

THE WORKER



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As opposition mounts, we say

GET BRITAIN OUT OF EEC

CALLAGHAN'S so-called rejection of the European Monetary System is a stage-managed charade. The interminable meetings and antics of 'now we join' and 'now we don't' boil down to one thing only. The Government dare not plunge openly further into the morass of the EEC for fear of the unpopularity it would bring.

They are caught between the devil of their capitalist masters for whom they must join, and the deep blue sea of public revulsion against the EEC. Hence the feeble attempt to curry favour by pegging the Euro-MPs salary.

That the rejection is window-dressing is clear. Listen to Callaghan in Parliament. "We shall join the development of the European currency unit and of the European Monetary Fund. . . That is a matter the Chancellor will be considering shortly. . . We shall participate in the enlarged community credit which is linked to the establishment of the EMS." What a pity that Schmidt's plan had suffered a set-back. "I believe that another attempt should be made in due course . . ."

This Labour Government is integrated with the EEC. It has already joined in closer links with the Community, of which EMS is one part only. Talk of deferring decisions is humbug, exactly like that of the Wilson Government which, while binding itself to the EEC, feigned to be negotiating better terms, and out of fear of unpopularity pretended to be keeping its distance.

The capitalist governments of the EEC need a central authority just as capitalist firms need the State for wage control. As the EEC dictates this unemployment or that spending cut, national governments (what a misnomer!) will protest opposition while all the time combining through the EEC to enforce those same policies.

Currency union cloaks

agreement among capitalist governments that, when it is expedient to judge a member economy as 'out of line' then that country shall be in their thrall - exactly as the IMF decided, along with Healey, that public spending should be axed in Britain.

Callaghan hinted that control over Britain by the EEC alone was insufficient. The dollar too should be associated. He said he would not hesitate to recommend a departure from national sovereignty if it were of benefit. Benefit to whom?

Like all capitalism, the EEC creates inequality and regional differences. That is why as a currency plan the Monetary System is doomed to disaster, like Bretton-Woods and all other predecessors. It may represent the newfound will of Schmidt and Giscard to prey on the economies of the weaker members - Britain, Ireland and Italy. The latter two governments are holding out for a better deal than so far offered. But

basically it is a financial plot of the capitalists of all nine countries against the working class.

British capitalism is prepared to collaborate in the bleeding white and destruction of Britain itself. Britain will soon become the largest single contributor to the EEC, with a net outflow of funds rising from £660 million now to nearly a thousand million. The doubling of food prices by the Common Agricultural Policy means that the markup on every bite we eat funds the EEC capitalists.

The special efforts to destroy Britain and our working class are a tribute to the strength of our class. Yet each state in Europe today is wracked by internal revolt - the German steelworkers, the French shipyard workers and widespread unrest in the candidate countries, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

That spectre of revolt prompts the architects of the EEC into ever more frantic efforts at capitalist federation.

Shipbuilding workers unite to stop closure of yards

ON December 15 a half day strike is being called by the European Metalworkers Federation to highlight the destruction of the shipbuilding and repair industry in Europe. The action is called in opposition to the European Community Commission for the Reorganisation of the shipbuilding industry.

The call in February for a 46 per cent cut back in building capacity in the EEC, of which Britain's share is 20 per cent, has finally met with action and not just words. In Britain, British Shipbuilding have called for a 32 per cent reorganisation, starting with 12,300 redundancies to be followed by another 14,000. The scheme would reduce manpower from the present 86,600 to 27,000 by 1980.

Frantic destruction

The EEC commissions have proven their worth with the destruction of steel. In the frantic destructive actions of capitalism to keep itself alive in Europe as elsewhere, it passes the consequences of its own contradictions of 'overproduction' onto the backs of the working class, with unemployment and the destruction of production.

The great difference of today's crisis with that of past crises is that capitalism is now in absolute decline, and this is shown by the figures for restructuring the capacity in Britain downward from 632,000 in 1978 to

120,000 in 1980-81, then 530,000 in 1981-82. At the same time new shipbuilding nations are emerging who rightly wish to own and repair their own fleets.

Workers proposals

The EMF backed by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions in Britain has proposed measures for controlled reduction and redeployment by the development of maritime technology and the diversification of shipyard production. They are calling for the immediate putting into practice of measures involving better safety regulations for shipping, segregated ballast tanks, reinforced outer shells, doubly equipped controls and double radar, a reduction in the size of holds, a limitation of the size of oil-tankers, scrapping of old ships which no longer satisfy the required standards and the banning of entry to European ports of ships which do not respect the safety, environment and minimal social regulations for the crews.

The political reality of the situation as yet has not been fully grasped. The attack on the industries is an attack on the workers organisations of those involved as well as a lowering of the standard of living of the whole class. Capitalism which creates this destruction appears strong when centralised as in the EEC, but when the shipbuilding workers of each country fight against such destructive power, this will reveal its weakness.

Fight for socialism

But the only future is that of socialism; and further struggle will prove this. This token strike will have to be taken forward in future action, such as occupation of threatened yards. Only unified action will give this, and the responsibility ultimately lies with the shipbuilding workers of each individual country.

Restructuring may be inevitable in present world conditions. However capitalism's inhumane destruction of livelihoods and future skill in the furtherance of high profit is totally unacceptable. The only restructuring which is socially acceptable, that of centralised planning where the people's needs count and industries are not destroyed because they do not make huge quick profits, will come about under socialism.



In pursuit of their claim for a basic £80 members of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers picketed the Ministry of Agriculture on December 8. (Andrew Wiard, Report)

HISTORIC NOTES Have enough and say 'Ho'

THE LEVELLERS (see issues 33, 34 and 35 of The Worker) did not arise solely because of the liberating effects of a struggle against the 'divine right' of kings. Just as they prepared the ground for future democratic and egalitarian movements, so they reaped from the intellectual seeds of brave men and women before them. In this and the next issue of The Worker we look at two of these movements, the Peasants' Revolt and the Lollards.

"Be ware or ye be wo.
Know your friend from your foe.
Have enough and say 'Ho!'"
So ran one of John Ball's famous rhyming letters to the people of England, calling them to revolt. Such letters could be easily transmitted by word of mouth, and show, that even in the 'dark ages' the people of Britain were struggling for independence.

Ball, "a foolish priest in the country of Kent" had been freed from his third prison sentence for egalitarian and heretical sermons. His liberators were the band of men led by Wat Tyler - in revolt against government attempts at wage fixing (Statute of Labourers 1351), the Hundred Years War, and the increasing Poll Taxes (levied two years running) to pay for it. Virtually all we know about Tyler is that he was killed in front of the king by the mayor - Sir William Walworth. (To this day the Walworth

Road in Southwark is named after him.) But Ball had already come to the notice of the authorities, and some reports of his 'sermons' survive to this day.

"Ah! Ye good people, the matters goeth not well to pass in England, nor shall not do till everything be common, and that there be no villeins nor gentlemen, but that we may be all united together, and that the lords be no greater masters than we be. What have we deserved, or why should we be kept thus in servage? We be all come from one father, and one mother, Adam and Eve; whereby can they say or show that they be greater lords than we, saying by that they cause us to win and labour for that they dispend?"

Ball's proposal was to gather and march to London to petition the young King Richard. And it is a testimony to the chord he struck, and the organisation of thousands forgotten today that a reported sixty thousand people from Kent, Sussex, Essex, Bedford "and of the countries about" began the march to London. The frightened landowners attempted to rout the army more than once - and failed. The peasant army, swelled by artisans from the town, took control of Southwark, Lambeth and the Tower.

Realising his weakness, Richard used a trick which we ourselves often see today. "Withdraw ye home into your own houses and into such villages as ye come

from... and I shall cause writings to be made and seal them with my seal... containing everything that ye demand. And to that intent that ye shall be better assured, I shall cause my banners to be delivered into every hallowick, shire and counties." So ran the French Ambassador's report of his message to Ball, Tyler and Jack Straw.

The trick worked. Many were satisfied with these promises. Many more were confused. The hungry, frightened 'army' found itself divided and the authorities were able to manoeuvre a confrontation with those who were not satisfied with an empty promise only. They were defeated, the leaders seized and executed, their heads displayed on the Tower as a warning to others. "These tidings anon spread abroad, so that the people of the strange countries, which were coming towards London, returned back again to their own houses and durst come no further." And Parliament hastily retracted all the concessions made.

'Order' may have been restored, but that does not always mean tranquillity. No sooner had the 'peasants' revolt' been defeated, than riots erupted in all parts of the country, with monasteries, manorial houses and other institutions being sacked. No sooner had these 'unrests' died down than a new and more determined challenge emerged, in the form of Lollardy.

Chile Junta THE WEEK

NOW IN Chile, over five years since the fascist coup, crisis is biting hard. Unemployment is permanently over 20 per cent, many skilled workers are emigrating to find work abroad, while in the past five years 30,000 companies have gone bankrupt.

The National Debt increases, and it was calculated that this year the Junta would have to pay back 600 million dollars, much of which would be repaid by obtaining further loans. But presumably the British Government would say Chile was a successful country because inflation was reduced from 375 per cent in 1975 to 70 per cent in 1977.

At what expense? A country where there are thousands of political prisoners and exiles, 2500 people have disappeared, and where arrest is completely arbitrary.

Yet with all these difficulties, workers are standing up and resisting fascism, and finding ways of working under these conditions. This is shown by the struggle of the copper miners who are involved in a movement to safeguard Trade Union freedoms. When six miners were sacked at Chicquicamata for demanding a wage increase, by using their own union organisation the workers started a canteen boycott, their bood leaders of the fascist union out of the hall and rejected the 'legal' way of negotiations.

LAST week Horton General Hospital at Banbury was forced to close down a 24 bedded ward due to a 'staff shortage'. Shortages have their causes. Oxford's Area Nursing Officer commented, "The decline in nurses' pay is a big factor in this problem. At the moment we are getting nursing on the cheap. Nurses are being exploited and the public should put pressure on the Government so that they are fairly recompensed for what they do."

THE GOVERNMENT says it is worried by the fall in new building, which is down by a third on the projected target for this year. The 'remedy' which they are considering for this, is to phase out the Parker Morris standards which fix the maximum and minimum standards to which local authorities must build council housing.

Although they are anxious not to give the impression that they are encouraging a fall in standards, this is exactly what will happen in the present situation of expenditure cuts. Now they will build not only less, but worse!

TOM Jackson has still got it all wrong. First he sets himself against the labour movement's reassertion of collective bargaining by supporting the Labour Government's incomes policy. Then when the pay policy has been defeated by the organised working class, Tom Jackson says that "if there's to be a 'rat-race'", then the Post Office workers must get in on it. Collective bargaining does not mean workers fighting each other for a bigger slice of the cake, Tom Jackson. It means workers uniting to fight the employer.

A PICKET of all of Garners Steak Houses by workers striking in support of union recognition and improved wages and conditions took place on December 8th. This 'stake-out' is the latest action in the ten month strike which has forced the owners to close several restaurants and has severely curtailed the business at the others.

FINANCE capital in the city of London, not content with taking 70 pence in every pound of council house rents as interest charges on council loans, is now exploring further ways of profiting from workers. Apparently, pension funds have so much money that there will soon be problems finding 'suitable' things to invest in. One plan is to use them to build schools and hospitals and then rent them to public authorities.

As the destruction of the health service continues apace, there is a corresponding growth in health insurance schemes and private medicine, which is highly profitable. So, any such hospitals that are built could well end up going to the highest bidder. Destruction and profit always go hand in hand, and we want none of it!

SWAPO leaders jailed .. Namibian elections a sham

ELECTION, to the South African occupiers of Namibia, means setting off bombs in the centre of Windhoek, and then arresting the leaders of SWAPO, the main party opposed to their rule, the day before polling was to begin. SWAPO has boycotted the elections as a farce held to give a semblance of legality to South Africa's continued military intervention. Police armed with machine guns have been guarding the booths, while the army in order to find voters has ventured heavily armed into places they never dared go before. Sixty per cent of the electorate are said to be illiterate, and votes will have been cast for them by the South African authorities.

The United Nations role in all this has been despicable. Five major powers (Britain among

them) have assumed Namibia as their protectorate. They plan for more democracy, under the rule of 7500 UN troops. However, until such time as South Africa will agree to this (the elections are to set up a puppet government first) the imperialists are quite happy with South Africa's rule, so long as they can share in the profits of this mineral rich country.

Both the UN powers and South Africa justify their interference with the assertion that they are there to keep Soviet imperialism at bay. They go to ridiculous lengths to prove that this is the case. As if, however much Soviet imperialism might wish for some pickings, under South African and Western rule there were room for another predatory power! Naturally, according to the South

African police, the pre-election bomb was of Soviet manufacture. There is no end of news about Cuban advisers, yet, strangely, detainees are always African freedom fighters.

At present the enemy for the Namibian and South African peoples is the one that daily kills and imprisons - South Africa, abetted by its allies in Europe and the US. The West Germans operate a guided missile range in Zaïre to the north, capable of delivering nuclear warheads, yet protest about East German infiltration.

Last year 2 million carats of diamonds were mined by De Beers (operating with much British capital). Export earnings were of 200m Rand. Every week several hundred tons of uranium oxide are air-

lifted from Windhoek to Paris, as the yearly output of the mines climbs from three to five thousand tons.

It makes little difference whether the occupying force is UN or South African, so long as such exploitation continues. We hear all about the EEC Codes of Conduct for firms investing in South Africa. But who can forget the latest mining disaster, when the owners said they had to bury men alive in order to save the remainder? They clearly anticipate consolidating their rule. A recent plan is to construct, at an estimated cost of a billion dollars, a railway link between Walvis Bay, on Namibia's Atlantic Coast, through Botswana and into Smith's Rhodesia. This is the brain child of a British-South African consortium.

IN BRIEF

I G METALL, the West German steel workers' union, has agreed to the appointment of a mediator to try to resolve the combined strike and lock-out in the steel industry.

The strike, now in its second week, brought out 37,000 workers and the Ruhr steel bosses promptly locked out 29,000 more.

In agreeing to mediation, I G Metall has made it clear that it will stick to its demand for the introduction of a 35 hour working week.

SCOTTISH lorry drivers are preparing themselves for action early in the new year to press their demand for a £12 increase in basic rates from the present £53. Union negotiators for drivers all over Britain are recommending action in the face of the employers' 5 per cent offer.



These Namibians being trained for guerrilla war know that their country will never be freed by phoney elections whether arranged by South Africa or the UN.
Photo: Hsinhua

EDITORIAL

THE BRITISH labour movement's defiance of a capitalist government by reasserting its right to bargain over the price of labour power is one of the most important events in working class history during the last quarter of a century.

It has exposed the Labour Government leaders as no less enemies of the interests of the working class than the leaders of any other capitalist political party. By this exposure the Labour Government has to a considerable extent ceased to be the useful tool of British capitalism it has so long been in the past.

The successful class war waged around the issue of collective bargaining has also exploited the contradictions between capitalist governments serving the general interests of capitalism and individual capitalists looking for immediate advantages. This has come out into the open in connection with the sanctions issue and the row between Ford management and the Labour Government has been reflected in splits within Parliament itself which threatened to bring down the Government.

This labour movement victory on the wages question has also revitalised opposition to the Government's flagrantly capitalist line within the Labour Party. This is what made it impossible for Callaghan to take Britain into the European Monetary System. With a divided Parliamentary Labour Party behind him it would have been political suicide for Callaghan to ignore the growing public resentment against the Common Agricultural Policy and the bitterness over even higher unemployment which would result from joining a European monetary union largely controlled by Western Germany. Callaghan had instead to pose in the House as a nationalist concerned about unemployment as well as inflation.

Major lesson

The labour movement must welcome this opposition within the ranks of the Labour Party and use it but it must not depend on it. To do so would be to forget the major lesson of our successful struggle which was waged by and through our own trade union organisation.

What keeping Britain out of EMS shows is that the British labour movement's campaign to defend their only freedom, the right to bargain over wages, has reopened other questions which the capitalist ruling class had hoped were closed. The question of Britain's very membership of the EEC, for example, is wide open again. So is the question of devolution which the Government hopes to use as a means of splitting working class unity in Britain.

What is essential for the British labour movement having scored this major reversal of its class enemy's economic and political scheme of things is to keep up the pressure by following up the implications of its revolutionary defiance. The ruling capitalist class demanded the fixing of wages by government fiat as the only way the profit system could survive. The British labour movement said NO, and in saying NO it said, in effect, to hell with the profit system. Now it has to begin saying what is to be put in the place of the profit system and the only answer is socialism.

Capitalism sabotages reservoirs as water shortage reappears

IS IT all another act of God incensed at the growing power of trade unions or has the capitalist system yet again failed to plan for the future? How is it that Britain with the most advanced water industry in the world cannot survive nature's ups and downs?

One of the arguments used in the 1976 drought was that it was irresponsible to plan safeguards against situations that were only likely to occur, at the most, every 40 years. Not a very progressive attitude for a highly industrialised country where exactly such provision should be the hallmark of civilisation.

It is well known that adequate reservoir and other water supply provision would have prevented both the present and 1976 discomforts. Such was the disarray of the free market water industry before reorganisation in 1974 that areas such as Devon and Cornwall were left badly lacking in good water storage facilities. However despite the brave face of plans to put this to rights, and indeed some material progress, the true mark of distinction on the post-reorganisation period has been that of unparalleled cuts in public expenditure. Even with a hoped for 17 per cent increase in spending over the next five years in the water industry the total of expenditure will have dropped to about 30 per cent below that of 1973/74 according

to the Water Industry Review 1978. This has resulted inevitably in the sabotaging of reservoir building plans. As a South West Water Authority report said, "It will be some years before new storage reservoirs are complete to make the supply really secure."

If the country and industry were really hard up one might be prepared to wait. However, an analysis of the finances of the water industry shows that while the rate paying public are going without an adequate supply of water, the financiers are drowning in returns on their money lending. Of every pound of revenue expenditure by the water industry in 1976/77, 33.8 pence went in interest charges alone. Among the kind benefactors is none other than that people's friend, the government of Iran, who have lent the National Water Council 800 million dollars. With a third of the industry's available finance going on interest charges (let alone repayment of the actual loans) is it any wonder the reservoirs are not being built.

It is not beyond understanding that matters could be different. While we are told to go short of man's greatest necessity, water, is it not time to turn the tables and deprive the ruling class of their greatest necessity - exploitation. Only then can we truly Save Water,

Net profits produce gross destruction

AS THE sordid wrangling in Brussels continues over how to carve up the fisheries around Britain's shores, the worldwide destruction on the high seas assumes new proportions. Following the abandoned seal cull in this country, we have heard recently of the slaughter of thousands of dolphins in Japan, justified on similar specious grounds as being a threat to fish stocks, while nearer home, as the winter shoals of mackerel arrive off the Cornish coast, the Ministry of Agriculture has had to impose catch quotas in an effort to protect future stocks.

Since the over-exploitation and consequent decline of cod, haddock and herring, mackerel has been sought increasingly. As trawlers from the East Coast, Scotland, the USSR and Eastern Europe begin the scramble for the mackerel, John Silkin has imposed a limit to the catch of 100,000 tonnes, and has banned all ships of over sixty feet from a three mile zone in response to demands from local fishermen.

It is widely believed that the imposed quota will make little difference and despite assurances from scientists, local fishermen believe that the behaviour of the mackerel is following the same pattern of decline as the pilchards years ago, since already the mackerel shoals have been late in arriving, are fewer in number and have not been coming so far to the east as previously.

Data ignored

Thus it seems the same tragic cycle of destruction continues with one species after another joining the execution list. Prior to the present fisheries crisis in the north east Atlantic, biological and catch data had been available for fifty years, which indicated a crisis. This knowledge was deliberately ignored, however, by the fishing industry, as was shown by the constant use of small mesh trawls over the herring spawning grounds to catch larvae and fry which were subsequently reduced to fishmeal.

Last year's yield of the Atlantic/Scandinavian herring was less than 10,000 tonnes, well below the estimated potential yield of 1.5 million tonnes. The catches of cod and haddock have been above estimated sustainable potential, but a similar demise to that of the herring is believed to have been avoided only by benign climatic conditions which cannot go on.

Not content with the devastation in the northern fishing zones of the world, Southern European, Russian, Japanese and S. Korean fleets have turned their attentions to the tropical and northern subtropical fisheries such that 'developed' nations now take approximately 70 per cent of the catch in these waters. Although there is insufficient data from these areas to suggest depletion on the scale of the northern seas, there has already been a decline in the South African pilchard, again with the bulk of many catches going for the production of fish meal.

It is now abundantly clear that the exploiters of the ocean's reserves show as much regard for the ecological balance of the oceans as would a farmer if he were to remove and sell the soil after the harvest. Profit they want and profit they will have; the only answer to destruction is more destruction.

Capelin is a case in point. This is one of the lesser quality fish caught in increasing numbers since the decline of the more valuable species. Not only is this the staple diet of the harp seal, which has been the victim of the now infamous culls, but it also provides part of the food supply of whales and cod. Such an approach to fishing is equivalent not to biting the hand that feeds you, but to cutting it off.

What is required is a total

reassessment of how food should be produced from the sea - does it really make sense, biologically or even economically, to use one form of protein to produce another, ie the use of fishmeal as animal feed. An investment in skills is needed to discover exactly what we can take out, how to maintain an ecological balance and what if necessary we should put in to maintain the sea as a permanent asset, not as a wasting one as capitalism would have it.



This trawler took part in a demonstration by British fishermen against throwing open British coastal waters. Photo: Nick Birch

The more dangerous the cargo the less seaworthy the ships

"WE CANNOT prevent extensive coastal pollution following an abnormally large spill of oil." So said the Welsh Secretary in Parliament. Clearly devolution does little for the environment. "The quantities of oil involved are so great that neither we nor anyone else can make any arrangements."

The extent of the problem is such that there is an anti-oil fleet on call, capable of dealing with 6000 tons a day along the south coast. Whether these vessels are in fact capable of dispersing such quantities of oil is obviously open to question. But what is above all shocking is that the government should be prepared to accept such a volume of spillage as normal.

When the Christos Bitas went aground off the Welsh coast recently, it was declared that less than 3000 tons escaped. Yet there was extensive pollution of shores, at least 2000 birds affected, and severe pollution of Skomer Island. Only favourable winds prevented the many nature reserves along that coastline from being affected.

Nevertheless a recent government report congratulates itself for dealing so well with the Christos Bitas. They talk of the action taken - refusal to take a

leaking vessel into a British port, the use of pumping ships, and the final destruction of the boat out in the Atlantic - as a step forward. In comparison with what? With the appalling wreck of the Amoco Cadiz which filthied hundreds of miles of Breton coastline, and the Eleni V off Yarmouth, which took over three weeks to dispose of. The delay was all the more terrible here as the cargo was heavy fuel oil, for which there is no known dispersants.

The real problem is, of course, the greed for profit, which dictates the transport of toxic substances vast distances, when domestic sources of energy would be equally effective. Under this logic, it means the more dangerous the cargo, the larger and more unmanageable the oil tanker. Tankers are, moreover, fitted in many cases with only the crudest navigational aids. Yet it seems that any form of international cooperation which might help such disasters in the future - shipping lanes, higher standards of navigation, or whatever - is out of the question. The Channel is one of the world's busiest and most dangerous stretches of water. Yet for the British or any other government to think of more stringent control would be unthinkable.

Broadcasting workers defend skills

THE ASSOCIATION of Broadcasting Staff, representing the BBC's 26,000 employees, has set up an action committee empowered to call for strike action at any time in either radio or television. The necessity for strike action has come about as a result of the Government's refusal to treat the BBC, which has fallen far behind comparable organisations like ITV at all levels, as a "special case" and the BBC management's refusal to breach the Government's guidelines.

Those who may suffer the inconvenience of having BBC television programmes blanked out over Christmas must appreciate that in fighting for decent wages and conditions in the BBC, the broadcasting workers are fighting for the preservation of public service broadcasting. And those who do not appreciate what public service

broadcasting means should experience the cultural desert of a country like the US where most radio and television programmes are paid for by advertising.

The Labour Government, in turning down the BBC's request for a licence fee adequate to maintain public service broadcasting and in extending the BBC's ability to go on broadcasting at all for only another year making the planning of future output practically impossible, is destroying public service broadcasting as surely as by cuts it is destroying other services in the public sector like health and education. By depriving the BBC of an adequate income and keeping it on a yearly leading string the Government is not only favouring commercial broadcasting but also establishing tighter control of BBC programme policy.

As a result of Government

action and the pusillanimity of BBC management there are severe staff shortages throughout the Corporation and soon we shall have the same anomalies in certain areas of industry of a concern foundering for lack of skilled staff amid massive unemployment. The BBC management, in allowing itself to be bound by the Government pay code in a way that its commercial competitors are not, is conniving at this destruction.

Capitalism has no regard for institutions to which the skills and energies of those who work in them have given a high degree of excellence - like the BBC or THE TIMES. They are not profitable or not very highly so and capitalism says to hell with them. It is for us workers to save these monuments of our talents by seeing that conditions of work in them are adequate to their preservation.

Fight against destruction of Fire Brigade

THE FIRE Brigades Union has set April 1 as a deadline for the implementation of the 42 hour week, won as a result of their struggle last year. This 6 hour reduction will require an extra shift to be organised and, obviously, this should entail the employment of extra firemen. In London, an extra 1100-1200 firemen will be needed on top of the 6500 or so already employed.

The employer's attitude to this reorganisation indicates a continuation of the callous disregard for life which they showed during last winter's dispute. Instead of employing the necessary extra workers, they intend to cut services and close fire stations.

In London there are over 100 fire stations, about 80 of which operate with two fire fighting appliances. The employers intend to make 30 of these stations operate with a single appliance, thus at a stroke reducing the number of workers needed to run the service at its present level. It is likely that only 400-700 extra firemen will be offered by the employers instead of the 1100-1200 needed. In Man-

chester and Strathclyde, the intention is to close down fire stations altogether.

In any event, the recruitment and training of firemen will never reach the levels needed to operate a 42 hour week, even on the employers' terms. In London, workers are leaving the service at a rate of 30 a month and by April 1, it is estimated that there will be an undermanning of 500 firemen.

What this will mean for the fire service is clear: fewer vehicles and men will be sent to fires and it will take them longer to get there because they will have extra work to cover.

The Fire Brigades Union was the first in its courageous stand against government pay policy. For many years the union has fought hard to preserve and improve the fire brigades, and the unity and determination of its wages fight augers well for the struggle against cuts. The rest of the working class drew inspiration from the firemen's struggle last winter - this time we must ensure our full support.



Young people in Albania performing national dances as part of country wide celebrations. The portrait is of the outstanding Albanian leader, Enver Hoxha. (Albanian Telegraphic Agency)

Provincial journalists

FOR the first time in the history of the National Union of Journalists an open-ended strike began last week of provincial journalists.

The journalists on these papers have been notoriously badly paid and the union believes that if something is not done to remedy this the crisis in the newspaper industry will deepen - resulting in poor coverage and low quality writing.

The national provincial agreement that exists at present sets 18 minimum rates for various workers based on where they work and how long they have been working. Most of these journalists earn less than £75 per week, including some editors of

weekly newspapers. The union claim for a £20 a week rise is way beyond the government guidelines.

The Newspaper Society which represents 260 provincial newspaper managements refuses to break government pay policy and their only firm offer to the journalists is 5 per cent and the possibility of a productivity scheme. A 5 per cent rise would give journalists on average a £4 per week rise. Another offer is dependent on the government making journalists a special case.

The NUJ is not prepared to be made a special case and is sticking firmly to breaking the imposed government guidelines.

More hospitals in London to close

FINCHLEY Memorial Hospital is in danger of having its ear, nose and throat unit shut down. Barnet Area Health Authority, the instigators of this plan, obviously have not asked for the opinion of the medical and nursing staff and patients.

Last year there were 14,000 attendances at the casualty and out-patients department and nearly 500 minor operations were carried out in the casualty operating theatre, apart from attendances at fracture and other clinics. There were 1,057 operations performed in the main theatres of which 400 were ear, nose and throat operations and the remainder orthopaedic, general and gynaecological surgery. It is obvious that this hospital plays a great part to the nearby community and any threat to a part of it is a threat to the complete hospital's wellbeing.

The medical committee at the hospital asked the district

management team to provide a portable cardiac monitor. This was turned down and so was the appointment of a senior medical officer who would have been able to supervise medical work within the hospital and also lecture.

It is obvious that Barnet Area Health Authority is carrying out the policy of the Government on the Health Service - destruction!

Potters Bar Hospital is also threatened with closure, and will mean that everybody must

attend Barnet General Hospital which already has a large waiting list. This would be a disaster. The medical committee at Finchley have announced their hostility to closure but their main campaign against it is in the form of petitions and letters etc.

This will help build up public support, in preparation for a hard battle; but only the strength, single-mindedness and organisation of the workers in the hospital will keep it open.

Unity in Hull docks over claim

AS A RESULT of industrial action by Hull Dockers since October 16 in support of a 20 per cent pay claim, North Sea Ferries, who operate a Hull-Rotterdam service, offered to negotiate with their 155 registered dockworkers a deal above 5 per cent.

A spokesman for the dockers' negotiating committee said this offer showed a split among the dock employers, and the negotiating committee had to negotiate on behalf of all the dock workers in the port and would not be taking up the offer.

Bookshops



Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress 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

Basildon bookstall Tues Fri Sat Marketplace

Liverpool bookstall - every Thursday at Liverpool University

Hull Bookstall - Old Town Market, Saturdays 9.30-4.00

BRISTOL MEETING: "THE FIGHT FOR WAGES".
Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, Old Market, Bristol
Friday, December 15, 7.30 pm.

'The Worker' 155 FORTRESS ROAD, LONDON NWS
6 months £2.50 (including postage)
1 year £5.00 (including postage)

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