

THE WORKER



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FIGHT FOR WAGES

We've got collective bargaining and we're starting a new round of wage claims. For us workers there's just one Dickensian "Twist" to the whole situation - we want more!

We've starved long enough and it did no good. There's still massive and rising unemployment and still the running down of our country's industry. We were asked to destroy ourselves to save capitalism in decline and we were foolish enough to agree. Now we fight for wages and to hell with capitalism! They ask us to go on making sacrifices that capitalism may live, since capitalism cannot afford to pay us more. But we have no interest in saving the system that exploits us. We aren't the management; we only work here and we want our wages.

Whatever pleas they make about saving this or that industry or this or that public service, the workers must be paid. And when has an employer ever said he could afford a wage rise?

We go for wage rises, the most our organisation in unions for class war can get for us: and every voice raised against our fight for higher wages is the voice of the class enemy. We throw all our united force into the struggle for wages, not because wages themselves are our main object but because the struggle for them is the main form of class war - and that class war can only end with our complete victory or our complete defeat.

We go for wage rises without worrying about the consequences because we're all too aware of the disastrous consequences of not going for wage rises - the highest unemployment since the thirties and the general dissipation of our skills. Capitalism is a jungle in which we need all our united strength in our unions and all our cunning in collective bargaining to survive. The social contract was our agreement to walk naked and alone into that vicious jungle. We must never let it happen again. Our strategy is simply this: Give us the money we have coming to us or we're going on strike. They will say that our strike is destroying the country when they mean that it's destroying capitalism. When has government or the media or the employers ever approved of a strike, anyway?

The fight for wages is as political as it is economic because there is no real separation between the capitalist system and the government that serves it, be it Labour or Tory. We're not concerned with whether a Labour or a Tory Government is brought down. We have to put behind us for good the nonsense that workers can save themselves by keeping a Callaghan in office.

We made a great mistake in agreeing to the wage restraint of the social contract. We are paying dearly for that mistake and we must never make it again. The right to collective bargaining and the right to work add up to the right for decent wages wherever we are. And we must never again regard the right as negotiable.



Dustmen in March, 1975, protesting at the Government's use of army scabs to try to break their strike. Photo shows army jeep crossing the picket line. Press Association photo.

Callaghan fiddles as Britain burns

We hold this Labour Government responsible for every death and injury and all the damage that may result from the firemen's strike.

In their illegal fixing of wages far below a level that makes any of our public services viable, they have driven firemen into taking this action which will have the support of the whole working class. The firemen are not striking only for their own pay; they are striking to smash the bonds this Labour Government tries to fasten on all workers in their pursuit of a policy of destroying Britain in

capitalism's service.

We condemn the use of army scabs who cannot possibly provide an adequate fire service and will merely be used by the Government to fool people into thinking cover is being provided.

The Government must be forced into a quick settlement of the Firemen's claims in the interest of the people of Britain.

Meanwhile Callaghan and Healey have found a new organ of 'democratic' rule in their war against the working class - the Opinion Research Centre which in

a poll of a few hundred sample citizens found that a large percentage thought that the Government's 'battle to defeat inflation should be supported'.

"It is the most astonishing and remarkable thing I have seen in many years", says Callaghan. "No poll has ever shown such unprecedented support for a government pay policy", shouts Healey.

Callaghan calls this "the general will" but it is all too reminiscent of the rigged plebiscites which have always been such a feature of fascist rule.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR HEALTH

THE public sector unions Week of Action, starting on November 21st, must raise a resounding 'No!' to all cuts. As if to quell the tumult, a stream of sweet words has recently issued from the Government about the future of the NHS. If we look at the reality instead, we will see that our answer can only be a revolutionary one.

Ennals' concern for conditions for patients in geriatric and mental hospitals, expressed while promising an 'extra' £50m for improvements and £55m for 'new' building in the NHS in the recent mini-budget, would have brought

tears to the eyes of anyone who had forgotten that this was but a small part of the amount cut from the NHS by the Labour Government over the last 2 years.

The Government has discovered another new way of disguising the cuts and decline - for example, the DHSS's recent consultative document, ironically named 'The Way Forward', talks of improvements in the needy areas, restricted growth etc., and yet insists that "the further restraint required" prevents these things being implemented, unless we all work harder and lower our standards ...

It admits acute services have become much more efficient in recent years, but insists there must be more curtailment; talks of shift of emphasis to community services and community hospitals, but admits little progress can be made in this area, and openly states that where local services for the mentally ill and handicapped cannot be provided, they will have to stay in their old mental hospitals. Then it sets out those areas where savings should be made - less cooked and the minimum food,

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WEEK OF ACTION AGAINST EXPENDITURE CUTS

A NATIONAL week of action to push home the need to call a halt to the destructive cuts in public expenditure has been called by the National Steering Committee against the cuts.

The week will begin on 21 November with local, regional and national action.

The Steering Committee is not planning to mount a demonstration similar to that it organised in London last November, when 60,000 people marched from Hyde Park to Westminster in a big protest against the cuts.

Instead it is concentrating its efforts through a series of coor-

minated local activities which will emphasise the effects of the cuts on local services and will exert pressure on local authorities, health authorities and other 'centres of local power'.

The regional committees of the National Steering Committee have drawn up plans of action for this autumn offensive which involve local organisations.

The weakness of the activity is the focal point, the presentation of a petition to No 10 Downing Street coupled with a lobby of Parliament.

The time will come to go to Downing Street, but not to plea for benevolence.

THE WEEK Chickens come home

THE journalists of the Daily Mirror continue their quest for a big wage increase. Very good, but let there be a stop to the filth with which the Mirror greets the wage claims of other workers.

MINERS are watching the Leyland men before taking a firm direction on their wage claim. Teachers are waiting to see how others fare before putting figures to their claim. Now, it's true that a gain for one section of workers is a gain for all. But to leave all the struggle and sacrifice to others is pure parasitism.

SOME are scandalised by the report that thousands of British soldiers on active service in Northern Ireland are living like "caged animals". There are two points to make. First, the people of Ulster should be spared the terror which is regularly released from behind bars. Second, the soldiers can return to a human existence when they are got completely out of the country.

Civil servants strike

MEMBERS of the 105,000 strong Society of Civil and Public Servants staged a half-day strike from 12 noon on Tuesday, 8th November in protest at the Government's refusal to honour the National Pay Agreement of 1974.

Contrary to the impression given by the national press, the strike received overwhelming support throughout the country with large attendances at 70 protest meetings. Heathrow and other major airports and docks were left without customs or immigration controls, DHSS and D of E offices closed and computer centres severely disrupted.

Since the Priestly Commission in 1955, Civil Service pay has been determined by comparison with the pay of similar workers in the private sector. In July '75 at the start of Phase 1, the Pay Research Unit (which produces all the facts and figures forming the basis for negotiation) together with the National Pay Agreement

THE important lesson to be drawn from a dispute at British Leyland's No 2 plant in Speke, Liverpool, is that past mistakes catch up with you.

In return for monetary reward, workers at Speke accepted a Work Study programme which would lead initially to men being taken off jobs and put into a reserve pool of labour. Through natural wastage this would lead to a permanent loss of jobs.

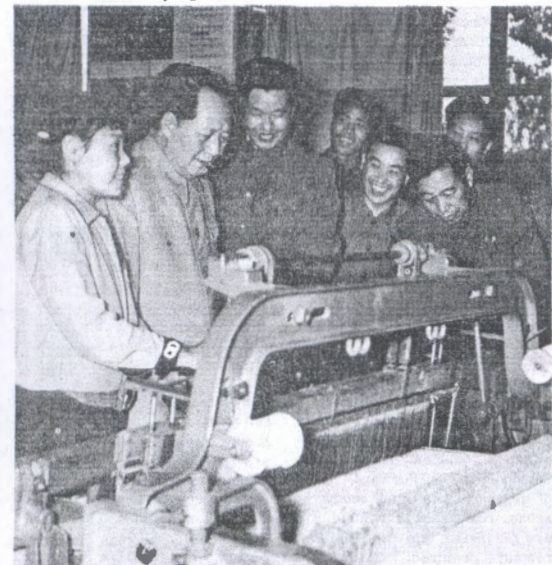
Management have been trying to enforce the new track speeds and man assignments for over twelve months. But a clause in the Protected Earnings Plan (PEP) states that in a failure to agree on the work-study findings, temporary arrangements are negotiated until such time as agreement can be attained. The shop stewards have used this clause to thwart management. Now management has decided that this is the appropriate time to attack on the issue of over-manning. The stewards called meetings of individual areas affected and walked out. The fight is on for jobs.

was suspended without warning, and despite the return to "free collective bargaining", it remains suspended.

The Government dare not allow the PRU to reveal the failure of their incomes policy and intend to impose a settlement of 5 to 6 per cent on their employees next April.

Well, they won't get away with it. The PRU pay system, which for 20 years has usurped the union's sovereign right to determine and negotiate its own wage claims and has been effective in restraining both wages and ideological advance, is proving to be the Government's stumbling block.

Now is the time to shed the shackles of PRU, to assert the sovereignty of the SCPS by a clear rejection of any form of arbitration and to put the whole strength of the membership behind the '77 Conference demand for a '78 wage claim of at least 20 per cent.



Mao Tsetung congratulating workers in Chengchow on a technical improvement (1960). A revolutionary change in the relations of production releases the creative energy of the working people while capitalism goes into an ever more rapid technological decline. Hsinhua photo.

EEPTU needs to reject wage restraint

THE EEPTU Biennial and Rules Revision Conference is being held at Blackpool in November of this year.

The key issues are the policies on 'Wage Restraint' and 'Democracy'.

Since the EEPTU voted in support of the twelve-month rule at the TUC and were so mandated to do by the last EEPTU conference, they have yet to take an unambiguous stand on wage restraint. A number of branches have motions for the November conference calling for a return to collective bargaining and a rejection of any form of wage restraint. These motions should be interpreted by conference to mean exactly what they say - NO TO ANY FORM OF WAGE RESTRAINT. So they can be considered in no other way than the prelude to an immediate wage claim. The EEPTU can only be governed by policy made at this conference.

The other question before conference is that of democracy in the union and union sovereignty.

It could be argued that since Mr. Justice Winn's judgment delivered in the High Court in June '61, in the case of Byrne and

Chapple v the ETU, where it was ruled that the ETU was controlled by the "Communist Party of the United Kingdom", the subsequent banning of its members from holding office, that the executive, under the guise of protecting its members from communist influence have eroded certain democratic rights, such as the right of members to appeal against executive decisions to a rank and file appeals committee, the election of Area Officials, Branch Secretaries, Union President by the membership (now elected from the executive), the closing down of branches, under the guise of amalgamation and industrialisation. The latter point leading to a situation where a branch of four thousand members has the same representation as a branch of four hundred members at the Biennial Conference.

If it is true, that certain aspects of democracy have been eroded, it has been done with the acquiescence of the majority of the union membership, and contrary to common belief there is still democracy enough, to effect change in policy. Too often, the forlorn cry of EEPTU members

calling for greater democracy is heard at the wrong place and at the wrong time.

With contracting in it is now possible to join the EEPTU without cost to yourself, dues being paid by the employer. Treasurers find that the central computer informs them they have to add numerous new names to the membership register. This prevents the traditional right of branches to discuss and interview each new applicant. Yet all this has come about with the acceptance or at least without the resistance of the membership. There has been a turning away from the Union by the members themselves. This process has been greatly speeded up by state fixing of wages, which develops the attitude, why bother to take part in the Union when wages are settled by the Government anyway.

Conference is the sovereign body of the EEPTU, and the basic democracy still exists, we must make sure that democracy is fully used for the purpose that it was created by our Clause Four. To improve wages and conditions and to force the social advance of society.

No bombs!

THE United States is currently exerting pressure to force the neutron bomb on NATO. This of course is the new capitalist device which can distinguish between workers and the buildings they work in, and kill the workers. So far, NATO has not agreed.

The situation is that the United States says it will not produce the bomb unless it can be used. The only place it is going to be used, say the Americans, is Europe. (A comforting thought for Europeans.) So before they go to all the trouble and expense of making it, they want assurances that Europe wants it.

Reports indicate that when the US put the matter to NATO's Nuclear Planning Group last month, everybody agreed that the neutron bomb was a good thing. The military argument, it is said, was overwhelming.

What then is making NATO hesitate? Certainly not the immorality of the thing, for they consider it much better than existing weaponry. No, the problem for NATO is that the people of Europe are not happy about such a thing as a neutron bomb being held over their heads.

In Britain it appears that our rulers have yet to make up their minds. We must decide for them. They hesitate only because they are not sure they can get away with foisting this vile implement of destruction on us.

In 1934 the Austrian government spent weeks reducing an entire working class housing complex in Vienna to rubble in order to suppress the workers there. The neutron bomb would save the British army that tedious expenditure of effort - one bomb and an estate is "clean".

Barbarism and war represent the highest achievement of capitalist civilisation. If we allow it they will destroy the world. It is time that we British workers stood up and said "Down with the Neutron Bomb. Down with NATO. Down with war." Nothing is inevitable unless we permit it.

Fight for public transport

BUSMEN in Bristol are finally having to face up to the problem that they and their union, the T&GWU, helped to create two years ago when they supported phases one and two of the social contract. For it has now become too clear to ignore that their wage levels have been critically eroded.

Added to that, buses in Bristol are seriously undermanned and men leave the job every day because of the poor pay and working conditions. The T&GWU has so far failed to tackle the combined problems of bad working conditions on the buses - due mainly to the heavy amount of overtime men are forced to do in order to live at all - and those 2500 unemployed in the Greater Bristol area alone who have the right to a job.

A principled stand of fighting for increased wages, proper manning levels and no overtime would be a courageous but long-awaited stand against unemployment and poor conditions - both direct results of the busmen's acceptance of the "one-man operated bus" and the social contract.

Without a demand for more money, the reduction in hours

from 130 to 96 a fortnight, no overtime, enforced longer rest periods, no more than four hours continuous driving, simply add up to EEC proposals from Brussels. These proposals are being met with anger by Bristol busmen, because they know that as things stand, squeezing in as much overtime as possible, they just can't make ends meet, and would probably, as one steward noted, gain more financially by quitting the buses and living off social security. That is why the correct line for them to pursue through their union is an immediate claim backed by strike action for higher wages. Our unions were not created to enable us barely to survive nor to live off social security. We have the right to work, to utilise and improve our skills and the right to leisure time to improve ourselves. The Bristol busmen are right to be suspicious of any EEC proposals which will be in the interest of Euro-capitalism, not workers anywhere. They have to fight themselves, in their struggle for wages, for a better public transport system which will play its part also in employing more workers.

Britain's power workers squander their strength

POWER workers, with their ability to black out the whole land by the throwing of a switch, may have seemed to be the envy of other workers who feel that they are lacking in 'muscle'. But on November 11 the leader of the power workers' shop stewards committee admitted defeat in their work-to-rule which had shut off power at various times in many sections of the country.

Since they had not based their struggle on their union but had, in fact, as one of their demands, insisted on extra-union bargaining rights, there was no hope of finding support for their attempt to escalate their action into a national strike. In their efforts to side-step a collision with manage-

ment and Government over pay by calling for such 'extras' as travel allowances and more away-from-home expenses, they also failed to gain the support an honest confrontation would have commanded. It is no use expecting other workers to support an attempt to use a special position to get more wages without fighting for them - and it does not work anyway because Callaghan says there are no key workers, no special cases. We say we are all key workers, all special cases, and we all have a right to pay rises.

The power of power workers, as of all of us, is in making our unions do the job they were created to do and in not trying to side around the wage struggle.

Education : erosion of NUT democracy threatened

LOCAL Associations of the National Union of Teachers throughout England and Wales are currently turning their attention to the Annual Conference of the union. This is the sovereign body of the NUT determining policy and ensuring its execution. Conference is the culmination of many months of hard work in the local associations.

There are some who want to change all this. They want to see the Executive (which at present is also able to submit policy making proposals) play the dominant role. The Executive would propose and local associations would have the right only to amend. It is through the process of presenting motions from the branches and their subsequent adoption or rejection that the NUT maintains its democracy. It is the responsibility of the members to maintain and

utilize this traditional method of deciding union policy. There is good reason to protect it: the onslaught against schools and colleges and those who teach and study in them has not subsided. Teachers must find new strength within themselves and so in the union to combat the attacks of central and local government.

Not enough has been done. There have been credible defensive actions but a full mobilization of the forces of the union has not been made. This will not come about until the members demand it.

Universities

UNIVERSITY lecturers are taking a first significant step in the fight for better salaries, a better career structure and a better higher education service, after years of shabby treatment by successive governments.

On Wednesday, 16th November, thousands of University lecturers from all over the country descended on the Houses of Parliament in London to let the Government and MPs know exactly how they feel about the suggested 10 per cent limit on wage rises after they have suffered several years of deliberate depression of their salaries as part of the blatant attack by the Government against the whole fabric of higher education.

This action by the Association of University Teachers shows that yet another section of the working class has recognised that no advance will be made without struggle.

Premature

THE threat of county-wide action by Essex teachers against £7 million cuts was sufficient to secure an extra 150 teachers. The action has been suspended but the

suspension is premature. The aim of the teachers has narrowed to achievement of a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:32 instead of 1:33. The national criterion for action, that of oversize classes, is better.

Who assesses?

LIVERPOOL overseers of education are enlightened people. The Education Committee, its chairman, its director are all above reproach, above failure and above incompetence.

It is not this Labour-controlled council's fault that there are metalwork classes with no metal. It is not their fault that teachers are using their skills to organise raffles, lotteries and draws to raise money for books and paper. It must be somebody else's. Surely?

The Chairman of the Education Committee must have an answer. He intends the Education Committee to study the best "... prac-

tices and methods to be used (for the) assessment of teachers and the establishment of a criterion of efficiency..."

It must then be assumed that it is teachers who are incompetent. Perhaps as a criterion of efficiency or competence we could suggest, as finance departments and Shirley Williams seem to want, that all those teachers who earn more than £1000 per year are incompetent. Or perhaps we could use a stopwatch to record how much time a teacher takes to sell a raffle ticket.

Teachers in Liverpool must turn around and assess the assessors. They must reject this further attack on education as the NUT members rejected the recent scheme for redeployment.

Building in Europe exhausted

THE latest projections issued by 'Euro-Construct', a group operating within the Common Market, outlines only too clearly the present state of Britain's construction industry and its future decline under capitalism. British capitalism is represented on 'Euro-Construct' by the National Economic Development Office which has recently made the report public. The main conclusions of the study show that although the outlook throughout Europe is very poor, in Britain this is especially so with continuing decline and no future developments in the building and construction field planned. Significantly, output here will be falling while others are expected to rise slightly under similar economic conditions. There has been an almost uninterrupted decline in construction output in Britain since 1973 and the report demonstrates how sharp this decline has been compared with other countries. Between 1973 and 1977 this represented a 25 per cent fall in activity with the promise that it will sink still further, especially in the civil engineering sector.

Civil engineering employment has fallen by 32 per cent since 1974 and building by 13 per cent, with the result that these together add up to 200,000 construction workers on the dole. Healey's so-called boost to the industry will have little effect on these figures, as any extra work created will be taken up by existing manpower, and central and local government expenditure will still remain 15 per cent lower than three years ago, without taking into account the effects of inflation.

Recent figures contained in an earnings survey published by the Department of Employment show that building industry workers are amongst the lowest paid in the country. The future of the industry under capitalism is clearly bleak. Many skilled workers are being lost to the industry and youngsters who wish to enter are finding this impossible.

In many areas the decline of British industry sent British capitalists engaged in construction running to Europe. It is now obvious that Europe is played out. All over Europe weekly working hours have been reduced and migrant labour sent home to their countries of origin. They are now concentrating their attentions even more on the Middle East, Africa and the Far East, determined to maintain profits at the expense of Britain.

Profitable asbestos responsible for thousands of deaths

ONLY six months ago the Fleet Street Press was giving a great deal of attention to the dangers of asbestos, as if it had just been discovered that asbestos was a danger to health. The fact that articles concerning this product rarely appear in the Press now does not mean that the danger has gone away or that asbestos is any less dangerous.

Looking back at the history of the industry it is possible to see that from the beginning of its use, at the end of the last century to the present day, the dangers have always been apparent. The first factory to refine it and transform it from its mineral state to a workable product was in France, where mainly young girls were employed and a large percentage of them died at early ages from asbestosis.

However, this did not stop its production. Its use spread over the years and although various token safety measures were introduced, workers continued to die. At the end of the Second World War an increase in construction coupled with a change in building techniques and designs resulted in an increase in the use of asbestos in the insulating sector, as a fire-proofer and as a cheap substitute for wood and plaster-board.

In Britain many deaths have occurred, although not all of them among people who actually worked with the product: such as the 53 year old miner thought to have died from pneumoconiosis, but after a post-mortem found to have died from asbestosis. The coroner believed he had contracted it as a child when living near Turner and Newall's asbestos factory at Washington, Co. Durham. Mr Tait was a Post Office telecommunications engineer who died of asbestosis in 1968. His exposure to the dust was no more than on visits to Post Office buildings where asbestos was being used. One in three members of families of asbestos workers in the Cape Industries factory, previously called Cape Asbestos, in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, showed signs of exposure to asbestos fibres when x-rayed, and one in a hundred die of cancer.

Perhaps the most startling evidence for this complete disregard of human life comes from the experience of insulation engineers members of the TGWU in Scotland, where only by taking strike action did they succeed in having asbestos withdrawn from use in their trade. Of the 500 members of TGWU (7/162 branch, Insulation Engineering, Scotland) exposed to asbestos, over one hundred are now dead and at present 56 are incapacitated due to asbestos-related diseases. Many of them are only in their mid-twenties.

Yet asbestos continues to be used widely, especially in the construction of false ceilings. Workers are continually informed by management that asbestos is not harmful when used in this particular form, in other words it's not blue. When approached on this subject employers will produce pamphlets and statements put out by an organisation called the Asbestos Information Committee. It is not made clear though that the AIC was set up in 1987 by Turner and Newall, Cape Industries and

BBA together with various other companies who dominate the asbestos industry. Of interest not only to building workers but to others as well, is a study conducted by Dr W Nicholson of Mount Sinai Hospital in America who discovered high levels of asbestos dust in offices that had asbestos ceilings in them; as a result Yale University removed all the ceilings of its ten-storey School of Art and Architecture because of the amount of asbestos in the air.

There is another shocking twist to this whole affair. Many of the older buildings in which the most dangerous form of asbestos, Crocidolite (banned in Britain in 1970) was used are being demolished and so another wave of deaths amongst demolition workers and de-laggers may well occur, considering the lack of union organisation amongst this section of workers and the common disregard of safety procedures.

The latest wave of public concern over asbestos resulted in the demand from various directions for its removal. It is common knowledge in the industry

that those employed to remove it are in many cases doing so without any personal protection or without the necessary precautions being taken to prevent dust escaping into the air, thus putting others into danger. It might be added that in some instances cowboy outfits, always on the look-out for a fast buck, are employing youngsters to undertake this work.

Since its early discovery asbestos is known to have been responsible for literally thousands of deaths. The reason that its use continues is that it is a very profitable product. It is after all chiefly extracted from the earth in its mineral form from South Africa, by workers who are paid starvation wages and are without the protection of trade unions. It is very cheap to refine and make into a workable form. As a very cheap substitute for plaster, fire-proofed wood and various insulating materials it has earned vast profits for capitalism. But although measures have been taken to regulate its use this has always come in the wake of action taken by workers.



Building workers and their supporters march in militant protest in February, 1974, at the jailing of pickets. During the building workers' strike the highly effective tactic of flying pickets was developed to spread action to other sites. The state countered this with vindictive sentences on the building worker pickets.

Grunwick

GRUNWICK strike committee is calling on all workers to take strike action in December in support of union recognition at Grunwick. This call followed the mass picket of 8000 held on November 7 when one fifth of the Metropolitan police was deployed to keep the small film processing factory in North London open.

The violence of the police at that picket was unprecedented in this dispute. Screaming Special Patrol Group policemen were unleashed on peaceful pickets. Women were dragged by their hair and kicked. Men were pulled out and punched, some fell unconscious. Students and teachers going to the neighbouring Willesden College of Technology were threatened and abused by the 4000 police force who cordoned the area around the factory. Scores of coaches full of policemen occupied the streets leading to the factory at Cooper and Chapter Roads. Nearby roads had more coaches, police cars and motorbikes. Mounted police were employed at the rear entrance to the underground station next to the factory entrance. A special canteen was installed to supply the police with tea and coffee. In the nearby Gladstone Park tents were erected to provide the police with further amenities. The whole atmosphere was one of a battlefield. Going south down Dudden Hill Lane towards the factory one was suddenly faced with hundreds of policemen lining both sides of the street forming a massive wall. Police motorbikes raced up and down with officers conducting a continuous conversation on their walkie-talkies. Suddenly and without any apparent reason one officer would summon a company of policemen sitting in one of the parked coaches to march quickly to one corner or another, forming a second cordon or a spear head to break up the picket line.

In spite of all this provocation the pickets who came from London, Kent, Yorkshire and other places held a meeting in Cooper Road and marched to Willesden Police station to protest against police violence.

The call for strike action should be heeded by workers throughout Britain. Those who came to the mass pickets must now persuade their workmates to come out and form a picket outside their own gate. The aim of such action is to force the government to withdraw their protection to the Grunwick employer. Romantic aims of 'stopping the bus' must be discarded. The aim is not to win a token gesture but to achieve the closure of the scab factory and force union recognition.

Sugar beet

WORKERS at five of the British Sugar Corporation's 17 processing factories have imposed a strict work to rule in support of a pay claim. This action by members of NUAAW, TEWU and EMWU has prevented the factories handling any sugar beet since the processing machinery normally runs 24 hours a day. Farmers are anxious to lift their bumper crop of sugar beet before conditions become too wet for the harvesting machinery, but shop stewards warn that if the BSC offer is unsatisfactory industrial action will spread to other plants.

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less beds shorter stays, the closure of 'inefficient' units, less home services - all disguised as "more efficient use of existing resources".

Other recent DHSS documents, 'Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped', 'Reducing the Risk: Safer Pregnancy and Childbirth', take a similar line - fine words, but no more money. The latter gives a good indication of the real decline of the NHS - the perinatal mortality rate has slipped to "no better than the Scandinavian rate of 10 years ago", which means 5,000 extra babies dying per year.

While considering what to do to stop the destruction of our health service, we must not be misled by the many diversions being put about. TUC, Labour Party and others have toyed with schemes for the 'democratic control' of the NHS, some calling for more local authority interference, some for 50/50 worker participation: all ignoring that underfunding is the main cause of defects in the health service - real democracy can only be the workers deciding the whole funding and direction of the NHS, not sharing in the administration of cuts. In the same vein are the attempts to blame closures and cuts in services on mismanagement by health authorities or on too many administrators. These arguments divide workers whose interests are the same, and are seductive to those who will not put the blame where it really lies - on the Labour Government.

Similarly, NHS workers must be wary of 'independent' review bodies on pay or staffing levels, public inquiries, and public watchdog bodies with no teeth such as the Community Health Councils (which can oppose closures but must suggest alternative ways to make the cuts!). All these can be used tactically to publicise our case, and often come out in workers' favour (if only under pressure of their actions), but they foster and reflect the dangerous 'special case' mental



Nurses voicing their demands for higher wages as they began their campaign back in 1974.

Press Association photo.

tality which argues that my cut is wrong but yours is OK. All cuts and closures must be fought as special cases, and no independent judgement of the fairness of our case will stop one cut, only our organised strength in opposition.

The plans for the 'autumn of offensive' against cuts by nine public sector unions, though inevitably a compromise, reflect the growth of united action by organised workers against the cuts; it also reflects their thinking, with all its good and bad aspects. It is completely clear on the need to oppose all cuts, on the emphasis on local actions (allowing the more advanced sections to give the lead to the others), and on the need to draw in the rest of the organised working class to defend its health service.

The tactics planned for the

week of action are a national petition, lobbies of parliament and local authority and health authority meetings, regional conferences, demonstrations and rallies, and general publicity activities. All these have been tried before and had only small success, but they can be made use of nonetheless to put forward the case against cuts with as much clamour as possible; remembering of course that local struggles to oppose particular cuts by the affected workers in their trade unions have been the most effective opposition to cuts so far. There is also the danger of the growth of broad front organisations against cuts, neglecting the trade union organisations where our real power lies.

Another mistake is the call in the petition for the implementation of the TUC's decrepit "after-

native economic strategy". As if it was our job to suggest better ways of running capitalism! It is the problem of this Government which is running down our economy and our public services on the orders of capitalism, to find funds for the NHS, not ours.

Let us make this autumn offensive show that we will defend our health service, and put terror into the minds of those politicians who obey capitalism's demand that it must be sacrificed. But we cannot forget the origin of that demand - as long as capitalism goes on decreasing our decline, gains like the NHS will always have to be fought for. We must see all our tactics in defence of the NHS in the light of the overall strategy of defeating the capitalist class. Then we shall create a health service which will once again be the envy of the world.

Rolls Royce strike : We are not amused

(Or why the Queen won't be getting her new Rolls on time.) THERE have been continuing developments in the strike at Rolls Royce Mulliner Park Ward factory in Willesden: On 28th October the loyal subjects of the factory sent a letter to Her Majesty the Queen, apologising for the non-delivery of her jubilee car. It also said: "The delay has been occasioned by a difference of opinion between the craftsmen who are building the car and their management over what constitutes an adequate standard of living." In the light of her other role as the richest woman in the world the workers decided to enclose an appeal sheet for donations. So far nothing has been received.

On a more serious note, as the strike entered its 8th week, the management (having looked in the factory and realised that the workers weren't there) held its first meeting with the strike committee. The management's personal touch was given by the guest appearance of the Divisional Director; his first meeting with the workers since his appointment almost a year ago. After three hours they produced a new offer: 10 per cent increase instead of 8 per cent and attempts to steer the

negotiations onto productivity bargains. Within 10 minutes the workers had rejected these, standing firm in their demand for 17 per cent.

In retaliation, the management attempted to undermine the authority of the strike committee, and implied that they hadn't informed the workers correctly of the new offer. They sent a letter to all workers plus a ballot form, setting out the offer and asking for a vote of acceptance. Infuriated workers returned these to the committee and last Friday (November 11th) 95 per cent of the work force, the largest turnout since the strike began, voted overwhelmingly for rejection. The management's ballot was declared null and void by both sides.

The men are determined and will not be intimidated by management's attempts to hide behind the Government's 10 per cent "guidelines". As the convenor said: "We are selling the dearest car in the world for the highest profit, made by the car world's most skilled workforce on what must be the world's worst pay for skilled workers. For highly skilled workers in London, we earn £2 less per week than the national average wage. Something's got to change."

Public Meetings

ALBANIA, AN EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD

Friday 25th Nov. 7.30pm.

Small Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1

(organised by the New Albania Soc.)

LONDON At Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, N.W.5. 7.30 pm:

- Fri December 2 Capitalism's destruction of the fishing industry.
- Fri December 9 The changing role of the police and the armed forces.
- Fri December 16 "The world is yours as well as ours, but in the last analysis it is yours." - The Role of Youth in Britain.

BRIGHTON At Brighton Workers' Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Rd., 8 pm
Thur November 24 Socialism - people not profit.
Thur December 8 Britain in the World 1977.

BRISTOL At Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, Old Market, 7.30pm:

- Fri November 25 One world divided by class.
- Wed December 14 For an independent Britain: No to devolution, No the the EEC.

"ALBANIA TODAY" - the theoretical magazine from Albania - is now available on subscription from the Bellman Bookshop. The subscription is £2.40 a year for six issues, including p+p.

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