



TO HELL WITH RESHUFFLES SACK THE LOT

Editorial

A CHORUS from the Tory press demanding that Nicholas Ridley 'must go' is proof that we are living in interesting times.

Ridley may be incompetent. He's certainly a nasty piece of work. But up till now that has been a good qualification for being a Thatcherite minister.

The fact is he's a fall guy. He's only been doing Thatcher's work. In imperial courts and dictatorships alike, people only attack the tyrant's ministers because they haven't got the guts or the honesty to point the finger at the tyrant himself.

Ridley should get the sack for his handling of the Poll Tax. As he should for water privatisation. As should Parkinson for electricity, Baker for education, Channon for transport, and Lawson for the economy. But the real question is who is going to sack Thatcher?

The answer of course is

obvious. It is up to us. But we won't get anywhere near it if we fall into the trap that has been so carefully laid for us. As soon as we enter the Poll Tax 'safety net' debate as to how much 'provident' councils should pay over to 'improvident' councils to ease the pain, we are accepting Thatcher's terms of reference.

The implication is that the hard up in one part of the country should subsidise the hard up in another part. The one thing the poll tax does is effect a wholesale redistribution of wealth from poor to rich by reducing taxes on the rich wherever they are.

Without the 'safety net' the poll tax amounts to a tax on poorer people for being poor: councils which spend more to meet the needs of their local community are being punished for it. With the 'safety net' it

is still a tax on the poor for being poor - but spread across the country rather than across a council.

The beauty of it is this. The 'safety net' was devised to set one section of the working class against another. But so far it is only setting one section of the Tory party against another.

Gutted

In the same week as the Lords gutted Thatcher's attempt to disqualify council workers from standing in elections, the Commons Tories staged one of their biggest revolts yet over child benefits, while Thatcher's erstwhile supporters in the City inflicted further body blows to her plans to privatise electricity and water.

They are divided and bickering. Ministers' heads may roll as a result. Which is good news of course. But not good enough. It is Thatcher's head we want.

Disturbing

Our country now shows disturbing signs of the same cavalier attitudes to the health and safety of its citizens. In recent years a couple of dozen serious tragedies have shocked Britain. As an exercise, name any six and the chances are they would not be the same six as on someone else's list.

Tragedies

The second division of avoidable tragedies includes food poisoning outbreaks, water unsafe to drink without boiling and Legionnaires' disease passed through cooling towers to the unsuspecting people at street level. Second division because only a handful of victims die each time, whereas in the big tragedies scores are killed and maimed for life. But so often the difference in scale between one tragedy and another turns on apparent luck or fluke rather than sound judgement.

Neglect

Lack of investment in the public infrastructure, general neglect, the removal of regulations that protected producers and consumers, and profits put above all else: these factors recur when tragedies are publicly investigated. Life has been cheapened when the protection of life and limb is regarded as an unnecessary expense.

The growing realisation, however belated, that this country deserves more consideration of its basic needs than this government will ever give it, is one more sign that change is in the air.

THREAT TO SCIENCE

THATCHER has refused state backing for a national fibre-optic network. This is in contrast to the policy adopted in advanced industrialised countries.

At the same conference that this announcement was made, a professor from Southampton University reported that budget restrictions would partly lead to the closure of three opto-electronic centres at the university.

A report on the British economy produced by management consultants PA, recently, has concluded that unwillingness to invest, limited markets, and reluctance to adapt to technological advance are the key reasons for Britain lagging behind overseas competitors. This contrasts with Thatcherite boasts of an economic miracle.

That foreign investment is no answer is no answer is shown by Wang's decision to close its assemble plant on Stirling University campus after receiving £4million in government grants. 240 jobs will be lost.

The privatisation of computer centres demonstrates a similar lack of commitment. The CEBG site at Stockport is only the latest to be threatened in this way. The political nature of such decisions is often clear. For example, Customs and Excise awarded a computer software contract to British Telecom despite an £11 million cheaper in-house bid. This case is to be investigated by the national audit office.

British Rail Board goes loco

THERE HAS been a tremendous victory on the railways. The leader of the Labour Party should learn to keep his mouth shut. It is not the job of the leader of the opposition to do Thatcher's work for her and attack workers involved in struggle. She will always invite him to condemn, knowing that this is one way of dividing the labour movement. He is going to find it more difficult to resist the demand next time around.

Credit

The National Union of Railworkers have led a remarkable struggle which moved a management determined to force through the position adopted by Thatcher. They have won concessions on future bargaining (discussions are to continue on this issue) and of course have increased the pay offer from BR's 'final' one.

An intransigent BR management said they would only talk on some of the issues involved. They were forced to concede. ASLEF acted honourably in joining the dispute and increasing the pressure while the white collar

Transport Salaried Staff Association provided a loophole for BR to concede through their tribunal case.

The net effect was that BR was seen to be routed and the intransigence that everyone recognised as cabinet inspired was made to look stupid. So ASLEF and the TSSA settled for the substantial gains already made.

The NUR itself has suffered many years of falling wages and job losses. Now it will be necessary to take stock. It is true that they have not won nearly enough to redress that balance. Neither will they, whatever the outcome this particular year. Years of low pay cannot be put right in one go.

Proclamation

NUR members will judge how to reach a settlement that will consolidate their gains and leave the union in a position to continue the struggle in the future. It is their privilege to reach that decision, not the prerogative of a politician speaking from the outside.

Don't you know your history?

PERHAPS it's just as well the national curriculum places such emphasis on English history. When lecturing the French in Paris on the English Way, Thatcher said: "We have the Magna Carta in 1215, the Bill of Rights in the 17th century and our calm revolution of 1688. Of course that was not a revolution but a change carried

out calmly without a bloodbath".

When she has to pass a statue of Cromwell every day on her way into the house, can she really have forgotten that parliament voted calmly to chop off the king's head over a century before the French got in on the act? Was this woman really once an education minister?

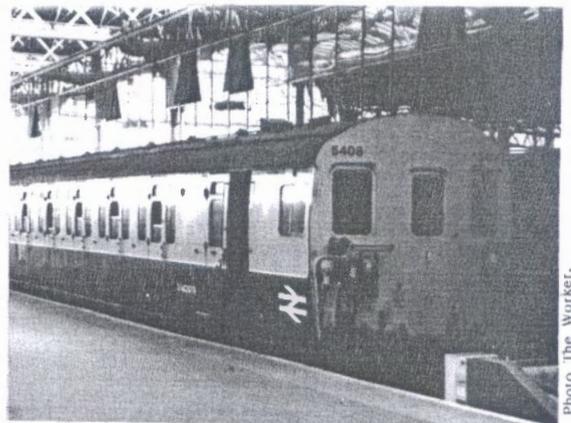


Photo The Worker.

Rail workers demonstrated their vital role, bringing services to a standstill and wringing concessions from British Rail.

Thatcher the Philistine

THERE are philistines and then there is Margaret Thatcher. The scandal of the Rose Theatre illustrates this fact. One can only marvel at the determination shown by Thatcher and her sidekick Ridley to bulldoze this unique historical site. Not even the deathbed plea of Laurence Olivier was sufficient to move them.

The same antipathy is shown to the arts in general. Museums and art galleries housing priceless work from past centuries are being allowed to rot.

To their credit, the directors of London's main museums and galleries, mostly appointees of the Thatcher era, have rebelled and addressed an unprecedented plea to the

Government for more money. They point out that they do not even have enough to cover the basic costs of maintaining their collections let alone improving them.

The existence of libraries and museums has been a touchstone of the health of civilisations since the time of the Ancient Greeks. There is something sick in a society that does not value its cultural heritage.

TO OUR READERS

We have had printing difficulties. We apologise for delays experienced by readers in getting the last issue.

Part 2 of Historic Notes on the French Revolution will appear in the next issue of the paper.

When the 'left' doesn't know it is doing the right's handywork

In the wake of the large scale immigration of the 1960s and 1970s, and the rapid internationalisation of the British economy, an intense battle of ideas has begun. Some say that the idea of the nation is outdated. Others think that nationalism is the same as chauvinism. We say:

advance, in any other part of the world, and nobody else can achieve these things for us here in Britain.
It is in this context that we must consider 1992 and the Single European Market. On 31st December 1992 all barriers to frontiers in Europe

and the indigenous population. The idea of "multiculturalism" appears to date from the mid sixties. Roy Jenkins, then the Home Secretary, said of Labour's race relations policy in 1966 it was "not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity accompanied by

1. Is it true that all cultures are equal? A culture is more advanced than another in as far as it is created and controlled to a greater extent by the working class, in as far as it protects and advances the interests of the working class more effectively.

that when immigrants to Britain adopt the basic, forward thinking aspects of British culture, fight for progress and a halt to the decline, and join trade unions, we welcome them as our class brothers. But when coexistence means accepting backwardness, we must recognise the contradiction, and struggle to reassert the values and gains of our class.
If multiculturalists argue that people are endlessly divided then the so-called 'Anti-racists' take difference and division a step further.

Britain: One Nation One Culture

TO SAY that Britain is one nation with one culture is to risk criticism by the narrow-minded and jingoistic. But to say this is to assert the unity which is so essential to our class.

As Britain has developed, it is a single capitalist economy. It follows that one single working class has emerged. Not necessarily developing at an equal rate, and certainly with differences, but united by an overwhelming commonality of interest - to defend itself against capitalism.

Why is nationalism important to us, the British working class? It means something different for us than for the ruling class. The bourgeoisie has no intrinsic loyalty to or interest in Britain. It no longer has an interest in protecting its home market. It destroys British manufacturing industry in its war on us, the British working class. It may occasionally revive a disgusting jingoism for a specific gain like during the Falklands War. But jingoism is not nationalism.

For the British working class, nationalism equals survival. We can't ship ourselves off in mass to greener pastures which are probably illusory anyway. To survive we need to take control of our future as a collective. We need:
*control of our economy
*self-sufficiency - agricultural and industrial
*control of our politics.

Integrated

We cannot achieve these things in units smaller than our nation. It is no coincidence that we have a National Health Service, a national state education service, nationalised essential industries, British Rail for the whole of Britain. It is in this context that we understand Thatcher's attempts to fragment and destroy.

She is no nationalist. Remember for her there is no society, only individuals. Cecil Parkinson, when asked whether Thatcher had moved away from the concept of one nation to individual selfishness and greed, replied that he didn't understand what was meant by 'one nation'. This is no small move for the Conservative Party to make.

It's not surprising then that 'regionalism' raises its head again under Thatcher. Certainly we in the South East have a special and enormous task before us to oust the Tory majority, but people in the North and Scotland have no room for scorn or complacency. There is no such thing as socialism in one borough or one corner of Britain.

Does this mean we scorn internationalism? Not at all. Our contribution to the forward movement of the international working class must be to rid ourselves and the world of Thatcher.
We, as a working class, have no hope of achieving socialism nor even significant social



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Black and white workers have long made themselves an integral part of the struggle of the British working class. Belated attempts by both 'left' and 'right' to divide us must be resisted. Photos show an NHS day of action in 1985 (above), and bakery workers fighting for pay in 1979 (below).

will be abolished. All restrictions on the movement of capital between the twelve member states will be lifted.

The Single European Market then will hasten the decline of capitalism in Britain. So why does Thatcher appear also to oppose closer integration? She doesn't. She is quite prepared to forego national sovereignty to release capital from national constraints. What she is unwilling to do is to accept anything which would limit her in her onslaught against the British working class.

Culture

What is culture? I think it is the totality of the experiences, skills, beliefs, customs, organisations, history, values and traditions of a people - in this case the working class of Britain. It has both continuity and change. As the sociologist R.A. Halsey puts it, "Our sameness and our differences are more than just genetic. We are creatures of cultural as well as genetic reproduction. Culture is the sum of the skills by which we live, which are passed down the generations by means other than genetic transmission - our language, science, religion, art and practical knowledge, as well as our material artifacts and social organisations."

This doesn't mean that there aren't differences between British workers. Let's even call them cultural differences. Different conditions prevail in different parts of the country, and aspects of culture have developed differently in response. But these regional differences are minuscule in comparison with regional differences in other countries.

More recently it has become fashionable to stress differences especially between immigrants

and the indigenous population. Immigrants were no longer expected to integrate as rapidly as possible. The idea began to gain credibility that British culture could coexist alongside a mosaic of different culture, and insofar as British culture changed, it would be enriched by an endless array of difference.

Multiculturalism is based on three assumptions:
1. All cultures are of equal value.
2. Culture can be transferred from one country to another.
3. The host culture can coexist beside minority cultures and is enriched by them.

Let's examine these assumptions more closely.

2. Is culture transferable? If it is true that culture arises out of physical, organisation and historical phenomena, then it must be true that it does not necessarily transfer.

Multiculturalism

3. Is it true that British culture will not only coexist beside foreign cultures, but be enriched by them? Of course it is true that British culture can be enriched by foreign cultural influences. But multiculturalism asks us to tolerate a force of feudalism, backwardness and intolerance, and accept it as equal to our own culture.

Wittingly or unwittingly multiculturalists accept the Thatcherite ideology of special, individual interests. In response we say

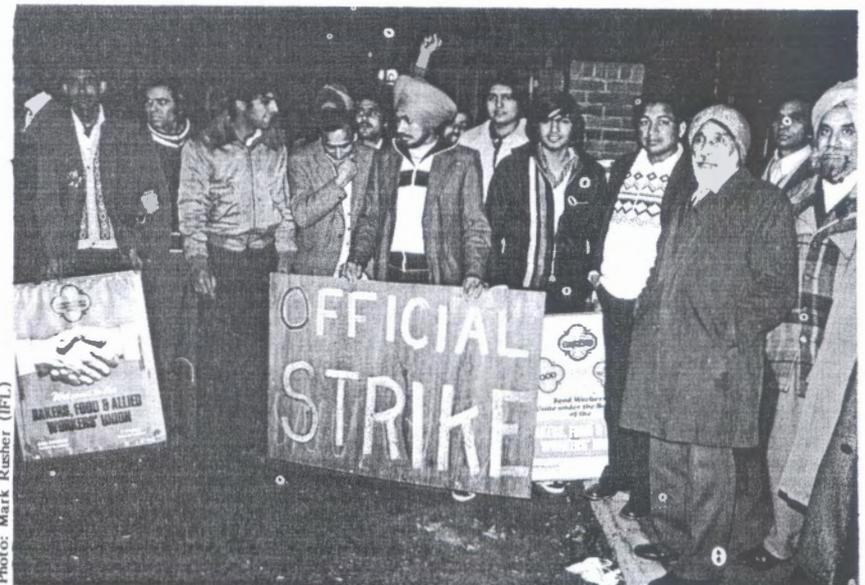


Photo: Mark Rusher (IFL)

Racists

The anti-racists are today's racists, claiming that workers are separated by differences of interest depending on the colour of their skin. So a few years ago Ambrosine Neale, elected as a Labour councillor in Brent, could defect to the Tories when she couldn't get her own way over introducing black schools, and give control of the council to the Tories.

According to the anti-racist argument a black worker has more in common with a black employer than with a fellow white worker. This is to be expected if, as the anti-racists say, all whites are racist.

The absurdity of the argument comes to a peak with the allegations of 'institutional racism'. There is no distinction between institutions - education is racist because a school encourages parents to phone for an appointment, because some immigrants cannot cope with English. The TUC is as bad as the CBI. So you set up black sections to bring the union under their control: vilify the leadership and do Thatcher's job for her.

And so the ideological battle is lost. Race and not class is the issue; our own trade unions or the Labour Party are the enemies and not Thatcher.

But Thatcher stands against all that is precious and advanced in British culture. She attempts to stand in the path of history.

And so we enter into ideological battle against all those who wish to divide and weaken us. That is why we are Britain one nation, one culture, one class. Thatcher out!

The above article is based on a speech at a recent CPBML public meeting at the Bellman Bookshop.

Asset stripping the aim of ESI privateers

THE DIVISION OF CEBG assets - worth up to if not over £50 billion - between Powergen, National Power and National Grid, has all the hallmarks of thieves tunnelling into the Royal Mint and the resulting frenzy of greed and goldfever. The allocation of generating plant and non-operational buildings was supposedly on a fair, reasoned and logical basis.

Powergen has no nuclear generating plant. Hence they were allocated the Marchwood Engineering Laboratories. Marchwood is 99% nuclear engineering and nuclear-related research and development.

No sooner had Powergen been allocated Marchwood, than they announced their decision to close the site. For nearly six months, all

ESI trade unions on-site - NALGO, EPEA, NJIC - have been resisting the closure. Now, unswayed by logical, reasoned and financial arguments, Parkinson remains loyal to the original allocation to Powergen and closure.

500 workers at Marchwood, though allocated to Powergen, are employed by a company in which they have neither identity, work or future. The Marchwood site, 168 acres, is valued at £100 million plus, in a prime development area for house building.

The buildings and land owned by the CEBG is vast. £100 million cool profit for Powergen, for one site, is the mere tip of the iceberg. The value of CEBG properties in London is estimated at

hundreds of millions. The successor companies of the CEBG may well be fleeing Central London HQs, but the values being raised in the process are enormous.

Not only are properties in London being examined. Until 20 years ago every city and town had its own power station. Many of these stations have gone, but ownership of the sites remains.

Demand for land and re-development of central city sites has raised the value of such sites. All the successor companies are at this moment issuing their building strategy proposals. What this means is identifying their major buildings to be used and indicating which buildings, properties, sites, etc are to be liquidated.

From electricity generation, to estate agency.

It is estimated that distinct from major headquarters buildings training centres, grid control and power stations the CEBG has over 800 properties throughout England and Wales. Let alone sites reserved for future developments, like sites with initial planning permission for new power stations.

Just the beginning

The Powergen-Marchwood asset-stripping operation is just the beginning. Extremely unlikely but large and well-resourced property owners are now entering the property market, a by-product from electricity generation which may well change the face of Britain.

Youth on the right track

FOR MANY YOUNG people who have grown up under ten years of Thatcher, life has been hard and miserable. Homelessness, unemployment, enforced labour and poverty have been the order of the day. Luckily, the nation's nine million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are far from coned by the regime.

A recent MORI poll conducted for the Independent and the BBC shows a negligible influence of Thatcherism on young people. Of the 11 million young people aged between 18 and 30 the overwhelming majority (4:1) proved in no doubt that the NHS, electricity and water were better held in public hands. 71% of people polled said they would pay more tax if it improved public services. 66% of young women thought the country was heading in the wrong direction.

Trade unionists

Though less likely to be trade unionists than in previous years, young people still value the trade unions and 72% believed that trade unions are essential to protect workers' interests. This view is being encountered frequently by trade unionists running education classes under the new adopt-a-school schemes. Young people are genuinely responsive to discussion about the organisation and discipline of trade unions and in favour of them.

Youth workers, working with young people in informal settings find all sorts of signs of encouragement. There is humour, there are signs of life and resistance as the many cultural expressions of young people shine through the commercial pop and fashion promotions. Think of the millions motivated by the anti apartheid concerts, the Red Wedge tours, or the political bands. The National Union of Students remains organised and fervently against the Government's plans for the young.

Youth must not be written off. They must be brought closer to the organised movement and the efforts of the TUC to provide useful trade union education packs (Getting Together) should be supported.



Water privatisation a licence to print money for advisors

ADD WATER to privatisation and you get instant profit for some. Profits of £1.76 billion probably have a stronger attraction for Mrs Thatcher's friends in the City than all the less plausible benefits of efficiency and competition put together.

Higher management have probably been looking with envy at their counterparts in former state industries who have all experienced massive salary increases since the sell-offs.

BT's chairman now earns £283,000, the chairman of Cable and Wireless, Thatcher's pioneer privatisation had a comfortable 86.5% rise to £388,000 last year, and the British Airways chairman also found he was worth 117% more over the last year.

Of course, since it's only our money, they can afford to spread it around, a few million to stockbrokers and a few million to the ad industry. It's early days yet, but Yorkshire Water's accounts already show £700,000 paid to merchant bankers for specialist advice on privatisation.

The water authorities as a whole have appointed a total of 55 firms to give similar advice, including 10 stockbrokers, 12 accountancy firms, 10 legal advisers and 11 PR firms. £9 million has already been spent on advertising the fact that water comes out of taps, called a public awareness campaign, nothing to do with privatisation.

People who didn't know that water comes out of taps will probably believe that. It's all money down the drain anyway, judging by the Water Association Chairman's statement that 'We have had two years of a lot of mud being thrown at us, and a lot of vilification and a lot of criticism.'

So far into the campaign, public criticism and vilification for something so previously innocuous has intensified beyond belief. The more spent, the more unpopular it gets. This must be a source of great satisfaction to the opponents of privatisation, which is almost everyone in the country. What is less funny is that it is all being syphoned out of our pockets.

and an estimated 3 million members have so little an interest in the stock market that they have never owned a share in their lives. As with all previous privatisations the shares will be sold off in the first few months, and will gravitate by the million into the hands of large financial institutions.

Never has so much wealth and influence moved from the hands of the many into the hands of the few as in recent years. Abbey National will soon be just another example showing that popular capitalism is a contradiction in terms.

Fight to oppose compulsory redundancies at Aston University

REPRESENTATIVES of Local Associations of the Association of University Teachers from throughout the country attended a rally on 28 June at Aston University intended to persuade the Council of the university to rescind the authorisation to the Vice-Chancellor to declare lecturers compulsorily redundant.

Similar rally

Many at the demonstration had been at a similar rally in 1982 which was successful in averting compulsory redundancies. Since that time, however, the university has suffered massive cuts with a reduction

Individual contracts hit rights

INDIVIDUAL contracts are now frequently used in previously strongly organised areas in the employers continuing drive to eradicate collective bargaining. By a combination of pressure and seduction the intention is to wean the employee away from the protection of his or her colleagues into an unequal partnership with the company.

Any dispute must then be fought out in the courts - if the employee can afford it. Those that retain membership of a union of course find legal representation of value, but the contracts signed are even then often inescapable.

National newspaper

Two employees of a national newspaper recently gave the traditional two weeks' notice only to have an injunction served on them to restrain them from working for any employer without the company's permission. A close reading of the fine print in their individual contracts revealed that

they were obliged to give 12 months' notice!

They were obliged to continue to report to work as usual until their union solicitor could have the injunction lifted. An employee of a provincial newspaper was asked to sign a contract obliging him to give three months' notice, then restraining him from working for another paper for 12 months afterwards.

Similar contracts

Workers have often been forced to sign similar contracts after many years working for the company. Although ostensibly equally binding, while the company readily sues the individual, some employees have returned from sick or maternity leave to find their job gone and themselves surplus to requirement.

Non-union members then lack the means to take the case to court. Then, as never before, the need for solid union organisation becomes apparent.

in lecturing staff from 500 to 250 and a similar fall of 50% in the number of departments.

Financial straits

The situation though, is that the university is not in the same financial straits as in 1982. Indeed, the Universities Funding Council itself has expressed its view that the main priority is to fill the high number of vacancies at the university. In addition, these latest cuts are directed at departments of engineering when Aston is supposed to be an engineering-based university. As a student speaker

(himself studying in one of the threatened departments) pointed out at the meeting there is supposed to be overstaffing, yet he and his fellow students daily face overlarge lecture and tutorial groups to the detriment of the attention they should be receiving. Nevertheless the Vice-Chancellor seems unswayed by such arguments and is determined to press ahead, even trampling the rights of staff as set out in the university's own charter and statutes.

National action

Similarly national action continues for the reinstatement of Edgar

Page, a philosophy lecturer made redundant at Hull University. The academic boycott has affected staff recruitment and many external examiners have resigned or refused reappointment. Major conferences at the university have been cancelled and staff barred from events elsewhere. A recent UGC (University Grants Committee, now Universities Funding Council) report implied criticism of the sacking.

Add its voice

Hull is the latest to add its voice to those calling for negotiations to resolve the situation.

The Abbey loses its saintly habits

THE OFFICIAL line on the Abbey National sell off becomes ever more bizarre. Since the share offer was oversubscribed some form of rationing had to take place, so those who applied for only 600 shares received the full 600, while those who applied for more will receive 'only' 775. If as is likely, the shareholders immediately sell at the expected premium of 25p a share the smaller applicant will make a profit of £150, while the larger applicant will make £193.75.

Grasp of mathematics

Showing a grasp of mathematics which bodes ill for Abbey National PLC, the board view this as favouring the small investor.

It is perhaps not too cynical to believe that few of the Abbey National savers and borrowers who voted for flotation did so out of a desire to play a greater part in the Society's affairs. Where were all these public spirited individuals during the most important but most sparsely attended AGM of the Society's history? At home with their pocket calculators.

Not much impact

No individual with 600 shares out of a 1.3 billion issue is going to have much impact on company policy,

Doctors vote to oppose Clark's new contracts

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS have voted 3 - 1 against the new contract proposed by the government. The vote - with an 82% turnout - is a remarkable demonstration of the anger that has united family doctors against Kenneth Clarke's bullying tactics.

Despite his blustering that he now intends to impose the contract on them (as other Thatcherite employers try to impose pay deals and new conditions) this will cause the government major difficulties.

The essence of the proposed contract is that GPs would have to have more patients on their lists to retain the same pay in terms of capitation fees. The net result would be poorer care for patients as there would be less time for individual consultations.

This is just at a time when progressive and innovative GPs are developing their service so that advice on prevention of disease is becoming part of their work. But this takes time, and the inevitable pressures will reverse this trend back to the quick consultation and a possibly unnecessary prescription, rather than taking time to get to the root of the problem.

White Paper

The new contract for GPs, while technically a separate issue from the government's White Paper proposals for the NHS, is in fact linked to them, in that it is part of Thatcher's drive to dismantle the existing structure of the Health Service.

On this front too, the pressure is mounting on the government to slow the pace of its NHS 'reforms'. The demand has been made by the all-party Social Services Committee of MPs, which issued an interim report on the government's White Paper, 'Working for Patients'.

Labour MP Frank Field, who chairs the Committee, said 'This report is a damning indictment both of the arrogance of ministers and their flawed policies. It is not too late to slow down, think again, and consult with professionals and patients alike.'

The Committee goes on to say that staff are the key to a successful NHS. The responses of the health professions to the proposals in the White Paper have been hostile. All the major organisations representing health service staff have expressed opposition to the government's plans. 'The government,' say the MPs, 'would be wise to take account of their critics.'

Shocking

Serious criticisms have been made about the proposed reorganisation of every aspect of its provision of health services, particularly the singular lack of mention in the White Paper about the whole area of community care, when Clarke is proposing that new systems should be 'up and running' by April 1991. Mr Field and his colleagues expressed 'grave doubts about the practicality of this timetable.'

When Clarke finally announced the government's response to the Griffiths Report on Community Care - eighteen months after its publication - there were signs of a victory for common sense. Thatcher had obviously been forced to concede that local authorities are the best placed organisations to hold the budget for the provision of a comprehensive range of services for those needing long term care.

The real question now is going to be the need for adequate funding. It will not come easily from this government.

Textile workers point out that imports threaten their industry

DURING May 1989, members of the TGWU Textile Group carried out a survey of labels and source of origin of textile and clothing goods sold by Marks and Spencer. The results were staggering in that Marks and Spencer, a household name for quality and the use of best-quality British-produced materials, was shown to be using up to 35% imported textile and clothing products.

The furor which followed has resulted in Marks and Spencer reiterating assurances of their commitment to buying British produced goods whenever possible. A situation to be monitored closely by TGWU Textile members.

With import penetration of the British textile market now in excess of 70% - resulting

in over 3.3 billions being added to Britain's balance of payment crisis, Textile workers are to extend the campaign.

Throughout the remainder of July and August, all 189 branches of the TGWU Textile Group will be surveying major high street stores selling clothing and textile products. These will include: Littlewoods, Storehouse Group, Mothercare, BHS, House of Fraser, Burton's, Debenhams, C&A. Going on past evidence, the managing directors of these companies had best be preparing their responses and defences now to letters bound to be winging their way from the TGWU.

The question is simple: why are companies, recognised as household names with



Photo: The Worker

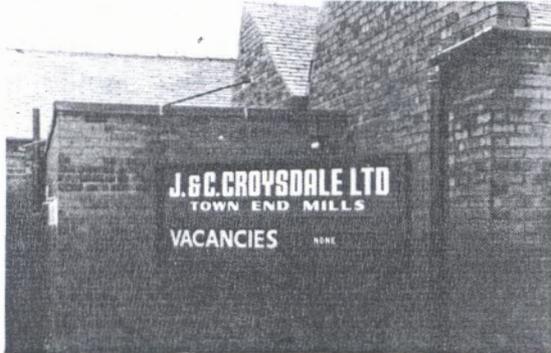
a recognition of quality, undermining the best clothing and textile goods in the world (British) by selling inferior imports?

The campaign against imports has several objectives. It raises the consciousness of those directly involved in the textile industries as to the future of their industries and their survival. It involves all members and workers in textiles - employing nearly 500,000 people. It involves the public - why should they suffer inferior quality goods just to boost the profits of various multi-national companies? It heightens public awareness of the importance of the textile industries to the economy of Britain, and hence the importance of industry as the cornerstone

of Britain's prosperity - past and future.

It is one of few campaigns in Britain at present highlighting the importance of manufacturing industry. Much is talked of the damage likely from the 1992 EEC Single Market; here is a campaign actually practically challenging that threat. It raises the issue of manufacturing industry as a General Election issue - especially in the 230 parliamentary seats which have textile workers employed within their boundaries. Further, the TGWU Textile Group has still reserved its position over future picketing of high street shops.

Examine the shirt label on your back - the starting point for the fight for textiles is as simple as that.



No vacancies at Croysdale.

Photo: The Worker

NALGO BALLOT INCREASES PRESSURE

WORKERS in town halls are preparing to strike indefinitely in key departments. This week 25,000 are to be balloted.

Departments concerned with poll tax registration, finance, rent collecting, and computers are almost certain to be stopped. This will hit the employers at minimum inconvenience to the public. NALGO is applying workable tactics.

All of the union's 500,000 local government employees will

be balloted on one day strikes in September in support of the claim for more pay without the strings tied to the employers' proposals so far.

Up to this week, one, two and three day national strikes in recent weeks have enjoyed about 90% membership support.

The tactic of selective strikes is adroit of the national leadership. It avoids the empty posture of a national all-out

indefinite strike call which those calling for such intend as a stick with which to beat 'union bureaucrats' when the inevitable failure of members to respond occurs. The employers would love that, so NALGO isn't going to give it to them.

The 25,000 key workers who would be on indefinite strike would receive full pay throughout the action, with members elsewhere rallying around in support.

Panorama accuses Westminster's Lady Porter

PANORAMA on 19 July alleged that the Conservatives on Westminster Council 'misused ratepayers' money for political purposes'. It is alleged that the Council, under Lady Porter's leadership, spent millions of pounds, kept itself in power, and may therefore have acted illegally.

There are two sets of allegations. The first is that the Council sought to use officer time for political purposes. It was alleged that Lady Porter illegally asked the Council's press officer to assist in the 1986 Conservative local election campaign. It was also alleged that she was seeking to involve local government officers in the run-up to the 1990 local elections. A legal expert, James Goudie QC, stated that there was a 'strong prima facie case that some Conservative Councillors are guilty of wilful misconduct'.

Gerrymandering

The second allegation is that Westminster Council's housing policy 'amounts to gerrymandering'. The Council allegedly sought to build up the Conservative vote by increasing the number of likely Conservative voters in eight key marginal wards. In these wards, 81% of all empty properties were designated for sale; only 36% in the other wards.

'Targeting' wards is illegal. James Goudie stated that in his opinion 'an utterly unlawful policy continued as the driving

force'.

Shirley Porter denies the allegations made by political opponents to Panorama, claiming 'political bias' by the program makers. A political row about BBC standards looks likely.

Last year the district auditor examined the small print of documents relating to the sale of three cemeteries by Westminster Council to a Panamanian registered company for 5p each. In total the cemeteries are worth £5 million

although the company has offered to sell them back to the council for £2.5 million, provided they can use the land for 'development'. It is this which has dogged Westminster Council and caused outrage among relatives and ratepayers generally, since when the council's policies have come under close scrutiny.

Shirley Porter's high profile leadership has now attracted the unwelcome attention of the media. Whose fault is that?

Judge defends academic freedom

THATCHER is in deep trouble...even the judges are sniping at her policies. In a remarkably candid judgment last week Lord Justice Dillon said the government's introduction of market forces to higher education was a threat to academic freedom.

The Education Reform Act has removed the right to job tenure for newly employed or promoted academic staff. When Aston University announced a plan to make 23 engineering staff redundant the AUT organised protest action and appealed to the court on behalf of their members.

Not even in their widest dreams could they have anticipated the vitriolic nature of the Lord Justice's response. He said, 'It was easy to remember how academic staff had been treated by the authorities in Nazi Germany. In

pursuit of 'managerial interests' the old priorities and the old memories are forgotten...'

The court granted the lecturers the right of appeal against the sackings... it's round one to them.

* IN BRIEF

IN THE year 1988-89, a total of 75,230 domestic electricity consumers were disconnected. When the electricity supply industry is sold to private interests, prices we know are going to go up and up, which will mean still more disconnections. But consider this: housing is classed as uninhabitable if there is no running water. When water is sold off, again with prices set to rise, surely many people will have their water supply cut off because of non-payment of bills. Will they also have to be re-housed?

Record crowds on the buses

COULD IT BE that when Tebitt told us to get on our bikes and look for non-existent jobs, he was not, as we supposed, cynically adding insult to injury? Having inside information about future government plans for public transport, was he, perchance, only concerned for our safety?

Somebody certainly should have been. Since deregulation standards have nose-dived. Many off-peak and unprofitable services have been axed altogether. Waiting times have increased dramatically, there have been fare rises, and safety considerations have taken a back seat. The emphasis is now not on providing a decent transport service, but on making a quick profit at any cost.

In Nottingham recently police stopped a bus for being overcrowded. The double decker with a capacity of 80 was found to be carrying a staggering 130 passengers (and five babies and three dogs)! Charges are due to be brought under Public Service Vehicle Regulations.

Newark

In Newark, the bus company W Gash and Sons, founded in 1921, ceased operation after losing its licence. Traffic Commissioners described the condition of its vehicles as 'appalling' and 'a danger on the roads'. Only 4 out of a fleet of 35 buses tested passed. 16 had to be withdrawn immediately after faults were found with brakes, steering, suspension, body-work, controls, engines and lights.

Since deregulation, Gash's had been Newark's largest carrier. The Chairman of Yorkshire Traction Company, which had bought out Gash in March 88 said, in the company's defence: 'We are a reputable organisation. We really did not know what we had when we bought Gash.'

Well - the travelling public knows what it's got with deregulation... a bad deal!