



THE FIGHT FOR PRINT Fight on at Senior Colman

TODAY

THE BATTLE for control of the Today newspaper finally ended last week when Murdoch's News International bought the title and its mountain of debts for £38 million from rival Lonrho. The Sunday edition of Today was closed down several weeks ago, after mounting losses and a scant readership.

The paper that claimed to be breaking the mould has now fallen into the clutches of a proprietor whose success has been based on reducing all his titles to the lower common denominator of malicious gossip and trivia. While Murdoch has given assurances of the continued 'independence' of the paper, the appointment of the former editor of the News of the World as editor and managing director shows the direction the paper will take to try and boost its 320,000 circulation to its break even 500,000.

Today fills a convenient gap in the middle of the market for Murdoch, and will enable him to take on the Mail and Express, but the main reason for the takeover lies in its presses. These will provide much needed extra capacity, with the added bonus of colour. Even before the deal, News International had begun to print a million copies of the News of the World on them - using capacity freed by the closure of the Sunday Today.

Short of capacity

Murdoch is chronically short of capacity at Wapping, with insufficient press lines to meet his demands. A new press hall is being built there, but will not be ready for some time. The presses at Today will ease the pressure in the short term and enable him to embark on his target of increasing the sales of the Sun and NoW by an extra million copies, as well as extra pagination for all his titles.

This may be easier said than done, as all his titles except the Sunday Times show a continuing fall in circulation. The Sunday Times has pulled back a little following its disastrous loss of readers after the transfer to Wapping, but is still well short of the former figure.

Robert Maxwell's Daily Mirror is gaining, however, and with his large investment in

Thatcher rewards a good servant

WHEN it comes to Rupert Murdoch, nothing is too much trouble for the Government. Brushing aside protests in parliament, horror from the Press Council and the reputation of the Fair Trading Act, Thatcher's ministers decided last Thursday he could take over the daily Today without a investigation by the Monopolies Commission.

Within two hours of the announcement in the Commons that the bid could go ahead, a new editor appeared in Today's offices (from the News



Photo: The Worker

Kinning Park printers marching from Glasgow to London.

colour presses, soon to come on stream, the scene is set for a major circulations battle. Nevertheless, Murdoch has the advantage of a 30% market share to squeeze the other proprietors with lower advertising rates or cover prices. While colour has not proved to be as revolutionary in its transformation of our daily papers as some had predicted, the ability to produce run-off-paper (ROP) colour will help boost advertising revenue.

The NoW will benefit particularly from this. Its colour supplement Sunday has never been profitable, and may end up being dropped as ROP colour allows all the lucrative car and fitted kitchen ads to go inside the main paper.

It is in this light that the decision not to renew the contract for printing Sunday at Bemrose, Murdoch's printing plant in Liverpool, makes more sense. Everything Murdoch does is well planned: the announcement of massive redundancies at Bemrose and the almost simultaneous transfer of printing part of the NoW to Today.

MPs are holding up their hands in horror. But Murdoch's ultimatum of 'give the go-ahead or I'll shut it down' shows how a determined operator, and a proven ally of Thatcher, can make a mockery of the monopoly laws.

of the World). Journalists at the paper say that he moved swiftly into action, ditching a headline that hinted at any opposition in parliament to the takeover.

Under the Fair Trading Act, the government need not refer a bid for a newspaper to the Monopolies Commission if that paper is likely to go under without a sale. Murdoch's group said it would fold five fold unless he took it over. But, for a paper dead on its feet, Today could still command £38 million!

EXPRESS

THE DESTRUCTION of Fleet Street claimed its latest victim last week, when Express Newspapers announced their long awaited plans for moving production out of their historic art deco headquarters. Around 2500 jobs are to go, split between London and Manchester. Coming on top of previous rounds of redundancies, this will mean that over 60% of the workforce will have gone in three years.

The Express is the last paper to move out of Fleet Street, and the seeming inevitability of the blow has led to a loss of morale and demoralisation amongst the workforce, which has been exploited to the maximum by the management. The comparatively generous redundancy terms being offered are doubtless aimed to diffuse any attempt at resistance.

Of particular importance is the attack on newspaper production in Manchester. While previous casualties in the second main production centre have been eclipsed by Fleet Street's demise, this could herald a second phase to break up union power in the north - where it has always been particularly strong. Part of Express Newspapers' investment is to be spent on a new plant at Broughton near Preston.

SCOTSMAN

JOURNALISTS on the Scotsman newspaper have been locked out of their Edinburgh offices since June 16. After talks between the NUJ and management broke down last week each of the 120 journalists in dispute received letters at home setting out the management case, an obvious attempt to sow the seeds of division.

A meeting of the Scotsman NUJ chapel, however, overwhelmingly rejected the company's proposals, which were described as punitive, and called on the NUJ to declare the dispute official.

The management are proposing longer hours and a longer working week as part of the annual wages and conditions agreement, together with five redundancies on the Evening News, the Scotsman's sister newspaper, and the eventual transfer of ten journalists to "one of the company's development projects". All these proposals were rejected.

The Scotsman continues to be produced by an editorial management team, and the journalists have been prevented from placing their case before the Scotsman readers, in particular to point out that they have been locked out by an intransigent management.

The NUJ persists in seeking a negotiated settlement, declaring its willingness to recognise that negotiation is a question of give and take on both sides. In complete contrast the Scotsman management continue to call for "realistic discussion" (meaning you must accept our terms), and have even objected to members of the NUJ negotiating team.

Support for the journalists has come from Lothian Regional Council who have decided to withdraw all advertising from the Scotsman until the dispute has been resolved.

WORKERS at Senior Colman, an Engineering company in Manchester, have been on strike since January 19 this year.

Management engineered the strike along Wapping and Silentnight lines. In fact the chairman of the Senior Colman group, Professor Roland Smith, is also a director of Silentnight.

The dispute originated when the workforce were told to complete a questionnaire and timesheets. Not only would this mean administering a time and motion study in their break-time but questions included "Do you believe that you are working harder than the man next to you?"

This task was refused by all. Management made an example of four men by sacking them.

Immediately a shop-floor meeting was convened and in a secret ballot 110 voted for strike action in support of their workmates (two voted against). Management refused to reinstate the four, and the workforce withdrew its labour.

Sacked

It then became all too clear that management had planned the dispute in order to break the union. Within two days the 97, who refused to break the strike, were sacked and replaced by scabs.

The scab labour had been recruited with the help of Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the Local Job Centre.

It is crucial that we in the trade union movement appreciate the scale of effort and planning that the Thatcherites are prepared to put into their attack on us and our ability to organise.

Many of us underestimate their determination, guile and even professionalism. We need to understand our attackers, understand what we are up against. Not so that we become demoralised, but so that we can fight back effectively, to be prepared and to avoid traps.

The Senior Colman strikers, and others, ask for and deserve our support. That support can take the form of collections, visits to picket lines and rallies, inviting speakers - but also the spreading of their experience and the lessons to be learnt.



Editorial

THATCHER's aim of a non-socialist opposition has failed with the break-up of the 'Alliance'. Mutual enmity between the Liberals and the Smashing Dinner Party, and further divisions within the SDP itself, make a mockery of their chummy act for cameras.

Politics in Britain may have its individual personalities, but it runs along class lines. The two classes have economic, social and political interests that are fundamentally opposed. Despite attempts at modernity, the Liberals remain an anachronism; in the Liberal Party nowadays hardly anyone's father even remembers Lloyd George their last prime minister 65 years ago. SDP attempts to push against class politics have rebounded on it.

And yet for over seven million votes to have been wasted when they could have been used against Thatcher is food for thought. Thatcher was the beneficiary of the 'Alliance' while it lasted.

Despite her wishes, Labour not only survived, but boosted its vote in the general election. It can play a positive role if it wants, or it can be inward-looking and negative. It can join the Opposition to Thatcher or it can indulge in sectarianism. Will the Scottish MPs really prefer a breakaway, or will they exercise a leadership role against Thatcher's destruction of Britain?

Labour needs to think seriously about class perspective when discussing the problems of the working class. The Joe Ashton dirty-hands-or-not approach to class analysis is crude and wrong-headed. At the other extreme is the idea that dumping class politics is the modern thing to do.

To challenge decline, youth must demand work

In the face of Thatcher's third term we must consider the situation of those workers who have grown up under Thatcherism.

The following article is based on a speech given by a young comrade at a recent Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) public meeting entitled "Youth Demand Work"

YOUNG PEOPLE demanding work is essential for the very survival of Britain because youth are the future.

However, if we look clearly we see how youth are divided into those who have or have had work and those who have never worked.

Those who have had to fight for work, because of the Government's attempt to smash trade unionism, to destroy industry, like young miners or printers, demand work because they know that without work they and the rest of the working class cannot survive.

And those young workers in the education sector, teachers and now lecturers, have shown their determination to demand work - and decent work with pay and conditions.

Through struggle, young workers have shown determination to demand work and have learnt the necessity of work for survival.

Never worked

Those who have never worked including those thousands of young people on Government training schemes don't demand work because they believe that there is no future for them. Unemployment has become a way of life.

In a recent television poll, 85% of young unemployed people questioned in a new town, said that unemployment was no-one's fault, that no-one was to blame.

Often these young people have an anarchic response to society and don't participate because they don't see a place for themselves within society. Until those young people see who the enemy is they won't demand work.

For many young people, Thatcher is the only government we have known and can remember. Young people who are brought up in Thatcherite Britain and are trained to believe that the most important thing is number one - me, and the survival of number one. Thatcher is the norm, youth unemployment is the norm - and survival for number one is the norm.

Why did 42% of first time voters vote for Thatcher? Why did the Conservatives increase their hold on first time voters by 4%?

Blank future

I believe it is because the majority of young people can't see beyond Thatcher, beyond capitalism. They can't see a future, cannot imagine socialism because Thatcher has imposed herself and undermined the confidence of youth.

A vote for Labour in the General Election would have been a vote of confidence in the working class of Britain. The majority of youth lack confidence in their own ability to bring about change, they lack confidence in the ability of the working class to run the country.

Thatcher has made the survival of the individual the priority in young people's minds and if you can survive by being: a city whizz kid; or a 'street wise' barrow boy; or a black-market entrepreneur; or a spiv; or a drug dealer; or a part-time casual worker or a temporary worker; or a struggling artist - then that's OK because



Youth on the march for work.

Photo: The Worker.

at least you're alive. But for how long?

And that's what Thatcher offers youth: individualism over collectivism.

With this creation of a new generation of people to whom Thatcher is the norm there has been a growth of reaction amongst youth who don't see themselves as part of the working class, who don't believe they have any role in society - because they've never had to fight for anything other than survival.

In the 1930s the unemployed emerged as a dignified organised force who along with the trade union movement led the fight for some of the welfare reforms we have today and when I was first involved in politics, when I was very young about 6-7 years ago, there was a growth of youth movements where the young unemployed, trades unionists and activists attempted to organise to demand a future.

Dramatic change

But there has been a dramatic change since the early 1980s. Giro cheques are sent through the post. There are no more queues for dole. Why? Because the Government can see that congregation, collectivism - even signing on to collect dole money - has led to action.

Thatcher attacks youth as part of her overall attack on the whole working class and everything that the working class has ever fought for - health, education, industry, jobs. There is no future for Britain in a declining capitalist economy.

Asset stripping

Britain is in decline and as the economic situation declines, as Britain is asset stripped and capital allowed to flow abroad, industries close one by one and with them the chance of work. Thatcher is trying to remove our fundamental strength - our labour power because by doing that she will destroy the trade union movement, she will destroy socialism, she hopes, and she will gain a short-term profit.

In our 'Economics of Genocide' pamphlet we said that unemployment is the issue which forms the great meeting point of the two classes battling for Britain's future. For the working class, opposition to unemployment is necessary

to survive.

To youth Thatcher has offered unemployment or a series of short term training schemes, to support a declining economy to hide the unemployment figures and to stop youth demanding work.

Millions like us

About three-quarters of a million young people are involved in one scheme or another, while one third of a million people have never had a job since leaving school. The unemployment rate for 16-25 year olds is 21%.

In 1974 3% of 16-18 year olds were unemployed; 72% of them were in work, the rest were studying. That sort of figure seems so far away from reality now that it is almost unimaginable and that is the problem. Thatcherism has sunk so deep into the minds of youth that they can't imagine a future.

This government offers youth nothing but sees youth as a vehicle to eradicate socialism, trade unionism and collectivism - as a vehicle to create her 'individual' society which doesn't question her and doesn't demand.

Let us look briefly at some of these so called training schemes and the thinking behind them. Thatcher intends to make such training schemes compulsory for 16-25 year olds.

Firstly, the mind behind training schemes is that of the Employment Secretary and the Manpower Services Commission which is an unelected body appointed by the Government with the sole intention of keeping youth quiet by giving them short term training to support a declining economy.

The schemes of the MSC now take up 30% of further education and are now in schools more and more with schemes like the 'Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative' where 14-18 year olds are taught how to be business entrepreneurs.

Admitting failure

The MSC sees its primary customer as business and commercial trainees or students. There are about 350,000 youth trainees at present and over 100,000 of these are presently in colleges all over Britain as part of the Youth Training Scheme. Initially the scheme was a one year scheme but since April 1986 it has been extended to two years for those who enter at 16 year old school

leavers and one year if they enter at 17.

The YTS is supposed to provide work experience complemented by elements of education and training. Trainees receive £27.30 per week. For 1986/87, the first year of the two year YTS, some 450,000 places were planned at a cost of £925 million.

Eventually it is intended that the YTS should cater for 500,000 trainees a year and that it should be, as Bryan Nicholson head of the MSC says, "the accepted road to employment".

Now to futher that aim, the Government has just announced that 16-18 year olds will be forced onto the YTS if they are unemployed and will be taken out of the benefit system if they refuse. As Norman Fowler said, "young people should not be allowed to opt for supplementary benefit." The reason? because by being on supplementary benefit young people are supposed to be available for work - to be employable. But by forcing young people on to the YTS Fowler is admitting that there are no jobs for youth.

Some benefit!

The Government is now trying to add 18-25 year olds to the disappearing unemployment figures by calling young people in for 'Re-Start' interviews. It seems ironic that a 20 year old is invited to an interview to re-start their life, a life which the Government has deemed to have failed so far. Instead of the usual eight options for "Moving out of unemployment", as the MSC puts it - there are now only four - the enterprise allowance scheme, a place on a job club, a job vacancy or a place on a Job Training Scheme. Access to courses and to community programmes have been blocked.

When the Job Training Scheme comes into full operation, young people will get an allowance that is equivalent to their previous benefit and they will be no longer classed as unemployed. The scheme will be run by local managing agents who will provide a mixture of training and 'work experience' and who will get £35 per JTS entrant and £58 per completed month - a total of £696 per year - and who hire out trainees for £20 per week to sponsoring employers!!

Unlike the YTS, the Job Training Scheme does not have

a guaranteed period of off the job training. So JTS trainees will spend their time with sponsoring employers who pay £20 per week to exploit their Labour power while trained work for their benefits.

Trainees will no longer count as unemployed, will lose rights to benefits and at the end of the JTS will have to sign on as new claimants which will mean a £6 reduction in money per week and will futher distort the youth unemployment figures.

Squeezing profits

This scheme is one of the most dangerous yet and shows the lengths that Thatcher is prepared to go to destroy the organised working class in Britain while at the same

squeezing the last drop of profit out of a decaying capitalist system. It also implies that those who are unemployed are so because they lack skills or the relevant qualifications to have work, rather than the fact that there are no long term jobs with pay and conditions for youth.

Opposition to unemployment is essential for the survival of the working class. The denial of dignity otherwise is a clear attempt to divide and rule and or youth who have never known the dignity of work, division is increased. Socialism alone offers the right to work; capitalism cannot.

Youth must demand work and those in work must fight for work but not just any work, like that offered on the JTS or the YTS, or where workers live on the poverty line and unions or illegal, but work with proper pay and conditions.

Resolve to fight

Already we have seen the resolve to fight the Governments Job Training Scheme from the Transport and General Workers' Union who have voted to withdraw from and boycott the JTS. Ron Todd, TGWU General Secretary said, "The JTS is the worst proposal put forward by this government for Britains unemployed for a long time. The unemployed are offered no pay and no legal protection and scarcely any real training". This resolve to fight must be broadened to involve the whole trade union movement and the plans to take young people out of the benefit system if they refuse to go on a government scheme must be the focus for the trade union movement.

The student movement has a vital role to play. The thousands of trainees in colleges throughout Britain must be brought closer to the National Union of Students where the fight for education is the demand for work, where young people can be introduced to collectivism and union principles. We have seen more active involvement from the Futher education sector and that needs to be focussed on the enemy of education - Thatcher.

Socialism

As the attack from Thatcher gets stronger so must our resolve to fight for decent wages, jobs, education, healthcare. We must never lose sight of what we fight for - socialism.

Confidence is what is needed. Confidence in youth so they will demand work. Confidence in the working class so we believe in our strength - our power to change the society we live in and get rid of Thatcher. Because while we have Thatcher there is no future for young people.

We must take heart from the struggle of young workers, be they miners or printers. We are not so easily beaten.

NHS funding is increasingly charity based

DURING Thatcher's reign, charity has played an increasing role in covering up the cracks in the health Service. And as the cracks get larger, some health authorities are glowing themselves to be coerced into a much more organised dependency on charitable support.

Instead of passively relying on gifts and donations, these health authorities are getting involved in the fundraising process itself - and not just for one piece of equipment or a hospital - but to support the day to day running of the local service.

For example, Trafford Health Authority recently advertised for a fundraiser, on £10,000 and a 12 month contract - renewable dependent on performance.

Earlier this year, Oldham Health Authority set up a charity called Oldham Community Care which takes advantage of the Government's payroll deduction scheme whereby anyone can have a regular amount of their wages deducted tax free at source and given to a charity of their choice. Oldham Health Authority hopes to raise £50,000 to £100,000 per year from employees in the town. Other health authorities are now considering similar schemes.

These moves need to be strenuously opposed by NHS workers. The new post in Trafford should be blacked by the local trade unions. Proposals by other health authorities to set up pay roll deduction schemes should be opposed outright as the first stage to setting up Oldham style charities.

Even at this late stage, arguments must be won with union members that charity should not be used to support the NHS. In this, Thatcher's third term, we need to reaffirm the principles on which the NHS was created - that it is paid for by the state cut of our taxes and is free at the point of need for all who require it.

Giving money to health service charities only weakens the NHS and lets the Government off the hook. We cannot afford to be so generous with our wages until we create a state which works in our interest. Until then, there are many working class struggles in need of support for those with spare change in their pockets.

Bradford cows Heseltine

ONLY those who grovel and beg will be the recipients in Thatcher's inner city initiative test. This is the clear message sent to Bradford by Heseltine after the election. Before June 11 when they still thought they would win Bradford North, the former doyen of the Thatcher party accepted an invitation to visit the city given by the then Tory MP, Geoff Lawler. Well, the diminutive Geoff was cut down even further, losing to Labour's Pat Wall.

Now Heseltine says that things have changed and he cannot possibly be seen fraternising with Labour city councillors and three Labour MPs. So he won't be coming, which is a sure sign of their weakness and our strength.

* IN BRIEF

THE self-publicist Richard Branson, in a pickle last week, wants to put a 12p condom on the market. To draw attention to this he and his partner even flew a hot air balloon across the Atlantic, dropping litter as he went. Shame about the premature evacuation.

Memorial meeting pays tribute to Jack Collins' example



Jack Collins Photo: The Worker
COMRADES from the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) were privileged to be invited to the Memorial Meeting for Jack Collins, Secretary of the Kent NUM, who died in January. Speakers from the Kent NUM, from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, from the French mining community, and Betty Heathfield from the Women Against

Pit Closures, all paid tribute to the man who showed us all that being a communist was a way of life.

They spoke of his principled stand, his diligence, his kindness, and above all his positive and optimistic outlook. Betty Heathfield urged us, however we may be feeling after the Election, to do what Jack would have done - "pick yourself up, and get going." Contacts that were made through Jack with the French miners have resulted in exchange visits between Paris and Deal, who will now be competing through football for the Jack Collins Memorial Shield.

Internationalism

Jack's nationalism in defending his industry against attack, and his internationalism in his links with workers in Chile, Vietnam and the Soviet Union is an example to all of us in struggle. What better epitaph than these lines from a book in Jack's personal library "How the Steel Was

Tempered" by Nicolai Ostrovsky: "Man's dearest possession is life, it is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame

of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world - the fight for the Liberation of Mankind."



Kent miners

Photo: The Worker

Sharks line up to exploit the Don Valley

IN THE wake of Thatcher's new found 'concern' for Britain's inner cities, much ado was made recently of the commissioning of consultants to undertake a study into the Lower Don Valley, Sheffield, to assess 'the potential for economic regeneration'.

The Lower Don Valley has been devastated by Thatcher. Formerly the steel and engineering industrial heart of Sheffield, it now lies in ruins. The rubble and desolation serve as a stark reminder of what Thatcher's policies mean for Britain.

The study was commissioned by what the press described as a "rare alliance between a left wing City Council and [presumably a right wing] Government." Its objectives are to assess the 'development potential' of the area, and give guidance on the investment planning and roles of the public and private sector.

'Development potential' are code words meaning the potential for property sharks to make a fast buck, whilst investment planning is anathema to Thatcher. As for the role of the public sector, Thatcher's plans for local councils means that the 'ability of the Labour City Council to make a financial input will be non-existent, and Thatcher certainly won't inject capital.

A hint of what is in store for the Lower Don Valley is given in press comparisons with London's Docklands, held up by Thatcher at the start of the election campaign as the Tory vision of the future with, of course, no input from local authorities.

There will be a £25 million answer to London's St. Katherine's Dock at the canal basin. And Sheffield Forgemasters, better known for their steel

business, are proposing a 'major shopping complex'! Hypermarkets DIY Megastores, leisure facilities galore - this is the future the Thatcherites have in store, a candyfloss economy.

Hundreds of thousands put on the dole need more than fancy shops and places to spend their enforced leisure. Sheffield needs investment in manufacturing industry. Sheffield's workers need to put their skills back to work to make the things that Britain's people need, for it is they who are the potential for economic regeneration.

Landslide victories for the Labour candidates at the election mean that Sheffield's people reject Thatcherism and understand the need for real regeneration. Sheffield's workers must now ensure that the city's remaining industry is defended in the growing resistance to Thatcherism.

'Unity is strength' remains class truth

LAST WEEK saw the 'relaunch' of the General and Municipal, henceforth to be known as the GBM, and with it the heightening of debate about the methods and objectives of the trade union movement.

Many of the objectives laid out by John Edmonds are indeed needed, and reflect initiatives in other unions such as USDAW and the TGWU. Recruiting and representing the growing number of part time and temporary workers, and assessing how to appeal especially to young people, whose formative years and (if they're lucky) working lives have been spent under Thatcher, giving them a very different view of trade unions, are vital for our movement.

However, some of the remarks made at the launch revealed that the thinking behind the birth of 'GBM' is far from what we need.

Much attention was given to image, with, for example, the GBM's 'M' cleverly made into two stick people to illustrate the new slogan 'Working Together' thus showing what giving £35,000 to a firm of design consultants can produce!

Out goes the 'boring' Unity is Strength and the old logo, which Mr Edmonds said looked like a sheep looking over a five barred gate. (If you thought it looked like a handshake, don't apply for a job with any design consultancy firms.)

Edmonds, like many in the union 'establishment' and would-be trend setters, seems to be falling into the trap of throwing

the baby out with the bathwater. Gaining members in new fields and responding to changing circumstances should not mean rejecting our historical inheritance or forgetting what trade unions exist for.

We also need to use our senses and stop believing what those with little commitment to the movement tell us. Is the image of unions really 'flat cap and woodbines'? I first joined a union four years ago and the image could just

as easily be described as 'skinhead and donkey jacket'.

Undoubtedly the future does lie, as Edmonds says, "With the recruiter and organiser". However, the negotiator still has a role, and most importantly, so do we the membership. Even in the current circumstances, a vigorous and aggressive trade union is still best for the working class, and it is up to us to ensure it reflects the reality of class politics rather than the whims of design consultants.

Britain lags on health funds

IT MUST be rare indeed for a Thatcher government to be criticised for its lack of radicalism. Or perhaps Lord King's pronouncement at the annual lecture to the Institute of Directors when he suggested that their approach to privatisation was too cautious and that he was inclined to the "sell the lot" school of thought, was just to open a debate that has already taken place in Cabinet. He would look closely at the National Health Service because huge savings could be made, though, he claimed, the principle of free medicine was sacrosanct. How can a public service be made private and free? Is health care free in the US, for example, or allocated solely on the ability of an individual to pay?

Earlier on the same day, Junior Minister Edwina Currie admitted that it was not necessarily a better world over there. This was a warning to

nurses that although salaries were higher, education and accommodation were more expensive and there was no national health service. An American job fair in London had attracted 1,000 advance enquiries from British nurses. The Junior Minister did not touch on why British nurses have such a low value in her government's eyes, or why 30,000 left the service last year.

In the end, when all the figures have been quoted, Britain, by any international comparison lags behind every western country in terms of money spent on health care. Denmark and Finland spend half as much again in real terms terms. West Germany, France and the US twice as much. The justified reputation of the NHS stems from the fact that it is public and controlled in the main by the British working class. Let's make sure it remains so.

Surrey to ask police to vet teachers

EMBOLDENED by apparent electoral success, the Thatcherites of Surrey County Council education committee have now introduced a ruling which requires teachers to disclose in writing details of any criminal convictions held they may have incurred. In addition, applicants for posts must give permission for police inquiries into their records, the results of which will be passed on to employers. Failure to give such permission will render any applications for employment invalid.

This move is made under the guise of protecting children from abuse and is equally applicable to parent helpers, caretakers and other ancillary staff. But behind this facade of concern lurks the sinister design, more to do with intimidation of teachers than protection of children. In fact the Department of Education and Science, with the support of teacher unions involved, already operate a blacklist of teachers barred from teaching because of criminal conviction or professional misconduct. This is the long established mechanism for ensuring that those who have charge of children will not put them at risk. What Surrey are doing is to introduce the notion of positive vetting by the police before teachers can be deemed suitable.

NUT response

The National Union of Teachers have responded immediately to this development, calling it an infringement of civil liberties, and will no doubt be much exercised in the defence of teachers should Surrey be so foolish as to proceed to use the powers they have created. Here we have in embryo, the new scenario in which teachers will have to operate. It is no longer a question of losing pay for striking but of losing your job.

Of course moves like this oblige us to reconsider tactics from time to time, given the requirement to preserve our forces and not fritter away our energy in debilitating and foolhardy assaults. One thing is certain, teachers in this country have invested too much of themselves in the ongoing defence of state education to be diverted from that task.

Election results and Surrey education committee may come and go but this most vital public service will continue to be defended by those who care for it, against all who would destroy it.

Profiteers set to eat from British Rails' table

BRITISH RAIL informed the National Union of Railwaysmen last week that 366 Travellers Fare outlets are to be put out to tender over the next two years. This means that any catering firm will be able to bid for the lease of existing Travellers Fare buffets and restaurants in rail stations all over Britain.

For Travellers Fare staff, who are mostly members of the NUR, and as such enjoy relatively good wages and conditions in the notoriously poorly paid (and organised) catering industry, the implications are serious. If the plan goes ahead they will force lower pay and conditions at best, or redundancy at worst. There are too many examples in other industries where ancillary services are privatised to hope otherwise.

Although TF will remain for the present an arm of BR and bid for its own sites, BR admit that TF will itself be sold off soon.

Jimmy Knapp, the NUR General Secretary, wryly remarked to delegates at the annual NUR conference at Dundee, "So much for the famous dog-eared British Rail sandwich. It now becomes the most luxurious morsel in the world."

Tasty morsel

A tasty morsel indeed for the purchaser of TF, which made more than £8 million profit last year.

It is not only TF staff who face a struggle to maintain their jobs in the coming years. The BR asset strippers have their eyes firmly set on British Rail Engineering and Inter City as the next targets for privatisation.

London Transport workers support builders' strike

BUILDING workers employed by London Regional Transport walked out on strike last week, fighting against redundancies. Pickets are out at the depots at Chiswick, the Oval and Parsons Green, and the reports are of a good response to the action.

jobs & services

Ever since Thatcher took London Transport away from any form of democratic control, workers there have had to fight hard for jobs, conditions and for the service itself.

Last November, LRT told the construction union UCATT that it wanted 400 jobs to go. UCATT managed to get that number down to 13 and then made it clear that no redundancies were acceptable.

Crucial to the success of the action is support throughout LRT. This has always been a characteristic of action, and with Thatcher, it must become a reality if jobs and services are to be protected.

The only crime of LRT builders, in the "competitive jungle", is that the standard of their work is too high to compete with the cowboys. And they are determined to make sure that it's an unlucky 13 for LRT's management, and Thatcher behind them.

War of attrition for education itself

AFTER eight years of Thatcher attack it is easy to discount the most outlandish proposal as just more of the same. In 64 euphemistic words in the Queen's speech the Government's onslaught on education was announced.

117 years after the establishment of state education in the 1870 Act and just 33 years after Butler's Act (Heath: "He would turn in his grave.") they are planning the end of the maintained state system. Clearly, a lot of knowledge is a very dangerous thing. Not just turning the clock back now but leaving the works out.

Path to disaster

They hope to maximise government support, especially in the cities, by capitalising on parental discontent, justified or unjustified. "Forget self and serve the people," Mao told comrades. "Serve self and forget the people," (thereby destroying self) admonishes Thatcher. Unthinking, narrow and self-seeking attitudes have kept her in power, and these they would foster. Untrammelled parental choice needs to be exposed for the path to disaster and no choice at all that it is.

The provision to allow parents at local authority schools to opt out of the system is a whip to keep the service in Thatcherite line as much as a false avenue to a better deal. There are enough contradictions in the proposal such as: can you 'opt in' or 'back' (Baker: "Not really") as well as 'out'? Alongside the

chaos, most envisage that with determined opposition the tables can be turned on Baker.

The Government also proposes to take control of polytechnics and larger colleges of higher education (smaller ones could opt out) from local education authorities, leaving universities, a tougher proposition, for later.

Ironically the more 'independent' the schools and colleges become the more they would lose that independence and become controlled in every way by the state.

Moves to delegate school budgets completely to head teachers are not designed to give greater autonomy to schools, rather to rule them better so divided and suffering

the self-delusion of independence. The notion would be a non-starter, as evidenced in the pilot scheme areas, if the head had substantial class or teaching responsibilities.

The fifth column of the City Technology Colleges is still being mustered, in some confusion as to their number (the target of 20 looks a long way off) and the avowed function.

The most telling area of destruction is the curriculum. People who think for themselves are the fear which drives Thatcher and Baker. From accounting for 70% of the available curriculum, this national (socialist?) 'care' plan could now account for 90% - some care! Attainment tests at

seven, 11, 14 and 16 provide the mental straitjacket and the threat for teachers erring into quality.

This blitzkrieg against education is necessary because of the teachers' magnificent struggle. That struggle over pay entered a new phase when Baker took away their negotiating rights (and the employers' too). By the teachers' efforts and the Government's fears, the struggle has been elevated to a war of attrition for education itself.

The battleground is wider than before. No area of education will be untouched. Potential allies are all in Britain who can recognise what is at stake. Parents, pupils, students, governors, churches, education authorities, Labour and Tory, even employers, must be won over.

Know the enemy

Now more than ever the need is to know the enemy. No more of doing Thatcher's work for her by targeting a lesser foe. This understanding should exert its own discipline. It will lead to a review of tactics but not surrender. Bad as the situation is there are more against her than for.

The quality provided by the collective in the education service and the unstoppage strength of teachers and parents united are clearly the main target, a major obstacle to Thatcher's dictatorship.

Hence this quality and strength must be the focus of the opposition.



Teachers - unstoppable force.

Photo: The Worker

Workers to fight Clyde closure

SHIPBUILDING on the River Clyde has been dealt another body blow with the announcement that the French owned UIE fabrication yard at Clydebank is to close with the loss of more than 200 jobs. The excuse given is the failure to win orders for a new North Sea Gas development, and the skill and efficiency of the workforce in being almost three months ahead of schedule with a wellhead deck for Conoco has been given no consideration.

Run down

Instead some jobs are to go at the end of this month and the remainder when the current order is completed in October, leaving only nine hourly paid workers, not even enough to maintain the yard on a 'care and maintenance' basis.

Work in

This yard where the Queen liners were built was formerly

John Brown's, then part of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, and in July 1971 was the scene of the UCS work-in. In 1971 after the announcement of the closure of UCS, the Provost of Clydebank, Bob Fleming, commented bitterly that, "The Government were trying to do to Clydebank what the Germans had failed to do during the Second World War." In 1971 8,000 shipbuilding jobs were immediately at risk and many of these were saved at the time.

Defiant

In 1987 a foreign multinational, aided and abetted by a government which has never forgotten the earlier defiance, is about the same job. The challenge must not go unanswered. Workers at the yard are angry and defiant, and determined to find ways of fighting the closure decision in an area which already has one of the highest unemployment rates in Scotland.

Cuts cause research talent exodus

THE ROYAL Society, Britain's leading scientific association, has just issued a report which shows a depressing and accelerating exodus of scientific talent from Britain.

Outstanding

The survey looked at five representative areas; electronic engineering, physics, chemistry, earth sciences and biochemistry, over a ten year period. It found that the exodus was accelerating with two thirds leaving in the last five years of the survey. The highest rate of emigration was among recent PhDs, of whom over 40% had

been termed as 'outstanding'. Other countries get the benefit of expenditure here.

The Royal Society also looked at where Fellows of the Society were living when they were elected to it. In the early 1960s 15% lived overseas. By the mid-1980s the figure was 24%! A large proportion of this outflow was, not surprisingly, to the United States, where by comparison the pay, conditions and money available for research seem ever rosier.

Shocking waste

Our premier scientific body has done us a favour in highlighting a shocking waste of talent and resources. Unfortunately, things look as if they are going to get worse before they get better. Yet it seems so obvious that keeping such people and using their intellect is of benefit to our country and people. Surely you don't need a CSE, never mind a PhD, to realise that?

Cuts turn lights out at Lucas

WHEN all its competitors are expanding to take advantage of a fast growing world wide market, Lucas Electrical, a British company, looks set to wind itself up. It was universally acknowledged as a world leader in technology associated with optimum engine performance through control of fuel and ignition systems. With its dashboard business in Wales folding and its lighting and starter motor going to the Italians, Lucas now plans a 'collaborative venture' with Bosch of West Germany, using its core and highly profitable engine management systems division as the bargaining counter.

Midlands pride

Anyone who can add two and two together must know what will happen when a firm manages to acquire control of a major competitor. It is proposed that the 7,300 strong workforce will be slimmed down inside 12 months to a core of 2,300.

When Thatcher took office in 1979 the Birmingham based

supplier of everything for the motor industry from windscreen wipers to reflectors was in substantial profit, and the pride of the West Midlands.

There were 13 factories in the region employing 17,000 workers. Unrestrained import penetration forced the company into a drastic cost cutting exercise backed by a government loan of £15 million to allow a restructuring aimed at cutting costs to the point at which it could serve its main UK customers, Ford and Austin Rover. The result has been a pre-tax loss of £20 million.

Vital industry

The head office at Great King Street is being run down (1,200 jobs); there are plans to phase out the instrumentation division at Ystradgynlais;

lighting, starter motors and alternators are being handed over to the Italians, and European partners are being sought for the engine management and switchgear company (based at Burnley, employing 600 and also profitable). Another vital British industry is on the point of being lost.

picketing the Health Authority giving workplace meetings and speaking at branch meetings. The hardship fund has raised £1,650 so far.

The Medical Secretaries are not going to be divided. To date, management have offered the regrading to all but 16, but twice in the last week they have voted overwhelmingly to stay out until their demands have been met in full.

As their strike news sheet puts it: "One thing is certain, management will never again be able to ignore the medical secretaries!"

IN BRIEF/ Home News

IT WAS the Prince of Wales' visit to the depressed regions and meeting unemployed miners that caused him to make the famous remark, "Something must be done about this," of inter-war Britain. His namesake Prince Charles has uttered the phrase again, after eight years of Thatcher.

The Worker

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Cheques, postal orders to L. Elliott.
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