

THE WORKER



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Revolt against Restraint

DECLARE WAR ON THE WARMAKERS

It must now be clear to everyone that the government is intent on the destruction of the working class in Britain. The attacks on education, health, the destruction of industry and now living standards is the avowed strategy of the ruling class. No longer are we even promised better things to come.

Pay curbs and all other attacks are the long term strategy of the ruling class. Its aim is to produce a generation of illiterate, unhealthy, uprooted workers who roam the streets of Brussels, Paris and Bonn looking for work.

The so called 'anti-inflation' policy represents the most positive step towards the corporate state yet taken by any British government. They desire not just to depress living standards but to destroy the trade unions - something the ruling class has prayed and worked for but never succeeded in achieving for over two centuries.

In their panic to destroy everything they come in conflict with all workers. Never has the bourgeoisie been so isolated and never have the prospects of revolution been so bright. It is shameful that nineteen members of the TUC General Council should vote for such a policy which is nothing less than an abdication of trade unionism. The shame is on us who in our passivity allow such an atrocity to be committed in our name.

Gone are the days when we could 'live with capitalism'. Today it is us or them. We face our greatest challenge yet. The government has declared an all out war on the working class. We must declare war on the war makers.

Another fatal cut

We are now witnessing another attempt to reduce the already inadequate numbers of doctors in this country, to a figure well below the minimum required for our Health Service to even begin to work efficiently. The Health Service is already struggling under severe pressures financially and also in its numbers of medically trained employees. Last week saw a further attempt to cut these numbers even more drastically in the guise of the General Medical Council's mandatory 2-day series of Tests of Competence to Practice for foreign doctors. 60 per cent of the foreign doctors who sat these examinations failed.

Throughout Britain today it is these very doctors (mainly Indian) who fill the most undesirable posts both geographically and, more importantly, in the areas of medicine which are the most unpopular, for example, geriatrics. In hospitals, foreign doctors comprise of 1 in 3 of all doctors, 8 in 10 of all senior

house officers, 1 in 2 of all registrars, and 1 in 5 of all general practitioners.

Post-graduate training schemes are meant to be in operation for all junior hospital doctors, although the heavy work-load, particularly in provincial hospitals, often makes operation of such schemes difficult. The medical profession itself has shown great concern for such training, but only the improved conditions of work for which they are struggling will allow efficient operation of the principle. Meanwhile, are all foreign doctors, on whom the NHS relies, going to be required to sit these Tests of Competence? Will this blatant racism also be an excuse to cut back our Health Service?

Are we seeing now a blueprint for the eventual total dissolution of our National Health Service? It appears increasingly even more apparent that no longer is a healthy worker required in Britain.

THE FIGHT AGAINST CUTS IS REVOLUTIONARY



Tyneside workers on strike at Swan Hunters raise their fists in defiance of the Labour Government's pay curbs. See page 2

BMA Conference

The Government's attack on the National Health Service, after having tried to disguise itself as poor pay and conditions and having that disguise recognised and attacked by all NHS workers from ancillary staff to consultants, has finally come out into the open and shown itself for what it is - a vicious attempt to take away from us the right to be healthy.

At the annual conference of the British Medical Association in Leeds delegates were told that rationing of services available under the NHS seems unavoidable; while Mrs. Castle, addressing the first annual meeting of the National Association of Health Authorities, announced that she is proposing cuts in administrative costs, joint health and local

authority planning and financing of some services. This adds to a situation where already standards of patient care are being reduced because of lack of finance and hospital budgets are inadequate to provide a modern health service.

The BMA Conference, however, has demonstrated that there is a new mood amongst doctors. Motions on the agenda to turn the BMA into a fully-fledged trade union and the NHS into a closed shop for doctors, although defeated, reflect the protracted, bitter conflict between doctors and their employer, the Government, not only about pay and conditions, but also about inadequate financing of the NHS. Junior hospital doctors, too, are preparing to

enter into battle over their new contract, to be implemented on October 1st, which reduces their basic working week from 80 hours to 40 hours with overtime starting at 56 hours - and every junior doctor will have to work many hours overtime, which means that they will each be working 16 hours entirely unpaid!

The whole working class must be quite clear about the significance of these developments. If the Government attacks our Health Service, then its defence is left only to NHS workers, supported by their class. Defence does not mean belt tightening or preparing to work in bad conditions for a pittance. Defence of the NHS is all one with improving conditions of work, thereby improving conditions of patient care, and improving pay, thereby staffing the NHS properly and adequately. A motion passed at the Leeds Conference by a large majority stated that among its principal functions the BMA should 'represent the profession, advise members and negotiate terms and conditions of service'. Doctors have taken to heart the struggle for maintenance of their standards of living and improvement of their conditions of work. They are leading the defence of the NHS and deserve the support of the rest of the working class.

REG BIRCH
on the
BRITISH REVOLUTION
see centre pages

Industrial Front

Tyneside Counter-offensive

Tyneside workers reacted to the Healey-TUC attack by launching a counter-offensive which resulted in over 10,000 workers being on strike by July 7th. 5,000 Swan Hunter shipyard ancillary and outfitting workers voted unanimously to strike and within hours the six tyneside shipyards were at a standstill. The workers, whose next increase was due in six months, rejected an immediate offer of £2 per week and demanded £8.30 now and a further £2 in January. The men will not be meeting until the management make a satisfactory offer.

4,000 AUEW manual workers at Parsons Engineering struck from July 5th, closing the plant. The usual threat to close permanently had been made by the firm the previous day. The men want an immediate £10 per week. 500 boilermakers at Gateshead struck from July 7th demanding at least 30 per cent. Their last increase had been in January 1975.

Representatives of 20,000 local government and hospital workers in NUPE called on the executive to oppose both the Healey 10 per cent and the TUC £8! They called on the Union to fight for the full claim of 33 per cent and if necessary to go it alone. The response was NUPE's vote against the TUC wage restraint.

Firemen stepped up sanctions resulting in the closure of Gosforth and Newburn fire stations, in support of their pay demand. Also ambulance officers, who have been operating on emergencies only for seven weeks, in support of their demand for a new rank structure.

Most Tyneside workers are fully aware of the implications of the Healey-TUC pact and are letting it be known that they are not going to fall for this one.

The counter-offensive of Tyneside workers must lead other workers into battle against the enemy's new onslaught. They must grasp the revolutionary nature of their struggle.

NUM Conference

The annual conference of the National Union of Mineworkers ended recently. The media apparently saw it as dominated by a conflict over whether to fix precise money figures for their next wage claim and stipulate £100 a week for underground workers, or to press for substantial increased and state no precise figure. We should not delude ourselves however. In reality that discussion was but a mock battle, and a diversionary tactic. The real point of principle for the NUM - a union which has recently relearned its immense industrial power - was to declare itself forthrightly against any form of interference in wage-bargaining, whether statutorily imposed by government or voluntarily accepted through a TUC Social Contract. No such clear pronouncement emanated from Conference. Now it must be heard from the collieries of Britain.

In times of rapid inflation money increases are rapidly eroded. It was with this in mind as well as from a desire to improve their conditions of work that

Worker Interview

Interview with a member of ASTMS telephone installations branch in dispute with GEC. The men have been demanding a 40 per cent pay increase to bring them into line with Post Office engineers. The company, true to form, instituted a lock out of all installation workers, but as this entered its thirteenth week, GEC called of its immediate attack and agreed to arbitration of the final settlement.

What is the background to the dispute?

The claim for parity with Post Office engineers has been pending for several years, but because of government pay policy we felt it was impossible to press for it. However, when the Industrial Relations Act was defeated, we decided to get organised and in March we began a work to rule - refusing to fill in progress reports, or open any new contracts. After two weeks of this action the company threatened to lock us out without pay unless we resumed normal working immediately.

How did you deal with the lock out?

The main action was selective picketing of the factories producing installation equipment, and at Coventry a fifty-strong picket was maintained seven days a week so that no supplies could get through. Other ASTMS branches refused to accept GEC equipment for export, and so prevented the company from switching output to foreign markets. Then the call went out to engineers in Jersey and abroad to support the dispute by returning home, so action continued to escalate throughout the period.

What effects did your actions have on the company?

They twice raised their offer to us, but we turned them down because their offers were diabolical, and still left us £10 to £55 a month behind Post Office engineers. The Post Office then began to put pressure on the company to settle because they wanted equipment installed, whilst production was piling up in the factories to the extent that it was in danger of falling through some of the floors. GEC then threatened lay-offs in the plants, and the sad thing about this was that some people left voluntarily instead of fighting to keep their jobs.

What did you learn from this dispute?

We saw that only the members can really fight: it simply cannot be left up to a few union negotiators. And as staff employees, we discovered that the company deals with us just the same as it does with hourly paid employees, so clearly we're not privileged in any way. Also, given this dramatic action going on for months, we realised just how difficult it is to get publicity, for press, T.V. and radio coverage was almost nil.

What do you see happening next?

Some union officials are talking about getting this sector nationalised. This would be a diversion. They are only suggesting it because they believe in the Labour government, but it is no good their expecting the Labour government to fight their battles, because it is just as keen to back the status quo as any other government. As far as the arbitration is concerned, we cannot say we have won our full demands yet, but we are fairly optimistic about their outcome.

The installation engineers dispute proves that a numerically small section, if it relies on its own strength, can take on a powerful corporation. The fight was one against the current rabid attack, not of Weststock and his colleagues as individuals, but of the entire capitalist class in its present crisis. If 1,000 engineers can tackle the gigantic GEC in such times as these, then millions of proletarians can certainly suppress that class and put an end for ever to wage slavery in Britain.

the miners decided at conference to press for a four-day week of 29 hours - a decision which entails a commitment to a steady, if not expanding, labour force.

MP's Pay

The wildcat windbags of Westminster who are on a basic wage of £90 per week plus allowances are pressing a claim for a £150 per week. The hazards of being an MP are only too well known. The dangers of backside numbness - that often spreads to their brains as a result of late night sittings. The danger of tripping over one another as they stagger from the bar to lobby when a division is called.

The only way left open to them now that there is a wage freeze is a "Productivity Deal."

MPs given the right incentives, could equal the output of North Sea Gas, by asking twice as many questions in the Question-time hour. They would get twice as many evasive answers. They could have a decibel meter and

award increases on who could shout the loudest. The proof of increased productivity would be Hansard. Doubled in size it would prove how much garbage had been spoken and thereby justify an increase.

Pilkingtons

Pilkingtons have told their 750 employees that the Plant at Ravenswood will close down next March because requests for financial aid to the Department of Industry have been turned down.

The Plant makes glass funnels for television tubes. Reduced demand and the increase in imports of colour television glassware are responsible for it reaching this critical stage.

This is not peculiar to the television industry. The motorcycle industry in this country was in the same position once, but was allowed by management to fall behind in competition with foreign firms. Many brand names of goods made famous by British skill like Jones Sewing Machines are now being made elsewhere.

THE BRITISH

On July 4th at the Bellman Bookshop Reg Birch, Chairman of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), spoke of the necessity of the British Revolution - a declaration of independence of the British working class from the capitalist system which is crushing the life out of Britain.

"Revolutionary change", he said, "is inevitable - and nowhere more so than in Britain where the very class relationships of capitalism began. We are the first working class in the world, the first proletariat. The capitalist class in Britain which was the first to ascend to power has the right among the older capitalist countries to show priority in its descent!"

unable to rule in the old way

"But anyone who believes that the British bourgeoisie are unable to sustain their old role any longer seriously underestimates them. They have exported vast wealth to Europe to draw upon when they like and lend back to Britain at staggering interest. If the Mafia can have numbered accounts in Swiss banks, do you think British capitalists would be behind hand in such financial juggling? With the mobility of capital the bourgeoisie when in difficulties can simply move their seat of power elsewhere."

"Industry and development in Britain are run down. This is the shift of the bourgeoisie to other sources of surplus value - an attempt to do without the British working class which is so difficult to humble and control. Capitalism can no longer use the young. They can become "guest workers" in West Germany or they can go back to the land and become peasants again."

"Lenin defined these "coupon clippers" when he spoke of the change from industrial to finance capital. That is what inflation is really about - speculators who rule the roost and can cash in on any situation no matter how disastrous for workers. Then this very inflation is blamed on wages and we are threatened with extremism of left and right if we, the victims, do not arrest it."

"The European Economic Community is a reencouragement of imperialism doomed to failure from the outset. It has been joined by the British capitalist class because, face to face with the British working class, it has to seek the help of other monopoly capitalists. NATO is the prop to neo-fascist trends in West Germany under the aegis of the US and, though ostensibly against the USSR, is really the means for retaining order and power for capitalism in Western Europe."



"The international plot to put the West European working class in bondage is like the "popular front" in France before the War from which arose Laval, Dorel and Petain."

"Bourgeois democracy demands two political parties, originally representing different class interests - a governing party and an opposition. In Britain, as also in the US, this has been transcended. The two are identical. There is a single party system. Bourgeois democracy begins to break down at that point. Certain legislative measures begin to take away freedoms previously won. Collective bargaining goes; an Englishman's home is no longer his castle. On the excuse of drug detection youth are stopped anywhere and searched; majority decisions by juries can convict and we have Sir Robert Mark's plea for more practices of the police state."

"Since bourgeois democracy requires a two-party system, now that there is only one we can see the extent of the decay. From this situation can only emerge two political forms - a triumphant working class led by the CPB(ML) or fascism."

no longer to be ruled in the old way

"It is not a question of whether we want the capitalist class to do these things to us or not. If you believe you have a choice it is like saying you will "turn the other cheek". They will come for you in your bed. Revolution is needed not only to bring about a new order but even to prevent the clock being turned back."

"This is a new revolutionary situation. If you think things can continue as they are, the class enemy does not think so. The court jesters of the capitalist camp like Mugggeridge and Worsthorne are not just clowning when they talk about civil war, war declared on the working class. They want blood, working class blood."

"Only socialism can save us and only a class, the working class, can bring that about. Not some political nostrum like "The British Road to Socialism". It is a British revolution because that is where we are. This is where we live and work as British workers. But it won't be orkist!"

"If we say the revolution has to be violent, people will say that it means we have no mass base. What it means is that today, in advance of the revolution, we have counter-revolution - counter revolutionary preparation."

"In this revolutionary situation the working class in Britain has to take on the task of leading. There is no model. There has never yet been a revolution in a highly industrialised country, though in some

REVOLUTION



respects the October Revolution is closest to ours. Russia was not occupied by a foreign power. The intervention of imperialist powers came after the revolution. Britain is an aircraft carrier of reaction. Do you believe that it can be sealed off and defended from intervention by putting bits of paper in a box?

"Our situation is not like Portugal where the people have not developed sufficiently and an armed junta does the job for them. Politicians are more difficult to be recognised for what they are and driven out than colonels and little Napoleons. That is why even a body like the General Council of the TUC can be difficult to topple.

"Lenin thought it might be easier for us in Britain because of our industrial position enabling us, once we did make the revolution, to surpass others overnight. But I am not so sure. We are a land of perpetual and all pervasive corruption because of the capitalism which is even in our own minds as social democracy. To minimise the revolutionary task before us is to betray the young.

the role of the party

"Here, in this revolutionary situation, the working class can either be for revolution or it will go the way of the German working class before the War. This is our job. Either revolution or counter-revolution already being prepared in advance. This job depends on changing a state of mind - social democracy.

"We led in making some changes. We exposed the Labour Party's 'In Place of Strife'. We made them say of such anti-trade union legislation 'Never again!' But Healey did not hear. We dealt with Heath and the Industrial Relations Act. We have been right about Ireland. If there be no British forces in Ireland, they will have to solve their own problems of liberating themselves. We are clear about Soviet imperialism. We explained the relations between India and Pakistan and condemned the aggression involved in setting up Bangladesh. We have exposed the illusions of Parliamentarism.

"But if we do not work even harder we will be too late. The youth of '68 are no longer young. Some turned to political dilettantism, some got lost in the day-to-day routine. Theorising is idle. The way is already clear. Marxism-Leninism has been expounded, as has the inevitability of revolution. We alone can draw on our own experience which is not to be got from a book. It comes down to the primitive question - them or us. We the working class: they the class enemy. And time gets shorter. We have to work all the time. Not for us leftism as a kind of youthful indulgence. Nor is it open to us ever to retire.

"Although the working class espouses social democracy it does not believe in it. It uses social democracy as a coward's castle. They are advanced enough to be so-cunning. We are of that class. What we say is what they really think and wait for us to say.

"The only popular front we recognise is the organised working class. We would not join with the Labour Party, with the revisionist Party, with Trotskyites who are police spies and tools of the bourgeoisie. The working class has to create its own opposition, not reformist but revolutionary. The Labour Party is still the largest voice of assembled workers, existing on funds of the labour movement. As there emerges from them those who were



formerly reformists but are so no longer we shall welcome them.

"You cannot eschew any form of struggle in which the working class is involved. The battle for the right to work is revolutionary. It came after the War with a new wave of automation. (It was introduced by Reg Birch at an AUEW National Committee Meeting - Ed.) It forced governments to say that unemployment could never again be an instrument of policy! The reply to redundancy by occupation itself has a revolutionary content. There are only two kinds of economy - ours or the governors! They have yet to realise that theirs is a loser.

"Revolutionary change is inevitable!"

Very High Voltage

Providing electricity for a country is an expensive job. When electricity enables industry to be set up the rewards are obvious, but if it means using enough wire to encircle the earth several times, and struggling up mountainsides to reach isolated cottages, the benefits seem less clear to those who think in terms of profit. However electrification was achieved in Albania, when on October 25th 1970 the last Albanian house was connected to the countrywide network. Thirty years before, even the capital, Tirana, had only enjoyed electricity for 2 hours each evening.

With electricity, farm and factory work can continue efficiently all day, and the people can enjoy reading or study, films, plays or television. The telephone network in Albania has recently been completed. Large television sets are the proud possession of thousands of peasants. The Albanian people half-jokingly refer to Lenin's dictum that "Socialism equals people's power plus electrification", but point to their achievement with real pride.



Korea

Twenty-five years after its first attempt, the United States is again threatening war on Korea. Brandishing the big atom, the Secretary of Defense Schlesinger admitted that the United States had tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea and would use them if necessary. The odious puppet regime of Park Jung Hi in South Korea has become even more unpopu-

lar, and its harsh repressive nature is only mollified to allow mild pacifist religious dissent, a wishy-washy cosmetic to try and deceive American public opinion. The press in the United States is making a big bally-hoo about a "threat from the North", meaning an armed invasion, but the real "threat" from the North is the success of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea in its twenty-five years of reconstruction, land reform and industrialisation, when compared with the

decadent, corrupt, inflation-riddled society in the South. The North Korean press re-emphasised "our basic stand remains unchanged, that is, to achieve the re-unification of the fatherland independently and peacefully not through war or reliance on outside forces".

The US forces in South Korea have recently been forced to give up the covering of the United Nations. They now stand isolated and exposed as the occupying army that they have always been.

India

What an achievement! India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in this international women's year, leads her sex to become the first woman dictator. Found guilty of improper electioneering she did not bow out gracefully as her Parliamentary mentors - the British bourgeoisie - would have made a British politician do. She had to impose a state of emergency, cancel whatever rights were on paper, arrest thousands of her opponents and, most important of all, forbid all strikes, go-slows and other forms of mass agitation. The newspapers have been put under strict censorship and the situation has become so nakedly fascist as to make the

more fastidious of her sponsors in the imperialist club squirm. Not however her main backers - the renegades who have turned the Soviet Union into a major imperialist power and the local revisionist party. They keep hailing her as the great saviour of the people and their minions - the revisionist party of India - has come forward to accept her every dictate, including the latest, forbidding workers to demand higher wages.

Why this fascist move? Because the situation in India is desperate for the ruling class. Economically and politically the country is like a gigantic powder keg ready to explode. The savage repression of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and the subsequent policy of war, which led to the dismemberment of

Pakistan and the setting up of India's puppet state of Bangladesh, have been accompanied by a miserable economic record in which the rickety capitalist-feudal semi-colonial structure has failed to provide either food or employment for the Indian people. A plethora of words about state plans and nationalisation and land reforms but the people starve and industries languish, while the rulers wax fat and the militarists are kept happy by Russian weapons.

In the new-style dictatorships fascism has to be larded over with a lot of verbiage about socialism and people's rights and a pretence of getting rid of capitalism by locking up a few recalcitrant capitalists. But it is scarcely new. Did not Hitler have to call his dictatorship national socialist?

IN BRIEF

All that the link-up of US and USSR astronauts symbolises is the old story of the link-up on the ground of these two imperialist powers who both compete and collude in trying to divide up the world between them. This spectacular event in space, like a huge neon sign advertising the phoney peace talk at Helsinki, is not an advance of science in the service of the world's people but an attempt by the two super-powers to harness science against the people. Their collaboration in detente is just as dangerous as their collaboration in nuclear blackmail.

In Angola, potentially one of the richest countries in Africa, the tragedy of the Congo is being repeated. Once again as the grip of a lesser imperialist power on an

African colony is broken by the people in revolt, the two super-imperialist powers try to move in through the manipulation of black stooges. Many of the characters in this drama are the same as before, like British imperialism's new hero, Mobutu, and there is already talk of possible intervention by the UN. It will be remembered that as in its aggression against Korea, the US involved UN forces, with the backing of the USSR, to engineer the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's national leader.

And Kissinger has hinted that if the smaller nations in the UN do not stop making "inflammatory speeches" against the US and using their majority "to coerce the industrialised countries", the US might abandon the UN altogether.

A Department of Employment report last week stated that the extra cost of living in the capital as compared to the rest of Britain had increased during the past year by more than 20 per cent in Inner London and 17 per cent in Outer London.

These figures based on an Index framed by the Pay Board last June imply increases of £80 a year on the £400 a year Inner London and £200 a year Outer London weighting allowance.

Unions representing up to 1,000,000 workers are preparing claims for special payments of up to £2 a week.

Civil Service Unions are leading the field and have put in claims for £120 a year.

A 'NATIONAL' GOVERNMENT

It has often been stated in THE WORKER that there is no difference between the Labour and Conservative Parties. Both are capitalist; both serve the interests of profits against the interests of workers; both are anti-working class and have tried to destroy the working class's defensive organisation.

Never has that been more obvious than in the last week. A coalition of Labour Government and Tory opposition will smash any resistance in Parliament to an incomes policy that has nothing to do with solving Britain's economic crisis but merely

increases profits at the expense of wages and the standard of living of the working class.

Ever since 1960 every Government, whether Labour or Tory, has brought in a statutory incomes policy and every opposition, whether Labour or Tory, has put up token resistance and said that it would never do such a thing itself. Now even token resistance has vanished.

In the same week at Strasbourg there was complete unity of the Labour and Conservative delegates to the EEC.

The Times of July 8th calls for a national government to

enforce an incomes policy, deal with the trade unions and restore the foundations of a society based "on the liberty of the individual". In effect we already have a one-party system of government. We already have a 'national' government which is bent on destroying Britain as a nation!

Out of this collapse of bourgeois democracy as is shown in "The British Revolution" (See page) there can emerge only two political forms - a triumphant working class led by the CPB(ML) or full fascism.

'De-skilling' the Working Class

The precise form of the Government's statutory wage freeze does not matter, since the working class, on pain of slavish impoverishment, must reject it completely; but apart from everything else the flat £6 maximum continues a policy of down grading skill in the working class.

This tendency over the past few years has substantially narrowed differentials. It was

emphasised by the Tory Government's income policy, in particular the threshold payments which on the average reduced from 60 per cent to 48 per cent the differential skilled workers could expect. It has prevailed in the motor car industry where in many cases management and non-craft unions have collaborated to take the skill out of this industry as far as wage

rates are concerned.

This tendency is often presented as a welcome move toward greater equality. It is not. Greater equality can only come under a socialist system with the working class in control. It can never be imposed on workers by their class enemy. Attacks on skill are attacks on the whole working class, an attempt to degrade them to mere automatons.

It is therefore understandable why Jones of the TGWU was quick to come to the capitalist Government's assistance with a flat-rate deflationary scheme which the TUC soon endorsed. He was willing to use the capitalist class's attack on workers to erode differentials still further and try to weaken those very sections of the working class around which the fighting defence of workers' livelihoods will have to rally.

A New AUEW Resolution

"This London South District Committee fully support the Resolution of the AUEW National Conference rejecting the Social Contract.

We repudiate the TUC proposals of a ceiling on wage increases also the Government's proposed action of imposing a 10 per cent Wage Freeze.

These proposals if put into effect are tantamount to agreeing to massive wage cuts and a drastic reduction in living standards of all working people in the interest of the Employers and Big Business."

FIGHT CUTS IN EDUCATION London

Leeds education lobby wins

The class rule implemented by Leeds City Council over education, cutting education has received a set-back. In the battle against the Council, students, pupils, staff and lecturers mounted the Civic Hall on June 25th, where a screaming match was held with the puppets of capitalism, the Councillors.

The Council, taking the policy of not educating people, is denying the individual's and community's chance to strive for overall education.

The cuts were put off by the Council meeting, because of mass pressure. A temporary victory. Good at this stage of the academic year. Time has been gained by us, ready to fight another day. Preparation can now be made for the attack at the beginning of next session as the cuts reappear.

Any underhand attempts to cut education should be rejected, whether it be by increasing student to staff ratios, which would mean "shallower" teaching methods during class contact time, insufficient lecture preparation, or by cutbacks of materials and resources.

Throughout the country, local authorities in connivance with central government has been working out how educational expenditure can be reduced as part of the ruling class strategy for the destruction of education as we know it. They hope to see a minimal education system, befitting a nation whose industrial and technological life blood is being drained across the channel, the gains of a century removed in a few years. Yet the ruling class knows full well that in doing this they will incur the

wrath of teachers, educationalists and the broad mass of the working class, and assist in their own destruction, as the battle for the defence of education becomes part of the attack on the capitalist state.

In Leeds, for instance, the July, 1974 attempt took the form of a letter sent round schools by a Labour councillor, explaining that vacancies for teachers would not be filled, thus reducing the number of teachers and raising class sizes. This was challenged by a determined body of NUT and NAS members, numbering 2500, who at a mass meeting unanimously threw out this directive, and upheld their right to employment.

This June the new Tory council chose a different tactic, asking the unions to join in discussion with them over eleven areas of expenditure where reductions

could most easily be made, in effect, cutting staff by 1 in 20, cutting building and maintenance allowances, raising school meal prices and almost removing all adult education. The whole plan was formulated to take place over three years, taking £2m out of the current year for a start. At this, teaching organisations let it be known that they would consult with nobody over the destruction of education and when the question was in discussion at a council meeting over 1000 teachers and students, representing all education establishments turned out at the Civic Hall, which was surrounded by half of Leeds Police force. In the face of massive united opposition, for a second time the cuts were thrown out.

A London teacher writes of the struggle in his school against education cuts:

"When we were told at a staff meeting to prepare for a 'minimum' of 15 extra pupils in September, which would mean some classes of 35, the first response was 'How can we cope best with this?' After all, it 'could be worse', especially in this 'difficult economic situation', and 'besides, what can we do about it?'

"It took a few weeks to persuade union members of the true significance of the cuts - they were not just a temporary measure, but part of a deliberate plan to cut education down to the bare minimum.

The only possible conclusion was that if there was to be education, we the teachers would have to fight for it, as we had done before.

Such arguments led to a big turnout from the school for the NUT branch meeting, where we put forward a policy of defending education by working to our union rules - 'We will define the necessary standards'. Insisting on a maximum 30 to a class, and on our minimum preparation time, would make the cuts unworkable. Sadly, we got little support then from other schools.

"Yet the employers seem to have recognised our strength, since two days later, without any explanation, our staff was increased by 2, whilst in every other school, the cuts were carried out as planned. Nor would we have any extra pupils.

"Now, after our small victory the others have begun to see that we were right after all.

Democracy in the NUJ

The NUJ is currently in the throes of a debate which will find its parallel in every other trade union. At its root is the whole morality of trade unionism - of collective participation and responsibility and action wielded for mutual benefit, versus the sanctity of the individual to abdicate all responsibility for both decision-taking and decisions taken, whilst at the same time demanding absolute fulfilment of private demands.

The NUJ is shortly to hold a Special Delegates Meeting (SDM) to debate the use of the secret ballot. The tragedy is that the issue for which the secret ballot is intended is one which has already been debated, and a decision taken, at the Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) - the supreme policy-making body of the union - made up of delegates elected and mandated by all the branches in the union. The issue was the closed shop and the position of editors; the decision, as reported in THE WORKER Issue No. 12 - was to uphold the fight for the closed shop with no exclusion of any member from union discipline.

For a proportion of the union's membership, however, this decision is an uncomfortable one - for those who never attended the meetings which discussed the issue before ADM, who have therefore neither elected nor mandated the ADM delegates, and who, bedevilled as they are by confusions and illusions about their relationship with their immediate bosses - the editors - do not feel the strength or unity to enforce closed shop provisions which would include them.

Having throughout their union membership abdicated responsibility for taking decisions, they are now preparing for the whole-

sale destruction of the life of the union through the negation of the ADM decision and the destruction of the sovereignty of that body. By introducing the ballot in the hopes it will reverse the decision, they seek the death of branch life and all that goes towards the achievement of an informed collective opinion. In its place they seek a method which sanctions isolated, unformed individualism, and a permanent removal from collective forums of decision.

We cannot pretend these events are based only on the closed shop issue. There is an overall strategy at work against which all unions, not merely the NUJ, will have to fight. There is a vital choice looming before all union members, and at the forthcoming SDM, the NUJ will have to face up to the fact that the issue that should concern them there is not the closed shop, but the democracy of the union - ultimately the union's life or death. They will have to recognise that the ploys being used to overturn ADM and institute the secret ballot are attempts to do so for all time, and are at root deliberate strategies for the destruction of the union and the section of the working class it represents. The tragedy is that so many union members who would not consciously wish to aid such an attempt are in reality doing so, by seeking a blessing in their laziness and a short cut to union membership which does not involve having actually to do anything. Once and for all will they have to make the choice, clearly - for a trade union, functioning as such, with a conscious and active membership and against a nominal non-functioning organisation with a membership only in name.

AEI Cables, NORTHFLEET

Workers at AEI Cables, Northfleet, Kent, celebrated Wilson's announcement of the compulsory "voluntary agreement" on wages by striking for an interim pay claim.

The TASS members openly declared that they place no trust in this Government's "£6 flat rate increase for all in the interests of the lower-paid". As the Union official said, "£6 is 35 per cent for the lowest paid here, and this company will not give even that, unless we fight for it."

Employers on the front pages of the national press weep crocodile tears for the lower-paid. But the employers of the 120

office supervisory and quality-control staff in the AEI Cables plant were adamant and dry-eyed as they wrote to employees - by passing the Union - offering a £2 rise for women earning £20 for a 40 hour week.

Workers at this plant are 15 per cent behind national average wages for workers in their field. Allowing for this and inflation, the Union's claim is for 17 per cent this month and a further 17 per cent in October.

After a four-day go-slow and overtime ban the employers threatened to bring in scab labour. The response was an all-out strike. For workers new to struggle it will not be an easy fight.

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