

THE WORKER



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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING THE BATTLE CONTINUES

SPEAKING at the Post Office Workers' conference at Blackpool last week Healey firmly linked the Labour Party's election plans with a call for trade union co-operation in a fourth round of wage restraint. He said, "We can win the election, but only if men and women in the trade union movement... want to keep inflation down by deciding with the Government how much wage costs could rise next year and then, through collective bargaining, dealing with wage anomalies."

That simply means that the policy of fixing wages by Government order in the interest of higher profits goes on and relegates collective bargaining to a fight amongst workers instead of against the employer. It is easy to see whose orders Healey is obeying. The Engineering Employers Federation, for example, while "stressing their dislike of pay norms", has just expressed capitalism's demand for a "stage four, substantially lower than the 10 per cent of stage three which ends in 7 weeks".

The present Government's wage restraint policy, the 'social contract' or the endless succession of stages and phases, is simply the latest form of capitalism's declaration that in a state of general decline it can no longer afford collective bargaining and wages must continue to be fixed by government fiat. It is this economic fact which is expressed politically in the end of bourgeois democracy

and the necessity of capitalism's future becoming increasingly fascist.

It is to the credit of the British labour movement that it has said no to further wage restraint and insists on its right to collective bargaining. But the political implications of that correct decision have yet to be recognised. It is not possible, for instance, to be in favour of collective bargaining and at the same time to support the Labour Government. Those who support the Labour Government at all costs, like the general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers Union, have therefore to fudge on the issue of collective bargaining, calling it 'responsible voluntary collective bargaining' and speaking of 'an orderly return to collective bargaining'. They want a new 'economic contract', involving the closest collaboration of the trade union movement with the Labour cabinet, which will be even more corporatist than the old, discredited 'social contract'.

In this way it is possible to pay lip service to the concept of collective bargaining which the labour movement demands while really supporting a capitalist Labour Government. The general secretary of the TUC, Murray, says that a decision has been taken in favour of collective bargaining but adds: "I have no doubt that there will be an understanding by trade unions of the need to keep inflation down

and I have no doubt there will be a response by negotiators to a climate in which the Government is very clearly making further effort to tackle the problems of the economy." This line has been properly rejected by the general secretary of the T&GWU in connection with a Ford claim for a 25 per cent rise and shorter hours. He said, "The Union would not support any sort of central arrangements on pay whether maintained by the Government or the TUC" and he did not "believe in any economic contract."

The organised workers of Britain in opting for collective bargaining have taken an absolutely necessary step to defend themselves from fascist enslavement. But we have also to realise that in taking this step we are taking up arms against capitalism, our arms being mainly our trade union organisation - and we are committing ourselves to total rejection of capitalist government, whatever the name of the party that administers it.

EEC destroys our steel

IN SPITE of all the cutbacks and redundancies imposed on the British steel industry by the Government, the EEC is demanding even greater destruction. Proposals are under active consideration by the European Coal and Steel Community for a further reduction in British steel production in the third quarter by another several hundred thousand tonnes. At the same time there is to be increased import by Britain of Italian-made steel.

The steel unions are preparing to fight European Commission plans for cutting Community steel production and the TUC has urged the Government to take a tougher line with the EEC.

The real line which ought to be taken by British workers, in steel and in every other industry, is: Get out of the Common Market. We should never have gone in to begin with. The only country in Europe with

an expanding steel industry is socialist Albania which has developed on the basis of self reliance, free from the EEC and Comecon.

Meanwhile the BSC will lose £100m worth of its steel exports to the US as a result of that country's 'anti-dumping' campaign.

Three missions from Britain are visiting China in the autumn at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Metallurgy to see if Britain's experience of 'modernising its steel industry' can be sold to China! This opens up a whole new field for British exports. Being the oldest capitalist country and the one, therefore, where capitalism's tendency to destroy its own productive base in an attempt to destroy workers' organisation is most advanced, Britain can now offer to sell abroad its prescription for the quickest and most efficient way to commit industrial suicide.

NUM-unity not division

THE PRINCIPAL task facing delegates to the NUM's National Conference in July is the fight for wages. This fact has already been recognised by the S. Wales Area Conference. It represents the key to building the union into a strong united force capable of resisting the present Labour Government's attack on the coal industry, an attack spearheaded by the introduction of the present productivity/bonus schemes. The introduction of these

schemes was not intended, as the Labour Government would have us all believe, to increase production in the industry, but to weaken and divide the NUM, the only obstacle to a further run-down of the industry.

Since the introduction of the productivity schemes the NCB have deferred the opening of a new £290m mine at Margam with its estimated 60 million tons of rich top grade coking coal in thick

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Cardiff steel workers protesting against the destruction of their industry.

Albania on disarmament

THE first real plea for peace not war came at the UN General Assembly's special session on disarmament when Albania's delegate, on June 9th, called on all Mediterranean countries to close their ports to both American and Soviet warships.

If the world was serious about disarmament, then both NATO and the Warsaw Pact ought to be abolished and there should be an immediate withdrawal from their foreign bases of the military forces of the two major imperialist powers, the US and the USSR.

The Albanian delegate, Abdi Baleta, accused Washington and Moscow of "taking advantage of the arms trade to get rid of outdated weapons and replacing them with new, more advanced and powerful armaments." Both powers used their arms race with each other to try to extend their domination over the rest of the world.

The Indian Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, attacked the nuclear non-proliferation treaty as discriminating between the nuclear powers "giving them a monopoly and the freedom to exploit nuclear know-how commercially" and countries expected to be dependent on the nuclear powers for restricted peaceful use of nuclear development. "The whole world," he said, "should be declared a nuclear-free zone."

HISTORIC NOTES Paris Commune

"AFTER WHIT Sunday 1871 there can be neither peace nor truce possible between the working men of France and the appropriators of their produce." So ended Karl Marx's address to the International Working Men's Association delivered just two days after the final suppression of the Paris Commune on May 28th by the soldiers of the French bourgeoisie.

The beginning

The story of the Paris Commune began almost a year earlier. In June 1870 the French bourgeoisie declared war, ostensibly against Germany. In fact, it was a war for the decimation of the French people, and was opposed by the working class. The bourgeoisie then declared peace in May 1871 with the country under Prussian military control, and with a pledge to extort from the people a horrifying burden of taxation to compensate the invaders: the object of the bourgeoisie was now apparently achieved, except for Paris.

On September 4th, 1870, the workers had taken matters into their own hands, overthrown the Empire and demanded a Republic. Yet this new bourgeois government, headed by Thiers, was more interested in alliance with Prussia than with the defence of Paris and its people: it only narrowly escaped overthrow in October.

After the capitulation of the city in January 1871, this cowardly government fled to Versailles, leaving the workers' National Guard successfully to secure

Paris. The bourgeoisie then pressed Bismarck to use the Prussian occupation forces to suppress the city.

Unwilling to involve his troops in street-fighting, Bismarck declined the offer. The bourgeoisie, forced to take matters into its unwilling hands, entered Paris with their army in an attempt to gain possession of the weapons of the National Guard.

They failed miserably, and their repulsion on March 18th was the birth of the Commune. So they returned to Bismarck, shelling the city the meanwhile. Even harsher compensation terms were agreed for the May "peace", so desperate were the bourgeoisie for the release of French prisoners of war held by the Prussians. Thus was an army hastily assembled for the butchery of the men, women and children of Paris.

The hideous revenge exacted on the Paris workers was the doing not just of the French bourgeoisie, but also of international capitalism. The British and Tsarist governments gave their wholehearted backing to the Thiers government. And the principal condition for the suppression of Paris, the continued occupation of France by Prussia, was continued at the request of the French bourgeoisie.

The common estimate is of 100,000 men, women and children slaughtered.

Their only crime was to seek to govern themselves. "Paris was no longer the rendezvous of British landlords, Russian ex-serf owners Irish absentees, American ex-shareholders and shoddymen and

Wallachian boyards." "We," said a member of the Commune, "hear no longer of assassination, theft and personal assault: it seems as if the police (who had fled) had dragged with it to Versailles all its Conservative friends."

Working hours were reduced, production organised under a co-operative plan, the standing army abolished and replaced by armed workers, all officials elected and subject to recall: in short there was a dismembering of the militaristic and bureaucratic mess of bourgeois government.

Hideous

The Parisians had survived months of famine when, in the words of Victor Hugo, "the potato was Queen, and the onion God." They had made peace, not with their bourgeoisie, but with the Prussian soldiery, who in awe at the armed people would not or could not enter the city. The bourgeoisie could not forgive the workers of Paris.

The Commune is the first living example of proletarian dictatorship. But its lesson is bitter. For their courage in refusing to submit to the bourgeoisie's conduct of war, and in turning their weapons against their rulers, the Parisian workers paid a terrifying price. After the Paris Commune, no one can wait for the outbreak of war as an opportune moment for revolution. Our task, like that of the French working class, is to strike at the warmongers at home and prevent war, which now as a hundred years ago has as its only object the carnage of the working class.

THE WEEK

CHINA has cancelled a large scale aid programme for Vietnam and is prepared to introduce "even more rigorous measures", all because of Vietnam's supposed subordination to the Soviet Union and alleged mistreatment of overseas Chinese. Ironically, it was the withdrawal of aid to China around 1960 which signalled the Soviet Union's rejection of socialist principles at home and abroad.

THE THOMSON Organisation, which has a novel approach to industrial relations (sacking any worker fighting for wages and jobs) has recently published its results for the year. Profits were up 29 per cent, to a mere £19½ million.

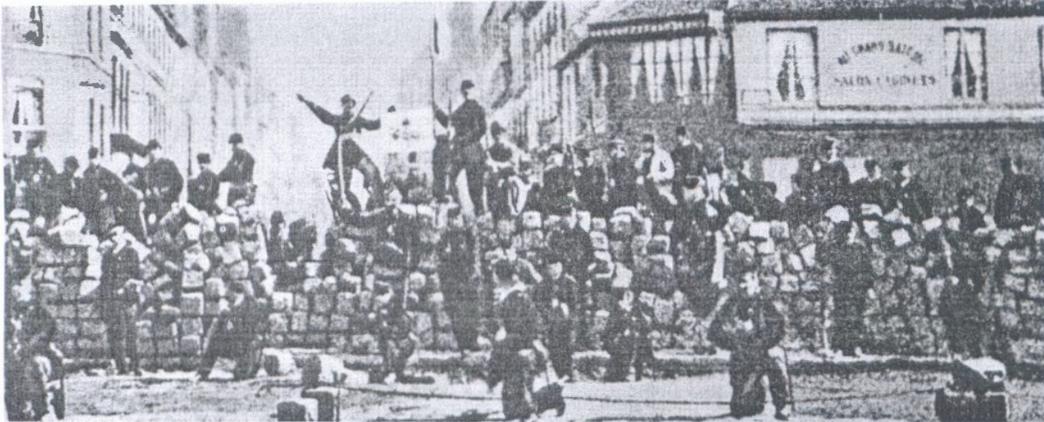
"Times Newspapers" are a part of Thomsons. This year "The Times" group moved from a loss of £1.5 million to a profit of £1.9 million. However, workers fighting over jobs and manning levels were sacked and the company threatened to shut "The Times" forever. For Mr Brunton, Chief Executive, nearly £2 million profit is not enough: "Our national newspapers are still not providing an adequate return by normally commercial standards" was his comment on the results.

UNILEVER is, apparently, concerned about the world food problem, and is willing to contribute. But it warns governments must "play their part by establishing and maintaining the political and economic environment which will make it commercially sensible for us to devote our resources to such activities."

BRITISH Rail, announcing record £28 million profits, have had this to say: "... since 1962 we've reduced our wagon fleet by six hundred and eighty thousand vehicles, and the number of locomotives by over nine thousand. And although tonne-miles have fallen only 14 per cent, freight train miles have fallen by 56 per cent." Figures which, according to British Rail, "shows that British Rail is developing a rail business all of us can profit from!"

THE NATIONAL Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers has made a formal complaint to the Manpower Services Commission. Under the scheme whereby employers are paid £19.50 to provide youngsters with 'work experience', farmers are getting cheap labour and are not giving training. After the six month period is over, the school leavers are sacked to be replaced by new ones bringing new subsidies. "What worries us," says the Union, "is that this may be a ruse for getting rid of a full-time worker or not taking on an apprentice."

THE STRIKE of some 500 SOGAT members against the Bank of England's employment of non-union labour continues, with a firm decision on Friday, June 9th to stay out until the next Friday. Bank notes are running short. Picketing has been successful in stopping deliveries to the works at Debden, Essex, and the Union is threatening to extend the picket to the Bank of England in Threadneedle Street.



Fighters of the Paris Commune manning one of their street barricades.

The question of the Hwa people-Vietnam statement

In the May 27th, 1978 Statement by the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and in the May 28th, 1978 Note addressed by the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China, the Vietnamese side has proposed that inciting propaganda harmful to the friendship between the two peoples should be ended, and that representatives of the two Parties and Governments should meet as soon as possible, maybe in early June 1978 to discuss and settle differences regarding the question of Hwa people in Vietnam including the Chinese Government's proposal to send ships to the ports of Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City to take Hwa people back to China.

The Vietnamese proposal is prompted by the friendship between the Vietnamese and the Chinese people. It is conforming to the interests of the two peoples

and to customary international practices. What has surprised the Vietnamese side most is the June 2nd, 1978 Note addressed by the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China to the Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in which the Chinese Government refuted the sensible and reasonable proposal of the Vietnamese side. At the same time, it repeated its allegation at variance with the truth and put forward demands contrary to customary international laws and practices.

The Vietnamese side has repeatedly pointed out that over the past 20 years and more, in keeping with the 1955 Agreement between the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Party and the Central Committee of the Chinese Party, it has allowed Hwa people in North Vietnam to have the same rights and obligations as Vietnamese citizens, and in prac-

tie, they have become Vietnamese citizens. In South Vietnam, almost all Chinese residents have taken up Vietnamese nationality and become Vietnamese of Chinese origin. Now if the Chinese side wishes to change the 1955 Agreement between the two Parties regarding the question of Hwa people in the North, and to revise the issue left by history concerning the Vietnamese of Chinese origin in the South, then it is logical that the Chinese side should negotiate with the Vietnamese side. If the Chinese side wishes to send ships to Vietnam to take Hwa people back to China, it must also hold negotiation in advance with the Vietnamese side. This is the correct way to settle differences between the two countries conforming to the interests of the two peoples and to the principles of equality and mutual respect in international relation.

The difference about the ques-

tion of Hwa people is easy to settle, but on the one hand, the Chinese side refuses negotiation and on the other, it invents stories about Vietnam ostracizing, persecuting and expelling Hwa people, and speeds up a large scale propaganda campaign so as to arouse national hatred and to incite the anti-Vietnam psychology among the Chinese people. It is clear that the Chinese actions are premeditated and aimed at creating difficulties for the construction of socialism in Vietnam and undermining the age-old friendship between the people of Vietnam and China. The policy of the Party and Government of Vietnam vis a vis Hwa people in Vietnam is a correct and consistent one. It is based on Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism in keeping with the Agreement between the two Parties and with the fundamental and long-term interests of Hwa people in Vietnam.

EDITORIAL

IMPERIALIST powers trying to grab the richer portions of Africa and becoming involved in clashes and confrontations with each other in the process - what could be more like the international situation just before the sparking off of World War I?

Lenin was absolutely clear about the role the working class must play in such a situation. The working class must repudiate the national capitalist governments bent on making war in capitalism's interest and turn the aggressive wars launched by those governments into civil wars to topple the ruling class and establish socialism.

What happened in 1914 was that the social democratic leaders in Germany and the other European countries were allowed by the working class to vote the war credits the capitalist governments needed to make war. Four years of insensate carnage which decimated the ranks of European workers duly began.

What is the stance of the British working class today, in a precisely similar situation? So far we have failed to denounce our own war-mongering capitalist government. We have allowed US bases to be established here; we have permitted Britain to be involved in the anti-socialist NATO pact; we have not succeeded in preventing British imperialism's forays in various parts of the world either on its own or in concert with other imperialist powers. In short we are doing the same thing as voting the war credits at the beginning of World War I.

An occasion for reversing that tragic trend is coming up soon. In the elections probably to be staged in October the British working class will be presented with the 'choice' between two capitalist parties equally committed to the drive to war inevitable under capitalism. The choice being offered is would you rather die horribly and pointlessly with a Tory or a Labour prime minister cowering in a bunker below Whitehall? Whichever way you vote in the October elections you are voting for war.

We say with Lenin: to hell with that phoney and fatal choice. Let's choose instead to vote for peace by boycotting capitalism's polling booths - which are only the first recruiting centres for World War III. Let's choose instead to vote for socialism by such a rate of abstention from voting for our own exploitation and slaughter that the whole world will see that British workers will not again die in the mud for capitalism. Let's make revolution to prevent war.

And at the same time, in voting for peace not war by repudiating capitalist elections, we will be voting for full employment not mass unemployment, for an end to the destruction of British industry and a beginning of self-reliant progress for the good of the British people, for a final cessation of our exploitation by capitalism.

Let's begin now to harness the working class's natural and honourable detestation of war to our equally natural hatred of capitalist exploitation in a mighty socialist crusade which will engulf the enemies of peace who rule us.

Communists?

THE SPANISH "Communist" Party, hastening to make itself respectable in the eyes of the ruling class, is dropping even the vocabulary of a communist party. Airing references to Lenin, they now describe themselves as "Marxist, democratic, and revolutionary", although their leader Carillo says that Marx himself has been outdated by the welfare state, the mixed economy, the atom bomb, and the emergence of the so-called third world. The words "democratic centralism", which have historically been used to describe the structure of a communist party, have been replaced by a phrase - "governed by democratic rule" - which is intended to put the stamp on its commitment against revolution.

Abandoned tenets

The French "Communist" Party too has abandoned some of the basic tenets of Marxism, notably that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As for democracy within the party, even leading members claim that the first they heard of major policy changes was when they were reported on the State-run television service.

Long lacking in Marxist understanding, and now increasingly divested of the words that used to cover their nakedness, the Euro-communists still find themselves largely distrusted by the older social-democrats: understandably so, since the revisionists are in the market for the same handful of remaining reformist policies.

The French revisionists now seek not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but a nebulous union of the left to rule over a union of the people. The understanding of the nature of class and politics, the only roots of real social change, are entirely missing.

Gloomy vista

In further confirmation of the CPB(ML)'s thesis on the absolute decline of capitalism in Britain and in the world, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, an independent research body for long-term forecasting of economic trends, predicts higher unemployment, more inflation and continuing stagnation or decline in industry for the coming year.

The Labour Government moved suddenly last week to help fulfill these gloomy predictions. The restrictive monetary and fiscal policies introduced on June 8 under pressure from the City, involving a rise in the minimum lending rate, a squeeze on lending from banks and a rise in the national insurance surcharge, will have the effect of further damping down investment in industry, raising prices including mortgage rates and creating even more unemployment.

The fact that the Government should be forced into such a policy, blamed on Tory tax concessions of course, just when it was hoped to create illusions of "the light at the end of the tunnel" leading up to an election shows how anarchic in its overall decline the capitalist system is.

Whose fraud? MSC attacks schools

AS THE numbers of unemployed rise and standards of living fall, it is easy for politicians to win popular support by focussing anger and dissatisfaction on to some apparently blameworthy 'social security scrounger'.

It has been suggested that the unemployed receive vast sums of cash, that social security provides the lazy with an open invitation not to work and that hundreds of thousands of men and women are claiming benefit and also working.

The facts are somewhat different. As anyone who has had to subsist on a niggardly 'benefit' will testify, rather less than princely sums are paid to claimants, and then only after a virtual inquisition. The Means Test has never left us, only been decorated with a new name. The DHSS employ hundreds of specialist staff to prevent benefit abuse and fraud, prosecuting wherever it is found. Estimates for illegally claimed social security benefits are £2.6 million - just 0.02 per cent of the total rightfully paid out. Only £1 out of every £5000 is fraudulently claimed.

Moreover, each year about £600 million worth of benefits are not claimed, of which at least £160 million is owed to pensioners. A lying campaign ensures that old people will die of hypothermia and hunger, and that children will suffer from malnutrition and rickets.

In contrast, compare the staggering rate of tax abuse by capitalists - some £620,000,000 in undeclared profits and undeclared VAT. The demeaning 'dole' and 'SS' are not gifts from capitalism, but paid for by those same workers who are thrown on to the scrap heap when they can no longer produce the maximum profit. Workers do not choose to live on 'benefits' and those who accuse them can have no experience of the demeaning and galling benefit offices nor of the frustrations of the vast majority of unemployed claimants.

Moving capital out of Britain

TRANSFER pricing is a scheme used by multinational companies for shifting capital from one subsidiary to another by selling at a price favourable to overall profit. This is one of the methods employed by capitalists to drain Britain of economic resources.

A seminar on international transfer pricing took place at the London Press Centre on May 9th, attended by 120 delegates, amongst them high-ranking managers and executives from international companies such as ICI, Du Pont, CAV, Plessey, SKF and Nestle. The main purpose of the seminar was to discuss the ways and means of combating Inland Revenue and justifying the moving of capital from one country to another in order to maximise profit.

Several speakers put forward arguments for the manipulating of the Inland Revenue over transfer pricing so that a favourable 'negotiated tax settlement' could be achieved. It was alleged that Plessey, SKF and Nestle are under surveillance by unit 485 of the Inland Revenue over transfer pricing.

THE MANPOWER Services Commission, having already attempted to undermine the quality of education and trade union organisation in further education colleges, is now attempting to spread its influence in the schools.

In opposition to the established standard of education provided by further education colleges, the MSC has already set up Skill Centres where education in skills has been supplanted by narrow training. Now, still under the guise of helping the unemployed, the MSC is trying to undermine wages and conditions in schools.

In Liverpool, instead of falling school rolls being used to improve class size and working conditions in schools they are being used to cut down the number of teachers employed. The MSC is exploiting the demoralisation caused by this situation to attempt to divide one section of teachers from another by making the school teachers and the further education teachers fight over who should teach the unemployed. Thus, the unemployed school leavers are being sent back into the schools where

some of them are taught City and Guilds courses.

Secondary School is no place for such courses. Education at secondary level must be general and resources must be provided to make it an excellent basis for the acquisition of more specialised skills in further and higher education.

MSC unemployed teachers who are employed on Job Creation Schemes have no job security and are paid the lowest rate for the job regardless of qualification or experience. Further, if they are probationary i.e. first-year teachers, such Job Creation work is not counted towards their probation, thus they cannot become fully-qualified teachers.

The National Union of Teachers in the area should seize the opportunity offered by falling rolls to improve education standards by fighting for unemployed teachers to be employed within the schools on a proper fully-paid basis and not be a party to the tragic parody of the 1944 Education Act (which called for compulsory day-release for all 16-18 year olds) at present being carried out by the MSC.

North East jobless

THE NORTH EAST, renowned for its shipbuilding and heavy engineering skills, has for some time watched its traditional heavy engineering base contract.

A "new industrial strategy" was introduced in the 1980s. Various light engineering, electrical, textiles and chemical work was introduced and developed.

This strategy was designed to soak up workers from steel, mining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering. It has been a dismal failure.

Plessey has closed its Sunderland factory, with other electrical engineering projects set up with regional grants for multi-nationals now contracting.

The textiles industry has suffered a massive cut in manpower. Factories belonging to all the high street tailors have closed - Hepworths, Alexandre, John Collier, to name but a few. Lonrho-owned Brenford Nylons factories at Cramlington and Felling are currently on a three day week. Literally thousands of workers have lost their jobs.

Ever Ready, the battery producers, have warned of 1300 redundancies, with more than 1000 jobs going at Stanley and Newburn.

The chemical industries, which in the main are sited on Teesside, have for about 4 years been a source of constant employment for building and construction as well as engineering workers, but now nearly all are completed or nearing completion.

In the steel industry, the number of workers is vastly reduced due to mechanisation and the British Steel Corporation's proposed 40,000 redundancies throughout steel production. The Consett iron and steel works has for some time been running on reduced production and has suffered through 'natural wastage' and redundancies. A new handling terminal which was to be built on Tyneside to handle iron ore has been indefinitely postponed, a pointer to the future of Consett steel production. The British

steel plant on Teesside, costing £290 million, has a very uncertain future. The Green Fields cold rolling mill, which is one of the most advanced in Europe, may operate at a reduced production rate due to the steel slump.

The shipbuilding industry (recently nationalised) has been the source of employment for many thousands of workers. Now the order books are virtually empty for the majority of yards. By December only two yards will have work on the Tyne. The Wear which is famous for the SD14 is in a similar position, as the market for the SD14 is also swamped by excess tonnage. On Teesside part of the Polish order is being built, but once this is gone very little work will be left for shipyard workers.

The workforce in shipbuilding has been cut from 130,000 in 1955 to 86,000 in 1977, and the EEC has called for a further 20 per cent cut-back; this is apart from the 46 per cent cut-back called for from the EEC which will cover the total shipbuilding production of Europe. The declining port and docking facilities of the Tyne, Tees and Wear have over many years been cut down to almost extinction with the loss of thousands of jobs.

In the light engineering field almost all of the small companies exist on contract work from shipbuilding and heavy engineering and often specialise in one part of the industry, for example, ventilation, pumps, electronics, etc. These firms have over a period of time been reducing manpower and in a large number of cases closing completely.

The future of the region is the retention of skill, and the training of new apprentices for industry. To allow the de-industrialisation and destruction of the very source which gives us employment is to destroy ourselves and the future industrial development of the North East.

Parents fight for education

MINERS continued from page 1

workable seams. Truly if the Labour government and the NCB had only the intention of achieving an increase in production then a quick settlement of the 1977-78 claim would have produced the desired result. Instead the scheme has seen the rise in deaths to 43 in the industry, a 20 per cent increase over the year 1976-77, and negative internal disputes setting section against section, pit against pit and area against area.

BASIS

A fight for wages cuts through both the divisive effect the scheme is having on the internal unity of the union and provides the only basis to strengthen democratic control of the union machinery, focussing attention on the main threat to the industry's future which exists at the moment from the present Labour government.

REASSERTION

By accepting Government-imposed wage restraint over the past few years the existing union machinery has fallen into disuse and has been turned by self-seekers into a weapon against the membership. By re-asserting the traditional aims of the union in a fight for wages, the existing union machinery can once again become a powerful tool in the hands of the membership. The 1978-79 claim must be within the capabilities of the membership if these tasks are to be fulfilled - appealing to capitalist courts serves only to strengthen state interference in the internal affairs of the NUM.

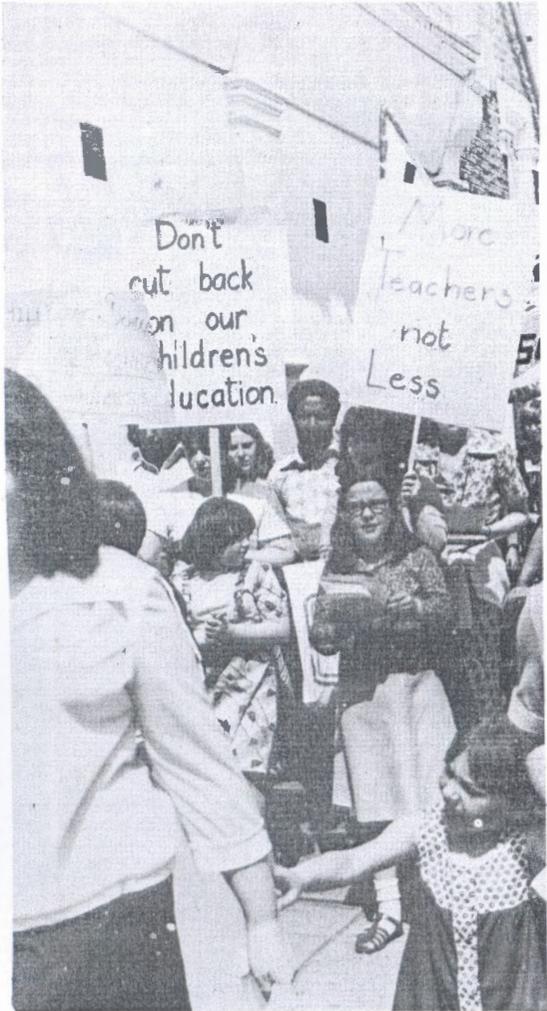
TASKS

South Wales delegates have already set the tasks for national conference in calling for a fight for wages by sweeping away further government-imposed wage restraint, whether by Labour or Tory, as detrimental to the interests of the miners and the working class as a whole.

MISPLACED ALLEGIANCE

Since so much hinges on the wages fight - the unity and democracy essential to combat the Labour Government's destruction of the coal industry - the miners cannot allow the old misplaced allegiance to the Labour Party and to the alien ideology of social democracy to sabotage its successful outcome.

Conference has no choice but to reject the Labour Government and to fight for wages.



PARENTS and teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the great opportunity falling school rolls provides to improve education. The potential of parental support for such a campaign was vividly demonstrated by a packed meeting organised by the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) of a primary school in Wandsworth which is faced because of falling rolls with losing one teacher this year with three other teaching posts in the school under threat. Parent after parent, teacher after teacher spoke of the need to seize this opportunity to lower class size; to increase small-group teaching; to provide teachers with only-too-necessary marking and preparation time.

The parents voted unanimously to continue their

fight including a march through the local area and contacting all the other PTAs in Wandsworth to get them to support such a campaign. This initiative was warmly welcomed by the local NUT (National Union of Teachers) branch which is co-ordinating action in local schools fighting compulsory transfer of staff and loss of staff through natural wastage.

The need to bring unemployed teachers into the schools and force the authority to employ them in place of all teachers who leave schools was emphasised by the Wandsworth meeting. If such enthusiasm is mirrored up and down the country, an improved standard of education will become a reality instead of an electioneering slogan.

Education meeting—No school closure, no transfers

AT a recent meeting held at the Bellman Bookshop, entitled "No School Closure - No Transfers" the speaker began by saying that capitalism had decided to abandon Britain. The resulting de-industrialisation meant that a skilled population was no longer necessary. Hence the unprecedented attack upon the education service that we witness today. The speaker characterised this situation as 'death by a thousand cuts' - teacher unemployment, teacher transfer, crumbling buildings, sub-standard meals

and so on. The speaker went on to outline the flagrant hypocrisy of the government's position. While launching the Great Debate and expressing concern over standards, faced with a reduction in the number of children entering our schools, they transfer teachers rather than use the opportunity to reduce class size and reap the educational benefits.

School closure was now very much on the agenda. In his own school, which traditionally had a nine-form

entry of 270 pupils per year, the likely intake was now 90. This could lead to the transfer of 10 teachers and, if the current trend continues, eventual school closure.

The speaker concluded that falling rolls should be used to improve class size and thus the standard of educational provision. Capitalism limits education and the input of physical and human resources. Unless we prevent it, it will destroy an advanced industrial state and deny our children a future of dignity and prosperity.

COHSE Conference issues

THE START of the conference season has seen almost without exception every union coming out in favour of collective bargaining and an end to wage restraint.

At this year's Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) Conference, correct policy on pay is the most important issue on the agenda. This year's motions demonstrate a healthy reversal of last year with all resolutions demanding a return to collective bargaining and substantial increases in wages.

A gauge of our own understanding of this concept will be reflected in our attitude to our employer - the Labour Government. As an employer the state differs in no way from other employers when it comes to dividing our class into employed and unemployed, and in trying to wring as much profit from us as possible.

We should need no reminder of the atrocities committed by the Labour Government so far. Like all unions COHSE needs a policy that asserts the autonomy of the union in fixing our own guidelines on pay and achieving them through the strength of our organisation affords.

To call for linking wages to the Retail Price Index or to raise our wages by bonus schemes and productivity deals is a false road that is both divisive and destructive to our union and hence to the NHS. We need a policy that has provision for improving and saving the health service, rather than connive at its destruction.

Also, amongst Ancillary Staff broad banding is being used to attack their particular skills and the quality of service they can provide, as the Plaster Technicians at Bristol Royal Infirmary recently discovered. No motion on broad banding should be accepted.

It is in our places of work that we must use our union to take up the fight, in a real way, to save the NHS. All over the country workers have been resisting poor staffing levels and closures - the EGA, for example, still continues despite the threat of a terrorist attack from the

Area Health Authority as was the case at Hounslow.

It is in our day to day struggle that we must use the democratic structure of our union not only to save the NHS but also to save the union itself. Hence the call to workers to 'seize the Union for further advances'. The fight for wages is not, and never was, a separate issue from fighting the cuts. Conference must pledge itself anew to secure for the working class a freely available health service.

LETTER

Dear Editor,

There is nothing so sickening as needless suffering. Recent statistics show that unemployed workers' standard of living is steadily decreasing. The reality of these figures was illustrated by an example told to me recently.

An unemployed friend of mine has seen her income fall steadily for the past 12 months. To begin with it was about £14, including earnings related benefit. When this finished it fell to £17.70. After Healey's budget her child and single-parent family benefits together went up to £1.80, but this increase was deducted from her unemployment benefit, leaving £15.90 (remember Healey's "something for everyone".) Now after 12 months she moves on to supplementary benefit, and since she lives with her mother, whom she supports, she only gets the basic £11.70. She is quick to point out that she is not entitled to any of the wage-related benefits such as Family Income Supplement.

The sickening side of her suffering is that it is unnecessary. One person prevented from exercising or developing their skills is wasteful: capitalism wastes the potential of millions. Unemployment and the suffering and divisiveness it brings is essential to the survival of capitalism. We have had enough of it.

Yours fraternally,
An Exeter worker

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, London NW5

Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol

Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton

Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds

Basildon bookstall Tues Fri Sat Marketplace

Liverpool bookstall - every Saturday at Paddies

Market, Great Homer Street, Liverpool

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

June 16 "The Future Of Science in Britain"

June 23 "The Neutron Bomb - For Use in Europe?"

PUBLIC MEETING IN LIVERPOOL

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To be held at the AUEW, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool

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