

# WORKERS POWER

20 DECEMBER 75

## INTERNATIONAL- COMMUNIST LEAGUE FORMED



## WHERE NOW AFTER THE MARCHES?

158

# WORKERS POWER

20th December 1975

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## THE FINAL ISSUE

This will be the final issue of the WORKERS POWER Review. The Review will be incorporated with Workers' Fight and Permanent Revolution into one monthly journal, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST, the first issue of which will be published shortly.

Apart from the lead article, *A FUSION ON THE LEFT: INTERNATIONAL-COMMUNIST LEAGUE FORMED*, all articles were written and type-set before the Workers Power and the Workers Fight groups were fused into one organisation. Thus these latter articles were not subjected to the democratic centralist processes of the International-Communist League

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# A FUSION ON THE LEFT

# INTERNATIONAL-COMMUNIST LEAGUE FORMED

ON THE weekend of 13/14 December, the **Workers Fight** group, **Workers Power** (former Left Faction of IS, expelled in October 1975), and some **CA-WRP** comrades from the Midlands, united to form the **International-Communist League**. A detailed resolution outlining the basis of agreement, within which the new organisation will function under strict democratic centralism, was passed unanimously at the fusion meeting.

This is the first major fusion on the revolutionary left, involving forces sizeable enough to change the balance on the left of the so-called Communist Party, since the fusion that created the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1944.

The new organisation is born at a most critical period for our class, and its tasks and responsibilities are in consequence enormous.

The British working class is militant, combative, and has not known decisive defeat in two generations. It has recently brought down the Tory government that dared to attempt to shackle the trade unions to the bourgeois state. It has proved capable of controlling society in the negative sense, of exercising a decisive veto on the plans of the ruling class. It can control society in the positive sense of taking power out of the hands of the demoralised capitalist parasites whose strongest prop at the moment is the Labour government. The entire objective logic of the working class struggles of the past period, and much of its subjective content, add up to a drive to gain positive control of society, and reconstruct it under working-class rule.

The crisis of world capitalism, the worst in a third of a century, hits with especial force at British capitalism, because British capitalism is exceptionally decrepit. This situation makes it inevitable that the lull in the class struggle which the Labour government has secured for British capitalism will be short-lived.

The workers will not for long pay the price for capitalism's inability to ensure their daily needs. They will not for long be conned by the double-talk about the national interest used by the ruling exploiters and their political agents.

## CUL-DE-SAC

Major battles are imminent. The working class has not been defeated or broken — the present lull results not from defeat, nor even from exhaustion. It results from a certain perplexity in face of the doomsday economic atmosphere, and above all from the fact of a Labour government in power, backed actively by the trade union bureaucracy, and holding, despite everything, a high degree of working class loyalty.

It is, ironically, a product of the very victories which the working class won on the field of industrial struggle, culminating in toppling Heath — and of the necessarily limited nature of those victories.

The direct-action militancy is blocked in a cul-de-sac — and though the level of strikes runs remarkably high, the explosive confrontationist element has largely disappeared, for the time being, because of the existence of this Labour government. The most militant sections of the working class, including

sections roused to struggle against the last Labour government, voted Labour as a class, anti-Tory vote, because there was no revolutionary alternative.

The titanic wave of direct action never reached the general strike level that would pose directly the question of power in society; and no revolutionary party existed to transmute direct-action militancy into its natural international-communist political equivalent, fighting reformist consciousness and presenting a credible electoral alternative to Labour. The ironic result is that the most militant wave of direct action since the '20s has led to a Labour government which is proceeding with a full-scale onslaught on working class living standards, more severe than any that the Tories have even tried.

Because of the nature of the attack, it is only a matter of time — and probably a short time — before a working class counter-offensive erupts.

For revolutionaries, the central question is to prepare an organisation that can, linking up with the direct action of the working class and integrated into its struggles, present an Action Programme that focuses those struggles beyond reformist goals. An organisation that can recruit and organise the best militants, and educate them as working class leaders with a rounded international-communist world view, thus building itself within the working class. One that can fight reformism politically and organisationally, exploiting the deadly contradiction at the heart of the Labour Party — that it is a capitalist party in its actions and leadership, a party now in government running capitalism for the capitalists at the expense of the working class, while being based on the bedrock organisations of that working class, big elements of which want to bury capitalism.

No such organisation of sufficient size and public presence has existed in the past period.

The Workers Revolutionary Party links reformist politics with organisational sectarianism, and mistakes its own sideshows for the real struggle of the working class. It has recently lost most of its industrial base, and it is not an accident, nor is it inappropriate, that its main trade union strength is now in show-business.

The WRP recruits fighters, prepared to give everything they have to revolutionary struggle, and turns them into more or less full-time newspaper sellers. It talks about the need for work within working class organisations and trade unions; work on the Irish question; the fight against fascism; it talks about a politically educated cadre party: and yet in reality it does none of these things. Gross organisational sectarianism cuts it off from work even with broad labour movement bodies. It has not been seen on the streets against fascism for over a decade. Its record on Ireland is amongst the most scandalous in the British labour movement. It responded to the outrageous raid by the police by cravenly disavowing, in the name of revolutionary politics, the use of violence by the working class; and it has in the last two months devoted more time, energy, publicity and campaigning to publicising this issue (and its leaders being held in a room by the police for a few hours) than it has given in the last five years to exposing or fighting against the murder, terror, and police state rule in Northern Ireland.

The IMG is an unstable bloc of about five distinct organisations or cliques, held together by a common worship of a fetish - the so-called "Fourth International", which is a pretentious myth: it has meaningful existence neither politically nor organisationally. Over four years the IMG has presented no coherent politics. In 1972 they were passive-propagandist maximalists. By 1975 they had veered to offering 'Marxist' advice to the Tribune/Benn left. When the latter - to take one example - advocate import controls, the clever 'Marxist' IMG merely counsels rephrasing it in good "Trotsky-ese" as "state monopoly of foreign trade" - evading the question, which class does the state serve.

'Militant' is a Social Democratic reformist sect, which is rarely to the left of the TUC.

IS has been a centrist diversion which successfully - often as a result of hard work by its members - inserted itself into many industrial struggles, but which vitiated all its work there because it boycotted its own nominal politics. It has been the most serious ostensibly-revolutionary organisation; but it acted throughout the 1968-72 wave of industrial direct action on the assumption that workers would spontaneously break - or already had broken - with reformism and Labour. It was therefore unable to fight reformism, except rhetorically. Having broken with the Leninist theory of the party, and with the method of the Transitional Programme, holding to a semi-spontaneist conception of how workers become revolutionaries, it was mesmerised and disarmed politically by the level of industrial combat. Having declared social-democracy dead, it now can only rail in ultra-left third-period fury at the Labour Party, which unfortunately still retains the allegiance of most of even the best industrial militants. In parallel, it has itself become an undemocratic, largely depoliticised, sect.

## MAELSTROM

Two issues show the bankruptcy of all these organisations. The anti-Common Market campaign was a delirium of chauvinism, a chauvinism which is at the root of racism and anti-Irish feeling, and is one of the strongest threads binding the working class to the bourgeoisie. All these groups joined in the obscene orgy, murmuring a few phrases about socialist internationalism to salve their consciences.

With the partial exception of the IMG, all of them have reneged and scabbed on the liberation fighters in Ireland. They have betrayed the elementary principle, that communists in an imperialist country should give full support to those fighting for freedom against 'our own' government and its army.

These organisations offer no hope of building a revolutionary party inside the working class, in the maelstrom of the struggles to come. Hope rests only in this: that the bitter results of what they have done in the past will teach the hundreds of devoted revolutionary militants in these groups to break decisively with them, politically and organisationally.

The fragmentation that has been a marked feature of the left in the last year or so demonstrates wide-scale dissatisfaction. The creation of the International-Communist League is a major step towards reversing and overcoming such fragmentation. We will work with comrades in these blind-alley organisations, or recently shaken loose of them, to help them reach revolutionary-communist conclusions and find their place in the ranks of those who will build an adequate revolutionary party.

What do we stand for? What is international-communism? The record of Workers Fight - whose original nucleus came from the WRP (then SLL) and Militant - is public in its press. Solidarity with the Irish struggle; an intransigent stand against the chauvinist tide on the Common Market; attempting to focus the industrial militancy of 1972 and draw out its political logic through raising and discussing the question of a general strike and its implications; relating in a principled but not abstentionist way to the Labour Party - these are some of the main themes.

The record of Workers Power is found in the documents of their struggle against the IS leadership: against IS's cowardice and evasion on the Irish struggle; against IS's semi-syndicalist conception of trade-union work and for an understanding of the method of the Transitional Programme and the need for a serious fight against reformism; for a Leninist conception of the function of a programme and a party; for an internationalist position on the Common Market; against the degeneration of IS's internal democracy. Workers Power neither buckled before the bureaucratic browbeating of the IS leadership, nor did it react, as others have done, by putting a minus where IS puts a plus.

Shortly the International-Communist League will publish an extended manifesto. Meanwhile, what international-communism is can be summed up briefly. It is the basic Marxist programme of the conquest of power by the international working class. It is the unfalsified Programme, method and experience of the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky. It embodies the world experience of the workers' struggles, including the defence and development of Bolshevism by Trotsky and the Left Opposition in battle against the Stalinist counter-revolution. It means reliance on the self-controlling activity of the working class, which it strives to mobilise on the programme of transitional demands as a bridge to the overthrow of capitalism and the attainment of workers' power. It is the programme of the workers' revolution, organically linked with the practical struggle to aid its development. It is not only a programme, but the struggle to build a revolutionary party to fight for that programme. Its traditions are those of the Bolsheviks and the Left Opposition: workers' democracy, unremitting struggle for theoretical clarity, revolutionary activism, unbending hostility to and struggle against capitalism and those within the labour movement who stand for its continuation.

We call on militants who know the urgency of the situation and the possibly decisive character of the battles that loom for our class, and who know the bankruptcy of the existing left groups, to initiate discussion with us and to join the International-Communist League. The new organisation contains the forces and the will to reorganise and regenerate the fragmented and degenerated so-called revolutionary left, and thus seriously to begin building a revolutionary party.

## MAJOR STEP

Revolutionary socialists, international-communists; trade union militants who want to organise to fight to win next time, and who understand the need for an anti-bureaucratic rank and file movement inside the trade unions; internationalists who want to eradicate the shameful record of the British labour movement and the so-called revolutionaries on Ireland, and who are prepared to aid the Irish Republican struggle; militant women who know that women's liberation is inextricably linked with proletarian revolution; black activists and [all] who want to fight racism in the working class and fascism in the streets, or wherever it rears its head - the International-Communist League calls upon you to help us build an organisation to link your various struggles into a revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism. An organisation which will rise above the chaos, the shambles, and the shameful record of what passes for revolutionary politics in Britain now. An organisation built according to genuine democratic centralism, in this too breaking with the existing groups' record of bureaucratic sect-like structures. The formation of the International-Communist League is a major step forward in the building of such an organisation. Help us to build it, and to take it forward to the point where it can transform the situation on the revolutionary left - and thus the balance of class forces in Britain.

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE,

## INTERNATIONAL-COMMUNIST LEAGUE

# PORTUGAL: BOSSES GO ON ATTACK

THE BALANCE OF CLASS FORCES HAS SWUNG SHARPLY TO THE RIGHT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ABORTIVE REBELLION OF THE LISBON PARATROOPERS. THE SIXTH PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SAVED FOR THE MOMENT, TO THE REJOICING OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS ALL AROUND EUROPE AND AMERICA.

The Azevedo government, installed in late August to 'restore order' in the barracks and factories, has staggered from crisis to crisis ever since. Its problems came to a head with the the siege of the Constituent Assembly by striking building workers in mid-November. During the siege it was unable to rely on troops to protect it. In Lisbon only the Commandos and the military school of cavalry remained loyal to it. This incident led to a showdown which at one point took Portugal to the brink of civil war. The Socialist Party and the PPD ministers suspended the working of the cabinet and demanded the removal of radical officers like Othelo de Carvalho and General Fabião (hoping to guarantee themselves protection from further demonstrations of workers in Lisbon).

They also threatened to move the government to the North where it would have acted as a rallying point for the right.

Faced with this situation President Costa Gomes vacillated trying to patch up yet another compromise. Carvalho was removed as commander of the Lisbon military region but kept his post as head of the radicalised COPCON units. At the same time some of the overtly revolutionary moves of the government were revoked. For example, the elite AMI units were formally disbanded, although in reality they had already lost credibility. Neither side was satisfied by this. Socialist Party leader Soares threatened mobilisation of the conservative Northern peasantry. Demonstration of right wing farmers took place in some Northern towns; they threatened to block road and rail links to Lisbon. The right wing Northern military command promised to send reliable troops to the assistance of the government.

These events show the inevitable confrontation that was developing between the forces of the left and the so-called 'moderates' behind whom stand more sinister right wing elements. There is little doubt that a right wing offensive against the radical units and the left controlled media was being planned behind the scenes. Several days before the

revolt of the paras, REPUBLICA reported that the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces had drawn up a plan to switch radio and tv broadcasts from the Lisbon to the Oporto networks. In fact the Council had set up a unit to prepare such a plan and to clear the ground for the demobilisation of troublesome units. It was headed by Col. Eanes and included Col. Jaime Neves, later to be hailed as the hero by the right for his role in suppressing the paras revolt.

Amongst the most radical soldiers in Lisbon the response was confused and unco-ordinated. It was in this situation that the paratroopers took steps on Tuesday November 25. They seized the HQ of the Air Force command and occupied the

**by S. Tuckwell**

airbases at Monsanto, Montiuo, Tancos and Monte Real. Until recently the paratroopers were regarded as being loyal to the 6th government. They supplied recruits to the AMIs. This was reversed when they were hoodwinked into guarding Radio Renescaeca whilst government agents blew up the transmitter; incensed by this the paratroopers returned to barracks and resolved that they would never again obey orders unless they were agreed to by a mass meeting.

To atone for their past they also decided to mount an armed guard around the offices of the worker controlled newspaper, Republica to protect it from right wing attacks. Faced with the loss of yet another regiment the AFM Council set out to disband them. The paras were given compulsory home leave and threatened with the cutting off of pay and food rations. Facing these provocations they decided to defend themselves and stay in Lisbon to continue their new political role.

The paratroopers are generally regarded as being politically unsophisticated. But since the incident at Radio Renescaeca they have developed a strong loyalty to the left and a week before their revolt promised Carvalho '123,000 rounds a minute' of backing. But their rebellion was ill-timed and premature its purpose unclear. It was not a coup in the real sense but simply an attempt to secure their position and retain Carvalho.

Faced with an albeit premature rebellion the other left groups units mounted a desperate attempt at support. RALIS occupied positions on the motorway leading to the north, the airport and the Beirrolas arsenal. EPAM units occupied the TV studios and began to broadcast an appeal to workers but were cut off in mid-sentence as the government plan to switch transmissions to Oporto went into action. In the industrial areas crowds of workers assembled demanding arms and asking for directions. The role of the supposedly left officers was atrocious. For example at Ralis,

the officer allowed government commando units through the lines and then abandoned the regiment. At Armada Forte the 'left' officer refused to give arms to workers who wanted to defend the paratroopers.

The commandos therefore had little difficulty in quelling the rebellion. Within 24 hours the paratroopers has surrendered without a fight. The only real fighting took place, at the barracks of the Military Police barracks. 200 commandos stormed the building which was defended by military policemen and some civilian revolutionaries.

The Communist Party's role remains obscure. When the 6th government took office the CP accepted a minor ministerial position. At first it ignored the mass mobilisations around Radio Renescenca and SUV but later took them over and diverted them into a campaign to exclude the PPD from the cabinet and replace them by communists. Thus the CP combined a collaborationist policy with militant rhetoric.

During this period a division developed between those CP ers who wanted to pursue a policy similar to the Italians 'historic compromise' and those who wanted a more aggressive line not unlike that followed by the East European parties after the 2nd Worl War. Despite differences of emphasis both approaches lead to bureaucratic manoeuvring which defuse the mass movement, heads it away from the goal of workers power and leaves the working class unprepared for civil war. The ~~split~~ however may be at the root of the CP's ambiguous role in the rebellion. Some of those who appear to have supported it are CP allies, eg, Major JOse Costa Martinas. At first the party gave the revolt unofficial support but later withdrew, condemning it as an 'adventurist' move and refusing to mobilise it s supporters in the industrial areas. The CP must take the major blame for the failure to mobilise support. Having given tacit support they then backed down leaving the left-wing soldiers to their fate. Had they co-ordinated resistance, mobilised their support on the streets and called a general strike the government and the military right could have been held to a stalemate.

The revolutionary left appears to have played only a slightly better role. We have pointed out before (see Workers Power November 19, 1975) the weaknesses of FUR, MES and the PRP, in particular their failure to fight for a principled workers united front. This failure allowed the CP to head off the movement with only limited gains by the left. The PRP has also added the folly of calling for an insurrection when conditions made this premature. Although there is no evidence that they played a direct role in the revolt their general propaganda may have contributed to it. What is scandalous is that, given the PRP's perspective of an insurrection, when the revolt erupted they were toally unprepared. When groups of CP workers, angry with their own leaders, came to the PRP offices looking for a lead the PRP could give none. This failure directly reflects the PRP's failure to develop a united front programme and the illusions which it had in the left officers. By concentrating on the army they had failed to develop an essential working class base.

The failure of the revolt gave the 6th government all the cover it needed to restore 'order'. It immediately declared a state of emergency; all radio tv and newspapers were banned, except for the government controlled station; the



rights of assembly and free speech were suspended and a curfew imposed. In the following days the government took powers of summary arrest, house searches and censorship of mail. Since then a purge of left-wingers from the media, state and army had begun. The COPCON units have been disbanded and left officers removed from their posts. Over 750 people have passed through detention; about 200 are still under arrest and being held in the north. The left in the army has been virtually atomized.

The brunt of civilian repression is against the revolutionary left. The PRP has been forced underground again as loyal troops search out missing caches of arms. The government strategy is to isolate revolutionaries from the CP and its supporters, and this is being done by holding out the bait of more CP places in government in return for declarations of non-involvement in the revolt and non-opposition to the repressive measures. The CP has faithfully responded and is currently calling for calm. But the right wing parties cannot resist calling for the complete purging of the CP. If the 6th government is successful in the consolidation of its control then the CP will be next for the chopping block.

This concern to pull the CP back into the fold also importantly reflects the concern of officers of the 'moderate' group, such as Antunes, that they had to rely on allies of the extreme right to defeat the left. They know that men like Neves, a man responsible for one of the most notorious massacres in Mozambique, are not yet satisfied;

The setbacks of the last two weeks are, however, not the end of the matter. The government has been successful in its first aim: the strengthening of its control over the army. It will now turn its attention to dismantling the working class gains made since the April coup.

Socialists should be clear that these setbacks do not represent the return of fascism to Portugal- although they could pave the way. The regime in Portugal has ALWAYS been a Bonopartist one; at first a left moving one but now firmly right-wing. The development of revolutionary organisation in the army has always rested upon the existence of a militant working class movement. The course of the Portugese revolution now crucially depends upon the

actions of the industrial workers- and this depends upon the role which parties like the PRP and MES play. IF they quickly learn the lessons of their past mistakes then thereactionary forces could be fought back. Workers Power has to repeat that the first essential is a vigorous agitation for a principled workers united front which can defend the essential class organisations, co-ordinate the struggle against economic boycott, rebuild links with rank and file soldiers and prepare the way for proletarian state power.

But, for revolutionaries in the rest of Europe the main task must remain the construction of an effective solidarity campaign rooted in the organisations of the working class■

#### WHAT CAN WE DO IN BRITAIN?

1. Fight for affiliations to the Campaign of Solidarity with the Portuguese working class from trade union branches, shop stewards committees, trades councils, Labour Party branches, etc.
2. Form a local organising committee of the Campaign to co-ordinate work in the localities. Speakers and the film VIVA PORTUGAL are available from the PWCC, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2.
3. Sell the English language edition of Republica, available from PWCC.
4. Build rank and file links between workers in Britain and in Portugal to fight the boycotting of the Portuguese economy by British firms

# WHERE NOW AFTER THE MARCHES

The protest march of 25,000 workers in London against unemployment represents a significant hardening of opposition by sections of workers to the policies of the Wilson government. Branches of all major unions were represented as well as District Committees, Trades Councils and unemployed workers. Especially evident were contingents of workers from Chrysler and the building industry.

The slogans for the march were openly anti-government echoing as they did the demands for nationalisation and for work sharing with no loss of pay. This makes one thing clear. The fight against unemployment has definitely begun. Rank and file pressure has even forced the TGWU Executive Council to recognise that 'the present level of unemployment is totally unacceptable'. It has taken the Trade Union leaders long enough to realise. What do they now intend to do about it?

They intend to pressurise the Labour Government to take action to cut down the level of unemployment. Erif Heffer promised the Liverpool demonstration to fight to get unemployment down to the million level by the end of the year.

What action do they want the Government to take?

Are they demanding nationalisation without compensation for all firms declaring redundancy? NO. Are they demanding public works under trade union control while out schools and hospitals collapse and 170,000 workers are unemployed? NO. Are they demanding work or full pay? NO.

They are calling for a lessening of H.P. restriction, for selective import controls so that workers elsewhere will feel the brunt of unemployment and for a reduction of VAT on consumer durable; plus they are calling for MORE government aid for training and for areas of high unemployment ( which areas are not? ). These policies just

do NOT answer the problems- they accept that workers must pay the price for the crisis- they just want the price reduced a little.

And what pressure do they intend to bring on the bosses and the Labour Government? Are they campaigning against overtime and for work sharing on full pay? NO, Persona workers even had to send flying pickets to AUEW headquarters to pressure the executive. Are they fighting to organise demonstrations and occupations? NO. Their idea of pressure is closed meetings with the Government and the CBI to plead that unemployment levels are becoming unacceptable. What kind of pressure is that?

That movement that has built up over the last few months must go forward. But, in order to do so, it needs clear alternative policies and organisation to the leadership of the trade union movement. That is why we call for the building of trade union committees against unemployment in the localities. These must involve as broad a number of workers as possible. There is no point in a small group of militants declaring themselves to be such a committee unless the trade union movement in the areas at branch, Trades Council and shop stewards committee level, WILL NOT ACT. We must work to force them to act.

#### TRADES COUNCILS

Not only do Trades Councils not represent all trade union branches in the area, they do not represent the unemployed or shop steward committees. Trades Council campaign committees must be broadened to include shop stewards representatives if they are to organise support in the workplaces where our strength lies.

But, such campaigns do not just need a few 'structural changes'. They need a clear campaign of action to involve ALL workers and to relate to all the problems that unemployment poses to groups of workers.

#### 1. ORGANISE SUPPORT

They must be able to mobilise support- collections, blacking and picketing for all groups of workers fighting redundancies. The Hull dockers' blacking of all Phillip Morris goods in support of the Personna workers, shows the way forward.

They must organise meetings with speakers involved in struggles and take these meetings to the factory gates;

#### 2. FIGHT FOR POLICIES.

All committees must have clear policies for how to fight redundancy. They must argue with all threatened workers not only for work sharing on full pay, not only for occupations to ensure secure jobs but must prove that they can deliver support and assistance.

They must arrange for the books and profits of local companies to be examined to expose the lies and frauds of the bosses.

#### 3. EMPLOYED WORKERS.

Unemployment campaigns must fight against overtime, productivity deals and voluntary redundancies. They must fight for the 35 hour week NOW with no loss of pay. This must be done both inside official trade union machine- District Committees, shop stewards' committees and trade union branches, and outside- for example using unemployed workers, where they are organised, to leaflet and persuade workers who are still working overtime.

#### 4. THE UNEMPLOYED.

We must campaign for the trade union movement to take up the fight of the unemployed. We must fight for trade union registration of the unemployed and for the formation of unemployed workers' committees recognised and supported by the local labour movement. This is not always easy. In many areas the unemployed have little previous experience of organisation or have seen their jobs sold down the river by the trade union movement. Special TU schools for the unemployed organised near

the doles are just one way that the local committees can take up to cement the links between employed and unemployed workers.

#### 5. WOMEN, BLACKS AND YOUTH.

At our peril we will ignore the problems that women, blacks and youth face in the present fight against redundancy; we must approach all organisations representing black workers and discuss their specific problems and they must be involved in the campaign. Likewise we must recognise the effect of unemployment on women workers. The traditional attitudes and prejudices of male workers, the extent of part-time working and traditionally low levels of unionisation all make women particularly vulnerable. Rank and file committees or Trades Council committees must ensure that local Trades Councils' Women sub-committees and Working Women's Charter groups are drawn into the campaign if it is to be solid and overcome the divisions.

Outside the trade union movement, straight from school with no prospects or future, youth are open to the appeals of Army recruitment and the National Front unless we can offer them a fight and an alternative. Trade Union Committees against Unemployment must organise meetings to appeal to youth- not in the patronising style of so many labour movement organisations, but in a style and with policies that young workers can understand and relate to.

We must build these clear and united campaigns in the areas. The London demonstration showed that the numbers and the anger exists to go ahead. Such a movement can be built which will not just ask for improved HP terms. It will be a movement that will not just politically pressurise Healey and Wilson and their CBI friends.

Revolutionaries must have clear policies inside these campaigns. We can put to the test the solutions and the campaigns of the Labour Left and Trade Union leaders. With clear politics we can offer our alternatives to the bosses' crisis and prove ourselves the most effective fighters against unemployment.

D. HARDING and J. HUNT.

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# CUTS

## VALUABLE AMMUNITION FOR THE BATTLES AHEAD

The new Counter Information Services pamphlet 'Cutting the Welfare State' is full of valuable ammunition and explanation for those fighting the cuts. The cuts will drastically affect services that are essential to the living standards of all workers. But the pamphlet does more than just describe the effects of the cuts, although it does that very well. It also describes how the NHS has been sucked dry by those consultants involved in both private practice and the drug companies. It documents a drop in housing provision when 100,000 are homeless YET council housing expenditure is actually rising. It shows the devastating effect that cuts will have on already inadequate educational provision.

### PRIORITIES.

These cuts are central to government policy. They are part of their drive to make workers pay the price for the crisis with diminishing wage packets and deteriorating social services.

The pamphlet makes it clear that the Labour Government's payments to the banks and private industry will go unscathed. Government expenditure to support private industry will be substantially increased. The Government has made it clear that as the need arises more funds for Law and Order will be made available. It is those areas of government spending that are of direct benefit to workers living standards that will be axed. The Labour White Paper of January 1975 made clear the intention of cutting public expenditure by 1.3%. This meant that public transport, health, social services and education would take cuts of 10.0%. The Health Service can be left to collapse while the 'National Enterprise Board' is given virtually unlimited funds to revive the flagging profits of British Industry. The sickness of workers matters little compared to massive cash transfusions to shore up sagging profits.

### PROFITS AND INTERESTS

While our social services collapse, while local and central government falls deeper and deeper into debt

the central banks have been having a bonanza. Over the last ten years their profits have shot up.

Clearing Bank Profits 1964-74.	
Midlands	up 687%
Barclays	up 886%
Lloyds	up 1042%.

This is not surprising as interest rates on borrowed money have been soaring too.

The pamphlet calculates that government expenditure in 1975-76 will be equivalent to £1000 per man, woman and child. Of this £91 will go on paying INTEREST on borrowed money compared with £116 on health and personal social services! For 1975-76 the government will borrow to the tune of £9 billion on the money markets. Of this a cool £5 billion will go on paying interest on previous and present borrowings; Since 1968-69 local authority interest repayments have risen 3 times. It now costs Islington over £11 million to borrow £7½ million, in Coventry 20% of council spending is on debt repayment and interest charges.

As local authorities have been paying more for less as the social services crumble, so the profits of the banks have escalated and the flow of government money into private industry has increased.

### HOW DO WE FIGHT?

It is in the interests of all workers to fight against ALL cuts in welfare spending, against all deterioration in services. We demand education, health and housing as a RIGHT not a luxury.

But it is not enough to call for 'a fight' and for 'no cuts'. We will be left next year calling for 'another fight' and 'no more cuts'.

Those working in the public sector must decide on sanctions to be operated to prevent any deterioration in standards. Refusal to teach classes over present sizes, NUPE sanctions against private patients are all important and vital.

But the battle must not be left scattered in isolated workplaces where the weak can be picked off. We must build links and real support between public sector workers. We will need trade union public sector

committees to support particular groups of workers and to publicise the effects and importance of the cuts for all workers.

The fight against cuts, however, raises more than this. It raises the question of 'BUT WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM?', of 'WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO?' of 'IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE?'. Socialists must be able to answer these questions if they are to galvanise real support. We must realise that the fight against the cuts is a fight against the priorities of the entire capitalist system.

That is why we must argue for:-

1] The nationalisation of the banks and finance houses under trade union control. The immediate cancellation of all debts. Only in this way can social services and local authorities be released from the grip of the banks and money lenders.

2] For campaigns to force Labour Councils to refuse to implement the cuts and to refuse to repay interest on loans.

3] For a sliding scale of social expenditure to compensate for the effects of inflation on budgets affecting working class living standards.

We must put these arguments clearly and concretely. We are not merely defending lousy social services against a Labour government.

Read this pamphlet for some of the ammunition we'll need in the fight.

CRISIS CIS CDP  
SPECIAL REPORT  
45p  
'Cutting the Welfare State'  
(Who Profits?)

## EDUCATION

# CUTS

Central Government has cut £487M off education expenditure. The projected student intake for 1981 has been cut from 750000 to 640000. Local authorities have implemented cuts over and above those of central government in a bid to keep rates down and stretch their dwindling budget a bit further.

The cuts have meant little or no provision for nursery education, a partial freeze of school building programmes, bigger classes and fewer teachers. In higher education courses and facilities have been cut and redundancies have been threatened. For instance, more than 100 lecturers face the possibility of redundancy if the proposed merger of Newcastle Polytechnic and Northern Counties College of Education goes through. The number of education students will be reduced from 1470 to 650.

Job vacancies in academic, technical, research and ancillary posts remain unfilled or have been cut. Birmingham University has cut teaching and research jobs by 10% - a loss of about 120 jobs.

Students in higher and further education are still fighting meagre grants, a discriminatory grants system, soaring hall fees and canteen prices and the more general effects of inflation on their grants. Meanwhile education standards are deteriorating because of the cuts.

### EASY MEAT FOR RIGHT

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> a series of local initiatives on the issue of the cuts and the grants system took place. In Glamorgan Colleges of Further Education, the Art College plus the Polytechnic of Wales organised sit-ins and a demonstration. Various inter-Union committees against the cuts in education have been formed, a particularly successful one being formed in Avon. However what has characterised the response to the cuts has been its sectional and localised nature. For instance the NUS has completely opted out of any nationally co-ordinated campaign and settled for local days of action and tactics which can only spread demoralisation and disillusion amongst students. This is borne out by Aston University Students' Union's decision to leave NUS.

Obviously the students could not see the relevance of the NUS and hence became easy meat for right-wing rhetoric, even though the right-wing within the student movements have no concrete programme of action against the cuts.

Politically the Broad Left NUS leadership's response to the cuts has been to argue that cut-backs are a short sighted response to the crisis and that if continued British Capitalism will be unable to take advantage of any future boom, because of a lack of suitably qualified personnel. However, such an argument misses the main point that is that workers and students should refuse to pay the cost of bailing out the bosses and their system. In fact, we fight to place the cost of the crisis on the shoulders of those who created it - the bosses.

### A SOCIALIST ANSWER

In this period of capitalist crisis when all fields of public expenditure are under attack there can be no talk of welfare or social priorities; all areas of social and welfare spending are important for workers and students. It can only be on this basis that any meaningful fight-back takes place. Students, teachers and workers in education must join forces with workers in both the public sector and private sector of the economy. The fight-back itself cannot be on a merely local basis. It must be co-ordinated at a national level.

We believe that such an alliance should campaign around the following demands for higher education:

- \* Restoration of all cuts and the expansion of education expenditure to ensure that higher education is a right for all - No Cuts in student numbers.
- \* Freely available and adequate grants for all students - awards without means testing and no discriminatory awards.
- \* Immediate rise in grants to compensate for inflation and rising fees and rents.
- \* The fight for a sliding scale of grants based upon an NUS drawn-up cost of living index.
- \* Abolition of overseas student fees - Against all attempts to limit overseas student numbers.
- \* A complete freeze on hall rents and canteen prices.
- \* All vacancies to be immediately filled - No to natural wastage. No to all redundancies.

Ron Miller

# NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

# CUTS

The National Health Service represents an essential part of workers' so-called "social wage". But since its inception it has been inadequately financed, its workers poorly paid and it has borne the brunt of social expenditure cuts. As far back as 1951 prescription charges were introduced by the "great reforming" Labour Government of that time:

The history of the health service is a long and morbid one for the working class; now with the capitalist system in crisis, the whole of the public sector is being subjected to the most vicious cuts seen since the War.

The aim of these cuts is to solve the crisis of capitalism by freeing money for profitable investment. These cuts go hand in hand with the present income policy, the wage cutting £6 limit, and spiralling unemployment; All these Government policies have one central aim- to make the working class pay for the capitalists' crisis. The tactic the bosses use to implement these attacks is to divide and rule; resistance to these measures so far has come not for the official trade unions but the workers themselves.

In the NHS the tempo of attacks has been speeding up in recent months, especially in terms of closures and planned closures of hospitals. In London's East End, already a depressed working class area, the Poplar, Bethnal Green, Invalid and Crippled Children's, East Ham and Wanstead, and Connaught (Leyton) hospitals are all threatened with closure of some or all of their departments. Added to this, the East End has the highest unemployment and the heaviest education cuts in London. In Portsmouth, Clamorgan and Liverpool nurses are being made redundant. Everywhere a policy of 'natural wastage' and enforced retirements is being pursued.

There is considerable resistance to the cuts from hospital workers. At the Charing Cross and Hammersmith hospitals, workers are insisting that NHS patients should not bear the brunt of the cuts. They have banned work on private patients and are demanding their removal from NHS hospitals.

Pressure from workers has forced Barbra Castle to say she will go ahead with plans to phase out private medicine in NHS hospitals. But pressure from the bosses to hit the workers harder is far greater at the moment; so plans to give a bonus to consultants who work only for the NHS look as if they are going out of the window.

While the capitalist press has given massive coverage to the 'plight' of the privileged consultants and the effects that their sabotage will have on the already declining hospital service. The press campaign has taken the guise of 'freedom against totalitarianism'- freedom for consultants to line their own pockets at the expense of the working class and it is fired with hysterical headlines, like 'Doctors to leave Country'

It is true that the standard of service in the NHS has been declining but the deliberate policy of this government and past ones, Labour and Tory alike, has caused this.

For Junior hospital doctors the story is different- a massive working week with pitiful overtime pay (having to be 'on call') has produced militancy and strike action not so enthusiastically covered by the press and TV except to say that it is a pity that there is nothing in the kitty to pay them what they want.

Pressure on the government to hit the working class harder and harder means that the class must organise to resist the cuts. Labour will never be able to give workers a decent health service so we must fight for it.

We must fight to restore the cuts, to reinstate all workers made redundant, to give all hospital workers a decent wage and to force a massive injection of money into the NHS to replace the hundreds of decrepit hospitals with new ones.

To win this fight we must link up with workers in other parts of the public sector and where possible with workers generally- for the NHS is the property of all.

In East London a trade union action committee has existed for some time, including in it representatives of several different unions. Public meetings and leaflets should be used to prepare the ground for the formation of a united front of workers around the demands to restore cuts in all areas and to protect them against further attacks on erosion.

## WE CANNOT DEPEND ON THE UNION BUREAUCRACY TO FIGHT FOR US.

In many areas Local Action Committees of the National Campaign Against Cuts in the Health Service exist, drawing in workers from all public sector industries including hospital ancillary workers, doctors and nurses, and the campaign has been supported by the NUR and NALGO executives. This campaign has been formed out of the delegate conference of the MCAPP (Medical Campaign against Private Practice) in October 1975, and calls for a co-ordinated campaign against the cuts and a sliding scale of expenditure to combat the erosive effects of inflation.

We support the building of workplace based caucuses of militants to fight the Public Expenditure Cuts. These should be linked up on a district and national basis with trade union branches and Trades Councils where they are fighting cuts, and specific campaigns such as the Local Committees against cuts in the NHS.

# EDUCATION

# CUTS

Although education cuts have been with us since the Barber budget, the NUT leadership have just realised that it is time to take action against them.

Regular readers of the NUT publication, the Teacher, will have noticed how next years' estimate for the number of unemployed teachers has risen progressively. Presently its estimate stands at 8000.

Now the education cuts are hitting everywhere, Birmingham banned rising fives from entering primary school last week - an action which many local authorities have already taken. This week the ILEA announced that there would be no jobs for new teachers in primary schools next year. Everywhere nursery schools are being axed.

This is the thin end of the wedge; the non-compulsory sector of education must inevitably be the first sector to receive the worst of the cuts. This has several advantages for the Government. Firstly, that sector tends to be the most badly organised and therefore the weakest. Secondly it falls into line with government policy on employment. and the bosses need to reduce the number of women in the workforce.

One way of forcing them back into the home is to make women look after their children 24 hours a day. With this aim in mind, the bosses have also launched an ideological attack to reinforce their cuts campaigns. The anti-abortion lobby and the variety of 'disquieting' reports in the papers concerning the effect of working mothers on their children are the best orchestrated examples of these.

The non-compulsory sector is bearing the brunt of the cuts but all areas are suffering and are shortly to be hit even harder. Nearly all local authorities are considering various ways of implementing the cuts, often under the guise of a 'standstill'. The number of new teachers to be trained over the next few years is proof that the cuts are intended to be permanent. The present 30000 student teachers will be cut to 12000 by 1977. Even with full restoration afterwards, it would take the education system at least ten years to recover from the teacher shortage this cut would produce.

## THE UNION'S PROPOSALS

For a long time the NUT has been making 'left' noises about the cuts. At last the union leadership have proposed some action. However this action is of such a limited nature and is bound with such stringent conditions that it will be, at best localised and as such totally ineffective. The union executive has argued that if parents want a decent education service, they will have to pay for it through increased rates. This argument completely accepts the ruling class's ideology that the government cuts are inevitable and necessary.

The union officials' proposed action is to stop covering for teachers absent for more than three days. But without a fight from the rank and file to extend action and make it unconditional, the campaign will not be implemented. This will enable the Executive to say that there was not enough support and call off sanctions altogether. According

to the Executive any action must be "disciplined and controlled".

## RANK AND FILE

The effect of the crisis on the Rank and File teachers organisation (R&F) has been disastrous. This organisation has held the belief that as the crisis deepened there would be a corresponding and automatic growth of militancy. In reality there has been a 50% drop in R&F's membership and an unequivocal hammering of its candidate in the Vice-Presidential elections. R&F has one tactic only - the Right to Work Campaign. Its agitational paper has failed to come up with any answers to the crisis and has made no demands on the Labour Government.

## BUILD A UNITED FRONT

The political objectives of cuts and wage restraint is to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis. This involves concentrated attack on the living standards of the class. To combat this attack in the educational sphere, an independent rank and file movement must be built through the trade unions but cutting across the sectionalism of these unions.

The rank and file of all unions must find a working class answer to the crisis - an answer which means that school kids will not pay for the bosses' crisis. Thus a rank and file movement must be built around a programme of demands which unites as many workers and teachers as possible.

We must demand that:-

All cuts be restored.

Parity between Local Education Authorities be achieved by a general levelling up.

Nursery facilities be made available to all children between the ages of three and five years.

Maternity leave and reinstatement after pregnancy

Contract security for all teachers must be established. Abolish all short term contracts and establish a permanent pool of supply teachers.

All teachers have a guaranteed marking time of a fifth of their timetable.

All qualified teachers must be employed.

The only way that these demands will be secured is by militant action. The formation of a genuine united front to fight for these demands is the only way to solve the crisis facing the working class at the expense of the bosses. It will also aid the building of an effective, independent rank and file movement of all trade unionist.

R BAYLEY

# TAKING A STROLL TO THE DOLE

WHILE waiting for a bus that never seems to come, console yourself with the thought that the London Transport Board (LTB) is doing its best to provide the advertised services! The Board's official reasons for the chronic service are staff shortages and difficulties in obtaining spares.

But these excuses won't stand up to the shallowest investigations. The simple answer to staff shortages is to recruit. But what is LTB's present recruitment policy? It has stopped all recruitment!

The real cause of the bad London bus service is the shortage of buses. LTB blames the shortage of buses and spare parts on the motor industry. But the factories have the capacity to remedy these short-falls. It's the bosses who are perpetuating the ills of public transport. There are lay-offs, short-time working and closure threats through out the bus and truck divisions of the motor industry. Meanwhile most of the buses on the road are in dire need of replacement. Of the RT model buses, now over 25 years old and previously due to be put out to grass two years ago, hundreds are still in operation.

To make matters worse, the GLC has tightened the purse strings on public services, so from now on even less new buses will be bought. At the beginning of December another £9 million was lopped off LTB's budget. To get around this the LTB has started to buy second-hand buses off the Southend, Birmingham, and Stoke Corporations.

Over the years the GLC has borrowed large sums of money from banks and finance companies at extortionate rates of interest. A considerable portion of the rates is used to re-pay these debts and the interest accruing on them. These repayments are crippling all public services, including public transport. Which is more important - healthy bank balances of a few loan sharks or the maintenance and expansion of the public services on which we depend. Faced with such alternatives, we must demand that the local Government debts be cancelled, and that interest-free loans be made available to them.

The bosses' quest for profits makes it impossible to gear production to social need. This is particularly true of the motor industry; it must be completely nationalised and receive a thorough-going reorganisation.

But rationalisation must not be done at the expense of working people. We must demand nationalisation of the motor industry, including the bus, truck, and spares and components divisions, under workers' control and with no compensation to the bosses. Workers control does not mean that we take responsibility for the industry. While the banks and finance houses control the rest of the economy, we can have no real control

based on one industry. We need the right to veto management decisions and inspect their books to ensure that firms are not being run against our interests.

For instance, bus workers must have the right to veto decisions on bus designs to make sure that dangerous contraptions such as the Leyland National don't get on the road.

With a fight around these demands we can get a decent public transport system. But if we don't win these demands we will find ourselves doing a lot more 'strolling' and even more of us to the dole office.

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## IT'LL HAVE YOU IN STITCHES

M HOGAN

If it makes you sick to see hospitals closing down, to see the queues for the new 'wonder' drugs that help you to forget that you've no job, no decent home, no decent education for your kids. If you are sick and tired of hearing about latest cuts in your ever declining standard of living, then you need to see the new play by Red Ladder, aptly titled, 'It Makes Yer Sick'.

It is their first full length play since their successful 'A Woman's Work is Never Done'. And in 90 minutes it manages to examine the NHS and the wider problems of health in our society. If you think that is depressing, they will manage to cheer you up with some excellent songs and a lot of laughs, which help to make the criticisms more effective.

As it stands at the moment it is a bit long in parts, but Red Ladder are hoping to develop a shorter version based around the songs and I'd recommend that all cuts committees, unions, Trades Councils and every group fighting the cuts should book them for their meetings. If you are going to hold a benefit or social then book the whole play - you'll not regret it.

The only comment to be made at this stage is that the politics are not punched out clearly enough. But one of the best points about this group is that they continue to revise their work from the comments made. And I gather they have already started to work on it. So don't miss this one.

You can contact them at:- 58 Wray Crescent, London N4.  
01 263 1053.

# BLACK WORKERS-

## A SPECIAL TARGET, A HARDER FIGHT

Militant struggle by black workers has forced the racialist outlook of many trade union officials into the open. Struggles at Imperial Typewriters, Nuneaton Art Castings and North London Standard Telephones and Cables have been instrumental in exposing these attitudes.

In a belated response, the TUC has announced its intention to set up an equal opportunity committee and has recommended that equal opportunity clauses be written into all collective agreements.

But such a recommendation will remain a dead letter unless taken up by the rank and file of the trade unions. A black workers' charter must be worked out. It should have the perspective of strengthening black and white workers' unity in a counter-offensive against the crises of capitalism. It would act as a guide for our day-to-day anti-racialist work in the trade unions.

### HITTING BLACK WORKERS

Black workers have borne the brunt of unemployment in every post-War recession. Black unemployment rose 2½ faster than the general rate between November 1973 and May 1975. This figure is even higher for black women and black youth.

Racial discrimination means black workers suffer disproportionately from the general attacks on the working class. In the 1971/2 recession black unemployment in Birmingham more than doubled in a year while overall unemployed/employed ratios went from 1/11 to 1/8.

Two reasons account for black workers going out the factory gate first:

The acceptance by trade union negotiators of the "last-in, first-out" principle which directly hits black youth and black women workers who are often the last to have been taken on.

Trade union officials' acceptance of voluntary redundancy

Many black workers who have relatives abroad to support are wooed by the pay-outs accompanying voluntary redundancy into giving up their jobs without a fight. An offer of several hundred pounds will seem attractive to a worker supporting a family in Bangladesh where that family can live for £5 a month.

When black workers see no other way of meeting their responsibilities, their will to struggle is sapped.

Lump-sum payments may also be used by workers to visit

families barred from this country by savage anti-worker and racist immigration laws. Visits mean invariably that the worker will lose his job, has little chance of being re-employed and will certainly lose any accrued pension rights and increments.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE RIGHTS

In some plants the whole work force has united behind demands for special holiday provision for foreign-born workers. At Cannon Industries, near Dudley, the AUEW secured an agreement for the right to leave of absence for West Indian and Asian workers. White workers in the plant supported this demand throughout a 13-week strike. The black workers in effect won the right to ten weeks leave of absence every four years. Under the agreement, the black workers will be restored to their jobs at their previous rate when they return. The struggle has developed a very experienced group of Asian and West Indian shop stewards. A similar agreement is being sought by the AUEW at Albion Bottles at Oldbury.

With soaring unemployment it is far easier for management to introduce policies aimed at dividing workers along racial lines. The National Front fascists have already begun organising in Midland car plants behind the slogan "last-in, first-out", hoping that this demand will split black and white workers' unity.

Management at the Birmid Qualcast's foundry of Midland Motors Cylinders has attempted over the last two months to secure a passive response from white shop-stewards by promising that black workers will be sacked first. To this end, wage cuts were introduced in a number of foundries where black workers were in a majority as a preliminary to easing them out altogether. The workers successfully resisted the wage cuts and the previous rates were re-introduced. Now the management has issued 100 redundancy notices and threatened another 300 at the end of December even though Birmids' profits last year were £10 million.

Trade union officials must not be allowed to agree to redundancies at the expense of Black workers. Multi-racial solidarity with any workers threatened with the sack must be organised. The fight must be carried out around the following demands:

Work or full pay.

No voluntary redundancies.

Leave of absence rights for foreign-born workers.

# Fishing with force

## Britain, Iceland and the 'Cod War'

With the onset of the Cod War, the Labour Government has once again shown the ease with which they can adopt the policies of the previous Tory administration. Like the Tories their immediate reaction to the attempts of Iceland to defend its fishing grounds has been to send in the frigates. This is, of course, explained away by reference to the unreasonable nature of Iceland's claim and the need to defend British fishermen. But a quick look at the facts soon shows the hollowness of this argument.

Iceland has a case to make. In this small country with a population of under 250000, fishing accounts for 80% of its exports. So any threat to this vital industry would have severe economic effects. There is a lot of truth in the arguments about conservation. Excessive fishing in some areas has virtually eliminated the stock there; and because Iceland is convenient for British trawlers its waters are far more extensively fished than other grounds. In 1971, about 300000 fishing hours were put in there as opposed to 179440 elsewhere. The effect this is having can be judged by the age of the fish now being caught. In 1965, more than 65% of the catch was aged 10 years or over. Now only 2% exceeds this age, the main catch consisting of 70% spawning cod.

But when you look at who controls the fishing industry in Britain that you see in whose interests the Labour Government is really acting. The fishing fleets are dominated by three firms, British United Trawlers, Marrs and Boston Deep Sea Fisheries and Mac Fisheries (Unilevers). In 1971, two firms controlled 45% of the total fleet and four firms 73%. These firms also control a large proportion of the outlets. In 1965, five Grimsby firms, all owned by trawler companies, handled 25% of the catch and in Hull six firms had a 37% control.

### PRICE RINGS

These firms have used their power not to benefit the consumer but to boost their profits. Price rings are a fact of life in the fishing industry. Firms keep part of their fleet in port when a glut of fish threatens to drive prices down. Fishing is big business and this means big profits must be extracted at the expense of fishing workers and consumers. It is these profits that the Labour Government is now defending. Ironically, the tugs that are being used to help defend British fish-

ing fleets at a cost of £59000 a week are all hired from the main trawler firms.

Socialists have to take a clear position on this dispute. Just as we would support the right of Iceland to exist physically so we should support its right to economic existence. This means opposing the attempts of capitalists in this country to impose their own solution to the question. But the situation cannot rest there. Capitalism cannot provide an answer to the problems of the fishing industry.

As long as fish are a commodity to be bought and sold, then fierce competition and the subsequent over-fishing that this brings will go unchecked. Only a Socialist system of planning would provide any real solution. Fish stocks would be subject to international control, caught centrally and distributed to countries in accordance to their needs.

Labour's present defence of the fishing monopolies' interests leaves them with two alternatives. Either they back down or by using more force allow fishing to continue at the present rate. In either case both the jobs of the trawlermen and the consumer will suffer. Yet there is an immediate third course. This is to nationalise the big firms without compensation and under workers control. Fishing workers would then be able to make agreements directly with workers from other countries as to how much could be fished and where. The wages of workers would be guaranteed and not tied to the size of the catch, so the amount caught would reflect solely the need of consumers.

The interests of the big monopolies and of the workers who are employed in their industries

The interests of the big monopolies and those of the people who work for them and eat their products are not the same. In fact, they are completely opposed. The Labour movement must demand that the Government ends its support for the bosses. On no account must we allow ourselves to be drawn into supporting their attempts to bolster their profits at the expense of another far weaker nation and in the final analysis, ourselves.

**COMING SOON**

**INTERNATIONAL**

**WORKERS' FIGHT,  
WORKERS' POWER &  
PERMANENT REVOLUTION**

# WOMEN AND THE CRISIS

A SURVEY BY ANN JONES

**DISPUTES** at Kayser Bondor, Power Developments, Ladbroke's and the host of others around the country in recent months are clear evidence of growing confidence and combativity of women workers. Last June's NAC demonstration of 30,000 testified to the success of the women's movement in penetrating areas of the trade union movement previously uninvolved in the fight for women's liberation.

Trade union activity among women has steadily increased since the early equal pay battles of the late sixties. Now the crisis is hitting women hard both at home and at work, and ideas of Women's Liberation have begun to take hold in the working class.

We mustn't forget, however, that there have also been defeats and setbacks, and many instances of women going out the gate first! There is no guarantee that the small, fierce struggles, or the limited success of a single issue campaign such as NAC, will be strong enough in halting the immense attack being launched by the bosses. Unless such fights are linked, broadened and taken onto the offensive, the gains that we have forced out of the government and the employers will be lost. **We must be clear that, too, that defeats for women, whether at home or at work, are a defeat for the class as a whole.**

## HOW IT AFFECTS WOMEN

Capitalist crisis always hits the oppressed sections of the working class hardest. As the bosses attempt to solve their problems at the expense of the workers, they intensify their policy of divide and rule to take advantage of the weaker sections.

The present crisis is no exception. Throughout Europe, the 'reserve army of labour' is being told that its services are no longer wanted. Black workers and "guest" workers are being thrown out of work and hounded by increased restrictions and immigration controls.

Women workers are being forced back into the home. There are sackings and cuts in the welfare state which force women to shoulder the burden of the old, the young and the sick. There is an ideological offensive to back this up, with the 'experts' saying that nursery education isn't such a great thing after all, and shedding crocodile tears for 'latch-key' children.

Besides all this, workers are taking big cuts in real wages and increases in work levels.

The success of the bosses' ideological attack would severely handicap the unemployment struggle. The call for women and black workers to go out of the gate first is not being made just by extreme right wingers, but also by many trade unionists who are militant on other issues; and even those won over from racist ideas will retain their chauvinist ideas about women. Much to the benefit of the bosses, sexist ideology implies that jobs for women aren't seen as the 'right' they are for men, and that the fight for equal pay is seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. And this ideology is very deep rooted.

If women are to fight back they have to be prepared to organise themselves and to win support from men trade unionists.

## REDUNDANCIES

Unemployment figures always understate the number of women out of work. But even the official figures show that in the last year, while the number of men out of work rose by just over half, the number of women jobless has **doubled**. It is not just women on the shop floor who have been hit. Office workers, computer operators, technicians and canteen staff have all been affected. Night cleaners find themselves covering areas previously worked on by two women. Even the traditionally 'safe' jobs in the public sector such as teaching, nursing and social work are no longer guaranteed.

In the Birmingham and Black Country areas, there are numerous examples showing the ironies of public sector cuts. Nurses nearing the end of their training find themselves without jobs to go to, while women are told that they have to have their babies at home where previously they would have gone into hospital. Nursery nurses are unemployed while longstanding nurseries are being closed down. Teachers are out of work when there is a crying need for smaller classes and special courses for unemployed youth.

Such examples show the importance of linking up those who work in the public sector, and those affected by it. Women can play a vital role here.

The fight for the right of women to work is crucial in both sectors. Two examples show some of the dangers and the possibilities for a fight back. In BSR, Blackheath, earlier this year redundancies were announced. As in many other firms, the first to go were the women on the twilight shift. The women themselves were prepared to fight, but both the union officials and the shop floor leadership on the day shift failed to involve them. So BSR were able to carry through their plans. In contrast, men and women workers at Personna have occupied together.

To overcome such unevenness, socialists must propagandise against the bosses' divide and rule tactics and formulate particular slogans and demands which will take the women's struggle onto the offensive. We have to show that once you start saying that one section should go out first — whether it's women, black workers or even unmarried workers — you start playing the bosses' game. For women, the following points are particularly important:

- The right for women to work.**
- Resistance to all cuts of part-timers.**
- No worsening of conditions — no worker should do another's job.**

## EQUAL PAY

The fight for Equal Pay has come to be seen as a 'luxury' in most unions. Instead of the equal pay battle intensifying as the



date when the Act comes into force approaches, disputes have lately been few and far between. In threatening redundancies, the bosses effectively utilise the many loopholes in the Act.

Two recent successful strikes have involved newly recruited TASS women members. At both Newark, in Ipswich, and Bronx Engineering in Lye, women clerical workers fed up with waiting for equal pay and being told that the jobs they did were not strictly comparable to the men's, took the initiative. In both cases they shocked the men into activity and gained their support, and got their action officially recognised by the union. This shows the importance of fighting for support from the men in a particular workplace, and the paramount importance of the fight inside the unions to take the women's struggle seriously.

These women now face the danger of a job evaluation scheme. The pressure on the union has to be kept up to ensure that management is not allowed to invent spurious grades which allow them to depress women's wages. We have to fight for:

**Equal pay for work of equal value NOW**

**Mutuality to apply to all job evaluation and regrading.**

**Step up the campaign in the unions for equal pay.**

### UNIONISATION

The fight by groups of low paid women for the full £6 has strengthened unionisation in several backward workplaces. The most important of these has been at Kayser Bondor in Merthyr Tydfil, where three weeks of round the clock picketing forced the Courtauld's management to concede the £6 in two stages. This struggle has given a big impetus to other workers fighting the Courtauld management.

Though these struggles are important, we must not give way to the Labour Government's propaganda about the £6 being fair to the low paid. We must keep up our pressure to smash the limit. There are real snags in the flat rate £6 for low paid workers. First, it doesn't go on piecework, bonus or overtime pay. Second, many women bringing up kids on their own find

that increases squeezed out of employers are immediately lost because of the low thresholds for taxation and the Family Income Supplement. We must fight **against all wage limits**, for a **living minimum wage** and for the trade union movement to demand a non-means tested grant for single parent families.

### HOW SHOULD WE ORGANISE?

To fight for all these demands needs a high degree of consciousness and organisation amongst women workers. The fight for support from men is only just starting, but the present struggles show women's ability to fight and win support from other sections of the class.

But however spontaneous, determined and hard are many battles involving women, the employers' offensive will beat us unless we overcome isolation and develop a strategy for organising, unionising and taking the women's struggle forward.

First, we need to battle in the unions against prejudice. It is the job of all socialists to argue consistently against sexism. But fine words are not enough. We need union branch meetings at times suitable for us, special trades council sub-committees, campaigns for more nurseries and against all closures, and fully paid maternity leave.

We must campaign in the rank and file organisations for priority to be given to the fight for women's rights, and we must urge women to get involved. We need to build up women's caucuses in the unions and fight for special conferences and action committees. Within the unions, we must watch out for the stranglehold that union bureaucracies can exert. In some of the white collar unions where women have been organising (ATTI, ASTMS and Nalgo) we have found that only constant rank and file pressure will prevent us from being hived off into safe 'advisory' committees with no power or influence.

Second, we have to campaign for unionisation. Individual trades unions and trades councils have an important role to play in initiating such campaigns, but a real fight must show women themselves the necessity of unionisation, and the need to pressure men trade unionists into active support.

In Birmingham three recent disputes have highlighted the

Striking for £6: women workers picket the Kayser Bondor factory at Merthyr Tydfil



importance of rank and file support. At Yarnolds, the official strike of 40 women for 20 weeks ended in defeat because local trade unionists failed to provide the consistent help and solidarity action that were needed to win. But at Hampton Stampings and Power Developments, local AUEW rank and file militants gave solid support which helped to win the strikes.

Unionisation attempts in South London at Sunlight and Sanitas highlight the problems of convincing women workers they need to be in the union when the union leadership, whether at official or shop floor level, isn't prepared to take the women's struggle seriously. At Sanitas, a strike forced the re-instatement of a woman who had been organising; whereas at Sunlight, the management succeeded in sacking a militant woman trying to organise the laundry.

When disputes occur, there are a number of things that women must get organised for themselves right from the start. Workplace meetings to discuss disputes and possible action are important. There are frequent complaints from men trade unionists about women being uninterested and unreliable. But these same militants usually fail to explain what's going on. In a strike situation, special arrangements have to be made such as creches and baby sitters, especially if picketing has to be outside normal hours.

To campaign on these issues and take the struggle forward needs national organisation and co-ordination. Socialist women need an organisation; even the revolutionary party will have to have special caucuses for women.

The need for rank and file women's organisations is paramount. At the moment, we don't have either a revolutionary party or a national scale socialist women's movement. Both the revolutionary left and the women's movement are wracked by splits. But we must start to make links between the various struggles and campaigns, encourage militant women to join the wider movement, argue for involvement in the Campaigns against the cuts, and participate in local action groups and national campaigns such as the National Abortion Campaign and the Working Women's Charter. We hope revolutionary socialists, women and men, will discuss with us ways in which we can build the movement amongst women at work and at home and how we can step up the fight for women's liberation in the labour movement. ●

## The WOMEN'S VOICE rally

MEMBERS of Workers Power consistently argued, when they were in IS, for a serious attitude to women's work. We have pointed out that if we are to fight for the kinds of demands and activities described in the previous article, if we are to develop a real fighting strategy for women workers and if we are to link up workers and housewives, we need a genuine rank and file women's paper which can be effectively used to organise women. We have argued against those in the women's movement who think that women can end their oppression without joining the fight with the working class to change society — but we have insisted that the fight for women's liberation starts here and now and that all socialists, women and men, have a duty to be active in that fight.

Did the recent Women's Voice rally provide real leadership and involve women in concerted activity? With 600 present and speakers from many areas on a range of aspects of women's struggles, it was certainly one of the biggest gatherings of socialist women there has been, and evidence of the growth of militancy and determination amongst them. But although some of the biggest cheers went to calls for a movement of 'revolutionary feminists', the Rally offered little real guidance on the way forward. Rallies are not enough. IS women and supporters of Women's Voice will have to argue that Women's Voice has to get down to the serious task of planning consistent strategy and activity. Proper conferences, national and regional, are needed to pool experience and draw the conclusions. Active rank and file Women's Voice groups are needed, ones that are not simply recruiting grounds for IS, but which agitate and intervene in local battles — whether around NAC, nurseries etc or trade union issues. IS should drop its sectarian attitude to the Working Women's Charter; if the Charter and its campaign has faults, then IS should join and work to change it.

The Working Women's Charter Campaign does offer socialist women a chance to involve working women and gain support in the existing trade union movement. We should campaign within it and for it. It isn't the only arena for work but we must not ignore its possibilities. We urge women socialists and trades unionists to attend the London Cuts Campaign Conference organised by the Charter, and the National Conference planned for the new year. ●

# A PROGRAMME FOR ENGINEERS

**HAILED AS 'moderates' by the bosses' press, the right wing have won a significant victory in the AUEW. The CP/Labour Party Left has suffered a significant defeat with the election losses of Bob Wright and Jimmy Reid.**

The bosses were given even more cause for jubilation when the recent meeting of the AUEW National Committee (NC) accepted the Labour Government's £6 wage limit. The Committee (its composition unaffected by the national elections) had held a position of verbal opposition to the government's pay policy and the TUC General Council's acceptance of it. But at the meeting the vote in favour of accepting the £6 limit was 32 to 20.

With the left outflanked, Scanlon was able to say that the NC's new position reflected the mood of their constituents, and that the decision "must be good news for the government and the TUC". The severity of the defeat means (for the union officials) there will be no further national increase until next

August even though the present agreement expires in May; next year's agreement will be "conditioned by the pay policy of that time"; and demands for a shorter working week and longer holidays will be dropped.

We know the direct interest the bosses have had in these results. Their press campaigns on the AUEW and EPTU elections do not surprise us. Around the country bosses and management openly encouraged a right wing vote.

But the left can't blame it all on the bosses. Their leadership of the union, their policies and their methods must be examined.

The highly democratic structure of the AUEW is divorced from the shop floor. The present branch structure has produced a special layer of AUEW militants with their own milieu; and District Committees with little immediate pulling power. Whereas the Left has been able to dominate the branches in many areas, it has not managed to develop

policies and a leadership to meet the present crisis and win support among the union membership at large. It has relied on manoeuvring and string pulling at the top to keep its control.

Not only are national wage claims not relevant to the stronger sections of workers in the union, but in recent years the 'Left' leadership has not been prepared to lead a serious fight for those claims. In 1972 Manchester and Sheffield engineers were left to fight for the National Pay Claim on their own. The 1975 agreement included no provision for the shorter working week, for a sufficient minimum wage throughout the industry, or for adequate compensation for the effects of inflation.

With such a feeble record and such a fragile base, it is not surprising that the Left were so vulnerable to the recent press campaign. In the atmosphere of 'national crisis' and orchestrated cries for 'moderation' and 'restraint', the Left clung to low-profile manoeuvring over the postal ballot rather than coming openly to the factory floor with clear alternative policies to meet the needs of the members faced with short-time, unemployment and inflation. They have now come unstuck. The Broad Left's policies and perspectives have been shown to be inadequate.

A united Left offensive against the right now has to be launched. It must have policies that meet the real needs of the members, it must campaign for the union structure to genuinely represent the needs experienced by the members on the factory floor. If the right are to be pushed back, militants must unite around a clear programme that can take the union forward and galvanise the members. It must be able to link the struggles of engineers with the struggle of other sections of workers.

To this end we present the following programme which we consider offers relevant and clear policies.

1. **A clear goal** — the thorough transformation of the Union into a body capable of mobilising AUEW members (as a leading section of the working class) in the fight against the effects of the crisis, and the bosses' offensive on their wages and working conditions.

2. **Policies relevant to rank and file engineers** meeting their needs and uniting them in struggle; and a wages policy and national claim which mean real across the board gains for all members.

For £60 minimum time rates to bring up the weaker sections.

For a rising scale of wages compensating for every rise in a worker's cost of living as the result of inflation. £1 for 1%.

For equal pay now and equal job opportunity for women; preservation of health and safety legislation, and where this applies to women only, its extension (where appropriate) to men.

Use of the union journal and district bulletins to publicise and agitate for the claim. Regular district stewards' and mass meetings during campaigns.

Real national guidance and strategy in the fight against unemployment, redundancy, layoffs and short-time working.

Official opposition to all closures, layoffs, 'voluntary' redundancies, job reduction by natural wastage and short-time working. For the maintenance of all jobs.

For a 35 hour week with no loss of pay. For work sharing on full pay under trade union control.

Officially supported occupations to force nationalisation with no compensation of all firms attempting redundancies or closures.

For the 100% closed shop, strong shop stewards organisation on plant and combine basis. Control by shop stewards of manning levels, of hiring and firing, and work speed.

For the extension of workers' control. Inspection of all areas of 'business secrecy' — the account books, the board committees etc should be open to workers' inspectors

(stewards and any 'expert' advisors they might need), who must be answerable to and recallable by mass meetings. The right to veto all management decisions not conducive to the workers' interests — **but no participation**, no responsibility for conditions (profit and loss) imposed by the capitalist market.

District committee registration of job loss and leadership of the fight to prevent or restrict it.

The fight to transform the Union into a completely democratic organisation — rank and file workers' control of the Union.

Transformation of branches from a geographical to a factory structure. Fight for mass union meetings in work time.

Joint shop stewards committees uniting all unions in a plant. For official support for combine committees on an all trade union basis.

For majority shop steward representation on district committees and for bi-monthly stewards meetings.

No postal ballots.

For branch voting for all official positions and circulation of election addresses and results.

Average engineering wage for all full time officials and re-election every three years; a system of re-call.

A campaign to improve the conditions and rights of women, young workers, apprentices and immigrants.

Equal pay and equal opportunity for women.

A fight for creche and other facilities at work.

A woman's right to work. Official opposition to any attempt to put women first on redundancy lists.

Women's caucuses or committees in factory and district where they request it. Official encouragement to women workers to play a full part in union life. (Special schools for women shop stewards, creche facilities and union meetings in work time.)

100% trade union membership for apprentices.

Full adult rate at 16.

Junior worker committees in each factory, representation on joint shop stewards committee and the right to direct negotiations on wages, conditions etc.

Opposition to all racial discrimination — equal opportunity for all jobs.

Black/immigrant workers' committees/caucuses in factories and districts.

Expulsion from the union of all fascists. No National Front members as stewards, district committee members or trades council delegates.

A consistent political line for the union nationally. It should include: support for all other unions in struggle against the bosses and the Government. In particular the forging of an anti-incomes policy/wage freeze alliance with any union pledging itself against the so-called Anti-Inflation Policy. The creation of inter-union solidarity and where possible formal alliances against the cuts in the Social Services and Government spending, and most importantly, against redundancies.

The fight for this line in the TUC. No acceptance of class collaborationist policies even though the majority of the TUC Congress holds such policies.

International Solidarity and links. Solidarity with Chilean and Portuguese workers. Fight to build international Combine Committees on a lay delegate basis.

**JOHN HUNT**

**MIKE EVANS**

## MINERS AND THE PAY LIMIT

# AN URGENT TASK

**THE Labour Government, the TUC bureaucracy and the capitalist press were unanimous in their glee at the result of the NUM ballot on Labour's incomes policy. The result gave the media a 'mandate' to give full rein to their red-bashing and put-downs of the so-called "mindless militants" among the NUM leadership.**

There is now a growing feeling among the rank and file of the NUM that the ballot of the membership was 'rigged'. Not rigged in the accepted sense of the word, such as a deliberate falsification of voting returns; no, this rigging was of a more insidious and devious nature.

First, look at the conditions under which the ballot was taken. It was only eight days after the end of the 1975 NUM Annual Conference (which had decided to 'seek' wages increases that would result in faceworkers receiving a basic wage of £100 per week) when the NEC decided to ballot the members on the question of the Government's "anti-inflation" package. That Conference had been subject to the pressure of an appeal to the NUM's traditional loyalty to the Labour Party by a Prime Minister who has many times 'deplored' the 'interference' of political parties in trade union affairs. Nevertheless, Conference decided to 'seek' £100 for faceworkers.

### DISARRAY

The right wing majority of the NEC read this to mean that faceworkers should **eventually** achieve a basic rate of £100 — but exactly **when** was open to speculation. Then, rather than call a Special Conference to discuss the £6 limit (which should be part of the normal process of the NUM) they embarked upon a new course of action.

In the period when the pits are in a state of disarray — the holiday period when collieries close on a staggered basis to ensure continuity of production — the NEC called a ballot of the members. The recommendation of the NEC was to vote 'Yes' to a reactionary policy which would result in wage cuts and deprivation for the members and their families — a policy directly contrary to the objects of the union as laid out in the rule book (where it states that the objects of the union are a) to defend and advance the living standards of the members and b) to abolish the capitalist system).

By emphasising 'collective responsibility' the right wing of the NEC sought to silence the opponents of the £6 wage policy. In this they were largely successful. Campaigns for a rejection of the £6 limit were weak even in Yorkshire and Scotland.

The campaign against the £6 limit was both organisationally and politically overshadowed by the joint propaganda drive of the Government, the TUC, the Press and the NEC right wing.

A workforce that had just come back from holiday — had just 'got away from it all' — was subjected to a deluge of 'national interest'/'all pull together' propaganda from all sides. The traditional response of the NUM left — McGahey, Scargill and Co. — was totally inadequate. Their emphasis on the miners' 'special case' and their 'just deserts' could offer no clear alternative to a membership that knows how crucial the support of other sections of workers has been to the two victories the miners scored against the Tory Government. The left's 'special case for the miners' could offer little way out of the corner into which the miners were being driven by the propaganda barrage. In fact, in stressing the miners' sectional

needs, the left only served to reinforce the illusory "class-wide" gloss that the Jack Jones flat-rate plan was giving to a wage-cutting policy.

In this way, the ballot was 'rigged' from the start. Many rank and file members are now saying that if the ballot were re-taken now, the result would be reversed.

The Yorkshire area's call for a Special Conference to review the wages question is a reflection of this feeling. **It must be fully supported.** In all probability the NEC will deny the rank and file the opportunity of changing their minds, stating that the ballot result should be binding until **they** decide otherwise.

This is largely due to the over-concentration of full-time officials on the NEC — bureaucrats who, because of the gulf between their own living and working conditions and those of the rank and file mineworker are totally unaware of the very real hardship that the pay limit entails.

Basically, these leaders accept the view that workers must pay the price for the crisis, and they have no alternative other than policing Labour's wage cut policy. As one miner put it "What justice is there in them bastards getting over £100 a week for sitting on their arses thinking of ways to sell us out, when we can't get it for working bloody hard ripping and producing coal."

However, all may not be lost. Full time officials may have short memories, but the rank and file have not. Already in the winter of 1970/71, many rank and file miners became fed up with the frustrations of combatting 'official' bureaucracy and struck over their pay claim. Such action is a very real possibility on the issue of the £6 limit.

In the event of such action, there will have to be an all-out effort to spread it. Otherwise militant miners will face isolation, and the forces of the union throughout the country could be fragmented. The bureaucracy will play an easy game of divide and rule.

### SOUND BASE

It is essential therefore that miners prepare now to co-ordinate rank and file action in all the major areas of the NUM. What is needed is a rank and file organisation within the union which is capable of breaking the right wing stranglehold of the full-timers. This will not appear overnight. It will need consistent and concerted work by rank and file activists in the union — bulletins, newsletters, regional and national link-ups and conferences — in order to build a sound base on which a real rank and file group can be constructed. And it will need a clear and class conscious political programme to avoid such failings as those of the left over the ballot.

No flashy facade of a "rank and file" group (such as The Collier, one of the IS group's "industrial promotions") can substitute for this work.

In a situation of mounting tension leading to the outbreak of actions to break the £6 limit, such work will receive a tremendous impetus. The coming struggles will act as a spur, and this could transform the effectiveness of even quite a rudimentary rank and file structure. But such a structure must be begun **now**; otherwise there will be nothing to build on.

The task is not an easy one. But a great deal depends on it, both for miners and for the working class as a whole, in a situation where miners could help to defeat Labour's attempt to make workers pay the price of capitalism's crisis. **In the event of unofficial action being taken, no effort should be spared to spread it and make it effective.**

**Dave Black**