

LEEDS STUDENT



SPECIAL ISSUE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10th, 1971

SPECIAL ISSUE

Mrs. Thatcher's report reveals . . .

GOVT. ATTACK ON STUDENT UNIONS

Editorial

The Government is attacking Student Unions!
They say it is because we are irresponsible with the tax-payers' money.

Mrs. Thatcher has issued a report proposing drastic changes in the methods of handling Union money. We think they will rob us of our independence, making us the servants of the University authorities. We will be in the position of a Trade Union which is completely financed by its employer.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE?

Local Education Authorities pay money to the unions on behalf of the individual students; but the amount to be paid is decided between the university and the union—the local education authority has no say or control of the money.

Because of this, the government think we are too independent and need stricter control. They say we cannot handle our own money, but we can show them that we are able.

They can look at our books, we know that there is nothing wrong with them.

Student unions have been accused of misusing public funds for giving donations to political causes, paying legal fees and expenses and favouring left-wing organisations.

We can honestly say that we do not do this.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IS UNNECESSARY!

We do nothing illegal; perhaps they think that checks should be there just in case we do.

But checks already exist upon student finance. The Union Constitution forbids payments which are beyond "the normal range of student union activities."

If the Union acts outside its constitution, it can be sued in the civil courts (as recently happened at Sussex). Besides, all Union finance is properly audited by professional accountants to make sure that nothing underhand is going on.

WHAT ARE THE REAL AIMS OF THESE PROPOSALS?

They are intended to weaken student unions. The government wish to do this for two reasons; to save money for themselves and for Local Education Authorities, and to destroy the National Union of Students.

Mrs. Thatcher and the rest of the government are fighting a battle against any independent bodies which oppose them. That is why they are attacking the trade unions through the Industrial Relations Act. That is why they are attacking student unions through this new report which can be carried out without it becoming an Act.

That is why we need your support in our fight against the government over these proposals.

THE Department of Education and Science released a Consultative Document on student unions last Wednesday.

The document, which the Minister of Education, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, insisted was nothing more than a working paper, has met with considerable opposition from union presidents throughout the country.

Mr. Digby Jacks, President of the National Union of Students, has condemned the reports as being a "recipe for destroying student unions".

The report sets out the defects of the present system, the proposed alternative and how the latter will work.

DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

(1) Local authorities pay union subscriptions, but have no control over the amount, which is agreed upon by only the union, and the university or college concerned. (The local authority has no say in the amount set.)

(2) Unions sometimes spend local authority money on causes which would "more appropriately be taken from voluntary contributions".

(3) Part-time students often have to find the cash for their union fee from their own pockets.

PROPOSED NEW SYSTEM

(1) All full and part-time students will automatically be members of the union but members will be able to "opt out on grounds of conscience", whilst still being allowed to use all Union facilities.

(2) The university or college will be responsible for providing and maintaining Union facilities from its general funds. The amount of money made available for this will depend on local circumstances.

(3) All clubs and societies will be financed by subscriptions from individual students, the student maintenance grant being increased by a modest sum to cover such expenses. The Union will NOT be able to give ANY money to ANY clubs and societies.

HOW THE PROPOSALS WILL WORK

(1) No NEW legislation will be necessary — only amendments to existing regulations will be needed.

(2) Universities and unions will have to negotiate in order to fix the sum required for general facilities and then application to the University Grants Committee will be made by the University in their quinquennial submissions.

(3) There is no "in principle" objection to an institution providing -names for N.U.S. subscriptions.

(4) It is not intended that the scheme should lead to an increase in public expenditure.



Mrs. Thatcher in Leeds last Wednesday.

What your M.P. thinks

ALDERMAN Stanley Cohen, Labour M.P. for Leeds S. E. questioned whether Mrs. Thatcher understood the full implications of her Consultative Report at a Constituents' meeting on Saturday.

He considered that the document was a blatant attack on student unions, which was just what Mrs. Thatcher had wanted.

In the House of Commons on Friday Ted Short, Shadow Minister of Education, made clear his opposition to the proposal.

However, the Parliamentary Labour Party has not met yet to discuss the Consultative Report, but Alderman Cohen said that he would personally

by Pete Reader

do everything possible to press for a policy of rejection of the Report. He thought the acceptance of his viewpoint to be likely.

Mr. Cohen is also considering raising the matter in the House during Question Time this week.

Personally Mr. Cohen views the report in the same light as that of the attack on the Trade Unions as instigated in the Industrial Relations Bill.

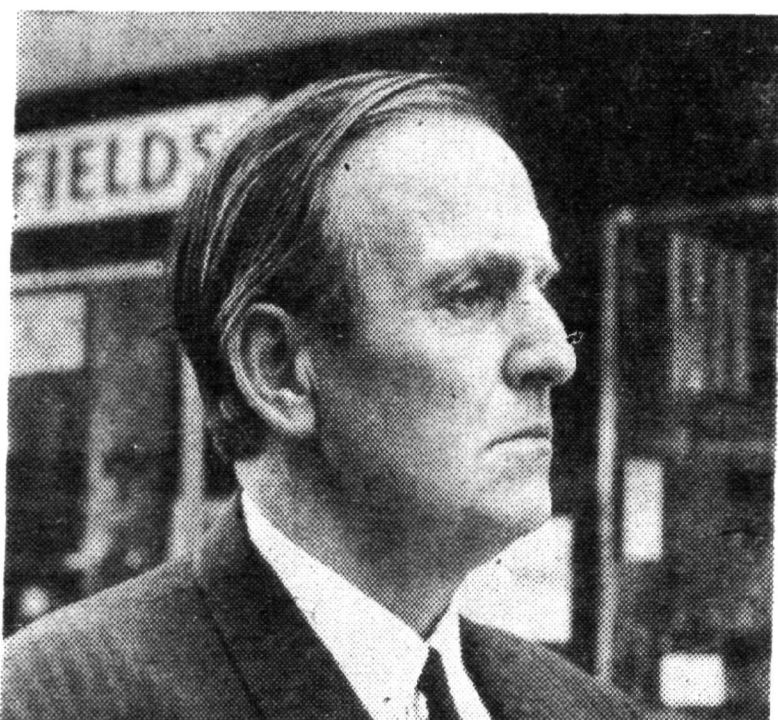
But the chances of preventing the report from becoming law he considers slight as the Government is so unbending in its attitudes.

"This Government considers flexibility as a weakness," he said.

What does the man in the street think...

by S. P. Meyer

Pictures by Nigel Thompson



"The minority with their L.S.D. etc. give a bad impression to the whole. But the students should retain control of their unions."

THE Government is pushing its proposals on student unions through Parliament on the pretext of public demand for tighter control over students. Commentators, the media, even students themselves assume that tax-payers are anti-student, that they believe the freaks are typical of all students.

Is this true? To find out, Leeds Student went into the city to talk to shoppers. Their reactions were interesting, and will surprise the Government who think they have wide support.

For one thing, we found no hostility to students. Some people we interviewed said that their first reactions to students were to think of "demonstra-



"Oh, they're alright. No, I don't think there should be any more control; they're sensible."

tors" and "a lunatic fringe." On reflection, though, they all said that the majority — one man specified 90% — of students were "a basically intelligent group of people."

Justified

Even those who thought the government proposals justified, were not against students as such. We obtained reactions like, "I've got some very good student friends"; "there's good and bad, just like with anyone else"; even "the students are the brains of tomorrow!"

However, there was general ignorance of the proposed new

regulations. One old lady when asked what she thought of the government proposals for student unions said, "What, d'you mean all this sex business?" But when people understood what the regulations entailed they were on the whole against them.

One lady thought students ought to get their money from charity, but most of the others we asked seemed happy for students to run their unions as at present. Typical comments were, "They're res-

ponsible and things should stay as they are," "They're very sen-

sible people," and "I think they should have full control over their own funds."

Apathy

But though there is no widespread anti-student feeling, neither is there active support for students. The general mood was of benevolent apathy. And of course, there are always people who refuse to give an opinion either way, like the little old lady who said with a sweet, vague smile "No, I won't bother, thank you" before scurrying back into the anonymous crowd.

— OPINION PAGE —



Courtesy of the Guardian

Two Student Leaders' views

MR. DIGBY JACKS, President of the National Union of Students, condemned the Consultative Document on student unions released by Mrs. Thatcher last week.

"The report is most inflammatory, a recipe for destroying the student unions," he charged. "It will force confrontation over financial matters."

"It is a monstrous plan, fostered by a Minister who has a naive belief in the benevolence of University authorities," he said.

Digby Jack's experience has been the reverse.

"Under the Department of Education and Science plan, College Presidents could take over the Unions and run them themselves," he noted.

"Such a proposal was considered earlier this year in one case I know about. At the Barrow Road College of Education (London), the Board of Governors actually considered whether or not they should wind up the Student Union."

The NUS President pointed out further shortcomings and biases in the Report.

"There is no commitment either to the principle that student unions are a good thing in their own right, or that they should be permitted to exist," he noted.

"Because the Report focuses its attention on the future conduct of the individual student, the political societies will thrive."

"By not guaranteeing subscriptions to the unions, societies will suffer a very ephemeral existence."

"The irony is that everything but the political societies will fail."

The President has already sent a letter to the DES seeking points of clarification and has produced an Executive Statement on the issue. He was confident of general support.

"We have a fight of enormous importance on our hands," he stated. "The majority of unions will not accede to the DES proposals."

MR. ANDREW NEIL, National Chairman of the 15,000-strong Federation of Conservative Students, condemned the Consultative Document on student unions released last week by the Department of Education and Science.

"The Government has put forth stupid, irrelevant proposals," he charged. The Monday Club want voluntary membership for unions. This will kill student unions. We are totally opposed to this."

"Student unions are a good thing, and should be encouraged. We want the unions to be free of interference from college authorities and Vice-Chancellors."

"Mrs. Thatcher doesn't want to do that. She has blown out of all proportion the whole question of political payments."

Mr. Neil was convinced the Government had "grasped a symptom of the overall problem, and not the root cause," which he identified as "irresponsible minorities who filibuster and ignore the University Constitution in OGM's."

To solve this problem, he proposed a Registrar of Student Unions.

His duties would be "to lay down very broad constitutional guidelines and make sure that any Union that did not keep to them would get no public monies."

"We further propose that any OGM with a quorum of less than 10% of the Union membership shall be merely advisory to the Union Executive in any decision such an OGM might pass," he continued.

"If more than 10% of the Union membership approved of proposals the Executive disagreed with, an immediate popular referendum on the issue would be held."

"The situation now," said Mr. Neil, "is that anyone with a few dozen politicised students can walk into and control outright the entire constitutional apparatus."

"What we're trying to do," he concluded, "is establish the machinery by which moderates will be forced to participate in their Union government."

Report means 1000% price rise

FILM SOCIETY, the largest society in the University, will be among the first to feel the financial implications of the Thatcher Report according to its President, Mr. Peter Smith.

"We have 1,500 potential members," he noted. "Their needs are our concern. Unlike Mrs. Thatcher, we can't ignore them."

"We'd end up by having to charge between 35p and 40p per film," said Mr. Neil Taggart, the Film Soc. Publicity and Equipment Officer.

"It would be quite a price rise, considering that we now show 25 films a year every Tuesday and charge 2p each per member; and 10 films a year every Friday at 5p each."

Film hire for the organisation isn't the only expense incurred by the society.

"We spend £25 a year in mailing costs," Mr. Taggart noted. "We project films for other societies, and this means equipment renewal. And there is a weekly charge for projectionists' overtime, both Tuesdays and Fridays."

"Our membership fee doesn't begin to cover all this," the Publicity Officer pointed out. "The fee is intended as a token payment. Ultimately, we feel we provide a service to students, because we give people the opportunity to see films they might not ordinarily be able to see."

"There is no doubt that the Thatcher Report, would severely curtail our activities. Besides increasing our admission costs, we would have to eliminate our Friday showings altogether, and rearrange the entire system of admission — thus blatantly breaking certain regulations laid on us by the British Film Institute concerning their showing."



"I agree with your proposals of course Maggie — but I think we should make special allowances for the University Sailing Club!!"

No more societies for students

All talk No Action



"Help for the mentally handicapped, the elderly, childrens' playgroups, immigrant teaching and prison welfare may be stopped . . ."



Students decorating for elderly people.

HELP for the mentally handicapped, the elderly, children's playgroups, immigrant teaching and prison welfare may be stopped if the Government's consultative report is implemented.

This is the view of Mr. Peter Gray, secretary of Action, a society of the University Union, exists to increase student awareness of social and other needs in Leeds and to provide the means by which students may take part in voluntary social work and community action. At present 400 students are involved.

"The Government's proposals would prove disastrous to Action," said Mr. Gray. "If our current budget had to be met by voluntary subscriptions, as suggested by the Government, it would amount to over £4 per member."

"There are many students who might well feel that this is a high price to pay for the privilege of being engaged in this kind of voluntary work."

"It would be short-sighted to imagine that voluntary social work can be undertaken without

by Andrew Baldwin

money," he continued. "True, I could present myself at the home of an elderly person and say: 'I am a student and I want to visit you,' but I do not fancy the reception I would receive."

"What Action does is to provide the contacts and recommendations by which a student can go into a situation confident that he will be welcome; and this costs money."

Mr. Gray sees Action as bringing students and the community together, to their mutual advantage.

"We don't want the Union to be a parasitic social club whose members cannot see beyond the brim of their own beer mug. We provide an invaluable opportunity for students to look beyond their own study and careers, to the needs and efforts of the community, and to see their own vocations in a better perspective."

If we cease to exist it would degenerate into a Union of all talk and no Action."

"We'll have to close down . . ."

Union Presidents slam report

LEEDS STUDENT

INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER OF LEEDS
STUDENTS

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STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
Wednesday, November 10th

REACTION by local Union Presidents to the Government Consultative Document on student union control released last Wednesday has been one of shock and disbelief.

"It can be described as taking a hatchet to crack a nut," said Mr. Ken Hind, President of Leeds University Union. "It will completely destroy the National Union of Students as we know it today."

"I am appalled," commented Mr. John Josephs, Polytechnic Union President, "and hope this won't go through. It would mean the end of sports clubs, societies, low-priced trading ventures, the NUS, and will result in complete domination of student unions by the Government."

Mr. Laurence Barnes, President of Carnegie College Union, referred to the Thatcher Report as "a move stirred up by the Monday Club and its allies to take strength away from the unions."

"The Department of Education and Science can't possibly see from their elevated position what it means for a small union to join the NUS," concluded Mr. Paul Kale, Union President of Jacob Kramer College.

Fails

The Report was also condemned by Mr. Trevor Robinson, Chairman of the University Conservative Society and Committee member of the Federation of Conservative Students. "It is authoritarian in tone and fails to remedy the original grievance of ultra vires payments," he said.

Mr. Hind attacked the pressure groups who, he alleged, have forced the publication of the Report. "There are 700 student unions in this country",

by John Bradley

he said. "York, Southampton and Sussex have been cited by the right wing of the Conservative Party as typical examples of Union action, but they are in no way typical of what is actually going on within the student movement."

General meetings earlier this year at York and Southampton had refused grants to the Monday Club and Tory Society respectively, and the NUS had officially condemned these actions. In one case the decision has since been reversed.

Accounts

The University Union Treasurer, Mr. Mik Yates said, "We have nothing to hide. I gave six copies of our accounts to Mrs. Thatcher so that she and her Cabinet friends can find fault with them. I guarantee they can't. This document is made even more pernicious when one realises that no legislation is necessary, and that its proposals could be implemented tomorrow if the DES so decided."

The overwhelming reaction by the Presidents was a feeling of impending doom.

"The Thatcher Report is nothing more than an attempt to clobber a potentially dangerous political opponent for political ends on the plausible excuse of cutting public expenditure and making Union's financially accountable," the University Union President concluded.

A dead union?

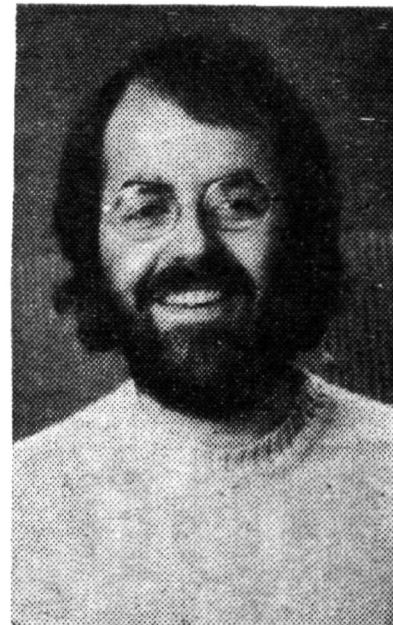
THE student world thought that the changes in student unions would be bad, but few thought that they would be this bad! The paper is described as a consultative document, but let us be quite clear that it can be implemented by directive — there is no need for parliamentary approval.

I will try to outline what these proposals will mean to many thousands of students, not only in Leeds, but up and down the country. The proposals will affect the daily lives of many people, not only socially, but culturally and physically.

Firstly, the Union would be able to function in an administrative capacity only. This costs Leeds University Union about £65,000-£70,000 per year. Included in this is expenses for upkeep and maintenance of the Union building.

The real problem comes with the financing of Clubs and Societies. They will have to be financed by voluntary subscription and donations.

These organisations include, Leeds Student — the student newspaper which costs the Union £2,500 per year, Network 4 — the student television service, the numerous sports



"I hope they will have on their conscience the loss to members of the community and the missed opportunities to students which will follow the destruction of student unions."

by John
Finestein,
University
Union
External
Vice-President

disabled people) as well as work with old age pensioners, and helping in hospitals. Without the finance necessary, this work would be nearly impossible.

clubs, such as Sub-Aqua, and functions like Arts Festivals. Quite obviously, the amount of voluntary donations needed to cover these activities could not possibly be forthcoming, and a valuable cultural contribution to University life would vanish.

There are over 4,000 students in these societies and many more who attend meetings. We believe that University life is not just to give you a degree, but a chance to participate in a wide variety of things that interest you. It appears that Mrs. Thatcher does not. But surely relaxation along the right lines is as important as work itself?

Welfare

Another serious way in which the activities would be hit is in the field of our welfare work. The Union has always believed in helping charities and playing an important part in welfare work outside the University campus. We have organisations like Action which receives a grant of £2,000 per year from Union subsidies, and their work is concerned with trying to help the under-privileged people of Leeds (the mentally handicapped, immigrant children and

checked regularly. We open our books for anyone who wishes to look. By making us subservient to the University we lose much of our *raison d'être*. Surely young people ought to be taught responsibility?

Having said all this, let me say that the document is very vague, so vague that I doubt if Mrs. Thatcher realises its full implication.

Student Unions will still have compulsory membership, but students can opt out on conscience grounds. Even if they do this, they will still have the advantages of the Union. A little confusing!

It appears that it will be possible to keep open our shops which provide books for students, but it is a matter of debate what will happen if they make losses as there are no provisions for these to be met.

Progressive

I hope you can see what this document is all about. It is quite clear that someone is worried about the progressive nature of student unions, and they have used financial accountability as an excuse.

If this document is implemented, I hope they will have on their conscience, the loss to members of the community and the missed opportunities to students which will follow and the destruction of student unions, which hitherto provided an irreplaceable service to many thousands of young people.

If there is anybody reading this, who does not know what a Student Union looks like, or still wonders why we are so anxious to beat these proposals, we will talk at any time at any place, to any number. Just phone John Finestein Tel: 30971 ext. 33.

Editor — Paul Vallyly

Other contributors: John Bradley, Pete Reader, Andrew Baldwin, Nick Clarke, Cath Garner, Nigel Thompson, S. P. Meyer, Mik Yates, John Finestein, John Meadows, John Kent and Peter Gray.

Students can protest . . .



**but to achieve anything they need your support. Keep student unions free.
Write to your M.P.**