

# NO CUTS, NO REDUNDANCIES

Council workers throughout the Greater Manchester area face the prospect of savage cuts and redundancies if proposed plans go ahead.

Manchester City Council are talking of making cuts of over £40 million in the coming year and this raises the prospect of compulsory redundancies.

Any cuts will hit hardest those who are most vulnerable, the young, the old, the disabled and the poor. As yet no-one is quite sure of the extent of the butchery as the City Council is deliberately putting out misleading and contradictory information in a deliberate attempt to cause confusion and to prevent an organised fightback developing.

The response of the unions has been pathetic as they adopt a wait and see approach and take part in meaningless discussions over proposed budgets. Already divisions are appearing within and between the unions and council workers are becoming increasingly frustrated.

Part of the problem is that the unions, along with the council, have laid the blame entirely at the door of the Tory government. This has also been taken up by the left as they try to make political capital out of attacking the Tories. It remains a fact that Graham Stringer and his Labour cronies have decided to gamble with the jobs and services of the city of the faint prospect of landing the Olympic games in the year 2000.



It is time to recognise that in this situation the ruling Labour group has sided with the Government against the council workers and residents of Manchester. Indeed the Labour Party NEC has instructed Labour Parties all over the country to make compulsory redundancies to balance the books.

In many cases workers are having to pay for mistakes made in the past by city councils. The time has come for all council workers, no matter which section or Trades Union, to stand together to fight these cuts. Calls for action have largely been ignored by union officials who talk of being realistic. We have seen where the realism of the past years have got us, a shrinking workforce, privatisation of services and a lack of resources. Indeed there is evidence that the City Council has deliberately run down sections of departments in preparation for privatisation.

If the unions are unable or unwilling to fight back it falls to council workers themselves to organise resistance where it matters the most, in the workplace. We need to stand together and not let the City Council divide us by playing one section off against another.

We want to see NO CUTS, NO REDUNDANCIES, let's not have the false unity of the new "super union" UNISON based on cheap credit and insurance, but real unity of all council workers, without the managers who are implementing the cuts, based on solidarity and mutual aid. AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL.



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# SOLIDARITY

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## CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?

THE British trade union movement is in a financial and ideological crisis which will worsen with the election of a Tory government for a fourth successive term. These 2 facts are closely linked. Since Thatcher was elected in 1979 trade union membership has fallen markedly and continues to do so. The TUC's latest annual report shows that membership has almost halved since the Tories came to power with only six million now entitled to vote in union elections.

This has also had a dramatic effect on the TUC's and individual unions' incomes. Many unions are now in debt and have been forced to borrow money to keep going. As a result, according to TUC figures, a massive 10% of dues goes towards the repayment of debt, in other words our hard-earned money goes straight to bankers and their rich friends. This has forced a rash of amalgamations over the past few years, the latest of which is the merger of the AEU and EEPTU to form the second largest union in the country, with NALGO, NUPE and COHSE soon to follow to form a new union of 1.5 million members.

We would welcome these new super-unions if their main aim was to increase the industrial strength of workers. However, the current amalgamations are inspired only by financial viability and the desire of union bureaucrats to retain their power and well-paid jobs. Whilst the merging of unions along industrial lines - for example, an RMT-ASLEF merger - would be of immense benefit to workers in their fight against management, little or no thought is given to that in any of the recent or proposed mergers. What is now occurring is the formation of a number of general unions or mini-TUC's which will accept anyone as members and indeed compete with each other for members, often trying to win single-union sweetheart deals with management.

Coupled with this merger-madness is the move away from workplace militancy to more of an American-

style business union mentality. Unions increasingly see themselves as pressure groups who will be able to influence government by the use of professional negotiators elegantly expressing their views without the need of strike action. More and more they see their members as clients who pay dues in return for services - hence the growing emphasis on mortgages, credit cards, insurance and even membership of BUPA in the case of the old EEPTU.

We believe that over the last 20 years the trade unions have become more and more divorced from the point of workers' power - the workplace - and the move towards super unions will only increase that trend. This can only lead to unions being alienated from their members and therefore of little value to ordinary working people.

There is a need to build workplace organisations that will concentrate on improving pay and conditions while constantly stressing the need to change the whole capitalist system which is the ultimate source of misery and oppression. We will be part of that movement believing that the future lies in working class organisation based on the workplace and not "super unions" who measure success in terms of a balanced bank book and the number of credit cards issued to members.

Consequently, we want to set up networks in every industry working towards building revolutionary unions. Initially these networks would provide information and support for workers in struggle.

While rejecting the existing unions as beyond reform, we will continue to work inside them to defend working class interests. We will, however, be promoting workplace resistance, not standing in union elections on so-called radical platforms. It is in workplace organisation and not in New Unions formed through amalgamations that the future of the working class lies.



## TORY LAW

Already in Britain, we have the most oppressive anti-union and labour relations legislation in Western Europe. The Tories are not satisfied with the situation, and are planning to introduce even more stringent and repressive legislation. These plans are set out in a green paper, 'Industrial Relations in the 1990's'.

All but the very smallest industrial dispute would have to have a postal ballot for a strike to be called.

The Tories are planning to make the deduction of union dues directly from wages illegal unless the employer has written permission from the employee this consent must be renewed at three yearly intervals and have the right opt out at any time. Employees have to be informed of any change of the rate of deduction and again they have the 'right' to opt out.

### Strike ballots

There will have to be seven days' notice given by the Trade Unions before a ballot for strike action. These ballots will have to be independently supervised if more than fifty workers are involved the ballot be must postal. The employers will have to be given a sample copy of the ballot, as well as the scrutineers' report.

### Union executive ballots

The independent scrutineers will have access to a union's membership register at the request of a union member or election candidate who thinks that it is inaccurate. Unions will have to allow equal opportunities to all candidates. Unions will have to ensure that an external agency distributes and stores voting papers. Trade Unions will have to say in their annual returns to the Government's Certification Officer how many names appear on the register without a corresponding address.

### Unlawful Industrial Action

The Public will have the right as part of the Citizens Charter to seek redress if they consider that they have the victim of any unlawful action. Any persons who think that they have been deprived of any goods or services will be able to take proceedings through the courts. The Government will appoint an "independent" official to advise the public of its rights.

This new legislation is designed for one end, the

breaking of the organised working class, and any campaign of resistance.

We believe that we as a class should fight back, to do this we must build a real alternative to the existing collaborationist trade unions, taking on the full control of our own struggles.

## THE MINERS

The government's decision to postpone the closure of 31 pits should be seen for what it is - no more than a delaying tactic to let the public outcry die down. It is clear that the Tories are intent on destroying utterly the mining industry and the mining communities - the privatisation of electricity was totally geared to that end. Coupled with the pit closures, the government, presiding over an economic crisis, has made its intention clear to hammer public sector workers. While privatisation still looms over the whole public sector, workers' jobs and wages are now coming under threat through a fresh round of cuts, the aim of which is to bail the government out the present crisis.

However, the unions seem in as much disarray as the Tories. It doesn't take a genius to realise that the way forward is for unions in industries most at threat to organise co-ordinated strike action. After an initial blaze of publicity over joint talks between the railway unions and the miners, little has been heard as the railway workers' leaders shied away from effective strike action in favour of the dead end tactics of courting public sympathy. Such tactics will inevitably leave the miners isolated and facing defeat. We cannot allow this to happen. A defeat for the miners will be a defeat for us all.

We, the workers whose necks are on the line, must begin to organise. Union leaders have already shown they are unable and unwilling to build strike action, but then it isn't their wages and conditions that are under attack. If effective action is to be organised we must break out of the narrow confines of union membership. Joint meetings must be organised of workers who are under threat. This process can be started by organising branch meetings calling for strike action to which speakers from other affected industries can be invited.

By organising in our own workplaces and coming together with workers in other workplaces and industries, rather than waiting for ever for our union leaders, we can force the unions to take effective action and deliver the killer blow to a government in total disarray.

## UNION ORGANISATION

This broadsheet has been written by the Manchester group of the International Workers' Association, an organisation of workers who believe in an alternative, revolutionary kind of unionism. This organisation unites workers in over twelve countries around the world. We are united, amongst many other things, by our belief that unions such as those in the TUC are fundamentally constrained by their in-born limitations. Many unions in Britain nowadays can barely protect their membership from attacks by the bosses, let alone organise defence in the form of strikes or other actions. Most can offer us better insurance deals, cheaper holidays or credit cards, but often end up between us and management when there is a dispute. What happens is that we have to take on both union and management in a dispute, with union officials running around doing their best to keep us poorly informed or stifle any action.

We are told by the 'left' of course to 'radicalise' the unions and get more left leaders at the top who will do the job for us. Years have been wasted by this 'strategy' and union power is nothing in comparison to what it was fifteen years ago. We have been left practically defenceless and the Tories haven't finished with the unions yet. We've had enough of left promises and Labour Party pledges and have realised that it is time to organise in a different way, not with bureaucrats, officials and careerists by ourselves in a permanent organisation of resistance. Some may think that a revolutionary workplace-based union is a break with British tradition. Well it is a break with the reformist TUC unions of now but it is not without its history in this country. The early twentieth century saw this kind of organisation flourish in Britain and we see it in the 90s in other countries of Europe and Latin America.

As a first step towards these revolutionary unions we have Networks of activists in Education, Transport and Public Service. We know this will be a slow process and we haven't got all the solutions but by building an organisation based on solidarity and strength which

will improve things here and now and which has a vision of the future, we think it's worth the effort and we are open to all workers regardless of union affiliation or employment.

**NETWORKS EXIST IN EDUCATION,  
PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORT.  
WRITE TO P.O. BOX 29, SW PDO,  
MANCHESTER M15 5HW FOR  
DETAILS.**



### MIDDLEBROOK MUSHROOMS

Middlebrook Mushrooms, based near Selby, have recently sacked 89 women workers for opposing a pay cut this year after a 1992 pay freeze. There were over 300 redundancies last year.

Messages of support to: SUE SYKES, 33 PARK DRIVE, CAMPSALL, DONCASTER DN6 9NS

