

THE WORKER



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END WAGE SLAVERY

TUC'77 : one step forward, one step back

HAVING rejected the social contract the TUC affiliated unions are displaying indecent eagerness to get back to the very situation out of which the social contract was born. Our failure to confront honestly the mistaken ideology that accepted the social contract such a short while ago will only confound us and bring about a social contract with another name, fascism.

Short term, immediate demands for improvements in wages and conditions are not enough. For without a long term strategy, without the aim of challenging capitalism, without the conscious effort to destroy the system of exploitation, improvements will prove to be illusory.

The ruling class strategy is clear. Ours sadly lags behind. We are called upon to involve ourselves in an orgy of percentages, bonuses, productivity deals and so on - an orgy not least welcomed and encouraged by the Government itself through its 10 per cent guidelines. This is the tune every worker is enticed to dance to. It is not so much a limit on wage rises as a limit on ideological advance.

Throw away all restraint material and ideological and embrace our heritage, Marxism-Leninism, the philosophy of revolution and social progress. Without it we remain slaves in the most developed system of slavery throughout history, wage slavery.

In trying to evaluate this year's annual Trade Union Congress at Blackpool we have to be clear about what the TUC is.

As a forum of organised workers it is a conference where lines of class struggle relevant to a particular period can be put forward for general discussion and approval. Such was last year's resolution on the total unacceptability of the current level of unemployment. Such is this year's rejection of the social contract in favour of an "immediate return to free collective bargaining at the end of the second stage of the social contract."

It is a clearing house for information about where the various unions have got to in their understanding of and willingness to act on the real interests of their members.

It is also an assemblage of trade unionists who can be addressed by Callaghan and praised for doing what they should never have agreed to, told that they were responsible for inflation and by their restraint have enabled him "to report considerable progress on that front" and receive a standing ovation for lying to them and trying to cajole them into accepting yet another round of wage cuts!

Murray, after the majority of 2,786,000 in support of the reso-

lution for a return to free collective bargaining, told Congress that unions could get on with it - depending on "the profitability of the company your members work in."

Ay there's the rub, and that is why the resolution says that an orderly return to free collective bargaining requires Government; action to reflate the economy, to reduce unemployment and allow living standards to rise again. So, in fact, we will return to free collective bargaining if the capitalist government will let us.

The vote on continuing in the Common Market showed that many who have demanded import controls to protect their particular industry are willing to vote to stay in the EEC. This is exactly like being willing to accept the social contract because you think you can find ways of getting around it yourself.

The TUC is not, of course, a governing body which can formulate an overall policy incumbent on its affiliates. It must not be thought of as some kind of labour court of appeal to which union members can go over the heads of their own union to get their union's policies reversed, altered or made more or less progressive by a general vote. Struggles over the line of a union have to be fought out in that union and not anywhere else. General votes at the TUC do not



TUC Annual Conference, Blackpool, 1977. Picture by Press Association.

lay down lines of action workers are obliged to follow nor bring any pressure to bear on the employing class. They are like taking the temperature of the labour movement and, therefore, making them seem more or less progressive than they are does not make the labour movement more or less healthy.

It is on this basis that one must consider the question of the engineers and the TUC vote on the 12 month rule. The Executive Council could not allow a general vote to be used to bypass, short-circuit or even anticipate a decision on this issue taken by the democratically elected policy-making body of the Union, the National Committee. Since the 12-month rule is left over from an earlier agreement and since its abrogation could result in divisive pay anomalies it has to be dealt with specifically. At a re-called meeting of the National Committee in mid-November this question will be properly considered in the context of the next engineering industry pay claim, and meanwhile it could only weaken the democratic structure of the Union to delegate a decision to any other body.

Some of those yelling most loudly for the AUEW to set aside

its own democratic procedure and register a meaningless vote against the 12-month rule were the pseudo-leftists and Trotskyists who think it is ever so revolutionary to destroy trade unions and the very opportunists who only a few months earlier had been the staunchest supporters of the social contract.

Reg Birch speaking as a member of the AUEW Executive at the time of the National Committee's deliberations on the social contract which they rejected by a vote of 50 to 2 said to them: "Either you believe in autonomy, either you believe you are a union, and that's why you've got a card to hold up and vote, or you don't. But don't ask anyone else if you can do something if you're in the AUEW. Don't go and ask Jenkins

or Gill or Gormley or Murray or Jack Jones what this Union wants to do. That's what you're here for now: you must say. If you do stand up and say 'we want a social contract', I'll settle for it."

Strong words but based on the revolutionary understanding that at this stage of working class struggle we have no other organisations for defence or attack but our unions. When we say 'seize the assets', we mean that we have to take democratic control of our unions and make them the fighting units of our class for this stage of the struggle. It is foolish and dangerous to think that there is any other body, the TUC, Parliament, the courts or anything else that we can use instead. That is what the AUEW's fight against the Industrial Relations Act was all about.

LABOUR PARTY CONF.

THE Labour Party Conference which meets in the first week in October will debate and vote on a wide range of current political issues. It will discuss problems of life under capitalism, not the real question of abolishing it.

It is no accident that the TUC precedes the Labour Party Conference, not that the policies laid down at the TUC are binding

upon the Labour Party. Indeed, the Labour Party Conference has even thrown out resolutions submitted by unions whose combined vote outweighs that of the Labour Party. This is because the number of Trade Union members affiliated to the Labour Party far outnumber individual members

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Only the proletariat and peasants of Zimbabwe can liberate their country

ANGLO-AMERICAN proposals for the future of Rhodesia have been welcomed in the bourgeois media as liberal, fair-minded and reasonable. Clearly those parties who do not rejoice in accepting them must be unreasonable people, and therefore deserve whatever wretched fate they may get. In Fleet Street's best traditions of fair play this must apply to both Smith and the Liberation forces.

It's easy to see why peoples' war is looked upon with some disfavour in Washington and Whitehall. But why this hostility to Smith, the self-styled champion of western civilisation? Like the National Front, the reactionary Smith serves as a convenient fall guy. Anything must be better than Smith, hence the opportunity to smuggle in proposals to strengthen the bourgeois rule by giving Smith the push. But not too soon. As the representative of law and order he can serve his turn for Owen who scorns him. The liberal Foreign Secretary consult-

ed Smith the hangman about his proposals—the African people did not get a look-in.

Playground

What do the Anglo-American proposals mean? They mean the maintenance in all but name, of a United Nations Force to do away with troublesome revolutionaries, as in the Congo 17 years ago. They mean a British Resident Commissioner, Lord Carver, ex-Supremo NATO land forces, will use his vast experience in fighting the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya to create such a nice corrupt, capitalists' playground in independent Zimbabwe.

Only Britain, the most experienced imperialist power in the world, could have produced these proposals. US imperialism too cocky by half and then defeated by the Vietnamese people, has neither the subtlety nor confidence to dare such intrigue by itself. As the bourgeoisie which first

made revolution against the old feudal order, and first proclaimed the 'liberties of the subject' as long as three hundred years ago, our ruling class understands the importance of fine blandishments with words of 'freedom and equality' to sugar coat the most ruthless exploitation.

Liberation

Owen aims to lure the liberation forces away from the villages and into the conference chamber where they must hand over to a "progressive" national bourgeoisie. So far the magic seems to have fallen flat. But it contains a seductive potion, the temptation to compromise principle to secure an immediate gain, against which only a clear Marxist perspective is immune. Victory to people's war, in Zimbabwe as in Vietnam, "for in finality only the peasant and proletariat can achieve liberation for it is they who are slave."

Sandfly back in India

CLASS division is deliberately ignored when any news of the so-called "third world" makes the headlines: whether political or apparently non-political events like natural disasters and epidemics. Right now the toll of lives from kala-azar, the black fever, in eastern India, is much in the news, not least because everybody thought it had been eradicated for ever. A deadly fever which attacks the spleen and liver and leads to the blackening of the skin, it used to be (like Malaria) the scourge of villagers. Carried by one variety of sandfly which breeds in moist, humid, dirty places — "microhabitats" in the technical jargon — the disease was supposed to have been eliminated with DDT spraying of the sandfly.

Indeed, so sure were the authorities, that the very production of the drug, invented by a Bengali doctor, was stopped. Now that the disease has returned in epidemic form the usual oracles of help to the western nations are being heard.

But why has the sandfly started breeding again? Why are the great majority of those dying from the lowest income group and, incidentally, those accorded the lowest status in India's caste-ridden society, the "untouchables"? Because they are the most under-nourished and have to live in the filthiest hovels; for whom there is little or nothing in the way of sanitation or medical facilities.

A recent study published by the Reserve Bank of India compares the pattern of assets in rural households between 1961 and 1971. This incidentally was the decade of 'Nehru socialism', which, far from helping the poor merely helped the rich. It found that while there had been an increase of cultivators owning land in some parts of the country, overall the conditions of life of the great majority of the peasantry and agricultural labourers had worsened. This, coupled with the highest incidence of unemployment in the world, is at the heart of the calamities which kill off thousands.

Green Revolution flops

IT'S OFFICIAL. The "Green Revolution" has failed, as it only could, to feed the hungry millions of Asia. So says the Asian Development Bank in a survey covering 13 developing countries. The special seeds do indeed produce spectacular yields, but require massive use of fertilisers, expensive irrigation and plenty of chemical protection in the form of pesticides and fungicides against disease, herbicides against the weeds that thrive on the fertiliser. The sale of the seed depends on these extras

being imported from the same source. Millions have been made out of famine. Countries find themselves dependent and at the mercy of the big corporations. Food is used as a weapon.

The survey shows that the 'per capita cereal production actually fell over the past decade'. New farming methods and technology have only led to a dramatic rise in the landless unemployed. Poverty in the countryside has increased, while an elite few profit. It is the political structure of these countries that continues

Albanian people ready to defend socialism

UNIQUE in Europe, socialist Albania is surrounded by hostile governments. As the crisis of declining capitalism intensifies, the continued existence of a country where the economy is actually developing free from the evils of inflation and unemployment creates an intolerable situation for those regimes. On the other hand, it provides a source of inspiration

for class-conscious workers throughout Europe and thus presents an even greater threat to the system of exploitation.

The Albanians say they have "two million people — two million soldiers," and this is no idle boast. They do not mean only that the whole people is armed and trained militarily. They are quite aware that the survival of their system

requires an increasingly mature level of political development of the entire population. The intense involvement of all in the recent elections testifies to this. Ideas are the powerful basis of Albanian defence. It is the thinking brain behind the gun in the hands of the Albanian people which is a fearful prospect for the enemies of socialism.



Albanian women have a full part to play in the defence of their country.

BRITAIN IN THE WORLD 1977

Communist Party of Britain
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The latest pamphlet produced by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), on the international question, is entitled "Britain in the world, 1977." It is now available, price 20p, from the Bellman Bookshop and all other Party bookshops.

the starvation, not the population growth. The myth of over-population is easily exploded. Look at China. Before the revolution there was famine somewhere every year when there were 500 million people. Now it furnishes 2300 calories per capita per day to a population of over 800 million. A system run for the benefit of the people can always feed everyone. Turn the "green revolution" into a "red revolution" and only then, under socialism, will poverty and starvation be completely eradicated from the world.

German investment

A SENIOR official of the South African racist regime has admitted that their secret agents have been trained in West Germany. "Roter Morgen", central organ of the Communist Party of Germany (Marxist-Leninist), also reports that Bonn maintains branches of its various enterprises in South Africa.

In a recent conference of the OAU, Bonn was exposed as one of the most important military supporters of the Vorster regime providing over 20 per cent of its imported arms. Efforts are made to cover up such sales as those of Milan missiles, armoured cars produced by Jung and Blohm and Voss warships.

The West German imperialists have never given up their dream of a return to southern Africa where they have already invested over four billion marks and where some 400 branches of West German firm firms are exploiting African people.

An article in "A Classe Operaria", central organ of the Communist Party of Brazil, describes the aid of the so-called 'second' world for the so-called 'third' world as a fraud. "Can the nuclear agreement between Federal Germany and the Brazilian dictatorship be regarded as help to the people of Brazil in gaining their true independence? Western Germany is now one of the biggest investors in Brazil, second only to the US and the aim of these investments is exactly the same as the aim of US investment — the merciless exploitation of the Brazilian workers and people."

Just as in Portugal and Spain, Western Germany provided open financial assistance to the so-called moderate forces for use against the left, so in many parts of Latin America it is helping to support and organise social democratic movement as a counter weight to revolutionary forces.

EDITORIAL

REVOLUTION : THE GREAT DIVIDE

INDIA and China were very similar countries at the end of World War II. Both for over a century had been the prey of imperialist aggression and exploitation, both were relatively unindustrialised and miserably poor, both were vastly overpopulated in terms of their economic development and their peoples were subject to successive natural and man-made disasters in which millions perished.

Today China feeds, clothes, houses and keeps in good health a population almost one-fifth of the world's total. In India there is the same poverty, the same chronic under-nourishment, the same suffering and dying from cold and starvation as before.

India has had massive 'aid' from all of the imperialist countries and such technological developments as the 'green revolution' and they have made no difference to India's miserable millions. China has had a real working class revolution, a fundamental change in the relations of production, and the people of China not only enjoy material comfort but in terms of stable prices, no unemployment and a steadily rising standard of living they are even better off than the people in the so-called 'prosperous' capitalist countries.

Albania is a tiny country with a population of only about two and a half million. It has great strategic importance and considerable mineral wealth and has been described as a "tempting morsel for any imperialist power". After liberating itself from fascist occupation Albania has been looked at greedily by Britain, the US, by Yugoslavia and the revisionist Soviet Union: but Albania remains completely independent and free from any of the wars which the imperialists have provoked all around it.

This has not been achieved by joining one imperialist power against another. At the time of Albania's greatest danger from the Soviet Union Enver Hoxha said: "imperialism, particularly US imperialism, has changed neither its skin nor its nature. It is aggressive. It will be aggressive while even a single tooth remains in its mouth." And Albania certainly knows better than to seek an alliance with one of the imperialisms of the so-called 'second world' like Britain. Albania enjoys this kind of independence precisely because it has had a real working class revolution.

ABSOLUTE CHANGE

A working class revolution, a change in the relations of production whereby the working people from being exploited become the masters of their own destiny, is an absolute change. It takes a country out of the capitalist world of exploitation and war and into the socialist world of peace and plenty. It marks the main division in the world between the capitalist camp and the socialist camp. It also marks the division in every single country in the world - in socialist countries between the working people who are the guardians of the revolution and the enemies of the people who want to overturn the revolution and restore capitalism; in capitalist countries, whether metropolitan or colonial, between the exploiting ruling class who must prevent revolution and the working people who can only emancipate themselves by making revolution.

Only by revolution can the yoke of starvation, misery, unemployment and all the evils of exploitation be lifted. Only by revolution can the threat of war be diminished. In a socialist world there will be no material want, no exploitation and no wars - not even just wars like those glorious struggles waged by the peoples of Korea and Indo-China because there will be no capitalist exploiters to launch unjust wars.

If that sounds too idyllic, it must be remembered that not only do most countries including our own still have their revolutions to make but also it is possible for revolutions to be reversed and for socialist countries to slip back into the miseries of capitalism again. It is a long road and a tortuous one but at least there is a goal at the end worth all our human striving. It lies on the other side of revolution.

Western Capital penetrates Soviet Union

THE SOVIET UNION, the "most dangerous superpower", is far from keeping itself separate in hostile opposition to that other "super power", the US. In fact the US now has considerable economic interest in the maintenance of Soviet capitalism, as Senator McGovern confirmed during his recent visit to Moscow.

Last year the Soviet Union, incapable of feeding its people, like every capitalist country, bought about 7m tons of wheat from the US, and now an agreement has been signed for 6m tons to be supplied every year for the next five years. The penetration of US capital is such that now Russia owes the US about 20 billion dollars.

Likewise, that other bulwark against Soviet imperialism - British capitalism - is increasingly investing its capital in the Soviet Union. A British firm has an agreement with the Soviet Union for the construction of two plants for transforming natural gas into methanol, worth 250m dollars. Another British company recently signed an agreement to supply the Soviet Union with compressor stations for the Tumen-Chellabinsk gas pipe line, worth £100m. John Brown Engineering have a Soviet order worth £26m.

According to the conditions of these agreements, the Soviet Union must pay back the investments and credits of those firms with huge amounts of raw materi-

Mismanagement in Fleet St.

THE RECENT attempt by the new management at Beaverbrooks to bring to heel their engineers met with dismal and embarrassing failure. Having first sacked over 180 engineers - most of them were not even on duty at the time of the famous meeting, and some were not even at the meeting! - they soon had to beg to be allowed to take them back.

Management was insisting on discipline. Their problem is that the engineers are indeed the most disciplined workforce in Fleet Street. As Reg Birch, their negotiator, said they would stop the whole of Fleet Street without instant reinstatement of those sacked.

All the brave statements from Beaverbrook executives could not hide the fact that they had to go back on their previous "conditions" - for instance, that they would not re-employ chapel officials.

So the Fleet Street magnates have once again set a poor example to the rest of the ruling class, whom they continually lecture on "industrial relations" - that is, how to crush the fighting spirit of the workers.

The dispute, of course, is not over. Nor did it start with the sackings. It is part of that Fleet Street battle which has been going on for years. The proprietors claim that the industry is "overmanned" and that working practices are "restrictive", but their real problem is that print workers are too well organised and not sufficient-

ly subservient. Like all capitalists, the press barons will tolerate anything but an organised working class.

At the beginning of this year, we wrote in THE WORKER about print workers' rejection of the famous "Plan for Action". This "Plan" was aimed at massively reorganising methods of production in printing, and offered large cash incentives to sugar the pill of redundancy.

The Beaverbrook management's

latest fiasco is part of that attack, which is going on in other forms throughout Fleet Street. (As for instance at the Financial Times).

The effect of the plan would have been a massive setback to print workers' union organisation. We said then that having rightly rejected the plan, print workers could not rest on their laurels, that the attack had been beaten off for now, but that the sharks would be back.



Reg Birch, executive member of AUEW who handled negotiations with the Beaverbrook Press. (Picture by Press Association)

The cost of animal spotting in Berks.

At Dalton Supplies, Berkshire for the past 18 months, factory workers have been struggling for better wages. Their T&GWU shop steward has had to deal with opposition from the shop floor in the shape of ex-union members as well as a pig-headed management.

Following pressure from the workers, a report on the problem was called for, although the management have refused to supply details of wages.

Dalton Supplies, which makes animal tags for livestock identification, employs 12 women at Stoke Row and another 24 at Henley. Last year the workers joined the union when they began to struggle for minimum wage agreements; their wages at present are a pitiful £28 for a 40 hour week. Despite resistance to their actions by both the management and some about-turn back sliders they are determined to continue the struggle. The Henley workers' shop steward said they were in total solidarity with their co-workers at Stoke Row.

als such as natural gas and coal. British banks have opened branches in Moscow and are, of course, enthusiastically encouraging stronger economic ties between capitalists of both countries. Soviet debts to western European capitalism amount to nearly 27 billion dollars.

International finance capital recognises no national borders, except where it is forced to: around those countries where the working class has taken power. Western "opposition" to the Soviet Union is so much hot air, and will certainly never be allowed to hinder the pursuit of profit. Profits recognise no first, second or third worlds.

Hull transport fight

HULL City bus crews defiantly refused to operate revised timetables after a Council decision to enforce further cuts in our Public Services as part of their contribution to the "national effort".

The Council put forward the reduced timetables only a few days before their implementation, promising consultation on the next round of cuts.

An emergency meeting of the bus crews rejected the proposals out of hand. On the first day of

the proposed cuts, a driver was sent home for insisting on working the old timetable. This led to a complete walkout by the bus crews and at a further meeting it was decided to stay out till the following weekend.

The men then decided to return to work to operate the new reduced timetable, with the promise of no reduction in staffing levels. The question of a reduced Public Transport system in Hull is one for the whole working class.

Clarity in the car industry

A TYPICAL newspaper response to a toolmakers' strike is "£100 million in lost production at Leylands". Yet, to squeeze a figure only a tiny fraction of this fabulous sum out of the employer, would apparently cause immediate bankruptcy. And Ford can say he will invest a little (with something from us by way of a reverse slush fund!) since labour in Britain is so cheap. Haven't we read about pricing ourselves out of the market?

To ask for clarity from the employers is perhaps too much, but surely there will be clarity from our brothers and sisters who create such wealth.

It is certain that with class clarity the toolmakers could have led us all in revolt against the social contract in March rather than attempting to free just themselves from its intended effects. Again with clarity the AUEW members in the Midlands would have used the democratic machinery of the union to smash those self-imposed chains rather than adding the confusion of parallelism inherent in their claim for separate negotiating rights.

Basic class politics would also have accepted that those who lent themselves so willingly to a

social contract in the first place would have fought hard to correct their error when they felt its effects. The democracy of our organisation is the basic control we have over policy and this control must be asserted in a straightforward way and not be undermined by opportunism. Of course it is easier to say than do, but if any workers should have reason to learn the disaster of allowing short term gains to obscure the long term, it would be those in the car industry.

The whole recent experience of letting piece work and the bull in differential be replaced by the measured day system is lesson enough. Another lesson is that stewards will be wary of getting involved in endless "negotiations" while allowing the employer to appeal over their heads to the workers neglected during all those hours of "meetings".

We will have clarity and success if we accept that the social contract was an error in principle - that the sovereignty of our union is not to be switched on and off according to whim, but is a fundamental condition for our defence. Our skills are ours alone to sell and we will claim to have sole rights in fixing the price.

Labour Party

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of the Labour Party. The individual dues-paying membership of the Labour Party is small and getting smaller and its active membership is smaller still.

It is an illusion, however, to imagine that this situation gives the Unions effective control over Labour Party policy, whatever the Tory propagandists say to the contrary. Social democracy doesn't work like that.

Whereas the TUC notwithstanding the autonomy of the Unions can determine its policy and take steps to implement it in some respects, the Labour Party Conference is a horse of a different colour. The Labour Party Conference having debated and voted have a policy but only on paper.

The Parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour MP's, determine their own policy with little or no regard to Conference resolutions. Policy-making moves even further away from the rank and file through the machinations of the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet when in opposition. The Parliamentary Labour Party alone elects the effective leader of the Party who when the Party is in office then appoints the Cabinet. The Cabinet then acts as another Party within a Party with no regard at all for whatever was

voted on at the Party Conference. But it goes further.

Marxists have always maintained that the workers can never win power by the elections to parliament, that the State remains firmly in the hands of the ruling class whatever the outcome of elections. Whatever party has a majority in parliament the State machinery remains unchanged. A joint committee of enquiry has just issued a report which confirms what we have maintained all along, that even the government ministers, let alone a Party Conference, have little or no control over the civil servants who exercise real control on behalf of the permanent power, the ruling class.

The issues to be debated at the Conference are real enough. Probably the most important will be the issue of withdrawal from the Common Market. The demand for Britain Out is one which cuts across party barriers even if the motives may differ. The certainty is that this issue will not be resolved by a Conference resolution. The first step to realise this and other important working class aspirations is in the recognition that they will not be achieved by Conference votes or crosses on ballot papers but by revolution. That way we replace the State of the ruling class by the State of the working class. Then the workers will make policy and carry it out.

Kent nurses resist cuts

NURSES at Oakwood Hospital, Maidstone, are showing the way in resisting hospital cuts. Enough is enough, they've said, and they are threatening a work-to-rule unless more staff are found within a fortnight. They have to resist, one possible "solution", that of closing another psychiatric ward - Preston Hall - and moving patients and staff to Oakwood. Their demand must be: bring in the unemployed nurses and hospital workers into Oakwood.

Quite correctly the nurses call for more money from Central Government. Unless they get it, their COHSE action will be to ban overtime and to insist that untrained staff are not left in sole charge of wards. Any move by the authority to use students to plug staffing gaps will be resisted. Elsewhere in North Kent, in Medway, repeated pressure has been applied by different community groups for health improvements. Even the Junior Health Minister, visiting Medway hospitals this summer, had to admit that conditions in the Special Care Baby Unit were "deplorable".

The reaction of Kent Area Health Authority to the pressure has been to threaten closure of certain of the hospitals - thus releasing necessary cash! The Mableton Hospital, Dartford, catering for psychiatric patients, is to close and at present a battle continues between the Authority and the Community Health Council, doctors and local people, over the proposed closure of Livingstone Hospital, Dartford. The hospital, run on old cottage hospital lines, with GPs from all over the area responsible for their own patients in the wards, is seen to be too costly by the Authority.

The Authority is attempting to rob Peter to pay Paul. This is the whole backcloth of struggle.

Sladebrook victory

AT a full Brent Council meeting held over the summer holidays a previous decision to cut staff at Sladebrook School was reversed.

This is a significant victory. The School has been able to use the falling roll to have smaller classes, not fewer. No first year or second year class is

WORKER INTERVIEW ROLLS-ROYCE LONDON

AT PARK Mulliner Ward division of Rolls Royce in Willesden over 600 workers have gone on strike. Management have offered 8 per cent. The claim is for 17.8, a new bonus scheme and improved holiday and sick pay (at present only 75p. a day!)

An interview with the convenor, Brian Eagles.

Question: What is the dispute about?

Answer: Basically about our standard of living. We made a mistake 2½ years ago, in accepting a new agreement which replaced piece work, but we learnt our mistake. Over the first 2 years we lost 30 per cent through inflation. This year it's running at 17 per cent. That's 47 per cent. Our claim would only make up for what we've lost this year. We've already given 2 years blood.

Q: What effect did the social contract have?

A: Simple. It cut the standard of living of the working class, and improved it for the financiers etc. Rolls Royce profits were up last year by £93m.

Q: What about the 10 per cent pay limit?

A: As far as we are concerned there isn't one. There's no law and there hasn't been. These last few years have all been voluntary.

Q: What's your feeling as skilled men? What's been happening to skill and rewards for skill over the past period?

A: We're coachbuilders and proud of our skill. You have to pay skill more to encourage people to learn the trade. Look at doctors. We don't pay them enough and they leave the country. Skill and craft are at the heart of everything - doctors, coachbuilders even magicians. Speaking of magicians, the Government should employ a few to pull something out of the hat for them.

Q: What's your feeling about further wage restraint?

A: (Expletive deleted) How much can you stand of a person kicking you?

Q: What's the mood of the men?

A: More determined than it's ever been. It's not our first strike but don't let people think that such a decision is taken lightly. It's serious and a sacrifice, but we have to do it to be able to live. We know it may be a long haul but we're determined and intend to win.

Exeter nurses strike for better health

"THE hospital authorities have come to accept that standards have to be lowered and care lessened. We're saying that we don't have to accept that and we won't accept it." So said the secretary of the Confederation of Health Service Employees branch at Exminster Hospital, Exeter. That was the call for the nurses at Exminster Hospital, Exeter, members of COHSE, to come out on a one hour strike in early September as a

first step in their campaign to preserve standards threatened by a severe staff shortage. Their 700 psycho-geriatric patients' average age is 70, many being permanently bedridden while many more are semi-ambulatory or totally unable either to walk or feed themselves. This calls for a high level of support staff - physiotherapists, occupational therapists and nursing auxiliaries - in order that the nursing staff can do their

jobs properly. In fact, there are all-round shortages and a ward sister said, "None of us is doing what we were trained to do. We never practice psychiatric nursing skills as we haven't time."

Equally seriously, wards are being left unstaffed at night. COHSE's regional secretary said, "There is a danger of patients falling out of bed at night. At this age bones are much more easily fractured." The nurses are proud of the high standards that have been maintained - at the cost of a higher accident rate among nursing staff. "After a 12-hour day everyone is exhausted," said one nurse. "No wonder more accidents happen." Another said, "We're all afraid that our hospital will become the way it was 25 years ago if we don't put a stop to it now."

The fact that there are 777 nursing staff on the dole queue in the South West further angers nurses, and they are calling for an immediate injection of 20 to 30 more nurses now and additional nurses later in order to end "the antiquated 12-hour shift system."



Exeter nurses, members of COHSE, protest against staff cuts.

Students fight decline in education

STUDENTS start the new academic year in the face of unprecedented cuts. According to the bourgeois press, "several thousand students will have had to cease their courses due to the rise in tuition fees. There is the continuing decline in education budgets, the closure of 35 colleges hanging over us,

now over 20 and the teachers hope to extend this throughout the School. Brent Teachers Association supported them and has called for no cuts in any school establishment for this year and an improvement in schools where numbers rise.

and the ever present spectre of unemployment. It is necessary for students to counter-attack

Education is a means of acquiring skills. It is crucial to the material and social welfare as well as essential to the survival of the working class, its identity and skill. As a national union we have consistently said that education is a right and not a privilege, we must in the coming year step up the fight for that right.

There must be no talk of 'alternatives' for closing colleges (such alternatives being hotels or police training centres) or calls for the total abolition of the fees system by referring the Government to such practices as already exist in the EEC, tuition fee rises must be seen for what they are, an attack on student numbers and the education system as a whole, a further erosion of student living standards, and a restriction on the access to education. We have to involve the mass of students in the fight to keep colleges open and the fight for a 'full grant for all full time students', these demands unlike

so many others presented, are clear and attainable and will play our feet more firmly on the ground in the fight to save education.

As our struggle is gaining momentum the Government has turned its attention to our defence organisations in an attempt to halt our fight back. It is primarily for this reason, with examples such as the court action taken against Central London Poly students' union and those actions taken against the union at Bristol Poly that the issue of autonomy should be consistently born in mind, as that autonomy can best be secured with the fullest involvement of students in their unions.

As the Government steps up attacks, it is no coincidence that the issue of devolution has become an urgent one for our union. We must state quite clearly that in present circumstances it would be a grave blow to the NUS, were there to be a split. Such a move can offer no real advantages to Scottish, Welsh or English students, but only restricts our ability to fight to save education. It off only a step backwards.

Books, pamphlets

Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, London NW 5

Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds.

Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton.

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

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings at the Bellman Bookshop will begin their new season at the beginning of October, and continue weekly into December. A full list will appear in the next issue of THE WORKER. The first meeting of the series will be:-

October 7. 7.30 p.m. Enver Hoxha; great Marxist, staunch friend of the British proletariat.

Croydon

Meetings to be held in Federation House, Elmwood Rd, West Croydon, at 8.00 p.m.

October 4. Capitalist decline: an end to education?
October 11. Socialist advance: Albania shows the way.
October 18. Bolshevik Revolution: the lessons for Bri