



At the end of 1981 British workers have to count the cost of failure to **GET RID OF THATCHER**

Lords attack democracy

THE DECISION of the Law Lords to uphold Denning's judgement that the GLC's subsidy to finance a 30 per cent cut in London Transport fares is illegal is a fundamental attack on democracy.

In a blatantly political decision, these five Lords, who are themselves accountable to no-one, gave an interpretation of the law which will tie the capital's transport system within the narrow confines of 'profit and loss' economics, no matter the social consequences or what the mass of Londoners might wish. In effect they have outlawed not just the present subsidy to finance the current operating loss and launch the new fares scheme, but also any regular transport subsidies in the future.

The effect of the ruling will not only be to raise fares by up to 150 per cent in the next three months - the time it will take to alter the fares structure yet again - but also put 20 tube stations, 10 per cent of bus routes and 15,000 jobs at risk. London Transport have forecast that the recent 11 per cent increase in bus passengers and 7 per cent increase on the tube will quickly be transformed into a 30 per cent loss of passenger traffic as a result. Their finances will once more be pitched into the vicious circle of price rises leading to passenger losses leading to price rises... Public transport in London will be destroyed.

National importance

For Londoners, the new fares scheme was one of the few good things to have happened for a long time. Now the Law Lords judgement has even put cheap fares for the elderly at risk. As the GLC itself, despite its earlier brave words, is loath to fight it must fall on the shoulders of the transport unions and the travelling public to take up the struggle to save London's public transport. The TGWU and ASLEF have already pledged 'whatever action is necessary' to oppose the ruling.

But this is not a parochial issue of interest just to Londoners: on Merseyside, Liverpool council has expressed its opposition to the new cheap fares scheme there:

similarly schemes in Greater Manchester, south and west Yorkshire and West Midlands are now also at risk. Nor do the implications just stop at transport.

The Law Lords' interpretation of councils' fiduciary duty to their ratepayers means that authorities which have lost substantial sums of Government grants through their opposition to spending cuts may also have been placed outside 'the law'. What we have to look forward to is a rash of other court cases brought by those quite happy to see further destruction of democracy and local government autonomy, and a further decline in our public services.

New Gauleiters

In another significant ruling this week, the High Court have rejected Norwich council's attempts to stop Heseltine's commissioners from selling their council houses. How soon before they, along with the district auditor, become the new gauleiters?

Similarly new schemes are being put forward to replace the current rates structure through which local authorities receive the bulk of their finances. A poll tax, local income or sales taxes have all been put forward. But whatever scheme is eventually implemented, we can be sure that it will not reform but destroy local autonomy even further. The defeat of Heseltine's local Government Bill will only lead them to redouble their efforts... If we permit them.

This Government was elected on a platform of less interference in industry and local government, yet in its first two years has intervened decisively in all areas to bring spending under its centralised dictat regardless of the consequences and needs of the people, as no other government before, except perhaps during the war. The decision by the five old men has now offered up the law as an open weapon for use against the working class.

The next issue

This is the last issue of 1981 for The Worker. The next issue will be on 14 January 1982.



A DEMONSTRATION in Glasgow in February of this year against the level of unemployment in Britain. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

POLAND: PRICE OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION

IN POLAND the Government has used the army to put an end to the economic chaos and reactionary political manoeuvring of the Solidarity group. That this group did not command the mass working class support it claimed has been shown by the few instances of clashes between soldiers and striking workers so far reported.

The Prime Minister, Jaruzelski, speaking as head of the Military Council for National Salvation created to deal with the situation, said that Solidarity had brought Poland to the brink of civil war and that when order was restored whatever positive gains had been made by the trade union movement would be maintained.

The Solidarity rump in Gdansk has melodramatically called for world wide support for 'democracy and working class freedom in Poland'. The

main response has come from Reagan, who has cut off food supplies and threatens to use economic pressure to intervene in Poland's internal affairs; from Haig, who has rushed back to the US just to concentrate on Poland; from Lord Carrington, who calls what is happening a world disaster and from an assortment of European political leaders, all equally noted with the fore-going for their hostility to real working class interests and to the Soviet Union.

The press in Britain, right, left and centre, is united in portraying Solidarity as a working class organisation struggling for working class freedom against communist repression. But what demands has Solidarity ever made that were recognisably working class and therefore socialist?

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Conscription for youth?

THE WHOLE labour movement must rise in indignation at the Government's proposals for so called 'training' of the young unemployed. Conscription by another name has been the reaction of practically every trade union spokesman. But still the General Secretary of the TUC has felt able to give the plan qualified support. Every worker must demand the withdrawal of any trade union participation in the 'no hope' plan to muzzle youth - and in particular an end to TUC participation in the body responsible - the Manpower Services Commission.

The scheme is supposedly voluntary. But all who do not attend in their first year after school, will lose the right to supplementary benefit. The existing Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOPS), where trainees receive £24 a week, will go. Trainees will receive something in excess of £16 a week, which is even less than supplementary benefit.

This form of conscription will mean the final demise of industrial apprenticeships, and with them, all future for British industry.

Blatant slave labour

The young will be taught nothing. The minimum period of 'off-the-job' training is three months in the year. During this period, they are supposed to acquire 'basic skills in literacy, arithmetic, office practice, and the use of tools and machinery'.

Work experience - the subsidisation by the taxpayer of employers to take on cheap labour - will become blatant slave labour as youngsters are sent to work in the small businesses which have tended to take advantage of the current YOPS schemes, or to undermine existing union organisation. The government openly states that 'trainees will have relatively lower wages'. Indeed the aim is to take them right out of the factory, and the trade union movement which has demanded employment for the young.

The scheme signifies the demise of capitalism itself in Britain, an end to the old

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The Week

MANY PEOPLE will have seen on television a fifteen year old solving the riddle of Rubik's Cube, in just 25.79 seconds. Over at 11 Downing Street, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is no nearer solving the Hayek cubic equation after 31 months and the assistance of a Treasury full of advisers. Is this a record?

Unemployed people are living at a lower level than at any time since 1971. Unemployment benefits have fallen behind wages, prices and other benefits, in real terms. This information is revealed in 'Social Security Statistics 1981', which notes that the fall has been particularly marked since 1978 and for every year since. And Geoffrey Howe reckons he's Santa Claus. His performance was not just a seasonal gesture, it was a joke in appalling taste.

Mr Christopher Lawson has been appointed head of the new marketing department at the Conservative Party. His job is to jazz up the party image in the event of a general election. It seems his particular marketing qualification was his success over the last 16 years in persuading the public to buy Mars Bars! Come the election babies will not just get kissed but will have Mars Bars pushed down their throats. Mind you, wasn't Mars the god of war.

The House of Commons has rejected by 18 votes a bill designed to allow TV cameras to cover parliamentary proceedings. This issue is raised regularly and every time it gets rejected. The mover of this Ten Minute Bill was Jack Ashley. Mr Ashley wants TV cameras in the House because he says people take little notice of what goes on in parliament, in terms of ideas and personalities, and he thinks public broadcasting would help the image improve. With the present mood of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Mr Ashley's remarks might be equated with those of Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey. If Mr Ashley isn't more careful, he may find Mr. Foot unwilling to support his standing again as MP for Stoke on Trent, South.

If Freddie Laker is such a model of free enterprise and competition, its worth asking what he's going to do now that such free-market adherents like Thatcher and Reagan have forced on us all what looks like a Depression. Laker has had to go to American banks to reschedule loan repayments, and his price-cutting policy is probably at an end. We look forward to more of his full-page newspaper advertisements, this time explaining how the successful businessman gets out of a mess people like him are now in.

THE GRAND Master of the Orange Order has claimed that Unionists in northern Ireland were considering asking the Soviet Union for aid because of the security situation and the Anglo-Irish talks. As the talks were primarily about getting Ireland into NATO by offering the chance of re-unification, Unionists would be forced to seek help from NATO's enemies to preserve their independence! Then are we to believe that Paisley's third force are Cubans?

Israel annexes Golan

ONE OF HITLER'S best pupils in the exercise of realpolitik, Begin, justifies Israel's annexation of yet more occupied Arab territory, the Golan Heights, on the sole ground that he is sure he can get away with it. He stated quite openly that the UN would be too caught up with Poland to take any effective action and such is Reagan's hysterical hatred of Colonel Gaddafi that the US was unlikely to support Libya's close ally Syria.

He might have added that the Arab countries are in such disarray that they won't be able to agree on any concerted action against this latest aggression by Israel.

If Begin represents realpolitik at its worst, the policy of the so-called hard-line Arab states in refusing to recognise the existence of Israel as a political entity that won't go away is un-realpolitik at its most ineffective. All of us progressive people with hopes for a prosperous Middle East shared the dream of a secular state of Palestine in which Jews and Arabs could live together in peace. But the marriage of Zionism and US imperialism makes that, for a very long time to come, an idle dream indeed.

Arab countries must unite around some such proposals as the Saudi 8-point plan, which the PLO was at first willing to consider, in order to isolate Israel and make it realise that it can only survive in peace as a Middle Eastern country getting on with its neighbours--not as a dangerous, sharp-clawed cats paw for US imperialism.

Nothing but disaster awaits Egypt and Israel if they continue to allow themselves, in exchange for US aid, to be used for a US attempt to occupy militarily the whole oil-rich region--naturally on the plea that it is the only way to 'protect' this part of the world from Soviet aggression!

Such a move on the part of the Arab states would not mean the end of the secular dream for the land around Jerusalem, but it would mean that the Palestinian people would not be expected to wait, dispersed and in bondage, for a homeland till the dream came true.

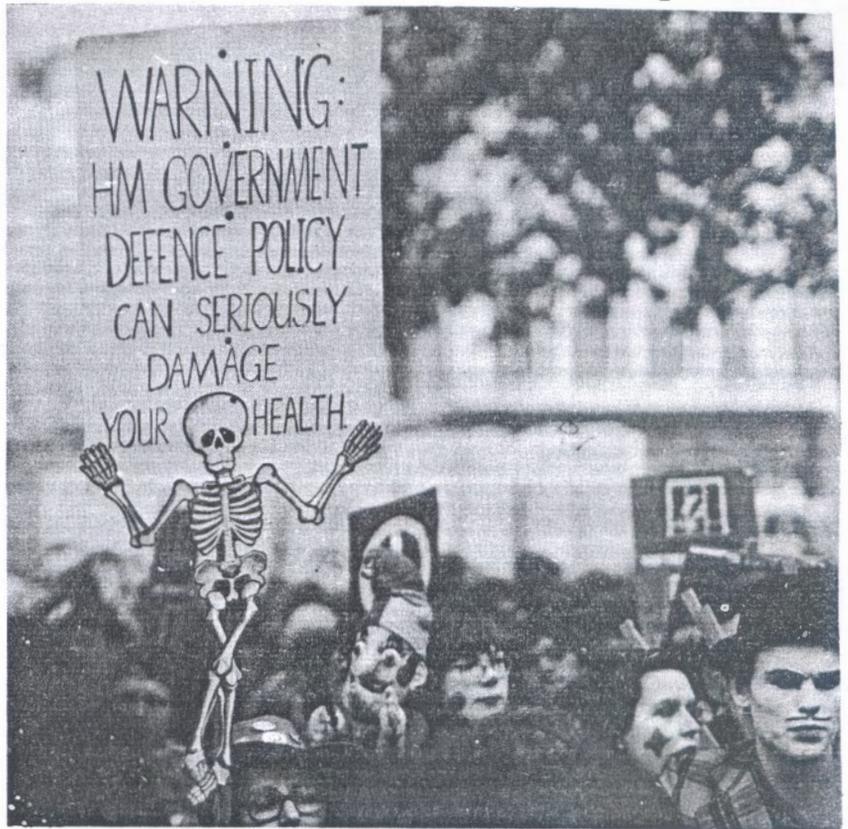
Assassination attempt in Zimbabwe

AN EXPLOSION at the ZANU(PF) Party headquarters in Salisbury where the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, and members of his cabinet customarily met killed six people and did considerable damage. Had Mugabe and his close associates in government not been absent by chance, the assassination attempt would very likely have been successful.

It is thought that South Africa is directly or indirectly responsible for the attempt on Mugabe's life, since the existence of an independent, economically viable, democratic Zimbabwe is incompatible with the continuation of racist rule by a white minority in South Africa.

A recent move of Mugabe's to raise substantially the wages of workers has caused an out-

Spending to destroy peace



The bare bones of a defence policy.

Photo: The Worker.

IT HAS long been accepted, correctly, that increases in the production of armaments in countries such as Britain, the USA, Israel and South Africa, have led directly to greater political tension in the world and far from saving peace are tied to a policy of aggression aimed primarily at one country, the USSR.

A report released two weeks ago by the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency reveals that spending on armaments in such countries has reached an all-time high.

To 54 countries in the Southern Hemisphere controlled by military dictatorships, 41 of whom have outstanding records of violating basic trade union and individual citizens' rights, we find that Britain has sold over 1 billion dollars of military hardware in the last decade.

It is also the case that the

two highest military spending powers in relation to GNP, Britain and the USA, have the slowest growth(!) in investment and manufacturing production. This clearly shows the deliberate neglect by Thatcher's government of industry coupled to a predatory policy aimed at shattering world peace. If a deliberate policy of warmongering by Thatcher and Reagan was not enough proof of their cynical playing with lives, the South Carolina plant in the USA which produces plutonium and tritium for US nuclear warheads had 108 hazardous incidents in 1980.

Further, the US missile attack warning system produced 147 false alerts in 18 months. While 39 airmen working at the Strategic Air Command Headquarters in Nebraska have been arrested for drug offences.

Cynicism - yes, cruelty and disregard for life - certainly,

because despite full knowledge of this, Reagan has declared that he will push for an increase in the US military budget to 250 billion dollars a year in January 1982 for the following year, much of which will go into the ever more sophisticated nuclear arsenal but also to such countries as Israel and Egypt.

Union condemns death sites

The Health and Safety Executive have admitted that it can take up to three weeks for a factory inspector to visit a suspect construction site. They were commenting on a UCATT claim made at the TUC Construction Health and Safety conference.

"The factory inspectorate has been cut back so far that you almost have to have a fatality on site before you can get an inspector round" said one speaker.

The facts bear this out. There are only 90 inspectors covering the construction industry. They are responsible for safety standards on roughly 40,000 sites. Despite this the H&S Executive is being forced to reduce its complement of inspectors and back-up staff still further on Government instructions.

When the Health and safety at Work act was passed in 1975 it was envisaged there would be a total of at least 1000 inspectors by April 1982 - there are likely to be only around 860.

The attitude of many firms came in for criticism at the conference. Particularly bad when it came to safety were the Government's beloved small firms. A UCATT officer from the North of England told of instances when workers were elected safety reps and then sacked within weeks. Attitudes to safety training were deplorable.



Robert Mugabe

These rises in minimum wages are to be introduced in January 1. The wage for industrial and commercial workers is to go up by 66 per cent from \$Z 85 a month (about £65) to \$Z 105; and the wage for domestic and farm workers by 23.5 per cent from \$Z 30 to \$Z 50.

The president of the Commercial Farmers Union said the increases could lead to a decline in agricultural production and large scale redundancy. But Mugabe, anticipating that farmers and domestic employers might get rid of workers rather than pay the increases, has said that no dismissals would be permitted.

What a comparison this makes with the action on wages and employment of our own Prime Minister!

Editorial

At the end of 1981, looking forward to our working class commitments for 1982, one question stands out above all others. Are we going to continue to allow the youth of Britain to be sacrificed on the altar of a vicious moribund capitalism?

One of the most painful scenes shown recently on television was of an agency which recruits unemployed British youth for unskilled work abroad - as seasonal grape-pickers in France or tea-pickers in Sri Lanka, as cheap labour in Burma or Singapore. These young people in the same plight as last century's indentured labourers from India or China are the terrible disproof that British workers shared in any benefits of British imperialism. All workers coming within its range are its victims - and none more pathetic than our young people today.

They have protested themselves, in spontaneous upsurges in cities where youth unemployment was worse, and in demonstrations like the jobs for Youth marches. But where is the indignation of the rest of our working class, of our trade unions which ought to have surged up in a mighty swell sweeping away the slaughterers of the innocents and all her dirty henchmen

Youth labour camps

And now one of them, Tebbit, comes along with his proposal to turn unemployed youth into slave labour, using the threat of starvation to get them off the unemployment registers and into the equivalent of labour camps. One of the declining capitalism's problems is what to do with the millions of workers who can't be employed profitably. Thatcher is not in a position yet to send them all overseas as indentured labourers in other lands nor to consign them to gas chambers: but a million young people can be hounded into regimented idleness as a start on the final solution.

Waste and destruction

All these young people want is the right to work, the right to play their active part in the community they were born into. If we don't see that they get it, we can't even call ourselves civilised human beings. They have been called the nation's seed corn. Wasting the seed-corn is destroying the future of Britain. This is true and pure self interest ought to make us take action. But it goes beyond that. We care for our young people and we are deeply concerned about the bleak existence to which the greed of those Thatcher represents consigns them.

It's a pretty poor concern that says to them: wait a couple of years and see if voting in this way rather than that doesn't make things a little better. The challenge for us in 1982 is just this: what are we going to do about it now? We have the strength to put a stop to Thatcher's destruction of our organised working class. We are fools and scoundrels if we fail to use it; and find ourselves at the end of 1982 still wringing our hands and saying we ought to have done something to implement our slogan of THATCHER OUT.

Paying for rubbish in Southend

TORY councillor David Evans charmed his party's conference in October with his claim that he was now saving Southend ratepayers about £500,000 a year. As chairman of Exclusive Cleaning, Evans has conducted a £250,000 advertising campaign on behalf of 'free enterprise'. Evans was given the contract for refuse collection by Southend council, in Essex, on April 1, but evidence gathered by Arthur Smith, branch secretary of TGWU 01/293 (Southend) suggests ratepayers have been fooled.

Exclusive now rents, at the ratepayers' expense. It will cost £50,000 a year in wages, cars and offices for council inspectors to oversee the activities of Exclusive.

The fleet of 28 council vehicles was valued at £300,000 but 22 were auctioned for between £250-£450 each. Exclusive had the pick of the best 6 vehicles for £75,000 in all. Ratepayers can do their own calculations here. They will have discovered by now that the cost of removing garden waste has doubled, as have trade waste charges to companies and sohoos.

232 council workers lost their jobs which cost £472,000 in redundancy payments. A number were taken on by Exclusive but they now work longer hours, work harder, have lost index-linked pensions, get less sick pay and shorter holidays. Those who had suffered illness were not taken on. There was a similar fate to that of the nine union stewards, although the company claims not to be anti-union. Of those made redundant, 63 are now without jobs in an area of high unemployment. As each unemployed person costs the country £4380 a year, these redundancies will cost £275,940.

Arthur Smith's calculations have exposed the true cost to the local community of David Evan's supposed savings. As for Southend Council they are clearly putting out more rubbish than they should be taking in.



The December issue of LABOUR RESEARCH carries Arthur's evidence that because council vehicles were old maintenance costs were high. Exclusive now has an arrangement with the council workshops which service the vehicles for £100,000 a year, whereas previously it cost the council £250,000. In the year before Exclusive took over, the council spent £170,000 on the depot

Fighting unemployment



TUC General Council lead a march for jobs.

Photo: The Worker.

THE POPULAR slogan "No return to the 1930's", although directed against the growth of mass unemployment has got equal relevance to the fight of the organised labour movement against it. In contrast to the unemployed workers' struggles of the depression, the fight against unemployment today has proved altogether different.

In the 1980's the fight is for jobs not charity and relief. It involves those still in work fighting redundancy and closure, whilst joining in protest demanding jobs for those without. It proclaims the right to work, rejects decline and poses economic alternatives to the destruction of Britain as a manufacturing nation. In particular it

champions the cause of youth - a whole generation fighting for life.

From this more militant philosophy new tactics have evolved in contrast to the thirties occupations and sit-ins have grown: the TUC have called mass rallies in London, its NW Regional Council led the People's March for Jobs; there have been days and weeks of action (national and regional). More recently there has been the Jobs Express which caught the eye of newspapers and broadcasting but not sufficient numbers of young unemployed.

Over one hundred TUC sponsored unemployment centres have now been established throughout the country. Staffed

by volunteers and supported by workers' voluntary contributions, they have acted as a focus for advice, assistance and activity against the government.

Despite all these developments however, it is becoming clear that new approaches are going to be needed if the unity of employed and unemployed is to be taken to a higher level. So far, the struggle has been focused outside the factory gate.

What now?

Now the aim must be to make every workplace the struggle against unemployment - with every factory or office being turned into an unemployed workers' centre. Every shop stewards' committee should take responsibility for its own register of unemployed workers.

Employers (who, after all, have been responsible for sacking the unemployed in the first place) need to be compelled to allow unemployed workers back into the workplace to participate in trade union organized activities. Perhaps workplace unemployed stewards should be appointed as part of normal trade union activity.

Battle plans

Work should be found for unemployed people and employers be forced to pay them. Furthermore, those without work, or who have never had a job, need the opportunity to see the organized labour movement at first hand. Those still in work need to be reminded at first hand of the reality of being unemployed. More important still, both need to understand the necessity of being part of the growing campaign against Thatcher.

Although as yet, this kind of workplace unemployment activity may still be speculation, experience has shown the almost infinite capacity of the labour movement to find new methods and tactics of struggle to match hitherto unknown situations. In contrast to the thirties, a whole class is being made redundant. The key to the unemployment struggle today therefore lies in joining hands across the boundaries of the workplace against both employers and government. New and imaginative thinking is needed on how this is to be done.

Obituary MEHMET SHEHU

THE DEATH OF THE Albanian Prime Minister, Mehmet Shehu, has recently been reported.

Mehmet Shehu fought against fascism as a volunteer in the civil war in Spain. He played a leading role in Albania's heroic resistance to and defeat of the fascist forces of Italy and Germany which invaded Albania in World War II. He helped to organise and took command of the First Shock Brigade in August 1943 which was a military formation marking the advance from small partisan guerilla actions to higher forms of warfare. Like Mao Tsetung and Ho Chi Minh he contributed to the Marxist philosophy of People's War.

As a guide to the development of a national army after the war Mehmet Shehu summed up the experiences of the resistance struggle. He said:

"In fighting on the plains as well as in the mountains man is the decisive factor that determines the fate of the war regardless of any development in armaments. A small army can defeat a bigger one, superior in numbers and means, if it wages a just war and if it is made up of men who are politically enlightened on the just nature of the war they are waging, united in their determination to overcome the enemy, resolved to the end to shed their last drop of blood to achieve victory and well trained to face adversities in battle. On the field of battle man can replace the weapon, but weapons can never diminish the role of men. Without men a weapon is nothing but a dead piece of iron, lifeless and powerless."

Mehmet Shehu had also taken a leading role in the development of socialism in Albania since the War. In 1967 he convened a national forum on revolutionising education in Albania which led a democratic exercise involving the entire working class in considering how education could be made to serve better the socialist needs of the country.

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortess Road, London NW5
Brighton Workers Bookshop 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
Clarion Books 5 The Precinct, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex
Basildon Bookstall Tues, Fri, Sat Marketplace
Northern Star Bookshop 18A Leighton Street, Leeds.

Law Lords' decision a major attack on workers in London

THATCHER has been defeated on one front, so now she must attack on another. Forced to withdraw new proposals to curtail local democracy in the form of Heseltine's Local Government Bill, she has turned to her trusted friends and allies, the Law Lords, to do her work. This they did, when last Thursday they declared the Greater London Council's fare reductions illegal.

The new Labour-controlled GLC inherited a shambles in the capital's transport policy. The management of London transport had hitherto been lunatic in its simplicity: financial losses were constantly offset by raising fares - between 1977 and 1980 this meant 107 per cent increase - driving passengers away and making losses even greater.

Central to Labour's election platform was the proposal to turn this policy upside down: to write off LT's deficit and to attract passengers to buses and tubes by a subsidy to reduce fares, taking private cars off the roads. This would

also have the effect of decreasing noise and air pollution, road wear-and-tear, traffic congestion, and accidents. In short, a coherent forward-looking transport policy which would have improved the quality of life for all Londoners. Understandably, the capital's inhabitants voted for it.

And it has worked. Already, in the few months it has been in operation, the 'Fare's Fair' scheme has won many more passengers to LT. Such success is a thorn in Thatcher's side. Reduce prices? A scandal in itself. Carry out election pledges? A dangerous precedent, tantamount to insurrection. A future for London? Treachery!

Having forced the Government's retreat on the Local Government Bill, we must not allow our victory to be snatched away. The present GLC has every right to call upon the workers of London and their trade unions to make this piece of Thatcher's law unworkable. Whatever she says, London will have a future. Workers will make sure of that.

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Tebbit introduces youth conscription

system of firms carrying out training for their employees out of their own profits, and rightly so, as they derived increased profit from those so trained. If there is to be no industry, there need be no skilled hands either.

The scheme is adapted to 'the labour market'. But if there is to be no labour market, training will reflect this. They announce guidance and counselling throughout the programme.

They also talk of the need for 'a change of attitudes in young people'. This, if it means anything at all, is an attempt to run the one-year course as a means of inculcating into the young a sense of their own redundancy. YOPS already had more than enough courses in bird-cage building and the like. This can be expanded.

The plan also attacks the Further Education system, so many of whose courses were for apprentices on day or block release. If they go, so also do the FE colleges.

Schools, too, are under attack. The demand is rising all over

the country for pupils to stay on. But no books or teachers are to be provided.

All - trained teachers, instructors or skilled men - are to be made redundant as the young are taken out of their hands and placed in establishments without a single of the standards required by trade unions for education and training.

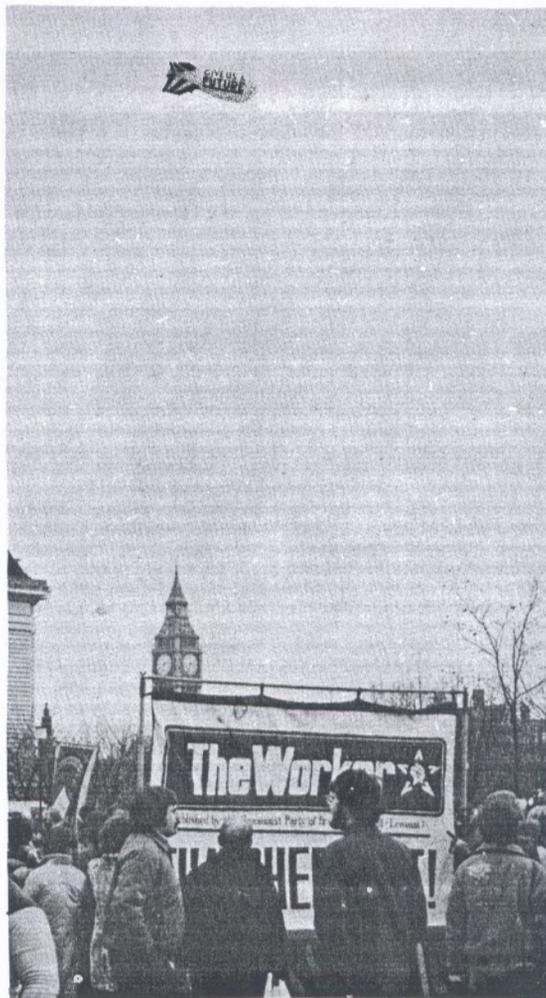
More. The scheme sets itself up as an instrument 'to assess existing skills.' The whole of education up to the age of 16, by this yardstick, can be shown to be as irrelevant as the hope of employment after.

The final outrage is that companies exporting capital from Britain at the rate of £1 billion a month, as industry is closed, will be spared the expense of directing any profit into training. This is a sure indicator of the future in store.

The taxpayer alone will have to find the £1 billion to finance what is a compulsory year's sentence in a not-so-open prison, for each of the unemployed school leavers.

for socialist planning and self-reliance?

No. The 'working class freedom' Solidarity has called for has been the 'freedom' of dissidents and other elements hostile to socialism and to the Soviet Union to act as Polish agents for western capitalism, the 'freedom' for the Roman Catholic Church to broadcast masses and intervene in state affairs, the 'freedom' for Solidarity to use strikes not in the interests of the working people of Poland but in the interests of Reagan, Thatcher and all those who want to turn Poland into a weapon they can use against the Soviet



A MINIATURE barrage balloon flies over County Hall in London during the recent TUC March for Youth. The GLC will need more than such balloons to protect London from a Government more destructive than the Luftwaffe of World War Two. Photo: The Worker

Civil servants show support for their victimised colleague

HUNDREDS of civil servants met in Edinburgh and London on Thursday to show their support for a victimised colleague with marches, rallies, speeches and a half-day strike. Ted Elsey, a full-time IRSF official faced charges under the archaic Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875. His crime? - pursuing scab managers as they removed blacked work from picket premises. Although dismissed at the first hearing as "irrelevant", the charges were reinstated on the instructions of the Government. Ted Elsey is "guilty" of the determined enforcement of industrial action during the '81 pay campaign.

Ted's colleagues expressed their anger and disgust at this crass attack and pledged him their support. In doing so they recognised and rebutted Thatcher's efforts to undermine the forthcoming pay campaign. They reaffirmed the determination to fight for Thatcher's removal.

Nurses pay rally

IN NOVEMBER, Thatcher refused to meet the nurses and midwives negotiators - 4 per cent and no more she said.

Since that time there has been mounting pressure from nurses. Packed meetings in regional centres throughout the country have declared themselves set for a fight.

Now this week Thatcher has backed down and agreed to meet nurses.

The Royal College of Nursing has planned a major rally in Trafalgar Square for January 24th. Local centres of the college are planning a march to the rally. The time is ripe for all nursing unions to act in unison and force Thatcher to hand out more than invitations to meetings.

NUPE rejects water offer

NUPE'S NATIONAL water committee which represents around 10,000 manual workers in the industry has refused to endorse the recommendation of the pay negotiators that the offer of 9.2 per cent should be accepted. NUPE's national executive then backed this decision.

The negotiators had said that 9.2 per cent was the best that could be achieved by negotiations. The national committee have now given the workers the chance to consider the alternatives.

With Fords, the miners and local government manuals all lining up against Thatcher, water workers would do well to consider the part they can play. It is one thing to smash the 4 per cent limit - it is another to avoid taking a pay cut. With Howe's so called mini-budget what's 9.2 per cent really worth anyway?

Penwith strike goes on

A MASS rally of NALGO members from the South West will take place in Penzance on Monday December 21 to show support for the hundred Penwith Council workers now in the ninth week of their strike.

Morale is still high despite the length of the action and the proximity of Christmas. The whole union is throwing its weight behind the Land's End fighters in the understanding that their battle against compulsory redundancy, privatisation and local Authority bloody mindedness is a battle for all.

The little Thatchers who run Penwith have kept up a high level of dirty tricks ever since the strike began. Midnight phone calls to strikers' homes, refusal to meet union officials, reneging on negotiated agreements and threats of the sack for all the strikers are just some of the lengths they have gone to.

But the branch in the knowledge of why they came out, heartened by the thousands of pounds in donations they have received from fellow NALGO members and by visits to their daily picket by representatives of NALGO Districts from all over the country, have stood firm and ignored the council's attempts to divide them.

The whole dispute, which arose after the council closed the Architects Department, put the design work out to private consultants and sacked the architect (who just happened to be the active NALGO branch chairman), also managed to avoid the diversion of an Industrial Tribunal.

The Tribunal in fact heavily criticised a couple of councillors for their personal antagonism to the architect, but ruled that NALGO would have to prove a majority of the councillors held such a view! The strikers were even more determined after that bit of justice.

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Poland pays the price of Solidarity's counter-revolution

Has it demanded more agricultural collectivisation to put an end to shortages of foodstuffs caused by hoarding and the low productivity of private plots? Has it called for better planning in industry to meet the real needs of all Polish people and not go in for consumer junk? Has it insisted on an end to piling up debts to capitalist banks and governments, which could be used as levers to pry Poland away from its alliance with neighbouring east European countries? Has it denounced the substitution in Poland's economy of capitalist motivation and foreign investment

Union.

That Tory and Labour MPs can stand together bewailing the alleged loss of freedom of workers in Poland at a time when Thatcher is making war on the working class in Britain tells us all we need to know about the usefulness of the Parliamentary Labour Party in our fight against Thatcher. To the organised workers of Britain we say in respect to Poland: any time you find yourself marching under the same banner as Reagan, Haig, Thatcher and Carrington you had better take a damned good look at the wording on that banner.

The Worker

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