

The Worker



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STEELMEN vs IRON LADY

Steel workers have given the labour movement's firm answer to Government proposals to make picketting ineffectual by law.

THE STEEL strike is a blow for peace and sanity in a mad world.

The Thatcher government which, alone of the governments of Europe, met no internal resistance to its plans to introduce the new nuclear missiles aimed at Russia, proceeded even more confidently along its path of aggression against British workers.

The offer of a massive wage-cut and the proposal to axe one third of jobs in British Steel goes hand in hand with the call for war against the USSR. Ignoring Thatcher's call for war, the steel workers are more interested in fighting for steel in Britain than for fighting Russians at Thatcher's behest.

'We will be putting a ring of non-steel around Britain' — Herman Rebhan

The context is one of civil war over steel; as one interview with Villiers, BSC Chairman, put it, the ex-Grenadier Guards Colonel Villiers is now a general without an army. He is as powerless a figure as Methuen of the CBI who prattles of the dangers to the economy of imports when British industry has never been so effectively protected against imports as in the present blockade. As powerless as Edwardes of British Leyland who whines about the danger of redundancy when at the root of increasing unemployment is he and his like.

Thatcher's posture of Olympian indifference is unconvincing as union after union, the General and Municipal, now the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, falls behind the steel unions. In opposition to the Government. Miners in Wales speak for strike action in solidarity; the dispute is extending to private stockholders and pri-

vate steelmaking, to halt all production of steel as workers round the world give their support and refuse to allow the British capitalists to move to break the strike in Britain.

This strike is offensive, not merely defensive, not simply guerilla in tactics - which it so successfully is - but nationally directed, organised, and supported, struggle at a higher level than before.

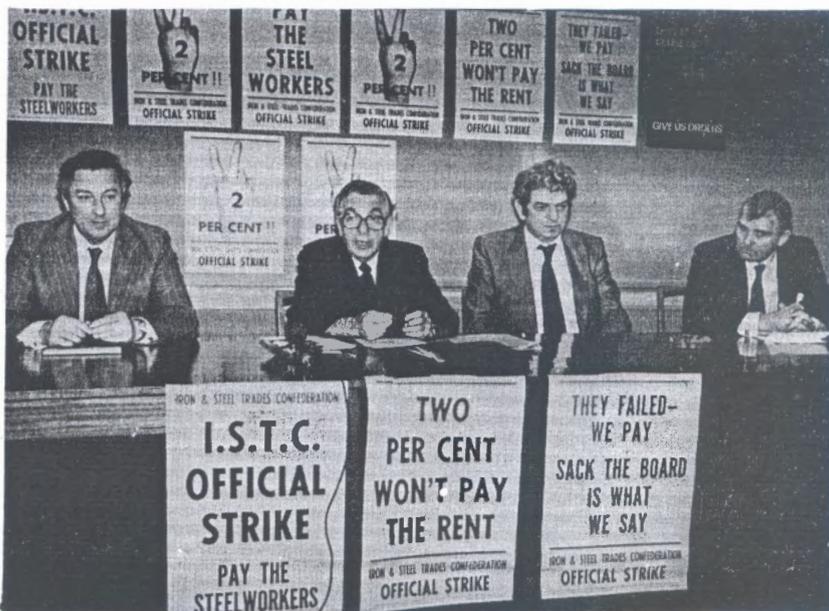
The steelmen have not waited for the promised axe of redundancy to fall before fighting, but have fought now, when the employers least expected. It is not a fight over the percentage figures of the money claim, but over the principle that BSC in its wage-cut proposals is seeking to dispense entirely with steelmen.

Rather than wait for the new legislation on picketing and unions to become law, the strike has destroyed them almost in their very conception, so plain is the strength of organised labour against the forces of the state. Only the other day, McNee, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, whinged at the problem of dealing with tens of thousands united on the streets, as at Grunwick. What must he fear now?

The unity and power developed by the strike, the flying pickets and solidarity action with unions nationwide have given a new dimension to the old truth: "one out - all out." It also means "one back - all back", for the fight is no less than to force the Government to sue for peace on its plans to throttle the industry. In the words of the Consett spokesman: "our unions have told management that when this strike finishes every plant goes back on the same day or no-one returns."

not enable the Government to withstand a long strike. So they would still have to negotiate a settlement. What the Government is banking on is the public turning against the water workers rather than the Government in such a crisis.

The water workers are demanding £15 a week on basic wages, a new minimum of £75 a week.



The General Secretary of the International Metalworkers Federation, Herman Rebhan, (second from left) at a meeting with Iron and Steel Trades' Confederation members pledged international solidarity and support for Britain's striking steel workers. Similar support has been given by the International Transport Workers Federation; and Swedish steel workers have said no steel from their country would be allowed to go to Britain while the strike was on.

As organised workers in Western Europe find themselves in the same situation, with a monopoly capitalist combine attacking the industrial core in each country to weaken trade union organisation, they are uniting in what could be a solid working class opposition to the EEC.

Afghanistan-pretext for war threats

THATCHER and Carter, urged on by China, are attempting to create an alliance of the most reactionary forces in the world. The anti-Communist Crusade of the late forties and fifties is being revived with great haste. McCarthy come back, all is forgiven!

The barbaric behaviour of the Islamic fanatics in Afghanistan, of killing all prisoners, shooting Communists, Communist sympathisers or anyone who does not pray to Allah at the prescribed time is reported with approval. Horrific pictures of an Afghan-istan teacher being shot for being a "Communist sympathiser" is described as "Islamic justice". The public beheadings of 63 people who occupied the Great Mosque in Mecca a couple of months ago is to be rewarded by a visit from the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, to strengthen the alliance with Saudi Arabia.

The US Defence Minister and British Foreign Secretary have been despatched to the area to forge such an alliance. The former went to China (today a fomenter of war and reaction)

where he watches military parades and manoeuvres. The US publicly agreed to supply China with monitoring and surveillance stations. What they agreed to in secret is, of course, another matter.

The Foreign Secretary has visited Turkey, and currently is in Oman on his way to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The purpose is to give military aid and to establish new bases in the area. The message is if there is to be a Jihad, let it be led by Anglo-US imperialism against another imperialist power, the Soviet Union.

At the British Government's insistence, the UN is discussing sanctions against the Soviet Union ostensibly for its occupation of Afghanistan. And this round the same table as the Afghan Delegate who insists on inviting the Soviet troops in - to the dismay of the US and Britain. How dearly they covet the Khyber Pass and Afghanistan as the launching pad for war in to southern USSR, a plan thwarted by the Soviet troops.

In reality the discussion is

about a Third World War. Those countries who will join the Britain - US - China axis and support taking sanctions will declare themselves ready to join the anti-Soviet crusade.

The British labour movement, locked in battle with the Thatcher government on wages, conditions and cut-backs is implicitly rejecting her plans for war. We must now consciously enlarge our opposition to include the war-mongering of Thatcher and Co. We must declare ourselves openly opposed to the war hysteria created by the present government.

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Troops against water workers?

THE THATCHER Government is preparing to bring in 15,000 troops to break the national strike proposed by Water workers. The Civil Contingencies Unit (an assortment of cabinet ministers and leading civil servants) has prepared the plan which would require the declaration of a state of emergency.

It is quite clear, however, that such an operation would

The Week

Surprise, Surprise! Liu Shao-chi the Chinese head of State who was thrown out during the Cultural Revolution, is about to be rehabilitated. Liu, who was regularly denounced for his championing of policies that would lead China on to 'the capitalist road', died several years ago. But what we are seeing now is 'rewriting of history on a grand scale. After all, if the Chinese government now welcomes foreign investment, while its new legal code allows for the payment of profit, why pick on old Liu who was a man before his time? The next rehabilitation we can expect is that of Genghis Khan, who was unjustly criticised by ultra-leftists. And he did hate Russians, didn't he?

The International Longshoremen's Association in New York have decided to boycott Russian shipping in protest over Afghanistan. An interesting reversal of the Jolly George incident which in 1919 opposed intervention in Russia. However west coast dockers have ignored this latest call from the east coast. They carry on work as normal. The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in San Francisco say they will engage in no such boycott, and what's more the union executive refuse to even consider such reactionary nonsense.

What a charade was put on in Oman when Carrington stopped there on his anti-Soviet tour as the travelling salesman for war-mongering Thatcher.

Great play was made by the Sultan Qaboos asking for military aid so that Oman could hold out against the Russians in their putative drive southwards, - as if the Omani Sultanate was not already receiving military aid from both the US and Britain. As if the puppet army fighting the progressive People's Front for the Liberation of Oman has not always been run by seconded officers from the British Army.

It is interesting to hear about those people in Kabul who entered Poleshokwrt prison and freed prisoners. Perhaps they were justified. It got front page treatment in the Times. A prison incident in London a few weeks ago got rather less publicity. Prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs had peacefully protested about bad conditions. About a hundred were sitting in a group in the exercise yard waiting for the prison officials. Instead the gates opened and scores of the MUFTI squad (from other prisons) piled on and attacked the prisoners. There were scores of injuries. There has been no inquiry.

It's pretty obvious why the Tory Government have decided to close down the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. The Commission has just published its final report. It notes that the richest 1 per cent of the population own more wealth than the 80 per cent.

It particularly emphasises that nearly three quarters of the lowest paid workers in Britain are women.

Historic Notes

THE VICTORIAN British ruling class regarded India as the jewel in the crown of the Empire, to be guarded at all costs. The dangerous rival was Russia and the weak frontier was Afghanistan. Subjection of the Afghans was therefore a prime objective of the British government in India. Friendship with them proved difficult, however, as they were a group of fighting tribes who had lived for centuries despoiling the traders through the Khyber Pass.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the English and Russian frontiers were separated by 4,000 miles, reduced to 2,000 in the nineteenth by the British annexation of Bengal. When the Russians in their turn began to advance the frontier, the British started the First Afghan War. An army led by General Elphinstone, at the demand of the East India Co., occupied Kabul in 1837. In 1841 there was an uprising so the General agreed with the Afghans to evacuate the town and go back to British India under safe conduct. The Afghans proved treacherous, attacked the British force of 4,500 men and killed or captured everyone except a doctor who escaped to the fort of Jellalabad near the entrance to the Khyber Pass in January 1842. After a display of great bravery by Indian

Afghanistan under the British

and British troops defending Jellalabad, a fresh British force under General Pollock advanced into Afghanistan, defeated the Afghans and occupied Kabul. The historian Mowatt wrote "After thus indicating the prestige of the British Empire, the East India Co. recognized the independence of Afghanistan and evacuated the country." The nightmare of the British always was that the Russians would make friends with the Afghans because it was believed almost impossible for them to scale the great mountain wall of the Hindu Kush if the Afghans were hostile to them. In 1878 the nightmare came true when the Amir invited a mission of Russian officers to reside in Kabul. The British Government in India demanded the same right and that the Amir should conduct his foreign relations only through the Government of India. War followed and the Amir was compelled to accept these terms in 1879. An officer of the Political Department was sent to Kabul and on September 3rd he and his escort of 75 Indian soldiers were killed. For the second time the Afghans had shown their contempt for the British so now a lesson had to be taught. (Is that where Hua learnt the phrase?) General Roberts, later of Boer War fame,

marched at the head of 7000 Indian and British troops through the Kuram valley to Kabul but meanwhile Governor Burrows had been defeated by the Afghans at Kandahar. At all costs the legend of British invincibility had to be retained in order to hold down India so Roberts was despatched with thousands of troops, horse, mules, camels and guns to march to Kandahar 313 miles away. They did this very quickly, met Ayub Khan and routed his Afghan army. A new Amir was chosen by Britain and the original terms were imposed on him. With a minimum of internal authority, all external authority belonged to the British. British power had been vindicated, Russian influence expelled and rifles and money were given to the ruler Abdurrahman to keep down the people or as the British expressed it "to keep law and order". One of the most repulsive aspects of these invasions was the war fever in Britain and particularly amongst the radicals in the industrial towns.

A similar phenomenon can be observed today in the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and the National Union of Mineworkers. It is marvellous to behold how belligerent men past calling-up age become.

BOOK REVIEW Charlotte Bronte by Mrs. Gaskell

HOW refreshing to plunge into the "Life of Charlotte Bronte" (for whom "originality is the pearl of great price in literature") written by no less a genius Elizabeth Gaskell. It is available at Bellman Bookshop at £2.75 in Everyman.

For Mrs. Gaskell, no attempt to systematise, to explain away the contradictions in the life of the author of Jane Eyre, to apologise for her, in the familiar, disguised manner of the patronising academic - but a whole-hearted appreciation of the rich individuality of her friend.

How much simpler for the academics if the youthful admirer of Wellington had not spoken so feelingly in a letter of those "by the late strange railway system deprived almost of their daily bread", if Charlotte hating Popery with all her soul had not avidly crossed the channel for the instruction of a catholic whose teaching in the close little world of a Brussels pension flat might have graced any university.

God-fearing, Tory Charlotte Bronte hardly endears herself to the liberal mind. Not surprisingly, given her judgement on John Stuart Mill, whose "head is, I dare say, very good, but I feel disposed to scorn his heart."

Mrs. Gaskell's biography is a joy to read because she lets Charlotte Bronte come alive, as herself, above all through her letters. Charlotte speaks to us of the life at the Haworth parsonage, of her sisters Emily and Anne, of their illness and death, of the horrors of private schooling (whether as pupil or teacher, and Charlotte was both), the more vivid and more prosaic than Dotheboys Hall, and in dull reality the death of one of the family.

Charlotte's life was shaped by the Yorkshire moors. How well the northern independence of mind is described by Mrs. Gaskell,



with its fond recollections of Cromwell, the violent passions of the Dissenters, the stirring tales of the Luddites.

We then visit the schoolrooms, English and genteel, popish and foreign, enter the world of publishing in Pater Noster Row (how old fashioned and honest to us now) in the shadow of St. Paul's. There is Charlotte's contact, in person or through their books, with great writers, then new and striking, uncanonised, Balzac, Jane Austen, Thackeray, their judgements are a joy to read.

Charlotte Bronte, like her biographer defies simplified academic judgements, so a la mode, for example in the Penguin Introduction to Mrs. Gaskell's work, died in 1855 a year after the outbreak of the Crimean War. It is a measure of her biographer's skill and tact,

This latest legal attack in the form of the Employment Bill now before Parliament, seeks to outlaw unionisation. Preserving capitalism is what Thatcher's government is all about; if it means war, then so be it. At home the ruling class is preparing for the revolution that must come if the working class is to survive. A new television documentary series has the 1960's, General

that the simple quotation of a letter, written a few months before her death, suggests the journey of the mind travelled by Charlotte Bronte, the youthful admirer of Wellington.

"I say nothing about the war; but when I read of its horrors, I cannot help thinking that it is one of the greatest curses that ever fell on mankind. I trust it may not last long, for it really seems to me that no glory to be gained can compensate for the sufferings which must be endured. This may seem a little ignoble and unpatriotic; but I think that as we advance towards middle age, nobleness and patriotism have a different signification to us to that which we accept while young.

The Life of Charlotte Bronte by Mrs. Gaskell.
Published by Dent £2.75

Kitson, who now teaches tomorrow's Army top brass how to stop British workers from taking over.

The Army's role in capitalist Britain has been made abundantly clear in the last few months both on television and in the press. The part they play today as scabs during industrial disputes will be expanded; they will shoot workers if necessary.

Imperialist China joins British and USA imperialism against USSR

ONE OF THE main historical events leading up to the present situation in Afghanistan is China's defection from socialism.

The original break between Moscow and Peking was ideological. The Soviet Union after Stalin's death, when Khrushchev took over, was turning its back on socialism; and China, under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung was determined that socialism should be maintained and that socialist countries and movements throughout the world should be encouraged in every way short of exporting revolution.

After the deaths of Mao Tse Tung and Chou En-lai, the gang which succeeded them by a coup also turned their back on socialism. This had the effect of transforming ideological differences with the Soviet Union into an inter-imperialist rivalry. China's alliance with US imperialism and those imperialist powers in league with the US, like Britain, formed a hostile ring around the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries. It was ironic that the Soviet Union, which had once contributed to the encirclement of socialist China by imperialist powers, now found it self encircled by hostile imperialist powers including China.

Such a result represents the complete failure of Khrushchev's policy of linking Soviet imperialism with US imperialism in joint hegemony based on the shared nuclear ability to threaten to destroy the world if they couldn't dominate their respective spheres of it.

But many people were not cowed by this ordering of world affairs, which was a little like, and no more enduring than, the Pope's division of the world between Spain and Portugal. Most importantly the Vietnamese administered such a sound defeat to US imperialism that the whole American dream of the 'American Century' burst like a bubble in the ignoble scramble to get out of Vietnam.

The utter failure of the Khrushchev line as the Soviet Union finds itself ringed by hostile powers, some of whom obviously think that a world war would solve some of their domestic problems, at least creates conditions favourable to a change in the Soviet Union - a renascence of socialism in socialism's first home. The impetus for such a change must come from the inside, from the Soviet working class itself, but to a people who have known the advantages of socialism and are experiencing the hardships and dangers at home of an imperialist policy abroad, the urge to restore socialism must be strong.

So many things are being repeated these days - like the chance for us workers in Britain to get it right this time and prevent our own bourgeois government's drive to an imperialist war. We may also see the time when our line of refusing to allow Thatcher to get her wish of a war against Russia will be given the old proletarian passion of defending our brothers in a Soviet worker's state whom we so signally failed to adequately support before.

Editorial

Last year Cornell University, in upper state New York, held a conference on the crisis in Britain and now makes available to the British public at £7.95 a copy, under the title IS BRITAIN DYING?, the results of their deliberations. Pricey medicine for a dying man!

We can answer their question straight away. Britain is not dying: it is being murdered by moribund capitalism.

Two other studies attempt to shed light on this problem of Britain's economic crisis. The report of the Government's Advisory Council for Applied Research says that Britain must speed up the introduction of new technology if it is to survive as a trading nation. The Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex will be publishing in February a study of the entire OECD area showing that Britain alone, between 1967 and 1975, actually reduced industry-financed expenditure on research and development and is at the bottom of the table in terms of any provision for future technological development.

Both of these reports call for massive investment in new technology if Britain is not to fall hopelessly behind even the more go-ahead under-developed countries. Both reject completely the present Government's thesis that all that is needed is to create the right economic climate by monetarist means and then successful capitalists, out of their vast profits, will be able to invest in research and development.

In addition to these two reports there are the Finlston Committee's proposals for enabling British engineers to compete with the engineering standards of Britain's rivals - this in the country that practically invented engineering. These proposals include the sort of educational provisions to be found in any socialist country of linking engineering theory and practice instead of teaching theory academically and leaving practice to be plucked up in employment. The expenditure required to implement the educational recommendations would come to £60 million. That's the increase needed for engineering alone at a time when the present Government is cutting all higher education. It's like a man claiming he has found the way to solve the problem of bills he can't pay - suicide!

None of these conferences and reports dare to point out the most obvious conclusion to be drawn. Britain's crisis is not one of a failure in innovative imagination or skill in workmanship. In spite of all the handicaps these reports show British capitalism to have been putting in the way, British engineers, technicians, researchers and industrial workers generally are still achieving original breakthroughs on a number of industrial fronts - the recycling of diesel and other oils, obtaining oil from coal and even from rubbish; the invention of the jet engine, the hovercraft and high-speed magnetic monorail transport; computers and chip technology which began here only to be exploited elsewhere and British scientists are taking the lead in the new biotechnology.

No, the simple fact these experts don't wish to recognise is that because Britain is the first capitalist country, the contradictions within the system, primarily the contradiction between the capitalist class and the workers in whose labour power they profitably traffic, have had longer to work themselves out to the point of acute crisis. Britain is the most obvious example of capitalism's decline but the decline is general and what is happening to Britain today will be happening to other capitalist countries tomorrow. That is why what the working class in Britain does about it is so important to workers everywhere else. That is why, also, experts don't want to look up from their narrow analysis to see the writing on the wall.

None of the remedies proposed in these reports can really restore Britain to economic health - only getting rid of the capitalist system altogether can do that. These reports do show, however, that the last desperate measures to which British capitalism has been reduced as exemplified by the policies of the Thatcher gang - cutting back higher education and research and development, cutting back the general education which is the bed-rock on which the other two rest and destroying the industrial core of Britain to get at the organised workers based there - is simply a prescription for sudden economic death.

But we can reassure the academics at Cornell University who are so worried about us, and for only 5p! We British workers have no intention of letting Britain die as capitalism declines nor of being murdered by British capitalists in a final auto da fe.

New technology and the modern world

ACCORDING to The Economist "The next century's under-developed nations will be those industrial societies which fail to harness the explosion of micro-electronic technology." So exactly which industrial societies will fail to harness it? Don't we get the impression that Britain, with its abysmal record of industrial investment will be amongst them?

The two leading nations in micro-electronics are the USA and Japan. In the former, its development has been fostered by massive government spending, particularly in weaponry. In Japan the government spent £1000 million between 1972 and 1978 in conjunction with private industry to develop all aspects of micro-electronics.

Not until 1978 was the British government provoked into action. Meanwhile British industry waited in the wings until cash handouts were forthcoming. The result was a £300 million programme to launch three ventures under the direction of the NEB and to promote the use of micro-processors in industry. Furthermore, substantial regional aid was granted to GEC to set up a micro-chip manufacturing plant in partnership with the American, Fairchild.

The attitude of the incoming Tory government to this programme has been ambiguous. While ideologically committed to the free market, Keith Joseph has not yet put his axe to these projects. However the funding of the promotion of micro-electronics in industry has

A less bright tomorrow?

been pruned, and Joseph has made it amply clear that he would prefer to see all the NEB's assets in private hands. In the words of New Scientist "Although the world in 1980 looks very different from the eighteenth and nineteenth century era of industrial revolution and growth, the government sending its industrial troops into battle armed only with tax rebates and a chauvinistic belief in their innate talent and innovative genius"

Biotechnology, the second major innovation, could be as far reaching in its consequences as the micro-chip although it has received relatively little publicity. It consists of harnessing microbes and the tissues of plants and animals, either in their natural or genetically altered forms to produce whole new ranges of products as well as older ones by new methods in industries such as pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals and food.

Biology may launch an industry as characteristic of the twenty-first century as those based on physics and chemistry have been of the twentieth. In contrast to micro-electronic development, British scientists have been at the forefront of research. However, as The Economist points out: The problem is that - with the notable exception of ICI and the American owned Searle (UK) - it is more talk than action.

This technology calls for large scale investment. For example in its first industrial application the production of single cell protein, \$500 million has already been spent world wide. At present a working party is investigating with some urgency the potential of biotechnology in British industry. Whatever the recommendations of this working party, given the high level of investment needed, they are bound to involve some degree of state intervention to promote and fund its application.

In the present atmosphere it is likely that such recommendations will meet with total indifference if not active discouragement. After all should not the back street workshops which engendered so many of today's industrial giants be sufficient for the scientist-entrepreneur experimenting with genes and enzymes. Perhaps they have in mind something like the backstreet workshop established by Hoffman-La Roche in 1967 in New Jersey - an institute of molecular biology with an annual budget of \$6 m.

That other form of investment in the future, education is also relevant here. Investment in new technology plant and equipment, but also education to foster new skills and innovative abilities. It does not take an expert to guess that radical advances in industrial processes would also require advances in education, to train workers to man those industries. The unavoidable conclusion is that more resources should be devoted to education to meet this challenge!

Teachers in Avon try to stop the rot

THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT was undoubtedly pleased with the way in which Avon LEA called to the call to make expenditure cuts way back in July 1979. The effect of these cuts, over £4m off education, are now clearly being felt.

Through 'natural wastage', early retirement without replacement, 'freezing' of vacant posts, refusal to cover maternity leave with short-term contracts, under the umbrella of 'a strict application of pupil teacher ratios', the LEA has cut at least 300 teaching jobs in the county. In order to implement these policies the LEA has tried to enforce new timetables in secondary schools in the middle of the academic year.

These new timetables would mean larger classes, loss of remedial provision, non specialist teachers, amalgamation of sixth form groups and the cutting of subjects altogether. In short, the destruction of worthwhile education for thousands of

children.

As soon as the cuts were announced Avon Division of the NUT developed a very clear policy towards them. Firstly, total opposition to all cuts in public expenditure, secondly a determination to fight cuts as they affected its own sector.

Throughout the Autumn term numerous public meetings, rallies and thousands of leaflets explaining the situation were organized, culminating on 15th Nov. in the biggest demonstration seen in Bristol since the war.

The NUT warned Avon that its members would refuse to cover up the cuts, specifically the cuts in jobs when they were made in December 1979. The Union committed itself to a timetable freeze, which means that members make themselves available to teach the old timetable (Sept. 1979) but refuse to teach any part of the new timetable (Jan. '80).

Avon failed to heed that warning and when the Spring Term

began last week, the worst affected schools implemented the Union's policy. This has resulted in thousands of children being sent home as NUT members refuse to connive at the cuts by implementing new timetables.

In response, the rats at Avon House have crept out of their holes and denounced the damage which the NUT is inflicting on education!

But the members are clear that they have to fight now if they are to stop the cuts. Just as the steel strike is showing what a vital industry steel is so Avon teachers' action is forcing recognition of the vital need for education.

A meeting between the LEA and national representatives of the NUT was fruitless and the Division is now making plans for an escalation of the fight, drawing in the support of hundreds of members who indicated their willingness to take strike action in a ballot held last term.

of work!

And the responsibility of doing something about it lies with the employed and organised working class.

We cannot say to youngsters: 'don't go part time to school, do nothing instead. Or to the teachers on these courses; don't do it - don't eat.

But the teachers' unions and the whole of the labour movement must decide whether they want the destruction to continue and the new young generation to be pensioned off before their apprenticeship begins.

MSC disguises job loss and attacks education

LAST YEAR 35 young unemployed teachers were taken on to teach 700 unemployed youngsters in a number of Liverpool secondary schools.

The courses were not school or academic courses nor a vocational training. They were not financed by the Department of Education and Science but by the Manpower Services Commission's Special Temporary Employment Programme, with special permission from the Supplementary Benefits Commission. The only features about these courses which appear to have any connection

with education are that they take up school space, Head's time and qualified teachers who should be properly employed and paid as teachers.

This set-up was a development of a scheme which allows young people under 21 to study for up to 21 hours a week in further education colleges, provided that when a job comes up they are prepared to drop their studies immediately, even days before an examination.

Now school heads are to be encouraged to run special, part-time further education courses for the young unemployed. This is an incredibly sad reflection of the miserable prospects facing youngsters leaving schools. For these courses do nothing except allow them to stay off the streets while drawing the dole for a very short time.

It is also a most dangerous signal of an entrenched accep-

tance of unemployment and run-down, shown in an attitude to schools. State schools have never been part-time institutions nor are they the responsibility of foreign bodies such as the Manpower Services Commission, but of the education authorities. These things are crucial to the strength and standards of state education. Poney courses to keep youth off the streets and out of the factories, offices and other places

..... The need is for real education and real jobs

Worker Interview

Port Talbot steelmen solid to save industry

THE BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION has put forward three proposals for the major steel plants in South Wales:

- To close the Port Talbot works, or,
- To close the Llanwern works, or,
- To close down the finishing mills at Port Talbot, keeping the steel making section open. Steel would be transferred to Llanwern for finishing, the steel making section there being closed down.

It is the third alternative which the BSC has deigned to declare the least disruptive to the two steel communities. 15,000 jobs are at stake. Least disruptive???

Will Williams, who is 55, has worked at Port Talbot since he left school. He gave an interview for THE WORKER.

Question: What was the reaction to the BSC proposals?

Answer: At first people were stunned. Normally the eastern end of town is under a red cloud from the works. Over Christmas the whole town was under a cloud. Workers have since become angry and are determined that the whole of the Port Talbot works should remain open and not at the expense of Llanwern.

Q: Is this anger reflected in the solid support for the strike?
A: Very much so. Some sections of the works had been labelled token trade unionists. These sections would be hardest hit by redundancy. Yet they have led the way on the wages question. Q: What reasons does BSC give for its proposals to cut down on steel making capacity?

A: Lack of profit. Their figures show that Llanwern lost £5 million and Port Talbot £1 million last year. We don't accept their figures. Anyway the RAF loses aircraft which cost £10 million each. Nobody closes down the RAF. The real reason for closing down the works is that they don't want the steel produced. We are being denied access to our markets through agreements made which are detrimental to the whole of the working class and not just steel workers. 25 per cent to 30 per cent of steel used in Britain comes from abroad. We are capable of producing all the steel that this country needs and more.

Q: Should closure occur what will be the consequences?
A: For Port Talbot, disaster. The town is 99 per cent dependent on the works for its existence. There are no alternatives. It will lead to massive long term unemployment in the community. A loss of dignity for the workforce. It is to prevent this degradation that the works must be kept open.



THE BRITISH Government are again masquerading as the peace-makers in Ireland. They still pretend that it is the Irish who are the problem; difficult, intransigent, ready to murder one another the minute the British back is turned. The Lancaster House talks have gone to their heads and they think everyone will believe that because Hume and Paisley sit down at a conference table that some solution can be found.

The peaceful solution discovered for Rhodesia meant British troops

being sent. Since troops are already in Ireland it is difficult to imagine what the outcome of the Northern Ireland talks could be. But certainly yet another excuse for more repression when the inevitable breakdown comes, as it surely will be.

All previous attempts by the British government have failed to repair its international image. Nothing Paisley and Hume could say to one another will remove the troops, or end torture.

The only solution for Ireland and

for the British people is for the British government to withdraw its troops and leave Ireland alone. It won't do this, so the people will have to throw them out.

The present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland thinks his career has been made. He has got rival politicians talking to one another but he will hardly be able to manipulate them in quite the way Lloyd George did in 1921; Humphrey Atkins is no Lloyd George and will not succeed in making Ireland a peaceful colony.

Government cuts prevent progress on one prevention scheme in five, despite recent massive damage

FOR THOUSANDS of people the New Year meant picking up the pieces of their lives after their homes had been devastated by floods.

Naturally in a country noted

for its interest in the weather it is of little surprise that great theories about the "freak" floods have been bandied about.

But blame the weather all you might, you cannot escape the conclusion that by and large these floods could have been prevented.

It is no coincidence that areas with flood prevention schemes stood up well to the rain. In Exeter, Devon, for example the £4 million floor relief channel completed in 1977 once again saved the city from the floods it was once famous for.

Yet in nearby Newton Abbot where residents have been pleading for a flood relief scheme ever since serious flooding in 1936, the still def-

enceless town was damaged to the tune of £1 million.

As those affected around the country once again campaign for relief schemes 'what is the prospect? Already water authorities have had their capital expenditure budgets cut in 1978/79 to only 58 per cent of that of 1973/74.

The National Water Council warned the Government that the Industry's expenditure was being cut to dangerous levels. The Tories answer? An 11 per cent at this financial year and a standstill budget next - which with 20 per cent inflation means one in five projects will have to be scrapped or postponed. Inevitably some of those schemes will be for flood prevention.

London Transport starved to death

HOW OFTEN have you come across a management that actually wants you to do less and less work? When it happens, you know it's not out of the goodness of their hearts: they've got a trick up their sleeves. And that is exactly what is happening now in some areas of London Transport.

In the bus maintenance and repair depots, at Chiswick and in other places, bonus schemes have been introduced recently which seem to be a result of management madness. In many areas it seems like money for old rope - you just follow the scheme, work less hard, and draw more money. But will it be money for old rope when the money in the wage packet is the redundancy pay-off? Meanwhile, there are buses parked in bus depots and fields all over London waiting for repair. But they are not being stripped down and repaired. Instead, the management waits until a nice backlog has been built up, then asks for the work to be contracted out.

At Chiswick the management decided long ago that they wanted to run down the repair operation, and introduced a mild form of factory bonus scheme six years ago. Two years ago, they decided things weren't going slow enough, and decided that a more severe scheme was necessary. But in the machine shop there was opposition.

The machine shop kept out of the bonus scheme on the grounds that the existing method of work study was not workable on their machinery. Now the fight is one to get the scheme thrown right out of the Chiswick works.

The first step was taken at a mass meeting where the contracting-out of work was unanimously rejected. That battle was won with the management. Now the backlog has to be cleared: you can't fight eternally against contracting out if you allow a situation to develop where you can't handle the work.

We have seen the systematic murder of London's major and basic manufacturing industries, together with a slashing of the city's services in schools, hospitals, local councils, etc. In fact, everything that is necessary for a healthy, educated working class has been cut. The planned cuts in London Transport would be another nail in the coffin of the capital.

It is a double-edged threat: workers who use London Transport suffer through increased fares and longer waits; while workers on the buses and tubes find the axe hanging over their jobs. The threat is real. As the then Leader of the Greater London Council said at the end of 1977, planned cuts would "decimate our public transport system", which would mean compulsorily laying off transport workers

and cutting existing bus and tube services.

Now we see the GLC with a policy of increasing fares, which only forces passengers off buses and tubes. This, combined with all the cuts in capital spending, can in the long run only add up to one thing - the jobs of LT workers. It is ironic that after the introduction of "new" types of schemes involving redundancies by natural wastage, we see those familiar notices at tube stations: London Transport regret that passengers will suffer delays, due to shortage of staff... (although London Transport is bolstering up one area - its services to tourism).

Almost daily, reports conflict and confuse. There are plans for "more acceptable" cuts, or certain cuts are to be shelved. But the intention to "decimate our public transport system" still remains, and is deliberate. Are LT workers going to permit it? Only they can prevent it, by using their trade union organisation and united strength where they work, whether it be on road or rail, in the offices, depots or garages. They will need to be more watchful than they have been in the past. When there's no work coming through, and your workplace seems like a holiday camp, that doesn't mean there's no work to be done - only that the management, for reasons of its own, doesn't want to give you any.

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