to lose all political balance.

Not to feel horror at senseless slaughter unconnected with any military objective is most certainly personally unbalanced or to be thrown off balance in over-reaction to the hysteria.

Not to express those feelings, while maintaining the solidarity position, is to lose the credibility of even talking to ordinary British workers.

To present at length a full socialist view of the war in Ireland and to place responsibility with the British ruling class — that was to attack press hypocrisy. *Workers Fight* did exactly that. White grossly overestimates the influence of the press, however. There is no straight cause-and-effect relationship between mass chauvinism on Ireland and press coverage. Certainly the press buttresses chauvinism and makes the fight against it more difficult. But bourgeois ideological domination is much less shallow than simply being the effect of press bias, and certainly not simply related to this or that lie in the press at any given moment. Far more deeprooted, chauvinism combines decades of imperialist conditioning with the most primitive "defend your home and local pub" gut responses — understandable responses.

## TOADYING

To concentrate on condemning Government and press hypocrisy would in this case have been a mechanism for evading the reality of working class chauvinism, in the worst IS or WRP style. We tried to hit at the substance, not the shadow. The immediate ephemeral expression in the press at that point in time was the mere shadow of the all-pervasive double standards within the working class and the labour movement. We expect hypocrisy from the press, what

we attempted was to hold a mirror up to our own class. Events like Birmingham are, as we explained, a result of British partition, interference, and its present terror campaign in Ireland. Fundamental responsibility rests with the British state, as we said and repeat. The events in Birmingham must be seen within this context. But they are events in their own right. As such they demand a responsible response. Simply to duck the issue, as *Red Weekly* did, with a pettifogging and evasive article by Clarissa Howard, or to take refuge behind general declarations about the general right of the Irish people to fight for independence, is petty bourgeois indecision and gutlessness.

In practical politics, this leads to mimicking and toadying the republicans having something very different from principled solidarity. With the Birmingham bombings, sycophancy towards the republicans and fear to take an independent judgment were the dominant feelings. A tendency in *Red Weekly* to avoid sharp clashes with backward feelings in the working class, and produced a woolly and evasive response, which said nothing, did not educate, did not clarify.

## ATROCITIES

It is possible, though by no means easy, to explain the justice of the fight for Irish independence and all the things that flow from that, including attacks on military targets in Britain — even where some innocent victims suffer. Workers Fight has done that consistently and more outspokenly than any paper on the British left. We will continue to do it in the future.

A recent incident will illustrate this. A WF militant was sacked in Birmingham during the anti-IRA hysteria. Ironically, his first serious stand on Irish politics had been when he attempted to hit someone 18 months ago who sold him a copy of WF containing a pro-IRA article. In patient discussion he learned the basic justice of the republican cause — because it is a just cause, one that can be rationally explained and argued.

But how do you explain, on any level, the Birmingham bombings? White would have us repeat, moron-like, banalities about "citizens getting killed in a war". (Such an attitude, incidentally, parts company from any communist attitude to the habitual slaughter of non-combatant civilians in modern warfare, expressed by Leon Trotsky when he talked about the "struggle against fascist atrocities, and imperialist atrocities in general, especially the fight against the bombing of peaceful cities", and went on to describe such things as "criminal acts". That was in January 1937. It is a measure of the brutalisation that has coarsened even revolutionary socialists that we should have to recall such elementary attitudes.)

## NIHILISM

Are we being "moralistic"? But what is "moralism"? It is setting up abstract, timeless principles, and putting them above the needs of the class struggle. Since when has opposition to the useless slaughter of innocent working class civilians been a matter of abstract principles, and how is it counterposed to the class struggle? We are not pacifists, nor do we subscribe to the Ten Commandments. But there is a socialist morality. We recognise that the class struggle and national liberation struggle is a merciless battle in which we will kill and be killed. But we do not on that account casually shrug off slaughter which serves no political or military purpose. It is for that reason that the bombings in Birmingham must be morally condemned — according to the morality of communists who do recognise that the reality of class society imposes violence upon us.

The charge of moralism implies that one shares the caricature view that Marxists are a moral. For English revolutionaries to fear to bend under the pressure against the IRA is healthy and politically honourable. But it is essentially infantile and unthinking if it leads to

the moral nihilism of an attitude to bombing civilians which is derived from the British RAF's "Bomber Harris" and other professional imperialist butchers.

In their zeal to refuse to condemn such bombing (which they can hardly really believe could not be the work of certain republicans or pro-republicans) such people SLANDER the organised republican movement, which has a better and a more honourable record precisely because it is motivated by values different from those of the imperialist butchers who casually wipe out whole cities "in order to save them".

The attitude that would say "one doesn't condemn, one simply says Birmingham was a mistake" is another contemptible evasion. We did refer to the possibility that the bombing might have been the result of a ghastly series of errors, if the Republicans were responsible. Nevertheless, if what happened in Birmingham was the result of a conscious decision, that it was not a mistake on the other side of the British and Irish working class. And it was necessary to say so.

Revolutionary cadres are not just schoolboys playing rugby, trained to resist the pressure of the other side come what may. If revolutionaries are not trained to look at reality squarely and think independently, then they will prove useless.

The *Red Weekly* method of training cadres appears to be one of ducking the issue while making a fine pretence of principled politics and world-defying intransigence.

As opposed to this, the proletarian revolutionary organisation that we maintains its political independence, and either defends or rejects action by revolutionary nationalists which whom it is in solidarity.

We denounced the Birmingham atrocity. Weighing what we denounced against the fundamental issues in the war, we then went on to reiterate our continued support for the republican side, in the same article which White attacks.

## ROMANTIC

We affirm the right of the IRA to fight the British ruling class and their army, in Ireland or in Britain. And we affirm our right to condemn elements within or on the fringe of that movement if they are, or appear to be, in favour of indiscriminate and senseless slaughter of innocent British workers.

We judged the situation and took our position irrespective of the attitude of the Republican movement. As it happens, we afterwards learned that Provisional leader David O'Connell expressed a similar attitude.

The guerrilla leader O'Connell knows that armed actions either have a purpose or they are senseless; either they are part of a strategy, or they are random and indefensible. He says that the Birmingham bombings are senseless and indefensible, differentiating between legitimate acts in a war of liberation and indiscriminate slaughter of civilians. (The vicarious, romantic sympathiser is of course free from such considerations, feels no responsibility and instead of trying to talk intelligently to the potential allies of the republicans among the British working class, he takes refuge in 'tough guy' quips like White's "is this the first time civilians have been killed".)

We welcomed O'Connell's statement. But we would anyway have maintained our position. We remain consistent.

And White and the IMG? If the Provisional IRA investigation which O'Connell announces leads to a trial by the Republicans (we deny the right of the British state to try such people, who should be treated as prisoners of war), will White remain consistent and consider the defendants in such a trial as victims of British hysteria reflected within the IRA itself? (Thus intimating that even the Provos are not "hard", ruthless or "callous" enough for their vicarious British sympathisers....) Or will they ditch their position? Or today, and come to agree with O'Connell — and Workers Fight?

# An appeal from Dublin's socialist prisoners

Comrades - We are a group of political prisoners in the Curragh Military Barracks, and because of financial difficulties we are unable to obtain socialist literature that would give us a better understanding of the present crisis of capitalism and the problems of revolutionary leadership for the working class. Therefore we are appealing for any socialist literature that would help us in study.

We fully understand that most comrades are struggling to keep their

organisations out of financial difficulties, so the contributions, no matter how small, will be appreciated.

The task of preparing the working class for its historic mission is crucial. The present leaders are unfit to represent the working class as the class collaboration, cowardice and treachery can only bring defeat as it did in Spain, Germany and, most recently, Chile.

While we are in prison our duty as socialists is to educate ourselves

politically for the coming battles. Therefore, comrades, we are asking for your help to assist us in this task.

Faternally,  
Eugene Norrby (6 years)  
Joe Flannery (7 years)  
Joseph Dillion (4 years)  
Patrick Dillon (6 years),  
Eoin MacTurlough (15 months),  
Donal Pireen (4 years)  
Danny McCowen (2 years),  
Military Detention Barracks,  
Curragh Camp, Kildare, Ireland.



THE degeneration of the Official Sinn Fein has now gone so far that at their last Congress they decided to mimic the mannikins of the SDLP and renege on their pledge to refuse to stand in Six-County local and "national" elections until internment is ended. This decision has speeded up the process of fragmentation of the Officials.

The article below republished from REPUBLICAN NEWS, the Belfast paper of the Provisional Sinn Fein — the organisation the Officials have the cheek to refer to as "extreme right wing" and worse. We have serious disagreements with many aspects of the politics of the Provisionals; but this article should demonstrate that "right wing" is an insult, rather than an accurate description.

## BREAK-UP OF THE OFFICIALS

THE present break up of the NLF (Official Sinn Fein) is a judgment on its bureaucratic leaders. They chose to break away from the Irish Republican struggle for national independence. Many thought they were doing so to concentrate on socialism. They were badly mistaken. They are paying the price now for enslaving themselves to the Communist Party of Ireland (which in turn is a puppet of the British Communist Party), under the firm supervision of Moscow.

Moscow has long abandoned the ideal of socialism in its own country, never mind exporting revolution. Its leaders have for decades ordered Western Communist Parties to accept the status quo, not to rock the boat, to accept a pacifist, parliamentary role, and to demand only mild reforms, organising middle class support for them.

### VENOM

The Civil Rights demands were a good example of this, and that campaign now drags on through the CP and NLF demand for a British Bill of Rights for Irish people. The decision to break their solemn promise not to take seats while internment lasts is the last degradation to which their fetishism for elections inevitably led them.

The venom that they should have reserved for the imperialists they turned on the anti-imperialist people, out-doing the British gutter press in vilification of the Republican Movement. A recent extraordinary example of that mentality was Gerry Docherty's comment to the press when he was deported from England by the imperial government: he condemned the IRA rather than the government that had deported him.

One of the commonest smears the NLF used against the Republican Movement was "sectarian bombing". It is only

now finally becoming clear and widely accepted, that sectarianism will always be with us as long as the Protestant dominated anti-national six county state remains. Any attack on the Six Counties, including the demand for civil rights, will be denounced as sectarian as long as Stormont remains. The Orange Order is anti-national. Republican politics will always meet Orange resistance.

### CONNOLLY

The NLF claim to be the heirs of Connolly, but they have not only betrayed him but misrepresented him to a generation of Irishmen. A review in *United Irishman* (paper of the Official Sinn Fein) of Greaves's life of Connolly even accuses Greaves of sectarianism because he told the truth about Connolly's assessment of Orange Unionism.

The NLF have constantly misrepresented Connolly's views on physical force and nationalism. Those views were nobly expressed by Connolly at his court martial: "We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire and to establish an Irish Republic ... believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland ... the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that Government for ever an usurper and a crime against human progress."

### 'PEACE'

They have departed so far from Connolly's honourable stand that they went with Roy Johnston *en masse* to a "Peace Congress" in Moscow in 1973, describing themselves as "Peace Activists" and allying themselves with some of the most reactionary pro-imperialist forces in the world. They are no longer in the Fenian tradition, which is that Irish freedom will never be won without recourse to arms. They do not even use the right they claim, of retaliation and defence of the people against their enemies.

In fact their epitaph is best written by James Connolly himself: "Revolutionaries who shrink from giving blow for blow until the great day has arrived, and they have every shoe string in its place, and every man has got his gun, and the enemy has kindly consented to postpone action in order not to needlessly hurry the revolutionists nor disarrange their plans — such revolutionists only exist in two places: the comic opera stage, and the stage of Irish national politics. We prefer the comic opera brand. It at least serves its purpose."

# 'I Guess I'm some kind of a Rebel'



able to assimilate and promote them as commodities, their "rebelliousness" reduced to a closed, completed image. They become unreal figures of fantasy amid the dead-end cultural impoverishment of most people, even in the most advanced capitalist societies.

The film *BADLANDS*, showing now at London's Academy Cinema, dramatises the way one such fantasy was lived out in the real world, and the blind destructiveness that came of it.

The film is the first by the U.S. director Terrence Malick, and it deals with the 'adventures' of two young people in America at the end of the fifties: Kit, a 25-year-old garbage collector, and Holly, a schoolgirl 10 years younger than Kit.

Kit's whole personality is imbued

of stilted description both distances and punctures Kit's carefully contrived image, so he can clearly be seen as something quite pathetic. He is acting the part of a "rebel without a cause": but he is not consciously 'angry', he never questions anything. Not only is there no cause — there is no real rebellion either.

Eventually, Holly gets bored with it all and Kit, needing the stimulus of recognition for his deeds, deliberately lets himself be caught. More than ever he plays it up — building a pile of stones to mark the spot of his capture, and talking to the assembled policemen as if he were a film star giving a press conference. When a copy asks why he did the killings, he replies, with great self satisfaction, "I guess I'm some kind of a rebel." And his last words to Holly, again parroted out of some old B-picture, come out as "Too bad about your father. We're going to have to sit down and talk about that sometime."

Yet Kit and Holly are not monsters. We see them as quite ordinary, amiable, backward people; and though they also happen to be murderers, they are quite without remorse or guilt because their actions are never real to them.

### DWARFED

The film is so objective and unhurried that it feels almost like watching a film within a film. It is entirely appropriate. Without any air of moral indignation or artistic demagogy, we are shown how the consciousness created by capitalist conditions and fostered by a mind-destroying culture leads to this kind of aimless nihilism.

The setting — which gives the film its title — is also appropriate. The vast Montana plains serve to depersonalise Kit and Holly, dwarfing their 'adventure' and showing it as puny and narcissistic. The endless space seems to emphasise the banality of their dialogue and how tragically far they are from any understanding of their own actions, until, by a last irony, the novelty wears off and the adventure becomes as boring as life was before it.

with the image of James Dean, and the myth of the "rebel without a cause".

He has the hair style, the walk, the banal throwaway speech, and even a strong facial resemblance. This total absorption in a fantasy personality clearly has to do with Kit's situation — he does a stultifying menial job and seems to have few interests or thoughts outside it; the system doesn't foster or encourage thinking garbage collectors.

Holly gets hung-up with the image Kit projects. It represents an escape from her authoritarian father, and an indulgence of her own fantasies — again, moulded by capitalist pop culture. She speaks a commentary throughout the film exactly in the style of a 'True Romance'-type pulp magazine.

Her father objects to her going out with a garbage collector, and breaks up the relationship. And Kit's "rebellion" now begins.

He shoots the father, burns down his house and takes off in the car with Holly — bewildered, but prepared to play her part in what has become an adventure. They begin to dramatise their lives accordingly. They construct a tree-house as an idyllic escape from society, until some hunters discover it by chance. Kit, Kit, totally caught up with the image he is acting out, kills them all. Then he shoots an old work-mate and two other people, simply because he has given them the role of informers. And in films, men on the run shoot witnesses of course.

As their journey into the Montana badlands continues, Holly provides a commentary on their experiences rather as she would see any courtship described in a magazine; and, in the same style, concludes never again "to tag around with the hellbent type".

Kit's weird, aggressive actions are described with utter flatness: - "Kit shot a football that he considered excess baggage"; and this technique

## ALAN HASLAM reviews 'Badlands' — a film about the James Dean myth

THE BOREDOM and aimlessness of life for young people under capitalism interacts significantly with capitalist popular culture. Young people, wanting to rebel against the deadening routines of work and family, look to hero-figures to personify some kind of revolt.

Yet because these individualistic figures cannot offer solutions to problems that beset millions — but only evoke or anaesthetise these problems — the bourgeois media are

### CORRECTION

TWO errors — the result of failure to implement a proof-reader's correction — appeared in the article on Greece in the last issue of WORKERS FIGHT (which was also, incidentally, mis-numbered No.79 instead of No.80!)

1. The fall of the Papandreou regime occurred in 1965, not 1967.

2. The article makes the point that the Greek Royal family, installed in 1832, has always been a conductor in Greece of the interests of the dominant "great powers". But it did so in a sentence which defined the nature of this great power pressure as Imperialist, and inserted the fact, the date and the purpose of the monarchy's initial installation as a parenthesis within this statement.

It thus appears to say that modern imperialism dates back to at least the 1830s! This is of course a liberal conception of imperialism, not that of Marxism, which sees imperialism as the system of world rivalry between the great capitalist states in the period of monopoly finance capital, and dates its origins at, roughly, the very end of the last century.

## Just the man!

THE HOME Secretary, Roy Jenkins, has appointed the leading right wing peer Lord Alport as head of the tribunal that will help to deport "terrorists".

Alport started his career in the Artists Rifles. This was the curious name given to the regiment that carried out clandestine intelligence work. It later came to be known, during World War 2, as the Special Air Services — the underground army that exists today to carry out murders and bombing in Ireland.

Alport received his training in this tradition. And his civilian employment included a period at the Bar and service for the ruling class as Director of the Conservative political centre.

He rose to become a junior minister in the Tory government of the mid-1950s before taking assignments in Africa.

Lord Alport is obviously a man well fitted to the job of administering the dictatorial law just passed by the Labour government.

# Jan 14th named as day for pickets lobby

JANUARY 14th is the day for the TUC sponsored lobby of Parliament for the freeing of the Shrewsbury 2. At last there's a definite date. For a couple of months the rank and file militants have been chasing the TUC leaders for a definite date. Now we have one, and every effort should be mobilised to make this a really mass lobby. On that day every building

site — indeed every work place — should be deserted. Every worker should be on the lobby.

Anybody who says that a few articulate delegates are enough has missed the point. This is not a lobby where subtle arguments are going to count. The TUC General Council members have already been to see Roy Jenkins and failed to convince him; the Labour Party

Annual Conference decided in favour of freeing the Two... but they didn't convince Roy Jenkins; deputations of MPs have been to see Wilson and Jenkins... all to no avail. No. It's numbers that count. This is not so much a lobby as a demonstration. And it should be a gigantic one.

## URGENCY

The fact that the TUC Construction Committee set a date at all is an achievement for the rank and file. After all, three

quarters of its members didn't turn up.

The fact that no reliance can be placed on the TUC leaders is most graphically brought out by the revelation that the meeting of the Construction Committee of the TUC THAT FOLLOWED THE General Council's passing the buck to it for organising the campaign to free the Two did not even discuss the matter. The reason: most of them didn't bother to turn up — in fact, only four out of fifteen did. That is the reality of the "sense of urgency" proclaimed by the General Council and its subcommittees.

# HOUGHTON REPORT DIVISIVE AND INADEQUATE

AS THE DATE of publication of the Houghton report on teachers' pay was put back and put back until finally it was scheduled to appear just after the start of the Christmas holidays, it became increasingly clear that we were being lined up for a hammering. We were not disappointed. Hoping, no doubt, that reaction would mellow over the holiday, Houghton finally published his report on December 19th, urging us all to accept without delay a vicious stab in the back for the 44% of all school teachers who have to exist on the bottom salary scale.

The whole emphasis of the report is on the need to provide adequate incentives for the 'career' teacher. Hence the proposed rise in the starting salary of £4.40 a week (before tax) to £1677, compared to a rise of around £18 per week (to £3609) for the 2.1% who comprise the 'senior teachers'. Hence the increase in the infamous and divisive 'graduate allowance', the scheme whereby if you are a 'good honours graduate', you get £426 a year more than someone from a college of education for doing exactly the same job.

Rather than paying a reasonable wage to all teachers, Houghton prefers to try to persuade

young teachers to stick it out in the classroom on low wages in the hope of one day getting one of the 2.1% top jobs.

With an annual teacher turnover hovering at the 30% mark, school staff-rooms have been described as resembling transit camps. It is no better in the classrooms. One pupil at a London comprehensive reported 12 different maths teachers in one term. (Is it any wonder that students are reacting aggressively, sometimes violently?) The teachers who move on or out are not the 'career' teachers so beloved of Houghton, but the poor sods who are thrown in at the deep end right from the start with minimal marking and preparation time and little or no in-service training. In other words, the teachers on the bottom scale. The Houghton offer is not only inadequate and divisive, it is also simply unrealistic in terms of trying to maintain any standards of teaching.

The Houghton report as a whole will be gone into more fully in a pamphlet shortly to be published by teachers supporting Workers Fight. In the meantime it is important to watch the statements coming out from the Houghton

Committee, the Government and the union officials, and to prepare for national action early in the new term. Edward Britton, secretary of the NUT, says "Obviously we are not going to ask for some people's increases to be reduced so that those at the bottom of scale one can be given more". But will the NUT do anything to increase the overall sum offered?

Peter Sloman, education officer of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, says: "the increased cost of the teachers' salaries bill may force some of the counties to employ fewer teachers than they would like in the future." And the report itself says that 'in the light of the extra burden the new salary levels will place on the taxpayer', teachers must accept that their job "cannot be compressed within a rigid structure of prescribed duties, hours, or days".

## SCOTLAND

In other words, there is a high probability that the vagueness of the school teacher's contract will be exploited by the employers to an even greater extent in an attempt to introduce some kind of productivity deal into the settle-

ment.

Reaction to the Houghton report is at its most militant in Scotland, where all out strike action is to be decided on early in the new term. However, things are picking up in England as disgust turns into determination.

At a protest meeting in Leicester, held in school time on Thursday 12th December, 114 teachers representing 14 schools voted overwhelmingly for strike action on January 14th in support of the demand for £15 a week flat rate increase for all teachers. In Liverpool NUT branches in at least three schools are taking similar action. If attempts at committing people to strike action for January 9th failed last term, response to action on the 14th should be more encouraging this term as all those who said "wait and see" have seen and considered.

There will still be those who say "take what you can get now and wait to negotiate on the annual pay review coming up in April". But it cannot be emphasised enough that the Houghton award "only represents the rise which is thought to be necessary to lift teachers' salaries to the level at which Houghton thinks they should have stood on May 24th, 1974". If we give up on that, we'll have little enough chance on the 1975 claim.

Ian Hollingworth  
Cynthia Baldry

# Anti-fascist demonstrator gets 18 month sentence

On 6th December, a young anti fascist demonstrator, Ian Coleman, was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment by Leeds Crown Court. The charges against Ian Coleman arose from a clash with the fascist "National Democratic and Freedom Movement" on Leeds Town Hall steps last June. Charges were also brought against some of the fascists involved in the clash, but they got off with fines.

Before that antifascist demonstration in June, the NDFM had a record including breaking the arm of a woman militant, knifing a black worker, smashing the window of the Gay Lib bookshop, ripping and setting fire to Bardford

Trades Council banner on anti-racist demonstration, and harrasing left-wing paperselling in Leeds. Since the demonstration their activities seem to have collapsed.

Leeds Anti Fascist Committee have sent out an appeal for support for Ian Coleman's release. A letter in their name, published in the Yorkshire Evening Post and signed by a number of prominent local trade unionists, says "We feel most strongly that Coleman's sentence should be immediately quashed". They are also asking for messages of support to be sent to the Anti Fascist Committee: 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2.

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accepted a much reduced wage offer, boasting about it being within the social contract as a way of foisting it onto the rank and file. They are not only using the crisis as a way of persuading building workers to accept less than they need to keep up with inflation, but they have also dropped the demand for a 35-hour week, a vital demand in fighting unemployment.

When Wilson appeals to "people who really have the interests of the country at heart", he is appealing to the trade union chiefs against the militants who want to show up the con trick for what it is — a way of cutting wages. Wilson's aim is to keep wages down in order to show the ruling class

that he can 'handle' the unions. At the same time, the Labour government has tried to stem unemployment by bailing out industry and streamlining it.

But this will not stop unemployment. It will only increase inflation and make a rapid rise in jobless even more inevitable in the process of "rationalisation" through the National Enterprise Board.

This is not to say we ignore the Labour and trade union leaders insofar as they may take action to defend jobs. We should support that to the full, and, more important, we should fight to make them take such action. But it would be foolish to rely on them, especially after the Shrewsbury experience. We repeat — a fighting strategy is needed to beat unemployment.

# CRACKDOWN ON IRISH COMMUNITY STEPS UP UNDER 'JENKINS ACT'

WHILE the attention of the press was primarily focused on whether one man, John Stonehouse, would be deported from Australia, Albie O'Rawe was awaiting deportation from Britain to northern Ireland as the tenth man so far to be "excluded" under the "Jenkins Act".

About 15 policemen had arrested Mr O'Rawe at his home in Kilburn after a 5 a.m. raid, carried out, according to the police, in order to arrest a youth staying with the O'Rawe family.

The police took Mr O'Rawe's back pay — and even emptied Mrs O'Rawe's purse — claiming that this was "IRA money". They then said that Mr O'Rawe was to come with them... just for a couple of hours. He was gone a week.

The police took him to Guildford along with 40 others and asked questions about the money, about the IRA and personal matters and asked the 40 to identify photographs. One of the forty has since said he recognised almost all of

the scores of pictures he was shown... and the place they were taken in: they were all taken in "The Memphis Belle" public house and were pictures of regular patrons.

At no time was Albie O'Rawe charged with anything, no allegations were made. Nevertheless, after being in custody for a week he was served with a deportation order.

Margaret Crowley, a 22 year old Co-op shop assistant, who was held incommunicado for 5 days, has already filed complaints about the police's completely illegal action.

The main weapon being used against Republican activists — and therefore inevitably against Irish people with only the most tenuous connection with Republican affairs — is, however, still harassment. The treatment of Albie O'Rawe and Margaret Crowley (who is, however, English, and thus could not be "excluded") fits into this pattern.

# Police use new Act to harass students

IN RECORD TIME, the new Jenkins Act ("Prevention of Terrorism") has already been put to use against socialists.

The Bath University Students' Union has put out a statement deploring the way police have used the new Act to conduct searches among students who support the campaign for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

"The police", they note "had no evidence for questioning the students and carried out their search after it had been ascertained that they were not involved" (in the bombing at Bath).

The Students Union also gave notice of its intention to take the matter up at national level through the National Union of Students.

The International Marxist Group has issued the following statement on the bombing in Bath and subsequent inquiries:

"On Tuesday [no date is given] a member of the Bath branch of the IMG was questioned by the police in connection with the recent bombings in Bath. In view of the rumours which are circulating with respect to the bombing in Bath on Monday night, we will state what our position [is] on this incident:

"As yet no organisation has claimed responsibility for the bombing and yet the police decided that one of our members was a suspect. This is no doubt because this person and many others are involved in a campaign for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland — as are 6 Labour MPs and many trade unionists. So we can only suppose that the police then consider we should be under suspicion. However, we are in no way involved in the bombings nor are we associated by membership with any organisation which may have carried out these bombings. We believe that the root cause behind the bombings is the problems in the 6 Counties and reject the

idea that this situation can be resolved through increasing the powers of the British state: a solution can only come with an end to attempts to impose a British solution on the Irish question.

"The police are perfectly well aware of our position, despite this they considered that it was necessary to search this person's flat and examine political documents in that flat not related to Ireland. In addition to that other people were questioned about this person's general activities. This was all after a statement had been made denying any connection with the bombing.

"We accuse the police of taking advantage of the bombing on Monday night in an attempt to harass a member of the IMG and attempt to gain information on other socialists in Bath. We do not believe that this incident can be seen in isolation from the repression facing trade unionists, socialists and Irish people throughout the country — in particular from the wider powers given to the police under the Jenkins Act on Terrorism."

The statement ends by calling for a campaign in the labour movement for the repeal of the Jenkins Act, for an investigation by the Labour Government into the way the Bath Police have conducted their inquiry, for the ending of police raids and harassment of British and Irish socialists, and for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland.

WORKERS FIGHT fully supports this call — though we'd rather see the incident investigated by an independent inquiry by the labour movement.