



SAVING BRITAIN

Editorial

LIKE any other leading politician about to visit another country, Mikhail Gorbachev, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet, will have been briefed on what to expect. Facts of British economic, political, social and cultural life will have been covered comprehensively, but in summary form, the better to appreciate Britain in the mid-1980's. We can only speculate on what a straight-to-the-point summary might contain;

- * Britain's capitalist economy sinks deeper into long term crisis. They are destroying their own manufacturing industry. The latest confidential report from the National Economic Development Organisation (Neddy) reveals the effects of long term lack of investment in the economic infrastructure - roads, railways, sewers, which provides further evidence of de-industrialisation.

- * North Sea oil is still being squandered. A major opportunity to invest revenue in the economy is being thrown away. Oil revenue funds reactionary policies in Britain.

- * The balance of trade figures are dreadful. In 1983, for the first time in 20 years of their history, Britain began to import more manufactured goods than it exported. This trend has worsened for them. Birmingham, for example, played a major part in the industrial revolution helping to acquire for Britain the label 'workshop of the world'. Two months ago, Birmingham applied for assisted area status; this is very significant.

- * The pound sterling continues its inexorable fall in value. Since March it has lost one fifth of its value. The mass media play this down, but it is an index of the industrial decline under Thatcher.

- * Politics reflects the dire state of the economy. The Thatcher government grows weaker despite a majority in the commons. Unrest among her MP's on a number of issues; she is losing her grip. An expected sympathy vote in their 25th safest seat of Enfield Southgate showed little sympathy, for while winning the by-election their candidate lost 11,000 votes on the general election only 18 months ago.

- * British society is under great strain. Mass unemployment ruins many lives when you count the families affected. Drug addiction rates are soaring. Graffiti seen recently in London and scrubbed out by the authorities read 'Heroin: Thatcher's answer to unemployment'. Mr Healey talks of 'sado-monataram' rearing the social fabric, and sadly there is much evidence for that. One in eight people now rely on supplementary benefit (it was one in 33 in 1948).

- * The brave British miners; the whole world knows about their struggle, the most profound working class struggle in Britain since 1800 when unions fought for life. Their fight for a future in work, comes to grips with the economic, political, social and cultural problems facing the whole working class. Many workers realise that, many workers do not. 1985 will be interesting, but it will need an active interest. There is much that is good in Britain, but the country is being destroyed by capitalism.

TACTICS OF FAILURE

STAND with Yorkshire miners behind a police cordon at 4.45 am as a half empty scab wagon roars through the pit gates and the talk is of Thatcher's desperation as she racks her brains to dream up new schemes to break the union.

Shifting bonus deadlines, pressing wage rises, paying a dozen police for every scab to clock on, massive newspaper ads to encourage scabs, docking benefits ('how can you take a pound off now?'). These are all the actions of a loser and the lads know it.

Pickets quote examples of

school leavers on the NCB jobs waiting list for years being written to with a firm offer of work if they are willing to cross picket lines. Before the strike, miners were warned that anyone working a three day week was not worth employing. Now anyone who comes back on a Friday is a hero, paid to play cards all day.

No, they are not going back on NCB terms and Thatcher's proclamation of victory at bribing 2 or 3 per cent to break ranks after 9 months and £1 billion clearly indicates that they won't need to.



◀CHRISTMAS approaches in the pit village of Armethorpe where striking miners are suffering hardship but stay as solid as ever. Armethorpe is the scene of the South African style police rampage of August 22 and of intimidatory attacks on the homes of striking miners (no arrests!).

The local NUM branch has strength enough to continue for as long as it is necessary. The small number of scabs ("They've destroyed their own lives") includes only two face workers, one of whom has just been sacked for stealing NCB property!

They warmly respond to the solidarity shown to them in financial terms by other workers, but the best Christmas bonus to reward them in their magnificent struggle would be to open up those other fronts against Thatcher that would swiftly end the need for such sacrifices in villages like Armethorpe.

Photo.: The Worker.

The law is an asset stripper

THE USE of the law as a class weapon against the miners has become more and more blatant. It has also made the NCB and the government look more and more foolish.

The sequestration of the NUM's assets, declared several weeks ago, is far from conclusive - or even begun! Price Waterhouse were named as the firm to hunt down the union's assets in a flurry of publicity. All went quiet for a while before the announcement that some money had been found, a grand total of £8000!

Then the receiver, one Herbert Brewer, was appointed. By this time bank accounts in Dublin, New York and Luxembourg had been discovered.

Shut in his face

But the banks and courts in these countries have not been over-keen to follow instructions from Downing Street. International lawyers have been working overtime advising them. Herbert Brewer just had the door shut in his face, and gave up without having got his hands on a single penny, not even to repay his expenses.

Meanwhile the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, has made a mockery of his 'independent' position by handing out money to Price Waterhouse to carry on tracking down the money. Not, of course, because the firm is poverty-stricken, or indeed had even asked for money. No, the rumour is that Price Waterhouse are considering getting out of the whole affair, believing they were more likely to lose money than make it.

So the government was on the verge of losing a sequestrator as well as a receiver. All this in the same week that MacGregor openly supported privatisation of our collieries, making a further mockery of claims that the coal industry is safe under Thatcher.

NEXT ISSUE
No. 48 will be published on
31 December 1984. Seasons
greetings to all our readers.

Scottish teachers step up campaign for education

TEACHERS in the Educational Institute of Scotland are stepping up their action to improve salaries and conditions of service. A series of one day strikes in various regions of Scotland has proved very successful with the turnout over 80%.

At a rally in Dunfermline, the general secretary of the EIS, John Pollock, stated that teachers were now determined to make a stand where their previous unwillingness to take action had made them easy victims to erosion of salaries and conditions. He challenged the Secretary of State for Scotland, Younger, to stop damaging children's education.

Younger has announced his rejection of this with his expected refusal of an independent pay review and his presentation of a package already rejected by teachers in England and Wales.

The package involves further deterioration in conditions of service with voluntary duties to be made compulsory. There is no progress on salaries with Younger claiming that he will not sign a 'blank cheque' for teachers. If he believes that a review would give such increases then he admits his disgraceful treatment of Scottish teachers in the past, and he has admitted as much in an interview on the BBC programme 'Reporting Scotland'.

The EIS has been holding a ballot on escalating the current industrial action and this latest instance of Younger's contempt will only serve to further unite teachers. Younger has yet to understand that Scottish teachers are no longer prepared to listen to excuses. Rather they have come to realise that a future for education in Scotland depends on a different sort of sacrifice.

Longer working hours threaten and unites shop workers

HABITAT of Tottenham Court Road, in London's West End, opened in defiance of the law on Sunday 9th December.

The staff there are paid below the "Decency Threshold" set by the EEC, and the government is supposed to ensure (under the European Social Charter) that workers in the UK do not fall behind that amount.

Habitat, of course, is owned by the same person who owns Heals, Now, Mothercare, and Richard Shops. That person is Sir Terence Conran, an avid Thatcher supporter.

The clamour by the authorities to bring the company to account

for these two misdemeanours has, so far, not been brought to the attention of either the workforce or the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW). In fact there has been a deafening silence.

ON a third count, the company is also guilty of intimidation. When such badly paid workers are "offered" an extra day's work, in a non-union store, with a reputation for campaigning for Sunday Trading, and with Christmas so close, the fear of being the only "non-volunteer" and the lack of hard cash become

One in four go hungry in ... Chicago

IN THE PAST month the British government has decided that we can be shown pictures of starving Ethiopians. The subject has been treated in a characteristically superficial way, the causes of the famine have not been examined and we have been exhorted to make individual financial contributions as a solution to the problem. It cannot be an accident that this famine which has been going on for some time was discovered at this point of the miners' strike when food collections are being made in every town in Britain.

It is not only the Thatcher government that wants to concentrate on famine in Ethiopia. The USA has described itself as "leading" the relief effort to Ethiopia. It was recently outraged that the Roman Catholic bishops had called for more jobs and higher minimum wage levels for US citizens. It was deemed necessary to put the government's position in an editorial in the Wall Street Journal: "Modern capitalism is intended to serve the unique goals and needs of individuals ... (for) upward mobility ... And the specific means to all these different personal goals is the individual freedom that capitalism provides in greater measure than any other system of economic organization."

Freedom to starve

In Chicago the individual freedom provided by capitalism is hunger. One in four Chicagoans go hungry. The task force set up by the Mayor reports "887,929 persons are at risk of hunger in Chicagoans. This number equals 29.5% of the city's population."

A picture which will not be shown on British TV is that of hundreds of Chicagoans queuing for food at one of the 400 pantries, soup kitchens or shelters in the city. The number of public and private food banks has tripled in the past three years. In 1982 the city distributed 1,000 boxes of canned goods a month. The monthly total is now 20,000 and rising.

Another picture that we will not see is that of the health problems associated with hunger. Admissions to Cook County Hospital for symptoms of malnutrition have increased 24% since last year. The hospital also reported 223 new cases of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1983. Infant mortality is a horrific 60% above the national average. This figure reflects the effects of chronic undernourishment.

The economic organisation of Capitalism so praised by the Wall Street Journal has no solution to hunger, it creates it. This is the answer to the Mayor of Chicago's question "how can the richest country on earth allow this to happen to its people."

• Prior to revolution in China in '45 famine was a regular occurrence. Communism provided the collective solution to hunger.

Tory councils expose the bus route sell-off

TWO RECENTLY commissioned studies on the effects of bus service privatisation shoot a large hole through the remnants of the government's claim that taxpayers' money will be saved.

In advance of the forthcoming bill to deregulate bus services, Hertfordshire and Plymouth councils, both Conservative controlled, have undertaken a detailed report on the likely outcome of privatisation.

Hertfordshire, with its urban south and rural north has found that to save £1 million on

The paper's dear so now they're saying slates are better!

ESSEX County Council is considering, on the grounds of economy, bringing back slates to schools. In 1920, schools in the North East, and elsewhere, always used slates. They had their advantages, for each day started afresh and yesterday's errors were gone.

Slates were valuable and usually cherished; girls brought dolly-bags to school holding damp sponges, boys brought rags. To spit on a slate and

rub out with a sleeve was criminal. Slates gave a shape and measure to lessons. There were one-slate, two-slate and even three-slate compositions and a slate of correct sums was hung on a hook on the wall.

One class, 3A, nine year olds, had a good reputation as regards slates. They were receiving an 18th-century classical education. The Bible, Shakespeare and the "100 Best Poems in the English

Language" were their sources. Every child had applied for a library ticket by their fifth birthday and the library was only forty minutes walk away from home.

The Headmistress had two passions in life, the Romans and "the bones of our language" which meant "subject and predicate, adverbial clauses, never splitting an infinitive, avoiding the vocative used only by God and the King". She grieved that we

did not learn Latin so we could never understand the beauty of language. All that was written on the slates so the elegant thin strokes up, thick down with long loops had to be abandoned for lack of space and the ugly "teachers' script" came into being. Similarly, the map of Australia was popular because it fitted into a slate, as did the coastline from Berwick to Durham. The rest of the world was ignored as not fitting the slate.

A strange plague ravaged the children of the district - scarlet fever. Sufferers were put in isolation hospitals, their library books were burnt and sheets steeped in carbolic were hung in the houses.

Death-knell

The disease came and went mysteriously but it was the death-knell for slates. The school doctor, in a starched white coat, told us about Pasteur and bacteria and she implied that spitting on a slate was tantamount to murdering your neighbour.

So in came paper and the abominable steel nibs and liquid ink that ensured misery for generations of probationary teachers. The paper was of poor quality and porous so that the ink ran.

Of course it was not known till long afterwards, that the demise of the slate was as a result of closing the Welsh slate quarries, as houses were no longer being built. And because the USA had started on its long road of despoiling its land and was flooding Europe with cheap paper-pulp.



A classroom in 1908

Government to tax knowledge

THE GOVERNMENT has acknowledged that it is examining proposals to remove the zero-rated status of books and other publications, and to impose a positive rate of Value Added Tax, almost certainly at 15%

Most book-buyers would have to pay at least 15% - 20% more for books, because of the cost of handling the new tax and reduced print orders resulting from lower sales.

Book sales react sharply to price increases, so fewer books will be bought. The viability of books without mass sales will be destroyed.

School books

School book purchases have fallen by at least 16% - allowing for inflation - according to Government figures. Already parents are buying one-third of all books used by pupils. Higher prices will mean still fewer books. VAT does not distinguish between rich and poor so the children with less well-off parents will suffer most.

Public and school libraries may get the tax back, but even these will have to face higher prices and choice will be diminished.

Equally certainly, the already prohibitive cost of printed material will increase by even more than 15% as publishers, who thrive on low wages and high profits, drive up prices as happened with all VAT hikes.

It is not possible, nor desirable, to draw a distinction between "educational" and "leisure" books. All books should be exempt from VAT, in line with current practice

in most of the rest of the world.

There are, of course, wider undesirable consequences of a tax on reading. The effects on the dissemination of research, on universities, on the viability of small bookshops, on the publishing industry's contribution to Britain's overseas trade, and on employment prospects throughout the print and book distributing trades.

The Educational Publishers' Council is launching a campaign against VAT on books. NO TAX ON READING.

Londoners denounce Thatcher

LONDONERS Kick out Thatcher was the subject of a well attended public meeting held at Walthamstow on Friday 16 November - the same evening that London Transport announced fares increases

The main speaker first outlined the historical reasons why Thatcher hates London. For two centuries it has

had a working population with a diversity of manufacturing skills and a history of struggle.

The speaker went on to say that "she wants 33 villages (boroughs) to be set-up away from the collective GLC outlook. This will then enable the destructive process to proceed easier". The alleged transfer of power from the GLC to local boroughs is a hoax.

The effects in Walthamstow since 1979 of a philosophy of an "I am all right Jack", approach to life were also looked at. All local industries have been in absolute decline - timber, furniture manufacture, clothing and light engineering. Currently there were over 11,000 people unemployed in the Borough. It is the same story throughout Britain, whether it be North or South.

We cannot be despondent about the challenge we face. The question of the GLC in the coming months offers the possibility of opening the badly needed second front directly opposed to Thatcher.

Stripping the UK's assets

AMERSHAM, Cable and Wireless, Jaguar, British Telecom - under Thatcher the ruthless privatisation of our assets goes on and on. This latest theft merely reiterates the fact that this government intends to destroy all public ownership in Britain. So hateful to Thatcher is the thought of any state-owned assets, that she will stop at nothing in her bid for all out privatisation.

British Telecom shares are now worth an overwhelming £1.3 billion more than they were sold for! This selling off of our assets at ridiculously low prices has been repeated often in the last few years. British Aerospace sold to private investors for £150 million - now worth £375 million. The British taxpayer has lost £225 million on that little deal. Amersham International - it is estimated that the taxpayers' loss at present share prices is £100 million. In July, Jaguar was sold off at 165p a share. They now realise 220p, another loss of £99 million to the taxpayer.

But it is not just the money we are losing. The irrevocable damage done by privatisation reaches far beyond any mere monetary consideration. Think of the harm done by the selling off in the last five years of 750,000 council homes. The privatisation of school meals, hospital ancillary work, refuse collection, all bring public sector services to a new

So obsessed is Thatcher with the need to purge Britain of all things public that she will stop at nothing. It remains for us to ensure that there will be, in our hands, everything that rightfully belongs to us.

Accountants attack Coal Board on 'loss-making' pits

AN ARTICLE due to appear in the Journal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in January accuses the coal board of "a mine of misinformation" regarding its pit closure programme. While any of the usual accounting methods employed in British industry would fail to consider the real issues involved in whether or not a pit should close, it is clear from the facts revealed by the article that the NCB is using inaccurate accounting to justify closures.

No sensible basis

The method used by the NCB is based largely on a straightforward profit and loss account for each pit. The article states that this "does not provide a sensible basis for pit closures". The coal board's methods make no allowance for the costs of blending coals from different pits or of pricing arrangement with other nationalised industries. Setting production targets which difficult-to-work pits cannot meet is also criticised as a means of preparing pits for closure. In addition, the NCB

takes no account of costs which continue to be incurred after closure because of such things as subsidence.

Backward looking

The accounting method used is historic (backward-looking) and fails to consider future costs. An example is given of the costs presented by the NCB for the Cortonwood pit. According to them, receipts per ton of coal were £44.30 and costs £50.50, giving a net loss of £6.20, and justifying the closure of the pit. A more accurate cost assessment shows that 25% of the costs given by the NCB would not be avoided by closure, so a realistic figure for the costs would be £38.80, a net gain to the coal board of £5.50.

Report delayed

The article has been delayed because of protests by the NCB. Clearly, even without taking any sensible account of the social cost involved in pit closures, there is now ample evidence that the coal board is arranging the accounts to suit the wishes of its political masters.

Mine Operating System computes more unemployment

IN THE spirit of true investigative journalism, the 28 November Channel 4 programme Diverse Reports defied Thatcher's attempts to control the media and told the truth about the Government's vision of the future of Britain's coalmining industry.

The programme revealed the NCB's newest, and most dangerous, weapon - MINOS (Mine Operating System). Without union consultation or consent, the NCB have been

stealthily introducing computer systems into British coalmines - systems which are assiduously taking over miners' jobs and threaten the existence of the entire industry. In 'super pits' like Selby, the injection of new technology has massively raised production but at the expense of hundreds of jobs.

The destruction doesn't end at Selby. While the NCB are

pouring millions of pounds into computerising the central coalfield, they are simultaneously starving other areas like South Wales of any investment. Coal reserves estimated at 7½ billion tonnes in South Wales are and have been declared by the NCB to be 'uneconomic'.

Only the central coalfields will remain - and they will be exhausted within 30-50 years. Meanwhile millions of tonnes of coal will be sterilised as other areas are closed, fast to become unreachable.

Could it be that Thatcher plans to close down the entire coal industry - revealing capital's determination to ensure that Britain's manufacturing industry is killed - never to revive? And in the process, thousands of jobs would be destroyed along with skill and communities as the government seek to break the working class in Britain.

Essex workers support miners at public meeting of CPB(ML)

THE MINERS' strike is not merely industrial nor about crosses on ballot forms. The miners have upped the ante for the working class - now the issue is power and who governs Britain. That was the message from a public meeting held by the Communist Party of Britain (ML) in Pitsea, Essex.

Speakers outlined Thatcher's plan for the future of British coalmining, starved of investment with mass unemployment seriously undermining the strength of the NUM. The blueprints had been laid with British Steel and shipbuilding, but now Thatcher has more than met her match. In her desperation her violence knows no bounds - thousands of miners have been injured, 7 have been killed, families starve and the unemployed despair (over half of all male suicides are unemployed). Yet the miners are not cowed, and their resolve hardens daily. In their battle to overturn Thatcher's plans, which must result in her removal from

power, they are the true peace movement, for with Thatcher out we can all look forward to a more peaceful and secure future.

A shop steward from Thurrock power station spoke of their resolve to continue to support the miners and the fact that fellow workers at Sizewell nuclear power station were prepared to take action if Thurrock Workers were disciplined. He also spoke of their contempt for the men at Tilbury who continue to "burn anything".

A teacher spoke of her school's weekly contributions of money, food, etc, but more importantly, of her school's stand against closure.

The chairman ended the meeting by saying that the miners had been out for too long to fail. The audience had given the evidence of their support, the fight on all fronts against Thatcher. With that spirit abroad in the working class we can look forward to a peaceful and happy New Year - a New Year of struggle.

Fight to retain Rivermead Rehabilitation

STAFF at Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre in Oxford, at a meeting last week, gave their backing to picketing of the gate, to deter contractors sent in by the Health Authority to make alterations as part of a plan to cut the number of beds at the centre. The Authority claims its proposed cut of ten beds will fund recent pay awards and will be temporary, but there were moves to close the centre two years ago.

Rivermead is one of the two leading rehabilitation centres in the country for people with central nervous system damage. Treatment is often long term, and expensive - it is also successful in regaining speech and limb use for people who might fail to recover without the specialised help available here.

From the Health Authority's angle it is a target because of the high running and staff costs, because people are sent from other regions for treatment, and because Rivermead occupies a prime site on the outskirts of Oxford which the Authority may expect to make a lot of money on.

One woman on the picket on Monday said her father's life had been made liveable after a stroke thanks to a stay at Rivermead. Under the latest attack, people like her father would be barred - because he came from outside the region.

The picket mounted by members of the "Who Cares?" campaign against cuts in the health services, the Oxford JTUC and local people, received much public support in the form of hooting and thumbs-up from passers-by on their way to work.

On the first two mornings, the contractors did not try to come into Rivermead. Their arrival at 10.00am on the third morning, when a token picket only remained, signalled a

Below: a crippled shoemaker marching to London during a strike in 1905. There was no National Health Service then, and if Rivermead rehabilitation and others are cut, there may be none in the future...

Can we let go the gains of the past?



renewed mobilisation and stepping up of the picketing which will be kept going till Christmas and beyond if necessary.

Aid cut spurs on de-industrialisation

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by the Industry Minister of a £300 million cut in the regional aid programme has a significance beyond a mere fiscal reduction. It reveals clearly that there is now no aid policy which has at its basis any degree of attempt to regenerate economic and industrial activity.

The new programme accepts the inevitability of social upheaval produced by de-industrialisation and offers a few crumbs in cash to ameliorate its worst effects. The rate of capital grant has been cut and the remaining allocation has an upper limit of £10,000 of investment per job; the previous scheme

required at least £35,000. All major industrial ventures are hence excluded, leaving service industries and football pools to provide what employment there will be.

Over the past 25 years successive governments have offered massive inducements to willing employers with our money. In the 1970s Ford Engine Plant required £150 million aid towards its total cost of £225 million and provided 2,000 jobs. Even this is now abandoned.

Significantly, the West Midlands will receive aid for the first time - a sop to the 347,500 on the dole;

14,666 of whom are school leavers. A century ago Joseph Chamberlain described Birmingham as being able to produce everything from a pin to a battleship. Now 16% of its workforce is unemployed and less than one third of those remaining are in what passes for manufacture.

Industrial capital and the surplus generated by production is the life blood of the system. Now the class enemy has destroyed its own base and supply lines. To assault the weak and vulnerable by such programmes is a sign of desperation; an inability to face the rising vanguard.

Underfunding threatens universities

BRITAIN's salvation, via the appearance of the 'sunrise' industries, is becoming an increasingly more difficult pill to swallow. The joke of prosperity through non-production is sickening. What nonsense!

Of more serious concern is the lack of development of real skills. The Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) which funds Alvey (The name of the British effort to develop next generation computers) reported to a government 'watchdog' on the dire state of affairs in British universities.

Basically, when a research grant is given to a university department from the SERC or any other body, it is calculated on the basis that University Grants Committee (UGC) funds cover the basic overheads such as staff salaries, building rent and rates, and other basic necessities. It is therefore a 'top-up' grant. Under rules

governing Alvey, (and Esprit, its European equivalent) it is prevented from buying or renting buildings on behalf of the universities to enable them to carry out the research.

Since 1981, the UGC has suffered enormous cutbacks in funding. This so called investment in future skills then, is drained of its life blood at conception. So the

computer industry itself sees it can gain little from Thatcher. But now the solution is provided: a private information technology university.

Is this a quirk of fate or one more step in Thatcher's plan to rob the British working class of its hard-won public education system? You don't need a research grant to work out the answer!

Nottingham council attacks government

NOTTINGHAM City Council is preparing to take the government to court as the row grows over a directive to release land for building in an area of the city. A judicial review is being sought ordering Environment Minister Patrick Jenkin to justify his directive.

The row began when Jenkin ordered the City Council to release 17.5 acres of building

land for sale to private bidders. The land was earmarked for rehousing thousands of people on waiting lists and to provide new homes for the tenants of condemned flats. More warden-aided flats were also to be built to accommodate the elderly on waiting lists.

The City Council now hopes that with the support of the people, it can force the government to retract its order.

NUM support: Exeter to Hull

"AS SURE as night follows day, Thatcher will lead this nation to fascism if she is allowed to do so."

With these words, South Wales Area NUM vice-president Terry Thomas drew the loudest applause of the night at a rally organised by Exeter and District Trades Union Council on December 10.

Reflecting on the strike so far, Thomas also said: "When they come to write the history of our dispute, some will begin with March 1984 when the strike started. Others will look back to November 1983 with the outset of the overtime ban. Well I personally would start with May 1979 when Thatcher was elected to Westminster."

destroy anything

"Her government had a list of priorities. To destroy anything publicly owned; to destroy trade unions; and to take revenge on the miners for 1972 and 1974."

"The fact that the Trade Union movement failed to support workers in ASLEF, the NGA and at GCHQ was an encouragement to the government."

"Some said that the miners wouldn't fight and that the young especially would draw back. The last 10 months have destroyed that myth. I'm proud of the present generation of young miners."

responsibility for all

"Without the women, too, this strike would have collapsed months ago. But there is a responsibility for all active in the trade union and labour movement. We are in temporary

charge of a movement built on generations of struggle. We don't have the right to sell it short and hand it over to Thatcher, when our fathers and grandfathers spilt blood to create it. Our job is to organise, lead and build not surrender!"

Rodney Bickerstaffe, General Secretary of NUPE, also called for a bigger and better response from the trade union movement.

"There are millions of excuses if you don't want to stand up and be counted. But it's about dignity and there are plenty of people who do and will fight."

"Thatcher brooks no opposition but we have an underground movement here - the NUM. I'm convinced that at some point the miners will win and the government will be rubbed in the dirt for what it is."

clear message

The message of the meeting was clear and well summed up by the two banners on the stage. The Trades Council's says 'unity is strength' and

the NUM's Blaenau Gwent Lodge's 'united we stand - divided we fall'. Fine words that must be acted on.

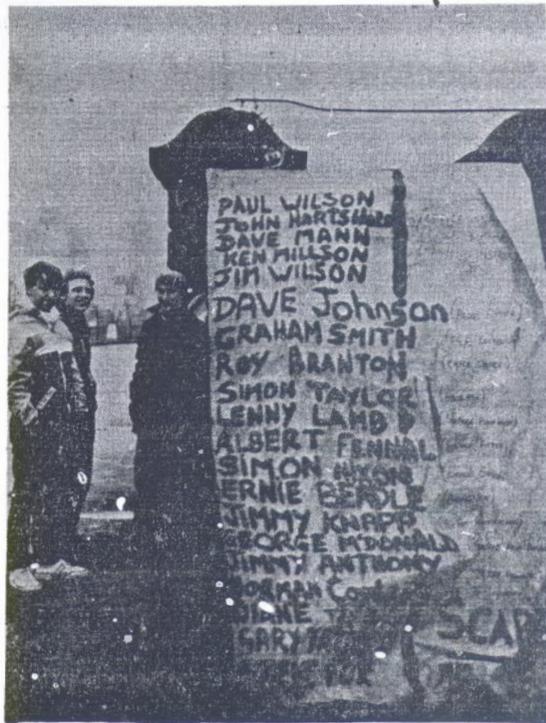
Daily collections

THE HULL and district TUC Miners Support Committee, twinned with three Castleford pits has raised over £22,000 from workplace, pub, and street collections to provide a regular order of food and money for the Castleford womens group.

The money from workplaces is collected regularly by miners commuting daily to Hull, visiting shop stewards and speaking at many local meetings.

The pub and street collections are done twice a week under licence from the city council by local people, from all sections of the Labour movement under the umbrella of the support committee.

Recently, large donations have been forthcoming from local strike funds that have lain dormant from past disputes to ensure there is a children's party and a better Christmas for the Castleford families.



The scab list at Armethorpe, South Yorks. Photo: The Worker.

NO SCABS PICKED

FURTHER proof of the lack of any sort of comradeship among scabs came with recent NUM pit level elections. At the annual general meeting of the Lea Hall Colliery in Staffordshire, striking miners won all the posts that were up for election. A remarkable feat considering that almost 90 per cent of the workers are scabs.

Morning picket at Lea Hall. Photo: John Harris IFL.

Attempts to set up local branches of the National Working Miners committee have also met with apathy and rejection by the majority of the scabs. It is hardly surprising that these people show so little support for each other given that their whole stance is one of "I'm all right Jack - sod the rest of you." Such crass self-centredness will always shrink from collective responsibility. To them, trade unionism is a foreign language.

Shop workers -contd.

overbearing factors in their decision to comply. Subsequently Habitat prepared to open with an "oversubscription" of volunteers.

However, all was not as the company wished. The advertised opening time of 12 noon came and went. Nothing happened. More importantly, snappers and workers met a picket of over 60 USDAW members armed with placards, banners and leaflets stating the union's case. Habitat eventually opened at 12.35pm - a moral and concrete victory to USDAW.

One worker, who refused to cross the picket line, and has since applied to join the union along with several colleagues, told The Worker that staff had been called to a meeting during the week... and told not to talk to the pickets, not to talk to the press, and, if necessary, to enter by another door, in order to avoid any attention.

John Fahy, USDAW Area Organiser, said of the picket: "It has brought together a whole number of union members from stores throughout the West End; it has high-lighted their resolve to fight the government's proposals on the deregulation of shopping hours, and it has high-lighted the fact that employers can break the law when it suits them." Or as one Habitat worker said: "It's not the law they're frightened of, it's us."

The police presence outside Habitat was not to stop the store opening illegally, but rather to control the pickets. So, it would appear that if you're rich-enough to be in contempt of the law, you can trade, and by doing so collect monev. in order to pay the paltry fine you may receive



The NUT in Wales and elsewhere in the country, along with the EIS in Scotland, has prepared the ground for the sharpening class war with Thatcher. Edwards, Secretary of State for Wales, won't meet parents; Joseph can't talk to his own class - let along ours.

BLOOD

THE NATIONAL Union of Students (NUS) tasted blood with the successful campaign to thwart Keith Joseph's plans for increased parental contributions to student grants. A 'limited reversal' only however. There is still much to fight against and for.

Fortunately the latterly quiescent NUS has found its teeth and voice once again. Its conference in Blackpool was the springboard for further action. Student leaders are looking for support for a programme of protest and disruption against falling living standards students are having to face.

The remnants of Joseph's plans will still mean an increase in contributions for parents earning between £13,000 and £19,000 after certain allowances for mortgages and pensions. The minimum grant award is still lost and the means test - a thing abhorrent to the NUS - has been worsened.

Further, the debate in government circles has once more enlarged to encompass the idea of student loans. A somewhat frightening concept in an era of unemployment such as that inflicted on Britain today. A large percentage of graduates are unable to get a job after their degrees are awarded.

NUS plans include a rent strike. This financial tool is particularly sharp and would very quickly seriously affect University finances. In addition the students are seeking an alliance with parents. Roughly half of all students due a cash 'top-up' to their grants from their parents receive nothing.

S'PORT

IN A DISPLAY of their continuing support for the NUM's struggle against Thatcher, teachers from the Wandsworth branch of the NUT are visiting Aylesham, Kent, this weekend. Rugby, football and netball matches have been arranged between the teachers and the Kent miners and their wives. The teachers are taking with them toys and food as gifts for the miner's families which have been collected by their school staffs.

cash from schools

A number of Wandsworth secondary schools have celebrated the raising of £1000 for the miners and their families. One school has almost raised £2000. Primary schools have also given strong support to the miners struggle.

BAFFLED, ENRAGED BY THATCHER'S BRITAIN?

STUDY MARXISM AND GET YOUR BEARINGS!

The CPBML conducts study classes in most parts of the country. If you agree with the approach taken in The Worker and would like a chance to learn more through study and discussion, tell your local Worker seller or write to:

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155 Fortess Road
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Nurseries win lifts campaign

HUNDREDS of parents, teachers and trades unionists demonstrated in Mold, Clwyd, last week against £1.6 million cuts in education. They succeeded in saving nursery education in the county which was due for total abolition.

This was just the latest in a series of joint actions taken by teachers and parents throughout Wales. It demonstrates Thatcher and the embattled Joseph that the disaffection on the back benches is just the tip of the iceberg.

In Mid-Glamorgan 300 teaching jobs were threatened along with all nursery education. After the NUT countered with proposals for action, supported by parents, the threat was lifted for a year. Rural Powys backed off after 80% of NUT members showed themselves to be in favour of industrial action.

West Glamorgan has tried the hard-nosed managerial approach but, like the NCB, in the area, has only succeeded in boosting morale. NUT members whose back pay (due last April) has been delayed until the end of this month, are moving from 'no goodwill' to 'no cover' action to 'unfreeze' vacancies and restore supply teachers.

Teachers' action in the summer pay campaign, far from destroying links with parents, has strengthened them where teachers have explained their case. Where they have shown that they are determined to save jobs to save education, then they have received the backing of their communities.

Over the hill

If you've had your 35th birthday, you may be too old to work. That's the latest message from the Japanese firm Hitachi at their television plant in Hirwaun, Mid Glamorgan.

We've seen our industry like British Leyland destroyed with the lucrative residues left to Japanese car producers. We've seen the destruction of manufacturing, deliberate unemployment and young workers used as cheap labour. Now comes the next stage as a foreign capitalist attempts - largely without success - to get workers at the television plant to accept a payment of only £1800 to give up their jobs. Why? Because they're 'over the hill' and inefficient. once they've hit the 35 year mark.

Of course, workers need not feel guilty for giving up their jobs - Hitachi is offering them the option of choosing a 16 year old to take their place. Is this Hitachi being compassionate in the face of mass youth unemployment? No. As the 42 year old personnel executive said: "The scheme will be self-financing because 16 year olds will be paid about £1800 a year less at the beginning than fully trained employees."

Not all hope is lost, though, for those of us over 35. After all Hitachi's chairman is 73!