FOR KIDS in Cambridge, schools are now a twice-weekly treat in their school meals. Their country, together with Eros, and their local education authority, the Education Committee, is cutting down on school meals because they are too costly. And Devon has joined a number of other education authorities who, in answer to instructions from Whitehall, have cut down on meat in school meals.

But the Labour government has no doubt told them, they should pretend they are lucky to be getting any dinner at all, in a situation that is causing "economic difficulties". And for thousands of kids in Leicestershire, no dinner is precisely what they are getting.

In a statement issued by the Council for Educational Development last week, a sad chronicle of education retrenchment is listed. "This will be the bitterest winter ever for education", says its Chairman, Cyril Pyle. "The reports we have been getting in show local education authority all over the country are making contingency plans which will close crowded classrooms, reduce teachers’ salaries, reduce resources, deteriorating conditions and a hardening time all around the children in our schools if they are put into effect as planned."

Already last year there was an outcry in Buckinghamshire where to close colleges, schools and libraries "borders on the ridiculous". Now the Education and Resources Committee has decided on a cut of 8% in real terms in the education budget. According to NUT Regional Official Ray Fox, this would cut the teaching force in the country by 1,500, or 4,500 teaching jobs wiped out.

HALVED

Countrywide, with 25 teachers training courses closing down every year, it’s estimated that the number of teachers being trained will be halved in the next five years.

The 186 million cut in educational spending made by Hanley’s last budget, coming on top of the Barber cuts of £182 million 22 months ago, means that County of County, while area teaching service are being closed down.

In Crewe, the Education Committee have discussed plans for cutting £2 million of their £31 million budget. The effect will be to destroy all the advances made since 1968 in pupil teacher ratios. Whole courses will be scrapped, remedial classes will be abolished — and teachers who are vital to the system are being punished on the dole.

In the County of Avon, some students have been faced with unexpected bills of £900 for courses they started a year ago on the understanding that they were free. And up and down the country, working-class students are being refused discretionary grants for courses at technical colleges.

BLOW

And even as Education Committees settle round their tables trying to decide whether to cut out meat, sports, teachers or courses, the Government last month published another further instruction to bring spending to a complete standstill. Their target is 186 million of this year’s 316 million, or a cut of 13, 89 or 258 — depending on what you call a "reduction from the previous year’s expenditure.

This is the reality of the policy that Jack Jones described to the TUC as "not a fee for all, but a fee for all". An unagreed Labour Party Conference approved the cuts. But those confronted with the reality of the situation and not just a lot of figures — of Chorlton’s appeals, are taking a different stand.

On 21st October 21st the Council for Educational Development advanced with the South East Regional Council of the TUC has organised a day of action. There will be a march, a rally, a lobby of Parliament, and an evening public meeting.

CUT TO THE CORE

Many more needed to stop the front

It’s your fight too, say N. London tech. teachers

- Realising that while we have a special interest in education, the issues presented by the cuts in real educational expenditure are part of wider programme of cuts in public expenditure which will cause a deterioration in the standard of living of the mass of the population... realising that while the trade union and student movement have also an interest in opposing the programme of cost-cut, this branch of the ATTI instructs the secretary immediately to circulate a statement of our intention to participate in next Tuesday’s action to trade union branches, shop stewards committees of the area and students’ union of the college urging their participation too.

Lobby your MP, Oct. 21

RALLY CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER 7pm
Portugal: the battle lines are being drawn – where will you stand?

by SIMON TEMPLE

In desperation the government is trying to form new reactionary units out of retired soldiers and returning Angolan refugees. But these will take time to organize and their military value will be limited even then. The government’s attempt to reverse the military situation without open civil war, looks doomed to failure.

Certainly, imminent civil war in Portugal is the specter which looms over the political horizon of which we in Britain must operate. This means that the issue of solidarity with the Portuguese workers is of vital importance. We can be sure that the Labour government, judging by its past record, will rush to the defence of the Portuguese capitalists. The extent to which workers and soldiers, either alone or with the NATO allies, very largely depends on what the labour movement will let them get away with.

This is not just an academic question. A victory in Portugal will be a tremendous boost for socialism throughout Europe, a defeat for revisionism and a blow to imperialism.

All trade unions and Labour Party members should be prepared to get their organisations to take up the issue of solidarity with Portugal, and fight the current economic boycott and the plans for intervention by big business and NATO to prevent the工人 revolution.

Individuals and organisations should affiliate now to: Campaign of Solidarity with the Portuguese Struggle, 8-10 Gower Street, London WC1.

In Brief

AN INTERVIEW in the ‘Times’ last week with that arch reactionary of the Labour Party, Lord Shinwell, brought forth some typical Shinwell ranting. How about this?

‘One of the things that ought to stop is providing nourishment for land drones. This motor cycle business, they go all round the place, look at the bloody lot of ding-dongs, go round the countryside. Say to me, I don’t like that. I don’t like that at all. I don’t like that statutory incomes policy. Now, strangely, you can’t say you don’t like it, because I believe in the force of law being used in connection with wages and incomes in that way.’

We don’t think that’s strange, Manny, coming from you.

ANOTHER POMPUS politician, this time Lord Hailsham, has this week published another pompous volume entitled A Man of Two Minds and an apparently somewhat pompous title, “The Door Whom I Knock Doth Mind Me to Consider My Words, ‘In Case for Conservatism’.”

Conservatives do not believe that the political struggle is the most important thing in life. The simplest among them prefer to ignore the political ‘religion’. Now that’s from the horse’s (or Labour’s) mouth.

PLANS ARE BEING NEWED for a suggested tour of South Africa by a cricket team of 15 MPs and Peers. Internal transport and hotel costs in South Africa would be met by an unrecorded, but presumably substantial, sum, and if this did not boost the morale of the white regime, it would certainly boost the mood of the African workers.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, demonstrating blacks were willy-nilly dealt with by police who fired on demonstrators and used tear gas to disperse them. The blacks were demonstrating over rents in the Cape, the blacks only bases, from 30 to 40.

And were they reported to be and communal tasks, police tore them out on grounds of “over-crowding”. For those who know the overcrowding on buses provided for African workers, that’s a joke!

THE UNITED STATES has shown its continuing support for the Franco regime with a £2 million credit to Spain, under which the US retains its base at Torrejón de Ardoz. Sources gave Dr. Kissinger’s view that when the US retains its base in the Franco regime, the US gave the high priority to the maintenance of the Spanish bases which they see as the key to their future policy in defence. Could it be that the importance the American Administration attaches to the Spanish base has not a little to do with events in Portugal and Spain?

We shouldn’t be at all surprised.

THE AMERICAN representative to the United Nations, Mr. Moynihan, apparently shocked at the appearance of President Amin of Uganda, who has been called Amin a ‘fascist murderer’ that he wouldn’t, but such a judgment should seem strange coming from the month of the representative of the US Administration, Remember, Vienna, Mr. Moynihan.

JUDGE OF the week is undoubtedly M. De la Charette, a French judge, who committed to prison a French violinist accused of being responsible for a fatal industrial accident. Unfortunately the director has since been released as the decision was swiftly overruled by a superior court. The French judiciary are presumably put out at the thought of the company director being put in prison “alongside common criminals”.

Get-tough Prime Minister Azevedo with President Costa Gomes
DANGER—MEN AT WORK!

ROUGHLY every hour of the working day throughout the year someone is killed either by accidents at work or through the effects of industrial diseases. Each year over a million workers take time off work because of the effects of an industrial accident or disease. There can be no mistake about it — work is dangerous to your health!

Some jobs, like mining, are especially hazardous, but even the most careful, low-risk jobs possibly safe can be slowly doing you some form of damage. An example of this is technicians working with computers, who often find that they have headaches caused by the completely artificial lighting used in many computer rooms.

That's who. Does someone working with computers, who often find that they have headaches caused by the completely artificial lighting used in many computer rooms.

But who does something about this enormous problem?

Certainly not the bosses! They only spend about £3 in every £10,000 of their annual research and development budget on research into safety at work. It is their responsibility to provide you with the equipment and facilities that make this hazard less serious.

In the U.S. it is the employer's responsibility to provide you with the protective equipment and facilities that make this hazard less serious. Even the trade union movement spends, unfortunately, little time investigating and fighting over aspects of health and safety. No union now has a national full time safety officer, and even the TUC's Medical Officer, Robert Murray, has resigned because of the lack of resources placed at his disposal.

The worker threatened by bad working conditions can only rely on himself, his brothers and sisters in the factory, and perhaps the national combine committees or political representation. But workers find that when they come to discuss issues of health and safety they run up against an impenetrable wall of secrecy — and the Board of Trade's code of silence.

A SPECIAL GUIDE TO WORKERS' SURVIVAL BY NEAL SMITH

A potentially harmful chemical comes on to the market roughly every 20 minutes, most of them with little testing. It's obviously impossible to list all the dangerous ones (books that do that are enormously) but some general points should be kept in mind when assessing the risk of a chemical or worrying about the introduction of new ones.

First of all, find out the chemical name of the substance you want to investigate. Chemicals have many different trade names, designed only to keep secrets from competitors, and you need to know its chemical name before you can find out much more about it.

Ask the warehouseman if he knows what the chemical is called if management won't tell you. Try asking the trolley drivers who deliver the chemical — sometimes these drivers carry in their lorries 'TREM cards'. These cards, which give the chemical formula of the substance, tell you what its dangers are, and what to do in case of an emergency, such as a spillage. [All good employers should have such information available to them — but all too often they don't!]

If all else fails, check with a copy of the 'Chemical Society Annual Buyers Guide' (see bookshelf) which gives the scientific name of many hazardous names.

Having found out the scientific name for the chemical, the next thing to do is to see if there is a recommended working safe level. Any estimate of this is usually based on the concentration of the chemical you are exposed to, and this is normally reckoned as so many parts per million (ppm) of air or water. If, for example, you collected a million cubic centimetres of air (that is, one cubic metre) — the amount most people breathe in during an hour of active, but not heavy, work — and found in it five cubic centimetres of xenon (a solvent in common use), then the concentration of xenon would be 0.5ppm. If you work in such a concentration for an eight hour day, then you're taking in about two egg shells full of xenon each day.

Safe limit

That is the recommended so-called 'safe limit' for xenon!

Because it is expensive to keep air pure, a compromise has been adopted to keep chemicals to certain specified limits within which the concentration is not supposed to be harmful. These limits are normally referred to as the 'threshold limit value' (TLV).

This is the amount that you can safely be exposed to in an eight hour working day.

But you should view TLVs with some caution. Many of the limits are based on inadequate scientific evidence. Even when the TLV level sounds ridiculous and protective, scientists don't claim that all workers will be safe. One thing to bear in mind is that if a workplace is at the TLV limit, then any overtime worked begins to put you in greater danger, although the atmosphere may remain the same. Even your personal exposure will have gone beyond the threshold.

Legal force

In this country TLV values have no legal force, although the Factory Inspectorate use them as a guide. So they should not be accepted uncritically, and should never be taken as guaranteeing safety. The only thing that can do that is to get rid of polluters altogether.

Use the TLV as the maximum upper limit of the concentration of a hazardous chemical — and keep trying to get the working level reduced further! If you want to find out what levels of concentration you are exposed to in your job you are a number of things you can do:

Chemicals

Benzeno, also liquid, has a TLV of 25ppm, and its effects on people are similar to aniline.

Carbon tetrachloride, liquid, TLV of 10ppm, is an irritant to the nose, mouth and throat, and long exposure may lead to liver damage.

Cyanoacetylene is a gas, its TLV is 10ppm, and it is not toxic on its own, but it can cause liver damage if it mixes with the nervous system.

Phenol, liquid, TLV of 5ppm is a skin irritant, long exposure can give liver damage.

That's just a sample of the variety of chemicals and their effects. Often chemists of particular sorts are harmful. Many organic industrial solvents like 'Tritek', phenoxy et al are skin irritants and can cause liver damage with long exposure.

If you want to find out just what level of concentration you are exposed to, there are a number of things you can do:

Suspicious

Call in the Factory Inspectors and get them to run a sample (make sure its done by their normal working conditions). There's no guarantee that they'll tell you the results, but at least they'll tell you whether or not in their opinion the concentration is at a safe level.

Possibly try to get the firm to do a survey and demand the results (although this is usually very difficult to get done). Get in touch with an outside group of helpful scientists, such as the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BRSRS), who will analyse samples for you or else give you information on how to monitor chemical levels yourself.

Above all, with any chemical, if you are suspicious of it get it checked. If you consider the chemical the chances are that it is too high a concentration in the working atmosphere (but don't rely on this test, as your own sense of smell will be dulled in a chemical smell and no longer be sensitive to new mates get headaches, feel unusually fatigued, find it difficult to walk with a chemical — GET IT CHECKED!

Getting the company to run regular, check that checks and give the results to the shop stewards committee is an excellent way for you to keep tabs on any long term hazards that might be developing.

THE RISK

If you do find that you are working in hazardous conditions before you get a chemical, then immediate action should be taken. There are three basic ways of reducing the risk to yourself.

Elimination

The best way. Try to get the chemical either replaced by a safer one or substituted by a safer process the best way. Try to get the chemical either replaced by a safer one or substituted by a safer process.

Substitution

Call in the Factory Inspectors and get them to run a sample (make sure it's done by their normal working conditions). There's no guarantee that they'll tell you the results, but at least they'll tell you whether or not in their opinion the concentration is at a safe level. Possibly try to get the firm to do a survey and demand the results (although this is usually very difficult to get done). Get in touch with an outside group of helpful scientists, such as the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BRSRS), who will analyse samples for you or else give you information on how to monitor chemical levels yourself.

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Personal protection. Masks and respirators. These are an unsatisfactory way of reducing the risk to yourself. If you have to use them and the work is fairly active, make sure that the firm provides you with battery-powered respirators, which actually pump the air into the mask and take away the effort of you having to draw it through the filters.
YOUR lungs are a highly efficient pair of filters that exchange the precious carbon dioxide in your blood for the oxygen in the air you breathe. Industrial dust chokes up the pores of this sensitive filter and reduces the efficiency of your lungs. The very fine particles of dust that do the real damage are so small that you cannot see them, but they penetrate the furthest into your lungs and are the most damaging.

There are several types of dust disease, depending on what sort of dust you are exposed to. For example, some dusts simply have a physical effect by choking up the inside of the lungs; others attack the chemicals in the body cells and may cause cancer. Many of the dusts, such as asbestos, remain permanently in the lungs, so that even a small amount will continue to affect you for the rest of your life.

Early death

Pneumoconiosis This is the disease given to a group of dust diseases - silicosis (silica); coal miners' pneumoconiosis (coal dust); asbestosis (asbestos);byssinosis (cotton).

In Britain, apart from accidents down the pits, about 40,000 miners and ex-miners suffer from pneumoconiosis. More than 700 new cases are still appearing every year. Modern drilling machinery in fact increases dust and accentuates the incidence of the disease. Like many other types of pneumoconiosis the symptoms are fairly distinctive. First there appears an unusual shortness of breath, which gradually develops even until the slightest exertion produces acute shortness of breath. Weight starts to go down, and the heart begins to be affected. At this stage an early death is fairly inevitable.

If the symptoms are spotted early enough, the dust stopped, the disease may not progress, although life expectancy is shortened. The damage done to your lungs can never be repaired.

Asbestosis acts in a similar fashion and produces effects similar to those of coal dust. It is taking an increasing toll of workers' lives: 64 died in 1965, 107 in 1970, 113 in 1971.

If you get only a slight exposure the disease can be mild, but heavier exposure can kill you in as little as two years.

There are two types of asbestosis. Blue asbestos is so deadly that it should be avoided like the plague. Although no longer in extensive use, the dust is still found as insulation in old buildings and factories, lying in wait to cause the demolition gang. In 1972 workers at British Leyland, Cowley, were exposed to blue asbestos when they were being re-engaged. The Factory Inspector who carried out the pronunciation said he had never seen one of them prefer an unlicensed tiger to have been in the plant. White asbestos that was on the floor.

Blue asbestos can be recognised by its lavender colour. Reticine to work near it unless provided with a good respirator.

White asbestosis is also dangerous, and prolonged exposure to it will produce

In fact, there are no known safe levels for exposure to so-called white asbestos. Both of these actions has the past admitted.

One of the best methods is testing the reality of the air you're breathing is to use a personal sample. A battery-powered pump at your wrist draws in air from a point near your face for an entire shift. The total amount of pollution in the air that you are exposed to can then be calculated. One of these would set your local stalking committee back about £70, but the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science has one that it will lend out to you, and they will also help outline the sample.

Another device for sampling air is a hand pump, which works rather like a break. The sample is drawn into a tube by a set of hand-handels in the same way, and the hand pump will easily leave you ready to go breathing in. It is worth considering getting your local union to buy one of these—a pump and set of reactive tubes would cost about £30.

If you are not being discovered a dangerous concentration of dust, get it checked out as soon as possible by a better extraction system fitted. At least, if you can't get a control, insist on respirators or masks.

The Factory Inspectorate Code of Practice drill. If the noise is not now reduced, you should work half as long. Also, remember that before the TLVs, overtime took you past an acceptable level based on an 8-hour day.

Hearing loss is no joke. Quiet conversation becomes no longer possible; it becomes difficult to distinguish speech, and with other people become strained as a result of your inability to follow their conversation. The whole quality of your life is reduced.

The ear drums suggest above all, can be achieved.

No joke

Obviously the best protection against excessive noise, like that against chemical dust, is to get the source removed. Failing that, sufflers and sound deflectors should be built around the machinery to shield the worker from the noise. If management refuse to do either of these things, try to reduce the dosage of noise that you are exposed to.

WHERE TO GET PUBLICATIONS

Hazards of Work - Pat Kinsley; Pluto Press, 90p. Absolutely vital handbook for any worker interested in doing something about improving his work conditions. Cannot be recommended too highly.

Dangerous Properties of Industrial Materials - Sax, Rhombus Press, £19.5. The book for everyone knowing every known dangerous chemical and its effects. Too pricey for all but the wealthy, but in all major public libraries.


Health and Safety at Work Booklets - HMSO. A series of small booklets produced by the Factory Inspectorate about the hazards of a variety of processes and industries. Normal price about 20p.


ABORTION
Select Committee used to impose restrictions?

Clearly, although the Abortion Amendment Bill has fallen, there is a very strong lobby behind it in the ranks of the Select Committee. This body can be reconstituted at any time, and can come out with better recommendations for restrictions. If the composition of the Committee is the same as when it was first constituted (with an overwhelming majority of anti-abortionists) then further restrictions can be guaranteed.

Another danger is that the Government will put up its own Bill based on the findings of the Committee. Barbara Castle has in fact welcomed its third report, and if it is approved by the Government, most of the clauses in it can be implemented via the Commons, under the powers which it already has.

SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) has a large number of MPs willing to sponsor it in the 1976/77 session.

Restrict

There is no doubt that the National Abortion Campaign has been one of the most effective and best organised campaigns on women's rights to emerge from the women's movement. Hundreds of women have been active in the campaign.

The need for further action on these initiatives, and the likelihood of further restrictions if abortion is not drawn up in the New Year if not sooner, poses very drastically for the continuing capacity of the campaign on a political basis and with a campaign networked strategy.

A series of rallies, demonstrations and meetings will be proposed at a very small cost. Protocols for a demonstration on March 9th (International Women's Day) to launch a Bill which NAC SPAC and linked together with the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) are nearing, to say that the campaign should also use the fact that the TUC and Labour Party have both passed resolutions supporting abortion on request.

This opens up real opportunities for the campaign to raise the question of abortion on demand inside the trade union movement and in the rank and file of the Labour Party — not only drawing the attention of the DHSS, but also showing the bankruptcy of the Labour Party constantly having the question of abortion brought up in with restrictive legislation.

The working women's Charter campaign has had some success in taking the issue of abortion into the trade union movement. By putting the question in a much broader context and seeing it as an integral part of the fight for women's rights, they have managed to get many trade unions that have adopted the Charter for Freedom to give some support on the abortion issue.

Link up

The Medical Committee against Private Practice held a well attended conference on the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) on October 15th.

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The Medical Conference got huge support
The IRO men need your help

At the end of their victorious days and a half year strike in August 1972, the clericalists of the Inland Revenue (IRO) sat at the STM's council table. They had fought a long battle. That same battle involved the IRO's strike in 1977, which was the longest strike in the history of the UK. The clericalists and the IRO, who aimed to peacefully resolve the dispute, finally agreed on a settlement that was accepted by the government.

The IRO is more than just a union. It is a network of workers from around the country. In this article, we will explore the challenges that the IRO men face and how they are fighting for a better future.

The TRAGICOMEDY OF T.M.O.'S CONFERENCE

Scarcely 20 miles away, in the heart of Northern Ireland, the situation is just as volatile. The situation there is a major political issue. The Troubles have been going on for decades. The situation is dangerous and unstable.

The first day's discussion on the TRAGICOMEDY OF T.M.O.'S CONFERENCE was the sort of Alice in Wonderland event that only the IRO could pull it off. The discussions were intense and the speakers were passionate. The IRO members were determined to fight for their rights.

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In reality, however, the TRAGICOMEDY OF T.M.O.'S CONFERENCE was a far cry from what it was advertised to be. The IRO members were passionate and determined, but the discussions were not as intense as they had been advertised to be. The IRO members were determined to fight for their rights.

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