



THATCHER OUT! OCCUPY AND SAVE

The working class will have to occupy hospitals and schools to keep them open, industries like steel to keep them running and, eventually, the state itself to save Britain

THE BANNER displayed above the main entrance to one of London's most famous hospitals proclaims that St George's is occupied.

In a desperate rush to save money, and move the remaining services from Hyde Park Corner to the new St George's at Tooting, the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth area health authority have decided to bring forward the closing date from 1981 to June this year. So there will be an 18-month gap before St George's can resume surgery on its present scale.

The hospital is famous for its heart and chest surgery, yet the hospital's heart disease team cannot be accommodated yet at Tooting. Over half the patients waiting for heart surgery are going to have to wait another 18 months as a result of this cut. Some could die.

Meanwhile various plans for selling the St George's hospital site have foundered, since the authority has now discovered that much of the site is in fact owned by the Grosvenor Estate and could return to them on the payment of a 'peppercorn' fee of £23,000! But in the remaining parts of South London under the AHA the closures announced are catastrophic.

Putney General is to close completely. Bolingbroke Hospital, with medical and surgical beds, is to close all these acute beds and instead take geriatric patients from St Benedict's Hospital. Yet the Bolingbroke has none of the specialised facilities,

such as a hydro pool, for proper care of the elderly, which already exist at St Benedict's, a much-loved local hospital. The hospital staff there have recently started an occupation of the hospital to protest about its closure.

The Henderson, a unique and world-famous hospital which has pioneered a therapeutic community approach to psychiatric care, is now threatened with closure. Over 100 patients are treated each year and would otherwise occupy places in other psychiatric hospitals. After a stay of six to 12 months patients move to a halfway house in Wimbledon and look after themselves. Yet in an area where the suicide rate is 50 per cent higher than the national average, it is more of these services that are needed, not less.

It appears too that the area health authority has decided that no child in the area should fall ill - the children's wards in Sutton Hospital and the South London Hospital, the muscular dystrophy unit at Queen Mary's Hospital for Children and the entire Belmont Children's Unit are to close.

The occupation of St George's, Hyde Park Corner is receiving support from patients and is backed by the nurses, doctors and ambulancemen. As one nurse said, 'the nursing staff are backing this action. Traditionally they do not get involved in these disputes, but attitudes are changing.'



Occupation of St George's Hospital, Hyde Park

Photo: Mark Rusher (IFL)

sense as his politics. Vietnam was an American state too. He talks of war and calls for conscription in peace time. He sends his generals on a walkabout to gain acceptance for land based missiles. He hopes the American people have forgotten Vietnam and Cambodia and they will give him a new mandate to destroy the youth of the world. But maybe they won't though.

The Olympic Games pale into insignificance as we watch the games politicians play. They are ruthless at home and warmongers abroad. Hyper inflation, a new name for an old phenomenon, goes hand in hand with massive unemployment. For capitalism unemployment can be cured by war.

Why is it that Thatcher, a British prime minister, seeks to lead the field? She has taken up Heath's point that the main danger to capitalism is from within, civil war, and in consequence seeks for war abroad to prevent it.

The present form the attack takes is essentially anti-communist. The fact that the USSR is not a communist country does not alter her purpose; the idea and the motive is enough. Come back McCarthy, all is forgiven. Will we see it in Britain too? We must see that it doesn't.

Steel workers show mettle

THE NATIONAL steel strike, now involving the private steel-making sector is plain for all to see as an overtly political struggle. The issue is not just about wages or even just about the destruction of Britain's steel-making capacity, it has become a struggle about survival and the slogan around which this battle is to be fought by workers in all sectors of industry is, Thatcher out!

At the same time, as Thatcher spreads her attack on the workers in Britain, through trade union legislation, the call for war, and the public sector cut-backs, so the working class is going onto the attack. The steel strike has become the catalyst for workers' reaction and it now involves the miners, the railwaymen, the dockers, the engineers and other crafts and the TUC as a whole.

This battle has raised fundamental questions for our class, about the future of Britain, its industries, its communities, our jobs, indeed our very existence. As the president of the Wales TUC (a miner) recently said, the fight is about deindustrial-

isation.

In the past Thatcher has always tried to talk in hushed, patronising tones in an endeavour to make it pass for reasoned argument. Her lies have been shown up by the ISTC. In reply to the accusation that steel workers produce less steel than workers in Europe they have shown that apprentices, health and safety workers and other ancillaries were not included in the European calculations. Our production is almost identical but we are paid less.

The destruction of industry is a political decision based on destroying any threat to Britain's role as a centre of world finance, and that threat is embodied in the organised working class. It is not steel that must go but Thatcher and her stormtroopers.

But the central question is not to be, nor could it be, decided on commercial grounds alone. The Government, the EEC (through the Davignon plan) and BSC are hell-bent on destroying Britain's steel industry and its future as an industrial country.

Thatcher wants us at war

MARGARET Thatcher appears to be the world's number one trouble shooter these days.

She and her like, Carter among them, are leaping around the world playing Russian roulette - except the gun is to our heads, mores the pity. But

Russian roulette is a lonely game. Even Indira Gandhi won't play it with her, and we all know Mrs Gandhi's feelings about the lives of her people.

Carter talks of Soviet aggression, regarding the invasion of Afganistan, as a body blow to America. His geography makes as much

The Week

The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, has called for a boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow. Sadly old age has taken its toll on Mr Sartre. He is now half-blind.

Luxembourg, on the other hand, wishes to participate in the Games but has suggested that 'second-rate' athletes be sent as a form of protest. If that's protest some might say that Luxembourg has been protesting for too long. Perhaps if they could arrange it, Mr Sartre might be entered for the Marathon.

Since the CIA-backed military coup against the progressive Allende Government in September 1973, the word 'Chile' has come into popular usage as shorthand for 'savage repression'. Thousands are imprisoned, many trade unionists have been tortured or have simply disappeared. You need a pocket calculator to keep up with inflation in Chile. It comes as no surprise then that the Thatcher Government chooses this moment to re-open diplomatic relations, originally broken off when Sheila Kennedy suffered torture at the hands of the regime. The TUC has condemned this Government hypocrisy when elsewhere it makes noises about 'human rights'.

The reactionary regime in China says it is alarmed at the number of witches and wizards who are taking advantage of complete religious freedom. The regime will make a distinction between freedom of religion and freedom of superstition - a distinction no Marxist ever makes.

What is laughingly called The Opposition, the Parliamentary Labour Party, joined with the Government to vote for an expenditure of £4000m to £5000m for the renewal of the Polaris missile system and for establishing US cruise and Pershing missiles on British soil. There is no opposition but the working class.

The Royal Household is reviewing its expenditure in keeping with Government 'requests' to reduce spending on the Civil List. Note that Buckingham Palace is 'requested' while we're given no choice in the matter. The Royal Household has two options. Either it can acquiesce or it can send the Household Cavalry to Downing Street. The former is more likely.

Thatcher frequently attacks 'spongers on society'. We remember well her call in December 1978 to 'back the worker not the shirker'. We, on the other hand, back The Worker not the shirkers. Look at what the shirkers are costing us this year. The Queen's expenses come to £2,134,000 while her mother comes at the knock-down price of £200,000. Phil the Greek is charging £98,000 for handshakes in 1980, while Princesses Margaret and Anne get £64,000 and £63,000 respectively. The Royal Yacht cost us £2,150,000 last year, while in 1978 the Queen's Flight clocked up £1,180,000. But this is now being looked into. Savings will be made. The corgis can expect no Christmas presents in 1980.



Historic Notes Olympics

BARON de Coubertin, Pierre de Frey, knew precisely why he wanted the Olympic Games revived in the latter part of the last century. We should ponder again what he said in 1892: "Let us export our oarsmen, our runners, our fencers into other lands. That is the true Free Trade of the future; and the day it is introduced into Europe the cause of Peace will have received a new and strong ally".

The present threat to the Moscow Olympics from Thatcher, Carter and their ilk, is only the latest threat to an international movement that has traditionally been bedevilled by outside influences. Baron de Coubertin was convinced that the downfall of the Games previously had been caused by outside influences which undermined the spirit of the Games. Since the Roman Emperor Theodosius 1 outlawed the festival in AD 394 more than 15 centuries passed before de Coubertin succeeded in establishing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894.

Since then the IOC has tried to safeguard the integrity of the Games especially from unwelcome political influences. The Games have flourished since. In Athens in 1896, 13 nations had 300 representatives competing in 42 events in 10 different sports. By Munich 1972 there were 6000 representatives of 100 nations competing in 200 events in 20 sports. The 1976 Montreal games Olympiad was closed by the President of the IOC calling the youth of the world to assemble in four years to celebrate in Moscow under the Olympic motto: Citius-Altius-Fortius (Faster-Higher-Stronger).

Note the two points here: it is

a call to 'the youth of the world' (the future); and secondly the Games are always awarded to a city, not a country. The spirit of peaceful competition (begun traditionally with thousands of doves released to carry the news) is symbolised in the 'five rings' representing the five continents brought together for the Games.

The IOC awards the Games to a city to underline its freedom from political considerations. The Games are contests between individuals not countries, while the IOC ensures no discrimination along lines of race, religion or political affiliation. The 120 National Olympic Committees are responsible to the IOC alone. IOC members are ambassadors from the IOC to the sports organisations in the countries from which they come. They are in no sense delegates to the committee and may not accept from the government of their country, or from any organisation or individual, any instructions that in any way affect their independence.

The Munich Games were marred by a terrorist incident which left 17 people dead. That intervention contravened the Olympic spirit of peace and goodwill. In 1916, 1920 and 1944 the games were not held because of terrorism on a larger scale. Let Thatcher and Carter not try to wreck the 1980 Games, so that after a peaceful Olympic contest in Moscow, we can look forward to the participation of thousands in 1984 in Los Angeles peacefully in spite of the US foreign policy of aggression and war. In publicly repudiating Thatcher, British athletes are speaking for athletes and their well-wishers all over the world.

Chemical war on Vietnam

CARTER in his Cold War State of the Union speech said 'we superpowers have a responsibility to exercise restraint in the use of military power. The integrity and the independence of weaker nations must never be threatened.' Does he really think the world has forgotten the US's unprovoked aggression against Vietnam?

And now in close co-operation with China the US has the colossal nerve to accuse Vietnam of 'using toxic chemicals in Laos and Kampuchea'. No doubt it is hoped thus to raise enough dust to conceal the US's horrible crimes of chemical warfare against the three Indochinese countries for which no restitution whatsoever has been made.

The US sprayed more than 100,000 tons of toxic chemicals on almost all provinces of south Vietnam. There were two million victims of toxic chemical poisoning of whom 3,500 are dead. 70 per cent of coconut orchards, 60 per cent of rubber plantations, 110,000 acres of pine-woods and 150,000 acres of mangrove forests were sprayed with defoliants.

The US has dared criticise the Vietnamese for the distribution of food in Kampuchea. The US destroyed enough food with chemicals to feed millions of people for many years. Even a

US senator had to admit that 'the history of mankind had never known a case in which a country declared war against the environment of another nation, yet the US had embarked on an ecological experiment the like of which no other nation would have dared to do.'

Since 1970 Vietnamese scientists have shown that herbicides used by the US contain dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known. A tiny amount of this agent causes miscarriages, birth defects, still births and cancer. Dioxin renders land uncultivable for decades and changes the environment in such a way as to cause floods and droughts.

In the US more than 2,000 Vietnam war veterans, suffering from the effects of exposure to dioxin herbicides, have filed a law suit against the five large US firms which made the herbicides.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam calls on the governments of other countries and world opinion, especially American public opinion, to be vigilant against the US's cunning manoeuvre and it demands that the US administration accept responsibility and pay compensation for losses caused in the war of aggression against Vietnam who are victims of the toxic chemicals used by the US.

THE STATE OF BRITAIN/Health

AN OPPOSITION motion welcoming the Royal Commission's endorsement of the principle of a free health service was defeated in the Commons this week by the Tories' lowest majority yet (42). Jenkin said that, contrary to its recommendations, the Government was still planning more funding by private health insurance, although he denied they intended to introduce charges.

This follows the pattern of

the Government's consultative document, 'Patients First', in accepting proposals of the Commission where it can save money, and rejecting those that point to severe deficiencies, for example the special problems of London. It talks of local decision-making, while the most important decision of all, on how much money, remains the Government's; simplification of the management structure for 'greater efficiency' is in fact intended to save £30m, with managements being obliged to agree to

Olympics-latest news

'NOT ONE member of our Olympic Committee is in favour of a boycott,' said Sir Denis Follows, Chairman of the British Olympic Committee.

Just as the only people calling for war with the Soviet Union are British MPs and American Congressmen who have had their deep bunkers already allotted to them, so the people calling for a ban on the Moscow Olympics are non-sportmen. 50 MPs ganged up on the 75 year old Marquess of Exeter, whose crime is to support the Olympics, as one of Britain's two representatives on the International Olympic Committee. Will they strip him of his title or the Olympic Gold Medal he won in 1928? Refusing to be cowed, he pointed out that no boycott of the Olympics had ever been mooted against America through out the course of the US invasion of Vietnam. Why start now?

He and his colleague totally rejected Thatcher's line, and spoke for the whole British athletics movement: "We are loyal to the IOC. It is clear from the reaction of member associations already, including our own, that the IOC must and will honour its contract to stage the games in Moscow."

Similarly, the Central Council for Physical Recreation (a meeting of sports administrators) called for an immediate meeting

at a mysterious 'new objective' yet to be spelt out - inevitably job loss.

Other phrases such as 'the discipline of planning' and 'cost-effective patterns' describe the ways we are to meet

with Thatcher to oppose her plans to hold any events in Britain.

Now there is talk of preventing the BBC and ITV relaying the Moscow Olympics if (or which read when) they take place!

The BOC started a £1 million public subscription for British Athletics to attend the Moscow games last year. Already half of that has been collected, with donations from firms supplementing the money donated by well-wishers. What will happen to that investment if Thatcher gets her way?

Thatcher's line has met with as little success abroad as it has at home. The great movement to withdraw is represented by the governments of Arabia, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (but even there support is waning). In Europe, the French have already called to accept the invitation to Moscow, the Dutch Olympic Committee, who like the Italian want to go to Moscow, are resisting pressure from the Dutch Parliament to withdraw, and the West Germans seem set to accept, as does Eire.

The president of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, Mr. Abraham Ordia has spoken out in support of the Moscow Olympics. Speaking on behalf of the athletes involved, Mr. Ordia said, "Africa will be there in full force. We will not boycott the Games."

priorities and save on support services, all within 'available resources'. And all with 'staff conservation' of course! The government wants our response - the only correct response is unprintable.

Editorial

THE RISE in unemployment to an official million and a half and an actual figure well in excess of two million comes as no surprise. It is not the accidental result of some world-wide recession over which the Government has little control, but the anticipated effect of a deliberate Government policy of trying to weaken trade unionism and to break the resistance of organised workers to savage cuts in their standard of living by throwing millions of them on the scrap heap. Just as the present Government has proved up to the hilt what we have been saying all along about inflation not being caused by the efforts of workers to resist wage cuts, but by Government policy to impose wage cuts by financial manipulation of the economy.

Both of these obvious facts, rising unemployment and soaring inflation, make nonsense of the claim that is being put forward as an excuse for the Government's labour law legislation - that the trade unions are too powerful and must be curbed. If they were so powerful, how could it be that their members continue to suffer a lowering of their standard of living no matter how hard they struggle against it?

Necessary as that constant struggle is, we must know from our own experience that we cannot safeguard decent living conditions nor guarantee any sort of future to our children as long as those who exploit us, the capitalist class of profit-grubbers, enjoy state power.

The seizure of state power becomes ever more a matter of survival as the actions of a capitalist government against us multiply. Now the Thatcher Government is sweeping aside all bourgeois cant and saying openly in everything it does, 'down with the working class.' We have to take off our social democratic gloves and knock out Thatcher.

It would be ridiculous for anyone to say that we, the working class, cannot do it. Governments have been brought down before without respect to whether or not it was time for the next Parliamentary general election - an event which has all the political significance of changing the guard at Buckingham Palace. But in the case of Heath and Callaghan their dismissal was the by-product of our fight against the Industrial Relations Act and for collective bargaining. The THATCHER OUT movement is directed specifically against someone who personifies the whole anti-working class thrust of an exploiting class.

Faith, Hope and Charity

'CHARITY would be no more if we did not make somebody poor'. Let us take this truthful statement by William Blake to heart. Already hospitals in many regions are obtaining some of their most advanced equipment thanks to the fund raising work of clubs and pubs. Now the Government wants volunteers to play a bigger part in the running of our whole health service, especially in times of industrial unrest. A primary school head called for 'sponsorship' from private industry to keep his school going. Mothers are setting up alternative play schools in areas where nursery provision has been axed.

If we paid a bit more in taxes would they keep British industry? If we paid more rates would our nurseries stay open? Obviously not. Many of our children who scripped and saved to assist the starving abroad will not themselves be able to study properly at school in the coming years as resources become scarcer, meals



March against the cuts in Keele. Photo: The Worker

smaller, clothes, travel and equipment more expensive. Many who have worked to buy body scanners for our hospitals will find themselves, if they become ill, in a cold, understaffed ward, or, more probably, on a dangerously long waiting list.

Education run down in Enfield

ENFIELD teachers have pledged to take action against the latest series of attacks on education planned by the local Tory-controlled council.

The measures read like a Tory shopping list for destruction - school dinners up to 50p, abolition of free school milk, reductions in free travel facilities, a cut of 27 primary school teachers, less grants for university applicants, cuts in the schools maintenance programme, and so on. The meanest cut of all is the stopping of swimming lessons for secondary pupils. The total package amounts to

4 per cent less in the education budget for a council which already prides itself on its meanness.

Enfield Association of the NUT are under no illusions. As their secretary correctly states, "It is quite clear the standards of public provision in education are being run down. "From now on members of the Association will refuse to cover lessons for colleagues absent through illness for more than one day or cover because a vacancy has not been filled. The action is expected to affect half the borough's 100 schools.

Nuclear power stations to increase but installation inspectors can't cope

ON DECEMBER 18th the Government announced plans to press ahead with expansion of Britain's nuclear power generating industry, increasing it to 15,000 megawatts by 1992, by building up to 12 new reactors, most of them at existing sites.

The Thatcher Government programme is based on the policy of building US-style Pressurised Water Reactors (PWR) under licence in Britain. This means abandoning further development of Britain's own independent and unique development - the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor (AGR) which is not only more sophisticated in engineering terms than the PWR, but is inherently safer in operation.

Reliance on the PWR design places Britain once again in a dependent relationship to US technology so that Weinstock and Co. can reap a fast buck at the expense of British industry.

The opponents of nuclear power argue that the industrial world does not need nuclear power and can continue to rely in the main on burning coal, oil and gas. Although these arguments may sound reasonable, they follow from a "flat earth", "anti-industry" view of the future.

The burning of fossil fuels is not only environmentally harmful, but must eventually come to an end. This means that nuclear energy as an alternative energy source will inevitably be developed on an increasing scale in all advanced industrial countries. This does not mean in turn, however, that the price will necessarily be an increase in death, disease and contamination of the environment. In fact, there are very good reasons to suppose that generating electricity from nuclear sources can be considerably safer than conventional kinds of energy production. For example, in the production of electricity from coal, there is the legacy of respiratory disease amongst coal miners (about 600

new cases each year) there are large scale mining disasters (Whitehaven 1947 - 104 dead, Easington 1951 - 83 deaths, more recently Golborne).

In addition about 50 - 60 miners die every year in accidents, and about 500 suffer disabling injuries. This means that if coal continued to be mined for a further 200 years as Britain's main energy source, the cost in human terms could be as high as 12,000 deaths and 100,000 serious injuries.

If it is accepted that the risks from nuclear accidents are qualitatively no different from other accidents, then on the very worst safety assumption about nuclear plants, it is extremely unlikely that nuclear disasters could kill or affect this number of people. This does not mean a nuclear disaster on whatever scale would be any more acceptable than a conventional one. It does, however, expose the erroneous thinking of those who exaggerate the hazards posed to the public by nuclear power, but ignore the much greater risks faced by conventional energy workers.

Naturally occurring radioactive emissions from coal fired plants are often higher than emissions from nuclear plants - not to mention vast quantities of sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and heavy metals evolved in combustion of coal.

So far as a radiation exposure of nuclear workers is concerned, rigorous monitoring by the National Radiological Protection Board has shown this to be consistently well within internationally agreed limits. Mortality studies too have shown cancer rates amongst nuclear workers to be lower than for the population as a whole.

What of the argument that nuclear power provide the raw materials for nuclear weapons? This is the complete reverse of the old CND slogan of "atoms

for peace". Not only is the argument only partially true, but more fundamentally every form of production can be harnessed for war. The question is will we allow a Tory government to stay in power and do just that?

The real issues in nuclear safety in Britain today are exactly the same as in any other field of safety - namely, how many resources and what kind of organisation is going to be allocated to ensure the safety of workers and the general public?

The question of the Nuclear Installations Inspectors is possibly the most fundamental. The NII which was set up in 1960 and is now part of the Health and Safety Executive, has the job of assessing the safety aspects of nuclear plants.

The NII should consist at present of 104 highly qualified and experienced engineers. Because of understaffing due to inadequate salary levels there are only 88 NII inspectors in post and with threatened dispersal of their headquarters from London to Bootle and cuts in the HSE budget, it is likely that NII will shrink still further. This means that not only will the inspectorate be unable to meet the demands of nuclear expansion, but they cannot even cope with their existing responsibilities.

It is precisely this sort of scandal which shows that it is not nuclear power that is inherently so dangerous, but the short cuts which capitalism seeks to take in exploiting it. Only the struggle of organised workers can stop this - by vigilance and by demanding the highest level of safety that can be achieved.

Opposition to nuclear weapons is one thing. But opposition to nuclear power harnessed for peaceful purposes, serves little purpose. At worst it diverts from the real struggle, that against Thatcher's plans for nuclear "development" - her bombs and her US reactors.

Libraries.. books are not for burning

THE DISMANTLING of public and school libraries now amounts to virtual demolition in some areas, making their tardy defence a matter of great urgency.

Warwickshire has decided to close 6 branch libraries and Hertfordshire 4, as well as closing all libraries on Saturday afternoons - the one time when many working people can visit a library. Cheshire is not filling school library posts (which led to a loss of over 3000 books in one school over six months). Nottinghamshire is axing many of its school library posts and has provided no money at all for its central

school library service. Solihull suspended its library service to schools altogether, until recently when one post was restored. These are just a few recent examples.

In Solihull the partial reversal was won after protests by schools and teachers. Hertfordshire now at least has a pressure group to fight it there. The Scottish Library Association are campaigning against the "irretrievable destruction of the whole fabric of rural life" which would result from cuts in library provision. The HMI report on secondary schools published in December and ignored by Thatcher found that over a quarter of all

schools already suffered from poor library provision, understaffing, and depleted, inappropriate stock. The damage to literacy and learning for the whole working class, urban as well as rural, which will result from the current destruction of libraries is all too obvious.

Effective defence, however, awaits the concerted action of librarians to defend their own jobs, raising the necessary support from all public and school library users. If teachers can rally support to stop a school closure, librarians can rally support to stop a library closure

Trimming and compromising put public at risk

IT SAYS something about the state of the fire service in Devon, that the only area in which the brigade could even consider cuts in operational cover was Plymouth, where they would mean the loss of 1 appliance and 8 firemen. This is not at all surprising to anyone familiar with the facilities (or lack of them) on station.

Some of us would make the administration at Headquarters the scapegoat for cuts, but we should realise their job of encour-

aging order and efficiency takes on a more difficult, if not farcical role, as successive purse strings are tied. 'Order' is reduced more and more to a desire to impose discipline on the service - standards are dropping, therefore it must be firemen's attitudes - while direction becomes increasingly a case of trimming and compromising.

Planning becomes almost impossible. As an example, the original idea of an appliance to

deal with many situations (the multi-purpose) as the standard vehicle of the brigade was conceived in the early 1960's. We have only just furnished the whole brigade with such machines. With the cuts, the life of these machines is gradually extended now it is about 15-20 years, but the original idea has to serve 30-40 years of changing technology. This with equipment often inadequate in the first place.

Consett united against destruction

AS the steel strike escalates with the move to bring out workers in the private steel companies, THE WORKER spoke to striking steel workers at their Consett strike headquarters.

By way of introduction the steelmen explained that the fight for wages and the fight to keep Consett open were one and the same thing and that the battle was political, to get Thatcher out.

In announcing its latest schedule of plant closures and the consequent cutback of the labour force, BSC had hoped to split plant from plant, and,

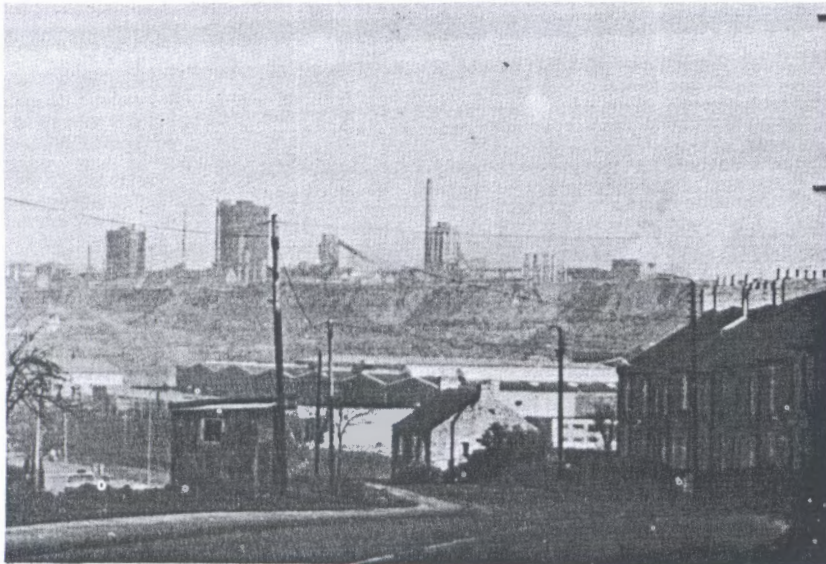
they hoped, force a wage cut on those left. The Consett workers are now united in seeing that only a national struggle against closures will secure the future of all plants.

It was pointed out that the example set by the French steelworkers has struck a chord among British steel workers and that they were now reappraising the whole EEC policy on steel and its tie up with the Thatcher Government's attack on British industry.

The steel workers commented particularly on the assistance and support being given

not only by other British unions such as the NUR, NUM and TGWU, but also by the International Metalworkers Federation, the International Transport Workers Federation and the Swedish steelworkers Union.

The Consett workers went on to tell THE WORKER that Government and the management were liars, prating the need to close 'inefficient' and loss-making plant and yet closing down profitable plants such as Consett. They reiterated the point that BSC's policy is not one of viability but of destruction.



Consett steelworks today. If our steelworks close our local communities die and Britain ceases to be an industrial nation. The fight for wages and to keep the steelworks open are the same fight. Photo: The Worker

Tory Housing Bill is really the Housing Destruction Bill

THE TORY strategy on housing has been made abundantly clear in their Housing Bill which is currently making its way through Parliament.

It is disguised as a document that gives new rights to public sector tenants (the much vaunted Tenants' Charter proposals) and to private sector tenants, but a closer look reveals that, in line with all this government's legislation, its objectives are far from benevolent.

Most importantly, the Bill represents an outright attack on social housing in this country. Through giving Council tenants of 3 years standing the right to buy their houses and flats at substantial discounts, the Government aims to sell off the bulk of the stock. Its vision is to reduce such housing to a small pool of properties catering solely for the elderly, the disabled and the 'socially inadequate' - a return to the days of welfare housing.

Thatcher is so eager to sell off our heritage that she is giving easy terms (in the form of discounts ranging from 33 per cent to 50 per cent of the market value, plus other provisions) to enable tenants on otherwise too low incomes to buy their Council homes with a Council mortgage.

In sharp contrast to the Government's raucous demands for savings in public expenditure, here it chooses to ignore the long-term financial implications of Council house sales. Most studies have shown that although there

appear to be gains in the first year of a property sale, over the life period of the property the local authority stands to lose a considerable amount of public money. This is because the loss of subsidy and potential income is not compensated by capital receipts, mortgage repayments and other savings. A study undertaken in Nottingham between May 1976 and May 1978 indicates that, through its sales in that period, there will be an eventual loss to the Council (i.e. to the working class) of about £75 million.

Aside from these financial considerations, what will the effect of sales be on people presently trapped in private rented accommodation, on the homeless and on urgent Council transfer cases? In London alone in 1978 there were over 200 000 households registered for Council housing, many living in run-down property, often in overcrowded conditions.

The future will be bleak for those people in urgent need of rehousing if the Housing Bill is enacted. Councils, effectively deprived of control over their housing stock, will be left with a mish-mash of property - flats with massive maintenance problems the least attractive properties that nobody wants to buy, and inevitably an even more chronic mismatch between dwelling sizes and actual demand than presently exists.

All this, at a time when there are severe Government constraints

on further expansion in the public sector, either by new building or municipalisation. The Building and Civil Engineering Economic Development Committees recently predicted that new starts in the public sector for 1980 will fall to 80 000 and in 1981 to 70 000, as against the 1979 figure of 107 000. By 1981 they predict that the house building programme as a whole (both public and private sectors) will fall to the lowest level of production since 1948. This, at a time, when the construction industry is desperately underemployed: when housing waiting lists and homelessness are growing.

The attack by the Thatcher Government on Council housing (i.e. housing that is allocated on the basis of housing need and not ability to pay) is part of the whole attack on public services - services won by the working class over 200 years of struggle.

The fightback against cuts in housing has proved slow to get off the ground. Time is not on our side. With the publication of the Tory's Housing Bill (i.e. Housing Destruction Bill), the working class must organise to fight against the destruction of housing in this country, as it is doing in other industries like health and education. Nalgo members in local government can make a stand by refusing to co-operate with Council house sales - but any such moves must be actively supported by the rest of the class.

SHOPWORKERS SUPPORT STEEL WORKERS

S. E. London USDAW resolution passed unanimously at Lewisham and Deptford Trades Council:

"That this Trades Council conveys its solidarity and complete support to the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the National Union of Blastfurnacemen in their just struggle against insulting pay offers, and the lunatic plans of Thatcher and her asset strippers to hive off our industry and attack the whole trade union movement.

Your fight is our fight.
No to closure!
No to cuts!
Out with Thatcher!"

Strong reaction in Oxon against demolition of nursery education

A SORDID squabble is going on in the ranks of Oxfordshire's Tory councillors over the demolition of nursery education in the county. It amounts to a disagreement about destroying all nursery education immediately, with the more tender hearted favouring an 'alternative' of less cuts in nursery schooling combined with more cuts in staffing for secondary schools. Their disarray undoubtedly results from the strong reaction of parents and teachers against the attack on nursery education.

In November, the council resolved to close all the nursery schools and classes in Oxfordshire. The 12 nursery schools and 16 nursery classes, most of which are in the City of Oxford itself, were already too few. Parents were demanding more nursery provision, not less. But the council, in its eagerness to implement the spending cuts called for by the Government,

chose to attack the nursery sector first and most viciously calculating that it was the weakest. They even dared to use the argument that nursery education in Oxfordshire is inadequate to try to justify cutting it out altogether.

Government ministers have the gall to declare that they are in favour of expanding nursery education, that they don't like what Oxfordshire County Council is doing but: are powerless to stop it. They even use the phrase from the TUC charter for the under-fives: "Provision of nursery education for all children aged three and four years whose parents wish them to benefit from it." But with what a difference of intent they use it. The Government ministers' mouth noises intended to sound good while actually destroying our education service. The TUC calls for what its members want and what, if we are prepared to fight for it, we can win.

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