

THE WORKER



Published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist - Leninist) No 27 Dec 10th 1977 5p

THE WAGES FIGHT: TO HELL WITH CAPITALISM

No blackmail at Swan Hunter

THE REFUSAL by outfitting tradesmen at the Swan Hunter shipyards on the Tyne to succumb to Government blackmail over the Polish shipbuilding order raises some fundamental issues for Tyneside ship workers. And not just for them - for the whole working class as well.

For fourteen weeks the outfitters had been banning overtime in support of a wages claim when they were confronted with an ultimatum from British Shipbuilders, the company which runs Britain's nationalised shipbuilding companies including Swan Hunter.

In return for getting a share in the heavily subsidised £115m Polish shipbuilding order, the workers were told they had to call off their overtime ban, abandon their wage claim, agree to the enforcement of the Government's 10 per cent limit on their future pay claims, and guarantee no disruption.

The Government and the company huffed and puffed about massive job losses which would result from the re-allocation of the order to other yards. The response of the outfitters was solid: by 1700 votes to 20 they decided to continue their fight for wages and to reject responsibility for the consequences of their decision on the future of the Polish order; that responsibility lies on the shoulders of capitalism.

The outfitters are claiming £7 a week to give them parity with boilermakers employed in the same yards. While it is true that the boilermakers' rate reflects a degree of flexibility in working practices that the outfitters would probably not accept, it is foolish to get bogged down in the justification of a parity claim. The only just parity is that which is won through struggle!

Union machinery in the yards, as in so many other places, has been somewhat neglected over the

past couple of years. But the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) has a policy of free collective bargaining and it was neglectful of the workers not to use their unions to assert their right to determine their own claim within the CSEU. However, the claim for parity has existed for years and the outfitters overtime ban, albeit five months ahead of their "annual pay date", was a quite correct tactic.

When have Swan Hunters ever listened to or conceded such claims without such action? Even in the present situation, Swans did not even respond to the men's claim until the Government blackmail threat came along.

Of the £115m Polish order ("the Poles drove a hard bargain and demanded no disruption") 7 ships worth £52m were to come to Swans. The Government proudly proclaimed that this might provide work for the Tyne yards for almost a year. In return, the Government wanted 'good behaviour', acceptance of the 10 per cent limit as well as no strikes or disruption, and agreement that all the overtime necessary should be worked.

For the outfitters to have agreed would have meant forfeiting their right to fight for their own pay claim (and their right to determine hours of work): to refuse brought the threat of 800 immediate redundancies. The outfitters correctly said: To hell with wage slavery, we want more wages and we'll fight for that!

Despite immense pressure, the men stood firm and British Shipbuilders commenced reallocating the order to other yards. Teesside outfitters stopped work for the day stating that if the order was brought to their yard, they would submit an identical claim and take the same action as Tynesiders.

Austin & Pickersgill in Sun-



derland the CSEU men voted against giving the required guarantees to the Government. Draughtsmen at Smith's Dock in Teesside, members of the Technical section of the Engineering Union, voted to black design work on any of Swan Hunter ships. At Govan on the Clyde meetings are going on this week to determine their attitude.

The outfitters stood up to the greatest moral blackmail and in doing so they may destroy parochialism in the yards and undermine the Government's plan to play off one yard against the other. They have certainly highlighted the way in which the Labour Government is leading capitalism's attack on the working class.

Their line, "To hell with capitalism, we want wages," is right and should be fought by utilising their own union machinery. The line of all shipyard workers must be to fight against the rundown and closure of the yards decreed by capitalism.

Only socialism can save shipbuilding!

Firemen strengthen resolve to continue their fight

AS the firemen's strike stretches into weeks not days, support from workers throughout the country continues to grow. A conversation between a WORKER correspondent and pickets in Liverpool was interrupted by a delegation of Merchant Seamen bringing money to the fire station!

The firemen themselves are growing in unity and in confidence. It was on the basis of their own strength that they approached the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the TUC for support in their struggle and in the struggle of all workers against the Government guidelines.

There should be no surprise at the result of this approach. The Finance and General Purposes Committee is reluctant to give up what it has assumed through years of wage control, the role of interferer in the process of wage bargaining.

The Committee's decision is a disgrace but of no real conse-

quence to the firemen. The massive support they are receiving from the working class has already swept it aside.

For us workers, there can be no waiting for the firemen to do or die before we begin to put in our own claims. The "spectator mentality" must be fully discarded. The firemen are not gladiators to be watched by the rest of our class.

Nor are the firemen a special case or a test case. They are workers fighting for an increase in their wages. Win or lose, other workers will have to fight as hard as the firemen or even harder for their own claims.

COMMUNISM CANNOT BE PROSCRIBED
IN GERMANY

IT is no accident that since the events surrounding the kidnapping of the ex-SS captain Hans Martin Schleyer, the bourgeois press in Britain have remained silent on the importance of events taking place in West Germany since then. West Germany, the show-piece of European Capitalism (for our part read Corporatism) is in the throes of a profound crisis, not restricted to their million unemployed workers, but a crisis of the first political degree.

The influence of Krupps, Thyssens and Siemens industrialists on the West German political order has been made completely clear in the past two months.

Sizing the chance offered by the provocation of various terrorist groups, the Bonn Government has unleashed its forces to terrorise the West German people. Meetings are banned, presses have been closed, and mail is intercepted, searched and withheld. At embassies and other institutions susceptible to terrorist attacks, armed patrols have become a regular sight.

It was in this situation that in the first week of November, the Christian Democrat Union proposed the banning of several political parties including the Communist Party of Germany (Marxist-Leninist) but not including the revisionist "Communist" Party of Germany. This move

was only defeated by widespread protest, including one of 20,000 people in Bonn, and factory stoppages.

Since then the Students' Union has been banned, and as from the 28th November students are hitting back with a National Strike. The witch hunt against communists and progressive people in the trade unions, the teaching profession and the civil service has been stepped up McCarthy-style. Laws have been passed in the last week whereby 'political' prisoners cannot receive or send letters whilst in prison. After a strike last year and clashes with demonstrators, police can now lawfully carry loaded weapons on demonstrations.

Since the war, German bourgeois democracy has been a weak cover for the bourgeois dictatorship, and it has now switched masks. The German bourgeoisie, quick to recognize its friends, whilst attempting to 'proscribe Communism' has overlooked the revisionist 'Communist' Party of Germany - which has barely raised a whisper against fascist attacks. But those Marxist-Leninists who are truly the leading force in the German working class have rightly stated 'Communism can never be proscribed.'

"Roter Morgen" paper of the KPD(M-L) states, "No fascist act whatsoever can intimidate and bring the KPD(M-L) to its

knees and catch it unawares... we will never give up the struggle for the interests of the working class. We will not allow them, through the banning, to evict us from the factories, trade unions, schools, universities and barracks. We have been prepared for our banning and we will continue our struggle for a united, independent, socialist Germany.... It is our duty, the duty of the German working people, not to allow the year 1933 to be repeated."

SMITH'S "ONE MAN, ONE VOTE"

MURDERS 1200 PEOPLE

JUST three days after Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, had publicly stated his acceptance of the 'principle' of one man, one vote, the Rhodesian Government announced the killing of what it described as 1200 guerrillas in an across-the-border raid into neighbouring Mozambique. Dr David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary, reacted in the name of the Labour Government by hailing the massacre as "underlining the need for an internationally agreed settlement".

Owen's statement is on a par with the action of President Sadat of Egypt, who announced his intention to visit Israel at the very time that the Israeli armed forces were killing Palestinians in southern Lebanon. This is the logic of gangsters.

The British government is becoming increasingly concerned

that which the people themselves impose by their own will and force of arms.

at the progress of the liberation forces in Zimbabwe (the African name for Rhodesia). Hence their indecent haste to organise an International agreement with what, until recently, was always referred to as an illegal regime.

As far as the Cabinet is concerned, the worst thing that could happen to Zimbabwe is that the people themselves should determine their own path to freedom and liberation.

An international settlement would be just as phoney and worthless to the Zimbabwe people as would "one man, one vote" while power remains in the hands of Smith and his army.

The racist regime in Salisbury wants only one thing: to stay in power.

British imperialism wants only one thing: to keep power out of the hands of the people. This is what an "international settlement" is all about, and is the reason why the government is now reaching an accommodation with Smith after years of half-hearted sanctions and waffle.

Owen and his cronies should be told firmly to keep their hands off Zimbabwe.

The only settlement will be

THE WEEK

THE social contract is dead, long live wage restraint! The fact that capitalism can no longer afford collective bargaining was made obvious when the chancellor hinted at a meeting of Labour MPs that some form of wage control will be needed for years.

There was also a proposal to have a Minister for Pay. Since ministries are usually created to oversee the destruction of the industry they are named after, does this mean that the Government hopes to do away with pay altogether?

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NOTTINGHAM workers in Raleigh Industries are on strike for a 30 per cent pay rise and an improved bonus scheme. Also in Nottingham 1000 Spun Iron Pipe Makers are on strike in pursuance of a wage claim.

* * *

A WORKER reader informs us that ASTMS intends to take the Government to court over pay policy.

He asks, "Whose Government and whose court?"

Surely workers do not still believe that the courts are an independent body in judging the daily struggle of workers against the employer.

DEVOULATION IN WALES

THE Labour Government began devolution in 1964 by setting up the Welsh Office, which started a policy for the region. In the next 6 years, a third of agricultural jobs were lost, and from 1965-75, over ten per cent of all jobs were lost. The Government has congratulated itself on this policy and forecasts its full success within the next twenty or thirty years; presumably unemployment over thirty per cent.

Another move to devolution was the founding of the Welsh Development Agency in 1976. Its declared aim is to act like an adventurous merchant bank, with its budget of £160m for the next five years. Spending £840m, British Steel managed to sack a

thousand Port Talbot workers. Perhaps workers should be pleased the WDA has relatively little to spend!

A third 'success' the Government claimed for devolution is the invasion of 127 foreign firms, including 90 from the US. But a fine example of multi-national 'development' is Milford Haven where, according to the "Investors' Chronicle", investment's "only effect has been to increase unemployment" to 20 per cent.

Devolution's 'successes' - high unemployment; high rate of exploitation; widespread poverty - are capitalism's successes. Devolution's full success would turn all Wales into a green desert: Welsh workers need revolution.

BALFOUR SPIRIT REVIVED

RENEWING the Balfour Declaration was one of the expressed aims of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as his visit to Britain began.

The Balfour Declaration owes its title to A.J. Balfour, one-time Tory Prime Minister, and Foreign Secretary in November 1917. It was then that he issued a declaration of sympathy with Zionist aspirations.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

Those who acted as midwives for the birth of this deformed monster read like a roll call of reactionaries: Leopold Amery, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Milner and Field-Marshal Smuts. They dissolved in smiles at the prospect of betrayal of all the promises made on behalf of the British Government by T.E. Lawrence to the Arabs who revolted against Turkish rule during World War One.

British and French imperial-

ism had already divided the Middle East between them in the Sykes-Picot Agreement - one of the secret treaties which the new Bolshevik government in Russia revealed to the people of the world.

After its foundation in 1919, the League of Nations (forerunner of today's United Nations) sanctified Palestine as a British mandate, and the declaration which Balfour had made to Lord Rothschild began to be put into effect.

Many Arab landowners benefited enormously as they sold out their country to Zionist millionaires while the native peasantry were displaced by Jewish immigrants organised in the cheapest and most effective colonial settlements yet discovered - the kibbutz.

In calling for a renewal of the Declaration, Begin is leaving no doubt on the true meaning of the recent Israel/Egypt 'detente'. The aim is to set the seal on Zionist occupation and on the annihilation of the Palestinians as a people.



ENTHUSIASTIC MEETING ON ALBANIA

THE 33rd anniversary of the liberation of Albania was celebrated in Britain on 25 November at an enthusiastic meeting of the New Albania Society in the Conway Hall. The speaker described her visit to the 7th Congress of the Albanian Labour Youth Union, which is responsible for all youth work and the development of correct Marxist-Leninist theory among the young.

In Albania there is great awareness of the need to be on guard against liberalism - letting things slip without comment - and revisionism which deliberately undermines self-sufficiency and independence. No one can dictate to Albania or wield power through sanctions. Albanians do not rely on fraternal parties, whose role is one of support through revolu-

tion in their own land. It was emphasised that the Albanians and the British are kindred people and that the greatest service we can render them is not to slumber, but to take up our own revolutionary task and thus help this small brave people should the imperialists unleash their war. As one member of the audience put it, "We smash the bastards here. If you don't do that you're not a Communist."

The ideological clarity of the Party of Labour of Albania was a constant theme of the meeting. For instance, their unwavering adherence to the Marxist theory of class contradiction in relation to the "three worlds", the two "superpowers", the Common Market and Comecon, Nato and the Warsaw Treaty. And the

correct analysis of the effect in Britain of joining the EEC - our loss of sovereignty, and the perfect opportunity for British capitalism to export its capital and seal the decay of British industry.

Without glossing over the problems yet to be tackled in Albania, many aspects of life under socialism were touched on by different speakers - her stable economy, her industrial and agricultural advance, the strength of her youth and her military preparedness - all contrasted with the dismal prospect of Britain's future without revolution and Marxism. The speaker summed it up: our choice is clear - for the destruction of Britain, or for peace and socialism.

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British and French imperial-

Editorial

When we say 'fight for wages' we do not mean that the working class should elevate economic struggle above political struggle. What we are saying is that the main form political struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class can take in Britain today is the war for wages.

Unless that war for wages is fought as a class political struggle, using our own class institutions like our trade unions and rejecting the attempts of the institutions of the class enemy like government and parliament to fix wages for us, we will not succeed. Insofar as we do succeed in defending our standard of living it is a political victory.

Our class has always had to fight for wages, has always had to organise itself for that fight. The change brought about by the absolute decline of capitalism is that the ruling class can no longer afford to make concessions. Reformism, improvements within the capitalist system are out. The fight for wages has to become the political battle over the question of which class is to rule.

The working class does not take up this question of which class is to rule solely out of necessity, solely as a matter of survival. We do not have to lose everything we have gained from past struggles and be reduced to absolute poverty before we can discover in ourselves the impulse to revolution. The argument about whether revolutionary zeal depends on pauperisation has been going on ever since Marxism began to throw the bourgeoisie into panic. The apologists for capitalism have always contended that any improvements won by workers would dilute their revolutionary zeal.

But Marxists do not equate revolutionary fervour with degrees of oppression and exploitation. We do not say the worst off are the most revolutionary and therefore we must see to it that our class is as badly off as possible. We say that the attraction of socialism for the working class is not simply that it is the only system under which workers can survive. We say that only a system based on cooperation rather than competition, only a system based on man's common exploitation of nature rather than on man's brutal exploitation of man allows the full development of the human potential both material and spiritual in all of us. It is a good, just and desirable system for all workers whether they are on the verge of starvation or not.

The working class has demonstrated on the world stage the possibility of overthrowing a reactionary, exploitative class and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat for the building of a socialist society. What has not yet been fully demonstrated is that the working class, having made the revolution and changed the fundamental relations of production, can safeguard the socialist base and prevent the class enemy from creeping back into power to restore capitalism.

The first working class in highly industrialised country to make a revolution, not as part of a liberation war of national survival and not as the only alternative to starvation, will inevitably shed new light on this unresolved question.



THE Government is using the whole power of the state in an attempt to break the first national strike by firemen. Both the police and the armed forces are used to scab against the firemen.

More troops (or as many as can be spared from northern Ireland) are being drafted as a monster scab. A massive publicity campaign has been mounted to present the troops, "our lads" as the saviours of the country. Their commander-in-chief, the Queen, was employed to whip up public sympathy.

Apart from their use as oppressors in foreign lands from Malaya, Aden, Cyprus to northern Ireland, the troops' main task has been against workers here in Britain. Labour and Tory governments never hesitated in using troops as strike breakers against dockers, seamen, dustmen and today the firemen.

The troops are not "our lads". They are the ruling class instrument against workers.

Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

A LESSON OF HISTORY

Any Capitalist Government is always ready to go over to direct fascist rule in an emergency. IN the period leading up to the General Strike in May 1926, Sir John Anderson, Permanent Secretary to the Home Office, acting under the provisions of the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, divided England and Wales into 10 areas each under a minister who would act as civil commissioner in an emergency. Local

authorities were circulated with plans to be put into operation on receipt of a one-word telegram, "Action!" - all for the purpose of ensuring that if there were any trouble the whole country could be quickly brought under heel.

In May 1946 the Attlee Government revived the organisation set up by Sir John Anderson to meet an emergency which might arise from "industrial disputes or from action taken by political

extremists". The Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, wondered whether employers and trade unions should be taken into the Government's confidence, but Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, promptly vetoed that. "The trade unions would expect the Government to be ready to maintain essential services in an emergency; but if they were asked in advance to collaborate in devising an organisation for this purpose, they might regard it as an invitation to assist in building up a strike-breaking organisation."

BRITISH STEEL IS CAPITALISM'S STEAL FROM THE WORKERS

DISCUSSIONS are going on between the unions of British steel workers and the British Steel Corporation on the tough options proposed by the BSC for 'saving' the steel industry by closing plants, cutting back new investment and making thousands upon thousands of skilled workers redundant.

Meanwhile the Industry Secretary Eric Varley has already cut the capital spending programme for steel by £130m and has reduced stocks and work in progress by another £150m.

Varley blames the crisis in British steel on the world depression in steel. Certainly, whether one is considering British steel itself or the world situation in steel, there could be no better example of the way capitalism works, or rather, does not work.

The capitalist world situation combines enormous sophistication in techniques for making steel with utter chaos in the international steel market. New countries have learned these sophisticated techniques and have helped create a capitalist world surplus of steel not in terms of world need, of course, but solely in terms of the amount of steel that can be sold profitably.

The traditional steel-making countries are having to cut back on steel production, creating unemployment and contributing to the general recession. A major producer like the US has to put up import barriers to protect its own

steel industry from competition from Britain, Japan and even India.

In the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism there are no first, second or third worlds, graded on some basis of national income or levels of development or what have you. There are only the capitalist nationalist principle of beggar your neighbour and the capitalist internationalist principle of greed for profits that knows no boundaries.

Because Britain is part of that capitalist world, steel production here in the very country where it started has become so unprofitable that capital has fled from the industry and we tax payers have had to assume the costs of investment and the wages bill. But now, because a capitalist government can only think in terms of profit, capitalist type scare-mongering about losses of £10m a week or £1000 a minute is being used to whittle the industry away.

The older plants it is proposed to close are useless not because they can't make steel but because they can't make profits. The plans for further development of the steel industry are not being scrapped because Britain no longer needs steel: steel-making is simply no longer profitable.

The public sector of industry is not a section of the economy where some other principle can be applied than the capitalist one of be profitable or die: it is a section where that very capitalist rule can

be enforced with all the rigour of government action, backed up if necessary by the army and police.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that meetings of the TUC Steel Committee, representing the unions of those who work in the steel industry, and the British Steel Corporation, representing capitalism's interest in running down the industry, can't agree on future plans.

What do we workers do in such a situation, which is the same as that facing us in shipbuilding, in Leyland's and, indeed, in all the public services?

Do we suspend our fight for wages on the theory that if we make our labour cheap enough in this industry or that, it may be profitable for them to go on exploiting us there a little longer?

Of course we don't.

We know perfectly well that cheapening labour, degrading skills and enforcing longer hours are the way any industry is destroyed. We fight for wages as we always have and always must as long as capitalism survives.

But we can also, through our unions, link our struggle to save, for example, the steel industry from capitalist destruction with, say, the struggle of building workers whose jobs depend on restoring public expenditure on schools and hospitals requiring steel.

We can begin to join up our struggles right across the whole industrial scene, public and pri-

MAKING MANAGEMENT BEHAVE

FOLLOWING the return to work of No 2 Plant of British Leyland at Speke Liverpool, on October 31st after a six week layoff, management made an unprovoked attack on the membership and their agreement (Protected Earnings Plan). The attack took the form of imposing new man assignments and track speeds, without first of all reaching agreement with the shop stewards.

The men in the areas affected by the imposition immediately walked out, on the basis that the management were breaking the PEP agreement which has been in operation since May 1972. Following the strike action of the men in the affected areas, management laid off all production workers.

Management were apparently of the opinion that after a six week layoff the breaking of the agreement would be easy meat and there was little support or sympathy for the affected areas any way. Management issued a statement to all hourly paid employees "The Company has broken no agreement. We have negotiated par-

vate, making the TUC what it was founded to be - a committee of unions involved in class war, instead of what is showed itself to be when the firemen asked for support.

It is not our job to make capitalism work but to save ourselves and therefore our industry from capitalism. In so far as we succeed in doing so we are just beginning to make socialism work.

tiently for over 8 months through all stages of procedure."

At a mass meeting at Liverpool Stadium on November 21st, which was attended by all hourly paid workers, including maintenance electricians, fitters (no strikes in over ten years) inspectors, as well as production workers, and addressed by a local official of the TGWU and senior stewards, it was pointed out in what ways management had broken the PEP agreement.

During the debate it was stated that it was only the Liverpool section of British Leyland that had in their agreements such safeguards to stop management from imposing new man assignments and track speeds.

Elsewhere changes were implemented then discussed when it was too late. Therefore, such agreements as we have should be guarded jealously, for with British Leyland setting up national negotiating procedure it is possible they want this section of the agreement out of the way lest others achieve the same.

Following the resolve shown by the mass meeting of 2000 in supporting the agreement and rejecting management's letter by an overwhelming majority, management at a meeting with senior shop stewards and local TUC officials has agreed to take the problem up at national level.

There is no doubt that management will still try to find ways of evading the agreement, but workers have defeated this attempt.



On Wednesday November 23 in London public sector workers demonstrated against Government spending cuts, and then attended a rally at Westminster Central Hall. Photo by Laurence Sparham (IFL)

Broadcasting fight for a new wage claim

BBC management, under the delusion that it is running the nation's economy rather than safeguarding public service broadcasting, made a pay offer to staff strictly within the Government's guidelines. The National Executive Committee of the Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS), to which 14,000 out of the total BBC staff of 26,000 belong, promptly rejected the offer on October 24th and called on the membership to take industrial action to secure a better offer.

The action so far has resulted in cuts in radio and television services including the blacking out of the Queen's opening of Parliament. The newly-appointed Director General has written to television engineers who have been involved in the strike action reminding them that they were in breach of contract and threatening them with suspension preliminary to dismissal if they continued to act in this way.

Weaknesses in the ABS have begun to appear under the stress of action so far taken. The Central London Programme Branch, which had supported industrial action at a mass meeting before the NEC's call for action, allowed two management stooges, who had taken no part in branch activities for over a year, to make a plea for opting out of the fight in support of the Labour Government; and the branch membership, in a state of confusion, voted for their motion against strike action. This, when the union was already involved in strike action mandated by the membership at mass meetings and when colleagues who had been on strike were under threat of victimisation, was a vote for scabbing. On the other hand, many members who aren't used to the disciplines which may be second nature to members of industrial unions have participated fully in strike action when called upon.

BBC management has gone ahead with a unilateral implementation of its rejected pay offer, giving staff a highly-coloured version of what the pay increases of 10 per cent on the overall pay bill will mean to them. The divisive character of the offer

in the way it is parcelled out between lower and higher grade staff is also beginning to have some effect.

There is a problem in making strike action in the field of broadcasting hit the enemy. BBC staff have to try to secure the kind of public support on which the firemen have been able to count in their industrial action.

A step in this direction was made by the Radio and Television Safeguards Committee, a group of 13 broadcasting unions and associated bodies representing 150,000 members, who, in a statement to the Home Secretary pointed out that "the BBC was bleeding to death. It is being destroyed by a mixture of meanness, cowardice and indifference on the part of the Government and the BBC itself."

It is in this context that the Campaign for the Defence of Public Service Broadcasting in Britain was launched by the ABS and meetings on the work of the campaign have already been held.

Ultimately, the muscle for wage fights of workers in the public service sector depends not only on the strongest possible organisation on their part but also on the support of the public which they secure by the quality of their service.

STATE LAW

SUBVERTS

UNIONS

An interesting legal case prior to the miners' ballot brings out some instructive points on trade union democracy and the role of the bourgeois law courts. In October, the Kent Area Branch of the NUM sought an injunction restraining the Executive from holding a secret ballot. The Kent Miners wished the Courts to assert the Union's rule stating that the NEC had no constitutional power to hold such a ballot.

Not surprisingly, the Courts decided against the Kent Miners. It accepted that the Union's own rule book laid down the limits

In Brief

THE Minister for Education Shirley Williams, when being shouted down at the National Union of Students Conference because of Government policies on student grants, fees and the closure of colleges, came up with an idea for diverting their righteous indignation. Let the students instead of worrying about their conditions or the contraction of higher education go into the schools to combat the National Front's campaign to win our children for racism - that is, until the Labour Government solves the problem by getting rid of schools.

FOLLOWING on the Chancellor's refusal to consider a bonus for receding work, 3000 South Wales Inland Revenue Staff have applied a work-to-rule and overtime ban.

Strikes by CPSA members closed Swansea's employment office for a while and in a day of "general action" supported by 75 per cent of the membership prevented mail deliveries, closed job centres and social security offices, offices, shut up and picketed the Land Registry office and kept clerks from attending the County and Crown Courts.

AN interesting sequel to Healey's glowing praise for opinion polls quoted recently in *THE WORKER*: "No poll has ever shown such unprecedented support for a government pay policy" - was Foot's reaction to an opinion poll that showed that two people in three thought the firemen should get a 30 per cent rise; he dismissed opinion polls as not being true barometers of public opinion! Who is one to believe.... the Government, the opinion polls or the massive public support for the firemen's strike?

EGA STAYS ON

IN FEBRUARY last year the workers at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for women occupied after Area Health Authority threats to close it. The occupation continues and the workers are solid, providing the highest standard of health care. GPs are continuing to send their patients there - ironically the waiting list for the EGA is three months compared to the two years for the same operation at a district hospital. Ambulance men are continuing to take patients there.

A picket has been set up to prevent equipment and patients being moved out - the Hounslow Hospital incident, where equipment was deliberately broken and patients carried out, shows us how far the authorities are prepared to go.

Closure of the EGA would mean a drastic reduction in health facilities for Londoners, as well as job losses.

The EGA is of course only one of many under attack. In London alone 120 hospitals are threatened.

The workers at the EGA have made the message loud and clear - it's our health service, we must save it from capitalism which would destroy it and the working class with it. All workers everywhere, whether in education or industry or any other public service, must have the same clarity.

EXETER ACTION

STUDENTS at Exeter University recently organised a library work-in as a protest against education cuts, in particular the drastic reduction in the library budget resulting in journals being stopped and the buying of books being reduced.

There has been the threat of victimisation against the students

MIDLANDS DEMO

THE WEEK of action against cuts in public expenditure, called by the Steering Committee Against the Cuts, culminated in the Midlands in a mass demonstration in the centre of Birmingham.

In the preceding week unions had come together in other ways. At one public meeting in Solihull a NUPE shop steward spoke of the massive cuts in building and capital spending on the local hospital services. A Labour councillor spoke of how the local authority had cut £2m in two years, and an NUT speaker outlined some of the ways in which schools had been harmed by spending cuts.

Many speakers spoke of the damage done by unemployment, and there was general understanding that cuts were in no way leading to industrial renewal. As the speaker from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education put it, "Britain is industry; the British people are industry. The two cannot be divided and set against each other.

British workers, organised properly, can create for themselves adequate housing, education, services and jobs."

Saturday November 26 saw a march of trades unionists in Birmingham, with contingents and banners from all unions in the public sector, and a large group of firemen. The demonstration delivered a clear message, "No cuts; Save the public services; More pay."

Involved and much has been said of a need to choose between a campaign against education cuts and a campaign against victimisation. The choice is a false one; any campaign against education cuts which is any way effective will inevitably bring the threat or reality of victimisation. The two are inseparable; the choice is not which to have but when to fight.

Books, pamphlets

Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, London NW 5

Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds.

Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton.

Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol

LIVERPOOL BOOKSTALL Every Saturday at Paddles Market, Great Homer Street, Liverpool

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