



VOTE LABOUR THATCHER OUT WORKERS IN

Scuttling around in Finchley

SUCH is the deluge of election material, it is surprising when something arouses so much anger that people come out to the street to throttle the person who delivered it.

The material which aroused this response was Thatcher's election address. At first it just appeared to be the obligatory bland photo of "candidate with children" but Finchley conservatives had put a caption in the form of a quote from their leader: "Let our children grow tall, and some taller than others if they have it in them to do so."

The quote is a fitting summary of the Thatcher reign. The message is don't dare to aspire to the best for your child. Some people thrive in this society, some don't. Resign yourself at birth.

Die young with Thatcher

Presumably the reason that since Thatcher came to office children from low income families are proportionately more likely to be stillborn or die in infancy than those from high income families is a simple matter of destiny. And those who fail to "grow" in educational terms are presumably lacking something "inside". It is interesting that the children of Finchley conservatives, despite having rather splendid insides, and some pretty fancy exteriors by way of uniforms of the private dame schools they attend, seem to need the fertiliser of small class size and even additional tuition after school.

But soon Finchley conservatives will have another task - namely of finding an epitaph. Despite the secrecy surrounding Thatcher's visit to east Finchley last week to a very small business (even the press corps had been told her itinerary started 30 minutes later in a different place) a demonstration of several hundred people had formed in a matter of minutes. This leader is not walking tall, in fact she is scuttling about bent double. And by Thursday she will be laid low.

Manufacturing lie

THE CONFEDERATION of British Industry has been forced to admit that its optimistic claims about the economy have no basis in fact. It had said that its regular survey of manufacturing employers showed orders a higher level than at any time in the past 10 years. Now it concedes that the figures show no such thing. With manufacturing output and investment below levels in 1979, how could they?



"JUST SIX more days of Thatcher to go," said Neil Kinnock in Leicester on Friday. It felt like it too. Thatcher is sinking faster than Venice.

Thatcher has lost. She has run away from the ideological battle that was required and consequently her government is diminished in the voters' eyes. Labour has won the election argument.

Labour now must mobilise its millions of supporters, its new adherents, and all those who simply want the Thatcherites out for the sake of the country and who realise no other party can possibly form a government. The higher the turnout on June 11 the better will Labour do.

Those who have fought for the Labour campaign can claim a moral victory over Thatcherism. All that hard work, and collective effort to a common end, has daily attracted more helpers inspired to push her government from office. The labour movement has moved and is stronger for that.

That 'Alliance' has moved backwards, left floating upside down like synchronised swimmers out of time. Owen is closer to Thatcher than are Heseltine, Biffen or Heath, so why vote for that? Nobody ever accused Steel of being a humourless egotist. The 'Alliance' is like that non-alcoholic lager; you know what it's supposed to be, but you can't fathom out what it's for.

The people's agenda has been pushed forward in the cause of Labour to maximum effect by unity in action, a concentration of all our resources. There are basic requirements for life and dignity, besides which all Thatcher's contrived inventory pales. Her 'rights' - to own shares, to attend public school, to jump hospital queues, to blow up the world - are dubious, while ignoring our basic rights: to work, to shelter, to free speech and assembly, to education and health care.

This election is about democracy. Will fascism be rolled back? She would go 'on and on' to the turn of the century, month after month of misery and destruction. If voters want they can vote this government out of office in four days' time; that's how vulnerable she now is. Britain deserves far better than a Thatcher government. We have in our hands a golden opportunity. She's on her way out.

June 11.... We're on our way to victory

WHOEVER you are, whatever you do.... now is the time to throw your weight behind Labour.

Prince Charles has been taken off many of his official engagements in the election period in case he condemned inner city decline and manufacturing destruction. However, with tactical astuteness which would outdo many in the Labour movement he managed to raise the issue of youth unemployment on one of his 'permitted' visits.

In the medical world the junior doctors took the lead by writing to The Times challenging Thatcher to acknowledge the dire state of the NHS. Both Thatcher and Fowler felt obliged to reply - a big worry to Conservative Central Office in case Thatcher contradicted the minister. In this case however, Thatcher and Fowler

were agreed that the NHS was doing well. This was a move they lived to regret as consultants then rode in to reinforce the junior doctors' message. Then the medical professors spoke out. Then the researchers reported how Thatcher was using inflated figures for treatments carried out in the NHS - 20% of treatments were readmissions of the same patients.

In the arts world all sorts of celebrities have been campaigning under the banner of 'Arts for Labour'. But last week new faces joined the fray. Peter Dean who plays the stallholder in the Eastenders series turned up at another sort of stall - the Labour Party stall in Finchley.

Ted Heath took the lead in putting the weight of politicians from opposition parties behind Labour. His

condemnation of President Reagan's interference in British affairs was a big boost to Labour. Likewise the number of former Liberal councillors who have publicly announced that there is only one party of opposition to Thatcher - namely Labour - have responded to their true Liberal conscience.

But you don't have to

be famous to make your point. A pensioner from Cricklewood, North London issued a challenge to Thatcher to do a re-run of her 1979 trick of marching into a supermarket to show how the purchasing power of the £1 had been eroded. Thatcher declined (of course) but the pensioner marshalled the press herself and appeared on the front page of all the local press with her penny change from a pound after her purchase of a loaf of bread and half a pound of butter.

And finally cherish the thought of the 93 year old woman who telephoned the Finchley election hotline to ask for assistance to get to the polling booth. 'I feel it is probably the last time that I shall vote in a general election.... but one thing is sure. That woman is going to go before I do'.

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Reagan, get your nose out

REAGAN thinks he can tell the British people how to vote. Perhaps he has forgotten we are supposed to be an independent nation.

This senile, demented warmonger is already exposed as a liar and a fraud in his own country. And he has the gall to tell us to vote for his most sycophantic supporter!

Hypocrisy

The man who used our country to bomb Libya on fabricated evidence, and timed it to coincide with his country's national news, now lectures us on peace and defence.

The man who cheated and manipulated his own people in order to fight a covert war against Nicaragua's elected government tells us about stability.

The man whose troops already occupy our country, and who can press the button on his missiles based here whenever he wants, has suddenly realised that he won't be able to take diabolical liberties with us for much longer.

When they first came to power some clever people produced a poster of Reagan holding Thatcher in his arms. The poster was titled 'Gone With the Wind' but the wind was a nuclear one. Now Reagan is a has-been before his time is out, and Thatcher faces defeat.

We have the possibility of creating a Thatcher-free, Reagan-free world. Such a prize! Fight, and we will win it.

Thatcher sells out to America

A CLEARER statement on the relationship between Thatcher's Government and the United States could not have been made than Reagan's panic attempt to intervene in the British election.

Desperation

In her desperation to stay in office so that she may fulfil her 'historic mission', Thatcher is prepared to sell the independence of Britain itself if she can retain the support of the sagging President.

In order to be able to buy Awacs - in the process destroying Britain's own advanced electronics base - from the Americans, Thatcher has now given the go-ahead for British companies operating here to be subject to American law. Furthermore, companies will have to be licensed by the US Department of Commerce if they wish to use certain US-manufactured components.

And it's not just here in Britain. Now it's aircraft carrier Falklands. For despite protestations to the contrary, the first steps towards America's foothold in the Falklands have been taken. The Americans are using the new £450m Mount Pleasant airport. Supposedly, the aircraft are transporting geologists to the US research vessel operating off Antartica. But you don't spend an unprecedented sum of money simply to do a bit of harmless research.

As with all so-called defence contracts Thatcher is feverishly entering into with Reagan, the effect is to tighten the Yanks' grip on our country.

If we are to retain our independence as a country then we must remove Thatcher. It is as vital as that.

SHOULDER YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, SAYS ANC

ANC President Oliver Tambo has called on the British people to step up its boycott campaign and totally isolate apartheid.

Speaking at the 1987 Canon Collins Memorial Lecture, Tambo warned that thousands will die in South Africa simply because Britain has refused to side with the oppressed.

The boycott campaigns were aimed at the total isolation of apartheid. "This objective is inviolate and needs to be pursued with even greater vigour" he said.

Canon Collins came to the black South Africans' aid not in pity but in solidarity. "He acted because he could not stand aside", said Tambo.

"There are those in this country who, unlike John Collins, doubt the certainty of our victory. These calculate that the racist regime is so powerful that the oppressed are condemned to a futile and self-destructive battering at the ramparts of the racist fortress", he continued.

Appeasement

"These positions have resulted in a policy which amounts to appeasement of the apartheid regime. Of central importance to this policy is the notion that the Pretoria regime can and must be persuaded to turn itself into its opposite. Thus would we see the miraculous conversion of oppressors into liberators and the consequent transformation of the liberation movement into

irrelevance.

"In terms of this perspective, it is required that this regime should gradually reform the apartheid system out of existence. To do so, it is considered necessary that the supposed reformers should work their wonders in a situation of stability. Consequently, it is viewed as a sine qua non for the abolition of the apartheid system that the forces that are fighting against this system should be kept in check by repressive means. ANC.

"They entered into official contact with the ANC because of the argument that they were

seeking change by talking exclusively to the Botha regime could no longer be sustained. It had lost credibility. It became clear to the Western governments that the majority of our people within South Africa recognised the ANC as their political representative. Hence it was inevitable that, if they were still interested to project themselves as brokers, honest or otherwise, these governments would have to be seen to be talking to the

"Everywhere in our country, and after a year of national state of emergency, the democratic

forces are at work to expand and strengthen their ranks and to raise the level and intensity of the offensive against the apartheid regime to new heights. For its part, this regime prepares itself for more atrocities, for the campaign of repression of which PW Botha boasts - as though to shoot and kill children, to imprison and torture them and their parents, to carry out one outrage after another against independent Africa, were the worst activities that one could ever imagine.

Collision

"A terrible collision between ourselves and our opponents is inevitable.

"We cannot but regret that such titans of our struggle as John Collins will not be with us to celebrate the birth of democracy in our country. In a fortnight you, who are his compatriots, will be casting your votes to choose representatives to your parliament. How terrible it is that in the Southern tip of Africa millions have to go through the furnace of violent struggle to win for themselves a right that you take for granted!

Plea

What a tragedy that many more will have to die simply because this, a democratic country, refused to heed Canon Collins's plea for his motherland to side with the oppressed and to declare war on the tyrants!"



British trade unionists play their part

Photo: The Worker

Westland fears confirmed as orders drop

THE RECENT announcement by the management of Westland Helicopters Ltd that they intend to sack over a thousand workers at their Yeovil factory, and to virtually close down the customer service division at Weston-super-Mare, has produced an unprecedentedly

turned its presses over to produce a four page supplement written by the Westland unions.

The workers themselves set out to demonstrate that the Weston plant could be saved, by seeking alternative aerospace work to cover the order gap caused by the government's obsession with purchasing trident missiles rather than helicopters.

As anticipated, the company showed itself more interested in asset stripping the 400 acre Weston site than seeking work, and rejected the unions' proposals out of hand. But if the company is only interested in selling the plant off, the workforce is preparing itself to fight for their own future. On Wednesday last, 82% of the workforce voted to take

industrial action. Resisting company bribes, reported to be £800 per man to complete a current order on time, workers imposed an overtime ban and work to rule, as well as backing other decisions the action committee may take.

Promises

It is now up to the workforce at Yeovil to follow the lead given by Weston-super-Mare. The Government, and the company, have shown that they are not interested in producing helicopters (or anything else). If Weston closes, it will merely be the first step in the destruction of the entire industry. The battle to save it is on, and there can be no spectators. This is the firm Thatcher gave to the Americans.

Sell-off

united and angry response from the workforce and others who will be affected.

A mass demonstration in Weston, once one of Thatcher's safest seats, produced the unique sight of the local conservative club being bombarded with cries of 'Thatcher Out!', to the obvious approval of the populace. Even the 'Western Mercury', not normally noted as a leftist publication,

BIG BANG

THATCHER has spurned the present excellent opportunities for cuts in both nuclear and conventional weapons. Carriage of NATO revealed Thatcher's intentions: "Nobody supposes for one moment that you can do without nuclear weapons as long as the Soviets have nuclear weapons and indeed, even if they did not." Thatcher is utterly opposed therefore to multilateral nuclear disarmament, not just to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

When Carrington was asked if the Soviet leaders intended aggression he replied: "I am sure they don't." Yet Thatcher plans to allow 230 cruise missiles to be fitted to American B-52 bombers at Fairford in Gloucestershire, and 108 for American submarines at Holy Loch. Thatcher, like Owen, plans to use nuclear weapons as a 'last resort' - who is then the aggressor? Who is the threat? It would be the last resort for all of us.

Thatcher's manic flag-waving is preparation for genocide: the election of a Labour Government will dramatically improve our security and reduce the risks of annihilation.

Education runaround for Baker

EDUCATION is now at the top of the political agenda, put there by the action of the teacher unions. In these crucial days of the election campaign thousands of teachers will be using the time made available by strike action to press home the message - children need a motivated, respected profession working within a properly resourced education service if they are to realise their potential.

To deny teachers their rights and the resources they need to meet society's ever-increasing educational demands is to betray our children.

That is why there will be a huge anti-Thatcher vote among concerned parents and aware teachers.

A further fillip has been provided by the agreement in principle between teacher unions and Labour-led local authorities to finalise plans for a new negotiating structure (a National Joint Council). Labour's education spokesman has immediately welcomed the agreement and has given an undertaking that on his first day as Secretary of State for Education he would meet both sides,

KENNETH Baker, visiting Bradford to give flagging Tory fortunes a boost, attempted a 'walkabout' in the city centre. Instead, he encountered a determined group of teachers, lecturers and children who gave him the runaround.

Cries of 'on your bike' proved superfluous as the surprisingly fleet-footed Baker sped through subways, pausing for a short while to gain minimal respite amongst the bemused and amused staff and shoppers in BHS.

A few Tory 'plants', set up to provide TV material, were to little avail as the questions rained in upon a nervous minister who, either unable or unwilling to answer the serious questions with which he was pined, began to lose his Archie Andrews-like facial control.

A rather enjoyable excursion (for us) was marred by an unprovoked assault on a NATFHE member by a berserk Special Branch officer who had to be dragged off by a more politically astute colleague. For once, the BBC recorded the incident and even commented on it.

LESSONS!

THE DISPUTE over teachers' pay and conditions has moved far beyond its origins.

For the sake of an extra ten pence per week per child, the Government could have had peace in schools from January 5, 1987, when teachers and their employers had reached agreement.

The difference was the cost of the smaller classes and extra preparation time for primary teachers which the local councils had offered as their part of the ACAS agreement.

Compromise and agreement are not part of the Thatcherite vocabulary. Tory MPs' children aren't involved because they go to private schools.

Teachers have had their civil rights infringed - only in Chile have similar powers been given to the Minister for Education -

Thatcher thought that continued disruption would lead parents to vote for her. But she has miscalculated. Parents may be fed up with strikes and teachers don't relish disruption either. But we are now into a struggle to save state education. The half-baked schemes generated in the last week or so; the contradictory statements of Thatcher and Baker illustrate beyond any doubt that the lady who worked on 'junk' ices in the 1940s now intends to provide only junk education for the vast majority of our children in the 80s.

Thatcher is to blame for the state of school buildings which the buildings industry survey show would cost £2 billion to put right. She is to blame for the shortage of books and equipment. She is to blame for the fall in real expenditure on education of £750 million from 1980/81 to 1986/87.

She introduced the most radical exam reform for a generation, the GCSE, and then proceeded to short change those 15 and 16 year olds to the tune of £300 million.

She is the source of all education's problems - the solution is in our hands on 11 June.

Electricity workers unite to save industry

AS THE run-up to the general election gathers pace, so does the joint trade union campaign of workers in electricity supply, highlighting the threat of privatisation if Thatcher gets a third term.

The Federation of Unions Supplying Electricity (FUSE) campaign, though at present engaged in extensive public relations work, especially with parliamentary candidates, is beginning to establish a process which will have major long term implications on the industrial relations system within the electricity supply industry (ESI).

The fundamental development involved is the coming together of nine trade unions within

the power industry on an unprecedented basis. Slow and difficult this process is, the potential of such unity is staggering.

Lessons learnt in the joint union campaign run by water workers obviously have parallels for ESI trade unionists, study must also be made of the protracted and highly successful teachers' dispute. The latter demonstrating how to draw together trade unions, more often than not at each others' throats, in the face of a greater common enemy. Electricity workers are high up the list of "essential services" likely to see trade unionism outlawed under a third term, again a parallel with the teachers and the

ban on their collective bargaining rights.

The potential allies of the FUSE campaign are immense. Every household, every workplace, every industry. The FUSE campaign not only highlighting what a successful electricity service exists at present, but with its "Charter for Electricity" lays the foundation for an enhanced service which would play a fundamental role in the re-emergence of Britain's industrial future. Thatcher has her Channel Cable Link to light the South East, hence seeing the ESI (and remainder of the country) as a huge bonus for her city friends to swallow. The ESI has a £6.5 billion turnover and assets of £50 billion.

REVERSION TO TYPE

WE ALL know what we were supposed to be "Tell Sid" as the end of 1986 approached. The government conducted a massive publicity exercise in the sell-off of British Gas last December. The emphasis was on maximising small shareholdings in the privatised company.

Four months on, the shareholder profile is rapidly reverting to type. Massive institution buying of small holdings of shares from Joe Public has gone on. There has been a concentration of shares in the hands of fewer and fewer. The government knew it would happen of course. The city merely bided its time. A quick profit, of small proportion, borne on the backs of the gas consumer, was made by those one time shareholders.

There are now less than 25% of all shares held by the general public. The figure was 60% four months ago.

This is a fairly typical response in the wake of privatisation. After the British Aerospace and Cable and Wireless flotations the same thing was reported to have happened by the TUC in May 1985. After one year from the sell-off the number of shareholders was reduced by 83% in the case of British Aerospace and 84% in the case of Cable and Wireless.

"Tell Sid", the small investor, his glory was short-lived, with purely selfish motive, paid for by us - and him! "Tell!" the government, their privatisation propaganda is no longer credible.

Yorkshire 1987: one in three sink into poverty

WEST YORKSHIRE is now bottom of the low pay league for Britain, in comparison with Britain's nine other urban industrial centres. Nearly one third of all full-time workers in the region take home wages below the Council of Europe's "decency" standard of wages.

The "decency" threshold is 68% of national average earnings - £125.60 in Britain in 1986. In West Yorkshire nearly 20% of men and nearly 60% of women earn less than £125 a week. Nearly 32% of all workers in West Yorkshire survive on poverty wages.

Historically low wages have been the hallmark of textiles and clothing industries in West Yorkshire, particularly

as applied to women workers. The difference under Thatcher is that wages for both men and women are being driven down, since 1979 the proportion of male workers on poverty wages has more than doubled.

These figures compiled by the West Yorkshire Low Pay Unit, researchers at Leeds University and the Child Poverty Action Group, highlight the decline of West Yorkshire and extension of deprivation. Such is the deprivation that the Low Wages Unit report has been forwarded

to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg as demonstrating how Thatcher's economic policies are in breach of the EEC European Social Charter.

As with low wages unemployment has soared. In 10 years (1975-85), unemployment has risen from 70,000 to 296,000. The figures are still rising. Closures in steel, textiles, clothing and engineering are the contributory factors to West Yorkshire's soaring poverty levels. The Svengali of the crime is Thatcher.

Yorkshire pride at last year's NUM Gala

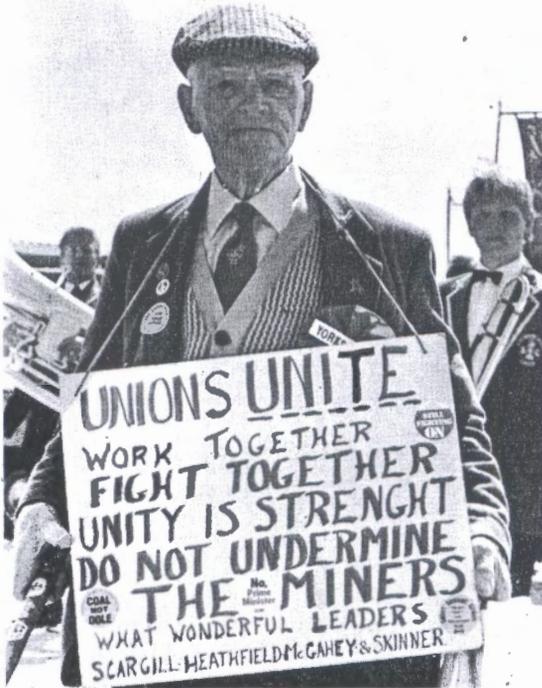


Photo: The Worker

New hulks for old

DOUGLAS HURD, the Home Secretary, has confirmed the intention of the government to purchase and establish a floating detention centre for immigrants. The 3,700 ton Earl William, chartered from Sealink, will be moored at Harwich. Initially, 120 persons will be detained on this 20th century hulk.

Using immigrants, a fascistic experiment of detention and isolation will be entered into. Some may turn a blind eye because immigrants are the initial cannon-fodder, but there can be no confusion that the success of this privately owned, privately staffed prison ship will be applied elsewhere in Britain - be it privatised prisons or internment camps.

The British ruling class has contributed much to the history of inhumanity - the use of hulks two hundred years ago was rapidly followed up by transportation, over 160,000 people deported to Australia alone. Britain invented the concentration camp and set the pattern for the notoriety later achieved by the Nazis. They now turn a full two hundred year circle as the first of the new hulks is moored.

College lecturers turn against the Government

'IF YOU want to change Government policies, you have to change the Government!' That was the message from the Annual Conference of the lecturers' union Natfhe.

The 400 delegates, representing 80,000 lecturers in colleges and polytechnics, agreed to a step-up of industrial pressure in support of their pay and conditions campaign.

The planned action will include a ban on marking registers, collecting money, and the use of private cars on college business. Branches have already voted on these sanctions and given them a massive 3-1 endorsement. The campaign is directed

against attempts to worsen the conditions of service of lecturers in exchange for a pay rise. Baker, the Secretary of State for Education, has, on several occasions, indicated the Government's unwillingness to provide the necessary finance to sustain the service and maintain its quality.

Instead, the Government has come out with a plan for the wholesale giveaway of polytechnics and colleges of Higher Education to local chambers of commerce and other unrepresentative and unaccountable industrialists to be appointed by the Secretary of State. This policy, coupled

with Young's Job Training Scheme, is a threat to the very future of Further and Higher Education.

In recognition of the urgency of the situation, and of the possibilities opened up by the General Election, Natfhe has determined to introduce educational issues into the General Election campaign.

Natfhe members are being asked to pose reluctant questions at public meetings, to confront Parliamentary candidates with the issues and to call meetings at the work place to discuss the effects of Government policies on their sector of education.

Tories' hidden education agenda

EDUCATION is a key issue in the General Election and one of the Tories' weakest links. So worried are they that several embarrassing reports about the state of Britain's schools are not being released until after the election.

The release of selective information is something the Government excels in, and while publicising the Inspectors' report on education in Brent - in the belief that they could make political mileage out of it - they have failed to release the annual report by HM Inspectors, which for the last two years, at least, has been published in May.

The failure to reveal the HMI report is most significant, and understandable, since in recent years it has contained much damning evidence of the

effects of cuts in education - such as crumbling buildings, shortage of books, equipment and teachers in key subjects.

Another report by the Department of Education and Science and the Furniture Industry Research Association, carried out four years ago, still has not been published - no doubt due to the fact that the findings revealed that up to 90% of lockers and cupboards needed repairing or replacing and one third of the tables, even in well-equipped schools, needed immediate attention.

Another potential vote loser is a report recommending that local education authorities charge for lessons such as music, cookery and field trips. No wonder this report 'is not being published yet'.

Brent says No to health cuts

MEMBERS of Brent Health Authority have voted by 14 to 0 to throw out a £1.3 million package of cuts that would have meant the freezing of 53 posts and 14 redundancies.

They warned that the cuts would create a major crisis in patient care and would be in breach of their obligation to provide a proper health service.

Managers of the community nursing and health visiting service have already declared their opposition to all further cuts.

Savings would have had to be made in the number of health visitors - an area

already found to be under resourced by the report into the death of Jasmine Beckford. The cuts would leave the equivalent of one neighbourhood of 30,000 people without a health visitor.

Last year, the health authority refused to close two wards at the Central Middlesex Hospital, and the NW Thames Regional Health Authority 'found' extra money to keep the wards open.

If this stand by the members of Brent Health Authority were repeated country-wide, Thatcher's 'no-health' policy could be defeated!

Skill shortage robs sufferers of hope

THE ARTHRITIS and Rheumatism Council reports that a serious shortage of rheumatology posts is robbing people with arthritis of the prompt treatment they so badly need. 7½ million people in Britain lack the services of a specialist rheumatologist. People with osteoarthritis are waiting 23 weeks on average for a hospital bed, and eight

months for a hip replacement.

The Director of the Epidemiology Research Unit says, "There are enough rheumatologists who have completed their specialist training available to block the worst of these gaps immediately. The real trouble is resources, and for that the buck stops with politicians and government."

Liverpudlians patch up their quarrels

THE SUCCESS for the Labour Party in the Liverpool local elections showed what can be done, and was achieved against tremendous odds.

The pro and anti Militant divide has been so great. The council has been pilloried by the media for years. Labour councillors were unfairly dismissed, leaving 47 new prospective councillors to be found. So a dismal outlook was forecast for Labour by the political pundits.

Liverpool's electorate responded with a high turnout of just over 50% and put some deep, often acrimonious,

divisions to one side. Whilst their majority was smaller, weighed against these factors, it was a victory for our class against Thatcher.

The Alliance were hoping to show the country that they were a force to be reckoned with by retaining the control they took by default. They were kept quiet. The only tactical vote here was a Labour vote, as it should be in the forthcoming general election.

The result shows that enough people forgot their differences and closed ranks against the real villain.

Civil Servants Go for Action

THE two largest civil service unions, CPSA and SCPS, have voted for national and regional action against the Government. Civil servants are demanding adequate provision of public services and improved pay for civil and public servants.

The Thatcher Government still insisted in talks on 18 and 19 May on the economic apartheid of regional and merit pay, homeworking and casualisation in an attempt to break up national collective bargaining. Civil servants who have found that they cannot change government policy will have to change the government.

The two months' action has elicited a response from the Labour Party which would reintroduce access to arbitration, restore full trade union rights to GCHQ, create 50,000 new jobs and improve the level of service to the public. The Tory Party by contrast has a hit list of 40 areas which could be cut out or privatised in another term of government. Our pay and staffing levels would continue to be cut.

Since Thatcher came in civil servants have seen their living standards fall to the point that they now do six days' work in five, for four days' pay. As a reflection of the anger against this government, CPSA conference recommended that members vote Labour for a future and that a campaign be mounted to affiliate to the Labour Party.

A hardening of resolve and a desire for unity have emerged in these months of action. A 90% plus vote by CSU and SCPS delegates will see a combined union of 120,000 by January 1988 if endorsed by membership ballots later this year. The links developed between SCPS and the largest union CPSA (150,000) at a local and national level have renewed interest in one national civil service union to counter the divisive tactics of the employer.

Thatcher hoped we would fade away, but we've got stronger. Nine ports in the South and East Anglia are blocked by freight carriers as civil servants keep up the pressure till the national stoppage. We've had enough of cutting our feet to fit ever smaller shoes - we're staying, she's going!

WATER WORKS

THE choice in the general election is very clear to water workers. Their future depends on the results.

Thatcher has confirmed in her manifesto that, if re-elected, she would proceed with privatisation of the industry.

Because of the highly successful campaign that stopped water privatisation in 1986 she has now come up with a different package. If anything it is worse than before.

The creation of ten regional water authorities in 1974 brought all aspects of the water cycle under unified control in each area, achieving integrated river basin management.

Now Thatcher plans to ruin this. Instead water supply, sewage treatment and disposal are to be sold off. Land drainage, pollution control, fisheries and flood protection will remain in the public sector as part of a new National Rivers Authority.

Recipe for chaos

This would divide the industry, divide staff and be a recipe for chaos.

But breaking up the industry is a top priority for Thatcher. She wants to destroy the pay, conditions and pensions of the workforce. Already she has encouraged Thames Water to give notice of withdrawal from all national negotiating machinery.

How refreshing then to see the industry's trade unions, who organised together so effectively over privatisation, now continuing over pay.

For the first time the three major council trade unions (for manuals, craft and staff) are in dispute over pay offers at the same time. A five per cent offer has been rejected by all and a joint strategy is now being decided.

June 11 represents an unparalleled opportunity for water workers.

Gas jobs threatened to boost profits

THE announcement that British Gas are planning to cut their workforce by 10,000 over the next 5 years must warm the cockles of Thatcher's stony heart but she could have done with better timing!

The figures for job losses were announced to the unions in April and the cuts will affect all regions and all departments. The proposed cuts



Newcastle street scene. Photo: The Worker

Old Tricks in Nottingham

ON December 4 last year Lionel Pickering, millionaire owner of the Trader group of newspapers, sent a letter notifying instant dismissal to all of his printworkers. This followed eight months of broken agreements with the NGA and a complete refusal to even meet with SOGAT or ACAS.

The management's intention was to reopen the factory at Heanor in Notts using non-union labour. But a seven-day, 24-hour picket started and since December 4 Pickering has

been forced to move his printing operation time and time again. After a brief run at the Nottingham Evening Post's presses at Breaston, he eventually moved most of his work to the non-unionised plant at Ad-scene in Canterbury. Unfortunately some NGA members in Welshpool are continuing to print some of the Trader titles.

The printers have now been on strike for over five months. There has been support in Notts and Derby and also from Chesterfield. In Nottingham a printers' support group has been set up and a fund raising stall is held every Saturday in the city centre.

Hundreds of Trader newspapers are sent back every week at the request of the printers and local councils are stopping advertising in the papers. Pickering is having to cut the price of the advertising by up to 45% just to fill the papers.

The printers have also now applied to the Industrial Tribunal for unfair dismissal. The Tribunal has agreed to hear more than one case a week to speed things up but this could still take up to October for a decision.

Printers are appealing for more donations and visits to the picket line at Heanor to make sure that the plant stays idle. Any donations should be sent to 114 Stonehill Road, Derby DE3 6TL.

Sacked for Solidarity

SINCE January 97 workers have been dismissed from Senior Colman, a small engineering works in Sale, for striking in support of fellow workers sacked by management on January 18.

The sackings came about because the four workers would not comply with a management order to fill out new detailed time sheets. The union had wanted to discuss the issue and a meeting was planned but the management refused.

The firm was taken over by the present owners in July last year, being known previously as Barber and Colman. There had never been a strike. The present management visited the homes of deaf and dumb strikers telling their families they would never work again if sacked. Then they were sacked.

By now families are experiencing severe hardship but the men and women in dispute refuse to submit to this type of management policy, Thatcherite in its key essentials.

Donations can be sent to the Senior Colman support group, c/o AEU, 43 Crescent, Salford M5 4PE (telephone 061 736 5206)

MINERS DEFIANT

ON SATURDAY, 13 June, Swansea plays host to the annual South Wales Miners' Gala. Coming only two days after the General Election those miners and their families in attendance will know that its outcome will have been due in no small measure to their enormous contribution to the 1984-85 strike.

They were the first to actively oppose Thatcher's policy of industrial destruction and mass unemployment. In demanding a future for themselves they were foremost to recognise in practice the absolute decline of a system which if left unchecked would go on to destroy their jobs, pits and communities, as the NUM stated at the time.

With the return to work came the cacophony of "the defeat of the miners" from both ultra-left and ultra-right alike. Of course there were also the "spent force" theories of the "educated men" who should have known better.

Strange then how only a few years on that Britain's miners even by the reckoning of coal boss Haslam are 30 times more likely to take strike action in pursuit of a grievance than any other section of industrial workers. A spent force indeed!

But as with other parts of the British coalfield, that South Wales has had its casualties cannot be denied - 13 pit closures with the attendant loss of 7,000 jobs.

Careful scrutiny shows that by far the biggest post-strike casualty within the mining industry has been the scab UDM. In terms of collective thought and hence resilience, it was bankrupt from day one, and now it is broke financially. In stark contrast the NUM expects to return to a firm financial footing within the next 18 months.

Fifth column fails

With the failure to gain ground of the MacGregor-inspired fifth column, has come the Coal Board's attempt to manufacture differences of opinion between area and national structures within the NUM - markedly so with regard to the proposed Margam super-pit and six-day coaling. Here then the weakness of the employer should indeed be seen for what it is.

Where attempts to fragment the NUM have failed before so they will fail again. Quite properly the South Wales area NUM declines to take up the issue in isolation preferring instead to iron things out at July's national conference when the Midland's resolution on the working week is debated.



Manchester street scene. Photo: The Worker

Public Meetings

9 June: Thatcher Out, Workers In.
7.30 pm, NALGO Conference, New Clifton Hotel, Talbot Square, Blackpool.

12 June: Peace not War) 7.30 pm, Bellman Bookshop,
26 June: Youth Demand Work) 155, Fortess Road, NW5.
Nearest tube: Tufnell Park.

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155 FORTESS ROAD, LONDON NW5.
£6 for 6 months, £12 per year.
Cheques and POs to L. Elliott.

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