

Action last term

Over 22 Polytechnics,
Universities and Colleges
throughout the country occupied
last term as a protest against the
nationwide cuts in education, as
well as their own local issues.

Some successes are apparent already, with immediate rent reductions and increased budgets. For the majority of last term's protesters, however, the struggle for a better quality of education will continue this year.

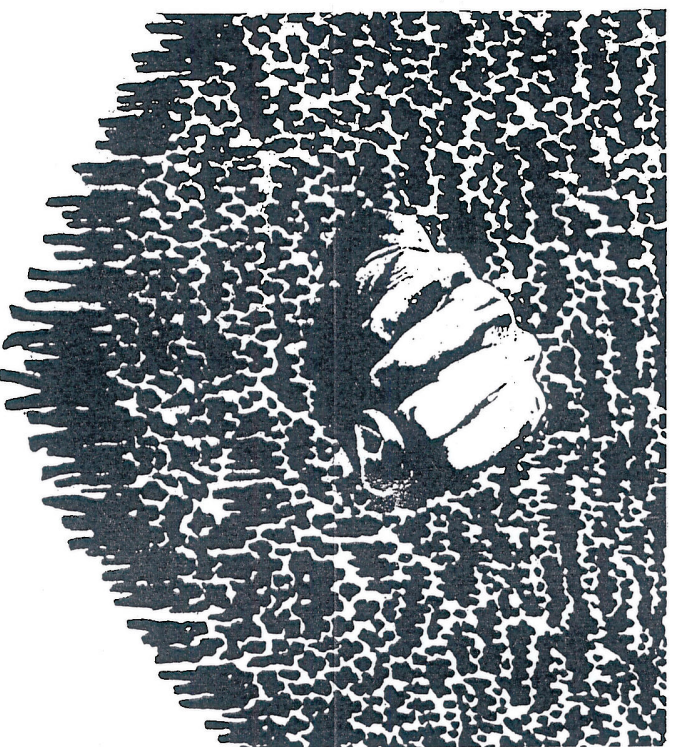
LONDON

Thames Poly students occupied their Woolwich site on the 28th November, in protest against poor library and childcare facilities and student number increases. They achieved some concessions - rent reductions of up to £6.50, canteen price decreases and an increase in the library budget. They came out of occupation after 4 days.

The Polytechnic of North London (PNL), again, had similar grievances, including a management plan like that of Middlesex, to double the student population by the year 2000, without the necessary funding! Their occupation began at the Kentish Town site on the 3rd December and, within the week, had spread to the whole Poly (at least 4 sites). They were

COLLEGE OCCUPATIONS THAT BEGAN
BEFORE OUR 28 DAY OCCUPATION:

Glasgow Poly.
Paisley College
Wolverhampton Poly. (11-14 Oct.)
Middlesex Poly, Quicksilver Place (16-18 Oct.)
Middlesex Poly, Ivy House (29-30 Oct.)
Poly, Enfield (21-22 Oct.)
Lancaster University (14-24 Nov.)



taken to court and came out on the 14th December. PNL management are now offering £20,000 extra for the library, but they are threatening to take £30,000 off the union block grant.

City Poly also occupied on the 3rd for just under two weeks until legal action was taken to remove the students. The Injunction served, insisted on eighty people present in court and so the hearing was suspended until a large enough court could be found! The management are still withholding 90% of the Union grant, and as a result, Union staff are now against further action. The students, however, are determined to continue their protests until their conditions improve.

Kings College students found themselves faced with the proposed closure of several departments last term. The management felt this necessary to resolve the college's financial predicament: a £3 million deficit! The students attended a march from Waterloo Bridge to the D.E.S. building on the 11th

AROUND THE COUNTRY

Action at **Lancaster University** started at the beginning of term with a rent strike in protest against a 13% hall fee increase over the course of one year. Students then occupied on the 14th November for ten days, until they were evicted by bailiffs and police in dramatic fashion: nearly 200 students had to be physically carried out of the building! Despite threats by management to substantially cut their grant to the Union, Lancaster continued their protest with a large rally on the 29th November. The University Secretary refused to even negotiate a rent decrease. The strength and determination of the students, however, meant that the disputes will, no doubt, continue.

Similarly, **Newcastle Polytechnic** faced rent increases of 11% last term, and compulsory charges (of £82) over Christmas. After a rent strike failed to achieve a reduction, around 200 students occupied the Administration Block (22nd November). Again, management went to the courts, and injunctions were served on the main activists. The occupying students were 'removed' on the 18th December. The following day some Middlesex Poly Students travelled up to lend support and help to picket buildings at an attempted shutdown of lectures. Mark Lickley, the S.U. President, said that, despite pending court action (on the 21st January), the students and union officers involved had no intention of compromising on issues. Threats of expulsions seem to be having little effect: a demonstration in London is being planned for February and last term's rent strike looks likely to continue.

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (part of U.L. in Surrey) held a 24 hour occupation on the 28th and 29th November in support of our action here at Middlesex. National student issues aside, the students are contented with conditions at their college which made their protest a particularly liberal and inspiring gesture.

straight away, planning to review the situation the next day. Management handed out leaflets threatening legal action and severance of the Union grant. On Friday 6th December the S.U. withdrew its support for the continuing occupation (obviously intimidated by management bullying!). They walked out, as did the occupation committee, and then proceeded to cut off the electricity and phone lines to the building. The remaining students were cold, but undeterred, and revised the original demands to include a specific rent reduction and the ingenious idea of using empty campus accommodation in the holidays for the homeless rather than for wealthy conference delegates.

They stayed in over the weekend, even managing to accommodate a planned gig on Saturday night, by using a borrowed generator and so avoiding disruption of their entertainments schedule!

They decided to end the occupation on Monday 9th with a rally in the centre of Brighton. They marched to an occupied Brighton Poly (and several other Polys/Colleges on the way) gathering supporters. One of the students told me that the importance of their occupation was that it showed that students cared enough about the issues to make a stand in such adverse circumstances. More action is planned for this term.

Nearby **Brighton Poly** occupied their library building on the 3rd December. Students were protesting mainly about the Polytechnic's application for University status, and unsatisfactory fire safety standards in Halls. On Monday the 16th Police and Bailiffs sledge hammered down the doors and threw the students out. Concerned students planned to meet with the Director on the 10th January this year, to discuss the occupation.

Paisley College in Scotland was one of the first centres of student action, although, like here, political activity had been very low for some time. After unsuccessful negotiations with their management over a pro-

posed rent increase of 44% (in one year!), they occupied one of the college business sites. After two nights the rent increase was reduced considerably, to 7%, and the students left the buildings. Similarly, Glasgow Poly had an early, successful occupation.

Rent increases were also the reason for the occupation at **Wolverhampton Poly**, where 250 students took over the main finance building for four days (until served with an injunction). They also held a rent strike across three sites.

Teeside Poly and Nottingham Poly both held 24 hour occupations, on the 2nd and 4th December, respectively. Teeside students stayed in their library to protest against the lack of facilities there. If the situation fails to improve this term, the S.U. President, Jason Leask, promised that action would increase.

Liverpool Poly also occupied for 24 hours (on 3rd - 4th December), in protest against a proposed name change when the Poly receives University status. (The management's suggestion was "Sir John Moore's University". Moore was the founder of the Littlewoods Pools!).

Action also took place at **Birmingham Poly, Essex University, Bristol Poly, Bristol University** (a 'sleep out') and **Luton College of H.E.**; with rallies in **Leicester** (23rd October), **Manchester**, **Lancaster** (29th November), **Brighton** (9th December), **London** (16th December) and **Cardiff** (N.U.S. rally on 30th November).

The protests last term were not just confined to Middlesex Poly but, as you can see, were truly widespread. (Faxes of support for our occupation came from as far away as New Zealand!). As Stephen Twigg, the President of the N.U.S., said: "This spate of activity shows students have been pushed as far as they can go... the issue of student poverty has to be raised and occupations are an effective way of doing it". ☆

