

# THE WORKER



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## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING VICTORY THROWS GOVT IN DISARRAY

THE FINAL withdrawal of the teeth of the Labour Government's pay policy as the price of a few more months in office is only the latest consequence of the labour movement's restoration of collective bargaining.

The assertion by the organised working class of its determination to have a collective voice in the pricing of its own labour power continues to have repercussions throughout the whole capitalist state structure.

The Labour Government remains nominally in power but bereft of the one plank in its programme on which its right to govern the country - a pay policy in defence of profits which defied the trade descriptions act in its claim to be in 'the nation's defence against inflation'.

The Tory opposition huffs and puffs but does not really want to take office and confront the organised working class at this time when its own policy on pay is in complete disarray. It knows that sooner or later some capitalist party is going to be expected to come forward with a policy of out- and - out coercion, but meanwhile is waiting coyly to be summoned.

Now that the proceedings of Parliament are more public, through broadcasting, than ever before, that body shows itself like nothing so much as a bear pit where the animals divert

BAKERY WORKERS in spite of the tricks of the employers, the guidelines of the Government and the harassment of the police, have won through to the victory of a 14 per cent offer which they have accepted.

The six week industrial action by the 26000 Bakers' Food and Allied Workers Union was the longest in the history of the bakeries - Rank Hovis McDougall and Allied. Spokesmen for these large firms kept boasting about the continuation of sup-

people from their troubles by growling and scratching at each other. The emptiness of the show appears when a policy of sanctions which had no statutory force anyway was defeated by a strange confusion of shattered party elements and resented in everything in Parliament staying the same! Nothing could more clearly have shown up the House of Commons as irrelevant to the real class struggle which is being fought out elsewhere.

The Labour left, encouraged by the real opposition to capitalism of the labour movement has stitched together a new manifesto with all the old socialist-sounding nostrums - a wealth tax, more 'nationalisation' - involving banks, the diversion of investment to the inner cities, trade union involvement in planning agreements etc., etc. What the situation really demands is not capitalism dressed up like socialism but socialism itself.

To end this year with the governmental representatives of capitalism in complete disarray as a result of the labour movement's successful defence of the right of collective bargaining. We have imposed a stern set-back on capitalism's agents but we have not defeated capitalism itself. We must be ready for capitalism's riposte.

lies during the strike but it cost them £15 million and they will be a long time winning back the share of the market lost.

Just before the strike ended the police, who have constantly tried to prevent the bakery workers pickets from being effective, arrested a whole column of 'flying pickets' moving against a mill in Tewkesbury supplying flour to blacked bakeries. 68 bakery workers were held in custody in Cheltenham police station



National Union of Journalists pickets prevent Swindon Evening Advertiser edition going out. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

## Provincial journalists fight Newspaper Society for an increase in wages.

MANY provincial daily and weekly newspapers are falling to print at the moment because of a strike by 8,500 journalists. The journalists are seeking a £20-a-week pay rise, which is well above the government's futile guideline.

They are not receiving strike pay in this, their first ever national strike, but colleagues in Fleet Street and the books and magazine sections - unaffected by the dispute - are holding regular collections.

Support for the journalists has come from the print unions in the best example of solidarity

yet seen in the newspaper industry. Transport union members have refused to cross picket lines and dock workers are also giving sympathetic help.

This strike - which stems from the National Union of Journalists' decision at their annual conference to ignore any outside interference in wage bargaining - is proving much stronger than Press managements expected, especially as other trade unionists recognise the justice of the claim.

In fighting the management and the government the jour-

nalists are fighting for that most basic of all trades union demands - what they need and what they want. By so doing they are developing themselves as trade unionists and building for the future.

In many towns the strike has been a hundred per cent and papers have been halted, but even in those places where management-induced rebels are defying the union the morale is extremely high.

TURN TO PAGE 4 for an interview with a Chapel official at the Brighton Evening Argus.

## Millions demonstrate against Shah

JUST over two weeks ago, with the advent of the mourning month of Moharran, the military government in Iran announced "the marching of mourning groups is absolutely prohibited." King Canute could not hold back the sea, so why should Iranians with the ability to think be held back from demonstrating their sentiments "Down with the Shah, Death to the Shah!"

On December 11th and 12th millions defied martial law and marched against the monarchy. Previously the mullahs had been told that all non-Islamic laws could be revised in accordance with religious principles and the clergy would be invited to help. But still millions marched because their opposition is political rather than religious.

A Charles 1st sits on the Iranian throne put there by God, he believes, put there by the American Central Intelligence Agency we all know.

But the CIA has lost grip on Iran after twenty five years. In the summer the CIA told Carter "Iran is not in a rev-

olutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation. Those who are in opposition do not have the capability to be more than troublesome." They regret their complacency now, but they were not alone. The West German Foreign Minister, giving the go-ahead to arms sales, declared Iran was "no longer an area of tension." The facts belie this diagnosis.

As well as nearly two million demonstrating in Teheran last week, thirty abreast and five miles long, a million came out in Mashad 700,000 in Tabriz while Abardjan, Esfahan and Shiraz claimed 300,000 demonstrators each. In addition, all Iran's major oilfields are hit by strikes, as are the oil refineries except for Abadan where strikers were gunned down a month ago. Oil output is down to 1.3 million barrels a day, a quarter normal supply. The oil-rich Shah now has to buy oil abroad while the industrialised countries that have kept the Shah in power suffer shortage. This, more than anything else,

has caused Washington to re-think its support for the Pahlavi dynasty.

They need to give him support because he is their man and the alternative for capitalism is worse. Yet oil shortage creates panic and the Shah may be dumped. Particularly as oil companies have been told that those who support the Shah can expect little oil if he falls from power.

However Kissinger recently argued that "many elements of stability will disappear" for the USA if the Shah goes. To this end, the NEW YORK TIMES reports that a number of CIA agents have been rushed to Iran to help stiffen the badly demoralised regime. Military and police experts dominate the CIA reinforcements. Britain has had counter-insurgency personnel in Iran for many years. That is part of the "special relationship" between Britain and the USA. But, given the previous CIA analysis of Iran, what is most striking is the lack of intelligence of intelligence agents.

## Guerrillas 'unbust' the sanctions

RHODESIA'S Combined Operations HQ proudly announced this week that on raids in Mozambique over a hundred guerrillas had been killed or wounded and weapons and explosives dumps destroyed. However, guerrillas claimed two aircraft had been shot down, a claim denied by the Smith Government.

What they would not deny, however, was the fire in Salisbury following guerrilla attack on a Salisbury oil depot. Over half the storage tanks were affected. Damage is put at over £6 million. Ironically, the sections of the depot most affected are owned by Shell-BP-Total, all of whom have recently been implicated in sanctions breaking. Well, what the British Government would not do about it the guerrillas have done for them. Given that our government says it deplores sanctions-busting by oil companies, then surely the government must support the attack on the oil depot. If you believe that, you will believe anything.

The Labour Government is having a bad time of it, for all its cunning. Cledwyn Hughes, Callaghan's emissary sent to southern Africa to gather support for an all-party conference on the future Zimbabwe, has come back empty-handed. Resistance to the Smith Government is now so strong that martial law is widespread. On October 4th, one fifth of Zimbabwe was put under martial law; by November 24th, three quarters were living under such military rule. The old Rhodesia is slipping away from Britain's grasp. Smith, who had promised a new constitution, is seen as meaning in reality the old order with a new face.

With cruel twist of irony, when the oil depot was destroyed, it was revealed that South Africa could still supply plenty of oil, so not to worry. Where does South Africa get 90 per cent of its oil from? Iran. What's happening in Iran? The government is having to import oil! What we would call a bad week for capitalism.

## THE WEEK

ONE of the reasons why Ford profits are so enormous was shown when it was fined a total of £650 for working conditions in which a man lost a hand in a milling machine, and another was dragged along a conveyor belt. Perhaps it is cheaper to be fined for the occasional loss of a limb, than pay for safety.

ITALY and Ireland showed how predatory the European Monetary System was by holding out for better compensation terms for joining. Not for long, as they are now in, riding roughshod over public opposition. The British Treasury has been talking, not only about joining, but of "concerted action on economic management to include inflation rates and incomes policies." But if Callaghan can't get wage restraint, what chance for Brussels?

AFTER the rise in profits of major companies such as ICI (measured in thousands of millions, not millions as we reported in this column), comes news of a rise in Post Office Profits - up £10 million to £170 million. Yet they have the nerve to say that a pay claim of 24.4 per cent from the Union of Post Office Workers would add 2p to the price of a letter! Post Office workers cannot accept this. Nor should they demand to be treated as a "special case", so claiming status as "special rats" in what their spokesman, Jackson, wrongly called the "ratrace" of collective bargaining.

CARTER's desperate need for an international coup to make up for the loss of an Israeli-Egyptian peace settlement (how right they were to demonstrate against Begin in Oslo!) has been met by China. China has agreed to full diplomatic relations with the US from the beginning of 1979. The condition was that the present Chinese leaders would tacitly agree to an arrangement over Taiwan acceptable to US Senators. Representatives of MacDonalds and Coca-Cola are now in Peking.

PRINCE Charles has blamed British industrial decline on our schools. His mother, meanwhile, is due in Iran next February. To learn from a country where they do things better?

LAMBETH, Southwark and Lewisham Area Health Authority, which defied the government by overspending by £4 million have agreed not to do so in the future. But the government are still begging for the missing millions. Other authorities can be forced to do the same thing.

THE MINISTRY of Defence is refusing to allow Portsmouth workers to refit the "Fearless". They allege the work is behind schedule, but the real reason is that Portsmouth workers were among the most active in the widespread industrial action this summer.

## Guatemala workers' resistance grows

WHAT do United States slogans about human rights really mean?

Guatemala is a case in point. It was the prototype for the Chilean disaster: ten years after a previous dictatorship had been overthrown the CIA engineered a coup to destroy the country's brief independence. Between 1944 and 1954 1.5 million acres had been confiscated from private landlords, mostly from the US-owned United Fruit Company. After the coup the reforms were reversed at the cost of blood and starvation. Now 2.1 per cent of the population own three-quarters of the land.

The coup did not put an end to resistance: by the mid-60s both workers and peasants were fighting back hard. The response was to give fascist para-military organisations US arms and complete freedom to murder. From 1966 to 1968 between 3000 and 8000 were butchered in the pro-

vinces of Zacapa and Izabal alone. Colonel John Webber, US military attache, acknowledged in *Time* magazine that "it was his idea and at his instigation that the technique of counter-terror had been implemented by the Guatemalan army in the Izabal areas."

The "technique" of repression has been used unabated ever since; conservative estimates put the numbers kidnapped and murdered between 1966 and 1976 at 20,000; most victims are tortured before death. Popular disgust at US support of such regimes has led to some pious sentiments from the Pentagon but capital continues to pour in to Guatemala.

The motive for the 1954 coup was the safeguarding of profits in the face of the growing strength of workers and peasants. For the same reasons support continues. After all, money is at stake and what is the death and

mutilation of thousands against that? In 1975 the US-owned Del Monte Corporation made \$36m out of banana production and it was estimated that the firm's starting capital would be repaid in three years.

Meanwhile the workers and peasants continue their fight despite 20 per cent unemployment, 52 per cent underemployment and the two or three mutilated bodies that are found every day. In October government buildings were occupied and demonstrations held against a doubling of bus prices (not surprising considering the average urban worker spends 15% of his wages on transport). The increases were reversed, showing the strength of trade unions organised despite fascism.

The strength and determination of resistance indicates that US monopolies and the butchers they employ will be driven from the country.

## Socialism in one country - fighting for ourselves

SOCIALISM in one country was discussed at the last meeting in the autumn series organised by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) in London.

Until 1917 it was generally supposed that socialism in one country was impossible to achieve. In 1915, however, Lenin wrote that revolution in one particular country could not be prevented once begun. His belief that it could be consolidated in one country was proved true after 1917. Socialism was built in Russia, a country surrounded by enemies. The imperialists, led by Britain, launched the attacks of intervention and blockade and armed the White army. Their defeat, and the successful spread of the socialist ideology throughout that vast country is the inspiration of our age.

All the pessimistic carping and criticisms of the opposition were proved wrong not by argument but by positive results: a country that was industrially and economically backward was transformed

through industrialisation, electrification; a country without reserves of capital refused all outside aid and created wealth for its people.

Opponents of the Bolshevik Party claimed that the Soviet Union could never defend itself against its enemies without a protective ring of socialist countries - but socialism was consolidated throughout the nineteenth-thirties while fascism developed without.

Two other struggles for socialism on the other side of the world, in China and Vietnam, were born in the nineteen thirties. As in Russia, the successful revolutions there demonstrated how socialism in one country depends on understanding our national contradictions. In Vietnam and China successful revolution followed on the understanding that the colonialists were the main enemy, and then the national bourgeoisie. All this means that socialism can only develop in one country - it cannot be exported or imported.

After the Second World War socialism in one country emerged victorious. What has happened since in the world, in the Soviet Union and China, shows only that complete victory is not always possible in a world dominated by imperialism. Albania, however, has applied the principles of Marxism-Leninism to building socialism in the most backward country of Europe.

But is socialism possible in the very heartland of imperialism, in Britain? Britain is a country where a materialist and scientific ideology gained the ascendancy over religion long ago, where awe of the monarchy is long dead, buried with the king the people executed. The working class of Britain is rooted in the country and faces a capitalist class which has no roots - multinationalism also means weakness. In their weakness they attempt to destroy our roots, and their home base. Only a migrant nomadic working class can serve capitalism now.

So if the class does not take hold of socialism, what is the alternative? We can't turn the clock back to the nineteenth or early twentieth century, to hopes of an evolutionary socialism. We can't turn to a united international communist movement for aid, which is no great handicap really. We have to rely on our resources in any case.

Everything is in our favour: the world is in ferment, and we have vast resources of energy. We must understand that if we allow fascism to return it will be fascism with the neutron bomb this time.

If we understand that socialism is possible in one country, then the capitalist class in their frenzy to destroy Britain understand and fear this too. This takes us back to the beginning, to Marx, who said, "The proletariat must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."

## EDITORIAL

WITH this issue of THE WORKER we have completed ten years of publication, during which not a single publishing date has ever been missed.

In those ten years we have gone from monthly to weekly publication; we have progressed self-reliantly to the point where all the processes connected with bringing out a newspaper are under our direct control, and most importantly of all, we have learned through practice to develop our newspaper as the main political dialogue between our Marxist-Leninist Party and our British working class.

The ten year effort to deep up the regularity and quality of this political dialogue is one measure of the Party's commitment to the working class and to the working class's historical mission of ending the exploitation of man by man.

These last ten years have been of vital importance to the working class in Britain. In that time the growing crisis of capitalism has manifested itself in a number of attacks on trade union organisation, British capitalism, unable to rule in the old way, has attempted to legislate the trade unions out of existence by such Parliamentary means as "In Place of Strife" or the Industrial Relations Act. When that failed the attempt was made to render trade unions redundant by replacing collective bargaining with the fixing of wages by government decree.

All these desperate measures to bolster up profits were described by capitalists and their government, no longer confident of their right to exploit workers, as the fight against inflation. We have just seen the British Labour movement rally in defence of collective bargaining and the TUC, in response to this massive challenge, put an end to any social contract with a Labour Government.

Since the organised working class of Britain is rooted in British industry and by its skill and energy has made the Britain we know and take pride in, the capitalist class in its determination to destroy the organised working class has shown itself willing to destroy British industry and Britain's national integrity. Hence the attempts to merge Britain in Europe or split it up through devolution. But the national resistance of the labour movement to these moves is growing stronger.

These developments reflect a growth in the class political consciousness of British workers and a greater understanding of the way social democracy serves the interests of the class enemy. It is no accident that they should have coincided with the foundation and development of the working class's political party, the CPB(ML) which is also a reflection of this growth in political consciousness. It is no accident that this time of working class consolidation and advance is the time in which THE WORKER has been established and has developed in the interest of the working class. The struggles of the class are the school in which we in the Party and on the Party's paper learn how to carry on the political dialogue between Party and class.

At the end of our first ten years of publication we pledge ourselves to continuing service to our working class and its revolutionary ideology.

# Farm workers continue fight for wages

"WE sow it, we reap it, but we can't eat it" said the placards outside the Ministry of Agriculture in Whitehall on December 7th. Five hundred farm workers from 20 counties came to lobby the Agricultural Wages Board, meeting to discuss the claim of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers (NUAAW) for more money.

Farm workers in England and Wales on a basic minimum rate of £43 for a 40 hour week have lodged a claim for £60 for 35 hours, four weeks' holiday (to replace the present 2 weeks and third week for long service) and a larger differential for craftsmen. Despite a whole day spent negotiating the employers refused to budge. Their offer remains at 3 3/4 per cent for the ordinary grade and 6 1/4 per cent for craftsmen.

So there is a chasm between what organised farm workers want and what the employers are prepared to pay. This is nothing new in this country where militancy is not resorted to by the workers in pressing a claim. The NUAAW has 90,000 members out

of 135,000 full-time farmworkers and 40,000 regular part-timers in England and Wales. An industry like farming, only half-organised by trade unionism, tends towards resignation and quiescence and appeals to being a 'special case'. More often than not a farm will be worked by two, maybe three, farmworkers who consequently lack the confidence that prevails when a large group of workers can deal firmly with a tight-fisted employer.

When the NUAAW claim breaks government pay guidelines and the claim is taken before the Agricultural Wages Board (eight employers' representatives, eight union representatives and five government-appointed 'independents') what else can we expect? The Board, set up under another Labour Government in 1948, rules the roost until union members press the claim. What could be done to strengthen the claim?

There is militancy, as shown by the stoppage at government agricultural stations in Rosewarne in Cornwall and at Stratford-upon-Avon. The TGWU has 3000 members in England and Wales

and represents all organised farmworkers in Scotland. The TGWU also has as members the milk tanker drivers as well as drivers of oil tankers. The Scottish farm workers' claim has been refused also so that the conditions for struggle are present and advantage should be pressed.

Why otherwise is Britain's most productive industry, technologically advanced and capital intensive, such a lousy payer to those who produce in it? (The harvest this year will be a record 17.5 million tonnes.) So productive is farming that institutional investors, like pension funds, unit trusts, property bonds and insurance companies are buying into it. The imminent publication of the report of the Northfield Committee will show the role of such investors.

We may have contented cows but until discontented farmworkers (17 per cent of whom receive family income supplement, more than any other group of workers) turn discontent to action poverty will remain the lot of the farmworkers.

## Common Agricultural Policy : less food

FOLLOWING the Prime Minister's condemnation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) there has been a revived concern in the press and elsewhere about the vagaries of an agricultural plan which creates vast, expensive mountains of food.

This call for reform from within the EEC is intended to convince the British people that entry into the Common Market was a sensible move. We are supposed to believe that if only a few changes were made we

would see the great benefits.

The suggested reforms of the CAP are not reforms at all. The CAP is a system designed to make as much profit as possible. This is achieved in two basic ways.

A price is fixed on a particular foodstuff and this is guaranteed to farmers. When the price falls below this the foodstuff is bought by the administrators of CAP and stored. This causes the mountains and is a political embarrassment to

those who advocate the necessity for a common agricultural policy.

The other method of maximising profit is the one now preferred. This is called structural reform and actually means cutting productive capacity, concentrating the farming into fewer hands, and making a nonsense of any advance in producing more food. The abolition of the food mountain only means less food, not more for everybody. The price won't go down either.



Hospital workers demonstrating against cuts in 1977. Photo: Andrew Ward (Report).

Dear WORKER,

After a week of the most disgusting press and television attacks on pickets at Charing Cross Hospital, it was a revelation to have a report from one of the shop stewards there at my branch meeting. The picket of AEUW and EETPU members was in solidarity with sacked NUPE members at the Western Hospital next door. What became clear from the shop steward's report was the way that lies are developed and enlarged in the mud-throwing industry in Britain. The Hospital Management claimed that oxygen and oil were running out, yet the drivers who brought the fresh supplies had

to turn back because the tanks were full.

Thames Television appeared at the picket to "do a story". They brought their own gang of heavies who descended on a lorry that had agreed to turn back, shouting abuse at the driver, telling him alternately to go through and turn back as the camera and sound crews recorded them, the shop steward reported.

Not satisfied with that "story" the TV company then apparently set up a scene where women and children would come and complain about picketing. Naturally, the steward said, they didn't film these "extras" arriving to the scene in Thames Television vans. Two pickets were confronted

by four pickaxe-wielding thugs in the early hours of the morning. All the front windows of a shop steward's house were smashed in during the night.

In his report, the shop steward explained that the action taken in this dispute aroused no hostility from delivery drivers and did not, nor was intended to interrupt any vital supplies to the hospital.

But then why should we be so amazed that those in Britain who are doing so much to destroy our Health Service should at the same time conspire to attack those who work in the hospitals and compose stories designed to set the public against them?

Yours fraternally,  
An AEUW shop steward.

## News in brief

ROLLS-ROYCE are backing the government's attempts at wage restraint by insisting that shift and overtime payments agreed earlier this year should be deducted from the present offer of a five per cent increase. 1200 workers at Barnoldswick, near Colne struck on November 17th against this, with the full support of the AEUW. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions has insisted that local agreements should be in addition to any five per cent wage rise, and British Leyland (controlled, like Rolls-Royce, by the National Enterprise Board) has already conceded this. Now all the 30,000 manual workers at Rolls-Royce are considering an overtime ban on the same claim. This could have rapid effect, because of the company's shortage of skilled manpower, and its need to make a rapid start on new orders.

NUBE, the union of bank employees, is about to launch an all-out attack on Saturday working. The union members are opposed to it because the National Westminster and Midland banks think that Saturday opening will get them more custom (read profit) and the NUBE know that it will not be long before the rest of the banks start doing it.

The banks aren't willing to pay overtime and the NUBE members aren't willing to accept that, nor are they willing

to work Saturdays anyway.

LEADERS of 5000 dockers from Hull and Southampton, as well as 19 other ports are planning a united campaign on wages. Southampton dockers have a claim of 15 per cent, at Hull 20 per cent. Action has already started there, with a work to rule causing many delays to shipping. Unity has meant an assurance from other ports that ships turned away from Hull will not be unloaded elsewhere. It also means that 155 dockers with North Sea Ferries, already offered a separate deal provided they call off their action, will not do so, but will stick together with their 2000 mates at Hull, in the overall fight with the major employer, the nationalised British Transport Docks Board.

STRONG union opposition has stopped Wiltshire County Council from utilising the Manpower Services Commission for work on insulating 750 houses in Bradford on Avon, Melksham and Warminster. The unions objected to the fact that the council would pay the 'unemployed' working on the project less than if the council paid contractors. The technical director of the council made the remark that "it would be better to let the contractors do the work now, than wait for consultations between the MSC and those unions involved."

## WORKER INTERVIEW

We talk to a Chapel official of the National Union of Journalists at the Brighton Evening Argus, where 42 journalists are on strike as part of the union's national claim for decent wages.

Question: Why did the Chapel come out on strike?

Answer: We obeyed our NEC's order to strike because we wanted to grasp the opportunity to express our revulsion at the management's failure, over many years, to do something about journalists' wages and conditions. Whenever management considers the budget for the year journalists always come last on the list.

Q: Why should journalists be at the end of the pay queue?

A: Provincial newspapers are not about journalism in the accepted sense of the word but about making money. Millionaire Press barons simply see papers as a licence to print money. All their budgets are calculated so that their main resources are fed towards the money-earners areas of the business, like advertising. Print workers have a history of militancy and bargain from strength so they come next on the list. But when journalists bid for their share of the cake they are denied that most essential of bargaining weapons - the closed shop, or hundred percent unionism. Employers hide behind the false belief that a closed shop is a threat to the freedom of the Press. The real threat is that journalism is gradually being denied people with adequate skills and principles because of penny-pinching accountants.

Q: Even though there are forty-two journalists striking, we hear that some journalists are working on. Why is that?

A: There are three basic groups who are working. First, there are those who are thoroughly individualistic and who can't be bothered to be a member of any organisation. Second, there are those who fly under a flag of convenience - the Institute of Journalists - which is merely a pretence of a union. Third, there are self-seekers who think they can increase their job prospects by working. For instance, we had some resignations just before the strike call and, in most cases, those people who were not committed to helping colleagues and who were not prepared to make any sacrifice to further the cause of their colleagues.

Q: This sounds as if the NUJ is badly split and that members don't understand what belonging to a union means.

A: Nationally, the strike has been obeyed very well and this may help in the future with those who have pulled out this time. When a strike is called the most common excuse to try to avoid taking action is to blame the NEC. There may be times when tactics can be questioned but the membership needs the discipline to obey as a body, and so to give their negotiators the maximum leverage. If one of the print unions is given a strike call there is no discussion about the disobedience and their tradition of trade unionism hold firm.

Q: Was the NUJ's strike well prepared for?

A: As far as prior consultations with the membership are concerned it would have been difficult to have got the members more involved. Expensive and time-consuming meetings of national Chapel representatives were held to discuss the claim and the tactics. However, even this process has problems. First, by voting against the 5 per cent limit we had to vote for a programme of action leading to a strike. Second, in doing that, we left no time for consultations with the print unions.

Q: Why should you need to ask print unions for their help?

A: The truth is, of course, that we shouldn't. Journalists have too often expected other unions to do their fighting for them, and the print unions have taken the line that before they get involved they want to see journalists going out first. But with a union as vulnerable as ours it's only sensible to ask our fellow trade unionists to help. The most heartening thing on the picket lines at the moment is the solidarity of the TGWU drivers who have refused to carry vital newsprint across the lines. Of course, this reliance means that management are bringing pressure behind the scenes to set union against union and worker against worker. So far that has failed.

## Firemen protect service

AS REPORTED in The Worker, the Fire Services is being chopped to make way for the shorter working week. On the Merseyside, this meant 16 fewer appliances, and two stations closing. The local Fire Brigades Union branch, following a national policy of opposing any cuts, instituted a work-to-rule in one of Merseyside's divisions. The demand: no closures, no cuts.

Their action, while comparatively restrained, gave them a position, strengthened by the national strike last winter, that was strong enough to extract commitments from the Chairman of the County Council. Namely, that five out of ten pumping machines that were axed will be brought back into service within a year. The number of men in training will be increased from 150 a year to 250 to cater for manning these machines - 100 extra jobs.

In addition Strand Road Station, Bootle, will remain open until the extra men are trained.

The FBU believe this will mean an extra 18 months to two years before the Bootle station closes. The axing of the other appliances and the closure of Hatton Garden station were reluctantly accepted.

Meanwhile, the implementation of the 42-hour week will be from January 1st, 1979. The delay in introducing the 42-hour week has been used as blackmail to encourage acceptance of the cutbacks.

A success like this, gained directly from struggle, is a shot in the arm for workers, especially on Merseyside, where incessant redundancies were having a numbing effect. It provides useful encouragement within the FBU generally, faced with identical attacks elsewhere as reported in Issue No 44 of The Worker. Moreover, it highlights the potential within our class as a whole to challenge this bourgeois dictatorship over us that masquerades as democracy in order to preserve a declining capitalism.

## Student Conference

THE ISSUES before the National Union of Students as it met in Conference in Blackpool from 8th to 11th December were clear. The student movement is under a prolonged attack, mounted by the Department of Education and Science, on cuts in educational expenditure and the lamentable level of student grants.

A motion demanding outright rejection and setting out a guide to action was defeated by 92,000 votes. Students went on to accept the concept of nationally negotiated "guidelines" (read "limits"), thus weakening the essential strength of the NUS-local initiatives being taken in pursuit of national demands.

This issue, more than any other, showed the contradiction now evident within the Union. On the one hand there was not-

iceable feeling against the Government proposals, and on the other, Conference was unable to reject the proposals.

Discussion on the Manpower Services Commission also took place. Students are slowly waking up to the fact that not only are the MSC schemes inadequate in catering for the needs of young unemployed workers, but that they represent a direct attack on the existing education system.

Conference began to recognise the implications of its own mistakes, but took some dangerous steps on the road to incorporation with the Government. However, students do not yet have the clarity and courage to rid themselves of their self-imposed restrictions and to stand up to the onslaught of the Government's attack.

## Public transport axed

IT IS often said that the various forms of transport constitute the arteries along which the life blood of a nation flows. We all know of the bashing the railways have taken under Beeching and ever since. In a pamphlet entitled Public Road Transport Support it or Lose it, the Transport and General Workers' Union have produced a first class case against the proposed changes in the bus licensing laws which are an attempt to do much the same to public road transport.

Given that the proposals pass into law, the intention is that regular bus services should be replaced by privately owned car and mini-bus services. Unlike the established services these will be exempt from fare restrictions.

For more than half the population buses are the main form of transport. A bus carrying 30 passengers is far more efficient and economical than 20 or so motor cars. It takes up less room, produces less noise and pollution as well as using less fuel.

## Police arms

AN ARMED robber was shot dead by a plain clothes policeman outside a supermarket in South London. Assistant Commissioner informed a Press Conference that only highly skilled, highly trained marksmen are issued with arms. There is no risk to bystanders, not from the police anyway came the assuring voice of MPs, the press and TV.

The post-mortem examination of the dead man revealed that out of the four shots that the Detective Sergeant fired only one hit the robber. Another went through the front window of a first floor flat overlooking the supermarket. The bullet went through the window-pane hit a curtain and landed in front of a TV set which was entertaining a father and son to the Pink Panther Show. The mother working in a florists below the flat had the window of the shop shattered by a third bullet. The whereabouts of the fourth bullet has as yet not been revealed. Forty-eight hours later, over sixty policemen and twenty dogs surrounded a fire station in North London, with guns and rifles aimed at the entrance from every conceivable direction and hideout.

Eventually a young man came out with his arms in the air, lay in the middle of the road, another followed lying in a similar manner, spread-eagled. With the guns still aimed at the two men from behind lamp posts, dustbins, police cars and doorways, the two men were searched and found clean, as clean as can be expected having spent two nights under siege. . . . they left their sawn off shot gun behind in the fire station.

Was all that necessary? Yes comes the chorus from the police, MP's, Press, etc., etc.

## ASTMS claim

UNIVERSITY technician members of ASTMS in 36 Universities are working to rule in pursuit of a 40% wage claim.

Years of wage restraint have resulted in a drastic erosion of salaries. Low pay is being used to destroy university technical services. In spite of high unemployment, skilled staff are steadily lost. Great difficulty is often found in recruiting suitably qualified staff because of the miserable salaries offered. Many posts remain unfilled or are 'absorbed'.

The present national action highlights the growing realism amongst technicians that government intends to destroy our education service, but we will not let them take what is ours.

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