

WORKERS PLAY THE GAME

About a week after the notorious Halewood 'vandalism' (see below), an assembly plant worker called Paul Kelly was accused by a foreman of bending a bracket which holds the centre console to the floor of the Escort (a popular practice - if you bend the bracket, you don't have to fit the console.) Kelly was suspended for two weeks while various appeals were heard. On Tuesday March 8th. he was sacked.

This led almost immediately to a walk-out by night-shift workers, who were later joined by the other shifts, bringing the number on strike to 4500. As a result of this, 3700 body plant workers were laid off, along with 500 more at the transmission plant (the total workforce at Halewood is 9700.)

A week later on 15th. March, 3500 of the strikers attended a union-called mass meeting and voted overwhelmingly to stay out. Obviously somewhat perturbed by this result, the union (TGWU) made the strike official a week later, and 100 security men immediately joined in.

LEGALISM

The union officials - legalistic as ever - tried to present the strike as being purely and simply about management picking on someone who was 'innocent' of the 'crime' they were accused of, rather than being about management victimisation in general. A TGWU convenor, Bill Maguire, said "People have been caught for vandalism before and have been sacked but in this case ... he has been wrongfully dismissed." At an early stage, stewards offered to let the management bring the police into the plant to examine the evidence, taking the matter completely out of the hands of the workers who are routinely subjected to this sort of victimisation.

The company put forward the idea of an industrial tribunal taking on the case, and agreed to be bound by the result. This is just a joke - only 0.7% of unfair dismissal cases result in reinstatement.

AFTER JAPAN

The bosses have let it be known that they intend to introduce 'After Japan'-type changes (see vandalism article) 8 days after people get back to work, and it's

pretty obvious that they're taking a tough line over the Kelly sacking because they want to smash the Halewood workers into the ground to get them ready to accept the new 'efficiency' measures. This could be tougher than they think - over 2000 laid-off body plant workers recently voted to reject the changes when they get back to work.

This has even been publicly recognised by Ron Todd, the chief union negotiator, who said the bosses were trying to 'soften up' the workforce. He neglected to mention that the unions have been softening up the workers for the last year or so - senior shop stewards at Dagenham were promoting a 10-point AJ programme on the shop floor even before management were.

The bosses are adopting this strategy not simply because they want to get more productivity out of Halewood - they can always follow up their threat to close the plant and move production somewhere else - but because they see it as a crucial step in getting the changes accepted throughout the country.

The management's attempt to soften up the Halewood workers has clearly failed. Another, more serious, strike can be expected when the 'efficiency' measures are imposed. But the Halewood workers are going to get completely screwed unless they spread this strike to other plants. This is something they'll have to organise themselves - there won't be a union call for solidarity.

As we go to press (as we hacks say), the top union officials and management have struck a deal. Paul Kelly stays sacked, but will be given an 'ex-gratia' payment equal to his wages, pending the findings of a 3-person tribunal. The 3 persons will be one from Fords, one from the union,

Popular yarns of class war

and one neutral. Mr. Neutral hasn't been named yet.

This is the first time we've ever heard of someone being sacked on full pay. What a laugh. Anyway, this deal will be put to the Halewood stewards and workforce on Tuesday (5th.) Despite all the efforts they'll be making, there is a good chance the workers will reject this union/management lash-up

STREET'S SUNDAY TREAT!

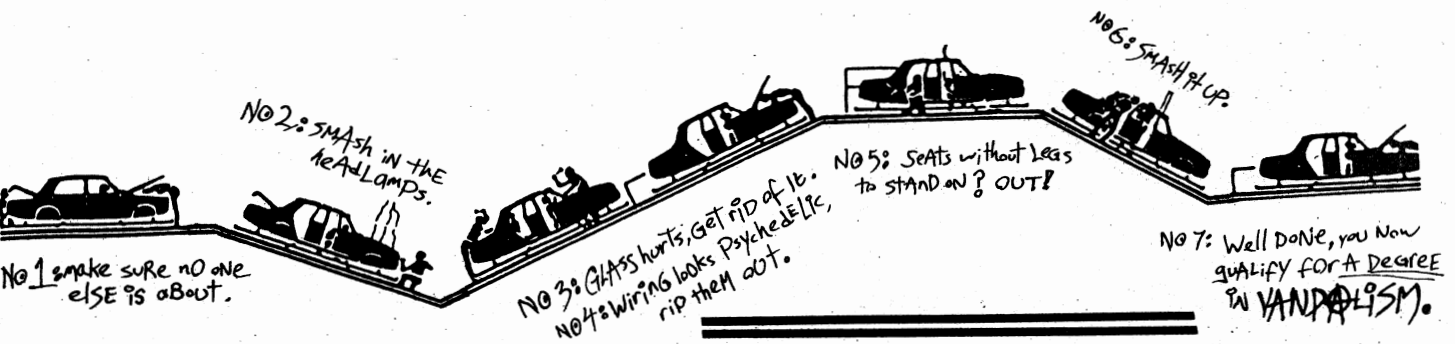
Angry Ford men wreck new Escorts

Play fabulous £40,000 BINGO

No, it's not a repeat of the celebrated Ford Dagenham riot of 1976 in which car workers genuinely ran amok (trashing cars, looting the management canteen etc.) just the bourgeois press looking for sensational copy.

In fact what happened was that 8,500 hourly paid Ford Halewood workers had been laid off without pay for almost a week during a foremen's strike. That strike had started with a walkout by the foremen on Tuesday 8th February. The nightshift supervisors went home in support but the operators weren't told they were laid off. The next night they were told - and also told that they wouldn't be paid for Tuesday night unless they could prove they'd been in. Since one of the supervisors jobs is to put out

(contd. back page...)





NUCLEAR WAR IS GREAT FOR BUSINESS

The government is worried. Too many people are questioning the nuclear weapons programme. So the government is planning to spend millions of pounds to con us into thinking that we somehow benefit from these weapons. More dangerous is the fact that when we question nuclear weapons, we are led to question the whole basis of society.

All the major electronics companies, aircraft and telecommunications companies, shipbuilders, the steel industry etc, etc stand to make handsome profits selling equipment to the armed services. The recession has led to a general weakness in the market place for goods for 'peaceful' purposes. They are anxious to extend the military market. There is also room for small businesses, building shelters for the rich. Of course this provides jobs, but what is the point in having a nice house, a video, a flash car . . . if we're going to be incinerated in a few years. But now the government is trying to sell us the idea of 'nuclear weapons for peace'. Let's have a look at this more closely:-

THE WAR GAME

Whenever war looks more and more likely, politicians, as natural liars, always shout more and more about peace. Just before the second world war it was Chamberlain mumbling about 'peace in our time'. Today, politicians mumble about 'deterrence'. But when Reagan compares the nuclear arsenals in east and west Europe, he is careful not to mention

the substantial numbers of American sea-based nuclear weapons. In fact America has always been well ahead in the nuclear arms race, and is now preparing for a limited nuclear war in Europe.

THE EUROPEAN THEATRE OF WAR

Germany is the favourite to host the proposed war. The largest industrial centre in the world is around north Germany and Holland. This area would be destroyed. A major rival to American business would be wiped out. With a few nukes lobbed into the industrial centres of north Italy, the Paris region and the English midlands, west Europe would be stitched up for a few decades. For their part, the Americans could pacify Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany and Hungary with nuclear strikes. It could all be conducted in a civilised and gentlemanly way, with neither Russia nor America receiving a direct hit, but mutually dealing with each other's allies. Of course there would still be all the Cold War rhetoric, but the resulting peace would be a victory for 'humanitarianism' on the back of a devastated Europe.

FROM THE WAR OF WORDS. . . .

In the thirties and forties, people were sent off to concentration camps at Dachau and Auschwitz, and in Siberia. Modern technology means that mass murder can now be brought to the comfort and privacy of our own homes. As usual war is not so much between two countries as between the state and the population. They have started this with a war of words. The Jews were persuaded to pay for their railway tickets to the camps. We are being persuaded to pay through taxes for our own destruction. We are being persuaded to accept destruction passively. But as the women at Greenham Common are finding out, our democracy is limited to the liberty to agree with our ruling class. When the ruling class feels they are losing the war of words, they use force and violence.

. . . . TO CLASS WAR

It is no good waiting until the police and army are waiting to bash our heads in. We must be ready to use whatever means are necessary. Sometimes 'peaceful' action is appropriate, at other times more direct and violent action is needed. We must not shrink from its use, as in the final analysis, it is our commitment to go the whole way which will lead to success. The way out of the nuclear labyrinth cannot be found by protesting and voting Labour. The working class, those who put most into the system and get least out of it, will have to challenge the whole basis of society. By destroying the basis whereby industry, economics and politics run our lives, we can destroy the power that threatens us with the holocaust.

In the East, they will have to dispose of the commissars, army officers and party functionaries who keep them in line. Here our task is similar. Despite Foot's vague gestures, ALL the main political parties have built up the arsenal of nuclear weapons. NONE have curbed the power of the armed forces. NONE have done anything to stop the use of troops in Ireland.

If we are serious about creating a society without nuclear weapons, we must be ready to challenge the state itself and defeat it. We must destroy the class society that it defends.



FLUSHED WITH 'VICTORY'

The first national water strike gave the water workers a clear view of the absurdities of union led disputes. Strike activity became eclipsed by the sequence of banal and useless negotiations, where both management and unions tried to outdo each other in taking up stances for the media. The cost to the workers, watching this stagemanaged farce, was five weeks wages: the outcome hardly raised anything, not even a laugh let alone wages.

WALKING ON WATER

The 'show' started with a government intervention to force the employers into a 4% pay limit when the unions looked set to accept the 6% on offer, plus the usual promises to look into comparability. Scenes were acted out, such as management withdrawing an offer as too high and then stating there was more money on the table than there actually was. The farce continued with Tebbit's claim that the strike was illegal by the unions rules as it was only supported by 61% and not the 66% of the membership constitutionally necessary. In reply the GMBTU stated that the rule book said the executive could call a strike regardless of the 2/3 majority role. The conclusion to the strike showed even greater dictatorial tendencies and double-talk. The strikers rejected as unacceptable an offer which management urged was a reasonable deal. Two weeks later the union negotiators accepted virtually the same offer, after arbitration, and claimed it was a great victory, while the management were now deeming it too high, in face of government displeasure. The leadership duly forced the deal — well short of the initial 15% claim — upon the membership. GMBTU boss David Basnett stated that the workers dissatisfied with the settlement 'don't really know what they are talking about. This is a tremendous victory. The wage packets of the workers obviously lie.

MILITANCY ON TAP

Given the victory that wasn't; the fact that most workers returned to work when the unions demanded they do so, shows the limitations to their unity. The union had broken the strike after various government interventions, notably by Tebbit, had strengthened it. The strike by and large had stayed solid. The government strategy that was successful in the Steel, Civil Service and NHS disputes — trying to wear the strikers down morally (by emphasising the social/economic harm done) as well as financially — had little impact. Government actions and remarks only incensed the strikers to a greater will to win. After five weeks on strike, when action was just beginning to have an effective impact, it was the unions, not the workers or government, who lost their battle. It seemed they could not take the pressure from an increasingly militant membership on the one hand, and orchestrated public opinion and

'shock horror' media stories on the other. They took the easy course and negotiated an end to the strike which was barely face-saving.

WATERED DOWN

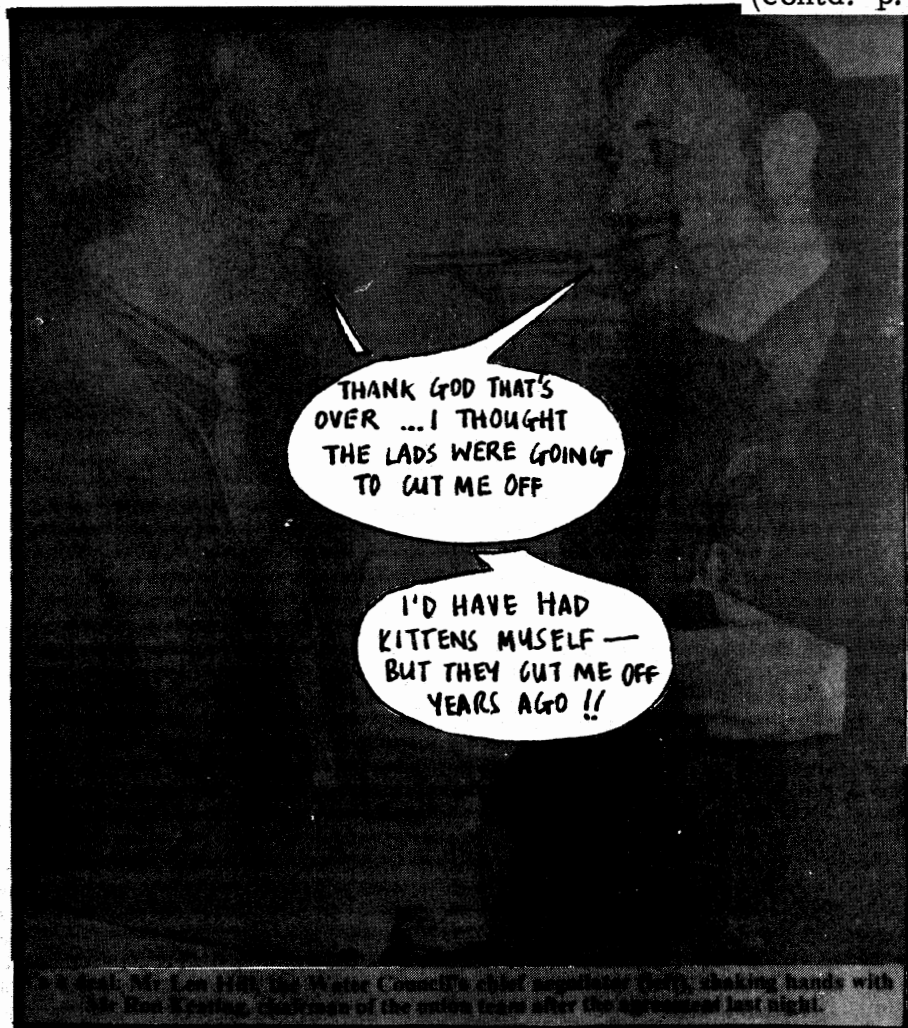
Overall the strike was not outwardly effective. Three million households had their supplies interrupted in some way, but this was confined to certain areas. The national strike was not national in effect — London, the centre of media public-opinion was hardly affected. In the areas that 'suffered' it was mainly the inconvenience of having to boil drinking water. Cut offs were limited and were directed against households not industry. Even so the image of chaos the strike

provided has allowed the government to go ahead with plans to legislate against strikes in the essential services. But more damagingly for the unions concerned, the 'industrial muscle' of the water workers has been exposed. The expected catastrophies did not occur. The government can plan to survive a 6-8 week strike without dire consequences. Given that the water workers resolve may not be as strong next time around — the phenomenon that first time strikers tend to be the most militant — future disputes will be that much harder to win in face of this government's resolve to approach every struggle as a war of attrition.

UNION SEWAGE WORKS

The strike showed the signs of union officials dominating events. Until management started repairing burst pipes and so on, the strikers were prepared to do so as a gesture of responsibility. Direct action, as always effective, was limited and sporadic — with the emphasis being on occupying administration offices rather than the plants and pumping stations. There were isolated acts of sabotage to try and shut down works but they were not widespread. Organisation between workers, outside of union channels was poor, shown up by the response however resentful, to the return to work ordered by the leadership. This has to be seen in context of course — the nature of the work process means waterworkers are largely isolated from one another. This obviously doesn't help solidarity at base level, and on the other hand gives the unions great power as the point of coordination of a dispersed workforce.

(contd. p. 8)



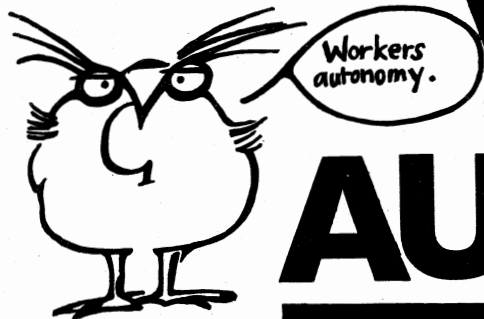
The print was too small, the articles were too long, too dense, too wordy and too boring, and what they said was all wrong. If we wanted recruits we wouldn't get them this way.

Those were some of the comments we got about the first issue of PLAYTIME. Without much doubt, all the same mistakes will be made in this issue, except maybe one.

Somebody said, it was all very well trying to read between the lines, but why didn't we say what we really thought, and what we were aiming at.

Fair criticism, but PLAYTIME is not about recruiting people to join a group, nor do we have a list of policies that we all agree with. Articles in the paper about different events that affect us as workers, are meant to contribute to the discussions that go on all the time, both at work and outside, about our own situation and what we can do about it.

However the point was taken. Somewhere else in this issue is a short description of the group which produced it. And the following article is a view of what class struggle implies. Like all the other articles its one persons view. If the title seems vague and confusing, it should become clearer by the end. However if the article seems even more vague and confused than the title then send us your comments -



WORKERS ?

AUTONOMY??

Nine years ago, the miners struck for a real increase in pay, and not only got it, but brought down a government. Since that time, industrial disputes have been getting fewer, and more likely to end in defeat. The most powerful groups of workers, according to tradition, are being forced to accept mass redundancies. Those who have public sympathy, according to the opinion polls, have lost many weeks wages in strikes, and then gone back to work with nothing, like the firemen and health workers.

Dole has been cut at the same time as unemployment was rising. There is now competition for the worst-paid jobs. The value of state benefits and allowances has fallen. Other elements of the social wage, like education and health, are being run down. More money and wider powers are being given to welfare agencies and the police, so as to contain, soften and if necessary suppress the response of working class people to the effects of poverty.

In 1983, the miners face the same prospect as workers in the steel, motor and railway industries: their wages falling in value, thousands of redundancies, and a speed-up in the rate of work. These changes, and their effects, are being felt everywhere in the working class. The small gains we made in the past, are being taken away by employers and the state. As the rate of their profits falls, it is the workers who pay the cost, as always. We seem to benefit when profits are growing, but these improvements vanish as quickly as they appear, through price rises, higher taxes, faster work, shoddier goods and mass unemployment.

Workers do not want to fight over wages during a recession, partly because they know they will probably lose, and also because of the fear which mass unemployment brings - of losing their job to an employer who pays less. As the water workers found, even 'winning' is in reality defeat, since it usually means standing still for twelve months instead of slipping backwards. As for the methods workers use to get their demands, the simple stay-at-home strike is getting less and less effective. It often plays into the hands of employers looking for a way to close down without having to pay compensation. The tactics used to get pay rises

reflect the nature of that kind of demand, which can only help one group of workers for a short time. This is why the health workers could not expect wildcat sympathy strikes in support of their pay rise, which they were trying to get by arguing they were a 'special' category.

PROFIT AND LOSS

The economic crisis is not short-lived. It cannot be blamed on bad luck or bad planning. It has happened before, on a smaller scale, and results from the unstable nature of the system itself.

In order to live, the working class depends on being able to sell its labour. What goods and services we produce, how they are distributed, consumed and reproduced, is determined by the logic of capital and those who manage it. This minority controls and effectively owns most of the natural, industrial and human resources. Its aims are to maintain social stability and a steady rate of profits. Stability means keeping the working class in its place, working as and when required, consuming what is for sale. Profits are made by selling goods and services for more than they cost to make, over and above what it costs to renew the economy and keep the workers in line. The source of this surplus is our labour.

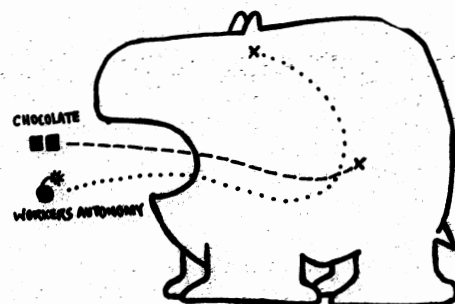
In both economic and human terms, the interests of the working class are opposite to those of its bosses. From the point of view of capitalists, crisis results from the profit motive itself, the pressure to keep growing, to re-invest profits in order to get the same rate of return. The only way for them to do this is to find new markets, or to intensify the exploitation of markets that already exist (by increasing produc-

tivity or forcing wages down.) If this does not happen fast enough to meet the desire for profitable investment, the result is conflict between capitalists as they search for new sources of profit.

On an international scale, economic war can turn to real war. Usually, the state acts as a mediator between capitalists within its political boundaries. But the state is not just a mediator. It is also the military and repressive arm of the ruling class, and a capitalist in its own right. When competition goes out of control on this scale, the state becomes an aggressive entrepreneur, whipping-up nationalist feeling in support of national capital. Whether or not the crisis becomes military, workers are taken out of normal production (through unemployment or conscription); austerity is imposed, and workers are set to fighting out their bosses quarrels. The resulting devastation provides capital with the right climate in which to recuperate and start growing again.

FACT: WORKER'S AUTONOMY REACHES A HIGHER LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, IN MINUTES, THAN THE OTHER LEADING PAINKILLER.

HERE'S SCIENTIFIC PROOF:



'A' IS FOR ALIENATION

It is not just that one class owns and profits from the work of another. The production of commodities — that is, goods or services for exchange — means that our whole lives are modelled on the profit motive and its requirements. We cannot give of ourselves, our time, our labour, according to our capacity or desire to do so; we cannot take what we need; we cannot decide for or among ourselves what those needs or desires are, or how to go about meeting them. We are only permitted to produce what can be exchanged, sold. In fact we are forced to do so, in ways that alienate us and turn us against each other. We can only take what is on sale, not what we need, not what we want, in strict proportion to our wage. And then most of it is rubbish, stuff on which someone can make a killing. Our social relationships repeat the pattern. We are isolated from each other, at work according to profitable divisions of labour; on the streets according to our capacity to purchase goods and other peoples time; even at home, where the division of tasks is made strictly domestic, and we are cornered into making private contracts, in the hope that this will secure us against the world outside.

Seen in this way, the question of what demands working class people make, and how to go about making them, takes on a wider meaning. It becomes a question of classes themselves, the way we are exploited, and how this can be opposed. We believe that it is necessary to struggle against the ruling class and its system in every possible way; to go beyond our isolation in this struggle, by developing solidarity at every level and in every place; and in this way to assert the autonomy of the working class against its oppressor. We can only do this on our own, for ourselves. Finally, we wish to see the ruling class overthrown, and a social revolution in which commodities, the state and both the classes are abolished.

Workers autonomy is not a blueprint or a set of policies. It exists only in as much as we can develop our own activity and ideas in opposition to the ruling class. It develops from our desire to see the downfall of this system, becoming a conscious understanding of the need to destroy it and the ways of bringing this about, in the course of everyday struggle with other members of our class. When theories are cut off from our practical experience, they become mere ideology, at best irrelevant, at worst elitist. If, on the other hand, we deceive ourselves that anything worthwhile and permanent can be gained by reforms, then we are condemned to endless isolation, cynicism and defeat.

BLOOD BROTHERS

Trade unions, which rely on this deception among waged workers, stand as a barrier to their struggles, even on the level of reforms. They exist only to negotiate the price and conditions of labour, and are therefore a part of the system itself, since they cannot be used to challenge it. At the highest levels of the bureaucracy, unions operate alongside national governments and private capital. They take part in economic planning, enforce government policy on wages and conditions, and participate in schemes of social control,

especially when Labour is in power. The unions reinforce all the divisions within the working class, between workers in one country and another, between waged and unwaged, skilled and unskilled, between workers in different industries, trades and workplaces. At the local level, union branches manipulate their members



by pre-empting their demands and enforcing agreements on discipline. They restrict workers demands to short-term wage settlements and changes in conditions. Activity against employers is only permitted if it can be used to consolidate the power of the union officials. The unions require militancy on tap, to order. Sometimes they will suppress strikes, sometimes they will demand heroic sacrifices. Sometimes they miscalculate (last month, the miners dealt a second blow to the personal ambitions of their union president, Scargill.)

Unions smother autonomous activity in the workplace, by outlawing independent agitation of all kinds, and by keeping discussion to a minimum. When disputes are made official, the unions take control. They slow down the pace of activity by sending strikers home, organising phoney one-day stoppages, demonstrations, delegations and endless negotiations. This is how they span out the dispute over wages in the National Health Service (*Playtime 1*), which ended in defeat. When strikes threaten to by-pass union channels, spread out of control or use unsanctioned tactics,

the union officials will attempt to sabotage them, denounce their members, and sometimes call in the police, as they did during the 1979 lorry drivers' strike, and again last month, when assembly workers at Fords Halewood damaged cars in protest at lay-offs.

If unionism is a dead-end, so is politics. It is not a question of electing people who will manage things more efficiently on our behalf, any more than it is one of putting forward more militant delegates to negotiate our wages. It was the Labour government of 1974-79, not the Tories, who began the present round of austerity measures. Meanwhile the inner cities have felt the full force of leftist welfare planning. The old working class ghettos have been demolished in programmes of estate-building, brand new ghettos where twice as many people could be put at half the cost. Labour councils have built up heavy welfare bureaucracies, partly to deal with increasingly poor and unruly populations, partly to build up a power-base for themselves in the local state.

As for the notion of a working class party, it is a contradiction in terms. Whether they aim at being elected in order to nationalise factories, or at overthrowing bourgeois democracy in order to substitute their own brand on our behalf, political parties can only be concerned with management and control. They cannot, even if they wish to, overturn capital itself; that is a task for the whole of the working class and nobody else. Nobody can create a better world for us. The problem of exploitation is in the end a problem of social relations, not one of economic management. Historically, every socialist and revolutionary party, along with every socialist and revolutionary union, has ended up in one of three ways; oblivion, complete integration into the ruling class, or if they managed to seize absolute power on the back of a revolution (as the Russian Bolsheviks did in 1917), they have become a new ruling class, the state and the only employer, and just as ruthless.

WORKERS POWER OR WORKERS PLAYTIME ?

A fairly new proposal, but one getting more popular with politicians of all shades, is the idea of workers co-operatives, in which everyone has an equal say in the running of the business. The theory is that this will make everyone work harder, since they have a share in the profits. Very little changes. In fact, it can be a way of making workers pay for unprofitable factories. Co-ops are still subject to capital, because they have to sell their products at market values. This means that they are still engaged in commodity production, and cannot claim to be making what people need: at their worst, co-ops are an extreme form of exploitation, working long hours very hard for low wages. Self-managed misery, all for the sake of an illusion.

In this country, talk of Workers Autonomy has only appeared quite recently. Elsewhere, and especially in southern Europe, it has been a recognisable current in working class struggles over the last fifteen years. In reality, autonomous workers groups have existed for a lot

(continued on p10)

NO FT - NO COMMENT

British Shipbuilders are currently facing a massive crisis. Nationalisation by the last Labour government was the prelude to drastic 'rationalisation'. Of course this is what nationalisation has always meant — the State bailing out 'key industries which no longer produce enough profit for 'private' capital. This is done by removing competition between the various nationalised companies, introducing new technology with State investment, reducing labour costs by cutting the workforce (23,000 jobs gone in shipbuilding since nationalisation), imposing corporate plans, tying up workers militancy in complex conciliation and arbitration schemes, and holding down wages with govt./union collaboration (Labour) or cash limits and confrontation (Tories). This has happened again and again as industries have been nationalised — every time presented as a victory for 'socialism'. The logical end result of this 'rationalisation' has been the present govt's selling off of these bits of the nationalised industries which State intervention has made profitable. (Leading to further 'rationalisation' as the new owners take away the concessions given to the workforce to induce them to accept nationalisation...)

But drastic surgery seemed to have paid off by 1981/2 with losses cut to £20m. — well within the loss limit set by the government. However the world recession in shipbuilding has sunk to new depths over the last eighteen months and with no sign of having hit the seabed. Warship yards received orders worth £585m. in the enthusiasm for Our Fighting Fleet after the Falklands war. But the value of merchant shipping orders placed in Britain last year was 25% down on the year before. At the end of 1982 there were only 56 ships on the books as opposed to 63 twelve months earlier — more worrying still hardly any new orders are being placed and Lloyds have calculated that 80% of orders worldwide are due to be completed by the end of 1983. British yards are already unable to compete with Japanese and South Korean prices they now face the real prospect of running out of work.

HATCHET JOB

If they lose it will have defused militancy without any 'damaging' and 'pointless' confrontations - they hope! (Exactly what the steel unions did in 1980 - opening the door to Macgregors hatchet job on the industry.)

In February outgoing BS chairman Sir Robert Atkinson warned of possible yard closures and called for 2,300 voluntary redundancies (average redundancy payment £5000 according to the press). He also said the industry couldn't afford any wage increase this year, and begged the unions to co-operate with a pay freeze and redundancies. The unions decided to go for a 'reasonable' 4% pay claim. They are 'committed' to oppose closures and compulsory redundancies but clearly see realistic opposition as impossible. Hence the old trick of going for a 'fair' pay claim - if they win it will sweeten the pill for those who still have jobs.

BS knows that its got the unions over a barrel however and has decided its not going to play. When unions and management met on March 18th to discuss the pay claim Atkinson announced that a further 9000 jobs might have to go and that plans to mothball some yards and for "job sharing, redeployment and retraining" would be announced on March 31st. Rumours meanwhile were carefully circulated about yard closures - Scott Lithgow kept coming up in this context.

The yard had been top of the loss league last year (nearly £15m.) (For some time the yard had been employed on one off jobs for the oil fields - no orders are being placed from this source at present.)

MANAGEMENT RUMOURS

Its an old trick for management to circulate rumours that redundancies or closures are going to be more drastic than is in fact the case. Its designed to defuse militancy when the truth is announced on the basis that 'its not as bad as it could be'. Having been given the big build up in this way the plans were announced. 9000 redundancies - 4000 of them in Scotland and 2250 (half the workforce) at Scott Lithgows. The week before Lower Clyde shipyard workers had voted against compulsory redundancies - and at Kincaid had walked out over short time working.

The other side of things is that BS faces losses of £70m. this year and seem set under new chairman, Canadian Graham Day (salary £80,000) for drastic rationalisation. The 9000 are likely to be just the first batch - BS would like to get rid of 20000 jobs this year alone.

When the plans were announced stewards began talking about taking action to resist them. However when pressed they displayed 'realistic' attitudes towards the likelihood of being able to switch on rank and file militancy, after years of trying to police it out of existence. Indeed having crawled on their bellies in recent years the unions clearly have little stomach left for a fight.

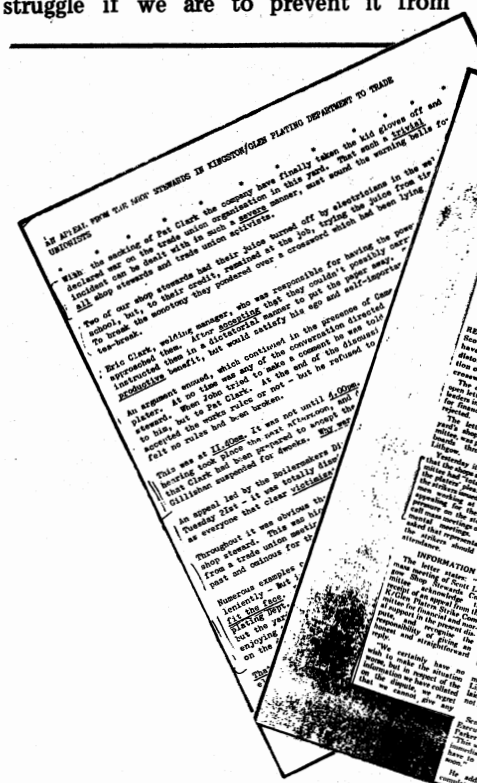
An illustration of the state of demoralisation within the unions is provided by the Crossword strike in Scott Lithgows last year. Industrial relations have been excellent within BS recently (so say the bosses). It's perhaps not accidental that Scott Lithgows which is the most likely yard to be closed down has been the scene of some of the only strikes to mar this record. This account of the strike is based on one written by one of the strikers, received courtesy of Anarchy. It demonstrates clearly what Hammer and Tongs, the rank and file paper inside Scott Lithgows during the late seventies, said in 1979:

'Workers have a long history of allegiance to their traditional leaders

ie. the unions and the shop stewards committees — but surely now we must realise that only independent action can show us the way forward.'

'Should we.... decide to carry the fight forward, then we cannot afford to leave the struggle in the hands of the unions or the stewards. Delegations would have to be picked from the mass meeting to link up workers in other shipyards. These delegates will be answerable to the entire workforce at the mass meetings and not to the unions. These delegates would be the delegates of the Lower Clyde shipyard workers and not puppets of the unions.

The entire workforce must control the struggle if we are to prevent it from



becoming a fake. If we put an end to the struggle now, all we are doing is telling the government, British Shipbuilders and the unions we are prepared to accept the dole queue.

CROSSWORD STRIKE

At the end of September last year, platers at Scott Lithgows in Glasgow struck in defence of two victimised stewards. Pat Clark and John Gillishan were in the company's welding school one morning, learning to use a type of welding rod for building oil rigs. (It's the lack of orders for oil rigs that's currently threatening Scott Lithgows with closure.) Power had been cut off so that repairs could be done. The two remained at their work bench waiting for it to come on again. To relieve the boredom they began doing the Financial Times crossword.

The welding manager came over and insisted they put the paper away. An argument broke out. The conversation was all directed at Pat Clark — when Gillishan tried to speak the manager told him to shut up — no one was talking to him.

The water workers can be seen to have missed a crucial opportunity to build solidarity outside the industry, with others such as the gas, electric and local authority manual workers who have similar interests as regards aspirations over pay and conditions. (Only after the strike was over did power workers in Wales make attempts to link up with gas and water workers.) If this contact had been established it would have put them all into a stronger position for the next round of pay demands, especially as the water workers 16 months settlement will bring negotiations closer into line with the other sectors next time.

SHIT CREEK REVISITED

Because of the complicated nature of the settlement it is difficult to put a figure on the outcome. The miners and electricians unions have also used this ploy, both to mystify their membership and keep their level of wage rises from other workers. The water unions were anxious to convince the strikers that the deal was a good one, 12-14%. But this was over 16 months and not backdated the six months to November. Management claimed it was only 10.4% (7.8% per year), and an independent study put it at around 10.5-11.5% with full bonus arrangements, and only 9.5-10.5% for those without long service. The extra 'bonus' comes from 'increased earning opportunities' — for example service, productivity, flexibility payments, a 38 hour week, an extra days holiday and quite a few more bits and pieces. This falls well short of the 8-9% increase on top of the basic rise that the strikers were seeking in order to move themselves up the pay league and into comparability with the highest paid manual workers

MANUAL OVERRIDE

The water workers settlement failed in its principal aim to bring their pay into line with electricity and gas workers. The electricians have accepted 7% and the gas workers look to be set on the same sort of figure, thus keeping their distance above the water workers.

While the failure of the NHS dispute preceeded the water workers strike the wage negotiations that have followed should be mentioned. The local authority manual workers are covered by NUPE, GMBTU and the TGWU — the same unions involved in the water workers dispute. In February, during the Water strike the council workers, albeit narrowly, rejected a 4.5% offer. After the strike the unions accepted a 4.87% on behalf of their members without a vote.

But what could be of greater significance for the water workers are the Steel industry negotiations. The government has made it clear that in the forthcoming Water Bill they will try to break up national pay negotiations into local agreements. This has already been put into effect in the Steel industry — last year there was no national pay rise only local efficiency deals. This year the Steel management have again refused national negotiation. With this prospect and the government's resilience, public sector manual workers seem set for even tougher struggles in the future

COMING APART AT THE SEAMS

The political voyeurs of the left have seen another illusion stripped bare: the miners will not be leading the working class into action against the government. As desires rose and fell, it provided yet another example of the impotence of current industrial activity. During the two weeks of speculation over the mineworkers response to another closure, the emphasis switched from the future of the pits to the future of the National Union of Mineworkers and its leader, Arthur Scargill. Unfortunately the wrong option is due to be scrapped.

After the South Wales delegate conference, which put off supporting the strike at Ty-Mawr Lewis Merthyr colliery in favour of an area ballot, the issue of pit closures and a national strike became caught up in the inevitable union manoeuvring. Emlyn Williams, area president, was the first of many to welcome the Lewis Merthyr protest and offer sympathy; he did this after refusing to implement the mandate to call a strike once the pit closure was confirmed.

PIT-BALLOT PROP

South Wales has been under a long-standing threat of pit-closures due to lack of investment in 'loss-making' pits. Under National Coal Board (NCB) plans proposed in November 1982, 10 of the 33 pits in the area were due for closure with another 6 possible. 10,000 out of 25,000 jobs were at risk. To counter this, the South Wales union executive arranged pit-head meetings, and on December 8th, the miners voted to strike from January 14th, unless promises of investment instead of closures were made. This was not forthcoming, and the NCB announced the shut-down of Lewis Merthyr colliery for July this year. The response of the 500 miners at Lewis Merthyr was an immediate strike. Encouraged by Des Dufield, the area NUM vice-president, 27 men staged a one-week underground sit-in. What started as an action to draw attention to a pit closure, which would have been easily ignored by the media and the vast majority of miners, led to an area strike and then became a national issue. Unlike recent strikes to save Kinneil colliery in Scotland and Snowdown in Kent, solidarity action spread. Behind it was the precedent of February 1981, when proposed pit closures were stopped by a series of strikes.

There was an unofficial walkout by 4000 miners in seven surrounding pits, prompting an area delegate conference. It was here that Emlyn Williams refused to support the strike, preferring an area ballot, and was met with jeers and prophetic cries of 'sold down the river!'. The following day, as the 27 men called off their sit-in because of appalling conditions, an eighth pit came out, bringing the number of strikers to 5000. South Wales looked set for an unofficial strike, which would simply be made official by the ballot. But the vote frustrated those already on strike, because it caused a 5-day delay in organising unified action, allowing coal stocks to be moved. After the strike vote came

out in favour, the union officials made their position clear. 'We don't want a strike, but we have been driven to it by the board' said Williams, when in fact he had been driven to calling it by his own members.

For a while the action grew. On the 28th February, South Wales miners had a 3-hour token occupation of the NCB's area HQ. More importantly, the Yorkshire leadership, without a ballot and expecting full support, called its members out on strike from March 7th. Durham and Northumberland decided to hold area ballots on the issue. The following day Scottish miners were called out for the 7th, again without balloting, and Kent held pit-head meetings in preparation for a strike. Derby Leicester, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire, traditionally moderate areas, decided upon area ballots. Significantly, the Notts area conference withdrew a previous executive decision not to go for a strike unless there was a full national ballot. But within two days this momentum had been halted, and reversed.

SCARGILL - THE PITS

While these decisions had been going on, Scargill had been keeping very quiet, especially in the light of his offers to go to prison over the NHS pay dispute. The martyr was prepared to excuse area delaying strike action by quoting paragraphs from the union's rule book, but it was obvious that this was not the way to gain control, especially if the action became effective. With things getting more and more out of their control, the executive saw the South Wales strike as 'unconstitutional', as it had not been 'authorised' by them. They complained that the executive 'is seen to be disregarded in so many instances these days. There will be concern over the haste



with which the whole exercise is launched.

Despite Scargill's previous aversion to negotiating with the NCB, and his obvious spoiling for a fight with the government, he needed the membership to rally behind him, not fight closures for themselves. With area operating outside the influence of the executive, he was in no position to bargain with the NCB. This is why he needed a national ballot. It was to do with sounding out support, not so much for a strike, as for him personally. His claim that the strike was about 'wider issues', was an attempt to divert attention away from Lewis Merthyr and pit closures, towards the likely appointment of Ian MacGregor as next Coal Board chief, thus making the dispute appear as a clash of personalities.

The broadening of issues to the whole future of the industry, and especially the spectre of MacGregor, was strictly within the limits of a union perspective. Scargill said that the only way to fight was with a strong union and a stronger leadership. There was little attempt to link the issues to the problems that confront working class organisation (although it was confidently asserted that MacGregor would not be allowed to do to coal what the steel workers had allowed him to do to the steel industry.) The national ballot was thus presented by Scargill as a vote for a strong union, and not so much over the strike against pit closures. He needed to maintain a united union behind his leadership, which could more easily be done through a national anti-strike vote than if only certain areas came out on their own. So the ballot, the strike, Lewis Merthyr and possibly other pits had to be sacrificed for the sake of unity.

WELL SHAFTED

From the outset, Scargill had not supported action wherever it took place, but had merely restated the union's anti-closure policy. It was reminiscent of his attitude in February 1981, during action against the proposed closure of 50 pits (5 of them in S Wales). Scargill, with his sights set on the union presidency, refused to call out the Yorkshire miners, not wanting to be seen to support unconstitutional strikes. The great industrial militant was roundly abused for his first attempt at selling them out.

The 1981 strike was finally halted by Joe Gormley, NUM President, and Derek Ezra, head of the Coal Board. Together, they used the fear of unofficial action leading to an unstoppable strike as a means to get £300 million from the government. This subsidised the 'uneconomic' pits, removing the prospect of closure and preventing the continuation of the strike. The 1983 strike was halted by Scargill alone, who diffused fear of a national strike by ordering a national ballot, thus blocking the momentum of the unofficial actions.

The failing of this dispute was the ease with which the executive got its way. In spite of the widespread deputations from S. Wales to other pits in the run-up to the ballot, they were not able to carry the momentum of the strike. But it is too easy to point to the lack of autonomy. The miners did reject union leadership, by rejecting Scargill's attempt to bring about a confrontation between himself



and the government — which is why he had to retreat into the issue of 'unity'. With this rejection came the jettisoning of the workers own aims and interests: there has yet to be a unified national struggle against the impact of redundancies and if the miners will not take it on, there are few industries which would. But even the spreading of strikes within one area — S. Wales — is more than most could hope for. Almost all struggles against redundancies are within the factory concerned. The need is to link struggle across industries.

The regional factor in the NCB's plans was reflected in the way various workforces approached the question of redundancies. An area like Yorkshire, although traditionally militant on issues like pay and conditions, is under much less of a threat than S Wales. Investment in the area's pits is high, and there are correspondingly high productivity bonuses.

The closures were not seen as a chance to get out of shitty and dangerous work, an attitude adopted by workers who have much better conditions than the miners. This is not just due to the lack of alternative work, even in an area like S.Wales. The strikes were not just aimed at saving jobs and the future of communities tied to bad conditions. They were strikes to save the future through investment in pits to make for better working conditions. This was the level of demand, and another

reason why, in the end, the strike failed to get national backing. With the Selby field being opened, there are plenty of opportunities for miners in Yorkshire and the surrounding areas, unlike South Wales. However, future actions may be more united, in view of a report that 75% of the industry's 200,000 jobs are at risk from new technology.

CAVE IN

The national ballot was presented not as an exercise in democracy, or as a vote over Lewis Merthyr. The executive was sure that the vote would go against a strike — the timing was wrong, with vast coal stocks in the country; Lewis Merthyr was not a strong cause to fight anyway. So the issue was turned into the perennial one for unions: 'unity'. Only through 'unity' could the membership rely on Scargill and survive the threats, not through spontaneous action in the areas. Previously, areas had taken their own decisions over strike action, but with the vote going against a strike the executive now had control over the situation, and the areas were brought into line. The national ballot — 'the final chance to save the industry' as Scargill put it — was the third rejection of national strike action in six months. It leaves Scargill still firmly in control, the workers demoralised and facing redundancies, and the left searching for another key-hole to peep through

WORKERS PLAYTIME is produced by some members of the London Workers Group. Articles all reflect the views of their authors. Playtime is intended as a forum for discussion - so if you disagree with something let us know. There is no editorial 'line' - but that doesn't mean we don't know what we disagree with.

The LWG is an open discussion group involving anarchists, councillors, autonomists and anyone else interested in workplace class struggle from a revolutionary point of view. It meets every Tuesday at 8.15pm, upstairs at the

Metropolitan Pub, 95 Farringdon Road, E.C.1 (Two mins. Farringdon tube). Anyones welcome to join in (except party recruiters!). If you want to know more but can't face meeting us, or if you want a copy of our free bulletin (send a stamp) then write to :

Box LWG, c/o Little @, C.1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E.1. (correspondence only). Typeset by Aldgate Press. Published and printed by the London Workers Group. Thanks to Little @ printers (488 0602) for assistance.

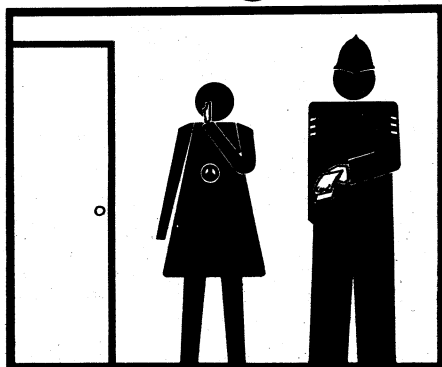
HOW THE OTHER HALF SURVIVES

Most of the jobs in this country (and most of the world) are useless, boring, oppressive and time-consuming. Working for the System, and for the rich and powerful parasites who control us all (and are wrecking this planet.) People do them mostly because they need the wage-packet.

But if you're not in a job (and not stinking rich), however busy you are and whatever useful things you do, you get either a pittance or fuck-all. About 25 million people are employed, so the rest of the working class (20 million, mostly women, children and pensioners) have to survive on Social Security (SS) or hand-outs from the 'breadwinner'.

There are over 10 million claimants trying to survive, and maybe *live* a little too. SS, although largely a reform won by working class strength and activity in the past (demanding rights, not charity) is like all 'rights' in this society — it can be eroded and taken away. Propaganda in the media

Social workers: paid to grass



remember
careless talk could
mean your arrest

about 'scroungers', bureaucracy to discourage people from claiming, and harassment by fraud squads etc., all aim to make sure then social *insecurity* and poverty continue, and that solidarity between people employed and claiming is prevented.

HARRASSMENT AND RESISTANCE

In recent months there have been changes in the SS rules, to try and increase control over claimants (such as local government now controlling rent, the new tax link-up computer for everyone, long claim-forms, etc.), reduction of benefits, and more intimidation.

Millions of people are too afraid, lacking information, or too proud to claim their full rights. Surveillance and threats of prosecution by fraud squads continue to try, but fail, to cow many *other* claimants, from screwing as much as possible from the system.

Recently, Special Claims Control Unit members (SCCUM) have been travelling around all regions of the country picking out claimants to intimidate, hoping to scare more people into signing off. Claimants Union (CU) and unwaged/unemployed groups have been publicising and protesting, aiming to disrupt their plans. This winter in the south-east, they spent some weeks in Islington, Haringey, Bexley, Hackney and Norwich as well as other places where there was no opposition. Tactics have included mass leafletting to encourage non-cooperation by claimants, neighbours and SS workers; an occupation of the Norwich office; 'welcoming' pickets (often joined by a few sympathetic staff); graffiti; monitoring of their cars and faces; public meetings; etc. The Islington CU were told by the staff that the publicity they and the local unwaged group did made the SCCUM's visit virtually ineffective as claimants refused to be intimidated.

HOMELESS ATTACKED

In Oxford last autumn, 300 homeless claimants (not the landlords organising the fiddle, in which they made a packet out of bogus tenancies) were arrested in a mass swoop. This was set-up and co-ordinated by police, courts, the media and a cabinet minister. The repression directed against one of the poorest and weakest sections of the working class is *meant* to show all of us how tough these bastards are, and also to build up the image of 'scroungers' being criminals if they refuse to accept the rules of poverty (starve gratefully and quietly.) In the same way, the state is trying to 'criminalise' anyone who resists their oppression.

Rather than be intimidated, we should take heart from the widespread resistance to poverty — shoplifting, fare-dodging, all sorts of fiddles (SS, electricity, etc.) sharing what we do have, refusal to be forced into jobs. Even on the job, this resistance continues — absenteeism, poor work, nicking stuff, insolence, strikes . . .

So as claimants (and as workers too), we have to stick together, discuss our common problems, fight back as best we can individually and collectively. We should work towards the abolition of money and

employment (and the whole state system), and just do sensible work, and share out the products of our labours fairly.

For more info on the SS, write to us for the broadsheet *Whose Benefit?* — *Changes in the SS Rules*

For contact with claimants and unwaged groups (and for help starting your own):

Federation of Claimants Unions, 296 Bethnal Green Road, London E2 (01-7394173) *London & S.E. Federation of Unwaged, Unemployed and Claimants Groups*, — c/o Bill Green, 294 Priory Court, South Countess Road, London E17.

WORKERS AUTONOMY

(Continued)

longer. Wherever working class people have brought their resentment to bear on the collective problems of everyday struggle, they have found the need to organise and fight in a completely independent way, not only against the employer and his class, but outside of unions and parties, and often against them. Such groups appear during periods of conflict as a way of developing communication and solidarity among the workers involved; they can draw lessons freely and apply them as they are learned, then pass that knowledge on to other groups. When the level of struggle dies down, so inevitably the autonomous groups cease to function as before, often being re-integrated into reformist political structures. Nevertheless, those who remain can develop the movement towards autonomous workers struggle by continuing to try and open up discussions and anti-work activity in the workplace. If they are isolated, they may form groups outside the workplace itself, as a way of continuing this discussion among the widest possible circle of people, even though such groups can never be a substitute for workplace activity (the group which produces *Playtime* comes into this category.)

In the longer term, we believe that the development of the revolutionary working class can only come about through autonomous activity and discussion at every level — within the workplace and outside. This article has concentrated on the struggles of waged workers in the workplace, but the principles apply to every member of the working class equally, wherever they are in conflict with the bosses and their system. We must fight for ourselves, with others who share our struggle, whether we are on the dole, working, homeless or harassed (or all those at once — think about it.) The pressure and divisions which are imposed on us can be turned into an attack on the system from all sides. As these attacks grow in strength and number, they will become a revolutionary movement of the whole working class, which has one common interest; the end of capitalism and its conditions of endless poverty, work, crisis and war.

We need a new world

Italy's 'Hot Winter' 1983

After a period of relative social peace, widespread class struggles erupted in Italy this winter.

(Based on a longer article by the ITALY 79 committee.)

From the mid-seventies the Italian Communist Party (PCI) has participated in the decisions of central government. This strategy of the 'historic compromise' succeeded in creating great confusion within the Italian proletariat — the PCI had been in permanent opposition since 1945. The 'historic compromise' was consolidated from 1978, enabling the government of National Unity to check the growth of autonomous working class organisation. The cycle of autonomous struggles dating back to the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 appeared to be broken.

Employers succeeded in regaining control in the factories. They were greatly assisted by the 'cassa integrazione' (1) — a pool of state funds which could be used to lay off selected workers, or even sections of workers. New technology has been widely introduced to reduce workers' power in the production process.

Thousands of communist proletarians have been arrested — usually through 'guilt by association' frame-ups in a climate of anti-terrorist hysteria.

But in the autumn of 1982 there appeared the first signs of a renewal of widespread struggles. Negotiations were taking place on modifying the 'scala mobile' — the system which indexes wage rises directly to inflation. In many places, workers began to reassert themselves, regaining lost confidence, to sway decisions in their own interest. Their mass participation in workers' assemblies brought about a decisive rejection of the union's proposal to accept a reduction in the 'scala mobile'.

In December 1982 Prime Minister Fanfani brought in a further round of austerity measures. They were met by a series of strikes and demonstrations organised outside the union apparatus. Union officials who attempted to regain control were accused of collaborating with the state and employers.

Early in January the national trade union leader Marianetti was shouted down and pelted with eggs by workers in Bologna's main piazza. They were incensed by Marianetti's criticisms of workers' actions during the strikes, and forced him to leave the platform.

The lesson was not lost on the union bureaucrats: during the general strike of 18 January 1983, not a single union leader dared to address any of the mass demonstrations throughout Italy. It was the country's first 'silent general strike'. The union leaders dared not announce the deal they were about to make with employers — a 10% reduction in the 'scala mobile' (the employers had proposed 30%)

Meanwhile the state's social contract and repressive acts are being disrupted by hundreds of demonstrations in key transport and communications centres. Hundreds of thousands of people — young and old, men and women, workers and unemployed — occupied motorways, airports, and railway stations.

The government used special repressive laws to attack and criminalise these actions — but only selectively, to avoid provoking further occupations. The Interior Minister arranged special meetings with the trade union leadership, who afterwards strongly condemned the mass actions. But this only separated workers from the unions even more, and the actions spread. The government was forced to withdraw some of the more unpopular austerity measures.

When the trade unions signed an agreement to a 20% reduction of the 'scala mobile', the rupture between the mass illegality of the proletarian movement and the collaborationist politics of the unions and left parties became total. The unions had exposed themselves as irrefragable agents in the state's attempt to take back the gains of the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969.

Although the proletarian movement had developed autonomously of the unions in the 1970s, this was mostly restricted to a vanguard of militants. By the mid 1970s this rupture was taking on a more offensive, mass character. Consequently, in spite of the retreats since the last few years, hostility towards the unions has continued to develop. Now it is becoming increasingly difficult for the parties and unions to contain the conflict erupting in hundreds of revolts.

The recent events at ANSALDO, the most important industrial complex at Genoa were typical.

A few years ago a Communist Party shop steward gave the police the names of some workers who had been seen distributing Red Brigades leaflets. Several workers were subsequently arrested. One, a 55 year old called Berardi, was tortured by the police and forced to confess to his own and others' activities. He later hanged himself whilst in solitary confinement. The shop steward responsible for Berardi's arrest was shot dead by the Red Brigades, an event which served as the pretext for police harassment of many ANSALDO workers.

ANSALDO workers themselves took a lead in the struggle over the winter. It was ANSALDO workers who led the march to Genoa airport, where an occupation prevented planes from

taking off and landing. They also overwhelmingly rejected the agreement between their unions and employers. The PCI had been confident that the workers would accept the agreement — and so had supported it in parliament and the unions. Now it was forced to admit that it could no longer control the workers at the ANSALDO factory: the party daily *Unita* said that the workers' public declarations 'put them firmly outside the framework of the traditional workers' union confederations'. The party's concern was justified: the ANSALDO workers' rejection of the agreement signed by their union was repeated in the majority of factories throughout Italy. It was no longer simply a matter of the rejection of particular agreements, but of the entire political line of the trade union confederation.

Workers are now taking initiatives against continuing police repression, for example at Alfa Romeo in Milan, where police had arrested a revolutionary communist worker. Other Alfa workers responded by striking and marching into the courthouse to confront the judges, distribute leaflets and hold a press conference. Their comrades were later released. This is the first occasion since the mass arrests of the workers have responded in such a way.

The entire 'Hot Winter' was organised and carried out by proletarians for their own objectives and using forms of struggle of their own choosing. It was carried out in spite of the inquisitorial climate of police repression, and the mass media obsession with 'terrorist suspects' supposedly manipulating mass illegal actions. This 'Hot Winter' of struggles appears to have changed the political situation, bringing a renewed confidence to the Italian proletariat.

(contd. from p. 7...)

“Well the meeting did take place in Newcastle — Pat Clark was still sacked and John Gillishan got his suspension reduced to a week.”

“On May 14th, 1982 the afore mentioned shop stewards committee signed a *no strike agreement* with the company. The Scott Lithgow shop stewards committees are afraid. The company's propaganda regarding the state of the industry has been accepted by them. No way are they prepared or willing to fight any future redundancies that seem to be coming our way. This attitude of theirs — if we are good boys and behave ourselves maybe we will get orders. Heaven help us when the crunch comes because there is no ground work being done to fight redundancies and closures.”

In Poland the army breaks up workers strikes. In the Scott Lithgow group it's the shop stewards committee that breaks strikes.”

Judge sla
2-year d
ban on T
David So



FACTORY RIOTERS SMASH 90 CARS

(... contd. from p. 1)

the timeclocks this obviously wasn't possible. The foremen were sold out by their officials before the end of the week and a return to work set for Monday 14th. Three sections of the paint shop refused to start work without an assurance that the Tuesday night shift would be paid. Not getting it they went home — however, the stewards committee refused to back the strike, arguing it was throwing good money after bad.

SABOTAGE

On returning to work a few workers quite rightly set about damaging some company property. By the end of the day minor damage had been done to over 200 Ford Escorts — paint work scratched, gear levers bent and so on. Then on the Thursday night the sprinkler system was set off and two hours production lost with part of the plant flooded. Management then shut off the fire sprinklers at the mains which led to four rubbish trucks being set on fire.

Significantly no-one attacked the foremen despite their obviously privileged position — they always get paid when line-workers are on strike and recently a foreman at the Bridgend Plant was rewarded with a car for losing six people their jobs via the company suggestion scheme. Again, the Liverpool branch of the foremen's union ASTMS (Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staff) recently discovered a company document leading them to believe that Ford is planning to close down Halewood and produce the successor to the Escort in Japan but they refused to turn it over to any line-workers, even to TGWU officials.

BACKGROUND

All this took place against a background of massive job losses (mostly through voluntary redundancies) from Ford factories all over the country in recent years. For example, 6000 jobs have been lost from the Dagenham estate alone since 1979. The reasons for this are automation, the switching of production to other countries, and the introduction of a massive 'efficiency programme.

This efficiency programme — originally known as 'After Japan (AJ) as part of an attempt to bring in Japanese management techniques, but now known as the 'European Efficiency Campaign' following

union resistance to 'AJ' — is a scheme by which the traditional demarcation between some skilled and unskilled workers is broken down and line workers are taught to do jobs which would otherwise be done by 'higher grade' operatives. It's essentially a means of getting more intense and more skilled work out of people without paying them any more for it. At Halewood alone hundreds of quality control inspectors jobs are to go.

HALEWOOD AGAIN

The immediate management plan is to reduce the number of jobs at Halewood by 1,300 by April '83 and by a further 1,700 after that. There is also the threat of closure already referred to. The foremen's strike which sparked off the sabo-

tage had happened because a foreman had been disciplined for refusing to train an operator — a job which had previously been done by relief and repair workers but which couldn't be done by them because there weren't enough of them, so many jobs having been cut.

SHOCK HORROR

What was conveniently not mentioned in either the *Guardian* or *Socialist Worker* articles about the sabotage is that the unions gave their full support to the bosses in tracing the culprits. This is only to be expected. The bureaucrats are always ready to condemn as 'irresponsible' those actions which they cannot control — actions outside the framework of 'orderly negotiations' with the bosses.

Maxwell axes 250 for 'anarchy'

Robert Maxwell is insisting that the 350 Radio Times printworkers dismissed by his company (British Printing and Communications Corporation) for 'anarchic behaviour' will not be given their jobs back. Even if they are, any 'victory' is likely to be short-lived.

Employment in the printing industry — traditionally a bastion of working class militancy — has been savagely cut in recent years. Worse is to come. The Printing Industries section of the National Economic Development Council predicts a fall in employment of 84,000, from 250,000 to 166,000.

SOGAT IS GETTING SLADE

Workers in print have become less and less able to defend their jobs through the unions. These old craft organisations remained useful so long as printing processes depended mainly on the skill of the individual craftsman. By controlling the supply of labour into the trade, for instance through long apprenticeship, they could protect jobs and keep wages high.

But despite many battles, the unions have not been able to stop the advance of sophisticated, labour-saving technology. As a result, the demand for labour has steadily fallen, both in quantity and quality. And the current recession makes things even tighter for printworkers.

The current dispute at the Radio Times is a good example. Management can break up a militant group of workers simply by moving operations to a more technically advanced plant

The 250 SOGAT 82 workers were sacked for their action over non-payment of a bonus. BPCC had promised a pre-Xmas 'goodwill' supplement, averaging £400 per person, in return for extra productivity. They withheld part of this payment because of 'lack of progress' Maxwell ordered the sackings during the strike which followed.

Printing operations have since been transferred to another plant at East Kilbride, near Glasgow, which up to now has printed only 1½ million of the RT's 3½ million copies. Maxwell claims that East Kilbride already has the technical capacity to handle the extra work. And current levels of unemployment mean it should not be hard to find the extra 200 workers, who, Maxwell hopes, will form the nucleus of a docile, semi-skilled workforce.

So far, the move has not been easy — 114 East Kilbride workers had to be sacked for actions in solidarity with Park Royal. Meanwhile SOGAT 82 has made gestures of protest by blacking the distribution of Sunday colour supplements printed by BPCC.

And the Park Royal workers are not the sort to take this lying down. The management were praising their militancy when they spoke of "a record of non-co-operation and bloody-mindedness on a scale unequalled in British industry." Indeed, of the last 52 issues of RT, only 7 have been on time and up to the full print run.

The BPCC will eventually move the whole operation to East Kilbride, or at least away from Park Royal. At the moment it is continuing typesetting there. The typesetters are members of the NGA — as usual, employers are taking advantage of the union divisions to play off groups of workers against one another. For the typesetting operations at Park Royal are even more archaic than the printing — much of it is still done by hand!

The development of technology has, over the years, made it harder for production workers to rely on skill as a weapon against the bosses. The craft unions, like those in print, are now unable to manipulate the labour market in the way they used to. Nowadays their only function is to perpetuate artificial divisions between workers in different firms and industries. But it is only the unity of mass, autonomous action which can help workers like those at Park Royal.

The print unions also police their own unemployed members, much more efficiently than the Department of Employment or the DHSS. The next issue of 'Playtime' will carry an article about the anti-working class activities of the National Graphical Association (NGA).