

THE WORKER



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FREE BARGAINING FROM GOVT CONTROL



A meeting outside the British Museum, civil servant style, during the January 1973 dispute.

ENGINEERING WAGES

Negotiations with the Engineering Employers Federation affecting directly more than two million engineering workers and in an ancillary way more than half a million other workers have broken down

THE ORIGINAL claim was for £70 plus a shorter working week, increased holidays and the like. Early in the negotiations, in an endeavour to secure agreement, the shorter working week and improved holidays were abandoned and the £70 minimum time rate, adopted by the National Committee, was dropped down to £60. At the last meeting the employers claimed that the highest they could go was £57, and £60 could only be agreed after such a lapse of time and with such conditions that the offer was meaningless. They also wished to withdraw from the holiday agreement of time and a third pay and substitute some other average wage payment based on a normal 40 hour week without any incidentals like overtime. Their reason for this was that our demand, if met in full, would contravene the Government guidelines and the EEF were not prepared to expose their members to the risk of sanctions. They claimed that they had consulted the Ministry on the last proposals put forward by our negotiators and been told that they would transgress the guidelines and thus bring member firms into conflict with Government.

Whatever the truth of this, it is obvious that the EEF never intended conceding anything at all. They have never required any encouragement from Government to reject the legitimate claims of engineering workers but they are delighted to be able to treat their rejection of this particular claim as a courteous obedience by capitalists to a capitalist government. This

should be understood and we must learn the lesson of our past errors in respect to restraints on bargaining and social contracts we accepted to assist the Labour Government. That Government is now so arrogant as to bypass the TUC and the trade union spokesmen altogether. Once having wooed and seduced them with invitations to Downing Street and private consultations on incomes policy, now, treating them like mistresses no longer worthy of regard, it ignores them completely while making new and harsher demands on the working class. Instead of a policy of consent on wage restraint the Government has jettisoned all arguments and inducements and treats workers as so stupid that there is no need of even going through the farce of consulting trade union spokesmen. We ourselves in our abject ignorance will impose wage restrictions on ourselves and lower our own standard of living.

Thus the Government can play the dictator, rendering useless all our past scrimmages and the money we have spent in strikes - which in many cases were not conflicts in defiance of the social con-

Cont. on p.4

The Executive Council of The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions demands an immediate undertaking by the Engineering Employers Federation to honour the understanding - else by March 20th there will be a two day strike and further action by decision of the CSEU Executive Council.

Civil Service pay - need for clarity

LATE last autumn the Civil Service trades unions reached agreement with their employer, the Government, on the restoration of the Civil Service Pay Agreement, which had been unilaterally suspended by the Government at 24 hours' notice in July 1975. The Civil Service Pay Agreement is the system devised by the Priestley Commission in 1955, whereby a special government department, the Pay Research Unit, investigates the rates of pay of "comparable" workers outside the Civil Service. Its findings are used as a basis of negotiation between employer and trades unions using the standard Whitley machinery. From 1956 to 1975 the pay of civil servants was based on this system.

The Agreement is not to take effect in 1978, however, as the Government has said there would not be time to do the necessary pay research. The true reason is not hard to find. Pay research would

have revealed that a rise of 22-28 per cent would have been needed to restore relativities with workers outside the Civil Service. (To counteract the effects of the wage-cuts of the last three years, the increase would

have had to be of the order of 35-50 per cent). Such a flagrant breach of Mr Healey's 10 per cent is not acceptable to the employer,

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Permanent way forward

FORTUNATELY good sense has prevailed in ASLEF and the proposed one-day strike, which was about the wrong thing, has been called off.

The occasion of the strike was a bonus payment to NUR guards on, ironically enough, pay trains which had the effect of whittling down the pay differentials enjoyed by ASLEF drivers according to the British Rail's 1974 pay structure agreements.

What ASLEF should have said from the start was 'Bully for the guards! We will now have a rise for all our members sufficient to reward us for our skills and service to the public and we will take

whatever form of industrial action seems best to us in order to get it.'

ASLEF has done part of this. The general secretary has said that "it was right that the guards' pay deal should go ahead." Now let them get on with the rest of it.

We support fully higher wages for greater skill but they must never be achieved by holding other workers back: only by being better organised to win what that greater skill is entitled to. And since this inevitably means driving a pay train right through the Government guidelines, it is an advance for the whole working class.

March 1917

ONE DAY in March, 1917, the women of Petrograd (now Leningrad) streamed out of their tenements and shacks and took to the streets in a mighty demonstration. Workers' and soldiers' wives, they marched in such numbers and with such determination that not even the Tsarist troops and police dared intervene - and some of them even joined in.

The slogans of the marchers, held high on their banners, proclaimed: "Bread for our children" and "Our husbands back from the trenches". And as they marched through the streets of Petrograd they lit the flames of the Bolshevik revolution.

That day was March 8, 1917. And the occasion was International Women's Day.

The first Women's Day had taken place ten years earlier, in America. Then, socialist women had marked the day down as one of struggle for women's rights. Back in Europe the idea was taken up in 1910 by the International Conference of Working Women. A proposal for an International Working Women's Day to be celebrated throughout the world was put forward by Clara Zetkin, who was later to become a founder-member of the German Communist Party. The proposal, which was accepted, called for a day of struggle to be organised around the question of female franchise - the right of women to vote in parliamentary elections.

The first proper International Women's Day was duly held in 1911. Votes for women was the issue, and although its success differed around the world, one demonstration in Austria alone brought out 30,000 women. The date chosen was March 19, for that was the day on which, in



Workers, men and women, march in Petrograd in March 1917. The overthrow of Tsarist autocracy. (From a painting by I. Vladimirov)

1848, the working class of Prussia had risen in armed insurrection against feudalism.

In 1913 International Women's Day, now changed to its present date in the calendar of March 8, was held for the first time in Russia. The slogan was "Votes for working women" and even then it was clear that such a demand was becoming a revolutionary one against the Tsarist autocracy. The meetings were

illegal; they were held in secret; and they were raided by the police and speakers hauled off to prison. The same happened in 1914.

Then came the First World War. The barbarous massacres in the trenches were equalled by savage repression on the home front, and only in Norway could a meeting be held in 1915. In Germany and other countries the social-democrats, who supported

this war for imperialism, collaborated with the ruling class to ensure that no meetings were held. They knew that such meetings would become rallying points against the war.

Had the social-democrats and ruling classes of Europe foreseen the effects of March 8 in Russia in 1917, they would surely have made even more strenuous efforts at repression. For by then what was at issue was not the vote. Not any longer.

March 8 in Petrograd began a series of strikes and demonstrations which were to continue until October, when the Russian working class seized power and established the dictatorship of the proletariat. The tone of International Women's Day had been set, for the Russian women began that day the march into a new world, the world of Socialism.

From then on, it could never any more be just a struggle for the vote. The era of proletarian revolution had arrived.

"If the task of International Working Women's Day was earlier, in the face of the supremacy of the bourgeois parliaments, to fight for the right of women to vote, the working class now has a new task: to organise working women around the fighting slogans of the Third International. Instead of demanding to take part in the working of the bourgeois parliament, listen to the call from Russia - 'Working women of all countries! Organise a united proletarian front in the struggle against those who are plundering us! Down with the parliamentarism of the bourgeoisie! We welcome soviet power! Away with the inequalities suffered by working men and women! We will fight alongside men workers for the triumph of world communism!'"

(From a speech in 1920 by Alexandra Kollontai, the first Bolshevik Minister of Social Welfare.)

Yanks out

30,000 British workers and their families, on housing estates near Newbury, are to be the first casualties of the current NATO reorganisation. United States planners, with the full support of NATO Staffs, now believe it vital to establish more air and military supply bases outside West Germany, since it is felt that their concentration in the European heartland makes them more vulnerable to Soviet 'attack'.

Their first choice of base is Greenham Common airbase near Newbury, which has been unused since the early 1960's. Since that time the surrounding area has been used to provide new housing and is in fact a key area in the West Berks housing policy. The site will be used as a base for the US air forces' giant KC135 tanker aircraft. These giant aeroplanes carry thousands of gallons of high octane fuel and will be used for refuelling fighter and bomber aircraft in mid-Atlantic. Local residents will be subjected to noisy and dangerous take-offs and landings, seven days (and probably nights) a week, at least fifteen times each day.

The USAF has two other standby sites in Britain - at Wetherfield in Essex and Sculthorpe in East Anglia. Both are in less heavily populated areas, but US plans, in keeping with their current policy of avoiding heavy concentrations, demand a site at some distance from the other airbases, many of which are in East Anglia; the

site must also be west of London to allow faster access to the Atlantic.

Workers living around Greenham Common are right to be concerned about the danger to themselves and their children, especially since the USAF has never been known for its skill in navigation. However, the true significance of US plans to reactivate Greenham Common lies in its part of an overall plan to involve not only the island of Britain as an aircraft carrier, but its people as conscripts in whatever aggressive moves the imperialists may make against other peoples in the global defence of the capitalist system.

We should tell the US what to do with their KC135s and order them to remove the hordes of US servicemen still infesting our country. And we should tell our own Government that we will undertake ourselves the defence of Britain's national integrity.



Joseph Stalin

Make our plan the future

STAFF and students at Bristol Polytechnic have won the first round of their fight against cuts in the building programme.

At the moment the Town and Country Planning Department, which shares a building with Social Services, and its library are threatened by the imminent termination of their lease by Avon County Council. No alternative accommodation has been proposed.

Students and staff held a joint meeting of their unions, NALGO, NATFHE and NUS. This resulted in a proposed

meeting between union representatives and Polytechnic administrators, and a mass lobby of the Polytechnic Board of Governors.

When the unions met the administration the following week they gained positive assurances that the lease for the Department and library will be extended until the long term future of the buildings is decided. NALGO also announced their decision to black transfer of Social Services staff until the future plans are sorted out.

Stalin - an anti-fascist revolutionary leader

TWENTY five years ago, on March 5, 1953, Joseph Stalin died. The man to whom, not just the international working class, but the whole world owed such a tremendous debt as the leader of the forces playing the major role in smashing the powers of fascist aggression has continued to this day to attract, as the leader of the first successful socialist state and society, the vilification of all enemies of the working class.

Indeed, the name of Stalin has become a touchstone for testing the true political intentions of many who profess to be sympath-

etic to the working class and its historic mission of liberating mankind from exploitation. Revisionists, Trotskyists and social democrats, no less than capitalists and exploiters of the people the world over, expose themselves by their hatred of this great socialist and defender of Marxism-Leninism, the ideology of the working class.

Let us workers of Britain make sure that our veneration for Stalin outmatches the hatred of him expressed by our class enemies as our love for socialism will one day triumph in revolution.

COFFEE, for months almost unobtainable in the Soviet Union, reappeared in shops this week at more than four times its old price. Petrol also went up, by 100 per cent. The increases were due to higher world prices, said the revisionists, a tacit admission that the Soviet Union was enmeshed in the capitalist world of inflation.

THE attempt by the Government to use racist activity as a pretext for banning everything has not gone unnoticed. The Epping Forest branch of the National Union of Teachers condemned the ban as "an infringement of the rights of Trade Unions and the public freely to express their views on their legitimate interests."

THE Manpower Services Commission has been given £160 million to further undermine established traditions of education and training. According to the London Evening Standard, "the shoddiness of the scheme certainly gives the impression that the Manpower Services Commission is more interested in being able to claim that it has put 200,000 people to work than it has found useful work for them to do, or that it has a genuine concern for their future welfare. Such profligacy is perhaps to be expected from a Government body which is, to adapt an expression, the disease of which it attempts to be the cure."

THE TUC wants measures taken to improve safety in inland and offshore waters. Every year approximately 900 people die from drowning in England and Wales. The Government's view is that no firm assurance on action can be given because of public expenditure cuts.

"THERE is no housing problem. It's just a rumour put out by those who can't afford it" - heard in the Bellman Bookshop.

AFTER more than four months of East-West debate the Belgrade conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is grinding to a halt.

Called to review the working of the Helsinki agreements on "security, cooperation and human rights" in Europe, the 35 nation conference is expected to end this week with a brief non-committal communique agreeing to meet again in Madrid in two years' time.

Not much prospect of peace there.

THE Wilson Committee, which is investigating the question of investment, has employed a firm of accountants to look into the reasons why medium sized companies decide to invest. They have come up with the startling news that they decide to invest on the basis of the expectation of profitability. Would anybody like THE WORKER to investigate why people like Harold Wilson get themselves appointed to cushy numbers like chairing such committees?

EDITORIAL

EDUCATION has become a focus of major contradictions running through British society. The fight of teachers for more pay has suddenly surfaced with a vengeance.

Some years ago when the discontent of London teachers threatened to spill onto a national stage the government hastily convened a special committee on teachers' pay. The outcome for teachers was a few extra pounds, a few extra anomalies, and great encouragement to those who wished to see the teachers' union relinquish its role as a wage negotiator.

Nonetheless, the employers handed over the money and as they did so talked in pious tones of the importance of the teaching profession. Such professional responsibility was worthy of a proper salary.

Subsequently, the employers have turned things much to their advantage. They have manufactured unemployment, principally among newly trained teachers and are now supremely contemptuous of the teachers' current claim of 12½ per cent. "We don't need you anymore."

The teachers, to their credit, have not been cowed. In a beautiful example of guerrilla struggle members of the National Union of Teachers have undertaken sanctions at their place of work, designed to show that teachers, if they want to, can make things very chaotic indeed for the employer.

It is often suggested by faint hearts that teachers have little "industrial muscle." But with schools in every community and large numbers of workers dependent for their attendance at work on normal arrangements for their sons and daughters, ferment amongst teachers can have a devastating effect. What terrifies the government and employers most, however, is that teachers might transform their thinking and turn their full fury against a Labour Government that seeks to impose 10 per cent, a Conservative "opposition" that would like to impose less, and say "Down with all capitalist governments!"

Already there have been reports from schools where the topic of universal debate has been "pay and the teachers' organisation." When the music club is cancelled and the pupils are sent home at mid-day then those involved begin to question the very order of things. There needs to be more clarity. The sanctions must be extended and the struggle must demolish the 10 per cent limits, not be confined within them.

EETPU Solidarity wins out

A SHOP of 15 EETPU electricians, employed by S. W. Bligh of Canterbury and Leatherhead at Beechams, Worthing, wasted no time in joining the fight to get their 1978 wages agreement into effect.

Early in January, the shop steward asked the management if the new rates would be paid as agreed by both sides of the industry. He received an unsatisfactory reply and having been previously armed with a resolution from the shop, informed management that the site would work only 38 hours and work to rule.

The management made some attempts to weaken the shops' resolve by attempting to transfer workers from other sites. The shop was quickly declared a closed shop and non-union electricians were turned away from the site. Subsequently, two men were declared redundant when other electricians were sent to Beechams from other sites. The shop resolved this to be a false redundancy but were

unable to prevent the redundancies being carried out.

Less than a week later, management approached the shop asking for a return to normal working and cooperation to complete their contract. They were informed that this could only take place if they paid the new rates, backdated, and immediately reinstated the two victimized workers. This was agreed and the two men returned to work the next day and were paid for the 4 days they were absent.

The shop returned to normal working but were approached by management to accept more electricians. They were informed that the closed shop policy would continue and that all their labour requirements could be filled by unemployed members from local branches of EETPU. The employer refused and the introduction of labour hired from a local contractor was prevented with the exception of one apprentice union member. The rest were turned away clutching their freshly completed union application forms.

Meek and mild trade unionism wins only small change

THE General Secretary and National President of NALGO are currently outlining their plans for abolishing the need for the trade union. They argue that the 'sacred cow' of free collective bargaining has never existed for NALGO and the public services generally because there's always been a government voice at the negotiating table.

It would be difficult to negotiate without the presence of the employer, but more to the point 'free' collective bargaining has never existed for any union since all employers refuse workers' demands until collective strength persuades them otherwise. NALGO's 'leaders' say that the public services unions have never

been strong, so by removing the need for having to flex muscle at all, pay negotiations will be fairer. The means to achieve this flabby state of affairs is to create a public sector committee in the TUC along the lines Bassett proposed a short while ago; this body would then peg public services wages to the going rate for other workers. How neatly they plan to divide the trade union movement into one section that carried all the burden of struggling for wages and another section which sits back and awaits the outcome - and which will no doubt chide those who fight for 'holding the country to ransom'.

It's time NALGO members

NCB Productivity Schemes are dangerous and divisive - reject them

WHAT has been the result of the introduction of productivity schemes into the pits for the miners in Britain? Contrary to the impression given by the press commending the schemes, the miners are now party to the destruction of their union and the coal industry.

The diversions created by the schemes are welcomed by the employers. While the miners are involved in local disputes mainly concerned with who gets what percentage of the bonus, the national unity of the mineworkers is being systematically destroyed.

By talking to many miners now involved in these schemes in the Western coalfield THE WORKER observed many relevant

issues yet to be brought before the public, one of the most crucial being the safety aspect in the pits. The targets for productivity are still relatively low but are creeping up rapidly with miners working increasingly longer hours. Periodically during each shift the ventilation officers have to take readings to check for gases. Since the miners have been operating the schemes, this essential job has been made even more difficult, with face workers arguing that they will lose money if the conveyor belt has to be stopped even for a few minutes while the readings are taken. This naturally leads to workers squabbling amongst themselves and general unrest on any shift. As one miner

commented, "It is only a matter of time before a major accident occurs and the blame falls on the workers themselves."

To sow the seeds of division even deeper the schemes have also recreated the old elite of the face-workers, who are the only men who take home the full bonus. In the majority of today's pits the role of the face worker is one of a skilled technician with a marked improvement in working conditions. Consequently there is growing resentment against the face-workers by the surface workers, the latter working the same hours for a small percentage of the bonus. This disparity sets man against man, pit against pit.

With the miners busily engaged in trying to sort out the anomalies the employers are getting away with effectively cutting back the entire coal industry. By publishing lists regularly of productivity targets in all pits, the 'unproductive pits are under increasing pressure to reach unattainable targets - usually because of geological faults. Closures of such pits under the guise of rationalisation, are inevitable! A just reward for keeping the Labour Government in power!

Miners must now realise through their own experience the disastrous consequences of their actions. Surely lives do not have to be lost to confirm that the productivity schemes are a vicious attack on the miners' unity and strength. The whole working class in Britain needs that unity. It is our revolutionary strength.

US miners' vital ballot

IN the US's longest coal strike (see THE WORKER No. 8) an agreement has been reached between the union and the coal industry negotiators which still has to be confirmed by the 160,000 striking miners in a ballot on March 6.

The agreement would mean a wage increase of \$2.40 an hour, raising the average daily wage of a miner to \$80 a day. But the strike was not really about a particular wage rise but about whether the miners' Union was to be severely weakened in its capacity to fight for its members wages and conditions. By this agreement the employers would seem to win the right to discipline

leaders of 'unofficial' strikes (which can always be turned into a ban on the right to strike at all) and to liquidate the free medical treatment for miners which the Union has maintained for 30 years and which has been part of the Union's strength in challenging the employers.

American President Carter told the miners: "I hope you will follow the lead of your bargaining council and ratify the settlement . . . If it is not approved by your ballot, I will have to take the drastic action I had planned to take before this settlement became possible." If Carter wants the settlement for US capitalism, it cannot be good for the miners.

"Higher Education into the 1990's" DES Report is recipe for destruction

IN its most recent pronouncement on the future of higher education in the document 'Higher Education into the 1990's' the Department of Education and Science shows just how far Government has moved away from the Robbins' principle of 'access to all those able to benefit'. The document shows the DES hedging its bets by presenting no less than five alternative strategies for the future. Thus, the choices available range from expanding higher education now and extending access in the future in the wake of the 'teenage hump' of the 1990's, to running down what we already have

as fast as possible, cutting back on courses and replacing normal 3 year degrees by many more 2 year diplomas or part-time studies - all in order to sweep the chronic problem of youth unemployment under the carpet. Also under consideration is the proposal to give 'mature and working class' applicants priority of entry to higher education.

It may suit Gordon Oakes, Minister of State for Higher Education, to embroil us all in some insane argument about whether the working class is more important than education, or whether education is more important than

the working class, but it is quite obvious to those of us who have seen and experienced the depressing effects on higher education of cuts in salaries, grants, equipment allowances, staff and prospects, to name but a few, that the future of our industry demands absolute commitment to expansion in all areas. We cannot accept the miserable trade-offs between 'more' and 'better' which Government insists on force-feeding us with, because we have seen that they always lead straight to the destruction of one aspect or another of higher education.

In the light of Government policy towards higher education for the past six years it is sheer hypocrisy to talk blithely of 'possibilities' of expansion now and in the

future, especially since approximately 40 teacher training colleges are currently scheduled for closure in the coming 3 years. It is also quite clear that the desired expansion of higher education will not come about by putting a cross against whichever DES proposal we happen to prefer, any more than it will come about by putting a cross on a piece of paper to signify which capitalist government is to have the opportunity to rip education to shreds next. It is we who work and study within the sector who must make the decisive move, and it is upon our own strength in our unions that we must rely.

ing the public service unions' bargaining position, a TUC public sector committee would sacrifice individual unions for one general public sector union by removing the keystone of trade unionism - wage bargaining.

NALGO's General Secretary is the leading supporter of this move towards corporate unionism, and the members have the responsibility of defending their union by rejecting these proposals at Conference, and by resolving to play their part in improving wages for the whole working class - and that means fighting for a wage which members think is enough no matter what percentage our employers prescribe 'for our own good.'

It is no fairness in the wages battle; he who fights hardest gains, and he who pleads weakness will always be poor, since in capitalism's eyes it is fair to exploit all workers to whatever limit workers will permit. NALGO has progressed from an 'association' which functioned mainly as a social club to a trade union which has grown to understand that action is needed more often than not to shift stubborn employers.

One of the strengths of the trade union movement is its diversity, which preserves the professional standards of each sector, and which permits flexibility in struggle. Yet under the guise of strengthen-

- need for clarity

so there will be no pay research this year.

This decision has been accepted by most of the Civil Service unions with remarkable equanimity. With the exceptions of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, which has stood out for the 22-28 per cent, and the Civil and Public Services Association, which has demanded 14-24 per cent, the others are forming a "consortium" to put in a claim which seems sure to fall within the Healey guidelines, although the Government may huff and puff about even that.

Is this because of a belief that, with the restoration of the Pay Agreement, all injustices will be rectified in 1979? First, this assumes that the Agreement will go into effect in 1979. But will it? A government that has once got away with breaking an agreement unilaterally can do so again, can't it? Within two months of the announcement that the Pay Agreement had been restored Mr Healey was telling Socialist Commentary in January that "No government can avoid having an incomes policy as far as its own employees are concerned". The Pay Agreement for 1979 may well, therefore, prove an empty promise to secure compliance in 1978.

"humble memorials"

Even if it does go into effect next year we can guarantee that the workers covered are in for a disappointment. It is high time that civil servants re-examined the basis on which they are paid.

In the last century Civil Service clerks, considering themselves a cut above "the working classes", submitted what were known as "humble memorials" to the government of the day when they had a grievance. Finding in due course that these did not work and that a sense of superior-

ity was no substitute for decent pay and conditions, they faced reality, i. e. that they were also part of the Working Class, and the most far-sighted and courageous began the fight for Civil Service trade unionism - a struggle still not won today in many other countries. In Britain now we have one of the most highly organised civil services in the world, and many gains have been won (despite, not because of, Whitleyism). But on the question of money a little bit of that fake gentility has survived. Many civil servants are embarrassed to demand more. Rather than fight over the filthy lucre they prefer to allow an "independent" government department (as though a limb can ever be independent of the body to which it is attached), the Pay Research Unit, in effect to decree what their pay shall be.

The justification put forward for this procedure is that it achieves "fairness" as between the tax-payer and the civil servant. This notion is so false as to make one weep, yet it is a fundamental article of faith of all Civil Service trades unions. First, under capitalism there is no fairness. Are there a "fair" number of chains for a slave? Wages are the chains that bind a wage-slave, which is what we all are while capitalism survives - there are no fair wages. But next, why should the alleged "fairness" be between the tax-payer (i.e. the public at large) and the civil servant? The tax-payer is not the employer of the civil servant, merely the consumer of his product. Marx proved 100 years ago that there is no relationship between the pay of a worker and the price paid by a consumer for that worker's product. If there is no relationship it follows that there cannot be a fair (or an unfair) relationship. The very idea

betrays the confusion of thought of our class.

Merely to seek parity or "fair relativities" with other workers is a craven, cringing approach. It assumes that others fight the battles and we scavenge for spoils like jackals in the battlefield, that we coast in the slipstream of others' advance. It elevates the petty-bourgeois obsession with "keeping up with the Joneses" into a political principle - and that for the proletariat, what Marx called the greatest class in the history of mankind. As a class, where is our sense of values? If parity with other workers is the limit of our ambition, will we accept parity in defeat as well as in advance? Will we say, "I don't mind dying in the gutter if others are doing so"? Surely, eventually that is the point to which Priestleyism, the ideology of pay research, will lead.

decrepit apparatus

And why should the private sector be regarded as the ideal model to which the public sector should aspire? In Britain the private sector of capitalism is a moribund, decrepit apparatus only kept alive by frequent subsidies from the public purse. In a society with a spark of reason the public sector would be the model in wages and conditions of employment.

If these considerations seem too general a purely practical argument against pay research can be evinced. Many public jobs have no analogue in private industry. To take only one example, comparing government scientists with scientists in the private sphere is like measuring an elephant against a flea - a rather backward flea at that.

Civil servants, most moderate men and women all, must discard their illusions, their crutches and their most immoderate modesty and say, with the great James Connolly, "For our demands most moderate are, We only ask the earth."



Darent Park Hospital - mental health out in the cold?

Darent Park Hospital

DARENTH Park Hospital, Dartford, home of 1000 mentally-subnormal men and women is threatened with closure.

The Regional Health Authority has talked of transferring patients to "smaller, more homely units, designed with the latest patterns of care and treatment in mind."

Already the first step towards "community care" has taken place. In December, patients were regrouped in wards according to the towns they originally came from. This "sectorisation" has done little to reassure the staff. We publish an interview with a nurse at Darent Park, describing "sectorisation day" and the staffing and conditions of the hospital generally.

What do you think of sectorisation?

"Theoretically it is an excellent idea, as a step towards placing patients in accommodation within the boroughs they originally came from. But will they be properly looked after by trained nurses and qualified social workers in hostels? Half our patients have been at Darent for more than 30 years, often since they were babies. How will they feel? Darent is the only home they know.

"All institutions throughout the country are being sectorised, but at Darent it was all done in one day, instead of gradually moving patients around.

"From the nurses' point of view, it appeared to go extremely well on some wards. On others, it went very badly, due mainly to a gross shortage of staff. Patients who had special friends were split up. In one case I know, two men had been friends for over 30 years. One had looked after the other, who was severely subnormal. He washed him, took him to work, bought him sweets, and generally cared for him. But because they came from different towns, they were split up."

"There is a grave shortage of nurses for the mentally ill and subnormal; the extra allowance for this type of nursing is pitiful, £25 per month. The academic qualifications for training are not always the best way of judging who is suitable. And the nursing school at Darent Park has just been closed. So the problems of untrained staff remain. In addition, morale is low due to insecurity about the hospital's future. And a lot of nurses resigned in disgust after 'sectorisation day'.

"It is unfair to say that nurses are neglecting patients, but we are not able to give them the positive help due to them. Even basic 'behaviour modification programmes', such as toilet training, are difficult. If there are too few nurses and no overlap between shifts, it really is no good. If it is not intense and cannot be continued all the time, you might as well not bother."

What is the effect of understaffing?

"The staffing situation at the hospital is chronic. Nursing Assistants form the main bulk of the staff and frequently have to run a ward alone. They have little training - a week's induction course and then a lecture once a month. These are outside working hours and unpaid, so very poorly attended."

Books, pamphlets

- Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NW 5
- Northern Star Bookshop, 18A Leighton Street, Leeds
- Main Trend Books, 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol
- Brighton Workers Bookshop, 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
- Liverpool bookstall
- Every Saturday at Paddies Market, Great Homer Street, Liverpool

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Meetings on Fridays at 7.30 at Bellman Bookshop:
- March 10 The Politics of Economic Struggle.
- March 17 James Connolly, the first British Marxist.
- Bradford
- March 9 Grants, Autonomy: Students and the Class Struggle.
- 1.15 pm Room C31, Main Building, University of Bradford.
- Croydon
- March 13 Housing - Socialist Security or Capitalist Chaos.
- 8.00pm Study Room, Central Library, Katherine Street, Croydon.

Cont. from p. 1 : Engineering Wages

tract but searching out loopholes in the social contract to avoid direct action. All such devices are a dissipation of the energy and stamina of our class and an abuse of courage. We can bear this no longer. We have to go back to first events in our tradition and call on the AUEW for direct action to enforce a settlement on the employer and ignore the Government.

The Executive Council of the AUEW at a meeting of the Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions on March 3 demanded a series of national one-day and two-day strikes to back the engineers' claim. In all districts shop stewards will be instructed to lodge a claim for the original terms direct with their employer, so that employers wishing to avert the effect of strikes to themselves, not caring for the Federation and operating on the basis of devil take the hindmost, can seek to con-

tract out and make their own deals. The proposals of any settlement will be submitted to the Executive to be authorised in such a way as to provide an example of settlement for break-through action among other employers, thus bringing the whole struggle out in the open without deceit.

Fight to lift morale

There are problems, for the actual wage demand is so modest that, settled in full, the improvement materially would only be shown in overtime hours, holiday payments and shift premiums; but it is to be hoped that the membership of all engineering unions will understand the psychological importance for our

morale of obtaining a considerable advance on the minimum time rate which now stands at an insulting £42 per week for a skilled man.

The employers, who have lived always in the illusion that they could revert to the days of wage reduction before the war and have as low a base rate as suited them, still believe they can force us back into that situation through another depression and use the horrendous unemployment of the present against those who are employed. This is why the struggle must be taken up by us. It is a struggle for all. It is not to do with engineering alone. It affects all workers. The Government and employer must be put in their place.

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