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RESIST IMF BLACKMAIL



Denis Healey presents a Winter budget this week

More crippling cuts in social services—that is the Christmas message that the international bankers have bluntly conveyed to the Labour government and the working people of Britain.

Yesterday the Cabinet agreed to the conditions negotiated by Denis Healey, the Chancellor, with the International Monetary Fund for a further loan to bale out a bankrupt Britain and stabilise the £.

This week Healey will announce the terms. They will spell out further monstrous reductions in public spending. Prime Minister Jim Callaghan has said "there can be no soft options."

It seems that the City financiers have won the tug of war with the manufacturers on how savage the cuts should be. The manufacturers are afraid that too severe restrictions in public spending would lower demand and cut into their profits. This would lower their profits and reduce investment further.

Financiers are more concerned with the value of their money. They are determined ruthlessly to slash living standards to preserve their profits. The Cabinet has capitulated to their demands and the pressure of the IMF bankers of America, Germany and Japan. The

Treasury mandarins have conspired with the City to force these policies through.

Whichever section of the ruling class has won over the size of the cuts, one thing is clear. Neither cares a jot for the living standards of the workers.

Cuts are expected to total £4,000 million over the next two years. £1,500 million is to be demanded over the financial year April 1976-77. Callaghan declined to call these "savage". However he added, "the definition of savage is important."

'Savage' would be the politest word used by ordinary workers! Cuts of this order will mean bumper rises in council house rents, an end to food price subsidies. It will mean increased prescription charges on drugs.

The government is also planning to tie unemployment pay and pension increases to wages rather than prices. Why? Because they are going up slower than prices. It will be a direct cut in real income for the poorest sections of society.

They are being asked to pay for the crisis of a sick capitalist system.

The Labour leaders are unwilling to resist the threats of the bankers. They see no alternative. That is because they are not prepared to consider ending the power of

capital and adopting socialist solutions.

But like Gulliver's giant, the body of the labour movement is rousing itself from the sleep imposed on it by the acceptance of the Labour and trade union leaders of Tory policies to solve the crisis.

Already we have seen 80,000 workers demonstrate last month against the public spending cuts. At the beginning of this month, 50,000 public employees struck for one day in the Midlands to protest against government measures. Thousands demonstrated in the streets in many towns and cities in the area.

Workers have reached breaking point with the government—TUC policy of wage restraint. The social contract agreement was made mainly on the condition that price rises would be contained and jobs preserved.

Despite continual predictions by Chancellor Healey that price rises would fall, they have remained around 15% and are rising. Nobody believes or is interested in Healey's latest prediction of a fall in late 1978! Unemployment has ominously continued to climb as we enter another winter.

Most significantly, the national executive of the Transport and General Workers Union rejected a third year of wage restraint. This shows the depth of feeling in the active layers of the working class against any more concessions to big business.

Now it is time for a change of course. It is time that the movement returned to a socialist solution to the crisis. Jobs can be guaranteed for all. An emergency scheme of public works to mop up the unemployed could be introduced.

The implementation of the mine-workers' demand for early retirement would guarantee new jobs for school leavers. If retirement at sixty and the TUC demand for a thirty five hour week were carried out now, it would immediately provide enough jobs for all the unemployed.

The cuts can be stopped and reversed to preserve and improve the basic gains for working people achieved through the welfare state. But this would only be possible on the basis of a planned and publicly owned economy. The private profit system of production has failed. It must be swept away.

The IMF terms must be rejected. The government must introduce an Enabling Act in Parliament to take over the banks and top 200 firms that decide the direction of the economy.

If such a measure is defeated in

Parliament, Labour must call an election to win a majority for this programme. With a concerted campaign, the government could explain how the country has been bled dry by big business. It could show that a planned economy which the organisations of the working class would fully manage and control could provide the resources in increased production and efficiency to pay for necessary improvements in public services and living standards.

It is the only way to avoid more cuts, more misery, and defeat of the Labour government bringing with it a new period of reactionary Toryism.

By Les Smith
(Deptford LPYS)

THIS WEEK

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HELP BUILD MILITANT

The Militant is under daily attack from the giant millionaire press and is calling on every reader to back us in a bold counter-offensive.

It is precisely the growing support that the ideas of the Militant are finding in the ranks of the labour movement that has frightened this Goliath into action against us. And just that support from you, our readers, is the only weapon with which we can fight back. Our resources are tiny and our press inadequate. But, with your help, we can come out of this battle with redoubled strength.

The more the Militant is attacked the more active workers want to know what's in it! Help them and help us by building the sales in your area. Order extra copies now. Take them into work, into your college, your 'local' and above all, to every meeting you attend. Point out the cheap-rate subscription for Christmas. Get your branch of the labour movement to take out a regular order.

Get the ideas of Militant known. Invite a speaker to address meetings on what the Militant stands for. Take posters and leaflets for the big meetings we are organising in your area. Above all, send us some cash!

These latest attacks have brought home the urgency of building the capacity of our press. A 12 page weekly is totally insufficient to counter the lies and distortions of the bosses' mouthpieces. If every one of you sent us the

'Christmas Fiver' we appeal for every year, we would more than treble what we have in the Fund at the moment! And we could use every penny.

As it is, we are aiming for £40,000 by the end of the year and, especially now we're under attack, must have every penny of the £15,687.04 still to get.

At least £10,000 of this could be raised in the next couple of weeks in a real drive for emergency 'fivers'. Every worker in the movement and anyone who has ever bought the Militant or even expressed interest in it must be approached and any meeting of any labour organisation.

The press and the mass media is no friend of the working class. Our enemies are your enemies. Take action now to help us fight back.

Build the circulation of the Militant! Rush us your donation and see what more you can collect! Find out about the "What Militant stands for" meeting in your area and get everyone you can along.

Build the fighting strength of a workers' paper that shows a way out for you and the whole of the working population of the world.

Militant answers the attacks
See pages 2 and 3

WHY THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MIL



witch-hunt cannot succeed

By their speeches in Yorkshire last weekend, Sir Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan have declared war on the left of the Labour Party.

In a deliberately orchestrated campaign they are attempting to blame the growing divide within the party on 'infiltrators' whose ideas Jim Callaghan considers similar to 'fascism'.

This smear campaign has been particularly directed at the Marxists in the Labour Party who are supporters of this paper.

But if it succeeds it will destroy the Labour Party as an effective force. For the McCarthyite language of the Labour right wing leaders expresses the desperate threats of a group who have increasingly become out of touch with the rank and file of the Party.

Many of them were elected on the basis of left wing speeches demanding reforms. But they have moved to the right under the impact of the economic crisis. They have become tied hand and foot to the bidding of the international bankers. When they attack 'infiltrators' they are really attacking the changing mood in the local parties who are demanding a break with the policies that reduce working class living standards and back big business.

This group is trying to save a decayed capitalist system in Britain by making the working class pay. They are doing the dirty work of the Tories. At the same time that the attack against the Labour rank and file has been launched it is reported in the papers that the Cabinet is agreeing to a near £4,000 million cut in public spending over the next two years, while continuing with wage restraint. That is the price that the international bankers are demanding.

Massive

But the wide opposition in the Labour Party to cuts and further wage control was demonstrated at the recent massive lobby of Parliament by public employees. This has put the fear of God into many right wingers. They must get the cuts through but to do so they must weaken the resistance of the Labour rank and file to their 1931-type proposals.

The fiercest and most respected opponents of the cuts are the Marxists. So they are the first in line for a "Stalinist type" ouster.

The Sun newspaper of December 6th greeted the news of Denis Healey's support for the cuts in the IMF deal with "Welcome to the club Denis." Immediately below this was another editorial headed "Welcome to the club, Harold" for his attacks on the left. Certainly in the minds of the Tory press the two events go together.

Wilson's plan to tighten the grip of the MPs and the government over the Labour Party is an assault on the fundamental principles of democracy in the labour movement. Wilson calls for an end to "bed-sitter" infiltrators and says that constituency delegates must be registered in the area for two years before they can vote. This would stop poorly attended parties being taken over by small groups, he says.

This is ridiculous. The rule would not make the slightest difference to the policies or composition of the GMCs. It only shows how remote Harold Wilson is from the rising mood of anger in the trade union and labour movement against capitalist policies. It is only suggested to give plausibility to the nonsense about takeovers.

Sir Harold wishes to impose the divine right to rule for MPs by his proposal that all members of the party should decide on any attempt to deselect a candidate where there is a sitting MP.

Sir Harold wants to take the power of selecting its candidates away from the party activists. But what is a constituency party? It is composed of the ward delegates and trade union delegates. They are the party stalwarts. They do the canvassing, the leafletting, they raise the funds. They do all the work. They should decide who they want to represent their party, not an élite of MPs in Parliament or the Tory press.

Many of these MPs enthusiastically accepted their endorsement as candidates by local parties they now claim are "unrepresentative caucuses". Let the MPs defend their ideas before the people who elected them. Under the present procedure they cannot be evicted by a snap vote. There is a formidable process of deliberation to go through before reselection is possible.

It is only when the party rank and file attempt to resist the pro-capitalist policies of a Cabinet desperate to appease big business, that Harold Wilson and James Callaghan hysterically scream about "infiltration".

If Labour Parties are poorly attended

the blame must lie fairly and squarely with the present policies of the government. Their retreat from the promises of the manifesto has led to the loss of over 30,000 members since the last election.

The Marxists in the party are not just a bunch of students who have jumped in a period of months. If that is the case what is all the fuss about? Does Harold Wilson think that party activists are sheep who would quietly follow the bidding of a handful of inexperienced student youths who are in the party for the first time?

No, many of the Marxists in the local parties have built support for their ideas painstakingly over many years, arguing their case in free debate. They are dedicated trade unionists who believe that it is time to change course and take up socialist policies as expressed in the party constitutional aims of Clause Four.

Democratic

Some have been party members longer than most members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. That is why they have won support from party members. That is the democratic way to do it.

That this campaign is a witch hunt against the left was confirmed by a letter Frank Tomney MP for Hamersmith North sent to the 'Times'. In his letter, Tomney (who is to be ousted by his constituency as a candidate for his long record of flouting party conference policy) attacked Ron Hayward, Party General Secretary for taking no action against "extremists".

He demanded the reintroduction of a list of proscribed organisations. Clearly this campaign would not just stop at the Marxists in the party but is aimed at the left in general.

As Martin Flannery MP said, "The witch hunting of Sir Harold Wilson and the Prime Minister are not new. They are now attempting to divert the movement away from the political reality that the IMF is now dictating what the Labour government should do and that the CIA has deeply infiltrated British political life."

The Marxists in the labour movement are not only the boldest fighters for the interests of the working class, they are also the greatest defenders of democracy. The Labour Party Young Socialists has also been under attack. Andy Bevan, the LPYS Chairman has been pilloried in the press. The Prime Minister has tried to block his appointment. Yet where else in the labour movement is it possible for the minority view to have rights of producing separate documents to a conference against the majority? This is a procedure introduced by the Marxists who have the majority in the youth wing of the party.

The Marxists have never feared an open debate on the issues facing the labour movement—the rising unemployment, the soaring inflation, the restraint on wages and the cuts in government expenditure. They have spelled out what the alternatives are if a socialist course is adopted. This has found wider support as the party has moved left.

Now the right wing leadership of the party seeks to deal with those ideas not by the methods of open debate but by the methods of the witch hunt.

This unprincipled scare campaign cannot succeed. For the majority of the rank and file of the party will not allow their decisions and their representatives to be ridden roughshod over, by an unrepresentative clique at the top.

Resolutions

The following resolution was overwhelmingly carried at a well attended meeting of the Wokingham Constituency Labour Party General Management Committee.

"That this GMC welcomes the decision of the NEC and Conference to endorse the appointment of Andy Bevan as National Youth Officer. We believe that the appointment of a leading National Officer of the LPYS to this position shows great foresight and will be reflected in a rapid growth of the youth organisation in the coming period."

It is reported that nearly thirty Constituency Labour Parties have sent similar resolutions and have protested at the delay in Andy Bevan's appointment.

The real asset strippers

Sir Harold Wilson in his speech attacking the Labour left described the Marxists in the party as political "asset strippers." Apparently the Marxists are to be likened to the big capitalists who take over a company and strip it of its assets and machinery. Marxists aim to take over the Labour Party and destroy it, Wilson says.

But who are the real asset strippers of the Labour Party? Who are the people who have used the party for their own gain and the pursuit of power and then tossed it aside when they no longer need it? Not the Marxist wing of the party but the former colleagues of Sir Harold Wilson in his Labour Cabinets.

The list is like a rogues gallery of Tories and Liberals masquerading as socialists:

Dick Taverne Charterhouse and Balliol, Oxford. Barrister, former Labour MP for Lincoln. A government minister under Wilson from 1966-70. Broke with his party over the Common Market. Stood against Labour in the by-election and won. Labour only



Dick Taverne

managed to remove him at the last election.

Christopher Mayhew a Director of Middle East International Publishers Ltd. Minister for seven years, some under Wilson. Broke with his party and joined the Liberals in July 1974. Beaten

HOW THE PRESS LIES

Over the last two years the press has conducted a malevolent and vicious campaign against the Labour government, in the interests of big business.

They threatened and cajoled the Labour government into doing the dirty work of capitalism for them. They have attacked workers forced to strike, they have slandered the unemployed as 'scroungers', quietly forgetting to mention that big business scrounges £11 million a day from the government. Now they have turned their hysteria on to the left of the Labour Party itself.

In their attempt to split and destroy the Labour Party, the Tory press has spared no effort to lie, distort and mislead its readers about the true state of affairs in the Labour Party.

The most sickening attack came from the paper that claims to and likes to see itself as the working man's paper, the 'Daily Mirror'.

In an editorial that is clearly an attack on the rank and file of the party, they call for action against "Trotskyist arsonists" who are trying "to build a bonfire beneath the unsuspecting local MP."

In a vile attack they try to associate the Marxist wing of the party with the latest exhibitionist decadence appearing on the pop music scene. In a reference to 'punk rock', they refer to the policies of the left as "punk politics".

But perhaps this would be a more apt description of the journalism that has been exhibited in the pages of the Tory press over this affair. No wonder active trade unionists and Labour workers take what the papers say with a pinch of salt.

The 'Daily Express' won the prize for champion liar. They reported that a "spokesman" of the 'Militant' had said that we had put Wilson "on the black list". The spokesman is supposed to have added that 'Militant' "was the true path of socialism in the labour movement". Yet our "spokesman" said not one word of these things. He told the 'Daily Express' reporter who loitered round our editorial offices that we

refused to speak to a paper that had consistently distorted the real situation.

Not to be deterred their reporter just went ahead and invented an interview that never took place. That is punk journalism.

The 'Express' continued to compound its blatant lying with sheer inaccuracy. In its editorial in the same issue it referred to Andy Bevan, the newly appointed Labour National Youth Officer as an "International Socialist."

Andy Bevan has never supported this group which is outside the labour movement. As he reported to his local Swansea newspaper last week, Andy Bevan has been a member of the Labour Party for over seven years. That is the level of their understanding of Labour politics.

Punk journalism again.

Trotsky Answers the Press

Zola wrote of the French financial press that it could be divided into two groups; the venal and the so-called 'incorruptible' that sells itself only in exceptional cases and at a very high price. Something of the sort may be said of the mendacity of newspapers in general. The yellow press lies as a matter of course, without hesitating or looking back. Newspapers like The Times or Le Temps speak the truth on all unimportant and inconsequential occasions, so that they can deceive the public with all the requisite authority when necessary.

From "My Life" chapter 45

HEAR THE TRUTH!

ALL LONDON MILITANT PUBLIC MEETING

'What the Militant really stands for— an Answer to the Press attacks'

Speaker: Peter Taaffe [Editor, Militant]

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square

Friday December 17th 7.30 pm

BRISTOL MILITANT MEETING

Subject: "Militant: What we stand for".

Speaker: Ted Grant [Militant Editorial Board]

Friday December 17th, 7.30 pm

Main Hall, Shepherds Hall,

Old Market, Bristol.

MILITANT?

By Bob McKee

at Bath by a Tory.
Lord Robens Labour Minister between 1945-57 before becoming Chairman of the National Coal Board. He is Chairman of Vickers Ltd., Director of British Anthracite Ltd., the Bank of England and Times Newspapers. In the Lords he broke with the Labour Party and is now regularly calling for a National Government.
Lord George Brown, Deputy Labour Party leader under Wilson and nearly won the leadership in 1963. As a Lord became adviser to Courtaulds Ltd where he was an industrial counsellor between 1968-70. He is an ex-consultant of the 'Daily Mirror' Group. Last year having denounced the Labour Party continually in the press, he finally renounced his membership and has since been calling for a coalition.
Lord Chalfont joined the Labour Party in 1964 to become a Cabinet Minister under Wilson straight away. (He certainly had no problem seizing a position of power!) He became a Minister. Only days before the October '74 election he publicly renounced his membership of the party deliberately to weaken Labour in the polls. He spoke for Taveme and Mayhew in the election. He is now a columnist for (guess who?) 'The Times' where he writes articles attacking "Communism" and demanding more arms for NATO.



Richard Marsh
 Richard Marsh Labour MP and Cabinet Minister under Wilson. Leaves to become Chairman of British Rail. Then leaves that to become Chairman of the Newspaper Publishers Association. He has said that he is not sure what socialism is now.

John Stonehouse Labour MP and Minister under the Wilson government 1964-70. Founder member of the right wing Manifesto group. Convicted of various fraud charges. Broke with the party to join the English National Party. Gave support to racist Robert Relf.

None of these stabbers-in-the-back were ever investigated. They were never accused by Callaghan or Wilson of stripping the party of its assets. On the contrary they were welcomed into the highest positions in the party. Now Wilson wants to make it easier for these types to stay as MPs.

It is only the very people who have fought for real democratic control by the party over its representatives to stop this abuse of power who are threatened by the leader of the party and its ex-leader with a witch hunt.



Hospital workers show their anger at cuts.

Vicious Health Cuts LONDON HOSPITALS TO BE CLOSED DOWN

Workers and their families living in this decaying part of London have just been given a savage indication of what the cuts—particularly in the NHS—really mean. There have been rumours and threats for some months, but at the last Council meeting the plans of the Area Health Authority were made clear.

These involve the closure of at least ten wards in local hospitals: two general wards at Bart's, plus the weekend closure of the children's ward, entailing the sending home of children suffering from leukemia; the children's ward and two general wards at the Hackney; 7 or 8 of the 93 beds at St Mark's, two or three wards at the Metropolitan and the infectious disease units at the East-ern.

This is on top of long standing rumours that the Mothers' Hospital and the German Hospital will be shut down. And, according to Dennis Jones, NHS district administrator, this is not the end of the economies.

Workhouse

Yet this is one of the country's health blackspots. It has the highest rates in almost every illness from TB to VD. The people who live here die younger, suffer more accidents and have more mental illness and handicaps. Two years ago, the number of babies dying at birth was 17% above the national average.

Some of the hospitals coping with all this are Victorian relics, which for years have suffered from lack of money for improvements and more qualified staff. For example, Hackney Hospital was recently described in the 'Sunday Times' as "a gaunt, grimy collection of Victorian buildings that were once a workhouse." An expert's report to the Health Secretary in 1973 described the psychiatric unit as containing "some of the worst wards for the care of the mentally ill I have ever seen".

Since then there have been no improvements, only further deterioration. The maternity block, which has been planned for closure for some time, has fungus growing on the walls, a defective sewage system, and lay between the laundry, which was very noisy and the mortuary, so mothers on their way in, could meet

Housing conditions will not make things easy for those sent home at weekends, or early, to release beds. Most homes in this area are flats, which means stairs to climb, many lack bathrooms or indoor toilets, or have to share these facilities. Also, back-up services are totally inadequate, there being only half the recommended number of district nurses.

Little wonder then, that Hackney Labour Council erupted when the plans were revealed. As Councillor John Wobey said, "to suggest that the present low level of service is to be cut down is incredible." And even Sir Lou Sherman, health committee Chairman, was moved to declare, "my loyalty to the government has never been in question, but to satisfy international financiers by literally putting the people of Hackney at risk of death, is not my way of seeing savings made in public services."

The Council have sent telegrams to Ennals, the Health Minister, and the three local MPs, expressing their alarm, and this action has been backed up by Hackney Central-Labour Party, who have sent protest resolutions to the Minister, MP and local press. Local leaders of NUPE and ASTMS have also declared wholehearted opposition. There has already been a deputation from the Council, community health council, trade unions and local MPs, to see Ennals, who has promised to visit the area and review the health service deficiencies.

Cuts

However, these protests must be taken further, as part of a campaign against the cuts as a whole. One NUPE worker at the Eastern complained that officially they had been told nothing, though the indications were beginning to seep through—for example, all those over 60 were being forced to retire.

The November 17th mass lobby of Parliament was an indication of the anger against the cuts. The unions must build on this and involve all members in an active campaign for a reversal of the cuts strategy and implementation of socialist policies and Conference decisions.

By Lynne Faulkes

YCAU Youth Campaign against Unemployment

"UNIONS MUST DEFEND UNEMPLOYED"

"Trade Unions should look after not only those members in work but also those who are unemployed," said Vernon Gapper (Divisional Organiser, AUEW-TASS) speaking at the first public meeting organised by the YCAU in Nottingham.

Going on to describe the unemployment situation in Nottingham he gave an example of the idiocy of capitalism. Plessey, one of the biggest firms in Nottingham, had not taken on young people to train during the past few years and now they found they had vacancies with insufficient trained personnel to fill them.

The main speaker, Andy Bevan (LPYS National Chairman), stressed the need for the trade union movement to take up the fight against unemployment. In the toolroom at Rolls Royce Bristol, shop stewards had negotiated with management to take on 125 instead of 100 new apprentices. "But even if this excellent example was repeated throughout the industry it would only be a drop in the ocean," said Andy, pointing to the need for political as well as industrial action to secure jobs.

He gave many examples showing that the struggle for jobs always comes up against the existence of the private enterprise system and hence the need for the adoption, by the Labour government of a socialist programme.

Jack Jones has stated that a 35 hour week could provide 700,000 new jobs.

"But this would mean much higher basic rates would be needed," explained Andy. "Wage restraint would have to be thrown out and a whole new approach adopted. We want to see a Labour government continue," he affirmed, "but only a movement from the ranks for a socialist programme can ensure this."

In the discussion John Harrison (NUT) explained that we could offer jobs ourselves—what we do have to offer is a political programme to solve the problem of unemployment. "Nationalisation is a must," emphasised Jack Saunders, an NSMM Shop Steward, while John Dale (ASTMS) attacked recent press stories about 'scroungers on the dole'— "employers want low unemployment benefits so that they can get away with paying even lower wages," he said.

With 60 people attending, the meeting proved to be an excellent beginning to the YCAU activities in Nottingham. Well-organised publicity in the local press and radio as well as several thousand well-produced leaflets advertising the meeting played a large part in ensuring its success. The £17 raised in the collection plus the £10 donation from Derbyshire Area NUM will be put to good use in further publicising the campaign and developing its activities.

By Jim Bell

(North Nottingham LPYS)

CARDIFF TRADE UNIONISTS BACK CAMPAIGN

Members of the LPYS in Cardiff have set the YCAU into motion by contacting trade union branch secretaries and by visiting local factories to explain the aims of the campaign and get new local sponsors and support for the campaign.

The reception in all cases has been very good and illustrates the dissatisfaction of many workers with the present levels of unemployment, particularly the effects that this is having on young people. Many trade unionists clearly feel the need for the government to change course and take some drastic action to immediately slash the numbers of unemployed.

Many of the trade unionists seen have voiced their displeasure at the way in which the CBI and the pressures of the bosses have forced the government to forget about their election manifesto of 1974. Clearly more and more workers are seeing the need for socialist measures to end unemployment.

Local sponsors to date include: Adrian Jones (asst. Divisional Organiser of NUPE) Stuart Hastings (Asst. Divisional organiser of NUPE) Cardiff Trades Council Dave Cooke (AUEW Convenor, Rover car plant) Dai Davies (NUM Compensation Sec) Revd. Bill Morris (President Merthyr Trades Council) Cllr Charlie Gale (Vice President Cardiff Trades Council) Cllr Bill Harry (Oakdale Branch NUM) Cllr. Mary Llewellyn. Rob Sewell (National Committee LPYS)

The main work of the campaign in Cardiff before Christmas is to be a public meeting on December 10th with leading speakers from the Labour Party and the trade unions.

LATEST SPONSORS

- Birmingham District Labour Party
- Joan Lestor MP
- Wirral Labour Party
- TGWU 1/1909-08 [Vehicle Building and Automotive, Cricklewood]
- Southend ASOB [Boilermakers]
- Solihull Labour Party
- TGWU 5/908
- AUEW 7 TE branch [Tower Hamlets]
- Kingston Polytechnic Students' Union

LPYS PUBLIC MEETING "UNEMPLOYMENT & CUTS"

—The Socialist solution.
 Hear: Nick Bradley (LPYS rep. NEC Labour Party) in personal capacity, and Ian Burge (Sec. JSSC London Hospital) in personal capacity.
 Chairman: Tom Doyle, (Sec. Tower Hamlets LPYS)
 On Wednesday 15th December, at 8.00pm. Venue: Music Library, May Field House, Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green.

CAMPAIGN MEETINGS

SOCIALIST POLICIES TO END UNEMPLOYMENT

Andy Bevan, LPYS National Chairman, will speak at YCAU public meetings in the following towns this week.

Friday December 10th—Manchester: Hulme Labour Club, Bonsall Street, At 7.30

Sunday December 12th—Glasgow: City Hall, Candleriggs. At 3.00 pm.

Monday December 13th—Newcastle: Bridge Hotel (near High Level bridge) at 7.30

Tuesday December 14th—Birmingham: The Wellington, Bristol Street, at 7.30 pm.

Thursday December 16th—Liverpool: AUEW Hall, 48 Mount Pleasant.

The Real Attitude of British Industry:

NEVER MIND THE SCIENCE

By John Pickard

(Gateshead Labour Party)

The pronouncements of James Callaghan and Co. about the need to train more scientists and technicians for our technologically-based industries prompted me to put down on paper some of my impressions as a scientist working in British industry. All this is true.

I suppose when I went into the pharmaceutical industry—a research and development section—I was too much of an idealist. I really did think that I would be pitting my skills and ingenuity against nature in the quest to produce better and cheaper medicines for mankind.

I soon learned otherwise. My induction into this nameless company referred only in passing to my job as a scientist—my real purpose was to 'manage'. From the day I entered to the day I left I was always being reminded that I was 'lower management' and I was supposed to aspire to 'middle' and then 'upper' management. I was expected to learn all the new jargon about 'ongoing commercial flow patterns' and the like—none of which had anything to do with a single tablet.

I was introduced to the hierarchy that would have made the church look like a shambles. I was a "project leader"; then there were "section

leaders"; then there were "departmental managers" etc., etc. I soon learned not to fit in. I lost the confidence of my senior section leader straight away when I told him I wasn't interested in doing a part-time course leading to membership of the British Institute of Managers (or something).

Then horror of horrors! I started fraternising with the technicians. I had the gall to go for lunch and even to sunbathe and play football with the technicians. I actually had an interview with my boss in which he tried to tell me to cultivate different friendships! I was clearly not cut out to be a scientist.

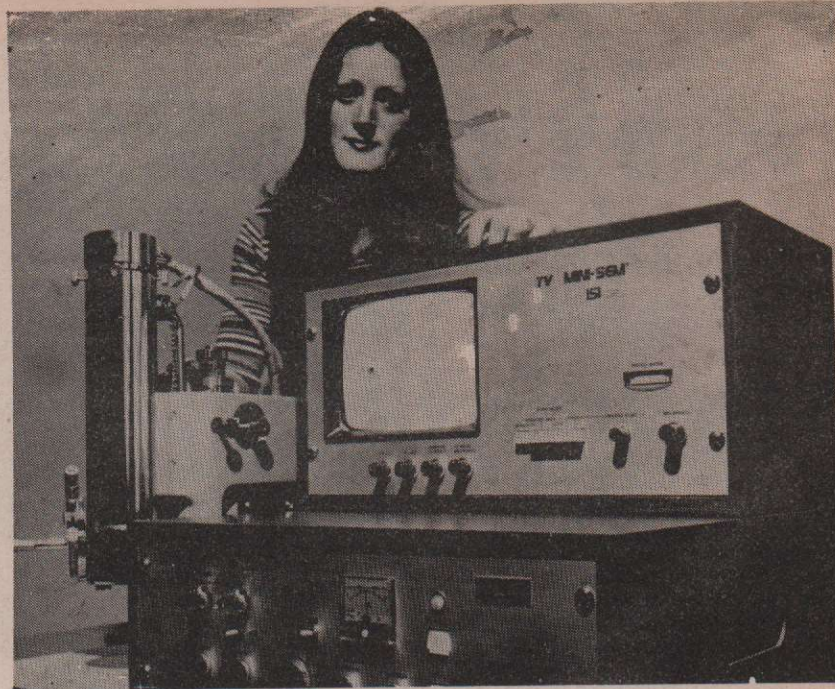
Status

My first open breach with the hierarchy came when I discovered that my wage (pardon me, salary) was £50 a year less than another lower manager who had started with me, with slightly lower qualifications. I was told that the company worked on a system of "merit" rises and we all had to be secretive to each other about our wages. Even the poor technicians were given their wage rises like some sort of underhand 'keep-it-to-yourself-the-others-are-getting-nowt' bribe. And so I became familiar with the mushroom principle.

For a while at least I was stuck—so I had to conform. I had to have a desk. Status, apparently, was everything. No-one else shared a desk, even if they only contained old pools coupons and sandwiches (as most of them did). So in my quest to conquer nature I first had to get a desk. However, the struggle for survival was sometimes very intense. When one departmental manager obtained a new wastepaper basket, the other one wanted one as well.

These two were notorious for their rivalry; once when their mutual boss moved to a new office they almost came to blows over the old equipment left behind. Imagine the scene in one of British industry's corridors of power—one senior scientist (pardon me, "manager") pushing a filing cabinet on a hand trolley one way, and the other pushing like hell the other way—both shouting vehemently that it was theirs. We just sat about and laughed!

I did earnestly try to keep a little bit in touch with science and technology. I managed to get two really exciting projects. One involved putting out a hot lemon drink for colds and flu, in an attempt to capture some of the market set up by the other three hot lemon drinks already on the go. Then we changed the shape of our paracetamol tablets, sold it under a new brand-



The "latest equipment": but 'image', public relations status are the most important things.

name and through a different subsidiary. By sleight of hand we now had two paracetamol brands and a few percentage points more of the paracetamol market. Really exciting stuff!

Degenerated

In my mission to revolutionise pharmaceutical technology I had to contend with various diversions. There was the time we were visited by the great American chief himself; we were spread around the laboratory and had to pretend that we were all working desperately at some job or other. After about two hours of unrelieved tension (we couldn't even get the tea-cups out of the glassware cupboard) there came a hushed silence in the corridor followed by a chorus of mutters. From where I was standing, pretending to be working on an obsolete and unused tablet machine, I just about got a glimpse of the end of a cigar, then he was gone and we fell about the place laughing.

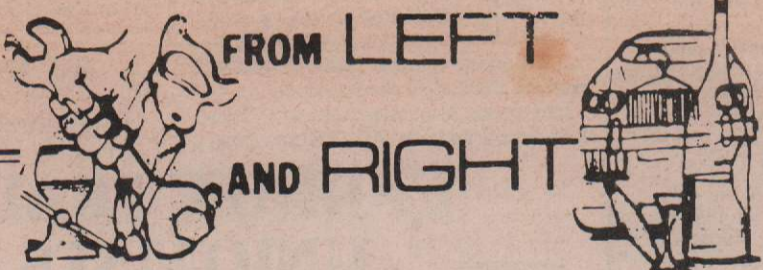
We scientists also had to contend with management—all of whom could be described as 'degenerated scientists'. One day, I went to my departmental leader to ask his advice, to discuss my project in the full glare of his scientific knowledge and experience etc. His only reaction was, "Never mind that, have

you seen my new information storage and retrieval index?" (i.e. toy). He then proceeded to show me about 500 cards with holes all over them and he began sticking pins in them in the hope that the correct cards would stay on the pin and the other would fall all over the desk and on the floor.

It worked quite well on the whole, but I didn't discuss my project. Anyway, the same boss wanted to have a go at me two weeks later for starting a trade union and then of course he came out with: "I'm not satisfied with your project work," etc. I often wondered if Louis Pasteur had these problems.

One of the fundamental laws of management which I only learned later on was the "Principle of the Application of Merit". Managers are never sacked and rarely asked to resign. When they are unwanted, their "merit" rises dry up and their desks are put near the door. So I was "squeezed out", trade unionist or not.

The moral is quite clear—British industry is based upon profit and its management is inculcated as far as possible into the ways of commerce, management and profit. Quite truthfully, the only scientists I met in my short stay in that particular industry were either eccentrics (and looked upon as such by their 'colleagues') or, like myself, "agitators" who had to be given the big elbow.



THE RED FAT CATS OF HONG KONG

It has long been known that the colony of Hong Kong, whose businessmen prosper on the cruel exploitation of cheap labour and the truncation of democratic rights, is riddled with corruption. Recent scandals have led to a campaign to root out corruption in government service, the Police and businesses.

Many capitalists vehemently oppose this campaign, not only because they accept corruption as an everyday business practice, but because they fear that state intervention into their realms may also lead to reforms guaranteeing

paid holidays, bans on overtime for young workers and better working conditions. Chinese businessmen are therefore mounting a counter-attack.

But the backbone in their fight comes in the shape of the local "Communist" Party. According to the 'Guardian', in the forefront are "many firms owned by Communist supporters. These so-called 'Red fat cats' are no better or worse in their business practices than other Chinese businessmen."

The bureaucracy in Peking benefits from the foreign currency

which passes into China through the port of Hong Kong. Putting its own narrow interests before those of the workers, they prefer to keep Hong Kong in capitalist hands, thus condemning the workers of the colony to a life of misery and exploitation under British Imperialism.

Thus the local Maoist CP strives to bolster businesses in the colony. That is why they have attacked the anti-corruption campaign for "disrupting normal business activities."

WHITEWASH RECOMMENDED

Philip ("Prince") Windsor, alias "The Duke" appears to have turned his campaign to eliminate wasteful public spending in the opposite direction. Recently, shocked by the sight of a scrapyard on a visit to Salford University, he has demanded the spending of £60,000 on building a wall to shut out the horrifying sight.

Mr Windsor told University officials that he thought the scrapyard was an eyesore and should be hidden from his view when he next visited the campus.

Mr Windsor seems to be rather sensitive about what falls beneath his regal gaze. On his last visit the owner was asked to lower the job

move an unsightly stack of squashed cars to a more distant part of the yard. He humbly consented to this, but the visitor wasn't suitably impressed.

The owner of the yard, Mr Potts, has been there for 28 years, long before the university appeared next door, but now the University wants to buy him out. Mr Potts' view of life is a little more down to earth. He sees the Great Wall of Philip as "the latest effort to shut off the University from the real world, where the Queen's subjects have to do a hard day's work to earn a living."

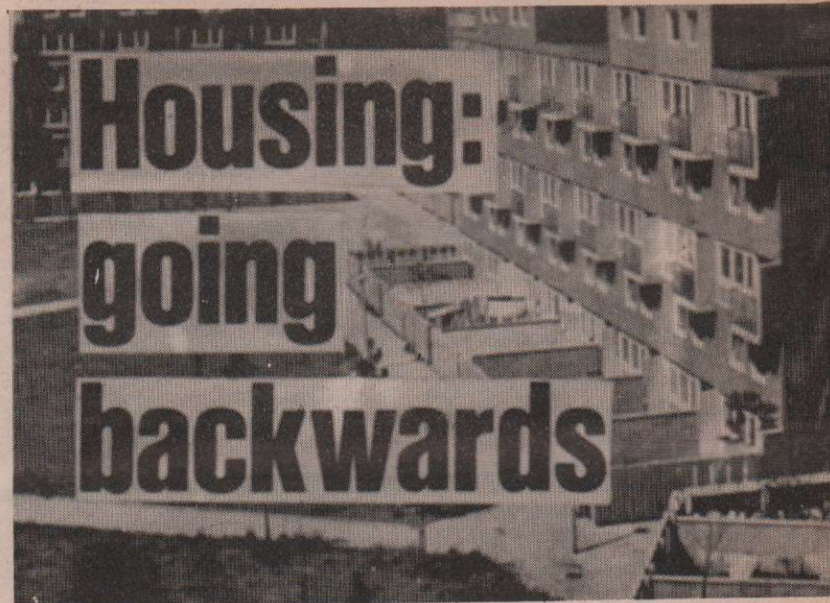
Ironically, Salford University is a science and technology-based University.

MORE POVERTY

The number of people on or below the poverty line in one country rose by a staggering 30% last year from 10 million to 13.1 million. Those scraping out an existence actually below the poverty line rose from 1.4 million to 2 million.

A Latin American banana republic? A backward Asian country? No, this is Britain. These figures, produced by the Child Poverty Action Group were quoted in the 'Express' [2/12/76].

The causes of the increase in poverty are obvious. More unemployed and more on low wages.



£108,000—that's the real price of a four bedroomed council house in Birmingham today, and a mere £95,000 for a three bedroomed house. These are the staggering figures just announced for a new scheme of 100 houses in Nechells. But the actual cost of building the houses is only £11,823 for a four bedroomed house, and £10,442 for a three bedroomed house. The difference—£90,000 or so—is the cost of borrowing cash over 60 years at 15½% interest.

These figures blow the myth that council tenants are in any way subsidised, as the Tory press would like us to believe. Rather, the subsidies that are paid out of taxation go to the financiers who do nothing to "earn" such exorbitant sums.

Council tenants in Birmingham have just had to cough up an extra 60p a week, with a threat of a further increase in the pipeline. The reaction of the Tories and the Liberals alike show the lack of concern by the rich for the plight of working class families, many of whom depend on council housing for a roof over their heads. Councillor Minnis, the Liberal Leader on the Council, said: "I want to see these houses built, but we are fast approaching the point where we may choose between cutting the standard or building fewer homes."

The City Housing Committee Chairman, Mrs. Erada Cocks, a Tory said:

"The Parker-Morris standard is now outdated and is making us build houses we cannot afford."

The "Parker-Morris" standard was introduced after the War to ensure a minimum local authority housing standard. And the rich now want to scrap it. That shows how much the crisis of big business today is attacking the living standards and conditions of working class families. Society is not progressing. It's going backwards!

But the labour movement and the Labour government should not tolerate such a situation where 90 pence in every £1 of rent goes to the money-lenders and only 10 pence to actually building houses. The last Labour Party Conference called for the nationalisation of the banks. These facts about Birmingham's housing show that this is an emergency issue!

With the banks nationalised, past public housing debts could be scrubbed (they are mostly repayments on interest), and vast loans could be made, interest-free, or at very low levels of interest. Then council house rents could be cut by over one-half, the number of houses built increased from this year's expected 350,000 to over one million, and the standards improved.

Nic Boulter

(Northfield Labour Party)

A SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN

Ed Bober

(Vice-Chairman, NOLS)



Whatever the technical reasons for the crisis, most students will hold the Broad Left leadership responsible for the financial collapse of the NUS services. As the BL has controlled the Executive for six years and presided over the expansion of the services, this is inevitable.

Undoubtedly, the situation will be exploited to the full by the Federation of Conservative Students and other reactionaries. There is certainly the danger of a temporary swing to the right at NUS conference.

This, however, is no reason to gloss over the mistakes that have been made. Appeals to "defend the unity of the NUS" and to "rally round the Broad Left" will not prevent a resurgence of the right wing.

The victory of the Broad Left represented an enormous step forward from the non-political and reactionary Executives of the past. There was enthusiastic support for the idea, put forward at the time by the Broad Left, that the NUS would be transformed into a trade union that would fight for improved conditions for students and in education generally.

Supporters of this paper have consistently supported the BL against the right wing (and the irresponsible ultra-left), and will continue to do so. But we have always openly explained our basic criticisms of the Broad Left's policies.

And the time is now ripe for an honest reappraisal of these policies and a turn to genuine socialist perspectives which will be capable of strengthening the left in the NUS.

The financial insolvency of the NUS has revealed, even for many of its own members, the political bankruptcy of the Broad Left. The "unity" which was used as the main justification for its existence has been blown to smithereens.

"The style of work adopted by the BL leadership," reads a statement put out by BL members in Wales, "has to be criticised. An alliance whose political orientation was basically correct has degenerated into an electoral machine relying to a large extent on bureaucratic methods."

This is true enough as the way that the crisis was sprung on the membership out of the blue and the scandalous manner in which the Executive sacked NUS employees show. A leadership in touch with its basis of support and used to democratic methods could surely have foreseen a crisis, and produced contingency plans to act on.

But the bureaucratic degeneration was precisely because the initial orientation of the BL was **basically incorrect**.

The fundamental mistake of the BL was the idea that the maximum unity and strength of the student "left" could be achieved by watering down socialist policies for "popular" student consumption.

Thus Jon Bloomfield, student organiser of the Communist Party, talks of the "task of retaining the progressive character of the student movement" ('Morning Star' 26/11/76). It is clear from the record of the BL that they regard "progressive" as being quite distinct from "socialist".

They have worked on the principle that socialism is a rich diet suitable only for the connoisseurs and gourmets at the top. It must be handed out, it seems, in small doses more palatable to the common herd.

First, win a majority by providing more and better services, etc., and by advocating "responsible", "progressive" policies, and then there will be support for socialist policies at a later stage—that is the thinking of the Broad



Charles Clarke, NUS President.

Left. It flows not from a conviction that it is the best way to win students to the idea of a change in society, merely a feeling that it is the best way to keep a majority at the next NUS conference.

Our policies, tactics and propaganda must, of course, be related to the existing consciousness and mood of students. But our programme must come to grips with hard social realities.

It is utopian to demand decent grants, a reversal of the cuts, jobs at the end of courses, etc., without posing the need for a change in society. Unless we explain the need for socialist nationalisation and workers' democracy, our demands will soon be discredited.

In the present economic climate it is hardly very convincing, for instance, for the present BL leadership, which includes people who claim to be Marxists, to turn round and blame the collapse of the services on the poverty of students and the decline of student travel. It only reinforces our point: that in a period of crisis it is only a socialist programme, consistently linked to day-to-day activity, that can win lasting support among the mass of students.

The Broad Left, like so many before them, abandoned the idea of a socialist programme in the name of "unity". Unity is vital. But genuine unity can only be achieved by bringing together politically compatible elements on the basis of real agreement on specific points and the open and honest discussion of differences.

The Broad Left has never been organised in this way. Its main bases, leaving aside various "independent socialists", "progressives" and "nationalists", are the Communist Party and the right wing of the Labour students. The present majority of NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) national committee, which is embroiled in the BL, have applied the undemocratic methods of the BL to destroying democracy in NOLS.

They have also joined with the ultra-rights in the LP in opposing the appointment by the NEC and the Annual Conference of Andy Bevan (LPYS Chairman) as National Youth Officer, directly helping to fuel the hysterical witch hunt whipped up by the yellow capitalist press on this issue. They have been repudiated on this issue by the left MPs associated with the 'Tribune', behind which they try to hide their right-wing views.

The Broad Left has always been an unprincipled alliance, undemocratic by its very nature. Despite its claims to be "broad" and "democratic" its conferences are by invitation only. Left-wing Labour students have repeatedly been excluded or thrown out of its meetings. Its leadership is self-appointed.

Bogged Down

Far from providing a forum for discussion, the different cliques who form this unholy alliance have always agreed to avoid the discussion of sensitive points of difference. Soviet dissidents, repression in India, and support for the Labour Party in general elections are all cases to point.

This is the approach of people who

have become hopelessly bogged down in student politics, not that of socialists who see themselves as an arm of the labour movement in the student field.

But instead of learning the lesson from the present debacle, the BL leadership appears to be pushing the disastrous logic of their "broad alliance" policy to its ultimate conclusion. They are now in a panic, terrified that the Tories will take control of the NUS.

The emergence of the Tories, writes John Bloomfield ('Morning Star' 26/11/76), "marks a qualitative change in the student movement.... This necessitates a considered response from the left. Traces of narrowness and rhetoric must disappear from our speeches and practice. On particular issues such as the defence of the union—we'll work in unity with all who agree."

This can only mean an attempt by the BL leadership to make the alliance, by agreement at the top with other groupings, even broader, including the Liberals—and even the Tories! The idea has even been floated of a "historic compromise" with "progressive" Tory students to salvage the financial position of NUS. Broad Left leaders who will have nothing to do with the left wing in NOLS are apparently quite prepared to talk with people who openly represent capitalist interests.

Presumably it is hoped that this would prevent their taking advantage of the present mess. But any such "compromise" would be a fatal mistake. Conciliation with the enemy is the worst form of defence. Concessions

would strengthen the right and demoralise the left.

The main justification being used for a timid policy of conciliation and retreat is the alleged "turn to the right" among students. It reflects the pessimism of the Broad Left, and their lack of confidence in their ability to win students to socialist ideas.

Certainly, because of disillusionment with the Labour government, there has been a mood of political apathy among students. This has undoubtedly been reinforced by disenchantment with the BL itself. As the Welsh BL statement quoted above says: "The reliance upon caucus procedures which inhibit the development of a mass movement now leaves us dangerously open to the right."

But although there may be an immediate reaction against the Broad Left, there will not be a fundamental turn to the right. The explosive radicalisation of students after 1968 reflected a swing to the left in society as a whole—the result of the growth in strength and the increasing radicalisation of the working class. This trend is far from having been reversed.

In the last period the industrial working class have also been affected by a lull, because of the policies of the government and the lack of any alternative from the "broad left" trade union leaders. But this is now changing.

The revival of the industrial struggle—with the possibility of another miners' strike this winter—and the strengthening of a powerful left wing with

socialist policies in the Labour Party will have an enormous effect on the students in the coming months.

The mood of students will change. Provided we have socialist policies and perspectives, masses of students could be won to a socialist change of society. The Tories will find no significant support.

Some of the members of the Broad Left who have been forced to recognise the correctness of some of the criticisms that we have made all along are putting forward the idea of a new Radical Alliance. We would not be opposed to Labour students participating in such a grouping—provided that it was organised on a genuinely democratic basis.

But we have to warn: unless it is organised on bold and consistently Marxist perspectives, it will go the same way as the former Radical Student Alliance (the precursor of the BL) and the Broad Left itself.

A strong, organised left wing in the student field will only be built on the basis of a socialist programme, consistently and skillfully linked to the day-to-day problems of students.

At the same time, socialist students must lift themselves out of the student environment and actively turn towards the organised working class, the only force in society capable of carrying through a fundamental change. This means, not abstract support for the working class, but serious work to forge links with the mass organisations of the workers, the trade unions and especially the Labour Party.

Andy Bevan Controversy

**Ed Bober replies:
the real issues**

"Clause Four" Laments Democracy

Dear Comrades,

I have been instructed by the NOLS National Committee to write to 'Militant' in connection with recent correspondence concerning the appointment of the new Labour Party National Youth Officer.

The key point, as far as we in NOLS are concerned, is that we have been landed with a non-elected joint secretary whose political position is drastically at variance with our own, and we have had no say whatever in the process of his selection. We hope that we will be able to work on a straightforward basis with the new Youth Officer, but it must be said that Andy Bevan's open contempt for NOLS members expressed at the last NC meeting do not give great grounds for optimism on that score.

Finally, it must be obvious to everyone that this kind of situation would be far less likely to arise if the Party as a whole operated in a more democratic manner. Hopefully, when the next Youth Officer is appointed everyone involved will have a real say on the matter, not just the LPYS leadership and their friends in the bureaucracy.

Yours fraternally
Bill Speirs
(Majority Vice Chairman NOLS)

In last week's 'Militant' [December 3rd] we dealt fully with the scandalous manoeuvres that have been taking place in the National Organisation of Labour Students, so we will confine our answer to Bill Speirs to a few brief points:

1. We would certainly favour the National Youth Officer's position being decided by election rather than appointment. But given the existing procedure, what better choice than the National Chairman of the LPYS, who has the overwhelming support of the LPYS, which includes labour students, who participate in the youth organisation? Andy Bevan is the first NYO, moreover, to have received the almost unanimous backing of the Labour Party Annual Conference. No other such appointment has been put to the vote at Labour's sovereign body in recent years.

It is strange that "Clause Four" supporters [who at present have a majority on the NOLS National Committee] should raise this question now. They have never supported our demand that all officials and representatives of the labour movement, including MPs, should be elected; subject to recall, and be paid the average wages of industrial workers.

2. We also agree that the NOLS National Committee—and the LPYS National Committee which was not involved in the selection procedure either—should have been consulted. But it is hard to believe that democracy is the main concern of the present majority. "Clause Four" supporters have always been prepared to work hand in glove with appointed NYOs who were bitterly opposed to the ideas of a majority of the LPYS and between 1974-6 of NOLS itself. There was, of course, not a word of protest from "Clause Four" supporters when every manoeuvre and trick in the bureaucratic arsenal was used against all the

left wingers to whom "Clause Four" were opposed.

3. Bill Speirs himself gives the game away: the present NOLS NC majority are opposed to Andy Bevan's appointment, not because of the procedure, but because comrade Bevan stands on Marxist ideas. Such is their contempt for the democratic traditions of the labour movement that they have gone out of their way to give ammunition to the capitalist press and the ultra-right political agents of big business in the Labour Party for their hysterical campaign against "plots", "subversion", and Marxism in the Labour Party.

4. The "open contempt for NOLS members" mentioned in Bill Speirs's letter presumably refers to the astonishment, disgust, and indignation that Andy Bevan, together with Nick Bradley [elected Youth representative on the NEC], expressed at the blatant manoeuvres used by the "Clause Four" majority at the NC. "Clause Four" know that they no longer have the support of the active majority of NOLS members. So they have manufactured various pretexts to refuse affiliation to new Labour Clubs, reject additional members to affiliated clubs, and even disaffiliate long-established clubs where they fear that there is opposition to their ideas and methods.

5. "Clause Four" supporters claim to be associated with "Tribune". But the "Tribune" group of MPs has come out clearly in support of Andy Bevan's appointment. We feel that the great majority of rank and file Labour Party members who support the "Tribune" will be horrified at the scandalous conduct of "Clause Four" supporters and will want sharply to disassociate themselves from undemocratic methods which can only bring discredit on those who use them.

"Marxism In Our Time" by Leon Trotsky was written as an introduction to the book The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx.

We are republishing extracts from this brilliant article because, although written in 1939, it answers the present day critics of Marxism—the hirelings of capital and their shadows within the labour movement.

There is an additional reason why this article deserves to be read by active workers in the labour movement today. All the conditions analysed by Trotsky have now begun to re-appear with the drawing to and end of the post-war boom in the capitalist world. We will publish a further extract next week.

—Editor

In contemporary society man's cardinal tie is exchange. Any product of labour that enters into the process of exchange becomes a commodity. Marx began his investigation with the commodity and deduced from that fundamental cell of capitalist society those social relations that have objectively shaped themselves on the basis of exchange, independently of man's will.

Only by pursuing this course is it possible to solve the fundamental puzzle—how in capitalist society, in which man thinks for himself and no one thinks for all, are created the relative proportions of the various branches of economy indispensable to life.

The worker sells his labour power, the farmer takes his produce to the market, the money lender or banker grants loans, the storekeeper offers an assortment of merchandise, the industrialist builds a plant, the speculator buys and sells stocks and bonds—each having his own considerations, his own private plan, his own concern about wages or profit. Nevertheless, out of this chaos of individual strivings and actions emerges a certain economic whole, which, true, is not harmonious, but contradictory, yet does give society the possibility not merely to exist but even to develop.

This means that, after all, chaos is not chaos at all, that in some way it is regulated automatically, if not consciously. To understand the mechanism whereby various aspects of economy are brought into a state of relative balance, is to discover the objective laws of capitalism. Clearly, the laws which govern the various spheres of capitalist economy—wages, price, land, rent, profit, interest, credit, the Stock Exchange—are numerous and complex. But in the final reckoning they come down to the single law that Marx discovered and explored to the end; that is, the law of labour value, which is indeed the basic regulator of capitalist economy. The essence of that law is simple. Society has at its disposal a certain reserve of living labour power. Applied to nature, that power produces products necessary for the satisfaction of human needs.

In consequence of division of labour among independent producers, the products assume the form of commodities. Commodities are exchanged for each other in a given ratio, at first directly, and eventually through the medium of gold or money. The basic property of commodities, which in a certain relationship makes them equal to each other, is the human labour expended upon them—abstract labour, labour in general—the basis and the measure of value.

Division of labour among millions of scattered producers does not lead to the disintegration of society, because commodities are exchanged according to the socially necessary labour time expended upon them. By accepting and rejecting commodities, the market, as the arena of exchange, decides whether they do or do not contain within themselves socially necessary labour, thereby determines the ratios of the various kinds of commodities necessary for society, and consequently also the distribution of labour power according to the various trades.

The actual processes of the market are immeasurably more complex than has been here set forth in but a few lines. Thus, oscillating around the value of labour, prices fluctuate considerably above and below their value. The causes of these fluctuations are fully explained by Marx in the third volume of 'Capital', which describes "the process of capitalist production considered as a whole." Nevertheless, great as may be the divergencies between the prices and the values of commodities in individual instances, the sum of all prices is equal to the sum of all values, for in the final reckoning only the values that have been created

by human labour are at the disposal of society, and prices cannot break through this limitation, including even the monopoly prices of trusts; where labour has created no new value, there even Rockefeller can get nothing.

Inequality and Exploitation

But if commodities are exchanged for each other according to the quantity of labour invested in them, how does inequality come out of equality? Marx solved this puzzle by exposing the peculiar nature of one of the commodities, which lies at the basis of all other commodities: namely, labour power. The owner of means of production, the capitalist, buys labour power. Like all other commodities, it is evaluated according to the quantity of labour invested in it, i.e., of those means of subsistence which are necessary for the survival and the reproduction of the worker. But the consumption of that commodity—labour power—consists of work, i.e., the creation of new values. The quantity of these values is greater than those which the worker himself receives and which he expends for his upkeep. The capitalist buys labour power in order to exploit it. It is this exploitation which is the source of inequality.

That part of the product which goes to cover the worker's own subsistence Marx called 'necessary product'; that part which the worker produces above



The two classes: Roosevelt enjoys the good life during a run on a bank, 1930.

this, is 'surplus-product'. Surplus-product must have been produced by the slave, or the slave-owner would not have kept any slaves. Surplus-product must have been produced by the serf, or serfdom would have been of no use to the landed gentry. Surplus-product, only to a considerably greater extent, is likewise produced by the wage worker, or the capitalist would have no need to buy labour power. The class struggle is nothing else than the struggle for surplus-product. He who owns surplus-product is master of the situation—owns wealth, owns the state, has the key to the church, to the courts, to the sciences and to the arts.

Competition and Monopoly

Relations amongst capitalists, who exploit the workers, are determined by competition, which for long endures as the main-spring of capitalist progress. Large enterprises enjoy technical, financial, organisational, economic and, last but not least, political advantages over small enterprises. The greater amount of capital, being able to exploit a greater number of workers, inevitably emerges victorious out of a contest. Such is the unalterable basis of the concentration and centralization process of capital.

While stimulating the progressive development of technique, competition gradually consumes, not only the intermediary layers, but itself as well. Over the corpses and the semi-corpse of small and middling capitalists, emerges an ever-decreasing number of ever more powerful capitalist overlords. Thus, out of "honest," "democratic," "progressive" competition grows irrevocably "harmful," "parasitic," "re-

actionary" monopoly. It began to assert itself in the 'eighties of the past century, assuming definite shape at the turn of the present century.

Now the victory of monopoly is openly acknowledged by the most official representatives of bourgeois society. Competition as a restraining influence, complains the former Attorney-General of the United States, Mr Homer S Cummings, is being gradually displaced, and in large fields, remains only "as a shadowy reminder of conditions that once existed." Yet when in the course of his prognosis Marx had first deduced monopoly from the inherent tendencies of capitalism, the bourgeois world had looked upon competition as an eternal law of nature.

The elimination of competition by monopoly marks the beginning of the disintegration of capitalist society. Competition was the creative main-spring of capitalism and the historical justification of the capitalist. By the same token the elimination of competition marks the transformation of stockholders into social parasites. Competition had to have certain liberties, a liberal atmosphere, a régime of democracy, of commercial cosmopolitanism. Monopoly needs as authoritative a government as possible, tariff walls, "its own" sources of raw materials and arenas of marketing (colonies). The last word in the disintegration of monopolistic capital is Fascism.

Concentration of Wealth and the Growth of Class Contradictions

Capitalists and their advocates try in every way to hide the real extent of the concentration of wealth from the eyes of the people as well as from the eyes of the tax collector. In defiance of the obvious, the bourgeois press is still attempting to maintain the illusion of a "democratic" distribution of capitalist investment. The 'New York Times', in refutation of the Marxists, points out that there are from three to five million separate employers of labour. Joint-stock companies, it is true, represent greater concentration of capital than

the President of the United States, the executive branch of the republic's government. But these chairmen of the board are immeasurably more powerful than the cabinet members.

The same processes may be observed in the banking and insurance systems. Five of the largest insurance companies in the United States have absorbed not only the other companies but even many banks. The total number of banks is reduced, chiefly in the form of so-called "mergers," essentially by being absorbed. The extent of the turnover grows rapidly. Above the banks rises the oligarchy of super-banks. Bank capital merges with industrial capital into financial super-capital. Supposing that the concentration of industry and banks were to proceed at the same rate as during the last quarter of a century—as a matter of fact, the tempo of concentration is on the increase—in the course of the impending quarter century the monopolists will have garnered unto themselves the entire economy of the country, without leaving over so much as the widow's mite.

The statistics of the United States are here resorted to only because they are more exact and more striking. Essentially the process of concentration is international in character. Throughout the various stages of capitalism, through all the political régimes, through peaceful periods as well as through periods of armed conflicts, the process of the concentration of all the great fortunes into an ever-decreasing number of hands has gone and will continue without end.

During the years of the Great War, when the nations were bleeding to death, when the very bodies politic of the bourgeoisie lay crushed under the weight of national debts, when fiscal systems rolled into the abyss, dragging the middle classes after them, the monopolists were coining unprecedented profits out of the blood and muck. The most powerful companies of the United States increased their assets during the years of the war two, three, four and more times and swelled their dividends to 300, 400, 900 and more per cent.

In 1840, eight years before the publication by Marx and Engels of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, the famous French writer Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his book on 'Democracy in America': "Great wealth tends to disappear, the number of small fortunes to increase." That thought has been reiterated innumerable times, at first with reference to the United States, later with reference to those other young democracies, Australia and New Zealand. Of course, de Tocqueville's view was already erroneous in his own day. Still, real concentration of wealth began only after the American Civil War, on the eve of which de Tocqueville died.

At the beginning of the present century two per cent of the population of the United States already owned more than half of the entire wealth of the country; in 1929 the same two per cent owned three-fifths of the national wealth. At the same time 36,000 wealthy families had as great an income as 11,000,000 middling and poor families. During the crisis of 1929-1933 monopolistic establishments had no need to appeal to public charity;

on the contrary, they rose higher than ever above the general decline of national economy. During the ensuing rickety industrial revival on the yeast-cakes of the New Deal the monopolists again skimmed a lot of heavy cream. The number of the unemployed decreased at best from 20,000,000 to 10,000,000; at the same time the upper crust of capitalist society—no more than 6,000 adults—garnered fantastic dividends; this is what Solicitor General Robert H Jackson proved with figures during his tenure as Anti-Trust Assistant Attorney-General.

Ferdinand Lundberg who, for all his scholarly conscientiousness, is a rather conservative economist, wrote in his book, which created quite a stir: "The United States is owned and dominated today by a hierarchy of sixty of the richest families, buttressed by no more than ninety families of lesser wealth." To these might be added a third tier of perhaps three hundred and fifty other families, with incomes in excess of a hundred thousand dollars a year. The predominant position here belongs to the first group of sixty families, who dominate not only the market but all the levers of government. They are the real government, "the government of money in a dollar democracy."

Thus, the abstract concept, "monopolistic capital" is filled in for us with flesh and blood. What it means is that a handful of families, bound by ties of kinship and common interest into an exclusive capitalist oligarchy, dispose of the economic and political fortunes of a great nation. One must perforce admit that the Marxist law of concentration has worked out famously!

Has Marx's Teaching Become Obsolete?

Questions of competition, concentration of wealth, and monopoly naturally lead to the question whether in our day Marx's economic theory is merely of historic interest—as, for example, Adam Smith's theory—or whether it continues to be of actual significance.



The reserve army of labour—unemployed workers in a town of I



LEON TROTSKY

The criterion for replying to that question is simple: if the theory correctly estimates the course of development and foresees the future better than other theories, it remains the most advanced theory of our time, be it even scores of years old.

The famous German economist, Werner Sombart, who was virtually a Marxist at the beginning of his career but later revised all the more revolutionary aspects of Marx's teaching, especially those most unpalatable for the bourgeoisie, in 1928, toward the end of his career, countered Marx's 'Capital' with his own 'Capitalism', which has been translated into many languages and which is probably the best known exposition of bourgeois economic apologetics in recent times. After paying the tribute of platonic appreciation to the tenets of 'Capital's' author, Sombart writes at the same time, "Karl Marx prophesied: firstly, the increasing misery of wage labourers; secondly, general 'concentration', with the disappearance of the class of artisans and peasants; thirdly, the catastrophic collapse of capitalism. Nothing of the kind has come to pass."

Against this erroneous prognosis Sombart counterposes his own "strictly scientific" prognosis. "Capitalism will continue," according to him, "to transform itself internally in the same direction in which it has already begun to transform itself, at the time of its apogee: as it grows older, it will become more and more calm, sedate, reasonable." Let us try to verify, if only along the basic lines, which of the two is right, Marx with his prognosis of catastrophe, or Sombart, who in the name of all bourgeois economy, promised that matters would be adjusted "calmly, sedately, reasonably." The reader will agree that the question is worthy of notice.

"The Theory of Increasing Misery"

"Accumulation of wealth at one pole," wrote Marx sixty years before Sombart, "is, therefore, at the same

time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its product in the form of capital." That thesis of Marx's, under the name "The Theory of Increasing Misery," has been subjected to constant attacks by democratic and social democratic reformers, especially during the period 1896-1914, when capitalism developed rapidly and yielded certain concessions to the workers, especially to their upper stratum.

After the World War, when the bourgeoisie, frightened by its own crimes and by the October Revolution, took to the road of advertised social reforms, the value of which was simultaneously nullified by inflation and unemployment, the theory of the progressive transformation of capitalist society seemed to the reformers and to the bourgeois professors fully warranted. "The purchasing power of wage labour," Sombart assured us in 1928, "has increased in direct ratio to the expansion of capitalist production."

As a matter of fact, the economic contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was aggravated during the most prosperous periods of capitalist development, when the rise in the standard of living of certain strata of toilers, which at times was rather extensive, hid from superficial eyes the decrease of the proletariat's share in the national income. Thus, just before falling into prostration, the industrial production of the United States increased by 50 per cent between 1920 and 1930, while the sum paid out in wages rose only by 30 per cent, which meant, Sombart's assurances notwithstanding, a tremendous decrease of labour's share in the national income. In 1930 began an ominous growth of unemployment, and in 1933 a more or less systematic aid to the unemployed, who received in the form of relief hardly more than one-half of what they had lost in the form of wages. The illusion of the uninterrupted "progress" of all classes has vanished without a trace.

The relative decline of the masses' standard of living has been superseded by an absolute decline. Workers begin by economizing on skimpy entertainment, then on their clothes and finally on their food. Articles and products of average quality are superseded by shoddy ones, and the shoddy by the worst. Trade unions begin to look like the man who hangs on desperately while going down in a rapidly descending escalator.

With six per cent of the world's population, the United States holds forty per cent of the world's wealth. Still, one-third of the nation, as Roosevelt himself admitted, is undernourished, inadequately clothed and lives under subhuman conditions. What is there to say, then, for the less privileged countries? The history of the capitalist world since the last war has irrefutably borne out the so-called "theory of increasing misery." The increase in the social polarity of society is today acknowledged not only by every competent statistician, but even by statesmen who remember the rudimentary rules of arithmetic.

The fascist régime, which merely reduced to the utmost the limit of decline and reaction inherent in any imperialist capitalism, became indis-

pensable when the degeneration of capitalism blotted out the possibility of maintaining illusions about an increase in the proletariat's standard of living. Fascist dictatorship means the open acknowledgement of the tendency to impoverishment, which the wealthier democracies are still trying to disguise. Mussolini and Hitler persecute Marxism with such hatred precisely because their own régime is the most horrible confirmation of the Marxist prognosis.

The civilized world was indignant or pretended to be indignant when Göring in the tone of the executioner and buffoon peculiar to him, declared that guns were more important than butter, or when Cagliostro-Casanova-Mussolini advised the workers of Italy to learn to pull in tighter the belts on their black shirts. But does not substantially the same take place in the imperialist democracies? Butter everywhere is used to grease guns. The workers of France, England, the United States learn to pull in their belts without having black shirts. In the richest country of the world millions of workers have turned into paupers living at the expense of federal, state, municipal or private charity.

The Reserve Army and New Sub-Class of the Unemployed

The industrial reserve army makes up an indispensable component part of the social mechanics of capitalism, as much as a supply of machines and raw materials in factory warehouses or of finished products in stores. Neither the general expansion of production nor the adaptation of capital to the periodic ebb and flow of the industrial cycle would be possible without a reserve of labour-power. From the general tendency of capitalist development—the increase of variable capital (labour-power)—Marx drew the conclusion: "The greater the social wealth...the greater is the industrial reserve army...the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus-production...the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation."

The thesis—indissolubly bound up with the "theory of increasing misery" and for scores of years denounced as



Increasing misery today: unemployed carpenter in Cleveland employment exchange.

declining, while small holdings have either been completely swallowed up by the large or reduced in grade and robbed of their independence, becoming a mere badge of unendurable toil and desperate want. At the same time, it is true, the development of capitalism has considerably stimulated an increase in the army of technicians, managers, servicemen, clerks, attorneys, physicians—in a word, of the so-called "new middle classes."

But that stratum, the growth of which was already no mystery even to Marx, has little in common with the old middle class, who in the ownership of its own means of production had a tangible guarantee of economic independence. The "new middle class" is more directly dependent on the capitalists than are the workers, whose taskmaster it is in large measure. Moreover, among it, too, has been noticed considerable overproduction, with its aftermath of social degradation.

"Reliable statistical information," states a person as remote from Marxism as the already-quoted former Attorney-General Homer S. Cummings, "shows that very many industrial units

must cease altogether and even back up.

Just as the operation of the laws of physiology yields different results in a growing than in a dying organism, so the laws of Marxist economy assert themselves differently in a developing and a disintegrating capitalism. This difference is shown with especial clarity in the mutual relations of town and country. The rural population of the United States, increasing comparatively less than the total population, continued to increase in absolute figures until 1910, when it amounted to more than 32,000,000. During the subsequent twenty years, notwithstanding the rapid increase in the country's total population, it fell to 30.4 millions, i.e., by 1.6 millions. But in 1935 it rose again to 32.8 millions, swelling in comparison with 1930 by 2.4 millions.

This turn of the wheel, astonishing at first glance, does not in the least refute either the tendency of the urban population to increase at the expense of the rural population, or the tendency of the middle classes to become atomized while at the same time it demonstrates most pointedly the disintegration of the



New York slum—who can say now that capitalism has solved their problems?

"exaggerated," "tendentious," and "demagogic"—has now become the irreproachable theoretical image of things as they are. The present army of unemployed can no longer be regarded as a "reserve army," because its basic mass can no longer have any hope of returning to employment; on the contrary, it is bound to be swelled by a constant flow of additional unemployed. Disintegrating capitalism has brought up a whole generation of young people who have never had a job and have no hope of getting one. This new sub-class between the proletariat and the semi-proletariat is forced to live at the expense of society.

It has been estimated that in the course of nine years (1930-1938) unemployment has taken out of the economy of the United States more than 43,000,000 labour man-years. Considering that in 1929, at the height of prosperity, there were two million unemployed in the United States and that during those nine years the number of potential workers has increased by five million, the number of lost man-years must be incomparably higher. A social régime of this malady was made nearly four score of years ago, when the disease itself was a mere germ.

The Decline of the Middle Classes

Figures which demonstrate the concentration of capital indicate therewith that the specific gravity of the middle class in production and its share of the national income have been constantly

have completely disappeared and that what took place was a progressive elimination of the small business man as a factor in American life." But, objects Sombart along with many of his forerunners and successors, notwithstanding Marx, "general concentration, with the disappearance of the class of artisans and peasants," has not yet taken place. It is hard to say which carries more weight in such an argument, irresponsibility or bad faith.

Like every theoretician, Marx began by isolating the fundamental tendencies in their pure form; otherwise it would have been altogether impossible to understand the destiny of capitalist society. Marx himself was, however, perfectly capable of viewing the phenomena of life in the light of concrete analysis, as a product of the concentration of diverse historical factors. Surely, Newton's laws are not invalidated by the fact that the rate of speed in the fall of bodies varies under different conditions or that the orbits of planets are subjected to disturbances.

In order to understand the so-called "tenacity" of the middle classes, it is well to bear in mind that the two tendencies, the ruination of the middle classes and the transformation of these ruined ones into proletarians, develop neither at an even pace nor to the same extent. It follows from the increasing preponderance of the machine over labour-power that the further the process of ruination of the middle classes proceeds, the more it outstrips the process of their proletarianization; indeed, at a certain juncture the latter

capitalist system as a whole. The increase in the rural population during the period of the acute crisis of 1930-1935 is simply explained by the fact that well-nigh two million of urban population, or, speaking more to the point, two million of starving unemployed, moved into the country—to plots of land abandoned by farmers or to the farms of their kith and kin, so as to apply their labour-power, rejected by society, to productive natural economy and in order to drag out a semi-starved existence instead of starving altogether.

Hence, it is not a question of the stability of small farmers, artisans and storekeepers, but rather of the abject helplessness of their situation. Far from being a guarantee of the future, the middle class is an unfortunate and tragic relic of the past. Unable to stamp it out altogether, capitalism has managed to reduce it to the utmost degree of degradation and distress. The farmer is denied, not only the rent due to him for his plot of land and the profit on his invested capital, but even a goodly portion of his wages. Similarly, the little fellows in town fret out their allotted span between economic life and death. The middle class is not proletarianized only because it is pauperized. In that it is just as hard to find an argument against Marx as in favour of capitalism.



ers queue for state benefits in the industrial Detroit.



Mexico Gripped by Class Conflict

By Brent Kennedy



A few weeks ago, a Mexican strike leader had his arm cut off by strikebreakers armed with machetes. The battle between blacklegs and picketing car workers was symbolic of the era of social conflict which has begun in Mexico.

Last Wednesday's inauguration ceremony for the new President, José Lopez Portillo, was also symbolic of the realities of Mexican society. Inside the National Auditorium were 6,000 well-dressed and well-fed guests lapping up

the pomp and fanfare as outgoing President Echeverría handed over the red, white and green sash of office to Portillo. As a reminder of the almost total dependence of the Mexican economy on US Imperialism, an 11-man American delegation headed by Mrs Carter and Henry Kissinger looked on approvingly. The wealthy landowners and businessmen cheered wildly as they watched the Presidency shift to the right. But in the nearby shanty towns, where many of Mexico's 10

million live, there was not much cheering.

Nor was there among the thousands of peasants in Sinaloa and Sonora provinces who have just expropriated a quarter of a million acres of land. This is just one of the problems the new President faces as he takes over during the worst economic crisis Mexico has suffered since the Second World War.

The political stability which US and Mexican capitalists have enjoyed for 40 years is now over. Now begins a period of open and bitter class conflict.

In Mexico, like all Latin American countries bled by American imperialism, an enormous gulf exists between the tiny élite of landowners and capitalists and the great mass of workers, peasants and unemployed. Since the Mexican economy is squeezed so much by American banks and multinationals, the home-grown capitalists have to squeeze those who produce the wealth that much harder. But this makes it impossible to solve the problems of decades of backwardness, let alone prevent new ones accumulating.

Peasants

Agriculture still occupies the majority of the population, but it suffers from extreme primitiveness. Mexico is not even self-sufficient in food. The worst land is divided among millions of impoverished small peasants who cannot afford new methods to raise productivity, while the best land is in the hands of a few ranchers and capitalist farmers who produce for export. Thousands of destitute, landless peasants are forced to leave home and seek work in the USA, where they

are ruthlessly exploited by owners of large-scale fruit and vegetable farms in California and Texas.

Many more drift to the cities to look for work. Most never find it and join the ranks of the lumpen-proletariat—the beggars, street traders, criminals, prostitutes and the human sea of unemployed. Mexico City combines all the worst problems of a modern, overcrowded metropolis with the primitive horrors of the distant past.

The birth rate among the 65 million Mexicans is the highest in the world. Most do not have the basic modern utilities of electricity and running water. Welfare and health care are virtually non-existent. Education is severely restricted and basic.

Over 30% of the population is illiterate. In maintaining such extremes of poverty and wealth capitalism has strengthened rather than weakened the fetters on the development of a balanced, independent economy. While the masses find it difficult to equip themselves with the necessities of life, they will never become consumers of the products of manufacturing industry. Thus the internal market for manufacturers is limited. The economy is wholly imbalanced. With the dominant market of the US next door, and with many companies owned or penetrated by American capital, most industries are geared to the needs and rhythm of "Yanqui" business.

Currency crisis

This year, despite increased output in the steel, oil and petro-chemical industries, Mexico's dependence on foreign finance provoked an economic crisis which led to the devaluation of the peso three months ago, the first for 22 years. At its lowest point last month, the currency 'floated' down to half its former value against the almighty dollar.

The balance of payments is in deficit to the tune of \$3,000m. The main source of foreign currency dried up as tourism fell, and reserves have fallen to below \$800m, with the foreign debt over \$22,000m. The shaky nature of Mexico's home economic base was highlighted by the panic caused by the stampede-like flight of capital to America (\$90,000 was withdrawn in 15 days) which led to rumours of an imminent military coup or assassination of Portillo by Echeverría.

Although wages were increased by 23% following the devaluation of the peso, this was nowhere near enough to offset immediate price rises. The cost of electricity was increased by more than 50%, oil by one third and bus fares by a sharp 60%. This resulted in illegal political demonstrations and the mobilisation of the troops.

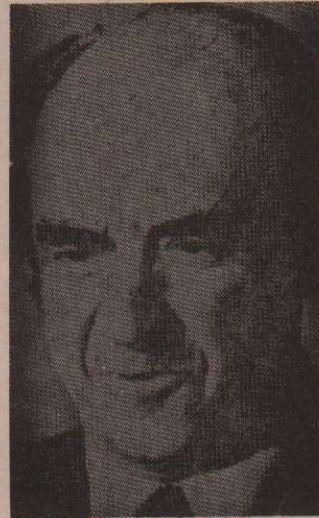
As far as the ruling class was concerned, the crisis was worsened by the final acts of President Echeverría before ending his six years of office. For thirty years the poverty-stricken peasants have been demanding a re-division of the land. Echeverría has tried to appease the peasants and workers by demagogically promising reform, while stoutly protecting the overall interests of capitalism. After watching his negotiations for land takeover for two years, the peasants took him up last month and began to prepare themselves.

The left wing Independent Peasant Front led a number of peasant groups into a coalition known as the Ocampo Pact and 25,000 set up camps beside the large estates in Sinaloa and Sonora. Growing impatient as the last days of the President's term of office were running out, 10,000 gathered in Culiacan, the capital of Sinaloa, and declared they would take the land the next day. Echeverría's hand was forced and he decreed the expropriation of 243,000 acres of wheat and cattle land, to be handed over to 8,000 peasant families. It was seized in hours.

The reaction of the ruling class was swift. Large landowners stopped all work on their estates and held tractor-demonstrations. Significantly, bankers and industrialists sprang to their defence and organised a national lock-out in 52 towns. The reason for this show of solidarity with the landowners was obvious. The President of one Chamber of Commerce explained, "it is our decision that private property must be respected until this regime finishes its term, and from thereon."

This is a real indication of the impossibility of bringing an agrarian reform and modernisation of Mexico under capitalism. The landowners and

ranchers and the capitalists in Mexico City are completely intertwined and subservient to American imperialism. As Richard Gott said in the Guardian (5/12/76): "To hear Mexican and American businessmen talk one would think that the Bolsheviks were already in charge. The subjects of their anger are usually reforms of the kind Britain introduced in the last century."



President Portillo

This land re-distribution was probably the most radical for two decades, yet it was a mere drop in the ocean to what is needed. Capitalism blocks the path of development in Mexico. The crucial problem of the land can only be solved by giving the peasants not only land but also cheap credit to buy tractors, fertilisers and irrigation to raise agricultural productivity. But that requires nationalisation of the banks, many of which have large stakes in the estates.

The independent development of industry can only become a possibility when finance and industry are nationalised too and a national economic plan drawn up. Oil, electricity, water and mining are nationalised, but run in the interests of the private sector.

Echeverría undoubtedly bent to the pressure from below and allowed the land takeover as a final symbolic act to leave the masses a favourable 'left wing' impression of his term of office—despite previous brutal repression of strikers, left wing students and guerrillas. He has bought up a chain of 35 newspapers and 10 magazines and obviously intends to build on his one concrete act preceded by so many years of hope-uplifting rhetoric to pacify the masses.

But any hopes that workers and peasants may have in a possible future Echeverría reign will be dashed. For all his erratic record which alienated conservative business circles, he rests on maintaining the capitalist system. The ruthless, determined response of the ruling class to the land takeover indicates that they would not tolerate similar reforms in the future, however half-hearted. And as the economy grows more shaky, there is even less room for manoeuvre.

Mexican capitalism now expects a move to the right from President Portillo. An austerity programme of more unemployment and wage restraint is now certain.

But the 23% wage rise and land expropriation has given new confidence to the workers and peasants. Their expectations have been raised and so has their militancy. The four million strong Mexican Labour Confederation is demanding wage rises of 50% to offset the real effects of inflation and devaluation.

Trade unions

It is clear that new battles are therefore inevitable between the classes, which can only be resolved by the overthrow of capitalism and the planned development of the economy for the benefit of all. This will not be achieved by acts of individual terrorism such as the bombing of banks and offices by left wing students recently. The crushing of the terrorists in 1972, isolated from the masses, strengthened the hand of the ruling class and set back the workers' movement.

Tomorrow a socialist leadership to lead the workers and peasants against capitalism, landlordism and imperialism will develop in the ranks of the trade unions.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES



SRI LANKA GENERAL STRIKE

A general strike—the second within a year—has taken place in Sri Lanka in protest against police brutality. In reply to a peaceful student demonstration at the Kandy campus of the University of Peradeniya on educational questions, the police were called in. The police opened fire on the students, killing one of them and injuring another 80 who had to receive hospital treatment. Women were dragged out of their rooms and assaulted.

This outrage led the trade unions affiliated to the LSSP [the Sri Lanka mass workers' party] to call a general strike on 26th November. More than half a million workers struck, industrial, transport and even plantation workers, and all the schools and universities came out indefinitely. Parents kept their children from school in solidarity with the strike.

The precarious government of Mrs Bandaranaike's SLFP [Sri Lanka Freedom Party] were forced to condemn the police shootings, to remove the Education Minister and send two prominent Cabinet Ministers to the campus to pacify the students.

This incident has spotlighted the murderous role of the state apparatus, blooded in the repression campaign following the adventurist JVP student uprising of 1971, and drives another nail into the coffin of the discredited SLFP government. A

showdown is coming soon between the forces of reaction around the big-business party the UNP, and the trade union movement with its magnificent traditions of struggle.

POOR AMERICANS

In the world's richest country the number of people below the official poverty line rose by 10.7%, bringing the total to 25.9 million people. Thus recent figures of the United States Census Bureau show that it was the poor workers who were worst hit by the recession, though even the median family income fell by 3% in real terms..

Blacks make up 31% of the lowest income group, although less than 12% of the population. Significantly, however, the recession begun to hit the white workers more severely: the number of poor whites went up by 12.9% compared to a 6% increase for poor blacks. A Peter Hart opinion poll among non-voters confirms that it was mainly the poorer sections of the workers who abstained from the presidential elections.

Fifty two per cent strongly agreed with the statement: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does;" and 62% felt the government was run "by a few big interests rather than for the benefit of all the people." These findings are hardly surprising; but they provide authoritative confirmation of our analysis of the elections.

FREE PRESS?

YOUR SAY

Letters to: Editor, MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

The following letter was sent to the 'Daily Mirror' following the paper's biased reports of the November 17th demonstration. Not surprisingly, it was not printed.

Dear Editor,

We would like to correct the article you wrote on page two of your 'Newspaper' on Thursday, 18th November, 1976.

The London March on the 17th November, 1976, by the public service unions was a great success, according to police estimates there were 80,000 people taking part. The march started off at 2.15pm, but the line was so great that my union NALGO, started off from Hyde Park at about 5.10pm, and there were still many unions to follow us. We arrived at Westminster at 6.30pm, the crowds were so great we were unable to see our Member of Parliament. Morale amongst the marchers was good and there was no trouble from us.

Yes we are trying to save jobs, but let the newspapers and television give the full picture. You are supposed to be a free press, so why not tell the public that spending cuts mean poorer and dearer education, fewer and dearer council houses, fewer and poorer services for the sick and elderly, etc.?

The people of the North have suffered already yet Labour wants us to suffer more and a Conservative government would cripple us so much it would take decades for the North to recover.

Miss M C Allen,
Mrs C Rooney.

(We are ordinary rank and file union members.)

SHOCK, HORROR, SENSATION PROBE

Dear Comrades,

Recently facts have come to light concerning the people behind the "Times" newspaper. It seems a small number of people known as the 'Ruling Class', not only own this newspaper but many other national daily papers as well. They account for only a small percentage of the population yet, through their front organisations, have infiltrated every level of government.

One of these organisations, known as the International Monetary Fund [IMF], is preparing a secret document, which they intend will replace Labour's Manifesto as the programme for running Britain. It is time something was done to combat this unrepresentative minority who, if they stood at a General Election as a party that stood openly for making themselves rich at the expense of everyone else, would surely receive very few votes.

To achieve their aims [getting richer, that is,] they have toppled governments, caused world wars, suppressed whole races and denied them basic human rights, divided whole countries on racial or religious grounds, just to preserve their wealth and privileges. In Britain their plan is to destroy the health and social services, and many other rights working people have fought long and hard to achieve.

It is time for every working man and woman to stand up and fight this menace before it destroys us all.

Yours fraternally,
Jeff Price,
Newcastle North CLP

IMPORT CONTROLS NO ANSWER

Dear Comrades,

Surprise has been expressed on a number of occasions why the call for import controls hasn't appeared on the demands of the Skelmersdale Joint Trades Council/Shop Stewards Action Committee for the saving of the Courtaulds factories now threatened with closure.

The fact is that the question of import controls was passed by Communist Party members who are also members of the Trades Council, but was defeated on a vote after Labour Party members were able to point out how futile and self-defeating import controls would be.

An argument that I have not seen put forward nationally yet, but one I have explained to reporters from the national press and media on a number of occasions should be used, I believe, by readers of 'Militant' when confronted by supporters of import controls.

The argument is that besides the obvious automatic price increase due to the removal from the home market of lower priced produce, there is also the case that if dumping is taking place (as supporter of import controls would have us believe) then this surplus of goods being sold at less than cost will not just go away if import control are introduced. When I ask the supporters of import controls what will happen to these cheap goods their mouths just drop open.

I have to explain that the overseas capitalists will just start dumping in our export markets, and I am sure if British capitalists cannot compete in the home market their export markets will be crucified.

Import controls will only assist British capitalists to get a monopoly in the home market and change higher prices for goods produced on their clapped out machinery and completely destroy the export market.

The only answer to the economic problems is to properly plan industry, and you cannot plan what you do not own. This is why the demand for the nationalising of the major monopolies under workers' control and management is the only sensible argument.

In the case of Courtaulds, there must be an immediate government enquiry into that empire to see just where all the public funds have been squandered. If the result are not satisfactory then Courtaulds should be brought into public ownership under workers' control and management. The present directors and shareholders should only receive the same compensation under the redundancy payments Act as the workers would get if the factories were allowed to close.

Yours fraternally
Griff Smiffs
(Deputy Leader Labour Group, West Lancashire District Council)

LET THEM EAT CRISPS

Dear Comrades,

Supporters of 'Militant' have warned that under the continuing attacks of the ruling class, working people could be reduced to the level of "the coolies of Western Europe" if the labour movement does not organise the defence of living standards.

From films and television I have acquired a mental picture of "coolies" as the most down-trodden workers, slaving long hours for pitiful rewards, and living off 'a handful of rice'.

Making a European comparison, we can see already that British workers suffer long hours for pitiful rewards. It is all the more interesting therefore to look at trends in food consumption to see how far along the road we have allowed ourselves to be taken.

A recent article in 'The Times', giving extracts from reports and surveys, revealed that people are eating fewer wholesome meals, and consuming more snacks and it was suggested that this trend would continue.

Inflation of food prices (which will run at a far higher rate in the next year than over the past eighteen months) is obviously a factor in the situation. The drought (surprise, surprise!), the fall in the value of the pound, and the removal of government subsidies, will increase the price of basic foods, like bread, milk, potatoes and butter by 25%.

The government's latest national food survey shows that "the energy content of food eaten at home by families with at least four children fell last year to nine-tenths of the total recommended by the Department of Health and Social Security."

At the same time, "commercial estimates for snack foods show very rapid growth... United Biscuits said that sales of snacks such as crisps and packet nuts would rise by as much as a tenth a year in tonnage to 1980."

So it would appear that the 'bag of crisps' is to fulfil the function of the 'handful of rice' for the "coolies of Western Europe", in the eyes of the British ruling class!

Fraternally,
Phil Rees
Banbury LPYS

MINERS' HAZARDS

Dear Comrades,

Now the miners have decided to go to the ballot on the question of earlier retirement no doubt the Tory press will be full of how much conditions have improved in the pits. But some information will not make the headlines.

It would appear that from the most recent report of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Mines and Quarries, the level of safety in North East mines is deteriorating. The number of underground fires in Northumberland pits has almost trebled in the last year, from six in 1974 to sixteen in 1975. In a pit environment any minor fire could lead to the loss of life.

The inspectors' report also went on to say that the number of "official" dangerous incidents underground in these pits rose from 24 in 1974 to 34 in 1975. I would imagine that the situation is similar in most other coal mining areas. But it is un-

likely that these facts will be greatly publicised during the miners' campaign for a better deal.

The miners' fight for early retirement is an object lesson in how to fight unemployment by creating jobs and a shorter working life for all. A man at 60 would find it difficult keeping up with the pressure of work in a modern clerical job let alone a mining occupation.

The miner's job is traditionally the hardest and most dangerous in Britain. That is why they so often lead the struggle. But it remains the duty of the rest of the labour movement not only to support the miner's but also to follow their example in the fight for better working conditions.

Yours fraternally
Dave Stead
(Blyth LPYS)

Food Chains

Dear Comrades,

No shopper needs to be enlightened on facts such as the rising cost of living and the struggle to 'make ends meet'. Many of us are all too familiar with the situation already. However, it struck my mind today, that with all these price rises someone somewhere is making a huge profit.

In the past if I have spotted a price rise, for example a ¼lb of tea rising from 11p to 13½p, I would query the rise but nevertheless either pay the extra, or if the rise was too high would walk out of the shop and find a cheaper shop, or stop buying the commodity in the hope that because I'd stop buying it everybody else would and therefore the price would have to come down.

Today, because I had a bit of extra time I went to five or six different shops and found the same brand of tea (¼lb) varied in as much as 4p. Now presuming every shop buys the commodity from the producers at the same price, it would seem that some shops try to squeeze more profit than others.

I happened to have worked in a shop for a few months and had to chop and change prices regularly as part of my job, sometimes having to put price increases on goods already displayed, which as you can imagine is a nice way of making profit for the shopkeeper or chainstore company. Old stock is increased in price when new stock is being bought at a slightly higher price from

the producer. As the new stock brings a dearer cost to the customer old stock is made dearer, even when it has been bought cheaper. Unsold stock therefore is profit making.

This is just one way profit is being made, I should imagine there are other ways too. But as can be seen all profit making is made at the expense of the customer, who is forced to pay or go without. I was told my employer was doing me a favour employing me, so the worker is doing a favour making profit!

Some of the largest chainstores are among the biggest monopolies of the country, these have risen as parasites of the shopper and the worker—squeezing extra money whenever possible. Shop assistants are among the lowest paid and worst treated workers. Few bosses of the big chainstores recognise USDAW and assistants seeking trade union membership are often blacklisted. Shop assistants very often get the backlash of annoyed customers moaning over price increases when the assistants are not to blame at all. I know of two girls who left their jobs because of this reason.

To bring prices down what is needed is nationalisation of these chainstore monopolies and nationalisation of manufacturing and production monopolies.

Yours fraternally
Shirley Bedford
(Wolverhampton SW LPYS)

'ONE OFFS'

Dear Comrades,

For anyone working in engineering, John Huxtable's articles in 'Militant' Nos 332 and 333, were an excellent and vivid picture of the back street shops to be found everywhere in the country, including every town in Sussex. We have got them in exactly the same places, beneath railway arches etc.

One of the union members of my branch visiting Birmingham on holiday found one of his mates working in just such a place: 'On-offs'. To work there you had to sell your body and soul, every job was a rush job, if you started it you had to see it through to the end.

You were expected to work 24 hours or more at a time, the gaffer would come round and stick a fiver or twenty five in your breast pocket, and say simply, "finish it". If you couldn't see the mic and wanted to go home, the gaffer would take you in his office, open the draw and give you a swig from a bottle of whiskey and you would make a miraculous recovery, to finish the job off.

This place was full of mavericks, some who boasted earnings of £400 per week, where the AUEW was taboo, a chance to make a bit of money or maim yourself for life.

Yours fraternally
Mike Singleton
(AUEW)

Silver Jubilee

Dear Comrades,

Next year will see a huge propaganda campaign for the monarchy of this country with the 'Silver Jubilee' celebrations. Already spectacular events are in hand to celebrate this non-occasion of 25 years of another monarch.

The Peasedown Parish Council of which I am a member—100% Labour—have just been informed of the part it is expected to play in the scenario. A letter has been circulated to all Parish Councils asking for support for the 'Silver Jubilee Trust Fund' (run by the Prince of Wales). This fund is to 'enable young people to help other members of the community'.

To do this, there is going to be a County Fine Art auction sale, organised by the Lord Lieutenant of Avon County, to raise funds and each Parish is asked to donate 'fine art' goods—three per parish expected at least—all over £25 in value.

The fund will be 'allowed' to keep 50% of the proceeds for local distribution to worthy young people—the remainder going for expenses etc. All this pointless organising will of course be in the hands of the usual mob—worthies of the County—appointed, not elected. There will also be a house-to-

house collection.

Our Parish Council have noted this but will not be donating anything or organising any collections. We don't feel that a working-class village like ours, without a village hall, playing fields or any amenities, will firstly find anything in our homes worth over £25 and secondly, contemplate putting our small sums of cash into worthless projects like this.

If this is the only thing (apart from the extra day's holiday next year) that monarchy can offer it's time it went. We can do without special effects and massive propaganda exercises to bolster the ruling class and its hangers-on.

The money wasted on this would be better spent providing decent jobs for young people, decent housing for the homeless and restoring the cuts in public expenditure. And there is only one way to do that—by getting rid of this wasteful capitalist system, and putting forward a clear socialist programme of a planned economy so that all people can celebrate 25 years work in a decent caring society.

Fraternally,
Julie Sullivan,
(Peasedown St. John Parish Council-
lor (personal capacity)
North Somerset Labour Party.

MINERS' LEADER SPEAKS

EARLY RETIREMENT NOW!

An interview by Mark Morton (Swansea Labour Party Young Socialists) with Will Haydn Thomas (Vice-President, South Wales NUM), after a special conference of South Wales Miners on Monday 29th November to discuss the early retirement issue.

Mark Morton: Can you tell me what this conference decided?

Will Haydn Thomas: This conference was called today to discuss the report given by the President and General Secretary of the South Wales Area National Union of Mineworkers on the negotiations that have been taking place on early retirement. Having heard the report, it was unanimously decided to accept the recommendation of the National Executive Committee of the NUM, that is to reject the proposals put forward by the National Coal Board for early retirement.

MM: Why are the NCB proposals inadequate?

WHT: They are totally inadequate in as much as they do not come near the terms of the resolution that was agreed on at the Annual Conference of the union this year which called for the retirement age to be dropped to 60 by the 1st January next year and to 55 by 1980. So when you consider the proposals made by the Board we consider it nothing but an insult.

MM: So what are the NCB actually proposing?

WHT: The coal board are prepared to offer us a reduction of the retirement age over a period of years to 62. It would not be brought into operation until the end of the social contract, it is something we are not prepared to accept.

MM: The government is using the excuse that early retirement is unrealistic in view of the economic crisis. What do you think about that?

WHT: I think it is totally irrelevant. When you speak to anyone he says the miners are morally entitled to early retirement. When this country agreed to enter the Common Market it was pointed out to us the benefits that would be obtained—that the workers in the Common Market would have earlier retirement, better fringe benefits, yet we find Britain, the oldest industrial country in the world, the first country that went through the industrial revolution, is on the bottom of the ladder as far as early retirement is concerned.

MM: Another argument levelled against early retirement is that it would lead to a lack of skilled men and manning shortages generally. How do you feel on this?

WHT: I believe the Board would have to engage in a massive recruitment campaign. But if they want to make the industry attractive there is only one answer; provide better benefits, that is the only way to attract labour.

MM: Do you consider a national vote against the NCB proposals to be likely in the miners' ballot to be held in December?

WHT: I'm pretty certain, speaking of the South Wales Area. I am convinced in my own mind that there will be a very strong vote in favour of the National Executive's recommendation to reject the Board's proposals.

MM: Given such a result, what should be the next step?

WHT: Given the necessary vote for strike action it will strengthen the arm of the National Executive and I believe that both the NCB and the government will have to pay due regard to that vote.

MM: Is industrial action possible?

WHT: If at the end of the day there is no disposition on the part of the Coal Board or the government to improve the present position then it would lead to a major struggle.

MM: How do you feel about those supporters of the Labour government who would argue industrial action to be disloyal or even treacherous to the Labour government?

WHT: I think it is necessary to understand no man or woman goes to work for a political party. Men and women work in order to earn wages, to provide a roof over their heads, to clothe and feed their families and to secure any other social requirement they want. Most of man's activity is directed towards this end. So it won't be a political issue as far as I'm

concerned. Whether it is a Labour government or a Tory government would make no difference as far as we're concerned, we intend continuing the struggle.

MM: Do you agree, as 'Militant' has consistently argued, that the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy and the introduction of a socialist plan of production, is the only solution to the crisis in the interests of working people?

WHT: I think 'Militant' is correct—it is an ideal we should all be working for—it's something we have appreciated in the trade union movement throughout the years. My only regret is that the present Labour government is not adopting that policy and it's rapidly becoming so that socialism is considered an ugly word.

480 Sheffield Jobs Threatened

Balfour Darwin tools, where last year a 10 week sit-in took place against redundancies, is now threatened with total closure and the transfer of its work to another part of the combine in Openshaw, Manchester. The struggle being mounted against this is not only important to the 480 workers involved and to the whole Edgar Allen Balfour combine, but also to many other workers in Sheffield. It is widely believed that success in this closure would be the signal to other employers in engineering to follow suit.

A previous "viability plan" had seen the elimination of several product lines including butt-welded tools, carbide, bandsaws and special cutting tools, all of which had been profitable at the time, their elimination of course had left us with a lower turnover and order book.

We made a prediction 12 months ago that the very closure we now face would arise. Edgar Allen had taken over Balfour Darwin only six months prior to the sit-in. If we had any grouse about bad management by the Balfour Darwin team, it's quite clear today we were living in vain hope of any improvement from Edgar Allen, not because they couldn't manage the factory well, but simply because in our opinion they didn't want to manage it at all. The Edgar Allen board made no secret of what their main interest was in Balfour Darwin, namely the Special Steels and the overseas holdings and outlets.

We are now told that the losses incurred by Capital Works will amount to £600,000, that the works cannot be made viable, that even if it could the market cannot support both factories at Openshaw and Capital Works and that to stop the losses Capital Works must close, causing the loss of 400 jobs and a further 80 redundancies at the other tool works of Shepcote Lane and Holme Lane.

What is not said is that in the first year of the new company, Edgar Allen Balfour, as it is called, a record profit of £3,334,000 was made and that this amount was tax free to put the icing on the cake. Nor is any account made of the valuable assets of Balfour Darwin gained for a bargain price, well below the true value of the capital equipment and plant. Neither is it mentioned that having procured the assets they have manipulated to the extent that

approximately 1,000 jobs have been destroyed.

To answer the management's points directly: assuming that the predicted loss of £600,000 is going to be made, why have management rejected the idea of applying for the Temporary Employment Subsidy of £20 per head as an alternative to redundancies? The TES alone taken over 400 people for the permissible 12 months duration would bring in £400,000 which is two-thirds of the suggested loss. On the point that Capital Works cannot be made viable, they haven't even tried nor have they done a feasibility study and admit they have based their decision to close purely on past records.

Investment

As to the state of the market, have they really made an attempt at market penetration? The facts are that the number of Sales Representatives for Capital has been reduced from 12 down to only 3 (Openshaw has 18). Customers have phoned in complaining of having not seen a rep. for weeks and are waiting to place orders. Any exercise that EAB has done with regard to the market situation of Capital, is to ensure orders cannot be obtained by the reductions in salesman and back up services.

Any question of viability needs to take account of investment, and a quick glance at the record as supplied by management shows a diminishing amount spent in successive years.

1970	£130,524
1971	£29,117
1972	£28,961
1973	£45,850
1974/5	£27,282
1976	£23,027

Quite apart from the direct reduction there is also the reduction in the real value of money spent, e.g. £29,117 in 1971 could buy much more than the £23,027 in 1976. The amounts are chicken feed for a factory the size of Capital Works and even those figures include all spending, e.g. they include such things as a new heater for the shop, replacement lighting and even moving machines around!

Naturally we recognize the difficulties of how to react against the closure as one can imagine a strike or a sit-in having almost no effect as management may well be prepared to leave us in that position for a month of Sundays. However, it is equally clear that a stand by Capital Tools workers supported by other employees in other Group companies and by trade unionists throughout the city is a different kettle of fish entirely, the implications of which are not lost on management.

It is because of management's fear that such a challenge to their supremacy could become a reality that they are doing their utmost to persuade other workers in the group to have nothing to do with Capital Works and are using the argument that the closure of Capital is in those workers' best interest. It is also why they are boasting of lack of concern at any sanctions placed on them by other trade unionists, such as blacking etc. To try to break any resistance in the factory itself, management are prepared to pay wages in lieu of notice adding anything between £500 to £700 to the redundancy payments to get people to leave straight away. **Interesting for a company which is not prepared to spend that kind of money to save the jobs!**

What is happening to Capital Works can happen to virtually any factory if threatened in the same way, and how many factories are going to be threatened by their managements: "toe the line or we'll have to do what EAB have done at Capital Works"?

Workpeople generally are having to face up to the problems, not by choice but by the actions and attitudes of the employers. The employers have to be challenged by maximum support to oppose such closures as Capital Works. Employers have to be made aware that trade unionists reject these attitudes, and that our members, many of whom have given a lifetime of service, deserve and demand better treatment than they are being given.

Opposition must be given by all of us.

By Derek Simpson
(AUEW Convenor)
and Steve Reaney
(AUEW Steward)

Grunwick Bosses' "last desperate attempt"

By Bob Faulkes

(Hackney Central Labour Party)

do not care what their opinions are, because they have nothing to offer the company." And then with a touching concern, "we are concerned about the feelings of the people inside the company." £28 for 40 hours and £25 for a 35 hour week, shows how deep the "concern" goes for those mislead enough to go on working.

The strike is now approaching its 16th week, with all that has meant in hardships to the strikers. If Grunwick refuse to face the obvious and apply the ballot, then undoubtedly the postal ban, which was only "lifted", will have to be reapplied. The full power of the trade union movement must be applied to bring Grunwick to its senses; either an immediate ballot of all workers, or better still, the straight recognition of the union, with reinstatement and no victimization of any of the strikers.

Support for the strikers has been tremendous, with donations from UCATT (Acton) £15, Richmond Barnes LP £10, Hounslow UPW £20, as a few examples, and a £60 donation from Tricos' Shop Stewards Committee, whose tremendous victory was a lesson to the labour movement. Their victory was achieved by their own strength and the solidarity of the trade union and labour movement. The following events held by the strikers must be supported:

Dec. 10, march from Cobbold Road factory to the Trades Hall, via Chapter Road factory. Starts at 12.30 pm. TU and LP banners welcomed.

Dec 23, Benefit Social in the Abbey Hotel, North Circular Road, Tickets £1.

Messages of support and donations to Jayaben Desai (treasurer), c/o Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Road, Willesden N.W.10.

DEADLY BLUE ASBESTOS

With the London North East Poly cleaners' strike now approaching its 9th week, the situation is deadlocked, although many of the strikers' demands have been conceded.

The most important one, that only trade union direct labour be used in the future has been given a vaguely worded answer by the authorities that "this will be referred in the first instance to the appropriate joint negotiating body. The polytechnic is constrained by financial rules by the constituent authorities.

The strikers are determined that this clause is met. On the issue of full back pay for the dispute (item no. 6) the "director will recommend strongly to the appropriate authority." But the cleaners do not see this as a major issue.

At a meeting arranged for the 3rd December with themselves and the Joint Education Committee to resolve the direct labour issue, it was not even raised. This is just one example of the runaround that the strikers have been getting from all quarters, including the GMWU official who "has washed his hands" of the whole affair. The cleaners have twice successfully turned away the OCS (cleaners).

On a circular sent out to the labour movement they show the health hazards they have been working with. "Attached is proof of some of the infringements. We also have proof of undeclared dangerous material—Grunetite [as dangerous as Blue Asbestos], Crocidolite [Blue Asbestos]. What other dangerous hazards are there in NELP that we don't know about?"

But only with the active support of the trade union movement can the deadlock be broken and victory achieved. As an act of solidarity the cleaners have donated £5 to the Grunwick workers.

Messages of support to: HUBB, Holbrook Annex, 15 Holbrook Road, London E.15.



CARWORKERS REJECT SOCIAL CONTRACT

The new mood developing amongst British workers was reflected in the meeting of shop stewards at the British Leyland Rover factory at Solihull on Wednesday 1st December.

There is now a real possibility of Rover workers breaking the social contract to restore their living standards which have been slashed by inflation and wage restraint.

The meeting was called as a result of the Rover collective agreement negotiating committee's decision by a small majority to put in a claim within the social contract, a claim that would mean in reality no more than £2.30 after stoppages for the top grade of workers. This was a reversal of a decision taken only one week before by the committee to put a claim in outside the social contract.

Living Costs

The negotiating committee represents eleven Rover factories, nine in the Birmingham area and two in Cardiff. The Solihull factory has as many workers (6,500) as the other ten put together.

The resolution endorsing the original decision was debated and carried by a vote of 230 to 40.

The policy of the Solihull shop stewards is that any claim should be in line with the increase in the cost of living over the past 12 months.

During the debate a shop steward who spoke against the resolution said that under Thatcher we would have a total wage freeze. He was answered that the miners by themselves had broken the last Tory government. Any attempt by Tories to repeat this would mean

taking on the whole of the trade union movement.

The Solihull delegates on the negotiating committee are now mandated to attempt to change the position of the negotiating committee to one of putting in a claim outside the social contract. Whatever the outcome there will have to be a campaign of leafleting, group and factory mass meetings, explaining the justified claim and engendering the necessary confidence into the shop floor in their own organised strength.

Campaign

The shop stewards realize that the best way of winning will be by involving as many other groups of workers in this struggle as possible. This will be done inside Leyland itself by sending correspondence and delegates to other Leyland factories explaining our case and asking their support by putting in similar claims themselves, and then throughout the engineering industry. It will not be a question of waiting for these other groups to join us but of taking up the cudgel first if it becomes necessary.

The Solihull workers have never been in a stronger position. Ours is probably the most important factory in Leyland. The demand for the models we produce (the new Rover 3500, the Range Rover and the Landrover) has never been greater.

One shop steward said after the meeting that it was by far the best and most serious meeting he had ever attended. It gave him the confidence to take the arguments back to his members sure that they would support him.

By Bill Mullins

(Shop Steward, Rover Solihull personal capacity)

Trade Unionists Arrested

Two Trade Unionists, one a member of the T&GWU, the other a member of the AUEW, were arrested on Thursday morning 2nd December on the picket line whilst defending the basic right of Hotel workers to belong to a Trade Union.

This incident happened the morning after the management had been reported to the authorities for employing scab labour without work permits. Those that are still working are mainly women from overseas and part-time OAPs. It is these people who remain at work, who are being paid abysmal wages and work under threat of losing their jobs and deportation.

It is necessary for them to see that the only way that they can begin to have any form of job security and decent wages is to join a Trade Union and support the strike. For too long the Hotel and Catering industry has got away with this form of sweated cheap labour.

The two pickets were released on bail and re-arrested on court for January 18th

1977. The following Saturday a mass picket was called at the Linton Lodge. The police had obviously adopted different tactics. It is believed that although they hadn't brought their customary Special Patrol Group van, that nevertheless the police that finally arrested a further four pickets on spurious offences were, indeed, Special Patrol Group Police.

Following a response to speakers from the strikers in dispute, the Oxford Trades Council has pledged support for the strike and picket. They have called for a march and rally in Oxford this Saturday 11th December in support of the Linton Lodge and Randolph Hotel disputes. The Trades Council have obviously adopted the correct tactic at this stage in the dispute. What is lacking, though finance has been freely forthcoming, is the actual mobilisation of T&G workers in Oxford in support of these two disputes.

The whole of the labour movement in Oxford has a responsibility towards these

Militant

AMBULANCEMEN DEMAND UNION BACKING

As the Essex Ambulancemen remain locked out for their fourth week it becomes clear that the Area Health Authority are determined to break our trade union organisation.

The lockout began after the employers broke a two year old written agreement on meal breaks (within hours of re-confirming it with Union officials). By breaking this agreement the employers deliberately provoked industrial action.

The Area Health Authority issued an ultimatum, timed at 5.00 pm on Thursday 11th November, that unless there was a return to normal working the men would be considered to have "repudiated their contracts". The employers intentionally gave the unions no time to respond.

The men have demanded:

- * No victimisation
- * Withdrawal of the lockout notices
- * 100% pay for the time locked out

At the last meeting the employers agreed to the first claim, were prepared to negotiate on the second point but

would only offer one third wages for the time the men have been locked out. This offer was overwhelmingly rejected by a mass meeting of the ambulancemen on the 4th December.

Of the Unions involved, so far the GMWU and the T&GWU have recognised the dispute as official. It is expected that COHSE will follow suit soon. Unfortunately NUPE, the Union that most of the ambulancemen belong to, has decided not to give the dispute any official backing. This has led, not surprisingly, to much criticism of NUPE's role and in particular the activities of some of the Divisional officials.

This experience of the lack of control the members have over their full-time officials must generate a campaign inside the Union for fundamental changes. If trade union officials are to respond to the wishes of the membership then they must come from the membership and they must be elected.

To control officials who have "forgotten" what they are there for,

members must demand the right of recall over full-time organisers. To stop careerists, all officials' wages must be based on the wages of the members they organise.

Such changes will help lay the basis for a fighting, democratic union in the public sector, and with unemployment at 1½ million and massive public expenditure cuts on the way this is certainly needed.

Meanwhile, the Essex ambulancemen are still resisting the lockout. Finances and messages of support are needed urgently. Already support has been given by the Essex Fire Brigades Union and the London Ambulance Service. Send donations and messages of support to:
Essex Ambulance Dispute Committee
c/o Colin Walker, 12 Rokescroft,
Basildon, Essex.

By a NUPE Member

SIT-IN AT HOPKINSONS

All 250 TASS members at Hopkinsons, Huddersfield, are holding a 'sit-in'. Management had refused to pay them a £6 rise using the terms of the 'social contract' as justification, even though the Department of Employment said that they could.

Hopkinsons then came up with the excuse that they could not afford to pay the £6, but in the same week a report in the local press stated that they had doubled their profit in the first six months of this year. During the picket duty outside a room where non-union labour was working, a fifth union member was sacked after an incident with a salaried staff vigilante force, which had physically thrown the pickets away from the door.

At about this time a document came into the hands of the union that conclusively

proved that Hopkinsons had broken government sanctions with Rhodesia by trading with them through South Africa.

The union sent the documents to the relevant government department.

The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back occurred when TASS EC member Granvil Clay (who had passed on the document) was sacked for allegedly stealing manufacturing documents. This action resulted in the withdrawal of 250 TASS employees' labour and, to avoid scab labour using their equipment, to a sit-in.

The dispute is an all-out attempt to smash the union organisation and the firm is receiving support from the Engineering Employers' Federation.

The Huddersfield branch of TASS has

decided to a) give financial support by a levy of the membership locally; b) approach individual management of local companies to put pressure on Hopkinsons to solve the issue; and c) to arrange a day of action in the Huddersfield area.

The sit-in has now affected the shop floor where 30 workers have been laid off and another 30 are in the pipeline. Talks through ACAS have broken down. Support is growing and £1,500 has now been collected.

The union must win this dispute because if they don't, who will dare to stand for official positions in the union? Two things will win this dispute, solidarity and cash.

By Philip Crosby
(AUEW TASS)

TUC BACKS GRUNWICKS

A Brent Trades Council delegation to the TUC has been given the assurance of support from the General Council for the strike. The TUC has circulated all affiliated organisations calling on them to give support. This should now be translated into action, using the strength of the TUC's 11 million members. [See page 11]

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workers. The Linton Lodge management have become entrenched and completely intransigent—refusing to negotiate with the strikers. The 17 workers sacked from Linton Lodge should be reinstated immediately and the workers of the Randolph Hotel reinstated with full recognition rights. Remember the struggles to unionise the car factories, as well as the other industries in Oxford.

Non-union and cheap labour have been the hallmarks of the hotel and catering industries for too long. Those arrested have a right to see a successful conclusion to the strikes and the organisation of all hotel workers into trade unions.

By Ian Isaac (NUM)

and Roy Fletcher (NUM)

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