

The Worker



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WORKERS AGAINST THATCHER

UNITE

STEELWORKERS last week stepped up their struggle to save their industry from the destruction planned by British Steel Corporation and the vandals in the Government. The great day of action in Wales on Monday shows just how strong and well organised workers in Britain are.

The capitulation of Strs to the ravings of Denning shows just the kind of weakness in our ranks that must be countered.

Sirs, who in the face of the enormous support at Cardiff said: "I have no intention of letting down my executive or the working class in general" did exactly the opposite. Now, since the law lords have overturned Denning's law, he says - "see we were right to obey the law and have shown that workers can rely on the law". What about the 46 pickets arrested in the same week?

The steelworkers, of course, have shown much more courage and sense than Strs and thousands stayed out rather than play Denning's game of now it's on and now it's off.

The judgement of Denning was a direct attack on the rule book of every trade union member in Britain. Where the rule book says that the executive has the power to call the members out on strike Denning said he has the power to tell the executive how to act. And it is nothing to do with so-called secondary picketing, but to do with the fundamental truth that if members do not control their own rules, then some force outside the membership does. That is why the Denning decision should have been fiercely opposed.

Strs was wrong again, after the law lords' decision, when he suggested that members should not be called out from the private firms until after a week's more talks with BSC. What his executive overruling him rightly understood is that only by increasing the pressure at this stage will BSC be forced to put some more money on the table. This is true leadership. All united against Thatcher - no holding back by the wavers in our ranks.

Especially important with the impending Thatcher "employment" bill is the need for union leaders not to be brave in front of mass rallies and then crumble. By taking on Denning the steelworkers could have highlighted the dangers of the new anti-union laws and shown the way that we shall have to deal with them.

What the Denning judgement shows is just how dead democracy is under Thatcher. The law lords do not provide a safe-guard either - all they are saying is do not do it that way (when it obviously doesn't work), do it the proper way and get some strong anti-union laws passed through this parliament with its automatic majority. Workers must understand that when that decision is taken and bourgeois democracy is dead in Britain, we cannot shirk the task of uniting to destroy their laws, root and branch.



Welsh workers in Cardiff all out against Thatcher at the call of the Wales TUC. Now on to the TUC Demonstration to Stop the Tory So-called Employment Bill on March 9th.

Photos on this page: THE WORKER.

US aggression threatens world peace

US IMPERIALISM is now resurgent, it must not become rampant, at our cost. The 'Carter Doctrine' is the latest development in a series of 'Doctrines' from Monroe in the last century through Truman, Eisenhower, and Nixon since the end of World War II.

Each doctrine has elaborated on the means of US expansion. As Lyndon Johnson told the National Foreign Policy Conference at the State Department during the Vietnam War, "We are the number one nation and we are going to stay the number one nation". That is Carter's intention also.

Consequently, the US military budget for 1980-81 is to be \$ 142,700 million, an increase of \$ 15,300 million on 1979-80. The Congressional armed services committees were informed of this last September, long before Afghanistan provided the pretext for renewed military expansion.

A key recipient of this inflated military spending is the 'rapid deployment force' of 110,000 troops ready to penetrate any battle-zone at short notice. Carter has particularly emphasised that such a force will focus attention on Pakistan and the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan is once again the pretext, for this force.

has been on the drawing-board since 1977 and will be ready by the end of 1981. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the Shah was to police the Gulf (remember the massive arms sales). Since the Shah's overthrow, the Pentagon has accelerated military preparedness for direct intervention. Previous

Conscription?
In imitation of Carter's ordering a registration in the US of young men to be drafted into the army, a Tory MP proposed in the House of Commons that there should be registration for National Service in Britain. The move was shelved as being as yet premature. How long before Thatcher orders the young men to their deaths?

Indication that gulf states might cut oil supplies to the US hastened contingency plans for US occupation of the oil fields. As Pravda has said: unlike the US the Soviet Union has never claimed for its own use other people's oil resources nor declared such areas its sphere to be defended by war.

The idea is that the American working class will pay for such military adventures. In 1985 they will be paying a quarter of their taxes to military spending while others in them may pay with their lives. Carter's call for registration for the draft will affect men aged between 18-26 initially. The American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organisation of Women have already condemned Carter for this, while the United States Student Association has announced a series of anti-draft meetings on college campuses over the few weeks.

Carter's military spending increases were announced after a week in which the US inflation rate rose to almost 14 per cent, the highest for 33 years. Prices for household petrol and home heating fuel will push inflation still higher. Unemployment, it is forecast, will number 7.5 million in a year's time. Foreign divisions are called for as so as to complain of conditions at home.

In the addenda to Webster's Third International Dictionary (1967) can be found this definition: "afghanistanism" - "the practice (as by a journal) of concentrating on problems in distant parts of the world while ignoring controversial local issues".

The first in a two-part article on the Korean War examining the events which led to UN intervention

PRESIDENT CARTER'S warning that "outside interference will not be tolerated", exemplified yet again the blatant hypocrisy of United States involvement that has been the crushing burden on the people of Korea ever since the Second World War.

The rapid advance of the Soviet

offensive against Japan in August 1945 had brought panic to the US Imperialists who hastily proposed the 38th Parallel as the military demarcation line for the surrender of the Japanese forces, but it was not until the 8th September that US troops were able to land in the South. Two days earlier



Photomontage: Jürgen Holtfreter

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Editorial

PRODUCTIVITY looms large in all arguments about industrial relations these days. Productivity deals have been used to dissuade miners from pressing a national wage claim, and Keith Joseph keeps urging steel workers to give up their strike and collect in productivity agreements what is being denied them in wages.

And yet when we look at the whole question of productivity in Britain some very odd things come to light. Why is it that in a country second to none in terms of inventive ingenuity and technical skill there is a lag in productivity in many industrial fields?

Why is it that after 200 years of increasing productivity in Britain, the working people, instead of having to work less, have to do more and more overtime to make a living wage? Why is it that more and more wives and mothers have to work full time just to enable the family to get by? An increase in productivity ought to be reflected in a shorter working week; but the CBI and the Government, who are always talking about the need for greater productivity, fight any reduction of the working week tooth and nail.

Why is it that in the public services productivity lags particularly far behind? There have been no technical advances to speak of in the collection and distribution of letters for decades and the labour costs of this operation, we are now told, have grown so high that we will have to pay considerably more in postal charges for fewer deliveries and an ever growing backlog of undistributed mail. At the same time, telecommunications, which serve big business, have seen tremendous improvements in productivity. When it comes to health, new scanners are developed which represent a huge breakthrough in terms of productivity, but there is no move to make them generally available.

In industries like coal mining, or chemicals the jobs of extraction or manufacture remain dirty, unpleasant and highly dangerous - in spite of all the productivity deals.

New techniques are called "labour-saving" devices; but is anybody working any less or doing less arduous, boring or dangerous jobs? - except, of course, the two millions of workers who have been 'saved' the labour of working altogether and whose families suffer miserably for it.

The answer to these apparent anomalies is the same old issue of class. Productivity is not at the service of workers making things. It is at the service of capitalists making profits. Productivity is not used primarily to make more things better with less effort: it is used primarily as an instrument in the hands of employers for exploiting workers. Exploiting workers is how profits are made.

Capitalists are by definition exploiters of the working class. It is their essential nature to rob workers of surplus value. But it is not the essential nature of workers to be exploited. It is their essential nature to work, to make things useful to themselves and others, to add to the store of value in the world. That is why Marx says that when the working class has put an end to exploitation "labour becomes not only a means of life but itself life's prime want."

Clegg's comparability is no substitute for a wages fight

BRITAIN'S half-million nurses are responding with mounting indignation to the Clegg Commission's report, which has recommended pay increases of 19 per cent on average; half to be paid from August 79 and half from April 1980.

Sisters, for instance, will get 25 per cent, students and many other grades 15-18 per cent; while top nurses get almost nothing, and auxiliaries as little as 4.3 per cent, meaning net loss after the £2 a week on account is paid back!

This award is meant to bring nurses pay to a level with "comparable" job content elsewhere, when in fact an overall 25 per cent would be needed to restore the 1974 Halsbury Level, and 50 per cent to equal the average male non-manual income. Other faults include its being based on a 37½-hour week (not due till April 1981!). The Staff Side of the Whitley Council is committed to accepting the Clegg results, although it has already said it will demand the 37½-hour week be brought forward and no clawback of "on account" payments from those getting no real increase.

Nurses have now had Halsbury, and Clegg, awards gained through struggle admittedly, but continued

reluctance to struggle has led to continued underpayment. There is a growing mood among nurses, seen in the RCN and the TUC unions alike, to demand the flaws in this award be remedied, and to go on immediately to demanding a substantial 1980 claim, regardless of Clegg. COHSE has demanded a 60 per cent increase, no repayment of the "account" money, and payment for the "extra" 2½ hours a week worked since last April - and its Scottish Regional Council has urged the NEC to start a national plan of industrial action from April.

Anger and fighting talk will not by itself bring about these demands, and certainly not recourse to another comparability study or calling for inflation-indexing. Jenkin, Minister without responsibility for the health service, announced that future funding for the NHS for 1980/81 will not meet the increased cost of modern treatment and an ageing population, and when nurses constitute 40 per cent NHS costs, it is clear that the attack on their wages is not different from the attack on the NHS. Let nurses bury their differences over "unprofessional" conduct and realise that fighting for their wages is part of their professionalism.

Why are our lives deemed expendable?

FOR the first time since 1963, Britain is to start producing uranium suitable for use in nuclear weapons. The decision to base US Pershing and Cruise missiles on British soil has already been made. Whilst the government prepares to use troops under the aegis of the 'Civil Contingencies Unit' to break a water workers' strike, a TV programme tells us of the army's preparations for civil disturbances in Britain. "It is too late now," said one NCO. "The unions have too much power. If they can shut the airfields that is the end of Britain as NATO's aircraft carrier."

Now Britain's 'civil defence' plans are being given priority by the Thatcher government. In the event of the nuclear war it is so enthusiastically striving for, Britain's share of bombs would amount to 180-200 megatons - where one megaton is the equivalent of one million tons of TNT.

A one megaton air burst over County Hall, London, would:

- completely destroy all brick structures in a radius of 1½ miles

- ignite fabrics in a radius of 8 miles

- inflict blisters and burns on all within nine miles without proper shelter

- lightly damage all buildings within a radius of 11 miles. (In other words virtually all of London.) And this is as well as the effects of radiation fall-out. There is of course, no difference between a Soviet bomb over London and a NATO bomb over Moscow - people still die. But if anyone had any illusions about Thatcher's concern for us they should study her 'civil defence' plans.

The government would be all right. Its southeast regional headquarters, buried deep underground, can only be reached by a long sealed-off corridor. Ventilation is designed to keep out any nuclear active dust, and of course the electricity, food and water supplies are kept independent of any damageable national grid system.

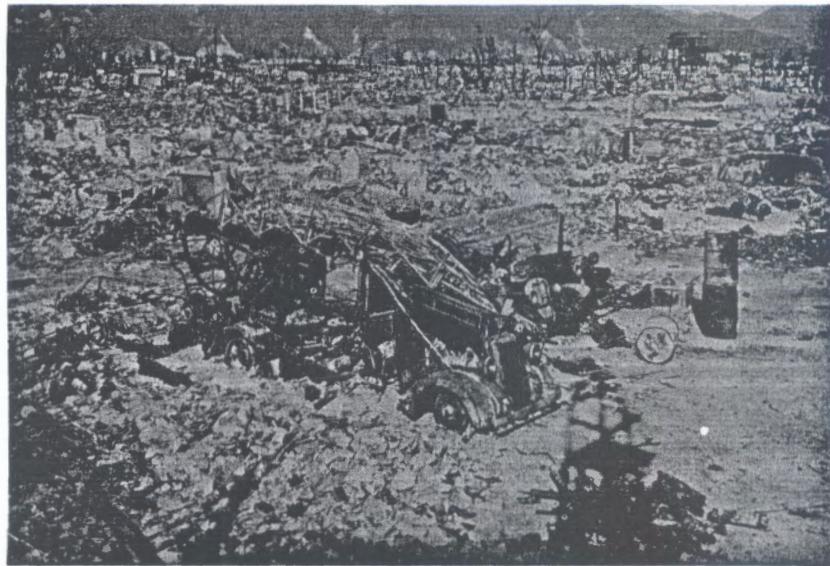
The Central Office of Information has some advice films for the rest of us - to be broadcast in the weeks prior to any 'expected' attack - they must think the Russians real gentlemen. The commentary goes on: 'No place

in the United Kingdom is safer than anywhere else. No one can tell where the safest place will be. In fact you will be far better off at home, because it is where you are known.'

If caught in a bomb attack we should 'seek shelter' or 'lie down'. Like the Tommies at Passchendaele our lives are deemed worthless, expendable. It is quite clear that in such a war defeat is indivisible - no nation wins and the people lose.

Any government preparing for such a war is declaring war on its own citizens as much as another state. Carrington, in his war-mongering trip around Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Oman has reportedly been warning these countries that their main threat lies from 'subversion within' - the crusade is anti-communist as well as anti-Soviet - they should deal with their own workers, he tells them. Thatcher, by her crusade for NATO missiles to be centred in Britain has made us a prime target.

The Thatcher government's drive for war against Russia, is a drive for war against the British people.



Has everyone, except the Japanese, forgotten Hiroshima?
Do we want Britain like this too?

Hiroshima 1945.

Health soon to be a thing of the past

'EVERY DAY in every way the capitalist attack on our living standards increases. Both patients and staff are suffering by the reduction in Health Service facilities, which is causing an increased incidence of disease and complications that have previously been avoided.'

Pregnant women in the Greenwich district can only get booked in for hospital ante-natal care when they are about 20 weeks pregnant, which misses the first 16 weeks, a vital time for investigation and treatment of complications like cardiac disease, hypertension, malformations. Last week the management said no locums were to be employed for junior doctors, so therefore they could not have their annual holidays.

There was an uproar; normally impeccably spoken doctors swore like troopers, and the management eventually backed down under the unanimous pressure of the doctors. But they will be back trying something else for

sure.

Some examples of things to come; there is often talk of 2 of London's oldest medical schools, Guy's and Kings, amalgamating, which means one will close; older blood is being used for transfusions; kidney transplants have been stopped for the rest of this financial year; 20 London hospitals

£4,000 millions go in tax but the government hasn't any money for health

are to close in the next few months; doctors at Guy's Hospital were told to see 15 per cent fewer patients at OutPatient Clinics; in March 1975 there were 186 doctors on the dole, by September 1979 this had more than doubled to 419.

The press and TV try to obscure the issues as much as possible. They say there is not enough money to pay for the health and education services, yet the top 20 companies paid 3 per cent of the £4000 million profits

in tax and exported the rest. The headlines on Thames TV news last Thursday lunchtime were "Good news on the job front". The news was that the Firestone factory in Brent was to close with the loss of 1500 jobs, the good news referring to the opening of a special Jobcentre inside the factory. There were evidently no ecstatic workers willing to be interviewed.

In some areas of Britain unemployment is over 30 per cent; skill nowadays counts for nothing - a qualified staff midwife (4 years training) working a 7 night shift will take home less than a domestic cleaner on the same ward working 5 nights and about the same as a medical student grant. This is an illustration of a fundamental principle of working class life under capitalism - you get what you fight for. The rising anger in Britain must surely be one of the reasons for the gold fever of recent weeks - the capitalists know that their time in Britain is almost up.

Pickets stand firm

THE FIGHTERS ARE TO ORDER A STRIKE to work of private sector steelworkers, and a lift of the ban on the movement of steel, was nothing other than an open attack on the rights of the organised working class. It had nothing to do with legality; the Thatcher government and the legal establishment are determined that workers shall not strike, or if they do, that their action will be ineffective. Bourgeois democracy is disintegrating fast.

Many believed that Denning's decision was not founded in law, and thinking that the House of Lords would overturn Denning,

were prepared to swear allegiance to the law. This is dangerous wishful thinking-- for what if Parliament changes the law, makes it explicit, and an Act be duly passed, banning all strikes and increasing the working week; would then the law be sacred?

If the founders of our trade union movement had spoken such rubbish as "the law must be obeyed, otherwise there is only anarchy" there would be no trade union movement at all. In this matter the pickets of the ISTC showed a great deal more sense than their general secretary.

Thorn Electronics workers action

ASTMS members working in the laboratories at various sites in Enfield took one day strike action on 21 January in support of their wage claim.

In 1978 it was agreed that the 1979 wage operative date would be changed from 1 July to 1 October. This change resulted in the comparison of laboratory grades 1 - 6 with the rest of Thorn laboratories. To the surprise of Enfield workers their wages,

excluding London weighting, worked out at 2 - 7 per cent less than the same jobs and grades at the company's Leicester laboratory. The company was asked to rectify the anomaly. Their response was to remove two members from their job.

The Thorn laboratory workers are working to rule and planning further stoppages to achieve a satisfactory settlement of their claim.

Abortion - keep it safe

THIS WEEK parliament takes up the attack on basic rights through the John Corrie Abortion Amendment Bill. The specific issue of denying women the right to decide about their bodies and the right to choose whether or not to give birth is what this Bill is about.

The three main features of the Bill are the limit for an abortion to be cut from 28 weeks to 20 weeks, women would have to prove "grave risk" if the pregnancy continued, and the destruction of abortion charities by separating counselling from abortion clinics.

It is quite clear that supporters of the Bill in Parliament have little regard for the lives they claim to be protecting, it's the same people

who are pushing ahead with destruction of health and education.

We only have to look at countries where abortion is illegal to see that they are the poorest and most backward.

The British Medical Association is totally opposed to this Bill which seeks to teach doctors medicine. Together with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists the BMA and most other unions in Britain are fiercely opposed to this Bill which is called amendment but is so patently destruction of the present law. The TUC made clear the policy of the working class through its policy of opposition to changes in the present law and the demand for more provision for contraception.

Attack on teachers training

ONLY 5 years ago London had 21,000 teacher training places. Today, after the vicious cuts implemented under the last Labour Government, scarcely 7,000 places remain, and these are being whittled away.

Now, London University plans to stop validating all the courses in the few former teacher training colleges which remain, having survived diversification, cuts and mergers. This move effectively condemns those colleges to years of uncertainty, possible closure and the certain prospect of losing more precious teacher training places.

The reasons given by London University for this had to rely heavily on financial and administrative considerations because the "poor standards" arguments put forward in their report are so transparent and biased as to be laughable.

The Teacher Education

Sector of the London Students organisation held a conference on January 16th to discuss this latest blow to teacher training. The University's decision was seen as a cynical attempt to ditch all its responsibility and commitment to teacher education - the future of education in London. Delegates strongly felt that the present Tory Government's attitude to education, the complete absence of any policy on the training and supply of teachers, will effectively allow the destruction of an already wounded teacher education system. The DES' famous falling birth rate has been used to justify the destruction of the future supply of teachers in this country. Do we really believe that the population of Britain is declining at a rate unprecedented since The Black Death? Delegates felt that, with more education cuts in the pipe-line student

teachers must campaign to save teacher supply.

The conference concluded with the unanimous adoption of a resolution which condemned London University's decision, and resolved to campaign vigorously for a commitment to teacher education and its future.

Since then, pressure has been put on the University authorities by students resulting in some commitment that no college will close. Teacher education students must now use this small victory to push further and ensure that every single teacher training place is kept as a pre-requisite to expansion. Students, campaigning in the colleges for a 'no cover' policy on teaching practice, are beginning to face-up to their responsibility to protect the future supply of teachers. A future generation of children will thank them.



Steelworkers picket Corby

Photo: John Sturrock (Report).

Interviews with Sheffield steelworkers

JUDGING by the reaction of the steelworkers interviewed by 'The Worker' in Sheffield on Saturday 26th January, Moscow would be a more welcoming venue right now for Thatcher.

In spite of all the protestations in Parliament and in the media that the government is keeping out of the struggle, it was transparently obvious to all those with whom we spoke, that it is the Government which is leading the attack on the steel industry and its workers.

The organisation of the strike with co-ordinated flying pickets, rotas, reports, etc., all carried out in a calm unfrazzled way gave the lie to the wild Fleet Street images of the 'mindless militants' which are periodically released from the wardrobe of stock-characters-to-hate.

The solidarity between the different unions involved was a heartening feature of the struggle. BSC men expected private sector counterparts to join the strike today (Monday) and in spite of the feeble Denning, they weren't disappointed.

pointed by and large. If the BSC men lose, there will not be victory in the private sector. Everyone we spoke with was committed to achieving the full claim and to saving their industry, not just in Sheffield but wherever steel is made in Britain. As one shop steward put it:

"The struggle of the Welsh steelworkers is our struggle too. We are not going to be led into just looking after our own particular area while the rest dies."

As for the latest offer, including the much-vaunted productivity deal, this was treated with the contempt it deserves. Effectively

it means that should raw material costs to BSC rise, there will be a corresponding cut in the bonus payments, let alone the 'normal' job loss provisions that go with deals of this kind.

We spoke too of war. The Sheffield steelworkers are clear on that as well. Their war is not against Russian workers but part of the class war against Thatcher, Joseph and the evil which they personify and for which they would have us die.

The steelworkers of Sheffield have taken up the task of maintaining their industry and their dignity with clarity and determination.

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LONDON MEETINGS

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