

The Red Mole ^{3p}

YOUTH ON THE DOLE





YOUNG WORKERS LOBBY THE 1970 T.U.C.

EDITORIAL

There are now more people unemployed in Britain than at any time since the War, and the total is generally expected to reach the million mark by the winter. This figure doesn't of course include the many others, particularly women, who don't sign on when they don't have a job. And the numbers will be further swelled by many of the 500,000 or so who are leaving school this summer.

Unemployment hits particularly at these last, and at youth in general. They are totally unprepared by school for this situation—careers masters and youth unemployment officers will tell you what jobs are available but nothing about what to do if you can't get one—and are therefore more easily prone to frustration and demoralisation. In most cases they will not be in trade unions (schools don't tell you about them, either) and will therefore be completely on their own; even if they are union members they cannot expect too much help from their local official. Young people who are unemployed get lower benefits than older workers. And in many cases they will be dependent on parents, with all the pressures and restrictions which that can involve.

In this situation unemployed youth need to get together and organise themselves to change it. The Spartacus League is arranging a series of meetings round the country on this question, and hopes that in many areas these can lead to the formation of Youth Unemployment Committees to organise action. Of course such committees should not operate in isolation, and should include representatives of the trade unions, of Claimants Unions, of Schools Action Groups, etc. But the main initiative and the main responsibility must come from the unemployed youth themselves. They themselves must take the lead in fighting for their rights, in organising local activity such as meetings, pickets, marches, etc.

These committees must also seek support from local trade union branches, trades councils, shop stewards committees, etc.—arranging for speakers at meetings of these organisations is one of the best ways of doing this. Money of course is the most urgent need. The committees should as one of their major tasks make preparations for the "mass youth lobby" planned for the TUC Congress in Blackpool on 6th September, and should aim to make the problems of unemployed youth one of the major emphases of this lobby. Local trade union organisations should be asked to sponsor coaches to this lobby as well as helping in other ways.

The organised labour movement must be left in no doubt that the problems of unemployed youth are extremely pressing and that immediate action on their part is essential. For its part, the Spartacus League will make every effort to ensure that unemployed youth can organise effectively and successfully to fight for their

FROM SCHOOL TO DOLE

When you leave school, or if you have left school already, you will find yourself confronted by probably the most difficult period of your life. Having struggled through the final O level or CSE exams you will find yourself torn between two contradictory ideas about your situation. On the one hand, it seems that you are now free to choose what you want to do rather than what your teachers or parents wanted you to do. On the other hand, you will be increasingly aware that the number of exams you passed, the streams in which you were placed, the remarks in school reports, etc., are what *really* determines your job future and therefore the future of your life as a whole. By the time you have tried out several dead-end jobs—office tea-making, factory work, etc.—you will come to the conclusion that *it is already too late*. You will come to realise that what you finally do is not at all your own free decision—it was determined in advance several years ago by examinations, pressures exercised on you by parents, attitudes you adopted to certain teachers, etc., the consequences of which you certainly did not realise at the time.

The fact of the matter is that the "educational" system is not so much an education as a sorting and grading process. Its real purpose is to give you a label which enables future employers to size you up. The way the educational system works is not an accident or a design of nature. It is determined by the long-term labour requirements of industry—or more accurately of the small class of people who own the industry in a capitalist society. Schools are there to sort out and train a minority to do the skilled jobs in society. The rest (the vast majority) are then discarded to find their own way in society—which usually means getting a lousy dead-end job or increasingly no job at all.

Now you may reply that really you did your best but there were many others in the class who were "brighter" than you; that nature just isn't very kind to most of us but mysteriously bestows upon a few some extra brain capacity. This lucky few then go on from school to get the most rewarding, most exciting, and best paid jobs, while the majority on the other hand get the dirtiest, most tedious and boring, and worst paid jobs.

But if nature is to blame for this state of affairs, then isn't it rather strange that nature produces roughly the right number of people to do the skilled jobs and roughly the right number to do the unskilled jobs? How did nature know? Of course we *could* say that there must *always* be a few skilled jobs and lots of manual jobs in any society, because nature just doesn't make lots of brainy people. However this answer to the question can't be correct—because it can certainly be demonstrated that while the population of the British Isles has risen quite considerably since the last War the number of skilled jobs has risen *very much faster*. If nature is the cause of "intelligence", then why did it suddenly decide that after 1945 it was going to produce a lot more brainy people than it had done previously?

If nature isn't the explanation, then what is? Maybe there have been more skilled jobs since 1945 because we've received

parents, the range of subjects taught is much wider, and these subjects are taught to a more advanced level. But then the question arises: why did society suddenly decide to extend the educational system?

The answer, of course, is that since the War the amount of skilled labour required has risen much faster than the amount required over the previous century. That is, industry today requires more technicians, engineers, designers, architects, scientists, planners, accountants, etc. than ever before. More and more people have to be trained, before they go out to work, not simply to read, write and count, but to do complicated mathematical problems, to understand the scientific structure of matter, to do physics and chemistry, to learn accounting, to have an elementary grasp of the history of the country, its geographical structure, where its minerals are found, what its transportation pattern is, and so on.

What has happened is this: over the last 25 years an industrial expansion has been carried out by the capitalist class (not just in Britain, of course) which has created hundreds of thousands of new skilled jobs. However, the capitalist class is not so numerous that it can fill all these occupations with its own sons and daughters. Consequently they have been forced to extend to the sons and daughters of the working class the educational facilities which they had previously kept for themselves. This involved a large and ongoing building programme of colleges and universities, new grammar and comprehensive schools, and the raising of the school leaving age from 12, and sometimes 13, to 15 years and now 16. The money for this of course came mainly from taxes gathered from the wages of the working class and not from the capitalists' own pockets.

The whole purpose of this expansion programme was to give larger numbers of working class children a "chance"—a chance to get skilled jobs and produce more profits for the capitalist class through the quality of their labour. *But at the same time it had to ensure that ALL of us didn't get these jobs, because that would leave none of us to do the unskilled work.* What the state therefore did was to construct and expand a system in which *everybody* (it was "universal") was given the opportunity but which at the same time *ensured* that only a few would be successful. *That is why it is competitive.* Competition doesn't arise day after day in the schoolroom because some of us are brainy and some dull. Competition is *deliberately* introduced into the day to day life of the classroom through the teacher and through the examination system to which day to day life is ultimately geared.

That is why we are all given the same "abstract" kind of education. We are all forced to run a race (which takes several years)—a race to gain mental formulae and facts which are of value only to the successful few. For the majority of us, destined to become the unskilled labour force, they are of little or no value; but it is not the teacher's task to tell us the truth—that for most of us the whole process is a complete waste of time and hell into the bargain. He is prevented from doing so by the

streams in the school even when it is apparent to everybody that the game is up. It has to perpetuate the illusion that its purpose is to "educate" us all; despite the fact that it is patently obvious that education is about jobs, it continues to perpetuate the illusion that education is something *separate* from jobs—something that makes us human and rational. Of course this whole competitive hell which goes on day after day is in fact one of the most *inhuman* and *irrational* experiences we will ever have to go through. And of course the very nature of this experience means that it is by no means the most "brainy" who come out on top. Many who are equally or more intelligent simply (and naturally) react against the whole system—against its values, against the way problems are set, against the organised terror of the school, against the fact that they have no say in "their" education. Because they don't fit in, they too are discarded so that they don't disrupt the system. Most teachers want us to answer *their* questions, not ask our own.

Of course, it would be some kind of solution if the teachers and the state decided to try and make the size of classes smaller, to lessen the degree of competition, to abolish the examinations, to respect the pupils, etc. This would indeed go a long way towards solving this mess. But the plain fact is that they won't for as long as society is organised in the present way, in the interests of a few and their need to make profits by exploiting the rest of us. The whole purpose of the present set-up, far from "educating" people, is to produce *precisely this state of affairs*: to produce a certain number of "successes" and a whole lot more "failures". It is designed precisely to create large numbers of people who *believe themselves to be failures* and a few others who *believe themselves to be successes*. It should be noted that this process is carefully regulated—where "too many" have passed O Levels the marking standards are adjusted to ensure that some who would have passed are failed. A "correct" number of passes is expected by the state from each region.

The kind of jobs we get are not therefore "our" choice or "our" fault. They are determined by how we fared in one of the institutions of the capitalist system. Equally, the same principle holds if we can't find a job.

As school leavers and young workers you now face growing insecurity of employment. This applies to tens of thousands of school leavers, college leavers, and even university graduates, because the economy is going into a general recession. When profits fall, as they are doing now, workers are laid off because production is cut down. So, not only do the working class create the capitalist's profit through their labour, but they now suffer by losing their jobs when the capitalist can't maintain this profit. The visible result of this system, where profits count for everything and social needs for nothing, is the dole queue.

But among all the unemployed it is youth, and particularly school leavers, who are destined to suffer the greatest lack of employment. The reason for this is simple, and operates over the long term. As pointed out earlier, the technological revolution has proceeded very rapidly over the last 25 years. And while the educational system has therefore thrown up more skilled workers—who are generally absorbed into employment—it has also thrown out thousands of unskilled workers who can't find jobs because the same technological revolution has *destroyed* many more jobs than it created (one of the advantages to the capitalist of new technology is that it cuts labour costs through redundancy). For a long period of time, this tendency to create redundancy remained "hidden"—older workers were retired earlier, women workers were laid off (they tend not to register on the dole because most are married, and so they don't appear in the unemployment figures), and retraining schemes were put into effect. But the current recession in the British capitalist economy is making the long-term trend appear very visibly: many young unskilled workers are now simply not employed in the first place.

The young unskilled worker is therefore a double victim: a victim of the school *and* of the technological revolution which created the competitive hell of the school in the first place. But while youth are the worst sufferers from unemployment (in terms of demoralisation and frustration as well as financially), they are at the same time the most willing to do something about it. It is with this expectation that the Spartacus League has launched its campaign on unemployed youth—help them firstly to understand the nature of their problems and the kind of society which deliberately produces them.

THE CLAIMANTS UNION



When you leave school, you have to go and sign on at the Labour Exchange. If they inform you of your rights, you will be sent either to a job (unlikely) or down to the Ministry of Social Security to claim supplementary benefit. The Ministry of Social Security has a simple message: if you are unfortunate enough to be unemployed: it is servility and obedience. They will deny that you are entitled to any benefit, make you wait for hour upon hour, treat you as some type of parasite. You will ask yourself, "Why didn't they teach me about these things in school? Why was I only told about employment possibilities?" The answer lies in the type of society in which we live—Capitalism. This system has established certain priorities, and works according to certain laws. Its profits, you will learn, are more important than any consideration for individual needs or even humanity. While Heath goes yachting, thousands of people sit at home without a shilling for the gas or enough food to eat. You will see some of these people when you claim your benefits.

In your locality, there may well exist a Union to fight for your rights under Social Security—it will be called a Claimants Union. It is a Union of people in a similar situation to your own, but who understand what your rights are and how to fight for them. If you join the Union, you will be able to achieve your rights much faster than if you try to win them on your own. Most of the Unions in the localities stand for what they call the "Claimants Charter". It contains four points:

1. The right to adequate income without means test for all people.
2. A free welfare state for all with its services controlled by the people who use it.
3. No secrets and the right to full information.
4. No distinction between the so-called "deserving" and "undeserving".

When you are down at the Labour Exchange, you might well get a leaflet from the Child Poverty Action Group or some other Charity Organisation, claiming that they can help you obtain your rights. These charities are advice bureaux run by liberals, no doubt with good intentions, but in the business basically to save their consciences. The Claimants' Union is not comparable to such organisations. It stands for the self-activity of the membership: claimants working together to fight for their rights, representing each other at the Social Security, and at Appeals Tribunals, pooling information and experience, organising collective action.

The Social Security is a highly discriminatory system. It discriminates against the young (lower allowances the younger you are). It discriminates against unmarried women with children. It discriminates against single unskilled men. In addition, it operates under a series of rules and regulations which no one else is allowed to see: for example, the "A" code, which is classified under the Official Secrets Act. By reference to this code, the Supplementary Benefits officers can cut your benefits, without informing you of the reasons—in this situation you have no rights.

The benefits that are granted under the Social Security system (see below) do not enable you to lead a life of luxury. In fact they need to be drastically increased—but the trend of the past few years has been for successive governments to attack these benefits and introduce new rules. It was the Labour government which, in 1968, introduced the notorious four-week rule, cutting off supplementary benefit to unemployed unskilled single men between the ages of 18 and 45 if they had not found a job after four weeks. The Tory government is in the process of introducing a Bill reducing striking workers' benefits by £3 or so, and has set up a Commission to investigate so-called abuses of the Social Security system.

These measures of course are backed up by a hysterical press campaign against what they variously call scroungers, loafers, etc.—living, we are told, off the backs of the public. Their

and join the ranks of the unemployed, you will be described as an idler, a layabout—as if you were responsible for the fact that the capitalist system and its various administrators are incapable of providing sufficient jobs. It covers up this incapability by slandering the people for whom it cannot provide employment.

The first principle governing the attitude of the Spartacus League towards the unemployed is the necessity to organise them in Unions. This is the first step, if they are ever to get the benefits supposedly guaranteed to them under the various Social Security Acts. To this end, you will see that in many areas members of the Spartacus League are active in the only existing organisation of the unemployed, that is, the Claimants Union. However, we argue that it is insufficient just to organise the unemployed in Unions so as to gain their rights. What is necessary is to drastically increase those rights and finally to abolish the situation in which 800,000 or more people can be without jobs. This means smashing the system which has proved incapable of providing jobs. We want a system where the priorities are not profit, with the inevitable side effects of degradation, unemployment, and misery. We want a system where the priorities are the interests of the working class.

This task, and indeed, in this situation, even increasing benefits, cannot be achieved without working towards the unity of the unemployed

and employed sections of the working class. It is vital to this end to agitate amongst the employed sections of the working class for active support of the unemployed, and to explain the unity of their interests with those of the unemployed. What we also think is a priority is to transform the existing Claimants Unions from being merely Unions which fight for the rights of the unemployed, to mass unions of the unemployed which engage the mass of those people in campaigns for increased benefits, and which link up with the employed sections of the working class. Only in this way can unemployment—and its accompanying degradation—be finally eliminated.

Martin Turner

YOUR RIGHTS ON SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

Husband and wife	£8.50
Single householder	£5.20
Other person, aged:	
— over 21	£4.15
— 18-20	£3.40
— 16-17	£3.05
— 13-16	£2.40
— 11-12	£2.20
— 5-10	£1.80
— under 5	£1.40

Plus your Rent, Rates or Mortgage Interest.

MEETINGS ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Spartacus League meetings are being organised in the following areas:

JULY	7th	Coventry
	8th	Birmingham
	9th	Stafford
	10th	Manchester
	12th	Glasgow
	13th	Edinburgh
	14th	York
	16th	Norwich
	17th	Colchester
	20th	North London
	21st	Canterbury
	22nd	St. Albans
	26th	Bristol
	27th	Cardiff
	29th	South-West London
	30th	West London

Further information can be obtained from: The Spartacus League, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

WHAT IS THE SPARTACUS LEAGUE?

The Spartacus League is a revolutionary socialist youth organisation in political solidarity with the International Marxist Group and the Fourth International. It strives to win those sections of youth who are becoming radicalised to the political perspectives of the Fourth International and to organise the youth to fight alongside the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of Britain and the world.

Further information, details of membership, etc. can be obtained by writing to: The Spartacus League, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

Published by Relgocrest for The Red Mole, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616.

Printed by The Prinkipo Press Ltd. (T.U.), 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 9987

