

THE WORKER



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SACK CAPITALISM !

The government's attack on us is the defence of capitalism, we can only defend ourselves by attacking capitalism

UNEMPLOYMENT: THE PRICE WE PAY FOR CAPITALISM

Unemployment is over a million. They call it 'the million mark', we call it 'a million workers', a million of our class.

What are the consequences of allowing capitalism to survive in this country, when we know it can only survive, as it always has, at the expense of the working class?

The consequences the Government plans for us are simple to describe: a vicious driving down of our living standard, the destruction of our organisation and dignity, demoralisation and weakening of our class. In a word: unemployment, the greatest premeditated crime this ruling class is committing against us.

Unemployment: The threat they use against us

The ruling class use many tactics to try to control and subdue the working class, to try to break our organisation and our strength. The most recent and most vicious of these is unemployment. Healey has threatened us with a 10 per cent cut in our living standards and 2 or 3 million on the dole for years unless we take a voluntary drop in our living standards, unless we cease to struggle, as we have always had to, to defend our living, our skill and our dignity.

This threat is echoed in many areas of industry. The British Steel Corporation is threatening the steel unions with the reintroduction of a scheme for up to 20,000 redundancies unless 'voluntary plans' produce greater savings. An employment survey has shown that only 1 in 7 of the 3,634 employers surveyed were expecting to take on labour in the next 3 months, while 1 in 8 employers expected to lay off staff soon.

The number of unemployed is rising faster than at any time since the war. Since June alone 81,819 workers have become jobless. Capitalism, a system which survives by taking from the working class the wealth it creates, can no longer find a way of employing us to create more wealth!

Of course, the ruling class will always blame the working class for the ills of this society, just as they will always try to solve their problems by attacking us further. We are told that attempts to sustain wage differentials and defend our skills just push up the unemployment rate.

Their solution to the problem is to impose on us, by law or fear, what is, in effect, a wage cut. But we have experienced that situation before. In another crisis of capitalism in the late twenties, a wage cut was imposed on the working class to be followed by the massive unemployment during the 1930s, a prospect the present incomes policy is supposed to arrest.

Unemployment and the EEC

What does the promise of 'Jobs for the Boys' in the EEC look like now? Within that organisation of desperate capitalists clutching at straws in the wind of capital, keeping themselves afloat on a sea of unemployment, there are not only no jobs for the boys; there are no longer even enough jobs for their fathers.

In Germany last month over one million workers were jobless - the highest June total since 1954. A further 800,000 were on short time. In Franco unemployment is likely to rise from an average of 561,000 in 1974 to £50,000 this year. Meanwhile Wilson has evred himself willing to consider ways of advancing towards greater economic and monetary cooperation.

We must be clear, however, that the employers make use of the areas in which unemployment is concentrated. In this country the employers try to use these areas, thinking to find a docile, demoralised, disorganised workforce, some of whom they will employ at low rates of pay, in bad conditions, hoping that it will take a long time for union organisation to build itself up again, using the threat of '20 outside the door'. Within the context of the EEC this tactic can be used with even greater force.

For as long as we allow capitalism to wreak such havoc with our lives, we must live with the threat and the reality of unemployment.

'Thus the forest of uplifted arms demanding work becomes ever thicker, while the arms themselves become ever thinner'. So Marx described capitalism in 1847. Only we, the working class, can ensure that such a description never again holds true.

AUEW against the Labour Government

The National Conference of the AUEW comprising the engineering, constructional, foundry and technical sections, totally rejected the social contract and ruled out any legislature or voluntary restraint before the Government announced its new 'anti-inflationary policy on July 1st.

Thus the strongest union and

the second largest in the country had already taken a firm and correct stand on behalf of the working class in favour of collective bargaining and against Government imposed curbs when Healey and the TUC came up with their £6 limit.

The only form of defence in these times is to go over to an offensive and the AUEW will spearhead the attack on the vicious deflationary policy the Government has launched against workers in the interests of the employing class. Plans are being formulated for a general attack on this policy at the TUC Congress in September.

One prong of the Government-TUC attack on workers by enforcing a £6 limit for everybody is to down grade skill in the working class. And yet skilled sections of the working class have been in the forefront of the fight against wage-freezes in the past. They have been in the vanguard in penetrating the defences of employers and of Government and, in the process, have forced up wage levels generally, benefitting their fellow workers.

The retraining of the unemployed which will be pushed harder than ever now is simply a scheme for providing 'skilled' workers on the cheap in the event of economic recovery. Six months at a Government Training Centre is no substitute for a four-year apprenticeship.

The AUEW Executive which has long been critical of Government wage statistics has also decided to carry out its own survey of earnings in the engineering industry. This is necessary because the correct guerrilla tactics based on shop floor struggle and local bargaining means that basic rate increases are largely irrelevant to the 3.5 million workers in engineering. With their own trustworthy statistics the AUEW will be in a better position to decide how the wages and conditions of members can best be fought for.

LONDON MURDER



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The revolutionary fight against cuts

Support your NHS- oppose all cuts

Hospital provisions have been deteriorating for a number of years. The number of staffed hospital beds in England and Wales declined from 468,000 in 1966 to 437,000 in 1973; a loss of 4,400 beds per year. The number of people on waiting lists rose from 536,000 to 546,000 in the same period; a rate of increase of 1,430 per year. During 1974-75 government cuts in public expenditure on hospitals and community health services were £13 millions and cuts in local authorities health services were £4.3 millions. Accounting for 14% inflation in 1974-75 the 'real' value of the cuts was nearer £66.6 millions. Next year we are expecting to tolerate another £76 million chop again, this figure does not account for inflation.

These massive attacks are manifested in increasingly inadequate facilities and equipment, rigorous hours of work due to staff shortages because of the low pay conditions which have long plagued the NHS. Its defence in the form of struggles for improved pay, initiated over two years ago by ancillary staff and subsequently taken up by other sections of health workers, is now being carried on with official BMA backing, by junior hospital doctors. Their demand for reduction of their basic working week from 80 to 40 hours in fact many work up to as many as 120 hours a week. The health workers periodically engaged in struggle since 1972 know the necessity and value of co-operation and support from fellow medical

workers when applying guerrilla tactics: walk-outs giving no prior notice, banning of overtime private practice work or working with agency staff - the tactics varying according to each hospital situation. The doctors must be supported in their struggle by the demand from all health workers to stop the NHS cuts. Enough of squabbling over integrated pay structure amongst the paramedical professional and technical sections - which have only served to dredge up any illusions still existing of professional elitism; likewise with the diversionary and devious prattling, futilely engineered by

the pseudo-left and beautifully played up by the bourgeois press, on how to eliminate pay beds - all two per cent of them'.

St. George's Hospital Group alone is short of 300 nurses, Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital for Women is to be closed and in regularly raising their prices medical supply and pharmaceutical companies daily milk our NHS. How much longer do we tolerate this? Assisted by their entire class, health workers to be worthy of their name, have no choice: they must attack the attacker of the working class's and future generation's health.

A further attack on the NHS

As part of the continued attack on the National Health Service by a capitalist class which is no longer interested in having healthy workers in Britain, Bristol National Health Service management is attempting to introduce bonus schemes for certain sections of employees. This is a national scheme already implemented in some areas of the country.

Porters at Bristol General Hospital are being asked to vote for the scheme in the near future. It is not only management who are encouraging them to accept the scheme, but also officials of COHSE union - predictably, the attack on our class is being encouraged by the social democrats in the union.

Bonus schemes, measured day work and all similar schemes enable management to justify redundancies in the future and

are an excuse not to replace people who retire or leave their jobs. In the short term the work-scheme means a little more money in the workers wage packets but we must not be blinded by these 'gifts' because we are laying ourselves open to long term cutbacks in our health service.

Already education cuts have meant the closure of teacher training colleges and in health cuts this could mean the closure of nurse and physiotherapy training schools, wards and even whole hospitals. If this scheme is accepted by the portering staff it will be proposed to other sections of National Health Service employees, e.g. domestic staff, nurses and doctors. There must be one answer from all National Health Service workers to these schemes: No!

Cuts in Housing

The squeeze on public spending has plunged the Government's housing policy into confusion. Council rents are threatened with increases via cuts in the rate support grants. Having already abandoned the large-scale development of new housing (reflected in the unemployment in the construction industry), the government drastically slashed improvement schemes to a level below last year's - even after restoring £6 million of the original cut - leading to lay-offs and short time working amongst the small build-firms. Finally, councils are unable to provide council mortgages which are usually used for lower market housing. Bracknell recently announced that it could consider no more applications for this financial year.

Predictably the government's Housing Finance Advisory Group seeks to play on the division between privately- and publicly-owned housing to make both groups pay more: to quote one Labour Party councillor, "If we can find a way of phasing out subsidies to owner-occupiers, it seems reasonable to expect people to accept a raising of public sector rents". The fact is that both owner-occupiers and renters of housing have an identity of interest in security of tenure at reasonable and stable prices. And it is well to remem-

ber that a considerable proportion of the cost of both types of housing is interest payments - from the mortgagee to the building society, from the tenant to the finance company lending to the local council.

Meanwhile the fundamental problem, the lack of adequate quality housing, remains untouched as the government seeks to force up house prices to lure the building societies back by the offer of higher profits. Even this will not eventually solve the problem, since it is a fact of capitalism that the building of homes will become unprofitable before every one is housed. It is a fact that for every slum which is cleared another is created: it is a fact that whilst profits rule, under capitalism, people never shall.

And now... cuts in

The James Committee set up to decide the proper division of work between Crown Courts and Magistrates' Courts is recommending that the right to trial by jury should be reduced.

One of the main reasons for curbing trial by jury is that the cost of cases in the Crown Court averages about £115 while in the Magistrates' Courts it is only about £37. Health, education and housing are all too expensive these days for ordinary workers and

Editorial

The question for the working class

The question today for the working class is not whether we only get a wage increase of £6 or not, not even how much the price of bread goes up. The question is one of survival. We can only survive by assuming state power ourselves. We can no longer survive under the rule of our class enemy - the bourgeoisie.

The working class can no longer hide in the delusion that the Labour Government is the lesser of two evils. All the controls over us which Heath was destroyed in trying to grasp, Wilson now wields. The attack on the working class is only possible under the auspices of social democracy.

We cannot exchange the fight under our own working class standards for a mere defence of bourgeois democracy on the grounds that it is at least better than fascism. The one thing leads to the other. We have long passed the stage when the bourgeoisie had any progressive role to play. They are all potentially fascists. The finance that makes a Hitler is the wage the bourgeoisie pays its ultimate mercenaries.

We were told that if we did not join the EEC, there would be massive unemployment. We are told that if we do not pack in class struggle, Britain will cease to exist as a nation. The truth is that massive unemployment and the destruction of Britain as a nation are the means the bourgeois Government is using to destroy the British working class.

Healey, having already brought about the highest unemployment since the great depression, now taking up the "Geddes axe" threatens cuts in the social services of £3 billion. De-inflation, the same policy that led to the economic collapse of the 'thirties, involves also for the working class de-education, de-housing, de-privation of health. It involves de-industrialisation, the de-nationalisation of Britain, the de-civilising of our island home and work-places.

We the working class are being routed. We have to make a stand and we can only do that by attacking. That attack is against the capitalist system itself. It is revolution.

The question for our Party

Our Marxist-Leninist Party must be the means by which the working class seizes control of its own destiny.

The working class resists being led by the very theory that their own struggle has taught them. They are afraid to disown what they know is wrong because they are afraid of the consequences. Why else would there not have been a massive reaction in united strength against the vicious attack on them in this time of crisis?

They do not say that we in the CPB(ML) are wrong. They say the danger has not come upon us yet. We have to alert them to the fact that it is here.

Marxism-Leninism is the revolutionary ideology of the working class. There can be no compromise with any other ideology. It would be class compromise. There is no separation but time between bourgeois and fascists. There is no distinction between social democracy and revisionism and they are both bourgeois. We will not compromise with them; but we welcome all those workers who abandon false ideologies.

In rejecting the EEC we are not deserting the workers of Europe. We are providing them with a Marxist lesson in the necessity of revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie. We are fighting against the class enemy in defence of our own country, but our nationalism does not exclude our responsibility to other workers. It is only possible for us to be of service to fellow workers on the Continent to the extent that, in the name of correct proletarian nationalism, we smash monopoly-capitalist internationalism.

We can only defend ourselves, as we can only be of any assistance to workers elsewhere, in Chile, Zimbabwe, Malaya or any other country under the capitalist domination of the two world imperialist powers, by getting on with our revolution here in Britain.

The right to a home

Every few years, the government, pretending to act in our interests, passes a new law which is supposed to protect our basic rights. When Labour passed its Rent Act in 1974, which was supposed to protect furnished tenants from eviction, the result was to dry up the supply of accommodation. But now the landlords, like cockroaches, have emerged from their filthy skirting boards to exploit the new situation.

trial by jury

now the same thing is true of justice.

The recommendations of the Committee briefed by the Lord Chancellor take no notice of the results of its own survey which showed that people choose trial by jury because they believe that they will get a fairer trial, that many people are reluctant to be tried by magistrates because they think magistrates are biased in favour of the police and because they lack confidence in the judicial impartiality of lay magistrates.

In Kent, where there are now 640 homeless families, the County Council is farming many out through estate agents who have understood that the law on 'security of tenure' does not include bed-and-breakfast. So, for example, a Gillingham estate agent, with a near stranglehold on furnished property in the area, is receiving £2000 a week from the County Council to house 71 families. This works out at an average £28 a week's 'bed-and-breakfast'. The breakfast? It arrives once a week in the form of a box of groceries. In many of these 'flats' there are no cooking arrangements, nor the usual bed-and-breakfast services such as bed-linen and cleaning.

The director of the company, who is planning to re-invest his profits in building a £300,000 golf-course, is indignant at his exposure by local newspaper reporters: "If you highlight the worst aspects, all you do is close the door on us helping these families".

Education Cuts

Mr. Mulley, the recently appointed successor to Reg Prentice as Minister of Education, has been talking to Parliament and to local government representatives about spending on education. He told local education authorities that he was angry at accusations that he was forcing cuts and that he was not prepared to preside over the crippling of education services. But despite his words and anger that is exactly what he is doing. The year 1976-77 will see an £80 million reduction in proposed expenditure on education. Government claims that this still represents a real 2 per cent increase ignore the fact that many authorities have already absorbed this and more into mere running costs. They will have to cut back on educational provision.

In parliament, Mr. Mulley announced that improvement in teacher-pupil ratios will be possible in the coming year. The local education authorities, who have been told to tighten their belts, have already said the opposite. New teachers will be unable to find jobs, some teachers may face the sack, and teacher-pupil ratios will get worse. The government has also published its plans for closing down thirteen colleges of education, reducing the number of teachers. Local authorities are complaining and teachers are taking action in opposition to the accelerating run-down of education in this country.

The Army and the People

On August 1st 1927, the Twentieth Army in China staged the famous Nanchang Uprising against the Kuomintang Government. This was the embryo beginning of the Red Army, later the People's Liberation Army of China, now the classic model of liberation armies the world over.

From its beginning, the Red Army was a political force, a class-conscious people's army. It defended the first red base areas, or soviets, undertook the disciplined confiscation of landlords' property and its redistribution to peasants, and worked alongside the people in food production. By 1929 the famous Three Main Rules of Discipline and 8 Points for Attention had been finalised. They include,

"Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses";
"Do not take liberties with women";
"Turn in everything captured".

Mao predicted that an army obeying such principles, in which "the Party commands the gun" and not the other way about, would be seen by the people as their own army, and would be invincible. He was proved right in China, and more recently in Vietnam, but the road to victory was not an easy one.

Guerrilla tactics and the mass line

By 1930 the Nanking government began launching attacks on the Red Army, which consisted of a few hundred thousand peasants and fewer rifles. The Kuomintang had air-power, arsenals and outside assistance. Positional warfare would give them an immeasurable advantage. Mao saw this, and fought for the adoption of guerrilla struggle - high mobility, surprise attacks, enticing the enemy off his own ground into hostile areas and above all relying on the people to be the "sea" hiding the "fish" - the soldiers. Mistakes were made, leading to the retreat of the two-year Long March, but the Red Army's policies won firm adherents throughout China.

Wherever the Red Army went, it conducted literacy classes, held political study sessions and produced political dramas and operas to rouse the people to an awareness of their own strength. This political education gave them the courage and conviction to defeat first Japan, then the vacillating but vicious Kuomintang reactionaries, in spite of their US backing.

The PLA today

The present day People's Liberation Army, though now equipped with modern technology, maintains its character as a people's army.

Its military role is the defence of People's China, not imperialist attack or infiltration of foreign territory. Its members continue to grow their own food and help the local population at harvest time or in big labour intensive projects such as land reclamation, mine-digging or railway construction. Officers work alongside their men in the paddy-fields, while civilian factory workers or peasants train in the local militia.

"With a People's Army there is no distinction between the people and the soldiers."



People's Liberation Army men working in the fields.



Agricultural workers learning to use rifles.

Superpowers v People

It is people that count

After many years of squabbling USA and USSR signed an agreement, in Vladivostok in 1972, to limit their strategic weapons.

Certain people may have felt this was a step closer to world peace; now might be a good time to see what value the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) have had for labouring humanity. In truth the talks heralded an arms expansion such that now, between them, these guardians of peace have the equivalent of two tons of high explosive for every man, woman and child on earth, and an average of one hydrogen bomb for every 50,000 people.

But people, not the weapons from imperialism's armoury, decide the course of history. In Vietnam the US could not, with the whole horrific range of arms at its disposal, conquer a nation of peasants and workers determined to win their independence.

The true design of imperialism

today is counter-revolution.

Where socialist revolution is victorious there its enemies conspire hardest to thwart a people's efforts to build socialism in peace.

China is so threatened by US and USSR imperialism. Seemingly admitting its sins Russia is fighting the inclusion in the proposed Sino-Japanese friendship treaty of an anti-hegemony clause. The clause would bind both countries to resist the attempt of any power or group of powers to establish domination on the Asian continent. Kissinger's recent sabre rattling, threatening that the US would use nuclear weapons, though ostensibly aimed at the Koreans, is in finality aimed at socialist China.

But since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 there has been a bridge between the struggles of peoples in the east and in the west. That bridge is proletarian revolution and by embarking on such a course we play our internationalist role, stressing the common cause of the world's people for freedom and peace.

Industrial Front

Avonmouth docks

During the past fortnight, 1,360 Avonmouth dock workers whose employer is the Port of Bristol Authority have been waging a guerrilla campaign of strikes since their claim for a £10 a week interim pay rise was flatly rejected by the PBA.

The struggle has been extremely well conducted, disciplined and tightly organised. On Monday 14th July, 150 tallymen staged a lightning one-day strike. The next day, 500 stevedores walked out and on Wednesday, 60 crane drivers stopped work for a three hour meeting.

Angered by the success of the campaign, which was causing maximum disruption of the docks with minimum loss of pay to the men, the management reacted by laying off all sections without pay when 700 dock workers staged a mass walk-out.

Undeterred the workers continued their action and have forced the PBA to rethink their original rejection. The results will not be known until next week but workers at Avonmouth have shown great determination to fight for what is rightfully theirs and will take appropriate action if the offer is unacceptable.

The most important thing to be said about the Helsinki conference is that Albania, the only socialist country in Europe, is not there. This conference is not about world peace but about world division - how the super imperialist powers, the US and the USSR divvy up between them the countries still subject to capitalist exploitation.

Albania is not one of those countries, and has the guts to say so.

ALFRED HERBERT AND THE NEB

Following the post-referendum reshuffle a new round of parliamentary jousting has broken out over Labour's Industry Bill. This piece of legislation, stemming from the White Paper 'The regeneration of British Industry', has been held up as the cornerstone of the present government's industrial policy - embodying a national holding company, the

Labour Letter

A group of Labour MPs wrote to The Times on July 22nd setting forth their reasons for voting against the Government's White Paper, "The Attack on Inflation".

They pointed out that these policies will cut living standards, create mass unemployment and injure the long term productive capacity of our economy. They charged that while Labour had expressed the intention of controlling 'the power of capital and business', the Labour Government had instead put an end to the 'free collective bargaining', of the working class.

This might be alright, they argued, in a society where resources were all planned -- capital, rents, profits, prices and industry... but in the capitalist rat race which we run, to control wages by statute represents a dangerous lurch towards the corporate state!

The nature of the attack on the working class could hardly be put more clearly; but it has to be realised that no capitalist party can be expected to carry out socialist policies.

The shape of things to come

12,000 of the Midlands' most skilled workers suffered a set-back when those who produce the world's most advanced aero-engine demanded an improvement in pay and conditions.

The demand was rejected. Union officials met and decided to fight. Sanctions against Rolls Royce were ordered.

The Rolls-Royce response, with obvious Government backing was immediate and vicious. "If sanctions are applied your attendance at work will not be required".

This set-back is not a defeat but in their protracted guerrilla struggle with Rolls-Royce workers must realise that the enemy has a new set of teeth provided by Wilson and Healey on the NHS.

Hawker Siddeley

20,000 workers at Hawker Siddeley are to strike in protest at pension terms offered by the company.

Trade Unions and Insurance companies are concerned that pension schemes would only have a limited exemption from the £6 pay limit.

The stoppage is planned to take place on the 18th August.

Foot, the Employment Secretary has said improvements in occupational schemes must in general be subject to the limit.

But they would be exempt if negotiated before July 11th, or if the parties could show they had been negotiating on specific proposals three months prior to July 11th.

A scheme for 130,000 British Leyland manual workers due to

start on September 1st is presumed to be exempt.

British Leyland staff negotiations which have not yet been completed is unresolved.

Other major schemes Pilkingtons 9,000 manual workers, 11,000 at Rediffusion and several thousand at Tube Investments are still in limbo.

So there will be plenty of conflict between workers, bosses and government over pensions along with the £6 limit.

We wuz robbed

1,000 GKM workers have gone on strike at Darlston (Staff). The employer has withdrawn an £8 pay rise because it was not agreed until the day of the government White Paper.

Workers at Bromsgrove are getting the rise because they accepted the offer 24 hours earlier.

The workers at Darlston are so infuriated that they have struck immediately even though they take their holidays in nine weeks time.

Bromsgrove's offer was 25 per cent which equals £8.

The Government White Paper that the employer is hiding behind forbids a company to increase its prices where an increase exceeds the £6 pay limit.

This looks like being amongst one of the first disputes along with Hawker Siddeley workers against the Social Contract.

Darlston is a major supplier of forgings to the commercial vehicle industry, and a prolonged stoppage could affect most of the big truck makers. So as much as the Government may be on the side of the employing class, workers still have the answer, no money, no work.

NEB, planning agreements and participation of the trade unions.

After the whitewash and false strictures of the Ryder Report, British Leyland was first in the queue for some of the £1000 million annual budget to be allocated to the NEB. Following this on Wednesday, 9th July, Eric Varley, Industry minister announced in the Commons, the extension of a £25 million subsidy in this form of equity, to the machine tool group, Alfred Herbert Ltd.

This has underlined yet again the role that this new investment body is to play. The NEB will eventually take the major share in the company and in the meantime the government has undertaken to extend the guarantee of Herbert's overdraft from £5 million to £15 millions.

The group is not now going into liquidation, but will this hand-out automatically safeguard the employment of the group's 6000 workers in the way the 1974 White Paper promised? Of course not!

Peat Marwick Mitchell, an 'independent' firm of accountants appointed by the government to investigate Alfred Herbert are reported to be recommending that the £25 million subsidy be accompanied by 'rationalisation', involving up to 3500 redundancies.

Commenting on the size of recent government subsidies, the Financial Times (10/7/75), was of the opinion that if the amount given to Leylands was perhaps

"politically inevitable", a subsidy of £25 million to Herberts "seems a large sum for a relatively small company".

In other words the government is being urged to give less cash, enforce even more redundancies and destroy industry even faster.

The real aim of capitalism is not to regenerate machine tool production at all. Once leader of the world, this sector is still a vital organ in the body of Britain's industry and the evil and callous plan to destroy it has wide ranging implications for the rest of what remains of manufacturing industry. It is made all the more unpardonable by parading under the specious argument that the government wishes to 'regenerate' something which capitalism is doing all in its power to crush.

But what of all the parliamentary shadow boxing? Clearly no one should be fooled by Michael Heseltine's monotonous sermons about the NEB and the dangers of creeping socialism. What really lies behind his scepticism is not that Herberts have had to accept central government finance - everyone in parliament accepts that the state, as the single greatest source of investment funds, should support capitalists when other bankers are unwilling.

The real fear in the minds of employers is that those they threaten with redundancy will take Mr Varley and the 1974 White Paper at their word and demand the right to work regardless of cost.

This is revolutionary - it is something capitalism cannot give,

The Worker Interview

120 white-collar workers, members of TASS, at AEI Cables, Northfleet, continue their struggle for basic Trade Union rights. Members of their 24-hour picket gave us this interview.

Why is this struggle so important?

Our wage claim is secondary to our right to negotiate. They're trying to destroy the Union here.

They stated point blank they would not negotiate with TASS. They offered to "discuss wages with any member of the staff individually", but that's not what we want.

They had previously granted official recognition to our union, but when we tried to negotiate, they responded by sending out a printed notice offering us an insultingly small wage rise. That was why we put in our claim for 35 per cent over 6 months.

In addition, the local press has been trying to divert us by stressing equal pay for women. Of course we want equal pay - the company claim we already have it, which is nonsense - but we'll sort out that aspect once we've won our Trade Union rights.

Have your members taken militant action before?

We have no recent history of militant action. For 80 years, the firm here got away with individual wage agreements with staff, resulting not only in low wages but in a cowed and subservient attitude on the part of many office staff. We started organising TASS here three years ago, and now have 50 per cent membership.

The management have been counting on our inexperience. They wanted us to let GEC Henley lorries through, claiming it was not involved in our dispute, although both factories use the same gate and are part of the same combine. We told them, "It's important to you to get those lorries out, it's important to us to stop them".

We did have one problem in liaison with other unions. T and G lorry drivers had been instructed not to break our pickets, but no one had informed their riverside branch.

A boat arrived to pick up completed cable from the wharf, and we couldn't get in touch with their steward. So three of our girls took the crew for a drink, and by closing time, it was too late for them to load up.

Our holiday begins in a week, but we shall maintain our picket. That is essential as this is when the management expect us to weaken.

How effective do you feel your action is?

Boilerhouse workers are in our union and on strike. This in itself has closed down many essential processes.

Our picket has been 80 per cent successful in stopping materials entering or leaving the factory. All gate and the wharf are picketed. Morale is high, and we've support from other unions here, such as T and G, ETU and AEU. Many individual managers have proved sympathetic too. There have been few attempts to cross our picket, but those firms determined to get their lorries through will find themselves blacked by TASS members throughout the country. After the holiday, it may be more difficult to keep going, but the company will definitely be feeling the pressure by then. In fact, production should have practically stopped.

We've realised our importance financially by calculating their profits. 900 workers made them £11million last year, approximately £1700 per worker.

The company is pretending our action is having no effect, but we've just heard they've decided to withdraw the guaranteed working week previously agreed with other unions. This could well draw other workers into struggle.



LONDON MURDER

The closure and destruction of manufacturing industry in London has been both dramatic and clearly visible to many workers for a long time - for example those at Crosfield Electronics who, realising that they had nowhere else to go, took their recent brave stand for the right to work in London.

As London has become an industrial wasteland there has been a conspiracy of silence concerning the extent of the long term run-down of industry in the capital. It has only been by the chance discovery of research work commissioned by the GLC that some of

the hard facts have come to light.

The picture revealed is quite staggering:

- * From 1961 to 1971, the number of skilled male workers in Greater London dropped by about a quarter. (743,480 in 1961 to 561,730 in 1971)
- * All industrial employment dropped by a third of a million men in the same period.
- * Although employment amongst men in office work declined by about 6%, 'white collar' workers now comprise the majority of London's workforce, well over 1.5 million people.
- * A survey of Department of

Employment statistics relating to London manufacturing firms, making more than 20 workers redundant at any one time between 1966 and 1972, revealed 217,000 were sacked in this period.

- * 75 per cent of redundancy amongst men in London during the sixties was in manufacturing industry.
- * By contrast, only 4 per cent was in construction and 20 per cent in service industries - although altogether these latter sectors accounted for well over 70 per cent of London's employment in 1966.

Testing time for steel industry

Once more BSC workers are faced with a dilemma - either hold their ground or continue re-treating. Up to now the unions in BSC have put up little resistance to the "streamlining schemes" which common to all industries "nationalised" under capitalism, have resulted in closures and redundancies at "outdated" plant plants, eg. Ebbw Vale.

In May, Sir Marty Finnisston, Chairman of BSC, stated that 20,000 jobs had to go - or - the unions by proposing a 6 point plan hoped the bogey of unemployment would go away! They should have known better.

The 6 point plan was designed to cut overtime, shift working, stand-by pools of labour for absentees, and to speed up "voluntary" redundancies and "natural wastage". As reported in "THE WORKER" (Issue 13) Port Talbot workers saw the attempts to cut weekend working and revise shift systems, as a cut in

wages; they would have no truck with these proposals.

This, notwithstanding, the "voluntary" agreement has attained £50 million a year of the originally intended £100 million a year savings. Predictably, given the stance of the unions, management has pressed home its advantage with demands for a further 8-10,000 cut in jobs to meet the estimated £250 million loss in the next year forecast in the chairman's report - or more progress on the lines of the May 6 point-plan.

On July 29th, the Unions are due to meet the BSC board. They have learnt enough over the last two months to see that as long as the crisis continues they will be made to pay for the losses of capitalism in hard-won gains, and that agreeing to participate in "savings" only gives management incentive to press home its redundancy programmes.

The deindustrialisation of London has been actively promoted at every turn by Government policy. Government offices are dispersed - selective employment tax encouraged shake out - grants are made available to firms to move to other areas - redundancy payment schemes enable firms to jettison workers, and above all 'rationalisation' of large groups of companies through mergers and take-overs (actively encouraged in the sixties by Labour's Industrial Reorganisation Corporation) leads firms to seek cheaper land and cheaper and unorganised labour outside the capital. It has been calculated that continuing monopolisation will mean that the top 100 companies will control 65 per cent of Britain's production by 1980 - what will be the cost in jobs?

New industrial developments in London are strictly limited. Firms have to apply to the Department of Trade and Industry for a special Industrial Development Certificate if they wish to expand factory space by more than 10,000 square feet. (Recent proposals attempted to halve this figure.)

What has happened to London illustrates in microcosm what is being done to the whole country. De-industrialisation is now being speeded up as a result of Britain's EEC membership, with well over £500 million investment per annum flowing out of Britain to other EEC countries. As with Britain's membership of the Common Market, capitalism's strategy for London is to de-industrialise the city and to try to escape from the organised working class. It is a wicked and disgraceful plan. London workers must stand up - go from defence to attack for the right to work in London - smash capitalism and save our country. We have nowhere else to go.

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THRESHOLDS CON

Wage settlements involving threshold payments that are supposed to be, "ongoing protection" against cost of living increases are proving to be just another cost trick to cut living standards and blunt struggle for real wages.

A recent settlement for London Transport workers gives 3/4 of 1 per cent of basic rate for every 1 per cent of cost of living each three months. Without counting the three month delay it doesn't need a mathematician to work out that this represents a real cut in wages. On a basic of £40, 3/4 of 1 per cent gives 30p for every 1 per cent increase in cost of living. To maintain his present standard of living which is set by his full wage of (£40 basic plus London Weighting, plus bonus) £56, a worker needs 1

per cent of his full wage for every 1 per cent in cost of living that is 56p. So with every 1 per cent increase, 26p plus is filched from the wage packet which gets worse as the 30p stands still while the percentage of full wage increases. At the present rate of 26 per cent a year price rises it won't take workers long to realise just how much they have been conned.

So much for British workers being conned, if we look over the water to one of our newly acquired masters we see how the Tindemans Government is using threshold agreements to rob our brothers and sisters in Belgium. In mid July the Belgium cost of living Index was calculated as being up by 2.46 points which would have given workers in the manufacturing and service

industries two full threshold pay increases. To much for the Belgian Government to swallow so they have decided that the cost of living should only have been up 0.55 because the unacceptable 2.46 was due to the abnormally high price of new potatoes (potatoes are the only fresh vegetable included in the cost of living index). An extraordinary cabinet meeting was called in order to "neutralise" the problem potatoe so that the acceptable index increase of 0.55 could be calculated. It follows no threshold payments and no "pom frits" for Belgium workers. But the Government did point out, "after all there are still plenty of old potatoes around".

Newmarket: the fight goes on

On July 24th, Newmarket stable lads voted to end their strike. They had won a £4.40 increase on their basic weekly wage, and driven their employers, represented by the Newmarket Trainers' Federation, finally to accept five negotiated conditions for the return to work.

The strike by 160 stable lads the first official strike in Newmarket, had been conducted with great determination since April. Throughout, the lads faced attempts by trainers and others to undermine them - blackleg labour was employed to replace them, their families were forced out of their tied cottages, their peaceful pickets were attacked, and a campaign of steady sackings

was directed against them. They have been struggling for the very right to organise, let alone for a living wage.

The lads' achievement of an increase only 30p less than their original demand is a victory but it could prove a Pyrrhic victory if the issue is allowed to rest there. The trainers refused to guarantee the reinstatement of those already sacked or to agree that the sackings would stop.

In fact, only 50 out of 140 stable lads got their jobs back. Their first priority now must be to fight for the reinstatement of their 90 mates and to broaden and strengthen their organisation in readiness for future struggles.