

# THE WORKER



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## GOVERNMENT AGAINST WORKERS



The army, now being offered a 14% rise, is mainly used as a reserve body of strike breakers, like the troops above during the firemen's strike.

### Engineering workers need fighting policy

ON MAY DAY at Worthing the 52 delegates of the AUEW National Committee will be meeting to consider over 500 resolutions from the 26 divisions of the Engineering section - resolutions proposed by members from all over Britain and Ireland. The National Committee will, in the course of the week, determine the policy of the AUEW for 1978.

The questions of wages, hours of work, differentials, retirement age and holidays will receive due attention and commit the union to the struggle these entail.

Of the Engineering section's 26 divisions, 18 have tabled resolutions condemning this Government or any other for laying down guidelines for the limitation of wage claims and

some of these resolutions could only lead to direct confrontation with the Government if it tries to apply some new upper limit - like the 7 per cent already being talked about.

One resolution instructs the union to resist "all forms of restrictions on any future wage negotiations" while another calls upon the union "to support any members involved in industrial action as a result of the Government's imposition of limits on wage claims". Another resolution calls on the AUEW to support any other trade union which becomes involved in a dispute through opposition to wage restraint.

Many resolutions point out the disaster of cuts in social services and call for an end

to the destruction of our schools, colleges and hospitals. Education and training of apprentices will be the subject of debate and no doubt delegates will not accept the notion that shorter training will do justice to our youth. Amalgamation of the 4 sections of the AUEW - so long delayed by National Committee - must now receive approval if delegates are not to wash their hands of that question.

Resolutions opposing the EEC are important for they portend a battle still brewing - that British workers will not brook outside interference. Similarly the arguments for the closure of US bases and against the Neutron bomb are

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A SECRET report to Margaret Thatcher on the likelihood of the defeat of a Tory Government in a confrontation with the unions has become public. Callaghan has used the occasion to give the Tories a lesson in how to handle the unions. "It is fair to say that on the whole the Conservative Party tends in their dealings with the trade unions to be aggressive when they should be accommodating and to be timid when they should be bold".

He talks as if he was a 'wise' colonial administrator who has learned how to deal with 'ignorant natives' and is prepared to share this expertise with a fellow capitalist party.

IN A week in which the workings of the Official Secrets Act were called into question by the "Colonel B" case, the real revelation was the secret report to Margaret Thatcher which appeared in the TIMES.

Lord Carrington had been instructed to enquire into the consequences of an all-out confrontation between a Tory Government and the unions, such as Heath's with the miners, and was assured that the findings of his exercise, so sensitive was the issue, "would never become known". His conclusion, which to the embarrassment of the Tories is now common knowledge, was that a Conservative confrontation policy would be destroyed by certain unions "powerful and determined enough to beat the Government."

It was Callaghan who, when the secret document became known, rushed in to reassure capitalism that the workers need not be victorious in a confrontation situation if one knew how to handle them. It is just a question of knowing "when to be accommodating

and when to be aggressive." It is knowing when to try and bribe and cajole them with a phoney social contract and when to send in the troops to break a strike as was done with the firemen.

When the Labour Government is so openly contemptuous of the unions, it is incredible that loyalty to it could still be expressed at the Scottish TUC by certain trade unionists. Indeed, in connection with the leak of the Tory inquest into confrontation with the unions a civil service mandarin is reported as having advised Lord Carrington that "the Conservatives do not hold the trade union movement in anything like the same contempt as Labour Ministers."

Any "special relation" between the unions and Labour is about as good for British workers as the "special relation" between Britain and the U.S.

### Anti-Nazis on the march

THE enemy of the working class is capitalism and capitalism will strive to divide our class at all costs. Racism is such a tactic. Divide the class and exploit more effectively. The working class will not be divided. Four days before the local elections the working class will demonstrate opposition to such a tactic. Black, white, students, school children, employed and unemployed trade unionists and the labour movement are to hold a "Carnival against the Nazis" and show that such tactics of the ruling class and their agents will not work.

The Rally starts from Trafalgar Square at 11.00 am on Sunday April 30th.

### Strong line by the NUJ

IN an overwhelming affirmation of the sovereignty and autonomy of their union, delegates to the National Union of Journalists policy-making conference at Whitley Bay last week stated their commitment to free collective bargaining and rejection of all attempts by outside bodies (including the TUC) to impose policies or guidelines on the membership.

Defence of and improvement of the union's democratic decision-making process permeated many of the debates - and in a conference (cont. on page 4)

'One world, two classes', Mayday meetings in Britain - see page 4.

## HISTORIC NOTES

### The Merthyr Riots, 1831

FOR A brief period in the summer of 1831 the workers of Merthyr took control of their town. Incensed by privation, disease, degradation and miserably wage rates the people, with miners in the vanguard, rose against the authorities. The uprising was triggered off by a substantial reduction in the wage rate but demands for voting rights, Parliamentary reform, and the ending of the truck system were also features. 'Bara neu waed!' 'Bread or blood!' is said to have been the rallying call.

The first target of the people was the Court of Requests. This was an institution which gave bailiffs the orders to seize workers' personal belongings which were auctioned to repay debts. The building was ransacked and records were burnt. Infuriated, the magistrates summoned troops from Brecon. The soldiers marched through the town and occupied the Castle Inn.

Townpeople rallied to this point and the troops were completely surrounded. So afraid were the mine and iron works owners at this massive show of strength by workers that they offered to concede some of the demands, but the soldiers panicked and a worker was killed. It was then that the crowd attacked and attempted to seize

the arms of the soldiers.

Twenty were killed. Shot or bayoneted to death. Seventy were wounded.

Cavalry reinforcements were sent to the aid of the trapped infantry. The following day the people of Merthyr captured ammunition supplies which were being transported from Brecon. The same day troops from Swansea were overpowered and their arms taken before they could enter the town.

News of the uprising spread to all parts of South Wales and thousands travelled to Merthyr to support the people.

The authorities, terrified that towns in other parts of Britain would rise, completely surrounded Merthyr with a huge force. They were prepared to slaughter every man, woman and child occupying the town.

The people faltered. They became divided. Some were prepared to accept the terms the "iron masters" had offered on wages. Others wished to stand out until guarantees were given to end the truck system and the insanitary living conditions in the town. There were those who wanted voting rights granted before they would surrender.

On Monday June 6th morale had become so low that the people began to disperse. The uprising had ended.

The troops moved in and dragged over twenty of the leaders to Cardiff prison. Two, Richard Lewis (better known as Dic Penderyn) and Lewis Lewis, were tried and sentenced to death. Lewis Lewis was reprieved but Dic Penderyn was hanged at Cardiff. So high were feelings in Merthyr at the unjust trial and the judge that the authorities would not allow Penderyn to be buried at Merthyr in case it should lead to further unrest. He was interred at Aberafan, many miles from Merthyr.

With hindsight we can see how the uprising in Merthyr in 1831 ended as it did. The organisation of workers was poor. Trade unions were then at an embryo stage. They did not have the advantage of the revolutionary theory of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Above all there was not a party, a revolutionary party, to organise the workers of Merthyr nor to ensure that the spark generated by the Welsh, Irish and English workers of the town would set the whole of Britain alight.

Today things are different. British workers have a revolutionary party, the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). We are striving to educate and organise the working class. The day dawns when the lessons learnt from Merthyr and similar uprisings are put into practice and workers will seize control not only of towns but of the whole of Britain.

### VW's first strike

NEARLY 90 per cent of the workers at Volkswagen's West German plants voted for a strike to achieve their demand for an 8 per cent pay rise. The workers rejected the management offer of 5 per cent and if they go ahead with the strike it would be for the first time in 40 years. Administration workers are also being called on to decide on strike action. So much for the tame workforce the US wanted to establish in Germany after the war.

## Slicing jobs at Spillers

THE dangers of accepting social-democratic legislation as protection against the crises of the capitalist system have been exposed yet again by the precipitate closure of 23 bakeries operated by Spillers (Wonderloaf).

7,986 workers are to be made redundant. They first heard of this on Friday, 7th April, the very same day that Roy Hattersley, Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, wrote to Michael Vernon, Chairman of Spillers, confirming government clearance. The government's own Employment Protection Act which is supposed to give 90 days notice of significant redundancies was "apparently breached"

The 13 remaining bakeries have already been sold to Rank Hovis McDougall (Mothers Pride) and Associated British Foods (Sunblest). In a deal reminiscent of serfs transferred between feudal land barons, 5000 workers awoke to find themselves working for someone else. Yet the two giant combines have guaranteed operating these bakeries for one year only. Such an over-concentration of production might appear to be another breach of legislation, yet Mr Hattersley stated that the deal "is not being referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission... despite the many unsatisfactory features". In fact the deal was the result of secret consultations with the Monopolies and Mergers Panel, the Office of Fair Trading, Roy Hattersley's Department, and the Bank of England.

## THE WEEK

AFTER "reluctantly accepting" a 9.2 per cent pay offer the ILEA School Keepers Branch of NUPE have decided to leave the phoney negotiating machinery for School Keepers in the ILEA and demand separate negotiations with the Education Authority. If the authority rejects this the branch intends to take industrial action in May.

CLOSER contacts may be encouraged between the Labour Party and the Eurocommunist Parties. On 18th April the Labour Party discussed closer links with the Italian, French and Spanish parties whose fawning attitude to NATO, the EEC and the bourgeoisie is well known. Predictably, not in the running for more cooperation are Korea, Laos and Albania.

THE Shah of Iran who intends to visit Britain soon is having more troubles at home. According to THE OBSERVER "the scale and persistence of the disturbances which have racked Iranian cities in the past three months bear comparison only with the savagely repressed Tehran riots of 1963."

The one-man autocracy is not welcome to visit this country.

IN Lebanon, there are no fewer than 10 foreign armies installed, some belligerents, some posing for the moment as "peacemakers!"

TEACHERS at Further and Higher Education Colleges are unhappy about the offer of 9.6 per cent (with minor structural changes) by the management. Having agreed to await the outcome of the school teachers' claim they have shown their unwillingness to fight independently, and hence the insulting offer. NATPHE cannot keep running on the tracks of the NUT where salary negotiations are concerned.

ACCORDING to Sir Ashley Bramall, described as "leader" of the ILEA, "We don't want children to grasp new mathematical concepts. We just want them to be able to go into a shop and be sure they are getting the right change."

Does this man really hold a responsible position in education?

SOMETIMES even government departments can play a positive role in the fight to save the country from decline. In reaction to a proposed cut of £2.5m in their budget the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Area Health Authority have refused to implement it. The AHA has instructed its officers "to continue at a level which will not result in reductions in services to the patient or a reduction in staff establishment levels." One of the immediate effects of this decision will be the employment of 50 more nurses.



Conditions in the early days of coal mining

## Germans say that 'The terrorists are in Bonn'

IN MID-OCTOBER 1977, amidst the events of the Mogadishu hijacking, the slaying of Hans Schleyer, industrialist and ex-nazi chief of Prague, and the assassination in Stammheim prison of the terrorists - Roter Morgen, newspaper of the Communist Party of Germany (Marxist-Leninist) was banned for publishing a front page headline - THE TERRORISTS ARE IN BONN.

Since that time repression in West Germany has, if anything, increased. To achieve some clarity on the situation in West Germany it must first be realised that contrary to the way the British press portrays the situation, Germany is not threatened by terrorists and anarchists: the real battle is between the German working class and capitalism. The bogey of terrorism is used to intimidate the German people. Armed police and vehicle stop-checks are now regular sights on the streets.

Such excuses are used by the Government to ban all opposition to them within the trade unions and to operate the notorious 'berufsverbot' which prevents any progressive people from holding civil service or teaching posts.

In the last week, Apel, the defence minister, has called for a fifteen per cent increase in 'fighting troops' in an army

which already after the unrest of 1968/9 has the constitutional 'right' to intervene in the country in the event of further unrest. Such a call, coming at this time, is no surprise as the real contradictions in West Germany society (not those conjured up in the press) sharpen.

Unemployment is now over the million mark despite the resurgence of West German capitalism, and is used, unsuccessfully, to try to blunt the growing opposition to the attacks on living standards and attempts at wage cutting.

The last month has seen strikes by postmen for higher wages, and by thousands of steel workers against unemployment and the closing of plants. Perhaps the most significant struggle has been the prolonged strike by over 100,000 printers against the introduction of new machinery which would result in massive redundancies. None of the major newspapers were printed for a week and a nationwide-employers lock-out was largely unsuccessful. In the countryside there is an established opposition to EEC practices and restrictions particularly amongst the dairy farmers and peasants who are being pushed off their land by larger farms. Recently in the Rhineland small farmers forced the shortening of NATO exercises by turning their

tractors against the tanks which were destroying their crops. In November and January there were nationwide strikes by students against "police universities" and against the ban on political debate within their union. These struggles for job security, for education and against political repression provide, not just a picture of growing widespread opposition but of struggles directed against the essence of West German capitalism.

The struggle for democracy for the German nation is not just restricted to Western Germany alone - the uniting of both East and West is an issue of major importance confronting the German working class.

The artificial division of Germany is itself a product of imperialism. Germany is certainly not the first country to be occupied by more than one imperialist country. Berlin Walls and other excuses aside, the division which really divides Germany, both East and West, is that between exploiter and exploited. East Germany and the Honecker regime are having increasing difficulty in hiding behind their 'socialist mask'. The increasing East German trade debt to America, the EEC and Russia is a product of a capitalist society not an independent socialist one. The across-the-board price and rent

increases at the end of 1977, the distortion of culture, the cut-throat competitiveness in sport, and the continual failings of GDR agriculture to grow, let alone allow the country to be self-sufficient over the years are equally reflections of capitalism.

In reality in East Germany, there is a growing struggle between the working class and a bureaucratic bourgeoisie. In Britain the bourgeois press continues to attack East Germany as an excuse to attack communism, whilst the same bourgeoisie in the West is more than willing to take part extensively in the exploitation of the East German working class through jointly-owned and managed enterprises where regimentation of the workforce is as strict as it is in West Germany. Before the German people, despite the unequal development between the two sections and whilst their struggles might appear unrelated, there exists numerous important bonds. 1975 saw East German workers coming forward to join the KPD (M-L) making it a truly national party. Thus there is a real recognition of these common bonds and the embryo of a united struggle against capitalism - against the EEC and COMECON, against the NATO and WARSAW pact occupations, against the bourgeoisies East and West.

# EDITORIAL

EVER since the War successive British governments have stressed as the key-stone of British foreign policy the "special relation" with the US. This relation has consisted mainly of the special position the US has enjoyed in sabotaging British developments like the first jet airliner which ought to have been the prototype for the world's air passenger service or, as most lately, using its influence on other countries and sharp advertising practices to get its own landing system adopted by the world's airports over a better British system - with the consequence of thousands of jobs going to the US which could have helped the unemployment situation here.

The carefully fostered campaign in the US against the Concorde delayed its commercial viability till it was past the time when a second generation supersonic airliner, solving the noise and pay-load problems, could have been produced. At the same time British Airways is proposing to buy Boeing and further erode the whole British aerospace industry. This is in line with the tendency of British capital to flee from this country where investment in industry is so desperately needed to cross the Atlantic for investment in US industry in which Britain is the world's largest investor!

It is no use inveighing against the Americans in all this. It is the nature of capitalism, not only in the US but in Britain also. Recently we have been told, as if we did not know, about the enormous slush funds, the bribery on a huge scale, that Lockheeds and the other multi-national companies go in for. Capitalism has changed neither its morality nor its practices since the days when robber barons hired goons to terrorise farmers off their land or to smash incipient unions. If we do not like that sort of thing, we have to get rid of capitalism. It is utterly useless to ask capitalism to be nicer and say 'please'.

## Self-reliance

If Britain took the decision to develop self-reliantly is there any doubt that our working class could not only supply all our own needs but also produce goods of the highest quality and precision for others? Albania, much smaller than Britain, with a much lower proportion of arable land and a working class which, in 1939, numbered only about a hundred thousand, has developed on the basis of complete self-reliance. And that same self-reliance which has enabled the Albanian people to develop their own industry and agriculture without interference from any quarter is also the basis of their national security and the fact that no country in the world is less likely to become involved in war.

But of course the Albanians could do this because of their revolution. When they threw out the Italian fascists and the German nazis they threw out capitalism with them.

There is nothing to keep Britain from developing on the basis of self-reliance, eschewing all the pacts and treaties and "special relationships" which both make us the victims of the world crisis of capitalism and threaten to involve us in capitalist wars. But we will have to choose socialism first.

# UN the arm of imperialism in Lebanon

THANKS to the UN, the Israeli government is consolidating its hold over its newly-occupied territories in the Lebanon. The promised 4000 UN troops are not enough, and the Zionists are to press for 6000. There will be no Israeli withdrawal other than token until the level of imperialist intervention is up to the level Zionism requires. The UN force will then be capable of defending the sizeable strip of southern Lebanon to which the Israeli government is laying permanent claim.

From Korea to the Congo UN 'peace-keeping' has meant the tragedy of war and foreign

intervention, and the Middle East is no different. Their commander, Ghanan Emmanuel Erskine, Sandhurst trained, is reported as saying that the people of the area have become all too used to "observers". What a euphemism for Zionist overseers shooting and bombing their way into Lebanon! Among the UN forces are 1000 French paratroopers, veterans of the colonial wars against the people of Algeria and Vietnam. Many of the rest of the force will be left-overs from other imperialist wars.

The UN will maintain not peace but a state of almost permanent war. Lebanese right-

# People oppose N-bomb, only barbarians want it

"PRESIDENT Carter announced his decision to defer production of neutron bombs. It has evoked strong reactions both in the United States and Western Europe: people in the military and political circles as well as public opinion have shown their opposition and discontent." This was printed in PEKING REVIEW April 14, 1978.

Besides the barbaric inhumanity of this statement about a weapon that is to destroy only people, particularly people in densely populated Europe, the lack of the most elementary knowledge of military strategy is incredible.

First, the bomb is useless against tanks. A tank could be protected from it by a plastic covering 1/2 inch thick. As it is a very "dirty" bomb however, it would kill the driver of the tank - but not immediately and a berserk tank driver in an unharmed tank could do quite a bit of damage to the enemy. This kind of warfare assumes, as the Nazis did, that men are more easily replaced than tanks.

Secondly, to what public opinion is the writer in PEKING REVIEW referring? Politicians like Schmidt or US General Haig-remember his namesake drowned a British army in the mud of Flanders in the 1914-18 War because he was too arrogant to take the advice of geographers. Such people may want the neutron bomb, but no human beings do. Indeed, no human beings in Europe would tolerate the thought of a third world war. It is interesting that significant numbers of professional soldiers, officers and men, wish to leave the British army. Is it entirely a question of pay? In West

Germany it is becoming more and more difficult to conscript their young men into the forces.

Neutron bombs would be of use only in the cities of Europe. They could not be used effectively against armoured vehicles or in mountains, in heavily wooded areas or extensive open spaces: so the targets would be the children, the women and the old in the big cities. Public opinion was outraged when it was discovered that mustard gas was being used by both sides in the First War; the anger was greater when it was discovered that Britain and the USA were conducting cultures of plague, anthrax and cholera after the Second War. Public opinion stopped that, or at least made the governments concerned pretend to stop. Are we, the people, less civilised now? Are we to allow two thousand years of struggle and culture to be destroyed?

Whatever his true motives, Carter had at least the sense of self preservation to defer. He might have lost the Presidency. Even NATO is worried about the opinions of the recipients of this great blessing! Are we to allow Moloch to reign?

# Nurses fight hospital cuts

Women in East London expecting normal delivery of any but their first baby are being turned away from the Whipps Cross Hospital and told they must have their children at home. No wonder, when the nearby Connaught Hospital and the maternity unit of the Wanstead Hospital have been closed by the cuts, and Plaistow Maternity Hospital is under threat, defended by a brave staff.

The crisis does not end outside the doors of Whipps Cross. The nursing staff in the maternity unit have declared the service unsafe because of shortage of staff, caused by the hospital cuts, and have threatened to cut down on admissions if staffing is not improved.

The hospital staff who are prepared to take action, and those who support them are defending the safety and indeed the lives of mothers and children in East London and joining the growing list of health service workers defending their jobs and our service. The health service is the property of the working class, and it is the task of all of us to defend it.



Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu celebrating May Day with the Albanian people.

# Albanian Party sends fraternal greetings

April 11

Dear Comrades,

Your Party celebrates its tenth anniversary - a happy day not only for British Marxist-Leninists but all who aspire and fight for socialism and communism join you in this celebration. On behalf of all Albanian communists and working class warm fraternal revolutionary greetings and wishes.

It is a great pleasure that militant friendship and fraternal internationalist ties between our parties have developed and strengthened in compliance with Marxism-Leninism and a proletarian internationalist spirit. Our common struggle against US-led imperialism, Soviet social imperialism and all reactionaries will achieve new victories. Marxism-Leninism will be victorious over all enemies, revisionists of various hues, Titoite, Eurocommunist and other trends. In common struggle we are determined further to strengthen our unity, unity with all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties of the world.

Long live the CPB(ML). Glory to the all conquering doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania.

# Albania explodes myth

RECENTLY Callaghan disgraced himself and the whole British nation in the eyes of the world by arguing for the deployment of the neutron bomb in Europe. It was needed he said, because the Russians have weapons of similar horror, and it is necessary to maintain the balance of power.

Compare this to the attitude of Albania, as set out in a speech by Enver Hoxha. "The history of Europe has proved that the 'balance of forces' attitude among the big powers has always been a weapon in the hands of exploiting classes to suppress the national liberation and revolutionary movement.

Intervention up to the present has always been the weapon of maintaining the balance, to restore it when it is upset or to guard against its being upset.

"Peace and international security in Europe and in the world are not achieved through the establishment of 'harmony' or 'balance' between the super-powers, but through the struggle against imperialist pressures and intervention, through efforts for the liberation of the peoples, through the strengthening of national independence."

Albania is the only country in Europe free from the clutches of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

wing Christians welcome the French paratroops as "their" friends in the strife with Muslims. Bedouin sheiks are found who support Begin's aggression. 30,000 troops (mainly Syrian) occupy Lebanon, and come to terms with the UN about what territory is "theirs". Even some of the leaders of the Palestinians who put up such a strong resistance to Israeli aggression now agree to respect the UN presence! And yet it is obvious that the UN troops who passively 'observe' the continued occupation of Israeli forces are not peace-keeping!

Rather than be cannon-fodder for the mercenary interests of their rulers, the 30,000 Israelis demonstrating against their government's warmongering have shown the way. Nor can the Lebanese people have any loyalty for their rulers who tolerate both the UN and the Syrians who shell Beirut as the Israelis bombed it. All the forces of reaction are united in support of the UN imperialists whose presence on foreign soil is the surest guarantee of further bloodshed. Out with the UN occupiers!

Only the people themselves can achieve their own liberation. Only the united efforts of the Palestinian people, of the people of the Lebanon and other Arab states attacked by Zionism, and not least the working people of Israel, who daily realise the fatal error of Zionism; only they can sweep imperialism from the Middle East - once and for all.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN (ML)

# MAYDAY MEETINGS

## ONE WORLD - TWO CLASSES



### WORKERS THROW OFF YOUR CHAINS!



<b>LONDON -</b>	<b>May 1</b>	Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1.	7.30pm
<b>LIVERPOOL -</b>	<b>May 2</b>	AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant.	7.30pm
<b>LEEDS -</b>	<b>April 30</b>	Swartmore Educational Centre, Woodhouse Square.	3.00pm
<b>BIRMINGHAM -</b>	<b>April 29</b>	Dr Johnson House, Bull Street.	7.30pm
<b>BRISTOL -</b>	<b>May 1</b>	Swan Hotel, Stokes Croft.	7.30pm

### Leeds busmen fight service cuts with strike action

SINCE 2.00 am on Sunday 16th April all 1600 busmen of the City of Leeds have been on strike against proposed new schedules and cuts in services to the public. Management have broken agreed procedures of negotiation, ignored attempts by the men's union the T&GWU, who have bent over backward in attempts to continue negotiations, and have decided to implement the their new schedules which mean reduction of certain runs in the city, especially in the western area. A ballot of the busmen resulted in a 97 per cent vote in favour of strike action. This was a significant change of heart from similar meetings in the past when cuts have been accepted as being 'inevitable'.

Since 1974, when local transport was reorganised as part of the local government shake-up, cuts in services have become a regular yearly event coupled with massive increases in fares.



### Bookshops



**Belman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NW 5**  
**Basildon bookstall Tues Fri Sat Marketplace**  
**Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds**  
**Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol**  
**Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton**  
**Liverpool bookstall**      **Every Saturday at Paddies Market**  
**Great Homer Street, Liverpool**

### Farm-workers to concentrate on wages

THE dominant issue at past Biennial Conferences of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers has been that of tied cottages. However this matter has largely been resolved, leaving delegates to this year's conference at Southport, starting on 6th May, to concentrate on the more fundamental issue of wages.

Motions on wages will occupy much of the conference, calling for substantial increases on the minimum wage, rejecting any further

wage restraint and with it the philosophy that low paid workers would benefit by sacrificing traditional bargaining rights. Furthermore other motions show a determination to back up a wages campaign, with calls for action committees and strike funds to be set up. Another major issue concerns the national negotiating body for farmworkers - the Agriculture Wages Board, with its "independent" members appointed by the government. Motions before conference

call for the abolition of the AWB and the setting up of a body in which the NUAAW negotiate directly with the National Farmers Union.

The majority of motions deal with wages and conditions; however a host of other matters are dealt with including condemnation of the EEC and the adverse effects of the Common Agricultural Policy on British Agriculture. Concern is also shown about land use in the countryside and the continuing decline of vital rural services such as health, education and transport.

The fact that farmworkers care about agriculture and the rural environment reflects that they are a dedicated and responsible workforce, but the only effective way of saving their livelihood and living standards is to base their union's policy around a struggle for increased wages and to utilise the industrial strength they surely have to achieve this aim.

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### Engineers fighting policy

essentially a question of sovereignty for us in Britain. Unemployment and continued destruction of basic industries are to be debated and should not be considered as temporary effects of market forces. Once we understand the deliberate intention behind them in the life and death class struggle we can advance.

On the eve of this National Committee meeting the Exec-

## READERS LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I have been reading your recent articles on the destruction of the Health Service with interest.

The question of nurses wages is a part of this.

It is now over four years since nurses last went into struggle over a demand for a decent wage. Since then we have been meekly following on, accepting the social contract as a sort of natural calamity, even welcoming it. Recently we adopted a "wait and see policy", and watched the ancillary workers to see how they fared against the employer. The result was that the staff side of the Nurses and Midwives Council (Whitley) produced a claim that matched that of the ancillaries. It contained an equally large "shopping list" of claims and a vague demand for a "substantial wage rise." Management then replied with an offer that could not be described as "substantial" by any stretch of the imagination. The offer consisted of 10 per cent of our 1975 basic wage, plus a few minor concessions which did not offset the insult to our dignity that the whole package represents. Indeed it has now become "traditional" for management to include in their offer the latest rise in accommodation rents for nurses. Thus, for anyone living in hospital accommodation you might as well close your wallets because small change is all you will get.

This offer was accepted

nationally by COHSE on April 11th. NUPE rejected the offer in words, merely calling for a redistribution of the miserable sum of money the management had offered. Nurses in NUPE Bedford had met and rejected the offer, nurses in COHSE from Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge had done likewise. All branches should have overwhelmingly rejected the offer, not because it is less than 10 per cent but because its not enough.

All nurses are reluctant to take industrial action, but we must gear ourselves to it. If we don't, there is only worse to come, and the whole quality of the health service we provide will deteriorate.

Our trade union conference are coming up soon and already there are many motions condemning the government pay limit. The policy of NUPE and COHSE (the main nursing unions) must emerge in total opposition to any such wage restraint. Also we have to discuss this shackle we call Whitley, and free ourselves from the idea that we are bound to bargain annually in this way. Whitley is a great convenience for the government in implementing their pay policy. We must either use it for ourselves or end it. Similarly we have to prepare for combat against the employers "cash limits" which are the behind-doors sanction we can expect. We have eaten dirt long enough. Yours fraternally  
A Bradford Nurse.

### Journalists conference (continued)

which displayed strong unity on all the central issues, journalists did not fail to take up the many challenges posed.

One of the most important issues facing journalists is the introduction of new technology. The debate on this followed a detailed report on the implications for journalists and print workers alike. Conference made an explicit commitment against the sale of jobs and for a policy of working for agreements on demarcation between journalistic and print work, and on the conditions of introducing new technology - including wages, hours and many safety matters - only on an inter-union basis. 'New technology only on workers own terms' was the call - a decision long overdue.

Attempts to use the secret ballot rather than the procedures of conference to alter policy on the vital issue of the post-entry closed shop were roundly defeated. Rejecting spurious claims to the superior democracy of the ballot rather than debate and decision at chapel, branch and conference level - there was

nevertheless a recognition of the need for a widespread debate throughout all levels of the union to review the structure and how it works, and achieve maximum participation in the affairs of the union at all levels.

In fine style the conference pledged unanimous support to the two journalists currently facing prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts, and while it never lost sight of the seriousness of the issue, moves by the courts to discipline the union over publication of the name of the no-longer mysterious prosecution witness 'Colonel B' - aptly nick-named Colonel Bogey, were rebutted with much humour and wit.

The test is now whether the host of policies newly established or reaffirmed by the Conference - on wages, technology, the fight for the post-entry closed shop, defence of several aspects of the union's Code of Conduct and a rejection of racism in the media - how these and many others are to be implemented by the membership. It is here that the analysis of structure and democracy in the union will assume a vital importance in the year to come.

Delegates at the conference rose to the challenges they faced. It remains for the membership to take up the issues with equal clarity and determination.

### Serves him right

A LATE train held up proceedings in a House of Commons committee because it delayed the arrival of the committee chairman. The committee was discussing... the Transport Bill.

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