

The Worker



AXE THATCHER NOT OUR UNIVERSITIES

18-8-81

THE SCALE of Thatcher's offensive on the universities becomes clearer day by day.

● "Substantial reductions" in social studies, business and management studies, music and biological sciences at Salford. 525 jobs and 1200 student places to be lost. 200 manufacturing and engineering companies have condemned the proposals.

● "Substantial reductions" in social studies, engineering and pharmacy at Aston. Philosophy, education, Russian studies, architecture and biological sciences to be ended. 31 per cent cut in grant.

● "Substantial reductions" in arts, physical sciences, mathematical sciences and pharmacy at Bradford. Education courses, biological sciences and medicinal sciences to be ended. 33 per cent cut in grant.

● End of Russian studies, electronics, mathematics, physics and biological sciences at Keele. 34 per cent cut in grant.

● Reductions in social studies science and mathematical sciences at Stirling. 27 per cent cut in grant.

● Russian studies to be ended (to stop fraternisation with the enemy?) at Heriot-Watt, Lancaster, Reading, Sussex, Aberystwyth, Newcastle, Southampton, York, Brunel and East Anglia. Lancaster has already stopped this year's intake.

● Social studies to be reduced at Exeter, Kent, Surrey, Warwick, Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff, Swansea, Durham, Leicester, Newcastle, Bristol, Brunel, East Anglia, City and Essex.

● Archaeology ended at Lancaster, Leeds, Reading and St. Andrews.

● A 25 per cent reduction overall in medicine-related subjects, particularly pharmacy.

● Arts, languages almost everywhere.

● A "significant reduction" overall for architecture and town and country planning because of the "lack of professional employment prospects".

● Discussions at London as to whether the University should withdraw to its four "prestige" sites or be allowed to disintegrate completely.



And so on. The full range of measures is impossible to reproduce. Perhaps just one example - sums it all up - the ending of civilization studies at Warwick University. Significantly the worst-hit universities are the most successful in capitalist terms, with increasing applicants and the highest proportion of graduates finding jobs immediately.

Nationally the universities face a drop in income of 15 per cent by 1983 and the loss of 26,000 student places. 4000 will be turned away from this year's clearing scheme, 4000 teaching jobs threatened.

There is to be a quota system for home students with financial penalties for exceeding them when, far from the "dramatic drop" as the Government claims, the number of 18 year olds throughout the 1980s is higher than throughout the 1970s; when the Age Participation Rate for higher education has risen from 6.9 per cent in 1971 to 7.7 per cent in 1981; and when Britain comes 15th out of 17 European countries for the proportion of its population in third level (post school) education (above only Greece and the Republic of Ireland). The London School of Economics Local Association of University Teachers has condemned the imposition of quotas and calls upon universities to ignore them.

The Conference of University Convocation, representing 2 million graduates from 20 universities has condemned Thatcher. Kinnock, Labour's education spokesman, has accused Carlisle, his Tory opposite number, of possessing the ideology of a "book burner" and even a Commons Select Committee has not been able to extract from the University Grants Committee the criteria for its decisions.

Many Local Associations of the Association of University Teachers are following the lead of Cambridge and are pledging resistance by whatever means necessary. A special Council has been called for October and a demonstration and mass lobby of Parliament is planned.

Universities fight for survival

AS MANY young people receive their 'A' Level results - ironically the best set ever - Thatcher is stealing their right to a university education as well as declaring that she has no further use for a university system. Because of the shortage of places, many universities are warning that they will accept only those students having the exact grades requested rather than use the "totting up" system as in the past. In addition, the future of the clearing scheme is in doubt, with Manchester University definitely not entering this year and Sheffield, Leeds and Bristol expected to follow suit. Many more universities have stated that they will be making less use of the scheme.

The University Grants Committee has admitted that at least 20,000 student places will be destroyed as a result of its recommendations and that there will be damage to areas "where there is a degree of excellence we would have liked to see remain". The UGC then has the gall to add that those universities worst hit would later find themselves in an advantageous position. Meanwhile, universities are being warned that research grants will be cut if UGC recommendations are not followed.

The Government has pronounced that Britain needs more technologists, more applied scientists and more engineers, but it is the technological centres that have been worst hit. Aston, with the largest concentration of engineering outside London, is to lose one quarter of its students. Salford, which has recently built an experimental house capable of being heated to 70 degrees Fahrenheit

throughout the year at a cost of £1 per week and which has also built a 'swivel walker' enabling disabled adults and children to walk, is to lose 1,200 student places. At London, some science subjects will lose 28 per cent of their student numbers.

Government policy has been exposed as to pick off universities one by one while taking percentage cuts across the board.

The only institution to actually have an increase is the London School of Business Studies, where Professor Alan Budd and his associates are also the only economists backing Thatcher's policy. It is a different story at Birmingham, for example, where all new appointments have been stopped and existing vacancies disestablished. And in London, where announcement of the Court allocation is anxiously awaited but where already the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences is to lose its £500,000 annual grant. Plans for a new medical school at Queen Mary College have been vetoed by the UGC on the grounds that the future of medical education in London is being "reconsidered". Nor were there ever any "palmy days". The average university has never been rich, the Robbins principle having been eroded at every step with less resources than were promised, and less than required by international standards.

A former President of the Association of University Teachers, Harold Perkins, has said in a letter to the Times: "No country would be foolish enough to try and prove the fatuous notion that a country did not need its universit-

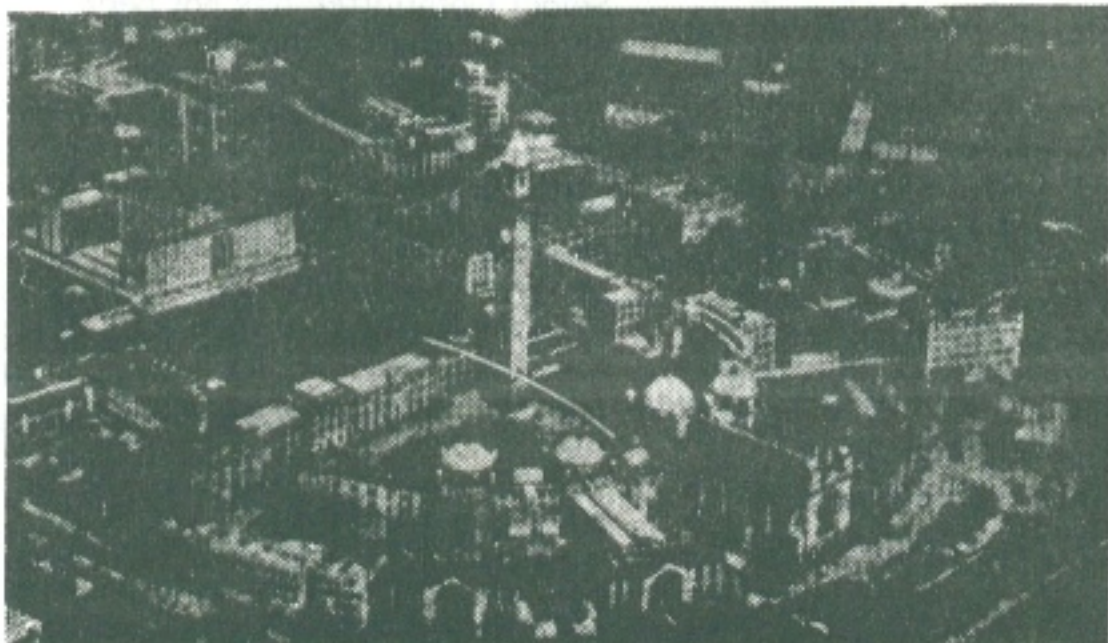
ies". He did not reckon on a Thatcher. He went on to point out that in Japan since the war the student population has risen from 4 per cent to 34 per cent of the relevant age group whereas in Britain it has risen from 3 per cent to only 14 per cent.

Universities are not short of allies. An emergency resolution to the NUM national conference deplored Government policy of destroying basic essential social and educational services and called on the Labour Party to commit itself to "more than restore" the cuts imposed by the Conservative Government. The TUC and Labour NEC have called for the government to immediately restore the cuts to universities and have pledged "bitter opposition". The campus unions (AUT, NUPE, NALGO, ASTMS and NUS) are planning a co-ordinated response to the attack and NALGO has submitted a motion to the TUC calling on the Government to abandon its "reckless" plan to cut 20,000 student places when the 18 year old population is at a record level and the demand for university places is increasing.

At Surrey, the Association of University Teachers has forced the university to maintain this year's student intake in the departments of microbiology, philosophy and psychology and there are signs that the pressure brought nationally so far has produced flexibility from the UGC on the question of student quotas.

The Association of University Teachers has called for demonstrative action from Local Associations in the form of ½ day or 1 day stoppages, and for the mounting of extensive publicity campaigns in those departments most threatened, the preparation of statements of their achievements, "teach-ins" involving students and other unions, and letters to schools, Local Education Authorities, etc, detailing the effects of the cut-backs in student numbers. In addition the Association is calling for full support for its national demonstration and mass lobby of Parliament in November.

But at the Association's Special Council in October university teachers must ask themselves if more petitioning of Parliament is going to be enough to stop Thatcher.



Birmingham University - where all new teaching appointments have been stopped

In her war on the working class Thatcher is taking the unprecedented step of reversing thousands of years of the advance of civilisation, by beginning the destruction of education in Britain, and instituting, if she is not stopped, a new Dark Age.

ON JULY 3RD the 1981/82 grant allocation for individual universities were announced. The cuts were unprecedented in their savagery.

The University Grants Committee, in this instance Thatcher's agent for the destruction of the university system, has singled out several universities for particularly nasty treatment. Salford is to lose an incredible 30 per cent of its income, Aston 22 percent, Bradford 19 per cent, Stirling 18 per cent, Keele and Hull 17 per cent. The list continues, including some of those very technological centres which Thatcher claimed were essential for the future of British industry. So much for that future.

their parents, aspiring to university places.

Universities represent one of the heights of achievement of a society and now even they are to go in the Thatcher clique's drive to destroy the working class. In the sixteenth century, as a reward for the town's heroic stand against the Spanish, the people of Leyden, in Holland, were offered a choice by William of Orange. Freedom from taxes in perpetuity or a university. The people, near to starvation, chose a university. Such aspirations frighten the philistine Thatcher.

Members of the Association of University Teachers are mobilising to Stand and Fight. Local Association

Needless to say the London Graduate School of Business Studies, backers to the hilt of Thatcher and her monetarism, get their reward. Their grant is to be increased by 70 per cent.

7000 university workers, including 4000 academics, are threatened with redundancy. Nationally 20,000 students will be lost to universities when demand for university places is constantly rising, a fact the government has been forced to admit. John Akker, Deputy General Secretary of the Association of University Teachers has described the plans as "butchery of the university system" and David Aaronovitch, President of the National Union of Students, has said that the news is a "devastating blow" for those schoolchildren, and

meetings are being held throughout the country and effective publicity campaigns have already started.

A mass lobby of Parliament is planned and a Special Council has been arranged for October to plan the fight back. A special fund of £500,000 has already been set up to fight redundancies. The General Secretary of the Association, Laurie Sapper, when interviewed and asked why universities should not take their share of the "burden" with 2½ million out of work replied, "Why should we bare our necks and get our heads chopped off?"

9-7-81

Higher education has more allies than enemies

THE END-OF-TERM announcement of savage cuts in university expenditure was designed to minimise any outcry. Such cynical calculation by the University Grants Committee (UGC) under government directive has not paid off.

The National Union of Students at a special conference in London on July 15 discussed in detail the effects of cuts on various colleges and how they might be fought. Some are worse-hit than others and the counting of blessings for having escaped relatively lightly will prove premature. Cuts once begun do not stop of their own volition: this year's 'escapees' with 'only' 5 per cent will be next year's victims with a vengeance.

That is why the NUS conference had to consider seriously the options before it. The old campaigning ways of the NUS will be insufficient for dealing with the enemy now before us. Fresh thinking and new tactics that involve all with a stake in higher education are now called for.

Some universities are so badly hit that whole campuses are likely to fight to stop hundreds of redundancies and thousands of student places being permanently lost. The campaign already begun in defence of Salford shows the allies available to those who fight. There, 200 companies aware of the quality of teaching, research and invention want Thatcher to explain why such a successful institution is victimised by her government.

Education in Britain has many friends and allies. This government has a great many enemies. Those in education who do not build on that understanding are falling short of what could be achieved were they to be uncompromising in dealing with this government.

9-7-81

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University job cuts-dons are determined to fight

2-7-81

THE UNIVERSITY Grants Committee will shortly inform individual universities of the cuts they are expected to impose for the next academic year, with indications for the future. At the Summer Council in Cardiff last month the Association of University Teachers showed signs of a determination to fight. This initiative must not be lost by a hesitant response - local meetings must be followed by a Special Council to decide our next step.

For AUT to fall into the role of accepting redundancies as inevitable and merely seeking to obtain high redundancy payments would be a negation of our professional responsibility. To believe that jobs can be defended simply on the basis of tenure denies the absence of tenure for many staff and that it is no immovable object anyway.

The last UGC letter in May made clear to any who may still have doubted that courses and departments are to go at some universities. The action of the Swinnerton-Dyer Committee in London also shows that colleges are threatened. AUT has argued that this is not the way to recovery and we have been ignored. There still persists the belief that Thatcher and her government are ignorant of the harm they inflict.

We are expected to believe that, in a country with a history of poor investment in research by both government and private industry (except "defence" of course) and with such a low proportion of students in university education, the road to recovery lies in imposing stringent quotas on the number of home students and drastic cuts in research capability. This is not economic madness but economic genocide.

Thatcher, however, is not yet content - she has promised more cuts to come. It is clear that the time has come to make a stand, not in the belief that this will be easy, but with the knowledge that neglect will only leave

the wound open to further infection. From the Special Council must come a further resolve, a new determination to oppose with whatever action may be necessary these cuts demanded by Thatcher and imposed by the quislings in the UGC. There must be no job losses and no student quotas, Thatcher must go to save our universities.

The Times Higher Educational Supplement has reported that the University Grants Committee has apparently been "disappointed" by the Swinnerton-Dyer Committee's plans for the University of London which threatens six Colleges. The proposals do not really go far enough for their liking!

Meanwhile the fight starts. The Senate of Chelsea College, one of those directly affected, has "utterly rejected" the proposals and the Association of University Teachers is planning a lobby of the University Court meeting on July 8.

● The AUT is to make £500,000 available for the defence of teaching jobs in universities, where at least 3000 are threatened with redundancy. Another 10,000 university researchers on short-term contracts are also in danger of being sacked.

The association's general secretary has said that every penny of the £350,000 reserves plus another £150,000 to be raised from subscriptions would be used to fight every redundancy.

For education

THIS WEEK Trade Unionists in all of Britain's colleges of Further Education, Polytechnics and Universities will show their readiness to stand and fight for higher education. TUC affiliated Unions have called for the development of an Education Alliance whereby all Unions represented in the colleges may draw closer together to fight Thatcher more effectively. The National Union of Students has called for two days of action when libraries will be taken over by the friends of education, meetings will take place and students will debate their future tactics.

The Government's plans are clear: they want to close more colleges and steal a few of our Universities for good measure. They want to sack lecturers, they want to rob students of their Union and reduce their income to less than half of the minimum supplementary benefit level. Unconcerned with productive progress Thatcher wants to do an unconditional demolition job. Her Government has proved itself to be misological in its hatred of education, scientific inquiry, invention and productive ingenuity and in its total refusal to listen to reason and discuss its policies. As the source of the destruction it stands condemned and must be removed immediately.

Workers in higher education, teachers, pupils, porters, engineers and cooks are faced alike with absolute decline. The only answer to this week's actions should trigger a protracted, highly determined battle.

7-5-81

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