



## FIGHT FOR THE DIGNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS

The increase in the Minimum Lending Rate to 14% is the latest instalment of the attacks Callaghan promised British workers if they refuse to abide by the Government dictat on wages. It is also a continuation of the state of crisis' so well orchestrated by the Government, Parliament and the media.

The crisis that ruling class spokesmen are screaming about is the crisis of a Mr. Bumble when Oliver Twist asked for more. It is not the extra spoonful that Oliver asked for that made Mr. Bumble squeal and rant, it was the very idea of disobedience. So with the squealing of Callaghan and Co. The local authority workers, the hospital ancillary, the dustmen and others are only asking for £60 a week... hardly a living wage. Yet they are abused and condemned as criminals by the bourgeois state. They are called wreckers, callous and irresponsible for asking for 'more'.

On the one hand workers are bullied and told that they will never get any more for there is no more soup in the bowl and on the other they are told that even if they get a wage rise it will disappear through inflation, and government cutbacks. Others use capitalist criteria in dissuading workers from taking strike action. After all it takes months if not years to recover the money lost during a few weeks strike. But the struggle for wages in essence is not about money. In finality is about the dignity of the working class. A dignity based upon the value workers get for their only possession, namely their labour power.

There is not one crisis for Britain but two. There is the crisis for capitalism, the parasite sucking the blood of the working class for centuries, now intent on destroying it. On the other hand there is the crisis of the working class, that of trying to live with capitalism.

The contradiction between capitalism and the working class, never reconcilable, has today become unworkable. Hence the vicious attacks on the trade unions.

### All out fight to save Leyland from productivity deal closures

BRITISH Leyland is Britain in miniature. The government is out to destroy its viability in the interest of capitalism which finds profits easier where workers are less well organised. The vote to strike at Longbridge represents the strength that workers in Leyland have despite the years of wasting away through acceptance of productivity deals and redundancies.

The workers there are clear that the company is dishonest. But what after all has honesty to do with productivity deals and redundancy?

Leyland workers opted for this productivity deal at the time the Government was still applying sanctions against Ford. Now they have learned what they knew all along, that a productivity deal is not an easier way to get money - it just puts the battle off leaving

the employer to decide the time. And that is what Leyland management have decided now. It is the time for them to attack again and since they keep the score on productivity, they have a handy weapon they think.

Workers at Longbridge have shown the way to respond to such a management. At the same time they know only too well that Edwardes is a government stooge whose brief is to close Leylands down and who so far has achieved much in that direction.

The workers at Leyland will have to organise themselves to prevent any further erosion. The fight to force more money out of the company must not become a further demoralising acceptance of this management's plans. The working class will have to save Leyland and British industry from capitalist destruction.



"Day of Action" 22 January, 1979.

Photo : The Worker

### Fight for pay and services

Public sector workers, in terms of unemployment and low pay, have born the brunt of the continuing public expenditure cuts, while workers as a whole have paid more for declining services. Industrial action now, against the Labour Government's low-pay policy, has the object of saving public sector manual workers from penury and in design is intended to save our services. This is why nurses, hospital ancillary workers, ambulancemen, school cleaners, caretakers and catering staff, as well as dustmen and water workers, have gained so much sympathy and support from fellow trade unionists. We want hospitals and schools.

Thus Fleet Street hysteria has had the reverse effect to that intended. Many people seem quite shocked at the vehement press campaign against the workers, 500,000 of whom are supposed to live on £44.50 a week. So when Haringay parents marched to demand that their children's education not be interrupted they made clear their support for the workers' pay claim. When the bereaved Liverpool woman, whose mother died during the gravediggers' strike, was asked on television what

she thought of the strikers, she said "I was infuriated with them until I learnt they get only around £40 to £50. Especially poignant was the additional remark from a gravedigger that two of the gravediggers had suffered bereavement during the strike so they knew how others would feel. A strike was the only way to put pressure on the employers, the Liverpool Council. This sentiment has been expressed wherever fellow workers have been asked about their attitude to the strikes. Wherever pickets have been questioned they have explained the industrial action with dignity, but also with concern that beneficiaries of their services will not be hurt by their action.

Striking lorry drivers recently ensured the transit of essential supplies. The Manchester lorry driver asked the usual question, the new-found media concern with old age pensioners, pointed out that the TGWU had done more to increase pensions than any one else. Drivers picketing Liverpool docks allowed £200,000 worth of fruit and vegetables through after the employers agreed to give £1,000 to old people and deprived children in the city. Working class morality has

been the leitmotif of struggle.

While hundreds of thousands are involved in industrial action all over Britain, the Labour Government has poured scorn on the militancy of workers. But trade unionists have reciprocated this contempt. No Cabinet member speaks in public without hundreds of placards and solid picket lines there to meet them. Industrial action is being stepped up everywhere but particularly in the constituencies of Cabinet Ministers. Benn, very wisely, has voiced support for the pay claim, so Bristol has got off lightly.

Less fortunate has been Cardiff South-East, which Callaghan represents, although he has two homes elsewhere. District and road cleaners are nowhere to be seen in that part of Cardiff. Nor are services being provided in Abervan, Llanelli or Swansea West, Norwich is 'represented' by Ennals and Ebbw Vale by Foot, so action has been directed at both. Nor has the March 1st referendum on devolution escaped the council workers' attention. They say schools they work in will not be used as polling stations, unless their £60 claim is met.

## The Week

IN a television interview, Callaghan said that in his calculations about keeping down pay claims this winter he had "seriously misjudged the mood of working people". He complained that in the unions too much power had gone from the centre to the shop stewards. In other words into our working class democracy in the labour movement and in the unions that defeated a capitalist Government on the wages issue.

\*\*\*

UNEMPLOYMENT at 6.1 per cent of the work force was up by 91,000. According to the government, this is the second highest January total since the war. It is probably the highest, since new methods of computation concealing the real figure have been introduced.

\*\*\*

BUILDING last year was the lowest it has been since 1974. It is only the third time in 20 years that the figure of starts has fallen below 300,000. Public sector starts at 107,000 are the lowest this decade. Rises in interest and mortgage rates will effectively put an end to the recent increase of private housing starts.

\*\*\*

WALSALL education authorities are trying to reimpose the eleven plus exam - on the cheap. They are offering sixth formers £8 per day to do the job of marking the exams. The NUT said this was 'deplorable' and that it would 'destroy' the work of primary schools which have been free of this kind of pressure over the last few years.

\*\*\*

THE canal system is near collapse. The manager of the Waterways Board told a Committee of MPs that the Board wanted to settle NALGO's claim for a 9.8 per cent increase, but the Government had vetoed the deal. A number of bridges and tunnels are already closed for safety reasons. "The present situation is a tragedy and it will take us years to get over it".

\*\*\*

A FURTHER step to the police state. The police used clauses of the Public Services Conditions of Fitness Regulations 1972 in London to stop and inspect buses and return them to depot as 'unfit'. Bus drivers prosecuted face fines of up to £100 and endorsement of their licence. The police have not apparently thought of taking London Transport to task.

\*\*\*

THE cry of "oil shortage" goes up, and with it, prices. Yet over 102 million tonnes have been landed since June 1975, and Britain should be self-sufficient in crude oil production next year. Where are the promised economic benefits?

\*\*\*

THE Queen's visit to the Gulf states has acquired further significance ever since the people of Iran declared her 'persona non grata'. It is openly admitted that her visit, coupled with the 10 day tour by the US Secretary of 'Defence' to the Middle East, is an attempt to reassure oppressive rulers of Anglo-American support against any popular uprising. It is an open admission that Hussein, Feisal, the Sheikhs and Emirs of the Gulf rule only by courtesy of imperialism.



East Moors Steel Protest, 1973.

Photo: Western Mail & Echo

## EEC and Government gang up against steelmen

THE EEC and the Labour Government, twin capitalist thieves, are responsible for the latest plan to close down a steel works and a whole town - Corby, in Northamptonshire. They want to do away with 7,000 out of 10,000 jobs. If it happens, it will raise unemployment to 33 per cent in the town.

The proposal comes hard on the rebuff received by the employers, the nationalised British Steel Corporation, over the proposed closure at Bilston. Months after the threat of all-out strike forced the BSC to postpone their decision, workers' resistance has kept the plant alive. Only recently, virtual occupation and preparations to light up unused furnaces forced the employers into further negotiations.

Under the EEC's Davignon

plan, all European steel production would be cut. But the EEC is particularly concerned with destroying us. While Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg showed production increasing last year over 1977 by 13, 12 and 10 per cent (France and Germany less so), only in Britain has steel production declined absolutely by 1 per cent. Clearly they feel this is not enough.

Destruction of steel making, hence industry as a whole, is their aim in Britain. It would be a disaster for workers the world over, not least in Europe. Resistance by British workers, at Fords and elsewhere, has been eagerly watched by the European trade unionists. As one of the leaders of the 2 million strong French General Confederation of Labour (CGT)

put it, our struggles "encouraged" them in their action.

Davignon, like every capitalist, attacks his own. The latest French Government plan is to axe over 20,000 jobs in steel. Yet no one reckoned with the violence and organisation of the French unions' reply: nationwide demonstrations, the steelmaking town of Longwy in Lorraine under virtual siege, action in the North as well. Frightened, the French Government has had to make concessions while the unions will press for more.

The struggles in France, following on from the recent successful strikes in Germany, will be an encouragement to British trade unionists in our fight against our Labour Government, in alliance with the EEC.

Out of the EEC now!

## Guns not butter as warmonger Teng visits US

THE SIGHT of Teng Hsiaoping waltzing around America in a ten-gallon hat must surely have been one of the most disgusting of the century. He must have laughed at the intrepid right-wing demonstrators who dogged his heels with placards saying: "The only good communist is a dead communist." Even Teng could not have put his own government's point of view better.

By the end of his visit, even President Carter was beginning to get embarrassed about his new-found friend. Teng, in a country which has posed a threat to world peace ever since World War Two, lost no opportunity to remind Americans that Russia was Public Enemy number one. As if the

American bourgeoisie haven't been drumming that message into the public's mind enough! Teng even paused between pictures in an art gallery to repeat his theme. Is nothing sacred?

Nonetheless, the American ruling class was not to be put off by a display of bad manners on the part of a guest who insisted on interfering in their own internal affairs. All they saw when looking at Teng was one big, big dollar sign.

China today means big business. Coca Cola is just the tip of an iceberg including computers, heavy machinery, managerial 'know-how' and, eventually, no doubt armaments as well.

In the middle of his visit, Teng

decided to 'clarify' the Chinese attitude towards Vietnam. Asked if China was going to invade the country, he refused to deny the possibility. Even now, a massive build-up of Chinese divisions is taking place along their common border. The Chinese, taking a leaf out of the CIA's tactics in Korea, are manufacturing a stream of border incidents in an attempt to justify precisely such an invasion.

How disgusting that China should choose to announce a fascist policy of aggression towards Vietnam in a country which also tried to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson".

Should they try, they will surely meet the same fate as the Americans - disgrace, dishonour and defeat.

## Capitalism's only art - the art of destruction

THE CULTURAL and artistic life of a country is dependent upon basic industries, public services and the collective products of our working relationships. As these material bases are destroyed by capitalism all aspects of our lives are damaged.

The capitalist class cannot do anything for the future of Britain: they are running down our central industries and closing the schools and colleges through which the working class transmits art, knowledge and practical skills. This strategic plan to destroy

the educational system as we know it, at its roots shows us exactly what the bourgeoisie and their parliamentary politicians think of culture - they think very little of it.

Their attitude is reflected again in Government treatment of public organisations explicitly set up to administer and foster every kind of artistic work from folk festival to high opera. The Arts Council of Great Britain has been badly handicapped.

Because of massive cuts in the Government allocation to the Housing Arts Fund, no new

building has been undertaken this year and unless provision is made soon nothing can be planned for the future. The Council's secretary has pointed out that "we spend less on arts subsidy than any other comparable Western country." "Almost daily," he continued, "we face clients who cannot manage on the most we can give them."

Financial crises are hitting nearly every major theatre or cultural organisation you can think of, including the National Theatre, and all this despite large audiences.

## British farmers must pay EEC for milk lakes

THE ONLY country in Europe to consume all the milk it produces is Britain. All of it, produced by Britain's 74,000 dairy farmers, is either drunk fresh or turned into butter or cheese. Thanks to the Milk Marketing Board, none of it goes into the EEC's ludicrous skimmed milk mountain.

Yet Britain's farmers (and hence us through the higher prices we have to pay) already contribute 3p a gallon, or £60 million, to the EEC for the upkeep of their absurd system. The EEC now proposes that this should rise to 4p per gallon.

Devise an efficient distribution system, or lower prices so that people will buy more dairy products? Never! By raising prices, they hope to cut back production, and gain even more funds for their storage systems. Above all, they want to wreck the British industry.

The EEC has been thwarted in its attempts to destroy the Milk Marketing Board and is turning to the tax plan instead. 96 per cent of Britain's larger and more efficient herds would pay the levy, as opposed to only 46 and 37 per cent of the smaller herds of German and Italian farmers. The cost to the average British dairy farmer is put by the Marketing Board at between £2,350 and £3760 a year.

### Out of the EEC now!

"The great majority of our producers would be driven out of business in a very short time", claim the Board, and the employers, represented by the National Farmers Union, agree. Yet the Agriculture Minister, Silkin, seems unperturbed. He has not opposed the levy as such, and wants to see how much can be "clawed back" from Brussels. As if anything which falls into their maw could be retrieved.

No attempts at tinkering with the system can make it work. Britain has the only efficient milk production system in Europe, and can only safeguard it if it produces milk, as we have always done, for our own home market and withdraw from the EEC.

The Common Agricultural Policy depends on not consuming the food produced, but storing or destroying it. The motive is high prices and profit. The EEC wheat price is double the world market price, sugar 2.5 times higher, and butter nearly four times higher. These higher prices simply mean we pay more and increase their profit. We need out of the EEC now.

In response to the overall crisis the Arts Council is calling for a Parliamentary lobby.

Yet lobbies will never be enough. The arts will not return to Britain's shore until the class which demands the closure of schools and factories has been destroyed. The claim for more money for art galleries and the like must be coupled with a sincere questioning of the destructiveness of a profit system never interested in developing manual and mental skills to their full.

# Editorial



## No to devolution - Britain out of the EEC

THE FACT that we have to discuss the question of devolution at all shows how far the process of destroying Britain has gone. For where is Britain without Scotland and Wales? Where is the British working class if we are so easily divided up?

Devolution for Scotland and Wales is the first step towards the break up of Britain and the British working class. For 200 years we have fought together to build our British trade union and labour movement, for 200 years we have stood firm against all attempts to destroy this unity and strength.

Today we are under attack because capitalism can no longer afford us. On the one hand the ruling class attempts to internationalise the class struggle by forcing us into alliances like the Common Market. On the other hand they try to destroy our growing NATIONAL opposition through devolution. The working class is the only defender of national integrity and independence. It is this nationality that is under attack from the EEC and devolution. Nationality in the broadest sense - the essential genius of working people who in a particular place and over a considerable period of time have developed their peculiar skills and arts for the enrichment of life both materially and spiritually.

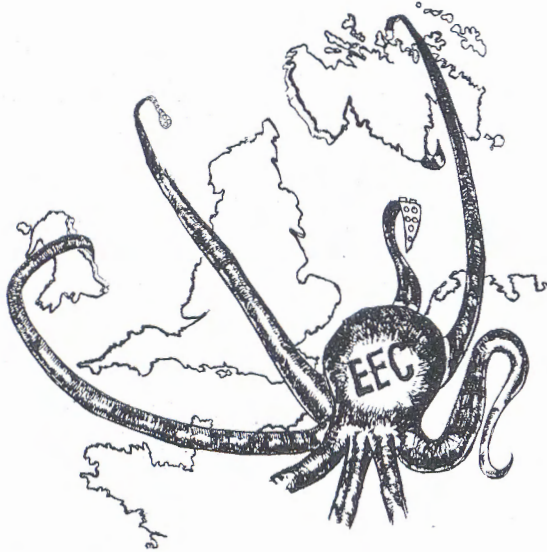
Just as the British ruling class seek to depress us by destroying our skills and the means by which we create wealth, so they seek to eliminate our nationhood in the pincer movement of Common Market and devolution.

Socialism can only be created in individual nations -- by the workers who live and work there. Only the Working Class is interested in such independence. That independence demands that the workers take power. A revolution in Britain would treasure and preserve the variety of distinctive cultural traditions of the British working class.

We must declare a resounding NO to devolution. With the same clarity that lorry drivers NATIONALLY drove through the 5 per cent we must extract Britain from the EEC and the rest of capitalism's counter-revolutionary devices.

We have always opposed divide and rule and now we need to take on the entire ruling class without regard to our ethnic divisions. We have to follow James Connolly and say "I deem that to be patriotic which is in the interests of the working class."

NO TO DEVOLUTION  
BRITAIN OUT OF THE EEC



## Corporate state medicine - the medicine of control

THE ROW over immigrant virginity tests has come at a bad time for the Government, which is doing its pathetic best to appear as a champion of human decency and compassion.

While Cabinet Ministers huddled abuse at hospital pickets for their lack of concern for patients, the press related that immigrant women are being given medical examinations to ascertain whether or not they are virgins. Now it has also been revealed that X-rays are being given by UK officials at the High Commission in Dacca to decide whether potential immigrants are lying about their ages. These X-rays are even being given to pregnant women, a practice proved to be potentially damaging to the

unborn baby.

Medical workers in Britain have expressed their horror at such barbaric practices, which have been going on for at least a decade.

Is this fascist travesty of medical examination which has nothing to do with health a symptom of a ruling class determined to keep immigrants out of Britain?

No. It is an attempt to cow and subdue a section of British people who are, or were, immigrants, to divide them off from their fellow workers.

No people in the world has the right to expect unrestricted access to another country, to live and to work there, whether that country be capitalist or socialist,

## Rail destruction

AFTER THE wholesale destruction of the railways under Beeching with the closure of branch lines and small stations we now have to put up with the continued 'rationalisation'. We have to face yet more cuts in standards and the rundown of those services that remain.

British Rail management has called for a £6.19 million saving with the loss of 520 drivers' jobs, 860 assistant drivers' and some 5,000 guards' jobs. The final aim of reductions and changes in work patterns would be as high as 20,000 jobs, along with the rolling stock and locomotives which complement them.

The NUR with 180,000 and ASLEF with 26,000 members have been offered a sweetener by BR whereby part of £6.19 million will be used as productivity payments to those left.

To judge by the past and present rates of reduction, those left will not have long to wait their turn. The arguments put by BR to justify the reductions - such as loss of rail traffic and inflation, as well as against the present £6 called for by ASLEF as a responsibility payment - would appear to be basically the same for all nationalised industry whether Steel, Shipbuilding or Coal.

The workers of these sections must be prepared to make capitalist management pay for their skills and labour, and prevent any further selling of jobs and destruction of industry.

## Fire Brigade cuts

EACH of London's 28 fire stations is to lose the use of 1 pump, the crew on fire appliances is to be cut from 5 or 6 to 4, and only 1 pump is to be sent to most fires in place of a usual 2 or 3.

Furthermore, items of specialist equipment, for example turntable ladders, emergency tenders with cutting gear and anti-chemical apparatus, and a fire boat, are to be taken out of service.

These cuts are in spite of an increase in London traffic, and when calls for emergency tenders (the kind used at the Moorgate Tube disaster) have increased by 150 per cent over the last 10 years.

It is obvious there can be no economic justification for these

cuts; the increase in fire losses would probably meet the saving, regardless of the threat to life. Firemen have shown their potential for organised struggle against Government sponsored decline in wages and services - all the fire cuts aim at undermining that potential, as part of a strategy nothing short of destroying effective fire cover.

## Engineering workers fight closure

WORKERS at Vickers Scotswood works are to fight the closure of the plant and the loss of 700 jobs. Vickers, famous for arms and heavy engineering, is pulling out of the heavy engineering industry with a move into the lucrative property field, as well as light engineering such as office equipment.

The unions revealed the company's policy of actually turning orders and tenders away in their attempts to close the Scotswood plant.

The workers held a march through Newcastle city centre on January 26 as the first part of their campaign to keep jobs and skill on Tyneside.

## Dockers

Ninety per cent of the 28,000 registered dock workers have still to settle this year's wage claim. Dockers at Grimsby, Immingham and Avonmouth went on strike after an offer of 5 per cent and dockers at other ports are beginning to take action in furtherance of their claim.

At a mass meeting, Hull dockers unanimously rejected the Port Employers' derisive offer of 5 per cent. They decided to step up their overtime ban and work-to-rule action into a campaign of one-day lightning strikes for their claim of a 20 per cent basic wage increase.

## Cement workers

THE CEMENT monopoly APCM has recently tried every trick in the book to undermine the value of real wages and set worker against worker.

Productivity, bonuses, flexi-work: you name it, they've got it. Under the 10 per cent deal (whatever phase was that?) they again promised increases in the bonus scheme - to be settled within 20

weeks of last year's short dispute. Not surprisingly, nothing has materialised.

Not only are cement workers (some of whom have been working an 80 hour week because of the company's undermanning) thoroughly resentful of the latest example of APCM's deceit. But they, like other workers throughout the country, have been turning their minds to a pay claim that throws out this dependence on bonus and productivity and overtime.

The claim for 25 per cent is based on a consolidation of the basic rate. No way will the workers at plants like Northfleet, Kent, be diverted from this principle.

"We've had enough of this productivity lark," a TGWU member at Northfleet told The Worker. "You need a bloody calculator to work out what you're earning. On top of that, the company thinks it can call you out any time for any shift - and hands you £1.04 for messing up your life. The basic rate claim is absolutely correct and Northfleet, the company's largest plant, will be showing the way."

## Textile industry

MANY THOUSANDS of textile and clothing workers in the UK could lose their jobs if an EEC plan is adopted, the Bradford-based National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers warned.

The union has condemned an EEC proposal for 'outward processing', under which textile goods produced in the UK and other EEC countries would be temporarily exported to outside states for final processing and then reimported as community produced finished goods.

Help for the 'Third World' is the aim of the plan, claims the EEC commission. The union report discloses that the underlying reason for this policy is to take advantage of the cheap, unorganised labour in the 'developing' countries.

The union's report cites the West German textile industry as an example of the consequences. 'In West Germany, where outward processing has been developing unfettered for a number of years, its effects are now being felt... over the last five years, it has lost 28% of its textile and clothing workers, totally over a quarter of a million jobs.'

and any people has the right to lay down limitations and conditions on the entry of visitors or immigrants.

But the ruling class of Britain - which does not speak for the British people anyway - has no intention of limiting immigration. It positively welcomes an opportunity to weaken and divide the British workers.

Since Britain joined the EEC anyone in the Common Market is free to come here to live, with practically no restrictions, and vice versa. The prospect of Greece and Spain joining means that immigration to Britain is likely to increase. When people are uprooted they are weakened. A mobile, rootless workforce is highly desirable to the multi-

national employer, above all in Britain, where immigrant workers do not have the British workers' tradition and experience of trade union struggle and sheer bloody-mindedness. Immigration also means emigration, and if British workers can be separated and scattered around Europe, so much the better for capitalism.

In fact, the so-called "Immigration" laws are, like the "anti-terrorist" laws, simply an excuse for more shedding of any democratic rights we have left.

The Immigration Act gives police the right to hold any worker without trial or right of appeal, for an indefinite time, under suspicion of being an il-

legal immigrant. This Act was brought to the Statute Book in the 1960's and has been strengthened by every Government since. Between 1976-77 the number of arrests under this Act more than doubled, and there are people who have now been kept in custody for 11 months without trial.

Now it appears the ruling class also reserves the right to submit immigrants - future British workers - to physical abuse and humiliation, no doubt as a warning that they will not be treated with any shred of compassion by our rulers when they join our working class. Capitalism and its servants in Government care not a jot for human dignity.

# Worker Interview

ANCILLARY WORKERS - ST. JAMES' HOSPITAL LEEDS.

**Q.** How did your dispute begin?  
**A.** The dispute began with a day of action on January 22 in pursuit of a pay claim for two-thirds of the average industrial wage which did not seem unreasonable.

**Q.** What happened then?  
**A.** This was followed by a work to rule which we informed management of on January 26.

**Q.** How has your action developed from there?  
**A.** Leeds was a selected Area for intensification so on 3 Feb it was decided that 50 porters would be withdrawn for one week. This decision had 100 per cent support.

**Q.** Did you offer emergency cover?  
**A.** Of course we did. This consisted of one general porter for Northside, Southside, Phase 3 and Beckett. Wing. All other services, except general portering were still being carried out in line with the 12 point plan.

**Q.** What was management's response?  
**A.** They were very dissatisfied. It seems we are an essential service. They wanted all linen transported; all meal trolleys returning to the kitchens; pharmacy boxes delivered (although the pharmacy does not do boxes on Bank Holidays so how can they be emergency?) and two men to do carry outs instead of one per block we were providing.

**Q.** How did your members respond?  
**A.** Sympathetically. We agreed to supply an additional man from the picket to carry outs voluntarily without pay. We also agreed to deliver the pharmacy boxes. It was suggested to management that additional porters would be provided if they were paid as per rest day working i. e. for 16 hours. This was not unreasonable as they were saving 50 mens' wages. We also agreed that management volunteers could be used but only in areas where no emergency cover was given. No outside volunteers would be permitted.

**Q.** What did they say?  
**A.** Firstly they would not pay rest day rates. They wanted to, but Whitley Council rules do not allow. This angered our members because such payments had been made previously to transport drivers in dispute - which was why we suggested it. They then started using management volunteers unnecessarily and in an inflammatory way in all areas, agreed and not agreed. We had a request then from departmental porters that they wanted to withdraw. They all came out in support on Thursday, 8th.

**Q.** What did you do about the theatres?  
**A.** David Beavers was closed, but Chancellor Wing and Renal Unit were fully manned to cope with any emergency. Management then opened David Beavers and Day Theater using outside volunteers. We agreed that management volunteers could do general portering duties, but they are now involved everywhere in total contravention of agreed procedure.

**Q.** Where do you go from here?  
**A.** Well that, together with the 8.8 per cent offer has produced a total withdrawal. We will all be back on Sunday except the general porters and there will be some emergency cover here. COSHE except their general porters will be back on Monday so the Pharmacy intravenous fluids unit can start production. There will be a further meeting on Wednesday to review the situation but local guerilla action will continue. We are solid and determined.

# Govt the killer

THE GOVERNMENT, which raves about the danger to life posed by health unions' action, is itself the only killer. Not only does it want the wages of malnutrition for health workers and their families, it is daily closing down wards, departments, whole hospitals.

For example:

London University, which trains almost one third of Britain's doctors, and whose medical schools include institutions world famous for their scholarship and research, such as the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, Guy's, St Bartholomews, The Royal Free and St Thomas', is in a perilous financial position. This is due entirely to the activities of the Department of Health and Social Security.

The DHSS funds the schools 'indirectly' in that most of their teaching is carried out by NHS registrars and consultants at the hospitals. It is this contribution which has been progressively cut, a contribution which cannot adequately be made up from any other source.

The Renal Unit at Hammersmith, recently closed, has been temporarily reopened, but only thanks to

charity. The technology is there to provide kidney machines for the thousands that die needlessly - Lucas workers could make them easily. Yet the Government is willing to see this department, a world leader in kidney treatment, closed.

Stoke Mandeville Hospital is the leading paraplegic establishment in the country. Here the fabric of the building is collapsing as funds are not made available.

Closure is planned for the casualty department of the District Hospital at Rugely, Staffordshire.

There is a plan to close all Shropshire's cottage hospitals. This has been opposed by the Shropshire Conference of the National Union of Agricultural Workers.

Birmingham's Social Services Committee is threatening to close all eleven hostels for children in care, five children's homes and three residential nurseries, so stopping working women having full-time nursery places for their children. Over 180 workers whose jobs are threatened are determined to defeat their savage attack on children.

# Farmworkers get off ground

DESPITE a national pay award of 13 per cent many farmworkers still live on the poverty line, or below. Nearly half earn less than £50 per week. But old defeatist attitudes are dying, and there are encouraging moves within the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.

Jack Boddy, NUAAW General Secretary, has urged farmworkers with the most muscle, those working in poultry and fruit packing stations, to push beyond the basic rate by local bargaining. This could have a 'domino effect' throughout the rural wage structure, as the Yorkshire District Organisation of the NUAAW explained to The Worker:

"It's not generally realised how important the wage level in farming is to rural areas. Apart from the poultry processing industry, Twydales, Eastwoods, Thornhills and Buxted and others who built in rural areas for cheap wage reasons, many rural based industries base their wages on farm rates - agricultural engineering animal feed firms, textiles, etc.

"Our recent wage increase does show signs of small successes following much more militant attitudes from some of our membership and I would claim that Yorkshire has led the field in this respect. We still have a long way to go, but now we are moving, in contrast to the 'full stop' feeling in the NUAAW of only a year ago."

# ENGINEERS CLAIM

2½ million engineering workers covered by the National Agreement between the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and the Engineering Employers' Federation, lodged their 1979 pay claims on Monday.

This claim, a decision of last year's AUEW National Committee, is for a £20 per

week increase to take basic rates for skilled workers to £80 per week. It includes a demand for shortening the working week and longer holidays.

The National Committee also instructed the AUEW Executive Council to back up this claim with industrial action if necessary.

# Two victories

LORRY DRIVERS finally wore down the employers, members of the Road Haulage Association, and secured a wage rise of about 21 per cent. After weeks of crumbling the RHA in the south west area agreed to pay £65 per week basic. The drivers had already secured many local agreements of the full cash demand of £65 especially in Scotland in spite of RHA claims that £60 was the final offer, and it was these local victories which finally forced the RHA to pay up.

\*\*\*

THE wage increase of just under 16 per cent won by 33,000 workers in the water industry is double what the Government is prepared to concede to workers in the public sector.

This settlement will be an encouragement to all the other workers in the public sector who are presently engaged in industrial action.

# Courtaulds

AT Courtaulds factory in Spenny-moor, 1600 workers pressed for a wage rise and management replied with a proposal of a £7 a week reduction in wages in exchange for their jobs. The factory is due to close in April with a further loss of 1500: 2900 Courtauld jobs have already gone throughout the country. The workers are determined to fight for wages and jobs.

# Oil workers 'strike' for 'safety'

OIL construction workers have stepped up their action in protest at the appalling working conditions in the North Sea Klondyke. The recommendation to escalate the strike action, which embraces some 7000 workers, was taken at the end of January. Each day, more and more workers are joining the strike.

The men want an increase in both basic and overtime rates. But money is only one aspect of their 23 point claim, which has been rejected in its entirety by the employers, the Oil and Chemical Plant Constructor's Association. Quite rightly, the workers are concerned not just with having a living wage, but also living to spend it.

The North Sea, notorious for its bad weather and the vicious wave formations unknown in other marine oilfields, is at the frontier of oil technology. Yet the much vaunted Health and Safety Acts which apply on dry land in Britain have no standing in Britain's North Sea water.

Strike action began on Jan-

uary 5th, led by a strike committee set up by the workers. An electrician employed in the industry told us why: "We presented them with 23 points which were rejected. The safety conditions on the platforms are hair-raising, and that is why men have died."

One of the strikers' main aims is a two-weeks on, and two-weeks off system, instead of two on and one off as at present. They say this would increase the number of jobs by one third while raising the total wages bill by only 10 per cent.

At present, when conditions do not allow them to be transferred to sleeping accommodation on another structure they are put up in camp beds. For this, they receive an allowance of £17.50 per night.

"We are then expected to go back on a 12 hour shift," another worker explained to us. "It is physical suicide. We are not interested in their £17.50. We need a decent sleep before we can carry on with that kind of work."

## Bookshops

**Bellman Bookshop** 155 Fortress Road, London NW5  
**Brighton Workers Bookshop** 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton  
**Main Trend Books** 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol  
**Northern Star Bookshop** 18A Leighton Street, Leeds  
**Basildon Bookstall** Tues, Fri, Sat Marketplace  
**Hull Bookstall** Old Town Market, Saturdays  
**Liverpool Bookstall** every Thursday Liverpool University

## Public Meetings

<b>London</b>	All meetings are at 7.30 p.m.
Feb. 23	Devolution and the EEC: whose benefit? Conway Hall
Mar. 9	Out with the Labour Govt. Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortress Rd, N.W. 5.
<b>Cambridge</b>	
Feb 15	Defend The Right To Strike 8:00pm, International Centre, Gwydir Street.
<b>Oxford</b>	
Wed. 21st February	Seizing the Assets All starting at 8.00 p.m., Cowley Community Centre
<b>Reading</b>	
Feb 22nd	EEC, Devolution and Parliament. 8.00pm AUEW Hall, Oxford Road.

## The Worker

155 FORTRESS ROAD, LONDON NW5  
 6 months £2.50 (including postage)  
 1 year £5.00 (including postage)

NAME . . . . .  
 ADDRESS . . . . .