

THE BULLETIN

FOR SOCIALIST SELF-MANAGEMENT

Mid-November 1972 No.6

Price 2p

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FREEZE

The expected freeze on wages, hurriedly bulldozed through Parliament, is yet another indication of the Government's intention to sustain the exploiting system. Having failed in its forward thrust (outright confrontation) policy, in its desire to paralyse the mobility and combativity of the working class by its Industrial Relations Act, the Government has now been forced to open a Second Front.

Those who are acquainted with the clauses of the Nixon 90 day freeze of August 1971 will observe the very same words in the Tory freeze legislation. Even the original authors of this blatant piece of class legislation have admitted the impossibility of controlling prices. Therefore the similarity in design and purpose reveals the complete bank-ruptcy of the British Tories. But will this legislation assure an equitable 'return on capital'? Or, to put it bluntly: will this legislation and its forthcoming machinery to control wages assure an increase in the volume of surplus value from the workers?

What is at issue is not what capitalist spokesmen and their spiritual purveyors say about wages and prices; the crisis lies at the heart of the profit system: capitalists keep putting up prices so as to maintain their 'profit margins', consequently workers are compelled to strive for higher wages in order to keep abreast of rising prices. (Capitalists are sure of their profits). In fact the capitalists are liars when they say that they are in business to provide services to the public or consumers; they are in business to make profits. So, in this competitive world of capitalist anarchy the Tories will have to liquidate every vestige of working class resistance to keep the monopolies in control. And that is precisely the purpose of the Second Front together with the Industrial Relations Act.

One of the most disgusting spectacles of a decrepit government is its pathological ability to tranquilise itself with lies: "The nation wants an incomes-policy... the nation agrees with us... the nation wants the economy right." This unpredictability of the nation's mind is rather puzzling because, in 1970, when this Tory government was elected, the nation wasn't very keen on wages (prices) freeze, wasn't too fussy about interfering with market forces, but was imbued with a mission of making Britain Great again. Such is the childish twaddle of a ruling class in decline. Is there further proof of bourgeois senility?

But despite the creeping overall disintegration of the capitalist system the unfolding scenario between the CBI-TUC and the government reflects a sinister attempt by the government to incorporate some of the TUC leaders

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WORKERS' CONTROL IN THE MASS MEDIA

Television is a most effective means of instilling middle class values and norms into the mass of the working class. In periods of sharp class conflict it is used in a very conscious and skilful way to confuse and demoralise the workers, and it is only very recently that we have seen signs that workers in press, radio and T.V. are not the unquestioning minions of the system that the system keeps telling us they are. Hopefully some sort of effective workers' censorship or uncensorship will develop in the mass media, but what sort of mass communications do we want in the end? Surely the very nature of television means it has to be run on the hierarchical and centralised lines of something like the BBC. - Is the best we can hope for a television system run and controlled by producers, actors, technicians on behalf of the working class?

The present authoritarian set-up in broadcasting is not a natural or inevitable result of technological advance, it is instead a natural result of a small ruling class's use of the media to maintain ideological control of the working class. Instead of developments in electronics and T.V. assisting broadcasting to become ever more remote and authoritarian new developments tend to make the whole thing more uncontrollable by a strict hierarchy. Central control and censorship become more difficult as 'live' television anywhere, anytime, becomes expected by the public. The selection of what the viewer sees passes more to the cameraman and the director, and censorship in favour of ruling class norms relies more and more on the increasingly unreliable false consciousness of the T.V. worker and the threat of the sack if he makes 'mistakes'. Many other developments in communications can be more readily used to destroy the present authoritarian set up rather than strengthen it. Videotape for instance does more than allow instant replays - it brings the possibility of relatively cheap broadcasting and recording within the reach of working class organisations and socialist groups.

The control of the mass media is a vital question for socialists interested in the practice of self-management. It is not just a matter of pointing cameras at people and giving suitable left wing commentaries on their actions, neither is it acceptable for an elite, however well-meaning, to control and run the main channels of communication "in the interests of the working class". What is needed is something different, and that is for the 'experts', the engineers, the actors, the directors to assist people to do their own broadcasting, to help them produce their own programmes, to explain and teach the use of cameras, receiving and transmitting equipment so that their use is not limited to a few and the mystique of television is removed. Workers in the mass media need to set about destroying the means of censorship, which is mostly their own subordination to authority, their fingers pressing the switches when the directives are given. Finally who wants an 'independent' mass media? only the ruling class and they want it to be independent of the working class. We need a 'dependent' television system, dependent for its programme policy, planning and co-ordination on local, regional and national councils of elected recallable delegates from all working class organisations.

D.M. 15.11.72.

SOME QUESTIONS

What is propaganda?

We can all have a good laugh when some retired colonel or National Fronter accuses the television of left-wing bias; after all, we know that what they call a 'leftie' is in fact a trendy, unprincipled liberal producer. All right, so the media carry a right-wing bias. This is obvious from news reports of industrial disputes, foreign affairs, etc. This bias has been challenged several times in the last few months: the Evening Standard workers' refusal to print the Jak cartoon on the electricians' strike; the participation of some Press workers in the strikes to release the dockers from Pentonville; the noises made at the Labour Party Conference. It has been very uplifting, but we shouldn't be astonished at the audacity of these actions, as the media barons themselves are. For in fact they are a partial response to a partial, perhaps minor aspect of ruling-class propaganda. If the argument about bias is confined to news, it is not only inadequate but mystifying too: propaganda can take on subtle forms, and if you switch on the television at 11 o'clock in the morning and switch off after the Queen you will not have watched one second that is not propaganda.

'Entertainment' programmes, for example. A majority of plays and comedy programmes are about middle-class people in middle-class situations: where this rule is broken, it is so that working-class characters can be laughed at by a working-class audience, e.g. Nellie Pledge's struggles with the English language, Alf Garnett's stubborn ignorance. In connection with Alf Garnett, it should be noted that racism is a working-class phenomenon (in 'Love Thy Neighbour' the racist is also chairman of the Labour Club): on the other hand, what sort of people produced the recent 'Softly, Softly' in which a reasonable, sane African dismembered his white girl-friend's body and handed it over, piece by piece, to the law (they didn't even make him a psychopath, as a white man would have been presented)? There is no difference between this and the stories the Nazis used to broadcast about Jews lying in wait for German virgins and leaving their livers on the pavement. If this seems an isolated example, you must remember that a black person on T.V. or in the press always appears primarily in a role as a black.

The deepest effects of propaganda have to do, as D.M. points out (above) with the subordination to authority. Psycho-analysis has revealed how the individual's willingness to accept authority unquestioningly is not natural but a result of sexual repression, particularly in childhood. In this respect, the universal television definition of love must be regarded as propaganda: it is nearly always connected, visually, with bullets, death, danger, tragedy. If not, it is enclosed in a rigid formula - the real man, the real woman (we all know what they are), father, mother, etc. Freedom from rigidity, from the obstacles to love, is a liberating force which must at all costs be suppressed by the class which it threatens to overthrow. What use is it to concentrate attacks on biased news, when it is precisely the other kinds of programme that stifle our will to fight in the first place?

What does 'the public' want?

The answer to this depends on the kind of society we live in. "Happiness is (substitute name of appropriate commodity)": as long as happiness is defined as buying and selling, as long as the profit motive is at the

heart of our existence outside work as well as in it, 'the public' will continue to get what it wants and want what it gets. Piecemeal reforms will not solve this issue. However, in certain situations, and particularly in revolutionary situations, people's needs burst through this vicious circle. To take an example from history: Britain in the 1820s and 1830s was in revolutionary turmoil; a vast underground working-class press sprang up, masses of people taught themselves to read (in the half-century after this press was wiped out, literacy actually declined); the first attempts at large scale trade-unionism sprang out of clubs which had been formed to defend the working class press against persecution. Now, once again, there is a 'popular' press, this time on the ruling class's terms, Why do people read it so eagerly? Certainly not because they hope to get any information or help concerning their own lives (as they did with the underground press all those years ago). The fact in itself that people go to 'news'-papers not for information but for entertainment, is a mass criticism of the mass media. This criticism will not be met by Guardian-reading 'left' workers in the media patronisingly turning out popularised Guardians. Which brings us to another question. Are the real militants inside or outside the industry?

Reporters, journalists and editorial staff play such an important part in the ideological repression that one thing is clear: those who consider themselves left or who are interested in the practice of workers' control must either be a) hypocrites or b) so sickened by what they are doing that they are incapable of taking action. The only examples of militancy have come from the manual workers such as cameramen, print-workers, etc. Shop floor organisation in the print is famous; the chapel system was a forerunner of the shop stewards' movement. But where is shop-floor organisation the tightest? On the Financial Times: there, the wages are highest and the hours least (averaging $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours per night); management has no say or control of the production process once the copy leaves the offices. Is it a coincidence that the paper where the workers are 'strongest' is the one which actually provides an internal service for the bourgeoisie?

One other point. This strength of shop-floor organisation is maintained by the closest thing in Britain to an American-style union, NATSOPA, with a regular gang of heavies who act as the final 'referee' in any attempt to disturb this 'strength' from within. While it is natural that NATSOPA should encourage its workers to de-censor anti-trade union propaganda, you couldn't expect it to take action against other forms of propaganda: for an example look at Briginshaw's opposition to the EEC, which is based on a defence of Britannia and the Queen's sovereignty. Given the limitations of media workers and (more to the point) their unions:

What about Workers' Councils in the media?

The limitations of media workers are obviously dependent on the present structure of their industry and society, and are therefore not absolute. So isn't it possible that real workers' control might exist in a socialist society, consisting of ownership and management by a council of journalists and technicians? Let us take two concrete examples, one reformist, the other a socialist one. The French Le Monde, a kind of successful Guardian has 49% of its share capital owned by its journalists, the other 51% being owned by the proprietor. In the May events of 1968 it appeared to be on the side of the people - until its proprietor made a sudden return from

holiday, when it started to support de Gaulle.

A socialist example is the house of Vjesnik, in self-managed Yugoslavia. This is a publishing company that is independent of the Federal Government and is run by its own workers'- and staff-council. In Croatia it enjoys the kind of monopoly that Lord Thomson and Axel Springer can only dream about. What does it do with that monopoly? It continually sides with the bankers and technocrats which have, like itself, sprung up like weeds between the self-managed factory and commune ghettos of Yugoslavia; it attacks 'leftists' and even 'Marxists' openly, by name, and encourages their persecution.

One of the most fundamental and effective divisions of labour is, and from the beginning of history has been the division between mental and manual labour, and so between the communicator and the person on the receiving end. A 'pure' form of workers' control, the council form, would only preserve this and intensify the difference between a knowledgeable elite and a passive majority. Even the bourgeoisie, in their wisdom, know this: their media are totally interlocked with the rest of industry; they sit on each others' boards, print their 'rival's' newspapers on their own presses, 70% of IBA advertising is accounted for by 20 companies.....

Didn't he do well?

If workers' councils in the media are counter-productive, what alternatives are their? D.M. (article above) has dealt with this. The word communication signifies a two-way process; present communications technology is in itself extremely democratic, and could facilitate the kind of mobility and flexibility which a truly democratic, socialist society would demand. It is at present growing so fast that it is becoming dangerously leaky, beyond the control of legislation. Ideology is a fortress into which the ruling class has retreated (it is used to prevent strikes more often than economic measures are used): the fortress seems immensely strong, since it has the power to absorb protest and change.

But by retreating into this fortress, the bourgeoisie has made itself fatally dependent on it. To take advantage of this we have to attack not only the content of the media, where attacks can be absorbed endlessly, but also its technological forms, which are in themselves powerful enough to escape bourgeois control. It is up to the 'experts' to demystify us about the remoteness and complexity of the media. Any programmes - 'The Generation Game', 'Opportunity Knocks' etc. - which feature ordinary mortals, scream one message louder than anything else: WE ARE THE EXPERTS: THE PEOPLE CANNOT COPE WITH THE JOB OF COMMUNICATION.

It is not, in fact, true but this is a point which has to be proved in practice.

A CONFERENCE ON WORKERS' CONTROL IN EDUCATION
AND THE MASS MEDIA

To be held on Saturday 25th November, 10.30 to 5.30 at the London College of Printing, Elephant and Castle, London S.E.1. Sponsored by ACTT, Central London Branch NUJ, LCS Political Committee and RACS Educational Committee. Credentials 50p per person from: Ron Taylor, 100 Ashley Drive, Whitton, Middx. Delegates and Observers Only - from trade unions at all levels, branch, shop & chapel, school etc. or from other interested labour movement organisations.

THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 1972

Other Women's Impressions

"It will be the first time I've been away without my husband or children since I was married".

"So many women together in one place. It really made me feel that we were powerful".

"The workshops on the first day were dominated by the political 'heavies' ".

"I felt very contradictory - Good, Bad, Good, Bad - all the week-end".

"Our group was very demoralised before the conference but we came back with new energy".

"After a while I realized the futility of dancing at someone and just danced".

"To see over a thousand women against my paintings. Its what I've always dreamed of".

"People are less frustrated now. They are learning what they can do".

Some Bare Facts

1700 women ^{registered} for and attended some part of the conference. Men looked after 90 children in a very well run creche, and unknown numbers were looked after all over the country by groups of fathers or individually.

There are Women's Liberation groups in more than 70 places outside of London. In some places several different groups either co-existing or federated. There are more than a hundred groups in the London area.

Groups vary greatly in character. There are locality groups and special interest groups, campaign groups, consciousness raising groups, groups linked to specific political organizations.

An Individuals View

Variety marks the movement and its conferences. This time only three full sessions and the social attempted to get all the women together. All the discussions were in workshops. Discussions around the six demands in Selma James' paper "Women the Unions and Work" and around the kinds of questions that raised about relations between capitalism and sexism and the family were held on the Saturday morning. There were related and continuing discussions in the afternoon on the issues and campaigns the movement has been or hopes to be concerned with, the struggle for women to control their own fertility through the women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign, the campaign for the Anti-Discrimination Bill, against the ending of family allowances payable to women, psychology workshops, workshops on literature, on unsupported mothers, and many more.

The discussions on the Saturday morning centred around the relationship of Marxism to analyses of the position of women in society. On Sunday morning the workshops were centred around Radical Feminism, the central idea of which is that the ^{was} fundamental social problem is male supremacy. During the week-end there ^{was} also a series of meetings with the large number of visitors, from France, Italy, Holland, Spain, North America, Ireland, Australia and Scotland.

There were films, exhibitions, a poetry reading, poster and literature stalls, and a very successful and enjoyable Disco.

The atmosphere is somewhere between a conference and a fair. This time there was more feeling of purpose, less frustration and impatience, and except for some of the discussions on Selma's paper where a lot of heavy artillery was lobbed over the heads of the crowd from fortified positions, more willingness to listen to one another, more agreement about the areas to be worked in.

The last few years have shown even to those who at first believed otherwise that this is a movement not to be taken over, but a genuinely grassroots movement with a dynamic of its own.

The movement has not got a single political philosophy. The conference did not attempt to vote on the questions that had been debated and discussed at the week-end. Though some resolutions were passed at the final full session that was one of the least satisfactory parts of the conference; and the later ones were voted on by a dwindling number of people and have a doubtful force in the movement, based as it is on the autonomy of small groups.

This conference showed that the discussion of ideas in the movement is deeper and more widespread than before. It confirmed that the movement will continue to grow and to work out for itself what it will do .

M.E. 17.11.72.

(Editors note. We feel that the above report is interesting and shows the progress the women's movement has made; especially in rebuffing the attempts by the political sects to take it over. This indicates the essentially healthy condition. However, we feel that if the movement were to adopt the position of Radical Feminism, as described above, this would eventually lead it into a blind alley.)

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in the policy decisions. The government is convinced that the TUC 'moderates', being contemptuous of rank and file struggles, know in 'their heart of hearts' that the course adopted against inflation is right, that is, legal restraint of wages. In other words the government knows that these leaders are sincere believers in the capitalist system of exploitation and social alienation and that they have been pushed onto a limb from which it is very difficult for them to return to safe ground, i.e. continued hoodwinking of workers. For them to continue their roles as imposters concessions must be given to the workers, but the economy cannot afford the necessary concessions to stabilise capitalist influence in the workers' movement. (Of course "when we had our colonies and the charismatic Citrine we could have done this.")

In the short term the freeze will bring a temporary lull in the pursuit of wage claims. Already some of the Left bureaucrats are modifying their members' claims. (These people still englobe 'public opinion' in their tactical considerations.) But the practical result of the freeze i.e. continued rising prices, will add further impetus to future class battles. This, some capitalist politicians are aware of, but in so far as workers are concerned it will be a great lesson, a great lesson in capitalist deceit and lies. Thus, the entire subject of self-managed socialism is now shifting from a theoretical abstraction into the domain of practical politics.

INFLATION

What is inflation? Inflation can be described as the total calls on a nations resources being greater than those available to meet them. This means that the purchasing power available to people is greater than all the goods and services available at any particular moment. This situation is expressed by a constant rise in prices. But this explanation leaves out a whole series of factors. Most economists talk about two main types of inflation - demand-pull and cost-push.

Demand-pull is the theory that says it is increases in final demand, i.e. consumers have more money than there are goods available and this pulls prices up to close the gap between money and goods. The demand and price increases cause a rise in the demand for the factors of production, which in turn cause factor prices to rise.

Cost-push theory reverses the order of events and tells us that it is increases in factor prices that cause increases in final prices, and (this being the crucial point) that these changes in factor prices can occur independently, even at times of no excess demand in a national market. One example of cost-push inflation would be a rise in the price of imported raw materials or goods. Another example is the one that is always trotted forward, that of wages increases which increase the costs of industry and these are passed on to the consumers. It is this latter point that is always seized upon and used as a club to beat the workers over the head. But I will return to this point later.

What most 'experts' leave out of any discussion of inflation is the question of monopoly, monopoly that is in relation to capital; they are only too ready to talk about the 'monopoly' of the trade unions. Now by monopoly of capital I don't mean the situation of one company having control over the whole of one industry; rather I mean a situation where there are only a few very large firms in an industry. In that situation it is very easy for them to cut out any price competition between themselves, and keep to a common price policy. This means that they are able to jack up prices to grab as much profit as they can, its known as "what the traffic will bear". Very little is said about this aspect of inflation, yet there is no doubt that it is one of the most powerful factors. Just think for a minute and ask yourself when did you last hear of any of the giant firms - say in the car industry - cutting prices?

Because of the high degree of monopolization, since the war in particular, we have seen a new pattern of pricing emerging in capitalist countries. It usually works as follows. When there is a slacking off of demand for their products this means that they often have to run their plants below full capacity. This means a drop in income and profits. Now in a non-monopolized situation more often than not prices would be cut to try to get a bigger share of the market. But with monopolies they put the price up so that with a smaller out-put they get the same amount of profit. So we had the odd situation of prices tended to be held steady in booms and going up when there was a recession. On the question of wages, this has meant that some companies have granted wage increases even during recessions, but all the evidence is that prices have gone up more than would be justified by such increases.

In other words, the bosses have passed off their taking bigger profits as being due to "the greedy workers"!

Another aspect of inflation that is rarely mentioned is the rise in interest rates that has gone on since the early 'fifties. At first sight such things may seem not to be very important to the ordinary worker who doesn't have any savings to get interest on. But it does affect them. First of all, housing. This is directly affected by the money that most local authorities borrow to build houses with. As the years have gone on the amount of money being paid out in interest on loans by local authorities has gone up in leaps and bounds, and this has led to higher rents and rates. Also companies that borrow money to expand their business will pass on the increased cost of borrowing money to the consumer. Another aspect is that the rise of interest rates has meant that those who buy goods on hire purchase have to pay more, and since it is working class families that buy most of the goods sold in this way it has meant they have been soaked this way as well. (That's apart from the high price of the goods).

Taxation is another reason for inflation. Taxes are used for two main purposes today. Firstly, to raise money needed for the government to carry out its policies. Secondly, they are used to try to 'steer' the economy. This is done by regulating certain taxes to either give people more money by reducing taxes or less by raising them.

But, of course, much of the government's spending is wasted. Not, as some newspapers would have us believe on Social Security - which is quite a small part of government spending - but on goods and services that are no direct use to the ordinary person. The biggest and most inflationary item of government spending is on armaments. This again is rarely mentioned. When the 'experts' talk about cutting down government spending they usually mean cutting down on house building, social services etc., but not arms. Yet arms spending is probably the most wasteful and inflationary way of using taxes. Who can eat a tank? How many people can live in a rocket? All of these sort of things are deductions from real wealth, yet the people who make them and use them have to be paid, which means they have a call on resources which they haven't matched by putting something into the kitty. Of course there are a number of non-productive (in the direct sense) items which are necessary, e.g. hospitals. Yet as we all know this country is short of good modern hospitals.

Another aspect of government spending which is inflationary, is spending money on projects such as Concorde. Most of the money spent on the research and development will never be recovered from sales of the 'plane. But of course the makers will make a profit!

Yes, there are lots of other reasons for inflation apart from wages. In fact over a long period it is clearly established that wages follow prices and very often fail to keep up with increases. Yet of course it will be wages and the ordinary workers who will be made to carry the can in the present wage freeze, if we let the Tories get away with.

K.J.T.

Printed and Published by BMS Publications, 16a Holmdale Rd. London NW6
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