



NO TO DEVOLUTION YES TO WORKING CLASS UNITY

THE working class in Scotland and Wales will choose on March 1st whether to reject devolution.

At a time when the British working class is asserting its independence from capitalism through the struggle for free collective bargaining, the call for devolution is shown most clearly to be irrelevant as a solution.

Yet at the same time, the fact that the class has, as often before, shown its unwillingness to embrace capitalism, makes it even more important for the ruling class to press ahead with its plans to divide us. This, together with the pure opportunism of the Labour Party which is desperate to maintain a strong parliamentary representation at all costs from Wales and especially Scotland, has resulted in a strong propaganda campaign being launched for a 'yes' vote.

Devolution can only be seen as the first step towards the internal division of Britain and as part of the political attack on the working class. The original Kilbrandon Report was clear enough on the reason why devolution was thought necessary: the major concern of the report was to seek means of restoring faith in bourgeois 'democracy' and other capitalist institutions. The report notes "a diffuse feeling of dissatisfaction... a feeling of powerlessness at the we/they relationship." Kilbrandon remarked about the attitude of workers towards the system: "They have less attachment to it than in the past, and there are some substantial and persistent causes of discontent which may contain the seeds of more serious dissatisfaction."

Devolution has nothing to do with nationality, nationhood or even the preservation of national culture. Indeed, the supporters of devolution are also in favour of the EEC - that economic cartel whose goal of political unity is contrary to the supposed objectives of devolution. The truth is that devolution is intended as another way of weakening the class by destroying its nationhood through disunity and division.

The development of England, Scotland and Wales into a single nation was a logical historical process although, as with the transformation of any society from being predominantly feudal and agricultural into being capitalist and industrial, the process was often brutal. For over 200 years, the tradition of

Scots workers has been to look and act beyond their own locality. For example, Scottish workers took a leading role in the founding of a union in the cotton industry (in the 1830's) and in the coal industry (in the 1840's), whilst the sense of belonging to national unions was expressed through the Grand National Union of Spinners and the Grand Consolidated Trade Union. The first Trade Union delegate conference was called by Glasgow Trades Council in 1864 and was followed by the British TUC in 1868. In Wales too, the same outward looking attitude has always existed: the lesson that working class unity must be forged if progress is to be made, had to be learned from the outset.

The history of the development of Britain into one nation contrasts starkly with that of Ireland. The history of Ireland is the history of the fight for freedom from British capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. For 800 years, the people of Ireland have rebelled against British invasion and domination and the struggle is still one of unification and national liberation.

There are no easy or peaceful roads for the British working class. Unemployment, cuts in education and the health service, the decimation of industry, are not caused by the geographical location of the seat of bourgeois government. Would that they were: the solution would be so much simpler! It is capitalism itself that is the problem and there is only one way forward.

Low pay and public services

THE effects of strikes in the public sector by manual workers have shown the essential nature of the work normally done by ambulance-men, dustmen, gravediggers, nurses and numerous others in hospitals, schools and local authorities. Roads ungritted, refuse left uncollected by striking council workers have changed the local landscape. Mountains of snow-covered plastic rubbish bags in high streets bring the strike home to those who might prefer not to think about it.

Both Labour Government and Tory councils have kicked the £60 a week pay claim back and forth. Both oppose the claim while 'sympathising with the lower-paid'. The government fixed the Rate Support Grant (RSG) to local authorities, whereby they cover 61 per cent of local expenditure, back in November 1977 on the assumption that 5 per cent guidelines would be acceptable to the organised working class. So in their election year, either the Labour Government raises taxes to increase money available for RSG or the Tory councils increase the rates even more.

Either way workers get stung unnecessarily. Public authority workers have watched

this hot potato being thrown around at their expense, while 500,000 of them try to live on £42.50 a week. British taxation, anyway, under capitalism, means that the badly paid are taxed along with the lowest paid to provide necessary services, while companies avoid taxation altogether in some cases. Ford Motor Company, for example, will receive a £136 million handout for its new plant in Bridgend in Callaghan's constituency.

In this same period there has been underspending to the tune of £7 billion, meaning a decline in real wages, and services provided. For this financial year additional underspending, it is estimated, will amount to £2 billion.

Local authorities have begun to concede the strikers' case. In Camden and Haringey, in North London, there is agreement on the full claim and elsewhere local deals have been attempted. Scotland has only just started to campaign but this will depend on negotiations this week, 75,000 GMWU members having planned strikes since early February. Welsh workers will not open schools for the devolution referendum.

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(Photo PA)

Civil Servants picketing the Treasury six years ago when a 24-hour strike was called to protest about poor pay. The civil servants are about to act again.

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About face for the General Council

FOR several weeks the TUC General Council has been trying to patch up some kind of social contract with the Labour Government before the general election. But their hands were tied by the overwhelming unity of the labour movement on the issue of collective bargaining. The concordat is an example of the mountain labouring and bringing forth a mouse.

What Callaghan needed was a figure - if not 5 per cent then perhaps 9 per cent. This was precisely what Murray could not offer. In-

stead there is a vague agreement on an inflation target of 5 per cent within 3 years and an annual assessment by both sides of industry about the country's economic prospects.

Against the Thatcher demand to outlaw strikes by public service workers is a proposal that there should be talks about negotiating pay settlements in the public sector without resorting to industrial action.

On the subject of curbing the power of the unions the TUC is to issue guidance on the conduct of disputes when

they arise in respect to strikes, picketing and the 'closed shop'.

We deplore the support for this concordat by the TUC General Secretary and so many members of the General Council (not all, as the refusal to submit the concordat to a vote concealed). The intention to betray was in it, though the capacity for betrayal was much diminished by the solidarity of the labour and trade union movement. Only when the TUC speaks for that movement does its voice carry authority.

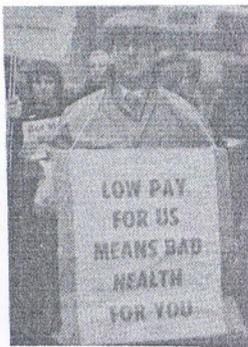
Public services

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Negotiations have now started in earnest about local authority manual workers. 10 per cent has been offered with the possibility of a comparability exercise to see what the pay rates are for similar work. 'Comparability' should normally be looked at cautiously but in this case it is a cosmetic device to let the government off the hook.

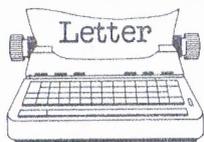
Once again the guidelines have been pushed aside. Public sector workers will still be low-paid, as are most workers in Britain, when the strike is settled. Who can really live on £60?

The problem is not comparability but capitalism. The educational aspects of this strike, the unity gained in struggle, have proved what can be done. Low pay and capitalism are intrinsically linked.



GMWU school caretakers in Gwent are operating a work-to-rule and overtime ban. This is leading to closures because boilers are not being stoked at weekends. At present 17 schools a day are being closed on a rota in S. Glamorgan by GMWU caretakers.

NUPE caretakers have also been called out on lightning strikes at 24 hour notice in W. Glamorgan.



Dear Editor,

Last Thursday 12 TGWU Warehousemen who work in Hull Cold Stores were sacked on their first day back after being laid off on January 9. They refused to handle blacked mackerel goods brought in by strike breaking lorry drivers until union dispensation for these goods were given.

After loyally supporting the drivers who settled their successful strike in Hull on Sunday, the warehousemen feel they might become left-overs and forgotten remnants of the drivers' strike. But full support for these brave men is being sought by Hull drivers and we hope out-of-town lorry drivers will not cross the picket at Hull Cold Stores either.

It's workers from one part of industry supporting strikers from another part which gives power and strength in the unity of the workers. Relations like this should be shown every encouragement.

A Hull Driver

Historic Notes Developing capitalism integrated Britain

SCOTS and English in the course of the struggles of 400 years have achieved a national British unity which any Devolution plans will never destroy.

With a rising bourgeoisie the movement to oppose the Church of Rome arose on both sides of the then separate Kingdoms of Scotland and England. While Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries and distributed the proceeds to sections of the bourgeoisie to gain its allegiance, so James IV and V (1488 - 1513 and 1513 - 1542) sold to landowners the right to inherited possessions. The sufferings these monarchs imposed on their people in the abortive incursions against England (at Flodden, 1513, Solway Moss 1542, Pinkie 1547), the increased taxation imposed by the alliance with the Pope and France were followed by the incompetence of Mary Queen of Scots. She fruitlessly tried to impose Catholicism and French alliance on a population who by now, as in England, were for Reform, and demanded closer trading ties with England.

City dwellers rebelled and took over monasteries by force. John Knox's ideas, including, among other things, education for all and abolition of the Church hierarchy, had spread. The idea of unity with England could not be uprooted. The basis of the power won by James VI of Scotland, after a troubled

regency, was the satisfaction of this demand.

James' accession to the English throne in 1603 signifies the beginning of an era when the disparate and sectarian movements of discontent and Reform on both sides of the Border gradually found a single focus - against the Royal power itself. When King Charles convened an Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1638 and Parliament in 1639, the Covenanters packed both and threw out the King's proposals. With the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, Scots and English fought together for Parliament in the Civil War. The Scots, to whom the King in extremity surrendered, handed him over to London for his due execution.

When the forces of wealth restored the King in 1660, and imposed the Dutch William as successor, they did so with the connivance of those who had enriched themselves through trade or land, in Scotland as in England. The land enclosures which had been one of capitalism's first cruelties in England came now to Scotland, with the abolition of 'run-rig' or strip farming.

The Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745 for the restoration of the old monarchy by demoralised sections of Highlanders were put down with savagery by English and Scots together. Highland chiefs began to exploit their clansmen

and force them off the land, ultimately to be sold into starving emigration, all in order to introduce capitalist farming on the English or Lowland model. The most wicked example (because it was a prototype) was the activity of the English agents for the Duchess of Sutherland.

Any idea of an independent, tartan-clad, Gaelic speaking, free Scottish nation was destroyed with ferocity by capitalism and its agents in the form of Lowland Scots, English entrepreneurs and Scottish aristocracy, the former clan chiefs. In a word, the British bourgeoisie. Only when the Highland clearances had been completed towards the end of the nineteenth century and the inhabitants totally dispersed, was the myth of the 'noble highlander' created - as artificial a symbol of national unity as the confectionary labels it adorns, as Victorian a 'tradition' as the Christmas tree, and popular only with the American clan societies whose money puts off the final decay of the castles of a Macleod or MacDonald.

In contrast, as capitalist farming was established from the Lowlands to the Channel (only the 'savagely' Highlanders holding out), South-East Scotland became a model for British agricultural efficiency, Ayrshire famous for its milking herds, the North-East for its

beef cattle. Eighteenth century Britain was shaped by the strengths and weaknesses of Scots such as Adam Smith, David Hume, Robert Adam and James Watt.

Scotland was an integral, essential part of the British industrial revolution, its population, in spite of emigration and the decimation of the Clearances, soaring from one million in 1700 to 4½ million in 1900. The iron furnaces of James Beaumont Neilson, burning Scottish mined coal provided the steel for the Clyde-side, and its succession of great marine engineers, from Robert Napier onwards. Advances in technology and industry completed the integration of the economies and people of Scotland and England.

The working class of Scotland and England fought a single British capitalist enemy. The English Combination Act was accompanied in Scotland by judicial decrees against trade unions. The Repeal of the Act in 1824 was effective on both sides of the Border. With the skilled workers, there began the long struggle for the establishment of a national trade union movement, a single British working class united against a national and now international capitalist enemy. Attempts through Devolution or any other means to split up that unity will be fruitless.

Great workers' victory in Iran

THE fourteen-month old revolution in Iran continues. The Shah has been forced from his throne by the collective strength of the Iranian people. Through 1978 the popular demonstrations grew larger, more adamant that the tyrant must go. And go he did but not before blood was spilt.

Khomeini, the supposed "guiding hand from afar", has now returned. It must be said that the departure of the Shah is a momentous victory for the workers and peasants of Iran, whatever new Iran is established. The euphoria in Iran indicates great optimism of the possibilities now before the people of that country. It is like February 1917 when the autocratic Russian Tsar was pushed from power. It is sadly characteristic of the present Chinese Government that instead of shared celebrations with a freedom-loving people it thinks immediately of a Soviet plot in the Shah's downfall. Didn't the Iranians know they were supposed to unite with their tyrannical Shah against the Soviet Union?

A republican government will be an advance for freedom but the revolution will press on regardless of the new government. Khomeini has demanded the return of weapons from the workers and has threatened to chop off hands. It seems that the women who wore veils did so to protect themselves from the secret police. Religious vocabulary is fast giving way to clear political, economic and social demands from the people, particularly in Tehran. It is this continuing revolution which has seriously rattled all those governments which asked to formally recognise the latest Iranian government. Khomeini and Bazargan were supposed to bring order to the cities in the hope that some economic relationship might continue with those countries that have many eggs laid in the Iranian basket - amounting to billions of pounds. Export credits to facilitate financial transactions with Iran

have been put on ice in Tokyo, London, Washington, Paris and Bonn. The international stock markets are very nervous indeed. Strikes at the docks have blocked exports to Iran for over four months. Bank Markazi Iran is sending contradictory unceded telex messages, intermittently, that have caused governments in the capitalist world to suspect that enormous debts run up by the Shah are about to be reneged on. Iranians have paid the price of the Shah's rule already, there's no rush to pay more.

None of this was foreseen. CIA and British counter-insurgency 'experts' with the whole gamut of spy technology completely misjudged the national mood. The Shah was as constant as the Northern star. Britain and the USA had trained and equipped the Iranian army of 425,000 soldiers. They had thousands of the most advanced Chieftain tanks with Chobhan armour and hundreds of jet fighters. Indeed as recently as June 1978, the Department of Trade in London granted export licenses for the following items to go to Iran: 8,000 anti-riot guns; 26,000 CS gas cartridges; 26,000 CS gas grenades; 22,000 smoke grenades. Clearance was also given for 20,000 each of anti-riot shields and helmets; 5,000 anti-riot guns, 20,000 baton rounds and 250,000 rubber bullets.

As it turned out the army threw in the towel after 36 hours of fighting in Tehran, a city which has taken on the appearance of a revolutionary citadel at the centre of the struggle in Iran. The capture of the capital city is of more than symbolic importance. Because the Shah lived in the city it was naturally garrisoned by large numbers of SAVAK police and the most loyal army divisions, the Imperial Guard being noted for their fanatical loyalty. As the army threw a cordon around the Shah so the Tehrani working class in turn surrounded the army. The Iranian working class is estimated at around 11 million

people, of whom a third work for wages in agriculture. 7 million workers work outside the agricultural sector and in particular we should note that 2.5 million are employed in manufacturing industry, just under half of this industry being situated in and around Tehran. The construction industry is also labour intensive and badly paid, but with concentrations of skilled workers around Tehran. Landless peasants have flocked to Tehran in recent years to search for work which they have often found in construction, but these same workers retain links with their villages. Unemployment, low wages and astronomical rent increases along with the concentration of manufacturing industry are among the key factors making Tehran the city of the revolution so far.

The SAVAK's Sultanabad headquarters was captured, as well as the Lavizan barracks and the Navanjan Palace. The Tehrani workers emptied the arsenals, there now being an estimated 70,000 guns in the hands of the people. Not surprising that garrison towns west of the city in Qazvin, Maraghehe, Zanjan and Sarab gave in with little resistance.

As THE WORKER goes to press, the deadline for Khomeini's orders to return to work is approaching. Three and a half million workers across Iran have been on strike, in some cases for up to four months. They have used their economic power to devastating effect, giving real bite to the struggle to depose the Shah. That industrial leverage has been well used and has frightened domestic and foreign capital by its apparent unity of purpose. There will have been much discussion among the striking

workers in Isfahan, Tabriz, Tehran and the oil-producing Khuzistan province as to strategy and tactics. First of all consolidate what is won, and then an eye on how to advance class interest against any theocratic imposition,

Vietnam border

ON February 10, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam sent urgent messages to the UN.

The Vietnamese say: "The Chinese authorities have recently intensified their armed activities at the Vietnamese border and carried out feverish war preparations against Vietnam."

"They have deployed twenty divisions, hundreds of fighter planes, numerous tanks and other war material close to the China-Vietnam border. They have carried out daily armed activities in violation of Vietnam's territory, thus creating an extremely dangerous situation all along the border between China and Vietnam."

"Along with these hostile acts, there have been reports openly confirmed by Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiao-Ping during his visits to the United States and Japan on the massive concentration of Chinese troops near the Vietnamese border and his brazen threats of war against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

"The border between Vietnam and China has been delimited in the treaties signed between the French Government and the Tsing dynasty (China) in 1887 and 1895 and has been officially marked out."

"Proceeding from the traditional friendship between the two peoples, in 1957-1958, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party agreed with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to maintain the status quo of the frontier left by history, considering the solution of all border and territorial problems to be within the competence of the two governments and advocating a negotiated settlement of all eventual disputes."

"Always true to the traditional friendship between Vietnam and China, the Vietnamese people persist in their policy of a negotiated settlement of the disputes, but they are determined to defend their independence, sovereignty and sacred territorial integrity."

Editorial

THE BOOTING out of the Shah of Iran is a great victory for the Iranian people. Just as Vietnam showed that the most powerfully armed imperialist aggressor could be defeated by people's war, so Iran proves that the most powerfully propped-up puppet can be toppled by people's power.

It is a major defeat for US and British imperialism. It is not a victory for Soviet imperialism. The present anti-Marxist regime in China sees everything in terms of the relations of 'super-powers' into whose ranks they wish to be admitted, while the people are nothing. (How different from the Marxist world view of Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai!) But over and over again the machinations of these so-called 'super powers' are brought to nothing by the action of the people.

That is one of the main reasons for Albania's importance to the international working class - relying on its own people for economic development and defence, and not getting involved in any pacts, treaties or concordats with the so-called 'super powers'.

We have often set forth the correct view of one world divided by class. Throughout the world the bourgeoisie and the working class confront each other. Their respective ideologies confront each other as well.

According to the bourgeois ideology human nature does not change. There will always be exploiters and exploited. The most the people can ever do is sometimes to change one exploiter for another but it makes no difference to their general state of poverty and abjection.

The working class confront this reactionary thesis with their own revolutionary convictions. Working people, properly organised, can, in fact, change society and change themselves in the process. They can put an end to the exploitation of man by man and bring in the glorious time of the unity of the world's peoples in exploiting nature for the good of all.

Class is the key

On either side of this class division that splits the world in two there are very different ideas about working people. Are they thought of as pawns, mere putty in the hands of their rulers? Are the very organisations they have created for their own defence, the trade unions, mere instruments of the bourgeoisie for their enslavement?

Anyone who holds such attitudes is not on the side of the working class. For such a person what is happening in Britain today must seem completely inexplicable. The pawns have stood up and are telling the bishops and knights and kings that they, the working class, will not put up with it. The so-called 'labour aristocracy' opens its mouth and out come the legitimate demands of the organised working class because the working people will not let them say anything else. The TUC when it speaks for the trade union movement, united as never before on the issue of collective bargaining, represents a force in the land, potentially the greatest force in the land. When it does not, when it signs contracts and seeks concordats with the class enemy, it does not become, as some say, an oppressive force against workers. It becomes nothing at all.

The working class in Britain today, using its trade unions correctly and dictating the right words to its leading figures, is writing a great chapter in the social history of this country. There is still a long way to go, but in stepping out on the historical stage in the way they have been doing they give the lie to any with so little Marxist understanding as to describe the British working class as being at the mercy of bad leaders chosen for them by the bourgeoisie and quite incapable of seizing their destiny with their own hands.

Worker Interview

We put the following questions to a worker involved in the Lucas Aerospace Corporate Plan, discussed in THE WORKER (issue 40).

Q. In putting forward this Corporate Plan, are you not abandoning the fight to protect the British aerospace industry, and accepting there is a need for redundancies?

A. It's not quite like that. We don't see the Plan as an alternative to aerospace, but as creating additional products which otherwise would not be made. In fact, in many cases, workers at different Lucas factories have experience in making the systems suggested in the Corporate Plan.

Q. How did this come about?

A. Lucas Aerospace was formed around 1969, under the guiding hand of Labour's infamous Industrial Reorganisation Corporation. Companies with experience of making control systems were bought up in order to create a pool of expertise within Lucas. People previously working on diverse products such as medical equipment and heating systems were set to work on control systems for military aircraft. Bio-engineers have become avionics experts; but research on kidney machines has been abandoned.

Q. There was a sort of asset stripping, you mean?

A. More like skill stripping. Skills that had been applied to obviously useful products were now either abandoned as the lay-offs began, or else applied to military aircraft - a lucrative branch of the international arms trade, which many Lucas workers detest being involved with.

Q. Has there been any resistance to the attempted closures?

A. Certainly. There has been a fierce confrontation between the Lucas workers and the Company ever since the shutdowns began. Right back in 1972, a factory in Willesden was occupied for 6 weeks. The first weekend it was left unmanned, it was mysteriously burned to the ground. Since then, workers in a Coventry foundry, for instance, insisted on it remaining open, presenting suggestions as to what they could produce.

THE recent meeting of the National Economic Development Council devoted most of its attention to a review of the Labour Government's 'Industrial Strategy', now just over three years old. In November 1976, with a fanfare of trumpets, was born a policy document that would help put British industry back on its feet. Its third birthday celebrations were a much quieter affair, with good reason.

It is necessary to look at what has happened in these three years because, with the attempted resurrection of the Social Contract (Mark II), new promises, of an old type are forthcoming, promises which bear a striking resemblance to those contained in the Industrial Strategy three years ago. Then, 40 working parties were established to look at all key sectors of industry manpower needs, and investment trends. They seem to have done little more than look, although the establishment of such working parties was also designed to encourage corporatist tendencies among weaker trade unionists.

In three years, the motor industry, steel and shipbuilding and repair have hardly been affected by this grand strategy, nor has it had any effect on engineering or textiles. But dramatic improvement in such areas of industry was one of the conditions agreed by the Labour Government as 'its side' of the original Social Contract. It reneged.

Civil Servants announce national day of action

THE Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Servants Association have announced that falling an adequate assurance of action on their pay claim there will be a national one-day strike of all their members in the civil service and fringe bodies on February 23.

The claim for between 25 and 36 per cent depending on grade will be backed by an all out strike of workers in key areas with the intention of paralysing Government machinery. There will also be an extensive campaign of supportive action including overtime bans, work-to-rule and refusal to use private cars on official

business. Inflation was going to be seriously dealt with. The truth is that the Retail Price Index shows a 100 per cent inflation rate since Labour returned to office in February 1974. The RPI hides the real inflation rate for items like food, clothing, footwear and heating. With regard to heating, it is expected that the electricity boards will raise prices by 10 per cent in April, even though this nationalized 'non profit-making' industry made £296m profit in 1978. Is that part of the Industrial Strategy?

The Contract and Strategy were to be concerned with investment and productivity. Millions of people will remember the Three Day Week imposed by the Heath Government, the election that followed and Labour's slogan which was 'Back to Work with Labour'. Statistics now show that investment and unemployment levels are such that industrial productivity in Britain today is at the same level as for the Three Day Week. Shedding of manpower has meant unemployment with few opportunities opening up elsewhere. Estimates for 1978 suggest that the number of unemployed then was the equivalent of £3600m in lost productivity. Make allowances for higher unemployment now and you can work out the productive capacity lost. To quantify the accompanying human suffering is impossible.

Nor does it stop. Singers workers are opposed to mass redundancies,

business.

The guerrilla approach adopted shows a high degree of organisation on the part of workers who have only struck once before in their history and indicates civil servants' unpreparedness to be treated roughly by their employer. Indeed it is ironic that when Callaghan is trying to buy off the public service workers with a comparability study to solve their pay problems, civil servants, who have had comparability since 1955, are having to strike to elicit a wage increase necessary to provide for their needs.

The Government's tactics are clearly those of delay in order to

as are Dunlop workers, but British Shipbuilders at Falmouth, Cornwall plan to make 1700 workers redundant, while British Steel announced 6000 redundancies the day after the NEDC meeting. Plessey and British Leyland have yet to announce expected redundancies.

Leyland is a very good case in point. Investment ran at £100m per annum for the three years up to 1978. For the same three year period Volkswagen invested £1350m. Yet Leyland management, with Labour Government connivance through the NEB, has harped on about low productivity. Of course the German workers are more productive. Ageing capital equipment is the characteristic of British metal industries.

In engineering, the average age of machine tools is 12.75 years, a sure sign of low investment over many years which the Government has done little to change. In the motor industry, 74 per cent of capstan lathes in use are over ten years old. Over 50 per cent of fine borers, drilling machines, gear hobbing, grinding and milling machines, automatic lathes and power presses are over ten years old in the motor industry.

The Labour Government stands in the dock. What sort of decrepit society or economy do they envisage? The Industrial Strategy, if it was sincere, has been a flop. The truth is that their strategy is tied to capitalism's chariot, that run-down at home and investment abroad will tame us.

rush the unions into a hasty response to an offer late in March to avoid losing their settlement date of April 1. And yet the other major civil service unions still consider this action premature. They should heed the CPSA general secretary when he says: "It is quite clear that the threat of strike action followed by strike action itself seems to be the only way working people in this country can get a fair deal in 1979."

That is true of any year, concordat notwithstanding, and the damage the Government will suffer through this dispute will not be limited to the higher wages that must be paid to civil servants.

Nurses take action

NURSES at Hertfordshire Psychiatric Hospital in Shenfield decided to take industrial action at a crowded branch meeting last week.

Ancillary staff have been providing reduced services since the day of action on January 22nd. The nurses have banned all informal (voluntary) and Section 136 (patients referred by the police) admissions and are walking out of selected wards with half hour's notice to management. Emergency cover is being provided.

At the first walkout catering and portering staff and even some non-union nurses came out in support of their colleagues and joined nurses on the picket line at the main gate. Next week at an emergency meeting the call will be to escalate the action. The nurses are taking action before their claim is considered by the Government. What began as support for the ancillary staff, whose offer of 8.8 per cent is a good guide to what the nurses will be offered, has developed into a fight for their own skills to be valued.

Plessey workers in new fight to save their jobs

AFTER months of deliberately encouraging uncertainty about the future of the Liverpool factories, Plessey have threatened to close the headquarters of Plessey Telecommunications, the plant at Edge Lane, unless the workers there agree to the immediate implementation of 800 redundancies.

In a long statement issued this month Plessey have put forward what they call a three year plan to save the site. In addition to the loss of the 800 jobs the company's requirements are the restoration of economic viability, new products, Post Office agreement on higher prices for Strowger Equipment, government grants for reconstruction, acceptance of new computer-based technology which will mean the loss of even more jobs, the continuation of the System X programme, and a good behaviour and no strike agree-

ment.

Plessey's statement is so full of 'ifs' and 'buts' that the feeling at Edge Lane is that the company intend to close the plan after three years anyway. For, in addition to all the other requirements, Plessey's are insisting on minimal (5 per cent or less) wage settlements, a move certain to result in the loss of the skilled workers required to develop any new products, if it is successful. It can be no accident that GEC plan to develop a micro-processor plant scarcely a stone's throw away.

The attitude of the Edge Lane stewards is that Plessey's are interested only in milking the last drops of profit out of (the now obsolete) Strowger exchange equipment before pulling out. Any grants to redevelop the site will have matured in three years leaving a very saleable asset for the company.

A joint union meeting on February 6th unanimously rejected the company's proposals, and national officers of the unions concerned met the management on St. Valentine's day. Meanwhile, attitudes are hardening. Workers feel they have no choice but to fight. As one put it, "they want to rape some of us now, and the rest in two years' time", a statement that indicates the general feeling that Plessey plan to survive at the workers' expense.

Thus, the good behaviour clauses have very great significance. What is demanded is no strikes of any form, complete flexibility, co-operation without 'obstructive consultation', new work practices and an end to 'restrictive practices'. In short, a recipe for the destruction of trade union organisation and the surrender of the gains made by organised labour over the years.

Social workers No devolution

AGREEMENT was reached nationally on a settlement to the social workers dispute last month. The settlement is a complex package involving several different scales of pay together with an important element of local negotiations. Although the deal does not complete abolition of nationally negotiated pay scales, it prepares the ground for substantial settlements negotiated locally.

Social workers in Newcastle and parts of London had been on strike since August, and at the time of settlement there were 14 branches on strike with several others taking selective action. Many areas have started negotiating locally while some such as Greenwich have already settled. The Greenwich social workers had been on strike since early November and the settlement concedes almost the entire original demand in part of regrading.

The way is now clear for branches to reach satisfactory settlements locally based on the strength and determination of local negotiations.

Criticism has been directed towards the national negotiators during the dispute for a lack of leadership. This belies the fact that the initiative for the dispute came from branches of NALGO acting individually. Nevertheless, those branches which did take action found very little support offered or given from national level.

The outcome of the dispute, where many workers were taking industrial action for the first time, is a settlement which makes a nonsense of the Government's pay policy. The important lessons learnt during the course of the dispute will serve well for the struggles to come. Already the employers are talking about the need to cut back on social services.

NALGO's 1979 pay claim will be formulated shortly and the present struggles in the public sector show what will be necessary to pursue that claim.



THE UNITED strength of the British working class in restoring collective bargaining in the teeth of the Labour Government has made that Government all the more determined to divide and rule by devolution.

As Tories and Labourites alike are trying to destroy the power of the working class as expressed in their trade unions, the separatism inherent in devolution provides the hope of dividing the unions along 'racial' or 'nationalist' lines.

This is part of the whole devolution concept of substituting for the real division of class, phoney divisions of a 'racial' or 'national' character; and in that it is like the Nazi attempt to substitute a division like Aryan and non-Aryan for class division.

In an attempt to repeat the divisive effect of the EEC referendum the bogey of Welsh and Scottish nationalism was created. But just as that epitome of social democracy, the social contract, has been smashed by a united wages fight so has

support for the nationalist parties dwindled away.

Plaid Cymru's support, according to recent polls, is now half (6 per cent) that of the 1974 election and support for devolution has fallen to 33 per cent. As support for the anti-devolution campaign (46 per cent) thrives on the present class struggle, so is the hold of the Labour Party weakened. Already one NUPE branch active in the local authority manual workers' strike has withdrawn all financial support to the Labour Party in Wales.

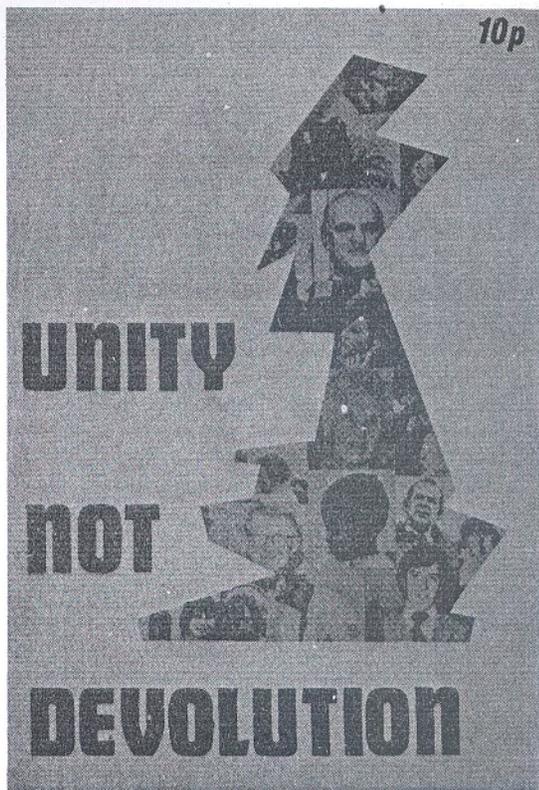
The creation and acceptance of a separate Welsh-speaking union (UMCA) within the NUS and the proposed acceptance of the National Association of Teachers in Wales for affiliation to the Welsh TUC are portents. Such organisations by seeking to undermine existing trade unions will only isolate the culture of Wales they are supposed to safeguard from the working class which is the only force capable of defending that culture.

The emergence of a Welsh Assembly will not democratise the Welsh Office which has doubled in size since 1974 nor will a Welsh 'Neddy' alter the workings of the Welsh Development Agency. The purpose of devolution is not to strengthen Wales economically but to weaken the only force in Wales capable as part of a united British working class, of guaranteeing Wales' future as part of a prosperous socialist Britain.

* IN BRIEF

THE BRITISH Labour Government which supported the US throughout its savage aggressive war against the Vietnamese people and which is constantly being hauled over the coals for its infringements of human rights in Northern Ireland has just decided to end all aid to Vietnam. Why? Because they don't like Vietnam's record on human rights.

BUS DRIVERS, conductors and maintenance staff 140 000 strong began negotiations with the state-owned bus companies last week. The employers have said they will not offer more than 5 per cent while the workers are demanding a substantial increase on basic rates which are £40 outside London and about £55 in London. The industry's national committee meets again this week to discuss the claim.



The CPB(ML) pamphlet 'Unity, not devolution' has just been reprinted. Price 10p.

It is a useful armoury of all the arguments against this attempt to divide the British working class.

As the introduction to this pamphlet says:

'Capitalism is in absolute decline and devolution is one of British capitalism's ways of trying to counter this - by attempting to dominate and crush the British working class by division.'

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Public Meetings

- London** All meetings are at 7.30 p.m.
- Feb. 23 Devolution and the EEC: whose benefit? Conway Hall
- March 9 Out with the Labour Government. Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortress Rd NWS
- Reading**
- Feb. 22 EEC, Devolution and Parliament 8.00 pm AUEW Hall, Oxford Road.
- Exeter**
- Feb. 22 Pay policy smashed: what next? 7.30pm Oddfellows Arms, New North Road