



Government unveils new anti TU laws...

STEEL WORKERS DEFY PRIOR

THE BRITISH Steel Corporation's offer of a 2 per cent pay rise received its deserved reply last week when the executive of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation called for a national strike beginning 2nd January.

This strike on pay will catch industry with the lowest factory stocks of steel for years. The steelworkers have taken up the challenge of saving that industry and there is no doubt that they will be supported by other workers.

The Government's new laws hampering picketing, 100 per cent membership at work and even the way we vote in our unions, will not stop workers fighting for jobs, for pay or for basic industries and services. As the ISTC General Secretary said "we will take all steps to ensure

the strike is effective and place pickets wherever necessary, regardless of Jim Prior."

The fact that Thatcher has started a new attack on trade unions shows that these people never learn. That they should call this attack an "Employment Bill" is on a par with

BSC calling their 2 per cent a pay rise. Apparently just over 50 per cent of MP's who were elected at secret ballot by 60 per cent of the electorate will by a show of hands be able to decide that 80 per cent of workers in a place have to have voted in secret to be allowed a closed shop.

The action of the steel workers in setting up pickets to make their strike effective would be illegal if Corby workers sent a delegation to picket at Shotton. It would be also illegal when the dockers decide to help their mates by stopping imported steel at the docks. It would be illegal for Corby teachers to support the steelworkers fight to keep Corby alive.

No wonder the CBI and EEF think its a good law. If they are determined to go ahead with their employers law we must say to them: alright we will not accept your law and we should be made to remember that it was not coincidence that the miners invented the flying picket at the same time that the Industrial Relations Act was in force. Our law against their law. Kill the bill!

It is surprising to find that education and health have to be stripped along the same lines as the Clydeside or the Great West Road. If the answer to an industry that makes goods which people may want but can't buy is to strip it down and sell it up, then the answer to education and health is the same: if there's more education or health than people can afford to pay through the nose for - then strip it down and sell off its assets as well. That's why we say sieze the assets - to save them.

We should not be surprised to read that this Government's "attack on inflation" requires massive price rises, nor should it astound us that "decreased taxation" means more VAT. Nor does the fight to get our money back from the Common Market signify anything but a willingness to be sucked even further into its economics of destruction. Thatcher for Euroqueen! And how much more of our wealth is she to be allowed to sacrifice to be crowned?

In Britain today a dinky toy made 40 years ago can fetch hundreds of pounds while the factory that makes such toys new has to be taken over by its workers to prevent it being stripped!

It's not a lack of money. It's who has it. All money represents the things we have made, we must seize it and put it back into the making of things. That's real economics.

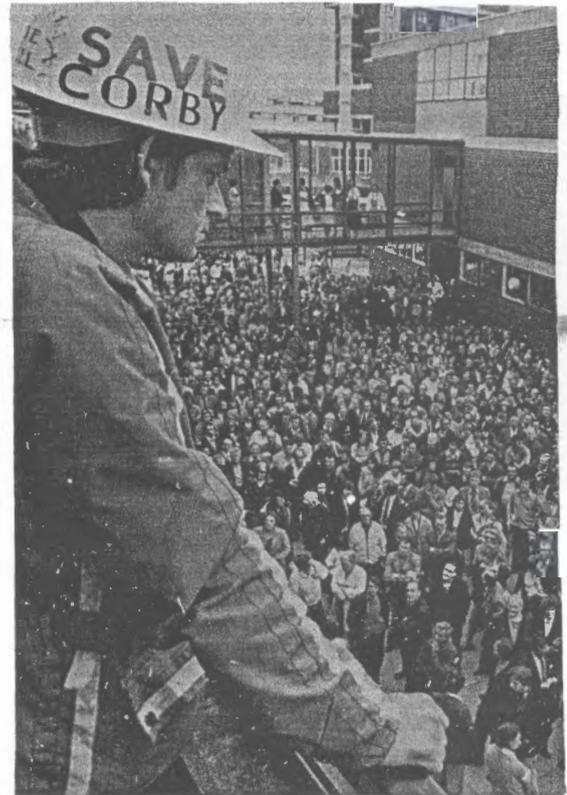
The wizard strippers

"I have sacrificed education and hospitals for your Europe, Mr Jenkins. What are you going to do for me?" Thus spoke Thatcher to the Common Market President before the meeting in Dublin.

The question is, of course, how long are workers going to allow Thatcher and her crew to sacrifice what is ours and not theirs? How long before all come to realise that the Common Market is only part of a grand plan to destroy modern Britain? Each week it becomes clearer, whether it's a question of importing coal for the steel industry and claiming that coal mines in Britain will have to close, or whether it's importing steel to make the machines that mine the coal and claiming that steel plants have to close.

Economy used to be about making use of skills to increase production so that industry would grow. Now "economy" carried to its illogical conclusion by the Thatcherites is that of the financial wizard who only sees economics in terms of the exchange of stocks and shares - coupon clipping. It is these wizards who now run (down) British Steel, British Leyland, GEC, British Shipbuilding and who are the "brains" behind Thatcher. None of them could produce anything.

Given such economics and a Government that thinks it's the way the country should be run, why should we be sur-



Corby steelworkers have led the fight to save steel in Britain. Photo: John Sturrock, Report

Meccano workers occupy as battle begins to save their factory, jobs, and skills

SWIFT and concerted action by workers at the threatened Meccano factory in Liverpool has led to round one of the struggle to save jobs, going to the workers.

The story is a familiar one, of asset stripping and dictatorship from on high. Having been taken over by American-owned Airfix Industries some years ago, the factory was allowed to run down. Never mind investing in new plant - the building itself was allowed to become derelict, so that now, apart from being rat infested, it has holes in the floor and

lets water in through the roof.

Having engineered its 'unviability', the orders to shut it followed. At 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon 931 workers were informed that their jobs had disappeared. Local management, it appears, were as astonished as their workers; but they couldn't match their workers' response.

A meeting that night led to immediate occupation of the works, continuing through the weekend, so that on Monday morning management found itself locked out. Meanwhile the local labour movement was

informed and the company's plans were stymied. Whilst the workers were able to send a lorry load of goods to a toy fair in Manchester to get future orders, it was also clear that unions would refuse to shift any of the £2 million plus of goods, equipment and raw materials.

Coupled with the threat of legal action under the Employment Protection Act, the company has been forced to back down and promise to keep the works going for at least another 90 days. Now the battle can start in earnest.

LONG ago THE WORKER pointed out that the Edwardes' plan for Leyland was really to run down the less profitable motor car side of the business and let private industry take over bus and lorry manufacture. Now he is furious with a businessman in the North East for leaking to the press a proposal to make a bid for BL's buses, lorries and tractors.

THE EEC Commissioner for industry, Davignon, visiting London to bridge British destruction of industry with EEC destruction, has guaranteed support for the British Steel Corporation's "restructuring policy" which will mean the loss of at least 52,000 iron and steel jobs.

IT IS a grim irony of history that US imperialism, which has sought out the most reactionary forces in countries all over the world through which to extend its economic sway; now finds its embassies in a number of places occupied or besieged by the forces of religious bigotry.

THE INTERNATIONAL confederation of Free Trade Unions, representing 70 million organized workers, backed the TUC opposition to Thatcher's anti-union laws at a meeting in Madrid. Attention was called to the fact that in Britain where trade unionism originated it was now under a new legal attack.

NO CASH limits. No lame ducks but plenty of duck a l'orange. No tightening of belts; no monetarist scripping but plenty of cash for liquidity. That's the situation in the House of Commons canteen which has been bailed out of the red to the tune of £27 million. Last orders Ladies and Gentlemen please.

ACCORDING to a report by the European Commission of Human Rights British immigration policy since 1968 has been charged with including racially discriminatory provisions which violate international human rights obligations. This report was never sent by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Court of Human Rights and was never published. However the Government had a copy of it before them when they drafted the present discriminatory tightening up of immigration laws.

IT SEEMS obvious to us standing in the cold and the rain at bus stops that we cannot manage without a decent bus service. In London the economic cost of lateness to work because of transport problems must be colossal. Delays are always explained to us as some sort of accident. Sir Horace Cutler indicated otherwise last Thursday when he revealed that this year only 165 million bus miles had been run in London where 178 million were budgeted for. Is the GLC, our democratic authority, up in arms about this shortfall? No. Cutler's reaction is to impose a continuation of this shortfall. Cutting mileage, reducing service, and increasing fares are not a matter for dispute between the GLC and London Transport.

So next time you are standing in the cold waiting, blame the GLC not the crew of the bus.

"THE FUTURE of Germany must lie on her Eastern frontier in an empire to which the future sets no limits." Sir Oswald Mosley 1935.

"While it is no part of our policy or of American policy, to foster a quarrel between Japan and Soviet Russia, it would be no concern of ours, if such a quarrel developed into war, to prevent Japanese expansion in Eastern Siberia." L. S. Amery 1935 (Cabinet Minister 1922-29 and 1940-45).

The net was tightening around Russia again. She faced this encirclement as she had the Civil War, relying first on her own people (described last week), secondly on workers abroad, thirdly on splits within the imperialist camp.

In 1934 Russia joined the League of Nations. As a legacy of the 1st World War there was an immense popular feeling in Europe against war, and a desire for the League to work. By taking an unequivocal stand against fascism, war and imperialism, Russia became the spokesman for this feeling at the League.

France, fearing a third invasion from Germany, made a series of treaties with Russia as they both did with most Central European states. But in the end France would not act without British backing. Therefore the possibility of a united stand against fascism came to depend upon Chamberlain (Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940). As Malley, the Russian ambassador, told Halifax (Foreign Secretary) "although Russia can win a war of defence singlehanded, she cannot singlehanded prevent war in general."

As Germany rearmed (with the compliance of the United Kingdom)

a quandary appeared: Hitler was a bastion against communism in Europe; he was also a threat to the Empire. However, Chamberlain told the cabinet in 1938 that he "had established a degree of personal control over Herr Hitler. This control amounted to allowing Hitler all his demands, but not through aggression.

As a result, by 1938 all but Czechoslovakia in Central Europe had come to terms with fascism. Czechoslovakia alone was still a parliamentary democracy. She had an arms industry, strong western fortifications, the will to resist Hitler's demands and mutual defence treaties with both France and Russia.

In August Hitler demanded the Sudetenlands. Chamberlain set out to break Czech resistance. On the radio he said, "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing" (a noble sentiment from the leader of a party with such a tradition of pacifism).

At Munich, Mussolini, Hitler,

Deladier (the French Prime Minister) and Chamberlain agreed the emasculation of Czechoslovakia. The Czech Prime Minister was not even invited to be present, nor any Russian delegate. The careful construction of the anti-fascist front was destroyed, whilst in Spain a blind eye was turned to the blatant breaking of the neutrality agreement by Germany and Italy, and they continued to stop help going to the Republicans.

Attempts by Molotov to get an Anglo-Soviet alliance continued. In March 1939 German tanks had rolled into Prague and Hitler put his demands to Poland. During May Molotov warned the British Government that if meaningful talks were not begun, Soviet policy was liable to be altered. Lord Halifax (Foreign Secretary) wrote in November 1938 "It is one thing to allow German expansion in Central Europe, which to my mind is perfectly natural, but we must be able to resist German expansion in Western Europe or our whole position is undermined" and in April 1939 "It was desirable not to estrange Russia,

but always to keep her in play." So in late July military talks were agreed to. Negotiations now reached the level of farce.

Admiral Sir Reginald Ranfurly-Plunkett-Erle-Drax was sent in a chartered steamer, the cheapest and slowest method of travel. He had been instructed to take the talks "very slowly... Agreement may take months to reach." "Not a senior member of the defence staff, he was unable to answer a single important question. On the 21st August, talks were broken off, the same day Ribbentrop was invited from Berlin; on the 23rd the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact was signed. Hitler fixed the invasion date of Poland for 25th August, postponed to September 1st. It was not until September 3rd that his backbenchers forced Chamberlain to declare war. To the end he had sought another Munich, a settlement which would have left the road to Moscow open.

Russia had been prepared to resist fascist aggression in 1936, 1938 and 1939. The refusal of the Chamberlain government to form an alliance left the Soviets little choice. The course of events was already clear to the Russian leadership. Litvinov had predicted in March that "France was practically done for" and that Hitler would soon rule "from the Bay of Biscay to the Russian Frontier". The non-aggression pact allowed a further 18 months of preparation before Hitler's inevitable "drive to the East". The blind and disastrous prejudice and pressure for war against Russia that characterises foreign policy today is not without precedent.



The West vilifies Vietnam for aiding Kampuchea

THE BBC continues to broadcast lies about Vietnam - such as the charge that Vietnam is obstructing aid to Kampuchea and demanding extortionate fees for allowing aid shipments in. This is in spite of statement by Oxfam to the effect that "far from impeding the flow of aid, by opening up the Mekong river which has been closed since 1975 to Western agencies, the Vietnamese have doubled the capacity of Western agencies to get aid to Kampuchea."

Every family in southern Vietnam sets aside one kilo of rice per month for Kampuchea and the Vietnamese have already sent into Kampuchea 100,000 tons of rice, 20,000 tons of seed rice, 3 million metres of cloth, 500,000 ploughs, 10,000 mosquito nets, 1 million school books, cooking pots and fishing nets.

The British Government has had to withdraw recognition from the Pol Pot regime. But the campaign of vilification of Vietnam goes on because Vietnam cannot be forgiven for thoroughly defeating and expelling the US aggressors whom Britain supported throughout the war.

The Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has rejected the November 14th resolution of the UN General Assembly, pointing out that "the Vietnamese armed forces did a just action fully conforming to morality and international law and the spirit of the UN charter when they exercised their legitimate right to self-defence and

responded to the call of the National United Front for the salvation of Kampuchea by helping the Kampuchean people in their uprising against the genocidal Pol Pot regime."

It should be mentioned that when the US imperialists dispatched 500,000 troops to invade Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea and, recently when the Chinese imperialists sent 600,000 troops to invade Vietnam the United Nations did not condemn the aggressors.

Opposition to NATO

THE LINK between NATO's planned escalation of nuclear armaments in Europe and the intended subjugation of the working classes of Europe is no more clearly expressed than in the present government crisis in Belgium.

A 24-hour general strike against government cut-backs in public spending has halted industry, newspapers, banking and retailing throughout the country and closed down all public transport - it was impossible to get in or out of Belgium for the duration. It is combining with major anti-missile demonstrations and strong opposition within the Belgium coalition Government to topple the Prime Minister, Wilfried Martens.

Throughout Europe opposition to the new generation of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles is mounting and severely jeopardising the

BBC wage claim fight

THE RECENT BBC strike was caused by management insisting on shelving all outstanding wage claims in order to introduce a new grading structure by April 1980. The Association of Broadcasting Staff informed BBC management that while not opposing the idea of a new grading structure, they could not abandon their responsibilities as a trade union to push through legitimate claims of their members during discussion about the new structure.

Some 18 technical managers were instructed to go on strike

for 24 hours and when BBC management suspended them, 600 technicians and programme staff walked out, causing cancellation of a number of programmes. The ABS executive had no alternative but to entertain requests for industrial action from other sections. The strike has been settled by arbitration, though 86 sound recordists held out for a time on the grounds that there were insufficient guarantees.

The basic cause for dissatisfaction of BBC workers is their awareness that management instead of fighting successive governments for the funds needed to run an efficient public service broadcasting system has expected workers to accept lower pay and conditions than those in comparable employment like ITV. Hence the constant drain of BBC programme makers and technicians.

The BBC licence fee is the lowest in Europe. One pays considerably less for all one's television programmes throughout a year than the cost of a single newspaper over the same period. The cost of public service broadcasting is not too great considering the standards of programming maintained in comparison with broadcasting systems which are entirely commercial. In exchange for that cost the public has the right to complain about the allocation of funds or the quality of programmes in the BBC. In a commercial system the public probably pays even more but the costs are concealed in the price rises of goods to cover advertising and such costs confer no right of public criticism.

credibility of the plans. It is ironic that while the Dutch Prime Minister, Andries van Agt spends the evening conferring with Thatcher to support NATO's diabolical intentions, the Dutch Parliament unequivocally defies van Agt and his Government and rejects "any decision by NATO to produce and deploy new nuclear missiles in Europe".

With Denmark already openly opposed and Norway's opposition mounting, should we not take a leaf from their books - and that of the demonstrating Belgium workers - and say finally to Thatcher and her like "No to your war hysteria, no to your plans to render our country a battleground for nuclear missiles aimed at the people of the world, no to your destruction of our country" and topple her and all she stands for one and for all.

Wage and job threat by British Steel

The relationship between voting and the struggle of people against exploitation has come up in various ways in the last fortnight. The miners have voted to accept a 20 per cent pay offer instead of taking industrial action to achieve 25 per cent. Many Leyland workers have voted not to subscribe to the defence of their industries. Spokesmen for the liberation fighters in Zimbabwe have accepted the British Government's proposals for a cease fire and a British-supervised election and armed foreign troops on their soil.

These cases reveal various aspects of the question. A vote can be largely pre-determined by the way in which it is put. It was hardly likely that a vast majority of miners would vote for all-out industrial action to add 5 per cent to a 20 per cent settlement without the involvement of some openly political issue like a shorter working week or an end to harmful productivity deals.

Voting against defending an industry in hopes that your workmates will get the bullet instead of you is both stupid and wrong. It is stupid because if you agree to your mate getting the sack today, you'll get it tomorrow. It is wrong because no one has the right to give up or bargain away jobs which belong to the working class including the next generation of workers.

In describing the Lancaster House agreement Robert Mugabe said: "Through the bullet we have achieved the ballot. The bullet is still there to defend the ballot." Whatever reservations we may have about the good faith of a British imperialist government, the people who have been doing the fighting are the only ones who have the right to say if they have achieved what they were fighting for. Their capacity to resume fighting if their aspirations are betrayed is the guarantee of the election - not the presence of a supervisory force.

The CPB(ML) has always said in connection with Parliamentary elections in this country: Don't vote. This is because of the "would you rather be eaten by a lion or a tiger" nature of these elections staged by the bourgeois state. It does not mean we are against voting in general. That would be absurd. Every effort to assess our strength for a particular line of action or to select our leaders in struggle is a form of voting.

Ever since Lenin's remark about Russian soldiers voting for the revolution "with their feet" we have realised that voting is necessary. The question is whether we are voting in our own way on our own course of action or are allowing the class enemy to impose on us voting that is meaningless or harmful to our own interests. Balloting which isolates one from fellow workers at the time of casting the vote, on an issue framed by the employer, is naturally something the employers' Government would like to impose on us by legislation. We must instead impose on Thatcher's Government, by all the collective means at our command, a massive vote of No Confidence.

Civil servants face axe

THE ATTACK on the trade union movement in the civil service continues apace. But attempts to destroy jobs, skills and services is meeting with strong opposition in certain areas.

Two hundred members of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) at the Department of National Savings (DNS) in Glasgow were recently suspended for refusing to cover work arising from staff shortages and while they have now returned to work, 30 of their colleagues from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) in Kennington remain suspended after taking a stand against the employment of casual rather than permanently employed staff.

At the Cokermonth (Cumbria) office of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) there is outright closure. This office, with current operating costs of £28,000 a year, provides advice on the availability of commercial premises and advance factories, coupled with advice on selective financial assistance for new or expanding businesses in the area and an export promotion service. In spite of this function the Tories would shut this office. Apart from the considerable expense involved (approximately £25,000) in transfer and redundancy payments and the cost of travel for the work to be covered

from Newcastle, it is intended to employ a retired businessman as an industrial advisor and a retired academic to advise on company law, in which the department has over 100 years experience, at a cost of £25,000 a year.

Notwithstanding the opposition, more than 45,000 jobs are expected to be lost as a result of the Government's survey of the Civil Service. They say they are eliminating waste, but such cuts, together with many others in customs and export credits, can be shown to be economically unsound and highlights the true nature of the cuts - a political attack on the trade union movement.

First the civil service unions were penalised for their victorious struggle on wages in 1979 by plans to cut staff. Now, in order to prevent a recurrence of such struggle, the Government intends to 'deprivilege' the civil service unions.

The full implications are not yet clear, but the first suggestion shows how far out of touch the Government is: in the interests of 'democracy', union meetings should be allowed during working hours so that 'moderates' will flock in their hundreds to curb the irresponsible power of 'the left'. If only ensuring fully attended meetings were that easy! But it is the thought that counts, and civil servants will have to beware of further interference with, and attacks upon their union structures.

THE BRITISH Steel Corporation plans to cut 52,000 more jobs in steel and has offered the rest of the industry an insulting two per cent wage rise. The new package would cut the mainstream labour force by one third and reduce the living standard of those in work by 15 per cent. The plant closures could include relatively new plant, recently modernised. But this loss of jobs still won't be enough to comply with Sir Keith Joseph's economic strategy. Apparently Britain only needs to produce 15 million tons of steel a year to suit the government and the EEC.

The BSC can't find anybody to buy steel any more and besides, we all know that British workers are too lazy to produce enough! But French, German and American workers are also losing their jobs. They too must be too lazy to produce profitable steel. One minute workers are too lazy and don't do enough and the next day they are told they have produced too much and are no longer needed. Only this week 60 maintenance engineers were punished for maintaining plant at Corby. The workers were stopped pay. Whoever heard of maintenance engineers being paid for not maintaining anything. It's always 'Heads we win; tails you lose'.

Whatever the outcome it's always blamed on workers.

We are constantly being told of the terrible losses of the British Steel industry. Government ministers enunciate every single statistic. The BSC seem to publish endless reports. The newspapers practically have a daily space for the latest catastrophe. It's like the weather, always terrible. The natural law of supply and demand must be heeded. The Gods are angry with us. We must make workers unemployed and close plants.

We are not told of course, that since the nationalisation in 1967 the Corporation has been burdened with interest payments on compensation to former owners, and further interest payments on borrowing. Added up over the years these debts account for nearly all the losses made by the industry.

The entry into the EEC wasn't calculated to cure the so-called ills of our steel industry. It could only serve to exacerbate them. The free-trade policies of the EEC mean that we now import a quarter of our steel from member countries and watch our own industry die.

We can have money to help with retraining schemes and for redun-

dancy payments: we can't have redundancy payments though for the young people growing up to join the dole queues.

The two per cent wage offer is designed to add insult to injury. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) is determined that this kind of insult will be treated with the contempt it deserves. The Confederation are calling a strike to fight the closures and the wage 'rise'. The disgraceful decision of the Blast-furnacemen to accept the management's offer has been roundly condemned by the rest of the industry. It has always been so that some workers make the task more difficult for the rest.

It is not the job of British Steel workers to line the pockets of financiers through the loss of jobs. It is not their job either to compete with the cheap labour of Brazil and South Korea. British steel making plants were not built for demolition simply because an economic system exists that defies reason.

Our steel plants, like our schools and our hospitals and every thing else that is important for our future, must stay open. We can close parliament and sack the government and begin again!

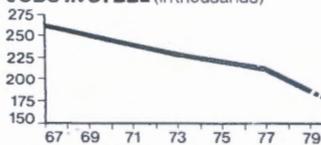
STEEL the heart of industry

WHERE THE AXE WILL FALL

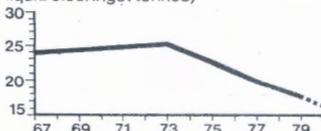
- Lanarkshire**
400 jobs to go.
- Consett plant mill**
420 jobs to go.
- Cleveland**
1200 jobs to go.
- Scunthorpe (Redbourn)**
1700 jobs to go, plus 400 unconfirmed. Will be merged with Sheffield.
- Shotton**
7000 jobs to go. Some finishing processes will remain.
- Corby**
6000 jobs to go.
- Ebbw Vale**
500 jobs to go.
- Port Talbot**
3000 jobs under threat.
- Llanwern**
6000 jobs under threat.



JOB IN STEEL (in thousands)



STEEL PRODUCTION (in millions of liquid steel ingot tonnes)



▲ The cutbacks at the three South Wales plants will also mean the closure of eleven local pits, and the loss of 8500 miners' jobs.

Welsh dockers support miners and defend industry in Wales for the future

WELSH dockers in Newport have been refusing to unload 18,000 tons of coal which is being imported by British Steel for its Llanwern works.

They are taking this action in support of the National Union of Mineworkers, who are faced with a deliberate government policy not to use British Coal, but to import coal and close down British pits.

British Steel and the National Coal Board are in cahoots. The BSC refuses to use British coal which is 'too expensive' because the Coal Board sells it to them 'too dear'. By importing foreign coal instead (their estimates) the number of miner's jobs at risk varies between 9000 and 15,000 - such economic savoir-faire!

When the numbers of jobs to be axed in steel varies from one day to the next - how long is

the prediction of 32,000 extra jobs to go over and above the current 20,000 valid? So-called economics cannot be more precise than to call for more and yet more destruction of economic capacity.

In 1974-5 over 90 per cent of British Steel's coal was British mined - nearly 13 million tons. Today, that has dropped to a mere 8 million tons, or about 70 per cent of BSC input. BSC is importing 2.9 million tons of coal, which it plans to increase next year by a further 2.2 m tons so that half of the coal for BSC will be imported.

Clearly, if Thatcher and Joseph have their way, Britain, an island of coal, will mine none (or only mine that most easily accessible, as they talk of ripping up the Vale of Belvoir). And so with a steel-making capacity of 25 million tons yearly (which was

planned to increase to 30) we produce only 15 million tons. And of course they plan to cut that further.

Only the madness of capitalism transforms the maintenance of productive capacity and steel production into figures of 'loss'. Only that madness has us export coal to the EEC at the same time as we import it from abroad. Only that madness has led to world-wide depression of both steel and coal production, so that 'surplus' coal is dumped in Britain at the expense of British jobs, and with government encouragement.

To prevent that, by force, by organisation, is to use trade union power to defend British industry. The Newport dockers' action, which has now resulted in an agreement to buy an equivalent amount of British coal, supports us all and deserves all our support.

Farmworkers

MINIMUM wages for farmworkers have been settled by the Agricultural Wages Board for 1980; basic rates are increased by 19½ per cent - 24½ per cent, raising the minimum wage from £48.50 to £58; the differential for craftsmen is increased and there will be an extra week's holiday by 1982. Compared with past settlements of the AWB, the current one is quite substantial, but will do little to help maintain standards for rural workers. The National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers (NAAAW) has calculated that proposed charges for school transport and meals will cost the average rural family an extra £9 a week!

Although falling well short of the NAAAW claim for £100, the settlement is a significant one for farmworkers and reflects the increasing militancy in the fight for wages and a realisation that the AWB has been a means of holding down wages in the past. Both these factors came to a head on 7th

November when over 600 NAAAW members lobbied the AWB meeting at Whitehall. Their calls for strike action must have echoed uneasily in the corridors of the Ministry of Agriculture. Meanwhile the NAAAW negotiators ignored the traditional protocol of AWB procedure and asserted more traditional methods of trade union negotiation. Faced with such a confrontation the farmers side walked out, leaving the 'Independent' members to decide the final settlement.

This negotiation by default will probably lead the NAAAW Biennial Conference in 1980 to demand the abolition of the AWB and replacement with direct negotiations. Judging by their hysterical reactions to the new basic wages the National Farmers Union will have to come to terms with real trade union negotiation now the farce of the AWB has been revealed. The NAAAW must go into serious training for the wages fight.



Inner London Teachers march against the cuts. Photo: The Worker

London Teachers fight destruction

MANY THOUSANDS of London teachers took part in a half day strike called by the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) on Tuesday, 4th December. Over 6000 teachers marched on County Hall to demonstrate their opposition to proposed cuts in the budget of the ILEA. There was no coverage of this show of strength in the media or the press. Censorship has many different forms.

There has been some reluctance on the part of the ILEA to succumb to the pressure put on it by the Thatcher Government - this "squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching gang." Earlier efforts by the leader of the Labour controlled authority to get a package of cuts approved by the education committee had failed. It had been hoped that a demonstration by thousands of teachers would have persuaded those members of ILEA who had refused to toe

the party line to stick to their principles.

Unfortunately one too many of these individuals bowed to the pressure put on them by the leader and cuts of almost £22 million were approved - by the chairman's casting vote.

All is not lost however. There is a possibility that when the ILEA budget is debated again in February the decision taken this week can be reversed. More importantly, should NUT members in inner London implement Union policy on the cuts, then a great deal can be done to preserve the education service in the nation's capital.

One thousand teaching posts are under threat as a result of the disastrous decision that was taken. The NUT members in London are committed to defending the total number of teaching jobs in the authority. They must show a steadfastness and resilience with regard to this very important

principle. Only an aggressive reaction to ILEA policy will suffice. Only then will the tables be turned on those who connive in the destruction of the education service.

Using existing policy on class size, conditions of service and no cover, which will be strengthened as a result of a special conference of the NUT which takes place on 8th December, London teachers must not only fight for jobs but to preserve the material resources deployed in the schools.

Following the demonstration in Central London, hundreds of Wandsworth teachers travelled back to their borough to show their opposition to the local council's plan to remove control of the schools in Wandsworth from the ILEA and place it in the council's grasping hands. Five hundred parents, teachers and students spelt out a clear message: "Yes to ILEA. No to cuts."

Deaths raise issue of policing the police

ONE OF the first acts of Margaret Thatcher was to increase police pay.

In a letter to "The Magistrate", a London JP claims that in allowing the slightest assault on the police to go unpunished "we are breaking down one of the fundamental taboos of society". A list of the weapons found in the lockers of the two Special Patrol Group units operating at Southall in April when Blair Peach died from a fractured skull, should allay the fears of that particular JP as to the possibilities of such an assault taking place. The inventory includes: 1 brass handle, 1 leather encased truncheon with knotted thong at one end, an 8-inch long leather-encased metal truncheon with lead weight at one end, 2 sledge hammer handles, 1 American-type beat truncheon, 1 rhino whip, 2 long metal bars with hooks at the ends, 1 white bone-handled 6-inch long knife, 2 3-foot long crowbars, and 1 piece of wood 3-foot long and 2-inches thick.

While magistrates bleat that the penalties for assault-

ing a police officer are too mild, the Home Office has released figures for the period 1970-77 which show that 169 people have died in police custody with verdicts of manslaughter returned in two cases - and what of the other 1677?

Last year in Merseyside alone there were 1543 complaints against the police - so many that the Chief Constable is now proposing to appoint another senior officer to handle only complaints and discipline.

But back to Thatcher and the pay rise. In 1974 24 pickets were arrested at Shrewsbury under a conspiracy law formulated in the 19th century. But you can't keep arresting workers under a nineteenth century law - it won't wash. And so today we see the publication of Thatcher's Employment Bill - a euphemism if there ever was one - the Bill they need to succeed where the Industrial Relations Act failed.

But now the most experienced working class in Europe is drawing up the battle lines and saying - Enough! And Thatcher

despite her aggressive stance is frightened. She is frightened of the power of the British trade union movement when it asserts itself. Witness the police 'presence' at a recent demonstration by the people of Corby to save their steel town from the wreckers - armed with dogs and riot shields. Witness the Inner London Teachers Association march last week against cuts in ILEA - County Hall was completely surrounded, and not by teachers, but by the police force.

Corruption in the nation's police force which is being given so much publicity by the national press comes as no surprise to any one. Since time immemorial there have been such exposures and not only in Britain. That is not the issue for today. A few of their numbers will be dismissed, and the status quo will go unchallenged. The real issue is that, even while the police force officially calls for the return of the death penalty - others within that body do not deem it necessary to wait. Who polices the police?

Review - Fairy Tales

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