

# THE WORKER



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## UNIONS MUST REJECT LABOUR GOVERNMENT

**NO TO LABOUR:** No to the Tories; No to capitalism! This must be our response to Healey's pleas for support for the Labour Government. Addressing the national industrial conference of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union in Scarborough, Chancellor Healey outlined the twin pillars of ruling class policy in Britain: wage restraint and support for Labour as the party most successful in enforcing that policy.

In spite of the overwhelming rejection by the trade union movement of any form of wage control, workers have yet to reject the architects of wage control, namely, the Labour government.

Talk about "economic contract" to replace the "social contract" is intended to sow confusion among workers. We still remember the "contract/compact" farce which led to the unions acceptance of Phase One of wage restraint. It is the height of hypocrisy for workers to reject wage control on the one hand while on the other permitting their spokesmen to offer full support for Labour at the next General Election.

THE TRADE UNION movement has shown a spirit of defiance in the first days of May which carries on the spirit of May Day.

May Day - established as a holiday in part as a result of the mass stoppage against the Industrial Relations Act in 1973 - has in 1978 been no holiday. It was a celebration and demonstration by workers of their power. Leeds workers made a mockery of police attempts to ban their march. London saw an unprecedented 80,000 people, mostly young, march against racism and reaction in a carnival atmosphere which defied the depression and crisis which capitalism attempts to foist on us.

The week which followed has seen conference after conference reverse policies of subservience to the employers and their wage restraint.

Running through the debates and decisions is the growing understanding that the Labour Government is as much an enemy of the working class as the Heath administration whose identical policies were shattered.

The EPTU were reminded from the platform that the present minority government was doing nothing socialist. The Secretary of the National Union of Seamen looked in vain for the increased investment in industry which was supposed to result from wage restraint. The Secretary of the

Civil and Public Servants' Association criticised those who put "party considerations above the interests of their members".

This renewed commitment of the members to the traditional aims of the movement, to maintain and improve conditions, is what is so important.

### Need for united action

Yet only a few months back we, this same organised working class, withheld support for the Fire Brigades Union who first openly attacked the Labour Government's wages policy. It now depends on us, the members of our unions, to turn into action this new found firmness of intent.

The declarations are important. But the wages targets reached collectively by the conferences cannot be achieved except by the united action of the members whose decision they are. This is their true significance.

The lead given by the conferences is clear.

The agricultural workers overthrew their Executive's recommendation of £60 a week next January and £80 a week by 1980, by pressing for £80 and £100 respectively. Like many others, they are also pressing for a shorter working week, of 35 hours. Their new secretary, elected in pre-



This mass meeting outside Congress House during a special session of the TUC in the summer of 1976 reflected the growing resistance in the British labour movement to pay restraint, Government wage-fixing and the so-called "social contract". (Photo: Press Assoc.)

ference to an MP, spoke strongly against further wage restraint.

For ASLEF their President declared that the whole trade union movement would unite in rejecting a Phase 4. The Transport and Salaried Staff Association likewise called for an immediate return to free collective bargaining. The EPTU Conference recommended a 38 hour week, a fourth week's holiday and an increase in the hourly rate from £1.75 to £3.00.

### Defeat wage restraint

In the same week the British Medical Association won an increase of 28 per cent, phased over the next two years, and was reviled by the right wing press. The provisions

for future increases are already in contravention of Government plans for wage restraint to come. They also achieved some satisfaction over contracts.

Government scientists threatened a half-day strike against cuts in research. The Association of University Teachers suspended their industrial action of refusing to mark exams, which was the stick with which they beat the government into acceptable negotiations.

The National Union of Seamen, too, demanded an end to wage restraint.

The insulting reaction of the Government to the civil servants' demand for a closed shop shows how they have yet to forge the unity in action which has forced the Govern-

ment to concede the closed shop to many of its other employees - the railwaymen, for example. Yet the opinion of the general secretary of the CPSA that their offer "was worse than if we had been dealing with the Conservative Party" shows a clarity which was also demonstrated by the conference's castigation of the Executive for their dilatoriness on the matter. Both the CPSA and the sister SCPS came out against wage restraint. As one speaker put it: "If the government goes on with this policy, militant executives will be elected throughout the trade union movement."

But it is the action of the members themselves, our own willingness to make our unions

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## Sino-Soviet border letters

After the strong protest of the Chinese Government at an incursion into Chinese Territory in Heilungkiang Province by Soviet service men, the Soviet Union has apologised. It is claimed that the incident was a mistake by Soviet border guards who landed on the Chinese bank of the Ussuri River in pursuit of a 'dangerous criminal'.

When the crossing of the Chinese border was reported, the following letters were despatched immediately by our Party Chairman:

May 11, 1978

The Central Committee,  
Communist Party of China,  
Peking, China.

The reported violation of your border by USSR imperialism is condemned by our Party as an act of aggression which threatens world peace. Our Party demands that the Chinese people and Party be ever vigilant against all aggressors, ever to defend their sovereignty, ever armed against all imperialists, especially USSR imperialism.

Long live the Chinese people!  
Long live the Chinese revolution!

Reg Birch,  
Chairman, CPBML

May 11, 1978

The Central Committee,  
CPSU,  
The Kremlin, Moscow.

The reported violation of China's territory by the USSR in crossing the border can only be construed as an act of aggression. It denies the teaching of Lenin and Stalin and is a betrayal of the great sacrifices of the Soviet people. In World War II, it is an outright abuse of the glorious Red Army who defeated and crushed the mightiest military machine in the world, the Nazis, and saved Europe and the world from fascism. It is an act of imperialist aggression condemned by our Party.

Reg Birch,  
Chairman, CPBML

## May Day visit to Albania

WORKERS in Britain today are not short of advice from all corners of the globe. When you come to weigh it up, however, it is advice only concerned with saving capitalism.

Some tell us we could overcome unemployment by expanding our trade with them. Others tell us to creep in closer with the boss in Europe to save our necks. The Americans tightly embrace our technology and tell us to die peacefully. The Tories say 'accept redundancy and save jobs' and the Labour Party takes out a contract - 'accept cuts to restore your living standards.'

Could it surprise anyone to find a land where workers, having rejected such advice are confidently advancing? Albania is such a place and a striking contrast it makes for the visitor. The workers there, having taken power by themselves, are building a self-sufficient economy to their own plan. Not impressed by the 'world surplus of steel' they are pouring their own at Elbaan. Already the giant complex there employs more workers than the population of that district in 1944. Where they are short of land on the plains they

terrace the hills. Hydro-electric schemes, fertilizer factories, oil wells, mines, schools, hospitals, whole new towns are brought into existence. Railways and roads and electricity find formerly remote places. Factories which started out to supply spare parts are moving on to make tractors and machines. Women have thrown off ancient subservience to forge an equal role in industry and defence.

In 34 years they have transformed the most backward country in Europe into the most successful.

Workers are welcomed to Albania as equals for they do not claim their victory as theirs alone, but rather they see in the world that workers are their allies. Their aim to be self-sufficient has made many enemies among the rulers of the world. Albania is a pie into which capitalism's fingers cannot dip. And to visit there in May, to celebrate May Day amongst the Albanians is a great delight. Their keen interest in the struggle of workers everywhere is that of friends. And their advice is very simple. Make revolution where you are, take control of your own country and build it healthy and independent.



Delegates to the May Day celebrations in Albania invited by the Albanian trade unions being greeted in Kruja by Young Pioneers.

## HISTORIC NOTES

### General Strike in Brighton

OUTSIDERS may see Brighton as a sleepy sea-side town full of elegant Regency houses, but behind that facade lies a chronic housing problem, massive unemployment, literally hundreds of unorganised sweat shops paying starvation wages. And a large industrial base with a proud tradition of organisation by its workforce. Nowhere was this organisation more in evidence than in 1926, during the General Strike.

The Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (the strike-breaking apparatus under the leadership of Winston Churchill) was established in the town and given prominence by the local press.

Notwithstanding this a mass meeting of AEU members was held on Monday 3 May, 1926 and carried without dissent: 'That this meeting of AEU members, having followed the negotiations between the Government, the Mineowners, the Miners and the General Council of the TUC approve of the last body's resistance to any reduction of wages or increase of hours for miners, and pledges its support to the General Council's resistance to this attack on the workers!' A strike committee was set up and pickets arranged.

Meanwhile other trade unionists in the district were also preparing for action. The railwaymen, the transport workers, the builders and the printers had all met and made their plans. These, with the engineers, were the key industrial workers in the area and they were all represented on the Council of Action, set up to assume overall control of the strike locally.

The General Strike descended with full force in Brighton and Hove on the Tuesday. It came suddenly and relentlessly. When the inhabitants of the two towns awoke, there

were no trains, no trams, no buses and no newspapers. It was an unfamiliar world and Brighton was a solid.

The Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies was hard at it, trying to undermine the effects of the strike. There were many clashes, and after one when an unsuccessful attempt was made to run the trams, many workers were sentenced to jail terms.

Morale was high and the effects of the strike still snowballing, when it was called off, by the TUC. The men who had sacrificed so much to prove their solidarity with the miners were completely bewildered when it was realised that their heroic stand had brought them so little. And of course the employers were vicious in their attempts to press home their advantage. Employers tried to resist taking back the active strike leaders. A desperate rearguard action was taken by the workers, and virtually everyone got their jobs back and the unions remained intact.

Though they were busy at the time resisting the attacks by the employers, the miners were still not forgotten. The local work force may have been destitute but they still raised over £1500 for the alleviation of distress in the mining areas. Clothes were also collected and forwarded to necessitous districts. In addition, over fifty children were brought from mining towns and villages and found homes among the Brighton trade unionists.

And when it was all over and Monday (the collaboration between the TUC and the Mond group of employers) ruled the day, the workers of Brighton still stood, bloody but unbowed, capable of fighting another day.

## Detente - it does not exist

WHEN the European Security Conference was held in Helsinki it was regarded as a personal triumph for Brezhnev. For the first time the Soviet Union was given formal recognition as a major imperialist power. The policy of Detente thus began. The first Helsinki conference was followed by another, held in 1977.

The Helsinki conference has as its precursor the Berlin Conference in 1884 when 14 European states, fearful of revolution at home and imperialist conflicts abroad, met to iron out common problems and regulate the colonisation of Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world. Far from reducing tension in Europe it paved the way for the First World War.

Callaghan said in 1977 that Detente is not just for Europe, it is world wide. This has since been echoed by the US who are making noises about Soviet 'inroads' in Africa.

What, one might ask, has the security of Europe to do with Africa? Only imperialists who treat Africa and the rest of the world as their own back yard can come out with an answer.

The people of Europe have no interest in war in Europe or anywhere else. Had it been left to them there would never have been a war in Europe. The only country that has no imperialist interests in Europe or anywhere else, Socialist Albania did not take part in the Helsinki Conference.

As the Foreign Secretary screams about Soviet arms and technicians in Africa, Britain signs a £750m

arms deal with the Shah together with the necessary technical and 'advisory' staff to maintain and deploy them. The Shah, busy shooting people in the streets of Tebriz and other Iranian cities, will soon have more tanks than Britain itself!

As US Secretary of State, Vance, following Britain's lead, threatens the future of Detente because of Soviet policy in Africa, the US signs a multi-million dollar deal to supply Saudi Arabia with the latest F15 jet fighters which are to be maintained by US ground crew and engineers. And France with 1100 troops in Chad together with 2500 technical personnel is getting further involved in the Civil War in the Central African Republic.

Britain has gone further than most in warmongering. Callaghan was the first to welcome the neutron bomb. The Chief of Defence Staffs, on behalf of the British government chose the Peking visit to call for a holy war against the Soviet Union. People's China is being wooed to join one imperialist alliance against another.

Those who welcomed these overtures should remember that it was British imperialism who refused to join the socialist Soviet Union against the fascist threat of many prior to the Second World War. Imperialist leopards do not change their spots.

So where is Detente, this 'easing of strained relations' according to the Oxford dictionary? It does not exist.

## THE WEEK

THE GOVERNMENT clearly does not want an independent British Leyland. The Japanese carmakers have increased their imports by 66 per cent between this April and the last. The Dept. of Trade reportedly will be studying the figures for the next two months, and the Government, obviously more friendly with Japanese capitalists than with British workers is perfectly happy with the former's empty promises not to increase imports. And why not? Japanese imports have risen unhampered to 11 per cent of the market while British Leyland's have dropped to 16 per cent. With car imports reaching an unprecedented 49 per cent of sales, what better argument for doing away completely with the British motor industry?

A SURVEY has shown that of the 40,000 young people employed at a cost of £8.7million under the Temporary Employment Subsidy only one eighth of them could claim to have got a job as a result of the scheme. Three quarters of them would have been employed anyway, whilst the other eighth got work at the expense of older workers, who themselves were put on the dole! Thus over £7million was put straight into the pockets of the real scroungers, the employers. They received £10 a week for 26 weeks for each young person below the age of 20 taken into employment.

WHEREVER the United Nations goes, there goes war. The sequel to the ill-fated British plan for UN intervention in Namibia was not just increased South Africa repression in Namibia itself, but outright incursions into Angola. In the Middle East, confusion and bloodshed has been heightened by their presence.

THE SMITH government's view of their so-called internal settlement was succinctly put in a speech by Smith's Minister of Foreign Affairs (van der Byl) to a closed meeting of invited whites in Salisbury on April 19th.

'We now have the advantage of authentic black nationalists defending our political position... what we have achieved is a masterpiece as a politico-diplomatic exercise. No one could ever have believed that we could get internal leaders to agree to so much.'

THE SECRETARY OF STATE for Education plans for mandatory, means-tested grants for young people between the age of 16 and 18 who are in full time education in schools or colleges. The average grant is estimated to be about £6 per week. However, life on the dole remains more remunerative at £11.50 a week.

SO SMALL is the attachment of workers to elections that the bye-election in Hamilton Scotland is to be moved forward one day to avoid a clash with the opening ceremony of the World Cup. Scottish workers certainly know their priorities.

A TELEVISION programme recently portrayed Yugoslavia as the 'most free Communist state in Europe'. The country was liberated from fascism at the cost of one in nine of its people. But its leaders then wanted to have a 'less dogmatic' form of socialism, a 'Communist Party' which did not need to study Marxism in order to practice it! It has degenerated to the point where 8 per cent of its people are unemployed. Some freedom!

IN A SPEECH on the "Ideals of an Open society" Mrs Thatcher bewailed the erosion of the rule of law in Britain. She was not talking about the corrupt slush funds of the multi-nationals nor the embezzlement of millions of pounds in banking and stock-broking circles, nor tax-dodging on such a scale that the whole system of inland revenue is threatened. No, the great danger to the moral principles of our society comes from the fact that a few people who have betrayed their fellow workers and trade unionists by scabbing in a common struggle for the good of all "can be punished by kangaroo courts set up by those same unions." She went on to complain: "Some workers would admit that they have joined unions not out of conviction but out of self-protection. Others fear flying pickets and similar manifestations of the power of the unions more than they fear the law."

In a new attempt to revive the Combination Acts, Mrs Thatcher is going to change all that by making the rule of law -- that is the employers' law of course -- the central political issue.

Callaghan's attitude toward unions is the same, only more subtle and more dangerous. In the euphoria of the successes he has scored against us in the way of imposing wage restraints in the interests of capitalists profit, Callaghan boasts that he, unlike Mrs Thatcher, knew how to handle the unions. "The Tories bluster when they ought to cajole, and climb down when they ought to be tough."

**Know your enemy**

The capitalist government be it Labour or Tory or Lib-Lab never forgets that we, the organised workers of Britain are the enemy. Behind every piece of legislation, behind every government policy, lurks the determination to keep capitalism fat and secure in Britain at the expense of us, the working class. The unions are seen as hostile to the interests of the capitalist class, all the more so when capitalism is in a state of absolute world-wide decline. Hence the open attacks of "In Place of Strife" or the "Industrial Relations Act". But even more of a menace are the attempts, when open attack fails, to undermine unions by setting up 'impartial tribunals' which somehow always find for the employer, or honey worker-participation schemes like the Bullock proposals, or profit-sharing programmes by which the working class is permitted to invest in the very companies that exploit them.

They, the capitalist class, and their government, never forget that we, the organised workers of Britain, are their enemy. Are we clear that they are our enemy? And that every proposal that they put forward in the 'national interest', every social contract they invite us to agree to, must be regarded exactly as we would an invitation to sit down to a meal prepared by our deadliest foe.

Every time we forget that we are dealing with an enemy or make mistakes about who that enemy is and how he operates, we have to pay for it. Take the tragic farce of pursuing recent union recognition cases, like Grunwick or Michelin, through the ACAS, up by way of the Appeal Courts to the House of Lords and back again. The Grunwick dispute has cost APEX £150,000 of workers' money and at a conference to be held on May 14 it will have to be admitted that there is no hope of reinstatement of the sacked workers. Or take the failure of the pseudo-left to know who the enemy was, joining up outside the Grunwick gates with Labour MPs to do battle with the police when the Labour Government was itself responsible for the police cordon protecting Grunwick's wretched little manager. Or take the recognition strike which becomes almost a metaphysical question about whether a manager can be brought to speak the right verbal formula showing that he is prepared to admit that such things as unions do, in fact, exist. No employer is ever going to recognise a union whose members are cold and wet on a picket line outside the factory while he is snug and warm with scab labour inside. We don't care whether employers recognise us or not in terms of say, tipping their hats to us when they pass us in the street. The only recognition we want is their realisation that they either talk to us about how to get their factory or shop going again, or they are out of business.

Whether it is Claridges or Garners or anywhere else, the employers will recognise our unions only when we are so solid that there is nobody else they can bargain with about wages and conditions in order to get their places of business functioning again.

If we fight the class war here as a real war, there is much less chance of the class enemy involving us in a capitalist war abroad.

**No gain from N. Sea oil**

THE LABOUR Government continues to give much publicity to the 'benefits' which befall the British working class from the pumping ashore of North Sea oil. Callaghan vows to use the oil money to finance the National Enterprise Board. This is only a way under the pretence of revivifying British industry of continuing its destruction. Thatcher would use the money to create a 'sixties style' consumer 'boom'. There will be no benefit for the working class. The money will benefit only capitalism.

The international monopolies bringing the oil ashore know no patriotism and will make tremendous profits from the operation.

All too soon the oil will have been used up in profiteering and Britain will not have taken the steps to guarantee alternative sources of energy.

Capitalism in Britain is in absolute decline and no natural phenomenon, such as North Sea oil, or unnatural phenomenon, such as British workers selling their jobs, can arrest or reverse this decline.



**In Union is strength**

MANY UNIONS at their annual conferences will be calling for a 35 hour week without loss of pay in order to cut down unemployment. They are realising that it is time to stop talking about unemployment and expecting the Government to do something and to begin winning more jobs at the bargaining table.

The Department of Employment admits that the 35 hour week could reduce unemployment by between 100,000 and 500,000 but on behalf of the employers complains that it would increase labour costs by between 6.1 and 8.5 per cent and would have a serious inflationary effect. Increasing annual paid holidays by one week could reduce unemployment by between 25,000 and 100,000 but would increase labour costs by 2 per cent. Therefore the Department of Employment (it ought to be called the Department of Employers) argues for a reduction in overtime. All overtime could be parcelled up in new jobs at normal pay and would add nothing to labour costs: it would merely take certain workers below the poverty line.

A WHITE PAPER on 'Industrial democracy' is before the Cabinet for approval as Labour's policy on 'worker participation' for the next election. It is a watered down version of the Bullock proposals which even the CBI is unlikely to object to. It includes as a statutory right the provision that trade union members, after the scheme has been in action for from three to five years, can claim one third of the seats of a company's policy board - rather like black representatives on the governing body Smith has set up in Zimbabwe. The White Paper proposes that there would be an immediate statutory right for trade union members to be consulted by their employers on major company decisions but it is a little vague about what could be done to companies which refused to consult. Unions could always take their case of not being consulted to the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service and many years after the decision they were not consulted about was over and done with, they might even hear that really they should have been taken into the management's confidence! Some Cabinet ministers think that a new body needs to be set up - an Industrial Democracy Commission. Let us assure the Labour Cabinet, and the Twelfth Conference for Workers' Control which has been meeting at Sheffield University to work out even more elaborate schemes for hoodwinking the working class, that they can all pack it in. We are not fooled. The interested in that which we have won for ourselves by overthrowing the capitalist class enemy and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat

THE OLD 'chicken or egg' controversy about whether low wages cause low productivity or low productivity causes low wages has come up in connection with ICI's report that the sales value per employee in ICI, whose wages are comparatively low, comes to £23,000 as compared with £35,000 for Europe and £45,000 for the US. 'The Times' commenting on this report naturally finds the explanation in the restrictive practices of British trade unions - waste, demarcation, slow servicing, refusal to operate new machinery and overmanning. This argument, that it is the power of the trade unions in Britain which has brought about the decline in industry, also finds expression in a report by Eric Jacobs in the 'Sunday Times' which says "working people have done badly under a Labour Government in terms of jobs and real wages, yet the powers and the privileges of the unions have multiplied." If the trade unions really were running Britain, and had brought about a situation where millions of their members were out of work while certain industries were overmanned, where training schemes and apprenticeships were being slashed while employers were complaining about a lack of skilled workers, where the oldest and best organised working class in the world was slipping behind workers elsewhere in pay and conditions, then we would have to agree that our trade unions were misusing their power. These are all crimes of capitalism in absolute decline, the decline being more precipitous in the oldest capitalist country.

**NALGO pay**

WORKERS in NALGO are quickly becoming aware of the pitfalls of following guidelines laid down by their own employers, the British capitalist state. The required number of branches have called for a special conference to debate a motion that calls for an end to NALGO's participation in wage restraint. The meeting takes place on June 2nd.

Already one of these services, the Water Group, has made its position quite clear. The motion overwhelmingly carried included the following:

"This special Group Meeting expresses grave concern at the erosion of members' living standards and declares opposition to the Government's present policy of using as an economic regulator, the control of wages in the public sector by way of cash limits and direct intervention in the collective bargaining process, and the acquiescence of the TUC in this policy.

"This special Group Meeting also rejects the proposals currently being discussed between members of the Government and certain trade union leaders aimed at imposing permanent control of wages bargaining in the public sector, and calls on the National Water Services Committee to ignore the Government ten per cent guidelines...."

This call to ignore the guidelines is one that now has to be spread so that NALGO once again can stand up as an independent union.

**DESKILLING SOCIAL SERVICES**

A NEW 'qualification' called the Certificate in Social Service (CSS) is being introduced in different parts of Britain. It has been hailed by local authorities as a radical opportunity for the large number of social services' staff who are in need of training and an improvement in conditions. However it represents a dilution of social workers' skill and is part of the national trend.

At present a large number of social workers do not hold the recognised professional qualification, the Certificate in the Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). Residential social workers are paid less and work longer basic hours than field social workers. But with growing unionisation in all spheres of social services, both groups have initiated a welcome move towards parity, including attempts to integrate field and residential work and residential workers beginning to obtain CQSW.

Unlike the CQSW which is studied full-time for one to two years at university or polytechnic, the

CSS is an in-service training scheme aimed at residential workers lasting five years and is recognised as inferior in quality to the CQSW. Once completed the CSS holder is not guaranteed more pay, promotion or increased status and is not able to convert the CSS to a CQSW by further training.

So, the second rate, cheap CSS will perpetuate second class status for many social service workers and attack social work skill. Its proponents speak of 'raising standards' yet for example in East Sussex the council's trainee social worker scheme (whereby people are recruited as trainee field and residential social workers and after a year are seconded to CQSW courses to return qualified) is being severely cut in order to introduce the CSS. The implications are serious: recruitment will drop, workers will receive inferior training, quality of work decline and pressure increase. This attack on social workers' conditions of work and the service they provide requires firm resistance by NALGO and NUPE.

## Fight to save Bethnal Green Hospital!

3000 PEOPLE marched from Bethnal Green Hospital in London's East End to the offices of the District Management Team in Whitechapel on Wednesday 10th May.

The object of the demonstration was to protest at the DMT's plan for the destruction of Bethnal Green Hospital as a community hospital catering for the needs of workers in the area. Their idea is to slash

the total acute beds by 300 (1 in 3) and to close all general facilities e.g. casualty and laundry. This would result in an average of 35,000 patients a year being diverted to other hospitals in the area, a strain they could not possibly cope with.

The demonstration was well supported by workers from the locality including NUPE members from five London hospitals - Mile End, St. Leonards, London,

Hackney and of course Bethnal Green itself, as well as local tenants' associations, UPW, T & G W U Brewery workers, print, UCATT and ambulancemen.

The situation at Bethnal Green is not unique - no matter where we live we do not have to look far to witness an attempt being made to shut down a hospital, a school, an office or a factory. They can only do this if we let them.

## GEC sack workers to boost profits

LAST month, 160 redundancies were announced at AEI Cables, Northfleet, Kent, to be split between 'staff' and shopfloor, as a result of a decision by the parent company GEC to increase its profits by saving about half a million a year on wages.

Immediately, the unions concerned responded in a united opposition to any redundancies, but since then the company has changed its tack and attempted to divide the manual workers from the white-collar. Realising that there was already considerable drift out of the factory of manual workers because of the low wages, they have promised no redundancy of manual workers if they will co-operate in retraining

and work-sharing so that jobs can be lost by 'natural wastage'. By this, means they hope to turn AEI, EEP TU, T & G, and G & M against TASS, the white-collar union, by asking foremen and manual workers to take on tasks previously performed by technical and supervisory staff who will be sacked. The Company is adamant that 60 'staff' must go.

This apparent 'saving' of 100 jobs is reckoned a victory by some, but in no way is this the case! Firstly 100 jobs lost by 'natural wastage' is still 100 lost jobs; even though manual workers and AEI might not suffer personally, their mates and children certainly will. By accepting 'retraining and reorganisation'

they are throwing away jobs which do not belong to them personally, but to the whole working class, including their mates on the dole queues and youngsters about to leave school. Secondly, the refusal by some workers to struggle, the division of one union from another, and the bitter feelings that result, will only bring nearer the day when GEC decides they have no opposition worth worrying about if they decide to close the factory altogether!

The decision of TASS members to refuse to take over anyone else's work is the only correct decision, and will be supported by all workers who know where their true interests lie.

## WORKER INTERVIEW

OVER 300 members of the National Union of Journalists were sacked in Reading, Cardiff and Middlesbrough by Thompson Regional Newspapers for taking action in support of 75 journalists sacked at Hemel Hempstead 2 days after refusing to work unpaid overtime during a pay dispute. All 166 NUJ members at the TRN Newcastle Chapel came out on indefinite official strike until their 400 plus colleagues were reinstated. Whilst on strike they produced their own thriving newspaper, "North-East News", which, despite attempts by TRN to intimidate advertisers proved to local people that the journalists have the skill to produce a far better paper than the dire product they produce under the auspices of the TRN.

During the dispute the following interview was made between THE WORKER and the Secretary of the Newcastle Branch (including 8 Chapels) of the National Union of Journalists.

Question: What is the nature of your dispute?

Answer: It is over our right to take trade union action, 75 of our colleagues were sacked in Hemel Hempstead for working to rule in support of a pay claim. Approximately 300 of our colleagues were also sacked for taking similar action in support of those originally sacked. This action, as at Hemel Hempstead, was withdrawal of unpaid overtime.

The pay claim itself was over a productivity agreement, which is already common in other Provincial News Offices, both inside and outside TRN.

Our strike has moved on from the pay dispute. When we get back to work it won't be on the basis of any more money, either for us or anyone else. Negotiations on pay have been suspended for the duration of the strike. We're out to get the NUJ members jobs back and prove that the employer can't sack workers for taking industrial action.

Q. How solid is the strike and what is morale like?

A. We've been out for a month now and the strike is 100 per cent solid. All the journalists on the three papers affected, apart from the editors of each, are NUJ members - 166 in all. Morale is very good at the moment - we can see we've had considerable effect on the papers which, to our way of thinking, are not proper local papers.

We're prepared to stay out for as long as it takes - hopefully not too much longer - those with families are finding the £25 per week NUJ strike pay hard to live on.

Q. What has been the public reaction?

A. Some rather misleading impressions were created when it first blew up. Once we were able to get over the facts of the dispute and the fact that we are not among the better paid workers on Tyneside, the public response has been good.

We have been particularly pleased with the great amount of solidarity shown and help received from Newcastle Trades Council and the National Union of Students in this area.

Q. What is the national, long-term significance of the dispute?

A. Obviously, if we conceded to the employers their 'right' to sack our colleagues for working to rule then we would be weakening the union immeasurably and laying other unions open to exactly the same threat.

## EEC vs milk

### TRADE UNIONS

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WHO BELIEVES Silkin when he assures us that our Milk Marketing Board is safe from interference? Especially when we see the charade of their decision-making process. The European Parliament on May 9th voted in favour of dismantling the Board. Immediately a cry of protest was raised from six MPs who had been unable to attend. If only they had been there, how different things would have been! But they were unavoidably engaged in voting on opposite sides of the important proposal to reduce income tax by one penny. Not that in reality it made a jot of difference. Mr Silkin would have us believe that he and his colleagues have taken the decision which they say will safeguard doorstep delivery of milk. But will it?

This is the tangle of muddleheaded procedure that the Labour Party Executive has committed itself to, declaring "It would not wish the mounting feeling of dissatisfaction with the EEC to go unrepresented and therefore believes that the Labour Party should contest the elections"! So now British MPs are to bring to Europe their backbenchers' lament on their inability to influence decisions - but sung now with an added poignancy from the first-class compartment of a jet shuttle between London and Strasbourg.

But decisions will nevertheless be made, as they always have been, without reference to a Parliament. The Milk Marketing Board, so efficient an aid to producing and distributing milk, can never be free from the threat of EEC destruction. Set up in 1932, and dependent in part for its administration on the farmers themselves, it

work in the role they were designed for, which is crucial. The clear sightedness of the leaders of the AUEW was shown when they voted against "any attempt by the government to interfere or attempt to close or run down British Leyland". But the membership on the Saturday before at Speke, had already accepted the closure of their plant, again in opposition to their stewards' recommendation. The way forward, as the AUEW National Committee and Conference shows, is clear. Out of the Common Market. For an improvement decided on and won by the members themselves in wages and conditions. A shorter working week. Refusal to work overtime until colleagues are found work. The Trade Unions to force the employers to create employment.

That we achieve such aims and progress depends only on ourselves.

assures jobs to 40,000 milk roundsmen. With 60% of production going into fresh milk which is delivered to nine in ten households, it gives incalculable benefits to us all.

It is not the impotent protests from parliament, but pressure from producer and consumer alike that has forced Silkin to adopt the pose of protecting this precious asset. The surge of public opinion against the EEC is typified in the recent vote of the AUEW against continued membership. We must force withdrawal from this senseless tangle of red-tape and profit-seeking destructiveness, the EEC.

## The "A code"

IT IS well known that Social Security does not go out of its way to encourage people to make rightful claims when in need.

Just come to light is "A Code", a secret Social Services document specifically designed to thwart people's attempts to claim their rightful benefit. One section forces a student into a prolonged struggle to gain a grant for his dependants. If he has already tried and failed to get a dependant's grant from the Local Education Authority, he is eligible to apply for a hardship allowance. If he is not told this. If he does apply, the Social Security clerk must advise him to terminate studies and sign for work in order to gain Supplementary benefit. Section 'A 1536' then further states that if the student "registers for unemployment but continues with his course, supplementary benefits should be refused on the ground that he has not made himself available for work."

We should not expect any better treatment under capitalism. It does not willingly give back benefits. And in particular, it is keen to encourage a sharp decline in numbers of students because such a skilled workforce is not needed for a declining industrial Britain. And in this case, the students should be demanding an adequate grant which renders hardship allowance unnecessary. Students should not leave it for MPs to take up the case and protest indignantly about the 'unfairness of the system'. No victory will be won except through solid, organised struggle of the entire student movement - a struggle which must also have support from all other Trade Unionists.


## Capitalism kills babies

THE SPASTICS SOCIETY has attempted to draw the nation's attention to some very disturbing statistics. 18 years ago the infant mortality rate in France was 22 per cent higher than in Britain. The rate in Finland was the same as here. By 1972 however, the French rate was 10 per cent and the Finnish rate 30 per cent lower than that prevailing in Britain.


Every year 28,000 babies in Britain are damaged before

during or immediately after birth. With more investment in research and far better childbirth facilities, this alarming number of damaged babies could be drastically cut.

The Spastics Society is right to highlight the deplorable conditions in the maternity sector. Nor will we tolerate inferior provision in any other sector of the health service. Better health for all!



## Bookshops



**Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, London NW 5**  
**Basildon bookstall Tues Fri Sat Marketplace**  
**Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds**  
**Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol**  
**Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton**  
**Liverpool bookstall - Every Saturday at Paddies Market,**  
**Great Homer Street, Liverpool**

YOU are invited to come to public meetings organised by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). All meetings will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Friday evenings at: Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, Tufnell Park, NW5. (Tufnell Park tube)

Next meeting:  
 May 19 No school closures, no transfers, save education

**'The Worker'** 155 FORTRESS ROAD, LONDON NW5  
 6 months £2.50 (including postage)  
 1 year £5.00 (including postage)

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