

THE WORKER



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Open letter to the Labour Movement

CALLAGHAN FLOUTS CONFERENCE VOTE

YOUR MASSIVE vote as organised workers at the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool for collective bargaining, flatly rejecting government-fixed wages, was a splendid exercise of working class democracy. It was a great victory not only for the right of workers to have a say in the price of their labour power, but for the defence of trade unions whose function is the organised struggle for the improvement of our wages and conditions.

Do you not agree that our whole class must follow through on the implications of

that vote?

How can we one day affirm in such solidarity our stand against any fascist tendency to make our rates of pay and our very working class organisations, the trade unions, instruments of capitalist government policy, and the next day greet Callaghan's refusal to accept our vote with a standing ovation?

How can our trade unions lead an onslaught on the Government's 5 per cent limit and at the same time contribute the funds that support the party forming that Government? Callaghan, in obedience to

his capitalist masters who expect him to cut our wages in the interest of their profits, has set himself against any modification of his Government's right to fix our wages. Indeed he threatens us with financial measures that will increase unemployment if we dare try to exercise our right of collective bargaining. How then can the logic of our collective action in rejecting wage-fixing by Government fiat be other than all-out opposition to Callaghan?

The decisions of the Labour Party Conference are in no way binding on the Parlia-

mentary Labour Party and on a Labour Government. They cannot be, because even if conference reflects the working class aspirations of the membership the Government remains the executive organ of the capitalist system reflecting only the interests of the capitalist ruling class.

It is useless thinking that this can be changed by approving progressive measures or appointing left leaders at Labour Party conferences. No voice can come out of Westminster but a capitalist voice until we change not the government but the system.

But, you ask, does this not mean that in fact we would be supporting Thatcher and the Tories?

It does not. It means that we are opposing capitalism whosever mouth it speaks through. It means that we realise that the government will be the instrument of our class enemy until we change the system and make it speak with our voice.

One of the Labour MPs, Joan Lester, expressed this fatal contradiction of the Labour Party. "Either we are the party

of full employment or we cease to have a historic role in representing working men and women." We agree. A Labour Government presiding over 2 million British people without jobs certainly has no role in representing working men and women.

The Financial Times in its editorial of October 3rd called for the trade unions to make a "collective commitment to realism". We have. The TUC rejection of wage control and the rejection of the Government's pay policy at Blackpool are the strongest collective commitment to realism it is possible for the labour movement to make. We must now implement that commitment in every place we work. Rejecting wage control when the capitalist system requires it to survive is tantamount to rejecting capitalism itself.

In the words of the song with which the Labour Party conference traditionally ends, the working class will advance toward socialism "where cowards flinch and traitors sneer". But we will have to advance under our own Marxist-Leninist banner.

Plessey: Employer shows weakness

WORKERS at Plessey, Liverpool, faced with 600 redundancies announced in July, are adopting their own protection policies as their 90 days of "Employment Protection" are ending. Two unions, TASS and ASTMS, have so far taken

action to fight for their members' jobs, since 76 of them have received redundancy notices. The largest union on the site affected has imposed an overtime ban.

The company faces action on two fronts. ASTMS with-

drew a section working on the key "System X" project. Within days, TASS took this further by occupying the whole "System X" area. ASTMS pulled out their men back who were now available for, but unable to, work in the

occupied area, and therefore, under their contract, back on pay. ASTMS then withdrew another section working on "TXE4" at the company's Huyton site.

While the type of action adopted by TASS could be strengthened supported and used by other unions on the site, the decision of the others to fight for jobs cannot be criticised. Plessey workers will soon learn whether or not their efforts are sufficient, and a recent development must ironically give them heart: Plessey have resorted to using the law.

A repossession order has been applied for and writs are to be issued against TASS. All the more reason for the workers to be resolute now they are so close. If their occupation is broken the fight can be taken elsewhere. Guerrilla tactics have, after

all, been used to good effect in the past by Plessey workers.

It is also interesting to note that the company chose not to use the Criminal Trespass Law, indicative of the growing strength of opposition with which they were not prepared to gamble.

To win this fight is important for the future as well as the present. It is important in the fight for the preservation of the telecommunications industry as well as for the preservation of the Edge Land site.

A RECENT meeting of the International Metal Workers Federation in Helsinki has expressed its support for the workers involved in the Ford dispute. I. G. Metall, the motor car union representative for Cologne in West Germany, with two million members, has also expressed solidarity.



Plessey workers marching in an earlier demonstration to prevent closures and redundancy.

Firemen want 42-hour week implemented

THE fire brigades union conference which meets this week must re-affirm the stand taken last year in fighting for better conditions, with the background of increasing Government threats to the fire service. The struggle for better conditions is still Part of the return to work agreement from the strike in

January was a reduction in hours from 48 to 42 beginning this November. Quickly after the settlement the employers put up a package deal, conditional for the reduction, giving them power to change conditions of service and manning levels without needing the union's agreement. This

(continued on page four)

HISTORIC NOTES The Levellers - Part three of THE WEEK

our series on the fight for freedom in the Civil War

IN THIS issue we are printing the concluding part of our 3-part series on the Levellers, with a look at the way in which Cromwell took advantage of the weakness of the movement to destroy it.

This brave chapter in British working class history ends with an assessment of the Leveller movement as a whole.

Albania Supported

SUPPORT for Albania was proclaimed at a meeting of British workers held at Conway Hall on 6th October. A motion put to the meeting was greeted with thunderous applause. The full text of the resolution reads:

"This meeting, organised by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), sends its warmest fraternal greetings to the people of Albania and their steadfast communist party - the Party of Labour of Albania.

It salutes their unflinching resolve to build a socialist state and society at the cost of considerable sacrifice and the risk of imperialist aggression. Their struggle against revisionism has been unwavering. Their great leader, Enver Hoxha, led the attack against Khrushchev at the 1960 Moscow Conference and more recently, against the anti-communist theory of "Three Worlds".

This meeting condemns the withdrawal of aid from Albania by the present leadership of the Peoples Republic of China, an act in no way different from that of the Soviet Union which also tried to coerce Albania into submission by cutting off aid more than a decade ago.

This meeting condemns the stand of successive British governments in refusing to make restitution of Albanian property seized during the Second World War and calls on the Labour Movement to press for the speedy opening of negotiations leading to the recognition by the British government of the only socialist state in Europe, The Peoples Socialist Republic of Albania".

Cromwell himself took charge in order to pull out all the stops. Troops had to be raised, a way had to be found to get round parliament's notorious meanness; food, pay, clothes and medicines were all needed in unprecedented quantities.

Soldiers who refused to go were dismissed without arrears of pay (over a year's arrears in many cases) and sent home in disgrace. Even so, in some regiments over half of the men chose the latter course as the most attractive. The radicals who would not enlist were replaced by a mercenary rabble of royalist POW's and deserters.

The Levellers asked what right the army had to inflict on the Irish the sort of slavery they endured when they and the Irish had a common cause - freedom. They called on the soldiers to elect

Agitators again, which they did. Scroop's horse regiment halted at Salisbury on May Day, 1649, on the way to embarkation. They refused to go further, instead drawing up a petition for pay, pensions, arrears for those who refused to fight, and arguing against the slaughter of the Irish at the Grandees' behest.

Other soldiers rode to join them. In all, 1000 men assembled at Burford in order to parley with Cromwell, who rode out to meet them. After Cromwell's treacherous surprise midnight attack, with 340 prisoners taken of which 3 were sentenced to death and shot, the Leveller movement within the army was finally broken.

The Leveller party was still active, publishing its most revolutionary manifesto (signed by 10,000) but it could do little without the army. There was much

sympathy for them in the army, but the soldiers left now felt that the threat of a Scots invasion led by Charles II and the Dutch war meant that unity was needed above all.

In the formation and programme of their organisation, the Levellers tackled all the problems of their day, anticipating many later struggles. Their programme was aimed at nothing short of the transfer of power from the exploiters to the exploited. It included, in addition to the demands referred to above, the tilling of waste lands in common by the unemployed, a graduated income tax, abolition of prisons, abolition of the death penalty for all but the most serious crimes, and legal proceedings to be held in English rather than French or Latin which the poor could not understand - and much, much more.

Japanese workers set example in opposition to war

RIVALRY, trade war, the possibility of real war - these are the hallmarks of capitalism in crisis. Accordingly British capitalism is urging us to ignore our real enemy, the British bourgeoisie, and to fight instead its rival, whether capitalist USSR or Japan.

We will not do so. On the contrary, the Japanese working class, in particular, claim our respect. In spite of Japan's imperialist past, in spite of the still close alliance of the Japanese bourgeoisie with the US imperialists, the Japanese working class stands as an example for us all in its opposition to the US - its warmongering, its nuclear weaponry. Japanese

comrades tell us of the July 1st movement of ten years ago. Thousands of workers demonstrated against a US nuclear submarine, at Sasebo, and each year the occasion is marked by new demonstrations.

The British bourgeoisie insult both Japanese and British workers by pointing to the world export of Japanese goods, as if this could ever be the cause of British industrial decline. The decline of industry in Britain, and its flooding with unnecessary imports is the fault of the British ruling class, and its senseless destruction of an advanced industrial country. Far from Japanese workers being our enemies, we can salute the skills which go into so

many of their products.

Yet Japanese industry is constantly under threat, as it is in Britain, while capitalism exists. Japanese workers derive no benefit from the 'export drive' for the profit of their employers. On the contrary, enmeshed in the capitalist world economy, Japan's growth rate has fallen from double figures to seven per cent. Japanese workers are told, as we are, that there is overproduction.

In its crisis, capitalism in Japan is turning to war production to try to maintain its profits, and increasing alliance with the US. The struggle of the Japanese working class against these war moves makes the world a safer place to live in.

Britain is biggest investor in uranium-rich Namibia

WHAT a travesty is the independence offered to the Namibian people, whether it is the South African plan, or that of the UN consortium of Britain, the USA, W. Germany, France and Canada.

The South African proposals are brutally simple: as many of its opponents as possible are under lock and key, or underground. Daily they carry out terror raids, killings and beatings military excursions even into Angola. Those, like the South

West Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO), who dare meet force with force are 'terrorists', and must lay down their arms. And then, in December, under South African military occupation, "free" elections will be held.

The counterproposals from the UN imperialists are hardly better. While South African atrocities continue, they calmly sit at the conference table talking about the possibility of South African withdrawal. Then they would occupy

the country with 7,500 troops.

The reason is simple. Namibia has the largest uranium mine in the world. Just over half is owned by South Africa, the rest by the British Rio Tinto Zinc. In the NATO would-be occupiers' camp, British capital is by far and away the biggest investor. In Consolidated Diamond, Namibia has the world's largest diamond mine, operated by a subsidiary of De Beers, itself mostly British owned.

AS a result of working with black pitch coating processes, SOGAT workers in New Hythe, Kent, recently began to contract pitchwarts, a form of skin cancer. The employers, Key Terrain (a subsidiary of Reed International) tried to ease their way out of the situation by making under-the-counter payments of £800 a man. But SOGAT refused to be silenced. And rather than directing their protests through the labyrinth of Health & Safety legislation, they immediately stopped all production. Nothing will move until the employers remove the health hazard. Not, as the Health & Safety Act says "in so far as is practicable", but by the workers' own standards. In short - completely.

THE USA's Financial Accounting Standards Board has decided to adopt an accounting method similar to our own current cost accounting system, which has been so successful in disguising profits here. One of the first examples of its results is that Shell's net income in one quarter fell from £286m to £6m. Another example of successful British technology going abroad.

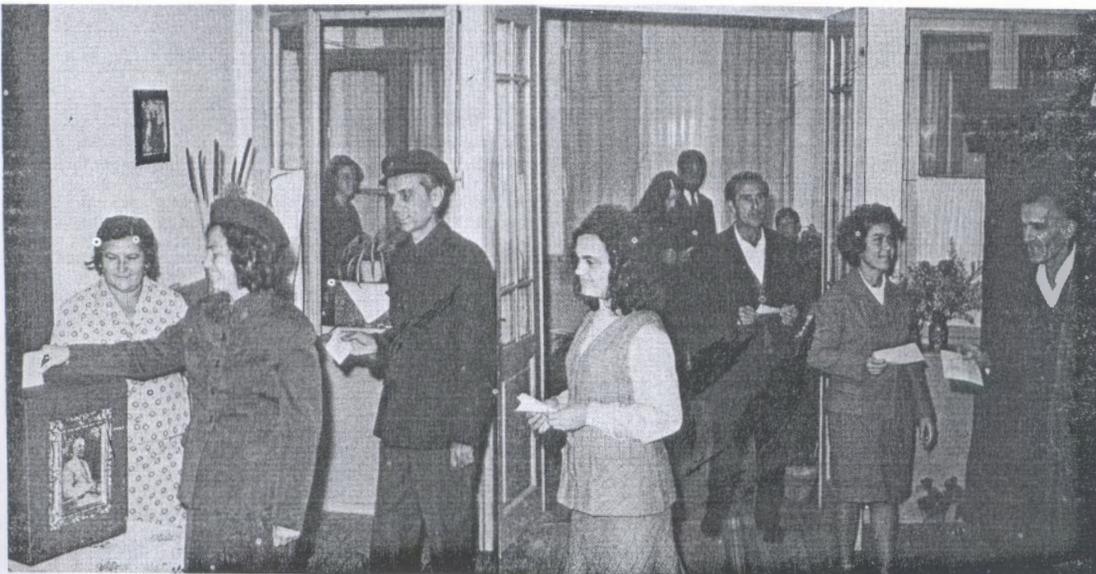
LATE in September was announced the closure of another section of the British Fastener industry. GKN Bolt and Nut Ltd closed down sections of their works in Darlaston and Smethwick. Taiwanese imports were the claimed cause of this closure.

This degeneration of a UK fastener manufacturer comes in a chain of shut downs in recent years: in this instance 300 people lose their jobs. Fastenings is a major industry (one UK motor manufacturer uses in excess of £6 millions per annum) yet government strategy of unlimited imports from the Common Market and the Far East is ensuring the rapid destruction of that industry. It is no exaggeration to say that if the situation goes on unhindered, there will be no British fastener industry left in ten years time.

IT would seem not illogical to assume that an Employment Protection Act, with its provision of industrial tribunals to oversee Unfair Dismissal cases, would offer some degree of protection against arbitrary dismissal. However, in a capitalist system logic is not always what it appears to be and recent figures published in the Department of Employment's Gazette show that out of the 12,843 cases brought before industrial tribunals in 1977 only 1.4 per cent resulted in reinstatement or re-engagement - a clear indication that such tribunals offer the working class no protection whatsoever.

MR. PETER SHORE, Secretary for the Environment, has asked local authority employers for round-the-table talks on a 12.5 per cent pay settlement for 5,000 chief officers and executives.

The department has been trying for the last couple of months to persuade the employers to renegotiate the award which it sees as being in breach of the Government pay guidelines. But the employers, represented by the Local Authority Conditions of Service Advisory Board, have twice refused to back down on the deal.



Albanian people voting for deputies to the People's Assembly

EDITORIAL

IN A speech delivered at the meeting of the General Council of the Democratic Front of Albania on September 20, 1978, Enver Hoxha spoke about the election of deputies to the People's Assembly which will take place on November 12.

He said: "Elections to the People's Assembly are a great political event directly concerning all the citizens of our Republic, because thereby they will elect the deputies to the Supreme State organ which represents and expresses the will and sovereignty of the people."

Why is that a democratic process when we have so often said that Parliamentary elections in Britain are not? It is because in Albania the working class enjoys state power. Elections of deputies to the People's Assembly are like elections in our own unions when we are running them properly. In Albania there is a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The bourgeois denigrators of socialism like to present the dictatorship of the proletariat as a denial of democracy. In fact it is the denial of the minority rule of capitalist society. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the political form of true democracy - "the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority."

As Enver Hoxha puts it: "With their free and democratic votes the Albanian people will express their determination to preserve the dictatorship of the proletariat... These elections will serve the further extension and strengthening of our socialist democracy."

The question of proletarian democracy is the crux of the preservation of socialism where proletarian revolutions have taken place. Only a working class democratically exercising the fullest control over the state and the economy can prevent the class enemy from sneaking back into power and restoring capitalism.

In Britain, too, we hold democracy crucial. When we say DON'T VOTE in a Parliamentary election, it is not because we are not democratic but because that election is not. The basic fault with all such elections in a capitalist society is that the working class is never given the opportunity to vote on the question of whether it is to be exploited or not. If it were, there is no question of how it would vote. If it were, a peaceful transition to socialism would be possible. But it cannot happen because the ruling capitalist class will never commit such an act of auto da fe.

When the organised working class at the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool voted overwhelmingly for collective bargaining and rejected flatly Callaghan's 5 per cent or any other figure, that was an expression of proletarian democracy. If the Labour Party was a democratic party, that vote would have become binding on the Parliamentary Labour Party. But social democracy is neither socialist nor is it democratic. It is a capitalist denial of democracy pretending to be democratic.

If the Government were a democratic Government, Callaghan would have been ruled by the vote of the labour movement for collective bargaining expressed through the TUC, but Callaghan's masters are the minority of capitalist employers who want wages restrained in the interest of profits.

The TUC vote this year in overwhelming support of the stand taken last year in favour of collective bargaining and an end to Government pay policies was an exercise in proletarian democracy by workers through their own unions. If the TUC should enter into any deals or compromises with the Government - and there is no middle ground between wages fixed by Government decree, whatever the figure, and wages arrived at by organised workers exercising their bargaining rights - that would be a denial of proletarian democracy.

Silicon: Capitalism cashes in its chips

EVERYDAY one government establishment or another, a professor at a university or an international convention makes a pronouncement about microelectronics, its effects on industry, jobs, way of life and the future of mankind. The general consensus is one of gloom. As the science correspondent of the Observer reporting from an international conference in Nice put it 'Either we embrace the microprocessor and lose jobs through displacement or we reject it and lose jobs through a catastrophic loss of international competitiveness'. Heads we the workers lose, tails we the workers lose. Just who is going to benefit?

In essence there is nothing the present circuits incorporating microelectronics can do that the previous semi-conductor technology could not achieve. The difference lies in size, cost and availability. Microelectronics is the technology of diffusing a large number of components (transistors, resistors, capacitors) previously only available in a discrete form onto a wafer of silicon (the silicon chip) one thousandth of an inch thick and as small as the end of a match stick. Up to 80,000 components may be diffused on any one of these chips to make an integrated circuit, to be used for various purposes from a computer to a washing machine.

space

This technique first arose in areas such as space exploration where size and reliability are crucial factors. Its most outstanding contribution to human civilisation and progress is in medical research and body implantation such as heart pacers. The nervous system of insects smaller than a bee may be studied by a minute integrated circuit attached permanently to their heads.

Under capitalism 'the holy becomes profane' declared the Communist Manifesto. So today the excellence of human skill is prostituted as the chip technol-

ogy moves into cars, washing machines and games; into the consumer market existing or created. Huge multi-billion pound laboratories are set up to produce millions of integrated circuits at a price of a few pennies.

With every new technology the rate of profit falls necessitating a huge increase in capital investment if profits are to be maintained and increased. The manufacture of microelectronic chips, the hardware as it is called is therefore no small business. It is not even large business. It is a monopoly of monopolies.

integration

The design of integrated circuits be it a microprocessor to be used in a calculator or super-market till or a decoder in a colour television receiver anticipates and determines the design of the device which ultimately incorporates it. Hence integrated circuit manufacturers move into other fields of industry creating conglomerates of huge proportions. Large Scale Integration (LSI) and Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) in microelectronics means precisely that in industry as a whole. As the silicon chip gets relatively smaller so industrial integration gets progressively larger. Hence the bankruptcy of the call by the British microelectronic industry interested only in a quick profit for government help to be limited to software, that is application of already designed and manufactured microelectronic devices imported from the USA and Japan. It is like closing down the aerospace industry in favour of a glorified school for pilots.

The introduction of microelectronics into everyday consumer commodities has meant calling a halt to further advance in this field. The silicon chip turned out to be too reliable and has a very long life for the liking of capitalists whose stock in trade is built-in obsolescence. It is not uncommon for electronic designers trained to improve reliability and life of components to be given specifications quoting

the maximum levels of reliability and length of life for not longer than, say, five years.

The effect of microelectronics on industry is only too obvious. Bigger and fewer monopolies encompassing a multiple of industries previously unconnected will emerge on a national and international scale. The microelectronic war is yet to start in earnest. Soon we will witness those very huge, expensive super-clean plants turn into ghost factories haunted by the mountains of chips scattered around the world. A wine lake we can drink, a butter mountain we can eat, whatever will we do with a mountain of chips of the silicon type.

The silicon chip, already the panacea of all our ills, will very soon turn into the cause of these very ills. Already we are told that mass unemployment itself endemic to capitalism and the direct result of government policy to destroy Britain's industrial base, will result from this very tiny chip. Blaming technological advance for the real sickness, that of the pursuit of maximum profits, is a common device of capitalist apologues. The silicon chip is not imbued with magical powers for destruction by an unknown God from outer space. It is the massive profits the Goddess of Capital may create through its use and abuse that gives it seemingly uncontrollable powers.

CAC Danger

THE work of the Central Arbitration Committee is, alarmingly, expanding in a rapid way.

The CAC was set up as an arbitration body on February 1st 1976 under the Employment Protection Act with provision for a wide jurisdiction over matters concerning wages and terms and conditions of employment, including Trade Union recognition. The CAC's recent annual report shows an eightfold increase of arbitration cases in 1977 (1080 cases) over 1976 (132 cases). Increasingly it seems Trade Unionists are sacrificing the strength and inner consistency of their unions in appeals to "independent" committees instead of directly confronting the employers.

One of the main reasons for this increase, according to CAC, has been the introduction from the first of January 1977 of Schedule 11 of the Employment Protection Act which attempts to settle wage disputes by establishing "general levels" of terms and conditions of employment among comparable workers engaged in the same trade. In this way the struggle for higher wages, the pivotal point of working class action against the capitalist system is diverted into the blind alley of squabbling for more money because someone else has already won more. Direct confrontation with the employer is diffused and is replaced by seemingly endless discussions on what factors constitute "comparable workers" - factors which the Act cleverly fails to define.

The demand for higher wages is not a shameful one and does not have to be justified in any way. The only way to higher wages lies in the ability of the Trade Union movement to rely on its own strength without recourse to 'independent' tribunals.

LETTER

DEAR EDITOR,

Many supermarkets were among the first companies to take up, at the Labour Government's invitation, Job Creation (now Temporary Employment) schemes. Since then they have been given, without having to prove that no full-time vacancy exists, the most "attractive" employees in existence - non-unionised, freely disposable, and free.

A case in question is that of a friend of mine, employed at a local branch of a national supermarket company, who overheard directors discussing ways to make workers redundant, so that they could increase their use of the Temporary Employment schemes.

He himself had been told they would have him out within six months. His crime? He refused to clean out the toilets when ordered to by the manager, since it was not part of his contract of work. It becomes more and more clear that workers dare not have truck with the Manpower Service Commission.

Yours fraternally,
AN EXETER WORKER

SW NUPE

NUPE's series of meetings as part of the campaign for more pay produced the best attended Trade Union meeting in Exeter for several years.

The speeches summed up all the unworthy aspects of the campaign - the begging, and imploring cries for 'justice', plus the embarrassed reassurances from the prospective Labour Party candidate that Labour was on our side really.

From the floor, however, came the sort of spirit that would really win higher wages. It's not bad luck that employers paid disgusting wages; militant calls for action recognized the weakness of union organization in the SW as the real reason for the area's relative abundance of lower paid workers.

Solidarity and determination to fight alongside traditional working class leaders such as the AUEW were voiced. Workers didn't want a campaign against 'low pay', for that is just another way of making sure we all get it. Our fight is with the employing class and its spokesmen the Labour Government, not with higher or lower paid workers.

'Trespass' Law defied

SINCE the war, workers have increasingly turned to the tactic of occupation to prevent closure and redundancy. Over 300 occupations have taken place since UCS, involving more than 1/2 million workers.

Now the Labour Government seeks to try out its new Criminal Trespass legislation, to smash the occupation tactic. It is setting up test-cases and case law against smaller sites before taking on the larger concentrations! In St Helens, just such a test-case has emerged at the Drylanders works, where eviction and arrest is threatened this week.

The workers at Drylanders, St Helens, are fighting desperately for the right to a job, since the firm went into liquidation. They have occupied the factory for 3 months to prevent closure. Not just to protect their own livelihood but to strike back at the rundown of their town. Over 6000 people are unemployed in St Helens and many more are faced with redundancy, at Pilkingtons, at the Direct Works Building Dept, and hundreds of

teenagers will return to the dole queue after completing Government-financed temporary employment schemes.

The workers' occupation has brought them into direct conflict with the Criminal Trespass Law. The courts have already been used against them and the liquidator has secured a possession order. The Sheriff is to be sent in to enforce an eviction - and it is now a criminal offence to resist. The workers have responded by saying that if they are evicted, they will picket the factory to prevent the removal of machinery, and they will be joined by workers throughout the town.

The law quite clearly intends to break occupations and to subvert such struggles to defend Britain - its industry and skills. We must defeat this Act, not by appealing for discussions with Labour Social Democrats over gin and tonics at Westminster, but by direct action in the factories, colleges, hospitals and schools wherever occupations are challenged.

Render the act inoperable!

WORKER interviews social workers

TOWER HAMLETS social workers on strike.

Q: What is the strike about?

A: The employers refuse to pay a salary sufficient to attract enough social workers. Typical take-home pay is £38 per week, with no payment for the overtime which we do. This has led to severe shortages of staff, about 20 per cent for Tower Hamlets, and some offices closing for half of the hours when they should be open.

Q: How has this situation arisen?

A: A national scale for social workers was drawn up in 1971 which hasn't changed. Although it was supposed to be a minimum rate, it has become a maximum in practice, as local authorities refuse to pay above it. During the same period the responsibilities of social workers have increased and the job has become more complicated.

Q: What do you propose to do with the national scale?

A: We propose to go off it and on to local negotiations with the various local councils.

Q: How many local authorities are affected by the strike?

A: Three at present (Tower Hamlets, Newcastle upon Tyne and Southwark) but five more should be out next week: Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool, Lewisham and Wandsworth.

Q: How effective is your picket?

A: Very effective here at present. There is no post going in or out due to the support of postal workers. There is no heat at the Town Hall because a tanker delivery was prevented. The completion of a central heating system has also been prevented.

Kent strike against 5pc

WORKERS in Strood, North Kent, have staged a one week strike in pursuit of a wage claim in excess of 5 per cent. The Senior Shop Steward (TGWU) at Hobourn Eatons Ltd told THE WORKER: "A 5 per cent increase, which was the management's offer, would give us an average of £2.50. We want to conduct free collective bargaining, which is our union policy now. We have worked out a wage claim which the management have not said is unjustified. But they are hiding behind the Government's 5 per cent. They maintain that guidelines means the law, and say they cannot negotiate. But I should think any company would be glad that the Government have introduced this policy."

The workers make oil pumps and power steering mechanisms at Hobourn Eatons, part of the Tilling Group. Workers at Erith and Skelmersdale factories are out too, a total of 900. "When management circulated details of their offer, we called a meeting to find out what the workforce wanted to do. The majority supported the tactic of a week's token strike. The ball is now in the management's court. The workers will decide what action to take if management

come up with nothing this week."

One of the AUEW Shop Stewards on the picket told THE WORKER: "Our claim unites all the workers. We recognise the loss of differentials of skilled workers and have taken this into account. Of course the company is losing a lot of money over this week's strike. Are they worried about Government sanctions? I don't think the Government would dare impose sanctions on this firm - 70 per cent of products is for export. Obviously we would care if the company went bankrupt - but this firm made increased profits last year."

"All they've offered us", said the Senior Shop Steward, "is a productivity deal, which we refuse to discuss. I speak for the whole of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee - we shall never accept deals involving labour reduction."

The AUEW Shop Steward said they were the first in the area to put in their claim. "Naturally we are following closely what's happening at Fords. They had the strength to take action before their annual agreement ended. It all comes down to what your strength is, in the end."

HMI's report requires smaller classes

THE RECENT HM Inspectorate survey, "Primary Education in England", showed that teaching of the 3Rs in Primary Schools is already of a high standard and that blanket testing in order to raise standards in this respect was unnecessary.

According to the inspectors, the sort of formal teaching needed to get children through tests of this kind is already sufficient. What is lacking is "rich, methodical and challenging work" to stimulate the "brighter child". This can be done, they say, by mixing

practice in basic skills into a carefully planned programme of subject work, with the use of dictionaries, atlases and other information-seeking tasks.

It is not the fault of teachers that this sort of teaching, which requires a lot of planning and facilities for independent work, is not always possible in classes of thirty, as is still often the case. With smaller classes and better resources every teacher knows the kind of quality that can be achieved in education.

As Mr. Fred Jarvis, General Secretary of the National

Firemen's conference issues -cont-

disgustingly dishonest and antagonistic action has been the obstacle to settling the hours dispute.

Two resolutions at the conference call for the FBU to introduce its own 42 hour week in November, failing agreement by negotiation. Essentially local conditions must guide the FBU's action. It takes 3 months to give a fireman basic training, and because the Authorities have only just begun moves to recruit, a general reduction in hours could only be introduced in January 1979. In some cities the worked 42 hours would simply reduce cover for 3 months, but in many areas the gap would be filled by part-timers - a move the Government would very much like to encourage. In this situation firemen should press for overtime rates for the 6 hours as the best means to conduct the struggle.

It is obvious the employers are trying to exploit the exhaustion of last year's mam-

moth strike by attacking the authority of the union as a step to completely disarming firemen of the potential for organised struggle. Also the attack covers attempts to run-down the service. Local Authorities are already proposing reduced cover by making some stations completely part-time or manned only during the day. Obviously this solves the problem of recruiting more firemen. Firemen cannot allow the Government to risk theirs' and the public's lives by its callous attitudes, the hypocrisy of which are shown by the criticism of firemen risking lives during the strike.

Some people blame the established system of negotiating with a national council of local authorities' representatives as the cause of all the trouble, and call for nationalisation, making the Home Office the direct channel for negotiation. The argument is only superficially true. The present dispute itself centres around the joint authorities

proposals to effect reductions in fire cover without regard to the union. Official responsibility for standards of fire cover belong to the Home Office. Local Authorities deal with pay and conditions of service.

Furthermore, one needs only to consider the financial and administrative holds the Government exercises over local authorities to realise workers are fighting the Government either way. The existing system is only an elaborate way to divert the firemen from condemning the Government outright, and they mustn't waste energy on this pointless venture.

Firemen must not allow the Government to renege on the previously agreed reduction in hours, but must see through and oppose the attempts to destroy the fire union and service. The best possible support now exists for this struggle with other workers actively opposing the Govern-

Inner London schools face closure

JUST AS the closure of the village school presages the death of the village community, so too with the closure of the city school. The announcement by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) that it expects to close 40 of its schools in the next four years should be seen in that light.

The desire to rundown education has not been sated by the mere redeployment of teachers - indeed acquiescence by Inner London teachers in these moves has been the green light for the ILEA to announce closures. The policy of casting pass-engers off the sledge to slow down the wolves has only succeeded in encouraging them. And redeployment is as brutal. Let alone the splitting of the teachers' ranks and less education for the pupils, each post lost in a school has meant one more college leaver denied a job.

iniquity

The iniquity of school closure is evidenced not only by the bitter opposition of parents, pupils and teachers, in fact the whole community, but also by the knowledge that the closures are engineered. The imminent closure of two schools in the Waterloo dis-

trict of Lambeth has given the Greater London Council (GLC) an excuse not to build homes in the area - there would be no schools for the children! Office blocks will be built instead. An ILEA spokesman said that failing use of 'surplus' school building for other educational bodies or by the GLC "the school would be put on the open market." Are the LEAs and Diocesan Boards now looking to announce a profit out of education? (Last financial year the ILEA announced a surplus of £2.1 million.)

At a recent meeting of some involved in struggles against closures a manager of a doomed school declared, "I am a member of the Labour Party but I have to say that the ILEA does not care

about the people concerned", and a parent commented, "I have always voted Labour myself but the politicians are all the same - they don't care about people." Such is the clarity, but there is confusion too. The way forward for teachers is not to set up yet another committee, small group or broad front, parallel to the Union, to do the work of the Union. Who will fight a campaign to keep schools open? Teachers other than the 1/4 million of the NUT?

The temptation to take on easier tasks than the hard unglamorous work of convincing the members to fight against closure and redeployment through their Union should be resisted. Teachers neglect their own organisation at their peril.

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NW5
Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol
Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds
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Market, Great Homer Street, Liverpool
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'The Worker'

155 FORTRESS ROAD, LONDON NW5
 6 months £2.50 (including postage)
 1 year £5.00 (including postage)

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Public Meetings

The autumn series of public meetings held in London and organised by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) will be continued at the Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NW5.

October 20th. 7.30pm.

"BRITISH 1st. OOPS OUT OF IRELAND: US BASES OUT OF BRITAIN

Other meetings to be held in the near future outside of London are:

Reading, Thursday, October 12th at the AUEW Committee Rooms, Oxford Road, Reading. 8pm.

"DESTROY THIS LABOUR GOVERNMENT -- FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM".