



STOP DRIVE TO WAR

Thatcher and Carter prepared to provoke world conflict

The present imperialist war mongering of Thatcher and Carter presents the working class in this country with the same life-and-death issue as the attempt to get workers to serve as cannon fodder in 1914. Then the working class failed to take the right course and millions perished in an utterly pointless war.

This time we have to get the answer right. The penalty for failure is a thousand times more terrible.

THATCHER and Carter are planning a world war. In this they are encouraged by the gang ruling China. Once again the Soviet Union is being used as the big bogey.

The fact that the Soviet Union is no longer socialist is immaterial. It remains "Communist" in name and that is enough for an anti-communist, anti-working class crusade at home.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is seen as an opportunity for war preparation. This must be stopped.

The Soviet Union is being surrounded by beligerent, hostile countries. China has for some time been urging a Holy War against the Soviet Union. NATO, having failed to get neutron bombs accepted by the countries in Europe,

is now planning to place Pershing and cruise missiles throughout Europe pointing towards Russian cities and other populated areas.

Thatcher played the main part in getting this plan off the ground. Offers by the Soviet Union to reduce its troops in Europe were completely rejected.

On the border of the USSR two former members of the US imperialist grouping CENTO, Turkey and Pakistan, are prepared to take an aggressive stance toward the Soviet Union as the US resumes arms deliveries.

Pakistan provided the bases from which US spy planes operated.

The revolution in Iran, having toppled the Shah installed and propped up by the US,

was subverted by fanatic mullahs and could become part of a reactionary Islamic Jihad against the "Godless" Soviet Union.

China, since the death of Mao and Chou En-lai, has turned ideological opposition to the Soviet Union into intense and aggressive imperialist hostility.

The ring around the Soviet Union tightens but is not complete. Afghanistan remains the only friendly country on the Soviet Union's southern and eastern frontier. Hence the British and US subversion through Pakistan and China's arming of tribal gangs.

To prevent the closing of the ring, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, not to help socialism and bolster up reforms, but simply to secure



its frontier.

This invasion was the signal for Thatcher and Carter to whip up war hysteria to the greatest level since the First Cold War.

The price of gold rocketed dramatically, climbing for a time at the rate of a dollar a minute; Pentagon generals dashed off to China; the British Foreign Secretary was dispatched to Turkey and Pakistan; and Carter began his

economic boycott of the Soviet Union and his arms lift to Pakistan.

The drive to war must be stopped at once. Thatcher and Carter are hell-bent on world war as a solution to the problem of monopoly capitalism's absolute decline. The labour movement here, in Western Europe and north America, must disabuse their minds in the most decisive way of war-mongering ideas.

Steel battle gains support at home and abroad

NOW entering its second week the steel strike remains solid. Pickets continue to make their presence felt despite the extremely cold weather.

All this points to a determination to save jobs, to save industry, to save steel. According to Keith Joseph "... there is too much steel" and consequently too many steel workers. But there is not enough use being made of Britain's steel, not enough construction, not enough production of machine tools, not enough manufacture of goods which are needed.

Steel workers face a determined effort to decimate them - a plan concocted by the Common Market to run down British steel production and turn Britain into a steel importer. Already 25 per cent of steel is imported. The proposal to ban imported steel through action by international trade unions has caused a panic and shows that steel is not available in abundance. It is exactly this kind of action and international support that Thatcher's new "Employment Bill" seeks to outlaw, just as it proposes to outlaw so-called secondary picketing or any other normal response to the employers plans.

The steelworkers command the support of the organised working class, the railway workers, the TUC and international trade union organisations.

The steel workers are discovering that the only way

to shake the destroyers of Britain's industry is to shut it down before it is destroyed. It may be a paradox that the only way to assert the importance of an industry these days is to show everyone what happens when it stops. This, of course, is ancient knowledge for workers in Britain. The only way to make the employer cough up is to stop the process that fills his pockets. The miners too were faced with "inevitable closures" until they said alright then do without us. Then coal was counted as a national asset again.

The plan of the Thatcher Government is to close Corby, a whole town, this week and then level Consett next. The steel workers have taken up this challenge and said alright do without steel.

The steel strike won't be a short sharp strike because the employing class have set themselves the task of destruction.



Steel workers picket at Port Talbot steelworks on the first day of the strike. Photo Andrew Ward (Report)

It will be part of a growing determination of the British workers not to suffer the indignity of redundancy and wanton closure.

Meantime British capital-

ists have spent the week in a new gold rush, buying and selling gold which has reached new record price levels. The steel workers are serving notice on those with gold in

their brains that steel is a precious commodity and that those who only produce chaos, through their economic policies, are the ones who are redundant.

HAPPY NEW YEAR the capitalist way! The Grocer, journal for the retail grocery trade, carried the good news last week. It announced that for the first three days of 1980 they had been notified of 437 price increases. No wonder that nurses are angry at the Clegg Commission. Little wonder that 2 per cent means little to steel workers. What must it mean for the rest of us?

ON THE SAME rueful note Malcolm Wicks, author of 'Old and Cold' (about hypothermia) advised on the danger to old people this winter. Inflation had caused old people to choose between food and warmth. His research in the mild winter of 1972 had shown 10 per cent of old people to be at risk. By his figures 700,000 old people will suffer from cold this winter. A happy new year to the oil companies - you will get yours yet.

AT THE MONEY-MAKING end of the oil market in 1979, holdings in US oil stocks leapt on the New York Stock Exchange. After all, holding oil company shares these days is as good as buying Krugers. The biggest percentage gainers on Wall Street was Heda Mining, which holds oil stocks. In the last quarter of 1979, Heda more than doubled from 22 to 46, finishing 1979 with a gain of almost 800 per cent from its 1978 closing price of 5!

IT TOOK Afghanistan to keep this next item off the front page in many American newspapers last week. Texaco announced a 6 cent-a-gallon increase in the price of home heating oil. It was the largest ever increase for this kind of oil. Measured over a year, the typical householder will end up paying another \$100 for this oil in 1980.

THE ISLAMIC revolution came to Marlborough Street magistrates court in London last week. An Iraqi woman stood in the dock charged with shoplifting £660 worth of goods in 13 consecutive department stores. Asked to explain her actions she told policemen 'Satan tempted me'. It is a novel defence for a London court and it might have come off, but the magistrate, lacking a Monty Python sense of humour, could not see the funny side. Instead he fined her £700.

BUT OIL SHARES really took the biscuit. The total market value for Standard Oil of Ohio rocketed by \$5.4 billion, by 4.3 billion for Mobil, \$4 million for Schlumberger, \$3.4 million for Shell Oil and for Standard Oil of Indiana. Poor Getty and Exxon leapt by only \$2.7 billion - the rest held a whip round for them. They should have collected for the millions of American families about to pay more for the heating oil to keep the winter away.

AS A YOUNG child I listened to my grandfather's story of the relief of Mafeking. It was the greatest period of his life; only chosen British soldiers were sent to the relief and he had a medal to prove it. He talked of the splendours of the British army and the wonderful 'Bobs', General Roberts. A majority of the citizens shared his view, so that the wild rejoicings of Mafeking night gave the language a new word.

My grandmother said it was a nasty, cruel war and we robbed the brave Boers. When grandfather died, my aunt threw his medal into the fire - 'back to hell where it came from' - and cut up his scarlet coat for a rag rug in the kitchen, where we would walk across it every day.

When I was given 'The Boer War' by Thomas Pakenham I was prepared to be hostile because of the author's name so looked first at his account of Mafeking. He agreed with my aunt's opinion of 60 years ago. The book is an excellent piece of historical writing and only the price of £10 would deter any serious person from buying it.

The author searches for the truth about the "longest, costliest and one of the most humiliating of British imperialist wars". In Kipling's phrase the war declared by the Boers in 1899 gave the British "no end of a lesson". What was the background?

In 1652 the Dutch East India Co. founded a colony at the Cape of Good Hope. The settlers were mostly Dutch Calvinists, with some German Protestants and French Huguenots, all of whom had unpleasant memories of Europe. The poorest of them were 'trekboers', a wandering farming group. They had a common language, Afrikaans.

In 1806, during the Napoleonic War, the British stole the colony as a naval base. Most of these white colonists accepted British rule, though few British had

Concluding our two-part feature on the economics of British imperialism

International finance capital - a web with the British spider in the middle

ORGANISATIONS such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are international credit agencies which act in effect, as powerful supra-national governments - an executive for international finance capital.

The resources which the IMF controls and the power it has to interfere in the internal affairs of borrowing nations gives it gigantic authority. It is the chosen instrument for imposing imperialist financial discipline on borrowing countries.

Masquerading under the term 'aid', it manipulates countries in balance of payments difficulties into indebtedness, and then ensnares them in a loan-debt-interest repayment trap: the relationship it establishes opens the way to involvement by other banks and private credit operations. All the major sources of credit - private lenders and credit houses government or international organisations such as the World Bank - will refuse to lend to a country which persists in defying the 'advice' of the IMF. For IMF loans are, of course, conditional.

The major articles of 'letters of intent' (part of the conditions for stand-by loans - called

The truth behind the Boer War

settled. When in 1834 Britain ordered the emancipation of all slaves in the British Empire, the Boers, with 5000 'Coloured Servants' set off on their great trek across the Orange and Vaal Rivers. They were united in one aim, 'to give no rights to coloured people'.

Then in 1843 the British annexed Natal and in 1877 the Transvaal. This was reversed by Kruger in the first Boer War, defeating the British at Majuba. In 1859 two multi-millionaires, Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit, conspired to take over the Transvaal for the



Above: this contemporary French cartoon portrays British soldiers brutalising Boer Civilians.

Empire.

Why the conspiracy for an arid land that did not tempt British settlers? The answer was the diamond-rush to Kimberley in 1870 and in 1886 the gold-rush to the Witwatersrand in the Transvaal, which made the second fortunes of Rhodes and Beit. It also exacerbated the relations between the Boers and the Uitlanders, mostly new British immigrants attracted by gold and denied all political rights like the black people.

The account of the war is superb; not just the set pieces of battles but the bravery on both sides, both of whom believed they were fighting for God. The Boers treated black men with the cruelty and indifference they would not have used to mules; the British generals allowed their own soldiers to live in rags with broken shoes, insufficient food,

lack of pay and conditions as bad as that of the Crimean War. They also set up the first concentration camps for the 'safety' of the wives and children of the Boers after burning their farms. Thousands died of disease in these camps.

The reputations of many Victorian heroes suffer. The 'saintly' Baden-Powell, who is always given credit for the success of the Mafeking garrison. This consisted of 2000 whites with women and children (one woman was Winston Churchill's aunt escaping from the annul of the London season) and 7000 blacks: Baden-Powell used rations of the blacks for the white defenders. Kitchener was as cruel.

We read, too, of the ambitions and rivalry of the generals. 'Good old Bobs' had endeared himself to his men by giving them food and new boots but he had the same soaring ambitions as his rivals. The incredible incompetence and barbarism of the British ruling class of that period is only matched by the crowd we have today.

Pakenham, in his admirable preface, states the aims of his research; 'the fine golden thread woven by the Rand millionaires';

THOUSANDS SAY NO TO S. AFRICAN CALL-UP

A SIGNIFICANT opposition to the American War in Vietnam came from within the USA itself. One form of opposition was 'draft dodging', which was far more than 100,000 Americans was a positive refusal to be a part of a war mongering machine.

This form of opposition, totally unpublicised, has now spread to South Africa. As resistance to white minority rule grows, an increasing number of draftees are being taken into the armed forces and forced into combat in Namibia and along the South African border. Even according

the feud between the Roberts Ring and the Wolsley Buller Ring, in order to explain the inexplicable military actions of the Natal campaign; the fact that far from being a gentleman's war, a white man's war, sadly, Africans were involved. By the end, 10,000 Africans were under arms in the British Army and black non-combatants were flogged or shot by the Boers.

Finally the author studied the concentration camps, where more than 20,000 Boer civilians died, and the burning and looting of Boer farms. 'The conscience of Britain was stirred by the holocaust in the camps.' Some credit for this must be given to Emily Hobhouse, who toured the camps, asked for improvements and wrote long reports to MP's and the Liberal Party. 'If the guerrillas in South Africa lost the war they won the peace.'

The last two sentences of the book are worth remembering: 'Beit's successors in South Africa have maintained rewarding relationships with successive South African Governments. The gold assets of South Africa are now valued at 100 times the value estimated in 1899.'

to official South African figures almost 4000 of the 20,000 men annually drafted failed to report for military service in 1978. In addition, over 1000 others are currently serving 3-year prison terms for choosing conscientious objection. This is a crime in South Africa, under a 1974 law which provides for those encouraging such actions to be punished by terms of 6 years in jail.

'The emergence of white draft resisters who refuse to serve in the army is one of the most important new forces in opposition to apartheid', said a member of the South African Military Refugee Aid Fund (SAMRAF) in a recent New York interview.

SAMRAF, with fraternal organisations in several countries, distributes an illegal underground newspaper in South Africa called *Omkeer* (Afrikaans for 'about-face') to encourage desertion in the 30,000 strong White section of the South African army.

Many of us will know little of COSA WRS, (Committee of South African War Resisters) SAMRAF's counterpart here in Britain. This also operates in the most difficult of situations because of the government's intense restrictions on the right of asylum for war resisters from South Africa, whose commanders and government have such close ties to our own. However, in the interview in New York, held in September, the SAMRAF representative said there were many more resisters in Britain than in America, because it was easier for South Africans, many having family ties, to travel here.

The group terms itself "decidedly anti-imperialist" and is dedicated to "the overthrow of the apartheid state" by the forging of links with the Liberation movement in South Africa. With the situation in the southern Africa as volatile as it is, such a development is a major step forward to the liberation of South Africa and the destruction of imperialism on the African continent.

'creating safe lending conditions' or 'improving a country's credit rating') make interesting reading. A country needing a loan has to commit itself to: 1) liberalisation of exchange controls and imports 2) control of wage rises 3) dismantling of price controls 4) a greater hospitality to foreign investment.

There is a pattern of IMF involvement across the world which is constantly repeated: military coups, followed closely by an IMF delegation to the country to advise on 'restructuring the economy'. The disastrous developments in Chile are an excellent example: the period of Allende is the history of the struggle of a country to free itself from the stranglehold of the IMF as agents of the creditor nations - chief of whom was the US. The military coup in 1973 was followed immediately by a mission from the IMF to negotiate new stand-by loans and unlock much larger amounts of finance from other nations and the World Bank, which had been hovering like a vulture waiting for the creation of 'safe lending conditions'. There are other examples:

Ghana, whose debts to Britain pushed it into the arms of the IMF and who had in effect an anti-IMF military coup. There have been military coups following a similar pattern to the events in Chile in Brazil, Indonesia, and India. The IMF had its finger firmly in the pie in Laos and Cambodia throughout the Vietnam war. Is this what the denial of aid to Kampuchea at the end of last year was all about? To bring it to its knees and create a dependency on the IMF which will create yet another door to attack on the valiant Vietnamese (who must be punished for their victory over the US)?

In all of this, Britain is an ever-present and virulent partner. The insidious web of economic involvement on a world-wide scale which was described in Part 1 of this article in issue One, gives it its motive force. Internationally it seeks, by whatever method it can, to preserve its economic and therefore ultimately political domination over the countries where its interests are spread. The hydra may have one head chopped off (they fear this in Zimbabwe) but it will always try to grow another.

Editorial

We ended 1979 with a formulation of the immediate political need of the organised working class in Britain -- Thatcher must go!

There are two aspects of this necessity which mutually strengthen its cogency. There is the continuing struggle we wage against capitalism in its final and most destructive phase.

From the time when we repudiated any agreement to accept cuts in wages fixed by government, and restored collective bargaining, it was obvious that capitalism would have to resort to wage cuts by rising inflation without any apparent intervention by the government in wage bargaining. Along with this would have to go the attempt to weaken the working class's ability to bargain over wages by using technological development to increase unemployment and by physically destroying the industrial base in which the strength of the organised working class is rooted.

That battle against capitalism in its vicious death throes has to go on whatever capitalist government is in power - till the capitalist system itself has been replaced with a better one.

But in addition to that, the almost gratuitous attacks on our class by a vindictive shopkeeper's-daughter and her loathsome henchmen adds another perspective to our struggle.

Her stupid class prejudice about the "work-shy", all those whom capitalism has deliberately robbed of the right to work, has led to proposed legislation to deprive the families of the unemployed of their meagre social benefits. Her idiotic class elitism makes her want to select children to be segregated into superior schools while the rest are barely taught to hew wood and draw water. Her class hatred of workers makes her think up ever new means of crippling and, hopefully, destroying the trade unions. Her spite against working class children makes her stoop to such vile pettiness as robbing them of milk and putting school meals beyond their means; and she has no concern at all for the fact that closing hospitals punishes the ill and handicapped - as long as they cannot buy private medical care.

Such is her prejudice and hatred that she is willing to provoke nuclear war against Russia because it has been and will again be a workers' state.

Indeed her class blindness will, in the long run, make her unsuitable even for capitalism, which needs much shrewder and more plausible agents. You simply cannot run a modern highly sophisticated industry on slave labour. But we cannot wait for them to realise their mistake. Too much of what we have made, developed and fought for is being wantonly destroyed. OUT WITH THATCHER!

End of local authority direct labour means the end of accountability

AT THE SAME time as the Tories attack our public services they are planning to ensure that as much public money as possible should pass to private employers. A good example is the consultation paper on Local Authority Direct Labour Organisations (DLO).

The main aim of these proposals is to undermine and reduce direct labour thus allowing as many small "cowboy" employers as possible to carry out public work without accountability. In addition these contractions in the workforce ensures that trade union action will be weakened and the standard of work performed will drop.

It is intended that Local Authorities will be required to produce endless accounts and reports, compete for work with private contractors and the Secretary of State will have the power "to remove or curtail the powers of a Local Authority to employ its own direct labour where it has shown itself to be consistently unsuccessful."

The new arrangements are aimed to come into effect in 1981-82 and in response to this consultation paper the TUC has issued a reply which sets out the real intentions of the Tories and outlines the consequences if the proposals are implemented.

The Tories' plans reveal their hostility and restrictive approach to DLOs. Much play is made about the need for fair competition between them and the private contractors who will seek to compete for work but no new requirements are made on private sector contractors to ensure that they act fairly in competition with DLOs. The smaller type of construction firm likely to compete for the bulk of DLO

work (i.e. repairs and maintenance) regularly top the bankrupt list in Department of Industry annual reports.

The consultative document calls for Highway and Water Authority projects valued at over £100,000 to be put to tender as well as those for all other projects valued at over £50,000. In addition one third of the previous year's turnover in each of four main work areas (i.e. (1) new work worth more than £50,000, (2) other new work, (3) maintenance, (4) highway work.) should also be put out to tender to ensure that DLO prices are competitive. The arbitrary nature of the Tories' proposals takes no account of the well established difference in the construction industry between a tender offer and an outturn price. With the present rate of inflation, costs on completion will bear no relation to those tendered.

It is no surprise that the Tories are looking for a resurgence of "lump" labour at the expense of organised labour. No account is taken of the steady employment DLOs provide in the construction industry. No allowance is made for essential services (e.g. Highway clearance, housing emergency repairs) which DLOs provide, profitable or not.

The fight for wages and the resistance to cuts in public services are part of the same struggle and if we organise against the Tories' plans for DLOs we fight for our services, our Trade Union movement and our jobs. The Tories will not stop until our public services are carved up at our expense for their profit unless we resist them.

Technology, Unemployment and the Falling Rate of Profit

THE CAPITALIST'S rate of profit is determined by the amount of unpaid labour, or surplus value, he extracts from workers divided by the amount he spends on means of production - rent, machinery, raw materials and so forth - together with the amount he spends on wages. It is a simple arithmetical fact that if he spends more on new and improved machines, while the amount of surplus value remains the same, then the rate of profit will fall.

In Britain the rate of profit in the industrial sector is estimated to have fallen from about 16 or 17 per cent in the 1870s to 14 per cent just before the First World War; to an average around 11 per cent in the inter-war period; and is now between 1 and 2 per cent. At the same time the share of wages in production has changed very little: 38.6 per cent in 1870, 38.6 in 1913, 38.3 in 1939 and 41.9 in 1950.

This means that the class struggle waged by organised workers over this period has kept the rate of surplus value relatively constant. Therefore, with the increase of investment in means of production, what Marx calls a rise in the organic composition of capital, there has been a steady decline in the rate of profit.

Particular Industries in this oldest of capitalist countries, like coal mining, steel, railways shipbuilding and, most recently, motor car manufacture, all once highly profitable, have seen such a decline in the rate of profit with the continuous increase of expenditure on technological

development that they positively repel new private investment and have to be taken over by the state.

Why do capitalists apparently cut their own throats by installing more and better machinery which lowers the rate of profit? In the period of highly competitive capitalism technological development is used to gain an advantage over rivals. Though profit per unit of production falls, the quantity of production for the increased market obtained by eliminating competitors yields a greater quantity of profit even at the lower rate. At this stage unemployment in one sector of the economy may be compensated for by increased production and employment elsewhere.

The degree of monopolisation is thus a measure of the fall in the rate of profit - unless some means can be found for increasing the amount of surplus value by raising the rate of exploitation. One way of doing this, given the ability of the organised working class to resist such a rise at home is to export capital where labour is not so well-organised.

Another way is to import less well-organised labour like the Algerian workers in France or the "guest workers" in West Germany. It has been tried in Britain, particularly after the last war, but as soon as it became obvious that trade unionism here was strong enough to prevent the setting up of a two-tiered labour force the flow was cut off. (It would have stopped anyway with rising unemployment.)

Once monopolisation has reached a point where scoring off rival concerns is no longer a principal motive, the nature

of the application of new technological changes. Many kinds of technological advance may actually be inhibited by the buying up of patents to suppress innovation. What technological advances are encouraged and applied are simply those which substitute capital-intensive industries for labour-intensive industries in order to increase enormously the reserve army of unemployed. This, of course, also enormously speeds up the fall in the rate of profit; but it is thought by capitalists that the weakening of the organised working class through massive unemployment will make it possible to raise the rate of exploitation high enough to compensate.

If then new technology is quite specifically directed toward recruiting more and more of us into the reserve army of unemployed, what should our attitude be? We cannot be against technological progress even when it is used against us, because we do not want to inherit a run-down economy in which our skills and equipment have fallen hopelessly behind. But neither do we intend to permit the catastrophic waste of our skills and the lowering of our standard of living brought about by massive unemployment.

It is in this context that the importance of the engineers' strike for a shorter working week has to be seen. In the final phase of capitalism our battle to reduce hours as productivity rises in order to keep the employer from wringing more surplus value out of us is as vital as ever. Together with the fight for the right to work it has to be an aspect of every wage struggle we engage in.

THATCHER GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DESTROY NURSERY EDUCATION

AT THE START of November the secretary for the dismantling of education, Mark Carlisle, criticised press reports and statements by teaching unions which pointed out the threat to nursery education in Oxfordshire. He commented that such reports were "exaggerated and sensational". On November 13th Oxford County Council became the first local authority in its area to completely close down all nursery

education. Twelve nursery schools and sixteen nursery classes are to disappear. One hundred teaching and nursery staff will be affected. Furthermore, capitalism's worst enemy, our youngsters (1500 of them), shall no more have nursery education.

Carlisle now has the effrontery to claim that the "saved" expenditure will be used to protect education for older children from his

own cuts. Criticising cuts is becoming more frequent than breathing for workers. The brutal honesty is that only through the seizing of political power by the working class can our education be saved, restored, and improved. The education of workers is a threat to the bourgeoisie. Governments are even willing to smash toddlers to prove this point. How sickening



The 1944 Education Act proposed more nursery schools. The battle today is to preserve what nursery schools we have. We must be aware of any attempts to trade off any section of our education system for the 'benefit' of another.

And what of Afghanistan?

THE US Government, having recently admitted preparation of a 'ready to fight, go anywhere' force of 110,000 soldiers to be used in any part of the world, condemns Russian intervention on its own frontier. Israel and Egypt offer the US military bases if need be. Near-fascist Turkey, in hock to the US through the International Monetary Fund, offers a springboard also. The Pakistan military junta, commanded by the tyrant Zia, is to be armed to the teeth. Pakistani weapons are currently used on Pakistanis who hate the dictatorship, but for Afghanistan Zia is now to be a 'freedom fighter' (Zia takes enough liberties as it is). Now China has been approached by Carter to send arms to Zia from their side while European governments are being asked to send more arms to China.

And what of Afghanistan? The military coup of April 1978 did seem to embody the aspirations of many in ousting the hated Daud regime, an event preceded by mass demonstrations demanding change. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) opted for land reform the emancipation of women and the equality of the minority nationalities. The governments in Russia and Eastern Europe supported the new government, the USA opposed it particularly as the PDPA appeared pro-Soviet and the scene was set, especially as Afghanistan's neighbours in Pakistan, Iran and China were all hostile.

In a country where 90 per cent of the population live in the countryside, the PDPA faced a problem in that its mass support lay in the towns and in the army. The ousting of the royal elite was the easiest of problems to deal with.

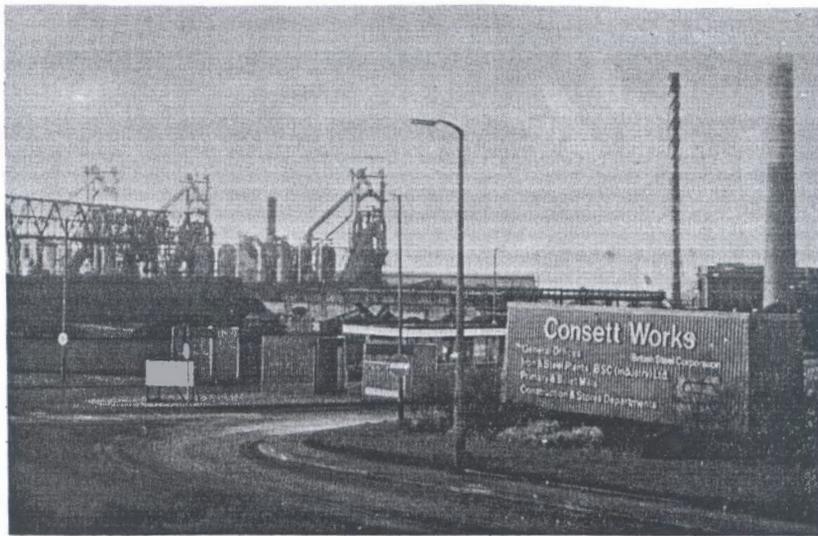
Water workers reject 13 pc

NEGOTIATORS for the water industry's 33,000 manual workers have rejected a pay offer of 13 per cent. Now, conferences of the three main unions involved (GMWU, TGWU, NUPE) are to be asked to discuss "appropriate measures" to pursue the claim of at least 40 per cent.

The employers, the National Water Council, are hiding behind government directives on spending. They have told the unions that their offer was the most they can afford given the "severe financial regime".

In an industry that hands a third of its income over to financiers - paying off interest charges on loans it is no wonder the employers plead poverty. But the real poverty is seen in the manual workers' basic pay of £49.60. The future of the industry depends on pursuing the wage claim.

Water workers will answer firmly that the industry's economic problems are the employer's problem not theirs. The claim goes ahead.



Of the 55,000 jobs to be chopped in steel making, the North-East will lose 4,000 at Consett; over the last 18 months 2,000 jobs have already been lost, the last being 400 at the Howns Gill plate mill. The Consett workers are fighting the closure which would destroy the town, like Corby and Shotton before. The fight will be difficult but no doubt the national steel strike will stimulate the resistance. Workers at the Jarrow mill also face possible redundancy, the mill employs 350 workers. The Yorkshire and Humberside division of the ISTC has started flying pickets to private steel companies. Herman Rebhan, general secretary of the International Metalworkers Federation said on international solidarity 'We have put a ring of non-steel around Britain'. Photo THE WORKER.

Tyneside ship repair to fight closures

BRITISH Shipbuilders, in its quest for 'restructuring', is to cut the repair workforce by 1400 nationally. The Tyne is particularly affected by this exercise in industrial contraction.

WallSEND Slipway Engineering is to close while jobs are to be shed at Brigham and Cowans, Redheads and the Newcastle Dry Dock. Vospers repair has cut 378 jobs and all 470 jobs have gone at Thames Shiprepair.

As usual, Tyne stewards have been told that non-acceptance means work will

finish for good. Ship repair unions on Tyneside have pledged to fight further redundancies. This is necessary because with 3000 redundant workers now seeking work, there are 115 tradesmen for every vacancy.

British Shipbuilders' statistics show the ages and length of service of workers in the industry; 16 per cent are under 24 years, 25 to 34 year olds make up 18 per cent; the 35 to 44 years olds are 19 per cent; the 45 to 54 year olds are almost a quarter of the workforce and

the over 55s are 22 per cent of those in the industry. Workers over the age of 45 therefore make up 46 per cent of the work force.

If a worker loses his job in his mid forties, what chance has he of getting a job again, especially a job in his own trade?

Similarly, 16 per cent of the workers, just beginning their working lives, are to be thrown out of their jobs with little chance of obtaining further work and none whatever of developing their shipbuilding skills.

Devon faces Thatcher hatchet

AFTER MONTHS of knowing that cuts were coming but not where the axe was going to fall, Devon workers are now starting to hear the council's plans. The news is not good.

Council committees are looking at how cuts can be made. To show the flag each committee is making protestations about the effect of the cuts and asking to be made a special case. But this is window dressing forced on them by workers' outrage. Being made a special case is councilspeak for being cut by only 3 per cent instead of the 5 per cent asked for by Thatcher. In other words the cuts go ahead. At the most something may be saved here - but always cut elsewhere to make up.

Workers can have no comfort in pleas for 3 not 5 per cent as committee deliberations show. The social services committee, in pleading a special case, say Devon provides fewer home helps, fewer meals and fewer places in residential homes per 1000 of population than the national average. This in an area where the over 80s are increasing at a faster rate than any other group within the population.

The director of social services said: "These are not the times we should be

asked to reduce, by a damaging level, its existing and inadequate provision."

The committee's solution? To ask for a 3 not a 5 per cent cut! Enthusiastically they point out the difference could be made up by increasing charges for things like the orange badge scheme for disabled drivers and passengers, meals on wheels, meals at day centres, and the home help service.

The education committee is already celebrating the decision that it need only cut by 3 per cent - that's £2,856,000 - as if it were a victory. They have decided to put up school meals by 45p, to restrict free meals, to stop free milk for infants, to cut educational visits, to cut health and safety at work.

The chairman boasted: "None of the proposals which come before you today includes the sacking of teachers." As if that were an argument. When challenged about the implications of cutting free meals: "If there are this number of poor people in the country who cannot afford to feed their children it is a damning indictment of the last five years." And now the next five years will be even worse.

Barbarians is too kind a word for some of them.

Reduced Working Time Campaign

THE TUC is encouraging the labour movement to benefit from the lead given by the AUEW on the issue of reducing working hours.

A second progress report on the Campaign for Reduced Working Time takes up the question of overtime which has long ceased to be a means of earning a bit of extra money and has become, at an average rate of 15 per cent of industrial earnings, an essential part of the workers' battle against a lowered standard of living. The TUC Employment Department estimates that if all the overtime hours in manufacturing could be converted into full-time jobs it would provide enough work for almost all the registered unemployed in the manufacturing sector.

The labour movement is now recognising the fact that a good measure of the degree of unity we achieve on issues vital to us is the extent to which the TUC speaks with a clear and unambiguous voice.

The latest sign of this is the consideration of whether to pull out of the industrial strategy working groups set up by the previous Government to talk about investment, exports and unemployment. Instead, the TUC would exert pressure on individual managements and encourage direct negotiation where jobs were threatened - exactly what they ought to do!

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