

The Worker



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IRELAND. ONE NATION BRITISH TROOPS OUT

A NATION on our doorstep is subjugated by an army drawn from our ranks. The same army will march against us. We will never be free while we permit Ireland to be occupied. Our task as British workers is clear. We must assist our Irish brothers and sisters and demand loudly and ever more vehemently that the troops of British capitalism be removed from Ireland. We are very close to Ireland geographically and politically. Our destinies are linked.

Troops were sent to Ireland ten years ago to control a popular upsurge, a disorder that threatened too close to the heart of Imperialism. They called themselves 'Peacemakers' and then proceeded to murder men and women in the streets. Human rights were suspended. People were searched in the streets by armed gunmen.

In ten years the form of British domination has changed but not the substance. The "loyalist" parliament at Stormont has gone, as have the "B" Specials and the Special Powers Act, but they have simply been replaced by Direct Rule, the Emergency Provisions Act and the SAS. British Imperialism is determined to maintain its stranglehold on its oldest colony and meets each changing situation with a new array of oppressive measures. At one time there was much talk of new political initiatives to solve the "Irish Question".

but with the abandonment of even the pretence of using the army to protect the Irish people from themselves, the policy of an imperialism clinging on at all cost has no need for any new initiative.

The working class in northern Ireland have paid in full for ten years of army protection. Waves of bombings and shootings have left almost 2 000 dead and countless more maimed and injured, far from preventing conflict the very presence of the army does much to inspire it. The conduct of the army has, to say the least, been

appalling and has caused outrage in all communities. Spot checks on cars and people continually harass and house searches leave behind a trail of destruction. Widespread use of the powers to detain for 72 hours before preferring charges is made to create an atmosphere of fear. Their presence serves only to maintain a cycle of terror, in which the SAS is only the latest and most brutal instalment, which is designed to obstruct the cohesion of a unified working class, the only force capable of destroying the domination of British capital. Yet it

has not been all setback for the working class in northern Ireland. Traditional loyalties are undergoing the severest scrutiny.

The divide between the people is not so sharp. The Ulster workers strike in 1974 had the support of the protestant working class. It was a fascist strike nevertheless. A repetition of the same tactic some years later met with total disdain. The second time round people went defiantly to work. It is interesting to note too that there was no sign of army 'strike breakers' during the 1974 stoppage but

they were very quick to send armed troops to drive and escort the lorries of striking workers just this last winter.

As in Britain the Tory attacks on industry and standards of living continue unabated. As in Britain the Irish working class must look to their own class unity and class ideology if complete destruction is to be avoided. The idea that this, for the working class in northern Ireland must mean a confrontation not only with the British government but with British imperialism is being slowly assimilated. The fact of a government using armed troops in such a brazen way as happened last year to strike break and the continued declaration of States of Emergency when none prevail in the rest of Britain only serves to quicken this assimilation.

For a long time the trade union movement in northern Ireland shied away from questions on the British occupation, thinking that a continued British presence was the only safeguard for the few precious industries that existed. But with trade union membership at its highest for some years and the success of the lorry drivers, the workers at Mackies, in the shipyards and in the civil service against the Labour Government's five per cent limit on wages behind them, the future is optimistic. 800 years is long enough. British Troops out of Ireland now!



Ten years ago British soldiers were sent to Ireland to keep the peace. They kept a large piece indeed.

(Photo UPI)

Zimbabwe people will write own laws

THE COMMONWEALTH Conference which has been taking place at Lusaka, in Zambia, is mainly about Zimbabwe. The question is whether the British Government can devise a formula for apparent changes in the present Smith-Muzorewa setup which will so weaken the hostility of Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria and Botswana as to end their support for Zimbabwe liberation forces. This, it is hoped, would allow the same racist minority rule backed by the multinational companies to go on running Zimbabwe but under a thicker disguise.

The present constitution

makes little pretence of transferring power to the people of Zimbabwe. The number of seats in the legislature reserved for whites is ample to block any attempt to alter the "entrenched clauses" and the "entrenched clauses" fix the qualifications for membership of the powerful Public Services Commission and for holding any senior post in the police or armed forces in such a way that only whites are eligible.

The commander of the army, even according to the constitution, "is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority". The

constitution also guarantees for many years to come that whites, making up 3 per cent of the population, should control 28 per cent of the Cabinet seats.

The kind of concession Thatcher showed herself prepared to make in her first major contribution to the Conference was to offer support for changes in some of the more outrageous provisions of this constitution in order to bring it a bit more in line with the sort of constitutions granted to other African territories on their gaining nominal independence.

In order to create the right

atmosphere for the Conference the Royal Family was sent out to pave the way by graciously talking to the people and taking pictures of the animals. This effect was completely dissipated by Carrington who in the most loutish way tried to practise a bit of gun-boat diplomacy at a reception by shouting at the Nigerian Foreign Minister how dare Nigeria take control of its own oil when that did not suit Britain nor BP. The firm, courteous response of this Minister put Carrington in his place. Nigerian oil would not be exported by BP to South Africa in future, despite this intimidation.

Thatcher has proved herself a more cunning colonialist. Having allowed every-

one to expect that she would come out boot-faced with the kind of racialist and imperialist attitudes she has so often expressed, she was able, without offering anything of the least value to the people of Zimbabwe, to appear conciliatory.

As far as the people of Zimbabwe themselves are concerned, nothing has been changed nor can be changed by this Conference. When they have overthrown the regime that has oppressed them in the past and continues to do now from behind black leering masks like Muzorewa's, they will be in a position to write themselves a good democratic constitution with some meaning, and ignore the dealings of others.

The struggle by the Irish for self-determination

THE PARTITIONING of Ireland into North and South by British imperialism after World War I remains perhaps the most evil and tortuous atrocity committed against the Irish people in their long struggle for nationhood and the right to self-determination. That Ireland is one nation despite all the myths fostered about the special rights and status of 'Northern' Ireland is revealed so clearly in the history of that partitioning.

Centuries of fierce struggle against Britain's ruthless exploitation and domination of Ireland culminated towards the end of the 19th century in a united national movement, led by the Irish Land League, demanding massive agrarian reform and the end of the landlord system. Alongside this the demand for independence, which gave rise to the Home Rule Party under Parnell, was inspiring a new national consciousness among the mass of the Irish people. But more important, the growth of organised labour, the birth of the Irish TU movement, was uniting catholic and protestant workers in struggle against their common enemy, the exploiting class. The founding of the Irish Republican Socialist Party in 1896 by James Connolly added fuel to this development.

The unity of the Irish working class was, and is, the last thing British capitalism wanted. The distorted development of Ireland's economy served Britain's imperial interests. Industry had been concentrated only in the North East of Ulster where Belfast's strategic position in relation to Liverpool had given rise to a number of industries including shipbuilding, supported by British capital. The agrarian south had been held back so that

it continued to play the role of cheap food supplier to Britain.

The general election in 1910 had placed the Irish Nationalist Party in a superb strategic position holding the balance of power between Liberal and Tory. Home Rule for Ireland, forced unsuccessfully upon a reluctant Gladstone 25 years earlier, now seemed inevitable. The Home Rule Bill passed the House of Commons in 1912.

A series of protestant demonstrations carefully whipped-up by Ulster capitalists resulted in vicious attacks on catholics in which 2,000 workers were driven from the Belfast shipyards. The old Orange Order, the first fascist organisation in the world, was being revitalised. By 1913 the Ulster Volunteers had been formed and armed to defeat Home Rule or 'Home' rule as it was called in Northern propaganda; to meet this threat the Irish Volunteers were formed and the Citizen Army was reconstituted a year later by Connolly and Larkin. In a bid to solve this dangerous build-up Asquith, following the earlier lead of Lloyd George, introduced an amendment to the Home Rule Bill excluding the Province of Ulster. The following month Britain declared war on Germany and the Bill was postponed pending the settlement of WWI.

James Connolly, disgusted at the concept of the working classes of Europe fighting one another for the greater glory of King and capitalism, urged the Irish people to remain neutral and continue their struggle for an independent socialist republic. Based on the sound principle that "England's trouble is Ireland's opportunity" Connolly argued for an armed insurrection. Supported by the Irish

Republican Board, Sinn Fein, the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army, the uprising took place on Easter Monday 1916. After a fierce battle the rising was crushedly defeated. The British had been fore-warned by an informer. The ruthless reprisals that followed, including the execution of a badly wounded Connolly, horrified the working class of the world.

After World War One

The general election that followed the war in 1918 saw a massive victory for the republican Sinn Fein right across Ireland - the 'protestant' North electing a republican majority. Connolly's fight had not died with him. The establishment of the Dail Eireann (Irish Parliament) in January 1919 ratified the 1916 Easter declaration for an Independent Irish Republic. Alarmed by the mass support for the Dail which had received official recognition from the newly born Soviet Union, the British suppressed it as an "illegal assembly". Warrants were issued for all its members and all national movements in Ireland were banned. This was a declaration of war. By September thousands of troops, tanks and arms were pouring into Ireland.

Having introduced a proportional representation system of voting which heavily favoured the pro-English faction, Lloyd George hoped that Sinn Fein would be defeated in the local elections in 1920. But he was to be in for a shock. Of 206 councils, 172 fell to Sinn Fein. In the nine counties of Ulster, despite vicious Orange intimidation, the Republicans gained a majority. It was an overwhelming vote of confidence from the Irish people.

The guerrilla war intensified as the fascist 'Black-and-Tans' were introduced. But resistance was widespread and fierce with the ITGWU declaring a general strike against British military occupation.

Demands from the British labour movement for an end to this hideous war forced the government to enter negotiations with the 'illegal' Dail. The result was a truce between the IRA, formally the Volunteers, and English military, signed on 14th July 1921. But the British continued to turn a 'blind eye' to the relentless Orange inspired pogroms against the Belfast catholics.

On December 6th the 'Articles of Agreement' were signed by the Irish delegation under the threat of an 'immediate and terrible war'. This treaty gave 26 counties Dominion status in the British commonwealth while the six Northern counties would remain partitioned and part of the UK. The Dail was split between those true to a united independent republic and those whose interests lay with the Irish bourgeoisie. The civil war that ensued was brief and bloody instigated entirely by British imperialism which sought to destroy the republican spirit of Connolly as a requisite of 'Southern' independence. The military defeat of the republicans brought the war to a close with William Cosgrave, the social democrat, as leader of the Dail. By the end of 1922 partition was complete. Ireland had been ruthlessly divided and the continued presence of British troops today is a statement that Ireland will not see peace until partition is torn down and one nation established by the Irish people.

PART 3 of Class Wars in 1549 will be continued in Issue 33.

Imperialism

in Zimbabwe

IT HAS BEEN announced that Bishop Musorewa will now personally approve the death warrants of 'guerrillas' condemned by military tribunal.

The new regime is merely a cosmetic change. Observers reported the strong-arm tactics used in the recent elections. But even before the elections their irrelevance was ensured - real control still rests with the colonial governing class and the multinationals who stand behind them. While Smith and successive British governments were allegedly bitterly opposed, British companies made sure that the racist regime would not be short of oil.

Not only is colonial ownership unchanged, but the same state machine exists to support it. The same hanging judges, the same civil service, the same generals. They continue to launch indiscriminate attacks against neighbouring Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique in an effort to persuade them to close Patriotic Front training camps. The army continues to employ a number of mercenaries and to issue 'head-counts' boasting of how many they have killed. Recently 183 members of ZANU have been massacred because they do not support Muzorewa.

Small wonder that the people of Zimbabwe see no future except in an armed struggle for freedom and that in some areas all the young men of guerrilla age have left home. It is this real independence movement that has frightened Thatcher into delaying the lifting of sanctions while she frantically searches for a stronger base than Muzorewa's crumbling regime.

BRITISH ARMY TERRORISES IRISH PEOPLE

IF ONE examines the technology and techniques developed during the last ten years for use by the Army in Northern Ireland, it becomes clear that the real target for its activity is not the provocations, but the Irish working class to contain their struggle. Terrorism is the excuse.

The struggle which erupted in Ulster rapidly became too intense to be contained by conventional methods of police crowd control. Water cannon were introduced, and one aspect of their use is instructive. This is the addition of blue dye to the water, ostensibly to mark out demonstrators for subsequent arrest. In practice few were arrested, while many had their clothing ruined by the dye, which was designed to be permanent.

Tear gas was the next escalation in August 1969. The gas used was CS-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile. Designed to cause pain in the eyes, nose, throat and chest, along with tears and vomiting, it was said that the effects wore off a few minutes after being removed from exposure, and that it was not harmful. In practice this was false.

In Ulster it was used in heavy concentrations and often grenades were fired into people's houses. The results were attacks of diarrhoea which lasted for weeks, peeling skin, and lung and eye damage. Not even this proved ineffective at suppressing the workers, so that by 1974 another more potent gas CS-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile brought tear gas.

This has the advantage for the Army that it can be dissolved in water, and can therefore be used in water cannon. It is highly irritating to the eyes and skin and, according to the Porton report 'due to the severe irritation and temporary inability to see clearly, some individuals may be expected to develop hysteria.'

Rubber bullets

Along with the gas came the rubber bullets. These can be fired from a modified signal pistol. A bullet is about the same weight and as hard as a cricket ball, and travels at about twice

the speed of a ball from the best bowler. It is not supposed to be used at ranges under 50 yards or fired directly at the target; but these directives are generally ignored.

The result: fractured skulls, ruptured eye balls, brain damage, lung, liver, spleen and intestine injury and death. And as Bloody Sunday proved, if all else fails there is always the Self Loading Rifle (SLR).

The second area can broadly be characterised as information gathering and intimidation. Here under the guise of searching for

wanted men or weapons, the army have repeatedly vandalised homes during night-time searches, and used plain clothes squads (the Military Reconnaissance Force MRF) for agent provocateur work. In a number of known incidents, these MRF squads have used non-standard weapons such as the Thompson submachine gun to give the impression of sectarian shootings. The Protestant UDA has also admitted that they have been asked to supply non-standard ammunition for planting in suspects' houses.

Sensory deprivation

It has been known for some time that torture or 'in depth interrogation' has been used in Northern Ireland, but again the scope of these activities is not generally realised. Cases range from beatings, electric shocks, water torture, drugs to various forms of sensory deprivation of which, in scientific experiments volunteers have often only lasted a few hours before wanting to give up. When first used as a torture method during the introduction of internment, the initial twelve victims were afforded no such 'panic button'. They were made to stand spread-eagled, hooded and in baggy clothing for hours at a time with little food and drink under a constant barrage of white noise. Any movement was punished by a beating. This went on for four days interspersed with interrogation sessions. As a result of public outcry this full treatment has been banned but aspects of it are

still in use.

The next weapon in the state's armoury is the 'Diplock Court'. Here the defendant is tried before a judge but not a jury. In 85 per cent of the cases the accused were convicted solely on an alleged confession, without any corroborative evidence, 90 per cent have been convicted.

The third and latest area is that of mass surveillance which has developed with the aid of a computer since late 1975. The Army's computer stores information in four sections. 'P' section, the people bank, contains intelligence on 500,000 to 750,000 people (up to half the population).

The second section is a house and street index, with descriptions of Ulster's residences. Some households also appear to have a regular quarterly search census. The third bank covers all vehicles: number, colour, make and ownership. All sections are cross-referenced and patterns of movement and association are analysed to isolate 'deviant behaviour', and provide lists of people for questioning. DHSS records have also been used.

What all of this does is to create a climate of mass intimidation, where people know that their every movement is watched, and any indiscretion can land them before a 'Diplock Court'. This is the scope of British imperialism's terrorism against the Irish people, and what we must not forget is that many of these techniques have already been introduced into Britain.



Editorial

We have just seen members of the Health Authority responsible for Britain's main teaching hospitals suspended for trying to save the lives of those people condemned to death by cuts in the Health Service. The Social Services Secretary did not deny that people would die as a result of Government policy; he thought the number might be exaggerated. We are governed today by a gang of self-confessed murderers.

To be under sentence of death "wonderfully concentrates the mind". We must think more seriously than ever before how we are going to save our working class from the lengths this Government is prepared to go in order to save its capitalist system at our expense.

Many in the labour movement still feel that the answer to the problem facing us is to bring back a Labour Government. Even if it is only the lesser of two evils, experience of Tory rule is making it seem a good deal lesser. The trouble with that proposal becomes obvious the moment we look at it critically. To go back to the previous situation out of which this present disastrous Government came is no way to ensure that the same thing will not happen again. We must work and fight for a solution that rules out the possibility of any such government ever taking power over us in the future. We have to go forward not backward.

Those on the left of the Labour Party argue that what let the Tories in was the right-wing line of the Callaghan Government and what is needed now is for the Labour Party to get ready to fight the next election on a radical socialist line like that which brought it victory in 1945.

The trouble with that is that the failure to implement such a radical socialist line was not gratuitous betrayal by Labour Party leaders; it was the incompatibility of such a line with capitalism. Capitalism has to be smashed before a radical socialist line is possible and as long as the capitalist system remains intact no prime minister, left or right, Labour or Tory, can act other than against working class interests because working class interests are incompatible with capitalism. Revolutionary commitment is the bona fide of every genuine socialist.

The same argument applies to the new party, the Citizens' Party, launched in the US by ecologists, environmentalists and so forth. Their aims are worthy: nationalisation of the oil industry, reduction of military expenditure and guaranteeing employment to everyone who wants to work. But they say nothing about getting rid of capitalism and capitalism requires massive unemployment as a weapon against the working class.

Often those who have claimed to be 'the revolutionary left' have regarded reformists in the labour movement as the major enemy and have attacked them with a savagery which ought to have been reserved for the capitalist employing class. Those who seek to introduce more democracy into the Labour Party, who want the next election fought on a radical socialist line, who still can see no alternative to a vicious capitalist party but a less vicious capitalist party are not the enemy. They are our misguided friends we must never stop trying to win over to a realisation that the only way forward for the working class is along the revolutionary line of smashing capitalism.

What is immediately required is that all those who feel concern about the crimes against the working class which this present Government is perpetrating and plans to go on perpetrating must unite in resistance. Working together to preserve the fabric of our society which these capitalist fanatics would tear to shreds is what history expects of the British working class at this moment in time.

We are confident that making this correct response to the need of today is also the way the labour movement will come, in its united strength, to make the correct response to the need of tomorrow - which is the revolutionary ploughing up of our native soil and the planting of socialism, so that the poisonous weed capitalism will never take root in our land again.

Women and equal pay

A RECENT government survey revealed a number of interesting facts about part-time workers.

Four out of five part-time workers are women. The vital contribution of these women's wages to their families' incomes is shown by the fact that 224,000 families would fall below the poverty line without women's wages. 72,000 families' incomes fall below the poverty line even with those wages.

Despite the Equal Pay Act, 75 per cent of women's wages are below the national average. The Employment Protection Act only covers workers who work more than 16 hours per week. Since the majority of women work part-time they are not covered by this act and employers take advantage of their fear of the sack.

Womens' earnings are generally only half that of men. Furthermore a judge has recently ruled against

a woman who was being paid less than a man for doing exactly the same job - women can now be discriminated against legally.

The law and unequal pay of women and the discrimination against them is not unconnected with the difficulties put in their way of organising themselves in trade unions. Thus only a large minority are actually members of a trade union.

Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome speaks of the right of men and women to equal pay. Now an EEC report points to the British Equal Pay Act of 1970 as a piece of legislation ensuring unequal pay, and admits that for each one of the EEC nations, Article 119 remains a dead letter. No wonder, then, that the British Court of Appeal, unwilling to grant an application to it for equal pay, should refer the case to the European Court of Justice at Luxembourg.

Terrorism - enemy of the working class

THE fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that its especial creation, the modern working class, is destined to overthrow it. For nearly two centuries workers have known that there are no easy ways out, that a protracted struggle must be waged if socialism was to be achieved and that the source of strength and key to eventual success lay not in isolated acts of violence carried out by self-appointed individuals acting on behalf of the class, but, rather, in a broad unity of solidarity among as many workers as possible.

To those who, today, have no faith in the working class, in socialism or in freedom, this organisation of ours appears cumbersome and outdated. Workers are too stupid to understand politics, they say, leave them to fight the mere bread-and-butter struggles, while we make revolution for you by blowing up a few MPs. The truth of the matter is that the engineers' pay claim, for instance, poses infinitely more threat to the profit-system than would any number of terrorist attacks carried out by various self-styled groups over the next few months - especially since most of these are not directed at the ruling class anyway, but at places where large numbers of innocent people congregate, whether it be tube-station, pub or Oxford Street supermarket.

In fact, not only is capitalism undamaged by acts of terrorism but also its agents actively encourage it. There was an upsurge of terrorism in Ireland after the British troops were sent there and that the military occupation is designed to squash it is a myth. The British Government had to bring in the army because in the mass civil rights movement culminating in the August uprising of 1969 it saw the germ of revolution and socialism. The end of imperial rule.

Having created in Northern Ireland and elsewhere the atmosphere of hatred and confusion which has caused the upsurge in violent 'political' crimes, the Government is able to use this as a pretext for the introduction of counter-revolutionary legislation binding upon the whole working class. In Northern Ireland it is not only the murderers who are locked up, 'but also those pursuing the ideals of the trade union movement there, and the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act is nothing but

a British version of South Africa's Suppression of Communism Act, being used as it is to cover anything from non-payment of fines to selling newspapers on a street corner.

The Worker has previously drawn attention to the way in which various capitalist administrations in the past have used the banning of fascist marches and meetings as a pretext for clamping down on all sorts of workers' organisations. In a similar way, what are we to make of the recent banning of the Irish National Liberation Army, and we must ask ourselves what other measures will follow? How long will it be before all organisations professing republican sympathies are made illegal, up to and including numerous trade union branches?

Here the terrorists are working hand in hand with the ruling class aiding them to legislate repressively against us. Also, as far as the provisionalists are concerned, they have, by their terrorist attacks on civilians tarnished the image of the Irish liberation

struggle making the call of 'Troops Out' in the British trade unions that much more difficult. But who are the real terrorists anyway? In the context of Northern Ireland, the British army despatched by successive British governments to harass and intimidate the people. In the context of society the essence of capitalism is the theft of surplus value from the working class backed up by the violence of state force. Who can quantify the misery and terror that this process has caused in working men and women throughout the world during the last two centuries. And, as if this wasn't enough, we are periodically sent to die in the trenches in our millions for the glory of our rulers. Is it not obvious who the real terrorists are?

But although they may be relatively free at the moment to carry out their terror, both they and those agents-provocateurs, who presume to act on behalf of the class, will pale into insignificance with the organised might of the proletariat building socialism for itself.



Striking Plessey workers are standing fast on their claim to the discomfiture of management. Photo: The Worker.

* IN BRIEF

'VERY SATISFACTORY', in the words of their General Secretary was the outcome of action by 100,000 members of the Institute of Civil Servants, which crippled the Navy. Action has been called off while the dispute goes to arbitration. Of course, this like the Clegg Commission on comparability, is bound to fall short of union demands, but members have the satisfaction of knowing that their strike will have given them a better offer.

AFTER THE gas profits that were double those of last year, and ten times those of ten years ago, there was still the 'need' for price rises to bring the price up compared with electricity. Now electricity has made a record £250m profit and the price is to go up 8 per cent. The GPO has record profits of £375m and is to put up the price of letters and telephoning. Even the Housing Corporation, which controls the 2,700 housing associations and accounts for one fifth of Britain's public housing, has made a profit of £3.7m.

Exporting wealth to destroy Britain's economy

CAPITAL is being exported abroad and British industry destroyed as a deliberate policy of the Government. The second stage of the Budget's 'progressive dismantling of exchange controls' has just been completed: there will now be virtually no limits on those who wish to invest abroad.

According to the Budget, companies can now invest £5 million per investment, without paying the premiums on investment currency. Nor do they have to return two-thirds of profits back to Britain. All profit can now stay abroad.

This is why capitalism no longer requires railways, roads, steel and most important of all, education and health services to produce the future workforce. These industries are being attacked and will, if we allow it, be destroyed.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Howe, has pointed to the

public sector borrowing requirement (estimated to be in the region of £11 billion) as a reason for making cuts in public expenditure. Rubbish. We are expected to ignore the fact that multinational companies effectively pay no tax on their profits, due to government concessions and the mechanism of transfer pricing and 'inflation accounting'.

The same companies are subsidised from the public purse whenever they find themselves in financial difficulties. The former Industry Secretary in the last Labour Government admitted recently that 'the same industrialists who demanded cuts in public spending one day would be in my office the next day asking for funds.' And received them more often than not!

In addition, we are expected to ignore the fact that the arms bill for British imperialism runs

annually to a sum in excess of £5 billion. The current astronomical level of interest rates will ensure that the financiers who lend money to the government receive profits on their current loans well into the next century. How well one can imagine the cry if it were suggested that profits, rather than our school should be cut!

The state sector is used to subsidise private capital. Former owners of nationalised industries are still receiving compensation payments from the state for nationalisation undertaken at the end of World War Two! And of course finance capital makes a mint out of the interest payments on the loans from which the nationalised industries finance their operations. As now the profitable sections are being handed back to private capitalists for asset stripping



IN ORDER to save a mere £3,000 of the social services budget, the Tory controlled Wandsworth Borough Council plans to phase out their play-buses.

These play-buses have had a vital role in the community, where not all under-fives have access to pre-school education. These disused double-decker buses have been transformed into a play and learning environment for young children. The idea is to encourage the mothers to assist the play-leader, then eventually to attend a short course and run the play group themselves. This having been achieved, the bus then moves to another area.

Over the years, this play bus scheme has gained impetus and support and now the mums are feeling very angry that this callous cut is to be made. They have already organised a demonstration in Wandsworth. They drove all the play buses round Wandsworth and set up play groups on the streets - much to the delight of the children and chaos to the traffic! They plan to hold many other demonstrations and press conferences to draw the attention and support of the public in their struggle for what should be theirs.

A KNIFE AT OUR THROATS

THE MANAGEMENT teams of the Oxford hospitals are yet again concerned over what they term 'overspending' in the present financial year.

The North Oxon Sector Management Team say 'they have trimmed all the fat from their organisation and that further savings would involve cuts in staffing and services'. Let us not forget that we have only the bare bones of the service left now.

The Joint Management Team of the New John Radcliffe, Churchill and Radcliffe Infirmary have put the responsibility onto the Area Health Authority to decide which service should be reduced and the scale of the cut. The options for 'achieving' these savings are a decrease in follow-up clinics and out-patients prescribing.

The Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre Sector Management Team have indicated that their target savings

cannot be 'achieved' in the current financial year without cutting patient services by closing wards.

The Psychiatric Sector would have to close either its drug or alcohol unit or adolescent service to realise its target saving but does not feel justified in doing this, but they have already cut down on the domestic budget and energy costs.

When the Oxford AHA met on 24 July to decide how to implement the spending cuts called for by the Government, an all-union lobby called by the health workers' Joint Trade Union Committee was waiting to let them know that any cuts in health care are opposed by those who really care about health.

In the event the AHA decided, by a cowardly 11 votes in favour and the rest abstaining, to impose a 2 per cent reduction on establishment levels across the board. Staffing levels are to be cut by a

freeze on new recruitment for the next 3 months, which at the present rate of turnover will inevitably lead to serious short-staffing. It was admitted in the meeting that standards of health care are bound to fall as a result.

Porters and ancillary workers are likely to be cut rather than nurses and surgeons because the AHA fears a public outcry. Those who work in the health service know that all sections are equally vital and that to contemplate running a hospital without cleaning staff is just as ridiculous to talk of running a hospital without nurses. To be drawn into an argument about which section can be cut most is to deny the value of health. If the service is important then it must be properly run and those in the best position to know must decide how many workers are needed - that is, the health workers themselves.

Area Health Authority refuses to kill people

THE BARBARITY of this government was clearly demonstrated to all this week when Patrick Jenkin stripped all members of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Area Health Authority of their powers. Their 'crime' was to take their responsibilities seriously and to refuse to implement the £5m cuts which they had been ordered to make.

The viciousness of Jenkin's unprecedented act was clearly designed to 'make an example' and 'teach us a lesson'. The Authority rightly stated that to implement these cuts would involve closing entire hospitals and reducing the number of kidney transplants open heart surgery, radiotherapy and obstetric services - specialist services which are available to patients from throughout the country. The director of Britain's largest liver unit at King's College Hospital, one of three teaching hospitals in the Area, has said that the cuts would have meant 87 patients not being treated at the specialist unit - "we would have had patients dying which we might otherwise have saved."

But Jenkin declared that the claims of the Area Health Authority members that cuts of this magnitude could mean that 200 people might die unnecessarily were 'hysterical' and wanted more evidence that £5m cutbacks would affect services to patients! If he cared to listen, the workers involved could give him ample evidence, but he did not even bother to meet the members he was sacking. He even said that the Authority was trying to blackmail him! It is at this Tory government that the charge of hysteria should be laid, that such fascist measures should be taken when the survival of our health service is

demanded by workers.

We applaud the brave stand taken by these Authority members, and hope that they will be supported by all health workers in the Area. Unions in the Area are already holding meetings to plan their campaign to oppose any cuts that may be proposed. The Confederation of Health Service Employees have already voted not to co-operate with any plans for closures. It is possible too that a special meeting of the South East Thames Regional Health Authority to be held on Thursday may support the stand the Area Health Authority members have taken.

Their defiance gives a lead to all workers in the health service, which nationally will be short of between £90m and £100m this financial year - and that even to maintain existing services, not to expand them. Between £35m and £40m of that is due to the increase in VAT, the remainder to inflation and the government's refusal to underwrite wage awards of more than 5 per cent. Jenkin himself has admitted this.

One Region already heavily hit is the North East Thames Region, where the Regional Officers themselves admit that their latest proposals to cut spending may appear to have 'a draconian touch'. They include a complete freeze on the replacement of doctors, dentists and nurses unless they are needed to avoid a complete breakdown in service, and a halt to all new developments. This is one of many examples all over the country. Thatcher and Jenkin, mouthpieces for capitalism, are set on nothing else but the complete breakdown of the health service. It is up to us, the working class, to 'blackmail' them and to fight for our health service.



North Sea oil strike

A DETERMINED catering workers strike is beginning to affect oil-production in the North Sea.

As the secretary of the Aberdeen branch of the TGWU said, "If the men are not fed, they will not work. It is as simple as that."

More catering workers joined the strike and came ashore at the weekend. The strike is expected by the National Union of Seamen, one of the main Unions involved, to be a protracted and strong one. 38 rigs are expected to be involved. Ninian Central, Ninian Southern, Belford Dolphin, Chris Chinery, Nor Jarl, Wildcat, Thistle A and Brent A have all declared for the strike. Decisions to strike were radioed to the NUS.

Once again we see the contradictions of capitalism. The capitalists are so keen to dredge the depths of the sea for oil, and scour every hill side for uranium, yet they are not prepared to pay the men who feed the production workers a proper wage. This time it looks as if they will have to go hungry for oil for a while anyway.

headquarters, 800 men are involved.

The issue involved is pay. The unions are demanding a £600 for every 14 days on 14 days off trip, and the 4 catering firms involved go no higher than £440.

The area secretary of the NUS said he had heard of "blackleg labour being used to counteract such steps. The unions will continue to picket Aberdeen harbour."

Once again we see the contradictions of capitalism. The capitalists are so keen to dredge the depths of the sea for oil, and scour every hill side for uranium, yet they are not prepared to pay the men who feed the production workers a proper wage. This time it looks as if they will have to go hungry for oil for a while anyway.

Engineers in struggle
WORKERS in the engineering industry have already forced some employers to pay up this year's national claim. The claim for £80 minimum, one hour off the week, and 2 days extra holiday has resulted in national action - the overtime ban since the beginning of August and the one day strike starting this week.

Engineering employers who agree to the claim in full are exempted from the action.

This action by engineering workers is the first nationally organised action since the fight against the Industrial Relations Act. Engineers also see it as a fight to preserve skill and save what is left of the engineering industry in Britain.

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