



THATCHER'S WAGE CUTS

IN BRITAIN, the oldest capitalist country, the fall in the rate of profit predicted by Marx has reached a point where the profit system can only survive if the working class can be made to accept a drastically lower standard of living. The Thatcher Government is the spearhead of the attack on our standard of living. Why should we live in poverty to preserve the system that exploits us? Our fight to save our jobs and skills, our fight for adequate wages and decent conditions of work, our fight to keep open our hospitals, schools, universities and the very factories that are the core of Britain's industrial strength is the fight to throw out Thatcher and capitalism.

With the Tory "philosophers" proclaiming that people should feel themselves owners not wage earners, the anger towards the Government's wage policy must come as a rude shock. Why can't the nurses, for instance, be content with the proceeds from their property, instead of demanding more as wage earners?

The policy of Thatcher seems to consist of a sort of "unity of opposites". Thus the 22 per cent inflation is really the "government's fight against inflation", and the dedication to free collective bargaining reveals itself in a policy of wage cuts.

Thatcher's own dedication to non-interference by Government has shown itself to be a kind of dictatorship. Even the promise of "prosperity round the corner" is now written as poverty around the corner.

This weapon of double speak is not new to politics. Maybe it is just that the present gang are drunk with power. Indeed the Chancellor is even speaking about "intoxication with the patient". The real question for us must be how much longer we will remain "patient with the intoxicated".

As the one who is supposed to know about economics, the Chancellor advocates that people should be prepared to accept reductions in real living standards. He said people, not MPs. They say that instead of bargaining for better wages, we should be bargaining for our own survival.

The workers in the public sector will show the way and Mr Biffen promises a "protracted winter of discontent". The fact it is still only spring will surprise no one, once you have grasped the intricacy of government thinking. After all, how can you have a summer of discontent - it is not even Shakespeare.

And then the great thinker of the gang turns up in the US offering money for wealthy Americans to invest in Britain with its added attractions of low pay and a docile workforce.

This should not really have been overheard in Britain because he had been telling us there was no money for investment because we were too highly paid and had priced ourselves out of a job. Also we threw eggs and things at him when he was driving in Wales.

The Chancellor said he would love to talk to the TUC about pay restraint, and even Thatcher agreed to meet the nurses although she refused to interfere with the wage cut she was intending to impose on them. They should be setting the country a good example, not talking about industrial action. If everyone was going to be as selfish as the nurses, where would the country be? MP's worked hard for their extra £60 per week and really, considering the bargaining power they had, this was an example of restraint for the whole country to follow.

Government attacks nursing in offer of starvation wage

ONCE, out of office, Thatcher promised to reward nurses' forbearance in not taking industrial action, with some system for maintaining their pay levels up to the general level of earnings - now, in Downing Street, she has snubbed their representatives with a ruling of 'not a penny more' than 14 per cent, the government's intended limit for the public sector (except the army and the police).

The Royal College of Nursing, so recently pledged not to take industrial action, has decided at its 1980 Representative Body (RRB) to call another Extraordinary General Meeting (and ballot of members) for the end of June, to consider the necessary constitutional change again: this time on a full democratic basis with voting rights for student nurses, one third of the total membership.

But first the RRB had to listen to Vaughan, whom the RCN itself had invited, tell them 14 per cent was the limit. Strong dissatisfaction came through in discussions of the Clegg Award, and a majority supported Council's Emergency Resolution to reject the Whitley negotiating machinery and seek new methods.

When the RRB heard then that the doctors' and dentists' pay award was to break the 14 per cent limit, a unanimous call for a new ballot on industrial action came from the angry delegates. The type of actions proposed, said the Vice-Chairman, would cause administrative disruption and embarrass the government, without affecting services to patients.

The Whitley Staff Side unions, bitterly angry at being offered 14 per cent again at their next meeting with management, walked out after only fifteen minutes, and demanded the infamous meeting with Thatcher.

Now the nursing unions, the RCN, NUPE, COHSE (with its conference in June) and others, have been brought closer than ever on this question of pay, at a time when they have just begun to organise in large numbers.

Games boycott boycotted-blow for world peace

IT SEEMS likely that more nations will be represented at this year's Moscow Olympics than at Montreal in 1976. Of the 22 nations which won 2 or more gold medals in 1972 and 1976 only 5 will not be competing - the US, Japan, West Germany, Kenya and Norway, and even West German athletes are clamouring for another meeting in the hope of reversing the decision that they should not go to Moscow.

85 committees have accepted the Moscow invitation, and only 19 have boycotted for political reasons. Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Bahrain, Bermuda, Cayman Islands... It is but a list of the most reactionary and Yankee dominated countries of the world... Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, West Germany. So much for the great 'Western' boycott. Thatcher had only the West Germans to go to for her one crumb of (partial) support, her line rejected first by British and then Europe and the world's athletes.

With US TV stations eager to televise the games, one wonders wherein the success of the boycott for Thatcher and Carter lies.



Nearly 2,000 workers march against Cruise missiles in Oxfordshire. Photo: The Worker.

OUR LIVES AT STAKE!

TGWU opposes drive to war

"THE re-equipment of NATO with attack weapons, the Government's decision to start making chemical warfare weapons again, their pathetically revamped "Civil Defence" programme, their "cuts for everything useful and boom for the arms industry and defence spending" policy, and their toadying to the USA and Europe, are sucking Britain into the morass of international political hysteria and brinkmanship in the wake of the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Afghanistan crisis.... We thought the prospect of being dragged back into the social and economic tragedy of the 1930's was bad enough. Now we are faced with a world nuclear crisis which may interrupt that terrible Tory journey with a holocaust.

Support your Executive. Protest to survive."

Quotations from a letter by Moss Evans in the paper of the Transport and General Workers' Union. For article on the Oxford March for Peace, see Page 4.

BUTTER up 2p a lb, beef up 2p a lb, cheese 2 1/2p, sugar 1 1/2p. £200 million a year more in higher food prices. A five per cent rise in farm prices. And so on. And we are told to believe that Thatcher's tough negotiations on Britain's EEC contributions have led to a "cut"! The 'Daily Telegraph' in its usual blatant and reactionary way spoke the truth about this charade of negotiation. "There is little evidence that the Nine have acted less cohesively because of the split on the budget". British fishermen, those few of them left, look with apprehension at the new settlement. Britain's capitalist farmers gloat at higher prices. Arguments about Britain's contribution to the EEC budget avoided the real issue anyway - we want Britain out of this capitalist, anti-working class club.

"AND THERE is no doubt that the police killed Blair Peach". This from the Tory "Evening Standard". What is particularly sickening about the inquest on the past President of the East London NUT is less the iniquity of the procedure - 13 months delay, a report available to the police but not the solicitors acting for the family, the comments of the coroner - than that at no point have the police denied that the killing was the result of the SPG. The verdict of "misadventure" is tantamount to saying that "reasonable force" can include killing of a demonstrator in what the coroner called a riot. The fact that 40 witnesses saw the SPG flailing at defenceless demonstrators hunted down the Beechcroft Avenue cul-de-sac, but that the handful of SPG involved at that point could remember virtually nothing of what they did is presumably what is meant by a riot.

THE CHAIRMAN of the local council in Brandon, East Anglia, who thought there should be US missiles based nearby is the local un-Jer-taker.

BBC MANAGEMENT has shown its misunderstanding of and contempt for public service broadcasts by cutting precisely those things it would be expected to fight for - orchestras, educational broadcasting, radio drama. The Musicians Union is taking action to oppose these cuts by boycotting work with the BBC from June 1st :- thus putting in question the BBC's sponsored Proms. In this action they have the support of the Association of Broadcasting Staff. Other Unions of artists who work in broadcasting will have to take similar action to support the fight for public service broadcasting in Britain.

AS THATCHER offers the nurses less than a pittance - and the profession is grossly understaffed because of it - the Manpower Services Commission has kindly offered to help out. They plan a recruitment drive for nurses in South Wales - among the redundant steelmen.

IN THE nineteenth century local government consisted of some 2000 separate and autonomous local authorities who, apart from a few specialist posts for which Parliament had prescribed qualifications, employed whom they pleased as they pleased.

It is no coincidence that at the turn of the century - a time when total trade union membership in Britain topped two million for the first time - workers in local government began to look to collective organisation to bring about change.

The breakthrough

The first real break was the founding of the London Municipal Officers Association.

Next came the foundation of the Liverpool Municipal Officers Guild by Herbert Blain in 1896. This was the first association of local government officers in Britain which attempted to reach all the staff of an authority.

Blain sought to extend the idea and within four years similar guilds were formed in many places.

Starting off with 8000 members the new association grew rapidly. By 1914 its membership stood at almost 35000 or nearly 70% of all local government officers. But in terms of trade unionism they were indeed early days. Its aims were pensions, the improvement of the efficiency and status of local government officers and the abolition of nepotism rather than the

improvement of salaries.

The horrors of the first world war created a desire for a new world and an increased interest in trade unionism.

With all this came a new statement of policy which, while not actually mentioning salaries, went beyond the previous policy in setting out, as its main objective, the creation of an "adequate and efficient local government service". Opponents denounced the plans as "not reorganisation but revolution - blood-red anarchy". NALGO at last was on the right lines!

Advent of Whitleyism

It was no surprise that, given its historical background, NALGO evolved into Whitleyism. With the idea that local government officers were a "responsible" class of workers and that trade unionism was inappropriate, the attractions towards the findings of the Whitley Committee's report published in 1917 were obvious. Whitley Councils with their "gentlemanly" joint industrial councils representing management and workers provided a "perfect" method for NALGO to step into the field of pay. The fact that Whitley had met against a background of industrial unrest and in order to "secure a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and workmen" was seen as a good thing rather than the dampener on trade union-

ism it was intended to be.

Ironically no sooner had the local authority employees agreed to a draft "Whitley" constitution and a set of salary scales than local authorities reneged one by one. Very few kept their agreements, and so NALGO set itself the task of rebuilding from that tiny nucleus. It was a case of NALGO fighting for Whitleyism when Whitleyism had been invented to fight trade unionism.

The employers finally realised the opportunity Whitleyism provided and in 1943 the National Whitley Council for local government was set up with the first national salary scales laid down in 1946. To this day, Whitleyism has remained the cornerstone of NALGO's negotiating procedure. Meanwhile, NALGO did have one major achievement - the original objective of retirement pensions. This had been a long uphill fight, culminating in the Superannuation Act of 1937.

The post war years

The post-war years saw NALGO facing a potentially crippling loss of members as the national health, gas and electricity services were formed by removing their functions from the municipal authorities. In the event NALGO decided to follow its members into the new services and in 1952 changed its name from the "National Association of Local Government

Officers" to its present title "The National and Local Government Officers Association".

In 1961, NALGO took a major step towards full "trade unionism" status with the addition of a strike clause to its constitution. Members did not rush to take advantage of this and it was not until 1970 that 18 members' first official strike action took place at Leeds over the application of an incentive scheme.

Affiliation with the TUC

Finally, NALGO took its biggest step towards being a trade union in the fullest sense, when 43 years and twelve conference debates and six ballots of the membership after it was first suggested, NALGO decided to affiliate to the TUC. Despite all the forebodings that members would leave in droves, NALGO recruited 7,500 members within 6 months of affiliation with just a handful of resignations.

The Union has grown and grown. In this, its 75th year, the 750000th member has been clocked up making NALGO Britain's fourth largest union and the world's largest white collar organisation. This anniversary year, of course, saw NALGO's finest hour when there was a magnificent and successful response to the call to action against the employers during the recent comparability dispute in the local government section.

Religious fanaticism and terrorism in the Middle East

THE EUPHORIA which accompanied Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the subsequent Camp David agreement presided over by Carter has today completely disappeared. The peace promised by smiling Carter, Begin and Sadat over a year ago, has brought more fears and misery to the people of the Middle East.

One would have thought that such a turn of events would have been treated with surprise if not astonishment by political commentators and the media who sang the praises of the "men of Peace", as they kissed and shook hands on so many occasions a year or so ago. On the contrary, the failure, if such

a description can be used, for it assumed honourable intentions on the part of the participants of the 'peace' initiative, is treated with a 'what did you expect' approach. The perfidy of imperialists is taken for granted even by their friends.

The war in Lebanon continues to be fuelled by Israeli support and direct intervention, with utter disregard of UN troops and international opinion. The West Bank remains under military occupation more tight today than ever before. Israeli Nazi tactics of expulsion of suspects and their families, bombing their homes, detention and torture are used with monotonous regularity. Those who are actually

found guilty face a more straight forward punishment.

In Egypt, freedom of speech and organisation is trampled under foot by a Sadat who finds the mildest opposition a threat to his rule.

Neither did Camp David stop the inhumane attacks on the civilian population of Israel by Palestinian gangs who, faced with Israeli terrorism, respond with terrorism of their own. The result is that common humanity goes out of the window. The world is periodically treated to outrageous episodes of an armed gang occupying an Israeli home, taking women, children and babies hostage and an Israeli counter-attack, regardless of the lives of

the hostages and gunmen.

The gall of the Shah in Iran shook the Middle East. However, the take over by fanatic Ayatollahs brought no hope to the people of that part of the world. The rule of the Ayatollahs brings joy to their counterparts in Israel, the fanatic Zionists, to Begin and the other notorious ex-leaders of the Stern gang, who now dominate the Israeli cabinet. The people in Israel and the rest of Palestine have no future in religious fanaticism and superstition. Their common interest lies in an end to war and oppression so that all can live in peace and harmony. That is what the 'men of peace' cannot tolerate.

Korean people rise up against American supported dictatorship

FOR MANY YEARS the large international monopolies, at the behest of the capitalists who control them, have been systematically removing their assets and industrial investments away from countries such as Britain, where workers are well organised in trade unions and have achieved many basic liberties, to countries such as South Korea, where workers were unorganised, wages low and the people held in subjection by a ruthless dictatorship relying on US military support. Capitalism hoped it had found its El Dorado - a land of high profits and compliant workers.

Imagine then the feelings of surprise and trepidation the international ruling class must be experiencing at the recent turn of events in South Korea which clearly indicate that the people there are no longer prepared to tolerate a low standard of life under a military dictatorship.

The popular rebellion against martial rule enjoyed vast support, not just among students, as our media would have it, and was particularly strong in the Cholla province, and in its capital city,

Kwungji. Indeed, the military could only retake Kwungji by besieging it completely with tanks.

As expected, the South Korean government blamed the revolt on "a few North Korean spies", while the USA took advantage of the situation to make wild threats against the North. The ruling class hesitates to acknowledge

what is really happening: that the South Korean people are tiring of military dictatorships operating as a client state of the USA and international monopolies and are flexing their muscles.

The government have won a pyrrhic victory - the writing is on the wall. The South Korean people will not accept military

dictatorship and are after a freer life. They are unwilling to remain cheap wage slaves for the convenience of profit margins when inflation is running at 18 per cent and unemployment is growing.

Martial law, mass arrests and the closure of colleges will not stop the South Korean people. El Dorado has been lost.



Editorial

The Thatcher Government is embarking on a replacement scheme for Polaris missiles costing 5 billion pounds which, when it is completed in about 5 years time, will already be hopelessly out of date!

It sounds like sheer madness; but only from our point of view. Some 5 billion pounds will have been taken from us and handed over to the arms manufacturers, so there's nothing mad about it from the point of view of the war profiteers.

Kissinger recently had to admit that, at the very time when the economic ills of the West were all being blamed on the OPEC's increase in oil prices, he encouraged the Shah of Iran to boost oil prices so that Iran could pay for all the arms being bought from the US.

The US suffered complete and ignominious defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese; but that didn't prevent vast fortunes from being made out of the war by the armaments industries. Nazi Germany was crushed by the allied forces but Krupps was not destroyed and flourishes yet.

Marketing war

Of all forms of production under capitalism, that which is most harmful to the world's people, the armaments industry, is far and away the most profitable. No other industry, try as it might, has been able to achieve such a degree of built-in obsolescence, requiring complete replacement of whole systems of weaponry every year or so. Unlike other forms of production, the problem of converting goods into money by selling them so that the industrialist can reap his profit doesn't exist. Arms are bought and paid for before they are made — with our money. Other markets become glutted and the price falls, but not the arms market. As long as there's a 'free' press to disseminate war-scares, the market is wide open.

Furthermore, there is no check at all on either the quality or quantity of the arms governments say they are paying for. Either the nature of the weapons is an official secret or by the time we actually have them in our hands because we are at war, it is too late to send in a letter of complaint. For all we know it could simply be said that 5 billion pounds had been spent on a better, more up-to-date missile system and our money could go straight into somebody's pocket. In fact, it would be better for us if it did!

All this expenditure on armaments is called "defence expenditure"; but it isn't for our defence: it's for their defence against us — the workers. And we pay for them to arm themselves against workers everywhere! What really makes them drool is the thought that those arms might be used getting rid of some three or four million surplus workers who are a danger just hanging around on dole queues.

Fighting the warmongers

It is no use appealing to a capitalist Government like ours to cut arms expenditure so that the money can be spent on social services instead. Nor is it any use appealing for saner policies to any capitalist political party. What is laughingly called the Labour opposition always endorses every bit of 'defence' legislation. It isn't even any use being a pacifist and declaring yourself against war if you aren't against the capitalist system and its government that finds war so useful and profitable.

We are in favour of war on capitalism, all out war — whether it takes the form of people liberating themselves from imperialism as the people of Zimbabwe have just done or of throwing out the war-mongering Thatcher government of Britain as we are committed to here.

AUT Conference

THE DEVELOPMENT of clarity and class consciousness of university lecturers continues apace. Following their decision to affiliate to the TUC two years ago the Association of University Teachers has continued its growing opposition to capitalism's rapid destruction of the seedcorn — education.

At their recent Council meeting in Liverpool the AUT dealt with three main items, and emerged all the stronger and more unified. On pay they voted to press for a single salary scale in order to create a more equitable system of pay. Also they empowered their negotiators to withdraw their 1980 claim from Clegg's incompetent 'comparability' board should they not gain satisfaction. This not only represents a great advance among university teachers, but also a lead that must be followed by other workers who have been delayed, confused, abused and now finally deceived by this attempt to

achieve fairness under capitalism — Clegg.

The AUT also debated the Flowers Report, which proposes the closure of six of London University's Medical Schools. As the Deputy General Secretary said, "What happens in London is a precedent for what happens elsewhere." The Association instructed its executive to "organise united opposition by all local associations against implementation of the report."

Similarly the University Grants Committee's (UGC) threat to close or transfer Russian departments in nineteen universities was dismissed as "shoddy and disgraceful". This threat is just as much an attack on the culture, education and skill of the working class as is the closure of a school. Also the AUT recognises its ability to defeat through struggle even the most determined government. As the President said, "If we can stand firm the UGC must quietly shelve this report."

London takes up fight to save ILEA

PARENTS, teachers and students throughout London are clearly telling this Government that they won't stand by and see the Inner London Education Authority (the country's best resourced education authority) dismantled, for they know this Government is only interested in cuts for the majority and preferential education provision for the few.

Because of the total inability of the Baker Committee (a secret Tory group that recently reported in favour of breaking up ILEA) to make an educational case for handing control of education to the local boroughs, the Government has set up an internal inquiry into ILEA. Certain leading Tories, especially Thatcher, are determined to see ILEA broken up but it is fast becoming a battle which

the Government will be scared to take on.

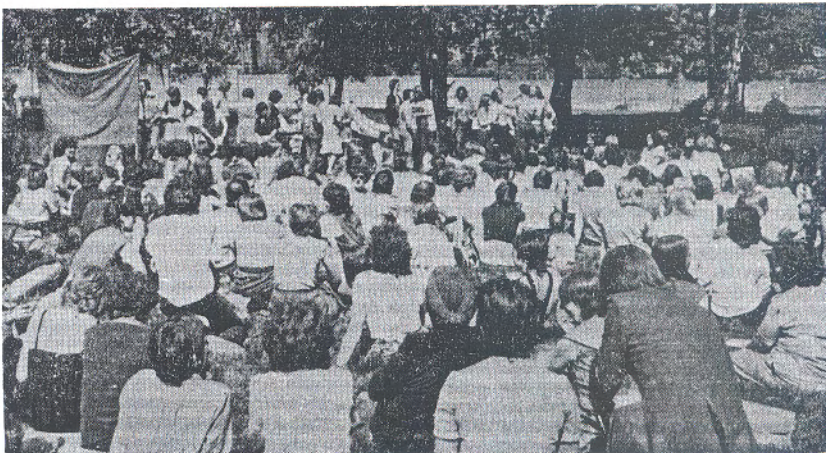
Opposition to the destruction of ILEA is so great that Carlisle, the Secretary of State for Education, has been inundated with submissions, letters and petitions supporting ILEA. In fact so vast is the opposition that he will no longer say how many representations he has received — and all in London who care for education must keep those letters of opposition flooding in.

The South East Region of the TUC has organised a steering committee of the 8 major unions with members working within ILEA to co-ordinate union opposition and give assistance to the local campaigns that are now springing up all over London.

Throughout London, all those

employed in the education service recognised the TUC's Day of Action on May 14 as an opportunity to tell the Government not to break up ILEA, and this was one of the central themes of many of the marches and rallies. In Wandsworth there was an excellent response to the Trades Council Festival and to Wandsworth NUT's Rally for Education at which 500 local teachers assembled for an open-air meeting.

The campaign to defend ILEA is growing from strength to strength with massive meetings of parents and teachers being held all over London. Parents, teachers and other trade unionists will show this Government that they will not stand by and see their education service cut to ribbons or dismantled.



Education rally, May 14th, Wandsworth.

Photo: Worker reader.



NATFHE President stressing the need to fight cuts and maintain world peace. The full report on the Conference will be published next week. Photo: The Worker.

Kent march against cuts

OVER 200 Canterbury Trade Unionists, parents and teachers, protested angrily that Kent Education Committee had no justification for cutting a further £4.2 million off the education budget.

This cut follows £12 million taken from education last January, and precedes a possible £10-15 million next Autumn.

The usual noises were made by the Authority. "We don't like doing it, but we have to because central Government cut our Rate Support Grant." The meeting responded by demanding that local elected representatives fight with them to get funds from central government restored. Money which should be for education was being spent on arms by Thatcher's government. So much so that...

- If expenditure on arms in Britain was stopped for one day, 72000 teachers could be employed for a year

- If it was stopped for one hour, Kent would not need to redeploy or make redundant any of its teachers for the next 4 years and class sizes would fall to the range of 25-28 pupils.

- If it was to stop for one second, a selective school threatened with closure in Canterbury would be safe till the end of the century.

Thatcher's government is all for "parental involvement" in education. But as one speaker pointed out, for "parental involvement" read "pay twice over". One area of Kent has already asked parents to pay £10 for their offsprings' books and stationary.

FULL REINSTATEMENT FIGHT BY NUJ AT IPC

WHATEVER happens in the struggle between the International Publishing Corporation and its 1400 journalists, May 30 will be a day to remember. Unpaid since April 6, sacked since April 25, the journalists, members of NUJ, decided last Friday at a mass meeting that they would fight on for full reinstatement.

The dispute, which started out as one over a new wage deal, has turned into a bitter fight against the work-or-be-sacked line so popular with Government and employers.

Two days before the meeting, the management announced that they would no longer be tolerating what for them has been a highly embarrassing work-in by sacked journalists. As from Monday, June 2, they said, any journalists found on the premises of IPC (the biggest magazine publishers in the world) would be deemed to be

trespassers.

But the journalists refused to be cowed. They said they would turn up for work, and would not leave it voluntarily. Would the management dare to bring in hundreds of police to evict the journalists in a glare of publicity?

Support for the journalists has come from the Mirror Group, which, like IPC, is owned by Reed International. In an unprecedented move of solidarity Mirror Journalists pledged to take action on Monday afternoon if the trespass notices were not withdrawn. This would mean that on top of the £15m IPC has lost already in the dispute, publication of the Daily Mirror and Scotland's Daily Record could well be stopped.

The latest news we have is that negotiations are taking place and IPC have already undertaken not to take any action to enforce their trespass notices on Monday.

