



UNDER THREAT — 200 YEARS OF WORKING CLASS CIVILISATION

THE BARBARIANS who rule this country have decreed that some 4000 million pounds is to be cut from public expenditure. And this on top of the cuts announced already. In terms of their scale and sheer savagery, these cuts are the biggest ever to be made. In fact, it is the demolition of a structure achieved by the organised working class through two centuries of struggle.

Having made their decision, the Cabinet ministers are now working out the details. But no one needs a crystal ball to see that they will amount to the complete dismemberment of a system of health care, education, housing and social service which many of us have hitherto taken for granted.

Some pointers to the future have already appeared. There are plans for the closure of universities, old people's homes and whole branches of medical care. Council house rents are to be increased, nursery education may disappear completely, museums may close.

They call it an attack on "waste". But really it is only an



Mass demonstration on July 17 at Mold, Clwyd, against cuts in education and the arts.

Cash bonanza but less jobs

FOLLOWING the government's Budget statement of intent to "dispose of" £1 000 million worth of state assets in British industry, a whole series of announcements and proposals is being made about the sale of shares in the NEB's holdings, British Airways, British Shipbuilders, the Post Office, BNOC and so on.

£100 million worth of NEB assets (in Ferranti, Brown Boveri Ken, ICL and possibly Fairey Holdings) are to be sold off in the first stage of handing over the whole of the £4 000 million corporation's industry, consisting mainly of British Leyland, Rolls Royce (1971), and Alfred Herbert, to private enterprise by 1984. A "substantial minority" of British Airways shares is also to be sold off, and the BA management has taken this as a signal to free them from any

future obligation to "Buy British".

Cancellation of the BAe146 is almost a foregone conclusion after the turbulent stop-go history of production of this once all-British aircraft. Several shipbuilding companies are also engaged in "informal talks" with the government about purchase of the lucrative naval shipbuilding yards. To their credit, shop stewards on the Clyde have threatened massive resistance to any attempts by government to sell off parts of their industry.

The government's proposals to "hive off" vast chunks of our national industries are a clear example of their willingness to dismantle and destroy Britain's industrial base in order to divide a working class united in collective bargaining.

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attack on people. The attack even extends to the old, who will be evicted from their special homes and flung willy-nilly into outdated and overworked geriatric wards in hospitals, there to live out their lives in misery, their dignity lost. It is an attack on children, who will be deprived of education, barred from developing those skills on which civilisation depends. One council has decided that handicapped children will no longer have the "luxury" of holidays.

Even the blind must suffer. We now have a Minister for the Disabled whose sole task in life is to make the handicapped more so. Last Thursday he told the Royal National Institute for the Blind that "he would not insult them by suggesting they contract out of Britain's problem." So increased mobility allowances for the blind fly out the window for years to come. The Civil Service Department, which oversees administratively the whole machine of government, has told all Whitehall departments that they must prepare plans for cutting staff. By the end of the summer, they are to have worked out ways of reducing manpower by 10, 15 and even 20 per cent. This will not only mean tens of thousands of redundancies, but also a decimation of standards of service to the public. Already, the civil service unions are making plans to fight this threat.

It is said that Britain is a civilised country. If this is true, then it is only because the working class has fought for what civilisation we have. For two hundred years, ever since the brutality of the Industrial Revolution, the working class has fought for dignity. We have fought for an end to squalor, disease, illiteracy and slums. There was a time when health care was for the rich, when unemployment meant starvation, when education was too seditious for the common people. Now we have the spectre of that time returning, masked in the mathematics of £4000 million.

BRITAIN has doubled its oil exports to West Germany to 5 million tons in the first half of this year, and is now Germany's fourth largest supplier. Britain has about 90 per cent of Europe's oil reserves. No wonder the EEC is keen on British membership. It appears that Britain's net contribution to the EEC budget will be substantially over the £1000 million forecast for next year.

THE EEC whose Davignon Plan dictates the loss of thousands of jobs at Corby and Shotton is unanimously granting £315 000 to 500 steel workers in the Midlands. They have already lost their jobs in steel making.

MINERS' LEADERS in the North East presented the NCB with a plan to open a chain of drift mines in Durham, to mine 301 grade coal to mix with 501 grade for coking coal. The BSC's decision to import 301 from Australia for steel making at Redoar, is seen as a blow to jobs in the coal fields of the North East. Possibly the same resolve as that which saved Deep Duffryn pit in Wales will yet be needed here

UNEMPLOYMENT rose by 120,117 to 1,463,482. Unemployed school leavers trebled to 215,526. The rate of unemployment is now over 6 per cent, and forecast soon to reach two million. And the government's figures are cooked so as to understate the problem!

CPSA AND SCPS members taking industrial action since April have received the Post Office's 'final offer'. The union executives are recommending acceptance to the disappointment of many members who feel the offer will do nothing to stem the steady flow of experienced workers out of the PO or to meet the effects of inflation over the current year. The total rise looks good at around 18-20 per cent but this represents a real rise of only 14 per cent for the pay period April 1979-1980. Selective strikers at Leeds and Harmondsworth have already said 'NO'.

LAST YEAR 50,000 Ford workers took the lead in smashing through the Government's pay policy. Now 50,000 Ford workers have just lodged a claim for a 'substantial' pay increase.

WITHIN DAYS of offering the profitable British Airways shares to private investors, the government is doing the same to British Aerospace, whose profits were £29m last year. Doubtless we will see asset-stripping on a phenomenal scale. It is another story on the military side, where the Government remains firmly in control, and ensures that military aviation far outstrips the civil side.

THE CAUSES of the peasant revolts in 1549 were numerous. One writer summed them up at the time by saying: "The most substance of our feeding was wont to be on beef, and now it is on mutton. And so many mouths goeth to mutton, which causes mutton to be dear."

In reality sheep were eating up beef, men and their small, private strips of land, their common holdings, and everything of value for the peasant class was being destroyed. Most couldn't afford to buy the mutton which grazed on the lands once owned by them as taxes were being forced up with prices, less people were required to work on the land, houses were being pulled down and rents were going up far above the means of the traditional peasant. People were being physically removed from their land and told to accept vagrancy as a viable alternative.

Many spoke out against the evils of this change. John Bayker, a self-described 'poor artificer

or craftsman, wrote: "Is it not a pitiful case, to come into a little village or town where there hath been twenty or thirty houses and now are half of them but bare walls standing?"

When the peasants came together to oppose this destruction they were not just fighting against enclosures but they were openly defying the Government and all it stood for. If we look at the complaints of the rebels in Norfolk we see that all of them were directed against a class enemy which no longer intended to rule and administer a peasantry and small-scale productive forces; it needed to seize their land for its new commercial enterprise, destroy the peasants and exploit the resulting class who owned nothing and could only sell their labour power.

In 1497 Cornishmen had marched on London in protest against Henry VII's raising of their taxes in order to finance his war efforts. When they reached

Blackheath Fields the King's men attacked and massacred two hundred of them. In 1549 they were wiser and joined with men from Devon and the neighbouring counties to form a strong army. They stole weapons from the yeomen and squires and allied themselves with the gentlemen equally affected by the dramatic economic changes of the time who were able to offer them their knowledge of warfare.

Local enemies they speedily imprisoned. They took over villages and churches and the whole of St Michael's Mount and rebuffed all the desperate promises of reforms handed out to them by Government officials. They were disciplined and well armed, and at the beginning of July 3,000 of them laid siege to Exeter.

They underestimated the forces of Exeter and the Government's troops sent to destroy them, but lacked no sense of courage and ingenuity; at one stage the tanners amongst

them started to dig tunnels to attack the city craftily by sneaking up under its walls. Smaller uprisings occurred elsewhere in the country, but in Norfolk the struggle for land, wages, food and employment took on an organised military form.

So threatened were the rulers that power struggles erupted among them, as they still do, if one ruler failed to deal effectively with the rebels then he could be replaced. Though not united like the Red Army in China four hundred years later, the peasants and others, through disciplined action in many parts of the country, were making it impossible for their common enemies to rule in the old way. It was a sign of the ruler's weakness that they had to employ foreign soldiers for their offensive, a kind of primitive NATO of cut-throats, in order to make up their number. An account of how the people's armies fared in Devon and Norfolk will appear over the next two weeks.

Sino-British alliance loses face at Geneva Conference

MRS THATCHER's government, represented by Lord Carrington, continued to act as Mussolini to China's Hitler at the Geneva Conference last week. Fortunately the attempt to isolate Vietnam failed.

The conference was originally demanded as a platform for an anti-Vietnam polemic. But as a result of the consistent demands by Vietnam for a genuine attempt to solve some of the problems, concrete proposals were made and large sums of money raised.

With great dignity the Vietnamese explained that existing policy was the result of previous International meetings which had approved her proposals, as had the High Commissioner of Refugees at the UN. The Vietnamese delegate expressed sympathy with Indo-Chinese states for whom the refugees could be an economic calamity. As the delegate left the rostrum he was embraced by the Malaysian delegate in gratitude.

Lord Carrington introduced the first sour note: the problem was internal to Vietnam, he said, Vietnam must change its policies — by order! As Britain's contribution all food aid to Vietnam would be cancelled forthwith.

The only occasion on which Kurt Waldheim had to use his

gavel was with the Chinese delegate, whose policy of disruption of racial philosophy and of reversal of the truth brings to mind the close parallel of Hitler in the 1930's. Chinese communities are scattered throughout SE Asia as were Germans throughout Central Europe. Since 1978 Chinese policy has been that all ethnic Chinese owe allegiance to China — shades of the Sudetenland. Yet China had the nerve to make accusations of Hitlerite policies of genocide; the big lie lives on.

Both the question of genocide and the nature of Teng's tame parrots in Whitehall were further exposed at a meeting of the Britain-Vietnam Association held at the House of Commons on Thursday 26th July. First the tame parrots — the text of a letter sent by Neil Marten, Minister for Overseas Development to Andrew Bennett MP on the question of food aid to Kampuchea was read out:

"There is no immediate likelihood of any change in the Government's attitude to the Vietnamese backed regime in Kampuchea; we still recognise the Government headed by Pol Pot.

"In the circumstances there was no question of introducing an official bilateral aid programme

for Kampuchea. In our present financial situation it would in any case be very difficult for us to find money for any new programme.

"On food aid, we are not at present considering any donation to Kampuchea. Our reserves for 1979 and those of the EEC are already very low; and we would not wish to allocate food aid to a country where we have no representations and especially when there is such a strong case for giving more food aid to other deficit countries such as Bangladesh."

The horrifying facts of the Pol Pot regime, beloved of Mrs Thatcher, were described by Wilfred Burchett just returned from Kampuchea. On a very rough estimation forty per cent of the male population is dead. In the villages there is a ratio of approximately six women to one man, there are children under twelve and there are women — few old people survive. Worse than the destruction of city life was a wholesale transfer of rural population from East to West, North to South and vice-versa. Those on the borders of Vietnam were moved, contaminated by contact over the border, as those bordering Laos, the fishermen in the South contaminated by

Vietnamese fishermen. These populations are walking back to their villages, carrying what they have, and one vital possession — a cooking pot. Practically one hundred per cent of the population suffer an illness — the most common being malnutrition. Also common are women's diseases relating to hard labour, loss of menstruation and spontaneous abortions. About eighty per cent of trained medical staff were massacred as "Intellectuals".

Disastrous famine was averted by the delivery by Vietnam of three months supply of rice. In the face of this, the invasion by China and bad harvests this year, Britain cancels food aid! What diabolic plot had they hoped to hatch. What ineptitude — our food reserves too low? — have the butter mountains gone rancid?

But Vietnam is not a 'Czechoslovakia' — her 'Sudetenland' was tamely given up. For the moment China has isolated herself, the second "Punishment" War is delayed. But in Britain the slander of the media has been frightening, the ability to create such a massive propaganda campaign, so quickly and on such a lie is a new development. The big lie technique is ludicrous when exposed, but vicious when not.

Battle for power

THE RESULT of the second ballot of 96,000 workers in the supply industry was announced on July 24. It was a clear rejection of the offer which was recommended by the four unions concerned (AU?W, EEU?TU, TGWU and GMWU). There were 34,097 votes in favour of acceptance and 49,151 against. A clear majority of more than 15,000 against. This rejection reflects the anger felt by the supply workers at the smallness of the money offered particularly when the Government is creating an inflation rate of 20 per cent. The demand is for 23½ per cent and two weeks strike notice has been given. The employers and government should think long and hard before taking on one of the most powerful groups of workers in the country. If they decide to take them on they will soon be faced with a humiliating defeat at the hands of a determined section of the working class.



July 20 rally by Corby steelworkers against BSC's closure plans. Photo John Sturrock/Report.

Editorial

THERE could be no better example than the so-called "oil crisis" or "energy crisis" of the way capitalism works--or, at this stage of world wide decline, does not work.

The key to the whole problem is the question of profit, which is the sole motivating force of the capitalist system. In theory the capitalist seeks his profit by serving some need of the people more efficiently than his rivals; but serving people's needs is merely an accident of the process. As capitalist monopoly develops, the needs of the people get pushed further and further into the background. Once the industrialised world has been made oil-dependent, bigger profits can be made by the oil companies from a shortage of oil by distributing it at enormously inflated prices, than from an abundance of oil provided at reasonable prices.

Even when waste is recognised as an element in the so-called "oil crisis", the only result is a piddling campaign to get individuals to save energy. No attempt is made to save by switching to forms of transportation that use less oil but are less profitable. No attempt is made to stop the enormous energy wastage of imperialism. The US destroyed enough energy in its wars against Korea and Vietnam and in its policing of the world for capitalism to keep its own productive economy running for years. And the waste of the other imperialist countries in maintaining vast armed forces throughout the world is colossal. From the point of view of profit, war and the preparation for it are the best possible ways for energy to be used up.

Sources of energy are abundant. There is enough accessible coal to supply all the world's energy needs for the next three to four hundred years; but coal mines are closed down because they are "uneconomic". World oil stocks may be limited but hundreds of alternative sources are known and could be developed: conversion of coal into oil, already well-advanced experimentally in this country; wind and solar energy systems; wave and tide-harnessing schemes; biomass; the conversion of vegetable matter into fuel, and so forth. They all remain unexploited because they are "uneconomic". Uneconomic means simply that they are not as profitable as easily-extracted oil. And the fact that the oil might be limited in supply or really belong to someone else has never bothered the big companies. On this highly profitable commodity has been raised a vast oil-dependent industry including such giants as General Motors, ICI, Shell, Ford, Toyota, Dunlop-Pirelli--a huge edifice raised on the sand of rapidly disappearing oil stocks.

The clumsy anti-social way in which profit-bound capitalism has to proceed in increasing the amount of available oil is shown by the present British Government's action over North Sea oil. In order to attract the private oil companies to increase exploration and development, the British National Oil Corporation, which was some guarantee that the oil would be developed in Britain's own interest, has to be cut back; the looting and wastage of our oil reserves has to be made a highly profitable venture.

But what is "uneconomic" in the narrow capitalist sense of profitable may be the most economic source of energy in terms of what best meets people's energy needs with the least harm to them and to their children. The concept of "social cost" which takes into account present by-products as well as future consequences of the exploitation of any particular energy source is alien to the world of capitalism. The question of nuclear energy and how large a part it should play in meeting our future needs, raises the question of social cost in its most crucial form. This problem cannot be solved in the people's interest under a capitalist system. That does not mean that nuclear energy, in spite of the difficulties of nuclear waste disposal and safety guarantees for plants, may not play an important part in serving people's needs in the future. It does mean that we must not allow the profit-grubbers to have any say in the matter.

For the oil companies oil exists only as a commodity on a par with ice cream and cigarettes. The fact that oil is a source of energy is completely incidental.

Oil is realised as a source of energy only by the consumer. To the consumer it has a use value, to run a motor car or heat a house. To the oil companies which extract, refine and transport it, it has an exchange value only; a commodity to be exchanged into money capital which, being greater than the original expenditure, makes a profit. The fact that production of commodities is for one purpose (making profit) while its consumption is for an entirely different purpose (in the case of oil as a source of energy) is the cause of the present crisis, all crisis, capitalist crisis.

Ships jobs battle on in earnest

IF THE THATCHER government gets its way, the destruction of British shipbuilding is assured.

Capacity is to be cut by more than a third, 10,000 jobs to be eliminated by 1981 plus many more jobs in related industries. 6,000 shipbuilding jobs had already been axed by the previous government.

At Doxford's marine engineering works, on the Wear,

the only slow speed engine builders in Britain, 487 redundancies have been announced. On the Clyde Scott Lithgow and John G. Kincaid are to merge with the loss of between 300 and 500 jobs. Barclay Curle ceased marine engine production last year and Clarke-Hawthorn of Tyneside has paid off 200, and more are to go. At this rate Britain will soon be left with no marine engineering.

The announcement by British Shipbuilding of the predicted, and, in a sense, planned loss of £49 million is the excuse the Government uses

THE STATE OF BRITAIN/Industry

PLESSEY LOCKOUT

IN PURSUIT of a 20 per cent claim, ASTMS (technical) staff workers at Plessey Telecommunications on Merseyside, having exhausted procedure, decided that only industrial action would budge the Company.

The Company's offer is 10 per cent, plus frills which benefit only about 40 per cent of the membership. A mass meeting on 13 July unanimously rejected the offer and decided on a course of selective strikes and a total overtime ban, backed up by a levy from the membership. As the members withdrawn are maintenance engineers, the effects were swiftly felt by the company, who are still crying poverty in spite of a cut in the wage bill due to four successive years of redundancies and increased yearly profits.

On 24 July, each ASTMS member received a letter from the

company stating that until normal working was resumed all 650 members would be locked out. The workers fully realized that their current and future credibility was at stake, and that if they backed down, any future action would be nullified at the first threat of layoff. The mass-meeting vote in favour of continuation was solid, and picketing of the 3 sites Edge Lane, Huyton and Gillmoss, is now taking place.

The workers are resolved that they will stay out until the company make a reasonable offer in the context of the respective offers from the Post Office of 16 per cent; GEC 20 per cent plus, and installation workers 23-28 per cent.

Meanwhile, on the inside, the police are investigating a possible management fraud; but the workers on the outside know that the real fraud is the wages system!



In 1834 six men were arrested at Tolpuddle, Dorset. Brine and Hammett, the Stanfields and the Loveless brothers were sentenced to be transported as convicts for the crime of organising a trade union. Over a century later, the struggle of the working class for dignity continues. The picture shows John Hose, President of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, addressing the annual Tolpuddle Rally, held on July 22, outlining the farmworkers' case for a wage of £100 a week. Photograph by Tony Martin, courtesy of "The Landworker".

Cleveland workers fight cuts

ON AUGUST 1st Cleveland County Council will announce their proposals to implement the Government's required cuts of 3-5 per cent in this financial year, and stand to be congratulated on their novel way of dealing with opposition to the cuts.

Their cuts will mean changing school hours to 8.00pm to 2.00pm; lowering standards of school meals reducing teaching staff by 155; ending foreign language classes; axing teachers for the blind and deaf; stopping swimming lessons; ending school bus passes; ending school milk; ending staff recruitment in homes for the elderly; axing 50 home helps; ending holidays for the handicapped; turning off two out of three street lights; stopping road repairs and cutting street cleaning; lowering the standard and supply of equipment to the fire service eg, breathing apparatus, foam, hoses etc.

If these measures are likely to make the workers of Cleveland take to the streets in protest then the County Council have the answer.

They intend to increase the Police Force by 500! However the police force are not free from demands for savings and they have decided to re-cycle notebooks and paper.

This open and vicious attack on North East workers is being fought by public and private sector trade unions. As a speaker at a recent NUPE mass meeting in South Cleveland stated, "The attack on our youth through education cuts is also an attack on tomorrow's industrial base in Britain. The attack on the aged and the sick represents a deliberate attack on the right to care in old age and during sickness that workers have fought for. All workers in Cleveland have a responsibility to fight these cuts which are a continuation of the cuts brought in by the Labour Government."

Trade unionists in Cleveland will hold their debate on the cuts in Middlesbrough Town Hall while the councillors hold theirs. While the councillors plan their attacks on the workers, the workers will plan their attack

Commission makes stand for the NHS

THE REPORT of the Royal Commission on the NHS, briefly reported in last week's issue, makes a timely assertion of the worth of the National Health Service:

"We must say as clearly as we can that the NHS is not suffering from a mortal disease susceptible only to heroic surgery".

The Report is a slap in the face for the Tory Government; but they are preparing their own review for the Autumn, when they will implement only those proposals which suit them — like abolishing the Area Health Authorities, not to provide a better structure but to axe jobs and save money and to "hive off" health units to voluntary bodies at "peppercorn rents". They intend to press on with health insurance schemes, and have refused to cover increased costs in running the health service due to their own rise in VAT, the recent pay rises and under-estimation of inflation — clearly we will have to fight to defend the Commission's conclusions and for the implementation of its proposals.

False assumption

Not everything the Report says is good, however, not least its assumption that we cannot expect more than an emasculated health service during our economic troubles; what causes these is, of course, beyond its brief. It also claims that London, although needing a special enquiry into its particular problems, is nonetheless over-provided with research and training facilities, and hospitals, and says that the notorious Resources Allocation Working Party formula of redistribution merely needs to be refined. The failure to understand how this historic concentration of resources in fact serves the whole country, and its dissipation, already begun, would be a loss to all, underlies, too, the proposals for devolving the running of the NHS to the Regions and Districts, which the BMA criticised as likely to lead to uneven provision of services from place to place.

One archaic prejudice that has slipped into the Report is that doctors should "assume total care of patients regardless of times of duty or other commitments", so that the payment of overtime so recently won by the junior doctors, would be lost.

Right to strike

Finally, it rejects any idea of a "no-strike" compulsion on health workers, but misses the point in calling for the Unions to establish a better system of relations with management in the Service; although unnecessarily disruptive actions have taken place, the primary causes of industrial action are low wages, overwork, and cuts, and only ending these will bring peace to the Health Service.



Hospital workers picket the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Area Health Authority to save St. Mary's Hospital. Photo: Ian McIntosh/IFL.

Ambulance service set for the chop

THE OVERBURDENED ambulance service has great difficulty in coping with accidents and emergencies. Indeed, at the scene of any major accident, an appropriately equipped and trained medical officer also needs to be present as quickly as possible. The government assures us of its concern but it means to cut the ambulance transportation service in the guise of providing better emergency cover. After closing down many casualty departments, particularly in the Thames region, decimation of the ambulance service is the next logical step.

There are 70 accident and rescue bodies operating in Britain organised by the British Association of Immediate Care Schemes (BASICS). These schemes are GP and hospital organised and involve about 1200 doctors. The very first general practitioner accident scheme was started in Yorkshire in 1967 and a good example of a GP scheme is the Wye based Kent Accident Rescue and Emergency Service (KARES). Wye Kares, inaugurated in 1972, involves three doctors in a group practice. They have a fully equipped emergency rescue vehicle purchased in 1977, the

running costs being met by the group. The scheme covers 100 square miles and notification is by 999 call through the ambulance service. Many doctors use their own private cars and carry extra resuscitation equipment. In 25 per cent of the calls the doctor is the first on the scene of the accident. It is a worthwhile life-saving scheme the finance for which, and for all other such services, is totally from the working class. In Kent, the local community have contributed over £7000 to the scheme and none of the doctors are paid for the calls.

Laudible though such efforts are, we must be careful not to allow capitalism to use our good intentions to assist the destruction of the NHS. There is no grant or health service support from the state; there should be. We must fight to make sure there is.

A truly comprehensive ambulance accident and emergency service will be established when those who care control the state. All that is morally positive is proletarian. To express these qualities fully, however, we must develop the ruthlessness needed to deal with the bourgeoisie which treats human being so callously.

Cash Bonanza, from page 1

As the Post Office workers have already found out, their refusal to accept a productivity deal that would undoubtedly weaken their bargaining strength and lead to even greater unemployment, has been met with the threat to split their industry into "profitable" and "unprofitable" sectors, and to run down the labour intensive side of the industry.

From the point of view of the working class, the whole argument about who is profitable and who is not, is entirely divisive and diversionary. As the example of the British Steel Corporation shows, at a time when the steel industry was being used as a "trial model" for rationalisation through the

EEC back in 1970, a fraction of the industry is considered profitable enough for intensive exploitation, whilst the bulk of it is abandoned and run down. Within a year of the "hiving off" of special steels, the BSC reported near-bankruptcy, prices were raised, and redundancies followed.

"Hiving off" has never been a means of saving jobs for even a minority of workers, only of increasing capitalism's profits in the short term by incorporating workers in all kinds of productivity deals and incentive schemes that undermine skills and industry in the long term. Where has the "hiving off" of North Sea oil fields to foreign capitalists (by a Labour government as well) ever got us?

Highbury Hill fights for survival against ILEA plans

AN ISLINGTON school is fighting for its life: Highbury Hill, with a distinctive history stretching back to 1844, has suddenly unleashed a furious assault on plans to close the school.

The Inner London Education Authority has approved plans to "amalgamate" the school with nearby Shelburne and produce a new school on the Highbury Hill site. But everybody knows there is room for both schools and unless both schools survive there is likely to be a serious lack of places for girls in North Islington.

Anticipating the decision, the Highbury Hill teachers descended upon the fateful meeting of the ILEA's Education Committee and professed their determination to fight the plan and to win. Parents have met, pupils have met, friends of the school have met. The parents of pupils in local primary schools have been alerted. The result has been a profusion of letters, leaflets, posters, fighting funds and exchanges with the press. The Highbury Hill motto "After victory tighten your helmet chords" mentions no possibility of defeat.

The Highbury Hill view is reflected at Shelburne and there are prospects of a united fight to stave off the destruction.

Islington has been chosen by the ILEA, ironically under serious attack from reactionary quarters who want to demolish the rela-

Some "educationalists" have argued that the reduction in the number of schools is inevitable given falling numbers. Furthermore big schools are said to be necessary to provide adequate stimulation from fellow pupils, and to provide a wide curriculum.

But the people of Islington have been more realistic and more ambitious for their children. They want to see their school buildings remain, and if they can keep their teachers this will guarantee the curriculum. Meanwhile, they do not want long and dangerous journeys for their children to go to school, and with the stresses of inner-city life are quite happy with smaller groups and more concentrated educational attention.

tively generous educational provision in Inner London, as the first area in which to "re-organise" secondary schools, supposedly because of falling rolls. The ILEA has conducted a hasty "mass consultation" exercise and have not been at all daunted by the vigorous and widespread opposition to the axing of schools.

They have decided upon a series of four amalgamations. The six years during which the amalgamations will be completed promise six years of horror. Not long after the six-year period the school population will be on the verge of rising again. The "baby-boom" has been under way for some time now.

Protest against E.Sussex cuts

IN EAST SUSSEX the fight back against social service, education and local government cuts has begun. The East Sussex branch of NALGO organised a demonstration in Lewes on July 17, with NUPE, NUT, TGWU and NUR also present, to coincide with the County Council's meeting on the cuts; hundreds of trade unionists took time off work to protest.

The County Council has cut £2.5 million from its present budget, with the social services and education as prime targets. East Sussex, with a high proportion of elderly in its population is to have six old people's homes closed; no longer will telephones be provided for the chronically sick and disabled; nor will holidays for the elderly, mentally or physically handicapped;

and six children's homes will be closed with 40 children involved in this, the Year of the Child.

In education, 20 teacher's posts are to be cut, charges will be made for pupils' musical instrument lessons, adult education fees are to be greatly increased and Youth and Community services are to be reduced.

Other services to be chopped will include the closure of a 4-year-old, purpose-built branch library in an area with no other social amenities.

Along with all the usual "financial" and "greedy worker" explanations, the Council has provided an amazing rationale for the cuts. The cuts are said to represent "progress". Next year home help and other home based services are up for the chop!

Bookshops

Bellman Bookshop 155 Fortress Road, London NW5
Brighton Workers Bookshop 37 Gloucester Road, Brighton
Main Trend Books 17 Midland Road, St. Philips, Bristol
Northern Star Bookshop 18A Leighton Street, Leeds
Basildon Bookstall Tues, Fri, Sat Marketplace
Hull Bookstall Old Town Market, Saturdays
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