



FUNDAMENTAL BATTLE JOINED BY ENGINEERS

It has taken eight weeks or more for the employers, Government, and some of the public to realise that a fundamental battle is taking place, a battle reminiscent of the nine hour battle of the engineers against the employers almost a century ago.

When the claim was first presented and the traditional posture and reply of 'No' was given by the Engineering Employers, there was no appreciation that a conflict of a fundamental nature was beginning. Ignoring all the lessons of history, the employers, the newshounds, and the Government know-alls settled back for the traditional slow process of feinting to ultimate compromise. They were no doubt confident in the belief that the new President of the AUEW, and spokesman for the claim, would conform to their needs: Had he not been hailed as a "moderate"? Was he not to be their darling?

Democracy

Such naivety ignores the obvious. All new figures, "leaders", must make an impact and it is always dangerous when a claim arises from the AUEW to ignore the democracy and strength from that union which gives it birth, pulling along with it all the unions in the Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions. The claim is of course the first of its kind for a long time, taking the earlier pattern of direct national negotiation with the Federation of Engineering Employers and carries with it all features of frontal conflict and national struggles,

Reluctant leaders

For some period past, in previous claims, this had been avoided under other leadership with the cowards-castle device of handing back the substance of a national claim to be "settled" as best maybe, at domestic level, arguing the specious virtue of "rank and file democracy" but in fact avoiding the responsibility of leadership settlement.

Hysteria

When the first actions began with an overtime ban and a one day strike, a curious silence descended. There was no news coverage, it was not happening. Then later came hysterical reporting of disunity, of opposition to action from

engineering workers, of revolt, from Union members' wives on parade and, in Birmingham, in the Midlands, a new warrior emerging to lead the fight against strike action. It was stated that the action would not be supported, thousands would flock to work. Now there is the alarm of bankruptcy, with millions of pounds being lost, with the Engineering Industry on its back, export orders lost, and so on. This is in contrast with Heath's 'Three Day Week' when all was good and, according to the news report, more work was done!

Coupon-clippers

Still the Employers say they are solid and united in the determination not to concede; they are whistling in the dark, ignoring the defectors in their ranks and the deep rumblings of more to come. They ignore both the justice of the claim and better counsel from some of their own. These coupon-clipping substitutes for the Old "Ironmaster" clique who created the Engineering Employers Federation 150 years ago believe they are back in 1890. The Engineering Employers have always believed in rejecting the actual going-rate paid by their own members in the factory, that they can hold back the national base rate they might yet, as in previous depression years, come forth and demand national wage reduction. Given also the demand for a shorter working week, the employers having stated NO, are in a dilemma and see all about them come tumbling down. These relative newcomers to the field of leadership negotiation, with no skills or experience, did not believe in the strength and unity of the working class they were facing.

Rolls Royce

Hence you have a crack-pot in part of Rolls Royce trying to run a national lock out all on his own, while within the federation palace circles, the split of disunity spreads. Of course Rolls Royce, directly sustained by public funds under the Government, is no



doubt urged by all to lead the way to self destruction.

Loyal and united

The fact that the claim materially changes very little in take-home pay by way of increase in the packet, makes no difference. The time to clean our house is now. What obtains in the factory should be writ into the national agreement. Everybody is surprised that such a stand evokes all the features of a loyalty battle and that the great mass stand square for the Union.

It is interesting that where, in the recent past, we were to be impressed by 'militancy', as in Cowley and one or other place, loyalty and backing were seen to be deficient, such is not so now, mark you, among the skilled

membership.

This struggle is of prime importance: it acts as a catharsis and answer to the much-abused and wilful 'do it yourself' brand of union action recently and wastefully brought to bear, which in some quarters was hailed as brilliant generalship. We are now back to Union democracy and membership control.

This struggle is a clear signal to all, following the lethargy and near passivity after the last General Election. It eschews all diversions presently raised, such as "who leads the Parliamentary Labour Party?" --- Ramsay Macdonald or 'Castle's in the air.' It is a fundamental class battle against the oldest, most ruthless class enemy, the Engineering Employers. It requires all our support and concentration

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Historic Notes

Fight for the shorter working week

Rolls Royce management have decided that for engineers to work is illegal. If the Tories then decide that to strike or not work is illegal, maybe the resulting legal tussle will provide jobs for us all.

HULL TUC are to publish their own newspaper, the HULL NEWS. Following the provincial newspaper journalists strike this year, several journalists approached the Trades Council with a view to setting up a Labour Movement-Community Newspaper. A free pilot copy has already been produced and distributed, with the first weekly 24-page edition planned for mid-October.

THE EDUCATION Secretary, Carlisle, has said that religious upbringing was one of the strongest factors in education, in bringing people together and in combatting the 'lack of roots' felt by many young people. Examples abound. The governing body of the Roman Catholic Cardinal Manning comprehensive school in London are reported to be attempting to dismiss the headmaster on the grounds that he has been divorced.

ELECTRICIANS in Swansea have placed a firm stop sign over the National Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre. The men, members of the EEPFU, are on strike as part of the national pay fight currently being waged by industrial civil servants. The red light for the DVLC came when the electricians turned off the heating and air conditioning - and the poor computers, suffering from the effects, had to be switched off.

WHEN Masumi Esaki, Japan's Minister of International Trade and Industry, visited Britain recently, Margaret Thatcher was very expressive in asking the Japanese to invest in Britain. She told him we would be happy to respect Japanese labour practices.

STUDENTS at Newcastle Polytechnic have been using the summer term for a struggle against the chronic accommodation problem for the 5000 students, many of whom have to sleep on camp beds at the beginning of the academic year. The students carried out a successful rent strike to force proper consideration of their accommodation needs.

THE FRENCH Government attempting to wreck the steel industry in Lorraine is trying to do the same with coal mining, one of their tactics being the import of coal from South Africa when it can be mined in France. But if the Government will not enforce import controls, workers will. Two hundred miners of the Confederation Generale du Travail have occupied a ship carrying 120,000 tons of coal from South Africa, and intend to stay there 'as long as is necessary'.

THE 2p COIN box charge is to go - up to 5p. These and other increases in GPO charges will go ahead in spite of profits to the GPO of £375 million, figures which themselves are an underestimate.

THERE WILL be 247 fewer primary schools next January compared to January 1978.

IN THE LIGHT of the present actions involving the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions we have decided to reprint the following article on the shorter working week first published in THE WORKER in 1973 when a similar campaign was being pursued.

Economics and politics

The relationship between economics and politics, and the trade unions and the Party was a question which Marx regarded with the utmost concern. Writing in 1871 of one aspect of the economic struggle - the fight for the working day - he stated:

'The attempt to obtain forcibly from individual capitalists a shortening of working hours in some individual factory or some individual trade by means of a strike etc is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, a movement forcibly to obtain an eight hour law etc is a political movement. And in this way a political movement grows everywhere out of the individual economic movement.'

The working class

For over 30 years the working class fought a bitter struggle for the Ten Hour Day. Demands for Parliamentary Reform were the outcome of demands for shorter hours, higher wages, better conditions and the abolition of child labour. Victory in 1847 was secured, therefore, under the political pressure of Chartism, but this victory represented something even more significant than the immediate benefits. Eminent economists, such as Nassau Senior, had 'proved' that 'all profits are made in the last hour' and if there were any legal restriction of hours it would ruin British industry. Needless to say, this did not happen, and the working class refuted this economic nonsense in practice.

IN BRIEF/Home News

EIGHTEEN months or so ago it was commonplace to see striking firemen picketing fire stations in West Yorkshire, as they challenged the Labour Government's pay policy.

Vilified then by Tory press and Labour ministers alike, these men stood up against the full rage of the media and the State in defence of wages and the Fire Service itself.

In recent weeks it has become a commonplace sight in West Yorkshire, to see uniformed but off-duty firemen in the streets, in car parks and outside stores, waging a campaign to save the local Fire Service from the devastation which the County Council wishes to wreak upon it.

The FBU is hoping for a million signatures on its petition to the Home Secretary.

BOOK REVIEW

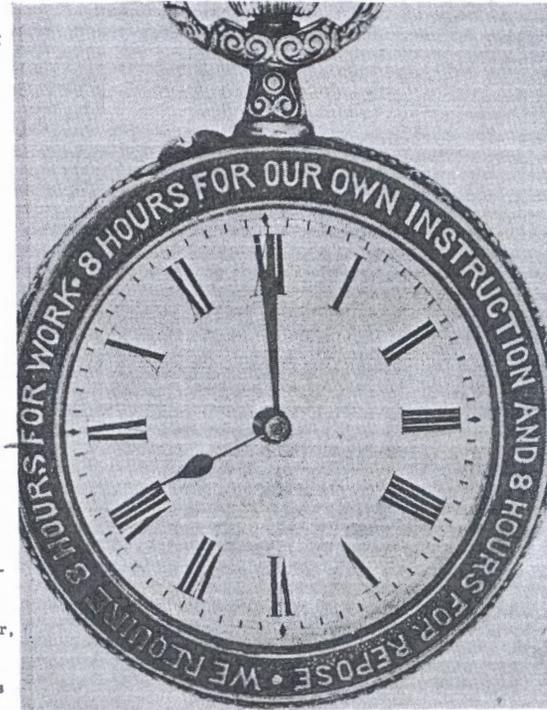
'Journeyman Press' has issued an elegant edition of 'The Overcoat' by Nikolai Gogol, arguably the greatest of Russian writers and certainly the most compassionate.

'The Overcoat' is the story of a certain civil servant in no way remarkable, indeed of low degree, 9th in the rank of 14 in St. Petersburg. His superiors treated him in a ranner "frigidly despotic" and the young clerks made cruel jokes at his expense, but he

Two different conceptions of economics and politics were involved: one, the blind rule of capital, and the laws of supply and demand, and the other, social, against redundancy, speed-up, and lengthening of hours, in every resistance against the laws of capital, there appears the contrary law of balanced, planned, development of the productive forces.

Organisation

But there is another aspect of the economic struggle which also has revolutionary implications: the



One of the twelve watch cases struck in the 1860's to mark the meeting in London of the International Association of Working Men (the first International) when the eight hour working day had been proclaimed as the Association's objective.

capacity for organisation and discipline.

In 1858 the carpenters and joiners of London presented a demand for a nine-hour day. They were joined by masons, bricklayers, painters, and plasterers the following year, whereupon the masters provoked a lockout and made non-unionism a condition of re-employment. After six months a compromise was reached whereby this condition was withdrawn and the men returned to work on the old conditions.

This attempt to destroy trade

unionism illustrated the weakness of the old-fashioned loosely-organised unions with small resources. To the skilled carpenters came the realisation of the need to organise. They founded a Maltreated Society with a constitution closely modelled on that of the engineers.

In 1871 the engineers on the north east coast won the nine hour day after a five month strike. They were successful in forming a Nine Hours League which succeeded in uniting both society and non-society men, and became an impetus for other areas. Around this economic demand, organisation of the various trades, unionists and non-unionists, was achieved from a very low level of organisation previously.

Conclusion

Only the united strength and determination of workers will stop the ruling class from intensifying exploitation. Having been forced to concede a shorter working day the employers began to use overtime to bump it up again. Beginning as a marginal way for workers to supplement their normal pay, overtime became in time part of the basic wage structure and a condition for the running of many industrial concerns. But also banning overtime became part of the guerrilla tactics of workers.

In current conflicts, too, all attempts by reformists and opportunists to separate economic and political struggles will be exposed as completely contrary to working class interests - just as Marx exposed such efforts in the last century when he wrote:

'The coalition of the forces of the working class, already achieved by the economic struggle must also serve, in the hands of this class, as a lever in its struggle against the political power of its exploiters.'

General Romero's reign of terror in San Salvador

THE OVERDUE overthrow of the 40-year old American backed Somoza dynasty continues to reverberate throughout Latin America.

The military dictators of near-by El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are understandably worried. So is the USA which is in the process of rushing its representatives all over the continent - especially to its most oppressive regimes - to advise their governments on how to Avoid Being Overthrown. In addition, both Britain and the US have expressed concern in recent months at the ease with which Caribbean dictators are being ousted.

El Salvador is Latin America's smallest and most densely populated country; it is controlled by the notorious 'Fourteen Families' (today estimated to be more like

200). Like Nicaragua it experienced a bloody civil war in the 1930s with over 30,000 killed in one year. The Somoza regime in Nicaragua and the military government in El Salvador both date from the 'pacification' moves made by the US at that time. The result of pacification US style was to leave an economy where 8 per cent of the population own 50 per cent of the wealth. United Nations statistics maintain that the Salvadorean peasant subsists on less food per person than the people of any other country on the continent. Seventy per cent of Salvadorean children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.

Since General Romero became president in 1977, repression has been markedly stepped up with Amnesty International reporting on the torture and even beheading of

local leaders. Those detained and, as often as not, murdered, include trade unionists from the textile, construction, manufacturing and bakery industries as well as civil servants, teachers, priests and peasants.

In spite of this terror, opposition is mounting up, and in May demonstrators took to the streets and occupied the capital's cathedral. The military's response was to open fire on two peaceful demonstrations killing 23 people. Pressure from the success of Nicaragua's revolution and the growing indignation of the Salvadorean people has meant that so far this year more people have been killed than in the whole of 1978 and more have 'disappeared' than in the previous three years, their bodies turning up by roadsides and in ditches or mass graves.

The misery of being a civil servant under the Czar

loved his work which was copying. He was told he needed a new overcoat. After his first dismay at having to spend 140 roubles, nearly twice his life savings, he acquired the coat. The story is of Akaky Akakievitch and his overcoat. The sadness of the life of this unimportant little man in Great Russia is the universal story of workers everywhere.

Gogol's deceptively simple, transparent style, every sentence leading to a deeper

understanding of the complexities of being, the nature of despotism, was a blow struck for freedom, culminating in the Bolshevik Revolution.

If you were lucky you saw the British film, when Akaky was played by Alfie Bass, whose genius as a tragic actor was forgotten when he became a famous comic.

Read 'The Overcoat' because we do not have a Gogol today though we need one.

The Overcoat

by Nikolai Gogol

Pub. by Journeyman Press

£1.20 + 30p. p.p.

Bellman Bookshop

155 Fortress Rd.

London N.W.5.

Editorial

In the heat of class war generated by the industrial action of engineering workers, old capitalist myths are being exploded and new ones being hastily cobbled together under pressure by Thatcher's crew.

One such myth was that the labour movement is led in this direction or that by leaders whom the capitalist press decides are 'left' or 'right'. There was much jubilation when a 'leftist' president of the AUEW was replaced by a 'rightist' -- jubilation on the part of the Engineering Employers Federation, and of the Government who now find themselves assailed by two million engineering workers in a carefully orchestrated attack.

The truth is that organised workers take decisions collectively with everyone at every level from the shopfloor to the National Executive playing his or her part. In this way organised workers decide when things have reached a point that requires action.

There is the myth that workers are only capable of acting on the basis of the cash in their own particular pay pockets. The majority of skilled engineers earn more, as a result of local shop floor bargaining, than the basic minimum of £80 being demanded so there could be no wide-spread industrial action on such a rate. But when the AUEW President put the wages issue as one of protecting skills under threat he was speaking for all those members who have seen a growing shortage of skilled workers in the midst of growing unemployment and who have realised that their industry is being destroyed.

When the Secretary of State for (Un)employment, Prior, whom Ford shop stewards sensible declined to meet, said that there was no possibility of agreeing to a shorter week for engineers because this would make British industry uncompetitive, he was trying to resuscitate the old myth of Nassau Senior that an hour could not be chopped off the working day because that last hour was the one in which the employer made his profit. Marx destroyed that myth. The engineers will destroy the Prior version of it.

It is demonstrably false, anyway, because skilled workers in most continental countries already work a shorter week than Britain. It is the old trick of blaming organised workers for all the failures of rapidly-declining British capitalism, inflation, low relative productivity, the lot. And then demanding that they bail capitalism out by accepting an even lower standard of living.

That myth has had its time!

The fight over class sizes goes on

"THE HAPPINESS of every worker and the future of our country must largely depend upon England's children being thoroughly well taught during the years they are at school. If the classes in the schools are so large that no one person can properly teach them, the children are then robbed of those advantages which their parents expect them to receive, which the ratepayer is paying for and which the country demands."

Thus began a leaflet published by the National Union of Teachers in 1909.

The struggle to reduce class size has been one of the principal aims of the NUT in its efforts to improve the country's education service. At the beginning of the

and there is a grave danger that with the reckless policies of the Tories the clock will be turned back and class sizes will increase.

Throughout the century teachers have pressed for reform in the interests of those involved in education. In 1931 a publication of the NUT described the movement to reduce class size as the most vital of all reforms because it lay at the root of all others. It drew attention to the waste resulting from an over-worked teacher. "Wasted time cannot afterwards be redeemed, if for one year children are in a class too big for a teacher to control and teach effectively, then that year is largely wasted. The child cannot plead his own cause."

above 30. In many parts of the country there are black spots with classes of up to 35. In *The Teacher*, December 1976 it was stated that 100,000 classes had more than 30 children and that 1½ million children were taught in classes of more than 35 children. The situation has not changed much since then. Nowhere does the staffing of junior schools 'approximate to that of senior schools.'

Large classes make it impossible for children to be properly educated. Teaching and learning is severely hampered. "The effect of large classes is to compel the teacher to set aside the ideal (method of education) and to adopt mechanical processes which tend to stultify the intellect instead of developing it. In addition it means the neglect of both the brightest and dullest scholars"

PUPIL TEACHER RATIO*

Year	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
1909-10	37.2	16.0
1919-20	34.8	19.2
1929-30	31.8	18.6
1937-38	30.0	18.8
1950	30.4	21.1
1960	29.0	20.7
1970	27.4	17.8
1975	24.2	17.2
1977	23.7	17.0

Source - DES statistics

*The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is the number of pupils at a school divided by the total number of staff which includes the head, deputy head, etc. It also includes teachers taking small groups for specialist subjects. The PTR is therefore much less than the actual size of the majority of teaching groups.

century the average number of pupils per teacher in primary schools was 48.3. By the middle of the century this figure had fallen to 28.6 and at the beginning of this decade 27.4.

Although class sizes have fallen over the years as a result of union pressure they are still too high

In 1931 the London Teachers' Association passed a motion stating that no classes should exceed 35 and that the staffing of junior schools should approximate to that of senior schools. Although most classes in the capital's schools have fallen to below that figure there are still many classes

NO RETURN TO THE THIRTIES

Avon NUT

AT A MEETING called by Avon Division of the NUT on September 12, over 1200 teachers were left in no doubt as to the effect on education of over £4 million of cuts.

Speaker after speaker emphasised that these and future cuts would mean the dismantling of state education, the denial of a worthwhile future for the children and the country.

The meeting had no hesitation in endorsing all forms of action proposed by the union - no cover for absence after one day, no cover for unfilled vacancies, freezing of timetables and class size action where non-replacement of staff increase classes to above union class size policy.

Humberide

A FURTHER effect of Humberide County Council's vicious outbacks in education as reported in *THE WORKER* (number 33) is the loss of more than 50 school crossing patrols.

In Hull 13 such patrols have been axed and angry mothers, anxious for their children's safety, have been blocking roads in various parts of the city, both mornings and afternoons, to allow their children to cross the roads in safety.

This action has taken place since the start of the new school term, and will be kept up until patrols are brought back.

The importance of school meals

THE RECENT Congress of the TUC coined the slogan: 'No return to the '30s.' Judging by the latest Government proposals for the removal of certain statutory obligations on local authorities to provide specific services, such a prognosis may yet prove to be optimistic by several decades at least.

From the time of the Howe budget and the Heseltine proposals in the early summer, local authorities have excelled themselves in their fervour to dismantle the public services which we have come to regard as part-and-parcel of a civilised existence.

The school meals service has come under particularly heavy attack. A persistent campaign has been waged, aimed at giving the school meal the status of a peripheral luxury, thus justifying its expendability.

In fact, it plays an important part in the lives of millions of our children. Of the 7,729,484 children at school, 5,096,433, or 65.9 per cent, took a dinner. And 1,074,000, or 13.9 per cent of the total, took a free dinner.

Qualitatively, too, the present school meal, in spite of the undoubted rundown in recent years, is of great importance to the nation's children. At present, it provides one third of a child's total energy requirements of the day and 40 per cent of its protein. This latter figure is deliberately maintained at such a level to

allow for the possibility of an unbalanced home diet.

Encouraged by the enthusiastic response of their acolytes at local level to the cuts, the Government recently issued a circular to all councils proposing further cutbacks.

According to press reports, over 500,000 children could lose their entitlement to a free meal, in January. The nutritional value of a meal is to fall while the price is to rise to 40p. Councils will be given discretion over what to provide, if anything, and what to charge. Even handicapped children in special schools, 95 per cent of whom stay to dinner, would not be spared.

Lead poisoning threat from car exhausts

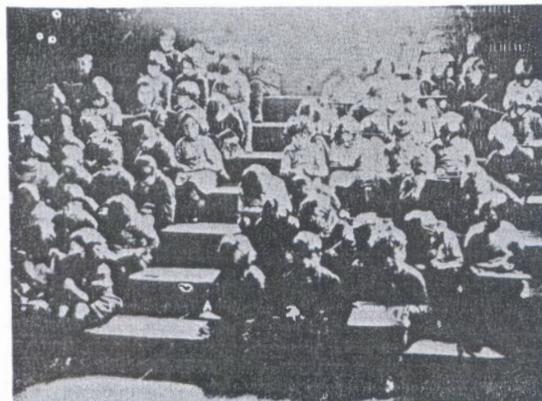
LEAD is put into petrol to give better engine performance, as a cheap alternative to extra refining. By cheap we mean cheap for the oil companies, and good for their profit margins. For us workers it's very far from cheap. Last year 10,000 tonnes of lead were emitted into the atmosphere over Britain from car exhausts. This is 2,000 tonnes down on 1978, because the concentration of lead in petrol has been reduced from 4 grammes/gallon to 2 g/gallon. A proposed reduction from 2g/gallon to 1.8 g/gallon has been postponed from 1979 to 1981.

The effects of this lead in the air, and eventually in us, are incalculable and frightening in the extreme. Lead is a notorious abortive agent; tests on stillborn babies have revealed lead concentrations often in excess of 5 times that of a normal baby. In large doses, i.e. around and above 40 micrograms/100 ml blood, lead causes brain damage in children. The DHSS, however, refuses to recognize new research that points to the hazardous potential of lead in low concentrations down to below 15 micrograms/100 ml. Here it is claimed lead has an unsettling effect on children, making them overactive, neurotic and easily distracted. Using these guidelines an incredible 50 per cent of the children in Birmingham are at risk from lead poisoning, with those living near Spaghetti Junction particularly at risk - there the lead levels have gone up 60 per cent since its opening.

The reasons given against removing lead from petrol have always been the cost and a refusal to acknowledge petrol as the main source of the lead we absorb.

On cost the MP Denis Howell estimated £140m as the amount needed to remove lead, equal to a 2p per gallon increase. Yet the Government will happily add 10p to the cost of a gallon through VAT increases. Anyway why should we pay them to stop poisoning us?

Furthermore, though 90 per cent of the lead humans take in comes from food, with a seemingly insignificant 10 per cent from the air, tests on plants have shown that only 10 per cent of the amount of lead plants absorb comes from the soil. The other 90 per cent comes from the air due to exhaust fumes. In other words 91 per cent of the lead we absorb is a result of putting it in petrol.



An overcrowded gallery class in Bradford at the turn of the century. No return to conditions such as these.

Wholesale closure and destruction of NHS

DESPITE Tory promises that the NHS would not be cut under their administration, this is exactly what is happening. In all areas of London and the country alike the cuts taking place are little short of wholesale closure and destruction not even lip service is being paid to the health and lives of the people the cuts will affect. We hear only of the importance of "balancing the books".

On September 13th the City and East London Area Health Authority met to discuss £2 million over-spending of the authority's budget. Despite a demonstration of an estimated 3,000 people outside the meeting calling for opposition to all cuts, substantial cuts were made. The economies will have disastrous effects on the people relying on the services of the Area, and others from all over the

country relying on the speciality services of 'Barts'. The people of this area have already seen the closure of the German, Bethnal Green and Metropolitan hospitals. Just to make the cuts 'fair', say the AHA, we will not continue to cut the hospitals of Shoreditch and Hackney, we are willing to cut one of the children's wards at 'Barts, it seems that the lives of children saved in the ward aren't worth the measly £60,000 per year that the ward costs to keep open. Also at 'Barts a number of out-patient clinics are to be cut and 12 Ophthalmic beds are to be closed.

At St. Leonards Hospital, within the same AHA as 'Barts, 60 surgical beds which admitted 1749 patients in 1978 will no longer be available from the end of September. The 6 Gynaecological beds will be closed in which 299 women

were treated last year. No additional facilities are being offered elsewhere, people in the area are to be admitted to the Hackney Hospital and to 'Barts, yet the waiting lists at the former are said to be "out of control". The closure of beds at St. Leonards means that the Accident and Emergency Unit as it is now will have to close: that the waiting list

Tavistock clinic, Coppetts Wood hospital, Muswell Hill, the Hospital for Tropical Diseases and the London Homeopathic hospital - the decisions are to be taken on September 24th. In addition to this proposed butchery a project (fought for 4 years by the North Camden Community Health Council) to open a psychiatric day hospital is to be scrapped.

Central to the proposals is the closure of St Olaves Hospital. 112 in-patient beds are to be closed in the area. The axe has already fallen on St John's Hospital Morden Hill which is due to close in late October. This hospital deals largely in treating venereal diseases and there are no alternative facilities elsewhere in Lewisham. Further cuts are also likely to be made at Lewisham General Hospital which is already starved of funds. Dr Kirby, the doctor in charge of Medical Care at Lewisham Hospital warns that "the next rounds of cuts ordered by the Thatcher Government will mean more deaths and more suffering for the old and sick." Already wards are acutely understaffed and patients die for lack of attention, operating theatres are not even clean, let alone aseptic, and infection is rife.

By no means are the cuts confined to general hospitals. In the NW health district of Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster in order to save £100,000 per year the AHA propose to close the Paddington centre for psychotherapy. The centre's executive warns that the closure of the centre which deals with more than 1000 referrals a year and is sited in one of the highest suicide and mental illness rate areas of the country, will be severely damaging - the psychological effects to children particularly are incalculable.

The people in many parts of London are not accepting readily that 'balancing the books' is more important than their health. The Hackney Health Campaign, coordinated by the CHC is continuing a vigorous campaign against the cuts. A delegate conference to be held at Shoreditch health centre on 28th October will involve representatives of the health unions in the hospitals and many other organizations and individuals.

Worker Interview

"THE WORKER" recently interviewed strikers and locked-out workers from YTV. The following are comments which explain some of the reasons behind the strike besides pay, and why it is of importance for the future not only for the workers involved but for the class as a whole.

Q. It has been suggested that some, if not all, of the ITV companies are interested principally in destroying the Unions in the industry.

A. This could be true of ACTT in particular because of its primary role in TV production. The EPTU and NATTKE could certainly take the companies off the air but the people in the key positions are ACTT members in central area, master control and these sorts of things. These are the guys who can say: "Right, that's it, flick the switches," and then it's gone."

Q. Have the companies deliberately provoked this strike?
A. Oh yes! They've done this sort of thing before. We weren't working overtime and that puts the company in an odd position.
Q. Do you think the advent of ITV2 and new manning arrangements are behind the management's willingness to lose £1 million a day?

A. This was part and parcel of the productivity deal we signed. In a sense it has all been settled. This was what the Xmas business was all about and why it staggered on for months. As far as I'm aware they've thrown this in as an extra to upset the negotiations.

As for the future of ITV2, one theory is that YTV aren't interested in making TV programmes - they owned over 100 companies at the last count, from car sales to safari parks. We've made the money but none of it's been put back into the company. It's all been diversified, what you might call "asset running-down."

Q. It has been said they're only interested in making cheap programmes.

A. That's right. You can suggest ways of improving the quality of a programme and they just don't want to know. As long as the job is sufficient that's all that matters. YTV doesn't look upon the public at large as being their customers or people they are responsible to. The people they're responsible to are the advertisers because they're the ones providing the money. Returning to ITV2 for a moment and leaving aside the question of whether YTV will get the franchise, which it may well not, what they could be trying to do is to have an ITV2 which works mainly on a freelance basis - almost pirate TV companies so they can use their facilities with these people. To do that however, they will have to flatten the unions first as all we'd do is say, "Black all that, we're not having anything to do with it", and stop the whole lot.

Q. One of the elements that stands out in all the conversations we've had down here, is the pride in and concern for the industry which is displayed by the workers in it. Why is this?
A. We're in a highly paid industry, compared to others in this area anyway, but there again, a lot of the people have invested a big stake, in terms of their lives, into the industry. Most people in it have served their time in a trade. We have electricians, engineers and so forth. People have a bigger investment in that company in terms of time and skill than anybody who's put money into it.

It couldn't work without the quality of skill put into it and the back-up of skills and expertise which make that level possible.
Q. Do you think you will win?

A. They thought we'd be crawling back within two weeks but it hasn't worked out like that. We've got them going so far. They have bitten off more than they can chew. Already the advertising agencies and related businesses are feeling the pinch. Especially as they rely on advance money to keep turning over. Also, the Autumn campaigns are about to start and even the bigger ones are going to feel it. I think there's going to be pressure put on the companies to get them to settle. We're pretty determined to stick it out. We're not going back for any piddling little deal with strings attached.



(photo: Martin W. Collins)

to be seen in outpatients will lengthen causing great suffering and misery; that the waiting time for non-urgent operations will increase - some people will have to wait years, causing their conditions to become worse and perhaps untreatable; that people will be discharged earlier and earlier from hospitals before they have fully recovered, and with community Services not adequate to meet their needs.

The Camden and Islington AHA are overspent by £4.75m this year. In order to save the money they are considering freezing medical appointments, strict control of other staff appointments and the closure or reductions of the

In Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow the AHA are making economies to the tune of £4m. The options to save this money include a 25 per cent reduction in the use of agency staff, closure of Acton Hospital, upon which many geriatric services depend, and the reduction of 20 acute beds at the West Middlesex.

The Lambeth/Lewisham and Southwark AHA voted against implementing cuts of 5 percent. For their trouble in saving lives in this way they were dismissed and replaced by Commissioners appointed by the Government. The Commissioners are proposing to cut acute hospital services in Guy's health district by 10 per cent.

Return to work at Plessey's after lockout fails

WORKERS AT Plessey Telecommunication in Liverpool have returned to work after a seven week lockout.

The settlement, which was not as big as had been hoped for, was worth some 15 per cent plus a probable 3 per cent from a "productivity scheme" yet to be finalised. Nonetheless, the workers returned with the knowledge that they had gained more than a pay increase.

Having been pushed into a corner at the start, had they conceded when the management threatened them with suspension they would have been left considerably weakened. As it was, solidarity was high from start to finish, the vote to return being as strong as the vote to "ride out" the suspensions. Moreover, shift workers stayed out for an extra week to secure an increase in shift premium from time and a quarter to time and a third for all shifts.

For most of the workers involved this was their longest period in dispute but a comment from one member summed up morale - "it makes you realise just how little four weeks holiday is, doesn't it?"

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortess Road, London NW5
Brighton Workers Bookshop 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
Main Trend Books 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol
Northern Star Bookshop 18A Leighton Street, Leeds
Basildon Bookstall Tues, Fri, Sat Market Place
Hull Bookstall Old Town Market, Saturdays
Liverpool Bookstall every Thursday Liverpool University
Clarion Books 5 The Precinct, Stanford-le-Hope

Public Meetings

Public Meetings in London will start at 7.30 pm.

Fri. Sept 28	Tories attack the old, the young and the infirm.	Bellman Bookshop
Fri. Oct 12	Education attacked, from nursery to college.	Conway Hall
Fri. Oct 26	The Party of the British Working Class.	Bellman Bookshop
Fri. Nov 9	Britain in the World Today.	Conway Hall
Fri Nov 23	Britain's Future, solely in the Working Class	Bellman Bookshop
Fri Nov 30	Britain in the 80's, an Industrial Wasteland	Conway Hall

The Worker

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1 year £5.00 (inc. postage)

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