

# The Worker



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## BAD WEEK FOR THATCHER

### NOW LET'S MAKE SURE NEXT WEEK IS EVEN WORSE

IT'S BEEN a bad week for Thatcher. The Gorbachev visit should have been a chance for Thatcher to shine, but instead domestic issues kept sending the clouds in.

The visit began with the gentle bombshell from Leon Brittan accusing top No. 10 advisers Bernard Ingham and Charles Powell of organising the famous Westland leak. In any previous government the resignations would already have taken place, but this government has lost all sense of morality and responsibility.

In the middle, London was brought to a halt by striking underground workers, led by no leaders that the bourgeois press could identify and persecute.

To cap it all, Gorbachev failed to confirm Thatcher's opinion of herself by announcing some epoch-making move, preferably her inauguration as Tsarina. What she got was an invitation for the Queen to visit the Soviet Union. The Queen! The very woman who even after 10 years keeps Thatcher standing when she comes for her weekly audience.

The list of problems facing Thatcher lengthened notably this week: Gallup showed a 2½% lead for Labour; power workers are to be balloted on industrial action over their pay claim; action began in the docks in defence of hard-won conditions; the threat



Marginalised: Gorbachev's visit showed up just what a nonentity Thatcher is

of higher interest won't go away; inflation continues; the CBI broke ranks and pleaded with Parkinson not to include the nuclear stations in the electricity sell-off; and the campaign against water privatisation gathered steam in preparation for the mass lobby and rally in Westminster this week.

Let's make sure next week is even worse for her.

## Massacres in Namibia

THE SOUTH African Government, whose chief ally is the Thatcher Government, is to blame for the killings in Namibia and for the threats to its independence.

On Saturday April 1, Thatcher and Pik Botha together bullied and bounced the UN's Special Representative in Namibia into the extraordinary and outrageous decision to permit the unleashing of South African armed forces against Namibians.

Outrageous, because South Africa is the illegal occupier of Namibian territory, and the Namibians are the rightful inhabitants and rulers of their land. The South African Administrator General is illegally designated the chief executive and legislative officer there, and has usurped responsibility for all law and order and administration. The UN has only a supervisory and consultative role. The Namibians are denied even this.

And Thatcher blames SWAPO for the breakdown of the ceasefire! The UN found that SWAPO forces in Namibia acted "without hostile intent".

Thatcher's claim that the Resolution obliged SWAPO forces to stay North of the 16th parallel in Angola is

just a blatant lie, serving, as ever, the purposes of the South African Government. A letter which SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma sent to the UN Secretary reveals only that SWAPO agreed to make the peace process work and to abide by a ceasefire.

Later, Commons leader John Wakeham was sent to apologise for her mistake, saying Thatcher was "not actually correct in what she said".

### Prevented

Thatcher has eagerly assisted South Africa's anticipated foul play. Both Governments are determined to prevent, by all means, free and fair elections in Namibia, for they know that SWAPO will win them.

The world's imperialist powers have turned their fire on SWAPO, calling for them to withdraw, and to recognise the policing role of the South Africans. How can SWAPO be asked to trust the very forces who occupied their country and sponsored internal subversion? Why shouldn't they be allowed to bring their forces back into the country in order to vote in the elections?

## Afghanistan wins victory in Jalalabad battle

THE DEFEAT of the Mujahedin in their attempt to take Jalalabad and there install and give credence to their 'government' is a significant event for the Afghan people and government. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops they have shown their ability to resist the Mujahedin assaults and to maintain the mobilise resistance among the population, particularly in the cities where industrial workers, many of

them women, have maintained production, security and services while fighting.

Jalalabad was chosen as a target because it is close to the Pakistani border, enabling the Pakistani military to aid the Mujahedin with military supplies and organisation.

However, Mujahedin fanaticism could not make up for their lack of training and organisation. They proved no match for government

## Dockers reply to Fowler

NORMAN FOWLER is rushing legislation to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme through the House of Commons. This was done to prevent parliamentary opposition, or any other kind, from getting organised. Also if legislation can be put on the statute book quickly then any strike by dockers against 'casualisation' can be deemed 'politically motivated.'

The port employers and the Thatcher Government have conspired to end the scheme and provoke a strike, which they think they can win by manipulating public opinion against dockers.

The dockers would be blamed for the further rise in inflation when retailers and wholesalers put prices up.

Even so, workers will not sit back and see their working conditions return to the bad old days. The strikes by several thousand dockers on Friday were entirely justified. Liverpool, Tilbury, Glasgow, Bristol, Fleetwood, Southampton and Garston were at a standstill.

This week the TGWU looks likely to call a ballot and an emergency conference on the provocation by government and employers.

## Ten years are ten too many

WHILST the Tory faithful plan to celebrate ten years of Thatcher in power, the Labour Party are organising a campaign over the next ten weeks to demonstrate that they are the only party capable of ousting Thatcher.

With the opinion polls indicating a steady decline in the government's popularity, the campaign is timed to coincide with county council elections in May, the Euro-elections on June 15th and probably the crucial Vale of Glamorgan byelection.

The campaign theme will be the quality of life for people in the 1990s, and should strike a chord with all those who believe that ten years of Thatcherism has wreaked enough destruction.

troops and militia.

The lack of support for the Mujahedin in the cities has been demonstrated, and their talk of taking them from within has proved hollow. Mujahedin spokesmen are already blaming Pakistani intelligence for their defeat.

There have also been many protests in refugee camps against conscription, lack of food, health care and basic services.

## Editorial

"WE CAN do business with him," said Thatcher of Gorbachev in 1985. So far, however, it's been show business on her part rather than anything of enduring substance. The relentless posing for photographers and the hand-shaking for cameras can give quite a false impression.

Gorbachev has tried, and failed, with Thatcher though he has managed agreements on important issues with other governments. World leaders have responded to Soviet peace overtures. Serious talk of peace, however, knocks Thatcher right out of her stride. By temperament and dogma Thatcher must fight or she is nothing. How can a 'war leader' be shown to best effect in conditions of peace or consensus?

Her Moscow visit of March 1987 - forced on her by the imminence of a general election - is remembered in the USSR for her perverse attachment to nuclear weapons, which shocked Soviet TV viewers all too aware of war and its consequences. Nine months later in December '87 when Gorbachev led Reagan to sign the INF Treaty in Washington, Thatcher was marginal to what had occurred. Gorbachev's stopover at Brize Norton for aircraft refuelling allowed Thatcher to bask in the inevitable interest in what the Soviet leader had done. In fact, Thatcher was not happy about the treaty at all.

When next in Germany, there was Thatcher's stunt at the Berlin Wall, warning of Soviet intentions and praising NATO. This behaviour angered many Germans, who wish to be rid of nuclear missiles from their soil for their extinction is certain in the event of nuclear war. Kohl has welcomed Soviet peace initiatives and ignored Thatcher's jibes.

Gorbachev's speech at the Guildhall in London last Friday faintly echoed his address to the UN General Assembly in December when he presented a vista of possibilities that countries at peace might pursue. Those proposals stand, but Thatcher insists on 'modernisation of our nuclear weapons' because by temperament and dogma that is all she can think about. The Soviets will make more important speeches this year, but not in London.

The British people see in Soviet proposals on arms talks the right instincts at work. NATO member governments seem churlish and hesitant but the USSR would like to press ahead. Europeans welcome opportunities to reduce military tension because Europe has had more than enough of war.

# Trains and boats and planes - but out of tune unfortunately

A TRANSPORT network always reflects the prevailing political strategy of the times. Just as its expansion facilitated the burgeoning Industrial Revolution, so its current contraction is a hallmark of the interests of finance capital.

Everywhere - from cutting corners on rail repairs to speeding up crossings on the Zeebrugge run, to the building of a Tunnel - the issue can only be clearly understood as part of Thatcher's destruction of Britain.

The move to Europe in 1992 is bringing about a radical transformation of the transport network of Britain.

Of course, it is not a thoroughly worked out plan to improve services for the British people. Its emphasis is only on the south east - road, rail and air. It is riddled with all the features of finance capital - corruption, insider dealing, and transfer of ownership. For free movement in Thatcherite terms means free from decades of legislation and, above all, free from the unionised control of workers in the transport industries.

## Dover dispute

The year long Dover dispute - now affecting other docks around the south coast - is an early indication. Channel ferry transport intends to shake out the NUS and tear up all agreements.

We severely underestimate the relevance of the high profile discussion on the Tunnel Rail Link if we regard this as a 'small local difficulty'. Its route, the protection of villages and the environment generally, are of course important - but the declared intent of Thatcher's Policy Studies Group is to remove this prestigious line, as soon as it is politically expedient, from BR control to private ownership. In like manner, a deregulated line, with no NUR.

Finance capital is aware there is more money to be made along the way. Firstly money from land. 'Insiders' as The

Observer (5 March) reported, have already been buying land on the known route, building on it, making money from those buildings aware that they will then be compensated for their demolition - much as Manchester capitalists were compensated in similar vein 150 years ago.

Other monopolists like Nigel Boakes' Trafalgar House have bought up companies with strategic areas of land like APCM, Britain's leading cement producer, whose many old chalk workings will now realise vastly increased profits, either as part of new routes or as 'select' property development.

## Speculators

Even the supposedly speculative building of a new airport in the quiet village of Manston in Kent is subject to the same process. Land - whether owned by the Health Authority, MoD or held by estate agents - is changing hands at rapidly escalating prices. Even the Property Services Agency (as a former employee made plain to The Worker) has been speculating in such land deals in this area for over two years.

Speculators speculate. Of course, at our expense. But this

is only half the story. When the late Harold MacMillan talked about Thatcher 'selling the family silver' he was painfully accurate - although we might in passing ask if Thatcher and her entourage were ever part of 'the family'.

## Sell-off

That she is selling what is not hers to sell should make workers throughout Britain throw her out of office. But now we are being asked to pay for the 'polishing up and repair' of the silver before it is sold.

Not only may BR be asked to pay £500 million extra to begin work on the Tunnel Rail Link, but £81 million has been talked out of EC funds for road development in Kent and £70 million of new rail stock has been pledged by 'honest' Paul Channon for Network South East. All very laudable of course - but as one Kent NUR member observed recently, 'Anything they tart up these days you know is being earmarked for flogging off.'

Plans to sell off 'strategic lines' announced several months ago are well in hand in Network South East. Public money - as in Gas, Water and

Energy - is being pumped in as a prelude to private profiteering.

And of course the south east of England is the most concentrated transport network anywhere in Europe and the most lucrative. The Channel Tunnel is being used as part of the broader scheme of privatisation. As one construction worker put it, 'It'll be Goods in and Labour out - and a bit of tourism.'

The private Tunnel will be fed into a private rail network, to London initially, with other key links in the South East privatised too. It would not be long before other 'strategic lines' northward follow. And where then a national rail network - and the NUR and ASLEF?

## Toll-routes

The Centre for Policy Studies recommends introducing a peage (toll-route) system on the M25. Privatising the M25 as the main feeder route north affects private control of all transport arriving in Britain south of London. Add to this the control - again by Trafalgar House - of the Dartford Tunnels and the new Dartford Bridge, then the picture falls into perspective.

Not a matter of concern for workers in the south east alone, but for Britain.

## Against our interests

Privatisation follows privatisation. De-unionisation at Dover and Portsmouth, as the NUS properly judged, will be followed by a similar attack at Liverpool, Hull, Aberdeen, Stranraer. The plans laid for our rail network in the south east must be worked through to Bristol, Birmingham, Bradford. The breaking of the Dock Labour scheme, the new docks at Fawley and Hull to import foreign coal, the schemes for rail, are all part of the transport counter revolution taking place in our country. It is as much against our interests as the sales of our Water, our Defence, our Energy to private, often foreign, interests.

## Integration

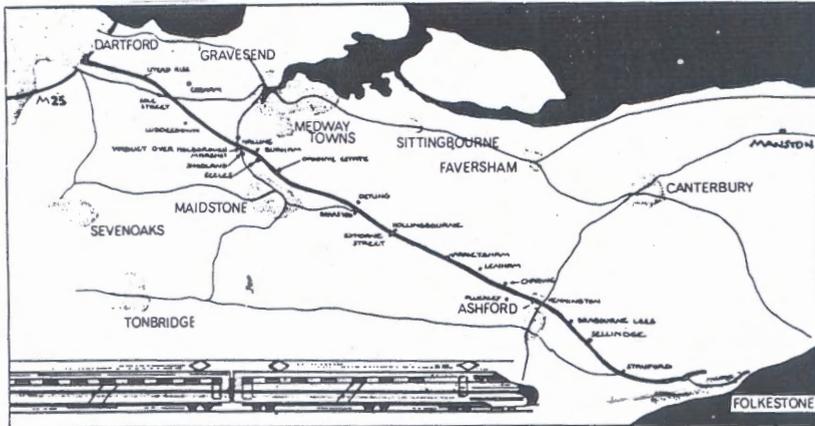
For all our failings in Britain we effected once an integrated industrial economy, production and distribution alike, the heart of an integrated social superstructure - health, education, social services - which in turn secured new life in advanced industrial creativity.

De-regulation of transport, in the interests of the City, will fail to meet our real needs as surely as Baker fails education, as Clarke fails doctor and patient alike, as Parkinson will surely fail light and heat.

## De-regulation

De-regulation will affect safety, as at Clapham, Purley, Zeebrugge; it will destroy the environment in the south east, but above all, this transport counter revolution will compound our national economic disintegration. Not just, 'Do as you're told. Move what we say, under any conditions!' But pay for the privilege of importing what we know we can and should make here.

In utilities, in manufacture, we call for integration, for a planned national economy. A socialist economy.



EAST LONDON

CHUNNEL

LONDON TRAFFIC

## Another London carve-up Trouble with chunnel vision

THE GOVERNMENT has recently announced the route and method of construction for another major transport route in South East England - the M11 link road.

The road will link the southern end of the M11 motorway with the Eastway, a major dual carriage way which already runs down to the Blackwall Tunnel. What is interesting to note is that the planned link road will cut straight through Leytonstone, which is part of the Labour-held constituency of Leyton.

What is not surprising is that the Government has rejected

a well planned proposal by local architects and a major construction company, which would have had the link road being cut deep and covered so that new housing could be built over it. The additional cost of cutting and covering would have been off-set by the sale of the houses built above it.

Cutting and covering is nothing revolutionary - it has been used on several other road building schemes - most noticeably on parts of the M25 motorway which runs close by Norman Tebbit's constituency.

THERE IS a saying that history repeats itself "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." Nowhere could this be more true than in the Government's attitude to providing funding for the new rail link to the Channel Tunnel.

Reproduced below is part of an article from 'The Poor Man's Guardian' of September 28, 1833.

"M.Thiers, the French Minister of Commerce and of Public Works, has returned to France and we hear that he has, on the part of the French Government, invited Mr Vignoles, the engineer, to visit that country, in order that he may inspect its public works. The object of Mr Vignoles is, however, mainly connected with the establishment of Railways, and particularly that about to be constructed between Dieppe and Paris. It appears that the French Government are to grant aid, by a loan of public money, towards the construction of this railway, whilst the English portion of the grand undertaking, which is to bring Paris and London within a compass of 24 hours' journey, is to be left to the unaided resources of British Capital and British enterprise."

## Londoners face jams tomorrow

TRAFFIC JAMS in London are costing £15 billion pounds a year says the CBI in a report just published. Marks and Spencer and British Gas each claim to be losing £2 million a year, Royal Mail Letters £10.4 million and British Telecom £7.5 million in London's traffic snarl-up.

The CBI says that something needs to be done before London "strangles itself to death". The truth is that London, far from strangling itself, is being murdered by this Government, which for the past ten years has choked-off the investment to the capital's public transport system.

Thatcher's policies, prompted by her financial backers, have closed down much of London's industry.

Unfortunately for Thatcher, however, there are still some companies in London which need workers and that have to transport their goods and services around the capital. Thatcher's blitz on London is undermining their profits.

To all of us who spend several hours each day crammed together in tube trains or sitting in traffic jams, the CBI's voice will be a welcome addition to the criticism of Thatcher.

## Tube strike

THE FRUSTRATION and anger that characterises travelling or working on London's tubes manifested itself in last week's 24 hour strike.

The Bakerloo, Circle, District and Jubilee lines were brought to a standstill as tube drivers, mainly in ASLEF, walked out. The Piccadilly line was reduced to running a 'shuttle' service between Kings Cross and Heathrow.

The walkout was an expression of anger at the attitude of London Underground's management. The issue at the heart of the action was the union's claim for extra payments for drivers operating trains without guards. Both ASLEF and the NUR are balloting on whether to take action on this issue.

Management had pre-printed 'apology' notices which were displayed on the day, which attempted to set commuters against tube workers. Although passengers experienced problems, for many this was nothing new on Londoners' deteriorating underground. Everyone knows shortages of trains and gaps in the service must be caused by driver shortage, everyone is fed up with the time-consuming and downright dangerous new ticket barriers, and everyone knows that London Underground's penny pinching attitude is causing chaos, as at Kings Cross.



## Costs rocket

HOUSING COSTS have shot up by an average 62.5% in the last year due to mortgage and house price increases.

Just to keep pace with the cost of living, the average family needed an income increase of 14%. If they moved house in the last year, they needed a 20% income increase.

The figures, from a nationwide survey by the Reward Group, show how much ordinary workers have born the brunt of Nigel Lawson's attempts to control the economy by raising interest rates. If you exclude the super-rich, who as the only significant beneficiaries of Lawson's tax cuts are likely to need about 6% more to keep pace with costs, an average family in anything from a 3 bedroom terraced house to a small detached need a 25% increase in income.

## Pits closed, but coal imported

HYSTERIA has been the reaction of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) and Nottinghamshire Conservative MPs to the rumours that the CEBG, and its proposed privatised successor companies, are considering importing Soviet coal into the Midlands. The CEBG claims such imports will be solely for a test burn.

Silence from the UDM has been their usual response to CEBG and other companies' intentions to import coal, even though the effect on other coalfields such as Yorkshire, Durham, Derbyshire, South Wales and Scotland would be devastating.

Conservative MPs now getting ever so 'British' in defending the Nottingham coalfield previously said nothing when voting for the establishment of the East Coast Port Facilities Expansion at Immingham in February. When completed this will allow up to 30 million tonnes of coal imports. Such silence and hypocrisy.

All proposals to import coal are wrong - irrespective of where the coal comes from. Britain has coal assets to last between 300 and 1000 years. There can be little justification for imports.

The hypocrisy of the UDM and their Tory MPs is that they have maintained their silence when others are under threat, but now they are in the firing

### IN BRIEF/Home News

BRITISH industry is being urged to "get ready" for 1992, while the Government is itself failing to invest in the country's infrastructure, says the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors.

"Britain needs more investment"

## NOW THERE'S A FUNNY THING ... CHARITY WORK!

SO THERE I was sitting at the breakfast table, trying to write a 'Worker' article. And the clock lurched closer and closer to the hour of my workmates' Comic Relief event. I thought again of walking down our High Street wearing a funny nose and manically shaking a collecting tin. Worst of all, having to smile about it! I shuddered and reached for the phone.

After giving my apologies I returned with relief to the article. By the time I'd finished

## RED NOSES TO RED FACES AMIDST THE MONEY MAKING

COMIC RELIEF was a remarkable proof of the good-heartedness of many British workers. Many took part with the best of intentions, and raised money that will be put to good use.

It also could not (and barely pretended to) solve the root of the problem. Starvation may be caused by a lack of food but that lack is rarely caused by accident.

Mozambique was chosen as a focus for part of BBC1's

EVERYBODY in Britain, except the Government who are shameless, must be deeply ashamed of the country's worsening housing crisis. Homelessness has doubled since Thatcher came to power, from 57,000 to 116,000.

Of these 30,000 are forced to live in squalid bedsits by councils prevented by the Government from building decent houses. This makes sense neither by humanitarian nor economic standards as the annual cost per family of bedsit accommodation in London is enough to finance debt repayment on two new council houses.

Since these costs are racing out of control - the bed and breakfast bill for London authorities has risen tenfold since 1984 - building new homes would seem to be the cheapest and best way of solving the

line, and from the proposed Humber Ports complex not the 'red herring' of Soviet coal which they are bleating loud and plenty about.

The UDM realise belatedly that Thatcher no longer has much use for it. The UDM is playing an 'ideological' card: the red scare tactic to try and get Thatcher's support once more; a forlorn hope.

Electricity supply privatisation and the move to large-scale importing of coal and other fuels, could threaten between 40,000 and 50,000 miners' jobs. The UDM's pay-off for scabbing during the 1984/85 strike will be pit closures of almost all the Nottingham coalfield.

Both Powergen and National Power are considering large-scale use of oil imports and use of 'moth-jalled' oil-fired power stations. Such activity would place enormous strains on Midlands mid-merit power stations. Whether they would be deemed unprofitable under the 'profit centre concept' being adopted by both Powergen and National Power remains to be seen. The threat to the Midlands power stations is obvious to electricity workers, and whatever the result it would seem that coal demand from Nottingham pits could be cut even further.

## MINERS AT BARNBURGH VOTE TO FIGHT FOR THEIR PIT AND COMMUNITY

FOR THE FIRST time since the end of the 1984/85 strike, miners in South Yorkshire have voted to continue the fight for their pit even though it has gone through the review procedure.

Miners at Barnburgh, near

problem. But not according to the Government.

The problem is not a shortage of local authority homes; it is a surplus, which they hope to sort out by abolishing all council housing. The Government rules compelling the sale of council houses have stripped council stocks of 150,000 homes so far, with an estimated 360,000 to go in the next five years.

At the same time, building is dwindling away from 28,000 in 1983-4 to 15,000 this year, to a target of 6,000 in 1991-2: this has produced the ludicrous situation of Welwyn and Hatfield council's having to buy back some of its own houses at vastly higher prices than they were originally sold at. This is due to the steep rise in house prices squeezing out first time buyers,

as many people are unable to accumulate the deposit or meet repayments. Again, this is more and more common, scarcely surprising when you consider the sums involved.

Mortgage advances have grown from £16.8bn in 1982 to £50bn in 1988. A combination of short

### In arrears

supply of council rented property and the repeal of the rent control acts have forced many more people to buy beyond their means, so that by June last year 58,000 building society borrowers were over 6 months in arrears.

Default repossessions have grown from 4,000 to 23,000 in six years, a small percentage of total mortgages, but a six-fold increase in as many years is another sure sign of Government failure to meet basic needs.



Doncaster, by a small majority, have voted to step up their campaign to keep the pit open.

The imminent installation of a huge docks complex on the Humber threatens every pit in South Yorkshire and even the 'super' pits around Selby. The

complex is designed to enable the import of 30 million tons of coal a year for the privatised electric power industry after 1990.

Nowhere and no miner is safe and Barnburgh is an encouraging sign.

up. "Don't forget, it was to help the Third World - just like the Union keeps telling us", he went on, looking directly at me. "We did bloody well, even though the bosses tried to stop us wearing red noses with our uniform. We told them to stuff off!"

Counting the money collected it was clear that there was a fresh team spirit amongst my workmates; the event had really brought them together. I felt more and more defensive;

I felt telling myself, why should I feel bad when most of them never even bothered to turn up for our union meetings? Where were they when we were collecting for the miners, or the printers, or the seamen?

I'd spent more time than all of them trying to promote a sense of collectivism. Yet here I was on the outside, isolated from it all.

Later that night I was impressed by some of the Comic Relief reports from Africa, outlining practical ideas to encourage real technical gains for the peoples there. And their sense of determination not to be subdued by their harsh conditions.

But by now the whole episode was drawing to a close, and I expected my own discomfort to ease.

I had to admire the way so many people had 'done their bit', a real sense of participation. Even so I felt a bit resentful that despite my efforts what my workmates had embraced was bloody charity work!

Well was it an embrace, or just a bit of flirting?

## Steam-uranium enthusiasts

IT IS SOMETIMES in the oddest situations that little flickers of a principled stand against Thatcherite values can be seen. Metropolitan authorities may have been abolished, and also some schools may no longer be controlled by elected LEAs, and there may soon be a tax levied on all those on the electoral register, but people with a few hundred pounds in a savings account are being urged to use their vote.

The Abbey National, second largest building society, wants to convert itself into a bank and float on the stockmarket. In fact, it wants to convert so much that it is offering 100 free shares to qualifying savers and borrowers as a bribe. It is estimated that if the Abbey National wins the vote and converts, the number of personal shareholders in Britain will be increased, at least temporarily, from a presently falling 9 million to 13 million.

Unfortunately being a personal shareholder may not prevent savers from receiving a lower rate of interest on their savings and from borrowers paying a higher rate of interest on their mortgages. So much for a share owning democracy.

The building society movement was started in 1775 by homeless people who combined their savings to be able to build themselves homes. A newly established ginger group Abbey Members Against Flotation is sticking up for what their opponents see as an antiquated idea doomed to extinction - mutuality. They have been given the derisory title 'the steam-train enthusiasts'.

It may not do to get dewy-eyed about building societies, no more than profit-making institutions wishing to make an even bigger profit. But what an interesting conflict of values: on the one hand the emptiness of a Thatcherite share owning democracy with record homelessness in the capital and on the other the supposedly outdated and old-fashioned mutuality of those who collectively built themselves homes.

## No rotten boroughs here!

WHEN Thatcherite 'Inner Cities' Minister, David Trippier visited Bradford just before Easter, he brought with him £4.5 million of Urban Programme money. He also left us in no doubt that the money was a politically-motivated grant when he said, "We believe Bradford Council in the hands of the Tories will promote urban regeneration and economic development in the way that you could never see from a local authority controlled by the Socialists."

Councillor Barry Thorne of the Labour group summed it up succinctly when he declared, "It is a bloody disgrace...There is no integrity left, I would imagine that if the Tories asked for anything at the moment they would get it because the Government is so desperate for them to stay in control of Bradford after the 1990 elections."

He also pointed out that many of the schemes praised by Trippier were initiated when Labour controlled the council. But of course at that time no money was forthcoming.

We now live in a country where blatant political patronage is back in vogue. We have to keep pressing to make sure that the rotten boroughs of the nineteenth century don't replace our elected councils. The first stage in Bradford is to winkle out the weak Tories, of whom there are a few, and make sure the human resources are put into winning any by-elections this year.

# Opposition to Clarke White Paper hardens, but more to do

IT IS NOW time for working class opposition to the government White Paper on the NHS to move into a new phase. No one can question the strength and cohesiveness of the leadership that health workers have offered. Hospital doctors from senior to junior, GPs, the Royal Colleges, the British Medical Association, COHSE, NUPE, the Health Visitors Association - all have opposed. Their major public statements have pointed a direction, but now the really hard work of explanation and discussion with every worker needs to begin.

The BMA has launched its campaign against the White Paper this week with leaflets in every GP's surgery. If people wait until illness strikes to collect their leaflets this will be too late, it is imperative that workers take the initiative to collect the information

and undertake to distribute it. Community Health Councils' in every locality will be holding meetings on the White Paper. Such a meeting in Thatcher's constituency this week attracted 200 people. A resolution from the floor of the meeting rejecting the White Paper was passed overwhelmingly, only nine people daring to raise their hands in favour.

The combined effect of small actions in every locality was a feature of the nurses' pay struggle and was successful. The same diversity of tactic is now emerging in the junior doctors' struggle over hours of work. The same imagination and creativity, and initiative, must characterise the struggle against the White Paper or all the efforts of nurses and doctors on the lesser issues will have been in vain.

# Local strength for national success

THE 20 separate negotiating bodies covering 2 million workers in 500 local authorities are now in jeopardy. The bodies were set up mainly in the 1940s and 1950s to cover the various trades and skills local government needs to carry out its socialised functions.

Now anything that is socialised, coordinated and national must go, especially if it is a national negotiating committee for workers. As local government workers enter this year's negotiations, they find themselves confronted with the breakup of national negotiating structures.

**Sabotage**

The employers' side on the committee covering most local government staff, the Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Negotiating Committee, is due to put forward its proposals this Tuesday. But the sabotage

has already taken place. The board that advises and services the negotiating committees has consulted employers on a variety of topics, asking particularly what they are prepared to stand out on. The result is that the employers have virtually started negotiations before making their offer.

The employers want an end to all national and provincial grading appeal structures, a new pay scale to come in below the existing bottom point, an end to automatic incremental progression (to be replaced by "merit" pay), as well as a whole succession of "enabling clauses" allowing individual employers to, for example, increase the working week.

Similar threats face lecturers in local authority colleges, and manual workers too. The TUC Local Government Committee, some employers' organisa-

tions and through the Labour Party, affiliated unions, are organising the necessary lobbying. But the die has been cast.

Local government unions will have to assess those external factors over which they have no control against the forces that can be run in their favour. There may have to be some accommodation on local flexibility simply to maintain the national structures. The trade off carrot may be on pay.

**Defiance**

Unions must now act with great care. The less members are involved in the full detail of the national negotiations the less they will be able to protect. It will take united and large-scale action to keep key elements of the national provisions. So far, joint union approaches have not been prominent. In all this, organisation at local branch level is vital.

# Attacks from employers confront NUJ with hard choices

THE Annual Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Glasgow gave cause for cautious optimism in the face of the most ruthless government and employer attacks the union has ever faced.

The NUJ, notorious for its willingness to ignore unpleasant reality in favour of cosy sectional or regional interests, this year showed signs of coming to terms with some of its most serious problems.

Sensible motions were passed on the way to handle personal contracts, a difficult and growing problem in both local and national newspapers, where key employers like Thomson and Northcliffe have launched vicious attacks on house agreements and collective bargaining. Rather than support an impractical stance based on the importance of punishing or expelling members who have transgressed, thus putting much of the pressure to resist signing such contracts onto the weakest members of the union, the ADM opted for the more difficult task of improving the union's ability to fight back collectively.

On the issue of a subscriptions increase, this year's meeting voted in favour, in order to keep the union running effectively while last year's ADM had voted for several increases in expenditure while refusing the subs increase needed to fund them. Similar shifts from wishful thinking to reluctant

realism (as opposed to new realism) occurred in union attitudes to the calling off of a one day strike over the attacks on Press freedom.

The conference recognised that the general secretary had acted correctly in calling off a potentially disastrous

one day dispute due to lack of real support. The majority of delegates recognised the importance of building a more united resistance to government attacks rather than pretending that the union's membership was as militant as the average conference delegate. In admitting that the calling off of the dispute had been poorly handled, members of the union's national executive also showed maturity, and the general secretary's comment that leadership included sometimes telling people unpalatable truths rather than ignoring the real situation was generally applauded.

## Awareness

A motion condemning the Ayatollah's death threat on Salman Rushdie and NUJ publishing workers showed an increasing awareness among delegates of the importance of class. An attempt to condemn the book as well as the Ayatollah in a six of one, half dozen of the other's squarely defeated, with an affirmation that condemning reaction and threats to a union's members is no more racist than to condemn Thatcher is sexist.

Not all was progressive, with the conference rejecting a much-needed restructuring

of the union nationally, which it had called for itself at the 1988 ADM. It seems that the process of coming to grips with the union's current perilous state is going to be a gradual one.

## Threats

Similar woolly thinking allowed bitterness over the protracted Wapping dispute to slow down much-needed recruitment and re-recruitment, including some former scabs who have now had enough of Murdoch's dictatorship. The liberal streak runs deep in the NUJ, and the delights of purity without responsibility are only being slowly relinquished in the face of attacks on regional newspaper contracts, national newspaper pay and conditions, broadcasting freedom from Thatcherite censorship, and attacks on local government press officers to even being members of a political party.

The conference was united in its defiance of Government attacks and scornful of Government hypocrisy over the Rushdie Affair, given its track record on upholding freedom of speech at home. The situation is critical for the NUJ, but at least it is beginning to point itself in the direction of the real enemy.

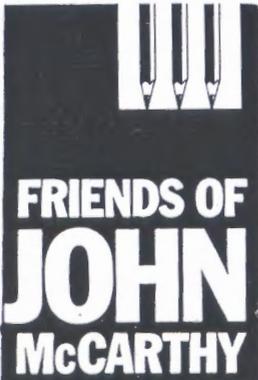
# Government bails out 'flagship' council

THE BRADFORD EXPERIMENT in municipal Thatcherism has taken a significant if not entirely unpredictable turn with the announcement of rate rises for the forthcoming financial year.

Of the 16 metropolitan boroughs, 15 have opted for rises of between 8.7% in Salford and 17.5% in (Tory) Solihull. Bradford stands alone with a rise of 1.3%.

Conservative group leader Pickles would have us believe 'prudent housekeeping' and 'sound book-keeping' account for this remarkably figure. His being the kept man of Ridley and Thatcher is nearer the mark. In the face of a groundswell of opinion against the damage wrought by his budget cuts, Pickles has received some £23 million in handouts of one form or another from central government and the EC.

With poll tax on the horizon, the political advantage of such a modest rate level has been calculated with cynical intent. Pickles has had to be bailed out in this way because, like every other authority Bradford was in a double bind of the Government's own making. Either electorally damaging cuts in services or electorally damaging rates increases.



THE NUJ meeting in conference in Glasgow pledged to continue working for the release of journalist John McCarthy, now entering his fourth year as a hostage in Beirut.

The conference heard repeated condemnations of Thatcher's government inactivity on this issue. In contrast, the PLO's Yasser Arafat sent a message to the delegates saying he would do everything in his power to secure John's release.

# 200,000 FOR VETS' SCHOOL

SINCE the announcement of the plan to close the Cambridge Veterinary School, a vigorous campaign to save the school has been launched. Earlier in the year the University Grants Committee recommended that Cambridge and Glasgow, two of the most progressive veterinary schools in Britain should close.

The closure plans have evoked strong protests from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Association. If the closures were to go ahead it is likely that Britain would be unable to meet its own requirements for graduate trainees and become a net importer of vets, probably from Europe. Another example of the Thatcher Government turning its back on the future of science and the future of Britain.

The campaign has included a fund-raising social organised by the union MSF and a series of public protests. Recently a 200,000 signature petition was handed into Downing Street to oppose the closure. The protests have highlighted the

veterinary schools' vital role in the monitoring of the health and hygiene of livestock which is crucial to food production control. The research work is also essential to human medicine and closure could jeopardise research on the anti-cancer drug Interferon.

All Thatcher can do is pontificate about litter, while those who are really working for a healthier future for our people are devalued and discarded.

## CYWU

THE YOUTH and Community Workers' Union (CYWU) meets for the first time as an independent union in Birmingham on April 15-16.

The union represents the interests of full-time and part-time youth and community workers and must yet organise many of the 60,000 potential members at work in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The 200 delegates have to face the fact that branches have still to come to grips with negotiations at a local level.



# FOR BRITAIN, FOR A FUTURE - COME TO GRIPS WITH THATCHER

## MAY DAY MEETING 1989

**LONDON**  
Monday 1 May, 7.30pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

**BRISTOL**  
Sunday 30 April, 8pm  
Assize Court Hotel, Small Street, Bristol

**CANTERBURY**  
Monday 1 May, 7pm  
Chislet Workmen's Club, Hersedon, Nr. Canterbury

**COVENTRY**  
Saturday 29 April, 7.30pm  
KoCo Building, Unit 5, The Arches Industrial Estate, Spon End, Coventry

**LEEDS**  
Monday 1 May, 8pm  
Leeds Co-op Rooms, Neville Street, Leeds 1

**MANCHESTER**  
Friday 28 April, 8pm  
Room 3, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street



**SWANSEA**  
Saturday 6 May, 7.30pm  
Singleton Hotel, Dillwyn Street, Swansea