

# The Red Mole



JAN 12th: SMASH THE TORIES

# TORIES ATTACK THE HEALTH SERVICE

By their campaign against the unions, the Tories are trying to make people think that the real problem in this country is the tiny one-tenth of 1% of working days that are lost every year through strikes. In fact, of course, the Tories are not really interested in this lost production at all. If they were really interested in days lost from work, then they would deal with industrial accidents—these cause five times as many days a year to be lost as do strikes—or they would deal with unemployment, which caused 30 times as many working days a year to be lost as are lost through strikes. What the Tories are really interested in is raising profits by lessening the power of trade unions to defend workers' standards of living. What is more, one reason why the Tories are kicking up such a noise about the trade unions is because they do not want it to be realised that the Tories are aiding the rich at the expense of the less well-off, and are making worse the *real* problems of the vast majority of workers. These problems aren't just confined to pay, either. They affect even more basic things such as health and life. For this reason, let us look at the Health Service and the number of industrial accidents. These are two good examples of the type of problem the Tories are trying to hide.

## No Proper Health Service

The most basic right anyone has is the right to a healthy life. The way this should be secured is through an efficient Health Service. But both Tory and Labour governments have allowed the Health Service to become less efficient at helping the sick.

For example, although the number of patients receiving medical and surgical treatment in hospital went up by 79,000 in 1969, the Labour government did nothing to increase the number of beds available to treat these people. In fact they allowed the number of beds available to go down by over 3,700. Since 1962 Tory and Labour governments between them have cut the number of beds available for the sick by over 12,000. Because of this deliberate policy, the number of people waiting to go into hospital has risen to over 530,000.

Most of these shortages have come into being because governments have preferred to spend money on arms to protect profits of British firms in the Far East and in giving huge hand-outs to firms like Rolls Royce rather than paying for hospitals and the doctors and nurses to run them. For example, as a result of low pay, there were *less* medical staff in training in the last full year than there were in 1968.

Conditions for student nurses, in particular, are terrible, and after all deductions they may be left with only a couple of pounds a week. It is not joking to say that the only way some nurses get decent food is by pinching those dinners which are delivered to the wards but not eaten by the patients. Under these conditions of lack of staff, ordinary people die needlessly. Every hospital worker knows of cases of this. For example, in one hospital ward in which the writer worked, an elderly man was brought in with an inflamed gland. He was in a lot of pain, but because of lack of staff there was no doctor available to treat him. As a result the man had a heart attack and died. Of course, this reason was not told to his relatives—if relatives were told of this sort of thing there would be too much trouble caused for any government—but that man's relatives were deprived of a member of the family simply because Tory and Labour governments were unconcerned about the Health Service and refused to finance it adequately.

But it is not only shortage of doctors and nurses which leads to this type of death; shortage of all types of hospital workers is responsible. Consider the case of hospital porters. Before the recent successful strike of the council workers, the basic pay for a hospital porter was £16.15.0. As it is practically impossible to live on that wage if you have a family, all hospital workers of this type have to work long hours of overtime, to work on Sundays and so on. But when this pay is added, the job is still so badly paid that it is almost impossible to get enough porters. This means, for example, if a patient has a heart failure there may be no porter to take vitally-needed oxygen or resuscitation equipment to him. Lives are needlessly lost in this way.

Consider also the case of telephone operators. Again because of low rates of pay, hospitals are frequently short of operators and often only one is on duty at a time for long periods. Consider what happens in the case of a heart failure. In these circumstances doctors have only two minutes to get the heart going again or the patient dies. The telephone operator is responsible for getting the doctors to the bed, arranging for an anaesthetist, getting porters to bring apparatus and so on. But even the telephonist is human, and if on duty for 8 hours non-stop they have to go to the lav occasionally. This leaves the switch-board with no one operating it. If the alarm for a heart failure goes during this time, then it is just too bad and the person who has the heart failure just dies. Another breadwinner of a family gone because the government refuses to pay a decent wage in order to get enough hospital workers.

As for the building of the hospitals themselves, the last Labour government cut the amount of money being allocated for starting building new hospitals from £121 million to £101 million in its last full year in office.

It is obvious that the Health Service needs to be enormously improved. The question is, who is going to pay for it?

## Who Pays for a Better Health Service?

The Tories intend that the ordinary workers should pay more just in order to keep the Health Service at its present low level. They are reported to be considering charging up to 15/- for a possibly life-saving visit by a doctor, and to intend to charge fees for staying in hospital no matter how vital the treatment. These sums of money would of course hit the ordinary person very hard but would mean nothing to the rich.

But there is another source of money for the Health Service. The large firms of this country, whose interests the Tories represent, make huge profits. The ten biggest firms alone made £1,383, 240,000 profit in the last financial year. Every penny of that was created by the effort of workers. For example, Fords made £22 per week per man profit, and American Tobacco made £24 per week per man. The profits made by these firms is enough to pay for all the improvements needed in the Health Service. These profits should be taken out of the hands of the tiny number of people with wealth and used for the benefit of the vast majority of people. 5% of the population own 75% of the wealth, and control over that wealth should be taken from them so it can be used to create, amongst other things, a decent standard of health for the whole population without the risk of losing your husband, wife or children because there is no doctor to treat them.

To achieve real control over the wealth of the country is a long job, but a start to improving the Health Service can be made now. The TUC can start a campaign, backed by strikes, in order to secure a decent wage for nurses, doctors and other hospital workers. There has been industrial action in support of nurses before, and if the TUC is really serious in caring for the *real* interests of its members, it should start a campaign at once which would explain to all workers that it is in their interests to support the hospital workers, and that strike action is the only real way they can support them.

## Accidents

One of the greatest risks facing any worker is industrial accidents. According to the latest official figures, the average worker can expect to have two serious workplace accidents in his working life. Since 1962 accidents at work have gone up by nearly 70%, and only counting accidents serious enough to cause three days' loss of work, industrial accidents now stand at a staggering 322,390 a year. There are also hundreds of thousands, probably millions, less serious accidents. What is more, in cases where death at work was due to negligence, the management's negligence was responsible for death in four times as many cases as negligence by the workers.\* The total number of deaths in work place accidents last year was 649.

Some accident figures are so disgusting it is hardly possible to believe them. For example, when 22 workers were killed in a warehouse fire in Glasgow, due to illegal acts by the management, the firm was fined only £13.12.0. per body. What is more, fines of this type are chargeable as a business expense and companies get tax relief on the money.

Nothing has been done by any government, Tory or Labour, about this terrible toll of accidents and deaths. They have all refused to set up an adequate system of inspectors for stopping accidents. There are therefore now only 39 inspectors specialising in safety work, and they have to cover over 200,000 factories (not to mention tens of thousands of building sites, quarries, docks, etc.) Each inspector is therefore on average responsible for over 5,200 factories. With so little trouble taken over safety, it is no wonder that the number of accidents goes up every year.

The attitude of many of the firms which the inspectors have to deal with was summed up in the pro-employers newspaper the *Sunday Times* when it said "... firms in the construction industry admit that they prefer to 'write off' a certain amount of workers each year rather than install expensive safety equipment."

If left to themselves, firms will always get round the tiny amount of inspecting that officials can do, and anyway it is only the workers themselves who have a real interest in preventing accidents and stopping themselves being seriously injured or killed. Therefore in firms and industries with bad safety records the firms should be placed under workers' control—and should be nationalised in order to make this possible—to stop the dreadful toll of human lives which is resulting from capitalism's greed for profit rather than for human benefit. There should be no payment for those taken over in this way, either. Company directors willing to see men killed and maimed in order to make profits don't deserve one penny in compensation.  
Alan Jones

\*These figures are for 1968.

[Figures from Labour Research, Incomes DATA Ltd., "Socially Deprived Families in Britain" (ed. Holman), *Financial Times* 6.1.70.]

# DEFEAT THE TORIES

December 8th was the first step in the fight against the Tories. Jan. 12th is just the second step forward. In order to see how far we have to go yet and how necessary it is to win it is worth remembering the main points of the Tory anti-union Bill. The Tories would:

- \* Make it illegal for shop stewards committees to call strikes.
- \* Make it illegal for individual trade unionists to support strikes called by shop stewards committees.
- \* Make it illegal for socialist newspapers to support or even to report these strikes.
- \* Outlaw the blacking of goods.
- \* Abolish effective picketing.
- \* Legalise the victimisation of workers by making it illegal to strike against the unfair dismissal of workmates.

## Who Will Win?

The Tories and the employers are certainly using their full strength to attack the trade unions. The press is whipping up hatred against individual trade unionists, the Tory leaders are making more and more violent threats against trade unionists such as the power workers, and firms are being encouraged to take a tougher and tougher line against the unions by carrying out actions such as sacking men who struck on December 8th and threatening to lock out BEA workers at London Airport. Even the industrial correspondent of the *Daily Mirror*, whose news paper backs to the hilt attacks on the trade unions, was forced to admit that employers are now being tougher than at any time since the 1930s.

But no matter how tough the Tories get, the strength of the working class movement is quite strong enough to defeat them, *provided that it is used in the right way*. The only question is, will that strength be used or will it be allowed to be wasted? Fighting the Tories with the certainty of winning requires three things:

1. That the full strength of the trade unions is used.
2. Fighting for aims that when achieved will really weaken the Tories and the employers.
3. Realising that a fight against the Tories is a political fight.

## 1. Using the full strength of the trade unions

The full strength of the trade unions lies in the fact that without the 9,500,000 workers who belong to the unions affiliated to the TUC, not a car or other article could be made, not a train or bus could be moved, and not a ship could be unloaded. While the worker can quite well do without the boss, no firm or industry can produce for one minute without workers. All that massive trade union strength can be used, and that means up to and including the TUC calling a General Strike against the Bill. If the Bill is passed, and that will only happen if the TUC refuses to fight, then unions can refuse to cooperate with the new bodies set up by the Bill. They can refuse to register and refuse to pay any fines that are imposed. Some trade union leaders have already said that they will go to jail rather than pay fines, all other union leaders can make similar pledges. In order to try and get these things done, ordinary union members must move resolutions in their branches to try and get their union officially committed to these policies. They can also pass resolutions in shop stewards committees and union branches declaring that they will ignore the provisions of the Bill if it becomes law.

There are many other forms of local activity that can be carried out. For example in Birmingham the one-day strike on Jan. 1st was a tremendous success. This can be copied in other areas where factories are strongly organised. In these and other places meetings can be held in work-time in order to point out

the dangers and aims of the Bill. It is also possible to copy the tactics used by DATA in a recent fight against redundancy at Vauxhall's Luton plant. Here on one day everyone spent all day cleaning their desks, another day they spent most of the time going to the toilets, etc. Applications of these imaginative tactics can easily be carried out elsewhere as an action against the Bill.

In order to achieve maximum results from such actions, and to carry out propaganda against the Bill, local activities must be co-ordinated. For this reason some areas have already set up Trade Union Action Committees. These can carry out long-term campaigns against the Bill and need to be extended to all areas.

## 2. What aims to fight for

There is no point in using the full strength of the trade unions in order to achieve results which do not really weaken the employers and the Tories. For example, there is no point in defeating Carr's 90-day cooling off period if the alternative being fought for is Barbara Castle's 30-day cooling-off period. What demands will therefore really weaken employers when they are achieved and will really strengthen the working class at the same time?

The first aim is simply to defeat the Bill completely. This means that there must be no agreement between the TUC and the government for a voluntary wage freeze. This only substitutes a TUC-enforced cut in living standards for one caused by the Tories weakening the power of the trade unions. It means that the Labour Party must pledge itself to repeal the Bill completely and not have any "constructive alternatives" similar to *In Place of Strife* which also attack the trade unions, even if in a slightly different way from the Tories.

Secondly there must be an end to policies which aid unemployment and add to the problems of workers by destroying work practices built up to protect the living conditions of workers. This means demanding

straight wage increases and rejecting productivity strings as these reduce the number of jobs available and destroy working conditions.

Thirdly, workers' standards of living must be protected against rising prices. This means that all wage agreements should have a built-in cost-of-living clause, with automatic increases. These should be part of the normal wage so that when trade unions come to bargain for higher wages, they start bargaining for what is to come on top of the cost of living rises. In that way wage increases will become *real* wage increases and not be quickly eaten up by rising prices.

Fourthly, any attacks on workers' living standards by indirect means must be defeated. For example, the latest tax and social service changes by the Tories will make the average paid workers £65 a year worse off. The TUC should therefore demand, and carry out, a campaign to get, a straight wage increase of £65 a year.

## 3. Politics

Most of the Tories' attacks on the living standards of workers are being carried out by changes in the law and by state action. The Bill will of course become a law if it is passed. The attack on pay packets by raising the charges for social services was carried out by the state, and the attack on pay packets by raising council rents will also come through the state. But a fight against a government and against the state is a political fight, so that when, for example, trade unionists struck on Dec. 8th, that was a political strike. The question is not whether politics will be introduced into the fight against the Tories, but only what kind of politics will be introduced?

Take Harold Wilson for example. He has

suddenly announced his "determination to build a fair Socialist society". After six years of Labour government with attacks on the National Health Service, support of the American war in Vietnam, and finally the *In Place of Strife* anti-union proposals, somehow we don't think that large numbers of people are going to believe him, particularly when he refused to promise to repeal the Bill if elected back into power without putting some new anti-union law in its place.

This situation will be fatal for the working class movement if it is allowed to continue. The last Labour government did virtually nothing to help the position of the working class. On the contrary in a whole series of measures from Incomes Policy to *In Place of Strife*, it attacked the living standard of the majority of workers. This government increased unemployment, cut housing, raised prescription charges and cut the hospital building programme. During its entire term in office, the trade unions were the only organisations of the working class which actually defended ordinary workers' standard of living.

But the trade unions cannot defend living standards solely by industrial action. The Tories are cutting standards of living by political acts such as increasing National Health charges, increasing rents, etc. If these attacks are to be defeated, then the power of the trade unions must be extended to the political field. This means firstly that the trade unions must point out very firmly to the Labour Party that he who pays the piper calls the tune. This means if the Labour Party refuses to repeal the Bill, it should simply be pointed out that the trade unions finance the Labour Party to protect their interests, and therefore the interests of the working class, and that the Labour Party is clearly not doing this. The conclusion to be drawn from that is obvious. The same applies to M.P.s who are financed by trade unions. Their voting record in the House of Commons should be examined, and if they have voted against trade union policy, then their finance from the trade union should be cut off.

At the present time we cannot afford to have open traitors inside the Labour movement. Mayhew and Gunter refused to vote against the Tory Bill in the House of Commons. The trade unions must demand that they be expelled from the Labour Party.

At the present time it is clear that there will have to be a big struggle inside the Labour movement against the policies of Wilson & Co. Some actions already make it uncertain if that fight is going to be really carried out. For example, the *Tribune* group of M.P.s gave in to Wilson when they withdrew their motion against the Bill at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party. But if it is not certain at the moment how the struggle will take place, at least two things are certain. Firstly, that what is needed is the fullest possible discussion on how to fight the Tories. This means there must be no bans or proscriptions inside any of the organisations of the Labour movement. Secondly, that the strengthening of the small revolutionary groups is a vital task. At the moment organisations and newspapers such as *The Red Mole* appear terribly weak. But as the fight against the Tories really hots up, it will become clear that it is only those who are prepared to fight the Tories by any means necessary who can really defend the living standards of the working class. What will appear impractical then will not be the revolutionaries who really want to fight the Tories, but those people who think you can defeat the attacks on the trade unions and the working class's standard of living by simply passing resolutions and carrying out propaganda campaigns without using *all* the strength of the trade union movement to achieve aims that will *really* weaken the employers and their government.

# DEFEND THE POWER WORKERS

The power workers have been one of the sections of trade unionists most savagely attacked by the Tories and their press. They therefore have more to lose than most if the Tory Bill is passed. We therefore posed four questions to Wally Preston, an AEF power workers shop steward in Manchester, in order to find out how power workers think the Tory Bill should be fought. In Manchester a Trade Union Action Committee has already been set up.

—What is your attitude to the TUC's methods of opposing the Bill?

They are not effective. As a trade unionist, I wouldn't look to the TUC for a lead. The TUC has cooperated with all governments. I should, think, unfortunately, that there won't be a very big show of opposition on January 12th; I should be surprised if there are more than a million people out, particularly since what happened on December 8th. They'll be out in Liverpool; London and Scotland weren't able to muster anything like what they got in Liverpool on December 8th. In fact the North West is an area of great militancy. I think the Communist Party has withdrawn, and they're not backing January 12th. The major trade unions are not backing January 12th either; there's a certain advantage for them in the Bill, I don't think they're really seriously against it; the Bill means for the trade union bureaucrats that everything is official, it does away with unofficial movements, and that suits them. When a strike was on recently, one of the union organisers said "How much is it going to cost us?"; that's all he wanted to know; and that's typical of their attitude. They've got their dues, and all they care about is the quiet life.

Which of the unions have issued leaflets against the Bill?—apart from DATA and the AEF? The trade unions' opposition is only nominal, I think. What about Scanlon? Has he been touring the country, calling for opposition to the Bill?

—What about the Labour Party's attitude on the Bill?

The Labour Party did the same as the Tories. It's the same meat and different gravy. *In Place of Strife* was the same sort of thing. There are no radicals in the Labour movement; they are all lawyers and careerists. Look at Frank Allaun, for example; he wrote against Castle's Bill in *Tribune*, but he didn't even vote against it, he only abstained; he's done sweet Fanny Adams for us. The Labour Party generally leaves a bad taste in the mouth. It hasn't been able to defuse the militancy this time, thanks to its industrial record; nobody will ever be conned again. The Labour Party is past the point of no return; it's identified with everything.

—You said you think the Communist Party is not pushing so hard for strike action as it did for December 8th. Why do you think this is?

They haven't done anything like what they could have done. Possibly it's because they're not as well organised industrially as they were, and they may be afraid of showing up their weakness.

—Can you tell us about the Council of Action you are setting up?

Well, it's been set up. Apart from opposing the Bill, we intend to defend the people who will be penalised because of the Bill, if it's passed, to raise money for the people who will be fined for going on strike, to agitate against the Bill even after it has become law, to organise resistance against it. We intend to go round to factories and shop stewards and agitate against the Bill, ask them to resist it. Provided we have the organisation set up, even if the Bill is passed we still aim to fight it. We have broad representation on the Council of Action, with clerical, manual and immi-

grant organisations, which is good; and we have representatives from all the confederated unions, the Boilermakers, the AEF, the Heating and Domestic union, and DATA, the T&G, the Clerical and Administrative, NALGO. We have advocated a stoppage on January 12th, of course.

## The Red Mole

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