CAN CARDIFF ESCAPE THE STEEL TRAP?

The collapse of the steel market last year when steel makers all over the world were expecting an upsurge in demand hit British Steel harder than most. The Corporation, which had adopted a big is beautiful policy, were caught out in the middle of a major investment programme in huge modern plants. With a record loss of something in the region of £500m in the financial year now nearing its end, it was inevitable that an extensive cost-cutting exercise would have to be mounted. One route was the closing of selected plants. East Moors, working at all times at less than one-third total capacity as the call for steel dropped, was an obvious target for pruning. The steel unions appear to have recognised that the plant is doomed; the problems that remain are the exact timing of the closure and a probable compromise over the size of the enhanced payments demanded by the 3,200 men who will be thrown out of work. British Steel have very little option but to push for closure. Indeed they are showing courage in facing up to a situation where so often in the past, especially in the case of nationalised industries, job preservation and short-term social considerations have been allowed to supersede moves aimed at efficiency and profitability.

Having said that, the closure of East Moors will push male unemployment in the Cardiff area up to around the 15,000 mark, equivalent to a 10 per cent unemployment figure. That sort of impact which has been described, with some justification, as the worst economic blow to hit Cardiff for the past 50 years, will be nothing short of disastrous for alternative industry can be hired to the area. The local authorities have so far acted with some measure of urgency. An emergency conference for all interested bodies has been called but substantive action is needed now. South Glamorgan County Council is making progress on developing 177 acres for industry at Tresoro and says that it is hopeful that three Welsh Development Agency advance factories in the Cardiff area will soon be occupied. These moves, coupled with plans for the development of 116 acres of land set aside for industry at Westwood, do offer hope for the future but a great deal of constructive effort is going to have to be forthcoming from the authorities and local MPs if Cardiff is to be prevented from becoming the Jarrow of 1936.

Too short a fuse

INTRANSIGENCE SEEMS to be the name of the game Britain's teachers and their employers are playing. On the teachers' side there is much to be said in sympathy. They have found themselves embarrassed by a rigid pay policy without the room for manoeuvre employed by many other groups of workers. Their case is also supported in part by Sir Arthur Bramall who resigned as leader of the management panel on the Harman Committee because he considered his colleagues too intolerant in their dealings with the teachers. However, to start something long and loud about the cause they intend to change in the schools and to impose sanctions in the middle of the arbitration of their pay dispute is reprehensible. The fact that the pay is tricky between what has been offered and what the unions have intimated they would find acceptable has not prevented some reaching flashpoints with indecent haste, a haste which may well be indicative of a pervading dependency and feeling of frustration within our education system.

Yesterday we published the disturbing results of an investigation into the number of school-leavers. Barely does a week go by without some report of a strike, with increasing frequency it seems. As the last great strike of this year, a chain of coalminers up a significant proportion (labelled Hydrosol: Hydroxy: a type of the ray ingredients of LSD.

Casual planning was needed if police were to smash an operation this obvious complexity and size. After a series of meetings between Home Office drug experts and they picked up snippets of valuable information from locals, and drank in the back bar of the Taffs Inn in Tregaron. Other officers roamed the area dressed as hippies—not an unusual sight in this part of Wales on popular with those who "drop out" of society.

ITAL CLUE FROM A FATAL ACCIDENT...

The gang that saturated the world with the misery of LSD from the twin laboratories of London and Mid Wales was finally smashed by the crack Julie squad, pictured right, hand-picked from drug specialists prepared to forego their normal lives and play an undercover game of cat and mouse.

A special report by
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