



THATCHER SELLS BRITAIN SHORT

Editorial

Jobs lost as Leyland Trucks given away to DAF

NOW Thatcher is actually shelling out money to destroy the British automotive industry. Twice over.

The Daf deal subsidises a foreign manufacturer to take over the UK truck market leader and dismember it. £750 million of public investment in Leyland Trucks, long pilloried as a crushing burden to long-suffering British taxpayers - has suddenly acquired the lightness of a February snowflake, to be handed over as if it were nothing.

Such a write off of debts would have boosted the struggling vehicle maker five years ago - but it has only been made available when it can be used to destroy the company.

Now the public will pay again. An initial bill of around £15 million to pay unemployed workers to waste their lives and skills on the dole, and more, so much more, as this new and deliberate twist to the spiral of manufacturing decline works its way through the economy.

Significantly, there's not a penny forthcoming to help develop what's left of BL. Instead, even closer 'links' with Honda are to be forged.

Loyal commentators have been able to bring themselves to justify this industrial treachery on the grounds of the need to 'rationalise' and 'restructure' the European automobile industry.

In trucks, European over-capacity is said to be 50%, while car-makers talk of the need to cut annual car making capacity by 2-3 million. It is just the inevitable end product of Thatcher's beloved free market

forces: waste and destruction of human and material resources on a vast scale.

But the European capitalists can sleep easy, for in Britain we have a government which sees in such destruction an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone: an organised working class and the economic and political independence that a strong manufacturing base necessarily implies.

THATCHER'S government has made it crystal clear that it stands for the plundering of Britain's assets. The latest act of destruction costing the survival of the British truck industry and the writing off of £750 million of our money serves to make it clear that there is no industrial future for this country if she is allowed to remain.

Election posturing in preparing for surprise tax cuts, and massaging the unemployment figures yet again are not allowed to interfere with the fundamental direction of the government, the attack on the manufacturing base which gave strength to our class.

Britain is a manufacturing nation or it is nothing. The policy of the Thatcher government has consistently been that it shall be nothing. Before Thatcher the country lived off its trade in manufactures. She has converted the surpluses of one hundred and fifty years into a deficit. The shops are awash with imports, the factories are closed, and the people are out of work. The capacity to make cars, trucks, ships and steel, to mine coal, to educate and heal, to conduct research and scientific investigation, all are essential for a sovereign nation.

That she needs a third term is a tribute to the strength of resistance she has met so far. The year-long struggle of the miners turned the tide in her current term, and despite the cost to those who took part, Selby miners have been in action again this last week.

In one of the greatest industrial cities of the world, Glasgow, Caterpillar workers are demonstrating that they know the value of their industry and their jobs.

The slick salesmanship of advertising men cannot disguise the fact that at the coming election we have to take a decision about our industrial survival. Thatcher has to be removed if we are to retain the ability to produce wealth at all.

Caterpillar workers occupy to keep jobs in Scotland



Photo: Anthony Brammen

Selby pit action

IN THE 12 months immediately after the 1984-85 miners' strike over 500 disputes hit the Yorkshire coalfield. Hit and run tactics. Now the ante is being raised; a qualitative change is occurring. Regained strength is leading to renewed offensive.

In the last three months a series of short, sharp disputes have occurred, primarily over pay.

In the Selby complex, a series of walkouts have occurred when visiting dignitaries have graced the pits with their presence. In December 1986, when the local Tory MP, Batiste, came visiting, his presence generated a strike. 20 January saw Whitmore out when the deputy director for the Selby complex visited. On 6 February workers at Stillingfleet came out when technical experts from British Coal's HQ visited.

The management to 'make an example', docked bonus payments for the 20 January walkout. The NUM have responded with a week long strike throughout the six pit, £1400 million, Selby complex.

All 3,000 miners are out, most deputies have refused to cross the line. Picketing is token, demonstrating strength, confidence and unity. Lost production topping £1.5 million. The NUM is hitting back where it hurts.

The week long strike has been deemed a revenge strike by the NUM. In reality it is taking the fight to the enemy.

Restart programme rigs the jobless statistics

UNEMPLOYMENT calculated on Thatcher's figures, rose by 68,089 in January 1987 and was dismissed by Lord Young as only 300 when seasonally adjusted. The change, he said, was not significant. 15,200 people have lost their jobs in Scotland since December; 9,500 in the South East, 12,000 in the Midlands. What is the significance for them and their dependants? The unemployed are people of whom Young is dismissive. For him the significance is only in the rigged figures.

The success of his Restart programme for the long-term unemployed has been startling even though there is no evidence

to show that it has any impact on jobs. Since July, one million people have been interviewed for the programme and 10% have subsequently left the register because of pressures not to claim. The fall in unemployment of 100,000 since then, is entirely due to this.

The Availability for Work Test, introduced in October, has had a similar impact. The numbers allowed to claim benefit fell by 4% and a further 2% had existing claims rescinded.

Still the unadjusted figures continue to increase. He tells us that industry is expanding and needs labour but cannot recruit because of shortage of

skill. 9% of manufacturing employers have claimed that output could be limited by such shortage. Between the years 1964 and 1979, however, the average number of manufacturers making such claims never fell below 25%. Less than 1% of firms report that output is limited by shortages of unskilled labour. This shatters the myth that people are unwilling to work.

Vacancies stand at 210,300 - the bulk are part-time jobs. 363,000 joined the register in January 1987. Of the 286,900 that left, a significant percentage have been forced to give up benefit to which they are entitled.

USDAW win at Harrods

SHOPWORKERS at Harrods have won a victory to inspire retail workers everywhere in the country.

The Egyptian owners had decided to extend opening hours and bypass negotiated rights in the process. In this respect they underestimated the workers employed at the store.

When USDAW members were balloted, the 1000 voted five to one for industrial action. At the same time a picket was staged from 5pm to 6pm every night which attracted massive publicity on TV, radio and newspaper.

Early day motion

The branch committee sought the assistance of the union's sponsored MPs. The result was an early day motion which attracted scores of MPs' signatures, including nine Labour frontbenchers.

The company was under pressure from all sides and called for a meeting on Friday 13 February, asking for an end to hostilities. Full negotiating rights are to be returned along with better facilities for union organisation. And there will be regular consultations. The workers have made their point with the Al Fayed brothers.



Thatcher dreams of annual wage cuts

UNEMPLOYMENT Minister Kenneth Clarke has launched a new round of attacks on trade union rights in what is being billed as a major plank of the Thatcher election campaign.

In what must rank as one of the wilder fantasies of capitalist wage cutting, Clarke is looking forward to a time when workers in one region will undercut the pay of workers in another, when the workers of one company are set against another, and when individual stabs individual in the back in the desperate search for a job.

Under the guise of ending 'automatic' and 'undeserved' annual pay rises, Clarke hopes to institute automatic annual pay cuts as wages are frozen and inflation gallops ahead.

And, under the banner of 'merit' and 'performance' related pay, he dreams of introducing a new element of coercion into the workplace: the employers' threat of 'work harder or we'll cut your pay or sack you'.

The Daily Express describes the new strategy as the government's 'master plan for delivering the death blow to the power of the union barons'.

That is what they hope. But the new plan says as much about Thatcher's failure as her dictatorial intent.

Clarke has been reduced to haranguing employers for being too 'cosy' with their unions and employees. 'You're not being nasty enough' is his message. But his tone has the smack of the isolated ideologue hectoring from the outside. He's failed even to convince his own people.

Eight years ago Thatcher promised there would be no more incomes policies. Really, it was a 'no more incomes' policy, but it failed and now she is looking for more direct ways of enforcing wage cuts.

Union bashing

She unleashed an unprecedented wave of industrial destruction and coupled it with a hefty round of union bashing. But she failed to destroy the power and influence of the British labour movement. Now she has to deal the unions yet another 'death blow'.

The parallels with another revolution are striking. In China, the warlords launched one 'encirclement and suppression

campaign' after another - each aimed at 'finally' eliminating the communists. But at the end of the campaign, the reactionary militarist government found itself weaker and more isolated.

Fifth column

Yet each campaign posed a real and grave threat. In this one the Thatcherites are appealing to the greed, desperation and folly of a fifth column in our class - individuals smitten with the belief that somehow they'll 'get on' if they display enough 'merit' and bootlicking. The effect on their fellows is invariably the opposite.

She prepares also to use the full power of the state to eliminate free collective bargaining, as the Baker Bill in education, and moves to regionalise civil service pay bargaining show.

Thatcher came to power on the back of an ideological onslaught against trade unionism and all forms of collectivism. She will be defeated finally when workers reject it for the no-hope philosophy of decline and despair it is.

'Flexibility'-meeting the challenge head-on

THE MOVE from manufacture to service has thrown down a challenge, which many unions have yet to confront.

Changes in the structure of the workforce; the move from full to part time employment; short term contracts; casual and seasonal work; have posed an even greater immediate threat to traditional union organisation.

The signs are, that far from ducking the difficulties thrown up by organising part-timers, the unions are adapting themselves and adopting strategies, which could lead to a massive growth in membership.

To achieve this, the unions are having to recruit in some of the most difficult sectors like retailing and catering.

Though the terrain is not unfamiliar the often transitory nature of the workers who can work a multiplicity of shifts (91 in Harrods for example) provides some major obstacles. Finding a common meeting time for the union branch is among the first.

Part-time

Approximately a quarter of the national workforce, some five million, now work part-time. The Labour Research Department have estimated that 90% of these are women. The move from full to part-time employment has grown in the last decade, escalating in the Thatcher years. In 1951 there were only 800,000 part-timers.

The growth of the private service sector has underpinned this structural shift, with the seasonal tourist industry playing a major role.

There are two principal benefits that have encouraged employers to expand the number of part-timers they employ.

Firstly it allows them to match their labour costs to fluctuations in the business cycle - in hotels in the summer to meet tourist demand and in shops during the 'sales/Christmas' period. This labour is then shed during quiet months. But secondly, part time labour is used to substitute full-time which hitherto has been the bedrock of trade union organisation.

Part-time work is often 'sold' to the workforce along lines which appear to be beneficial to the employee, 'choose your own hours' or 'pick the kids up from school'. In reality the benefits in an unorganised workplace only accrue

to the employers. One famous central London bookshop employs 120 workers, only six of whom are full-time. The rest are part-time or on five month contracts.

Such a workforce can be recruited to unions but it is very difficult to maintain organisation. An establishment such as this will have in excess of 100% annual staff turnover. This compounds the difficulties facing the union. Average staff turnover in central London retailing is 42%, with some major stores and fast food chains registering labour turnover in excess of 500%.

'flexible'

The latest report on the subject arises out of the first Labour Force study conducted by the Department of Employment which differentiates between 'permanent' and 'flexible' workforces. 'Flexible' goes beyond purely part-time employment to include seasonal, short term contract workers, etc.

The report, which covers the period between 1981 and 1985, shows that the flexible workforce has expanded by some 16%. The flexible workforce now accounts for some 34% of those in employment, some 8.1 million.

Behind the employers' push for flexibility lies the government. A spider's web of legislation has been spun which greatly enhances the power of the employers to 'shake out' full-time staff, employ a flexible workforce, and maintain an unorganised pool of workers with a rapid labour turnover.

According to the report, "Employers have used greater flexibility to vary employment levels according to fluctuating demand, and to save on non-wage costs such as sick pay, pensions and holiday pay."

The small degree of protection afforded part-timers and seasonal workers under the 1975 Employment Protection Act and Health and Safety at Work Act have been gradually whittled away.

Union dues have been specifically tailored for the 'flexible worker' and constitutional changes made to reflect changes in union structure brought about by an influx of part-timers. Over 50% of USDAW's membership and 25% of NUPE's are part-timers, so the need is obvious.

Union propaganda has also begun to tune into the problems

facing such workers, and the union machinery is being geared up to build and maintain organisation in this field. In USDAW, for example, all full-time officers now spend one week per month on recruitment. The TGWU has recently moved its national resources into action, along the lines of the 'living wage campaign'.

Negotiating strategies are being re-arranged to meet new priorities. The banner of equal pay and rights with full-time workers is an important basis for unity within and between the unions. It can only be secured through struggle against the employers and maintained by the collective efforts of all workers.

No group of workers can afford to remain outside the ranks of organised labour. In 1889 the great mass of dockworkers organised themselves in London and struck successfully against the dock owners. Previously, because of the flexible nature of their employment, these workers were considered unorganisable.

At some time in their development, all workers appear unorganisable, and yet our movement extends from nurses to coalminers to airline pilots.

Given the will we can organise the so-called flexible worker.



Photo: The Worker.

Overtime working undermines our fight against mass unemployment

100 YEARS after the demand for an eight hour working day the conditions that gave rise to the movement are being recreated - but with a fundamental difference. We now have the stark position of four million unemployed while those still with jobs are working more and more overtime.

Two years ago the average male manual worker's week was 43 hours (a rise on previous years). Last year this increased to 44½ hours. (Source - New Earnings Survey - published last month.)

Overtime now amounts to 14.4% of these workers' pay, whilst the impact of all "plus payments" (productivity, shift premiums) adds up to 25% of their wages. Plus payments are much less for other workers, but even here manual women averaged nine pounds per week, and non-manual men averaged nine pounds in overtime pay. The full list of average hours is as follows:

	WOMEN	MEN
MANUAL	39.5	44.5
NON-MANUAL	36.7	38.6
ALL WORKERS	37.3	41.8
		Average week
Textiles		45.8 hours
Transport and communications		47.3 hours
Mechanical engineering		45 hours
Food, drink and tobacco		45.9 hours
Minerals (cement, glass, ceramics)		46.5 hours

Overtime is most endemic in industries which have been earmarked for attack: though ironically one of the lowest male manual working weeks is the coal industry at 41.9 hours.

The plain truth is that the growth of overtime working reflects an increased exploitation of our class. After all, to the employer workers exist only to work - rest and play being as alien as Mars. In addition it has assisted the asset-stripping,

run-down and failure to invest our work with the future generations. The motive of trying to make ends meet is often as elusive as it is seductive.

With this shift in working has been a growth in the use of overtime as an industrial weapon. The miners, BT engineers, and college lecturers are recent examples. They have recognised the increasing dependence of our industries on overtime, plus its debilitating effect on our collective ideals.

Overtime ban

The challenge must be to turn tactical overtime bans into permanent ones, and one of the best examples is in the fire service. Over ten years ago the Fire Brigades' Union ceased extra working because several brigades were seen to be running permanently under-strength. As a result, about 2000 jobs have been maintained in the service. Throughout these

years of Thatcherism, fire brigades have been forced to recruit; providing fresh blood with the organisation of work and union.

The overtime ban is a daily reminder to the employers that we will not weaken our ranks with the self-interest encouraged by overtime. This is vital if we are to stem the alienation and disaffection of our youth from those still in work.

The need as well as the right to work must be re-asserted.

The fight for maternity rights

SO LOUD is the talk in some places about measures taken to combat discrimination against women, you could be forgiven for thinking that we were in a period of advance for women's rights.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the sharp reverse that working women have experienced in the area of maternity rights is a clear illustration of what Thatcherism has meant for the whole working class. We have no 'rights', only concessions wrung out of the employer with years of struggle and sacrifice. Concessions which can be withdrawn at a stroke unless we fight to maintain them.

Means tested

Maternity benefits date back to the 1911 National Health Insurance Act and all mothers now qualify for some help around childbirth. The Social Security Act 1986 will change this - from April 1987 the maternity grant paid to every mother (although an inadequate £25) will be abolished and will be replaced by a means tested payment for the few.

The payment of maternity allowance which is paid to working women will be transferred to the employer and payments will be restricted to women with a very recent work history. One in five mothers will lose the allowance - a potential loss of £850. Take-up will certainly fall if this benefit is administered by the employer.

Although the history of maternity benefits dates back to 1911, the history of rights at work for mothers dates back just 10 years - these are rights to maternity pay and leave and to protection against unfair dismissal on grounds of pregnancy.

Since 1979 not a year has gone by without some erosion in job protection and financial support. For example, the qualifying period for protection against unfair dismissal has increased fourfold - in 1978 it was six months and by 1985 it was two years.

The 1980 Employment Act reduced women's reinstatement rights and now we have the government's white paper 'Building businesses - Not Barriers' (1) full of proposals on deregulation which would further limit women's access to maternity rights at work.

It is not easy to organise against these attacks - a change in the rule here, a new bit of legislation there and suddenly we find that a structure outlined in 1975 has been seriously undermined. However, a number of trade unions, the campaigning group 'Maternity Alliance' and midwives have all come together to oppose the attack and to expose the hypocrisy of government talk about caring for families and children. The first stage of their campaigning activities will culminate in a mass rally at Central Hall, Westminster on Monday 6 April.

How the Vote was won, after a long struggle

MOST People were outsiders where political power and influence were concerned, in the early 19th Century. Those who felt themselves inadequately represented in Parliament included industrialists, shopkeepers and small traders, as well as artisans and industrial workers. In agitating for change various groups, sometimes antagonistic, formed shifting alliances in order to advance, establish even, basic rights.

The 1832 Reform Act was a landmark in the advance of democracy. It was won by middle class leadership - as it would have been called then - with masses of workers as infantry in the struggle. The middle classes, having won their objectives, betrayed their working class allies.

The working classes had doubts about the integrity of their middle class allies, given their experiences in the period 1793-1815, when Britain's war with revolutionary France had brought down charges of Jacobinism on those who struggled at home for basic rights.

'Iron Duke'

After 1832, workers stand out against all other classes as an independent force for political power. The growth of Chartism, for instance, reflects this thinking and organisation then. More important had been the survival of embryonic trade unionism in the face of the punitive Combination Acts which had imprisoned and even hanged those who would not obey. These various Acts operated 1799-1824 but were defeated.

The Birmingham Political Union was an organisation established in 1830 with industrialists and other middle class elements leading, and workers as rank and file, a coming together which alarmed the "Iron Duke" Wellington, the victor of Waterloo and one of Britain's most reactionary Prime Ministers.

Soon, the country was covered in Political Unions, but in the towns of the industrial north they were more working class in character, or there would be two Political Unions. There was unity against the corruption of the House of Commons, an unrepresentative assembly.

Enclosures had swept away the old 40 shilling freeholders in whom voting rights were vested; county seats were "fixed" by great landowners in groups; places like Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham had no MP at all; there were the "pocket boroughs" and the self-appointing town corporations; there was open voting that landowners could observe, and there was the corrupt buying of votes.

Corruption rife

There was much corruption as a matter of fact. It featured in the Law, the Church, the Court, the Civil Service, the Army and the Navy. But the Radicals aimed first at, concentrated their fire on, Parliament as the centre of corruption.

The National Union of the Working Classes was formed in 1831, with a distrust of Whigs in government and capitalists. From London artisans it spread to become a national network. In Manchester, for example, it had 27 branches and 5000 members, and wielded considerable influence.

In March 1831 the Reform Bill was introduced. It aimed to abolish rotten boroughs and redistribute seats to where the population was. It wanted to extend the franchise to include the middle classes in the boroughs and the tenant and leasehold farmers in the counties. It fell a long way short of manhood suffrage, annual parliaments and vote by ballot: old Radical demands. It secured a second reading by one vote, but the government was defeated in committee and a new general election was called. Whigs won a 136 majority.



This time the Bill passed at all stages, but was rejected by a majority of 41 in the Lords (mainly bishops and war profiteers created peers).

Huge demonstrations followed, often ending in riots: Derby Prison was stormed, Nottingham Castle was set on fire, Bristol was taken for days, while in London, crowds attacked bishops and Tory peers in the streets.

The Bill was painted as the only alternative to revolution by middle class leaders as mass pressure was maintained. The Lords and the Tory Party gave up, and the Bill was passed on June 7, 1832.

The 1867 Reform Act marked a victory for the organised working class. In 1854, 1858 and 1860 Reform Bills were presented to parliament but each failed and all were diluted anyway. Little working class enthusiasm accompanied the presentation of these failed Bills.

Fortunes revive

But from the late 1850s, trade unionism began to revive among the miners, several years after the setbacks for Chartism.

Various industries saw the Nine Hour Movements organise in regions, aiming to reduce the length of the working day. Trades councils formed in Glasgow, Sheffield, Liverpool and Edinburgh.

The London Trades Council had been formed in May 1860, a key semi-official body eight years before the TUC first met. The strike of building workers in the capital caused the formation of the trades council. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was set up in 1860, and was to grow rich and powerful among craftsmen in the building trade.

Internationally, the American Civil War divided this country along class lines, with slaves and slaveowners having support here. The Polish insurrection in 1863 against Tsarism found sympathy here where many hated the reactionary regime.

In 1864 Garibaldi, 'the man in the red shirt', arrived from Italy, which he sought to unite, and organised workers gave him a tumultuous welcome in London.

First International

Also in 1864, the International Working Men's Association (the First International) was founded. Howell, Applegarth, Odger and Cremer, all leading English trade unionists, were executive members. All Liberals, they sat with Karl Marx on that committee.

"The great importance of the International was that it brought together considerable bodies of workers at many levels of political development on the basis of a struggle for fundamental democratic and trade union rights." (A Morton, G Tate, 'The British Labour Movement')

All such factors encouraged the fight for political democracy.

Members of the International played a leading part in the formation of the National Reform League in 1865 and the struggle up to the 1867 Act. The League and associated bodies soon had a big following in Lancashire, West Riding, Tyneside and Birmingham, and London especially where Chartism traditions had survived.

Obstacles overcome

Russell and fellow Liberal, Gladstone, brought forward a Reform Bill in 1866 because of the popular clamour for it. It was defeated by Tories and right wing Whigs, who brought down the government.

That July the Home Secretary banned a Hyde Park rally, but 200,000 gathered outside while the Reform League marched to Trafalgar Square. Pressure was kept up during the autumn and winter. Authorities were alarmed, there was the influence of the International, and Fenians were organised in America, Ireland and Britain.

Concessions won

The Tories were forced to produce their own Bill. Mass pressure then forced a number of concessions - more than the original Whig Bill - which enfranchised the lower middle classes and the better off section of workers.

The 1867 Reform Act had extended the franchise only to the town artisans, leaving the poorer town workers and miners and agricultural workers of the villages without votes.

What gains were made always seemed to come in bits and pieces, reluctantly conceded.

Glaring omissions

Some of these groups gained from the Third Reform Act 1884, passed by the Liberal government, which increased the electorate (excluding Ireland) from under 3 million to almost 5 million.

Over 25 years later, in 1911, out of a 40 million population in the same territory, only 7.2 million had the vote; in 1955 there were over 34 million electors out of 51 million people.

1867-84 was the heyday of middle class political management in towns. Enfranchised workers were outvoted; 80% of voting power was possessed by their social superiors.

The 1885 redistribution of seats weakened MPs who had represented whole urban areas; eg Liverpool went from three to nine MPs, which reduced their standing. But it was the presence of the masses which was felt. The ratio of adult males able to vote rose from 1 in 6 to 1 in 3 after the 1867 Act. It rose to 2 in 3 with the 1884 Act. But by 1910 about 4½ million men remained disenfranchised.

How women got the vote

WOMEN first got the vote in 1918, provided they were aged 30 or over. Even winning that had taken quite a struggle. Only in 1928 were women placed on a virtually equal footing with men, having the vote if they were at least 21 years old.

In 1900 there had been just 6.7 million names on the parliamentary electoral roll (about 58% of the male population over 21).

"Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?" was a question first put at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, following which interruption the questioners were ejected and arrested. Christabel Pankhurst and Oldham textile worker Annie Kenny were imprisoned but released as martyrs, and the agitation went on.

The Women's Social and Political Union had been set up in 1904. The Independent Labour Party had then backed the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, as had the Women's Cooperative Guild, but it had been laughed out by the male legislators. After that it was direct action that was used to advance the cause.

Direct action frightened off the political parties, concerned as they were with their 'respectability'. Further to that some of the women were anti-socialist in a way that angered working class people. Nevertheless, there was a principle at stake.

Windows of department stores were broken, along Kensington High Street, for example. Letter boxes were burned, and churches went up in flames. Imprisoned women were force-fed, a brutal act as food entering the lungs led to disease and sometimes death.

Middle class? Yes, but a number of Lancashire and Yorkshire textile workers also got involved, and there was the East London Federation.

General election

If many men were opposed or indifferent, not all were by any means. A manufacturer in Newcastle in September 1908, reported to Prime Minister Asquith that the suffragettes were "influencing wavering elements". Of engineers he said, "I have been present at several meetings addressed by various branches of the Engineers' Society by members of the Women's Social and Political Union, and in many cases spontaneous resolutions were put forward in their favour and enthusiastically adopted, and also what is more important pledges were given to support the Women's franchise by voting against the government." Even before World War One, the agitation had had an effect. In wartime their leverage increased and the government was forced to give in. But what a struggle to win a basic right. Rights are not given, they are won through struggle.

1987 IS ELECTION YEAR! KICK HER OUT!

FOR THE RECORD...



● THE BITTER LEGACY OF THE THATCHER YEARS ●

CAPITALISM in Britain is 200 years old, but incomplete parliamentary democracy goes back only a century. There's nothing innately democratic about this system; what we've got we won.

The winning of the vote by workers encroached on territory that capitalism had treated as its own. We brought democracy to this country as part of a fight for basic rights.

This 7 June marks the 155th anniversary of the Great Reform Act, the first achievement by workers who sought the right to vote. It broke the ranks of the old order, and the working class learnt to rely on its own efforts in the future.

You can't change the system by voting for another one, but you can change the government. Such an opportunity will soon arise, and votes provide a means of removing the Thatcher government from office. A victory for Labour would break the mould of Thatcherism, and it would indicate a renewed interest by citizens in the future of Britain.

Today there is quiet anger at what Thatcherism has done to this country. But also there is unimaginative acceptance, by others, of what they see as inevitable decay. Defeatism of that type aids Thatcher and diminishes the efforts of those who resist her destructive role.

We do have organisation, we are many, and we have a golden opportunity. While Thatcher faces an imminent election she is vulnerable to citizens with votes. That for us is a strength, but it will become a weakness if workers lose the election. So our organisation for victory must be enhanced by extra effort to ensure her defeat. Resting in the general sentiment 'Thope Labour win', but doing nothing for that win, falls short of requirements. Out of nothing, nothing comes.

Rights our ancestors won, can be lost. Still we are treated like outsiders in our own country. Today there is a renewed attack on workers and unions. In the name of 'democracy', democracy is attacked. The rights to assemble, demonstrate or strike are fenced about with qualifications. When metropolitan authorities were abolished last year, 18 million workers lost those votes. Now local government is similarly threatened, along with the Welfare State it was set up to oversee.

We need to focus on what is to be done. We have to rally our forces, and challenge Thatcherites to defend her record in office. Tell others what effect her government has had on your work prospects, your industry, your service, your living standards. It's a funny kind of 'boom' that throws up a Credit Card Election.



Pupils and parents of Grazebrook School, Hackney, who occupied their classroom in protest at the shortage of teachers. After three days of occupation the Inner London Education Authority found a teacher for these Grazebrook pupils. But the shortage of teachers in Inner London continues and concerned parents are beginning to make their presence felt. Photo: Red Saunders Productions.

ABP THREAT TO SWANSEA DOCKS

THE £3.5m investment at Swansea Docks announced by Associated British Ports in February does nothing to safeguard the long term future of the Port. Indeed whilst ABP light argue that the new containerised coal terminal to be built at the port will secure the remaining Belfast anthracite traffic, by agreeing the transfer of the trade from rail to road, the port makes itself vulnerable.

Those same motorway links by which it is hoped

Those same railway links by which it is hoped to capture new trade from the South and Midlands to the North

of Ireland once the terminal becomes capable of handling all containerised traffic, can equally serve to take traffic away; witness Cawoods move to Ellesmere Port in 1986.

Thirty four jobs are to go as the rail operation is wound up - the promise that the traffic will again revert to the railways is dependent on a Section 8 grant from the Welsh Office. Government policy though has been clear ever since the miners' strike: to break down the traditional links between coal and rail.

This has been particularly marked in South Wales. The number of railway wagons used to move coal locally

has fallen from 40,000 in 1975 to 4,000 today.

Rail unions are now faced with an uphill task at the port. As track mileage has been cut by two-thirds and the Eastern Depot closed, so has BR contracted its own operation at the Burrows sidings and the Freightliner Terminal. Lack of investment in port facilities has resulted in major customers moving elsewhere. Now ABP have announced a further 60 port jobs are to go, on top of those connected with the coal operation.

The NUR have indicated their willingness to fight - others in the port need to respond.

Taking care of Casualty

IN A PROTEST at the closure of Ancoats hospital casualty department unions and local residents marched on a meeting of North Manchester Health Authority recently. Over 250 angry demonstrators packed the meeting and made clear that their occupation of the casualty unit, which began on 1 February would not end until the unit was re-opened on a permanent, fully staffed basis.

Built as a specialist casualty unit 14 years ago, the health authority has been slowly but surely running the department down, to the extent where it does not have enough back-up facilities to ensure correct training for junior doctors. The implications for local residents is quite clear - the mayor recently travelled by public transport from Ancoats to the nearest casualty at Crumpsall, a journey which, following deregulation, took 1½ hours and two bus journeys.

The Worker talked to Anne Dobson, Secretary of the Ancoats Action Group:

What sort of support have you received?

COHSE, NUPE and NALGO have been giving us full support. They have provided us with money and food and have asked us to their meetings to build up support. We are writing to local firms to let them know what it would mean to lose a local casualty unit for their workers. The Trades Council has promised us support as well. We have lots of support but we still need people to help us on the occupation rota.

How long are you prepared to occupy the unit?

We intend to stay here until the unit is reopened as a fully operational casualty unit. The health authority claim it hasn't got the right facilities but it is a more modern casualty than Crumpsall. It has examination rooms, plaster rooms, resuscitation rooms... in fact, more facilities than Crumpsall.

So what would be the implications if you didn't fight?

Firstly, a large area of East Manchester would be left without a suitable casualty department. This could mean people dying before getting attention and we are not prepared to accept that.

Secondly, the Regional Health Authority would like to see a reduction to one casualty unit in each of Manchester's three districts. If we stay closed then Withington in south Manchester is next on the list. It has already been forced to close on several occasions because of a shortage of doctors. We are planning to lobby their District Health Authority meeting to make this point. We are also organising a march through Manchester on 28 February. We are determined to hold on to our health service and ensure these facilities stay open.

Teachers dig in for new fight

IN A NEW initiative the NUT and the NAS (UWT) have joined together in a co-ordinated attack against the Baker Bill. As the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill reaches its final stages, teachers all over England and Wales are being balloted for action.

The new phase will begin with a half day strike and massive rallies. Teachers must ensure that this is only a beginning, not a token protest. Every form of action protest. There can be only two constraints. The teachers involved must support the action. Secondly it is vital

that parents must be won to support it too.

The Bill is the final assault on state education and its main guardian, the NUT. The attempt to stifle the power of teachers is the next step after GCHQ. All negotiating rights between unions and employers will be removed. Other unions must join us in this battle, for they could be next.

Unity will be the key. We cannot afford the luxury of fighting on lesser issues. Education is the Achilles heel of the government's election plans.

Journalists make a stand over Zircon raids

JOURNALISTS throughout the country struck last Tuesday in protest at the banning of the 'Secret Society' TV programme and subsequent Special Branch raids on BBC Glasgow, the offices of the New Statesman and the home of Duncan Campbell.

It was the first ever national action by the National Union of Journalists, winning support from members in books, magazines, local radio and newspapers, as well as the national media.

At a meeting organised by the NUJ at the House of Commons, Labour leader Neil Kinnock and Liberal leader David Steel lampooned and ridiculed Thatcher's dictatorial intent.

Earlier, NUJ General Secretary Harry Conroy had warned of a Thatcher-inspired dirty tricks campaign against reporters. 'Off the record'

and 'unattributable' briefings had been used to smear journalists and to question the motives of those amongst them who dare to question the actions of her state.

The Special Branch raids were yet another example of her determination to impose self-censorship on the BBC, he said.

Journalists have long been viewed with contempt by the organised labour movement. They have been too ready to allow their skills to be used as a special weapon in Thatcher's armoury. The Thatcherites hoped they could persuade, cajole, bribe or intimidate the whole profession to connive in her continuing attack on what little their is of British democracy.

But her attack has backfired. There is still independence and integrity in the profession,

and it is protected by a trade union. And now she has united and galvanised that union as never before.

After Real Lives and Zircon, the score is: NUJ and press freedom 2; Thatcher Nil. But before we crow too much, we should remember that this game is far from over.



Absurd offer to host conference

BARELY CREDIBLE though it may be, the British government is bidding to host an international conference in London on the freedom of information!

In itself the proposed conference is not remarkable, merely the next in a long line of meetings since 1975 and the Helsinki accords on security and co-operation in Europe. But with Thatcher and her state apparatus exposed before all as conspiratorial, secretive and above all determined to eliminate what remains of press freedom, flaunting public outrage in this manner must surely rebound on government credibility.

Thatcher's claim to a baying Young Thatcherite mob in Scarborough that "...The government does not give orders to the police as to how, when and where to enforce the law..." has

a particularly hollow ring in the wake of the Duncan Campbell affair and the forced abdication of Alisdair Milne as Director General of the BBC.

These are strange days indeed when the Special Branch can be so openly directed against a bastion of the establishment for daring to ask questions about government actions.

Telecom turn

WHAT a difference a day makes! The day before the National Communications Union voted to return to work we were all being told by British Telecom how little effect the strike was having.

The day after, BT were publishing adverts saying "there is a large backlog of repairs and installations work which may take some time is clear".

Dinner ladies demonstrate dedication

TWO HUNDRED school dinner ladies in Stockport, Manchester have tasted victory in the first round of their battle to save jobs and fight privatisation.

Through their union, NUPE, they heard of plans to rationalise the meals service. They invaded the council chamber where the Education Committee was debating the options for the future of school meals and came away happy after hearing that the intention

was to carry on much as before. They had taken with them a petition with 20,000 names gathered after a vigorous campaign.

Mr. Stan Rupa, NUPE officer, said, "It must have been obvious to the councillors that the school meals' staff is a very dedicated workforce who have the interests of the education service at heart. This is only the first stage in the battle. We are sure there will be more rounds to come."



Public Meetings

<p>Friday 27 February 7.30 pm</p>	<p>"London's Print - Press On Against Thatcher". Small Hall, St. Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, off Fleet St., London EC4</p>
<p>Friday 20 March 7.30 pm</p>	<p>"Public Services not Private Profit, Thatcher Out". Bellman Bookshop, 155 Fortess Road, London NWS</p>
<p>Wednesday 25 February 8 pm</p>	<p>"The 'Other' Germany". Talk and slides on life in the GDR. The Devonport Inn, Fore St., Exeter</p>