

HOSPITALS : SICK OF HYPOCRISY

THE HOSPITAL WORKERS involved in strike action and other forms of industrial action have faced a campaign of misrepresentation and downright lies from the Government, the Press and hospital authorities which must convince everyone that we live in a truly sick society. We have been bombarded by highly-paid doctors spreading horror stories of patients' lives at risk despite the way in which the hospital workers have maintained emergency services to treat patients in need of urgent attention. This concern by the workers was clearly shown when pickets immediately returned to work at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London to assist the injured from the Old Bailey bomb explosion. Elsewhere, hospital authorities have refused to negotiate difficulties with the union and rather than seeking assistance from the workers have gone screaming to the grateful Press. The stories of delays in treating patients are a sick joke to the thousands of people who normally have to wait months for operations while the rich jump the queue and receive extra attention as private patients. A real social medical system would not only provide the best possible treatment for all who require it, but would also end the exploitation of the workers who operate it.

The vicious propaganda campaign from the capitalist Press is only to be expected but perhaps the day will come when print-workers will use their industrial power to stop the flow of verbal diarrhoea which drowns the most exploited sections of their fellow-workers and those least able to defend themselves. Even *Peace News* with its pretensions to trendy radicalism could do no more than shake its empty head and perpetuate the emotional blackmail. John Ball wrote last week:

"Their case is unquestionably just, and seen as such by most people -- but the traditional strike is just not an appropriate weapon. In the last resort the vulnerability of hospital workers to the needs of the sick people is greater than that of the government who can in any case rely on the press to do its best to push the blame for any suffering onto the strikers and not on those who refuse them their just demands."

What this comfortable washing-of-hands conveniently forgets is that the hospital workers have been forced to take strike action precisely because all other methods have failed, and because of the total lack of assistance from the rest of society, brother trade unionists and trendy liberals and pacifists included. Why are the

most exploited and oppressed always expected to make the altruistic gestures which the relatively affluent consistently refuse to make?

The hospital workers are amongst the poorest paid in the country: a local hospital porter recently showed a journalist his pay slip showing that he took home only £13-a-week and that included weekend overtime. Nevertheless there has been precious little supporting action from other groups of workers -- with the honourable exception of the building workers in Southampton who staged a one-day sympathy strike. In reply to their very modest claim for a £4-a-week increase the hospital workers have now been offered £2-a-week extra for men and £1.80 for women. This has been rejected by the union. A call for a public inquiry into the pay has been rejected by Sir Keith Joseph, Social Services Secretary, who said: "The national interest must prevail -- the Government is not going to give way." Ironically, it was announced in the same week that hospital laundry work is to be done by slave-labour in three new prisons to be opened in 1976!

Until moral indignation is translated into practical action and we all act to end the exploitation of the poorest placed in society then they will be forced to act alone. And we who stand aside can only lower our heads in shame.

Terry Phillips

PROFITS OF APARTHEID

THE REVELATIONS in the *Guardian* (12/3/73) by Adam Raphael concerning starvation wages paid to African employees of British-owned firms in South Africa have led to an outbreak of concern that requires analysis.

Firstly, Raphael's factual material is as shocking as anyone with the slightest knowledge of South Africa would expect. Two years ago Prof. John Reid of Natal University "suggested that 40% (400 per 1,000) of African children died before the age of 10 in Transkei, the least poverty-stricken Bantustan" (John Laurence, *Guardian* 16/3/73) and Infant Mortality Rates in South African cities were from 85 per 1,000 in Durban to 330 per 1,000 in Port Elizabeth. The town of Port Elizabeth is where British and American cars are assembled. The average I.M.R. of whites in South Africa is 20 per 1,000.

It is then somewhat suspect when the liberals and christians suddenly discover a conscience over the whole question of making a profit from apartheid. Since Sharpeville, when 54 people died, it is estimated that every day 54 black babies have died due to the payment of starvation wages, and comparisons with Ghana show that where the per capita income was a third of that in South Africa the Infant Mortality Rate was substantially lower than for Africans in South Africa. As I.M.R.s are a guide to the level of nutrition and medical services enjoyed we can come to the obvious conclusions about South Africa. The Raphael reports simply add confirmation.

Stung into speech by the *Guardian*, however, politicians have excelled themselves. Jeremy Thorpe wants to set up a "vigilante group" of M.P.s to investigate those making excessive profits as a result of paying starvation wages. If the "vigilantes" turned their eyes to the excessive profit made by a firm of financiers dealing in second mortgages of which Mr. Thorpe is a director they would find profits of 25%, which exceed many profit margins in South Africa.

Which brings us to the British Council of Churches who begin their publication *Investment in Racism* by asking, "Can a Christian in all conscience profit from racism?" We must reply with a more meaningful question: "Can anyone with a conscience make a profit from the labour of others?" Why is profit suddenly worse because apartheid assists the acquisition of such a profit? Workers in Britain have a right to be cynical at liberals and christians who weep copious tears about blacks in South Africa but lift not a finger for hospital ancillary staff and support a wage freeze which benefits the rich and penalises the poor in Britain. The support of liberals and christians does a disservice to the African people because British people feel that only black people are able to gain sympathy and this only encourages racial antagonism amongst working people.

The British firms engaged in exploiting the Africans in Southern Africa are none the less particularly callous and vulnerable to action in Britain. Anything we can do to increase the strain on the interests underpinning apartheid/capitalism in South Africa is an act of solidarity with the brave African strikers who challenge the inhumanity of seeing their children starve before their eyes by taking direct action. Our pressure is best directed at all institutions and individuals who profit from investments in apartheid by insisting on the sale of such investments and the severe questioning of the method of investment as such. Then there are schemes run by the Haslemere Group to buy a share in Barclays, Rio Tinto Zinc, Tesco, etc. with Southern African involvement, thus entitling one to attend the firms A.G.M. Nuisance value and pressure of this type is useful if no one sees the process as more than acting as an irritant. N. London Haslemere Group, 515 Liverpool Road, London N.7 for more information on this.

One danger of this method of struggle however is that it can

merely lead to improved wages for Africans and leave the apartheid system stronger than ever. It strikes this observer that the ballyhoo of the liberals is directed at reducing the support for the African liberation movements. Whilst acknowledging the anarchist suspicion of all nationalist organisations it seems quite clear that only revolutionary action will topple the white oppressors in Southern Africa. Our essential task might well be to influence the African liberation movements towards a more revolutionary anarchist position. Learning from traditional African society and the best of libertarian social struggle we can go forward together to not only liberate Southern Africa from racial oppression but rid the world of an essential cornerstone of the capitalist system.

As six people, four black and two white, are being tried at the Supreme Court in Pretoria for allegedly preparing for a revolution in South Africa we could do well to reflect as to the wisdom or otherwise of taking such a course. Those who have tried to change the South African regime have suffered unimaginable cruelty and it is only justice to remember their suffering as we seek to subvert South Africa.

Dennis Brutus, a South African, reminds us:

*Sorrow descends on me/with the dark; Life is not simple/nor pleasant/nor even bearable; And on this night/as on a thousand other nights/there are men who languish/in the dark/with whom I laughed/with whom the intolerable burden/of unfreedom/presses/like the dark.

J.W.

*From *Other Voices Other Places*, an anthology of Third World poetry (15p) obtainable from the British Council of Churches, 10 Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BT

Railwaymen's Dilemma

WORK-TO-RULES on the railways are always very unpopular with the travelling public, especially those trying to get to and from work. Even without industrial action a journey on the busy Southern Region can be an exasperating experience. This places any section of railwaymen who want to take industrial action in a dilemma. If they embark on an all out campaign, they lose their wages but at least the travelling public knows where it stands. But the very effective tactic of working to rule earns them little sympathy.

What the travelling public forgets is that railwaymen are only operating rules made by management. If and when the non-observance of these rules causes an accident, railwaymen are then blamed for not carrying out safety regulations. When the situation was reversed Mr. Hunt, tory M.P. for Bromley, wanted British Railways to sack men for refusing to take out trains without a speedometer. I would have thought that a speedometer and wipers were essential parts to ensure the safety of the passengers, and yet B.R. withdrew mileage bonus from footplatemen when they refused to take out trains which had these items missing.

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen called off their industrial action following British Rail's decision to discuss their claim for consolidating their mileage bonus into one payment of £40 for all drivers. At the moment, drivers on Southern Region have to cope with the complex commuter lines and earn less than those on the long distance runs. Equal wages is a just aim, and workers should not fall for management's divide and rule tactics of a graded job structure which they have for signalmen. Rates of pay for these National Union of Railwaymen members can range from £22.95 a week in a local country signal box to £35.60 for those operating the large automated boxes.

Throughout the footplatemen's dispute, the N.U.R. have gone out of their way to attack ASLEF's assistant general secretary, Sid Weighall - even went so far as to say that the dispute could endanger the jobs of all railwaymen. The N.U.R. at first insisted that this year's general wage claim should be settled before any further working party restructuring of wages talks take place. Their change of mind means that these can be resumed on Monday, with the general claim talks being held on Wednesday.

Obviously, the ASLEF executive's stand has been motivated by their wish to remain in business as a separate union. Membership has declined from 70,000 to 29,000 over the last 15 years. The N.U.R. has only 5,000 members as drivers, the rest of their 200,000 members covering all the other manual jobs. The N.U.R. to a great extent has been responsible for the run down of the railways and jobs.

But the railways are in a terrible state. The vast network that linked so many towns has now been axed. The present congested roads and the plans to build motorway boxes in

continued on page 3

STOP PRESS Swedish dockers have refused to unload a South African cargo of fruit, on learning that the Zulu crew of the British-owned ship, the *Clan Robertson*, were paid well below normal seamen's rates. The Swedish dockers said they should have three times as much pay. The ship, its cargo only partly discharged, is proceeding to Southampton. Will the dockers there follow the *Guardian's* words with deeds like the Swedish dockers? It's up to Southampton now!

Eds.

THE BURNING BUSH

When I was but a child my mother would take me with her to visit my uncle in the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum. There within the huge visiting hall I would sit at the long table opposite my uncle while my mother reheated his Sunday Dinner on the communal gas stove as she did all those many Sundays over those long years. Every Sunday in all those sad years she would carry those enamel dishes of beef, greens, potatoes and custard puddings that my uncle might have one material link with the walls beyond the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum. And while my mother waited her turn at the communal gas stove my uncle and I would sit and shyly smile at each other for in all my visits I do not recall that we ever spoke. He was a sweet and gentle man and once, without asking, he removed his coat and opened his shirt to show me the shrapnel wounds from his trench warfare and I marked his scarred body and his puzzled mind and questioned our society in my own childish fashion. And there was the time that as my mother and I rose to leave my uncle handed me a handful of papers and I took them with me from the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum I sought to read them, in some lonely corner, and they were but nought but page after page of tiny writing, meaningless concocted words filling the page from edge to edge and I let them drift from my fingers into space and time.

That gentle little man knew that words had a power beyond the person and he wished to communicate the reasonings of his broken mind to others beyond the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum and even though he could not rationalise his fears and desires into the common written tongue he believed that by imitating the form and the actions of a writer he could convey the questions of his hurt mind. My uncle is long dead and lies buried in an unremembered grave around which his relations continued their vicious and fratricidal wordy warfare as the earth was casually spaded onto the cheap coffin. The name of the asylum has been changed but the walls still stand, wars are still fought and the stresses of our tormented age still fill the mental wards.

In the Arthur Tooth Gallery at 31 Bruton Street W1X 8ES, off Bond Street, Richard Cork, the art critic of the mass circulation Evening Standard, has been chosen to select the 1973 work of living British Painters for this year's Critic's Choice. In the past the work has been orthodox and literary but Richard Cork has thrown his hat in the air and it would seem his own values, for like John Berger he would seem to be a man living by two artistic standards. Berger was a man who publicly followed the official narrow and gritty marxist line, and one always felt that one knew that come the dreary academic slabs of social realism Berger would find value in it while casting a jaundiced and leery eye at the abstracts and the surrealist vanities of our local talent, yet in doing the rounds of the Bond Street wards one could meet Berger dreaming before a beautiful but meaningless abstract. Cork in his fashion carries the banner in the Evening Standard for the educated and literate common man and come the pretty paintings he will declaim their manifest virtues, therefore one wonders why this farrago of meaningless rubbish upon the walls of the Tooth Gallery.

Atkinson has two empty frames on display for which he is asking £2,200,000, and with inflation I will accept the £2,200,000 price but not the work of art. Dye offers us a reel of "blank film, on which has been scratched (one letter per frame) some of Richard Cork's review; while Gilbert and George are but two gentlemen of the Town who will do an instant freeze into living sculpture at the drop of an invitation, but whose paintings droop from ceiling to floor, at one time or more, in half the fashionable galleries. Banal, incompetent daubs doing no more than filling wall space too awful for the faint-hearted critics to reject for fear that within this corrupt lunacy may lie genius.

John Latham has long made his own scene but his art is literary and surrealist and in three dimensions becomes good solid Chamber of Hor-

rors props, yet of them all he is the only one one could claim to have any form of talent, and that is and has always been but to amuse we the mob.

There was a time when an art writer named Alloway ruled the London art scene and his coterie of third rate hacks painted what the writer dictated and we had all those barren years of Hard Edge Abstract Paintings dictated by Alloway and created by second rate sign writers making public fools of themselves as fourth rate artists. One feels, nay knows, that within the Tooth's Gallery men without art and without talent are once more winning the wall space as the camp followers of a writer who intends to create his own school of night.

Page After Page

I began by writing of the pages of meaningless lettering that my uncle passed to me when I was a child and within Tooth's catalogue is John Stezaker's two extracts from "The Trimodality of Art-Activity". Page after page and column after column of meaningless jargon, words pile on words until the mind must reject any attempt to come to terms with it, for Richard Cork's coterie are but men without art seeking to communicate a creative desire that has no foundation within themselves and they will pass for they are but art gallery dross, and only Cork the writer will survive with new clowns for his circus.

Within 96 Piccadilly the Arts Council are giving us IDENTIFICATIONS and one can sit from morn till closing time watching a looped video tape show an endless mindless TV picture of two hands "folding a hat". Mindless repetition from now to infinity, and the art of John Baldessari, while at the Tate Robyn Denny is given the chance of a major exhibition for his geometrical abstracts. One cannot fault this exhibition for wisely no great claim is made for the work displayed. The key (like Rosebud) lies in the title to a painting of 1965 and "drink me" is but the Alice in Wonderland key to these pretty but vapid geometrical abstracts of door and window frames each in their own candy colouring.

Only Henry Lamb at the New Grafton at la Grafton Street W1X 3LB makes it with his retrospective exhibition, for he possessed all the virtues and the failings of his time and class. He shot his mortal coil in 1960 but justified his minor talent by leaving us a visual paited record of his friends and associates, and they ranged from Lytton Strachey to Stanley Spencer, and in doing so he served his class and his small gift.

THEATRE

Tough Irish

But for the Town and his beer-drinking frau there is the Bush Theatre. The Bush Hotel is the Irish Pub next door to the old Shepherds Bush Empire and it still carries on one wall an ancient and fading BRYMAY SAFETY MATCH BRITISH AND BEST advertisement. The tough Irish and their broad-beamed wives fill its bars, there is strip tease on Sunday after mass, drag on Thursday, music groups and the occasional punch up. In the rooms above the pub there is the Bush Theatre and in the beginning it was accepted as no more than another broken-back vanity born to oblivion after a few artistic failures. And in the beginning the actors did play to empty houses and too many times one sat with a pint of beer in one's hand and a dog between one's feet as the sole member of the audience. The Bush Theatre has been dragged into merited success by the work of Brian McDermott who tore tickets, moved chairs and took his roles within the passing plays. Arden fetched in the St John's Wood wanderers and the House Full sign was painted, and Mr. Jean Frederick the Queen Mother of the Gay Lit Movement had the Kings Road camp followers breathing glory for the Christmas political pantomime.

The Bush Theatre, as befits all good Irish pubs, has had its bomb scare and it is now a needed and acceptable part of the London cultural fringe, yet one must wonder why it is hardly ever the bar room

regulars who climb the stairs to the pay but always outside visitors. There are, at the time of writing, two plays by Howard Barker for the price of 30p a seat, and while one can fault the plays one cannot fault the acting by every member of each cast. Barker's play SKIPPER is an allegorical satire on the old values perverting the new even though all must be destroyed. Played out by Chichester, an ancient contemporary waterlogged hero becalmed at sea with two McAlpine type stowaways, Howard seeks to explore and expose our own society. In this he fails for in both plays the situations are too contrived, the arguments too naive and the dialogue lacks wit or genuine passion. Within the theatre one can explore the ethics of Howard's stowaway murdering and then eating his own father's liver to survive, but Rome has beaten Howard Barker to the punch by stating that one can eat human flesh to survive providing the fleshee is already dead before carving and serving, so what we are left with is a play that begins as imitation Beckett with the first character and becomes imitation Pinter with the entrance of the two remaining characters. David Markham is magnificent in the part of Chichester for he has the air and the stance of that old man, and Michael Feast and Sydney Johnson are wonderful foils to Markham's air of elderly evil-mindedness.

Pointless Satire

With MY SISTER AND I, Barker allows his players greater scope, but for all that one feels that he is kicking a dead enemy for the British Royal family are completely divorced from political power and therefore to jeer at them before a committed audience by creating artificial situations is as pointless as spitting on the Cross in a Russian Anti-God Museum. But we have Princess Margaret with an impotent revolutionary trying to fuck her while she organises her sister the Queen's murder that she might assume the throne. We have the revolutionary scaring no one but himself and we wonder why if there is a revolution in the streets he is wasting his time and ammunition in Buckingham Palace.

In 1957 Jean Genet's play THE BALCONY was produced in London and Genet tried to argue that the inmates of the brothel, on his stage, was reality and the revolution outside was fantasy and both Barker and Genet, yea even Brecht, were wrong for when the play reaches the stage it is preaching to the converted and uncommitted for it is we the audience who are Belloc's "remote and ineffectual dons", for the struggle is in the street and never in the theatre, and all the mummies ranting written revolution will never win a convert to the brutal realities of a revolutionary struggle. But for all that I salute the actors at the Bush, for within Brian McDermott's theatre and Barker's writing they served us well.

Arthur Moyses

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CLYDEBANK: The Town Council voted unanimously on March 6th to implement the Housing Finance Act after refusing to do so for 6 months. The Council rebels were due to appear in court again on 7th March, and this no doubt influenced their decision. Clydebank councillors had the full support of the tenants and the shipyard workers throughout. Now it appears that the excuse that the councillors are using for implementation is that they could not burden the Trade Union movement any further, which had supported them both morally and financially in their defiance of the Act.

If the truth was really known, Clydebank Council were frightened of the movement they could have started on the Clyde if the court had fined them again. Jimmy Ried voted for implementation. It is up to the tenants to organise now as they have done in the past so successfully.

SHEFFIELD: The council here has jumped back into the fight against the Rent Act. They purposely broke the law by not sending out the provisional "fair rent" assessments they should have done by 11th February. The Council are now waiting for the Government to send in the Housing Commissioner or the District Rent Auditor. It will be interesting to see what will happen here as the Council has already backed down to the Government over the Rent Act once before.

DON'T MAKE A FUSS?

THE WRYLY HUMOROUS story is told of two Jews sentenced to execution by firing squad in one of the innumerable pogroms who, when facing the firing squad were asked if they wished to be blindfolded, one said nothing but Isaac insisted on being blindfolded. Jacob turned on him irritably, "Isaac... don't make a fuss."

In the same way every now and again the protest movement is told to keep quiet, not because their cause is not just but because 'it will only make things worse'. After the heady honeymoon of the Aldermaston/Committee of 100 era, there is a perceptible movement to the right, a cooling-off, and a chance for the vociferous 'silent majority' to open their wide mouths and to exert their pressure.

The notoriously blabber-mouthed Lord Hailsham, now Lord Chancellor, made a speech the other day referring to the necessity of a change of wind rather than 'the wind of change' (an oblique dig at Harold MacMillan whose premiership Lord Hailsham failed to inherit). He went on, as Hailsham always does, about 'Patriotism is not a vain word. Public spirit is not an obscene joke. Unselfishness is not an idealistic folly. Even for a time, to put up with inequality or injustice is not a childish illusion. To grab all, to exploit ruthlessly one's own economic strength be it of wealth or industry, is not necessarily a virtue'.

He was giving the Iain MacLeod Memorial Lecture to the Greater London Young Conservatives at Margate, so probably this turgid flush of oratory from a frustrated, windy politician is understandable. He referred back to his speech comparing Britain with the Weimar Republic (and everybody knows what that led to). Much of his speech was boringly familiar and no doubt we shall hear it all again.

We must resist the temptation to pick further nosegays of eloquence from Lord Hailsham's garden, contenting ourselves with a final posy:

"Mark this - no democracy has been defeated by a dictatorship from inside or from out because it has been itself too disciplined. It

has been destroyed in the end by force or frauds. It is not strength but weakness which kills democracy. . . It is not inaction but inability to act that destroys the authority of democratic institutions. It is no use masking anarchy or indecisiveness under the bland name of liberalism or permissiveness."

It was not the heady prose of Lord Hailsham which made one recollect this speech. It is the appearance in the Guardian (19/3/73) of an advertisement by Ernest Bader, Founder President of the Scott-Bader Commonwealth (saviours of Fakenham) headed

Join me now to eradicate the real cause of Strikes and Strife

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It includes a revised quote from Hailsham, starting "Patriotism is not a vain word..." but omitting for some inexplicable reason the sentence 'Even for a time to put up with inequality or injustice is not a childish illusion.' This may be on grounds of clarity but the mere introduction of the words of Lord Hailsham, especially from such a reactionary speech, bodes ill for the libertarian ideals of Ernest Bader, who is obviously asking workers and strikers not to make a fuss.

Further ammunition is added to the cause of sociological conformity and quietude by an article, "Law and Order", typically titled on the front cover 'Bombs, Law and Order' by Geoffrey Marshall in New Society, March 15th 1973. 'Bombs' come in to the article only once when Marshall writes with perceptible nostalgia, "The Aldermaston marches, for example, might have been alleged to be such acts of symbolic expression. But where between banner-carrying and bomb-throwing can a limit be set to dissenting actions? It is tempting to say that 'violent' dissent cannot be permitted. The lines between protest, coercion and violence are not easy to draw in a moral rather than a legal argument." Prior to this Marshall has brought up the hoary old chestnut of the social contract

"acceptance of the procedures binds one to the acceptance of the results". He flings in the unproved assertion "In a democracy, the possibility of constitutional change is seldom exhausted." He winds up with, "Though there is nothing magic or morally conclusive about the boundary line between lawful and unlawful action, a persistent tendency to devalue its significance ought, in a constitutional democracy, to put us on our guard" and, in conclusion, Geoffrey Marshall says, "Direct action has begun to enjoy a status that is on a par with free speech, lobbying and postal voting. Before we actually begin to recommend it for general use, as a regular form of civic duty, a longish pause for thought would be in order."

In short, think sociologically and politically before you make a fuss.

Finally, one never thought that one would have to rally to the defence of Ron Bailey. But in The Listener of March 8th there is a review of The Squatters* under the sneering title "General Bailey" by one D.A.N. Jones, erstwhile editor of Black Dwarf and self-confessed local councillor. He writes of the homeless families, "What happens to... the homeless families themselves? Have they generally benefited or suffered through Ron Bailey's skirmishes. 'By this time the families were almost at breaking-point' he [Bailey] writes, at one point, of his chosen protegés. How far was he responsible for reducing them to that condition?"

Mr. Jones, as a councillor, should know that most families who needed to squat were problem families to start with: homelessness only added to their problems. Ron Bailey and his ilk at least restored some of their human dignity. Jones quotes Des Wilson of "Shelter" who warned 'prophetically' that "more direct action could do more harm than good because it could cause anger against the homeless population." Mr. Jones pontificates, 'it can and often does'. Here, we have the 'no fuss' philosophy crystallized from the viewpoint of a councillor.

As the situation in this country

grows more reactionary both from the left and the right we shall hear more and more voices like those of Bader, Marshall and Jones counselling moderation in case any demonstrations or actions - no matter how non-violent - will cause repression to grow.

If there are injustices, inequalities and lack of liberty it is up to concerned citizens to call attention to them. If constitutional channels are blocked, as they commonly are, it is up to individuals to use appropriate means to call attention by direct action.

If there is no inconvenience caused to the public by a strike, for example, there is no point in the strike; for that matter there is no point in perpetuating the industry. The amount of inconvenience is only a measure of its usefulness to the public and therefore of the value of the work.

It will always be necessary for someone to 'make a fuss'.

Jack Robinson

*The Squatters, by Ron Bailey, Penguin, 35p, obtainable from Freedom Bookshop (post 5p)

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--graffiti from Petticoat Lane Street Market, London, E.

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FREE OURSELVES. By Arthur Aron, Times Change Press, \$1.35.

BEGIN AT START. By Su Negrin, Times Change Press, \$2.45.

"TIMES" ARE changing. We live in an age of transition," Hunac the Sage remarked in 1973 B.C. And things have gone on changing ever since till monotony has set in. I wish I could hail these beautifully produced little books, with their bright covers, drawings and photographs, with more enthusiasm, but I must be getting too old to respond to their appeal.

Honour America is about a proposed United Front to fight Fascism in America. How to fight Fascism without becoming a Fascist oneself is the question no one has answered yet. They will not be helped by this pamphlet I am afraid. The other two publications are personal statements, rambling, wandering thoughts of guilty, white, middle class American intellectual rebels, who have dropped out of conventional society to fight for personal freedom and the social revolution and all that. As the Jews say of the New Testament, "What's true isn't new, and what's new isn't true." There are elements of anarchism mixed up with a sort of puritanism, naïve Black Power style racism, mysticism and heaven knows what else. It comes near to stream-of-consciousness writing.

Drugs, police clubs and the worship of the gun have damaged American radicalism beyond hope if these books are anything to go by. In a Dark Age the only safe place for an intellectual is in a monastery, and there he comes under clerical discipline. If there are no islands of relative security the thinking man has no chance to think, he must

always keep a wary eye on his surroundings, for the Danes may be coming, or the police which is worse. Hence musing, phantasy and myth take the place of serious thought, and of course they have their virtues too. But a modern society cannot run on a mixture of Tolkien and LSD.

Maybe it is a horrible, old capitalist society, and is better destroyed, but I cannot see a better world emerging from the confused, sentimental notions expressed in Free Ourselves and Begin at Start, even though one agrees with a statement here and a statement there. Instead, all one can see is a kind of crumbling chaos, hippy communes, scattered about in a growing wilderness, in which human as well as animal predators are not lacking, becoming perhaps the nuclei of new serf villages under new warlords.

J.B.

HOW TO SET UP A FREE SCHOOL: Alternative Education and the Law, by Alison Truffitt, 25 White Lion Street, London, N.1. (25p)

The ex-Education correspondent on the London Evening Standard, who helped set up Islington Free School, has prepared a practical guide on how to go about setting up a free school. Much useful ground is covered: from the legal requirements which have to be met to sections on premises, insurance, safety and money. The author considers the publication "far from complete" and asks those with further information to get in touch with her.

J.W.

◀ continued from page 1

the cities show the folly of trying to run railways at a profit. The loss to the countryside, the choked towns and congested highways cannot be measured on a profit and loss basis.

Whenever railwaymen take action we soon see how important the service they provide is to the community. But it is plain that B.R. and the Government are not interested in a service. Mr. Marsh, the new chairman of B.R. and ex-Labour minister, equally wants the railways run as a commercial venture. However, railwaymen should start to look beyond the issues of pay to those of who should run the railways. Obviously, Mr. Marsh and his bureaucrats can't, but if the railwaymen and the passengers could get together and start working out their own plans and schedules we could begin to forge a united front against the real enemy.

P.T.

SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

A STROKE NEWINGTON FIVE Solidarity Committee has been formed by two of those acquitted at the recent Angry Brigade trial, together with the remains of the various defence committees which have been trying to help all the accused in the case over the past two years.

The Committee has issued a brief pamphlet called Release the Five (2p), summarising the facts of the episode, suggesting that the five now serving sentences of ten or fifteen years should be considered as political prisoners, and calling for a campaign for their release or, failing that, for their welfare (a separate Welfare Committee has been formed to look after the practical details). The Solidarity Committee proposes to raise money, publish literature, hold meetings and demonstrations, and coordinate efforts on behalf of the five.

The Committee's address is
54 Harcombe Road, London, N.16

(Incidentally, they may soon have some more work on their hands. The Jews of the World suggested on March 11 that the Provo bombers of London were helped by English revolutionaries, and stated that "the Special Branch are seeking two British girl anarchists who helped the Irish bombing team. The girls, formerly associated with the Angry Brigade, were known to have been in touch with the IRA for a long time".)

H.W.

KIRKBY TENANTS FIGHT ON

ON MONDAY, 12th MARCH Kirkby Council's Health and Housing Committee held a meeting in the Council Buildings. This is one of the meetings from which the public are excluded. On the Agenda for discussion was the matter of the tenants of Tower Hill Estate who have been on total rent and rates strike since 11th October 1972. The Rents Action Group heard over the grapevine that Winstanley (Housing Manager) was intending to put forward a proposal calling for eviction orders to be served on tenants who are on rent strike. The call for evictions is a change of tactics as the Council threatened to take strikers through the County Court as debtors (see FREEDOM 13/1/73). When the Action Group heard of Winstanley's move they put out an emergency leaflet calling for a lobby at the Council offices.

That evening some 150-200 tenants turned up to protest against any action against rent strikers. I must point out that since our last set-to with the Council they have kept the main entrance closed with a metal grille on the inside of the door, so councillors on the Housing Committee had to use a fire door as an entrance. One of the councillors arrived late and when the door was opened for him the tenants took the opportunity to push their way in past the police who were on guard duty. After a bit of struggle about a dozen tenants managed to get inside; eight made it to the fifth floor where the committee meeting was taking place, the other four were confronted with "Kirkby Blue Boot Boys" who violently evicted them. Two of the four were women who were punched, hit and dragged down the stairs by the hair. By this time the other eight had reached the room on the fifth floor where the Housing Committee meeting was taking place.

At this point about ten policemen came rushing up to us, shouting, "Walk out or get thrown out". We asked to be allowed in to the meeting but the police reacted by pushing us around, to which we immediately sat down. They retaliated by dragging some of us by the hair down the stairs, and still no one retaliated. The following incidents took place from the time the tenants entered the building to the time

they were dragged out and this can be verified by witnesses inside and outside of the council building.

- 1) Gerry Ball (Southcroft) dragged down the stairs by two policemen with another punching him in the back.
- 2) May Stone (Summerfield) dragged across the council foyer by her hair which came out in handfuls in the constable's hands.
- 3) Ann Braithwaite (Summerfield) dragged by the hair.
- 4) Tommy Scoggins (Heathfield) dragged through the door by his hair.
- 5) Andy McGowan (Westcroft) testicles squeezed by one constable while another held him by the throat.
- 6) Rose Kelly (Heathfield), a pregnant woman, was thrown violently against a wall.
- 7) Billy Fleetwood (Lime Court) dragged down four flights of stairs by two policemen. When he reached ground level one constable drew his baton and hit him several times in the chest and shoulder area. This constable had to be restrained by another. At this point the tenants outside saw what was happening and tried to storm the building and get through the doors to get Billy Fleetwood from the assault that was taking place on him. It was then that several policemen at the doors drew their batons and threatened the tenants with physical violence. Prior to this three policemen had already drawn their batons and the one mentioned above was using his with great relish on Billy Fleetwood. This was constable 806 of the Kirkby police force. While this was going on, Councillor Jim Wylie actually stepped over Billy Fleetwood as he was lying on the bottom of the stairs, and proceeded on his way. When asked "what are you going to do about that?" he gave no reply and scampered up the stairs.

Some demonstrators tried to block the police cars but they did not stop and a young woman was carried along for a distance on a police-car bonnet.

According to Winstanley's pathetically distorted report on the Tower Hill rent strike, there are only 261 tenants on rent strike.

would be implemented over my dead body". Every council tenant in Liverpool is only too well aware of what happened in the Council Chamber when implementation of the Unfair Rent Act was discussed. Sefton did a complete about-turn and stabbed the tenants in the back and voted with the Tories to increase the rents of Liverpool tenants by between 74p and £1.04 per week.

It is no good relying on the likes of Sefton or handouts from Heath's mafia which they won't give anyway. The only way to prevent the massive rate and rent increases is to organise on the council estates and embark on total rent and rate strikes. Quite obviously the tenants of Tower Hill don't need telling anything about either rate or rent increases or how to fight them, but tenants in other areas of Kirkby are not aware of all these facts. So every tenant living on Tower Hill should make these facts known to their relatives living in the other areas of Kirkby and encourage them to take an active part in Action Groups in their areas and organise now for the coming battle in April.

Under Tony Barber's "generous" new budget the Government will meet $\frac{1}{2}$ the cost of rate increases above 10% in domestic rate bills in 1973/4, where the rise is due only to revaluation. The Government is prepared to pay £10 million. There are numerous loopholes in this statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Tory Government to slide through. E.g. one of the major factors in the rate increases, apart from revaluation, is inflation. The Government simply have to say to any city that applies for aid - "But your rate increases are not only due to revaluation". Even if they grant this aid, there is only £10 million in the 'kitty'. Liverpool alone needs £5 million, and so do at least a dozen other major cities.

News from Other Areas

DUDLEY: Council tenants in Dudley (Worcester) have withheld a total of

Yet in the same report Winstanley states that the rent arrears of three weeks ago are a staggering £75,000 and that the arrears are still going up by about £2,000 per week. In the week that Winstanley says that only 261 were on rent strike he also said that 1,349 tenants paid rent that week. If you add these two figures together, you will find that they only come to 1,610 tenants - yet there are 2,100 tenants on Tower Hill. What has happened to the other 490? In addition to this, there are the tenants whose rent is being withheld from them by the Social Security.

It is obvious that these tactics are panic measures by the Council in order to demoralise tenants on rent strike by trying to kid us that the rent strike is very weak by falsifying reports. In fact, Winstanley's report only takes into account tenants who have paid no rent whatsoever and does not account for tenants who are paying garage money only, or tenants who have paid a week's rent and then rejoined the rent strike when they realized we are still strong and still fighting this vicious anti-working class Act. There are also those tenants withholding the increase who are not counted as rent strikers. The scaremongering tactics by Kirkby Council is nothing new. The only reason they are really going to town now is because of the rates increases due in April when there will be even more resistance to this further attack on our living standards.

At the last meeting not one councillor questioned Winstanley's figures or his proposals. They were just steam-rolled through by Winstanley. These proposals are now to be put before a full council meeting on the 26th March. The proposals that Winstanley put forward are:

- 1) A number of court orders already in existence will be actioned during the coming weeks.
- 2) Court orders will be obtained during the coming weeks, commencing with tenants with the highest rent arrears.

All other action groups in Liverpool have been informed and are prepared to mobilise on very short notice.

Half of this article has been taken from Bulletin No. 17 of the Tower Hill Unfair Rents Action Group, which is a weekly bulletin.
 May Stone

£229,000 in rent increases since the rent strike started last October. Some 18,000 people in council dwellings in the town are withholding rent increases of between 35p to £1.08 per week in protest against the Housing Finance Act. At a mass meeting held last week, attended by some 2,500 tenants, they voted unanimously to continue the fight until the Unfair Rent Act is completely smashed.

OLDHAM: The number of tenants on rent strike has increased since the rent strike started last October - even according to the Council's underestimation there are at least 2,543 tenants on rent strike.

MANCHESTER: Tenants have been withholding the increase on the following estates since 1st October: Hattersly, Stretford, Miles Platting, Hulme, Sale, Coleshaw Farm, Colleyhurst, Salford. Tenants are organising for April, and so are Rochdale, Chadderton, Partington and Irlam, who are faced with further increases of 50p.

CAMDEN: Scene of one of the most famous rent strikes in 1968, it is now preparing for a rent strike this April. A mass meeting has been called for Saturday 10th March to decide on the type of rent strike to embark on.

CLAY CROSS: On 6th March Clay Cross Council called off its official total rent strike in protest against the Housing Finance Act. The Chairman of the Council, Charles Bunting, said that 85% of the council tenants had supported the rent strike. The Council's decision to call off the strike still leaves it in breach of the requirements of the Act. The Council are still refusing to implement the Act which would result in rent increases of £1.09 for the town's 1,300 tenants. The tenants are already organised into action groups and street committees, ready to resume the total rent and rates strike if the Government throw the Council out of office and send the Housing Commissioner in.



THURSDAYS at Freedom Press from 2 p.m. Help fold and despatch FREEDOM

FREESPACE ALTERNATE U is an anarchist-sponsored free alternate school in New York City. You may visit us any weekday evening or on Saturday or Sunday afternoons at 339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012. Tel. no. 228-0322

Teachers wanted for Free Schools. Write to: Tony Brantingham c/o Dwarf News, 14a Hansard Mews, London W14 8BJ

Will all organisations please note there is a new secretary of Harlech Libertarian Group (including ASA and ORA): Bob Long, Coleg Harlech, Harlech, Merioneth, N. Wales

LONDON ASA meets every Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. at 3 Grange House, Highbury Grange, N. 5. Black & Red Outlook always available; by post 5p + 2½p

NOTTINGHAM: Trent Polytechnic new anarchist group forming. Contact Shirley Moreno and John Hinsley through Fine Art Dept., Dryden Street, Nottingham.

"Schools Anarchy Propagation Action Group" for non-collectivist school anarchy. Contact SAPAG c/o 1 Springbank, Salesbury, Blackburn BB1 9EU

New Earth Group, 112 Thomas Street, Dublin 8. Publishers, bookshop and meetings.

A MEETING to set up the S.E. London Gutter Press. Sunday 25th March 3.30 p.m. Contact Vera Krishek, tel. 01-852 8879

NOTTINGHAM All local comrades invited to attend a meeting at John Hinsley's, 131 Foxhall Road (off Gregory Blvd.) Forest Fields, Nottingham TUESDAY 27th MARCH 8 o'clock.

Comrade has to move in six weeks' time, would appreciate knowing of 1-2 unfurnished, or large furnished room. In any case has furniture to give away but it must be collected. D. Tullman, 248 Haydons Road, Wimbledon, S.W.19. (Can anyone offer van to transport gas stove to squatters?)

MICHAEL TOBIN DEFENCE COMMITTEE 265 Dale Street, Chatham, Kent

Anarchist woman having deserted capitalist husband desires maintenance from him. Serious suggestions and advice about getting this gratefully received. Box 102

STOP THE FRENCH TESTS. Contact Greenpeace, c/o 176 Finchley Rd., London N.W.3.

You as a Product, booklet on the family as key link between individual and social reality. 40pp. 10p + postage from Soc. Society Bookstall, Univ. of Newcastle u. Tyne, or from Freedom Press.

CARDIFF: Dwarf Group starting. Contact Ian Matheson, 45 Corporation Rd, Grangetown, Cardiff

WANTED - GAS STOVE for East End squatters. Contact Freedom Press

NEW YORK LIBERTARIAN BOOK CLUB Lectures, fortnightly on Thursdays 7 p.m. at Workmen's Circle Centre, 369 8th Ave., corner 29 Street, admission free. April 12 Irving Levitas: Messianism and Anarchism; April 26 Abe Bluestein: The Spirit of Freedom in America

WE GO TO PRESS ON MONDAY. LATEST DATE FOR RECEIPT OF MSS., LETTERS, MEETING NOTICES IS THE MONDAY IN EACH WEEK OF PUBLICATION.

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RENT STRIKE BULLETIN

Tower Hill Liverpool

IN ONE of the Action Group bulletins published just before Christmas, the Tower Hill Unfair Rents Action Group claimed that Liverpool Corporation tenants could expect rate increases of something like 30% in April. It now appears that the Action Group was correct - domestic ratepayers in Liverpool will be faced with rate increases of 27½p in the £ on the water rate. This works out at about an increase of 55p per week for the average tenant. This is in addition to the £1 rent rise last October and further rent rise this October of another 50p per week.

At a meeting held on Monday 5th March, Liverpool Corporation's Finance & Policy Committee recommended an increase of 24½p in the £ on the domestic rate (householders), bringing Liverpool's rate up to 132p in the £ (Liverpool's rates are already amongst the highest paid by domestic ratepayers in Britain. This includes the Liverpool controlled property in Kirkby.) If this is confirmed by the City Council's budget meeting to be held next week it will mean that Liverpool's rates will have doubled since 1970. Liverpool Corporation also wanted to increase water charges, but the Dept. of the Environment rejected this until October, when it is expected that the Corporation will increase the water rent and rates.

Liverpool Corporation have applied to the Government for help of at least a £5 million grant to help offset the rate increases, but it does not look like any Government aid will be forthcoming. At a meeting with Ted Heath in London, Alderman Sefton, Chairman of Liverpool Council, stated that "Unless Government aid was forthcoming there would be bitter resentment, and massive resistance to the rate increases in Liverpool." The same Alderman Sefton also stated last April just prior to the May elections, "That the Tory Housing Finance Act