

Workers' fight

3p

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B.M.A. Leeches' threat to wreck Health Service

BLOOD MONEY BLACKMAIL

A STORM of abuse and controversy blew up when ancillary workers and nurses took action to clear out private patients from National Health Service hospitals.

In their efforts to distort and confuse the issues at stake, the defenders of privilege in health care have come up with, appropriately, a bumper crop of double standards. Appropriately, because double standards is what the pay beds dispute is all about.

Even those who haven't sought to defend the pay beds system have chosen to direct their fire at the ancillary workers for stirring up the BMA hornets' nest. Instead of attacking these racketeers who threaten to sabotage the NHS, they turn their fire against the ancillary workers whose action has been taken to try and save the NHS from total collapse.

'Lowest'

The war over the pay beds didn't start at Charing Cross. But up to now, except for a few isolated actions in the North East, in Lewisham and in Portsmouth, it has been a war of words. TUC and Labour Party conferences have repeatedly passed resolutions to abolish this state-subsidised private practice. But it was the ordinary rank and file ancillary workers, the 'lowest of the low' in the Health Service hierarchy, who by their direct action put a stop to this game of words.

And this is the sort of action that the ruling class hate most of all. 'Hitting the sick is wrong' they cried with one voice: a voice that wasn't half so loud as half so strident and that wasn't

by the Editor

even heard) when the Tory government hit the sick by lopping £111 million off the Health Service budget; a voice that says little about the 10,000 people in London alone queuing up for hospital treatment, about the dreadful old buildings, about the exhaustion of the nurses and junior doctors who shift all the work, or about the new schemes and possibilities that can't be started for lack of money.

Britain, in fact, of the advanced capitalist countries, is bottom of the league for expenditure on health.

We haven't seen mass meetings of senior doctors and consultants threatening sanctions if more isn't spent on the health service. We haven't seen their angry protests about young doctors falling asleep on the job, or about the people they depend on in the kitchens, laundries, corridors and wards living in dire poverty. They haven't threatened to emigrate or go-it-alone to save a Health Service that was set up to provide for everyone on the basis of need rather than ability to pay.

Influence

But then, right from the start, they opposed such a service, and only agreed to work for it if they could keep their perks. For all their training and skill (acquired, incidentally, at state expense) they don't care about health. They do care about money, and lots of it, and their own prestige and influence.

This influence has never been used on behalf of a better Health Service. And there is good reason for that. If the Health Service were as good as it should be, three quarters of a million people wouldn't

spend money on medical insurance, and the £30 million a year private patient business would quickly melt away.

Who would then jump a queue that didn't exist? (And queue-jumping is the main advantage plugged in the adverts of BUPA and the other private patient schemes.)

Who would pay for that extra attention from a consultant if they knew there was an abundance of medical staff to give them all the attention they needed?

Who would pay for privacy if well designed modern buildings allowed for this anyway for those patients who wanted it?

Logic

Perhaps not many consultants are consciously fighting against an adequate health service so as to line their own pockets. But it is certain that the logic of the situation is that the most influential people, the top of the hierarchy, have little personal interest in improving things, and a lot of vested interest in keeping things as they are. The worse the NHS, the more flourishing will be the private practice that brings a consultant those extra thousands of pounds every year, on top of the £10-15,000 a year he gets from the NHS.

And it works the other way around, too. Private practice is the steam valve. This two-tier system is what makes it possible to give working class people a worse deal within a service that's supposed to be "classless".

Far from being a rational, classless system, the NHS is the scene of some of the most glaring inequalities: in the treatment of its patients, in



the pay of its workers (£20 a week for ancillaries, £300 a week for consultants), and even between the well catered for teaching hospitals at one end of the scale and the run-down and overcrowded geriatric wards, or the psychiatric hospitals with their permanently drugged chronic patients who get no real treatment at all.

In the midst of all this is the running sore of private practice, heavily parasitic on the NHS resources and a factor for inertia.

As the sleek, well manicured cohorts of the BMA move to defend their lucrative racket, the double standards that they represent are applied to them. Nye Bevan's descendant as 'left wing' health Minister, Barbara Castle, strongly attacks the industrial action of the nurses and ancillary workers who are fighting for a real health service, while the rich wreckers and saboteurs are pampered and appeased, as they have been ever since 1947.

But their threats are hollow. They may huff and puff, but they won't in fact blow the house down. They haven't the resources to set up their own comprehensive medical service; and even if they can get the money together, they will still have to rely on the very people whose action now threatens their patch of the NHS — the nurses and the

technicians, the porters, cleaners and cooks.

At a time when militant action against both private practice and nursing agencies is sweeping through the ranks of health workers, any serious attempt to set up a rival sector should be heavily undermined by hostility, blacking and direct action not only from health workers but from the whole of the trade union movement.

In fact, the whole of the

trade union movement must step up its support for the present actions, whether they be on pay and conditions or against the creeping parasite of private practice.

In greater numbers than even before, workers from factories, depots and docks have turned out in solidarity with the health workers. We must keep up the pressure, and bring to a full stop the destruction of the health service.

STEEL More Craftsmen join pay revolt

A NATIONWIDE revolt of steel industry craftsmen against the settlement made by the National Crafts Coordinating Committee (NCCC) has begun.

Craftsmen belonging to the AUEW, EEPTU, Boilermakers and roll turners unions and UCATT are on strike at Lackenby (Teesside); EEPTU men at Consett have put in a claim based on the original NCCC claim of a £10 rise plus time and a third for overtime, and Normanby Park (Scunthorpe) steel craftsmen are out for a new deal to replace their Phase 2 "productivity" agreement.

The original NCCC claim was ditched without a fight by the so-called negotiating team led by Salvation Army leader John Boyd. What they concluded was the framework

of a new productivity deal which would leave some workers actually worse off than at present. Most important, the new agreement — on which the regions were not consulted at all — ELIMINATES TONNAGE BONUSES AND ACM (abnormal conditions money) payments, thus removing one of the most effective bargaining counters on the side of the shop floor. It is clear that Boyd and BSC were here conniving at reducing the role of the shop stewards and the shop floor in general in wage negotiations to that of an obedient by-stander.

This would be bad at the best of times. Right now it's criminal. Workers who refuse to knuckle under to

Continued on back page

Castle leaves 1 million kids out in the cold

Anybody connecting the Labour Government with the idea of a "Social conscience" will have been quickly shocked out of that delusion by Barbara Castle's written reply to the Finer Report: "I cannot say that we will accept the recommendations".

This report proposes many progressive (though hardly earth-shaking) changes in the way one-parent families are treated. And it was greeted by Mrs. Castle, the Minister for Social Security, with a coolness that spelt nothing but continued misery for the 620,000 families in this category, with 1 million children.

But if the report was quite explosive in parts, it was the least that might have been expected after the long, slow fuse of five years' preparation since the Finer Commission was set up in 1969 by the then Labour Minister, Mr. Crossman.

WELCOME

It records that one parent families comprise 10% of all families. "Of these families, 100,000 were motherless and the other 520,000 fatherless. ... there are no figures available of the extent to which families move in and out of the one-parent category but movement must be considerable and a significantly higher proportion must spend some time as one-parent families."

According to the Child Poverty Action Group who gave "a warm welcome to the Finer Report" the present social security benefit system is incapable of meeting the needs of 300,000 one-parent families. The report shows that "shameless disabilities" are imposed on these families, that average maintenance payments (when paid) are of less value than supplementary benefit, and that these families are discriminated against by housing authorities.

The report calls for an end to this discrimination; for a new anti-discrimination law that will bolster the Equal Pay Act (given that the single woman earner is usually on a miserably inadequate wage); an end to the magistrates' jurisdiction in matrimonial cases with "family courts" being set up instead; an end to the women's obligation to sue defaulting fathers for maintenance; and most important of all, a general maintenance allowance administered preferably by a new authority and not the Supplementary Benefits Commission.

SNOOPS

One major source of disappointment will be that it does not recommend the abolition of the co-habitation rule. Under this rule the SBC employs an army of spies and snoopers to check on the sexual activities of mainly female single parents. This obscene peeping Tom rule is thought fit to be retained, though the system of 3-monthly applications (with a right of appeal in cases of refusal) for the guaranteed maintenance allowance could imply a relaxation of this disgusting regulation.

But the greatest disappointment is that Labour has not agreed to implement one jot of the report. Mrs. Castle has tried to fob off demands with talk of "further consultations", "asking for public comment" and "acknowledgement in principle". Not even the interim suggestions of the report — many of them a long way off full implementation — have received Labour's statement of commitment.

Jack Price

IF ANY country has gained from the current crisis of world capitalism, it is the world's major gold producer, the racist state of South Africa. With the market price of gold as high as \$184 per ounce in February of this year, South Africa's annual production of approximately 900 tons provides the world with three quarters of its gold supply.

The role that gold plays in the capitalist system is largely in the sphere of international trade. When nations trade with each other and debts occur, the means available for settlement are either the export of commodities, which gives the debtor country a favourable balance of trade, or the transfer of gold reserves.

In supplying the world with gold, South Africa supplies herself with foreign exchange resources of £1,600 million a year. In the trading between South Africa and other countries, and there is plenty of it, these foreign exchange resources well exceed South Africa's annual trade deficit.

Two-tier

Since 1968 there have been two prices for gold. The 'official' price of \$35 per ounce (that is the price at which the central banks are committed to buy and sell gold among themselves); and the market price, currently around \$142 an ounce. (Only private and industrial sectors may trade in gold on the free market.)

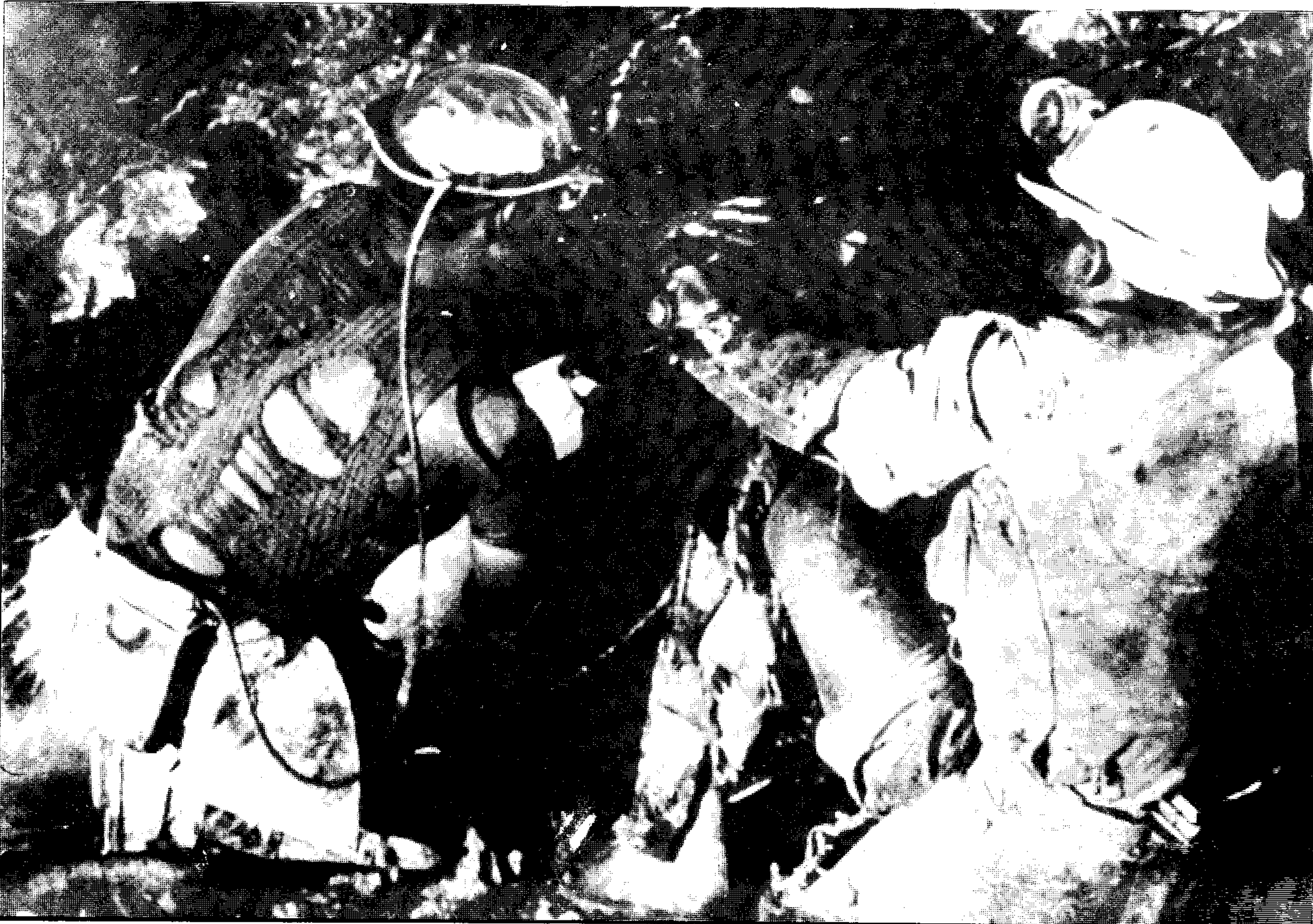
The two-tier system brought in in 1968 still meant that most of the world's gold stocks were tied to the official price. But even so, free market speculation on the rest of the stocks has massively increased the value of South Africa's gold exports. While all gold was transacted at the official price, South Africa's gold exports totalled \$1 billion per annum. By 1973 this value increased to \$1.5 billion, and the chances are that we will see a further increase during 1974.

50% up

For South Africa, the higher gold price means more than just a surplus balance of payments. It also means that South Africa has abundant tax revenues, and accordingly can increase its military expenditure.

With the uncertainty introduced into the Portuguese controlled areas adjoining South Africa (and South African controlled Namibia) and its protege Rhodesia, there arises the serious possibility of major intervention in these areas and the creation of closer organic links with Rhodesia. There has even been talk of Rhodesia being integrated as a member state of the Union of South Africa.

THE REAL PRICE OF GOLD



Thus, the provision of military hardware could be a matter of survival or destruction, life or death, for Southern African racism.

For international capital, on the other hand, the rising price of gold means that on the world's stock markets (where the crisis of capitalism is reflected in falling share prices) the price of gold shares has increased and continues to increase. Recently the dividends payable on gold mining shares have increased by up to 50%.

However, with rising profits and dividends for the bourgeoisie, the black South African working class whose labour creates all this wealth is at the receiving end of increased exploitation and racist terrorism. This terrorism takes many forms.

Firstly, the combination of bare subsistence wages and cruel, hard and intense working conditions underground, form the basis of existence for South Africa's 370,000 gold miners. In these conditions, violent accidents and deaths are everyday occurrences. The mines are worked in two daily shifts, and at least one death is recorded for every shift.

Under the Apartheid system, black workers have been geographically dispersed

to different areas of the country and in the process have had their roots, homes and families brutally smashed. Their families are not permitted to live with them where they work, and they are contracted for long periods to live in mine barracks. On top of this they further suffer the unspeakable indignities and harassment meted out by this racist state, with its jailings, slaughter and Nazi-style systematised torture directed to preventing

black political or trade union self-organisation.

In the past few weeks, for example, at least six miners have been murdered and many others injured by the police during demonstrations. Gas, water cannon and dogs are in common usage by the police whenever black workers try to act.

Despite wage increases in the last year of up to 60%, miners still only receive £25 a month, even though the 'poverty line' has been decided at £50 per month. These subsistence wages of the miners are equivalent to less than one third of the gold share dividends paid out to investors.

Demand

The rising demand for gold on the world's markets came about not because more people were wearing gold teeth or gold jewellery or had found a new use for it, but because the crises of the international monetary markets demanded it.

Originally at a conference in Bretton Woods in 1944, international capitalism agreed a plan whereby the American dollar would be redeemable in gold at \$35 an ounce. Other currencies would then be 'pegged' to the

dollar at fixed exchange rates. The dollar, having the direct backing of gold, could then be used by any nation as a reserve currency. In this way the international monetary system was centred around the dollar, which it was felt was 'as good as gold'.

Under this arrangement, for much of the post war period the capitalist nations of the world have held dollars as a reserve for their own currencies.

But over the last decade more and more countries, and particularly France, have stopped the practice of maintaining their reserves in dollars and have reverted to keeping an increasing part of them in gold. In practice this has meant that the United States treasury has been presented with more and more demands by various countries to change their dollars into gold.

As the demands increased, the U.S. gold stocks decreased. Whereas in 1955 the U.S. held nearly \$22 billion in gold, by 1968 it held only \$10 billion. At the same time dollar assets held by other countries amounted to \$31 billion. This is why Nixon and the United States government abandoned the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement in 1971 and placed a ban



It takes a death to keep a myth alive



Juan Peron and the new President

AFTER the death on July 1st of Juan Peron, president of Argentina, Fascist Spain declared three days' official mourning. So did revolutionary Cuba.

With Peron gone, the ruling class of Argentina will be hard put to find another leader who can serve its interests so well while retaining support from the far Right across to most of the Left.

Bringing Peron back from his 17-year exile was in the first place a gamble by a ruling class that was running out of solutions. After the revolutionary mass strikes and street fighting in 1969, the military regime was shorn of popular support. To try to bring the situation back under

control, they called elections in March 1973, and allowed Peron to re-enter Argentina.

Peron had been in exile (mostly in Spain) since he was overthrown by the army in 1955. But he had retained a lot of support among the people of Argentina, based on reforms carried through in the early years of his rule, in the 1940s.

Peron's nominee Campora was elected President in March 1973, and in July resigned in favour of Peron. During Campora's few months of office some substantial reforms were brought in, but with Peron himself in the presidential seat repression increased. Leftist papers were closed down, and

in Cordoba the provincial governor was deposed and replaced by a right wing hard liner.

Recently three Trotskyists were kidnapped and killed by right wing thugs, and there have been numerous other right wing attacks on the premises and on the militants of left wing groups both inside and outside the Peronist movement.

Myth

Peron's death might serve to keep the fast ailing "Peron myth" alive for a while longer. Certainly the ruling class hopes so: all its factions, struck with panic, have hastened to give their support to Peron's wife, the new President. She has been supported so far by General Lanusse, former head of the military regime, Ricard

on the export of gold from the USA. This was the beginning of both the devaluation of the dollar and speculation in the gold markets.

But now with the latest agreements being spelt out by the Common Market countries in their attempts to reach a new price level for gold, a new factor further enhances the role of gold in the money markets. This is the decision of the Common Market governments to buy and sell gold among themselves at the free market price, not the official price. This would enable some Common Market countries to rid themselves of their balance of payments deficits brought about by the general decline and the oil price increases.

Benefit

The result of this for gold would be to maintain, if not increase, the market price which now stands 400% higher than the official price.

A country such as Italy, for example, currently running a balance of payments deficit of around £3,350 million per annum, and which cannot raise long term loans on the money markets, would obviously benefit if she could realise her gold reserves at the full market price.

The bringing onto the market of such reserves will probably mean a temporary drop in the price of gold (such as in the past week). But this could easily be offset by the projected lifting of the laws in the USA against the private purchase of gold stocks.

Stability

South Africa sees the international crisis and the increased price of gold as adding to the stability of the apartheid regime. In fact, it not only buttresses the regime's stability, it helps create it. As the world's capitalist nations grope around for solutions to problems that beset them, they make more use of gold, and the South African ruling class becomes ever more powerful to wield the barbarian weapons and the super-exploitation of apartheid.

Meanwhile, the South African black working class, illegal strikes, massive demonstrations and the beginnings of an underground self defence force, tries to step up its struggle against the repressive apparatus of white supremacist capitalism.

As international capitalism in its crises uses gold as a mechanism for short term banking, thereby aiding the South African regime, so also must the international working class, in its growing strength and consciousness, come to the aid of those oppressed beyond measure by that regime.

DAVERUSSELL

Albin, head of the 'Composition' Radical Party, and the 'Communist' Party.

But there are already things — confused and incoherent as yet — from the masses. A statement from the 'Communist' guerilla group, the 'Frontoneros', dated 5th July, threatened to resume their armed struggle "if formal and immediate agreement is not concluded between the social and political forces working for national liberation."

The most important question in Argentina in the coming months will be whether the Argentinian Trotskyists can find a way to lead the masses in a clearheaded revolutionary socialist programme, cutting through the Peronist mythology of 'national liberation'.

Martin Thomas

LATE IN 1973 several individuals came together in Vanguard Headquarters in East Belfast to launch a new organisation which would take over from the Loyalist Association of Workers which, led by Billy Hull, had collapsed after a major split and was now defunct.

Several of the people gathered there were ex-LAW members, some were members of various trade unions, but in the main they were either members of Vanguard (William Craig's ultra Right Wing political party) or else were members of one or other of the Loyalist para-military organisations.

The political decision to gather these individuals together, however, came from Vanguard Executive Committee (headed by Craig and Prof. Kennedy Lindsay), the two foremost advocates of the policy of the six counties 'going it alone'. They wanted to mobilise Loyalist workers into an organisation that would be much more politically pliable than LAW had proved. Anyway, apart from its political failures, Billy Hull's LAW had been mostly centred in heavy industry in Belfast and held little or no overall strategic importance — except in those industries where it had a large membership.

POWER

Vanguard wanted a smaller and more manageable organisation with members in key positions in the power and fuel plants of the 6 Counties. Such a group would be much more effective if it was required to give industrial support to whatever activity Vanguard decided upon.

A total or almost complete power shut-down would mean that unsympathetic workers would be forced to leave their jobs, while a fuel crisis would bring industry and the whole Six County state to a virtual standstill.

It was little wonder then, when the plans for the formation of the Ulster Workers Council were laid at that first meeting, that they received a tumultuous reception.

The UWC would provide the broad base for recruitment, but Vanguard would provide the necessary initial finance to set the organisation up and also the political and ideological 'brains' for its existence.

It only took a few months before Loyalists holding key positions in all of the power stations in the Six Counties had been either recruited into the UWC or had promised it their support. Two months may seem a very short time, but in fact there were only 50-100 essential workers without whom the power stations in the Six Counties would cease to function normally, and this was a relatively easy task for the UWC.

JOINT

The actual formation of the UWC was merely a tactic in a much wider strategy. That strategy had been tentatively worked out earlier by the Ulster Army Council (the co-ordinating body for the Loyalist para-military groups such as UVF, UDA, Red Hand Commandos, Orange Volunteers, etc) in conjunction with representatives from the United Ulster Unionist Council (the co-ordinating body for extreme right wing political opinion in the Six Counties such as Craig's Vanguard Party, Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and West's Official Unionist Party).

Since mid-1973 fairly wide ranging talks have been taking place between the Loyalist para-military organisations and the loyalist politicians at regular intervals, to work out a

We reproduce below an article from the Peoples Democracy paper UNFREE CITIZEN. The information contained in it suggests that the Loyalist strike of 6 weeks ago was part of a strategy by the

ultra-right Orangemen that could have led to civil war, and that this could yet be the outlook for the future. And we give our views (inset) of Wilson's latest package of ideas for patching up the Orange state.

Plans for coup were behind U.W.C strike

THE ONLY ANSWER: JUST GET OUT NOW!

WORKERS FIGHT thinks Britain should withdraw from all attempts to control the affairs of Ireland, or any part of Ireland, immediately.

The Government's proposal to call Northern Ireland elections soon to elect a 'convention' to work out a constitution for Northern Ireland, within broad guidelines laid down by Britain, is proof that Britain is not yet prepared to get its nose out of the affairs of the Irish people.

The retreat from Sunningdale may open up divisions within the ruling class following the Labour Government's failure to stand up to the loyalist UWC strike; but all sections of the British ruling class are still determined to maintain the Six County statelet, built like a bearpit to produce nothing but perpetually battling Catholic and Protestant communities.

By standing for the framework of the Six Counties, the British inescapably give a giant concession to the reactionary Orange community's demand for full control. Within that area carved out of Ireland in one gigantic gerrymander, they will always be a majority — whatever form the elections take, and however proportional the representation.

But they can never be a democratic majority, and we cannot recognise any legitimacy in their majority. We have said again and again: Ireland, 32 counties, is the unit for minorities and majorities.

Only by breaking the framework of this statelet — the ending of the partition of Ireland imposed by force — can any progress be made. Britain, having failed to force through the Sunningdale policy, is still trying to play the game of divide and rule, holding the 6-County ring for the battle-locked Catholic and Protestant communities.

We say — Withdraw the troops now. Support the fight of the IRA for the self-determination of all Ireland, and for the defence of the Catholic communities.

common political/military strategy.

The overall strategy was clearly spelt out in press statements from the Ulster Army Council up to a week before the UWC strike began. It was to stage a military coup with the Ulster Army Council and simultaneously back it up with an effective general strike throughout the Six Counties.

The Ulster Army Council already had members in key positions in the Ulster Defence Regiment and RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary). They pledged to hand over complete armouries and armoured transport if called upon. (It is generally accepted that during the strike the British Government's decisions were influenced by the 'For Ulster'

movement whose existence first became known publicly several months ago. 'For Ulster' consists of UDR and RUC men in key positions such as in charge of armouries, transport depots etc. They are pledged to hand over these weapons, transport etc in the event of a civil war. Virtually unpublicised is the fact that during the UWC strike the Headquarters of the 10th Battalion of the UDR, which served South and East Belfast, was raided and its armoury cleaned out. The only newspaper to carry the story was Sunday World. Also plans were well advanced for the 'For Ulster' group to seize control of the BBC and UTV offices and transmitters throughout the Six Counties.)

Those remaining in the UDR and RUC could be guaranteed to take no effective action if a coup were mounted. So it was to be, and almost was, had it not been for the enormous success of the UWC strike.

MOMENTUM

May 14th heralded the acceptance of an agreed Council of Ireland by the Northern Ireland Assembly. As part of the overall British Sunningdale Agreement it represented a totally unacceptable step for the Six County Loyalists. They were not interested in the fact that it was British policy. To them it represented a direct threat to loyalist ascendancy and religious supremacy within the Six County state. It had to be stopped at all costs and that is what the Ulster Workers Council and Ulster Army Council were out to do.

The strike began the moment the Northern Ireland Assembly voted in favour of accepting the Sunningdale Agreement. Initially it relied heavily on the UDA and UVF to ensure it was effective, but as it developed it generated its own momentum when the Protestant population realised that the Army or Police were going to make no attempt to break it. The day to day control of the Six Counties rested in the hands of no more than two dozen men in East Belfast. (A provisional government of sorts was declared at UWC headquarters with UWC

members such as Jackie Scott holding posts like 'Minister of Power' etc.)

It is true to say that the strike involved in the main mostly workers. However, the implication that has been made by several political groups and some individuals that the strike was progressive because of this is totally false.

The UWC strike was the most reactionary event to take place in the Six Counties over the past few years. It was a strike by workers, not demanding progressive and revolutionary change within the Six Counties, but to maintain a neo-fascist state whose defenders momentarily found themselves in direct conflict with their imperialist masters at Westminster.

The tactic of a general strike is one of the strongest and most potent weapons the working class has, but the UWC strike was an attempt by one section of the working class to completely smash another. It was backed in full by the British Army and police along with all the loyalist para-military organisations mentioned above and without this backing it would never have reached the point where it gained complete control. Anyone who considers this strike to be progressive is taking the most purist and naive view that any strike is progressive just because the working class is involved.

ENEMIES

The UWC strike was operated by workers but its ideological basis was generated by individuals and organisations who have proved by their past activities and politics to be the complete enemies of the entire working class in the six counties (Vanguard, DUP, Unionists, UDA, UVF etc). The history of the strike outlined above shows that much.

Men in dungarees may have gone on strike, but what they were demanding was not reforms or progressive action. They were demanding a return to the system of government which only serves to prolong their own exploitation.

Now that the strike is over the anti-unionist population in the Six Counties, and

indeed the working class in the 26 Counties, must realise that what we witnessed during the UWC strike was objectively an extremely well organised and 'disciplined' display by loyalist workers and para-military organisations in support of fascism. Now that it has succeeded it has only proved the impossibility of any meaningful reforms within the Six County state.

We in the Peoples Democracy have always said that given the objective political conditions in Northern Ireland, meaningful reform of that state was impossible. The UWC strike has reinforced that belief — so much so that we now believe the two major opposing political viewpoints (i.e. anti-Unionist and loyalist) in the Six Counties are so contradictory that they cannot be reconciled. The only logical outcome of such contradiction is civil war.

TASKS

To be faced with the imminent threat of civil war is not at all pleasant. But that does not mean that we have the right to shirk our responsibilities or to be any the less prepared for it.

The fascist organisations which led the UWC strike still see their political position threatened. They will not hesitate to use their new-found strike weapon again if required. At present they are prepared to back off from the spectre of civil war because they see elections, and perhaps a referendum, as yet another lever with which to add weight to their reactionary demands. But if they don't get their way, then THEY will initiate civil war to enforce their will.

It is the duty of the Peoples Democracy as revolutionaries and socialists to prepare the people of this country, North and South, for such an event and help ensure that when it happens they will be sufficiently equipped both practically and ideologically to emerge victorious from the struggle, knowing full well that their achievement is an important milestone on the road to Irish national liberation and the Workers Republic.



Steel claim revolt

government pay laws have two choices: either an all-out fight against the State with an open declaration of war, or a strategy of "bumps under the blanket." The first is preferable in principle. But there are not many plants with the organisational strength to pull it off. The second line of attack, demanding bonus and other additional allowances to push up the 'blanket level' of a wage norm, is usually the only practical way.

The pay revolt began at Lackenby, where there is a long history of fighting Boyd's sell-outs - hence their 'pension money' and 'floating' rates for ACMs (they rise with the basic rate at a one for one ratio). At Lackenby fitters, roll turners, joiners and boilermakers began imposing sanctions, including guerrilla sit-downs for short intervals. Finally management demanded that these tactics cease or the men would be taken off pay - that is, locked out.

Consett

On Monday 8th, the Lackenby men decided at a mass meeting to continue their action despite official union support for management. The same evening at an informal meeting between Lackenby AUEW leaders and Consett EEPTU stewards, the Consett men decided to put in a claim of their own, thus lending their support to the 500 locked-out Lackenby men.

This had the further effect of forcing the Lackenby electricians' stewards, who

PHOENIX PAMPHLETS

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..the Poverty's still hurting

Now the N treble C when they put in this great claim, They didn't ask for 'backing' for that would spoil their game "I'm a general without an Army" has been Johnny Boyd's long cry And that's just the way they want it, for it means they needn't try!

The Ten Pound claim has disappeared, of Time plus a Third no mention And you'll have to wait till God knows when to hear about your pension. They will review the Sick Pay Scheme, to keep you just alive, For those Holiday improvements, in Nineteen Seventy Five!

We were sixteenth in the wages League and facing relegation The Day Shift lads have hunger pains and the Shift Men Night Starvation The 'Seven Per Cent' won't alter this, the Poverty's still hurting This so-called rise, if WE accept, makes relegation certain.

Support the Labour Government, although it costs you heavy, Consider your lost Ten Pounds a week, another 'Political levy' Then Subsidise the price of Steel by ever smaller wages So PRIVATE FIRMS who use the stuff can profiteer by 'Stages'.

Our Leadership are so Well-off, they've joined the Middle Classes See nothing wrong with Wage Restraint and preach it to the masses But not for them our sacrifice, no hardships they endure But hand in glove with BSC, combine to keep us poor.

They gave the 'Cost of Living' up, in Nineteen Sixty Nine, You must admire their foresight, since it's multiplied by nine, They're signing new Agreements, giving more up every day 'If the present trend continues' they will soon ABOLISH PAY!

Ray Thompson (EEPTU Convenor, Consett)

had in any case been coming under pressure from the shop floor because they were the only craft union still in, to put in a claim on their members' behalf. This claim is slightly over the Consett claim and has been put forward with the demand that all craft work should stop. This shows up SIMA who denied that they were scabbing.

The fact that 3 works are fighting in support of their claim shows that far from being a local dispute, this is a revolt against the Unions' sell-out on the national agreement. Local and national press has tried to contain the strike movement. For instance the Northern Echo, the leading paper in the North East, has not reported any of these actions.

Why? The answer is simple. These rags realise that publicity will help the struggles to spread. It is a testimony to the fact that what the employers really fear is effective regional organisation - for instance on the North East coast - that would break down BSC's attempt to model bargaining

on its own group structure. There is a real possibility now of the creation of a North East Coast Crafts Committee (including Consett) based on regular craft shop stewards' meetings.

Such regional organisation would be only a short step away from an effective national organisation, capable of telling the 'anything for expenses' merchants of the NCCC where to get off. The fact that the present claims are a step towards wage parity with Port Talbot can only serve to cement such an alliance.

For the present, an all-out fight must be waged to bring out more works in support of the original claim, and to get some solidarity from BISAKTA, some of whose members are the mates at helpers of the men outside the gate. BISAKTA members must black all craft work, all scab transport, and refuse to work with any SIMA men unless they make the same commitment on blacking.

Tony Duffy Acting Chairman, Lackenby Allied Crafts Cttee

LONDON PAY NALGO: still pinching its pennies

FOR MANY months, NALGO rank and file members have struggled to win a London allowance of £544 for Inner London and £505 for outer London.

Through all this struggle, the NALGO leadership, both at Metropolitan and national level, has worked to prevent all-out action being taken. The NEC have agonisedly watched the strike fund pay out money they have lovingly saved through years of non-action, and have repeatedly complained that the action was too expensive.

When Michael Foot, on behalf of the Labour government, refused to allow the employers to pay an interim offer of £360 (inner) and £291 (outer London) the NEC of NALGO quickly

came under heavy pressure from the TUC to call off action until the Pay Board had reported.

Now that the Pay Board report is out with an offer lower than the employers' interim offer, the NALGO leadership feel embarrassed and angry: the Labour-backed Pay Board has given the rank and file every reason to demand action from them.

Nearly 1,300 NALGO members are out on strike, with another 30,000 operating an overtime ban. In an effort to get control of the action and to cut down on expense, the leadership may try to concentrate action on computer and payroll centres, as well as the London power stations.

On Monday July 8th the

London teachers step up fight

LABOUR Education Minister Reg Prentice met NUT leaders on Tuesday July 9th and curtly told them that they could accept the Pay Board recommendations or get lost.

The Burnham committee meets again on Saturday 13th, but the conceding anything. Confrontation is building up.

The NUT Executive, which has dragged its feet for months, which has refused to take action when it could have real effect, has now, a couple of weeks before the end of the summer term, been pushed into calling a half-day strike on

Thursday July 11th. In some areas, at least, however, the official action will not even be a half-day strike: teachers are being advised to "work double sessions", i.e. work through their dinner hour and thus leave school early without actually missing any lessons.

The militant Ad Hoc Committee is calling a rally with speakers from NALGO and the nurses an hour before the official rally starts. About 30 schools are expected to come out for the whole day. Haringey Teachers' Association on 11th July decided to support whole-day strikes -

subject, however, to 24-hours notice being given to parents.

In Islington, militant teachers will be leafletting to explain their case in the morning, and are holding a joint parent-teacher meeting in the evening.

The NUT estimates that London will be 1715 teachers short in September, and if there is no adequate settlement by then action will continue not only this summer but in September. A number of local associations have already decided to refuse to cover for staff shortages in September, and Haringey association has called on the Executive to organise

strike action in September unless the £400 London allowance is granted.

While the struggle is pressed forward, though, teachers must take care that the authorities do not use the tail end of the summer term to victimise militants. Already in Haringey one teacher has been reprimanded for attending an Ad Hoc Committee meeting (as a delegate from the NUT in his school) and Haringey 'Rank & File' group is to put out a fact sheet on the case.

Tony Brockman Ian Hollingworth/Clive Bane

SUPPORT STRIKE AT IMPERIAL TYPEWRITERS DEMONSTRATE JULY 21st

STRIKERS at Leicester's Imperial Typewriters factory were hopeful, now that the two-week holiday period was over, of a speedy victory on all the points of their demands.

On Friday 12th the strikers' representatives will be seeing Brian Mather, Birmingham district organiser of the T&GWU, who led the union enquiry into the strike and the strikers' claims of racism and suffocating bureaucracy on the part of the local official, Bromley, and his sidekick Weaver, the convenor of Imperial Typewriters.

Brian Mather will see the firm's management on Monday 15th, and the strikers again on the following day. It is this development, plus the fact that the parent company, the sprawling multi-national Litton Industries, has been shocked into

action by the international support shown for the strike, that makes the strikers hopeful that the still unpublished report of the T&GWU enquiry is entirely in their favour.

They feel that the negotiations are only being organised in order that management and union officials can save face.

But it is the active support of many outside Leicester, together with the determination of the strikers, that will be responsible for any victory. And that shouldn't stop now.

In fact, it should be stepped up. In particular, there should be massive support for the demonstration to back the strikers in Leicester on July 21st. If you really can't make it to Leicester on that day, send messages of support and donations to RACE TODAY at 184, Kings Cross Road, London W.C.1

THE HEALTH SERVICE BATTLE

NHS technicians out for pay rise

NOT A single section of hospital workers remains untouched by the wave of discontent sweeping the health service.

The latest recruits to the militant ranks are the medical technicians. These workers operate, service, maintain, and often help design, the sophisticated equipment necessary to carry out operations such as open heart surgery.

For this highly skilled job, without which no surgeon could begin to earn his money, the technicians start on a £26 basic, and after six years rise to £32. In industry they could earn up to £10 more. The demand of the medical technicians is for parity with laboratory technicians, which would mean a 30% increase.

Action is mainly concentrated in the London area, but 68 technicians are out on indefinite strike in Manchester, and are picketing the major hospitals in turn. The London action started with a demonstration to the Royal Free Hospital on July 8th, and pickets on several other hospitals, including the Middlesex, Guys, and Harefield. So far laundry and post and some non-essential drugs are being turned away, but the pickets have threatened to step up the action to include food.

From July 15th the Society of Radiographers, who operate X-ray machines, are bringing 7,000 members out on a week's strike. This action will lead to the closure of many departments, and possibly the collapse of the fragile peace between consultants and ancillary workers patched up by Barbara Castle.

Certainly the National Health Service is running into a very serious crisis, and the workers who carried the burden at times of earlier crisis will refuse to do so.

T.R.

Below: nurses' march in London last month.



MANCHESTER NURSES DRAW BIG SUPPORT

ON JULY 8th, over 300 Manchester nurses and workers marched in support of the Nurses' National Day of Action.

240 Manchester dockers came out, 160 in defiance of local right-wing T&GWU shop stewards, and 80 from the Blue Union. Ancillary workers at Ladywell Hospital stopped for half a day and nurses from Salford Royal Infirmary took part in the demonstration. A delegate from the local AUEW District Committee was supported by factory delegations from Scraggs, Macclesfield, and Gardner's, Eccles. A large and militant contingent came from the Manchester Women's Liberation

Group. Despite the lack of a good turnout in other areas, and the decline in action following COHSE's dropping of their campaign, the Manchester Nurses Action Group is still active. On July 9th the Action Group held a factorygate meeting at Openshaw steelworks. Plans are going ahead for joint action with the medical technicians, and a meeting to organise a campaign to defend the health service. Certainly the Halsbury inquiry report is a long way off, but that is no excuse for not preparing now to take action if it does not give what nurses demand.

JACK SUTTON

NALGO representatives met the employers' side to see what deal could be made. But if nothing can be agreed the Emergency Committee is due to meet on Friday July 12th to decide on further action.

What is certainly needed is joint action by the rank and file of the trade unions which are fighting for an adequate London allowance.

One important sidelight of this struggle is how the NEC of NALGO have tried to slink round

the decisions of the last Conference - which resoundingly defied the leadership and insisted on keeping up the action until the London and national pay claims are met in full. One of the major excuses has been money - but this shortage of cash to pay strikers has not halted the building of the brand new HQ in Euston Road, the cost of which is reckoned to be around a cool £1 million!

Tom Ramsey

MEETINGS

Liverpool Workers Fight forum. Cynthia Baldry on the Fourth International. Wed. 17th July at 8pm. Stanley House, Upper Parliament Street.

Nottingham Workers Fight Forum. Sue Leigh on Fascism. Wed. 17th July at 8pm at 'The Peacock', Mansfield Road (near back of Victoria Centre).

Irish Political Hostages Campaign. Meeting to set up Ad-Hoc committee to organise a march on the 3rd anniversary of Internment. Tuesday July 16th at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road.

PICKET of Parkhurst prison to protest at conditions of Frank Stagg and Paul Holmes. Sunday 14th July. Buses from London. Contact 800 5696 for details.