



COUNT THE COST OF THATCHER

The plight of Liverpool is an indictment of Thatcher

LIVERPOOL Council has voted to implement a legal budget. A rate increase and a degree of 'capitalisation' are involved precise details of which are unknown at the time of going to press.

The outcome will be greater hardship for the people of Liverpool and is likely to involve some job loss. In return for setting a 'legal' budget, a loan has been secured from a Swiss bank.

This position, whilst better than the hardship through loss of services that was threatened by bankruptcy, was forced upon Liverpool. It is an indictment of Thatcher, who was prepared to see Liverpool rot. Indeed her policies, the initial cause of all the problems, show she wants suffering.

Councils dropped out

It is a further indictment of those councils who dropped out of the fight as the year progressed and of those sections of the Labour Party who seek to avoid struggle at any cost. Isolated as they were, Liverpool's position was further distanced by the concept of the Labour movement being asked to do the Government's job.

The Stonefrost report took the pressure of Thatcher and guaranteed she would stand back. It became a tool for Thatcher to throw the blame on the Council if they ignored it.

Kinnock's role in condemning the whole episode, and washing his hands of it, was one of a man whose moves are predetermined

by the media machine. It was the move of a man seeking to lead the Labour Party to electoral defeat—when has there been a change of Government without a high level of class struggle? he has attempted to keep the lid on struggle.

The Trade Unions' position has not been credible. They have focussed on tactical errors of the council, ignoring the real enemy, once their members had rejected support for a fight. In particular the NUT are part of the same struggle that Liverpool Council are waging, yet locally they chose to use the bosses' courts to pressurise Liverpool Councillors. Some 300 or more part time teachers would have been sacked two years ago but for a council decision to keep them on the books.

Liverpool Council live to fight on however, their courage must be recognised, and their achievement is not a defeat. Other councils, should take heart and example from it when they face problems next year. It is the attitude of mind we need to defeat her government and it is to our demise that we leave fighting sections of our ranks isolated.

CND maturity growing at conference

SHEFFIELD city council played host to the annual conference of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament recently.

Two thousand delegates represented some 100,000 members and debated key resolutions ranging from international links for 1986 peace year to stepping up activities at Greenham and Moleworth, including a blockade on 6 February 1986. It was also agreed to continue building opposition to Trident and to

mount a massive publicity campaign against Star Wars.

The optimism and determination of this magnificent campaign has never faltered, and the debates reflected a growing maturity in the movement. An emergency resolution was prioritised that called for a campaign of opposition to Thatcher's Public Order Bill. Increasingly, members have come to realise that Thatcher has to go it we are to live in peace in Britain.

RAIL FARES UP 8% ON AVERAGE

ELECTRICITY UP 5% WATER UP 8%

OIL JUST UP 6%—FACES 8% RISE

TAX-ON-POST PRICE JUMP PLANNED

Editorial

THE Thatcher government will almost certainly call a general election by spring or early summer 1987. The preparation has begun already. Not only has Thatcher's voice, hair, make-up and dress been altered to give a 'soft' effect, but her ministers have been coordinated in a series of outrageous claims about 'government successes'. Their aim is to set the terms of debate within which any election is conducted. Their papers will take up the themes and thread through patterns for readers.

The truth is that Britain is in a shambles after nearly seven years of Thatcher. We live in a low wage - high price economy. Mass unemployment is a shadow over million of lives. Even more than usual, this year's Christmas charities will fall short of social need, and what about the other 51 weeks in the year? Fowler's review of social security, with its intended cut of £1000 million, shows Thatcherite 'care' for the needy.

They're very anxious, you see, that we think of them as the 'caring party'. It's a commonplace remark in everyday conversation about the condition-of-Britain that "they don't care, do they?". Thatcherites say "I'm alright Jack; blow you". They're champions of anarchy, a threat to society. Their record exposes them.

Hospitals closed

They say they have opened 35 new hospitals (but they've closed 220). In place of full time posts they have part-time stints they call 'jobs', hoping you'll assume each is 35-40 hours a week. Furthermore they are undermining the principles and practices of the National Health Service, recruiting top managers ignorant of health care requirements who disdain medical professionals, doctors and nurses.

Education has suffered cuts for years on end. From nurseries to universities, the story is the same. Poorly paid teachers, buildings needing repair, books in short supply. Keele University being forced to 'merge' will effectively close, because university spending faces a 2% real spending cut every year, meaning a university to close every year or its equivalent.

Regional spending has been cut. Britain is divided between the complacent, the demoralised and those too angry to be demoralised. Only the complacent are really happy. The ignorant are just pleased to see the ignorant in charge.

Civil liberties threatened

Metropolitan authorities face abolition, millions of voters will have 'no say'. Civil liberties are further threatened under 'public order' legislation. The aim is to marginalise dissent, then criminalise it. Factories and offices everywhere have become no-go areas for the unemployed.

In the City, however, the Stock Exchange can regulate itself. What the freemasons can't handle, the police won't touch. There'll be no lay offs in the Fraud Squad for the foreseeable future but few find themselves in the Squad. The financial spivs have latched onto privatisation of public assets like pirates used to board gold ships off the Spanish Main.

Thatcher is not bothered that the City financiers starve industry of funds. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution, Britain imports more manufactured goods than she exports. We have record unemployment as skilled, educated workers are deprived of livelihoods. She needs more than a new hairdo. She needs to have her head sawn off.

Soviet Union forces Reagan onto defensive at Geneva

LAST WEEK'S summit in Geneva ended with both sides declaring their satisfaction at the outcome. Although no real progress was made on the contentious issue of 'Star Wars', more talks have been arranged for the new year.

For the Soviet Union, however, the most important gain is that Reagan has finally been forced to drop all his anti-communist hysteria and sit down to negotiate seriously. Mikhail Gorbachev clearly came across as the man of the summit, with a show of statesmanship that unnerved the Americans. Their faux pas fell thick and fast, with Donald Regan's remarks that women do not understand complex issues like peace and arms control being greeted with hoots of derision.

Position of weakness

In fact, Reagan entered the talks from a position of weakness. Far from forcing the Soviets to make concessions to avoid a costly escalation in the arms race, it is he who has a bankrupt economy to worry about.

The United States now has a record budget deficit, financed by the high interest rates which attract money from the world's markets. Like the price of tin, this cannot be held high for ever, and is already causing all manner of distortions to the capitalist world economy.

Star Wars

Star Wars might seem like a golden egg to all the arms manufacturers who hold sway over Reagan, but here also he is facing unprecedented opposition from those who would have to do the research and development on such a project.

People see the inherent dangers in a weapon system that promises to be the ultimate defence against a nuclear war.

European opposition

Opposition from the peace movement in Europe has clearly shaken Reagan. The fact that cruise missiles cannot be effectively deployed in Britain without attracting large numbers of demonstrators armed with paint brushes, or that Holland took so long to finally accept the system must be a constant worry to US war planners.

While the leaders of NATO express their agreement at the outcome of the summit ordinary people will still continue to press for peace and a genuine fraternal dialogue with the Soviet Union. They do not forget that in all the leaps in the technology of mass destruction since world war two, it is the Soviet Union which has had to respond to American developments.

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Underground Economy Grows

A BOOK recently written by Philip Mattera called "Off the books - the rise in the underground economy", published by Pluto Press, is an important contribution to our understanding of economic and class developments under the Thatcher government. This book needs to be read by those in the labour movement concerned with changes in work patterns.

According to Mattera, the 'growth of the underground economy is inextricably tied to the crisis of the economy at large.' Perhaps you thought that the definition of 'underground economy' simply refers to the man in the neighbourhood

who always found things falling off the back of lorries.

Mattera, however, is not describing the underground economy of Mayhew's Victorian London with its myriad of thieves, smugglers and gamblers. He describes a process which has become pronounced over the last ten years (and is in fact an international phenomenon) whereby millions of workers are part of an economy where they work 'off the books', unregulated by the state, avoiding elementary legal requirements such as paying taxes and conforming to employment legislation.

Policies of the present

government such as the removal of wage council protection and promoting of part time jobs, encouraging lump labour in construction, with subcontracting and temporary contracts, Sunday and extended trading in other areas, have led to a massive upsurge in the underground economy.

Coupled with encouraging off the books work, goes the recent attack on the unemployed from Young and Michael Edwards dividing those out of work into categories on the grounds that one such grouping are 'moonlighters', presumably preparing the ground for the introduction of means

testing and a version of the NGSW (not genuinely seeking work) clause which was used to great effect in the 1930s.

It is a fact, whether we like it or not, that many workers willingly go underground and they can be a dangerous force opposed to trade unionism and the standards that are set.

But many are forced underground by totally unscrupulous employers who set the pattern of work and standards of pay - it is no longer easy to actually achieve direct employment in the London building trade where the lump has grown to massive proportions - thousands of

homeworkers form an army on which employers draw.

Such activity now constitutes a real threat to class organisation and struggle. The threat is not limited to service industries. To show this, Mattera quotes a manager who markets the advantages of part time labour, saying that a factory should be run with 75% full timers, 15% of full and part-time temporary workers and 10% part time employees. This is an ideal way to create the conditions for workers to fight workers.

Available from Bellman. Bookshop, price £4.50 including post and packing.

Apartheid

South Africa boycott movement

IN appealing over the heads of the Thatcher government, Oliver Tambo, president of the African National Congress, recognised that it was the workers of Britain and not the government which could be expected to implement sanctions against the apartheid regime.

A process has now been set in train which could lead to a complete embargo on the import and export of goods with South Africa. It is the same prime minister who has engineered such high levels of unemployment in Britain who claims she is opposed to sanctions because of the effects it might have on employment in Britain. Yet a country as small as Zimbabwe can apply sanctions even though it would face the most terrible hardships.

Support

Trade unionists in the sectors of industry where a boycott could be implemented overtly and immediately have already begun to discuss action and a number are implementing such a policy.

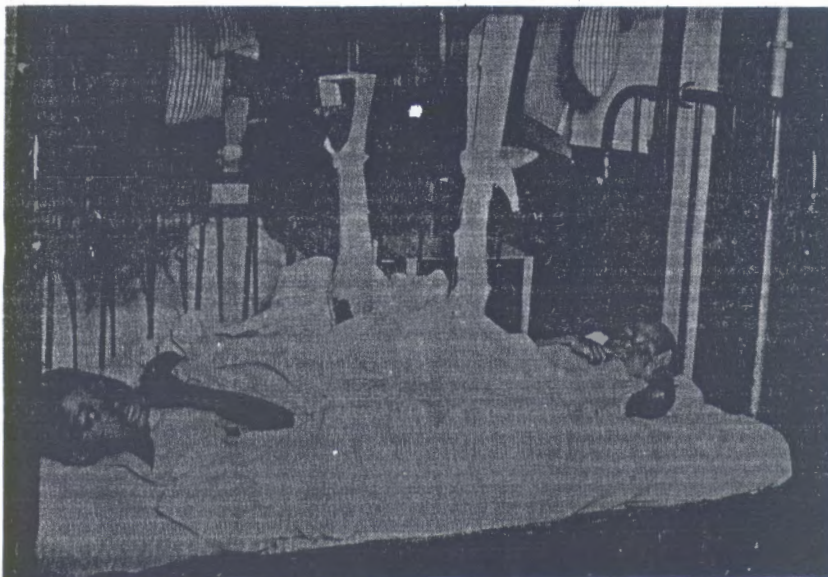
Following the blacking of machinery bound for South Africa by Southampton TGWU dockers, an immediate boycott of South African coal has been agreed by Merseyside dockers and the areas' miners.

This has received the active backing of the North West Regional TUC. Garfield Davies, secretary-elect of USDAW, the shopworkers union, announced last week that agreement had been reached with the

Cooperative Retail Society, the Co-op Wholesale Society and co-ops in the Manchester area to ban South African goods totally.

Representatives of the ANC have been touring the North at the invitation of the Regional TUCs to talk to trade unionists and shop stewards committees, discussions which obviously are already bearing fruit.

The Dunnes strikers from Dublin, who have already been on strike against the handling of apartheid products for sixteen months, have now gained enormous international support from trade unionists and visited London last week where the met groups of workers from major high street stores in the central London area to discuss boycotting more goods.



Sharing a hospital bed - the reality of life in South Africa.

Common Market

Food mountains - more waste more want

IN RESPONSE to Bob Geldof's accusation that the EEC is wallowing in grain while people starve, the Commission has mounted a spirited defence. First, the cost of distribution is prohibitive: it costs £1,800 just to deliver a tonne of butter oil to Ethiopia; a tonne of milk powder £900

and cereal £210. The Community furthermore, has, under its aid programme, supplied 1,250,000 tonnes of cereal equivalent worth £248 million to 8 African Countries. The truth, however, is that this is less than one tenth of the surplus cereal currently held in intervention; 15 million tonnes, with a market value of £2976 million.

Also in storage are:

- 980,000 tonnes of butter
 - 493,000 tonnes of skimmed milk
 - 800,000 tonnes of beef
 - 66,000 tonnes of olive oil
- Britain's share is estimated at:
- 6 million tonnes of grain
 - 202,000 tonnes of butter
 - 40,000 tonnes of skimmed milk
 - 69,000 tonnes of beef

Storage space is so short that France had to ask Brussels for approval to transfer 300,000 tonnes of wheat to intervention stores in Ghent (Belgium) to release space for its own surplus maize. Cold storage for butter and beef is requisitioned in neighbouring countries such as Austria, Switzerland and even Sweden. Refrigerated cargo ships are increasingly used to store surpluses.

Leaving the value of food aside, it costs £19.20 a tonne, to store cereal (£240 million per year for the surplus); £240 a tonne for butter (total £235.2 million) and £90 for skimmed milk or £44.4 million a year.

Future for UK cars? Glasgow health service threat SW Customs Service

IN RESPONSE to a 15% pay claim, the head of Ford's European operation has attacked British productivity, as usual. The Japanese, he says, make a car every 18 man hours whilst apparently, in Britain, it takes 70. He fails to explain why his own UK operation is more profitable than the US counterpart, or indeed, why the aluminium transmission plant continually undercuts its German counterparts in costs per unit.

Job Losses

Ford has shed 40,000 of its 140,000 European workforce in the last six years, and these slavish references to the Japanese are instructive.

Nissan is planning to advance the second phase of its Tyne and Wear development to double its original output target to 240,000 cars a year.

The British plant, which will assemble imported

kits only, is being built to accommodate very high output at an early stage in development. But there are no plans to look beyond a peak workforce of 2,900. Production will be achieved only by imposition of Japanese 'social styles'.

Honda

At the same time, using established facilities at Longbridge, Honda plans to continue to produce a substantial number of cars in the UK, at the Austin Rover subsidiary, under licence. This is now being done with the Honda Ballade, (sold as the Rover 200 series).

Ultimately, Austin Rover will assemble from kits, 100,000 cars a year for Honda, or a total annual Japanese assembly output of 340,000 vehicles by 1990, or even earlier. Any struggle for pay and jobs in the motor industry from now on will decide whether UK car manufacture survives Thatcher or not.

Glasgow health service threat

A GREATER Glasgow Health Board committee has recommended the closure of a maternity unit at Stobhill Hospital and cuts of £3m from the budgets of both the Royal and Western Infirmarys (which should ensure more outbreaks such as that of Legionnaires disease at the Royal).

Union opposition to the Stobhill closure has been swift. Only a few weeks ago the Health Board Chairman visited the hospital to deny its complete closure. Job losses resulting from the cuts have been estimated by the joint trade union committee as about 1300.

And yet again a Tory MP finds himself intensely embarrassed at the effects of government policy on his constituents, commenting "It is crazy to take a maternity unit out of a district general hospital."

THE GOVERNMENT'S scandalous treatment of the Customs Service was highlighted at the November meeting of Exeter Trades Council.

Thatcher says she stands for law and order yet, as the visiting civil servant union speaker pointed out, she has presided over a cut of 1000 customs staff since 1979.

Has there by chance been a drop in the need for a customs service? In fact since 1979 there has been an increase in people entering Britain of 25%, cars (25%), freight containers (55%) and coaches (30%).

The customs service aims to be an effective deterrent against smuggling. But under these conditions how can it? For instance in 1974, there were 330,000 visits by juggernaut lorries. Because of the cuts, only just over 300 were actually

checked in full. Not long ago, every yacht or ship was checked. Now only half are. At airports, there used to be a 1 in 3 chance of being challenged. Now the average is 1 in 100.

Is it any wonder there is a drug crisis? Since 1979, despite the cuts, the amount of heroin seized has jumped by 700%. Yet the price on the street has halved. A scandal is taking place and the government is to blame.

The South-west, with its long stretch of coastline, receives 20% of yachts visiting the country. Since 1979, 59 of the region's staff have been cut. Night cover has been reduced to next to nothing.

As responsible workers the customs officers are taking their case to the rest of the working class. Thatcher is smuggling away our future; she must be stopped.

LONDONERS CAMPAIGN ON BUILDING FOR PEOPLE

THE SOUTH EAST region of the TUC's construction unions, together with Shelter (Campaign for the Homeless), SHAC (the London Housing Aid Centre) and the London Churches Group, has launched a joint campaign for homes and jobs.

Called 'Building for People', the campaign demands a major public investment to meet the whole range of housing need, a strategy to tackle London's housing crisis, houses designed in response to people's needs, and decent jobs for building workers.

In coming together on a common platform, these groups intend to make public investment in London's housing and jobs a major priority for any future government at both national and local level.

A joint statement recognises that "...while successive governments have failed or refused to see the provision of decent housing as a priority, it is the last six years of expenditure cuts which are responsible for the present housing crisis. Three quarters of the total net reductions achieved in public spending have come from this sector... Public expenditure cuts have also meant a dramatic rise in unemployment among London's building workers. One in five is now on the dole."

The statement goes on: 'We want to see developed a carefully thought out and well planned policy, not just for homes but for jobs. A policy that is underpinned by a commitment to the principle that the provision of housing, like the provision of education and health, is a basic responsibility of any society to all of its members.'



Desecration of houses that should be homes for people but are left boarded up and useless for years. Photo: The Worker.

A policy which recognises that housing is a major and long lasting element of the nation's infrastructure, the quality of which has a very significant impact on people's lives.'

The jobs policy it seeks must "... address the quality of work and stamp out the anarchy of the lump, agency and self-employed labour. That will plan and regulate the industry and ensure proper training and apprenticeships for young people.'

An initial conference to be held on Saturday December 7 at Congress House will seek to develop a common campaigning strategy.

London is facing a major housing crisis. An increasing number of its people are homeless or live in squalor. One in five of its building workers are on the dole and it costs £300 million to keep

them there. London Boroughs last year spent £13 million keeping 3,000 families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

These figures cannot and do not measure the human cost, the misery and degradation and indignity of living in bad, overcrowded conditions. The policies of the last six years have consistently failed to recognise or ameliorate disrepair, structural defects, and chronic shortages. They have callously increased joblessness, homelessness and misery. As such they must be confronted.

— This campaign is a start.

The housing situation really is a scandal. London is a concentrated version of a national problem. Between 1935 and 1980 while the FT all-shares index showed a five-fold increase, the price of houses went up by over 41 times.

Housing study shows economic sense

A NEW study carried out in the London borough of Brent shows up the Thatcherite madness of keeping Brent's homeless families in bed and breakfast instead of housing them properly.

By the end of 1985-86, there will be 1,390 families in temporary accommodation (and with no change of policy there will be 3,500 by 1990). Almost 800 of them will be in bed and breakfast in appalling 'hotels' - at the huge annual cost of £5,000 per family in hotel bills from the slum racketeers.

Housing Brent's bed and breakfast families in a five-year programme to end temporary accommodation in Brent would

save the council and the government £34.6 million in five years. This is after taking account of the interest for borrowing money to build the houses, the saving on bed and breakfast and the saving to government on unemployment money and the extra taxes gained from the extra jobs which would be created.

The building programme would provide work for five years for 1,320 workers in the building and building supply trades.

Even when the five-year plan is complete, the new accommodation would continue to pay for itself in savings on bed and breakfast.

Dramatic rise in B&B figures ROSYTH

THE LATEST figures available show that nearly 8,500 households accepted as homeless by London boroughs were placed in temporary accommodation at the end of June this year. This is the highest figure ever recorded.

Of the households placed in temporary accommodation by local authorities, 3,251 were in bed and breakfast on June 30, 1985. This is an increase of 1,161 households from the official Department of the Environment figure for the same day last year. But these are only the 'official homeless', those that are accepted by local authorities. They exclude thousands of people who do not qualify for 'help'.

ROSYTH dockyard management has been censured by the Health and Safety Executive on 14 counts of asbestos infringement.

The Ministry of Defence has an unconditional five year licence meaning it is not normally required to give advance notice of work involving asbestos.

Rosyth management has now been advised to give 28 days notice in future and to introduce new systems to correct the areas of "serious concern". There is criticism of the failure to understand the philosophy of segregation between "clean" and "dirty" areas. There was even a case of non-asbestos workers having access to contaminated areas aboard HMS Plymouth when the measured level of airborne fibres was 120 times the approved limit.

The union is now demanding immediate health checks for present and former workers. The convenor of the shipwrights' union said "What we have been saying for years about the blatant disregard for safety has now been vindicated by the HSE."

This is not the first time this year that Rosyth has been criticised by the HSE. Earlier there was condemnation over blunders in keeping workers' nuclear radiation records. This makes the protestations of innocence emanating from Rosyth management of doubtful merit to say the least.

Uniform thugs

IF YOU were a miner arrested during the 1984-85 NUM dispute, you were sacked by the NCB. Irrespective of the charge, irrespective of the court proceedings and result. Hundreds of acquitted miners, charged with offences totally irrelevant to coal mining were arbitrarily sacked.

Recently two soldiers, aged 18 and 19, bombed a crowded bar with a smoke grenade and rocket flare. Some £3,000 worth of damage was done. 50 people gassed and terrified. The hand-held rocket launcher, rocket flare and smoke grenade had been stolen by the soldiers while on manoeuvres. Magistrates refused jail sentences for these uniformed thugs as this would prejudice their careers and "employment" in the army. The army to date has not considered implementing military criminal charges.

If you are a miner your livelihood, job, future are stripped from you by magistrate and coal board connivance. If you are one of Thatcher's uniformed - khaki or blue - thugs, a raid on a pub is seen as, "a joke which badly backfired"... "hopelessly out of their depth...no idea of the consequences of their action."

Worker Interview

THE TEACHERS took up the example of the miners and have shown what can be achieved when you stand and fight. The Worker talked to a Devon NUT official about their struggle for education.

What is the current situation in Devon?

We are still, even now, getting people going on strike for the first time ever. Many were doubtful to begin with but have come round to realise that they have to make a stand with colleagues. In October half the schools in Devon were taking action. That is incredible and unprecedented. We keep sending out ballot forms and they keep coming back with stronger majorities. We are also still getting a large number of recruits to the NUT.

Why do you think the action has developed this way?

The action has built up. Not everyone started from the same position - it's taken time for some to think it all through. But once members started taking action, they drew others in by giving them confidence - particularly in small rural primary schools. The intransigence of the government has also helped. Every time Keith Joseph goes on TV, we get an increased vote for action.

What have been the main benefits of the action?

There has been increased political consciousness. Many teachers are discussing politics for the first time in their staffrooms. It's make your mind up time - they have to decide which side of the fence they are on. There is far greater understanding of the role of trade unions and increased involvement in other aspects of union work.

Another benefit is that we have worked very well with the NAS/UWT in Devon. We have held joint meetings, made joint statements and taken joint action. That's been very positive.

Where do you see the dispute going now?

We are still stepping up the action and there is still potential for spreading it further. We have done some linking up with parents but not enough with other workers in schools like caretakers and cleaners. Schools will never be the same again. Salary cuts are just another education cut. Now teachers are likely to fight on other issues. Their morale has been raised by the struggle. We've already upped a 4% offer to 6.9% and had strings dropped. A moderate and professional union is conducting a very effective and encouraging campaign.

Even the 'moderates' join the fight

MEMBERS of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association have voted to escalate action in the current pay dispute. Convincing votes in what is often referred to as a 'moderate' union come as yet another blow to Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland.

In a 72% turn out, 66% voted for disruption of administrative procedures, 84% for a curriculum boycott and 82% to refuse to take over colleagues' extra-curricular activities. No one has yet pulled Younger's strings to elicit a response.

Industry needs cheaper power

PRESSURE to oppose the Thatcher policy of energy price rise is being mounted by the Central Electricity Generating Board, major industrial and manufacturing countries. They say there should be CEBG cut-price electricity generating schemes.

Major users such as glass, chemicals, metal industries should receive cheap, cut-price, off-peak generation, to cut production costs. Without this there is no future for manufacture in Britain.

Even the CEBG national managers, taking their 'non-political, sitting on the fence, only obeying government orders'

Parents support the teachers

PARENTS ARE increasingly showing their support for the teachers' struggle in defence of education. We know that nothing is too good for our children. If small classes are good enough for Eton, they are good enough for all schools. We want more money for education more money for teachers.

Even the Daily Express now agrees with the teachers' cause! On 12 November the editorial said: 'Generously rewarding skill and dedication will strengthen our education service.'

Parents, as ratepayers and taxpayers, are also more and more aware of the huge proportion of their income that goes straight to the City moneylenders, in the form of interest.

Education is the future. A country which permits its future to be sacrificed to the greed of financiers will not survive.

stance, stated recently that the CEBG in 15 years time will not be able to compete with cheap French nuclear power.

Raising energy prices will lead to the total closure of chemicals, steel, aluminium, glass, textiles, large areas of manufacture in the North of England.

Employers will invest and flee abroad, the EEC providing the bolthole.

A typical area board, Yorkshire Electricity Board, distributes 51% of sales to manufacturing industry, 14% to commerce. This 65% of sales dwarfs the 30% domestic demand.

25% of YEB electricity goes to the Yorkshire coalfield; 14% goes to the remnants of steel. Shutdown of the northern manufacturing will close the Yorkshire power stations, which would accelerate closure of the coalfield.

The government is in desperate financial crisis: privatisation is ready cash, and squandering of North Sea Oil revenues being measures they have adopted to scrape through another day.

The government intends to raise electricity prices (and other public utilities) by 5%+. This will increase pressure on the manufacturing base to close or go abroad.

Pressure which preserves industry is a positive step. Positive because it maintains an industrial nucleus essential for rebuilding Britain.

Positive because it demonstrates that high energy and public utility prices are a direct response of government dictat and are totally artificial. Positive because it will wreak havoc with privatisation price rigging plans the government has for selling off British Gas.

MORE PARENTS SUPPORT TEACHERS Hull Docks 'MacGregorized'

ON 30th NOVEMBER a double decker bus, suitably decorated will carry a deputation of parents from Waltham Forest, London to No 10 Downing Street, to demand that the Government settle the teacher's pay claim.

This action has been endorsed by a number of other parent's organisations in the London area, in Manchester and in Edinburgh. Edinburgh parents are also planning to make a human chain linking the

Scottish Office with the Education Institution of Scotland on the same day; to 'emphasise the point.

It has been difficult to develop a national network of the diverse grassroots organisations. Thousands of letters have been written, MPs and councillors lobbied, petitions circulated and public meetings held. But national publicity is never given to such local activities; however widespread.

Now the parents are beginning to find each other, and they are building a tide which threatens to rock Thatcher and her contempt for education.

Teachers have for years languished for want of such parental involvement and support, which once assembled will not be easily dispersed. The long term aim is higher priority and greater resources for state education, so that our class can survive and rebuild after Thatcher.

ASSOCIATED British Ports has announced 140 redundancies at Hull's docks. "The cuts are vital for the successful future of the port", announced company chairman Keith Stuart, at the same time making public a £25,000 'golden handshake' available to all.

ABP sees redundancies as essential for 'making Hull one of the major container ports in the country'. 'The old militancy is dead', says Stuart; 'there is now a more realistic attitude' among Hull's 700 dockers (compared with 4500 in 1966).

But class traditions die hard, and although Hull's dockers have settled for less than the increase in the cost of living over the past two years, they are now putting in for a claim which ABP describes as 'way, way beyond what we can afford', and which the TGWU says is 'quite reasonable'. (The exact details of the claim are being kept secret for the moment).

As TGWU official, Brian Barker put it: 'ABP shares have almost doubled in the last few months. They are making massive profits. We would like to share the success.' A not unreasonable aspiration, one might suppose!

Redundancy

ABP, using MacGregor-style tactics, has now sent every docker a glossy brochure describing the £25,000 redundancy offer. ABP says that the size of the pay offer will be determined by the number of dockers who take redundancy. The TGWU does not accept this.

As with the teachers, who have given the example of resisting the sale of jobs and conditions in exchange for a fast buck, Hull's dockers will soon have to take a decision and make a stand. Their traditions suggest that, despite all the blandishments, they should hold the right way.

Teachers winning

EDUCATION secretary, Joseph, seems to be finally cracking up. At a recent meeting in Berkshire with delegates from the National Union of Teachers, he appeared to be on the brink of openly weeping while slating the NUT with particular venom for being "the enemy".

To reassure delegates who seemed concerned about his state of mind, Joseph admitted that he was existing on only 3 hours sleep a night. Far from reassuring, it is very alarming that the education system is in the hands of someone who evidently cannot cope.

Metal Box slams shut on jobs

"GET ON your bikes to Berks" screamed the main headline in Reading's evening paper recently. It was reporting Southern Region CBI official Robin Harrison's plea to unemployed workers to emigrate from the North. Mr Harrison earns no marks out of ten for timing!

The Friday before, Metal Box, who moved the national HQ to Reading ten years ago, announced that they were pulling out, sacking over half the 620 staff. Two-thirds of the remainder will be offered jobs in their divisional HQ's around the country. Less than 100 will be needed for a new mini-HQ "within commuting distance of Reading".

Metal Box has been sacking production workers for the past four years. The total workforce is now only 29,400 nationally, compared with some 46,000 in 1981, but up to now the Reading HQ has lost less than 100 jobs.

The demise of Metal Box is particularly significant in Reading. The arrival of its HQ was followed by those of several other manufacturing firms, a very large part of the Prudential's administration and "Yellow Pages". Together they made it an office "boom town". In employment terms these offices were far more significant than the software houses of "Silicon Valley". As the Thames Valley has been called.

But administration cannot exist without manufacturing. Reading's so-called "low unemployment" (around 7%) will change very quickly if others follow Metal Box.

The message to the unemployed from "the North" (and elsewhere) is clear. There is no point getting on your bikes and coming to Reading. And, as for Mr Harrison, perhaps the CBI will be cutting back its regional staff too.

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Keith Joseph visits Highbury Grove School.

Photo: IFL

Too much tin creates bigger crisis for capitalist economics

THE London Metal Exchange and International Tin Council failed to re-open on 18 November as they boasted they would. Their brinkmanship was called by the banks and the doors remained locked. Legions of ITC creditors and bankers huddle in sub-committees of sub-committees, secret conclaves of secret conclaves, attempting to resolve the crisis of no cash, no market but plenty of commodity.

The crisis and proffered solutions by the banks reflect the idiocy of capitalism. Plentiful supply, high prices and no demand meant the ITC bought and stored tin to keep the price up. When they ran out of cash, crisis and panic ensued; the price collapsed, resulting in the suspension of the market and so it remains. The banks' solution after 4 nail-biting weeks is to offer to restore the status quo.

Pretend

The banks will lend the ITC the money to cover its debts, continuing buying tin, keep up the price and all will be rosy again. In other words pretend the crisis hasn't happened and exacerbate and cultivate the very conditions which brought the industry to its knees in the first place. If such a solution was agreed, it would mean that next time round, or if any other similar commodity market crisis occurs,

they would have a manifestly increased collapse on their hands. They are savir: today for a bigger spectacular head-on smash tomorrow. So much for capitalist economics and market forces.

Extending debts

To get out of the increasing possibility that ITC countries will waltz on their debts to the banks, the banks are willing to extend the debts. Next time round the banks will be even more desperate if the debtors imply they'll walk away. Debts on 24 October when the market was suspended were £300 millions, these accelerated to £900 millions by 16 November and are continuing to rise.

The banks have moved the tin crisis into the same league as the under-developed countries' debt crisis. In the past, the banks at whim toppled governments, they now have clients with debts which it would be impossible to foreclose upon. Or if foreclosure occurred, the international banking scenario would topple.

Fidel Castro at a recent Latin American summit proffered a socialist solution to the debtor countries: just walk away from it. What better solution to the tin debtors: walk away from it. Tin and metal production have nothing to lose, the banks are on the brink.

Scotland's industrial wasteland

LAST WEEK amid talk of 'rebirth', the Scottish Labour MP George Foulkes opened a new coal mine in South Ayrshire, a region blighted by closures.

But the new pit at Craigmar, New Gumbock, far from being a portent of better things to come, is a sad pointer to what will remain of industry if Thatcher has her way. It is privately owned by Colston Mining and will employ 36 men in an area which has lost 25,000 jobs in the last 25 years.

Of the 16 pits which operated in 1960, only two have survived and a handful of private drift mines scrape away at what reserves of coal remain close to the surface. Another telling feature of the industrial landscape here is the tarring up of redundant pit sites as small business premises.

Clearly the decline of productive industry in this part of Scotland was not initiated by Thatcher but it serves nevertheless as a chilling tribute to her chosen vocation, that of re-industrialisation. She talks of new industrial revolution of the old making way for the new, but the barren reality in South Ayrshire gives the lie.

Today, new industries do

not rush in to fill the vacuum created by the destruction of the old. Rather, a handful earn a temporary respite from poverty picking over the graves of many thousands of productive jobs.

The microchips are down

THE AMERICAN multinational, General Instruments plant in the 'Silicon Glen', Glenrothes Fifeshire, was a fine example of Thatcher's new wave of industry to lead Britain into a high tech 21st century. Producing high quality microchips the plant was seen as a pioneer two years ago, receiving millions of pounds of our money towards a £20 million expansion programme.

As with most American electronics companies in Scotland, the plant was non unionised. The 150 workers, models of 'new realism', recently achieved record productivity exercises.

Will this Phoenix company help lead Britain out of the ashes of its traditional industries? Sadly, no, the dream disappears in a cloud of smoke, the plant is mothballed and the workers have lost their jobs.

BT swindlers to go scott free

IN AUGUST 'The Worker' reported that Scotland Yard was investigating fraud in the dealings associated with BT's share flotation. 'The Worker' predicted that the Director of Public Prosecutions would move with the speed of a dead snail in implementing prosecutions. Now the DPP's department has announced there will be no prosecutions at all. Even though clear evidence of fraud at the time of flotation has been identified to the tune of £1 million, and subsequent investigations have revealed fraud to the tune of several millions, government pressure has made itself felt.

Though ministers and treasury officials are keen to make an example they fear 'long, costly and potentially embarrassing' prosecutions. Considerations not bothered about in persecuting miners or Clive Ponting. In other words the hogs at the trough have got away with their loot.

Prosecutions would embarrass the Government for all sorts of reasons.

Revelations that the Government will not bring charges come at a time when the head of the Stock Exchange, Sir Nicholas Goodison, has written to Thatcher calling for a 'get tough on financial fraud' policy by the Government. Both Lloyds and the Stock Exchange have complained that dossiers on fraud cases sent to Whitehall have generated no action or no reply.

As Thatcher takes a personal interest in 'law and order' as well as pontificating on Victorian values, it is of interest that the criminals of the greatest magnitude, are unharassed and obviously receive carte blanche of government approval. The moral is simple: why not get hung for a sheep, steal the whole flock, making sure the rustlers embrace cabinet ministers, high court judges and probably a general or two.

Public Meetings

Friday Dec 6 'No Work. No Society'
7.30pm Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortress Road, NWS.

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