

FOCUS

A-doin' what comes That-cher-ly

AS MRS THATCHER'S 16-car motorcade headed towards Edmonton on the Canadian Prairies last Tuesday, three Alberta students coined a new word in the political lexicon. Standing in near-zero temperature on the back of an open truck they waved a home-made banner at the prime minister's limousine. "Don't Falk with Maggie," it proclaimed.

No one, the students explained later, should think that Mrs Thatcher would ever allow anyone "to walk in and take over" - neither the Argentinian invaders in the Falklands, nor the Russians anywhere.

To these youngsters, the Iron Lady image was for real. She was as much the guarantor of their freedom on the Prairies as of victory in the South Atlantic.

As the week wore on, the full extent of the Thatcher appeal to such admirers unfolded, a combination of earth mother, Britannia reborn, Churchill reincarnate and the housewife who tells things as they are.

Hyperbole was everywhere. "Maggie Thatcher is one of those people who has managed to create in her name not only an economic theory but a way of life," gushed a Canadian television early morning chat show. For her, after four months in the doldrums at home - a period of anti-climax after her election triumph - it was a return to the old "high" of personal adulation, a reward for a gospel of fundamentalism unheard even in Reagan's America.

THE FIRST MAN to be maternally embraced was Canadian prime minister, Pierre Trudeau - liberal, durable (he is the only western leader with longer service than she has) and an eloquent spokesman of the pre-Thatcher style of government. While she was, as usual adamant - "I have been in politics too long to know how tempting the plausible half-truth is, and long enough to know that it won't work" - he was opaque. "The challenge we face," he told one audience "is multi-dimensional, reflecting the complexities and inter-relationships of the problems that have plagued world economics in recent years."

But she cut through this insider's jargon, with a never-failing series of simple homilies constantly repeated. And he took full advantage. His voice, weary with experience, is little listened to these days, according to Canadian opinion polls. Now, although keeping his ideological distance, he joined her admiring chorus.

He paid her a 2,000-mile compliment to show his sincerity. After introducing her to a rare joint session of the



Ron and Margaret: "defender of the realm"

● From the folksy Prairies to sophisticated Capitol Hill, the Margaret Thatcher show had them shouting for more last week.

MICHAEL JONES went on the trip and describes how she won the West.

GERALD SCARFE stayed at home.

Canadian parliament in Ottawa, he hosted dinner for her in Toronto and Edmonton on successive nights.

His reward was that rarity, a public Thatcher kiss, and endorsement as a worthy, if sometimes misguided, critic of the Thatcherite philosophy. This, indeed, was what the week was mainly about: a haranguing redefinition for foreigners of what Thatcherism really means.

The magic concept was on many lips, but on none more often than hers. "I assure you it's centuries older than I am," she told Canadian television. "It's saying to people - your future depends on your own efforts. I'll spend your money very well and very sparingly, but then it's over to you."

This self-advertisement was reciprocated. Canadian Tories, long in the wilderness at national level, were ecstatic. "Thatcher outshines Trudeau in defence of free enterprise," headlined the tabloid Edmonton Sun. There truly was, conceded a more dispassionate Toronto columnist, a way of doing things "Thatcherishly": a usage which not even the loyalist British press has yet discovered.

The phenomenon herself exploited every opportunity. There was no fake modesty. The product was told with a degree of self-eulogy which might make an ad-man blanch. "To run our affairs prudently and honestly, the challenge to exercise discipline, to show wisdom and

understanding: they call it Thatcherism," she told businessmen in Toronto. "I must tell you we need more of it." The audience rose to her as one man.

Nearly 2,000 of them had paid \$30 a head for a lunch blessed by the Primate of Canada's Anglican Church, to hear the authentic voice of Thatcherism itself, the word made flesh.

In the history of the city's upper-crust Empire and Canadian clubs, who were the joint hosts, there never was such a turn out, even for Winston Churchill.

She did not entirely abandon a politician's caution. Canadian journalists struggled to lure her into criticising Trudeau. American interviewees later invited her to denounce President Reagan's economic policies. She would not be drawn.

But she was completely unashamed about exercising her personal charisma. "Thatcherism isn't as Thatcherite as it could be," she said at a private business session before lunch. She was commenting on moves in Holland to cut public pay on welfare benefit. This was further, than she had gone. The moral appeared to be that she was really only a middle-of-the-road Thatcherite, as benefits the founder of the cult.

But her role in leading Britain towards revival was left in no doubt. It was all highly personal. Cabinet government was momentarily

forgotten. "When I took over in Britain" she explained, "one of the things I was trying to do was to restore to Britain something which I felt we'd had long ago." Andropov was seen as a personal adversary: a global struggle was going on for hearts and minds. "That is Mr Andropov's challenge. I accept it."

Nowhere were the politics of personality more evident than on the trip to Edmonton in the Canadian West. It was here that one finally understood that the main purpose of the trip was less to settle policy matters in Ottawa or Washington than simply to be there.

Even by the Thatcher standards of non-stop activity on every journey, the 4,000-mile Toronto-Edmonton-Washington loop seemed an excessive excursion for one overnight stop. It appeared to have no point, other than self-satisfaction.

But Mrs Thatcher was unrepentant. Dubbed "The Human Hurricane" by the Montreal Gazette, she strove to create an instant personal bond with the Canadian West as passionately as if she were running for local office. "I've never been to Western Canada and that's appalling for anybody," she said, when she got there. The very word "West" brought to her mind such keynote Thatcherite words as "initiative", enterprise and "pioneering".

"I wanted to see for myself whether what they say about the people of Alberta is true. (pause) It is." She then broke into verse: "Out where the hand clasps a little stronger / Out west the smile rose a little longer, / That's where the west begins."

To one lady in the audience, hand-picked by Trudeau this benediction was too much. She literally shrieked in exultation. All the same, there were a few jaundiced eyes. One observer from the Toronto Sun shrank from such populism. "The Iron Lady's celebrated economies have started with her scriptwriters," he sniped. "Or is this material plucked from the hopper where they toss the Queen's B material after a royal tour?"

NOWHERE, however, did she rely solely on scriptwriters, at least for the motor of self-confidence which carried the trip forward to a scarcely-less-ecstatic Washington. The Washington Post saw her success as highly personal, and compared her favourably with Reagan. "The Americanisation of British conservatism is a Thatcher achievement," it wrote on her arrival. "In fact, although she is a radical Tory, she is a traditional Republican - perhaps more so than Reagan."



She did not disappoint them. Where necessary she talked softly. Thus, she tore into the Soviet system, but spared Andropov by name. She attacked American budget deficits, but refused to call Reagan responsible for them. She was also muted, publicly, on one of the few policy disputes she had come to air, the unfair taxes imposed by some American states on British companies. The threat of retaliation was deliberately low-key.

But she carried all before her, with parliamentary finesse. She made two major off-the-cuff speeches as well as an impromptu White House reply to an impeccably scripted Reagan.

Analysing it in the White House gardens, British officials in attendance attributed her public hold over Americans to three factors: Her success in breaking through as a woman into the upper reaches of power. "The womanking of the world regard her as the female equivalent of a four-minute miler," said one.

Her appeal to men who know that she "really runs the country" and admire her leadership in the Falklands war.

Her clarity on issues and her willingness to confront them after a long period in which politicians became immersed in the technological and complex details of modern administration.

There is also the political blood. Among his more startling sleights-of-memory is the lofty contention that the monetary aggregates are not nearly so important as "Whitehall" has "talked [itself] into imagining". But Whitehall had nothing to do with it. Whitehall was deeply sceptical, as Thatcherites regularly complained. So, of course, were the Tory wets. And here is the cream of Howell's jest.

What he now says differs in no particular from what Mr Prior, Mr Walker, Sir Ian Gilmour and the other hate-figures of the new faithful have been saying all along: that monetarist claims were excessive, that public investment was important, that politics was not a branch of mathematics. For this heresy they were run out of respectable society. Mr Nigel Lawson caught the tone well: "cold feet dressed up as high principle", he called them.

Mr Lawson, like Mr Howell, is a regular convert. It's the most distinctive characteristic of the true believers. He's been all over the place. When he worked for Ted Heath and wrote the manifesto against the miners in February 1974, a comprehensive defence of a statutory incomes policy, he told Heath he was the greatest prime minister for 200 years. Politics does contain some men who don't change their mind quite like that, but somehow it is the chancers, gamblers, opportunists and other lurchers who these days get ahead.

Moments of self-doubt were rare but there had been a revealing incident during an early speech in Toronto, when she changed the text of what she was going to say. Originally, she was to assert that British public spending "was set to fall" as a proportion of national income this year, and "would fall" further next year.

Her text was then amended in a cautious direction. State spending, she said, was "planned" to fall this year and "intended" to fall again next year.

But, in the event, she added a further gloss. It epitomises her undoubted self-awareness. It was still only "intended" to fall next year. But next year she would still be prime minister, and "therefore I believe it will."

She even spoke of a third term in power when she expected to see further progress on all fronts, particularly her campaign to boost the private sector and shrink central government. Rocky Mountain Republicans could not have promised more.

She was relentless until the end. Her one full day in Washington accommodated three breakfast TV interviews, breakfast with the Senate foreign affairs committee, four hours of talks with Reagan and top officials, a press conference and the Churchill Award dinner.

Behind the scenes the Downing Street boxes carried into the White House in full

view of the cameras testified to the existence of the complex real-life prime minister, whose days at home now contain rather less adrenalin. But out front, the message never varied: sound money at home, sound nerve abroad.

It went down a treat. Even in Reagan's Washington, people have stopped talking like that. On Capitol Hill, Nebraska senator Ed Zorinski, a tough Democrat maverick used to his own landslide victories, recognised a real winner. He told Mrs Thatcher: "I don't need to ask any questions. I'm behind you 100 per cent. I'm going to write your name on my election ticket."

But it was the president who caught the full flavour of the Thatcher visit. In a *Ron-Margaret billet doux* he not only compared her to Britannia and Churchill but added an almost regal title - "defender of the realm."

Perhaps he had not then read the Washington Post which claimed that a Thatcher aide "swore she's been offered the American presidency three times, once even by Walter Cronkite."

Tale of a vintage author

Alan Moorehead: an appreciation by James Cameron

BY A rather bitter coincidence two of my oldest friends and colleagues in the newspaper trade died last week within days of one another - Wilfred Burdett, the crazy penniless radical, and Alan Moorehead, the solidly successful historian.

Both were Australian, both journalists - in our day they seemed to go together - and both were splendid craftsmen of wholly opposed ideas. By another coincidence we were all three born within a week or two of one another - 1911 was a vintage year for foreign correspondents.

Alan Moorehead was undoubtedly the master of us all. He made his first resounding name with the Daily Express in the North African campaign, with his inseparable colleague-comrade Alex Clifford. As often happens with professional rivals, they became complementary.

Much the same thing happened with Alan and me years later in Asia. We shared the idea that what is written for a newspaper need not necessarily be banal. If I learned that from anyone, it was Moorehead.

Unlike most newspapermen in time of war, Alan Moorehead had the respect and indeed occasional admiration of top military brass - without, which was most unusual, losing that of his newspaper cobbler in the field. It is true that some of us were doubtful of his very evident cultivation of major military names, such as Montgomery - of whom he wrote a rather tiresome biography, swiftly forgiven and forgotten in the literary success of so many later books.

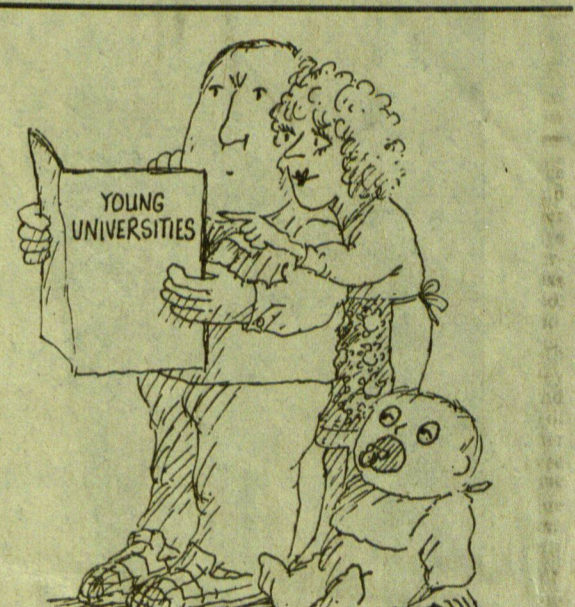
Alan Moorehead was one of his generation who felt - without any special pride - that his work should not moulder for ever in the forgotten files, but deserved hard covers. He was, as usual, right. Alan got into book-writing, retreated to Italy, and - unlike most of us - actually did it.

Alan Moorehead wrote many books, some not too wonderful, some splendid. The double act of *The White Nile* and *The Blue Nile* set him immovably in the world's libraries.

And then, just 27 years ago, he found himself in his splendid Gallipoli. He was only in his middle 40s when he did it. It was called a "masterly historical reconstruction combining imagination and scholarship with a new strain of haunting lyrical beauty".

Last week *The Times* obituarist said "... a man who sees an empty landscape behind every pageant ... but he will be respected too as a writer who at a time of academic excess brought to the telling of history the talents of a great reporter". What a fuss to make about a newspaperman.

Those of us who share his trade, if not his talent, say amen to every word.



The New Universities Robbins Revisited

Are the new universities growing up or growing old? Created in the swinging sixties, they were to break the mould of conventional university life. 20 years after the Robbins report which led to the expansion of higher education, the result of bad publicity, academic conservatism and financial cuts, is that they no longer wish to be seen as pioneers.

Also this week: Multiracial schools: Bradford's pioneering experiment. "Must try harder": Felicity Taylor on school governors. Craft design and technology: build your own car. "A level economics books: a guide to form."

THE TIMES Educational Supplement On sale at your newsagent next Friday, price 50p.

MR DAVID HOWELL is a Thatcherite theologian. And he has been changing his mind. He now thinks Thatcherism is not what it was, and last week he explained why in this newspaper. The trumpet may sound forth in North America with ever more emphatic and self-confident brio (see above). But the theologian is no longer sure.

He does not say it in so many words, of course. It is a bland, undramatic conversion. Quite calmly, he now redefines the laws of economics by which his party and his government have lived for the past seven years. We now learn that the "links between public spending and borrowing and the monetary aggregates and inflation are a good deal less direct and more flexible and capable of manipulation than has been accepted so far".

We are also to understand that the links between tax rates and tax revenues are not, after all, "as mathematical and predictable as hitherto held". Equally, public sector capital investment should not have been judged (and therefore cut) on the basis of mere market tests. Nor should the tradition of public service have been attacked and denigrated by much ignorance and prejudice.

Coming from such a self-conscious thinker, such an articulate believer, such an important exponent of the most doctrinaire and inflexible economic philosophy seen in any British government

The art of the flexible

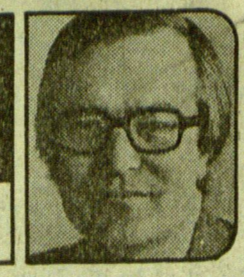
since the war, Mr Howell's demolition of four props of the faith may strike some people as breathtaking. All the same it is surely welcome. It shows that ideologues can also be pragmatists. Such bowing to reality is a salutary sight, giving hope for the future.

BUT WAIT a minute. Don't speak too soon. Haven't we been here before? Reality, to Mr Howell, has always been a bit of a puzzle. His whole political career has been marked by lurches of perception. Take the effect of tax cuts, a famous right-wing nostrum. In 1961, he wrote:

There is little evidence to suggest that high tax rates are a particular disincentive to mental effort and personal dynamism. The argument can be just as easily stood on its head with the assertion that still higher rates would induce the businessman to work harder to maintain the same living standards.

By 1965, Mr Howell had found a rather different way of standing on his head: The maximum tax rate on individuals in West Germany is 56 per cent. In Britain it is 90 per cent. It is hard to think of a single change in Britain which would have a more dramatic climate-changing effect than an adjustment, even half way, towards the West German rate. Having fixed on this ver-

Inside Politics
by HUGO YOUNG
Political Editor



sion of the truth, he clung to it, right through to his time in the Thatcher cabinet, and to be fair to him, it has become part of a long-standing and much-argued belief in tax-cut, enterprise, property-owning society.

Meanwhile, however, another intellectual crisis, of more horrendous proportions, had him in its grip. He began to wonder how money really worked. Thatcherism, of course, assigns a critical role to the money supply in controlling inflation and determining economic performance. When Mrs Thatcher took over, in 1975, monetarism swiftly became the new orthodoxy. But only a year earlier, philosopher Howell had described it with some derision.

In January 1974, writing in *Crossbow*, he depicted monetarists as mad scientists, playing with the economy as if it were a structure of glass tubes through which flowed

various liquids, achieving perfect balance with each other and proving, for example, that "it was technically impossible for demand not to be curbed if the red liquid in the tube marked 'money supply' began to fall".

Of such simplicities, Mr Howell was eloquently scornful: How simple it all seemed. And what ludicrous nonsense it all now appears - except in one or two quaint corners of the political and journalistic world where such familiar objects from the economic nursery are still hugged lovingly... Does anyone know truly what the 'money supply' is? We are human beings living in human institutions, and not pink liquid in glass tubes.

Reality, he advised, was far more complicated. Rather as he advises now, cutting an impatient swathe through the simple truths of early Thatcherism. Yet, in between, he was an intellectual leader in a