

The Worker



Published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Vol. 14 No. 27 July 29th 1982

Price 5p

TUC betrayal of ASLEF a crime against the working class

THE DECISION of the TUC's Finance and General Purposes Committee not to support ASLEF and the deal done over flexible rostering must rank alongside the worst examples of abject cowardice ever displayed by our trade union movement. It was a decision which exemplifies just how deep the illogicality of Thatcherism has penetrated our own thought. It was a classic example of how to turn victory into defeat through lack of

resolve, of how to turn strength into weakness.

Duffy, on radio on Sunday, spoke of the need "to get the show on the road". How apt, for the man who condemned Robinson at Leyland's and joined Edwardes in allowing 50,000 BL workers "to go down the road", to help take a decision which will mean precisely the end of the railways in any national sense and so put passenger and freight traffic alike almost entirely

on the roads, currently crumbling away.

This is what Thatcherism is about. The end of a transport infra-structure, the end of industry, the end of the organised working class. Murray spoke on the Monday of his "anguish" at having to reach such a decision, then went on to compound the error by using the TUC's similarly dastardly rejection of the FBU in their fight against the Social Contract in 1977 as justifi-

cation for this latest act. Hence the FBU motion at this week's General Council condemning the TUC's betrayal of ASLEF. Murray's comment that Thatcher mustn't crow about her victory and the defeat of ASLEF shows that he's still living in the period of the Social Contract, of 'give and take'. We gave and they took; but it's much more fundamental than that now. 'This fascist Government', as they were correctly des-

cribed by the ASLEF President, aren't interested in taking.

The dispute wasn't about flexible rostering which was the pretext, no more. This Government is about destroying. Not destroying established working conditions but destroying work itself, for therein lies our strength. The ASLEF members were more solid than anyone could have expected. They were right to resist and they were resisting in the right way.

AS EACH DAY goes by, the fight of British workers for health gathers momentum. We are fighting not only for better pay for health workers, and the very future of the National Health Service, but the realisation is dawning that we are fighting for the health of a class, its existence. Katherine Mansfield described health as "the power to live a full adult, living breathing life" and said "I want to be all that I am capable of becoming." Why not?

The three days of action throughout Britain, 19 - 21 July, was an exuberant declaration of defiance. The smile on the government's face after the TUC betrayal of ASLEF did not have time to settle.

On Tuesday Fowler described the response as "weak" and "patchy", on Wednesday the same man claimed the effects were great and at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, 2000 operations had been cancelled since the dispute began.

On that Monday Thatcher had called NHS workers "shameful" and on Wednesday after the bomb blasts in London she described them as "noble" and "magnificent".

For too long, health workers have allowed their ingenuity and powers of improvisation in coping with staff short-

FIGHT THATCHER FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR CLASS

ages and untold resources to be taken for granted. Now, at last, those skills have been turned to the task of fighting Thatcher.

From every part of Britain new ideas and tactics emerge - be it a block on laundry or blood supplies, or the hiring of a bus to take hospital staff to all big workplaces in the locality it serves. The response of workers in other sections bears the same stamp of inventiveness. Ferry boats don't sail, power stations close down, pits stop work, mother and toddler groups join rallies.

The power of surprise resides in the working class, the government cannot predict who will strike next. The government is predictable once you understand that it

has only one aim, that of destruction, and it attacks with the bluntest of instruments.

If everything that health workers have learnt about this battle, then Thatcher will get her comeuppance. If the working class as a whole can combine in this way, then she and her government will come crashing down.

Fowler told the health workers that this pay fight threatens "job security". The response of the TUC Health Services Committee was magnificent in saying that

● MORE THAN 5000 workers took part in a demonstration in central London on Monday 19 July as part of the NHS strike over pay. Photo: The Worker.

the level of organisation developed amongst health workers in 1981-82 is the best way of defending our jobs. The leadership of the action at a national level is a historical landmark.

Attempts to split different sections of the service, and attempts to divide the unions involved have failed. The sup-

port of the Regional Health Authorities for the action was another landmark as was the support of the medical profession at the BMA Conference.

The future

The TUC Health Services Committee has called for 5 days of intensive action from August 9. To the government's utter dismay the preparation will continue, for we control the action, and its effectiveness rests in our hands. NHS workers have produced a sticker which reads, "Your Health, Our Work". The stake in the battle being fought by the health workers is nothing less than the health of the working class.

▶ The Communist Party of Britain (M-L) has published a pamphlet "Genocide No" about healthy living in the 80s. Available from Bellman Bookshop, price 30p + p&p.

Down with terrorism!

WE CONDEMN absolutely the recent London bombings. They demean the deaths of the Republican hunger strikers last year, and divert attention away from the fight against the Thatcher Government at a crucial time for the British working class: it is indiscriminate murder.

Terrorism is not the route of liberation for the people of the north of Ireland. Such a strategy shows a fear and contempt for the working class, a strategy of those who wish to substitute themselves as rulers in place of those who rule in Ireland by terror now.

These explosions have simply given Thatcher another opportunity to don her uniform: first to visit the wounded bandmen in hospital, then to board the aircraft carrier Hermes as it returned to Portsmouth from the South Atlantic.

She was able to hold up her hands in horror at the terrible wounds inflicted by the IRA's six-inch shells; while just a month ago, she was gloating at the scores of Argentinian deaths caused by the Royal Navy's more scientific equivalent, the fragmentation bomb, at Goose Green.

The passivity of the British working class in not forcefully opposing the war led to those unnecessary deaths. Its confusion and cowardice in not demanding that the troops be withdrawn from Ireland has done the same here.

But the Irish working class must also accept that their passivity has allowed these gangsters to usurp their just call for freedom from foreign financial and military domination, and besmirch the memory of those who have given their lives in the cause of Irish freedom, victims of the atrocities of British imperialism.

If ever there was a need for a clear class understanding by British and Irish workers it is now. The immediate task for British workers is to throw out Thatcher. In doing so, we will be assisting Irish workers in their struggle too. More bombings, whether here or in Ireland, simply serve to strengthen Thatcher.

If either working class really wants its freedom, then it must deal with its own terrorists first, whether elected or provisional!



The Week

THE PHARMACEUTICAL Society of Great Britain reckons that 200,000 suicides a year are attempted in Britain. In England and Wales, 4000 of these attempts are successful. The Society has asked that in future the media not report the details of drug quantities taken to avoid imitation. The most common type of suicide attempt must be the taking of redundancy money, behaviour given a lot of coverage. Taken as a cure, it proves to be an overdose. 200,000 attempted suicides seems a conservative estimate.

IF THE Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham employs thousands of people, at a cost of hundreds of pounds a year, to listen in to every other country's radio traffic, then why is it an offence to spy on the spies? The rugged individualism of the single spy working on a shoestring budget is an example of free enterprise "up against the nationalised industry. Privatisation sounds just the job."

A SCHOOLBOY'S first visit to a football match stays in the mind's eye. Being taken by an uncle to Craven Cottage where Fulham played Cardiff on the opening day of the 1960-1 season, the memory remains of the great Johnny Haynes. Captain of Fulham and England, there was excitement whenever he got the ball and, more exciting still, when he passed it maybe 40, 50 yards through the opposing defence. The trouble with such exquisite passes to Jimmy Hill who needed glasses, was that young Hill was a bodger's boy to a craftsman. The crowd groaned to a man; sure enough, over the bar went the ball. Parrots were sick everywhere, the ball went over the moon. The carefully bearded Hill, yes even then and not lost on spectators, caused universal groans but the cognoscenti heckled him on, and off, the ball. 'Excuse me uncle, what's a nancy-boy?' It lasted just 90 minutes but it was very educational. The schoolboy learnt that with flash harries there wasn't much to see.

IF MEMBERS of the TUC's finance and general purposes committee were put into a race with Dave Moorcroft, he'd probably lose his world record.

JIMMY HILL, the recipient of so much advice in his playing days, has dished out a lot of advice in the last ten years to TV viewers who have to listen to him before they see the football. You would think he was an expert. But people dislike moralisers; sound advice from someone who knows is one thing, but it's the sermonising which gets up the nose and which Hill seems to personify. He decries how the game is being ruined by greedy players and bad play. So it was good to see his South African tour collapse.

DAVE MOORCROFT is a gifted amateur, 'the toast of Britain', who works in Coventry and Warwickshire, encouraging young people in their athletic potential. Mr Hill is the chairman of Coventry FC which saves him being sent there. The TUC finance and general purposes committee are as qualified as is Mr. Hill, the difference being that they're just a bunch of amateurs. They'll get the knighthoods but Mr. Moorcroft represents tomorrow's Jerusalem on a chariot of fire.

Flexible rostering - the enemy of safety

"British Rail has been prepared to adopt any methods to force us to accept flexible rostering and the 4000 redundancies which would follow, including sacking staff who have loyally worked for the railway, some with 30 or 40 years' service. Throughout, British Rail's actions have received the full support of the Government. Now they have received the support of the finance and general purposes committee of the TUC." - Ray Buckton.

FLEXIBLE ROSTERING has been extensively operated on continental railways for many years. Indeed, before the term 'flexible' was dreamt up, it was known as 'continental rostering'. Researchers at Bradford University have examined the evidence from Europe and it does not augur well either for the physical and mental health of drivers and

their families, or for the safety of rail passengers.

As long ago as the 1960s, French drivers became worried about their safety record and in particular the habit of falling asleep at the controls. Circadian (body) rhythms were found to be disrupted by the constantly changing working pattern which

'British Rail intends to disregard its own rule book when it has put across all it wants in the form of single manning, reduced rest periods, removal of guards... The result will inevitably show up in accidents, worsening health records etc.'

is a principal feature of flexible rostering. The result is a fall-off in vigilance as well as other effects brought about by the fact that train drivers on flexible working were found not to make up for sleep loss in the same way that people in other occupations do.

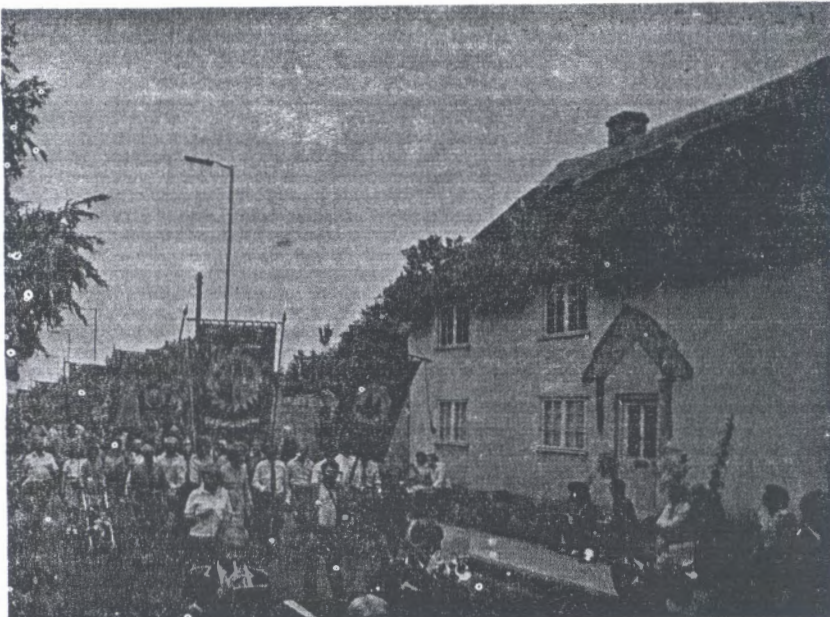
An extensive study was conducted into fatigue and working practices among West German

train drivers in 1974. It is interesting that they found drivers performed best after a complete break between shifts of 24 hours. They were least attentive after a break of between 10 - 16 hours. The new rosters in Britain will allow only 12 hour breaks with late finishes and early starts along with irregular hours: the

worst possible combinations where safety is concerned. Swedish and Dutch studies have both shown that the health of drivers is severely affected by irregular hours. In 1980 Swedish transport workers were found to suffer from more insomnia and stomach disorders if they worked flexible or split shifts rather than regular turns. Absenteeism

was highest amongst workers on changing pattern shifts, usually because of fatigue. Family relationships suffered far more amongst this group of workers. British Rail intends to disregard its own rule book when it has put across all it wants in the form of single manning, reduced rest periods, removal of guards starting with Bedford-St. Pancras. The result will inevitably show up in accident statistics, worsening health records and so on. And that for those who remain on the truncated services left.

As one railwayman of over 30 years' standing put it: - "In all the years of productivity deals and new working patterns, they've only ever meant fewer jobs and more pressure on the people left in work. There's never been any benefit to either the railway workers or to the travelling public, whose services have steadily disappeared."



ON SUNDAY July 18th, the 148th Annual Rally took place in Tolpuddle, Dorset to commemorate and celebrate the struggle to establish an agricultural trade union waged by the Tolpuddle martyrs nearly 1½ centuries ago. Thousands of trade unionists marched in the biggest rally for years. Jack Boddy, on behalf of the agricultural workers section of the TGWU, addressed the huge rally on the Green and referred to a number

of important issues. He dealt swiftly with the upstart Tebbit saying that it is union members who decide union policy, not Mr Tebbit.

As for Thatcher - he described her policy as one of scorched earth, used historically by others as a last resort against the invader but by her against the indigenous population as she destroys the industrial base, tries to enforce low wages, throws millions out of

work and dismantles the welfare state.

He referred to the agricultural workers' claim of £120 'Fork Up for Farm Workers' - and their determination to fight for it. He concluded by saying that there is a plot in Tolpuddle graveyard reserved for the spearhead of Thatcher's policy - the Tebbit bill!

• Photo: The Worker

Vietnamese troops withdraw

The Kampuchean people have scored great successes in reconstructing and stabilising their country after years of war and destruction. Now their government, the People's Revolutionary Council, has agreed with the government of their great ally, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, that many of the latter's troops can safely go home.

At the same time the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach, has warned the countries of Southeast Asia that the newly-formed 'Kampuchean Coalition Government', made up of elements of the murderous Pol Pot regime with Sihanouk as figurehead and with the backing of China, is "an interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea."

Speaking in Singapore during a tour of Southeast Asia, the Foreign

Minister said that although the countries of ASEAN - Southeast Asia's mini-NATO - had supported the Pol Pot regime against the people of Kampuchea and their Vietnamese allies, no hostile operations had ever been undertaken against them. But the Vietnamese would be within their rights in attacking bases used by guerrillas who remain a viable force only because of the political and military support they receive from China.

The Thai government continues to allow Thailand to be used as a base for war against Indochina. In the 1940s it collaborated with the Japanese; in the 1960s with US imperialism; now, in the 1980s with the US-backed Chinese expansionism. It maintains a string of Khmer Rouge (Pol Pot) camps within 10 miles of its border with

Kampuchea.

The UN, led by the US and Britain, still backs the Pol Pot group which has now become the basis of the new farcical coalition. But the plan for renewed intervention will fail, as have all past attempts by the Japanese, the French and the US to reduce Indochina to colonial status.

From being the backyard of imperialism, the Indochinese peoples have become the front line of the struggle for peace, national liberation and socialism. Their forty years of heroism have won them the opportunity for peaceful and planned development to prosperity. We can have only contempt for the efforts to sabotage this development to prosperity by the evil schemes of Thatcher, Reagan and Teng Hsiao-ping using such vile agents as Pol Pot.

Sacking threat in IPC fight

THE PAY FIGHT by the 1400 journalists working for the International Publishing Corporation is coming to a head. As The Worker is going to press, it is believed that notices of dismissal or suspension are already on their way to a number of journalists.

This is IPC's reaction to a devastating week in which the NUJ Group Chapel's policy of handling only union material has left three magazines suspended and countless others full of holes. The action has also had the effect of halting work on several books in the publishing houses of Hamlyn and Butterworths, also part of IPC.

The journalists have said they will not take suspensions lying down. NUJ members at the key Magazines division, based mainly on the South Bank in London, have already said they will take whatever action is necessary to defend themselves. IPC, stuffed full of profits and all the greedier for more, must be made to disgorge.

Dockers vow to black Cunards

IF PROPOSALS to build a replacement for the sunken Atlantic Conveyor in a foreign port go ahead, then dockers in Southampton will refuse to handle any Cunard vessels. The TGWU will also call upon their road transport members in other ports to do likewise.

The Atlantic Conveyor had been laid up for nine months prior to the Falkland Islands war and was estimated to be worth £5 million. Cunard, the shipping line to which the Atlantic Conveyor belonged, received £10 million compensation from the government and is planning to build its replacement in the Far East.

It is ironic that Lord Matthews the boss of Cunard, also owns the Daily Express, a paper which vociferously extolled the virtues of British nationalism during the Falklands war. His patriotism does not seem to extend to giving jobs to British workers: only last year Cunard transferred one of their cruise ships to a flag of convenience in order to replace British seamen with cheap foreign labour.

Editorial

THE OCTOBER Revolution set the pattern for any real liberation of the working class from exploitation. It was not a reform movement providing a better life for workers and peasants. It was a complete overturning, in an irreversible way, of the class relationships of capitalist society, whereby those who had ruled on behalf of the exploiters were thrown out and the working class assumed state power - a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In Britain the first proletariat, the best organised working class in the capitalist world, confronts the oldest capitalist system, where capitalism's general decline has been most precipitate. This is a potentially revolutionary situation - as is shown by Thatcher's hatred of the Soviet Union, the home of the October Revolution and her fascist attempts by means of mass unemployment, the highest in history, to weaken our trade unions in order to destroy them by government fiat. This is counter-revolution.

Our Party's call "Thatcher Out!" is a revolutionary call. It expresses the necessity, if the working class in Britain is to survive, of throwing out the class enemy in the only way we can, by means of our united strength exerted in all the places where we work. It is a call that has been taken up by millions of workers and, even though our unions are not, in origin, revolutionary, but organs of mass defensive struggle, some unions have begun to respond to the call of the hour in a revolutionary way. The civil servants turned a battle over pay into a challenge to Thatcher's sovereignty which, for several days, immobilised Britain as a NATO nuclear power. Unions like the NUM have defied the law to come out in support of fellow trade unionists in conflict with the Government. Health workers have seen their fight over pay as a struggle on behalf of us all to save the Health Service from privatisation and ruin.

ASLEF have not only been fighting the Government over preserving the 8 hour day and some 4 or 5 thousand jobs which they realise are not theirs to surrender; they are also defending our railway service from the kind of run-down which has already destroyed the British motor industry and is in the process of destroying British steel.

In normal circumstances of class struggle the conduct of the TUC's Finance and General Purposes Committee would have been reprehensible. There was unwarranted interference in the autonomy of a fellow union engaged in conflict with the class enemy; there was the treachery of the NUR General Secretary growing out of the old resentment of a mass union against a craft union and there was the use of TUC auspices by virulent anti-communists to betray the ASLEF strikers.

In today's situation this action was not simply a flouting of customary trade union practice; it was counter-revolutionary scabbing. It was putting the TUC at Thatcher's disposal for defeating a section of the working class in action against her.

As the working class's Party of revolution we have the duty of placing all events of concern to our class at this crucial juncture of history in a revolutionary perspective. The survival of our class is at stake and those who serve our movement well and those who fail it must be judged in the light of the revolutionary victory which is our only alternative to destruction.

Axe hangs over Shell refinery

THE FUTURE of the Shell Refinery at Carrington in Manchester has again been thrown into jeopardy. About six weeks ago the company came forward with two options, complete closure or part closure with approximately 1000 jobs to go.

The workforce responded by voting at a mass meeting to embark on immediate stoppages of work in the event of any enforced redundancy notices being issued, and to generate a campaign designed to affect the company's commercial interests.

At a further meeting with the Joint Unions and the Managing Director of Shell UK, there was a slight respite, but the company still make it clear that 500-700 jobs would have to go with no guarantees that the plant would still not be closed. This had been summed up quite clearly by the manager who said that the "critical mass" of the site would collapse inwards because of all the other cutbacks. The same can be said for the chemical industry and in fact British industry itself. The Thatcher notion of "slimmer being fitter" inevitably results in malnutrition and then death.

This threat is just the tip of the iceberg because of Shell's relationship with BP and ICL,

BRITISH TELECOM is a nationalised industry and therefore must be destroyed! There is no other logic behind the assault on Telecom's monopoly of service and ability to provide that service. Selling off 51 per cent of BT will be a prelude to a more general dismemberment - the eyes of the asset-strippers must be lighting up.

Under threat is Britain's national communications network.

Meanwhile the idiots who control BT, while they insist there is no money to put a phone-box in the street, prepare to blow around £500 million on an itemised call billing system (who you phoned, when, and for how long) desired only by the internal investigation Department and the Special Branch. Buzby brings bugging to every home in Britain!

Privatisation

Financial institutions in the City of London could face a total shut-down of their telephone system if government plans to sell off BT are implemented. Feelings are hardening within the 130,000-strong Post Office Engineering Union, the biggest in BT, as Thatcher's plans for Buzby are seeing the light of day, and reveal that there is a threat to union organisation and jobs.

"We'll put the banks out of bus-

Government plans to break up Water Council

THE GOVERNMENT'S announcement that it is to dissolve the National Water Council has brought an angry response from water industry trade unions.

The NWC was set up in 1974 as the national co-ordinating body of the regional water authorities in England and Wales. Amongst its many functions was salary and service conditions negotiations with the trade unions.

The trade unions believe it is this role that the government is really aiming at. In recent years the NWC has repeatedly ignored Government pay guidelines and has stuck to its 'quasi-autonomous' guns in negotiations. Now, like

health authority chairmen who disagree with Whitehall, the NWC is to go too.

Tom King, the minister responsible, said in Parliament that the dissolution (due to take place in autumn 1983) would enable greater decentralisation. Beware of Tories saying that! Inevitably it means that they want greater control (in this case no doubt through the water department of the Department of the Environment). Even 'The Times' in a leader said: "It is the culmination of an ambition in Whitehall to do the planning and co-ordinating work of the industry itself without encumbrance . . . centralism indeed!"

The National Water Council currently employs 450 staff. Many of them now face redundancy and their trade union, NALGO, will be taking up their case. Once again it is water workers who are being made the scapegoat for the water industry's real problems - underspending, high interest charges and lack of investment. Meanwhile this year white-collar water staffs pay talks continue. Consultation with branches by NALGO brought near-unanimous rejection of a 7 per cent offer. A further meeting with the employers is to be held early in August with staff ready to take action if necessary.



TECHNICIANS at Bristol University - all members of ASTMS - came out on strike on July 7 and mounted massed demonstrations outside the annual degree ceremonies, as part of the growing war against the 4 per cent pay limit and vicious cuts in universities. Thousands of leaflets and balloons were used and the demonstration was warmly received by local people and those attending the ceremonies.

After the implementation of a £10 million cut in finance at Bristol and the chaos this has caused, a huge pay cut could not be tolerated. This 4 per cent offer is just another form of financial starvation of education, where the staff are the greatest resource; the fights for pay jobs and resources are the same.

Consequently, the struggle has not only taken on the character of a fight against the 4 per cent and a defence of universities, but a fight to keep our organisation, of survival itself. For all their fine words university authorities actively implement the policies of those well-known progressives - Joseph and Rhodes Boyson; the job of resisting falls as ever on the trade unions.

Photo: The Worker

Asset-strippers gather as Buzby goes up for grabs

ness in a few weeks if we stop maintaining their equipment", says the secretary of the 3,400 strong London City branch, whose members maintain facilities at the Stock Exchange and the major banks.

Project Mercury

Last February the government granted a licence to an alternative telecommunications network which would be in direct competition to British Telecom. The private network, called Project Mercury, has three partners - Cable and Wireless, British Petroleum, and Barclays Merchant Bank. British Rail is also involved in the new network which will follow British Rail track.

This alternative network creates a direct threat to BT, and is a political move, as in economic terms it is obviously more expensive to duplicate networks. The Post Office Engineering Union (POEU) is instructing its members not to connect any Project Mercury traffic through the public-switched network or the interface to the international network.

The government is allowing private firms to supply, install and maintain terminal apparatus, although BT will continue to control the switching system, transmission systems and local network, and to fit the first telephone in every customer's premises. But custom-

ers will be able to add to installations by purchase or by renting of approved equipment from private companies. Kenneth Baker, Minister of Information Technology, has just announced that the introduction of private supplies has been brought forward.

Cable Television

In March this year, a report produced by the Government's Information Technology Advisory Panel was published, suggesting that the arrival of satellite broadcasting should be accompanied by the rapid expansion of cable television in Britain. This would mean that satellite signals would be distributed locally by cable rather than each home having its own dish aerial.

At present, only 14 per cent of households receive cable television, and the Panel estimate that it would cost £2½ billion to wire up half the country for these services. This would mean that Britain would have two wired networks: one copper two-wire system carrying telephone calls and one coaxial cable system carrying television signals.

The POEU says this would be a massive waste of resources with two sets of ducts in the ground and two sets of wires running into the home. They propose instead the creation of an integrated cable

system using optical fibre carrying all telecoms and broadcasting services.

BT has the necessary expertise to install and operate such a system. If cable television is developed privately, this would mean a concentration in urban areas where costs are low and profits high. The POEU says that BT should be allowed to develop and provide a fully national service.

Fight for future

The government's attack on British Telecom follows the usual pattern of divide and destroy tactics and the making of short-term profits at the expense of the long term. Government policy has ensured that BT has been unable to obtain adequate finance for the large scale investment that is now needed for the development of telecommunication services in Britain.

BT, far from being inefficient, is in the forefront of technological developments and their introduction of optical fibre cable systems is ahead of the world. The BT unions will need considerable ingenuity to fight the hiving off of profitable parts of their industry - arguments that industrial action would provide the government with a case for relaxing the monopoly must be rejected.

ROUNDUP OF THREE TREMENDOUS DAYS FOR THE NHS



HULL

JULY 20 WAS the high point of the three day health service action in Humberston. 3000 trade unionists marched from the Royal Infirmary, the largest hospital in the area, through the centre of Hull.

Included in the ranks were engineers, shopworkers, gasmen and workers from all sections of education. In defiance of possible disciplinary action for supporting health workers, a delegation of civil servants showed their solidarity.

The three day action got off to a good start on the Monday with pickets on hospital gates, and factories had been leafleted to gain support for the action and demonstration. At the Royal Infirmary different sections were on strike each day and were joined by delegations from hospitals in the area for Tuesday's march.

HACKNEY

FOR THREE days this week health workers at Hackney Hospital showed what they thought of Fowler's miserly pay offer. The black railings of the former workhouse were covered with posters and placards as NUPE, COHSE ASTMS and the local branch of the British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) picketed all the main entrances. Strikes and local demos have added to the work to rule. For the local branch

of the BAOT it has been the first time that they have taken industrial action.

Senior police officers have decided to make some attempt at enforcing Tebbit's law (providing there weren't too many pickets around to argue). Beside trying to limit the number of pickets, at one point they tried, unsuccessfully, to force the strikers to picket on the other side of the road to the hospital.

Many patients have been signing petitions in support, and were refusing to cross the picket line.



● PICKETS outside Health Minister Fowler's office at the Elephant and Castle in south London on Wednesday. All photos: The Worker.

YORKS

HEALTH WORKERS in West Yorkshire have responded magnificently to the TUC's call for three days of action. In Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford, impressive demonstrations on successive days highlighted the extent of popular support for this dispute.

THE WORKER visited picket lines in Leeds and Bradford during the three days of action and found morale high and determination solid. As one striking steward said, "We've come this far, we're not going to surrender now."

NEWCASTLE

SEVERAL thousand workers joined health service strikers on a march through Newcastle on Monday 19 July. Council workers, shipyard workers, miners, engineers, seamen, pensioners and the unemployed all showed their solidarity, while the health workers themselves had travelled in to Newcastle from all over North Tyneside and much of Northumberland.

Speakers at the Eldon Square rally made it clear that health workers are not asking for the moon, but only for a fair rate of pay. There is a clear understanding that health workers are directly set against the Government and that the struggle has to be stepped up in order to shift Thatcher from her intransigence.

W. SUSSEX

HEALTH workers from the three hospitals in Chichester, West Sussex, marked the second day of the current strike with a march through the city centre. Surprised shoppers and tourists, unaccustomed to the sight of trade unionists at such close quarters, were bombarded with leaflets and stickers. The health workers were joined by members of the Chichester and District Trades Council, representing NUJ, ASTMS and TGWU.

WALES

HOSPITAL SERVICES were at emergency only level in South Glamorgan, Clwyd and in Neath for the three days of action. Engineering and maintenance staff supported the strike in South Glamorgan Area Health Authority for the three days.

On July 21 a strike by telephonists at Swansea's Guildhall stopped all incoming calls. A march through Swansea attracted 300 workers including representatives from NALGO, POEU and AUEW branches as well as many others.

Generally, ancillary workers took action over the three days throughout South Glamorgan and at selected hospitals in Mid-Glamorgan.

N. LONDON

SOLIDARITY was shown for north London health workers from the local community Support on the picket line came from Haringey and Hackney Local Government workers, local library staff, Enfield branch of ASTMS, and Middlesex Polytechnic students at various times during the three days of action last week. Post Office and supply vans

respected picket lines.

One health worker at North Middlesex hospital told THE WORKER, "Even with my responsibilities for the distribution of drugs and chemicals throughout the hospital, which need very careful handling - as a single mistake could bring dire consequences - I am paid £58 per week take home. From this I pay £35 a week for rent, rates and heating. How can I provide for my family on £23?"

CROYDON

TRAIN DRIVERS, postmen and local office workers helped to carry the message of defiance expressed by the health service unions when they joined hospital workers in a demonstration through central Croydon during last week's three-day action.

"Unty is the key" said the local secretary of COHSE, "there have been mass walk-outs from all four hospitals in Croydon, though Waddon Hospital is already so understaffed that any withdrawal threatens emergency services, which we will not do."

Consultants, who earlier in the action tried to smuggle patients in private cars, have now expressed total support, and respect the picket lines. Support both verbal and actual has come from the patients, one of whom joined the pickets at Queen's Hospital in his wheelchair, propelled by his wife.

"This action is organised and directed by those taking part," the COHSE representative told THE WORKER, "and we are determined to work with the TUC in developing it as is necessary."

MANCHESTER

PICKETS were out in force in the Manchester area. A demonstration of health service workers marched through the town with seamen, engineering and building workers also taking part. The North West Exhibition firms had all voted to take a half-day stoppage in support of the health service workers.

Recognising the difficulties health workers face in taking industrial action has resulted in a number of hospitals using a more tactical approach. At Hope Hospital in Salford, and Crumpsall Hospital in Cheetam Hill the sterilisation units have been blocked and strikers paid £50 a week. Hope Hospital has now changed its tactics and the transport drivers have been brought out.



● BRISTOL: health workers were joined by many on their march.

EXETER

ACCORDING to Fowler, only 1 person in 100 supports the health workers. It was Fowler, of course, who thought health staff would not fight in the first place. Evidently very few of the 99 per cent live in Exeter, and according to health workers marching through Exeter on Tuesday 20 July, "Maggie out! Fowler out!" was what 99 per cent wanted.

The three days of action here started with a one-day stoppage of all staff except accident and emergency. The response was better than on any previous days of action. At one hospital, Exminster, Nursing Officers and Senior Nursing Officers had to work on wards to provide the emergency cover.

KENT

DURING THE recent three day action by Health Service workers, 900 men subcontracted on the Isle of Grain power station site in North Kent voted to strike for a day to help man the picket at their nearest hospital. And miners from Tilmannstone Colliery added their numbers to the picket line at hospitals in Canterbury during the last one day strike of Health Service workers.

DEVON TEACHERS WIN VICTORY

DEVON TEACHERS have won their battle against 60 compulsory redundancies. Their threat of widespread industrial action and a massive lobby of County Hall on July 29 forced the council to climb down. Indeed, instead of sackings there is to be an actual increase in teaching staff.

The NUT National Executive member for Devon and Cornwall said, "... we have obtained our three objectives. The first was that there would be no compulsory redundancies. Secondly, that there would be no overall reduction in staffing over the next year - in fact we had an undertaking there would be an increase. The third thing is that we have heard that the council is going ahead with its plans to staff schools according to the curriculum needs."

This is a major success for Devon teachers and shows that nothing succeeds like standing and fighting. It is a lesson that will be invaluable when the inevitable further attacks on staffing occur in the future.

The Worker

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