



knuckle

oct.

lambeth's alternative paper

MUGGING

It is usually difficult to have a rational discussion about mugging with most people. The press have so distorted the facts that many people seem to think all black youths spend their evenings beating up old ladies in the streets because they are too lazy to get a job.

press scares

Despite the fact that a minority of "muggers" in Britain are black, the press seldom uses the term "mugging" when the incident involves white youths. It isn't only the press; the chain of lies and distortions starts with the police force and fascist groups like the National Front and National Party. They feed the garbage to the press. It's printed in such a sensational way that many people, especially women, in areas like Lewisham and Brixton become afraid to go out at night. They become terrified of walking past a group of black youths.

YET THE FACT IS THAT THEY ARE 13 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE SLAUGHTERED ON THE ROADS THAN BE INJURED IN A MUGGING!

Now if the police, the NF and the press really cared about our lives they'd be 13 times more sensational about traffic accidents than they are about mugging.

what is mugging?

In New York, where the term comes from, it's a term used to describe the most serious violent robberies on the streets. In Britain most people understand the word in the same way. But the official definition used when giving statistics, comprises bag snatches, (regarded as "theft with violence"), and "robbery of personal property in the open following a sudden attack." * In most of these cases, no violence is used.

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As from this issue KNUCKLE will focus attention on some of the worst employers in Lambeth, and expose their exploitation and profiteering. In this issue we feature: HARRIS TRANSFORMER LIMITED, 9 PARK HILL, CLAPHAM.

scrooge bosses

Harris Transformer Co. Ltd. was formed some four or five years ago when its owner, Eric Harris, then works manager of General Transformer Co. Ltd. was made redundant.

breadline wages

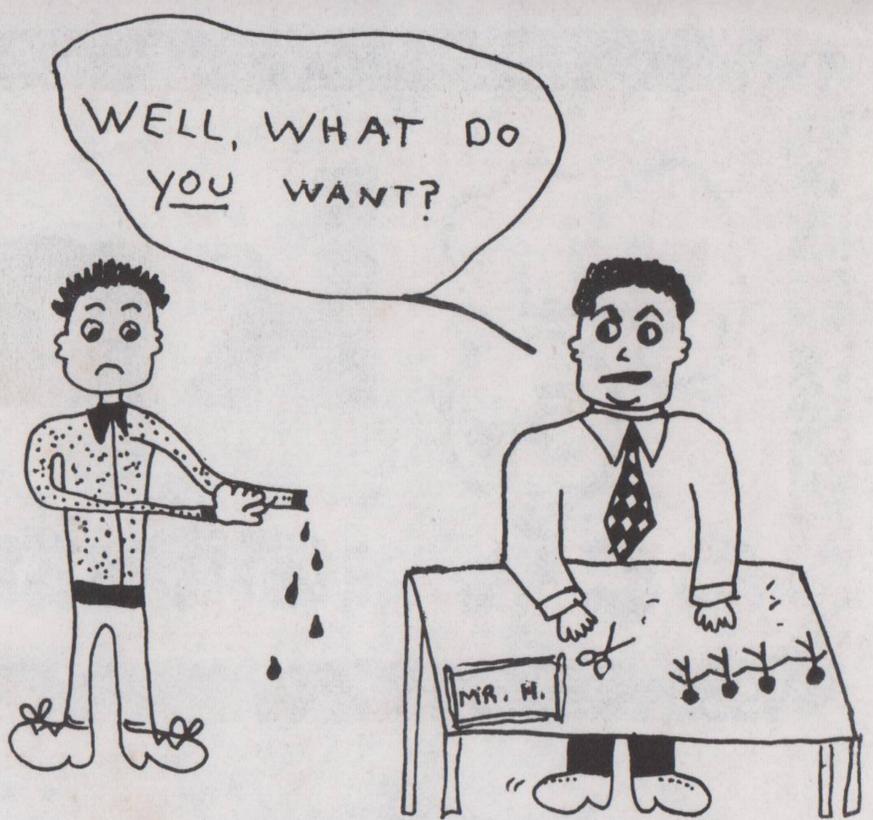
When first set up Harris Transformer was a small concern with a low turnover. Gradually it took over General's previous customers, and then expanded into competition with other transformer companies. In fact, Harris has won quite a lot of business - mainly by sweating his workers hard. His lowest wage is £18 per week for sixteen year olds, rising to £30 for older workers, the works manager excluded. This is for a 40 hour week. There is no pension scheme, no sick pay (other than Social Security benefits), no qualified medical orderly, and inadequate medical supplies and washing facilities: the First Aid kit comprised strictly rationed elastoplast and aspirin, Savlon, cotton wool, finger bandages TCP and antiseptic solution. There are no such facilities as a changing room, or rest room - workers are obliged to eat their lunch at the same benches at which they make their transformers.

dangerous conditions

In one section the workers are handling hot tar at 240 degrees C - over twice the boiling point of water. Harris has repeatedly refused to provide protective clothing such as gloves, just as he has for the impregnating tank, which contains molten wax. In other sections the coils are wound on antiquated machinery and the transformers are assembled by hand. The workers who do this find that their hands become lacerated with small cuts and filthy dirty.

no union

Harris employs almost entirely old people, women and youths. An ex-employee told us that workers who have complained about their conditions have been threatened with the sack, in contravention of the Employment Protection Act. Although no attempt at unionisation has been made, Harris has made it abundantly clear that he would oppose it with sackings etc. He is continually attempting to accelerate the pace of work.



The youths who work there, are, he claims, being taught a trade. In fact he merely uses this pretext to con workers into accepting low wages and poor conditions.

Their duties include loading and unloading all deliveries, including heavy blocks of tar; packing transformers; filling them with tar; 'boxing' them into their metal cases; and testing them.

This work is particularly dangerous as the equipment is old and faulty, and voltages of up to 10,000 are in daily use.

All in all, it is hardly suprising Harris transformers are the cheapest on the market. He is a brutal exploiter and swindler.

Blasphemy Case Appeal

PLEASE HELP

MARY WHITEHOUSE MUST BE STOPPED

GAY NEWS has just been fined £1,000 at the Old Bailey and its Editor Denis Lemon has been fined £500 and given a 9 month prison sentence suspended for 18 months. GAY NEWS and Denis Lemon will also have to pay legal expenses of many thousands of pounds. And all this for upsetting Mary Whitehouse by publishing a poem about the death of Christ by Professor James Kirkup, former holder of an Arts Council Fellowship in creative writing, the author of over 10 plays, 2 television plays and over 57 published books of poetry and prose. Gay News has got to appeal against this conviction and sentence not just for its own sake and that of Denis Lemon but also on behalf of all writers, publishers and ordinary readers.

Please send donations (large or small) to G.N. Fighting Fund, 1A Normand Gardens, Greyhound Rd., London W14 9SB.

WOMEN'S CENTRE

South London has a new Women's Centre at 45, North St., Clapham. We asked one of the women who works there to tell us about it.

The premises are owned by a brewery and were offered us by Clapham Community project in June. Since then a lot of work has gone into making the three roomed and cellared house into a functioning centre. The eventual aim is to have a centre open all day with a wide variety of activities going on. As yet, however, it is still in its infancy and a lot more help and effort is needed.

The difficulties in building a centre have been increased by people intent on making life hard for us. The front window has twice been broken by a group of vandals that the police are now dealing with.

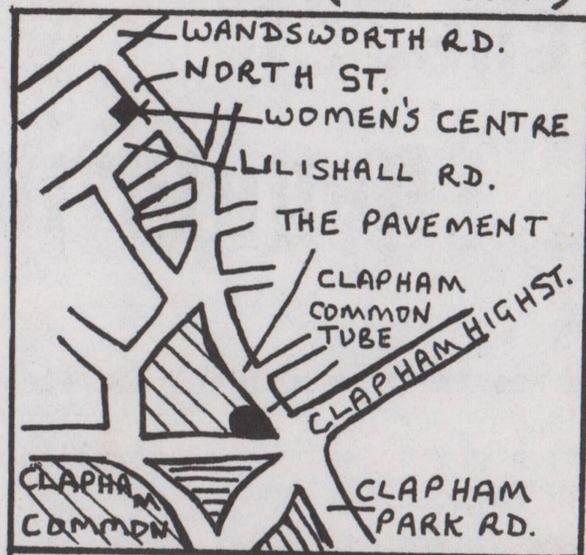
Setbacks not withstanding, we now have two rooms for meetings, a small kitchen and a cellar that still needs clearing out. We need more furniture, crockery and money! We now have a bank account containing £28 that came from a benefit social held in the Canterbury Arms in Brixton, and we also have a pile of Green Shield Stamp books - so don't throw away your unwanted chairs or stamps.

The centre is run by an open collective of women who meet weekly at 6.30pm Wednesdays. Any woman is welcome to come along - if no one is in the centre, try the pub in Lillieshall Rd round the corner. The collective deals with problems like paying the rent, fund raising and makes binding decisions on Women's Centre policy. It has

It has proved very difficult to carry out policy decisions and achieve any continuity from week to week, especially since the summer has made for an ever-changing collective membership. The reason why we feel it is important to bring up difficulties like this is because many women have turned up expecting to find a flourishing centre with a full programme of events and activities. We do want more women to come, but please don't expect everything to be wonderful.

Details of the Women's Centre rota for existing meetings can be found in the AGITPROP section on the back page.

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE
45 NORTH ST.
CLAPHAM (OLD TOWN)



WOMEN IN VAUXHALL FACE MALE VIOLENCE

The feminist disco at the Royal Albert Pub, Vauxhall, London, has been the scene of violent attacks on women in recent weeks. The violence started when 3 women were beaten up just 50 yards from the pub itself. The same night about 20 men threw bottles, bricks and stones at the women as they left the disco. One woman had her coat slashed by a knife while others were cut, bruised and beaten. The following week, although warnings had been given and women were advised to leave the disco together, a group of 6 women who'd known nothing of the previous attacks were followed by a group of 15 men, one of whom threw a bottle which splintered into one woman's eye - the sight of which is now endangered.

Rather than be forced to close the disco by the actions of male street gangs, local lesbians who live in adjoining streets to the disco have formed patrols to escort women to and from the pub to make sure that women catching buses and tubes don't walk unaccompanied.

This aggression is believed to be a direct attack on the overtly lesbian community in Radnor Terrace and Rosetta Street, Vauxhall, and the feminist disco, frequented by many lesbians. More violence in the form of bricks through windows in Radnor Terrace has followed the disco attacks, while many women also have been harassed by a peeping tom who has broken into lesbians' houses, once through the bathroom window. These local women are forming a self defence group and a house to house alarm system to counteract some of this violence.

Events at Vauxhall raise the question of how women can confront male violence when directed at ourselves. Resource to the police, which was the initial solution at the disco, is not realistic as their and our interests are at odds. Feeling in Vauxhall is that direct action, self defence and support networks have to be set up. But how this should all be done raises all kinds of political issues which the women in Vauxhall do not feel cohesive enough to agree upon, yet.

(from Women's Report)

MRS. NARAININE

Pharmacy Scandal

In response to our article on Mrs. Naraine as a racketeer landlord in the last issue of KNUCKLE, a reader called us to report her experiences with Mrs. Naraine as an employer. Our investigations also led us deeper into her involvement in the pharmaceutical business. Here we present both stories.

Breaches of Regulations

Mrs. Naraine was the director and secretary (is that allowed?) of Naraines Pharmacies Ltd., a company which until last May controlled five pharmacies in Lambeth.

These shops have a long history of breaches of regulations about the sale of poisons and dangerous drugs. Mrs. Naraine has no training nor education in pharmacy at all and often had no superintendant pharmacist present as the law requires.

Inspectors visited all five shops at one time and were able to buy poisons. Indeed, Mrs. Naraine had her children serving without supervision in the shop and, of course, no trained pharmacist.

Convictions

Between March and October 1974 the company failed to appoint a superintendant pharmacist. This resulted in a series of convictions at Tower Bridge magistrates court on July 16th 1975. Naraine Pharmacies pleaded guilty and were convicted of eight offences under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act involving the sale of poisons, and one conviction because of careless labelling.

SHOPS TO AVOID !

222 BRIXTON HILL, S.W.2

2 GIBBON ROAD, S.E.15

8 SELHURST ROAD, SE.25

25 WESTOW HILL, S.E.19

The Pharmaceutical Enquiry, whose inspectors were constantly in and out of the Naraine shops commented on her as an employer:-

".....we have seen Mrs. Naraine and it is abundantly clear to us that for all that she is not qualified she is a very dominating personality and takes very good care that those whom she employs do as she tells them quite apart from such duty as they may owe to the public and to their profession as pharmacists."

222 BRIXTON HILL, S.W.2



ONCE AGAIN

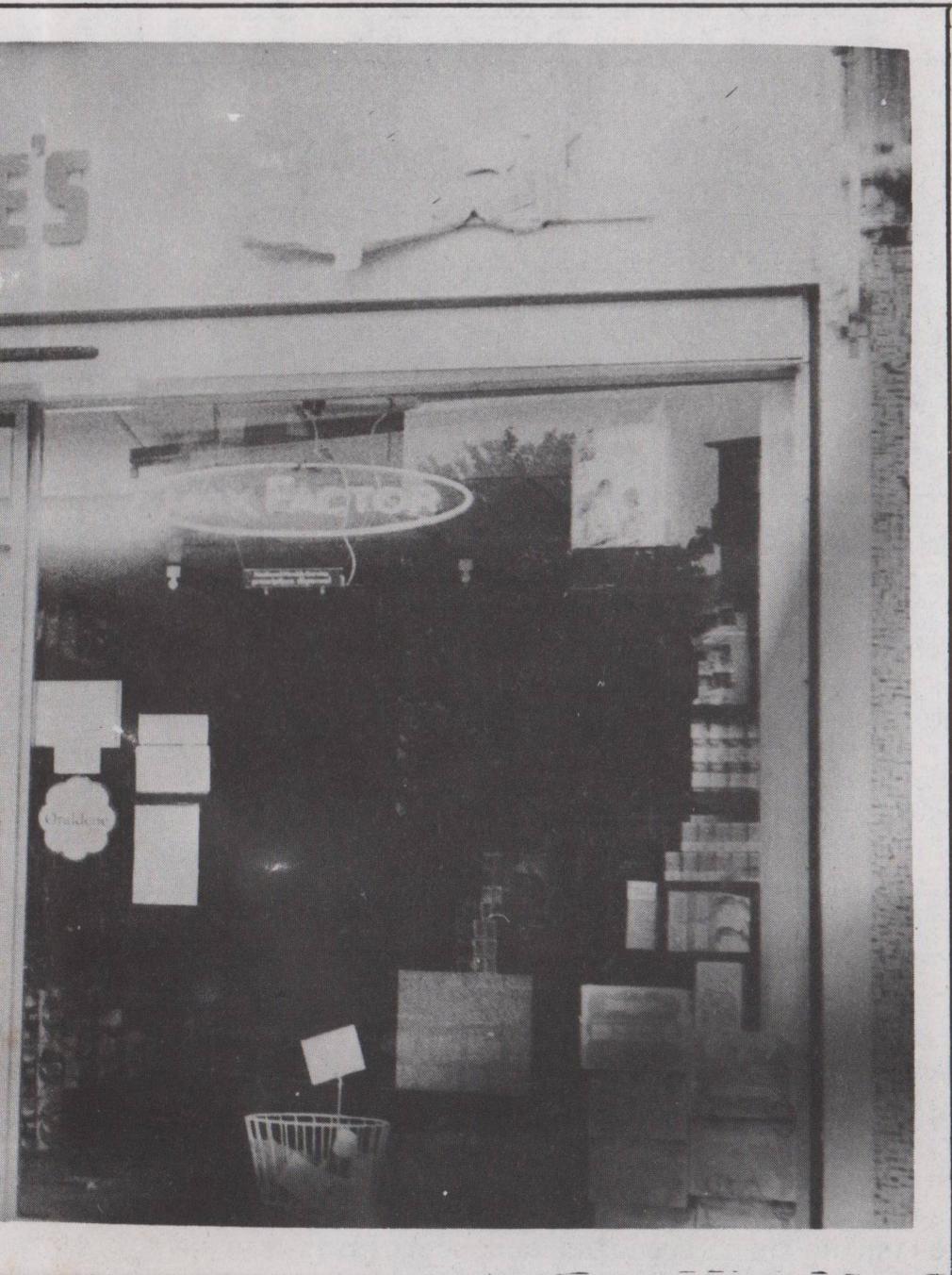
Mrs. Naraine Employer

Relations between Mrs. Naraine and her staff were bad. In the period 1975 - 77 the turn over of professional staff was such that 28 different dispensing chemists were employed by her.

The enquiry by the inspectors into all these serious charges and convictions gave Mrs. Naraine one year to sort out her shops. They withheld a more severe penalty as the loss of five shops would inconvenience the people of Lambeth.

In August 1976 inspectors visited and found no head pharmacist and poisons easily obtainable. In November they found matters were as bad, if not worse, as ever, certainly as dangerous. On December 10th the company was found guilty on five summonses for each shop and fined £50 with £20 costs for each summons. Further technical offences occurred so Naraine's Pharmacy Ltd. was no longer authorised to sell poisons and was struck off the register.

What did Mrs. Naraine do? Yes you've guessed - re-organised five separate new companies, one for each shop and **STARTED ALL OVER AGAIN.**



Mrs. Marjorie Dowdle worked for Mrs Naraine full or part-time from 1971 until 1976 at 2 Gibbon Rd., S.E.15 now known as Nunhead Ltd. At these premises the facilities and conditions of work and pay for staff were very bad.

There was no staff room,
One very small heater in winter,
The toilet was shared with male members of staff
No lunch breaks,
No tea breaks,
No cleaners were employed (The employees cleaned up themselves when it got too bad, for no extra money)

Staff were paid from the till, so no payslips were issued. No-one knew exactly what they were paying in tax and national insurance. Mrs. Dowdle took home £15 a week. On one occasion she was left solely in charge of the shop for two weeks to do the dispensing, which worried her as she has no pharmaceutical training.

Then one day, the 3rd Sept. 1976 Mrs. Naraine fired her, and refused to give any written explanation, and without the proper documents normally given when a person is fired. Mrs. Dowdle took it to the Industrial Tribunal which upheld her claim that she had been unfairly dismissed and awarded her £350. Mrs. Dowdle had also left some property in the shop worth about £50. Throughout the proceedings, Mrs. Naraine played her usual game of ignoring requests for documents necessary to Mrs. Dowdle, like her P45 and P60; getting appeals continually delayed, and all letters asking her co-operation, and the return of Mrs. Dowdle's property - were ignored.

At the time of writing ONE YEAR later not one penny of money, nor item of property has been received by Mrs. Dowdle; despite long and laborious court action, and endless bureaucratic muddling.

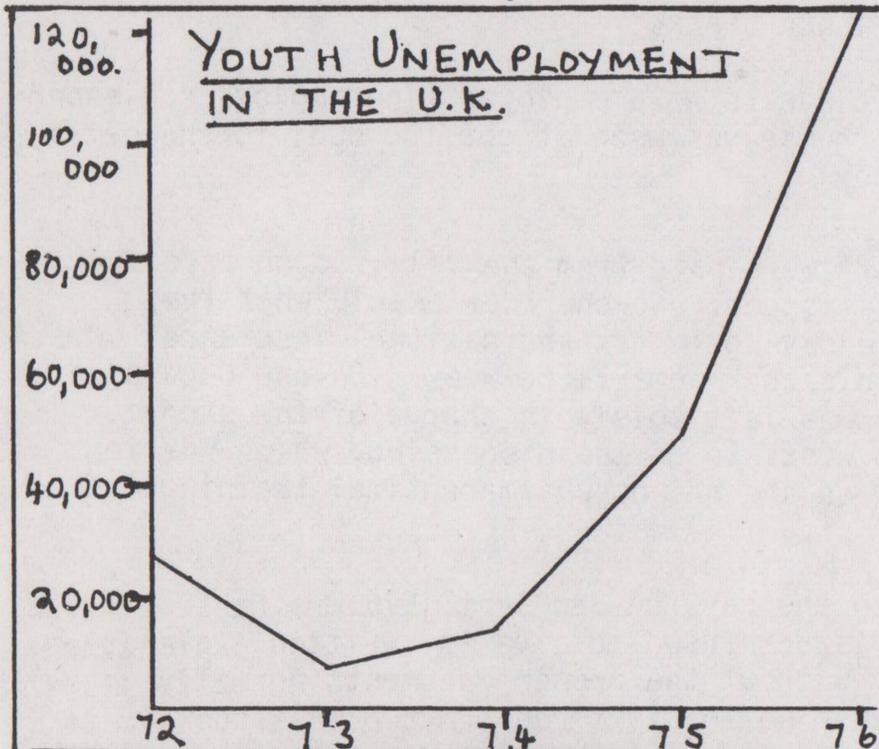
Meanwhile no information is to be had on the financial position of Naraine Pharmacy Ltd. (Where is its Annual Report for 1976?) and although the company was struck off the register it is still in existence as a company.

And the other five companies all with assets of only £100 each and with new directors dug up from somewhere (Mrs. Naraine is still part of them) continue to sell YOU and ME drugs and pharmaceutical goods.

MUGGING cont'd from p.1

According to Metropolitan Police records, you are 14 times more likely to be burgled and 22 times more likely to be robbed some other way than you are likely to be mugged. And to keep it in proportion, the chances of getting pregnant whilst taking the "pill" are 10 times higher than the chances of injury by mugging!

But all these figures aren't much comfort for those who have been "mugged" or for those who will be "mugged." Only stopping the robberies can help them, and that can only be done by understanding why the crimes take place.



racist lies

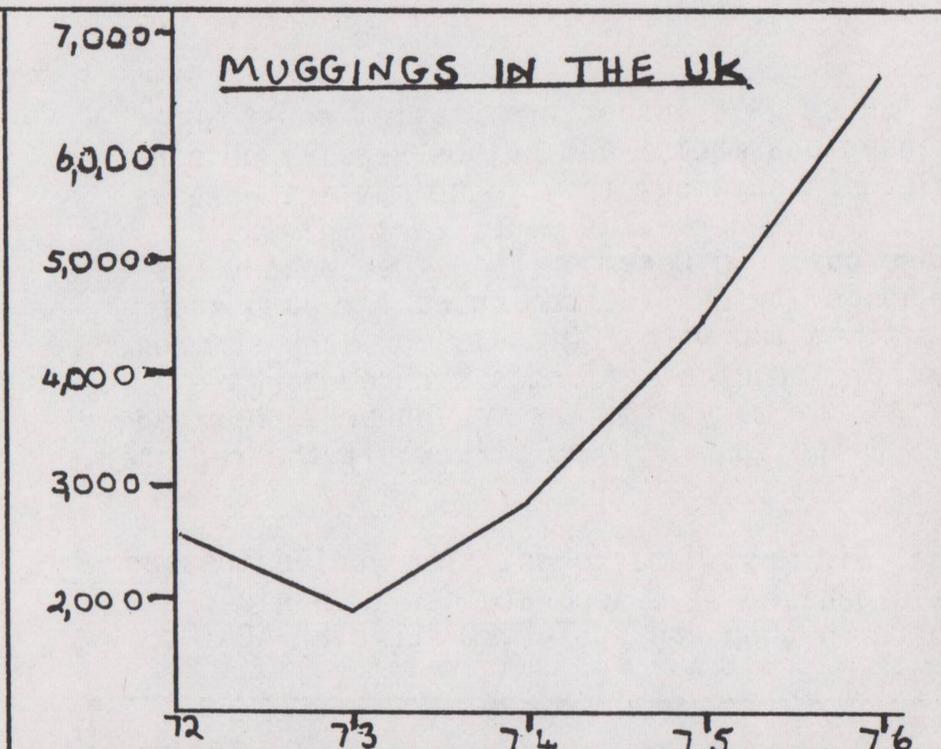
The racist argument is that black kids hate white people, and being too lazy to work they mug white old ladies. But is this true? In Glasgow, where there are very few black people, the rate of muggings is 9 times higher than in London!

The majority of so-called muggers are young people and mostly unemployed. It is no coincidence that the incidence of mugging has increased ever

since youth unemployment began to shoot up. THE ONLY TIME MUGGING HAS FALLEN IN THE PAST 6 YEARS WAS WHEN YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT FELL. That's why Glasgow, with an appalling record of unemployment has an equally appalling record of violent crimes, more murders than Northern Ireland, more muggings than anywhere else in Britain!

Reduce the unemployment problem and you'll immediately reduce the incidence of mugging. (see graph)

As long as factories continue to close, unem-



ployment increase, hospitals shut down, schools and other areas of public spending and the urban environment deteriorates, mugging will be a part of our life.

(This article was compiled by members of the SW London Women's Voice group. For details of meetings, see AGITPROP.)

* Report of Metropolitan Police Commissioner, 1976.

reviews

AS THINGS ARE - Women, work and family in South London.

NINE DAYS 1926 - The General Strike in Southwark.

DUSTBIN PRESS, Union Place Community Resource Centre, 122 Vassall Rd., SW9 2JB. 35p each.

AS THINGS ARE is a collection of articles from the earlier KNUCKLE. They describe and analyse the conditions of working women in Lambeth and Southwark - an area where well over half the women of working age are at work. They look at conditions and pay as night cleaners, launderette assistants and clerks in the mail order business. The woman's wage is vital for the family. They show how the employers use this fact to pay appallingly low wages. The other article deals with women's unpaid work in the home. The pamphlet attempts to show the three-

fold nature of these women's struggles - against employer, state (in the form of the local council) and the domination of the men they live with. It represents a significant attempt to assist in understanding these problems, and therefore lead to their defeat.

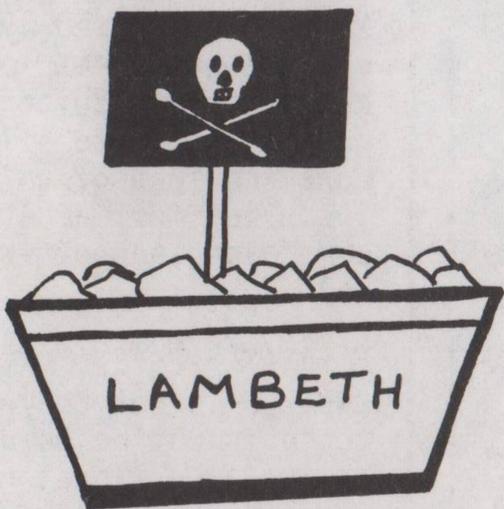
NINE DAYS 1926 is a reprint of a pamphlet issued last year to commemorate the General Strike of 1926. It describes the situation leading up to the Strike and the responses of local working people in the then boroughs of Southwark, Bermondsey and Camberwell. It also contains a very informative and interesting section of recollections by local people involved in the Strike. As a story of solidarity, grassroots organisation and ultimate betrayal by the union bosses of the TUC, it is a very real contribution to the writing of a workers' history of the area. Only by understanding our past - and realising our strengths and weaknesses can we really set about changing the present.



knuckleends

deadly asbestos

On August 2nd two tons of broken bags marked: "Blue Asbestos"- do not inhale dust" were discovered by firemen on a demolition site in Union Grove, South Lambeth opposite the Springfield estate. The Councils attitude was suspicious to say the least - the usual cover-up job. When the asbestos was first discovered, Cllr Derek Prentice (Lambeth's Health Chief) showed suitable outrage; "If we get our hands on the criminals who dumped this lethal stuff we will press for the maximum sentence and fine". But later when approached by local people worried about the situation, the Council said, "Don't worry, it won't harm anyone, not much was dumped. It's all safe now." Apparently 2 tons isn't much - even though it only needs as much as a few particles of dust to be inhaled before a potentially fatal disease to develop. These bags were clearly labelled "BLUE ASBESTOS", which is known to cause a form of cancer leading to a slow and painful death. The bags were torn and the dust was all over the place - a place where kids from the neighbouring estate play. How long had the stuff been there before it was discovered? How many kids had touched or inhaled this poisonous dust? It seems a vain hope to suggest that, "the risk to health was slight even to the children playing with the bags", as a council Environmental Health spokesman tried to do. Would he have been so complacent if some of those kids had been his own.



The council weren't responsible for the dumping of this deadly dust, but they were responsible for removing it and ensuring that the correct protective measures were taken. An industrial hygiene expert accused the Council of negligence at a public meeting on August 15th. The council he said, failed to seal off the Springfield Estate quickly when asbestos was discovered; workmen did not wear protective clothing and children at risk did not have their medical cards marked or their clothing specially cleaned as they should have had. The council's answer was predictably defensive - they denied all these

claims, saying that all the 'proper procedures' had been followed and ended up by accusing the hygiene expert of spreading "alarm and despondency"! Until the use and handling of this deadly material is more strictly controlled, with severe penalties for those who callously ignore these regulations, potentially lethal accidents such as this will continue.

hospital closures

Lambeth hospital finally closed on August 5th, after 105 years, when the last section, the Renal Unit, was transferred to St. Thomas's Hospital. But the administration continues to function; the £½ million computer block and the staff unit are to remain, as are the staff residencies.



The transformation of the NHS medical facilities into office blocks continues with the imminent closure of the Weir Maternity Hospital in Balham. At a meeting on August 10th the South West Thames Regional Health Authority endorsed the earlier decision of the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Area Health Authority, that the Weir should be closed "as soon as possible". The hospital is to be turned into offices for the Health Authority. Why do the Health Authorities need increased office accommodation at a time when actual medical facilities are being cut back?

Meanwhile the occupation of the Weir by workers continues.....

landlords

Landlord Victor Warden of 56 Clouesdale Rd. Balham, was last month fined a mere £50 for the illegal eviction of one of his tenants and for not providing a rent book.

Everyone's favourite landlord, Slidie Joe Whitter has been in action in Lambeth recently. He seems to be interested in 10 dilapidated Victorian houses divided into flats, in Morat St., Kennington. Slidie Joe has been discussing with the present tenants payments for quitting the flats. It seems all those stories of harassment, winking, illegal evictions and assaults are untrue; Slidie Joe was heard to whimper that; "Nobody needs to fear me. I'm not the sort of man they make me out to be."

