



TUC TOTALLY REJECTS GOVT'S UNION REFORMS

Prior to this year's conference the General Council has thrown out the whole package of union reforms by which the Government plans to cripple the trade unions and has declared that there can be no negotiation nor compromise on this issue.

THE TUC, meeting in Blackpool twelve months after its declaration last year for free collective bargaining, is faced this year with new tasks which, if to be achieved, will require a positive and clear response. The slap on the face delivered last year to Callaghan, the then prime minister, and his 5 per cent guidelines, which now seem ancient history, must be matched by a kick in the pants to Thatcher and her anti-working class, anti-human policies.

The TUC (sometimes feared, often derided, with no authority over individual unions) yet retains its influential position as the voice of the trade union movement. In reflecting the aspirations of the working class, the TUC could, if it chose, lift the struggle to a new level. So far, despite their statements, the General Council has been overcome by the rapidity and scale of the Government's onslaught - often more concerned with insult than injury. Last year's gains must be safeguarded and a response to the present attack by the Government must be found. As the TUC meets, millions of workers will be taking strike action and other industrial action in support of wage claims or against redundancies and cuts. The Engineering Confederation will bring major parts of British industry to a halt in the first two days of the congress and every Monday and Tuesday thereafter. Others are taking action in the ship yards, the Civil Service, Independent Television, Magistrates Courts and Mersey docks, thus the working class has turned the silly season into a time of battle in its initial response to Government attacks.

The TUC will have an opportunity to pronounce upon all issues confronting the working class. On collective bargaining the AUEW calls for opposition to all forms of wage restraint.

On trade union legislation, the General Council has correctly rejected the total package of Government proposals and has not even talked about accepting Government finance for ballots. The independence of union finance has previously been compromised by acceptance of Government funds for trade union education.

On unemployment the opportunism must be avoided of linking the fight against unemployment with traditional demands for reduction in working time, controlling overtime or providing for early retirement. All those aims are worth pursuing to improve the working conditions of workers. They have no relation to unemployment, which is an outcome of capitalist relations of production, consciously planned by the Government. The thrust against unemployment must be resistance to closures and redundancies.

There can be no holds barred in the struggle against the bunch of philistine barbarians in control of the Government in their aim of destroying Britain. Labour Parliamentary opposition is the shadow opposition of a shadow government which wants to become flesh and blood at the next general election. The return of a Labour government, which will undoubtedly be vehemently called for, must be seen for what it is, a device to damp down the struggle with the old illusion that better things will come through parliamentary democracy.

This year's TUC takes place against a background of an unprecedented onslaught on the people of Britain by capitalism in decline: £4000 million cut in public expenditure - health and education to be drastically reduced - basic industries to be closed at a stroke - unemployment to be deliberately increased unions to be tied down and broken. More than ever before, the trade unions cannot escape their awesome responsibility to rise up as the defenders of the national interest.

Engineers strike two days a week

THE Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' fight for £80 minimum wage, extra holiday and a move towards a 35 hour week has at last caught the attention of the capitalist press. A few scabs are front page news in a way that the thousands involved in genuine mass struggle are not.

Since July 30, there has been an industry-wide overtime ban, with one-day national work stoppages on August 6th, 13th and 20th. Almost two million workers have been involved on each occasion. But if you didn't know it was going on, you can't be blamed. You have been reading the 'news' papers again, haven't you?

Before the fight began, the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) claimed the CSEU had no support in the factories. The first strike was the test of that claim and there were some red faces when the 'shop-floor revolt' against the CSEU did not materialise. Quite the reverse. The next strike got even more support, with a number of firms conceding the claim. The EEF, which has its own closed shop, threatened expulsion for member companies giving in to the unions. Funny that, for a strike they claimed had little support.

But scores of firms have settled; the employers' ranks have been broken. So much so that the employers spent a fortune, which they claim they haven't got, on large advertisements in the daily press, aimed at trade union members. Nine questions were put to readers, questions which were off the point at issue. As opinion polls reveal, the answers you get depend on the questions you ask. If, as the EEF claim, unemployment is up and profits are down on last year, along with productivity, why is that?

Wasn't it the EEF itself which said the over-valued



Sheffield engineers demonstrate. Photo: John Sturrock Report.

pound was seriously affecting export sales? Finance capitalists play monopoly on the Stock Exchange, not workers. Why won't the EEF criticise finance capital then? On productivity, hasn't the Engineering Industry Training Board found that most engineering machinery is well over 14 years old? Of course productivity is down but we thought employers were supposed to invest in new machinery. Why has investment been so low in Britain for 25 years? The EEF's advertisements, a sure sign of desperation, are an insult to the intelligence of engineering workers who know what is wrong with the industry.

The CSEU decision for two-day strikes every Monday and Tuesday will cause many more employers to cave in. The EEF call for ballots of union members dates from the Industrial Relations Act 1971. If they push that one, they should remember what happened last time.

THE BRITISH people were treated to pictures of battle-dressed Thatcher in a Bob Hope-style cheering up the troops in northern Ireland. The occasion was the death of 17 British soldiers, mainly young, at the hands of the IRA Provisionals who only hours before destroyed Mountbatten's boat killing, among others, an Irish lad of 16.

Young people, the sons of British workers, faced with unemployment, join the army with a promise to see the world. They are sent to Ireland to be killed and maimed in order to perpetuate British colonial rule.

Tax payers' money and the lives of the young people who join the army are the price workers pay for the continued occupation of the north of Ireland. Let Thatcher, Callaghan, Atkins and Mason go to Ireland. Bring the troops back.

Historic Notes

LONG before national trade unions came into being during the latter half of the 19th century, workers organised themselves locally in societies for their mutual protection. As long ago as 1696 the Journeymen Feltmakers were organised in a semi-permanent combination to raise wages.

Almost all of these combinations were based around a single skill, group of skills or industry. Attempts were often made to expand the geographical influence of these unions, frequently without success as they buckled under the legal and often physical assaults of the employers. Some, however, were successful, such as the Stonemasons, Boilermakers, and the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners which was formed in 1827 from the many local trade clubs that had long been in existence.

During the 24 year period of the 1799-1800 Combination Act, under which there were provisions for the summary trial of unionists, combinations grew innumerable. Trade unionists were attacked legally, not through anti-combination laws alone, but also by such as the Unlawful Oaths Act of 1797, under which six farm labourers from Tolpuddle were prosecuted in 1834. The national influence, if not organisation of trade unions was demonstrated by the fact that an enormous demonstration of trade unionists took place in London against the prosecution.

In 1834 there was an attempt to create a national general union with the formation of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. The 'Grand National' grew rapidly in size, with perhaps as many as half a million members at its height, but by 1837 it was effectively dead. The demise of the 'Grand National' was due to the same weaknesses which led to

the failure of future attempts on this model, such as in 1845. The 'Grand National' fell apart primarily because such an amorphous organisation was intrinsically weak, endeavouring to base its strength solely on sheer numbers rather than on a commonality of interest, whether it be a common industry or skill. Hence there was little feeling of cohesion or unity among its members, most of whom in fact seldom, if ever, paid any dues.

By the 1850's unionism was coming to maturity with workers, particularly skilled workers, organising themselves nationally; but these combinations were qualitatively different from those that had gone before, in that they had a well developed organisational structure. A good example of a 'new model' union was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, founded in 1850-51. Although its district committees were permitted a considerable degree of autonomy, the bulk of funds were centralised at the headquarters in London, under a full time general secretary, who was supervised by an Executive Council elected from the branches. This type of organisation formed the model for many of the new unions subsequently formed.

The 1860's was a period of intense struggle when all unions were coming together in the course of the fight both for better wages and conditions, and indeed for the very existence of trade unions which were again under legal attack. Also in 1867, the Government appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Trade Unions, whose eventual findings, it was feared, might put the clock back to 1824, when all trade combinations quite simply had been illegal.

In 1864 trade unions started a

A new fascism replaces the Shah regime in Iran

SIX MONTHS ago we greeted the events in Iran with eagerness and excitement. The people of Iran asserted their right to independence and sovereignty and toppled the Shah. US interests and control of the economy received a fundamental - if not, it seemed, a permanent - setback.

Events since then have taken a saddening turn. The revolution fought by the people of Iran against a fascist repression has been usurped, and a home-grown fascism clothed in religion and superstition has replaced that of the Shah. The counter-revolution is in full swing. The Iranian people face a harsh and bitter struggle to wrest their country back from the Islamic mullahs and its paramilitary forces loyal to their own conception of the future with which they have surrounded themselves.

For the people of Iran old oppressions remain - inflation, housing and food shortages, and unemployment - the latter estimated at a quarter of the total labour force. With not even a pretence at dealing with these problems, the regime turns instead to new cultural and physical repressions in the policy of Islamisation - including marriage and divorce laws and the wearing of the chador (full length veil) which heavily affect women, and in practice discriminate sharply against minorities, exacerbating the already wide gulfs in Iranian

society.

But the struggle of the Iranian people is also in full swing, tens of thousands demonstrating against repression and restrictions on the press, against the attacks on property and freedom of organisations expressing opposition to the present regime, against the economic hardships of food shortages, the dislocation of agriculture which persists and which the government shows no intention of dealing with.

To the Ayatollah Khomeini and his fellow clergy, any criticism is treason - a rebel is 'corrupt on earth and a warrior against God'. The present 'crisis' in Kurdistan, as the Kurds assert their demand for autonomy, has been ardently used by the Ayatollah to divert attention away from the discontent and open opposition to his regime which is being more and more vociferously expressed closer to home as the weeks progress.

As a final touch of grim irony the US Government has now agreed to back the Ayatollah Government with millions of dollars in military aid in its savage repression against the Kurds.

But those who fought the revolution against the Shah in the early months of this year have not given up their arms. They have them still, and they will use them in their turn to topple the new fascism.

concerted campaign against the growing attack on their existence. A Trade Union Conference called by the Glasgow Trades Council had delegates from most of the big unions present. In 1866, following a lock out in the Sheffield file trade, the Sheffield Association of Organised Trades sent out an invitation to all national "trades" in the country to attend a conference with the object of creating "a national organisation among the trades of the United Kingdom, for the purpose of effectively resisting all lock-outs".

Soon after, in February 1867, the Royal Commission was announced and plans were made, led by the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, to hold a Congress of Trades Councils, Federations of Trade Societies and individual trade unions. The Congress was to discuss, amongst other matters, the "probability" of an attempt made by the Legislature... to introduce a measure detrimental to the interests of such Societies".

PROPOSED CONGRESS OF TRADES COUNCILS

Federations of Trade Societies.

PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS.

MANCHESTER, FEBRUARY 21st, 1866

The Manchester and Salford Trades Council having recently taken into their serious consideration the present aspect of Trade Unions, and the industrial system which prevails in the public mind with reference to their operations and principles, together with the probability of an attempt being made by the Legislature, during the present session of Parliament, to introduce a measure detrimental to the interests of such Societies, beg most respectfully to suggest the propriety of holding in Manchester, as the main centre of industry in the province, a Congress of the Representatives of Trades Councils and other similar Federations of Trades Societies. By confiding the Congress to such bodies it is conceived that a deal of expense will be saved as Trades will thus be represented individually; whilst there will be a better opportunity afforded of selecting the most intelligent and efficient exponents of our principles.

It is proposed that the Congress shall assume the character of the annual meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Social Science Association, in the transactions of which Societies the various classes are almost entirely excluded, and that papers, previously carefully prepared, shall be laid before the Congress on the various subjects which at the present time affect Trades Societies, each paper to be followed by discussion upon the points advanced, with a view to the merits and demerits of each opinion being thoroughly ventilated through the medium of the public press. It is further suggested that the subjects treated upon shall include the following:-

- 1.—Trade Unions an absolute necessity.
- 2.—Trade Unions and Political Economy.
- 3.—The Effect of Trade Unions on Foreign Competition.
- 4.—Regulation of the Hours of Labour.
- 5.—Limitation of Apprentices.
- 6.—Technical Education.
- 7.—Arbitration and Courts of Conciliation.
- 8.—Co-operation.
- 9.—The present Inequality of the Law in regard to Outrages, Intimidation, Persecution, Conviction, &c.
- 10.—Factory Acts Extension Bill, 1867: the necessity of Compulsory Inspection, and its application to all places where Women and Children are employed.
- 11.—The present Royal Commission on Trade Unions: how far worthy of the confidence of the Trade Union interest.
- 12.—The necessity of an Annual Congress of Trade Representatives from the various centres of industry.

All Trades Councils and other Federations of Trades are respectfully invited to intimate their intention to this project on or before the 15th of April next, together with a notification of the subject of the paper that each body will undertake to prepare; after which date all information as to place of meeting, &c. will be supplied.

It is also proposed that the Congress be held on the 6th of May next, and that all liabilities in connection therewith shall not extend beyond its sitting.

Communications to be addressed to Mr. W. H. Wood, Typographical Institute, 26, Water Street, Manchester.

By order of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

A. C. NICHOLSON, Secretary.
W. H. WOOD, Secretary.

TROOPS & TERRORISM OUT OF IRELAND NOW

THE KILLING of the civilian occupants of the Mounbatten boat has been shamelessly exploited by those who benefit most from this senseless and cruel act - the British government. Here, as with every other such vicious act of terrorism, the deaths of men or women, Irish or English, children or babies, of which there have been so many since British army occupation of Ireland, are basely used as a pretext for the maintenance of that army. Their inhumanity and disregard for Irish lives is the equal of that of the terrorists they allegedly oppose but do not, since the enemy of both, terrorists all, is the Irish people.

The outcome of this terrorism is the immediate strengthening of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a British prime minister in battle-dress, a clamour to bring back

The Congress was held from 2-6 June 1868 in Manchester, with 34 delegates representing 118,000 trade union members.

It is a great pity that there are very few records of what went on at the Congress, but we are left with the resolutions which included: support for action to amend the law on trade union activities such as picketing, their "suspicion and disfavour" regarding the Royal Commission, and the aiding of the London Conference of Amalgamated Trades in their endeavours to secure the legal protection of union funds. It was further agreed that annual congresses be held "for the purpose of bringing the trades into closer alliance."

And so the annual Trades Union Congress was born, intended as a meeting place where independent trade unions could debate issues of concern; its strength derived from the individual strength of its participants with the Congress to be an effective barometer of feeling in the trade union movement.

THE INCREASE in the number of births in England and Wales is continuing, according to statistics released by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

During the first 29 weeks of this year, 36,768 live births were registered, an increase of 10 per cent on the same period last year. The trend became perceptible the year before when the numbers were 2 per cent up.

The same statistics also show that the number of old people aged 65 and over increased from 7,345,000 to 8,023,000 or from 13.2 per cent of the population to 14.4 per cent.

And Thatcher's Tory government chooses this time to unleash a vicious attack on our country's social services, the greatest users of which are the young and the old. The government stands condemned on statistics alone, as well as on grounds of humanity.

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THE NON-ALIGNED Conference opening at Havana raises the question of just what non-aligned means. The only incontrovertibly non-aligned country at this moment in time, Albania, will not be at the non-aligned Conference!

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FURTHER evidence that capitalist government policies will force us back to a Dark Age of poverty and destitution was provided by a recent radio programme which heralded the boom in demand for Pawnbrokers' shops.

In the past the custom was to pawn a flat iron for 2d, after doing the week's ironing. Increasingly, we are told, pawnbrokers are having women coming in regularly each week to exchange their steam iron for 22.

An older woman interviewed admitted she had to pawn her rings in order to pay bills or buy food.

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THE STRIKE weapon was one of the "greatest threats to society" Professor Reginald Jones told a group of employers recently in York.

The learned Professor, erstwhile adviser to MI6 and Intelligence at the Air Ministry, expounded in no uncertain manner the bourgeois view of the reasons for the decline of Britain.

"After more than 30 years with so many of our people doing as little as possible and taking as much as possible, living on our capital and mortgaging our future, a change of heart is certainly required," he said. He would have been somewhat more accurate in his appraisal had he confined it to his own kind who, even as he spoke, were mortgaging North Sea Oil and easing "restrictions" on overseas investments.

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THE PRESIDENT of the American United Steel Workers Union has said that Government-run secret ballots have seriously interfered with the ability of the trade union movement to conduct its own affairs. Because of state intervention, it had taken four to six years to determine the results of an election. In the Chicago area, for instance, more than 200 Government agents helped conduct the election! All the more reason why we should resist similar threats to union democracy here.

Editorial

Capitalist governments in assuming power have taken very little responsibility other than that to their class. Those other responsibilities, such as education, health and what has come to be known as the welfare state, have been forced upon them by the working class. Those responsibilities are today thrown out wholesale by the present government. This bunch of Tory barbarians has power without responsibility.

They usurped power like all ruling classes do. Bourgeois democracy is no less a usurpation of power than a coup d'etat, also aimed against the working masses. They usurp the heritage of the working class destroying its skills and industry. They plan the cold-blooded murder of whole industries - shipbuilding, steel, while selling out those that are 'profitable'. They decree that there will be less health, less education and more unemployed. The young, the old, men and women are all discounted as valueless, only profits and those who amass them matter. They act as if there is no tomorrow. In that they are right, for there is no tomorrow for capitalism.

In contrast the working class has responsibility without power. The working class has always assumed responsibility to itself, to the whole nation and its future. Without such a responsibility Britain would long ago have been turned into a desert. Industrial action, always denigrated by the press as irresponsible, is in fact the ultimate in working class responsibility where today's bread and butter is sacrificed for a better tomorrow, and not just for those engaged in struggle but for everyone. The warnings by the firemen during their strike in 1977 that unless they got their wage rise and reduction in hours, the fire service would begin to breakdown is now coming true. This morality of the working class, the responsibility we have assumed for everything good and decent, is incomprehensible to the capitalists who are obsessed with the here and now.

The working class must match that responsibility with power to discharge their social duties. Working class power is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Shipworkers begin their fight to save 10,000 jobs under threat

A RESOLUTION calling for action has come from the 600 shipbuilding delegates of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, who held a conference on the threatened cuts in Newcastle on 23 August. This will be put to mass meetings of British Shipbuilders workers to find the best way to put it into practice.

The destruction of shipbuilding, marine engineering and ship repair are assured if the British Shipbuilders' plan on the future prospects and projected employment are implemented. The plan includes the loss of 10,000 jobs including up to 6000 redundancies. Four yards are to close and two mothballed, various marine engine builders will be merged and ship repair yards run down.

The response from workers so far include an overtime ban, an embargo on the release of the Polish ships and a ban on ship trials and launches, which involve heavy penalties for delays in hand-over. So far, however, these measures have only been taken in the yards affected.

The Conference has brought a unanimity that some form of action has to be taken and that it has to be on a national scale.

The plans and labour requirements of BS for 1979-80 are based

upon a winning of 44 new orders, in order to keep an annual capacity of 400,000-420,000 compensated gross registered tons.

This, however, will be impossible and in contradiction to their actual plans. The diversification into offshore work, for instance, is heralded with the closure of Burntisland Fabricators, producers of oil rig modules. The order book from 1975-79 shows the fall in orders (see fig 1). Tenders for other work are also being limited or not used as in the case of the North Sea support vessel which is to be built in Finland for Esso.

The order book will also be used to depress wages, as part of the statement by BS Chairman shows, "In working to annual capacity of 400,000-420,000 cgrt, we have assumed that the forthcoming wage negotiations will be realistic, and by this it means that unit costs of production cannot be allowed to rise, indeed, must come down. Every additional pound on our wage bill increases costs, makes us less competitive, reduces orders won and increases unemployment." This, we cannot accept. We will fight for wages and jobs together.

The reduction to a 400,000 cgrt building capacity is only the beginning (see fig 2 for distri-

Britain's ayatollahs' war on knowledge

THE SIGNAL for battle was recently received by universities in the form of a letter from the chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC): "The committee advises universities so to arrange their admissions procedures that the number of home undergraduates admitted in October 1980 can if necessary be restricted to 94 per cent of the number admitted in October 1979." When decoded it becomes clear that it is a message from the government to cut student numbers by 6 per cent.

This is not the usual instruction to universities to reduce their role by spending less money. Indeed, on its own it has negligible financial implications, but an instruction to do so directly by cutting down on raw materials. The essence of a university is the production of ideas through the process of research and the training of critically enquiring minds is primary to this function.

A ruling class with a strategy of destruction has no use for human progress through independent thought. Only the working class which produces such thought can use it. Hence not only will capitalism not pay for something it cannot use but, seeing it for the dangerous thing it is, it seeks to stop it.

Tactical guerrilla raids having been carried out relentlessly on behalf of the ruling class, in the form of financial

'cut-backs', the time has now been adjudged right, whilst the victims still appear to be unaware that a war situation exists, to unleash the storm-troopers so recently arrived at the front lines. They have unfurled their banner embroidered with the philosophy of decay.

Rhodes Boyson, junior Education Minister with responsibility for higher education, has been quoted as saying: "We simply have to re-assess the whole higher education system to see what relationship there is between spending on education and economic performance."

It is well established that attempts to view universities in terms of manpower planning have never progressed beyond the stage of mad dreams. There is no evidence that a successful attempt has been made since the last election.

However, since before the last election, in the Dept. of Education and Science under the Labour Minister Shirley Williams, there has existed a plan to relatively increase resources to the Polytechnic sector of higher education at the expense of universities. The former Secretary of State for Education made this point to a one-day conference organised in conjunction with the Times Higher Education Supplement on March 5th, 1979.

The reasoning behind this was that "While the universities have shown remarkable

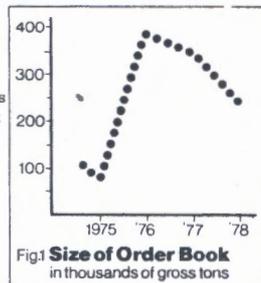
capacity for expansion, none of the responses (to a previously issued document) has suggested that the university sector is the more flexible. The public sector has a long tradition of responding quickly to changes in perceived demand, mounting and discontinuing courses at comparatively short notice."

In other words, the government will support not the universities but that sector which, it vainly hopes, will jump to its ever-changing priorities, be easier to cut, and deliver less expensive education. This is, of course, educational nonsense in whatever sector is being discussed.

The dangerous philosophy that we have enough 'excellence', so enthusiastically and aggressively being propounded by the Tory government has to be seen with clarity. It is not simply an economic equation being applied but an attack on all thinking people, ie. the working class.

We must be wary of so-called 'leftist' support for this in the form of an attack upon a supposed elite. Those in universities must have the courage to resist this with the justified arrogance of a section of the class in struggle.

The class as a whole cannot allow the response to be portrayed as a diminutive, eccentric professional figure of fun, wagging a finger, but instead as a clenched fist raised in anger at the enemies of progress.



tion of the cuts). Therefore, the importance of those questions posed by the acceptance of the resolution must be clear: unemployment, skill, de-industrialisation - in a word the future - have to be understood fully in the fact that redundancies and closures are not inevitable. We as shipbuilding workers, who who built the industry, we who are the only ones who care for the industry have our organised strength not only to reverse the plans for destruction, but to destroy those who would destroy us and our industry.

Will they sell or close the hospitals in Oxford?

ONCE again the Slade Hospital in Oxford is coming under attack by the Area Health Authority (AHA) Planning Department, this time under the guise of reorganisation and modification.

Their plan is to transfer the 27 Chest Disease beds and 12 beds in the Infectious Diseases Ward to recently vacated Wards at the Churchill Hospital. This still leaves the third main Ward on this site, the Dermatology Department for diseases of the skin, unaccounted for. In the words of the Area Planning Department, "Capital has not been allocated to rehouse the Dermatology Department elsewhere."

The AHA Operational Plan envisages that once these 3 Wards have been moved out of the Slade Hospital, 30 beds will be "re-opened" by 1982 for the care of the elderly, presumably at the expense of the Cowley Road Geriatric Hospital which they have been attempting to run down and close for many years.

The Area Planning Department says, "It would cost about £½ million to provide a purpose built Dermatology unit of identical capacity to the present one on one of the other hospital sites". Where does the AHA propose to find this money? Are they even interested in the survival of the unit?

Why don't the AHA want to keep the Slade Hospital in its present form with the prospects of expansion, rather than shuffling these Wards around and merely replacing them with 30 beds? The answer to this is becoming clearer, since one of

the main points for discussion by the AHA is the proposed sale of this "valuable property" in an attempt to get themselves out of the financial difficulties they find themselves in. What do they propose to do next year, sell off the new John Radcliffe Hospital?

The situation here is just as alarming. There is John Radcliffe part I and part II. There should have been a part III when the plans were made in 1964 but since then cuts have led to its indefinite suspension. Indeed, now the Cowley Road Hospital must close, they say, to allow the JR II to open, and some departments must remain at the old Infirmary site. With the accident service at one end of town and neurosurgery at the other, one can foresee difficulties and dangers.

The Management Team reports say that they cannot condone reduction in patient services, yet the only way the cuts could be implemented would involve closing wards. Such is the future for Oxford workers and their families under an AHA which has committed itself to impose the cuts demanded by the Thatcher Government.

All over the country the situation is the same. The South Western Regional Health Authority will be short of about £6 million this year, £4½ million due to increased prices and VAT, £1½ million through government refusal to cover pay awards. This amount almost equals the cash earmarked for improvements, so that even a new £30 million hospital for Taunton, the cost to be spread over 20 years, is in jeopardy.

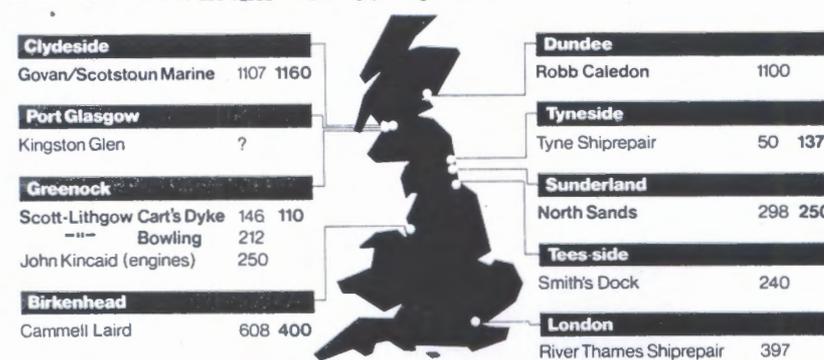


Fig.2 Distribution of proposed cuts in shipbuilding Yards in heavier type to be closed. Redundancies: light type 1979; heavy type 1980.

"A school meal of just soup and bread should be sufficient"

THE LIE that public expenditure cuts lead to economic rebirth from private investment is exposed by the latest National Union of Teachers pamphlet, prepared to mark the TUC and the launching of a massive campaign to reverse the cuts in education. From April 1976 to March 1979 the Labour government cut a staggering £4700m off the public services, without the fanfare accompanying the present Tory effort to cut even more in a shorter time. Yet private investment rose by only a quarter of that amount.

December 1973 saw £182 million cut off education, the next year £60m, and in 1975 £76m. From 1976 onwards the Labour government cut £1,030m off education, topped up in July by the Tories: another £115m. Tory followed by Labour then Tory, each government has used the destruction wreaked by its predecessor as a pretext for even more destruction.

It is their long-term political decision to create ignorance, dismantle the education system, even if this makes economic nonsense. Creating teacher unemployment costs more than to keep teachers in work, say the NUT. "The continuing cost to the state of 50,000 unemployed teachers (the likely figure next year) would be about £230m - which almost covers the projected cut in the rate support grant."

And this is to say nothing of the cost in human terms of the destruction taking place. For example: Devon where £3m is to be cut from this year's Council budget, and next year a further £4.1m. £900,000 is to go on education alone. Measures

envisaged are: closing schools over Christmas for an extra seven days; lowering the standard of school meals; charging £10 a year or even a term for each child; changing secondary school hours to finish at 2:30; charging 10p a mile for each school journey. London Borough of Haringey where they will cut £2.4m off public services, including £5,700 off the 'play' budget, described by a local play-leader as "disastrous".

£11,000 to 200 local sporting clubs will go, although local youth leaders claim these provide a valuable social service in reducing vandalism. Middlesex Polytechnic had half a million pounds cut in July. A creche planned 3 years ago on the Trent Park site is to be further delayed, catering is to suffer, and a hardship fund to help students

wound up.

Avon County Council has produced a plan to chop more than £4m off this year's education budget, and more next year. At-bitter but determined meetings held in the last week of last term, NUT members resolved to fight, with class size and no-cover action starting now in the new term. Plans are being laid for a day of action and perhaps more, later. Teachers' action had been suspended when the County prepared to admit children into schools in the autumn term of the school year when they are five, but will start up again now that the authority has reneged. Angry mothers swooped down on an infant school in Southmead and took it over, demanding a halt to all education cuts. A junior school was occupied by over 100 mothers

and children demanding education in September. Oxford County Education Committee chairman, a brigadier, illustrates the mentality (if the word is appropriate) of those destroying education. He was reported to have said that cuts "would do people good", that school meal subsidies should go ("a school dinner of just soup and bread should be sufficient. When I was in the army I got by on bully beef and biscuits"), that schools should close at 2:30 or earlier, as this would force many women to give up work. "Schools are not meant to be child-minding on the rates. Being a mother should be a full-time job until a child is at least 10 years old. Couples have a choice whether to have children and if they can't afford it they should not expect local authorities to help out."

Parents and children demonstrating in Bristol on 27 July against proposed cuts. Photo: The Worker



Misconduct threat to striking nurses

ONLY WEEKS after issuing its threat to nurses who take strike action, the General Nursing Council of England and Wales found two charge nurses guilty of professional misconduct during a COHSE strike early this year in northern Ireland. Judgement however was suspended with no disciplinary action taken against the two nurses as yet. The GNC stated that "if a nurse puts the health, safety or welfare of his or her patients at risk by taking strike or other action, he or she would have a case to answer on the score of professional misconduct."

The GNC is a statutory body appointed by the government to oversee the training and registration of nurses: no one may practise as a nurse without having their name on the Register or Roll, and it is a function of the GNC to remove from these lists the name of any nurse guilty of 'professional misconduct'. This, in the past, has included theft, drug-taking, assault on patients - 'criminal' offences. Through this statement it now includes the 'political' offences of taking action in defence of wages, jobs, standards and ultimately the National Health Service.

This statement attempts to transform the position of British nurses overnight - no longer able to take action on their own behalf like any other workers, but, like the police, restrained from any action by the threat of

disciplinary procedure and loss of livelihood.

This is an unprecedented move against democratic rights which certainly could not even have been suggested as legislation. The GNC has linked arms with the Thatcher government against the nursing profession.

How is it they can condemn the 'misconduct' of opposing exploitation and attacks on services, yet remain silent about the deliberate, systematic putting at risk of the health, safety and welfare of the entire populace through cuts, more cuts and cuts on top of cuts?

Even now nurses cannot ensure the health, safety and welfare of their patients. Waiting lists, shortage of trained staff, shortage of equipment and materials and increased throughput of patients all conspire to put health, safety and welfare at risk.

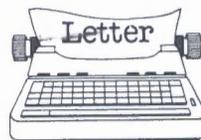
The government is carefully cultivating the 'philosophy' of 'individual responsibility' where patently a social responsibility exists. People must insure themselves against ill health and they must look after their ill relatives themselves. Workers must ensure safety at work themselves, doctors and nurses must accept total responsibility for patients in their care themselves. Individuals are to shore up a declining system by taking more and more upon themselves and by extension, individuals are also to pay when, as they must, they fail

to be able to compensate for the inadequacies of the system.

During their training, nurses are clearly told that it won't be any use pleading shortage of staff or that they had to undertake some thing they weren't trained for; if something goes wrong, they will take the blame. For example, nurses are not trained to give intravenous injections, yet they find themselves doing this routinely; but if the patient reacts badly, the health authority can deny all responsibility.

It is quite clear that this government wants industrial peace not because patients are endangered but so that it can go on hacking away at the social provision of health care unopposed. The health service unions and the College of Nursing must repel any threat to individual nurses who embark on collective action. The college has stated that it will not take any industrial action, it must not allow nurses to be put into a position where they cannot: like all other workers we have a right to decide. It is also high time the College dropped all talk about 'no strike' clauses. Far from bartering long-fought for rights for a phoney 'peace', nurses should be building up their organisations and their ability to fight back.

The Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) has described the GNC statement as a blatant threat and COHSE will oppose any attempts to implement that threat.



Dear Editor,

Hospital ancillary staff were labelled 'murderers' when they were trying to prove to the public and the Government that no one should be expected to live on a take-home pay of less than £40 per week.

The so-called "murderers" did not let the children, adults and aged suffer, indeed,

they sacrificed their own cause by providing a service throughout the disruption.

I say the real murderers are those who close down wards and cut expenditure in health and public services, thus denying sick people a decent Health Service and denying children the benefits of a decent State education.

I feel in a 'murderous mood' when I hear that after telling public service workers "sorry, no cash for you", the Tories find they can afford to finance postal ballots for the very unions they are bent on destroying.

an NHS Worker

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