

# THE WORKER



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## AUEW REJECTS SOCIAL CONTRACT

The national conference of the AUEW, comprising the engineering, constructional, foundry and technical sections, meeting in Hastings, voted against the social contract, not only in its present form, but also against any legislative or voluntary restraint. This represents a serious blow to the designs of both Government and TUC General Council to "tighten up" their sagging contract; indeed, the blow is all the greater since the AUEW's decision to a great extent predetermined the outcome of the meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU).

Having first been debated and rejected completely by the AUEW in conference, the social contract "question" arrived at the Confederation, which body rejected any form of legal or voluntary restraint at the very time that such restraint was being discussed by the TUC General Council.

The Confederation is sometimes referred to as "the little TUC". In fact, in terms of industry and make-up it covers 3 million workers in the private sector and its decisions are of greater import than those of the TUC. This is because the Confederation negotiates with the employers on behalf of all its members, despite the fact that they belong to 31 different unions, while quite rightly no union will cede its autonomy to a TUC.

Curiously, the wages resolution calling for substantial increases against a background of no restraint was an anti-climax, no discussion, the voting unanimous. Yet it signifies that the TUC's pronouncement, the vaunted six-point plan, itself an attempt to lead even further a self-imposed retreat, has already been rejected by the CSEU in conference as it undoubtedly will be rejected through circumspection by the mass of workers.

### CSEU CLAIM

The wages resolution passed at Hastings contains in particular two points which workers should take hold of and implement. Not only does the resolution call for a "substantial increase" in the national rate for skilled workers in Shipbuilding and Engineering, but also for pro-rate increases for semi-skilled and unskilled. This line, endorsed by the TGWU, makes nonsense of Jack Jones' proposals for a flat rate increase for all workers.

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The resolution also called for the 35 hour week. Action to implement this is long overdue. Engineering workers today work on average, including overtime, as much as they did 30 years ago.



Reg Birch, member of the AUEW Executive Council and Chairman of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) has, in accord with custom and practice, being the senior member of that Executive Council, been nominated by his Union to serve on the TUC General Council. No-one could be better qualified to represent in such a forum the interests of engineering workers. His nomination represents a victory for those who desire the continuation in the AUEW of that democracy which has taken the Union to the leadership of the whole trade union movement.

despite all the technological advances that have taken place. Overtime is the easy way out, without having to take on the boss, but many workers are now discovering that the boss can knock it off any time he likes. The struggle for shorter hours takes on even more importance now in terms of the struggle for the right to work.

### The Statistics of the 'Contract'

Official statistics (themselves often an understatement of the true position) indicate that since the end of Phase III, from August 1974 to April of this year, the Retail Price Index rose by 17.57 per cent. In the same period the Department of Employment Index of average earnings (not wage rates which are misleading because they do not include what workers are actually being paid) in British industry rose by only 15.65 per cent. For a married man with two children of school age with average taxation, this converts to a rise in take home pay of a mere 11.63 per cent.

On this basis the inescapable conclusion must be that the Social Contract plus inflation (itself powered by government policy) have together more than succeeded in cutting wages - by a considerable amount and at a prodigious rate.

## TUC PLANS WAGE CUTS - OR ELSE!

While the TUC was still hammering out its 6-point plan, the Labour Government announced the answer they will have to come up with - or else!

Healey stated in the House of Commons on July 1st that there will have to be a 'voluntary' limitation on wage rises of 10% or else legislation will be brought in to enforce it.

This is, in effect, a statutory wage limitation amounting, at the current rate of inflation, to a wage cut of around 25%. And this, as far as is known at this time, is to be imposed without any concessions on unemployment, price levels, or general rises in the cost of living.

As the article below shows, the TUC proposals were already such as should be rejected outright by the working class.

Twenty-one representatives of the working class, members of the TUC General Council, voted on June 25th to accept a 6-point plan of 'guiding principles' designed to restrain wages.

Those 21 'Shadow Chancellors' will have to be repudiated by the unions whence they came. The unions will have to better prepare for the next meeting of the General Council.

The idea of the plan is that a target for price increases will be set and subsequently, "Pay will be bound by the target for prices and unions would be expected to settle on the basis of a flat-rate increase."

All is uniform. A flat rate for all. The cherished autonomy and essential initiative of the various sections of the working class is denied. Collective bargaining is suspended. There can be no strikes; denied is the assertion and defence of skill which has long been a key weapon of workers in the struggle for wage advance.

It is the folly or deliberate deceit practised by the General Council that says wages should be restrained in order to cure the ills of price rises and unemployment.

The 'plan' says that, "Radical action should be taken to limit price increases" and that "the objective should be set in 1976 of halving the prospective level of unemployment."

### Employers' Devices

But price rises and unemployment are precisely devices of the employer to reduce wages. Conversely, wage rises are the only defence of workers against the employer. The 'paper chase' is only indulged in by those who believe that there is a necessary connection between wages and prices. Workers do not have the luxury of subscribing to such theories.

Speaking immediately after the 'plan' had been adopted Ian Murray TUC General Secretary said, "This means some reduction in living standards in the sense that at some stage people would be settling their wage claims on a basis lower than the rise in the cost of living since their previous settlements."

One of the 'six-points' is that "Recipients of very high incomes should forgo further increases or accept reductions". This is a very dangerous principle for the working class to adopt. It can eventually be applied to everyone and denies the guerrilla line that the strongest sections break the way for the weaker.

## Government Statement on Inflation Where we are now

We have always said there could not and should not be any social contract - that is, any bargain between the working class and capitalism. For workers there is either class struggle or class defeat. There can be no lasting compromise.

In our programme 'The British Working Class and Its Party' we point out that in Britain "the working class lives in a state of perpetual guerrilla struggle with the employers... Here every agreement is but an armistice and tomorrow is the war."

It was their understanding of this which led the Engineers to throw out the social contract. By this act of political consciousness they assume leadership in the intensification of struggle which is bound to follow the Labour Government's declaration of war against the working class.

The Government has also rejected the social contract as a fraud now exposed and no longer useful. There was not one reference to the social contract in Healey's announcement in the House of Commons nor any face-saving concessions to the TUC which has simply been ordered to submit unilaterally to massive wage cuts on behalf of all workers. The Government has declared in the interest of British capitalism that, whatever the cause of inflation, the whole burden of deflation must be shouldered by the working class - immediately!

For British capitalism and its capitalist Government this is 1926 all over again. Have we workers learned anything since then? Are we politically capable of realising the revolutionary potential of this situation? If not, there is nothing for us but a defeat far more crushing than the collapse of the General Strike.

# On the Industrial Front



THOMPSON & CAPPER

## UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The production of metal, especially of steel, has fallen nationally by 7% since November 1963. The effects of this fall were not immediately noticed. Heavy industry is the backbone of all other industry and now this fall in production is being increasingly felt in all those industries using metal-motor vehicle production, machine tools, foundries, etc. These are the prime industries of the West Midlands. As a result, unemployment here has risen rapidly from 58,000 in January 1975 to 82,699 in June 1975. Of the national rise in unemployment of 18,261 from May to June 1975, one quarter (4571) was in the West Midlands.

In addition this July 16,000 Birmingham school-leavers will be joining the scramble for job opportunities which are only one fifth what they were last year.

## Defending Park Lane College

If the education system which our class fought for is to be maintained, it will only be by our own efforts. The only efforts of the ruling class are in the direction of attacking education at every level. A case in point is the Park Lane College of Further Education, Leeds, where students and staff are engaged in a struggle against the Leeds City Council's proposed cutback of £2 million in the educational budget. Lecturers at the Leeds Polytechnic will support the fight by refusing to implement cuts should they be brought in, and at Park Lane mass walk-outs of students and staff have been staged over the issue of the cuts and over the filthy, Dickensian conditions in the Park Lane annexe building. Eventually, after having walked out with equipment, books and notes, accommodation was made available in the main College building.

Days later, members of the Students' Union and the ATTI marched on the Civic Hall in protest at the extensive attack being made on Park Lane College. Neither the staff nor students are tolerating brutal short-sighted acts of the Council and plans are being made for a total disruption against them in the form of token strikes, sanctions etc., whenever and wherever possible.

## IN BRIEF

Mrs. Gandhi must be the envy of 'democratic' leaders in all bourgeois countries. Having discovered some months ago the 'democratic' answer to strikes, i.e. lock up all the strikers, even some 20,000 of them, she has now discovered the 'democratic' answer to tire-some opposition leaders - lock them up too, the whole 900 of them!

Lord George Brown is an advocate in this country of the same kind of 'democracy'. He suggests as the answer to Britain's economic plight a statutory clamp down on wages and if any section of workers protests -- call out the troops!

## (SPEKE)

T & GWU workers at the factory in Speke Hall Road took action on 28th May to support their claim for a £4 interim wage increase. The Company refused to make an offer and threatened to close down the site. As if a claim like £4 a week would do such a thing when the average take-home pay of the workers is only £23 per week, and nothing was paid last year in respect of threshold.

Whilst this may sound like any other struggle over pay it is not. The workers have only been in a Union for 9 months. This is the first 'major' claim and the Company is panicking. The parent Company, London Rubber, is still boasting over how it defeated the AUEW in a 10 week battle last year, and worse, how they used the police to evict an ASTMS official from the site.

To quote from a workers describing this situation, "We are determined that they won't get away with that kind of thing here."

Clearly the Company is afraid of the effect organised labour can have in establishing better conditions and is attacking while they think the workers are still weak. Meanwhile the strike is in its fourth week and support is beginning to come both financially and actively in the shape of a demonstration outside the factory on June 27th.

## BRITISH RAIL

The pay settlement for workers on British Rail is to mean big cuts in the labour force.

In return for a 30 per cent increase, plans include a ban for possibly as long as a year on all but the most essential recruitment. This is aimed at reducing the work force of 280,000 by between 10,000 to 15,000 workers.

Marsh, Chairman of British Rail, who climbed to his position on the backs of the working class, is about to do another Beeching, at a time when the railways should be expanding to take the traffic off the roads.

There will be a reduction in services with a possible closure of unprofitable lines.

Marsh, (unlike private enterprise when it is going broke) has said, "We will not go cap in hand to the government."

A sharp cutback is to take place in the much needed capital investment required to bring the railways up to date.

Social democracy, to the detriment of the railway men, has used the same sort of thinking as the employers in trying to solve their problems.

## SWANSEA

4,000 steelworkers at the BSC Port Talbot works struck for 9 days in protest against a revised shift system. This, in spite of a so-called agreement (known as the six-point plan) between the unions involved and the management.

The plan was designed to "save" the threatened 10,000 redundancies deemed necessary in the steel industry in Welsh plants. In fact the new plan and working arrangements were a disguised wage-cut. The plan meant an end to week-end working resulting in a £5-£15 cut in weekly wages.

The management was forced to return to week-end working after the strike threatened to cause the closure of the whole Port Talbot works.

## LOW PAY REPORT

A report from the Low Pay unit says that some 20 per cent of manual workers in the City of Westminster earn less than £30 per week, while across the Thames in Lambeth, 15 per cent of men earned less than £24 per week.

A second report states that nearly half Britain's low-paid workers are employed in industry for which the government is directly or indirectly responsible as an employer or through the Wages Council Sector.

We have previously reported that a government Labour Exchange was advertising jobs in the catering trade at less than the minimum wage already established by law.

London streets are very far from being paved with gold. Unemployment is rising. Areas like Newham, Woolwich, Lambeth, Islington have become de-industrialised. The GLC leader pontificates every now and then about the absence of skilled men and a thriving industry to pay the rates but nothing is done about it.

## YEOVIL-

## HELICOPTERS AND GLOVES

Workers at the Westland Aircraft Company in Yeovil have won their demand for an average £8 per week rise and important concessions on sick pay and pension rights. Throughout the 5 week strike workers showed awesome solidarity, with only about 25 of the 1500 men voting for a return to work. This tremendous victory will increase workers' determination throughout the area in every industry to press their claims for a living wage.

Also in Yeovil, at the W. J. Ricketts leather glove factory, 18 workers walked out over bonus payments and stayed out for a week until the management made an acceptable offer. It was the first strike ever at the 70 year old factory, and the first walk-out ever by skilled glove-cutters in a town that has been world-renowned for its making of leather gloves.

## OIL RIGS

American oil companies in the North Sea who have been notoriously anti-trade union in the past, are having to come to terms with Trade Union organisations and militancy for recognition and negotiating rights.

The Inter-Union Offshore Committee which represents 12 Unions have won their fight against ODECO for the re-instatement of a shop steward on the Ocean Victory.

It was the successful blacking for three weeks of the supply of goods, services, and repair facilities to all ODECO rigs that brought victory.

This was the most extensive boycott imposed against a drilling contractor so far and was supported by the International Transport Federation which meant it would be effective also in Scandinavian and North European Bases.

The sort of trade unionism that operates in Britain is much more under the control of the working class workers who are working at the trade, no wonder arrogant American management doesn't like it.

# Editorial

The Government is bringing pressure to bear on the TUC and the CBI to come up with a much more tightly-drawn 'social contract'. At the same time it is being made clear that the Government is prepared to impose a kind of compulsory limitation by means of ceilings on the expenditure of nationalised industries and price freezes on the private sector, both of which will result in even higher unemployment.

At this very time we continue to urge the rejection of the whole concept of any 'social contract' between workers and capitalist state and we applaud the Engineers for throwing out the 'contract' and re-affirming the principle of free collective bargaining.

Is this irresponsible? Should we instead be urging workers to accept wage cuts and tighten their belts still further in the national interest? No, because it is not in the national interest. It is in the interests of profits and profits have no nationality.

We are completely clear on the implications of saying 'no' to the 'social contract'. We are saying 'no' to capitalism and 'yes' to socialism. Just as in rejecting the Common Market or in demanding the right to work or in calling for the self-reliant development of Britain on the basis of the energy and skill of the working people we are saying 'no' to capitalism and 'yes' to socialism - because capitalism has already demonstrated that it can do none of these things.

The important thing for the working class about these demands is that their revolutionary character must be recognised. To demand what capitalism cannot provide and to mobilise working class strength and ideology behind that demand is to take the lead in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. It is to insist on the seizure of state power by the working class as the only guarantee of what workers, as the producers of the nation's wealth, have a right to expect.

It is to take power away from those who have betrayed Britain by selling it out to international monopoly capitalism and vest it in the working people who are the true custodians of Britain's national destiny as an independent, prosperous and peaceful country.

## Italy's Cosy 'Communists'

The Italian "Communist" Party widely held to be the strongest revisionist party outside the Soviet bloc, has lately been flattered by considerable notice in the bourgeois press. The occasion for Fleet Street's attentions has been the recent electoral gains made by the ICP. Yet paradoxically, no use has been made of this to incite a Red scare campaign; in fact in this case efforts have been made to allay such fears.

The reason for such privileged treatment is that the Italian "Communist" Party, the apple of Moscow's eye, has strayed so far from the path of revolution that not even the bourgeois press can pretend any different. In fact the Italian revisionists not only deny the need for proletarian revolution, but openly support the bourgeois state machine.

Witness the incredible statement in the party newspaper by

Party boss Berlinguer: "We are far from making indiscriminate accusations and criticism of the organs and apparatus of the state as a whole. On the contrary, we have recognised and recognise the loyalty towards the republic and the constitution, the self-denial, sacrifices, crowned with examples of heroism, of a great part of the police forces and the armed forces, and not only of soldiers but also of the cadres, not to mention the courts."

Even the most casual tourist in Italy cannot fail to notice the fact that the Italian police force is a para-military organisation. Italian workers have long been acquainted with the identity between the 'padrone', the employer, the fascists and the police, whose 'heroism' shows itself in shooting demonstrators in the back, and whose 'self-denial' expresses itself in a level of corruption which makes policemen in other countries green with envy.

Such abject grovelling to the forces of oppression serves to render respectable the ICP in its attempt to effect a monstrous betrayal of working class interests under the cloak of the 'historic compromise'. As Amendola, another of its leaders, expressed it: "For twenty five years we have been trying our strength against Christian Democracy and this trial of strength has ruined the country... the trial of strength remains, and we cannot go on in this way, while the country goes to the devil. Hence the need for a rapprochement."

Such frankness is to be admired, since it is beyond the capability of even a British Labour Party. The CPGB for its part, looks longingly at its fellow revisionists in Italy and praises them for their achievements. The only achievement workers will recognise is the miraculous conversion of unconditional surrender into a strategy for the conquest of power.

## TETLEY BEER STRIKE

250 white-collar employees of the Leeds-based Tetley Brewery, part of the Ind Coope/Allied Breweries complex, have gone on strike for parity rates of pay with the manual staff. Draymen and delivery men have refused to cross picket lines in solidarity, so strengthening the position of the clerical staff. Within a week nearly all 800 Tetley pubs in Leeds were dry, and draymen have threatened that pubs running in scab supplies will be hacked after this dispute ends.

With large supplies of beer brewing, which will probably have to be thrown away as storage and outlet points are no longer available, Tetley's, who have had continued disputes with draymen and delivery men already this year, find themselves in a very weakened position.

# Unemployment- Crime against the People

Unemployment is one of the worst crimes of capitalism against the people. Not only does it reduce the family of the jobless to penury and destroy the self-confidence and dignity of the person vainly seeking work: it deprives the world of the goods which could have been produced by those the system discards as of no use to humanity.

## OVER ONE MILLION

## JOBLESS

## OR ON SHORT TIME

In June the number of people unemployed in Britain rose to 869,822 according to official statistics which use all sorts of devices, like not counting those just entering the labour market who have not found jobs, to keep the figure as low as possible. This is the highest June unemployment since World War II and represents 3.7 per cent of the labour force.

In addition there were more than 205,000 workers on short time.

At a time of the year when unemployment usually falls the number of jobless increased by some 20,000 over May.

This crime of capitalism against the people is carried out on an international scale. The percentage of workers unemployed in the major Common Market countries and the United States are as follows: Germany, 3.4; France, 5.1; U.S., 7.7. That is the club capitalist Britain has joined in "going into Europe" - the club of those countries which waste people as prodigally as they waste natural resources.

## FULL EMPLOYMENT?

Ever since the end of World War II when the demands of the British people who had fought successfully, and for a long time alone, against world fascism forced a policy of full employment on the British government, the Labour Party has been committed to preventing unemployment.

What is the Labour Government doing now that unemployment is reaching record levels? It is using these figures as a threat against the working class. In the voices of Wilson, Healey and the rest, the Government is saying in effect: You think that's bad. Unless you accept massive wage-cuts, it'll get a lot worse.

The Labour Government is a capitalist government and knows only the capitalist incentives of stick and carrot. In a time of general capitalist crisis there are no carrots - just sticks.

## TORIES SOLVE PROBLEM

The Centre for Policy Studies set up by Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph to keep Conservative Party thinking on the right lines has come up with a scheme for cutting the number of unemployed by half.

Is this to be done by finding half a million jobs? No. It's simply a matter of redefining the jobless. It is proposed that over 200,000 of those who are now counted as unemployed may be 'unsuited to full time work' and therefore should be excluded from the unemployed total. Others who should also be excluded are another 200,000 who have only

been out of work for a little while and all those who are receiving some kind of occupational pension and should not therefore be regarded as 'actively seeking work'.

The Centre further proposes that since job vacancies notified to employment offices are probably less than the actual number of vacancies the figure should be multiplied by about two and a half.

It is confidently predicted that the Centre will soon be able to demonstrate conclusively that old Conservative article of faith: there is no unemployment - only lazy workers.

## FROM SCHOOL TO DOLE

This month 500,000 school leavers enter the labour market to look for jobs in competition with

900,000 workers who are unemployed and looking for work.

When unemployment rises, the young, as yet with no experience or developed skills, always fare the worst. Typical of the situation is that reported by the Chief Education Officer of Devon who told school masters in the area that there were only 1,032 new jobs for 5,000 young people leaving school in July.

This situation is going to get a lot worse because not only is unemployment on the increase but also over the next five years the number of teenagers leaving school and requiring jobs will rise from 2 million to 2.75 million.

The incidence of unemployment is even higher among black youth and the alienation of all young people who are trained by society and then discarded as useless is bound to be more severe among them.

## ILEA'S 'Education' - without Teachers

For many months now our Party has called for total and active opposition to all cuts in public spending. The working class has begun to respond to the call. But the cuts are increasing. We must yield no ground in this fight to protect our living standards.

The Inner London Education Authority, that supposedly progressive body, has devised a scheme for education without teachers. Under the scheme, 'A' level Science candidates would spend three quarters of their time using "self-instructional materials", and only a quarter of their time with a teacher. The teacher would not necessarily be on the staff of their school, but might be based in another school or a sixth form centre serving several schools.

One reason given by the ILEA for this scheme is that it is more

likely to interest potential science candidates than instruction from an untrained and inexperienced science graduate. But this claim raises three serious issues:

1. How dare the authority suggest that a teacher might be less useful, or even less interesting than a pile of machinery and audio-visual aids?

2. There will never be sufficient scientists going into teaching while the pay for their skill is so bad.

3. The working class and the teachers must always oppose the de-skilling of the profession by the entry of those who are not trained.

The real reason, of course, is to reduce the number of teachers, chiefly to reduce spending, but perhaps also as a deliberate political policy of less and worse education for the working class.



"Armed struggle is the only way out for Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)", said ZANU leader, Ndabaningi Sithole, in Geneva. "We are now fighting for the legitimate rights of the Zimbabwe people." Hailing the independence of Mozambique Sithole said: "Like them we must mobilise the people for a great struggle against the racist regime and for our own independence." Photo shows Zimbabwe guerrilla fighters practising anti-aircraft defence.

## Medway Workers Take on US Giant over Labour Mobility

A "moonlight flit" by the American company Philips Petroleum has left 300 workers at an oil-rig site in Rochester fighting for the right to work.

The purpose-built site on the Medway has lost its £10 million contract, leaving Howards, the British subsidiary, holding £45,000 worth of steel while its parent Philips scarpers to find greater profits elsewhere in Europe.

Although some workers resigned themselves to drifting around the dwindling sites in the area in search of other jobs, 200 from

the Construction Section (CEU) of the AUEW decided that it was their right to work this steel.

Dockers, lightermen and haulage workers have agreed to help block the steel and prevent its moving from the site. The CEU workers ignored the employers promises and the Labour MP's "secret plan": "we're sticking here", they said, "until we get our jobs back, or the site is redeveloped."

Latest moves to shift the steel and jobs to Scunthorpe have failed as boltermakers and CEU workers there have refused to handle the blacked steel.

# Slashing the Social Services A HOUSE DIVIDED

Wilson in his June 22nd speech said that the same money cannot be spent twice. "If it is pre-empted for incomes, it is no longer available for social expenditure." If there are those who use their industrial strength to maintain wages, they are doing so "at the expense of millions of our fellow citizens, the old, the disabled, the unemployed, whose need is greater than theirs."

This is the usual capitalist divide-and-rule attempt to make organised workers who are the main defence of the standard of living of the working class appear as the 'enemy' of the weak and unorganised. Counterposing incomes and social expenditure in this way is an attempt to divide wage earners from those who have to be housed, educated or cared for when they are ill or out of work. But these are all the same people and cuts in the social services are only a form of wage cuts which it is easier for the government to get away with.

The Environment Secretary was using this same tactic when he said that the alternative to a workable wages policy, (a policy which makes the working class pay in wage cuts for the whole cost of deflation) "is savage cuts in public expenditure." It was the intention to begin these "savage cuts" which was signalled by the Minister's statement that "the party is over."

The General Secretary of the Association of London Housing Estates, representing 350,000 tenants in Greater London, wrote to the Environment Minister at the end of May challenging the policy of what amounts to cuts in housing by asking for action to be taken by Government to give "some relief to tenants and/or local authorities in respect of the vast amounts being paid and likely to be paid in current and future debt charges."

Crosland's answer to this proposal for limiting rent increases was to devise yet another version of divide-and-rule. "This is a matter of priorities," he wrote on June 11th. "As good socialists I think we should give higher priority to improving housing conditions than holding down rents for those who are already adequately housed" ... an attempt to divide the working class into house seekers against house holders!

The real answer came in Crosland's speech of June 6th in the House when he referred to the Chancellor's saving of £65 million in housing subsidies of which about £50 million relates to local authorities in England; and he went on to say that "it is clear that increases (in rents) will have to do more ... and quite a bit more than merely to keep pace with inflation." This is the exact equivalent of the TUC's agreement that wage increases will have to be less than the rise in the cost of living.

Julian Amery, Minister of Housing in the last Tory Government, said at the end of this speech: "On council house rents we seem to be on much closer ground than we were before ... It now seems clear that rents will be raised in many cases substantially higher than the Housing Finance Act would have raised them."

## REBATES

The Association of London Housing Estates had also taken up with Crosland the question of rent rebates in connection with the notorious Housing Finance Bill: of which Crosland himself had said "Conservatives cannot understand that people actually prefer to be independent and not to have to apply for what they regard as charity. That is why the only proper and sensible principle is to set rents at a level which most people can pay without a means test and without a rebate."

Many will remember the battles fought by the working class before the War over the degradation and humiliation of the Means Test. The Means Test has been written into practically every form of social service and Crosland in his answer to the ALHE now extolls as Labour Government 'humanity' this odious form of Speenhamlandism. "As regards rebates, in retaining the rent rebate and allowance schemes in our new legislation we are of course continuing to provide for the needy ... there will always be a need for some such financial assistance." The poor, as far as Labour is concerned, will be always with us!

And just to keep alive that tired old Parliamentary gambit of generosity in opposition, Tony Peter Walker proposes that after twenty years occupancy council houses should belong to the tenants.

## NALGO

Local government officers' union Nalگو has decided to settle for the employer's offer of between 22 and 24.8 per cent, less thresholds, in response to the union's claim for £10 plus 15 per cent. This acceptance comes only three weeks after the rejection by the union's annual conference of an offer which at 21.7 per cent did not differ noticeably from the employer's latest offering. Nalگو, having threatened industrial action at its annual conference, has shrunk back from it.

Nalگو members should realise that the acceptance of a low offer makes things more difficult in future negotiations, and that one should not make idle threats of industrial action.

## BRITTONS REDUCE LABOUR FORCE BY 250

192 staff at the Kingswood factory of shoe concern G. B. Britton Ltd. have received notice that they are no longer needed by the employer. This attack on workers in the boot and shoe industry has been heralded by nine months of short-time working.

Meanwhile, over in South Wales 250 workers have lost their jobs at Britton's factory in Brynmawr, while in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, 400 lost their jobs when the whole place was closed down. The employer had claimed that high-level inflation made it impossible to run the factory in the old way, particularly in competition with Continental factories.

# ROLLS ROYCE BRISTOL- THE SPARK TO LIGHT THE FIRE

Workers in the Design & Development Section at Rolls Royce in Bristol are in dispute over acceptance of a new wages structure "package" containing Job Evaluation, Measured Day Work and inevitable redundancies. The rest of the Bristol factory and the other Rolls plants in Britain have all accepted this offer, which management have been pushing for 6 years. Along with this they have been pushing for plant-wide negotiations, to "rationalise" anomalies which have risen over the years due to section-bargaining.

It is the principled rejection of this two-pronged attack which makes this dispute special. It can never be in workers' interest to give management the weapon of Job Evaluation to be used in their bid for easy redundancies. And management's enthusiasm for plant negotiation was clearly an attempt to submerge small but obstinate sections, which have built up a more favourable position in years of struggle, into the lowest common denominator of the "majority". Workers can distinguish between unity with a ball and chain, and that of their

own choosing.

During April, Design & Development re-established the right to send their fitters anywhere in Britain where their engines are being tested, thus ensuring to some small extent the preservation of their numbers, based on a recognition of their skills. With this behind them, they can resist the introduction of Measured Day Work as long as they choose.

The fight to defend the fruits of trade unionism at this particular workplace is a vital one which cuts at the root of Capitalism and its indifference to the nation of skill that it was once pleased to pay workers to build up. It is Government strategy on behalf of the employers to dismantle the healthy Aircraft Industry which was ours, and to substitute in its place a pruned, deskilled dumping ground. Already the number of apprentices at Rolls Royce, that stood at 1650 five years ago, is down by four-fifths. And the EEC has afforded the pretext for overall merger and specialisation that can only be implemented if trade union organisation is smashed first.

## Computer Operators in Universities

Computer operators in Britain's universities are in struggle for recognition of their skilled status, which their employers, represented by the Universities Committee for Non-Teaching Staff, refuse to concede. But the point is being proven in practice as the universities find themselves increasingly deprived of computer facilities as their "unskilled" operators mount a guerrilla attack in support of their claim.

Tactics used in the dispute vary considerably. In four universities - Queen's Belfast, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Birmingham - all-out strike action is taking place. In other areas the computer staff, members of ASTMS, have been invited by their union to take selective action as they wish. Tactics have included partial walk-outs, refusal to process more than 75 per cent of work normally done, and lightning strikes.

At Birmingham University, where all twenty two ASTMS members have been on strike for over ten weeks, support has been

forthcoming from other technicians, while a 50p. levy of other ASTMS members makes up the wages of those on strike. Such solidarity has kept morale high.

The strikers shut down the computer centre dealing with administration and left academic staff free to do research work on the remaining computer. Yet the authorities were quick to take advantage of such tolerance and attempted to have administrative work done there. The strikers therefore occupied the computer centre and, despite threats, remained until satisfactory assurances had been won.

The computer operators are determined to win their fight for regrading and deserve support from all, especially those in the universities. University authorities may claim that money is short, but struggle is teaching them that they cannot get away with classifying computer operators on clerical grades and paying them under £30 a week. Education is not a cheap commodity, nor is its administration.

## And Now- The Energy Mountain

In only a few months the situation in the oil and electricity industries has changed from one of critical shortage, threatening danger to the rest of industry to one of high surplus capacity threatening danger to the jobs in those industries.

We are now familiar with such terms as 'beef and butter mountain' and 'wine lake', but these are seen to be the effects of the EEC Common Agricultural Policy. They are. But they are reflections of capitalism itself, however it is organised. Shortage alongside of abundance or poverty in the midst of plenty is the very epitome of capitalism.

A few months ago we were all entreated to "switch something off." The Electricity generating industry, we were told, would have to make power cuts unless we effected both in industry and

in the home stringent economies in the use of electricity.

### THE BIG SWITCH-OFF

In the South Eastern Region alone it has now been announced to the power workers and unions that no less than fifteen power stations are to cease generating electricity for the whole of this summer and several of those will not generate in the following winter either. The power stations affected are: Barking C, West Ham, Fulham, Croydon B, Tilbury A, Hackney, Peterborough, Brimsdown B, Kingston, Littlebrook B, Woolwich, Little Barford, Acton Lane, Brunswick Wharf, Rye House. This is an unprecedented situation in this industry.

The reason given is plain lack of demand. It certainly has nothing to do with economies in

the homes, but it is a reflection of the general situation in industry resulting in closures and short time working.

At the same time as demand has dropped drastically the price of electricity is shortly to go up by 50 per cent. One problem arising is that of how to keep pace with coin meters filling up due to such an increase, that is, assuming people will be able to pay that price.

The problem is not confined to the S. E. Region however, the same is happening in the industry on a national scale.

The electricity industry is said to be millions in the red, and it is worth reflecting on the change that has taken place in recent times. A few years ago the pundits were saying that the chief problem in the industry was overmanning and that if that were put right the electricity industry would become prosperous and viable. In fact over the last three years the manpower in the industry has been reduced by a massive 60 per cent. It is similar pundits who are advocating big manpower cuts as a cure for the ills of the motor industry.

## THE WORKER INTERVIEW

On June 10th 2300 craftsmen at ICI Wilton came out on strike, setting up pickets at all gates of the massive Teesside site. Process and general workers who were also in dispute over pay remained at work, but would not cross picket lines if challenged or work with non-union replacements for the craftsmen.

By Monday 16th much of the plant was closed down, and there were rumours of lay-offs. But during the night, management instructed four lorry drivers to take chemicals out of the plant. Twice during the night the drivers refused to break the picket lines, and were finally told that they were being taken off pay. This precipitated a strike of all the 7000 process and general workers, who demand the reinstatement of the drivers on full pay. ICI Wilton is now virtually empty but for management, and claims to be losing £1 million a day.

Here one of the craftsmen's shop stewards talks about the strike.

### What is it about?

The basic issue behind the craftsmen's strike is money. Tradesmen have fallen behind on pay, so that they may find themselves working alongside contract labour, doing the same work, while getting paid £16 a week less. The contract labour is used as lump labour, and so is more easily controllable by the management. The ICI men fell behind because the last settlement was low, and threshold was not included. Resolutions were passed earlier this year calling for a strike if no adequate payment was made by June. A claim for an interim payment in April failed because the unions did not act together. By June we were united in a single demand for £63.20 a week, and rejected an offer of £59.29. ICI said that they had no money; that their profits had gone in taxes, pay rises and re-investment. But middle and senior management have received pay increases such as from £3751 to £6083 a year, with an extra week's holiday thrown in.

### What success?

After publicity in the press we expected trouble on the picket lines, but we have nothing but praise for the lorry drivers; there has been 99.9% co-operation. Even the Walls ice-cream vans haven't gone in. The drivers who have crossed the picket-lines have been cowboys; self-employed; after a quick penny. Some of the men working for the contractors have given up their jobs rather than cross the lines. There has been a 24-hour picket on all the gates, with 200 official pickets supported by the mass of the workers. On one day when we thought they would try to break the picket lines there were 150 to 200 men on each of the gates.

### What support?

There has been 100% support for the strike. For a few weeks before the strike the local press had articles on how the workers at ICI were content, passive. Since the strike there has been very little in the media, but workers from other ICI plants have been to Cleveland to find out what's happening. The men are still firm on staying out. They have now lost three weeks' pay and won't go back without something to show for it. The plant is 90% shut down. ICI workers as a whole have rejected the offer nationally, and various kinds of action are being taken.

### Safety?

Regulations concerning health and safety are not being applied in the plant. For example, unqualified staff have been driving tankers, and there have already been two accidents. Does the Health and Safety Act only apply under peaceful conditions? We have complained to the police about the breaches, but they have no jurisdiction over private property, and there has been no action yet from the Inspectorate. The strike has closed the plant except for the Olefines section, and although it is still operating it is a potential bomb. The Propathane plant is operating because management has fooled some men into believing that it has to continue for safety reasons, so safety is being abused in two ways.

### Lessons?

Some important lessons have been learned about solidarity, the importance of pickets, and the extent to which other workers have co-operated. It has become very important to beat management because if the workers win it will be a great positive lesson for the future. We realise that there is a big attack on living standards, and we have to stand up against it.

## TOO MUCH OIL

A similar situation to that in Electricity applies to the Oil industry. Recently all were appealed to for economies of this precious energy source. The speed limit reduced, prices forced up by taxation and other means, and now the whole of the British Oil industry is operating at only about 60 per cent capacity due again to lack of demand.

At the time of going to press the big Shell refinery at Shellhaven in Essex is virtually at a standstill and may shortly close down. This is due to a strike of 36 members of USDAW, but the fact that this strike has dragged on for weeks must be due in no small measure to the advantageous situation that the employer is in. All credit is due to these trade unionists who though they were prepared to put their pay and conditions to arbitration, the employer would not. In similar strike situations in the recent past there has been no firmer advocate of arbitration than Shell. The reason they are not so keen in this instant is self-evident.

## GUERRILLA TACTICS

There are lessons for the workers to learn here. These 36 workers by picketing intensively have stopped the job all right: full credit is due, too, to fellow trades unionists for their splendid acts of solidarity. The TGWU process workers and the maintenance workers in the craft unions have given good support, also members of ASLEF. But it has to be said that the wage offer made to USDAW was similar to the one made recently to the TGWU and the craftsmen, and accepted. It was not a case of any lack of militancy on the part of these workers or lack of strength. They are both much stronger numerically and otherwise than USDAW. What influenced these workers to accept at this time was their understanding of the battleground. It has to be said that if Shell were to determine when to have a strike they couldn't choose a better time than now. The essence of guerrilla warfare is never to let the enemy choose the battleground. That is for the workers to do and they must do it correctly.

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