STRIKE PAY: A NEW THREAT TO WORKERS' FAMILIES

by LIONEL SIMS

WORKERS WHO GO ON STRIKE face a new and vicious political attack from the Tories. Before the summer is over the government’s new Social Security Bill will:

- Stop all benefits for the first three days of sickness, injury or unemployment.
- Increase penalties for being unemployed.
- Allow the bosses to dock wages according to the amount of benefit a worker obtains between returning to work and receiving the first wage packet.
- Cut severely benefits for rent and family while a worker is on strike.
- The idea for stopping the back payment for the three “waiting days” was taken straight from Roy Jenkins when Labour was in office in 1964. Yet Labour MPs this week called the Bill an act of mean and vicious class legislation.

Labour’s idea

It’s true. The idea has been patched from Jenkins by Sir Keith Joseph and will save the bosses’ government £9 million a year. Once again, Labour paved the way for the Tories’ attack.

For working people who have not lost their dignity, those who refuse to take degrading jobs when they are unemployed, or who don’t justify the employers’ demands of servility and are sacked, they will get just over £2 taken from their benefits. That’s well over double the old penalty of 75 new pence.

The Tories will also force employers to terminate workers after strikes to accept subs from their employers instead of getting supplementary benefit to tide things over.

This comes just a week after a new Top Hat fiddle because public knowledge. Large companies in Britain send their top executives abroad for a holiday. They now pay back the state by setting up a limited company for the duration of their holidays to avoid capital gains tax. Capital gains tax bypasses the strings attached to company formation in Britain.

Swindle

The Tory logic minces words about a few pounds for people who work, but swindle thousands for those who don’t.

But the most important part of this package is the design to turn us against our husbands, to make the isolated concerns of the home and family dissolve and remove the collective strength of the shop floor.

At the moment an owner who goes on strike cannot receive unemployment benefits. But supplements for sickness will not be paid for their dependent families and the next day.

The calculation for benefit is made by assuming all tax refunds, strike pay and other personal income up to £4.85 a week. Under the new Bill, the exemption limit will be lowered to £1.

Since the average benefit received is around £6, this means a one-third cut in money to cope or while on strike.

Previously, wives and children were only allowed to benefit as the husband received no benefit. Now the proposal is to

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BIG STRIKE WAVE AS NIGERIA 2 UNION LEADERS
by Wenda Clenaghan
THE NIGERIAN military government has turned on the working class. Strikes, sparking off enormous waves of protest, have broken out following the arrest of leading trade unionists.

The movement against the government's anti-working class policy that started with the strike of six million workers that stopped work on 18 March marked an important advance on the 500,000 that struck on 8 December. The movement was spontaneous. Trade unionists and workers were allowed to go on strike, and the movement was not constrained. If the authorities had acted, it would be slowed down - if only temporarily. But that does not mean the fight against the Bill is over. Far from it. The campaign must go on and it can be successful.

The important thing for militants and socialists to appreciate is that while the goal remains the same - the废除 of the Bill and the Torrington Act - the main slogan that drove the anti-legislation campaign will have to be different.

The question of registration is vital. The law cannot be effective against the entire trade union movement even against a large section of it. The government knows this. It hopes that it will be able to take on and defeat isolated sections of the movement one at a time, using the old tactic of Divide and Conquer.

It hopes are centred on the fact that much of the law will actually strengthen the trade union officials over the rank and file, and registration of leaders in various crafts and file activities. But they are now using the excuse that if one union registers then the rest will be forced to follow suit. Even Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers Union promises that if the Local Government Workers register then his union will have to do the same.

The government is moving ahead to expose the double talk of union leaders who claimed they were against collaboration with the government at Croydon and yet are privately preparing to register. Rank and filiowl workers are being approached by the unions to demand that their leaders declare their refusal to register.

There must be growing pressure as well for total non-cooperation with the government of the country and of the strike action. What the Bill defines as 'unfair actions' - local strikes, blacking of works, refusal to cross picket lines, making collections for 'unfair' causes and above all official union policy.

The law must be broken and defied. That is why the demand for a national one-day strike on Monday 15th April. The movement is spoiling for the unions and at the conference called on 24 April by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions will inform the workers of the decision to strike for the unions and at the conference called on 24 April by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

The workers' struggle against the Bill, Councils of Action, made up of delegates from workplaces in every locality, remain essential to that success. National Council of Trade Unions and Councils of Action will inform the workers of the decision to strike for meaningful action within the unions.

Croydon was a setback. It was not a defeat. If we redouble our efforts to be given the opportunity to put the strike action and non-cooperation, not only can the law be smashed but the growing political awareness of workers taking part in this battle can lay the basis for a genuine revolutionary socialist party.

FAULKNER: THE TRIUMPH OF BIGOTRY

The PRESS has tried to give the impression that the election of Brian Faulkner as head of the Ulster Unionist Party is a triumph for 'moderation'. But in fact nothing has been done to solve the problems of the province.

The 7 per cent unemployment will continue. The miserable housing conditions for working-class people remain along with the discrimination against the Roman Catholic section of the working class in both housing and employment.

Meanwhile the wealth of the country, which could be used to improve the condition of the workers, will continue to go to the province as its own interests search for bigger profits abroad. Faulkner may try to press ahead with some minor reforms to make the degree of discrimination and unemployment more acceptable to the masses of a Party for many years. He changed his line only when he saw that it might be embarrassing to the UUP to avoid touching the question of the conflict with the Catholics.

Faulkner and our own Tory government will attempt to use the sectarian bitterness they have created in order to justify their use of troops and police. They will claim they are keeping 'order' when they club down protesting demonstrators.

Our sympathy should not be with them, but with those who are trying to build a movement to throw British big business and its troops out of Ireland. But that struggle will not be successful while it confines itself to fighting the police. Real success can only come when a movement develops that is able to pose united working-class action as an alternative to rule by British big business.
HOT ON THE HEELS of the TUC’s refusal to mount a serious fight against the anti-union Bill comes a hint of the next act of surrender. The Tories are determined to keep down wage increases and this campaign is linked to increasing unemployment and rising prices.

But the TUC is still prepared to talk with Heath and speak of ‘co-operation’ instead of fighting to defend workers’ interests. The Economic Review for the year outlines the Congress House version of how to solve economic problems in a very similar version to the Tory Central Office one.

It does not demand a price freeze or even ‘direct government intervention’ to halt the rocketing cost of living, which is accepted as virtually inevitable.

And the document agrees that even if an expanding economy wages should rise slowly to ‘allow profits to recover’.

After that kind of introduction, it is no surprise that the Review’s main proposals are little short of disaster for workers. The TUC, in another period of rising prices with Vic Feather using the policeman’s truncheon to stop wage demands.

The TUC’s proposals for the future are based on the assumption that ‘cost of living threshold agreements’. The TUC says that if the cost of living rises above a declared threshold a wage supplement is due automatically to workers.

by ALAN WOODWARD

PRICE INCREASES have to be paid for strain on economy but any wage increase to make up for them can take months to be satisfied.

Some cost of living agreements have been moderately effective. With varying results, workers in the furniture, building and printing trades have had some success but the advantages have been ‘sold’ in production and profits.

The willingness of union officials to make such agreements has helped to clear the way for the TUC proposals.

EXAMINATION

The central problem is finding a cast-iron method of proving the exact amount of price increases. This means that any proposal to relate wages to prices needs careful examination.

Certain conditions should be insisted on:

- Restrict periods of wage adjustment.
- Generous additional payments to help the depressed areas.
- Unemployment benefit to be increased for non-wage incomes.
- At factory level, some employers will see the complications of cost of living increases to lengthy wage negotiations.
- 6,000 Thorn workers in Enfield, North London, rejected recently the AUEW district secretary’s advice and accepted a settlement with a cost of living clause.

The final offer was a rebuff of an earlier one. It contained a moderate increase and the cost of living agreement suffered from the same defects: retribution on the index and no allowance for the time lag between prices going up and wages being adjusted.

On a national level, the reappearance of another incomes policy again raises doubts about the TUC’s self-styled role of making capitalism a ‘better system’. With different unions and eight variations, workers throughout Europe face calls from trade union leaders for ‘sacrifice and rea-piece of the national interest’.

The three leaders of labour play a key role in designing methods of restricting demands and persuading workers to accept restraint. Once accepted, only militant rank and file action can regain the losses so easily given away.

No doubt the TUC’s Collective Bargaining Committee will set the crucial ‘threshold figures’ at levels just below the expected rate of inflation. And the intervals of wage adjustment will be rigidly followed.

The TUC’s declared aim of allowing profits to rise at the workers’ expense will be achieved by these methods.

If workers that attempt to win better increases will be handicapped severely by the definitive policies of the assembled trade union leaders.

by SW Reporter

THE DOLE QUEUE is growing in the South West. Light engineering firms in the area are not yet able to push up wages by heavy redundancies to add to the lay-offs caused by the collapse of Rolls-Royce. Among firms hit are Masscon South West, Strachan and Hershaw.

Masscon South West, which makes components for the aerospace industry, was hit by redundancies notices without warning on 16 members of the Bournemouth Union.

A strike was called and was backed up by the 100 members of the Engineering Union.

The union had been informed as the men were not reinstated but were said to be offered jobs in ‘leading hands’ which included the introduction and new money. They are now being taken up by the company.

The union is Stewart Bristol printing works, Strachan and Hershaw, a subsidiary of the Dickenson group. An AUEW steward at the Bristol print shop tells the story.

The management told the stewards that the men were expecting wages next week, but they did not know what they would be. They were due to receive back the £12,500 which was owed to them.

The union learned that at least 140 manual workers and 50 staff would be made redundant. At least 20 per cent, or more than a quarter of the workforce.

By the time we got back on the shop floor, all the men had received a letter. Only some of them had redundancy notices in them. Given warning, we could have refused to accept the letters before they were opened.

Most of the men started to work out their redundancy money and warned they were going to cost of a job. These have been plenty of jobs in light engineering with 100 workers on the books with no pay rise in sight.

Many of the jobs have gone up the underwrite in the firm.

The men are very angry at the loss of job and the very few who have been offered jobs in ‘leading hands’ are too worried to accept.

Voiced fears

There is concern about jobs in other parts of the group. Dickinson Robinson have several subsidiaries in Bristol and workers from other firms such as Robin’s Woodbrook, Bournleigh and Bailey and Bollard voice their fears of a forthcoming rationalisation at a forthcoming meeting called by the trade unions to discuss the problem.

Apart from the employers’ immediate attack on cost, these lay-offs are intended to seed up organised labour for a forthcoming development in a company with an extensive line in semi-skilled labour and job evaluation.

Six of the 10 stewards have gone, and the men will feel in a weak position after such months of unemployment.

by TONY CLIFF

RUSSIA-A MARXIST ANALYSIS

CHRIS HARMAN

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You can break the law... if you are an employee... 

Like William Turner of Birmingham

Workers at two small Birmingham factories have been arrested because of a corporate battle for three months. In spite of weeks of hardship, police harassment and Little help from their local union officials, they are struggling for simple, basic and elementary rights: to belong to a union and to be recognised as trade unionists.

Neither of the disputes has captured the nationwide headlines as the post-war Board strike. Yet both of them express not only the plight and exploitation of thousands of workers employed in similar small factories but also how Britain's second biggest trade union apparently is incapable of defeating two family businesses.

On 5 January 18 members of the engineering union, the AUEW, stopped work at Daytona Engineering. A work later 40 more AUEW workers joined the strike at the grim, crowded back-street firm of Auto Tools. Appalling conditions exist in both factories.

At Auto Tools, wages are staggeringly low. A miller gets £14 for 40 hours and assembles only 30p an hour. The firm refuses to pay any basic hourly rates with the result that, if a machine breaks down or is not available, not a single penny, new or old, is paid for the time involved.

Workers fined

In addition to reluctantly paying wages, the owner of the firm, Mr Robert Heaton, decided to withdraw his support from the satirical article. Under his factory rules, workers who are late, absent or allegedly responsible for poor workmanship had fines of 50p imposed upon them.

One example of this occurred at the beginning of the year. A worker missed a morning's work because he was pregnant wife fell ill. For this 'strike' he lost half a day's pay and was fined 50p as a punishment.

Many of the workers at the company were among the first who were the only to put on the record that, if the machine breaks down or is not available, not a single penny, new or old, is paid for the time involved.

The Daytonas boss: no company figure... "We charged him an offensive smear that he claimed against the strike under capitalism.

There is no Auto Tools satirical article. There is no Auto Tools chart. There is no Auto Tools chart breaking the law for Employment.

The Daytonas pickette line: fighting against police attacks
UNIONISM IN PRISON

A quarter of a million men in full-time employment earn less for a week’s work than they would if they were in prison. That is the conclusion of a report by the Prison Reform Trust, which has found that the average prison wage is £7.20 per week, compared to an average of £7.00 per week for full-time workers in the UK.

Groups of low-paid workers are found in all industries, including those such as printing and car production. In fact, the high wages earned by prison inmates are due to the higher rates of pay and longer hours than those paid by employers. However, the study found that many prison workers have expressed frustration at being paid less than their counterparts in the outside world.

In the report, the Prison Reform Trust called for a more systematic approach to prison wages, suggesting that a minimum wage for prison workers could be introduced to ensure that they are paid a living wage. The report also called for a review of the current system of paying prison workers, which is based on a fixed rate of pay that does not take into account the number of hours worked or the skills required.

The report urged the government to take action to improve prison wages, saying that prison work is an important means of rehabilitation for prisoners. It called for a more flexible approach to prison wages, allowing prisoners to earn more if they work harder, and for the government to ensure that prison workers are paid a fair wage.

The report was welcomed by many unions, who said that the government should take action to improve prison wages and that prisoners should be paid a living wage. The TUC said that the report was a wake-up call for the government, and that it was time to end the payslip poverty experienced by prisoners.
What really happened in Tudor England

What do you know about Tudor England? That Henry VIII was a much-married glutton who cut off Anne Boleyn's head? And that his daughter Elizabeth defeated the Spanish Armada and remained a virgin all her life in spite of several unhappy marriages afterwards.

That is one way of looking at history. It is the way most people are encouraged to look, for it confirms the attitude that history is made by a romantic and adventurous few and that the great mass of ordinary people have no part to play in it at all. But real history is different to that. Although key individuals can play vital roles at certain times—and Henry and Elizabeth were important to their period—society moves forward, progresses or stagnates for reasons rooted in the economic structure of the time and the powerful and opposing class forces.

The long period of the Tudor monarchy—from 1485 to 1603—was a vital one in the development of English society. It saw the decline of the feudal system and the growth of trade and a strong merchant class that prepared the ground for the modern system of capitalism.

In the 15th century England emerged as a manufacturing country, a trend that started in East Anglia. Because of the poor quality of East Anglian wool there was little demand for it abroad, while other parts of England had a substantial stake in wool exporting.

Compete

East Anglian wool was used instead to produce cloth for local use. Immigrant craftsmen from Flanders, leading a region for cloth manufacture, raised the standard of the East Anglian product until villages such as Worcest became famous for the quality of their cloth and began to compete with and eventually oust their Flemish competitors. The cloth industry grew along capitalist lines. Small weavers were dominated by the merchants who had control of the European market.

The situation quickly dominated every sector of the industry: the clothiers bought the raw wool, gave it to the spinners, women and children working in the cottages—and handed it on to the weavers, dyers and shearers.

Instead of selling and buying back the product at each stage of its manufacture, the clothier paid for each process at fixed piece rates. Profits were high and the accumulated capital allowed the industry to spread to Somerset, Yorkshire and other parts.

The clothiers benefited to the beginnings of a capitalist class rich, unscrupulous and daring, willing to risk exploring fresh markets. Commercial centres developed in London, Bristol and Hull where the wealthy merchants became as important and influential as the feudal nobles.

The growth of the cloth industry enabled the clothiers to concentrate production under one roof, where weavers, dyers, fullers and shearers could work in a comparatively streamlined way with harsh discipline and bad conditions. It was the forerunner of the factory system.

Two other important factors helped paint the economic backdrop to the period. The first is the discoveries, naval adventurers opening up new continents and returning home with vast amounts of stolen booty.

The demand for silver and gold in the 15th century outstriped the supply and sparked off a serious monetary crisis throughout Europe. Precious metal was vital to the development of trade and its shortage prompted the search for new sources and with it a resulting expansion of the world market.

As every schoolchild knows, in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. He was followed by Vasco da Gama and later by intrepid English sea dogs like Drake and Hawkins.

Their reasons were not purely adventurous, neither were their backs: they sought new trading areas and bullion to swell the treasure chest at home. They allowed the merchant class to trade and profit more effectively.

Gold and silver bullion streamed into Europe from the Americas. The new trade routes were guarded jealously by each nation and enormous strides were taken in designing modern ships suitable for trade and defence.

Owners of capital invested in new industries. In England cloth was supplemented by soap manufacture, brewing, shipbuilding, glass, gunpowder, salt petre, and sugar. Much of this manufacture was carried out in factory conditions, which allowed for considerable quantities, leading to the rapid growth of the mining industry.

This small industrial revolution of 1440 to 1640 enabled England to become a great trading nation. It strengthened the power of the middle class of merchants and capitalists and prepared them for their struggle for power in the 17th century.

The second factor concerns the land. A free market in land and labour was vital to the development of capitalism and the enclosure movement, that fenced off common land and put it under the control of rich farmers and dissipated the peasantry, was a vital step in this direction.

The enclosure movement had been going on since the 14th century but its effects were most widely felt in the Tudor period because of rising population—up to about five million—and rising prices brought about by the influx of precious metals into England that sent profits and prices soaring and almost halved the value of real wages.

Misery

Land values soared, too, and encouraged farmers and capitalists to grab a bigger stake in the country. The 'Merrie England' of the day was in reality a time of deep misery for the labouring masses, forced into poverty by inflation, robbed of their land and their sheep.

The enclosure movement produced an army of unemployed, swollen at stages by the breaking up of the nobles' private armies by Henry VIII and the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

Slowly, the unemployed were absorbed into the growing capitalist industries but it was a slow process and generations of landless peasants, redundant retainers and exiled monks literally starved.

It was what the rising capitalist class needed—a degraded and servile condition of the mass of the people, the transformation of them into mercenaries and of their means of labour into capital!

Savagely repressive laws were passed against the unemployed. 'Sturdy vagabonds' had their ears cut off and those who refused to work were made the slaves of their accusers. Unlicensed beggars of 14 or more were flogged and branded and executed for a third 'offence'.

But as the unemployed were sucked into industry, the towns grew and demanded for bread and meat led to the growth of arable farming, and, initially, a demand for more agricultural labourers.

The jobless were sent to work on the land and wages were fixed by local Justices of the Peace, wealthy farmers and capitalists to a man, who naturally saw that wages were kept as low as possible. The Poor Law of 1601 apprenticed children of paupers and set in train the system of workhouses and poor rate that existed until the Industrial Revolution.

And so the scene is set: Tudor England witnessed fundamental changes, new classes of capitalists and workers began to develop within the feudal system, a world market for manufactured goods appeared and these goods were paid for in money not in kind. Powerful trading companies owned by merchants were set up to exploit these markets and defend them with fleets of modern ships.

Such changes called for a new kind of state machine, new politics, new religion—and a new monarchy.

NEXT WEEK: rise of the new class—with God on their side
Search of the lonely wanderer

FOR MANY PEOPLE, the undoubted star of Easy Rider was a nothing. Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper nor even the motorcycles. All of these were dwarfed by the superb performance of a little-known actor, Jack Nicholson.

Nicholson played the role of a drunken, radical Southern lawyer with such freshness and direct appeal that he won himself an Oscar as Best supporting actor of the year. It is to prove that this was no flash in the pan, he now appears as the main character in a new film of his own, Five Easy Pieces. Nicholson plays a rootless, discontented, introspective young man.

His family are musical and intellectual and he can feel for them little but contempt and incomprehension. To escape from their devastating influence, he embarks upon a series of manual jobs in a prolonged attempt to get out of the lunatic world around him.

Destroys illusions

Five Easy Pieces rejects any simple romanticism or self-pity. Nicholson brings his own brother's girl while his girl's romantic illusions about music and then seduces her. He frequently humiliates his dumb sexy girl-friend and despises his own need for her.

Yet, strangely, the film is full of compassion. Through the medium of this lonely, wry individual, the director has managed to reflect America that has lost its sense of purpose.

An ironic eye is cast upon consumerism, upon materialism, upon the luxuriousness of some radicals (represented here by a shapeless, aggressive young woman who is morbidly obsessed with cleanliness and with the unimportant dirtiness of her environments.)

Five Easy Pieces illustrates the never very apparent appeal for many Americans of the drifter wanderer who has no ties and no commitments. Less and less is evidence in an age of technological sophistication of the rvving denizen who still holds a tremendous attraction for many people.

Brave and forlorn

Yet, in the end our 'hero' is seen as an intellectual, and lonely rather than happy. To escape to Alaska with only the clothes on his back and a guitar. The film leaves him venturing into an unknown tomorrow - brave and forlorn but always facing the world with a wry smile and a saw knife on his face.

It is the quality of conscious honesty in Nicholson's performance that lifts the Easy Rider experience to great heights. He Cajoles, pleads, demands and finally is in the viewer's eyes to observe the insights of character he is revealing.

It is a performance of remarkable power and it is anything more convincing as his acting in Easy Rider. Five Easy Pieces is a film of rare sympathy for its characters - it is a pleasure to watch.

Martin Tomkinson

THE TELLY COPPERS have gone up in their summer holidays. Poor old Dixon has been carried off to the genie's world and Charlie Barlow can spend six months having his gill fish smooched by the Philosopher sorted out.

BC: THE CASE OF CLONING is an abrupt halt on Sunday with Professor Harold's doctor wife at death. Lewis-Claire, her and kidnapper had filled her full of gunshot. We will have two and three in the autumn to see if she survives, but the horse sense case was arrested and seems to prefer dead bodies to the animal kind.

The enormous output of police dramas on the box? It would be a disaster to do that as a conspiracy to show how marvellous the houndhounds are but then we've been told to portray grizzly Moneypenny in the raw with no real effort to moralise or take sides.

But its later development into Softly, Softly was matched by the funny concerns with new methods. Criminals have tended to be rather cardboard and predictable and some of the individual plays have been ludicrous distortions of the actual role of the law.

Overblown

The Expert which usually gets a BCC summer rerun, so you may get to see the latest series if you haven't seen the first. The usual run-of-the-mill stuff. The main character. Professor Hardy, is a criminal pathologist, not a detective and the interest of the series is to see each series travel a crime by the use of science.

He has a more hate than love relationship with the local police chief, Inspector Fleming who is probably closer to the real thing than some of the overblown prima donnas on the police side.

On Sunday, Fleming thumbed hull out of the kidnapper who shot Hardy's wife, an act not seen before, I feel, on British television.

Again, we will have to wait for the next series to see if Fleming gets the bouncy. My money is on the patently overacting and Fleming getting a severe reprimand.

Dour

CLASSIC SERIALS are coming thick and fast on BCC. Jude the Obscure. It is all the more bloody in the grave when Sunset and Sand is last Friday.

I read a book on a book by a relatively unknown Scottish writer, Lewis Gibs, and tells the story of a farming family and the very small area of Scotland which it seems to be. The central character is the young daughter of the tough, puritanical, God-fearing farmer who has no time for womanhood.

The first installment was pretty dour, but it might pick up.

David East
New threat to worker's families

From page one

The essential

- With the spread of productivity deals, increased rent and pension increases (redundancy), it becomes essential for a number of workers to keep body and soul together. The Tories oppose the right to strike.

- In February 12,000 more lost their jobs. With the Radio Times and Vehicle & General workers, the motor newspaper and steel industry undergoing mass redundancies, it will be more and more difficult for workers to get together for the results of the private profit-making system.

- In Liverpool in 1969 workers continued a strike to refuse to operate a superintendence's sub in preference for non-expendable supplementary benefits. During the postal workers' strike, the Tories made the Post Office pay unexpected back pay to disgusting post workers from receiving an adequate benefit.

Memence

The aim to estrange husband and wife 'saves' the workers. This is to be done by nothing to do with stopping inflation.

With the budget proposals for Vase Value Added Tax is quite clear that to the rich and poor the government's inflationary policy is no problem, but workers who go on strike meet substantial response. The massive strike wave in recent months has spread the lessons of solidarity.

Before the mid-1960s it was largely irrelevant what the politicians gave up. Since then the parliamentary system has become a Kids to the laws of ordinary people.

We can't afford to sit around and wait four years for another government to come along to break yet another set of promises. It is now absolutely vital for rank and file opposition to organize in their workplaces, for members to join together and organize a political revolutionary alternative to the rule of the bosses.

Next week: how to break the new Tory law.

Pay deadlock for data is warning for engineers

PROFITS rose by 14 per cent in the engineering industry last year, but the workers have flatly refused to offer a decent rise to 70,000 draughtsmen and technicians.

The bosses' offer of a slight improved minimum rates would give only an average rise of 2 per cent. According to DATA, the draughtsmen will strike section of the AUW. The reason is that a great majority of DATA members are earning more than the proposed minimum rates.

The union has rejected the employers' offer and announced that it will fight for its claim of up to 5 per cent, for a fourth strike over the data bargain.

The employers' attitude is another example of the government's determination to hold down wages and actually through a tax on real power. It is also a grim warning to the 3 million manual engineering workers that their forthcoming claim will meet with stiff resistance.

The National Committee of the AUW meets in June and motions for debate will demand a 40 per cent rise and big improvement in the industry's pay rates.

There are disgracefully low £9 for a skilled man, £15 for an unskilled man and £17 for women. The present three year agreement runs out in December and there is no doubt that the employers, backed by the Tories, an anemic force, will refuse to offer an acceptable increase.

This means the proposed data strike will be of critical importance to the whole engineering industry. Now that DATA is part of the unaligned engineering section, it must be backed by the full might of the industry's workers.