

OUT OF WORK

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END JOBLESS SCANDAL NOW

The number of jobless in Britain now stands at a million and a half. Thousands more face redundancy or are on short time. Few workers will have forgotten Labour's election slogan of "Back to work with Labour" and the pledges made "to restore full employment" and "squeeze the rich till the pips squeak". And what happened to the promise to carry out "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people"? All these promises are now a sick joke.

LABOUR'S POLICY

In the two years since Labour was installed in office by the miners' strike, unemployment has more than doubled from its March 1974 figure of 618,000. Likewise, nearly every pledge in Labour's election programme has been hurled overboard in a desperate bid to steer capitalism on a safer course.

The measures announced by Denis Healey aimed at slashing public spending can only increase unemployment. The battles against unemployment and against social service cuts are not separate, but are inextricably linked. Healey's cuts amount to £2.4 Billion over the next four years. "Rationalisation schemes" or sackings, to use plain language, will bite deep into jobs in the public services and nationalized industries. At first, vacancies will be left unfilled and voluntary redundancies asked for... Then, at a later stage, enforced cuts in jobs will follow.

All these things: mounting unemployment, cuts in social services, as well as the £6 pay limit are enthusiastically welcomed by the Tories, whose policies Labour was meant to oppose and reverse. In fact, the Tories are howling for more. Labour is acting with the full consent of Thatcher and her gang of wage slashers and union bashers and is paving the way for their return to office.

The effect of these blows against the working class has been to confuse and weaken the Labour movement. The T.U.C. leaders have expressed "anxiety" about the cuts but have worked up nothing like the indignation and opposition they showed to the 25,000 workers who demonstrated for action against unemployment, last November. The top T.U.C. leadership has remained deaf to calls from unions like SOGAT and the National Union of Teachers for a recall conference to discuss unemployment and the cuts.

OPPOSITION

The limited opposition of the Labour Left in Parliament shows the potential for a real fight against unemployment. For abstaining in the vote on Healey's cuts, they were told that they were opposing Labour Party policy... They were also opposing Tory policy being carried out by a Labour Government. "Out of Work" welcomes the actions of the Left MP's who must now carry the struggle outside Parliament and



DUNDEE, 5 March: 8,000-strong demonstration during the local one-day general strike against the cuts and unemployment.

mobilise the Labour and trade union movement into effective action against unemployment. At the same time we do not share their view that nationalist pro-capitalist calls for

"import controls" and "reinvestment" will solve what is a fundamental crisis of capitalism on a world scale. We regard such proposals as made by the Left MP's as a div-

ersion from a fight to challenge capitalist power, for without such a challenge the scourge of unemployment cannot be removed nor can a socialist society be built.

Organising the fight-back

History has shown us how the employers use unemployment as a wedge to help drive down the general level of wages and living standards. In the 1930's it was also used to divide the unemployed from the employed and to weaken trade union organisation. 'Out of Work' says that this tendency exists today and must be fought. If it is not combatted effec-

tively by uniting the employed and unemployed on a policy of struggle then great dangers exist for the working class as a whole.

TUC leaders, Labour MP's and (Un)Employment Secretary Michael Foot, wring their hands about the number of unemployed but are providing not an ounce of leadership

when it comes to organising the fight back against the employers' redundancy and closures plans or organising the unemployed.

'Out of Work' advocates the building of representative 'Unemployment and Cuts Committees' in every locality to meet this problem. These committees should be built through

Trades Councils, Local Labour parties and trade unions. One of the most important lessons of the Thirties is to prevent the unemployed from becoming demoralised. Only by fighting for the retention of full trade union rights for the unemployed and building a unity based on struggle in the mass organisations of the working class can this be done. Already in several localities this sort of fight-back is being mounted.

ployment and cuts, including sit-ins. * In neighbouring Hornsey, the local Labour Party held a successful Conference on unemployment from which it was resolved that under the auspices of the Haringey Trades Council an unemployment committee would be established.

* Also in London, Lambeth Trades Council and Norwood Labour Party are organising an Unemployment and Cuts Conference in April which is sponsored by Wandsworth and Battersea and Southwark Trades Councils.

* In Hull, the Trades Council has established an unemployment committee, which has begun thrashing out a programme of action.

Up and down the country the pattern is being repeated. By uniting a broad spectrum of political opinion the basis is being laid for mounting a fight back in action. The massive 8,000 strong march in Dundee against unemployment and cuts which brought 30,000 workers out on strike is an indication of the preparedness of the working class to fight. So too is the London Confed and Co-op P.C. Assembly which mustered 2,500 delegates.

'Out of Work' urges all trade unionists, socialists and unemployed workers to join the fight in their towns and localities to force Trades Councils and Labour Parties to form committees against unemployment and cuts which will organise in the factories and Labour Exchanges. In this way we can build a movement capable of thwarting the Labour Governments cow-towing to the Employing class, turning back the tide of unemployment and rooting out the crisis-ridden profit-system which creates it.

A PROGRAMME TO FIGHT THE DOLE

WORK - SHARING WITH NO LOSS OF PAY. WHERE EMPLOYERS DEMAND REDUNDANCY DEMAND ALL THE WORK IS DIVIDED UP BETWEEN THE WORKERS WITH A SHORTER WORKING WEEK.

OPEN THE BOOKS TO COMMITTEES OF TRADE UNIONISTS. EXPOSE THE PROFITEERING, SQUANDER AND WASTE BEHIND THE VEIL OF "BUSINESS SECRETS". LET US SEE THE BOOKS, NOT OF ONE BANKRUPT FIRM BUT THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY. THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT TO MAKE DISCLOSURE OF COMPANY INFORMATION COMPULSORY.

WORK OR FULL PAY IF CAPITALISM CAN'T PROVIDE US WITH WORK WE DEMAND FULL MAINTENANCE AT AVERAGE TRADE UNION RATES UNTIL JOBS CAN BE FOUND.

PUBLIC WORKS NO WORKER SHOULD BE UNEMPLOYED, NOT A MACHINE IDLE. HOSPITALS, HOMES, SCHOOLS AND AN INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED. 180,000 BUILDING WORKERS ARE ON THE DOLE. LABOUR MUST INTRODUCE A COMPREHENSIVE

SYSTEM OF PUBLIC WORKS TO EMPLOY ALL THE JOBLESS. LOCAL COUNCILS MUST EXPAND THE DIRECT LABOUR DEPARTMENTS AND END 'LUMP' LABOUR. BOOST APPRENTICESHIP AND RETRAINING SCHEMES ON FULL TRADE UNION RATES. NO CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE - EXPAND THE SOCIAL SERVICES.

NATIONALISATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION OF ALL INDUSTRIES OR FIRMS DECLARING REDUNDANCIES. EMPLOYERS HAVE SQUEEZED ENOUGH PROFIT FROM US ALREADY.

WORKERS CONTROL PREPARE NATIONALISATION WITH WORKERS CONTROL OF PRODUCTION AND WORKERS MANAGEMENT OF ALL NATIONALISED INDUSTRY TO MAKE WAY FOR A PLANNED ECONOMY.

UNITE EMPLOYED/UNEMPLOYED TUC AND TRADE UNIONS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED. BUILD UNEMPLOYED WORKERS COMMITTEES THROUGH LOCAL TRADES COUNCILS TO DEFEND THE RIGHT TO WORK.

Hackney

* In Hackney, the Trades Council, which embraces 16,000 trade unionists, has set up an open Unemployment sub-committee. The Committee embraces a broad cross-section of working class political opinion, and whilst its monthly meetings are open, representatives attend from many unions, the Hackney Nurseries Campaign, unemployed workers and the local Labour Parties. In March, when over 7,000 workers were chasing about 700 unfilled vacancies in Hackney, (1 job for 10 workers) the Committee organised a 300 strong-torchlight 'March for Jobs' through the Borough. Further plans will involve meetings and a Borough-wide conference. Assistance has been given to a successful occupation in defence of jobs in a local shoe factory and the Committee has adopted a programme of support for all workers struggles against unem-

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO WORK - NO RETURN TO THE THIRTIES!

FLINT SIT-IN STRIKE *Lessons in workers' defence*

The recent police attacks and unbridled brutality against unemployed workers marching on the Right to Work Campaign Manchester to London protest march, once again highlights the importance of organising workers' self-defence in the fight to defend jobs and trade union organisation.

Just as in the Depression years of the 1930's, when workers marching for jobs during the National Unemployed Workers Movement struggles were savagely attacked, beaten and harassed by the forces of "law and order", so too today does the labour movement face a similar threat. This is especially the case in the event of factory occupations and "work-ins".

The following article on the Flint sit-in strike in the United States during 1936/37 shows the enormous effectiveness of the occupation form of struggle — be it for jobs or union recognition, as in the Flint case. It also shows the way in which organisation of workers' defence against the forces of the employers' state in the 1930's can be a vital lesson in today's struggles to defend the right to work.

A town owned by General Motors (G.M.) of 150,000 people, of these, 120,000 were directly dependent on the firm. Inside the factories, 45,000 labour for long hours and low pay. The town's newspapers, city officials, and administration were all under the thumb of G.M. This was Flint, Michigan, U.S.A. in 1936.

"The happy G.M. family" was how the bosses described this near feudal set-up. The firm's shareholders had good reason to be happy. In 1936, they grabbed 225 million dollars profit from this employers' paradise. Really, they were sitting on a powder-keg.

Wages and conditions in the car

plants were the explosive material. The plants were virtual concentration camps. 1,600 dollars a year was the minimum on which a family of four could live—according to the U.S. government. The average wage in G.M. was 900 dollars. Hiring and firing was done at will by the foremen, so job security was non-existent, as was unemployment benefit. Work was carried out at break-neck speed on body torturing assembly lines amid intense heat and deafening noise. There was no union to fight back.

On December 30th 1936, all that changed. G.M. workers began a sit-in which defied everything the bosses threw at them. The sit-in was the product of a new wave of militancy in the American working class, of a trend towards large industrial unions which rejected the craft-minded policy of the American Federation of Labour. More immediately, it was the outcome of six months of dogged, secret work by militants of the Auto Workers Union (UAW). It began in Fisher Body No. 1 when management tried to shift production to a non-organised shop.

BARRICADES

Instantly, the 1,200 men sealed off the plant. Car bodies were piled high to form barricades. Cast-iron sheets with hoses screwed into them covered every window. Wet clothes for protection, against tear gas were held ready. Soon Fisher No. 2. plant was occupied. Because these plants produced chassis the whole G.M. combine ground to a halt. By January 7th, 100,000 workers were laid off. The U.A.W. presented its demands: recognition of U.A.W.; re-instatement of victimised workers; a 30 hour, 5 day week; abolition of



Victory! Jubilant crowd in Fisher Body No. 1 on 11 February 1937.

piece-work and slowing down of the assembly line. The capitalist press, naturally, attacked the workers. G.M. chief, Alfred Sloane, told shareholders, "The sit-in is revolutionary in its dangers and implications".

The occupation was highly organised. A strike committee of five was freely elected, with committees (food, education, intelligence etc.) to look after various aspects of the occupation. The plant general meeting was the supreme decision making body. Leaders were elected from it; rules were made by it.

The bosses hated this demonstration of working class independence and went all out to smash the sit-in. First, the law-courts were used, but a sherriff brandishing a writ was laughed out of the plants. Next a group of "loyal" workers were dug up and formed into the "Flint Alliance", only to be exposed as a fraud. Still, G.M. refused to meet the strikers.

Violence soon replaced deception. A large mob of police and company hooligans attacked Fisher No. 2 and were repulsed in the "Battle of

Bull's Run". The National Guard stood by, while new negotiations took place which granted the UAW sole bargaining rights. But, as workers prepared to evacuate the plants G.M. broke the agreement and went on a new witch-hunting offensive.

RUSE

To recapture the initiative, the workers decided to recapture the Chevrolet No. 4 plant, where 14,000 workers. They succeeded by means of a ruse in which the G.M.'s spies were misinformed that the workers were going to seize Chevrolet No. 9. The management then concentrated its thugs around "Chevy" No. 9, leaving No. 4 vulnerable.

The workers now occupying G.M.'s key plants prepared to "fight to the death". Governor Murphy now ordered a show of force by the National Guard. The workers ignored it. Faced with the alternative of a blood-bath or surrender, G.M. opted for the latter. On February 11th, 1937, 44 days after the sit-in commenced, G.M. signed a contract re-

cognising the U.A.W. as the sole bargaining agent in the whole General Motors combine, and guaranteeing no victimisations. Victorious, the strikers marched out as they had sat-in, in a disciplined manner. At last, the union was established in G.M. Flint was now a union town.

FLOOD-GATES

The American Trotskyist, Art Preis, wrote about the consequence of this victory in these words: "... it was an inspiring victory to all American labour in 1937. The flood-gates of the class struggle were opened. The cry "sit-in!" echoed from one corner of the land to the other. One month after the end of the G.M. strike, some 193,000 workers engaged in 247 sit-ins; nearly a half a million took up this weapon before 1937." The example of Flint served—along with other big class battles—as a beacon to the U.S. working class. The Flint workers had faced witch-hunts, slanders, truncheons, spies and the violence of the cops. They had overcome them and won. Their determination is an example, highly relevant, to the British Labour movement today. Without such determination and unity, British workers cannot defend the gains of the last three decades.

In the coming period, as capitalism intensifies its efforts to make workers pay for the crisis, the occupation of factories will be a key weapon of the battle. For this reason above all, the lessons of Flint must be studied and absorbed as an instructive example of how to wage this type of conflict, which explicitly challenges capitalist property relations. Only by understanding these lessons can workers elevate this form of struggle and extend it into a challenge to the whole capitalist system, by transforming defensive struggles (ie. against sackings) into an assault on the framework and power of capitalism itself.

LABOUR'S CUTS BOOST JOBLESS

The Labour Government's White Paper on Public Spending for the next four years, and its £3 billion cuts-plan revealed therein by Chancellor—the axeman—Healey, shows the extent to which the fight for jobs is tied to the fight against cuts.

These cuts in social spending on health, education, social services and housing will mean a slashing of services AND a massive increase in unemployment.

In Education: Teacher unemployment will rise from the current 7,000 to an estimated 25,000 by the end of 1977. Teacher Training will be cut from 30,000 in 1975 to 12,000 in 1978.

In Transport: Thousands of jobs are under the axe in British Rail. If the cuts go through the rail network would be cut by at least a third.

In Nationalised Industry: 40,000 steel workers, and post-office workers face the chop.

In Health: Hospitals will remain understaffed and new hospitals, health-centres, and nurseries will not be constructed while almost 200,000 building workers rot on the dole.

Workers with skills are being made idle through these cuts. Already, thousands of capital projects such as schools, old people's homes, hospitals are being scrapped leaving a trail of jobless.

BIGGEST CUTS

Last year, a small percentage growth was allowed to local authorities. This year Government circular 88/75 prevents even that, by telling councils to have NO GROWTH in 1976/77, and pointing out that grants which make up over half of a Council's income, will not be forthcoming for new projects. And as the local authority associations pointed out, because all councils have a certain amount of committed expenditure arising for the first time next year, (mainly the effect of programmes started this year), "No Growth"

can only be achieved by CUTS in existing services.

Increases, say the Labour Government, should also be made on all council charges from rents to Meals on Wheels, and the use of new social service buildings should be delayed. Capital expenditure, on new buildings, is to be the priority for the biggest cuts. On social services across the country, capital expenditure rose 143 per cent between 1969 and 1974. Between 1974 and

1977 it is to be REDUCED by 38 per cent. But soon the limit will be reached for capital cuts: and then the reductions in staff and/or wages must begin if the Government carries through its policy of redistributing resources in favour of private capital.

So a tremendous threat exists to jobs. Already 'natural wastage' is being skillfully used and vacant jobs remain unfilled. Many right-wing Council leadership's have eagerly

spread the smokescreen of Michael Foot's Job Creation schemes. But neither Foot nor local Labour leaders have made clear that the new temporary jobs created under this scheme are far fewer than the number being quietly pruned away.

The 37 Tribune MP's who abstained on the White Paper vote—leading to its defeat — should be supported for their belated action. But action against the cuts and unemployment must be organised in the local labour movement's, otherwise the left MP's abstention will remain an empty gesture.

The alternative policy is clear

The Labour Government is daily stepping up its attacks on working class living standards, implementing and projecting cuts for the "next several years" in the health service, education, housing and social service which will only add to and not shorten the already lengthy dole-queues of one-and-a-half million. Much of the burden of these attacks is being shouldered by women, in particular, both in the home and at work. This is happening despite the fact that the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, are now law, supposedly giving women "equal rights".

NO DOLE

There are 289,000 women out of work and this is only the official figure. Many women do not sign on the dole as they are not even entitled to the pittance of dole money. Unemployment amongst women is rising at twice the rate of that amongst men. Since 1974 female unemployment has increased by 106% as compared with 50% amongst men. This can only get worse as many women are employed in public services where the Labour Government's cuts are being felt most severely. Also many women often work only on a part-time basis, or are not organised in trade unions and therefore lack any security of employment, whatsoever. This makes it easy for the employer to kick women out first in order to make savings.

Women fight unemployment

Most women, even if they could get a decent job, and that is not easy today, would have considerable difficulty, if they have kids, because of the lack of nurseries both in local communities and at the place of work. Up and down the country, nurseries are being closed and plans for building new ones are being scrapped as a part of the Government's cuts. In 1949, there were 903 borough nurseries, by 1970 there were only 453, and it is probably less than that today. In London a recent survey showed that day-nursery places were provided for only 1½% of under-fives. Without these vital social facilities, the chance of any job for mothers of young children is completely out of the question. This means that women are still tied to the confines of the family.

It is of vital importance that a fight against the particular social and economic oppression suffered by women is taken up by the whole of the Labour Movement. It must be linked to the fight against the anti-working class policies of the Labour Government.

For too long the Labour Movement has failed to take up these issues. That is why only 31% of working women are in unions as compared with 57% of working men. Throughout the country there are women organising to fight on these issues

inside and outside the Labour Movement.

Women spear-headed the successful six week occupation-jobs fight at Personna razor blades in Glasgow. In London, at the end of February, a successful conference on "Women and the Cuts" called by the Working Women's Charter was attended by over 300 delegates from the Labour Movement and women's organisations. Initiatives like this should be supported. However the fight must be taken up to commit trade union branches, trades councils and Labour Parties to defend the interests of women as a specially oppressed section of the working class.

NURSERIES

Women's organisations fighting on abortion, nurseries or the cuts should be encouraged to build links with the local Labour Movement, which must extend a hand to these groups. Where separate campaigns do not already exist Labour Parties, union branches and trades councils must be prepared to initiate campaigns on these issues themselves drawing housewives, mothers and women workers into the movement. Only by defending the rights of women in this way can the Labour Movement gain the kind of unity required to effectively fight unemployment and the cuts.

both for Labour MP's, Labour Councillors and trade union leaders. Already, thousands of public service workers and localised campaigns are beginning the fight back against the threat to jobs and services. In Dundee, 30,000 stopped work for the day in March. In Liverpool bus-workers struck against the cuts. 3,000 workers demonstrated in Birmingham and a similar number in Glasgow and Coventry.

Against the cuts Labour Councillors should now be giving a lead and refusing to act as administrators for Wilson and Crosland, who are in turn the agents of big business. Councillors CAN refuse to increase rents, rates, fares and other charges. Above all, they CAN use cash left over in the council balances at the year end to launch crash programmes of PUBLIC WORKS. Every council has plans for nurseries, health centres, Old People's Homes and estate modernisation waiting in cold storage by dictate of the Labour Government. Money from the council balances could put these programmes quickly into action, providing several years work for unemployed workers and useful community assets.

DRAIN

Further funds could be obtained by cancelling the enormous interest payments on local authority debts which are paid to the banks and finance houses. These interest payments can account for over half the rate income of local councils and are a permanent drain on local authority finance.

By refusing to pay these debt charges and by spending the balances Labour councillors would show in action a determination to defend working class living standards. At the same time the basis for a campaign for the nationalisation of banks and finance houses by the Labour Government — without compensation — would be laid. Providing support, (strike action etc.) for such a struggle is organised in the local labour movement, tenants associations, nursery campaigns etc, then a real fight could be launched to turn the tide of Wilson's betrayals.