

THE WORKER



Published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist - Leninist) No. 28 Dec 17th 1977 5p

For the firemen - jam tomorrow!
For the miners - cream mixed with blood!

MAKE GOVT BOW TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

THE FIREMEN'S solidarity in their four-week-old strike, in which they have the overwhelming support of the whole working class, has forced the Government to dress up its boot-faced rejection of the firemen's claim as prettily as possible. While not budging from their position of treating the 10 per cent guideline as though it were handed down from on high engraved on tablets of stone, they are prepared to give 'firm guarantees' of wage increases over the next two years 'regardless of future economic circumstances'.

The assistant general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union put the present position in a nutshell when he said: "There has been no shift at all from the previous offers. The indication from the picket lines is that we stay out."

There are two points to note about the Government's offer of a pig in a poke (which would not be blinding on a subsequent government anyway). In the first place it is described as being guaranteed in spite of a 'future pay policy' - clear admission by the Government that it has no intention, as Healey pointed out at a recent Cabinet meeting, of even abandoning a policy of wage-fixing in favour of the collective bargaining demanded by the labour movement. In the second place the offer of increases dated at yearly intervals, in 1978 and 1979, would have the effect of institutionalising the 12-month period between claims as a permanent feature of British economic life.

As further bait for their offer the Government has suggested that negotiations might continue on the reduction of the 48-hour week!

This is the context in which the refusal of the TUC's General Purposes and Finance Committee to endorse the labour movement's decision to return to collective bargaining, by supporting the firemen's strike, has to be seen.

Naturally there have been feelings of indignation and resentment among trade unionists

at this support by the TUC for the Labour Government in its actions against the working class. But it is only by the member unions of the TUC moving into action on wages and conditions against the employers, whether private or state, that the TUC will ever become what it was originally intended to be - a committee of trade unions involved in class struggle.

WHO runs the National Union of Mineworkers? Is it the membership through Conference, or through the Ballot Box, is it the Executive, or indeed the Courts?

This question of authority has been a problem for miners for years! But the meeting of the NUM executive on December 8th has turned it into an urgent problem which miners can't duck.

At its meeting, the executive

voted to observe the 12-month 'rule' and to allow pit areas to negotiate separate productivity deals. These deals were described as giving miners 'a little bit of cream'.

Last year the miners voted by ballot in favour of a Social Contract deal and therefore supported the 12-month 'rule' which they subsequently rejected. But in the case of the productivity deal nothing could have been clearer than the mass vote of the miners to reject it as divisive and dangerous to life and limb. This democratic rejection has been overturned by the NUM executive to meet the Government's demand for increased productivity.

Joe Gornley, President of the NUM, said after the executive meeting: "When you have an annual conference in July, the world does not stop still because you pass resolutions." Indeed it does not: but then nor does the world stand on its head and turn somersaults.

There is now not just a problem, but a crisis of authority in the NUM. The solution as with everything in life is not simple. Yet recourse to the law is certainly no answer - at best it adds yet another character into the play.

Calling in the courts is like summoning up the Devil. First, he may not come. Second, he may not do your bidding. Third, he may not go away again. Lastly the Devil should stay where he belongs and not interfere where

he does not belong.

In inviting this interference by judges, those who advocate suing their own union for breach of rule are as treacherous as those who betray conference decisions. They are inviting judges to judge our unions.

The class struggle is not something to be resolved by capitalist Solomons. The capitalist class would love to try: they can't stand for election in our unions so they try to send in judges for them.

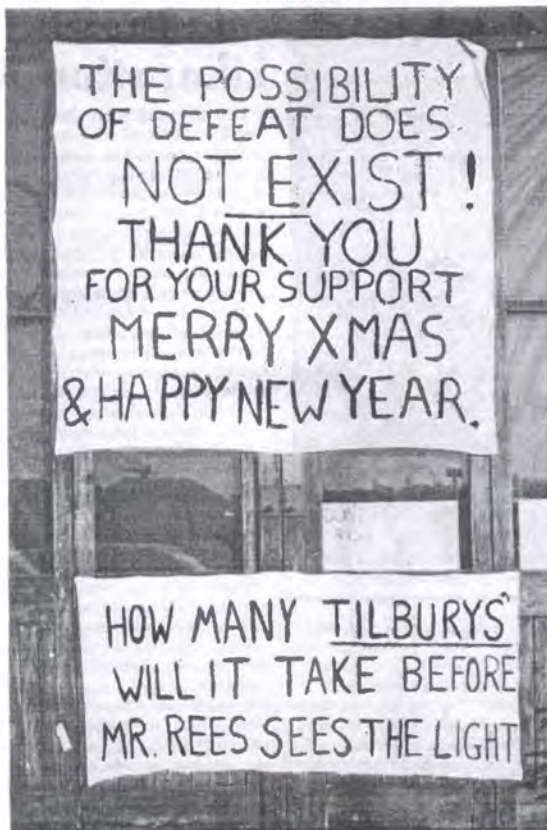
The vote for the 12-month 'rule' was neither here nor there in practical terms - but the decision implicit in that vote to overturn conference policy is far-reaching and cannot be ignored.

The decision to allow local productivity deals to be negotiated was certainly a breach of the spirit if not of the letter of the recent pithead ballot. It had only one aim in mind. To weaken miners' unity and sabotage the wage struggle.

The miners themselves must now show through resolutions and through actions that they repudiate the decisions of their executive. They must use the machinery of the union to force it to stick to policies, democratically decided, which uphold the unity of all miners and their right to negotiate without regard to the whims or predicaments of a Labour Government.

And they must keep away from courts. The job is theirs and they will shirk it at their peril.

The firemen's answer to the Government



Placards at Northfleet Fire Station in Kent, show firemen's determination.

AUEW RESOLUTION

THE following Resolution was carried unanimously at the AUEW London South Shop Stewards Quarterly Meeting on December 6th:

"This London South Shop Stewards Quarterly Meeting declares its solidarity and whole-hearted support both morally and financially to the Members of the Fire Brigades Union in the firm and principled stand they are making to improve their wages and obtain a decent standard of living.

"We demand the TUC General Council implement the Congress policy of unfettered collective bargaining and reverse the deplorable attitude adopted by the General Purposes and Finance Committee and give full and unqualified support to the Fire Brigades Union in their struggle to win their just demands."

Man is the 'most precious resource'

SOCIALIST Albania has in the three decades since liberation developed a first rate health service where previously one hardly existed. In a society which regards man as its most precious resource the protection of the health of the people is a concern of all.

Article 45 of the Constitution says: "The State guarantees the citizens necessary medical services as well as treatment in the health centres of the country free of charge." The effectiveness of the health care provided together with the benefits of a rising standard of living are manifest in the rising birth rate and lowered death rate, the extended life expectancy (38 years in 1938, 68 years in 1974), and the eradication of previously endemic diseases.

The origins of the modern health service and the philosophy which underlies it can be found in the grim days of the early 1940s when the partisans of the National Liberation Army under the leadership of the Communist Party were preparing to embark on their campaign of guerrilla warfare against the fascist occupiers.

The partisan health service was set up at the instigation of the Party. This was to provide an underground network of health care facilities to tend the sick and wounded in battle. This network operated both in the cities and in the outlying areas of the country and received much support and practical aid from the local people who in return also received medical attention from it.

In preparation for the major offensives which were to come the directive went out on August 17th 1943 to create partisan hospitals capable of being moved

as the situation demanded. Thus health workers were from the beginning closely identified with the National Liberation movement, and the tradition of placing a high priority on the health of the people, even in war time, was firmly established.

Since liberation the transformation wrought across the whole face of Albanian society is tremendous. The sheer scope of the coverage supplied by the health service seems extraordinary for such a small country relying almost entirely on its own resources to train staff, build and equip hospitals and health centres, and develop the necessary technology to produce drugs, vaccines and medical equipment. Hospitals, maternity homes, child care clinics and nurseries, health centres (in every village), work place clinics, dental units, convalescent homes - not only are these facilities available free to all who need them but the number of staff involved in running them is adequate to provide a thorough and humane service.

The doctor/patient relationship is a model of mutual respect and real socialist humanism. With a ratio of one doctor to every 780 people the doctors have time to listen to their patients, to properly diagnose their symptoms and prescribe the appropriate treatment which they are able to thoroughly explain to their patients. Without financial barriers, without a wall of mysticism and ignorance between doctor and patient a thoroughly satisfactory relationship can develop, enhancing the doctor's own knowledge and the patient's understanding. Besides personal health education doctors are encouraged to talk with and give lectures to groups of workers, city dwellers and villagers

and thus improve awareness of how to achieve personal and environmental health. Doctors are also encouraged to carry out research, a practice which serves to add to the general body of knowledge about medical problems besides maintaining a lively interest on the part of the individual doctor.

Besides the wealth of facilities open to the population generally, there are also many specialised units catering for the needs of the handicapped, war wounded and those affected by industrial accidents. The aim of these is to provide a good education and training, using up-to-date methods and equipment with an emphasis on integrating the disabled fully into society. In this way they too can contribute their own special abilities towards the building of socialism and can experience the satisfaction of having a role to play.

Several institutions have been set up at national level to carry out research and develop new expertise and technology in areas such as Public Health, Preventive Medicine, Popular (traditional) Medicine and Medical Statistics. The Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology today produces twenty kinds of vaccines and serums whereas in the early years after liberation only one was produced and the country had to rely on imported preparations. Studies such as those investigating the dangers of silicosis in the mining industry; the effects of noise in industry and urban areas; the physical development of children; the quality of foodstuffs, give but a few examples of the wide range of research undertaken at this particular Institute.

Part 2 next week

THE WEEK

A recent visitor to Hungary reports that there is no social, cultural, scientific, or sports field in that country in which Russian influence is not seen. The apparent aim is to liquidate the best cultural traditions of the Hungarian people.

In the United States the president of the AFL-CIO Union Organisation has said that American industries are being destroyed by unfair foreign competition. What happened to that superpower?

From Italy we hear that the "Communist" Party of Italy is busy sharing out "Jobs for the boys" with the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party of Italy. For example, a member of the "CPI" has been made a director of the Casa Per Il Mezzogiorno, a body responsible for administering and funding Southern Regional Development. Another has become a director of the Bank of Stena. All part of the 'historic compromise'.

A reader of THE WORKER remarks on a passage in the British Institute of Management's booklet, 'Employee Participation - The Way Ahead'. The passage reads, "The technical quality of a decision can be improved if employees... participate and contribute". Comes the comment, "Of course, workers can run any business more efficiently than employers. But this way the employer gets a management function out of you at no cost to him!"

The following is the argument of David Bassett, of the GMWU. Since the government is the employer in the public sector, it is only fair to expect it to have a wages policy in the public sector. If the government has a wages policy in the public sector it would be unfair if anyone outside that sector should benefit from collective bargaining. So it is only fair that the policy should be applied to all. Quite simply, it is an argument for saying that the existence of a wrong done to one person justifies it being done to the whole of society.

Said by a soldier, referring to the firemen's strike, "Next week, when the dockers go on strike, we'll unload the ships. When the miners go on strike, we'll dig the coal, and when the railway workers go on strike, we'll take the stuff to the power stations."

The "Labour" Party broadcast on December 7th dealt with the canvassing of the National Front in the decaying inner cities, correctly comparing the Front in respect to its racist policies with Fascism in Germany and Italy. We should not forget however that Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany were based on the concept of the corporate state, with state control of wages and state-controlled unions - the very things the "Labour" government have been trying to enforce through the social contract!

"Tonight we are concerned with a draft EEC directive on..."
- Hansard.

Smith's atrocities in Zimbabwe reported by Liberation Army HQ

ON the 23rd and 26th of November Smith's Rhodesian terrorist forces, supported by mercenaries, from Israel, Britain, France, West Germany and the US, attacked two of our transit locations in Mozambique killing about 100 people, mainly hospital patients, women and school children.

On Wednesday 23rd at 8.45 am Chimoiro was attacked by Rhodesian Mirage jets and Alouette helicopters concentrating their fire on the hospital, plainly marked with the international symbol of the red cross. Parachutists entered the hospital complex, dragged patients out of the mobile clinic and murdered them in cold blood. They then went into the hospital proper slaughtering those who were too ill to move from their beds.

At the same time another gang of Smith terrorists attacked a school for children between the ages of 9 and 14 which had already been bombed and strafed from the air. As the children rushed out of the burning building they were mowed down by machine-gun fire. Journalists who were taken to the site afterwards saw note-books, pens and pencils scattered about and visited the grave where 40 children are buried. As one of the teachers said: our young people's quest for knowledge will never be stifled by such acts of savagery.

In the area around the transit

location several bodies of men, women and children were found who had been brutally tortured in attempts to extract information from them.

In the Tete region on Saturday the 26th, Rhodesian terrorist gangs attacked another transit location killing 60 people, mainly women and children, and leaving five of their number behind dead.

Liberation war in Zimbabwe

On November 7th in the Salisbury area the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army forces killed nine settler troops and wounded 30 more. Four of the soldiers were killed when their base at Nyamanga came under rocket fire. Guns and ammunition were seized by the ZNLA.

On the same day an aeroplane from the Thornhill base was shot down by anti-aircraft machine-gun fire in the Tsonzo area. (The names of the pilot and of the Rhodesian soldiers given in dispatches.)

Back in the summer, hitherto unreported in THE WORKER, ZNLA forces attacked Mpakate Camp, in Chikombezi, killing 70 Rhodesian troops; and in the Gezani area hundreds of Zimbabwe patriots were released from Nazi-type concentration camps and resettled in the semi-liberated zones.



Zimbabwe freedom fighters training for guerrilla war against the Rhodesian regime (Photo by Heinbus)

"Three worlds" slated

MEHMET Shehu, speaking at Vlora on November 30th in connection with the Anniversary of Albania's liberation, said of the un-marxist 'Three Worlds Theory.'

"It replaces Marx's slogan, 'Workers of the World Unite', and Lenin's slogan, 'Workers of All Countries and Oppressed People Unite', with the counter-revolutionary slogan, 'Workers and Peoples of All Countries, Bour-

geois, Reactionaries and Fascists Everywhere, Unite under the leadership of US Imperialism against Soviet Social Imperialism'.

Only capitalism could do it

ONLY a completely anarchic system like capitalism could produce at once over two million unemployed workers and a shortage of skilled labour which is holding back industrial development.

So great is the shortage that the Government is proposing to make available some £60m a year to help finance training schemes. The free market where industry's demands and the availability of labour power are supposed to be resolved just doesn't work. The stop-go policy of capitalist industry cannot suddenly produce skilled workers out of a hat when there is a slight upturn in trade or make them disappear when there is the usual return to an even greater recession.

Editorial

NOW, as for many past generations of our working class, the main organisational form of class struggle is our trade union, the major weapon in that struggle, the withdrawal of our labour. That will continue to be the case until either trade unionism is smashed by fascism or it finds a new role in a socialist society from which exploitation has been eliminated.

It is easy to understand why the class enemy would want to destroy trade unions or render them ineffective. That was the purpose of "In Place of Strife" and of the "Industrial Relations Act". It has been the purpose of every attempt by governments to fix wages by fiat - from the Cripps' freeze and the "Solomon Binding" agreement right through the "social contract" to the present under-the-counter wage policy of the "Government Guidelines". Without collective bargaining over wages and conditions the unions have no function and can only degenerate into useless residual organs like an appendix.

But we have to be particularly on the look-out for attempts by our own 'leaders' in the labour movement who, knowingly or unknowingly, seek to disarm us in the face of the class enemy. We were clear enough about the Industrial Relations Court to smash it; but when Jones proposes in the Richard Dimbleby Lecture that strikes could be reduced or even eliminated if the role of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service were extended and strengthened, he is really proposing that we should stick our heads back into an industrial relations judicial noose - and tie the hangman's knot ourselves!

One of the best developments in the labour movement since the War has been the stronger organisation of workers in the public service unions and their growing use of the weapon honed by industrial unions over many years of struggle, the withdrawal of labour of which the firemen's present strike is an excellent example. Nothing would suit the class enemy better than a government promise to review the place of public service workers in the wages league (in exchange for a no-strike pact).

The proposals of the General Secretary of the GMWU would, in effect, bring about this very result. He thinks that the public services will always have to operate under a wages policy and that there is no real possibility of collective bargaining by unions; therefore, he suggests setting up a TUC Public Services Committee to deal directly with the government over the whole range of pay settlements for workers serving the public. But this would mean by-passing the individual unions which are the only basis for resistance to government wage policies.

Setting up such committees or joint negotiating bodies or two-tiered boards or any other form of 'transcending', that is, emasculating, individual unions is exactly what is behind all the various 'worker participation' schemes. Jones, in his BBC Lecture, called again for the full implementation of Bullock (for cowering militant workers!) and expressed the view that it would help workers in weak, undemocratic unions (instead of workers taking on the proper task of making such unions strong and democratic.)

Margaret Thatcher on a visit to Yugoslavia liked what she saw of "workers control" there and said it was her favourite "socialist" country, since it was so obviously capitalist. The Labour Cabinet is busily preparing a scheme to introduce trade union participation in the "running" of nationalised industries and Wedgwood Benn gave the scheme a bit of advance publicity when he called for workers' control in British mines. When so many supporters of the capitalist system urge on us something "for our own good, of course" we know what to do with it.

TUC backs Government backdoor wages policy against the firemen

WHEN Merlyn Rees promised the firemen, as he did last week, that they would be excepted from any pay policy operating next November, he was promising only one thing: that, if the Government has its way, there will be a pay policy. And not just next November.

Healey has been talking about the need for continued 'restraint'. The position of the Government is quite clear.

The position of the TUC is also clear - or at least it should be. The affiliated unions met in the Trade Union Congress in Blackpool last September - just three months ago - and voted that the TUC adopt a policy of free collective bargaining at the end of Phase II of the Social Contract.

Yet what has happened? The TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee reneged on the responsibilities of the whole trade union movement towards the firemen.

At the moment the TUC is supporting the Government in its attempts to introduce a backdoor wages policy. It is standing mute while the Government attempts to starve the firemen. It has no authority to act in this way.

Its job is not to keep a Labour Government in power. Nor for that matter is it specifically charged with bringing a government down. Its job is quite simply to carry out the decisions of Congress.

The job of the TUC is to say loud and clear that there is no pay policy, that it accepts no guidelines. This is its mandate from Congress.

When the full General Council meets later this month, the voices of the whole working class must be raised demanding a repudiation of the betrayal by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, demanding support for the firemen, demanding adherence to the policy of free collective bargaining.



Britain's fishermen have been in action against the EEC take-over of home waters. (Photo by Nick Birch)

British fishing in dire straits

THE speaker at a recent meeting in the Bellman Bookshop clearly outlined how capitalism has destroyed the fishing industry in the cause of profit.

He outlined how technological advance has been geared to capitalism's needs and not that of the working class, and how it has been introduced at the expense of the workers in the industry. New fishing methods have meant not the more efficient catching of mature fish but the hauling in of 'everything that moves' in the area irrespective of size or maturity and therefore destroying the future of the industry, the young fish.

Intensive fishing for bigger profits resulted in diminishing returns. Not content to fish out the North Sea which was once a vast food reservoir comparable to the American prairies, the boats had to start plundering other nations' fishing grounds such as Iceland, whose only raw material is fish.

This is not a new situation, however. Even in the 1930's one quarter of the white fish and one half of the cod landed in Britain came from Icelandic waters. It was not until the First World War that the case for conservation was accepted even though the North Sea had been overfished for 90 years. It was not until 1954 that net size was regulated, though of course when capitalists make laws and rules they go ahead and break them. Fishing was no exception with fishing fleets of all capitalist countries especially Japan and Russia ignoring every rule in sight.

The capitalist system of production (destruction?) is full of illogicalities; the fishing industry as much as any other industry under capitalism has its ridiculous aspects as well as its achievements of mankind.

Following up the fact mentioned by the speaker that a large proportion of fish caught was in fact made into

animal foodstuff, a contribution from the floor called the audience's attention to an earlier meeting this year where it was proved that Britain could feed itself. Would it not be more sensible if pasture was increased and improved so that cattle could eat grass like nature intended and not fish as capitalism ordained? Another contributor commented on the new industry of fish farming suggesting that this is the pinnacle of man's achievement in the fishing industry, though not to be seen out of proportion; after all water does cover 4/5 of the world's surface.

In conclusion the speaker pointed out three things the British working class must do; leave the EEC; impose a 200 mile limit around our shores to protect our sovereign right to our own fishing grounds (such as they still exist); and ultimately to have a revolution which is the only way that the industry will be assured a future.

Background to Swan Hunter decisions

THE refusal of the Tyneside ship outfitters - joiners, plumbers, coppersmiths, fitters and painters - to call off their 13-week ban on voluntary overtime and to accept a 'good behaviour contract' and settlement within the Government's 10 per cent guidelines in return for Swan Hunter's being allocated seven of the Polish bulk carriers has to be seen against the background of the fate of British shipbuilding as a nationalised industry.

Management and press have been loud in their condemnation of "suicidal workers" creating more redundancy on Tyneside. The ship outfitters see their struggle as a straight wages fight in a declining industry. And all workers sailing in the shipbuilding industry under government control had better look to see if the life-belts don't say "Titanic".

When industries are no longer profitable enough to be sustained by private capitalist investment, the government takes them over, with extremely generous compensation to the former owners of course, for the purpose of running them down and dispersing the workforce. This has happened with coal mining, the railways and steel.

Shipbuilding is no exception. It was cunning of the Labour Government to use a massive subsidy of our money to get the contract with a Comecon country for building the bulk carriers; but this shot in the arm for British shipbuilding isn't going

to help a patient under sentence of mutilation and death by the EEC

EEC Commission on Shipbuilding is calling for a 45 per cent reduction in shipbuilding in Western Europe with the biggest share of the cut, over 20 per cent, naturally going to Britain. This means the loss of 20,000 jobs in shipbuilding alone without counting the effects in steel and the supply industries related to shipbuilding. Shipbuilding is also like steel in that the older industrialised countries like Britain are abandoning the field to newer industrialised countries like Japan where profits can still be made.

This is not only a matter of concern to workers in steel and shipbuilding. It is a question of whether Britain is to survive as an industrial entity capable of further development on the basis of the skills and ingenuity of British workers. World capitalism does not care where profits are being made so long as they are. If it could, it would close down a country as no longer profitable just as a big corporation would close down a particular factory whose profit margin dropped too low.

Along with the running down of the nationalised industries goes the attempt to corporatise the unions involved in order to deprive the workers in that industry of the means to resist destruction. The Government's proposals for introducing "trade union participation" in the running of the nationalised industries are a move toward such

corporatisation. At a recent mass meeting of shop stewards of the Boilermakers Union the general secretary, himself a part-time member of the State Corporations Board, had to admit that he could give no information on the problem under discussion because he was under the Official Secrets Act and, in any case, as far as knowing what was going on was concerned "one day he was white and the next day he was black". So much for 'participation'.

The only participation of any value to workers is in their own unions and, based on strong individual unions, co-operation among the unions in a particular industry. Contrary to press reports of violent disagreements among the shipbuilding unions, workers themselves say that a situation of trade union mutuality and respect prevails by which the fight for wages and for the preservation of British shipbuilding can be sustained.

The executive of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions meeting at York on December 8th has agreed to give its unanimous support to the parity claim of the Swan Hunter-outfitters. This means that a principled return to normal working is now possible. Otherwise the support which the outfitters have so far received from other shipbuilding workers cannot be expected to continue.

Ultimately shipbuilding, like everything else of value because it incorporates the skills and energies of working people, can only be saved by socialism.

Defending skills and jobs at Plesseys - the fight for our future

A MOTION sent last week from ASTMS members at Plessey's Edge Lane, Liverpool, plant to their union's Annual Delegate Conference shows their increasing understanding of the contradictions facing them and their industry, telecommunications. The workers have been involved in a number of struggles over the past year to save jobs and preserve their industry from disintegration, culminating in successful sit-ins which were reported in THE WORKER.

The motion reads: "This Annual Delegate Conference observes the growing attack on our basic industry and the resultant destruction of valuable skills as dole queues lengthen. In particular Annual Delegate Conference sees our future fast being reduced to candyfloss assembly work while our 'workshop of the world' is relocated abroad. ADC believes that cuts in Education and Health are evi-

dence that our employers no longer require a skilled working class.

"Therefore ADC resolves to adopt a policy of fighting for every job and fighting for vacancies to be created to reduce unemployment. Moreover ADC calls for any contract for work in this country to be done by British workers and not just assembled here after manufacture abroad.

"Furthermore ADC aware of the differing circumstances in each (area) calls on the NEC to charge... Branches and Groups with the responsibility for determining the tactics to implement this policy."

It is significant that this motion comes from a group of workers who have long felt the effects of redundancy, and have acted more tenaciously each time management have sought to cut the workforce. Whilst in past struggles there has not been

100 per cent success in saving jobs, Plessey's Liverpool workers certainly know the importance of standing up to their bosses in such a situation and the numbers volunteering have dwindled in successive redundancy battles.

In passing this motion the ASTMS branch at Plessey recognise that cutting your losses is not enough and serves to allow unemployment to grow.

Despite the importance of such a strategy it can never be more than a holding position if we do not perceive the revolutionary nature behind our battles for jobs, for the 'Right to Work' Because our capitalist masters cannot afford to employ workers, on grounds of efficiency and under the guise of remaining competitive, their solution is to sack, invest overseas and import more.

Our solution must be to protect our skills for the future, for socialism!

Callaghan rebuffed at EEPTU Conference

PRIME Minister Callaghan was met with a very rough reception when he came to address the conference of the EEPTU, the electricians' and plumbers' union. Outside the hall the firemen came to show their anger at the Government; their demand was 30 per cent now or Callaghan out. Inside the Conference Hall Callaghan found that the majority of delegates remained seated in protest.

The message from the Prime Minister could have been written with accuracy by any one of the delegates the night before. Restraint now, prosperity later. He said: "The message I want to leave with you and millions of other workers is that Britain is now set for a period of growth at a level we can sustain. Don't throw the chance away by inflationary wage settlements."

The man insults our intelligence when he talks of inflationary wage settlements when prices have for more than a year been rising at about twice the level of wages.

Conference clearly rejected Callaghan and his so-called "Labour" Government when it passed the following resolution: "This Conference is of the opinion that the current erosion of living

standards has taken place directly as a result of the acceptance of wage restraint.

"Conference therefore rejects any attempt at interference by any Government in this fundamental issue and urges the Executive Council to take this into account when negotiating any future wage agreements.

"Conference believes the traditional role of trade unionism can best be served by collective bargaining."

In rejecting "any attempt at interference by any Government" in wages, we begin to overcome the double standard of accepting from the "Labour" Government what would never be tolerated from a Tory Government.

There were many other positive positions taken up by Conference. On the question of cuts the following motion was carried: "This Conference rejects the idea that the country cannot afford the present level of social services which has been obtained to a great extent by the sacrifices of our fellow Union members in the past.

"Therefore this Conference opposes the cuts in public and social services and asks that this Union, under its leadership, should take a major role within the TUC to

make constructive proposals to end these cuts and it categorically declares that under no circumstances will it accept clauses in wage conditions, either at national or local level, which requires this union to be a party to social service cuts or restrictions..."

On unemployment the Conference was equally clear: the motion carried stated clearly that there is no acceptable level of unemployment. Despite the growing movement against the Common Market, it was not sufficient to take a stand of outright opposition. Our position on industrial democracy was reaffirmed: we reject it as false.

Overall this was a very positive conference with a lot of clarity on most issues. It was also recognised that the firemen are fighting our battle as well as their own. We donated £1000 to the strike fund and pledged any support required. The task now is to pursue our own claims for wages with as much vigour and courage as the firemen, so that the Government gets bombarded on all sides and becomes completely isolated. We will determine our own wages and from that we will together determine how to run the whole economy.

NUS asks state to take over union

THE NUS Conference in Blackpool this December was certainly the worst in ten years. Ten years ago NUS asserted its right to organise free from interference by Margaret Thatcher and the Department of Education and Science when it launched the autonomy campaign. The victories of the campaign marked the beginning of NUS as a campaigning Union, asserted its autonomy, dignity and role within the trade union movement.

Today, ten years on, NUS has turned full circle. The so-called 'left', uniting with the right, managed to defeat every progressive motion put to Conference. The result is that NUS now has an education policy that does not concern itself with

outs! In pursuit of demands for expansion to further and higher education, NUS Conference resolved to lobby parliament and negotiate with the Government - ignoring the fight to save education and thus discouraging activity and initiatives in the colleges.

The most serious blow to the National Union came on the last day of Conference when a motion upholding and asserting the autonomy of the Union, its right to organise free from outside interference and represent fully the interests of its members, was narrowly defeated. The amendment that was adopted believed that all students' unions should make their finances publicly accountable and, thereby, invited the state to narrowly

define their terms of reference. At a time when the West German state has just defined Students' Unions out of existence - this is total capitulation.

The entire membership of NUS must now assert that their National Union will not be manipulated by this or that unholy alliance. NUS belongs to the membership. Its role is to represent the interests of 800,000 members: The tasks facing us increase daily - education cuts, tuition fee increases, overseas students quotas, steep rises in hall of residence charges. We must be determined that we will not capitulate in the face of attack. We must have the confidence to fight every single cut and in so doing build the NUS,

As skilful as brave

ONE fire it is hoped the firemen will never extinguish is the fire of determination that burns at the moment up and down the country on the station picket lines. Chester is no exception. Chester firemen are more determined than ever to continue the strike.

As the Chester FBU branch secretary told THE WORKER the Government had pushed the firemen to the point where they were no longer prepared to have their consciences taken advantage of and had no alternative but to strike. He emphasised the close-knit character of the fire service which is necessitated by the dangerous work the men do. He said that 14 years ago, when he first joined the fire service, firemen were not expected to fight the industrial fires they fought now. More highly inflammable toxic industrial materials are used than ever before and the firemen go through extensive training to deal with them.

The firemen were not saying they were a special case because of the dangers they face. But they were highly skilled men and demanded to be paid for their skills. In addition, he said, they were worried about the standard of the service.

Because the pay was low, he told us, recruitment had dropped, making the work more dangerous and the men less

effective. Improvements in the service which could result from the working day being reduced would be lost if the 5000 extra men needed could not be attracted into the service.

Firemen are also beginning to say that they are as important a part of production as any other worker, for without them jobs and lives would be lost. This is a step forward in understanding that it refutes the argument that some workers are superfluous because they do not actually make anything.

The Government's attitude towards firemen and the service is destructive - an attitude that repeats itself throughout all our services. But with Britain as the second largest overseas investor in the world, and the government at the same time telling us there is no money for such essentials as a fire service, who can still question the fact that Britain is being run down.

The firemen are once again being of great service to the nation. Their demands will ensure that at least some of British capital stops where it belongs - in Britain - paying for the services of the people who produced it - British workers. They set an example to all workers in showing that without our skills there is no industry, only insecurity and danger. It is we who made Britain: it is we who must save it.

Scots civil servants make chaos in courts

THOUSANDS of civil servants brought chaos to law courts and government offices throughout Scotland recently by holding a one day strike continuing their campaign of guerrilla action.

In the west of Scotland about 7500 civil servants stopped work. At two of the biggest Department of Health and Social Security offices in Glasgow, Provan and Maryhill, workers began a 3 day strike and pickets were out from

early morning.

Workers at the National Savings Bank donated pens for the afternoon, many of them to attend a rally at St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh, where a resolution to continue industrial action was overwhelmingly passed.

The Government refuses to allow them collective bargaining which other workers are now supposed to have. They are determined to fight for it.

European Marshall Plan

An ambitious European recovery programme on the scale of the Marshall Plan has been proposed by the leader of the Conservative Group in the European Parliament. He argued that some new dramatic initiative was needed to take Europe out of its present

economic and political doldrums.

If nothing on a sufficient scale was accomplished, he had no doubt that people within the Community would begin to feel disillusioned with the whole system of European society - that is to say with capitalism!

Books, pamphlets

Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NW 5

Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds.

Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton.

Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol

LIVERPOOL BOOKSTALL Every Saturday at Paddies Market, Great Homer Street, Liverpool

Now available: Volume V Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung

'The Worker'

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

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....