



WORKERS REJECT DEVOLUTION NOW OUT OF EEC!

THE WORKERS of Wales and Scotland have voted against divisions in the ranks of the British working class carried out in the name of phoney appeals to Welsh and Scottish 'nationalism'. There is no doubt that the backers of destructive devolution, mainly the Labour Government, completely failed to realise that the referenda were taking place at a time when the British working class, in battle with John O'Groats to Lands End over collective bargaining, have never been more united.

In Wales devolution was rejected by a massive 4 to 1 vote, only a tiny 12 per cent being in favour of it.

In Scotland, where devolution was thought to be so popular, less than a third of the votes were cast in favour. Since abstention could be counted as not supporting devolution there was, in effect, a massive, over two thirds vote of 'No' to devolution.

The vote for devolution in Scotland, only 2 per cent more than the registered votes against, fell far short of the 40 per cent held to be the lowest vote for devolution which would justify setting up a Scottish assembly.

The Labour Government may try to force through the setting up of an assembly in Edinburgh just to retain the support of the Scottish nationalists in Westminster to stave off an election till autumn; but it will only be a tactical manoeuvre. There is no chance that the proposed devolution in Scotland can go ahead on the basis of so little support.

The British working class has given the Labour Government a resounding rebuff on this issue. Having prevented this attempt to subject Britain to the divide-and-rule tactics of capitalism the working class must now take Britain out of the EEC to prevent its sovereignty and integrity from being merged in that capitalist combine.

Vietnam fightback

VIETNAM has rejected as utterly unacceptable the Chinese proposal for negotiations while Chinese forces are committing acts of brutal aggression against the Vietnamese people.

The Vietnamese response was that this was simply a trick to try to deceive the Vietnamese people and cover up their intensification of a war of aggression. They demanded that China withdraw all troops from Vietnam and "respect Vietnam's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The US faked a photograph of a sinking American warship in the Tonkin Gulf to excuse their bombing of the cities of northern Vietnam. China makes no excuses for its war of aggression, simply stating that they "want to teach the Vietnamese a lesson".

But Vietnam's invincibility has always been the invincibility of people's war, the determination of men, women and children to defend the independence of their own land. The Vietnamese are waging people's war against

the Chinese invaders who will inevitably find, as did Japanese French and US invasion forces before them, that the Vietnamese will never be defeated or taught a lesson in Vietnam.

The dreadful conclusion one is forced to reach is that the present rulers of China do not really care how many Chinese soldiers perish in an unjust war in somebody else's land. Since they have abandoned the socialist answer to a large population of increasing production to meet people's needs, are they now practising the malthusian remedy of reducing the population through war as a short cut to what they call 'modernisation'?

Many countries will express their sympathy and support for the Vietnamese people who after thirty years of fighting to maintain their independence are once more having to throw themselves into battle. Just when they were beginning to enjoy the fruits of peaceful production their factories and fields are once more being overrun by foreign invaders.



Members of the RCN lobbying Parliament over wages.

Photo: Michael Abrahams

Nurses pay talks founder on Govt indifference

THE VOTE against 'limited industrial action' in support of their pay claim by the Royal College of Nursing is an example of the responsible concern felt by workers for the public whom they serve. The care taken by nurses, hospital workers, ambulancemen and all others working in the public sector to see that their industrial action directed against the employers does not harm nor seriously inconvenience the people in their care has been one of the main features of the present wave of industrial action.

Unfortunately no such concern for the well-being of the ill and the injured inspires the actions of the nurses' employers, the State. One day after the decision taken by the RCN, talks between the Government and the unions over the nurses' pay claim broke down. There has not even been a settlement of the 1978 claim, to say nothing of the 25 per cent increase demanded for 1979.

Reluctantly, the Department of Health has been forced to make an improved offer, but it comes nowhere near meeting what the nurses have a right to expect. Nurses will be posting themselves outside government buildings in Whitehall as a reminder of their case and to bring moral pressure to bear on the Government. But no capitalist government, including

the present Labour Government, has any moral scruples when it comes to dealing with the working class.

The working class as a whole have shown themselves prepared to fight hospital closures. Trade unions are supporting public sector workers in their fight for a decent wage. Every section that has taken on the fight against the Labour Government is supporting the nurses. Nurses will have to show that they are ready to fight for themselves. By fighting for their claim they are fighting directly for the preservation of the hospitals and the Health Service.

Whether the RCN goes on strike or not is not the issue. That is a tactic to be decided upon at the right time. The issue is that nurses cannot help those who need their care by depriving themselves of the means of backing their claim. They cannot rely on an appeal to the benevolence of an employer that serves only the interests of capitalism.

Ambulance drivers

That this is indeed the case has just been proved by the ambulancemen. As a result of their one-day strike Ennals has paved the way for speeding up a settlement by declaring that ambulancemen, like the police and firemen, are a 'special case'. That

means that more can be offered to the ambulancemen without setting a precedent.

What is quite obvious, from the way this concession has come about, is that as far as the Government is concerned, what constitutes a 'special case' is the ability to hit the employer hard. The majority of the working class is proving itself one huge, united 'special case'.

Kent

KENT ambulancemen have rejected a plea by local MPs to call off their work-to-rule, voting instead to escalate their action in a fortnight unless they have in writing Ennals' recognition that they will be treated as an emergency service, and paid appropriately.

In a letter to the local paper, which had printed a headline, "Playing with lives is a dangerous game", the Northfleet committee named the real culprits: "It is the system and the men in charge, Ennals and Co., that allows 800 people with renal failure to die because they say that the £10,000 needed to supply dialysis machines per person is not available. But the Government can close hospitals at a stroke irrespective of patients awaiting operations for heart and cancer conditions. Perhaps this is not considered as putting life at risk."

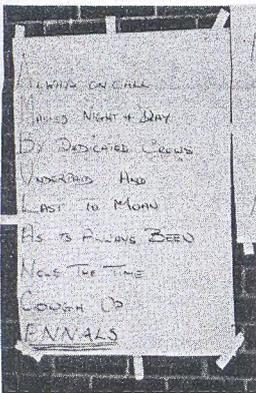
The Week

WHEN tax on buying homes over £15 000 was introduced in 1974, it could be plausibly argued by Labour that this was "soaking the rich". But thanks to increases in house prices the number paying duty has jumped from 16 to 43 per cent a few months ago. Today, half of those buying houses cannot do so without paying the government some £100 and often more for the privilege. They raked in £95 million last year as opposed to £32 million in 1974. The government gives £110 in its new assistance plan to first time buyers, but takes most of it back in stamp duty.

THE OFFICE of Health Economics announced recently that the original aim of the NHS, to meet all medical need, was no longer feasible. Shortages are supposedly inherent, because of medical advances:

Under capitalism, medical advances become an excuse for shortcomings in a socialist society, medical advances will fulfil the NHS's aim of serving all the medical needs of the people.

THE UK's largest private sector employer, GEC, has taken on a new consultant, at a fee undisclosed - Henry Kissinger.



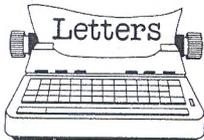
THE REFUSAL of the Price Commission to accept price rises at British Oxygen has nothing to do with holding down inflation. The fact is that the Government, unable to impose sanctions on companies settling outside the 5 per cent guidelines, is using price controls as a punitive measure instead.

The workers at BOC in their fight for a decent wage were not deterred by threats of sanctions. Would the Price Commission have been more concerned with BOC's 'profitability' if they had settled within the limit?

THE NUJ has expelled 96 members in the first round of disciplinary action following the seven week provincial journalists' strike. Complaints against a further 500 members, who failed to follow instructions and take part in the union's first national strike against the Newspaper Society, have still to be heard. The stoppage secured an average increase of 14.5 per cent for journalists.

Historic Notes

WHEN the harvest was safely gathered in in October 1878, farmers in Kent and Sussex announced that daily wages were to be reduced from 2/6 to 2/2 or 2/3d. Naturally the farmworkers resisted this repressive move and before long the farmers began a lockout. The farmworkers in this area all belonged to the Kent and Sussex Agricultural and General Labourers Union, one of several local Agricultural Unions formed around that time, but which had not affiliated to Joseph Arch's National Union. By 1878 the Kent and Sussex Union was 15 000 strong.



Dear Editor,
As the capitalist class becomes more and more aware of the threat to its well-being of an assertive, angry working class, it is fast trying to find effective ways of gaining the sympathy of its workers and ways of safeguarding its profit margins.

One such firm recently issued a booklet to each worker showing examples of ways to improve production, encouraging us to put forward suggestions to a committee especially set up for this purpose. Each idea would be put forward to the Committee and if found useful, the worker would be awarded a cash prize. The sum would vary according to the usefulness of the idea. For example, one worker operating a punching press came up with an idea for altering the cutting-board, which would double the life of the machine, cutting the annual replacement cost by half. For this idea he was given £100, only a fraction of the savings made by the company.

Such moves illustrate two things. On the one hand, the employers try to give credence to the idea that workers and employers have the same interest, and that employers reward fairly for the skills of workers. On the other hand, what we already know, that it is the initiative of the working class that the employers rely on when they see their future in jeopardy, and their profits declining. The sooner we realize our own worth and also that our skills and suggestions are not put to the use of the common good, but for the good of the capitalist class, then shall that class cease to exploit. We shall know the true value of our skills, and the benefits of a socialist society.

Yours fraternally,
A Hemel Hempstead Reader.

While the farmworkers faced a winter of even greater hardship than usual, after-dinner speakers at farmers' clubs praised the farmers' moderation, one such speaker told the Sevenoaks farmers' club that they must look on labour as a commodity, and should not permit 'flesh and blood' considerations to influence their dealings with the men.

The Union fought bravely but funds were badly depleted by payments to the locked out men and in December the Farmers began to evict the workers from their cottages. In despair the Union assisted about 500 of their

Dear Editor,

In regard to the wealth of detail in a recent issue of 'The Worker' dealing with the real role of devolution as the attempt to split the working class of Britain, already these reactionaries have found sympathetic ears within 'England'. An organisation financed by a capitalist charity, backed by Liberal and Labour MP's, called the Campaign for the North, for the last two years has been attempting to crank itself into a movement. Not only does this organisation advocate splitting the working class on an English-Scottish-Welsh basis, they would have northern workers split from southern, Yorkshire workers from Lancashire workers.

This organisation points out that unemployment, industrial decline, housing - general social and economic problems - are worse in many instances in the North of the country than in Wales or Scotland. Instead of demanding greater unity among workers to tackle and destroy the capitalist enemy, they would have worker against worker.

As the devolution nonentity creeps on, we must expect to see more and more attempts to fragment the class on sectarian and regional so-called differences, all of which we must counter with our working class unity, tested in the class struggle against our employers.

Yours fraternally, Leeds Worker

TELEGRAMA

FOR THE ATTENTION OF MR. CALLAGHAN - PRIME MINISTER,
10, DOWNING STREET,
LONDON.

WE SEND OUR SOLIDARITY TO THE JUST DEMANDS OF
THE CIVIL SERVANTS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

FEDERACION COMISIONES ADMINISTRACION PUBLICA

MADRID
ESPANA.

The Kent and Sussex Lockout of 1878

members to emigrate to New Zealand, while those remaining had to accept the employers' terms, although some farmers refused to reinstate Union men.

Farmers today still talk of the 'special relationship' they have with their employees, but in reality farmworkers are still treated as a commodity, just as farmers were urged to do in 1878. As in any other branch of Capitalism, employers pay as little as possible for the commodity of labour power.

In 1878 farmers could easily afford to shed a large part of the agricultural labour force, but

the situation in Britain today is very different. As the General Secretary of the NAAAW stated recently: "... The old assumptions are crumbling fast. In the highly mechanised agriculture today and tomorrow the skilled farmworker is not so keen to accept conditions that his father did. There are areas of agriculture which can be particularly vulnerable to a well organised workforce and it is to these areas that the Union may be looking for a lead in the unending struggle to achieve the financial rewards for the efforts which dedication to the job has not produced."



Harvest time has always meant long hours for agricultural workers; their reward, low wages and bad conditions.

Imperialism bolsters Gulf states

AMERICAN imperialism, in panic over its defeat by the Iranian people, threatens to install an army in the Gulf Area, to protect yet another vital American interest, the flow of oil. As an earnest, Carter sends \$100 million worth of military aid to the puppet North Yemen government, to try to prevent the Yemeni people from achieving a united democratic republic.

This aid is being paid for by

the Saudi Arabian Government whose 'secret' alliances are displayed by its massive arms deals with Britain, USA and France.

The Queen's recent visit to the Arab states was very much a show of British Imperialism's interest and concern in the region. The scheduled visit to Iran was cancelled but no doubt the assorted Kings, Sheiks and Emirs that she met were grateful for the comfort she brought them. Certainly so if the lavish gifts showered upon her are anything to go by. But Britain has more to offer by way of support for feudal reaction than a royal visit. In Oman, for example, the army is virtually officered by British servicemen on secondment or with free-lance mercenary contracts.

Soon all the puppets and their masters will discover that this area is of vital interest to its peoples, and that the peoples will be taking "any action that is appropriate" to achieve peace and independence.

Iranian workers carry the revolution forward

The message of the 100 000 Iranian industrial, government and office workers and students who attended a rally at Teheran University was clear: no return to the old methods of government and repression: the revolution must continue. They called for the destruction of the repressive army of the state, the police and the Shah's army. The rally was only the outward face of the revolutionary movement gripping all parts of Iran. Workers who went back to work following the successful uprising are forming Committees to run their factories and oil refineries, determining production, imports and exports. Attempts to impose

censorship on the press, radio and TV by the government appointees have been resisted and defied. The US military establishment and spy station were overrun and occupied.

Faced with such a movement the Bazarkan government is taking steps to establish "law and order". They demanded the return of all weapons captured by the people during the three day uprising and dubbed all opposition as anti-Islamic anarchist treason. Bazarkan went so far as to threaten to resign if the demonstrations and "disruptions" did not end. The government also promised a referendum to push the "Islamic Republic" scheme

on the people of Iran.

The Islamic Republic is a tenth century concept which bears no relation to the latter part of the twentieth century. It is like trying to introduce feudal laws in modern Britain. Islamic laws were developed to suit the nature of a tribal society to give it cohesion. The results were the Islamic crusades, the Holy Wars to establish the Islamic Empire. The much-publicised amputation for theft and other crimes has no Islamic significance. It is purely a weapon of terror just like detention, isolation, torture and murder practiced by every repressive regime from South Africa to Northern Ireland to intimidate

the population. The "Islamic Republic" has nothing to do with Islam and everything to do with oppression of one class by another. It is one thing for the Iranian workers to pray to Allah five times a day. It is quite another to leave their destiny in the hands of the Mullahs and Immams who claim to speak for him.

The revolution in Iran has nothing to do with Islam: witness the terror it caused the rulers in the heartland of Islam, literally its Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It will stand as an outstanding chapter in the history of proletarian revolutions, but it is still a long way from being finished.

Editorial

THERE has never been a time when Marxism, as a key to understanding the world we live in, has been under such concerted attack by all the anti-Marxist hacks serving the bourgeois media.

This ideological counter-revolutionary movement is, in fact, a tribute to Marxism's cogency. The consequences of capitalist production, not really being concerned with making things for people to use, only with making profits no matter what happens to people in the process, are obvious for every one to see. Equally obvious, particularly in Britain at this very moment, is the fact that capitalism in its constant search for profit keeps running into an absolutely basic class contradiction: the human labourer, in that portion of time he is not paid for his work, creates all profit; but that same human labourer, organised with his workmates, is the greatest enemy of profit. That is the contradiction which has broken out into the open in this country, whatever attempts are made to cover it up with talk about the fight against inflation, or the need to create conditions for investment to prevent even greater unemployment.

To describe the way the capitalist search for profit brings about the negation of its very all-consuming objective, Marx formulated the law of the falling rate of profit. This is the tendency of the rate of profit, which depends on the creation of surplus value, to decline as the capitalist seeks an immediate advantage over competitors by substituting machinery for workers, who are the only source of surplus value.

As a result, industries which once were highly profitable cease to be so and are abandoned by free-enterprise capitalism and left to the capitalist state to finance out of taxes paid largely by the working class. In the older capitalist countries, and particularly in Britain, the oldest of all, industry after industry has been taken up and then dropped in this way - coal, iron, steel, rail transport, shipbuilding, the motor car and aerospace industries. The consequent growth of bureaucratic capitalism has gone so far in a country like Britain that over 50 per cent of the working class are more or less directly employed by the state and any class struggle over the right of collective bargaining tends to become a conflict between workers and the state.

The capitalists' answer to the falling rate of profit is to lengthen the working day (consider the necessity of overtime) or to intensify the labour-exploitation (through, for example, productivity deals) of those workers still employed; but this runs into strong opposition from the trade union movement. Monopolisation not only enables capitalists to maintain artificially high prices, at the cost of inflation of course, it also counters the strength of organised workers by limiting their choice of employer. But in spite of all such palliatives the law of the falling rate of profit grinds inexorably on and there is a continuous flight of capital to any place where the labour force is not so well organised. The export of capital can be seen as capitalism's destruction of its own industrial foundation as the only way of humbling and disciplining the organised working class at home.

Back to coercion

Politically speaking what we are seeing in a country like Britain is the end of the phase of capitalism in which relatively little overt coercion of the working class was required beyond the natural laws of capitalist production and the workers' dependence on capital for the sale of their labour power to live. It was otherwise in the early days of primitive accumulation when the rising bourgeoisie had to appeal to the state authority to regulate wages, restricting them within limits suitable for amassing surplus value, to lengthen the working day and keep the worker in a condition of dependence. In capitalism's decline there is a return to that same need for the state authority to fix wages, to prolong the working day and to use control of the purse strings of the public services to keep working people in a condition of dependence.

Left to itself there is only one direction in which capitalism can be led by these contradictions - to fascism and war. The working class in Britain has no alternative but to make revolution to prevent war and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to put an end to capitalism's contradictions by socialism.

The critics of Marx have always gloated over his alleged error of showing how revolution would overtake the industrialised world when such social upheavals were actually going to occur elsewhere. But in the perspective of the firm and lasting establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat it may well prove to be the case that the oldest capitalist country will also be the birthplace of socialism as a permanent alternative to exploitative systems. From a revolutionised Britain a proletarian way of life, thought and action could spread to the rest of the world.

* IN BRIEF

THE SOCIETY of Radiographers has shown the positive role that a professional association can take. They have condemned the use of unqualified radiographers to X-Ray prisoners. They say that qualified radiographers were only used in 11 of our 52 prisons, which showed "a lack of apprecia-

tion of health hazards on the part of the Home Office".

Since they raised the question, two prisons have fallen in line with the joint demands of the Society of Radiographers and the College of Radiographers. Showing that organised workers can take steps to protect their skills and civil liberties, the Society is now stepping up its campaign.

THE STATE OF BRITAIN/Agriculture

Government attack on British farming

IF EVER the futility of the Labour Party dream of reform within capitalism needed demonstration, the sad case of British agriculture would provide it. As recently as 1975 the White Paper "Food from our own resources" aimed at Britain becoming self-sufficient in agriculture in the next few years. The White Paper embodied the hardly ambitious hopes of Labour party supporters and the modest projections of conservative scientific opinion. Every word of that document has been cast to the winds by the latest Government White Paper "Farming and the Nation".

Properly speaking it is not even a White Paper, but a caricature of one, being essentially a statement of the government's refusal to plan for agriculture. It concludes: "This White Paper sets out no precise aims, for in the agricultural context these have little meaning".

The cause of this volte-face is the EEC, whose harmful effects the Paper makes little attempt at concealing. "Our food imports cost more than if we were not a member. Prices are well above the levels that apply to British producers and are generally higher than efficient producers require." They unashamedly admit "the substantial net resource cost that the Common Agricultural Policy imposes on our economy. "We can no longer seek "the maximum output increase" they say, because while we are in the EEC "large increases in resources available to agriculture can be made only by increasing the domestic and import prices of temperate foodstuffs." Nowhere is EEC membership questioned.

The reality behind the glib phrases is even more shocking. There has been a fall in the consumption of various essential foodstuffs in Britain. Consump-

tion (measured in kilos per head per year) of lamb and mutton has dropped from 9.6 in 1970 to 7.6 in 1976 and 7.0 in 1977. For bacon and ham the figures are 11.4, 8.5 and 8.0. For fish 8.9, 8.4, and 7.4. Consumption of beef, milk, cheese, poultry and eggs has remained roughly constant. The decline in consumption of sugar, potatoes and wheat flour, it could be argued, might lead to a more balanced diet. But the only product whose consumption has risen is alcohol.

That there is an absolute decline in the diet of the British people in this decade is most clearly shown in the drop in per capita consumption of animal and vegetable protein. Measured in grams per day the figures given by the White Paper for the same three years are 52.5 falling to 51.4 and 50.8 for the one, and for the other 33.6, 31.7 and 31.9. Energy value of food (in kcal per head per day) has dropped from 3 110 to 2920.

How could such high prices and impoverished diet occur? We provide two-thirds of the food we grow ourselves, and over half of our total food supplies. We are self-sufficient in feed-grain (a recent achievement), poultry, and are a net exporter of eggs. 82 per cent of our meat is home produced. Even the present government is of the opinion that in five years the net product of British agriculture might be "10 or 20 per cent higher in real terms." How is it, then, that we are only 45 and 43 per cent self-sufficient in apples and pears? Has the British climate changed? Or has the British public succumbed as the White Paper says to the "advanced marketing promotion" of tasteless because unripe Golden Delicious? Why with bacon and pork are EEC importers subsidised to sell at lower prices in the British market?

Britain is the most efficient milk producer in Europe. Yet we are only 68 self-sufficient in milk products. The EEC forbids the British industry to produce more milk, and even more so to turn it into butter. We import 20 per cent of our potatoes, when we have been self-sufficient since the war. How ludicrous that we import nearly 70 per cent of our sugar, when beet is so easily grown.

According to the White Paper British agriculture is good at producing food, but bad at "marketing" and needs to learn the advanced selling techniques of competitors. But who is it that prevents home-produced food from even getting to the shops? Why should there be less sheep on the hills and moorlands? The government is keen to encourage the export of lamb, but only because it commands even higher prices than here.

The whole of our agriculture, it seems, is a victim to the haphazard demands of the import and export trade in home-produced food, which is totally unnecessary and indulged in solely for the profit of the traders. In the decade when we have been eating less and less, exports of food from Britain have risen by 60 per cent between 1972 and 1977.

Nor are the prospects bright. We have the largest fields in Europe, yet do not make our own harvesters. Although we import half our fertilisers, there are no plans to increase the chemical industry.

If it were not for the ignorance and paucity of information of the White Paper (a mere 46 pages!) one might suppose its authors had read Karl Marx. Their one correct assessment is that "production cannot be an end in itself, but must meet the needs of the market." Whose market?



Ambulance drivers on the Public Sector demonstration, January 22nd. Photo: The Worker.

Comparability is not 'fair play'

LORD PEART is recommending Government acceptance of a "pay comparability study" for 600 000 civil servants within the next 12 months in order to take the heat out of the fight over wages of the civil service unions.

"The Civil and Public Services Association and the Society of Civil and Public Servants immediately made it clear that this proposal would not make them call off their action.

The comparability study offered to public service workers and floated in the 'concordat' is no new idea. It has been the principle determining civil service pay since 1956 and has been presented to civil service work-

ers as a means of getting 'fair' wages without struggle. But Civil Service workers are presently having to fight to make the Government honour the agreement.

Forcing the Government to meet wage claims on the basis of comparability studies is a sound tactic in the struggle being waged by civil service workers. But to agree to give up the fight for wages for the kind of long-term comparability schemes being proposed by both Peart and Thatcher would be madness.

The result of 'Pay Research' in the Civil Service, which was supposed to remove the pay of civil servants from the field of

politics, has, in the past, simply made them the first to suffer from government pay policies. Making wage rises consequent on other workers' pay encourages the false idea that there can be such a thing as a 'fair wage' in a capitalist society and if, on the basis of making all wage claims parity claims, no workers challenge the employers' guidelines, real wages will decline disastrously.

Public service workers are finding in struggle that it is the collective strength of the working class which wins demands, not different sections looking over their shoulders at each other to see that nobody is getting ahead. Some group must lead.

Data workers in struggle

WHILE civil service members of SCPS push their claim, Post Office Branch members have been pursuing a 20 per cent claim on their own account.

The claim, which is for parity with the mainstream of administrative and engineering grades in the PO has been on the table for at least three years. Meanwhile people doing the same job for the same employer in the same area can have differences in wages of over £1000 a year.

The Post Office Data Processing Service has been hard hit by poor wages, 20 per cent left last year in Bootle. One disturbing trend is for more experienced programmers to leave the PO and seek work outside; once again the difference in wages is measured in thousands of pounds.

Fed up with being fobbed off, SCPS members in PODPS took limited industrial action, setting management a deadline to produce proposals. Almost all branches recorded large majorities for action - the call came from

and has been carried out by ordinary members. A clear intention was also expressed to step up action and paralyse key computing centres if there should be no response or no possibility of negotiating on the reply. The action produced the desired result in that the PO were forced into making some sort of reply - they responded with proposals for the complete restructuring of all grades, which would be financially acceptable to SCPS members.

The PO document also has two other objectives: to delay settlement and to set their workers at each other's throats. It insists that before anyone gets any money all unions must agree on the complete set of proposals. Not what was wanted! The SCPS is not quarrelling with any other union, only with management. Nor is a further delay acceptable, the claim has been waiting too long already. The members' unity and strength have forced management to meet one deadline; now they must be given another to pay up.

Bank opening fight

MEMBERS of the National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE) have begun action against Saturday opening, among other things. Banks, including Barclays, National Westminster, and Midland are following Lloyds example to open at weekends in order to increase their profits, while not even offering overtime to the workers. In other words, the employees are to have even less free time in a job that is demanding enough as it is.

NUBE stresses that it is opposed to Saturday openings. Its members have grown in strength and numbers, and are taking a very principled stand against their employers. Lloyds NUBE members in Bristol have already picketed their banks over Saturday working and the introduction of new machinery which is designed to create further unemployment.

The battle lines are drawn, even in this industry - the 'safe' of capitalists.



Exeter hospital workers on the march - 8th Feb.

Photo: Exeter Flying Post

Dirty work by Government

'DIRTY JOB' workers - made dirty by the Labour Government's disgusting attitude to their wage claims, have been asserting themselves in no uncertain way during the last few weeks in Bristol, bringing to the notice of their fellow workers just how intolerable are the conditions under which they work.

For example, the dirty job of disposing of refuse in Avon has been turned into a dirty farce by Avon County Council's ineptitude. They hedge round the problem in the comfort of their committee meetings trying to save the pennies, while Bristol's rubbish doesn't burn. The incinerator at Avonmouth is already working beyond capacity and actually broke down last summer under the weight, but the problem was only postponed, not solved, and now the incinerator workers are on strike about wages and conditions. But still the Council cannot bear the idea of actually having to spend some of the billions that have been saved nationally by Government underspending on a new incinerator costing £6-7 million, a mere drop in the ocean when it's

profit-making they're talking about. But when it's an essential service to do with public health and safety where the only 'profit' is an improved environment and cleaner cities, then the coffers are closed.

But inane suggestions flow readily in place of the cash, ideas like hiring British Rail to carry out the rubbish every day by train to a site in Buckinghamshire, a site also to be used by the Greater London Council! Oh what a county fair shall that become! It should nicely devalue some of the big estates in the county. But worse than that, the rubbish problem gets dumped at someone else's door to solve.

Perhaps instead of the bourgeoisie working out great cheap plans (no plans at all) to dispose of the nation's rubbish, we should have a contingency plan to put a final stop to their rubbish and get on with the job of sorting out these matters to suit our own needs. The men at Avonmouth incinerator know the solutions and are staying out on strike till the question of pay and conditions are sorted out.

Labour Government sup-

port grows thin while the rats grow fat.

150 workers came out at dawn last Wednesday on a lightning strike from Manor Park hospital for acute geriatrics, Bristol. They expressed their disgust at the derisory 9 per cent pay offer where many take home £36 for a 40 hour week.

"We are all loyal, but we can't live on loyalty," said their union spokesman.

Workers forced into this extreme position of having to interrupt their essential work of caring for the sick and aged in order to have to fight the Government for a decent living wage arouse only the fullest sympathy and support. Their work is nobler than the term 'dirty jobs', which only describes how successive Labour and Tory Governments have neglected their area of work.

Their fight for decent wages is a fight to maintain staffing levels at the hospitals, to attract new staff, generally to maintain the Health Service which the present Labour Government, in its cold disregard for the health, wealth and safety of the working class, seems bent on destroying.

Worker interview

Brighton Dustmen's Strike

AN INTERVIEW with a Brighton Corporation dustman - one of 500 GMWU members on strike in a pay dispute. Police have arrested 43 men on the picket lines at the refuse tip in the past fortnight.

Question. What is the dispute all about?

Answer. It's really two disputes in one - involving the national claim of £60 for a 35 hour week and also a local problem. Four men at the tip went on strike to support the national claim and us dustmen refused to cross their picket line. We offered to do essential work, clearing hospitals and gritting, but the Corporation tried to provoke us by not paying our wages for two weeks. Instead of striking we banned overtime and worked to rule. Then the Council brought in contractors to do our work. So we did go on strike.

Q. What was your reaction to the private contractors?

A. We set up a mass picket at the main refuse tip to prevent the contractors from dumping the rubbish. We asked the drivers not to cross the picket lines and they said they would get the sack if they didn't. We pointed out that their firms would be blacked in future if they did cross.

Q. What was the role of the police?

A. There have been as many police as pickets every day. They have stopped us picketing properly and prevented us sometimes from speaking to the drivers. Their main job has been to make sure the lorries get past us. Eventually we began to sit in the road so that our union leaders could speak to drivers properly. Then the police started arresting us. In one day alone last week 32 men were held for obstruction.

Q. What do you think of the Labour Government's part in all this?

A. It's clear that the Government is against the claim and it's doing all in its power to hold wages down. Although we've had support from local Labour Party councillors, their Labour Government isn't on the side of the workers. In fact, Callaghan is the best Tory we've had for a long time.

Q. The press has been saying the ratepayers are suffering because of the dispute. How do you feel about that?

A. In no way do we wish to inconvenience the public. We want a settlement, and we talked last week for 14 hours non-stop to try to end the strike. But the Corporation didn't budge an inch. Our argument is with them, not the public. After all, my weekly average take-home pay is £43, including all bonuses. That's to keep me, my wife and three kids.

Q. How do you see the dispute going in the next week or so?

A. Well, it isn't just about money - it's about defending our union. This is an attempt to break the trades union movement. We feel more determined and united than ever.

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