

# News from everywhere

A PRACTICAL campaign against increased fares on the Underground has started in London.

A group called Fare Fight have distributed thousands of 'deferred payment slips' which are, in effect, IOUs to London Transport.

Travellers (currently estimated at 5,000) buy the ticket they think is reasonable for their journey. At the journey's end they hand in the ticket and the note offering to pay the excess fare. So long as the name and address is correct, it's all perfectly legal.

When London Transport eventually write and ask for the rest of the fare, the Fare Fighters reply that they are "unable to process your application due to insufficient information" and enclose a 40-question form for the bureaucrats to fill in.

London Transport have reportedly taken on extra staff. Some Fare Fighters have had visitors telling them their "credit is suspended". But this, too, can be got round.

Plans for the future include spreading the campaign to the buses; liaison with trade unions, students' unions and cuts campaigns; and a national conference of transport campaigners.

Things are different in Liverpool.

Many bus passengers avoid unreasonable fares by simply buying the cheapest ticket they can get away with. The MPTE call this "passenger resistance".

Inspectors are few and far between, and drivers are usually easy-going, so there's only a slight chance you'll be asked for the extra. — Islington Gutter Press/Peace News



AMNESTY International has revealed that the security forces of Argentina and Uruguay are collaborating in the assassination of Uruguayan exiles resident in Argentina. At least 10 Uruguayans were killed over a two month period earlier this year. A popular method of disposing of them is to drop them into the River Plate from helicopters.



READERS of the Ceylon Evening Observer on August 23 were not surprised to find the main front page story was an interview with three housewives defending the government's policy on food prices. After all, the newspaper is owned by the government.

The shock came next morning when another paper revealed that the three "typical" women were in



From a poster used by the Fare Fighters

no position to be interviewed, or, for that matter to bother about food prices. They were all dead.

The reporter had simply picked three names from the Deaths column of a newspaper which happened to be on his desk. How he interviewed them is still a mystery.

Everyone was amused except Mrs Bandaranaike and her government. They are afraid the "interview with the corpses" will confirm people's suspicions that government-controlled newspapers are nothing but propaganda. They have sacked the

reporter and suspended editors of two other government newspapers whose only crime, apparently, was talking to the sacked reporter. — Guardian



A WIDESPREAD unofficial strike by American miners took place in August. It began in a small way at the Cedar Coal Company in West Virginia. The miners wanted a full-time worker to staff the emergency phone linking the pit with the surface. They complained

of waiting up to half an hour for the phone to be answered.

When the men went on strike the company went to court and got an injunction ordering them back to work. The miners refused. The judge fined their union \$50,000 and threatened to send the leaders — and eventually the strikers — to jail.

After this the strike quickly spread. It was no longer a local issue but a struggle for the right to strike and to keep the courts out of industrial disputes. At the height of the strike more than 100,000 men were out — two-thirds of all American coal miners.

But by the third week in August men were drifting back. Morale was low, so were funds. The courts agreed to review the injunction, but the issue was not really resolved. Still, the strike was important. It probably marked the first skirmish in a battle which is bound to flare up again.

In 1974, miners' president Arnold Miller signed a legally binding "No Strike" contract, and leaders of the other big unions did the same. But now, with wages falling in real terms and with 8 million unemployed, the "No Strike" policy is beginning to be challenged.

— Spectre.



WE'RE all being urged to save energy. But Aberdeen council's idea beats the lot. When voting, councillors will be spared the effort of raising their hands or saying Yes or No as their names are called out.

Instead they'll just have to press a button — and hey presto, the result lights up on an electronic scoreboard. And it's only costing £25,000.

While they're at it, how about a Hughie Green Clapometer for the public gallery? Or don't they think anyone would use that?

— Aberdeen People's Press

## Denmark: Industrial court is a workers' nightmare

THE OBJECT of the Danish Industrial Court is to enforce labour agreements and deal with unofficial strikes.

Workers are forced to accept agreements made between the LO (Danish TUC) and the Employers' Association. The agreements last for two years.

Often when these two organisations have signed new agreements there is one strike after another... to try and straighten out the mess. These strikes are unofficial and are sent to the Industrial Court.

Conflicts are only official after proper notice and when collective bargaining takes place. (The steel industry is an exception.)

In times of crisis the collective bargaining is broken off in favour of an Act of Parliament. The Social Democrats in government have quite a record of such 'social contracts' — and of course all strikes against these are unofficial.

When a strike comes about a meeting is held within 48 hours between the local branch, the shop steward and the boss. The meeting is held behind closed doors, meaning that the workers have no chance to control their delegates. In most cases negotiations lead to agreements — not accepted by the workers fully, but enough to make them go back to work.

If the workers decide to continue the strike, negotiations start between the union and the Employers' Association — negotiations which the workers have no real control over.

If the workers still don't accept, the employers refer the strike to the Industrial Court.

In the court workers have no right to speak — they are represented by an attorney from the union whose statements often conflict with the interests of the workers on strike. There is no appeal against the judges' decision.

The Industrial Court seldom puts any restraint on the boss, but always orders the workers back to work. It fines the workers for the number of hours out. (The rate depends on the time out. If the workers go back as soon as the court directs them to do so, the fine is small.)

A worker who goes out for more than two weeks can be fined 12.75 kr. (£1.18) for each hour out. The lowest hourly wages under the labour agree-

DENMARK is often thought of as a liberal-minded, tolerant country. But one thing the Danish authorities won't tolerate is industrial militancy.

- Workers who go on strike can be fined, sacked — or both.
- Unemployed people who refuse to fill their jobs can have their dole stopped.
- And anyone who gives financial help to a strike can be in trouble too.

This policy is enforced by an Industrial Court which dates back to the last century. The court does not allow workers to speak, and there is no appeal against its decisions.

This report, by PIA POULSEN of the Danish 'Workers Solidarity' group, will probably horrify many working people in this country. But it also shows where a lot of the ideas in the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act came from... and what could happen here in future if anyone decides to bring us into line with this particular Common Market country.

ments are 23.80 kr. (£2.20).

Before the 1973 Industrial Court Act, workers could be fined for striking just a couple of hours. But the new Act makes a distinction between 'spontaneous' and 'systematic' action. A 'spontaneous' strike can last for three days without fine while an action lasting only a couple of hours like a workers' meeting on the job, is 'systematic' and can be fined heavily.

Sometimes the fines are suspended. This means that workers going on strike again have two fines hanging over their heads.

The fines are paid to the Employers' Association if the company is a member, if not they are paid direct to the boss. Occasionally the union receives the fines.

Fines are deducted from wages. If a worker leaves the company he still has to pay. If he refuses, the bailiff can take his radio or TV.

### PORCELAIN STRIKE

IN OCTOBER 1972 the Royal Porcelain Factory and the Ceramic Labour Union signed an agreement which secured regular hourly wages for the girls repairing faulty plates. (The Christmas plates from the factory are exported all over the world.)

Two weeks later the management claimed that the agreement was too expensive and revoked it without notice. The girls refused to accept the dictates of the management who were also threatening them with a fine of 200,000 kr. (£18,500).

In January the dispute went to arbitration and the girls won. They

looked like getting their money. But then the management gave two months notice cancelling the agreement.

In February the Industrial Court fined the 150 girls 72,000 kr. (£6,670) for striking. This was despite the fact that the girls never refused to work under the agreement, and despite the arbitration award.

The girls accused the LO (TUC) of not taking proper care of their case and demanded that the LO pay their fines. The chairman replied that the girls were "merely silly and stupid".

### TAXES RAISED

IN MAY 1974 the government raised taxes. Workers demanded pay rises to compensate for their loss of spending power. There were strikes all over the country lasting two or three days (the new law made it possible to have a three-day strike without being fined).

The employers wanted the court to fine all the workers together. But legally this was difficult and the court had never before fined workers from hundreds of different companies all together.

The LO started negotiations with the Employers' Association, partly because the strikes were a blow against their agreement. After several secret meetings between the Association and the LO, the Industrial Court fined 400 shipyard workers.

These 400 and 25,000 other workers went out in protest. Resolutions came from workers all over the country saying they would go out as soon as the bosses started to collect the



Women strikers at the Royal Porcelain Factory decorate cardboard plates to sell to raise funds. Straightforward donations to strikes are illegal.

fines.

For the first time in recent labour history workers went out in direct protest against the Industrial Court. The Association referred the new strikes to the court and more secret meetings were held. They decided to drop the case, knowing that stirring any more could leave a situation that no organisation was able to control.

But two things were made clear: Strikes against the state will be handled in the same way as strikes against the bosses; and strikes against fines are a 'systematic' action and will be fined.

### LOSING YOUR JOB

GOING ON STRIKE can mean more than fines — you can also lose your job. When a strike is unofficial jobs can be declared 'vacant'. The boss is then free to go to the labour exchange and hire new workers. If the unemployed refuse to accept the jobs they can be denied their dole. The sacked strikers are fined and denied social security until the boss gets production going again.

### WEAK OPPOSITION

THERE HAS been no great fight against the Industrial Court. There have been speeches from party-organised union leaders, small political groups and militant workers.

Two lines have existed. One by union leaders saying the Act has to

be changed through Parliament. Demonstrations after working hours and resolutions are their weapons.

The other line, fought by small groups and more militant workers, says that the only way to fight it is to ignore it. Refuse to pay the fine; when it is deducted from wages go out for a day. This is their weapon. And from our point of view the only right one.

The reason for so little attention being paid to the Industrial Court is that it is only a part of the whole net of labour laws. The fight therefore focuses more on the collective bargaining and the incomes policy.

It might get a blow now, though, as the Royal Porcelain Factory are out again.

The workers went on strike in June wanting to raise the lowest wages. They are still on strike. They have received widespread support and several labour organisations have bought their painted cardboard plates. This has been reported to the Industrial Court by the employers, who want to fine the organisations for giving financial aid!

Already the jobs have been declared vacant by the court, but without the desired result. The strike goes on — against the government's new 'social contract' and against the Industrial Court.

So watch out for blue fluted plates of Royal Cardboard!