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STATE EMPLOYEES AGAINST THE STATE

Striking civil servants have demonstrated that Thatcher can be separated from the government machine. State employees are taking on the state.

The NATO war-game "Operation WINTEX" was planned as a full-scale rehearsal for war. Civil Servants have shown peace can be imposed. Key Ministry of Defence staff have struck, wrecking the exercise and leaving Thatcher like a naughty child who has had her toy removed. Industrial action at Faslane (Scotland) and other centres has paralysed the Polaris programme.

We can do without the EEC. Customs officers have imposed a unilateral withdrawal for a time through action in West Coast ports and on the northern Ireland border that severely disrupts import/export traffic from Eire. The action will frustrate the system of payments behind the cumbersome EEC Common Agricultural Policy. Nor did a threat of suspensions in Liverpool intimidate customs workers - it was met by walkouts of Civil Servants all over Britain.

The key to success will be maintaining the impressive unity that has been shown. On March 9th pickets were manned in parts of Whitehall by members of the First Division Association - giving the lie to Fleet Street's slanderous picture of effete bureaucrats.

Threats of suspension of customs workers in Liver-

pool led on Thursday and Friday to instant walkouts of Civil Servants throughout the country. Meetings of 2000 workers in Liverpool and Edinburgh showed within hours that Civil Service workers won't stand for victimisation and that Thatcher has a fight on her hands.

And it's entirely in character (and the decision was clearly a Ministerial one) that Thatcher should pick on four teenage trade unionists of only a few weeks standing and equally characteristic of the class that their response was immediate defiance.

That the Government sought through the Press to underplay the success of the Civil Servants' one day strike is no surprise to Civil Service workers who know very well the significance of the massive response on the 9th.

That understanding in action was displayed throughout the service as members of the First Division Association (the so-called Whitehall mandarins) thrust leaflets into the faces of scab workers at Headquarters Offices.

The "inevitable trouble on the picket line" was short-lived after a member of the public was arrested for abusing a striker.

The momentum continues and as workers all over the country get the taste of battle the Government is beset by



Pickets outside the British Museum explain to tourists why it is closed.

Photo: The Worker

lightning closures, refusals to use the telephone, and the chaos that overtime bans cause as at the Hayward Gallery where drivers are throwing exhibition schedules into disarray.

Equally important are areas of selective strike action which, although not apparent to the public, are hitting the Government hard.

The Union's policy of sensory deprivation is taking shape nicely. Inland Revenue workers at the PAYE computers at Shipley and Cumbernauld and VAT computer staff at Southend are stopping the flow of funds and complementary action at the Pay-

Offices.

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Teachers must denounce 7.5 per cent

TEACHERS all over the country are angrily asking, "why the haste over the teachers' pay settlement?" And everyone is agreed that 7½ per cent is just not enough.

The profession will have the opportunity of overturning the disastrous decision of their negotiators when the NUT meets at a Special Salaries Conference on March 21st.

The budget has only confirmed the view that there is

no survival for teachers under the Thatcher regime. A paltry 7½ per cent is a shot in the arm for the Prime Minister.

The premature settlement in the Burnham Committee is made more shameful by the broad range of factors which demand that teachers join the battle.

Only last September the teachers achieved a relatively high level of pay after protracted efforts. The September salaries are worthy of

defence, but the 7½ per cent is an immediate erosion.

The teachers have long had a close affinity with the civil servants over pay. The civil servants are fighting and the teachers must join them.

Above all, teachers were scarcely aware that their negotiations had begun. Their discontent with their economy is growing daily. The settlement is premature. On March 21st the teachers should denounce it.

Traitor's Budget

£5000,000,000 INCREASE in taxation by a Government pledged to cut taxes.

Rising prices from a Government pledged to fight inflation. More unemployment from a Government pledged to help Industrial recovery.

The reaction was dramatic. Two years of pent up venom against Thatcher poured out of the newspapers despite all editorial efforts to control it. Millions turned off their TV and radio to escape the sound of Thatcher's screeching. Even gutless Tory MPs spoke out against her latest rampage.

The only support in the land came from the addled Institute of Directors. Employers throughout Britain expressed their disgust and there was even revolt in the Cabinet. Ministers demanding to be involved in budget discussions can't be trusted!

It was as if the budget had suddenly revealed the Government's strategy - the pillage of a nation. This was to have been kept quiet, hidden behind endless talk of money supply, world recession and the fight against inflation. Now all is starkly revealed.

Thatcher is determined to bleed us dry with a mixture of taxation, unemployment and inflation - a purpose built depression. "Those in

employment will pay more income tax, but many people will pay less tax because they will have no income to tax" says The Times. Or "If tax is to be applied regressively this year and in future, the poverty trap into which the unemployed are locked will become even more depressing and disastrous" from the Financial Times.

Thatcher is determined to destroy industry and make recovery impossible. This is not a question of mistaken economics but a deliberate planned destruction of an economy and the impoverishment of a population. It is a traitor's plan that must be smashed along with its shameless perpetrators.

"The fall in spending power for most people is 3 or 4 per cent. Those who think the Chancellor has let them off lightly are living in a fool's paradise." Again from the Financial Times which estimate the increase in income tax alone to be £2,500,000,000.

Thatcher right on course with Budget cuts

HOWE'S budget at first glance appears to be a failure of the Tory government, a mistake bringing down the wrath of the CBI and Tory backbenchers as well as the TUC and the Labour Party. But is it so?

Thatcher, known only for hats with more dead birds and artificial flowers than any other of the 'hang em flog em' brigade at the Tory Women's Conference but never for acumen or the capacity of some efficient Tory women politicians, was catapulted into the leadership of the Tory Party for one reason only; to destroy the Unions, so emasculating the working class and prepare for the last crusade. The Holy War against Bolshevism in all its forms.

The new finance capitalists have no further use for most workers which means, as the CBI have belatedly discovered, no further use for some industrial capitalists. Without workers, manufacturers are redundant. But shall we then put ashes on our heads and cry 'woe is me' because ICI profits have fallen?

For two years the policies shrieked have produced 3 million unemployed, a number steadily growing. Thatcher talks of 'shaking out' workers; in the first world war it was 'combing out', so, in the Tory mind, workers have progressed from lice to fleas! She is doing exactly what her masters instructed her to do. Monetarism with those two geriatric stumblebums, Hayek and Friedman is a mere smoke-screen. It is the old badger game. The mark attracts the attention of the dupe while he is being robbed of all he possesses.

The taxes on beer, tobacco, petrol, are a diversion, people are supposed to expend their wrath on those. Every budget of every government robs the poor to give to the rich. That is what budgets are for. This government has clawed back more wealth from the working class than any ruler since Richard I who bankrupted the country to pay for his Crusades. What happened to it? In spite of the lies we know inflation is going up, all taxes including income tax are greater than ever before prices are higher, people are being reduced to the poverty level even when at work and unemployment escalates.

As Britain is destined to be the aircraft carrier of the USA why is industry or an industrial working class necessary? Some Tory MPs from rural areas areas are becoming worried about their role. Shore for the Labour Party gives an able but hollow criticism of the Budget, the CBI lashes out with a feather. All these are straws in the wind and certainly show that this crew in power are unskilled. After all Hitler was loved until he lost.

The working class has to do the job itself, get rid of the Tory government and any other rubbish that comes after. After all the Russians did it against all expectation in 1917. This is still the spectre haunting the capitalist world. The South Wales miners showed the way. They said 'no' and the Great Crusaders fell back like a swatted bluebottle.

Historic Notes

'THE LANCET' was founded by Thomas Wakley, a young doctor who had become interested in medical journalism, in 1823. His life-long concern was the exposure of medical abuses and the promotion of good practices.

At that time the Royal College of Surgeons was run by the surgeons of a few London teaching hospitals. To become a member of the college a student had to attend two courses of lectures for which he had to pay a high fee. The lectures were given by the same surgeons who made the rules. Lectureships were, of course, passed on by nepotism. 'The Lancet' began to publish weekly verbatim reports of some of these lectures to make them available to all students without fee. It also reported cases from hospitals, including examples of surgical incompetence. Although he was sued several times,

Pioneering work of 'The Lancet'

Wakley never paid more than nominal damages. 'The Lancet' became increasingly respected for its fearless advocacy of reform and good practice.

In 1855 Wakley was elected to parliament as an independent member for Finsbury. His first major speech, two and a half hours long, was a closely argued and impassioned statement on behalf of the Tolpuddle martyrs. This advocacy was a turning point in the movement for their release.

Wakley played a major part in setting up the Committee of Enquiry into the State of the Medical Profession in 1834. The evidence, all reported in 'The Lancet', included the constitution of the medical colleges, the training of doctors, the treatment of the sick poor, the management of institutions including workhouses and asylums, both public and private, the

army and navy medical services, the sale, use and abuse of drugs. The major legacy of his work was the Medical Act of 1858, which set up the General Medical Council, through which, even today, doctors are recognised as qualified in their profession.

He loathed the new Poor Law Acts which made poor relief solely obtainable in workhouses, and 'The Lancet' published statistics which showed that the poor and elderly survived longer in their own homes than in institutions, and he exposed fearlessly the terrible conditions in workhouses and the rottenness of the care of the sick poor. That battle was finally won in 1948.

In 1851 'The Lancet' began to publish a series of analyses of food adulteration, which was rife and unregulated. His unremitting campaign, where coffee, sugar, flour, vinegar, butter and a

host of other commodities came under scrutiny, finally led to a series of Food and Drug Acts. Wakley exposed medical quacks, sometimes challenging them to a public exhibition in which he could control the conditions. Not one of them accepted.

One of the major reforms Wakley fought for was that the post of coroner should be open only to medically qualified men. He had long been disturbed by the gross errors in decisions made by coroners mainly due to their complete medical ignorance. A liberal reformer of the best kind Wakley was always anxious that food should be taxed as little as possible, maintaining that 'material happiness led to moral rectitude'.

'The Lancet' itself continues to flourish, one of the foremost medical journals in the world, and continuing in the traditions of its founder.

Women fight for their rights

MARCH 8 has been International Women's Day for the last 70 years. All over the world, women have used this day to demonstrate their demands, and to celebrate their strength. The activities planned in this country for 1981 included a march in central London. This was stopped by Whitelaw's ban on all marches in the London area.

But the Police could not prevent several thousand women from assembling in Hyde Park, and then walking in small groups along the route planned for the march, chanting and singing as they went. Banners were not allowed to be carried, so women draped them over their shoulders until, like the one shown in the photo, they were confiscated by the Police. All the way, busloads of police were on hand to break up any groups which looked too large, and ringed Trafalgar Square for the rally.

Many women were wearing the old suffragette colours of purple green and white, and at the rally, the banners were finally raised as a background for speeches and singing. Photos: The Worker.

Thatcher's attack on British workers has been aimed especially at women. Maternity benefits were the first cuts to be made by this Government. Women are now even more likely to lose their jobs than men.

Of course there is the Thatcherite regression of "back to the kitchen", but essentially the policy is that a worker's place is on the dole queue regardless of sex or anything else.

The fact that the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination laws have not improved the lot of women does not mean that they are of no importance. They represent so many years of struggle but the fight must continue. What must not happen is a slipping back through disillusion with laws. Women workers continue to organise themselves along with men in trade unions.

The inability of laws to put an end to discrimination that capitalism thrives on is well known. The laws were passed in the first place to divert women struggling for equal pay at Fords. That they did not do this was shown by the famous struggle at Trico. The way the Trico women used the law is important - they didn't go to a tribunal, they went out of the factory until they got the equal pay the law was supposed to enshrine. At the same time they broke the slavish acceptance of the social contract that embraced the labour movement.

Ironical as it may seem, Britain's first woman Prime Minister is the biggest barrier to the progress of women's equality.

International Women's Day celebrated despite march ban



British and US plans split NATO

UPROAR and disbelief greeted Thatcher's call for a rapid deployment force in the Persian Gulf. But it was not just the Saudis, one of whose official papers wrote "the aim is to dominate".

Opposition to the Thatcher-Reagan plan was expected, but less so from Chancellor Schmidt, who has, however, welcomed the Soviet peace proposals emanating from the latest Party Congress, and is calling for Reagan to take up the offer of an immediate summit for peace with President Brezhnev. This Reagan has flatly refused.

Thatcher, who is obviously not taken so seriously by the Russians as not given that pleasure, and so had to make much of being rude to Popov, the Russian ambassador who was presenting a personal letter from President Brezhnev to the leaders of NATO. She is the only European head of state to react in this way.

Schmidt, like Giscard in France, is pursuing a policy quite different from Thatcher's, having

defeated in the last election Thatcher's German counterpart, Strauss. Strauss' line for arms expenditure and war was rejected decisively by the German electorate - a wise use of their votes.

The British budget is for a 5 per cent increase in real terms of arms spending. But the economic crisis in Germany (for there too there is mass unemployment, though at a level lower than in Britain) has met with a quite different response. Urgent meetings have been held of top ministers to decide how to cut military expenditure rather than social spending. Germany will be nowhere near the proposed NATO 3 per cent annual increase in arms spending (only Britain and the USA take this seriously).

West German arms spending is crippled by its project to buy 322 Tornado aircraft which, with predictably escalating costs, has already eaten up a quarter of the entire arms budget. Nor is that budget to be increased. The German government has flatly refused to have anything to do with the

funding of Thatcher's rapid deployment force.

European capitalists and their governments, who wish to preserve the old capitalism with its production of commercial products for simple profit, refuse to be beaten up by the arms economy of a Thatcher or a Reagan. The crippling taxation of the British budget will raise pounds for orders and subsidies to weapons manufacturers.

In France, Giscard, who is on talking terms with the Russians, delightedly seized on the total mess Thatcher is in over her budget, and denounced her 'monetary madness'. Her failure has damaged the cause of the openly pro-Thatcher Chirac.

The tremendous defeats inflicted on Thatcher recently, hence her obvious failure, and her undignified and isolated position internationally, should help to turn votes away from Chirac in France, and deprive her of a badly needed ally. French voters will surely not be blind to the danger she, through Chirac, represents.

Editorial

The simplest explanation of this anti-working class budget is that Thatcher is taking out of our hides as unorganised consumers what as organised workers we forced on the Government in the way of increased investment in basic industries like coal and steel. In punishing us for these industrial victories she has not only increased inflation but has also raised income tax and, at the same time, extended it downwards to the worse off - in spite of protestations ad nauseam that the Government's absolute priorities were to lower inflation and reduce income tax to provide incentives.

As we have said before: from her point of view only money in the pockets of workers is inflationary. It must be taken away from them and handed over to the capitalists because theirs are the only incentives she cares about - incentives not to make things for general use but just to make even more money. However this budget did not even give any support to industrialists, with the CBI now making strong complaints about the bare 2 per cent reduction in MLR and the insignificant measures to help small businesses.

This budget and the whole monetarist policy it reflects must also be seen in an international context. The budget Reagan has just presented to the US Congress - massive cuts in all forms of public expenditure on social benefits for the working class, falling most severely on the poorer sections - is an exact replica of the Thatcher Government's first budget two years ago. Like follows like, and Reagan too has enormously increased expenditure on armaments and military aid to 'friendly' governments like the violently repressive junta in El Salvador.

Monetarism, and all other nostrums based on returning to the pure milk of laissez-faire capitalism by wiping out all the reforms brought about by the working class to make capitalism tolerable, is simply anti-communism. It is weak capitalism lashing out at its most feared enemy - revolutionary socialism. We have had it all before with Hayek and his ilk during the previous Cold War.

The attack on the standard of living of workers and on their trade unions, in the name of a return to a free market economy, is always accompanied by the stirring up of anti-Red hysteria as the excuse for a war economy of massive rearmament at the people's expense.

We are seeing the international realignments taking place as a result of this overall policy of capitalism in decline. All the fascist, violently anti-communist governments like South Africa or Chile, once rapped over the knuckles for their crimes against civil liberties, are now being embraced as the staunchest allies. We have had all this before too - the conniving at Hitler's militarisation of the German economy because it was ostensibly anti-bolshevik.

Monetarism is simply one of the politic names for a move toward fascism. It is the economic side of capitalism's outlawing and suppressing class struggle at a time when class struggle can bring about its complete overthrow.

Devon Council plans for destruction

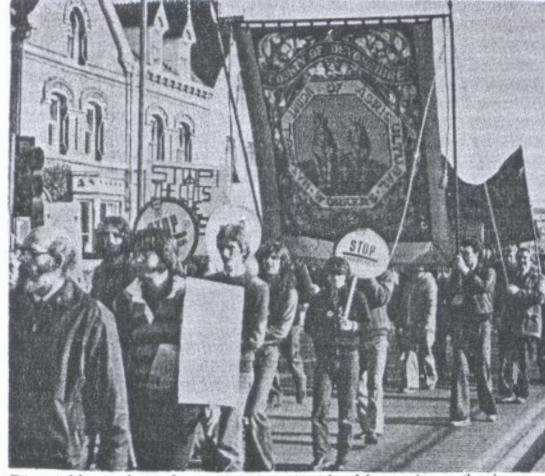
LAST year Devon County Council budgeted for 13 per cent inflation and found very early on that it had drastically underestimated (choosing rather to call it overspending), and a subsequent cut of £6 million was made not half way through the financial year.

In setting the rate support grant for this year, Thatcher insisted that Councils budget for 6 per cent wage increases and 11 per cent on supplies. Even though Devon is one of the counties that has had its rate support grant cut by 1 per cent this year, the Council decided the Government's figures were too generous, and set a rates increase of 9.75 per cent.

So are Government policies really working; has inflation finally been brought under control; and has the Council saved our services with a rates rise lower than the Thatcher inflation estimate?

Not likely! If the Council found that it can gain a couple of months' grace by using mythical estimates how much more important is that in County Council election year? It is obvious that after the elections the Council will be returning with a demand for massive cuts in all services. This is as dishonest as the Council chopping millions from construction projects, injecting half into other departments and calling it expansion of services.

As it becomes clear that the present councillors are happy to



Barnstaple workers demonstrate against health service cutbacks.

Photo: The Worker.

go on devastating Devon's services, the local workers must gain the clarity to oppose their plans. The danger is that the main criticism of their actions will be they didn't levy a realistic enough rates increase.

The assumption behind this argument is that we can't beat Thatcher, so we have to try and skirt round her, that the members of our unions will not protect themselves, or can't. This idea is prevalent but reactionary. The political situation in Britain is that Thatcher can't be ignored.

Busworkers say no to fare increases

THE VAST majority of public bus services in England and Wales are owned by the National Bus Company, but operated by local organisations such as the Bristol Omnibus Company, which are subsidised to a greater or lesser extent by local authority funds.

Thatcher's attack on public services such as schools, hospitals, housing and so on, has naturally found its complement in the denial of responsibility for public transport by local authorities.

The government's 'break-even' dictum as applied to bus services has meant withdrawal of subsidies increases in fares, cuts in manning and overheads (such as the number of bus depots), and plans for the effective destruction of these essential services.

Attempts to enforce these reactionary measures against the will of busworkers and passengers alike have led these authorities into direct confrontation with the unions, and in particular with TGWU branches which deal with bus crews.

In the case of Bristol, this meant suspending or sacking bus workers through unconstitutional disciplinary proceedings - a duty steward is bound to attend all disciplinary hearings - and then locking out all drivers and clippies when the union announced its

refusal to accept such high-handedness.

For twelve days up to 21 February, Bristol busworkers refused to return to work unless the issue of higher fares was put up for negotiation; the company refused to end the lock-out unless the union accepted increased fares as a fait accompli. Talks with ACAS broke down because the local company refused to call NBC officials to negotiate in the dispute. In the end, suspensions and sackings were withdrawn, after the issue had attained a certain prominence in the national press, although the condition that higher fares be accepted has prevailed.

In other parts of the country, local authorities have taken responsibility for cheap, efficient local services, despite cowardly suggestions that they can expect Rate Support Grants to be cut as punishment.

In London, West Midlands, Tyne and Wear, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, campaigns are currently underway to freeze or even cut public transport fares, and examples are being cited of towns and districts (such as Sheffield or Woodspring, Bristol) where subsidised services with cheap fares are in great demand by passengers, and are highly

valued by all the local working population.

An enquiry has been called for into the Bristol Omnibus Company management, due to the notoriety they have achieved. The gains made in the course of the Bristol busworkers' lock-out are far more substantial however,

First, attention has been drawn to what is possible in terms of bus service that serves people, rather than one which is used by the ruling class to attack workers' standard of living.

Second, bus workers employed by local bus companies have forced the national management out into the open where they can be made to take notice of the demands of all those who work in the services they run. The question of combining the trade union efforts of workers separated geographically, but united by the common aim of providing a high standard of public transport remains at an early stage yet, but the past few weeks have made it clear that their ability to organise nationally is the key to the future of Britain's nationalised bus services.

And since the TGWU bi-annual conference takes place this summer, clear policy for public transport is to be expected.

No rate rises - No cuts in services

A VAST mural, depicting the ILEA campaign putting the lid of victory on to a dustbin containing Thatcher and her henchmen in the Government co-ordinated campaign to destroy the Inner London Education Authority, summed up the spirit of Wandsworth's meeting to celebrate the Government's backdown.

Victory has been achieved because of the well-organised and united campaign of parents, teachers and other unionists. Throughout the country teachers must unite with their communities to defend our education service against the ravages of this Government. The will to defend the service is there - it only needs to be organized.

Not only has the campaign prevented ILEA's break-up but the strength of the support for maintaining and improving the education service has given ILEA the courage to refuse to cut its budget despite Government blackmail.

Now ILEA is in the front line for Government attacks, for if ILEA can survive relatively unscathed, the Government's massive attack on ILEA's finances came through the block grant, a system which, with pure Thatcherite logic, means that the less an authority is willing to spend on a public service, the more

government funds will be allocated to it to help that service decline. Thus ILEA would only have to cut its education service by one third to receive its full grant of £141 million. For refusing to cut the service, ILEA has been punished by its grant being reduced to £7 million: hence the central slogan of the victory meeting: "Give London back its grant!"

Now the Government is trying to turn the people of London against their education service by accusing ILEA of gross extravagance. ILEA, just like other authorities throughout the country that are attempting to resist the cuts, is seeking to pass the cost onto local ratepayers. We must be clear in the rates fight that will come. The people have already paid for their services through existing taxes, which the Government has stolen - we should not be expected to pay again. Our slogan must be: "No rates rises - No cuts in services."

ICL moves production to S. Africa

AFTER CLOSING two UK plants last year, Britain's premier computer manufacturers, International Computers, are planning to open new factories in South Africa.

Over the years, ICL have established South Africa as its biggest market outside the UK since the economic sanctions cover US-made computers only. ICL are concerned that the breakdown of the Geneva talks on the independence of Namibia last month will strengthen the calls of the front line African states for tougher sanctions. The South African Government Digest estimates that ICL's move will save their economy £22m in foreign exchange in the first year alone. ICL factories could give that regime increased access to computing technology to bolster apartheid.

Indeed, ICL have already

supplied computers to the South African Police.

A transfer of production facilities from Britain to South Africa will serve several purposes - the avoidance of the boycott of the South African regime and the boosting of profits through employing cheaper unorganised workers. It also demonstrates ICL's lack of confidence in Britain's future as a high technology nation.

Rumours about that ICL are seeking State aid to finance the costly closures of two UK plants. Interestingly enough, they are wooing Thatcher by cutting their Research and Development budget, on which their future depends, and not by showing evidence of planned investment in Britain. Perhaps, Thatcher is interested in swapping British jobs for more South African industrialists of the calibre of Michael Edwards.

Engineers back Civil Servants

AUEW ENGINEERING SECTION - London South District Committee Meeting - 11 March 1981

"This London South District Committee express support to the Civil Service Unions in the actions they are undertaking to obtain an acceptable settlement of their wage claim."

We congratulate them on their successful stoppage on the 9th of March 1981, and we urge Executive Council, Shop Stewards and all Members to give the Civil Service Unions every possible help to assist them in achieving total victory over this discredited Government."

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Civil Servants

Cont. from page 1

master General's Office at Crawley means that even existing funds are stationary. Action by Department of Employment staff round things off by ensuring that Thatcher has no idea of how much money the unemployed are receiving - not insignificant for Government borrowing.

Savage attack on Education

THATCHER'S RECENT decree to squeeze the very last drop of life blood from the University sector came as no surprise.

The announcement that 15 per cent was to be cut from the University Grants Committee budget over the next three years sounded the death knell for many institutes. To meet this shortfall in income, plans for complete closure and selective shutdowns are being openly discussed: these would take the form of research units being centralised, the withdrawal of postgraduate facilities and the complete removal of many undergraduate faculties.

The chairman for the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals has spoken out against the Government and

Neither does the City of London escape attention where workers at Companies House are disrupting share transactions.

Thatcher is losing control and her vicious retaliation in Liverpool indicates the start of a long hard fight which in its development will surely create increasing unity and political understanding in the Civil Service and leave the Government in disarray.

to the working class of skilled application in the fields of education and research. The most immoral aspect is the effect this will have on future generations of our class.

There is no alternative but to fight to bring down this Government. It is therefore imperative that clarity be maintained at all times with respect to this central task. Diversions at this point are not just folly but constitute a criminal avoidance of our responsibility to past, present and future progress in the pursuit of knowledge.

The current student activity around the issue of an increase in fees for students from overseas is one such diversion. It is a development of the opportunism of those responsible for running our Univers-

Hundreds pack Merton meeting against cuts

1500 PEOPLE, parents, teachers, ancillary workers and pupils turned up to a meeting called by the National Union of Teachers to rally opposition to cuts of £3 million in the education budget of the outer London Borough of Merton. This reduction in a budget of £28 million represents over 10 per cent with horrific consequences for the future of education in the borough. If the full Council meeting on Wednesday 18th March passes the cuts no aspect of educa-

tion will remain unaffected.

Up to 150 teachers (over one in ten) could be declared redundant, swimming and music tuition could virtually disappear, and this is just the beginning. Nursery education may be dismantled and further education would be savaged.

At the protest meeting only 400 could be admitted. Extra space was hurriedly arranged to accommodate a similar number in a local school and hundreds more were left outside. The meet-

ing was an unprecedented occurrence in Merton and it is planned to mount an even bigger demonstration of protest to prevent the full Council deciding on this programme of destruction.

The Government's cut in Merton's rate support grant amounted to £3 million - the same amount it is proposed to lop off the education budget. It is becoming increasingly clear that battle must be joined not only with this Council but also with their masters, the Government.



Civil Servants at Clarendon House, Exeter. In every city in Britain government buildings were closed and picketed. Photo: The Worker

Anger in Plymouth

PLYMOUTH Trades Council recently held a conference to discuss active ways of helping the 15 000 workers now unemployed in Plymouth, of whom 5000 are under 25.

Speakers from the platform did much to show that Thatcher's 'there is no alternative' argument must be totally rejected if workers are to retain work.

A TUC spokesman outlined the 'Plan for Growth': the £6000m investment programme proposed by the TUC as an economic alternative. It was felt that the sullen acquiescence to the black economy must be thrust aside. The TUC reinvestment programme is a direct opposition to the Thatcher policy of destruction and offers an intermediate goal for working class action. Along side this the TUC plan to advise all unions to allow unemployed workers to retain membership as a way of cutting back from the isolation of unemployment.

As one speaker from the platform stressed, 'The fight back must intensify at local level, there must be a rejection of the baloney of accepting "natural wastage".' He went on, 'Capitalism means as it always has done, Unemployment, Poverty, Misery and War'. It's for workers of Britain to tolerate this no longer. Capitalism must go. It is our job to get rid of it!

A meeting has been called by the South Essex Committee of the Southeast Region TUC on March 17th at 7.30 pm at the Laindon Community Centre, Laindon, to make arrangements for the TUC Week of Action, starting with the rally on April 7th.



Reg Birch (Party Chairman) and Les Elliott (AUEW) on Thatcher's war on the workers - particular reference to Brent/Park Royal industry

Tuesday 24 March 7.30pm

Willesden Trades and Labour Hall
375 High Road Willesden

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortress Road, London NW5
Brighton Workers Bookshop 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
Clariion Books 5 The Precinct, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex
Northern Star Bookshop 18A Leighton Street, Leeds
Basildon Bookstall Tues, Fri, Sat Marketplace
Hull Bookstall Old Town Market, Saturdays

Public Meetings

LONDON Fri 20 March	Make War on Warmongers 7.30pm Bellman Bookshop
EXETER Tues 24 March	End Unemployment, Sack Thatcher 8pm Oddfellows Arms, New North Road, Exeter.