

THE WORKER



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WORKERS FIGHT WAGE CUTS

The working class and the capitalist crisis

Editorial

British capitalism is in a grave state of crisis. A system so rent by contradictions is never entirely crisis-free; but the collision of class forces behind the present economic disorder is such as to represent, for the ruling class, the run-up to catastrophe and, for the working class, the beginning of a revolutionary situation.

A symptom of this critical state of affairs is that while there is high unemployment which is expected to climb to well over a million this winter, whole areas of our industrial society are grinding to a halt through shortage of labour. This seems to fly in the face of every principle of a market economy where labour power can be bought and sold like any other commodity.

The real source of the crisis

The truth of the matter is that British capitalism can no longer afford to buy labour power at what it is worth and British workers are too well organised to allow it to be further depreciated. This is crucial for the whole profit system which depends on employers being able to benefit handsomely from the difference between what labour power costs them and what labour power produces. The failure on the part of employers to drive down the selling price of labour power to what they think they can afford is what is reflected in the ending of collective bargaining. The employers have had to fall back on successive governments to effect wage cuts.

Governments talk about all sorts of economic problems like the balance of trade gap, the world commodity boom, inflation and so forth; but as the political expression of British capitalism they have one main purpose... to cut workers' wages. There is no difference between Labour and Tory on this score. Wilson speaks for them all when he says that even threshold agreements are inflationary! In other words the answer to the capitalist class's plight is not small wage increases, not even a wages stand-still but massive wage cuts.

Labour + Tory policy- wage cuts

The Tory Government served its masters by a statutory freeze and an Industrial Relations Act to prevent organised labour from doing anything about it. The miners crushed through the wages block and, even more important, the engineers smashed the Industrial Relations chains on the unions.

The Labour Government is involved in an even more insidious plot against the working class. It is trying to get them to acquiesce in wage cuts. Workers are invited to cut their own throats by agreeing to a 'social contract' in which they sacrifice wages in return for such empty promises as the abolition of an Act they have already destroyed or more phoney 'nationalisation'. The TUC tries to bargain away the workers' struggle for the kind of illusory 'workers' participation' which the Government is only too eager to grant. In its short spell in office the Labour Government has really tried to make the dust fly into the eyes of workers!

Class collaboration or class struggle

All of these attempts to replace class struggle with class collaboration are the very essence of the corporate state. The corporate state can only be erected on the prostrate bodies of workers. As long as workers vigorously continue the class struggle, there can be no corporate state, no fascism.

British workers are not the same as they were the last time British capitalism tried to solve a major crisis by massively cutting workers' wages - during the great depression. The maturing of our class



London teachers reject division

In response to the members' rejection of the divisive and derisory proposals of the Pay Board Report, the NUT and ATTI Executives called out their London members on a half-day strike. The result was a mass closure of schools and colleges

on Thursday July 11th, as 35,000 teachers gave support to the Union call, in many cases extending their support by striking for the whole day or more.

From the first moment the Tory government imposed a freeze on teachers' London

allowance, after having offered an insulting £12 a year, it and its successor, the Labour government, have plunged themselves deeper and deeper into trouble. The Pay Board Report recommending £400 for some and £200 for others has only succeeded in uniting teachers around the full claim.

Teachers have rejected the advice of those who seek to postpone action - it's always easier 'next term' - and right up to the end of term schools have taken action in support of the union campaign. Two schools in Brent struck for three days, the action being backed by the overwhelming majority of members and endorsed by the local association. One of the schools, Sladebrook High, explained their action:

"We fully support the Executive's call for strike action in pursuit of the full claim. A half-day is but one step, stronger action will be necessary in order to win our claim. Stronger schools can give a lead now. The Executive needs evidence of the determination of its members in order to negotiate from a position of maximum strength. Our action is that evidence."

political consciousness since then can be seen in our adoption of guerrilla tactics instead of confrontations like the General Strike which was fighting on the enemy's terms rather than our own. Sections of our class which remained neutral then or even sided with the bosses are now solidly part of the massive force we can muster. Indeed, entirely new sections of our class have not only entered the struggle but in many cases are giving a lead.

Today the class of exploiters faces a class of workers more united, militant and clear than ever before, on the immediate tactics and the strategy of class emancipation, and on the ending of exploitation. Today there is a Marxist-Leninist Party which has taken those lessons of our class over the last fifty years, systematised them into a practical revolutionary theory for Britain and is giving it back for action to workers who recognise it as their own.

Wages conflict

The forces are gathering for pay battles this autumn which will involve the whole working class in sharp conflict. Their just demands are not for the same size or a slightly larger piece of the cake but are a challenge to the capitalist system itself. That is why this state of apparent confusion on the economic front is a revolutionary situation. Only the working class has a solution to the crisis of capitalism - the eventual assumption of state power themselves and the establishment of socialism instead.

THE WORKER INTERVIEW ON THE INDUSTRIAL FRONT



Ford's tea ladies

Q. Why did you take strike action?

A. Having already turned down one offer, the management replied with an improved final offer of £1 p.w. increase on basic wages, half (yes half!) threshold payments and a half-way offer towards equal pay for women.

Q. Who were you striking against?

A. Garner Merchants, the giant industrial catering firm who have a contract to supply all canteen facilities at Fords sites. The firm is owned by the Trust Houses Forte group - well known for making high profits and paying low wages.

Q. What happened during the strike?

A. We had to picket the gates as several casual workers in the canteens are 'noners' and these people had to be prevented from scabbing. Fords' management tried to provide free sausages, chips, milk, rolls, etc. But this was defeated when the production shop stewards blacked them and further attempts to get provisions into the plant were ended when drivers refused to cross picket lines.

Q. How did the strike end?

A. Well, support inside the plant grew. All production in the Foundry stopped for a half-day in sympathy. The drivers quit for a day. Other impromptu walk-outs and a threat by the union involved - the T&G - to spread the dispute forced Fords to put pressure on their industrial caterers to settle our dispute quickly. The threat to production and profits really oiled the wheels of the settlement.

Q. What did you win in the end?

A. Our total victory brought a threefold increase in the so-called 'final' offer to £3, full threshold payments, and a promise of equal pay in three stages. Plus three days extra holiday and improved night-shift premiums (neither was in that 'final' offer).

Q. Any last comments or reflections?

A. Yes. On the Tuesday of our strike the police told our picket lines to move on. When we stayed put, our names and addresses were taken and it was, eventually, the police who moved on and not us. We would further advise all employees in the big-money catering industry to get organised, as there are still a high percentage of 'noners' about. Finally we would all like to thank the Fords production workers who both sympathised and supported our cause.

Mason, Scott and Thrissell

Interview with AUEW member involved in a dispute at Mason Scott Thrissell engineering works in Bristol. When thresholds were introduced, management reneged on a £5.60 offer and ran for cover under Phase III. The workers, thinking that they could be more effective inside than outside the gates, decided on guerrilla action instead of all-out strike action.

Q. What form did the guerrilla tactics take?

A. Shop meetings were called in different parts of the factory during working hours. Workers refused to recognise management because they were totally ineffective as a negotiating body and were being dictated to by management in London. (The firm is part of the Molins group - Ed.) During the dispute two sections marched around the works (inside and outside) behind a worker playing a set of bagpipes. There was also non-cooperation of movement to new stores. All apprentices were returned to training school - i.e. taken off production. A meeting of organised supervision was called and informed that the only people the workers recognised in the factory were supervision who were members of their union. All sub-contract work was banned. Workers refused to move between factories. Everyone then returned to the section they started from and demanded work.

Q. What was the management's attitude to this?

A. The management's reaction was to call a meeting with stewards - the stewards agreed to meet them as long as management were empowered to negotiate! While the talks took place action was still being taken by the men. The men claimed that they were working 'normally' so management could not claim penalty clauses. There was no overtime ban - people were just going home at 4.30 p.m. The tactics went on because management was sticking to legislation, i.e. still hiding behind Phase III. Management then asked what the men wanted to settle for. As the original claim was £5.60 and the firm was already paying £2 threshold payments we needed £3.60 to obtain our original target. They agreed to pay £3.60 + threshold payments, and they would pay illegally or legally! The increase was across the board (all trades and grades) including canteen staff and all future threshold payments will be honoured.

Q. What is your attitude to threshold payments?

A. The firm should pay these automatically, there is no need to negotiate these. We settled because these payments are on holiday and sick pay.

Q. What are you working to achieve in the near future?

A. The second stage of the claim is to be implemented in Nov. 1974 including a new bonus scheme and higher ceiling of merit, and the consolidation of threshold payments into the rate.

Q. What lessons have the workers learnt through using guerrilla tactics?

A. The men themselves achieved the increase by their own efforts. This has given them confidence in themselves and this holds good for the future. The raise was not handed to them on a plate by a steward doing clever negotiating - the mass of workers were in control of the situation and took the initiative at all stages of the struggle.

Political fiddling while London burns

That the economy of this country could be so mismanaged by all the political parties in Parliament to the detriment of the working class is what comes through most clearly as the background to the industrial front.

We have suffered a butter shortage, a glut of butter. An egg shortage, a glut of eggs. A beef shortage, a glut of beef. And now we are told that enough milk cannot be produced to return to the system of free milk to schools without causing a shortage of milk! And yet whenever there is a problem of overproduction of these things they never find their way on to workers' tables at reasonable prices but into the maw of the Common Market.

While all this mismanagement was going on the political parties in Parliament, aided and abetted by the Fleet Street press, have been sounding out different ways and means as to how they can come together better to manage organised labour.

Should there be a pact between the Liberals and the Tories. Could the so-called 'best elements' of Labour, i.e. Mayhew, Jenkins, Callaghan, Healey, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all join in a coalition government for national unity. And those who are left and not invited in could get on with the job of organising a 'social contract'. A social contract to do what?

Will it bring a sensible farming policy? Will it bring us the benefits of overproduction by giving us cheaper food? A 'social contract' will do no such thing. It's another device cooked up by the Parliamentarians to discipline the working class in the interests of the 'sacred-cow' profit.

It is good to note that many sections of the working class have seen through the whole political charade and are simply getting on with the pursuit of claims with no strings or standstills which will give them what they want, a standard of living that goes up, not down.

Miners

At the NUM Conference this month delegates passed two important resolutions.

- 1) A pledge to fight all incomes policies so long as the capitalist private profit making character of British society remains unaltered.
- 2) A resolution calling for a substantial pay increase.

NSK Japan

Although Britain already has a large ball-bearing industry (Skeffco's, Hoffman's Ransome and Marks), the Japanese have now received the go-ahead to produce bearings at Peterlee near Hartlepool, aided and abetted by Government grants, even though our own industry has suffered redundancies. The Japanese TUC say that we are being used as a source of cheap labour. Why does the Government of this country allow foreign investment when we already have an industry that can cope with any task within its field that it is asked to perform?

A prior(i) argument

Prior, Opposition Spokesman on employment, said:

'Increased co-operation is an essential step towards a higher standard of living. This could be achieved only if employees were given a say in the running of their work.

Workers are better informed and more articulate than ever before, but they suffer a sense of frustration and alienation.'

I'll say we do! But if Prior wants workers in management, it's no good to us. We, as workers, want the whole works for ourselves, in a socialist society.

At the same time as Prior is talking about worker participation, the Government Manpower Society, headed by Sir Dennis Barnes, said that it has plans ready for re-training in the event of unemployment. Re-training for what? We have already got the skills, that is what we as a nation live by. What about finding jobs for the skills we already have, instead of trying to re-train us?

Shell

Workers on strike at Shell's Stanlow Refinery, Cheshire, rejected an offer of pay rises up to 25% for the present year. Shop stewards said that the lower paid and women workers were not offered enough. Subsequently, a meeting of all Shell shop stewards representing 3000 workers, decided to reject the pay offer. They called upon the officials to enter into more discussion. Said the chairman, Mr. Bill Brown, "We are determined that the workers at Stanlow will not be defeated." This is how workers are fighting the fraud of a 'social contract' and to maintain their standards of living.

Liverpool sit-in

1200 workers at International Property Development Kirbby Liverpool staged a sit-in to save their jobs. Not the first time either. It was formerly the Fisher-Bendix Plant where they held a one month sit-in in 1972. Said the AUEW steward, "Nobody puts us on the street, least of all business, governments or anybody else."

Brighton

After 3 days of unsuccessful negotiation workers of the Brighton Hove and District Bus Company held a one-day strike in protest against the pay and operating conditions, and also to try and combat staff shortages.

At a mass meeting the strikers, members of the T&GWU, voted 165 to 2 in favour of further industrial action if their demands over pay and conditions are not met. This could mean an overtime ban or even a week-long strike.

This one-day strike, which was 100 per cent by the Brighton Hove and District workers, was also supported by other transport workers from the Southdown Bus Company who refused to take on standing passengers or the working of overtime.

Trinity House

A dispute exists between Trinity House and 31 seamen who were ordered off the vessel Siren after refusing to work over the weekend. They wanted overtime pay. Trinity House said they were sympathetic but the claim was rejected by the Pay Board.

Ford drivers Dagenham

On July 3rd, acting on Ford's instructions, police woke up 5 long-distance lorry drivers, who were sleeping after a night-shift, and dragged them off to the station to face questions about allegedly fiddling a few shillings on an overnight stop in Swansea some three weeks previous. Immediately all Ford's drivers, to a man, vacated their cabs in protest, and the Dagenham site was grinding to a halt by Thursday. Ford's are very vulnerable as their three week summer shutdown approaches as they try to stockpile cars in order to sustain them in business during this period. The strike was called off when Fords, in panic, completely capitulated and offered the victorious drivers 1) a guarantee that none of the 5 men would be sacked 2) to pay a fixed night accommodation rate instead of the present skintight system and 3) a promise to consult the union on all disciplinary matters before running to the police. Direct action won the day!

Also our picket lines had been respected by numerous drivers of vehicles from the firms that supply Fords and this contributed to the successful outcome.

National Carriers Liverpool

Since July 1st, 250 motor drivers employed by NCL at the three depots in Liverpool have been on strike for a 'fall-back' bonus of £15 per week. It was the total inadequacy of the latest Phase III rise which really precipitated the action on bonus. Needless to say, at no time have the drivers, members of the NUR, voiced support for their General Secretary, Sir Sidney Greene's, touching faith in the 'social contract'.

Merchant Navy officers

The Pay Board has refused approval of the pay agreement reached by Merchant Navy Officers with their employers. After a meeting in Hull the Ships' Officers threatened world-wide strike action - the first time they have ever contemplated industrial action. There are 40,000 officers on British merchant ships. An officers' strike would leave both shipping and goods stranded from Hull to Hong Kong.

ICI

Rises of between 19 percent and 27 per cent were won by ICI workers after industrial action, thus breaching the social contract. ICI made record profits of £122 million, double those for the previous period last year.

More wage fights

The struggle against wage cuts is being pursued at Plesseys, Liverpool; at GEC and Triumph, Motors, Coventry. At British Leylands there are threats of redundancies which workers are preparing to resist.

In five Leylands bus and lorry plants in Lancashire a fortnight's strike of 9000 workers has resulted in the immediate payment of a full 7 per cent pay increase and the postponement of a scheme by management to replace 'piece-work' with 'measured-day' work.

Chinese workers visit Britain



Ten machine tool worker delegates from all parts of China have been visiting Britain for three weeks at the invitation of the AUEW. The picture shows them at the Govan ship yard. They visited machine tool plants and other factories, including the Hawker Siddeley plant where they saw Tridents under order for China being made. They were entertained by local government officials and had discussions with managers, shop stewards and workers on the floor.

During their visit they were accompanied, at the request of the AUEW Executive Council, by Reg Birch, member of the Executive Council and Chairman of the CPB(ML).

OUT OF THEIR OWN MOUTHS

"What the power of Trade Unionism has done is to deny to the capitalist system the means of curing recession natural to itself and relatively to its beneficiaries. It cannot throw its human ballast overboard in stormy times." (Sunday Telegraph, June 30th.)

PCF M-L six years old

It is now ten years since the formation of the Marxist-Leninist groups who came together three years later to form the Communist Party of France Marxist-Leninist. Since then, despite great difficulties, they have gone from strength to strength.

Only six months after its formation the party was forced

underground, and the most vociferous in their demands that the party should be made illegal were the leaders of the revisionist Communist Party of France! Who are the revisionists most scared of - the ruling class, or the working class deciding their own future?

BBC workers continue strike

The production assistants in BBC television who have been on strike for more than three weeks over a claim for adequate compensation for the enormous amount of overtime they have to work have been encouraged by the mass support from fellow workers and the united efforts on their behalf of the Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians.

At a meeting on July 5, other unions - the National Union of Journalists, the Musicians Union, the Electrical Trades Union, Actors' Equity and the National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees - all agreed to instruct their members not to work with non-union labour brought in by the BBC to replace striking staff and to co-operate in the blacking of equipment that might be used to transmit substitute programmes.

Already a number of BBC blackouts have occurred. The last episodes of the serial "The Pallisers" had to be cancelled and "Nationwide" and "Panorama" have been blacked out. A forthcoming "Panorama" on which Wilson was to have appeared is also to be blacked out and the striking workers have said that "surely a Labour prime minister would not wish to be seen on the screen in such circumstances."

The guerrilla tactics by which 90 key members of the drama and entertainment section are striking for conditions which will affect BBC workers generally and can be sustained in their struggle by colleagues as long as management wants to try to hold out have proved most effective. A one day strike by all BBC staff was ruled out as not nearly so likely to put real pressure on management; but the strike of the production assistants is supplemented by short, disrupting, lightning strikes by this section of staff that as opportunity offers.

Managements dirty tactics

BBC management has tried to present the strike as really a dispute between the two unions, ABAS and ACTT, and nothing to do with them. This lie was promptly spoiled by the general secretaries of the two unions in a joint statement of combined support for their members in struggle. (This is like the efforts of Trotskyists, who play the same role as management, to convince the striking production assistants that their union leaders were selling them out. Unions are as strong as the actions of their members make them and the Association of Broadcasting Staffs has never been more det-

ermined to carry a struggle with management through to the end.)

The struggle of the production assistants had been going on for 18 months before they took to strike action. When the BBC management proposed outside arbitration, they answered that "Arbitration is like bringing in the mother-in-law to settle a dispute between husband and wife." Management took refuge behind every shabby device a capitalist government put at their disposal. They first used the wage freeze to say they could do nothing even if they wanted to and then they got an injunction from the NIRC against the production assistants' original strike proposal three months before the present strike was on. Management has also given undertakings about the use of material like world football coverage which they subsequently broke.

Philosophy of

BBC management

While the dispute with the production assistants was in progress, the Chairman of the BBC's Board of Governors was attending the Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference at Oxford where he spoke on the relations of unions and management. He warned that society could get fed up with industrial disruption and elect "a really tough

NALGO: London workers extend action

On July 8, NALGO rejected as "completely unacceptable" the employers' latest offer, based on the Pay Board's recommendations, of a London Allowance of £400 a year in Inner London and £200 in Outer London. The Union wants an increase in the Allowance of £400 for ALL its members in London.

NALGO workers are now determined not only to continue the present industrial action being waged in London, but to escalate the struggle even further. Strikes are expected to be intensified in 11 London Boroughs and 5 more power stations, and NALGO's 10,000 members in the Gas industry are also expected to enter the struggle.

Members are not interested in honouring the so-called 'social contract' by settling within Phase III; instead, they are honouring themselves and the Working Class by continuing the struggle until their original claim is met.

Industrial action, in the form of overtime bans, non-cooperation with agency staff and selective strike action, started over four months ago. It has been continued in the face of vicious attacks by both the TUC and the Government. All attempts to halt the struggle on the part of the employing class and its supporters, have only served to draw more and more workers into the arena.

When the employers refused in May to negotiate on the current 20% national wage claim unless the industrial action in London was halted, NALGO workers showed their solidarity and cla-

rity by threatening a national overtime-ban and a one-day national strike on July 1. Thus, the employers' attempt to split the membership, instead revealed the membership's strength - in the face of this the employers backed down and agreed to negotiate.

Throughout the struggle, NALGO workers in London have given the lead to the 'leadership'. They have shown the National Executive that they are determined to fight until the Allowance claim is settled. The National Executive's decision to call off the industrial action in the light of a firm promise increase by the employers was, therefore, not surprisingly overturned by members at NALGO's Brighton Conference on June 14. At the Conference, by a majority of 73,018 votes, a motion was resoundingly carried to continue the struggle. It was only surprising that the NEC had attempted a last minute 'sell-out' which was obviously destined to be thrown out by the membership; a membership that at every previous attempt over the last four months to confuse and disunite it, has risen each time clearer and more united than before.

It was said at NALGO's Conference that "No longer are members prepared to accept status instead of currency... a ton of it, doesn't buy an ounce of anything."

So much for the myth of the privileged 'white-collar worker'. Today, he is fighting on behalf of the whole Working Class.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nixon's recent visit to Brezhnev is yet another episode in the cliff-hanging series of SALT talks, conferences on 'security', 'disarmament', etc. which are all so much conjurors' patter to hold our attention and distract us from the real aims of the superpowers. What is the real aim of these talks? Not disarmament - both the USSR and America have ever-increasing military budgets. Not arms limitation - the 1972 agreement on testing of MIRV missiles was broken the day the treaty was signed. The campaign for arms 'limitation' and 'disarmament' is really directed at the rivals to the superpowers' monopoly - a monopoly which is very useful for blackmailing any country which threatens their interests. The development of nuclear weapons by a socialist country - China, which has no expansionist aims - is an extremely important step because

it breaks this monopoly. Possession of nuclear weapons cannot be judged 'right' or 'wrong' without looking at the politics of the possessor. Only China has stated that it will never use nuclear weapons first.

UPSURGE IN NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, 40,000 workers walked off their jobs recently when a drivers' union secretary was jailed. A ban had been imposed by the drivers on fuel supplies to a ship blacked by seamen. The Supreme Court of the Labour Government had ordered the seamen and drivers to lift their ban on the ship but the injunction was ignored.

The jailing saw a walkout by seamen, watersiders, drivers, tally clerks, freezing workers, engineers, electricians, carpenters and many others. Giant industrial plants were closed, mines closed, breweries closed. Buses stopped and one port was shut.

The union secretary was released when it was said that the ban on the ship would be lifted.

Workers in New Zealand have for many months been suffering from a steady decrease in real wages. The latest, ill-judged attack provoked a "truly magnificent mass struggle" according to the "People's Voice", paper of the Communist Party of New Zealand.

government... not visionary softies but real authoritarians. We all know that certain unions can bring society to a halt but misusing this power or even threatening it only ensures that other sectors which have hitherto been non-militant will start to get tough... there are plenty of other groups who can put just as nasty a stranglehold on society as miners, power workers, rail-drivers or dockers."

A BBC spokesman said that Sir Michael Swann's speech was in no way intended "to refer to the BBC's own present industrial dispute."

Patients not profits

Health service workers cover a large number of groups of workers. Not only nurses & registrars, junior hospital doctors & consultants but engineers & administrative & medical records staff, ancillary staff (cooks, carpenters, receptionists & telephonists), and various para-medical groups, e.g. physiotherapists, speech therapists, psychologists, dieticians, pharmacists, biochemists, radiographers, occupational therapists, physics technicians, medical laboratory technicians.

Because of the nature of their work health service people tend to be a dedicated and humane section of our class and thus reluctant to take industrial action to maintain and improve living standards. Consequently they are one of the most exploited sections of our class. Their dedication and humanitarianism has long been used as a psychological weapon to effectively dampen struggles to maintain and improve conditions.

Although private practice has a divisive effect amongst hospital workers in allowing some to supplement inadequate wages, it is not the cause of their predicament and the implementation of a ban on such work is most advantageously used as only one of a number of tactics in a struggle for improved conditions of all patients and health workers.

The recent "furor" at Charing Cross Hospital clearly showed how divisive and pointless the incorrect use of such a ban on private patient work can be. Such politics are the politics of the ultra-left; purely emotive and completely lacking in clarity and foresight and coming only from those outside our class.

Nurses in the North East had sufficient clarity and strength to maintain industrial action of such integrity that the struggle will continue - 16 hospitals in Sunderland, 10 in Nth. Tyneside, 8 in Sth. Tyneside, 4 in Darlington and many other area general hospitals are involved with well-organised picket lines. Nurses and fellow health workers here and in the rest of the country are now realising that this cannot be an isolated struggle. North East hospital ancillary workers have demanded that NUPE submit a claim for a £32 minimum wage. Realising that their position is strengthened by the nurses' fight, they intend to organise after learning tactical lessons from that battle and their own weaknesses in their isolated struggle last year.

Medical physics technicians operating heart, lung and haemodialysis machines, demanding a 30 per cent increase in their pay as a result of a reevaluation claim now into its third year, have been forced into industrial action. Provincial and London strike committees (involving ASTMS & NALGO) have ensured that 24hr emergency services are in operation while each hospital determines its most effective line of action according to specific conditions. Bans on overtime, working with agency staff, private practice and out-patient clinics vary in effectiveness from hospital to hospital. Just one of these tactics in a single hospital group is as effective as implementation of a combination of these same tactics in a single hospital. Only the technicians themselves can determine the most powerful tactic for

each situation. They have the support of their fellow hospital workers - picket lines at Guys, Middx. and the London Hospitals have operated successfully because of this support as well as excellent co-operation from delivery drivers.

Equally, radiographers have taken the initiative in pursuit of a 40 per cent increase and re-grading, and are using the same tactics as the medical physics technicians. At least 13 London hospitals involving 200 or more radiographers are affected and in the provinces hospitals such as Sheffield are showing a very good tactical sense, e.g. X-Ray departments coming out for intervals of 2 weeks and when their workload is heaviest.

Co-ordinated action of both groups can bring hospitals such as Guys to a stop if demands are not met by the present tactics. The issue before health workers is seen most clearly by these two para-medical groups, as the chairman of the national Radiographers Action Committee said at the rally on July 6th "we have no choice but to unionise, there is no room for divisions; we have to fight and we have to fight hard." The many other groups of health workers are also quickly realising they cannot afford divisions and illusions of professional elitism and separatism.



Radiographers in protest march, "Why the delay in X-ray pay"

This is a significant step forward from the situation of a few months ago when organisation amongst physics technicians was so weak that a jittery "leadership" could call off action. Such a decision by what some may call leaders and shrieks of "sell-out", "strike-breakers", etc. by those who would take their places show both to be of like mind. When confronted by the development of rising consciousness, ingenuity and self-reliance of health workers in struggle they behave like frightened sheep.

The rate of unionisation, solidarity and unity amongst different groups of hospital workers is steadily increasing - particularly in COHSE, NUPE, ASTMS. The numbers of hospitals with joint

shop steward committees is likewise on the rise. The well-fought but isolated struggle of the ancillary workers last year proved that sufficient support from fellow hospital workers and other sections of our class was the crucial factor lacking. With increasing unity amongst hospital workers all action must follow principles which ensure minimum harm to themselves and to patients and be of such high organisational quality and ideological clarity that demoralisation cannot occur. Their situation forces them to use guerrilla strategy - it will not be easy; unity, thorough preparation and perseverance are essential elements leading to further gains in strategic and ideological development.

Duel in the sun

In the Classified Ads department of the Sun newspaper, members of Natsopa stopped work on June 7th in reply to a management offer of 'merit rises' to two of their number who had handed in their notice - an effort to get those particular people to stay. When four months work-to-rule had already failed to get management to agree to a collective increase in wages for the workers - in the form of either a collective bonus or commission scheme - this preferential treatment could only be seen as a clear provocation to strike. Advertising coming through over the telephone was refused by the workers, and orders sent in by post 'went astray'. Subsequently one of the girls already in receipt of the extra money joined the action when asked to do the work of the strikers.

Standing firm against inadequate and divisive offers made only to some workers, the Natsopa members held out until an overall £3 a week was offered. As a proof of restored 'good will', thousands of pounds of advertising which had 'gone astray' was 'found'.

The collective increase was a victory for a department with little experience of collective organisation and struggle, working against concerted efforts to demoralise and divide the strike. Those taking the action remained solid, refusing to be divided or tempted by easy solutions and increasing their numbers during the course of the struggle. Regarding themselves as all part of the same production line, they proved that only by collective effort can victory be won. They also showed quite clearly that, if pushed enough at the right moment, the employers can and will break Phase III when they are forced to.

be divided among existing classes, increasing the size of classes - a forced increase in productivity.

Labour and Conservative governments talk of expansion and improvement of education; the opposite takes place. The government continues its cuts in expenditure on school buildings, books, paper and other vital materials, the number of teachers in training is reduced. We cannot sit by and watch intolerable conditions arising in our schools.

In Leeds, many have already expressed total opposition to these council proposals. There has been a call to the executive of the NUT for a one-day stoppage, and large numbers of teachers will flatly refuse to cooperate with the council and will not take on extra duties. Teachers everywhere realise that they have a duty and responsibility to the working-class - of which they are a part - and must fight hard against such measures, wherever they occur.

Social contract out

A rose by any other name Class collaboration is as old as Social Democracy. The 'social contract' is only the latest name. It doesn't differ much in essence from all the former manifestations. Statements by spokesmen to the effect that they are getting closer to the CBI on industrial relations remind one of the pre-war get together known as Mond-Turnerism. That was the 'social contract' of its day and it spelt disaster for the working class. The working class is not going to be conned again.

Even while the TUC speak of unanimous support as represented by the General Council, big organised sections of the workers have already repudiated it. The decision of the miners can be interpreted in no other way than as a clear rejection of any social contract. Apart from union conference decisions which are entirely at variance with TUC pronouncements - and there will be more of them - the grass roots trade unionists are already 'voting with their feet'. The wage settlements being currently made by oil refinery workers and others have nothing to do with any 'social contract', leave alone Phase Three. There are many more on the way. Neither will threshold payments satisfy.

The whole business of wage

restraint and social contracts purport to be means of dealing with inflation. But workers have memories and learn from experience. After all the welter of propaganda to the effect that wage drift is the cause of price rises, and all the legislation to control the level of wage increases including periods of complete wage freeze (during which prices continued to rise) we now have a record level of inflation! In other words, all the prognostications of the economists and politicians, Labour and Tory, prove to be wrong. This culminates in a situation where five payments of 40p have been made in recognition of the fact that, despite laws to hold down wages, prices have risen even higher. The fact that these wage payments are only made after prices have risen must dispose once and for all of the notion that price rises only result from wage increases.

It is even being argued that these very payments will promote inflation. This merely illustrates the futility of paying any heed to bourgeois politicians and economists. All the evidence though is that the working class is not to be taken in. They have seen the way the profit-makers insure themselves against inflation and that lesson will not pass un-noticed.

Leeds teachers struggle

One of the first directives to come from the newly organised and 'efficient' Leeds Metropolitan Council has been to initiate a further vicious cut in the educational budget, on top of the previous reductions made by the government last year. The council is on the 'verge of bankruptcy', so the story goes, because of inflation and threshold payments, so now the teachers are to be burdened with the task of balancing the books.

The cuts are taking the following form: until specific clearance is made by the council, no offers of teaching staff appointments can be made, (which means classes are likely to be without teachers in September,) no vacancies will be advertised, no promotion for existing teachers, no temporary and part-time staff will be appointed after their contracts have expired and lastly, no supply teachers can be employed in case of absence.

The reason for this situation developing is clear. The ruling class no longer wishes to spend workers' taxes on necessities such as the health service and education. Teachers are expensive; their numbers must be reduced in one way or another; the weakest within teaching, temporary staff and supply teachers, are removed first. Redundancies in a 'secure' job! Children without teachers will

Dearly beloved workers

The clergy might be interested to know that Marx predicted their present situation over a hundred years ago when he wrote, 'The bourgeoisie . . . has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers'.

And now angry vicars are

demanding 100 per cent wage rises. What is more, they are not just relying on prayer to support their demands. They are to work-to-rule, with a strict five-and-a-half-day week, and the Church Commissioners have been given three months to come up with the right answers.

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