

THE WORKER



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WHO ARE THEY KIDDING?

LABOUR'S 'SOCIAL CONTRACT'—ACCEPTING A CLAMPDOWN IN RETURN FOR WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY WON

Scientists in struggle

Civil servants are taking militant action again. What once would have provoked cries of incredulity is now becoming an everyday occurrence. Last year it was the clerical and administrative workers whose refusal to accept the Pay Code compelled the government to concede a substantial pay increase. This year it is the professional workers, government scientists, who have gone into battle over a wage demand and have proved, both to themselves and to the public at large, that BBC weathermen, airport meteorologists, Scotland Yard fingerprint analysts and nuclear scientists are members of the working class and will fight because they must, out of class necessity.

The scientists, numbering 32,000, have embarked on a campaign of half-day strikes, demonstrations and non-co-operation. The scale of their action is unique in the history of their union, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. Their struggle follows three years of prevarication and broken promises by the government. They know full well that the government has succumbed to pressure from certain big private employers who fear that, if government scientists get a pay rise, their own scientists (worse paid than those in government employ) will also demand one.

They did not allow the General Election to interrupt their campaign. Their dispute is not with any particular government but with all governments -- the State.

Their struggle can serve to break down the inter-union suspiciousness and hostility which has tended to bedevil Civil Service trade unionism. The realisation is growing that there is a common enemy, the employer, and that all must stand together no matter what niche they occupy in the official hierarchy.



WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

When every other newspaper in the country was bursting at the seams with advice and commentary on the Election campaign, the NUJ strike prevented the appearance of the Daily Telegraph in many parts of the country the day before polling day, a sharp reminder of the need to use direct action and to keep initiative in our own hands.

A pay rise for journalists will be the signal for a further spate of wage claims from the printers, and the fact that this particular NUJ action was supported by Fleet Street electricians, despite their union's weak-

kneed stand in the face of the General Election, is another healthy sign of the situation. Not only have the newspaper employers been forced to agree to negotiate locally, but the Daily Mirror group has actually withdrawn from the Newspaper Publishers' Association. All the eye-wash about, "We can't afford higher wages", has been swept aside: since when has their inability to make profits caused us sleepless nights? However, it would be wrong to think that everything in the Fleet Street garden is roses. Journalists broke their employers' united tactic of delaying negotiations

The Labour Government pretends that it ended the miners' strike and in return is expecting other sections of the working class to refrain from pressing comparable claims.

The miners had already won their battle for justifiable increases in pay before Labour took office.

The great deception

Labour is making a big thing of tearing up anti-working class legislation like the Industrial Relations Act. In exchange restraint is expected on the part of trade unionists.

But workers had already made this legislation inoperative by their own organised action.

Labour is apparently abandoning a wages policy and wants 'voluntary' self-denial on the part of workers as a fair quid pro quo.

But workers had already made the Counter-Inflation Act unworkable by their mass industrial action.

In other words, workers are being told that what they have won by their own struggle is a gift from a Labour Government. Then in exchange for this 'gift' workers are being asked to accept more intense exploitation.

But the deception does not end there

The TUC has its usual role to play in this attempted deception. The TUC General Council said in a statement on the political and economic situation that "in response to the policies of the new Government it would be possible to influence the size of claims and settlements achieved". In return for the Government's giving "priority to the immediate repeal of the Industrial Relations Act, the Government is entitled to understanding and support in its efforts to produce a solution to grave economic and social problems".

This is the line taken by certain labour 'leaders' like the Secretary of the TGWU who has said that "A government which is prepared to tackle these problems will certainly get the co-operation of the trade union movement and there will be moderation".

There are millions of workers with claims outstanding -- railwaymen, engineers, building workers, Ford workers and merchant seamen to mention only some. If they did fall for the deception the Labour Government is trying to practice on them with the help of these so-called 'leaders', it would mean a punitive cut in workers' wages and even higher profits for the employers.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has predicted that there will be further rises in prices this year of from 14 to 18 per cent, more unemployment of over a million, falling production and a wider trade gap. The CBI is calling for a spirit of sacrifice -- on the part of workers of course.

This critical situation will be used by the Labour Government to smuggle back its own versions of wage-freeze and anti-trade union measures. The blueprint for them already exists.

We workers will not have it. We will not let them use the fruits of our own victories as bribes to get us to renounce struggle.

for three months, or even for three days, until the Election was over, and forced them to go for house negotiations where they are most vulnerable. But the measure of this gain is pay rises within Phase III, and not payable until after July 1st. The point is that

Phase III is as much the employers' weapon as national negotiations and delay tactics - in fact it is their main weapon - and we must fight with all our strength and expertise to defeat its attempt to keep down our standards of living.

CHINA "ATTACKING MODERATION"

A ruling class in disarray

Throughout China today, in factory and in farm, workers are attacking the ideas of Confucius and his latter day adherent, Lin Piao. Though Confucius has been dead for more than 2400 years and Lin Piao met an ignominious death in 1971, their influence remains. Workers and peasants have seized the initiative in the battle of ideas, and the consolidation of the working class power in China continues.

Both Confucius and Lin Piao lived in revolutionary times and both took the stand of the class that was facing extinction. Confucius (551-479 BC) saw, during the closing stages of the 'Spring and Autumn' period, the gradual collapse of slave society and urged a surreptitious opposition to the then progressive feudalism in his instruction "restrain oneself and regulate the rites".

The ambitious Lin, opposed to the proletarian power, adopted a similar approach and wrote that he was "constrained to lodge for a time in the tiger's lair". Just as Confucius claimed that some are "born with knowledge", Lin Piao was obsessed with his own "innate genius". Confucius said, "those who labour with their minds govern others; those who labour with their strength are governed by others." Lin considered himself "the noblest of men" while the Chinese people



Women workers of Wuhan Iron and Steel Co. in Central China read articles criticising Lin Piao and Confucius

thought only of "rice, cooking oil and firewood"

Inspired by Confucian 'benevolence', Lin Piao advocated the "political liberation" of counter-revolutionaries and opposed the cultural revolution as "going to the extreme". This led him to seek internationally the "nuclear umbrella" of the Soviet Union

By recalling the barbaric days

before liberation in 1949, and by reviewing their world-shattering achievements since then, the working class and peasants of China are at present demolishing the viewpoint and thinking of Confucius and Lin Piao. In opposition to the "doctrine of the mean", Mao has said, "the philosophy of the Communist Party is the philosophy of struggle".

LAOS - enforcing the agreement

The pact has proved since the Americans were forced to sign the Vientiane agreement which promised peace and national concord between the American satellite government and the Lao Patriotic Forces. The latter controlled roughly 40% of the country with 1 million people while the American puppets had control of the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

While the Patriotic Forces have demanded the strictest implementation of the agreement, the rightists in Vientiane have spared no effort to sabotage. Troops and aircraft have been sent to attack the liberated areas and the refugees from the American bombing have been prevented by the Vientiane Government from returning to their homes. In the region controlled by the Vientiane Government people have been arrested

and murdered by rightists, and rice stores and dwellings have been burned down. The aim of the rightists is to delay the formation of a government of national union.

Reconstruction

All the attempts at sabotage have been smashed by the Lao Patriotic Forces. The latter, in the last year, has launched a drive to heal and rehabilitate the war scarred areas. Bomb craters have been filled in, and people have returned to the wasteland where all that might remain of their former village is a patch of bare soil smeared with the tell-tale scum of napalm.

Rice output has been increased, irrigation projects expanded, and the manufacture of small farm tools has proliferated. Thousands

more workers are involved in textile production, and roads and waterways now link the country from the far north to the south. General education is being popularised and public health is now widespread and free. Despite the barbarism of the US bombing and the current sabotage of the peace agreement, the green grass is beginning to grow again in the beautiful hills and valleys of Laos. Between 1964 and 1972 the US dropped 2½ million tons of bombs on Laos, a small mountainous country of less than 3 million people in S.E. Asia. The bombing, 'secret' for the first six years, represents one ton for each Laotian and was the most systematic attempt at destruction ever launched from the air.

Various superficial interpretations have been given of the present governmental situation in Britain - that it represents the electorate's way of voting for 'moderation', or a rejection of the personalist campaigns of the two main party leaders, or a revival of the basic 'liberalism' of the country, or the end of the two-party system.

What it really represents is disarray within the ruling class on the question of how to cope with workers whose organisation for struggle reflects a higher level of class political consciousness.

Statutory or 'voluntary' controls, Phase III or social contract between government and TUC, an Industrial Relations Act imposed by legal sanctions or 'In Place of Strife' administered by the TUC on the government's behalf - these are the kinds of alternatives the ruling class has been juggling with. Whether it is time to crack down on workers or whether it is still possible to delude and deceive them, whether to try to smash the trade unions or whether the unions can be tamed and made part of the capitalist state apparatus - these are differences confusing the voice of the ruling class.

It is not a difference about whether to exploit the working class viciously or not but how to keep the working class from challenging that exploitation. Tory and Labour policies do not represent different classes; but different voices of the same capitalist class - both inimical to working class interests.

A working class with its own ideology

There are dangers for our working class if we see this disarray as other than an opportunity for not only maintaining, but stepping up class struggle.

Immediately, there is the danger of some temporary resurgence of social-democratic thinking on the part of workers - of believing that a Labour government is more favourable to the interests of the working class than a Tory government, that under Labour gradual improvements and reforms are possible so that we can live with the capitalist system instead of trying to smash it.

We have ample proof from Labour's record in the past that such is far from the case. Social-democracy is the labour movement's compromise with capitalism. Labour is the clearest expression of social-democracy and to that extent it represents a greater threat to the working class than do the Tories.

It is not the Labour Government which made the miners' strike successful. By the correctness of their class struggle the miners would have exacted their just demands from any government. It is not Labour which will abolish the Industrial Relations Act. Workers by their concerted action made it inoperative and they will have to see to it that it isn't smuggled back again in some other form. It is not Labour which will abandon a wage freeze. It will have to be swept away by workers and collective bargaining will have to be forced on the employing class in the same way that workers forced on them their right of collective organisation to begin with.

Not class collaboration but class struggle: not the illusion of gradual evolution but the reality of revolution - that is the ideology of the working class.

The necessity of struggle

When an enemy stands pondering about the best way of attacking you, you don't wait patiently for him to make up his mind.

The capitalist class enemy understands very well how to go on grabbing profits, but it does not know how to sustain and strengthen the system on which the continuous flow of profits depends. In that respect, too, the ruling class is in disarray. In their extremity they even ask us workers to show restraint in respect to their interests which they always call the 'national' interest.

It is never our business to make the system that exploits us work. And no calls from would-be leaders of the labour movement to spare 'our Labour Government' should deter us for a moment from our historic task of smashing capitalism.

British Imperialism vs. the Irish people

The main contradiction

An important meeting in Ireland was held at the Bellman Bookshop on Friday 1st March.

The tone of the meeting was set by the first speaker who said that "the Irish question resolves itself, in the final analysis, into a war between British imperialism and the Irish people. This is the main contradiction. All other contradictions are secondary and subordinate to it". Ireland's long history of struggle bears out the truth of this statement.

Why Ireland?

Why British imperialism interested in Ireland? Why does it spend such time and resources on an attempt to control so capriciously one country?

The answer is, of course, that Ireland is not a poor country - to

addition to her agricultural wealth Ireland is now known to be exceedingly rich in minerals. Indeed, in this latter field, her wealth is unsurpassed in Europe. For example, the lead and zinc mine discovered at Navan by Tara Explorations is probably the largest in the world, and contains an estimated £2 billion worth of metal. This is a very good reason for monopoly capitalism to be interested in Ireland.

Domination - exploitation

The monopoly capitalists of Britain, America, West Germany, Japan... are interested in Ireland for one reason - to exploit its wealth. British imperialism's war on the Irish people, its forced division of the country, its careful fostering of sectarian differences, all serve to further the interests of the monopoly capitalists, to further exploitation.

So too do the actions of the Dublin and Belfast puppet governments - their courting of the monopolies, their 15 and 20 year tax holidays on the profits of export sales, their massive capital grants (of workers' money) to Courtaulds, Rio Tinto, Alcan, Grundig, etc.

The Irish people

At no time does imperialism consider the needs of the Irish people, the need to develop the considerable resources of Ireland in the interests of its people. Whilst imperialism keeps Ireland in turmoil, it bleeds the country dry, forces low wages and poor living conditions on its workers and working farmers, and keeps alive the curse of emigration. The Irish people can no longer live with imperialism. They have no choice but to struggle against it, no future unless they defeat it.

Occupation at Middlesex Polytechnic

Students at Middlesex Polytechnic, Enfield Precinct, not only occupied the administration centre of their building from March 6, in

line with the NUS "Week of Action" for a minimum grant of £655, they extended that occupation to the offices of the Education Department as well!

Our stand

Our stand, as ever, is one of absolute support for the Irish people. We support anyone who fights imperialism, whose strategy is to rid their country of its domination. When the last Labour Government sent troops to Ireland, our Party was the first to demand their withdrawal. It remains the correct demand of the working class today. British troops out of Ireland! British imperialism out of Ireland!

A member of the action committee said that the action was being directed against the local education authority because they: "quite cheerfully cut back our education programme when it suits them and it is to them we are directing our demand for higher grants".

Mass action by the students prevented the arrest of those carrying out the occupation when the college authorities called in the police.

The students continued their campaign of defiance in a disciplined manner and ended each action while morale was still high.

INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

The campaign at rank and file level for the release of the Shrewsbury Three and the dropping of the charges against the remaining building workers yet to be tried must continue, and be stepped up. The campaign initiated by the North Wales Defence Committee must not under any circumstances be diverted, by any pleading, no matter from where, that there is no need to continue the struggle; that the Labour Government will set these men free, so let's leave it to them.

We must also dismiss those who would put all their faith in the official side of our movement. History shows that any action taken by the official side of our movement, in the interest of our class, has always been, and will always be engendered at rank and file level. If this were not so, and the TUC were poised waiting to move against any injustice against our class, the building workers would not be in prison.

What we have witnessed is an example of how the ruling class exploit the contradictions in our movement. Workers in Britain have for many years had the right to picket; and again this right was won in struggle. The ruling class are now saying, we still have this right, providing of course it's ineffective.

We in the trade union movement must also learn the lessons from past struggles. It is at the point of production that the employing class is weakest; our real strength lies here, and it is here we must act. We must continue with the building of a mighty movement, for the release of our three brothers. Every place where workers earn their living must know of and about the Shrewsbury 24; every active trade unionist must raise the issue of our imprisoned brothers at his or her place of work. The campaign needs to be raised to a new level; the whole trade union movement must begin to take action. One of the slogans that came out of the struggle to build our movement was "An Injury To One Is An Injury To All". We would do well to remember it, and act upon it in the same way as those men and women who built our movement.

VICTORY FOR MAINTENANCE MEN

A determined overtime ban by maintenance workers at Perkins Diesel Engines in Peterborough has paid off. The action was taken over the three months before the 3 day week began, in support of a demand that all skilled facilities men should be moved onto top grade of pay.

While the 3 day week was in force, the ban was lifted since it would not have caused any loss of production beyond what the firm was losing due to the 3 day week itself. Now the 3 day week has ended the management has conceded the claim in full, since if they hadn't the ban would have been smartly reapplied.

Not only has this action gained the men an average of £1.92 a week, but it has helped to prevent stockpiling by the firm, who will shortly be faced with struggle by all the workers over the claim for parity with the firm's Coventry plant.

ON THE INDUSTRIAL FRONT



Lucas

Electricians and millwrights at the Lucas battery factory in Birmingham have been on strike since the end of January in a fight for extra payments for working in hazardous areas where there is a danger of lead poisoning. The management have been trying to block the demand by saying that the workers have already had a Phase III award and any other money can only come out of the 'relativities' procedure of the Pay Board.

British Steel

The management at the Llanwern steel works closed the entire plant down, laying off 5000 workers in an attempt to get the unions to pledge an end to short, sharp strike actions at the plant. Last year there were over 30 such strikes. Pledges or no pledges, a workforce prepared to fight for its rights and a management determined to attack those rights will always mean industrial action. And for management to take such action, shutting down the plant at a time when the steel shortage was threatening the whole of British industry, shows how determined they are to break the spirit of the Llanwern workers.

Print workers

Unions representing 200,000 print workers on provincial newspapers and in general printing rejected a Phase III offer of

£2.30 on the basic rate. The offer was nowhere near the £7.62 claim and the threshold increases, a feeble attempt to compensate for future inflation, did nothing to compensate for the losses suffered in the past.

Police radios

Z-Car drivers may well end up talking to themselves, thanks to a ban on stand-by duties by 500 police and fire brigade radio mechanics and technicians. The action, by members of the Civil Service Union, is in support of a claim for an increase in stand-by pay from £5.10 to £13 a week and days off in lieu for stand-by duties on Bank Holidays.

Coventry Art Castings

70 foundry workers at this motor -industry component firm have been on strike for twelve weeks for the re-instatement of a worker sacked for allegedly going slow. Thirteen pickets have been charged with over 40 offences, including of course 'conspiracy'. Management has been recruiting more scabs and has said that it will take back all the strikers except four Indian 'troublemakers'.

Grimsby docks

Grimsby and Immingham docks were closed by a dispute over a £2 an hour claim from dockers unloading 8000 tons of stinking fertiliser.

Women - one half of the working class

In Britain

Our Party celebrated International Women's Day, March 8th, with a meeting at Bellman Bookshop entitled "One Half of the Working Class".

The role of Women in our society is changing rapidly. The average woman can now expect to spend 35 years of her life in paid employment. Moreover a recent survey has demolished the reputation of women as unstable members of the workforce, for it showed that men changed their jobs more frequently than women. There are more women in paid employment now than there were at the height of the last war --



1969, women workers' message to their employers

In Albania

In Albania's liberation-war against the fascist German occupation, 6000 of the partisan fighters were women. Their participation heralded the emancipation of women in Albania, which proceeded step by step with the establishment of Socialism. Socialism, by doing away with the exploitation of man by man destroys the economic basis for the oppression of women. But the hidden enemy - the feudal, patriarchal and religious ideas - are not defeated overnight, nor destroyed "by decree", without the most determined and widespread struggle of the women themselves.

In 1967, Enver Hoxha made a speech calling for further efforts to ensure the full emancipation of women. The Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania said that without the further emancipation of women, "the freedom of the people, or of anybody, the progress of our country and the attainment of our goals, cannot be thought of". A wave of discussion and public meeting spread over the country. In the vanguard of the movement were the younger generation, but for the first time all sections of women were drawn into the struggle, including those in the highlands, where the mediaeval and religious traditions had lingered longest.

Miners

Even before the return to work in the pits, Yorkshire miners were preparing demands for the next round. They want new rates of £45 for surface workers, £50 for underground workers, and £65 for coalface workers. These are £13, £14, and £20 above the rates just won by the strike.

that heyday of women's employment.

Yet despite these facts the job opportunities for women are still appalling owing to the limited education and training courses available to women. According to a recent survey by the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions some colleges have even modified their OND business courses where the majority of students are women to adapt to the lower level of work opportunities for women.

The capitalist system depends on women's oppression. We have a huge task ahead of us: a two-fold task. We must smash the system that needs our oppression by fighting the revolutionary struggle for socialism, recognising that this oppression is the

ideology not of the male sex but of the capitalist class. And we must patiently fight wrong ideas amongst our class, educate our friends, families and workmates as to the bourgeois nature of such ideas.

Women's record in struggle has always been exemplary, both in workplaces employing men and women and in those employing women alone. In 1968 women sewing machinists at Ford's, with full male support, demanded equal pay. Since that time the principle of equal pay has been embraced as a priority demand by many unions. Barbara Castle's Equal Pay Act was a terrified reaction to the militancy of the Ford workers, an attempt to stem struggle by passing laws.

Men and women have united over the issue of equal pay; this is a big threat to the ruling class which has always tried to split the working class along sexual lines. And it hits the employers' pockets hard: the CBI estimated that equal pay would cost the employers £1000 million.

Attempts to struggle on sexist lines are a diversion from the real issue. Our oppression is brought about by capitalism; only the destruction of capitalism by the united efforts of all our class can secure our emancipation. It is a class issue. It is no coincidence that all the rights for women which have been won in this century have been won by the organised working class, men and women in trade union struggle.

CPB(M-L) message to Albanian women on International Women's Day

Feb. 28th, 1974

The Presidency of the General Council of the Women's Union of Albania, Tirana, Albania.

Dear Comrades,

The Secretariat of our Party sends you the following message on the occasion of International Women's Day.

"Greetings on International Women's Day. The women of our Party are grateful for the example of the Albanian women. You have won your own liberation by fighting the class war for socialism."

"You have taught us the difference between total destruction of the bourgeois class which creates our oppression and patient education of those in the working class who tolerate it."

"The women of Britain are brave too, and will never cease to struggle side by side with the men in the proletarian struggle for socialism."

Fraternally,
R. Birch

Women's achievements in Albania have been very impressive. The aim has been for women to participate actively in production and the political, cultural and social life of the country. Marxist-Leninists hold that knowledge and political consciousness are developed through man's contact with and changing of the real world, primarily through production and the class struggle of the proletariat. It is vital that women take part in social production, not just the work done inside the four walls of the home. There is a contradiction between women as mothers tending to be tied to the home, and women as economically independent workers in production. This problem is being solved in Albania. Women now form 46 per cent of the working force. There are more than five times as many women engineers as the total number of engineers before liberation. 30 years ago, 94 per cent of women were illiterate, now women form 43 per cent of the country's specialists with middle-school

education, and 31 per cent of those with higher education. Priority is given to girls wanting to continue education after the 8-years' minimum schooling.

The burden of housework is shared by every member of a family, male or female, and every effort is being made to socialise these chores, that is to treat them as any other branch of the socialist economy. More creches, laundries, kindergartens and public dining halls are being built than originally planned, as a result of the women's movement launched in 1967.

Albania is a very different country from Britain, with a very different history. But we can learn at least two things from the experience of Albanian women. First that an economic system serving only the self-interest of a few can never be the basis of emancipation for women, and second, that women themselves need to be fully involved in the class struggle both to achieve and consolidate socialism, and to win their own freedom.

Behind the scenes at BBC

Programme Assistants in BBC television's light entertainment and drama departments voted overwhelmingly on February 22 to take industrial action against the management for failing to deal with their demand to be regraded so that they would be paid for the hours they actually work.

As a result of a new grading structure imposed in 1968 P.A.'s found that they often worked more than 80 hours a week without being paid a penny's overtime. They don't even get compensatory leave unless they have worked 50 hours or more in a week; and then it is at the BBC's discretion.

After nearly two years of trying to get a response from BBC management to their claim the P.A.'s, with the backing of the two unions involved, the Association of Broadcasting Staff and the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians, decided on strike action. The BBC, like other notorious employers such as Con-Mech which

take an antediluvian attitude toward trade unions, went to the Industrial Relations Court and got an injunction against the ABS and the ACTT ordering that "their officers servants or agents refrain from taking or continuing to take action in accordance with that threat and to refrain from taking any other action of a like nature" in perpetuity.

The ABS and ACTT do not recognise the Court and were not present at the hearing. However, in accordance with the injunction, they instructed their members not to proceed with industrial action.

Sir Michael Swann is Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC and the P.A.'s are describing this backing of the BBC management by NIRC as "Donaldson's Swann Song". The P.A.'s who have the support of their BBC colleagues in their just claim are considering how best to continue their struggle.

NUBE defiant

In the wake of the massive profits announced by the English Clearing Banks - profits which would enable them to pay their workers three times as much and still come out winning - the National Union of Bank Employees has re-opened its 25 per cent claim. The claim was first presented in November of last year, but a Phase 3 settlement was accepted from 1st January.

Making a mockery of Labour's so-called 'understanding' with the unions to refrain from using the miners' settlement to further their own claims, Mr Lefl Mills, General Secretary of NUBE and a former Labour candidate, said: 'I am pleased that the miners have got the settlement they have, but we should be falling our members if we did not quote the miners in our own case.'

Gambling for high stakes

Prices are going through the roof. To see who is responsible, just look at who benefits from inflation. Not the working class. Real living standards have clearly fallen. Earnings before tax have only just kept pace with prices, while take-home pay has fallen well behind. The people who have done well are the capitalists. Look at bank profits: Barclays 46 per cent up, National Westminster 50 per cent, Midland 53 per cent, Lloyds 75 per cent. Look at the massive rises company chairmen and directors have been awarding themselves: £16,000 extra for the chairman of the Fatstock Marketing Corporation; the two top men at Unilever hold £83 million of shares between them.

Wheeling and dealing

And world price rises? Just as Britain's price rises are caused by British capitalists, so world price rises are due to world capitalism. Oils? The price charged when it comes out of the ground is only a fraction of the cost at the petrol pump. Meanwhile BP profits went up by 478 per cent over last year's figures. And Onassis and other tanker owners have been doing very nicely as well. Increased commodity prices? These are the result of wheeling and dealing on the commodity exchanges, where the whole idea is not to get goods to the people who use them, but to make fortunes for speculators. Take silver, vital to the electronic and photographic industries. In the past three months the price has doubled. This is because one man, oil magnate Nelson Bunker Hunt, has bought up nearly half of the world market supply of silver in the past three months. His brother Herbert has also been buying vast amounts.

Of course, not everybody wins in this game of Monopoly. That 'respectable' Quaker firm Rowntree, big contributor to Liberal Party funds, got its fingers burned to the extent of £20 million last year. You might think that a chocolate firm would use the cocoa market to buy cocoa. In fact Rowntree were selling cocoa, vast quantities they did not actually own in an attempt to make a speculative killing by forcing the price down. Rowntree lost, but the real losers are the workers. For now the commodity game has switched to food.

The humble soya bean

Food is the ideal commodity for speculation as the final buyer is the housewife, not a corporation which can afford to build up reserves and speculate back. So the prices go up and up. Take the humble soya bean. A vital foodstuff for animals, so high soya bean prices mean high meat prices, meaning high animal prices, meaning high milk and butter prices, high wool prices, high leather prices. . . . Even the capitalists substitute for meat, 'spun protein' now being fed to schoolchildren and a lot of unsuspecting buyers of processed foods is made from soya beans. The price of a bushel of soya beans on the Chicago market shot up from \$3 to \$12.90 in a speculative bonanza in which the average contract was bought and sold over 100 times before going from farm to final destination!

Two roads

There are only two solutions to the food price explosion. There is the capitalist answer - that the workers stop eating, and the socialist answer - that we stop capitalism.

WHAT A WAY TO RUN A RAILWAY

So far as the London Transport Board (LTB) is concerned it has a statutory obligation to run a public transport service, road and rail. It has recently been protesting that those who place the obligation (the Government) do not allow them to discharge it. Hence the much publicised nine point plan. This plan recognises that the LTB is losing labour instead of recruiting it for the simple reason that the pay and conditions are unattractive.

The Unions have been telling them that for years. In fact the Unions told the Board that shortly before the Government brought in its Phases I, II and III. Now the LTB has presented evidence to the Pay Board which runs completely counter to what they have always previously argued with the Unions. It is perhaps no more than a coincidence that the

LTB waxes generous when there is a government restriction on wages and tightens up as soon as those restrictions are lifted.

In the present situation the LTB is under much public criticism for the appalling service it provides. It shifts the blame, or seeks to, to staff shortages which it is unable to deal with under the present government pay codes. When it had the opportunity to deal with wages without government

BAKERS MAKING PILES OF DOUGH

From June 1970 to November 1973 a large sliced loaf went up 25 per cent and a large unsliced went up 28 per cent. From November to February 1974 these prices rose 24 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. In the whole period June 1970 to February 1974 the price of an unsliced loaf has risen 76.4 per cent and the price of a sliced loaf by 72.2 per cent.

Not surprisingly the three major companies whose production accounts for over 70 per cent of bread output, Rank Hovis McDougall, Associated British Foods and Spillers, in the same period, recorded record rises in profits of 81, 52 and 53 per cent respectively!!

interference it was not lost for other excuses.

One of the shortages is that of skilled fitters at the Acton and Chiswick works and depots, and not for the first time. To overcome this shortage brought about by the failure to provide competitive wages and conditions the LTB broke a long standing arrangement with the AUEW about the employment of skilled fitters. A thirteen week strike ensued, resulting in a victory for the AUEW and what had been an understanding was made a firm agreement.

The LTB, having predic-

tably failed to get the government to bail them out of their predicament, now turn to the unions for succour. They request a 'Relaxation Agreement' to enable them to make good the shortage of skilled fitters by upgrading. In other words, what the AUEW won as a result of thirteen weeks of strike should be set aside.

The nine point plan has been aptly described as no more than a public relations exercise. If the selling of dilution to the skilled craftsmen is part of that exercise, that is certainly one part that is going to come out.

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Real wages Who pays? fall

Successive governments have attempted rather clumsily to claim that since the rate of increase of average gross national earnings is numerically greater than the rate of increase in the retail price index, we are all better off. A little bit of simple arithmetic with even the official figures shows what an artless sleight of hand this is. With the increase in the ordinary price index at about 37 per cent for June '70 to Nov '74 and the increase in average national earnings at 60 per cent all looks well. However, if we correct this 60 per cent to take account of average tax and total deductions then average national earnings have only kept ahead of rises in the cost of living by about 15 per cent.

In fact this figure is incorrect. The real figure would be a minus quantity since the ordinary retail price index upon which this calculation is based includes a hypothetical full range of goods and services, when in fact most workers budgets include a much higher proportion of necessities for which the rate of price increases has been much faster. Average national earnings includes also the very wealthy and includes all overtime, so this again dist-

Who pays?

In Teesside a new dual carriage-way has been built on the outskirts of Redcar. This new road has been heralded as a much-needed improvement in the local road system.

The real reason for the road being built is that ICI Wilton, alongside which the road runs, are building new division headquarters. They felt that the existing road would not be adequate for their own traffic. ICI, therefore, put pressure on Teesside Council, who in turn put pressure on the Government, to allocate funds to build the dual carriage-way.

The costs involved have been heavy. The total cost was £690,000 of which ICI contributed only £82,500. Therefore workers throughout the country have had to increase the capitalists' profit out of their own pockets.

orts the real significance of the figures upon which the calculation is based. Also the whole calculation doesn't include what is called accumulated loss; that is the inflation in retail prices proceeds daily via thousands of small price rises, but wages rise only occasionally after lengthy struggle and negotiations. In the intervening period spending power is lost which is not regained in the higher level wage settlements.

As the rate of inflation rises also the effect of this will become much more noticeable.