

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

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STOP JOBS SABOTAGE!

BSC... DUNLOPS... 1000s MORE WORKERS FACE SACK

Not a week passes without yet another group of workers being threatened with the sack.

Thousands of workers in the British Steel Corporation are threatened with the dole queue [feature, centre pages], as are thousands more in the tyre industry [report, page 16].

So decrepit is British big business that it can hardly keep the rust off its existing capacity — 20% idle at present — let alone invest in modern, more efficient plant and equipment.

Preferring to invest in lucrative property speculation, government securities, valuable art and antiques, and overseas projects, the millionaire financiers and business tycoons are calmly prepared to write off whole industries — and with them the livelihood of millions of working people.

Not content with huge cash hand-outs from the government and incredible tax concessions — between them currently worth about £25 million a day to misnamed 'private enterprise' in Britain — big business is even screaming about the Labour government's limited job-protection schemes.

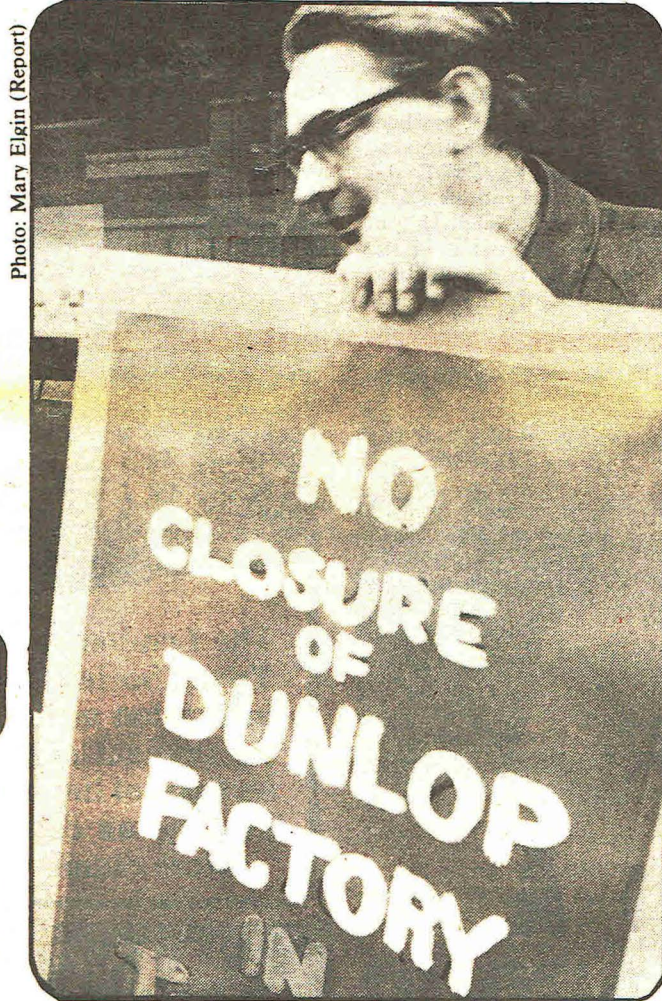
By Roger Shrivs
(Deptford Labour Party)

This is in spite of the fact that all the government's measures put together have done nothing significant to bring the official unemployment figures below the scandalous 1½ million which has now persisted for several years.

Big business pressure on this issue has been felt through the civil service, as letters recently leaked to the 'Guardian' clearly reveal. While posing as impartial 'servants of the public', the tops of the civil service clearly interpret the 'national' interests to mean the interests of big business.

In one of the 'confidential' letters, Sir Douglas Wass, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, wrote to Sir Peter Carey, his counterpart at the Department of Industry, claiming

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Dunlop workers fight closure threat

SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY NOW

By a narrow majority [51.6%], those who voted in the referendum in Scotland came out in favour of an Assembly as proposed in the government's Scotland Act.

Although the Yes vote—32.5% (with 37.1% abstaining)—falls short of the 40% minimum imposed by MPs who were out to block devolution, the Labour government

must act decisively on this simple majority and go ahead with the setting up of an Assembly in Scotland.

The establishment of an Assembly is an important democratic reform to satisfy national aspirations of Scottish people. It would also be a step forward for the labour movement.

The spokesmen of big business will exert tremendous pressure to block an

Assembly in Scotland. Their use of the 40% quota of registered voters, which they are now brandishing as a 'constitutional safeguard' is completely hypocritical. If this qualification had applied to parliamentary elections, hardly a government since 1945 would have been eligible to assume office.

In Wales, it is a different question. The referendum produced an

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STEVE AMOR '79

FIGHT TO SAVE CORBY

—FEATURE
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DERRY CONFERENCE

This weekend in Derry, one of Northern Ireland's unemployment blackspots, the Trades Council has organised a conference on unemployment, around their document 'Mass unemployment or the right to work'.

As the document explains: "1979 saw no let up in the increase in unemployment... over 64,000 people—11.7%—are denied the right to work". In Derry, unemployment is over 17% and in Strabane, the worst-hit town in the North, more than 1 in 3 males are out of work.

"The ingredients of a socialist solution... have come from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions over the past 60 years... the time has now come for bold and resolute action by the trade union movement."

Against this background, trade union and community speakers will address the conference, providing, with the document, the basis for general discussion from the floor.

Thousands of posters and leaflets advertising the conference, on Saturday 10th March at Magee College, Derry, have been circulated throughout the local trade union movement, to the unemployed, particularly youth, schools and technical colleges and factories. Fraternal delegates are expected from some British Trades Councils.

The Trades Council, "hopes that our contribution will be the beginning of a whole series of conferences... throughout the country... a campaign by the entire trade union movement could then be launched that would seriously begin the task of removing the scourge of unemployment from our midst once and for all."

35 hour week without loss of pay!

Militant

A SETBACK FOR SPANISH WORKERS

The results of the general election will come as a bitter blow to the Spanish working class. The expectations were that their parties, the Socialist Party [PSOE] and Communist Party [PCE], would emerge from the elections with increased support.

But it is the governing party, the Centre Union [UCD] which has increased its share of the vote, from 34.7% in 1977 to 35% in this election with two more seats, giving it 167 seats. The PSOE dropped from 29.2% in 1977 to 29%, and by three seats from 121 to 118.

These figures, however, underestimate the setback for PSOE because in the 1977 elections the Popular Socialist Party which together with a socialist party in Catalonia has now fused with the PSOE got 4% of the vote.

The Communist Party increased its share of the vote from 9.2% to 10% and its number of seats from 20 to 22. The right-wing Democratic Coalition, led by former Franco minister Fraga Iribarne, polled under a million votes and saw its number of seats drop from 16 to 9. The open fascist

party got a derisory vote.

Thus it would appear that the vote for the left has dropped from 42% to 39% today.

However, it is evident that in Andalusia and the Basque country votes were taken away from the PSOE by separatist and regionalist parties which claim to be 'socialist'. In the Basque country Herri Batsunna, the political wing of the ETA Militar, the terrorist organisation, won 170,000 votes and three seats. PSOE lost a seat in each of the Basque provinces. In Andalusia it lost five, and the Andalusian Socialist Party increased its number of seats from one to six.

So overall the share going to those parties claiming to be 'socialist' or 'Marxist' has probably not dropped.

Given the explosive social situation in Spain, the workers' parties should have scored a spectacular victory.

The electoral system, moreover, is rigged to give proportionally greater weight to the agricultural areas, where the intimidation and pressure of the caciques [bosses] to vote the 'right way' can still be felt. The TV was used in a most blatant fashion to promote the UCD, with 90% of the

air time given over to the speeches and posturing of the UCD leader Suarez and his entourage.

Nevertheless, given the explosive social situation in Spain, the workers parties should have scored a spectacular victory. Since 1977 unemployment has soared to about 1,300,000 which is equivalent to over 2 million in Britain.

In the Basque country in particular, formerly the most industrially developed part of Spain, factory closures have been running at two or three a week! Mass unemployment and real hunger exist in Andalusia.

After 18 months of the Spanish version of the 'social contract', the Pact of Moncloa, the billing opposition of the Spanish workers compelled their union leadership to oppose another pact. This compelled Suarez to call elections in the hope that he could receive a fresh mandate to carry through further attacks on the working class. Even during the elections, a massive strike wave, largely unreported in the British press, swept through Spain.

Much more than the election results, industrial

action is the real barometer of the mood of the Spanish working class. If the militant mood of the workers was not reflected in increased support for PSOE and the PCE, it is entirely due to the role of the leadership of the workers' parties in the past eighteen months and particularly during the elec-

tion campaign itself.

Spanish and international capitalism could hardly believe their good fortune at the grovelling support of the PSOE and PCE leadership for Suarez's attempts to stabilise Spanish capitalism during this period. The 'Financial Times' [1st March] remarked gleefully: "The credit in no small measure should go to the responsible way the PSOE and Communist leadership have acted in consensus with Senor Suarez to achieve a stable transition...But this, of course, is harder for the public to see, and in the case of the PSOE and Communist Party militants not so easy to explain."

The opposition to these class collaborationist policies by the rank and file of the PSOE was met with expulsions. The party membership plunged, and the Young Socialists was wrecked by arbitrary expulsions.

This undoubtedly had an effect on the election. The YS in Britain, with their elan and dedication, played a decisive role in the 1974 general election, and will do so again in this year's elections.

The Communist Party experienced similar upheavals, with opposition being met with purges.

In the election campaign Felipe Gonzalez and Santiago Carrillo, leaders of the PSOE and PCE respectively, made Callaghan and the right-wing labour leadership look almost radical by comparison! It was evident that they were afraid of forming a government. Attempting to out-Suarez Suarez himself, the PSOE's main slogan was for "firm

government"!

With malicious satisfaction the 'Financial Times' remarked: "The PSOE election programme refers only to one nationalisation—that of the high-tension transmission lines [already partly government-controlled]—and is scarcely more Socialist than that of the UCD." In evident astonishment the same journal quoted the CP slogan: "Put your vote to work"! In contrast to 1977, few outdoor rallies and

trated on the political plane, the workers will turn again to the industrial front. Feeble Spanish capitalism will be incapable of satisfying the demands of the working class. Big class battles are rooted in the situation. Long before it has run its four-year course the UCD will be compelled to call elections again.

There are also certain to be big repercussions within the PSOE and CP [notwithstanding the PCE's small increase in support].

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public meetings were held.

The politically advanced workers were obviously disgusted by the shameful campaign of the workers' leaders. This also produced a mood of inertia amongst the more backward sections of the working class. This accounts for the massive drop in the turn-out, from 77% in 1977 to 67% in this election.

At the same time, the PSOE leaders' support for the constitution, which denies the right of self-determination for Spain's nationalities and in particular full autonomous rights for the Basques, undermined its support in this region.

If Suarez, the UCD, and the capitalists calculate that the election results gives them a 'mandate' to squeeze further the living standards of the working class and deny national and democratic rights, they are mistaken.

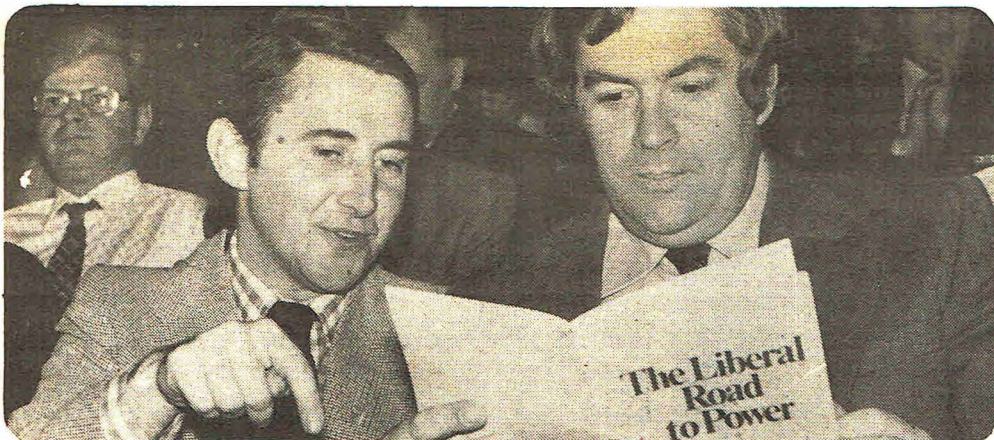
For the moment, frus-

Initially there may be a disappointed and even dejected mood. But the rank and file in the PSOE and UGT [General Workers' Union] will begin to question the policies and the leaders responsible for this setback.

Even before the election dust has settled some of the PSOE leaders are talking about parliamentary agreement with the UCD along the lines of the Italian CP's support for the last Christian Democratic government! It would be fatal for PSOE to take this road.

This is bound to meet with the furious opposition of the party and union rank and file.

Only by embracing a Marxist programme as proposed by the Marxist wing of the PSOE and its journal 'Nuevo Claridad', will the PSOE be able to re-arm itself politically—to defeat the offensive of Spanish capitalism and lead the working class to victory.



Liberal road to power has closed. But Tories have gained, not Labour

BY-ELECTIONS: A WARNING FOR LABOUR

By-elections are notoriously unreliable guides to what happens at general elections, but they are a useful rule of thumb. And the by-election results last week from Clitheroe and Knutsford are a dangerous sign for Labour.

It was not that Labour was expected to win these very Tory seats. But last week Labour supporters voted with their backsides—they abstained in considerable numbers.

In Knutsford the Labour vote went down from over 9,500 in 1974 to 5,124 whilst the Conservative rose by a few hundred. In Clitheroe it was a similar story: Labour's vote fell by 3,000 whilst the Conservative vote rose by 1,500. The Tories were not get-

ting their 'new' voters from Labour, but from the Liberals.

For the other pointer from these by-elections is that the Liberal vote fell catastrophically. In Knutsford it was down from 11,210 in 1974 to 5,206. In Clitheroe from 8,503 to 2,242.

Big business built up the Liberals from 1970 to 1974 as a haven for disaffected Tory voters, an alternative to voting Labour. With no real alternative coming from the Labour government, these people have now returned to the Tory fold. With the growing class polarisation in Britain, big business sees little role, at present, for the Liberal Party.

It is the failure of the

Callaghan government to pursue a socialist alternative which has also resulted in the abstentions of last week. Labour supporters did not want to turn out and vote for the Labour government's Tory economic policies.

Whilst two by-elections in themselves could not be taken as decisive, they do confirm other pointers. It is vital for Labour to change course otherwise many traditional supporters will abstain. If there is a danger of a Thatcher government, it is Labour's present disastrous policies which are paving the way.

By Les Smith

(Hackney Central CLP)

FIGHT 'SUS' LAWS

The London Regional Committee of the Labour Party Young Socialists has called a demonstration for 7 April in Brixton against the notorious 'sus laws' and police harassment of black youth. They are appealing to all sections of the labour movement to join the protest and demand an end to this anti-working class law.

More details next week.

WINCHESTER

Demonstrate against fascism

A motley gathering of racialists and fascists, appeared in Winchester last Saturday for a pathetic show of 'solidarity' with convicted racist Robert Relf now on hunger strike in Winchester prison, which broke up in complete disarray.

Shouting and fighting broke out among the 60 NF and British Movement members, who met at the station car park after their abortive prison-gate "vigil". Because of the fracas, the organisers failed to take a collection for

the "Relf Fund".

Relf, notorious for his crude Nazi proclivities, was last year convicted under the Race Relations Act for inciting racial hatred.

Before the racists' brief vigil, over 80 people (who had come to a meeting called by the Anti-Nazi League to plan counter demonstrations for next Saturday, when the racialists are planning a bigger turn-out), marched by the Prison.

This demo had not been planned, but the police, it seems, were convinced that there was to be a march, and

with threats of action under the Public Order Act if it was left any later, indirectly initiated an anti-racist demonstration.

For next Saturday (10 March) anti-fascist counter-demonstrators are asked to assemble in Winchester Station car park by 12 noon.

It is hoped that as many members as possible of the Labour Party, Labour Party Young Socialists, and trade unions will support the demonstration against racism and fascism.

HEALTH WORKERS REJECT OFFER

Results of the NUPE ballot on the government's 9% [£3.50] plus £1 offer show an overwhelming rejection by health service workers and ambulancemen. Health workers voted 4 to 1 against acceptance, and ambulancemen by an absolutely decisive 7 to 1 against.

This decision is all the more remarkable after the vitriolic and dirty anti-trade union campaign by the Tory press, radio and television. This decisive rejection has come, moreover, after NUPE's general secretary had sent out a call for acceptance contrary to his own Executive's recommendation—a move that has caused considerable anger and criticism among NUPE activists.

As we go to press, the COHSE Executive has yet to make its recommendation on the offer: if it decides to reject, strike action in the health service will go on.

NUPE members in local authorities, however, voted 6 to 4 to accept the offer. This result was undoubtedly affected by the fact that the T&G and GMWU had already voted for acceptance, as well as Alan Fisher's personal call.

Although there is widespread disappointment with the offer, even among those workers who have voted for acceptance after six weeks of selective action, the campaign has nevertheless immeasurably strengthened the public service unions, particularly NUPE.

In 1970, strike action called by NUPE involved only a



Ambulancemen demand action at January 22nd rally. Now they overwhelmingly reject the new offer

minority of its members. This year, most members have been involved in some form of action, and some of the lowest paid women workers in particular have been in action for the first time.

NUPE shop stewards in particular, who in many cases have linked up through action committees with shop stewards in the other unions concerned, have played a vital role in mobilising the members for action. The decisive vote against the present offer and for further action in the regions, like London and Newcastle, where there has been the greatest involvement in the campaign, is a clear vindication of bold tactics.

NUPE also has the advan-

tage that many of its members are concentrated in big hospitals in the towns and cities. The rural areas and the more

acceptance in the local authority section.

If all the regions, and particularly if the T&G and

workers now accepting a deal which falls £14 short of the original claim.

Many public service workers are rightly sceptical of promises of future comparability payments. Few believe that they will be brought up to £60 by April 1980. If this is really intended by the employers, why have specific cash offers not been made now?

The government seems to be proposing that a committee of the "Great and the Good"—who will undoubtedly be selected to produce the required results—will carry out a comparability study on a job-for-job basis.

But many public service workers, like school meals staff, for instance, are in fact

slightly better paid than comparable workers in private hotels, catering etc., where even worse wages and conditions prevail.

The only acceptable "comparability" to be going on with is that on which the original £60 is based—the two-thirds level of average earnings.

Those involved in action since 22 January are also disappointed that there has been no mention of shorter hours in the latest offer. So far, only Camden Labour Council—to its credit—has conceded a 35-hour week, together with guaranteed minimum earnings of £60 a week.

Camden, however, is in the exceptionally favourable position of having a very high rate income, and NUPE has so far rightly declined to settle with Camden on the grounds that a satisfactory national settlement is vital.

If NUPE and possibly COHSE now decide to continue the action, the campaign must be made even more effective, with key sections of workers being brought out, and the systematic co-ordination of strike action through the shop stewards and strike committees.

RESULTS OF NUPE BALLOT

	For	Against	
Local authority manual workers	227,591	150,455	Accepted 6-4
Health ancillary workers	35,149	123,498	Rejected 4-1
Ambulance men	1,124	7,704	Rejected 7-1

isolated character of some local authority work, as with caretakers and park keepers, for instance, have undoubtedly been an important factor behind the majority for

GMWU had been mobilised in the same way as NUPE members have in London, the north, and a number of other regions, there would be no question of public service

'SHOULD NURSES GO ON STRIKE'

A 'Militant' Pamphlet (3p plus 7p post and packing). From Militant, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

Reinstate ambulance men or we stay out

Humberside Ambulancemen and Ancillary hospital workers in Hull walked out on Friday (2nd March) on indefinite all-out strike in support of an ambulanceman suspended for refusing to take out a faulty vehicle.

This is in line with a decision a fortnight ago of the District JSSC that if any member was sent home there would be an immediate walk-out.

The strike has already been made official by COHSE and NUPE, and is expected to spread. Officers are providing emergency cover on ambulances, and only minimal emergency cover has been left by the unions at Hull Royal Infirmary.

There will be no return to work until the suspended ambulanceman is re-instated.

This action follows a decisive rejection of the latest pay offer by both NUPE and COHSE members throughout North Humberside. Our District Joint Shop Stewards Committee unanimously rejected the offer and recom-

mended rejection to our members.

In the big hospitals and among ambulancemen the offer was rejected by votes of 5-1 and 15-1. One NUPE branch attended by 150 voted unanimously against. Only in the smaller hospitals was the vote closer or in favour of the offer.

Our DJSSC also recommended that if the national ballot rejected the offer, then we would call for all-out strike action of our members.

Plans have now been laid to carry this out, and to try and spread the action and rally the support of the local labour movement.

Following a public meeting organised jointly by Hull Trades Council and the Strike Committee, (see below) a mass meeting is to be held on Monday March 13th.

This meeting will organise a one-day sympathy strike throughout Hull, in support of the hospital workers.

By Alistair Tice
(NUPE shop steward)

SUPPORT POURING IN FROM LABOUR MOVEMENT

After bitter clashes between pickets and the police ['Militant' 2 March], representatives of Brighton's local authority manual workers decided last week to respond to the Corporation's request for negotiations. However, talks proved abortive as a result of the ruling Tory group's intransigence, despite the union and the council officials having hammered out the basis for a settlement and an immediate return to work.

The officials' advice was ignored as Dudley Baker, Tory councillor, threw one spanner after another into the works. Finally, he insisted that the union sign away their claim for payment for the period they reported for work.

This would have undermined any successful appeal to the provincial council on any contested claim for monies accruing before the date of the settlement. This was overwhelmingly rejected at a mass meeting, and action was stepped up.

Leaflets putting the workers' case were prepared and distributed throughout the town. Factories, docks and other workplaces were visited. Support has begun to pour in.



Pickets confront contractor's lorries

Photo: MILITANT

Financial aid, help with picketing, and the blacking of private contractors' lorries from industrial estates and

sites. Even Equity members will not perform in local authority halls. The local hospital

workers have declared that they will not move rubbish for collection by the contractors.

The Trades Council and Labour Party have played an important co-ordinating role. The Sussex Federation of Trade Union Councils has declared its intention to gather support throughout the county, as has the Transport and General Workers Union District Committee.

The Trades Council has called for a mass picket at Shepcote Tip on Wednesday. The union remains prepared to negotiate at any time, but are ready for a long battle as the mood of the workers hardens.

By Vic Fulker
(GMWU shop steward)
and John Wall
(NUPE shop steward)

Messages of support and financial help to Vic Fulker, Treasurer, Local Authority workers, 16 Lewes Road, Brighton

London Labour Party Conference

MAJOR ADVANCE FOR PARTY DEMOCRACY



Delegates at the London Conference

Photo: MILITANT

The London Labour Party conference took a historic step forward in the struggle for party democracy last weekend when, by 764 votes to 499, it backed a resolution calling for the leader of the GLC Labour Group to be elected at the Annual meeting.

Earlier, it had overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution supporting mandatory re-selection of MPs, and calling for this to be re-discussed at this year's Labour Party conference.

'Militant' supporter Bob Labi, summing up the debate on the election of the GLC leader for the executive, declared: "It's

about time those at the grass roots of the Party had control over their leaders. We have to end the situation where Labour minis-

ters can say they have great pleasure in walking through picket lines, or express support for the Shah of Iran. This is a step in that direction."

One of the most important debates at conference was around a composite, moved by Greenwich Labour Party and seconded by the Labour Party Young Socialists, which called for a vigorous campaign for a 35-hour week, a £70 minimum wage, a programme of public works, and the nationalisation of all firms declaring redundancies.

It also called on the Regional Executive to

make representations to the NEC to ensure that it pushes for clear class policies of this kind to be included in the election Manifesto.

Yet the executive asked for remittance of this composite on the spurious grounds that "Trade unions have their own policies on the 35-hour week and the minimum wage, and passing the resolution could cause conflict. However, speakers in the debate clearly demonstrated that there was no artificial barrier between the Labour Party and the trade unions. The Labour Party was specifically formed to campaign for the political interests of the trade union movement.

The composite was eventually defeated on a card vote, with 500 in favour and 895 against. The majority of constituency Labour Parties voted in favour of the resolution.

Conference passed other important resolutions outlining socialist policies on housing, health, racialism, and inner-city decay. The elections for the Executive saw a swing to the left, particularly in the Labour

Party section, where 14 out of 16 seats were won by the left—among them five standing on a clear Marxist programme.

'Militant' supporters played a key role at the conference this year, providing the only real alternative to the policies of the government—moving the major resolutions on racialism, housing and inner-city decay.

NOLS National Committee rejects call for £20 grant for 16-18 year olds

At the recent meeting of the NOLS National Committee, a resolution moved by 'Militant' supporters on the NC, supporting the demand for a £20-a-week grant now for all 16-18 year olds in full-time education, was rejected as 'utopian'.

The NOLS leaders supported Shirley William's proposal of £7.50 per week for these students. Do they think that will change the lot of working class students?

The meeting also marked a further erosion of democracy in NOLS. The minority member position, vacant following the resignation of Mark Morton due to ill-

health, has been left unfilled. The NOLS leaders refused to allow Bob Sulatycki, the runner-up, to fill this position.

Democracy?

In the past the NOLS leaders have attacked the Labour Party Young Socialists for having no provision for a minority place on their National Committee. But their real face is shown here, hiding behind technicalities to prevent 'Militant' supporters in NOLS being fully represented on the NC.

The democratic traditions of the labour movement were again ignored in disputes over Regional NOLS Conferences.

In Wales, Swansea, the most active Club in the region, was ruled out because of the quorum rule, giving 'Clause 4' an artificial majority at the conference. In London, where the meeting of North East London Poly Labour Club was also inquorate, delegates were accepted!

Rules must be applied "flexibly", we were told. 'Militant' supporters have always opposed the extremely complicated, and growing, web of rules and procedures in NOLS as unnecessarily bureaucratic. But we do believe they should be applied fairly. 'Flexibility', for the NOLS leaders, means they enforce the rules when it suits them.

Detailed accounts were presented to the meeting, following the rejection of those presented to NOLS national conference. They were completely different from those presented at conference!

Labour Clubs must continue to be vigilant about finances and fight to ensure that the NOLS leaders use the large resources they have to build NOLS into a fighting socialist organisation.

The NOLS leaders refused to support the call of the LPYS for Andy Bevan to be allowed to organise the youth vote during the election; they have also affiliated to the 'Campaign for Democracy in the LPYS'!

Let them put their own house in order first! Earlier in the meeting, they had already rejected a resolution calling for MPs to be subject to the right of recall and to receive the average wage.

In face of the manoeuvring of the NOLS NC, harmful to the democratic working of the Labour Students' organisation, and indeed, to its growth and survival, it is important that Labour Clubs actively continue to take new initiatives, particularly on the £20 a week grant issue.

This is a golden opportunity for Labour Clubs to intervene in FE Colleges. It must be grabbed with both hands!

Sue Horne [NOLS NC—North West Region] and Alan Watson [NOLS NC—Northern Region]

'Militant' supporters challenged their right to participate, which resulted in the Regional Youth Officer closing the conference, saying that it would be 'unrepresentative' as "Militant would win".

The conference has been reconvened, but the rules were clearly broken by this unelected official, and his actions should not pass without protest. Officials are there to serve the party, not make arbitrary, factional decisions.

Compiled from reports by Geoff Stout, Alan Watson and Huw Morgan

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The Yorkshire region NOLS conference was attended by 18 delegates representing 6 Labour Clubs. The past year was a very successful one for the region, with three new Labour Clubs, and various regional activities, organised. 'Militant' supporters were elected unopposed to the new regional committee and Geoff Stout was re-elected as National Committee member.

Conference supported the demand for a 35-hour week, and the policies of the YCAU; called for increased and improved leisure facilities for youth, and opposed the 'Concordat between the TUC and the government.

11 delegates and 5 visitors fought through snow and ice

to attend the Northern region conference. This region was being re-established after the tied vote at last year's conference. This time 'Militant' supporters took all places on the regional committee, with Alan Watson being elected as the National Committee member. Already the regional committee are making plans to build the region, starting new Labour Clubs, especially in the FE colleges.

However, the East Midlands conference was not such a happy affair. A dispute arose over the delegation from Trent Poly—despite attempting to organise two meetings to elect their delegation, their meeting was still inquorate.

LABOUR PARTY REPORTS Arundel

The following resolution was passed unanimously by Arundel Labour Party's GMC and sent to the NEC, the prime minister and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

"This General Management Committee condemns the recent remarks of Premier James Callaghan concerning the crossing of picket lines and expects the Leader of the Labour Party to support workers trying to secure a decent living wage.

"Quite frankly, we are appalled at the disgraceful attacks made on trade unionists by some ministers...such dirty work should be left to the Tories.

"Further, we see a great danger in Mr Callaghan's attitude towards the low-paid, and this fear has indeed been proved correct by Alan Fisher and NUPE's threat to disassociate itself from the Labour Party.

"We therefore call upon the prime minister and his Cabinet, even at this late hour, to stop this silly nonsense of cutting themselves off from the great labour and trade union movement, and to carry out Party policy as laid down by annual conference."

Aberystwyth

Ken Smith, Aberystwyth LPYS Chairman, reports:

The Cardiganshire constituency Labour Party called a special meeting of its general management committee on 24th February to discuss an emergency resolution presented by Aberystwyth LPYS on the local authority workers' industrial action.

Most of the resolution was passed unanimously, including support for a national

minimum wage of £60, for a 35-hour week and opposition to using troops to break strikes, and full support was expressed for the strikers and their justified claim. Nearly one and a half hours were spent discussing just this one resolution and the LPYS comrades were thanked for taking the initiative in bringing this vital resolution for discussion.

The majority of rank-and-file Party members thought it was disgusting that workers should have to live on poverty wages after nearly five years of a Labour government elected to create a "fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power in favour of working class families", while heads of nationalised industries were receiving £6,000 pay rises.

Folkestone

At Folkestone Labour Party's AGM, the campaign for a 35-hour week and a national minimum wage of £70 became part of official local Labour Party policy, writes Mike Parsons, Press officer.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

By actively backing this campaign, the Party's relations with the local trade union movement are enhanced. Any similar trade union campaign can call on and receive Labour Party support. For example, the Labour Party will fully back the National Union of Farmworkers in their demands for a reasonable standard of living, which has been denied them for so long.

Some outsiders (Tories and their bedfellows), have suggested that this means the Party has moved sharply to the left. What arrogant nonsense!

How can a party that has always been committed to changing society (despite the aberrations of various Labour governments), now be accused of changing sides?

LEFT & RIGHT

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

Following the removal of the Shah of Iran, 'our own' Queen is now second richest ruler in the world. But just to add to her wealth, rulers of the reactionary Arab sheikhdoms have been showering her with presents on her tour. Amongst them are a golden palm tree 18 inches high glistening with pearls; a golden flower bowl on a stand of diamond encrusted gold horses, necklaces [one down to her knees], watches, handbags, golden coffee jugs, all resplendent with precious jewellery. One necklace alone is estimated to be worth £1 million.

The Arab masses and the low-paid workers in Britain? Well, they get nothing as usual. After all that would encourage greed wouldn't it?

BUT NOT FOR US

The 'Financial Times' reports that a lone shareholder at the annual meeting of First National Corporation moved that the increase in the auditors' fees should be limited to 5% as a sign of support for government pay policy. The other shareholders of this large fringe bank were not impressed and he failed to find a seconder for the motion which was greeted with "titters" from the platform.

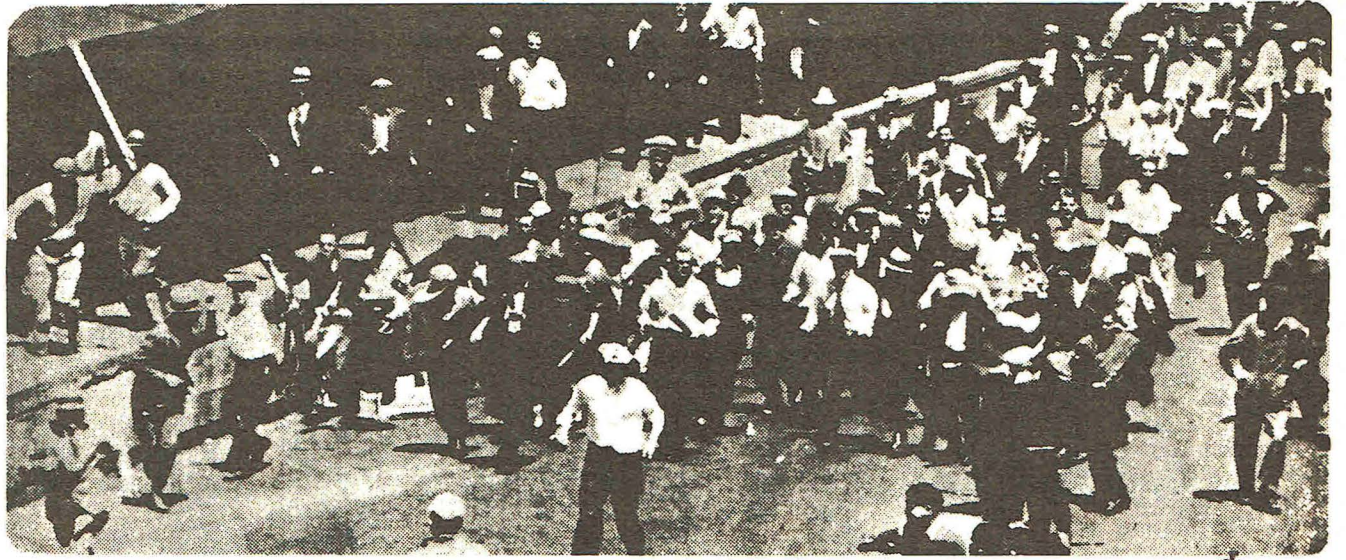
The maverick shareholder was said not to be 'a City man'. After all, dash it, this restraint idea is all right for those working class chappies, but for us....

A DOG'S LIFE

Is your chihuahua under the weather? Has your Great Dane got the blues? Send it off to International Pet Motels Inc. in Illinois, USA. It'll cost you a bit, of course. The cheaper De Luxe form of accommodation merely has vinyl carpeting in the sleeping area, but for a little extra, the Imperial treatment gives your pup astroturf carpeting, a miniature brass bed, a mattress, a daily brushing and two extra biscuit breaks between meals. For all dogs, [regardless of class!] stereophonic music is piped to the kennels and staff read letters to the dogs from their beloved owners. For a further small consideration, any food that you request can be supplied to your pet.

Cat lovers will be relieved to know that cats can be accommodated too. The numerous American workers who, surveys show, are forced by the price of meat to eat pet foods may be less enchanted at the thought of the pets of their bosses now being actually better off than they are.

'IN DUBIOUS BATTLE'



Jim Nolan had had enough of losing. All he had known was fighting and losing. His old man fought the bosses, he fought the school and his whole family fought the hunger that was inflicted on American workers in the 'thirties. So much anger and yet getting nowhere...that is until he met the Party men.

They had plenty of anger but of a different sort. Not that they were different from him; it was just that the hopelessness Jim felt wasn't in them. In the back of every one of their minds was the conviction that sooner or later they would win their way out of the system they hated.

Jim Nolan is one of the central characters in Steinbeck's novel 'In Dubious Battle', a book which continues a theme made famous in 'Grapes of Wrath'.

Set amongst the unorganised crop pickers of the West Coast of America, 'In Dubious Battle' is the story of a strike. A strike sparked by a wages-cut but masterminded

Dave McHale reviews John Steinbeck's classic novel

and led by Party radicals. A strike which followed the pattern of American labour struggles in the 'thirties and turned into a violent and bloody affair.

The book is written from the viewpoint of the 'Reds' as they strive to guide the workers to win the strike. But the opposition is tough. The bosses have "the area organised like (Mussolini's) Italy. Police courts, press, bosses and armed vigilantes merge as one in order to crush the strikes.

Mac is the experienced Party man and Jim his apprentice. They attempt to weld the men together and face the enemy's onslaught, and counter the tremendous

changes in mood that affects the workers as one problem follows another.

Steinbeck's Party men have a syndicalist approach. Their main aim is to organise the workers. They believe that if enough workers are organised then the revolution will follow as night follows day. Hence the Party is organised to serve this purpose and its members do not concern themselves with the political aspects of building a revolutionary party or the question of state power. All that is required of a Party man is to learn how to agitate and organise "in the field".

But where this is an obvious weakness of Steinbeck's Party men, it is probably an accurate reflection of the

attitude of many American socialists of the time.

In every sense this is a brilliant novel and ranks along with Labour classics like Zola's 'Germinal' or London's 'Iron Heel'. Any socialist worker after reading this novel will find some of the fierce determination and spirit of sacrifice of these early labour pioneers rubbing off on themselves.

The labour movement in the USA still only has 13 million organised workers in its ranks, but as the world economic crisis deepens this number will be dwarfed and the American masses will take up where they left off in the 'thirties. The miners' strike confirmed this.

And when they do all hell will let loose once again. Learning the lessons of the past, particularly the need for a mass independent party of Labour, the American workers have the power to defeat the world's strongest capitalist class.

Coming in from the cold

Lunch time. It's the low pay demonstration in London today. Think I'll nip out to the electrical shop and see how it's getting on. News at One in colour. Luxury I'll never be able to afford. Still better look as if I'm a prospective buyer. Hmm £350...shall I or shan't I? Just in time. Here comes the news.

Oh no, no peace for the wicked. This OAP looks as if he's about to give me some firm advice on how to deal with the unions. He certainly ain't after no colour TV.

Poor old fellow, just come in for a warm up I shouldn't wonder. One of the thousands. You soon know about it if you try and catch a bus into the city after 9.30 am.

Half way through the golden hour, the free bus pass scheme begins and so does your lonely wait at the bus stop. Many a time I've cursed...still I suppose I should get up earlier. These office workers have it too bloody cushy.

Not that its only the buses that get filled up. God no! Especially with all this snow. Public library is filled with old folk—pretending to read the

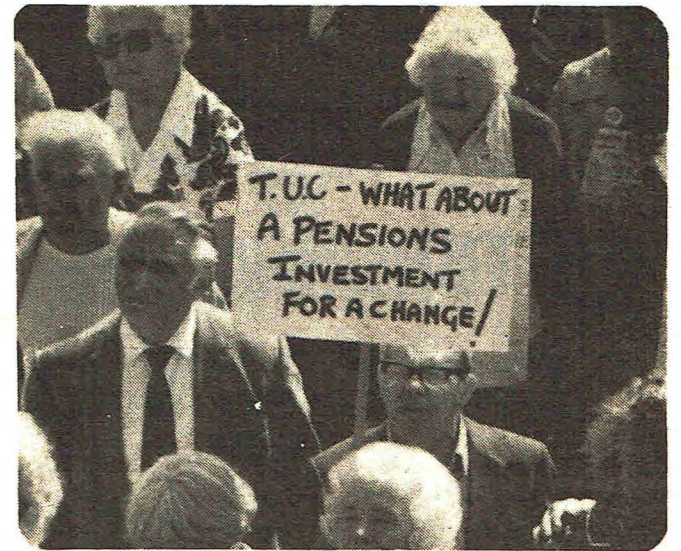
'Financial Times' while keeping an eye on the bloke lucky enough to have knabbed the 'Sun'. WH Smiths is packed with people who have every intention of not buying either Dickens or Harold Robbins. While in Woolworths' canteen the battle is on for the world record attempt at making a cup of tea last.

You have to be a little cynical in this world if you are to maintain your sanity. But it's no laughing matter, is it? Men and women spend their whole lives working their guts out only to find themselves chucked on the scrapheap with only a pittance to keep life and limb together.

Some people fear open spaces or taking rides in lifts. That's nothing compared to the fear of OAPs as he quarterly electric bill falls through the door.

No wonder there's so many deaths from hypothermia if old people are too scared to switch on their fires. Crisis in society? For some life is a permanent crisis!

Still that doesn't mean all OAPs are socialists—yet. This one certainly isn't. Still staring at the TV he cocks his



head towards mine and informs me the government ought to do something about these bloody unions. Discussing strikes has become a bit like discussing the weather. Not so much a conversation, more a way of passing the time of day.

'Sorry mate, I disagree. It's the other way round. About time the unions sorted out the government. If they gave us a decent wage there wouldn't be any trouble'.

Aha. I think this momentary silence signals a slight condition of shock. After all it's not every day someone will argue with you about whether it's raining or not! And don't all the newspapers agree that it is in fact raining!

He's not finished yet though. 'It wasn't like it in my day. No strikes then. People don't want to work nowadays and it's us pensioners that suffer.'

'I hate to disagree but British workers work longer hours and have less holidays

than any other workers. It's the bosses that are to blame. They don't invest so we can't compete abroad. If it weren't for the trade unions you wouldn't have a pension at all.'

'I suppose there's that. But there's going to be a big bust-up in this country soon'.

Who am I to disagree with that? He's not so bad really. Only wants a chat in the warm. No ill feelings brother, except...I've missed the flaming news. Oh well. C'est la vie! Back to the office.

If only the TUC was to take up the pensioner's case in a serious way. It's alright to have the occasional jamboree protest. But that's not what gets results. Industrial muscle could be used. My mate here can't wait till the end of the world for a proper retirement. We have to change society now!

By Dave McHale

The first rule of solidarity.....

NEVER CROSS A PICKET LINE

The Bradford 'Telegraph' and 'Argus' reported last November that one Joseph Thompson had been sacked from his job as a dyeworker at Yeàdon, near Bradford,—all because he had 'disobeyed a union rule 14 years ago.'

The National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile workers had discovered that Mr Thompson had worked at "a local dyeworks blacked by the union", for a couple of months after leaving school when 16.

The union's officials confiscated his union card and because the firm, Naylor and Jennings, was a closed shop, they had to sack Thompson.

Mr Thompson is quoted as saying: "I don't know whose fault this is, but I am left with no job just before Christmas and a wife and three children to support."

The report insinuated that here was another poor innocent victim of high-handed bureaucratic abuse of union power, and was taken up by television, radio and several Tory MPs.

The union refused to comment, adding to the impression that here was an unanswerable example of faceless bureaucracy accountable to no-one, over-reacting to a trivial breach of the rules.

These distortions become clearer, however, when the background is investigated.

The firm that Mr Thompson worked for, "briefly as a fill-in job", turns out to be William Denby & Son of Basildon, near Bradford.

It was here in 1963 that a dispute began which was to develop into Britain's longest running strike at the time,



Members of the Dyers, Bleachers and Textile workers' union picket a firm in Birkenhead. Distorted press reports aim to split such movements

Photo: MILITANT

lasting 14 months.

The dispute arose on the 30th October 1963 when Dyers and Bleachers members walked out in protest at a member of management breaking a working agreement by operating a machine during the lunch-break.

Everyone who walked out was summarily dismissed. After talks broke down—because Denby refused to take back certain men he regarded as 'troublemakers'—the strike was made official on the 2nd November.

Twenty-four hour picketing was maintained, but with the recruitment of scab labour

under police protection Denby's was able to maintain production. As both sides dug in, feelings ran high in the locality, with neighbours, friends and families being split over the issue.

Boycott

The more advanced workers realised that Denby was out to smash the union. The less conscious layers, influenced by the press and media, saw Denby as the underdog taking on the might of the union.

The former view was vindicated when Denby's circu-

lated a letter offering re-employment at the same rates of pay providing the employee agreed not to join the union.

This led to the union in March 1964, declaring Denby's 'black' and appealing for a boycott of his products. Local textile workers responded in a tremendous show of solidarity.

But the owners also showed their class loyalties and supported Denby both financially and by accepting his products and putting their labels on them.

The struggle continued with Denby's demanding an open shop, and the union

demanding a return to the status quo.

Denby's compromise of partial reinstatement was rejected out of hand by the men at one of their weekly meetings.

The men faced public hostility, police intimidation and insults from the scabs.

One picket described how on Fridays the scabs drive in cars and vans through the lines, escorted by police, and toss at the dejected pickets, wage packets with their earnings total written on the outside and halfpennies and abusive letters inside.

The dispute dragged on towards the pickets' second Christmas on the line: the second time their kids had no toys, the second time there were no festivities or relief from the poverty and deprivation of the breadline the workers had to endure in fighting for their principles, their rights and their survival.

The pressures built up until the union had to admit defeat. After fourteen long months the strike was ended.

Many of the older workers were never able to find work again, which damaged pension rights, whilst others struggled to work in a declining area with employers afraid of these 'militant' strikers and the lessons they had learned.

The tremendous pressures of 14 months on strike had led to the break-up of marriages, physical and mental illnesses, and a bitterness which is still present today in the area.

This was shown at the 1976 conference of the Dyers and Bleachers union, when a motion calling for the lifting of the ban on anyone who had either crossed the picket line or worked at Denby's since the dispute being members of the union was overwhelmingly defeated.

More recently, in 1978, a man took up a management job with another Yeadon firm, Scott and Rhodes, and when the members found out he was an ex-Denby man they threatened strike action rather than work with him, forcing management to pay him up and give him his cards.

Why wasn't this reported in

the press in terms of shocked indignation? The man was not a union member, so the union leadership could not be blamed.

But more important, at that time there was still a chance of the union leaders persuading their members to agree to a 5% limit on wage claims, especially the more 'moderate' unions like the Dyers' and Bleachers'.

However, with the massive rejection of wage restraint by the working class the gloves are off. Now as bitter disputes with the organised labour movement loom there is a need to discredit the leadership of the movement and divide and weaken it, thereby ensuring defeat.

Hence the distortions about Joe Thompson's "disobeying of a union rule 14 years ago" and the attempt to portray the union's action as a blinkered, heavy-handed judgement by one trade union official.

The facts are simple. In the irreconcilable conflict between capital and labour, the working class have only their own solidarity to rely on. The first rule of that solidarity is; never cross a picket line.

The ruling class have their wealth, the media, the police and the armed forces. But as we have seen in Iran, this counts for nothing in the face of united working class solidarity in action.

The scab strikes a blow for the bosses and against his own class every time he crosses a picket line.

The working class have every right to remind such people that they have a long memory, and that workers who line up with the bosses now will share their fate in the future.

By Keith Narey
(Chairman, Manningham Labour Party)

EDUCATION

NO TURNING THE CLOCK BACK

A friend recently applied for a job in a school and received by return of post a long letter from the Headmaster which readers may find interesting in the light of all the publicity in the press denouncing "progressive education."

The letter states, "In this school we have high ideals. We are suspicious of the new-fangled permissive and sloppy ideas of the '60s and '70s." When you read some of these ideals I think you will agree he could have said "the twentieth century" rather than '60s and '70s.

Although he says "I find dictatorial power an uncongenial implement," he also states "I have appointed every member of staff...Every pupil in this school is in full uniform...Our expectations are very important and children will conform to these." God knows what he would call 'dictatorial'!

At the end of the letter, in case no-one got the message, he added: "We are not interested in applications

from whizz kids, 'agin the government' college radicals, or the incessant grouser."

I repeat—because I find it a bit hard to believe myself—this is not some parody constructed by Charles Dickens in the Victorian era, but a letter from a practising headmaster in 1979!

This type of headmaster may be an isolated anachronism now, but I believe that his ideas—the replacement of education by obedience training and witch-hunts against "radical" teachers—will gain increasing prominence unless the teachers' unions and the labour movement generally take action against the cuts in public spending and the attacks of the Black Paper circus.

The temporary fall in the birth rate provided a golden opportunity for the Labour government to reduce class sizes. Instead, at the orders of the IMF, education spending was cut. Teachers facing large classes of children who are demoralised by the lack of

jobs; school leavers are under pressure to adopt traditional methods—such as hitting children with sticks—just to maintain order.

At the same time the Black Paper "educationalists" argue that beating the living daylights out of children is the best way to teach them that violence is a bad thing. It is important to note that this is not pure sadism or ignorance on their part, they have a definite purpose. "Progressive" education is a luxury which capitalism, can no longer afford.



"Progressive" ideas in schools came into prominence after 1957 when big business became frightened of the technological progress of the USSR. The Sputnik had provided concrete evidence of the superiority of a planned economy (even a bureaucratically and badly planned one) over capitalism. They

believed that by fostering 'creativity' and 'divergent thinking' they could revitalise the Western economies.

What they failed to take into account was that if you teach young people to think for themselves and then try to fit them into dead-end jobs or the dole queue—they are not going to think too highly of the profit system that is throwing their talents away. No wonder the right wing of the Tory party are screaming "back to the good old days"!

In the final analysis their attempts to turn the clock back are doomed to failure. The controversies in education are really only a symptom rather than a cause of conflicts in society. For a time the headmasters like the one I quoted above may be able to take out their fear of the power of the working class by beating obedience into the children of workers. "Headmistress" Thatcher may try to do the same to the trade unions—but soon they will find their "pupils" teaching them a lesson.

The Labour Party Young Socialists have a key role to play in uniting school students, young workers and unemployed youth around the demands in the Charter for Young Workers, to resist the attacks of big business and to fight for a society in which education is not just "training" for the dole queue.

By
Derek McMillan

New 'Militant' Pamphlet

'The 35-hour week'

By

Brian Ingham

Price 20p (plus 10p p&p). Available from World Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

LABOUR PARTY

SCOTTISH CONFERENCE

SOCIALIST PROGRAMME DEMANDED TO DEAL WITH SCOTLAND'S PROBLEMS

Between this year's and next year's Scottish conferences of the Labour Party, there will be no fewer than three elections: for the European Parliament, Westminster, and the Scottish Assembly. In every sense this will be a pre-election conference.

Foremost in the minds of the delegates will be the horrifying spectre of a Tory government coming to power with the reactionary union bashing policies expounded by Thatcher.

Yet, strangely, there is but one resolution on the agenda which explicitly attacks the Tories "whose policies to abolish the National Enterprise Board, to cut regional aid and the powers and budget of the Scottish Development Agency, and to cut public expenditure on vital social services would increase unemployment by at least 100,000 in Scotland." (South Edinburgh CLP)

It is clear from the agenda that the labour movement in Scotland does not see uncritical support of the policies of the Labour government as the way to crush the Tory threat. On the contrary, there is hardly a resolution which does not either express concern at the present economic situation within Scotland or demand measures from the government to tackle some of the worst social problems.

The greatest concern is the terrible scourge of unemployment. The latest figures reveal that the total number out of work in Scotland has shot up to 190,000, 8.7% of the working population, compared to the national 6.1%. In one month, from January to February this year, out of an increase in the adult unemployed throughout Brit-

By Alex Grant

(Central Ayrshire CLP— candidate for EC)

ain of 4,753, 3,132 were in Scotland.

The number of unemployed school leavers in Scotland stands at the scandalous level of 11,279.

Glasgow Pollok CLP finds this level of unemployment "totally unacceptable" and believes "that if unemployment is to be totally eradicated then industry must be planned on a socialist basis. The government must take into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy as embodied in Clause IV part 4 of our Party's constitution."

This resolution also puts forward a number of specific measures which receive widespread support in other resolutions:

- ★ A 35-hour week, with work sharing and no loss of pay
- ★ A reduction of the retirement age to 60, to encourage early retirement
- ★ A crash programme of useful public works
- ★ The nationalisation, under workers' control, of any company which threatens redundancies
- ★ The elimination of planned overtime and the establishment of a national minimum wage to safeguard living standards
- ★ A greatly expanded and strengthened Scottish Development Agency to develop state industry, under workers' control, in development areas to replace present regional development policies."

Another issue bound to dominate the conference is raised by East Kilbride CLP, which is "alarmed at the continuing plight of the low-paid in Britain.

According to the Low Pay Unit, the number of full-time workers earning less than they



The scourge of unemployment is relected in the resolutions for Labour's Scottish conference

would have been entitled to in Supplementary Benefits has risen from 130,000 in 1974 to 290,000 in 1977. It is scandalous," they continue, "that 3¼ million workers still earn less than £50 per week before tax."

If low pay is the greatest scandal, that does not mean that better-paid workers have not faced problems. A recent survey by Reward Regional Surveys has proved that living standards have been falling. "A family of four with a small semi-detached house and a £12,000 mortgage," it calculated, "would have needed an 18% rise in income last year to maintain their standards of living."

The same survey revealed that Scotland is the second most expensive region of Britain in which to live. "Seventeen towns and cities were monitored north of the border, and the figures show that, to maintain standards, the average Scot required to increase his income by just over 15% during the last year.

"This is more than any other UK region with the

exception of the South East of England...Food prices have risen faster than almost anywhere else, as have those of general services."

There is much support for NUPE's demand for "a basic minimum wage equal to two-thirds of national average earnings." "Family Income Supplementary Benefits," it adds, "are no substitute for an adequate wage, in that such supplements contribute to the 'poverty trap'."

Housing and land are other issues which have provoked a lot of resolutions. Glasgow Provan CLP accurately pinpoint the real reason for Scotland's housing crisis—"a direct result of the capitalist system that produces for profit rather than for need.

"Whilst nationally 300,000 building workers are unemployed and millions of bricks and other materials are stockpiled, over one million people are homeless and slum housing is rife."

Their solution is the only realistic one: "The nationalisation under popular administration of (i) the

banks, the insurance companies, and the financial institutions in order to create state banking and credit organisations to provide funds to councils for house-building; (ii) all privately rented property; (iii) the construction and supply industry in order to carry through a crash building programme."

The scandal of land ownership in Scotland has always been a source of great anger at Scottish Party conferences. This year it is South Edinburgh CLP who point to "the continued monopoly of land ownership by a small elite, 500 of whom own half the land of Scotland and 20 of whom own more than the government."

The resolution calls on "the Labour government and a future Labour administration in the Scottish Assembly to move with speed to bring the major cities of Scotland into public ownership and in doing so to develop a comprehensive rural policy which will end the poverty and deprivation which dis-

torts the rural communities of Scotland."

This is one of very few resolutions which mention the Assembly, and then only in passing. There are also hardly any which refer to nationalism and the SNP.

While to some extent it is to the credit of the labour movement that they reflect the fact that it is issues like jobs, wages, prices, housing and so on which are of top concern to Scottish workers, it is potentially dangerous that they also tend to ignore the rise of nationalism and the creation of the Assembly, both of which have only happened because of the economic problems and the failure of Labour governments to deal with them.

What needs to be added to the excellent policies contained in the resolutions for this conference is a programme for the Assembly elections and the general election, which will convince the working class voters that they are actually going to be implemented and make it possible to mobilise a great campaign involving the whole of the organised labour movement.

A bold socialist programme is the first requirement if the Tories and the nationalists are to be permanently kept out of power, but more important still is a willingness to wage a fight to get it implemented in face of the concerted opposition, obstruction and sabotage which is inevitable from all the vested interests whose wealth and privilege is at stake.

If Labour controls any future Assembly, as it surely would if it adopts the policies quoted above and then uses that position to get them implemented, that will be a major victory for working people throughout Britain, and a means of strengthening the unity of the British labour movement against both the Tories and big business, and the poisonous doctrine of nationalism.

CRUCIAL DECISIONS FOR LABOUR MOVEMENT

Last week's meeting of Labour's NEC was confronted with some crucial issues for the labour movement.

Two notable victories were scored, apparently, concerning the role of the party's National Youth Officer during the election and future control over party political broadcasts.

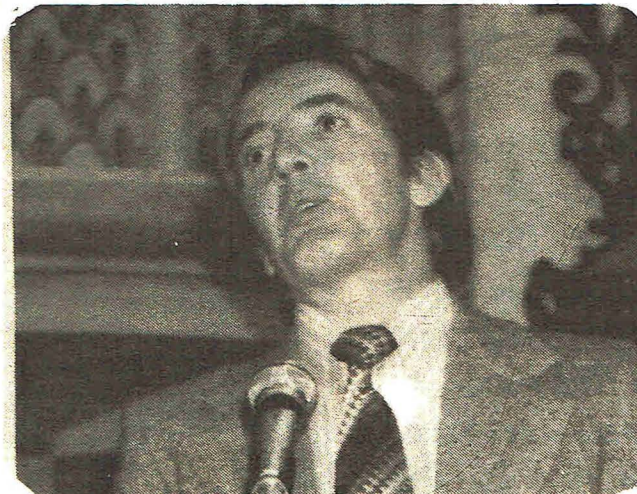
Firstly, the recommendation of the Press and Publicity Committee that in future the content and subject of broadcasts be under the control of the NEC through the Press and Publicity Committee was endorsed, with an amendment that the "leader of the Party should be consulted."

This will provide the NEC with an opportunity to ensure that in future it is Party policy which is broadcast, and not simply the view of the

By Eileen Short

government. Activists within the CLPs will undoubtedly be demanding that the NEC implement this decision.

It was also agreed without opposition that the LPYS representative on the NEC, Tony Saunois, should be included in discussion on the role of the National Youth Officer during the general election, something which the right wing had attempted to



Dennis Skinner MP. Labour must support low paid

block at last month's meeting.

Both these decisions undoubtedly represent a step forward for the Labour Party, and if acted upon will increase the chance to ensure the defeat of the Tories at

the next election.

Tony Saunois moved a resolution supporting the public service workers in their "attempts to eradicate low pay". Similarly a resolution to allow the question of re-

selection of MPs to be discussed again at this year's annual conference was moved.

Both were recommended for support by their respective sub-committees. However, due to the absence of a number of left wing members of the NEC both decisions were defeated. The NEC unfortunately referred back the decision to allow the subject of re-selection back onto the conference agenda by 11 votes to 10, with Joan Lester reportedly abstaining!

The resolution moved by Tony Saunois in support of the public sector workers was "left on the table" by 14 votes to 4. The main argument used against was apparently that "the Party shouldn't intervene in industrial disputes", something which Tony Saunois reportedly described as "putting a Chinese wall between the Party and the

unions."

"How can you separate industrial action like this from the political issues facing the movement? These workers' claims are based on Party policy. The Party should stand by them and call upon the government to do likewise." This view was apparently shared only by Dennis Skinner, Joan Maynard and Eric Heffer.

This meeting of the NEC marked a step forward in some fields—but some decisions will undoubtedly anger many CLPs and Party activists. Resolutions will no doubt be pouring in to protest at the failure of the NEC to stand firm on allowing a democratic discussion on re-selection; and also at the failure to stand by the local authority workers in their struggle to abolish low pay.

FIGHT THE THREAT



Lured by the good job prospects, houses, and the promise of a better future, thousands of workers and their families uprooted themselves and moved to Corby, a town built around steel. Now, through its massive closures, BSC plans to cancel the future for thousands of working people.



Sheena Colman

NUPE member Sheena Colman, school dinner lady and cleaner:

"My father moved to Corby in 1936 and he's retired now. He wanted to give his children and grandchildren a good future. If my husband is made redundant I don't know what we'll do. He's a pipe fitter at the steelworks.

We won't move from Corby even if it means him being on the dole for a long time.

Where would else would we Corby even if it means him being on the dole for a long time. Where else would we go?

"If the steel works close the teenagers for one will have no jobs to go to. I've got teenagers that are coming up for starting work. It's the young people that will be affected the most. They are just starting out on life..."

Sammy Ramsay, Machine operator and Chairman ISTC tubes division:

"I came down here from Scotland in 1954, mostly for a house—and the job went along with it. That was when business was booming and money wasn't scarce. It's scarce now.

"I've served 37 years in the trade: there's no chance of me getting another job. I'm 54 next week and there's only one job I know and that's tubing.

"I came here for the children. I've got three daughters and five grandchildren. There's no prospects for them here—but there's no prospects for them anywhere. This is what we're fighting for."

"I couldn't go back to Glasgow. There's a higher percentage of unemployment there now. The shipyards are closing down.

"I came down here because they wanted experienced



Sammy Ramsay

tubemakers. Now they've got what they want out of me, they want to throw me on to the scrap heap. Well, they won't.

"In the 1930s men walked to Corby all the way from Glasgow to find work. When they found a job and somewhere to live, they sent for their families. Well they won't be so prepared to walk back."

"Corby was a new town built for the steel works. People from all over the country were lured here for the jobs and the housing. But the first thing they did was to take away the train service, so that once you got in the town, you could never get out again!"

—Tommy Sheridan

Ian Merrilees, EETPU at steelworks:

"Many parts of the Works are bad for the people's health. For instance, the blast furnaces or the coke ovens. People tend not to work in these places for very long, particularly the coke ovens where there is risk of serious diseases if you stay there over a period of time.

"I used to work there and within a year I'd lost over two stone in weight, mainly because of the dust and the heat. Most jobs at the steel works are like this.

"The tube works don't have problems with the dust and heat and fumes, but there is a noise problem. This is the main factor in causing stress.

"Compared to other countries, BSC equipment is fairly antiquated. The conditions are not conducive to workers' health. This could be overcome if the money was spent.

"One of the main sources of pollution is from the coke



Tommy Sheridan

We will not be uprooted again

Alan Kane, an AUEW fitter at BSC and a member of the Labour Party Young Socialists says what redundancy would mean for his family:

"We moved to Corby eleven years ago. My dad learned his trade in the dock in Rosyth, Scotland. He left a steady job to come to Corby because the job prospects were better for myself and I was about to leave school.

"About three years ago my dad was offered the chance of buying this council house. It's



Alan with his father very fortunate that he turned it down. Because if the steel



Ian Merrilees

ovens. Most of the chemicals from the ovens go up into the air. Other areas use the method of dry quenching. This is cheaper and cuts atmospheric pollution.

"There haven't been nearly enough precautions to protect the local population. There have been umpteen campaigns in the past. People couldn't hang out their washing because of the pollution.

"This was in the old Stewarts and Lloyds days where they built houses right up against

the blast furnaces in Stephenson's Way. You can actually look out from the back windows of the houses and see the men tapping the furnaces."

Ian Merrilees (EETPU member at Steel Works) told us, "When I first came to Corby, I arrived on the train. It was a dull dark day. The train drew in past the blast furnaces and I thought what a horrible place this is. But I got to like the town."

"When we first came to this town", says Peter Floody, "we didn't just think we were getting employment for ourselves but we were getting employment for our children. We all fitted into a very good community.

"With 41 different nationalities, there has been no sectarianism, no prejudice and no racialism. There are political differences but that's all.

"Nothing to disturb the peace of the community except football matches, and that's normal! When we got to like the town, we persuaded our relatives to join us.

A BOLD

Closure of Corby's steel works would mean not just a catastrophic loss of jobs, but a sentence of death for the whole town.

Corby was built on steel. Workers were attracted to Corby by jobs, houses—and the promise of a secure future. What now if steel is wiped out?

The threat to Corby's steel-making is an alarming symptom of the depth of the crisis facing diseased British capitalism.

There is clearly a worldwide crisis for capitalist steel production. But representatives of British big business and the tops of the civil services are reconciled to writing-off a major section of Britain's steel-making capacity—which, if it is allowed to happen, would mean the end of Britain as even a second-

rank industrial producer.

It is not just the jobs and livelihood of working people in Corby at stake: the vital interests of the whole working class are threatened. A united and determined fight against closure—led by shop stewards in Corby and throughout the BSC, backed by the whole labour movement—is therefore absolutely essential.

At the first threat of closure of any BSC plant, there should be immediate national strike action. When so many plants are in the firing line, with BSC management trying to play one off against another, effective, national action is the only way.

Such was the pressure for action against redundancy threats at last year's conference of the ISTC (Iron and Steel Trades Confederation), that Bill Sirs and the executive

TO CORBY!

Feature by
Heather
Rawlings

Photos by
Julian
McKittrick



He'd be stuck with a mortgage around his neck.

"I'm getting married in sixteen months' time. We were thinking of buying our own house. No way will we consider that now.

"My dad won't be able to get another job. He's a welder and at the age of 50 your eyes begin to go and your hands begin to shake.

"If my dad had to move again it would break my mam's heart. It broke her heart to pull up her roots and leave her friends behind to come to Corby. Now she's settled here and made a home here and friends, it would break her heart to move again.

"I've vowed I will never leave. They've uprooted once and it's a hard thing to ask them to uproot again."

works closes down, he'd get a little redundancy money.

'IF THIS IS HOW WE'RE GOING TO BE TREATED BY MANAGEMENT, THEN WHAT'S HAPPENING IN LORRAINE WILL BE LIKE A TEA PARTY...'

The battle for Lorraine, see page 11

Two weeks ago some of the men went to London to lobby the meeting between the TUC steel committee and the BSC. It was a freezing cold day and most of the men lost a day's pay to go down to London. In the balance were their jobs and their future.

BSC 'kindly' gave them a free cup of tea in the morning. What price a job? Bill Sirs, the leader of the ISTC, promised to see them at 4 o'clock to tell them the decision. The men had waited from 10 in the morning, but Bill Sirs disappeared to South

Wales without telling them anything.

When the men finally found out the proposals of the BSC to axe 5,500 jobs, they were furious.

One of them, expressing the feeling of the others said: "If this is the way we're going to be treated by the management and the union, then what's happening in Lorraine in France will be a tea party compared to what we will do."

The French steel workers have occupied the plant, locked up the old managers and closed off whole towns. "We are getting in touch with the French steel workers", said Mike Skelton: "We'll learn the lessons from their experiences. BSC want to close the town down? Well we'll do it for them—only we'll keep the steel works open.

"What we'll do is shut down the town for a couple of days—a complete shut-down. We'll block off all the roads. Nothing will move in or out. Then we'll say: this is what Corby will look like if the steel works are allowed to close.

"Then we can get the whole town to fight with us to keep the Works open.

"Longwy in France is in a very similar position to us. It's a 'one-horse' town as well, and the steel works is under the threat of closure.

"The unions there got all

the steel workers behind them and they picketed every main road from Luxembourg and Belgium and other places. Then you got the spotlight on the town.

"We've got to do something different to save Corby. What's happening at Corby has already happened at East Moors, it's happening at Shotton and Bilston, and we've got to learn from them.

"For example, they let the BSC starve the NUBF out at Hartlepool and other places.

"Shrinkage has been allowed to take place, or dates have been extended and a stay of execution given and all the rest of it. We're not going to have that at Corby.

"We've got to do what the French workers did and shut the lot off and show everybody what a town being murdered looks like."

Ian Merrilees, EETPU at Steelworks. Committee member ROSAC ['Retention of steel making at Corby']:

"BSC has to be made an instrument of the people with more workers' control, not the parody that it is at the moment. The present system of worker-directors is a charade. The steel unions have a right to nominate a worker-director: these are then vetted by the TUC steel committee, and the BSC chairman even has the right to veto these nomination! It's completely undemocratic."



PROGRAMME TO DEFEND JOBS

were obliged to give a commitment to fight, including strike action, to save Bilston. It is high time that this promise of effective industrial action was taken up, in relation to Bilston (which is still threatened), and now especially in relation to Corby.

One immediate move should be the convening of a special re-call conference of the ISTC, to allow delegates to express the depth of feeling among steel workers, and to plan and co-ordinate nationwide resistance to BSC's disastrous plans.

The shop stewards at Corby have a key role to play. It is now urgent that links between the shop stewards throughout the industry be strengthened through the election of a national shop stewards' committee to co-ordinate action.

Acting as a united body with an effective plan of campaign, the shop stewards would play an indispensable part in building up rank-and-file support in the plants, ensuring that there is no back-sliding by the ISTC executive, and securing vital support from other sections of the trade union movement.

Shop stewards

The shop stewards in particular have an essential job to do in overcoming any move to accept redundancy payments, particularly on the part of older workers who may be dispirited by the long haemorrhage of jobs that has, unfortunately, already taken its toll.

In the event of a national strike, a national shop stewards' committee could effec-

tively appeal to dockers, transport drivers, railwaymen and other workers, to black all goods moving in and out of BSC establishments.

Already, the magnificent action of the French steel workers in the Lorraine [see page 11] has been a great inspiration to Corby workers. Contacts with shop stewards in French, German and other countries must be developed, opening the way to co-ordinated international action and preventing divide-and-rule tactics by the European and world-wide steel cartels, which include BSC.

The battle against steel closures is also a political fight: it must be carried into the political wing of the movement, the Labour Party.

Through their delegates to local Parties, steel trade unionists must ensure that a

flood of resolutions are put through to regional executives and especially to the National Executive, exerting the maximum pressure on the Labour government to halt BSC's carve-up.

A mass lobby of parliament should be organised to demonstrate to the Labour leaders and to Labour MPs that the rank-and-file will not tolerate any more redundancies.

The crisis facing Corby brings home the lack of any real democracy in industry. Men and women who have worked to develop the industry for years and years now face the scrap heap. This is particularly scandalous in a nationalised industry like BSC.

Nationalised industries are supposed to be run in the 'public interest'—yet they are really run by big business directors for the benefit of

private industry—regardless of the workers' interests. The fight to save jobs must therefore be firmly linked to the fight for workers' control and management.

Workers' control

Nationalised industries like BSC must be democratically run by boards made up of one-third representatives elected by the trade unions in the industry; one-third from the TUC, representing the movement as a whole; and one third from the government.

This would ensure that the industry was efficiently and democratically run in the interests of the workers, and in accordance with the overall needs of society.

But clearly, the nationalised industries could not be run as havens of socialism in a

big business environment. To abolish unemployment, secure decent jobs and conditions, and to plan the development of production as a whole, the labour movement must fight for the nationalisation under workers' control and management of the handful of big monopolies which dominate the economy. Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need.

Saving jobs is an immediate struggle. But the crisis in the big business system in Britain and internationally—which threatens the living standards, security, and democratic rights of all workers—makes it an unavoidable necessity to link the battle for jobs to the wider fight for action on the fundamental socialist aims of the labour movement.



CORRUPTION EXPOSURES

The recent revelations of corruption in the South African government have resulted in the resignation of the Deputy Prime Minister and the election of an extreme conservative opponent of the Prime Minister to the leadership of the ruling Nationalist Party in the Transvaal.

On the surface these exposures ['Muldergate'] seem to be nothing more than the bickering of thieves over the loot that they have wrested from the black workers. But beneath this appearance one can see something of the crisis that is facing the ruling class as it tries to maintain capitalist exploitation in the country.

The revolt of Soweto tore open South African society, bringing out in the sharpest form all its central contradictions. It was pressure from below which deepened the cracks at the top.

The current crisis is, in the first instance, a crisis of the Nationalist Party. The success of the Nationalist Party in power for over 30 years has been attributed to its ability to mobilise "Afrikanerdom", the majority of the white population. But its real base has lain in the form which the rule of capital has taken in South Africa. The root of capitalist exploitation lies in the perpetuation of the system of cheap black migrant labour.

Segregation and apartheid—the extreme national oppression of the black majority—have been instruments for the maintenance of this system. This has meant that the bourgeoisie has had to rest its rule in society through "democracy" for whites on a white aristocracy of labour. The crisis of the Nationalist Party reflects a crisis in the form of the rule of capital in South Africa.

The original aims of the Nationalist Party were to win a share for Afrikaner landowners and the middle class of the economic power monopolised by big "English" (foreign and local) capital.

As the South African economy grew slowly through the '50s, and boomed in the 1960s, Afrikaner capitalists achieved a position of partnership with foreign and local "English" in the control of the dominating monopolies.

The white labour aristocracy, their jobs, privilege and status protected, achieved large material gains. The challenge of the black working class (expressed through an extra-parliamentary movement for the democratic political and economic transformation of society led by the Congress Alliance) was beaten back by increasing brutal, vicious and dictatorial methods.

But through this period South African capitalism, ruling through the Nationalist government, was bringing into being its grave-digger.

by our South African correspondent

The development of the economy brought a massive expansion in the numbers and social weight of the black proletariat.

The Nationalists had come to power with a policy of apartheid to counter the rising power of the black workers, which they posed as a threat to the bourgeoisie and white workers.

The subsequent increased repression forced the majority of the black middle class closer to the workers. At the same time the ruling bourgeois layers of Afrikanerdom became ever more detached from their political base in the labour aristocracy.

The impact on South Africa of the new period of world capitalist recession has brought all these contradictions into the open. With the onset of recession, the ruling class is compelled to intensify the exploitation and oppression of a massively strengthened working class.

Narrower base

Black workers have been facing new burdens of accelerating unemployment and an increased cost of living which has eroded wage packets already paid at starvation level. The pinch is also being felt by white workers. The squeeze on profits increases the need for employers to substitute cheaper black labour for white labour, to erode some of the fat gains which were achieved by the labour aristocracy in return for political collaboration.

These attacks have narrowed the base on which the ruling class rests. Also the bourgeoisie is faced with the gathering pace of the African revolution for national and social emancipation, in Mozambique, Angola and elsewhere.

To maintain itself, the bourgeoisie must find a stronger basis for its rule. "As the the economic options are limited, a political solution, both internal and external, becomes more urgent." ('Financial Times', 6th October, 1978). The far-sighted elements of the big bourgeoisie have for a long time urged the need to win the support of the black middle class as a buffer against the black workers.

In 1959 the Anglo-American Corporation sponsored the Progressive Party on this basis. Since Soweto, the big bourgeoisie has sought this solution more urgently.

REFLECT SPLIT IN RULING CLASS



Revolt and confrontation—that is the fear of the ruling class

Encouraged by imperialism, and supported by the English language press, the Progressive Federal Party argues for a "federal" South Africa, for a recognition of "ethnic pluralism", a system which would perpetuate the migrant labour system, but on the basis of a strengthened collaboration with the black middle class, urban and rural.

The PFP has close relations with Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of the Kwazulu Bantustan. Through a "Black Alliance" of political parties, rooted in his Kwazulu Inkatha party, Buthelezi has made inroads into the urban as well as the rural middle class.

The first problem for the big bourgeoisie in pursuing this course has been the electoral impotence of the PFP, as a result of the hostility of the white labour aristocracy. Yet, through the '60s and '70s even before Soweto, as the interests of the rising Afrikaner bourgeoisie began to blend with those of big capital, the Nationalist government itself began to be forced to make some minor steps along the PFP road.

These derisory sops failed to win the black middle class but did evoke a reaction from the white labour aristocracy. Increasingly the Nationalist Party became divided between the verligtes (the big-business wing) and the verkramptes (orientated to the white petit bourgeoisie and labour aristocracy). In the late 1960s some of the verkramptes split away to form the Herstigte Nasionale Party. During the 1970s, and particularly after Soweto, these cleavages in the Party intensified.

It was in a vain attempt to forestall these divisions that Vorster called an election in 1977. He appeared to win a resounding victory for himself, for the Nationalist Party, for a re-unified Afrikanerdom, and for the white electorate. Yet, within fifteen months, he was forced to resign as Prime Minister.

All the social contradictions, brought out into the open in Soweto, had become expressed in concentrated form in the Executive through a tug-of-war between different Ministries. As a PFP MP recently complained: "We have reached a stage where Parliament has, in fact, very few powers left at

all."

Vorster's manoeuvres rested on the power of the secret police, BOSS (the Bureau of State Security). But as the new Prime Minister admitted recently, in the last period of Vorster's administration, "a degree of paralysis set in in the State administration." As in the case of Watergate in the USA, this secret conflict at the top of society publicly emerged in the form of leaks, exposés, and scandals.

The victims of these revelations have been among the verkramptes. Connie Mulder, who missed election as successor to Vorster by a small number of votes, has been politically destroyed by the exposure of corruption in his former Ministry, the Department of Information. Van den Berghe, ex-head of BOSS, whose role in South Africa could be described as a combination of Rasputin and J Edgar Hoover, has been retired to his farm. As further layers of scandal peeled away even Vorster, now State President, stood in the firing line.

Army behind scenes

In the fight to succeed Vorster as Prime Minister the victor was P W Botha, previously Minister of Defence. In the executive tug-of-war he had carefully constructed a power base in the military, promoting relative verligtes, such as the armed forces chief General Magnus Malan, who has taken over van den Berghe's role as chief adviser to the new PM.

Even before Soweto Vorster had engaged in a delicate Bonapartist balancing act between verligtes and verkramptes, between the interests of the big bourgeoisie and the white labour aristocracy. In the balancing act which the regime is compelled to continue the army plays an increasing role, if as yet behind the scenes.

Botha's first government faces a backlog of legislation: measures intended to hold the line against the mass pressures stemming from Soweto, and new "concessions" to the black middle class. The regime must continue to try to balance between the increasingly divergent interests of the white labour aristocracy and the big bourgeoisie. Botha was unable to prevent the

election of arch-verkrampte Treurnicht to the powerful post of Transvaal leader of the Nationalist Party.

The present course is a dangerous one for the regime and the ruling class. Any sudden and unexpected events can upset the delicate balancing act, to a far more profound degree even than Soweto or "Muldergate". On the one side there exists the danger, to the big bourgeoisie, of a reactionary Treurnicht government. But the more likely alternative course also has its pitfalls for the ruling class.

In the emergency debate which Botha was forced to call last December, he warned the parliamentary opposition to act "responsibly" in its exposures: "We are issuing a friendly warning to those people today that they will unleash forces in this country the end of which they have not foreseen if they continue on that course of calumny."

'Troubled times'

In the same speech Botha made clear the forces to which he was referring: the forces of the working class, in a period of recession and crisis. "We are passing through troubled times, troubled times for our country and for all its people, troubled times for civilisation...All around us is the evidence of States which have fallen before the tremendous onslaught of the radicals of the world, before the onslaught of the leftist revolutionary movements of the world."

The unleashing of these forces, however, is not under the control of Botha or the parliamentary opposition. As the crisis deepens, and struggles erupt again on a mass basis, the government of the Nationalist Party may have to give way to an all-party government, or to a more decisive role for the military verligtes. The programme of the PFP even calls for the summoning of a National Convention, representative of all sections of the people, to determine a new constitutional dispensation. This would bring much more decisively into the political arena forces such as Gatsha Buthelezi's Black Alliance.

But this would not be a stable solution for the ruling class. For the black middle class is a tiny force, vacillating and unreliable. The programme of the Black Alliance promises some alleviation of national oppression. But, rooted firmly in the preservation of a "free enterprise" system, it cannot address the basic problems of the workers of South Africa.

Under capitalism there is no answer to the assaults on living standards, the increasing unemployment, and the oppression of the migrant labour system in South Africa. In the present situation of the world and South African economy not even the problems of national oppression can be fully solved on a capitalist basis.

Thus, as the crisis deepens, and the South African workers continue their assault, the deepening divisions in the ruling class will further upset the balancing act of the regime. With that the way lies open, in Botha's own words, to the "fall of the State": to the destruction of national and social oppression, and the profit system in which these are rooted, and to the creation of a healthy workers' democracy in the interests of the whole of society.

FRANCE

The steelworkers in the North of France have been waging a determined and courageous battle to save the steel industry and to save their jobs. The mood of the workers in Lorraine is an indication of the mood of the workers throughout France. The stand taken by the steel workers has surprised the

bosses and the capitalist commentators because Lorraine was historically a traditional, loyal area.

In Lorraine life revolves around the steel mills. The latest cutbacks of 13,000 to 14,000 jobs axed cruelly rammed the truth home and the workers saw the need to take action. The fact that whole

towns are threatened, has rallied people together. The touchpaper of the powder keg is Longwy. Every public building in the town has either shown solidarity or been occupied. The shopkeepers see the need to back the steelworkers because their trade would be threatened.

FRENCH STEELWORKERS - THE BATTLE FOR LORRAINE

By Jo Eastop
in France

It appears that the French government is manoeuvring for time in the hope that the conflict will wear itself out. The joint union council are determined, and so are the workers, that it will not.

The strike on 16th February was massively supported in Lorraine and in the Lille region. It was the most potent challenge to the economic strategy of the Barre government. It made sure that the steel industry and Lorraine was in the forefront of the government's mind.

The struggle of the French steelworkers is a fighting response to the government's attempt to "rationalise" the industry. Last September the Barre government announced its plan for the three main private enterprise steel groups, Usinor, Sacilor and Chiers-Chatillon.

These firms had run into enormous problems. The industry, employing 140,000 workers, was only operating at two-thirds capacity. They were in massive debt to finance capital. Debts totalled £4,613 million and repayments accounted for more than 15% of turnover.

The government proposed 'streamlining', 'cutbacks', and sackings. The aim was to cut production by 25%, from 33 million tons a year to 25 million. They announced the details just before Christmas.

The fight that the French steel workers are now making is crucial for all French workers. Last year their parties, the Socialists and Communists, were defeated at the polls. The Barre government is now trying to build on that defeat by forcing through a Thatcher-style policy of increased competitiveness and allowing market forces to operate.

With unemployment at 1,800,000 and inflation at 12.6% cutbacks are the bosses' answer to the problems of French industry. Declining sectors or lame ducks must go to the wall. Big business applauds the sentiment, but wonders at the consequences. As the 'Financial Times' put it last September: "Is it politically feasible?" (21st September).

But French workers have

by no means taken these measures lying down, and in January alone this year 366 strikes took place involving 120,000 workers excluding those in the steel industry.

The two worst-hit areas for steel are the North and Lorraine regions and these areas have seen a number of strikes, occupations, demonstrations and violent confrontations with the police since the announcement of the government plan.

At Longwy, one of the most militant areas, 6,450 steelworkers would lose their jobs between now and 1980. These redundancies would involve the loss of a total of 17,000 jobs. The whole town has risen up in opposition to them. Towards the end of January a director of the Chiers-Chatillon steel company of Longwy was held prisoner for 19 hours, in an attempt by the workers to prevent the taking place of a meeting to discuss the restructurisation plan for the steel industry in the area. The director was finally 'rescued' by the CRS (riot police), who violently intervened using tear-gas canisters.

In response to the action of the CRS, a demonstration was called by the main unions, the CGT and the CFDT, which was attended by 5,000. Such was the fury of the workers that, ignoring the advice of the union leadership for the demonstration to disband, 500-1,000 demonstrators made their way to the police station where they broke windows, threw stones and attempted to break down the iron door.

Mass anger

Such actions have been typical of workers in many areas of France where their anger has driven them to pass beyond the control of the union leadership, and where recent disagreements between the unions have been forgotten in displays of solidarity.

In Nantes, in the Loire-Atlantique area, where unemployment is four times higher than in any other part of the country, 15,000 people took part in a demonstration against unemployment on 8th February. Again frustrated demonstrators, not content with merely marching, made their way to the town hall, ignoring the pleas of the union leadership to remain within the planned route. Again violent confrontations with the CRS took place.

A national strike and day of action in the steel industry, was called on 16th February by the five unions representing the steelworkers, the CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC and

CGC, which more or less paralysed the North and Lorraine areas. Thousands of other workers came out in support of the steelworkers. In the North 800,000 people took part in the strike and in the Lorraine region, 120,000. Enormous demonstrations took place all over France. 80,000 people were out on the streets of Valenciennes.

As a result of the overwhelming opposition to the redundancies, the government has been forced to agree to various meetings with union representatives and other concerned groups, but these have not prevented the government from remaining adamant in its refusal to go back on the steel plan. Prime

Minister Raymond Barre's comment at one such meeting was: "France's policy is fixed, settled, it will not change, it will be applied methodically."

Empty promises

Vague plans and promises have been put forward by the government for temporary jobs for the workers until the possible setting up of industries in the affected areas some time in the future. There has been some talk of the setting up of a new steel plant at Denain. Meetings have taken place between the government and Ford's concerning the possible setting-



Radio 'SOS jobs', Longwy has a theme song: 'We will not be moved'. It broadcasts over a 7-mile radius every evening, from a secret location.

lose everything that has constituted our lives for years and years." This was the comment of one of the Langovicien steelworkers who as a result of losing his job will also lose his house, belonging to the Chiers-Chatillon company, and will be forced to leave the region to look for work elsewhere.

Unfortunately the solidarity displayed by the steelworkers in their opposition to the redundancies has not been reflected in the national union leadership. The two main unions, the CGT and the CFDT, have been unable to put forward a united position on the steel crisis. While the 'Socialist' CFDT correctly criticised the 'Communist' CGT in putting the blame for the crisis on the West Germans, accusing them of exploiting nationalistic feelings, the CFDT's own position of just increasing investment in the steel industry is utopian on a capitalist basis.

'68 again?

The present policy of cut-backs in the steel industry in France as in all the capitalist countries of the world is a policy necessitated by the capitalist system resulting from a lack of profitable markets.

Only under a planned economy, brought about by the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control and management, would it be possible to revitalise the steel industry through investment, thus providing enough steel for the building of hospitals, schools, houses and other urgently-needed public buildings.

The real fear of the French capitalists is that the steelworkers' action could provoke a situation similar to the momentous events that took place in France in May 1968, when millions of workers came out on strike.

"The kid glove approach shows that things have changed since 1968...but the shadow of 1968 is still present and perhaps explains the President's sudden concern. The authorities know what could be set off and they have every reason to beware of a slow burning fuse." ('Financial Times', 23rd February).

They have indeed! Especially if the lessons are drawn by steelworkers elsewhere in Europe. The problems faced by the French steelworkers are very similar to the problems faced by British steelworkers. If the steelworkers in both countries and throughout Europe were to link up the struggle then they would represent a mighty force of opposition.

up of a Ford factory in the Lorraine area.

But workers can have little faith in these plans, when they see, for example, that the building of a shipyard at Batilly which was to provide jobs for 3,000 will now only provide 1,000, and where a Renault factory to be set up at Thionville has reduced the original number of jobs to be available from 1,000 to 300. In any case, these plans for the setting-up of industries some years in the future are little help to workers who will lose their jobs in the next year or so.

"We no longer have anything to lose. We will fight to the end. If the government plan is carried through we'll

LETTERS TO: The Editor, Militant, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

LETTERS

Who's ruining the country?

Comrades
After a straight 41 hours as a security officer on a building site I received the princely sum of £30.75 gross [75p per hour—no overtime rates]. Needless to say we're non-unionised.

While the mass media are screaming about unions ruining the country, these wage-slave employers are ruining the health of thousands of people, forcing them to work excessive hours for very low pay.

Only through socialism will we achieve a good living standard and healthy working conditions for everybody.

Comradely
Schepens Raphael

Picketing outburst provokes anger

Dear Comrades

The following resolution was put forward at the Brentwood Trades Council by a local NUPE branch:

"This Trades Council, alarmed and filled with abhorrence at the Prime Minister's recent outburst on picket lines, calls upon members of the NEC of the Labour Party to publicly repudiate his statement officially and/or individually.

"Further this Trades Council will welcome the day when Jim Callaghan crosses the floor and joins his friend Reg Prentice in the Tory Party, where he belongs."

After some discussion, the final paragraph was deleted as not being constructive and the resolution was passed unanimously as amended. However what better example is there of the anger felt by ordinary working people at one of their own leaders calling into question basic trade union rights.

Fraternally
Nick Toms
Brentwood LPYS

£500m COULD MAKE A LOT OF DIFFERENCE

Dear Comrades

"I know people are fascinated by money, but you don't feel any different". So said the new sixth Duchess of Westminster upon the inheritance by her husband of the fifth Duke's £500m fortune.

Tax duties "will be minimal" said a spokesman for Grosvenor Estates.

Her Grace may not feel any different—after all, what are a few hundred more millions, when one has so many already?

One wonders what the sixth Duke and his lady think of the claim by 2 million low-paid workers for a decent living wage. No doubt they believe it to be appallingly greedy and liable to bankrupt the country.

It would be worth pointing to the number of problems in the NHS that would disappear with the injection of £500m. So the sooner we relieve this young gentleman and all his class of the burden of counting their ill-gotten gains, the better.

Fraternally
Roy Clarke
Southampton Labour Party



A rubbish problem

Dear Comrades

As I was doing my duty as a householder today, taking my usual household waste to the emergency tip, I was accosted by an elderly middle class-type lady who emerged from her Jaguar XJ6 opposite the tip.

As I unloaded my old lawn mower and bits of old fridge together with the iron bars that had been cluttering up my backyard, she remarked that the public hadn't been able to off-load so much rubbish for years.

I agreed with her and suggested we donate 50p to NUPE's strike fund. This, however, fell on deaf ears.

She went on to tell me about a colonel somebody-or-other, who came on TV and reeled off a load of abuse against the unions. With a laugh she told me of a dustman of her acquaintance, who assured her that it would be 20 years before colonel what's-name got his bin emptied again.

I must admit her attitude came as a complete surprise, but it made my day. Here's my 50p anyway.

Yours fraternally
Vic Dale
Isle of Wight

'Comparability'—the Tory threat

Dear Comrades

The reservations that have been made over the offer of a comparability study for public service workers need to be emphasised—and one in particular.

The 'Militant' has made the point that such an agreement would be worthless were the Tories to be returned after the next general election. History has shown their record on wages and conditions!

Recent evidence has come in the form of a letter to East Surrey Conservatives from their MP, the Tory Shadow Chancellor, Sir

Geoffrey Howe. He speaks of a "determined programme" to cut public expenditure (i.e. on the NHS) and borrowing. ('The Guardian' 5/2 '9).

It is imperative, therefore, that the Labour government meets the claim of these workers. It is essential both to ensure basic living standards and to boost Labour's election chances.

Fraternally
Leon Kaplan
COHSE shop steward

VICKERS—bitter memories

Dear 'Militant'

I have just read the article on Vickers (issue 443). As an old-timer I would like to tell you of my experience of Vickers.

My father was sacked when Vickers moved from Erith to Crayford, Kent, and was unemployed till he died fourteen years later (1942).

My husband served his time as a toolmaker for seven years and received eighteen months on the dole for his trouble. He went back and worked for forty-two years.

When he died in 1958, I received a certificate which I took home and put on the bonfire.

I also received £5 for each year he was with this rotten firm.

Good luck to you all.

Yours
Doris Moss
South Devon

VERY SPECIAL TREATMENT—EXCEPT FOR COUNCIL WORKERS

Dear Comrades

Recently the 'labour movement in Leicester was graced by a royal visit of Princess Margaret. The gracious lady was to open a civic function at Leicester's De Montfort Hall. This was carried out with due precision.

However it was found, the night before her visit, that the toilets in the hall were inadequate. Therefore Leicester's Tory Council decided to construct a special temporary one.

This was a Very Special Toilet. It was furnished with plush carpets, paintings—and a portable TV! The Council employed two of Leicester's very hard-up self-employ-

ed who for eight hours' work, were paid the staggering sum of £68!

These double standards show that the struggle of low-paid workers in Leicester has now taken on renewed importance.

The anecdote concerning Princess Margaret was not surprisingly covered in Leicester's daily paper, the 'Leicester Mercury'. A paper which subjected NUPE and other workers in Leicester to the most vile abuse, during the course of their magnificent struggle.

Yours fraternally
Huw Morgan
Blaby LPYS

Workers back 'Militant'

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Enclosed is a cheque for £50 donated from our strike fund at Chloride Technical Ltd [Swinton, Lancs] for the 'Militant' fighting fund.

In sending this donation we feel we are showing in the best way possible, our support for the paper which has supported us in our recent nine weeks' strike.

'Militant's' coverage of industrial disputes is invaluable for all trade unionists and its policies show the way forward for the whole movement. For a 35-hour week and £70 minimum wage now!

Fraternally
Ian Stowell
Convenor, AUEW [TASS]

STEEL CRISIS—GHOST TOWNS AND DESERTS

Dear Comrades

Reading Eileen Short's article on the steel crisis in issue 444, I was reminded of a report I heard on the BBC World Service.

Apparently, while the steel industry in the industrial countries collapses through lack of demand, agricultural land in the underdeveloped world is being destroyed—through lack of steel!

Vast areas of land on the edge of deserts are covered by sand-dunes blown forward by the wind. The only way to prevent the dunes moving across fertile land is to plant vegetation to hold down the sand. But shrubs and trees are very quickly eaten by sheep and goats, so these areas have to be fenced off to keep the animals out. If wooden stakes are used

for this, they are soon destroyed by termites. The peasant farmers in these regions cannot afford steel stakes for the fences, so the problem remains unsolved.

The BBC did not draw any conclusions from this story,

but the message is clear; forward to socialism, before capitalism makes a desert out of the entire planet!

Fraternally
Rob Walsh
Uxbridge LPYS



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LPYS answer attack

Dear Comrades

At the Swansea 'Labour Movement Yes' devolution campaign meeting, James Callaghan attacked a group of barrackers as "young revolutionaries in my own party".

As this is an obvious reference to the Labour Party Young Socialists and supporters of 'Militant', I would like the opportunity to repudiate this statement, particularly to those Labour activists who were at the meeting.

The Labour Party Young Socialists fully support the ambulancemen in their claim and we defend the right to heckle in the tradition of public meetings.

However, we completely disassociate ourselves from the lunatic element who, by constant barracking, sought to disrupt the meeting. This element consisted of fringe organisations outside the Labour Party, and are in no way connected with the Labour Party or the Labour Party Young Socialists. By their tactic of barracking and chanting, rather than supporting the low-paid, they succeeded in alienating themselves from the other 500 people in the hall.

The Labour Party Young Socialists, as is well known, disagree with the government's strategy. We believe that it is only a bold socialist policy of nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control and management, that can solve the economic crisis in the interests of the working class.

However, we also believe in the need to win our arguments politically and by working in the manner and traditions of the labour movement.

Yours fraternally
Kevin Ramage
LPYS national committee member, Wales

EVERY PENNY HELPS BUT EVERY £ HELPS MORE

Few workers see £20 notes for long, if at all. But in the eyes of the 'Issuing Authorities' an even bigger denomination of banknote is needed.

They have decided to produce a £50 note to make it easier for the rich to cope with their small change. Their only problem is finding a suitable face to put on it. [The Duke of Westminster was suggested.]

But over 4 million workers don't earn enough to take just one of them home in their wage pack for a whole week's work. Millions of workers are being forced into battle to restore the value of their wage packets. 'Militant' fights consistently for an end to low pay and the system that depends on it. With the £1 in your pocket worth so little, why not help restore your living standards by giving one every week to help us?

Already a reader at the Alan Smith factory in Nottingham has told our seller that "he wants to give £1 a week, because £1 a month isn't enough".

This week too we have received what we hope are the first two of many donations from supporters in the POEU who recently got the first instalment of productivity money, with back pay. Thanks to the brothers in Leeds (£35) and Salford (£30).

Chloride workers in Lancashire sent us £50 (see letters page); a Leeds student sent £50, and £30 came from G Henthorn (Oldham). K Davies (Sheffield) collected £20, D Whyte (Woolwich) sent £21 as part of a regular donation. Many thanks!

Tenners came from students in Nottingham and Leicester and £5 from a Stirling student, and readers in Leeds and Fareham.

Excellent donations came from joint 'Militant'/NUPE meetings on the low pay dispute, held as far apart as Southampton and Dundee. In Leicester a meeting on the way forward in the nationalised industries left us £17 better off.











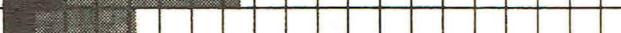







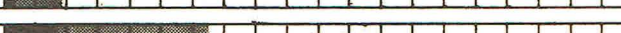
Just over £3 came from Norwich, and similar amounts from groups in N London and Slough. LPYS and NOLS members held collections for us in Chester, Newcastle and York.

P Samuels (Harlow LPYS) sent us £4. B Fleetwood (Hull) and J Cooper (Bradford) £3 each, R Williams (Gloucester) £3.60 and D Short, also Gloucester, £2.50. A further £37.50 has been added as a result of sales of Alan Hardman's 'Need not Profit' cartoon book—particularly from Bristol, Ipswich and Whitehaven, Cumbria.

Over £5 trade union expenses were sent from Leeds and Tyneside. Appeal sheets have been put to good use in Sheffield for example—£4.25 from one sheet.

Like everyone else, we are always pleased when the post brings good news among the many bills. This is the sort of

Build Militant

Area	Target 52 wks	Target 13 wks	Proportion of target received	Received
Eastern	4,700	1,175		307
Hants & IOW	3,100	775		251
Humberside	2,000	500		188
London North	9,500	2,375		642
London South	3,900	975		430
Manchester & Dist.	4,500	1,125		550
Merseyside	5,000	1,250		307
Midlands East	3,300	825		777
Midlands West	9,000	2,250		737
Northern	5,500	1,375		509
Scotland East	2,900	725		154
Scotland West	4,500	1,125		187
South East	4,500	1,125		425
South West	3,100	775		375
Wales East	2,600	650		51
Wales West	3,400	850		254
Yorkshire	6,800	1,700		660
Others	6,700	1,675		159
Total	85,000	21,250		6,967

Progress towards year's target  Towards April 7th target 
TARGET FOR THE YEAR £85,000 - TARGET FOR APRIL 7th £21,250.

letter we're happy to open:
Dear Comrades,
I enclose £1 for the fighting fund, may not be much but in these days of the rising cost of living every penny helps for the cause of socialism—from Stan Godwin, Erith and Crayford CLP and ASLEF.
 Those who evidently share these sentiments and gave us £2s include S Perry, P Polino (Birmingham), D Brown

(Hull), K Duncan and H Cowdray (Harlow LPYS), M Starr and J Watson (Bristol), D Moss (Torbay), D Willett and N Hammond, A Littlefair (Chester-le-Street) contributed £1.45 and £1s came from K Besant (twice), D Hague, R Barton, UCATT members P Corby and S O'Loughlin, C Todd, D Maynard, P Cousins and G Huggan.
 Over £11 came from Poole,

Paisley, Canterbury, and Bradford, where readers clubbed together with their contributions. Lynne and Jayne's Birthday Party (Caerphilly) was obviously quite a celebration—and our birthday present was £15.55.
 Elsewhere readers played darts, rattled tins, sold posters and diaries, gave lifts, collected Co-op stamps and cigarette coupons—all with

one thought—**Build the 'Militant'!**
 This week's £1,255 is up on last week, but we need another £13,000 by April 7th. Help us to build the fighting paper we all need—"every penny helps for the cause of socialism".
By Steve Cawley

ads

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MEETINGS

SOUTH WEST Regional Labour Party Conference 'Militant' public meeting: 'Socialist Policies for Labour'. Speaker: Robin Clapp (LP Regional Executive Committee in personal capacity). Chairman: Peter Hammond (delegate and candidate for REC). George Hotel, High Street, Taunton, Saturday 17th March, 1-2 pm.
SCOTTISH Labour Party Conference Militant public meeting: 'Which Way Forward for Scottish Labour?'. Speakers: Ron Curran (NUPE Scottish National Officer); Bob Wylie (East Kilbride Labour Party). Co-op Lesser Hall, Canal Street, Perth, Saturday 10th March, 6.00 pm.
NEWCASTLE Militant Public Meeting: 'China and Vietnam—the reasons for the war'. Speaker: Jeff Price. Durant Hall, Ellison Place, Newcastle (next to the YMCA). Thursday 22nd March, 7.30 pm. Everyone welcome

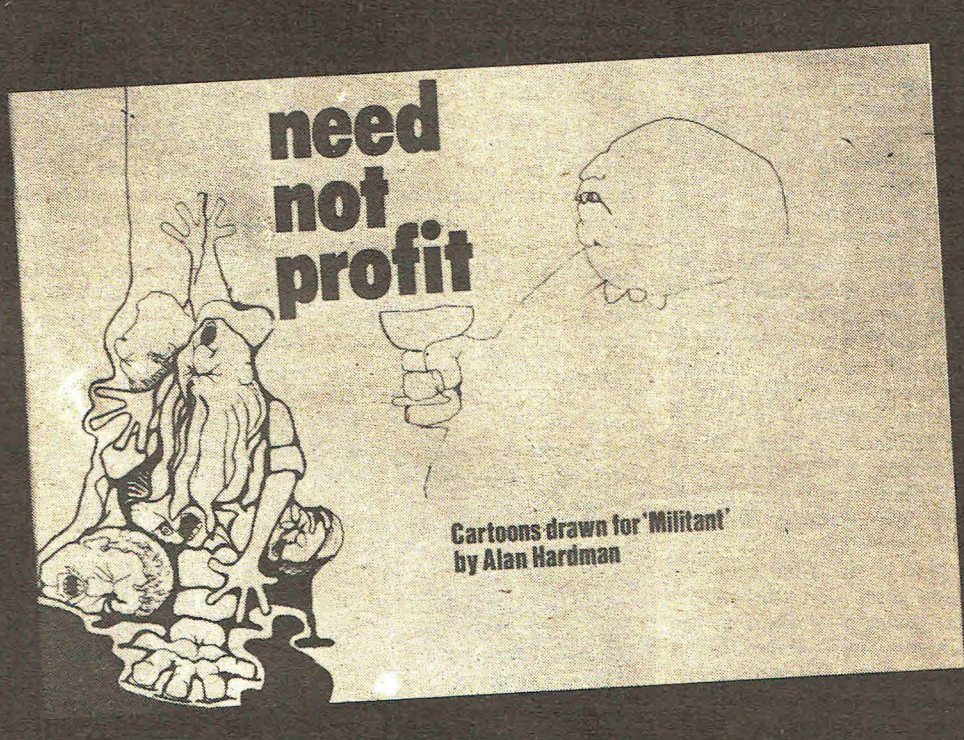
COVENTRY Militant Public Meeting: 'What the Militant stands for'. Speaker: Tom Smith (AUEW Convenor). Elastic Inn (opposite Theatre One), Coventry. Wednesday 14th March, 7.30 pm. All welcome; plenty of time for discussion
SHEFFIELD Militant Public Meeting: 'The National government of 1931—could it happen again?'. Speaker: Rob Jones (Heeley Labour Party). Station Hotel, Wicker, Sheffield. Monday 12th March, 7.30 pm
WOLVERHAMPTON Militant Public Meeting: 'The Bilston Steel Works'. Speakers: Dennis Turner (Chairman of Steelworks Action Committee); Jeremy Birch (Birmingham Selly Oak Labour Party). Etingshall Labour Hut, Ward Street, Wolverhampton. Tuesday 13th March, 7.30 pm
WALLSEND Marxist Discussion Group. The first Wednesday of every month. Contact Wallsend 687678 for details
NEWCASTLE Marxist Discussion Group for students and unemployed. Friday afternoons, in Newcastle University. 9th March: 'Trade Unions on the Shop Floor'; 16th March: 'Spanish Elections'. For further details contact Roy Goodspeed, tel: 748001
MORRISTON Marxist Discussion Group meetings: 22nd March: 'Is Russia Socialist?'. Venue: Morrision Public Library, Treherne Road, Morrision. Meetings start 7.30 pm prompt. Contact Swansea 33542 for further details

SUNDERLAND Marxist Discussion Group. Meetings: 14th March: Trotsky's pamphlet 'Transitional Programme'. For further details contact Diane English, Sunderland 44365
ROTHERHAM Marxist Discussion Group 'Trade Unions and the Fight for Socialism'. WEA Rooms, Corporation Street. 7.30 pm, Monday 26th March
CHESTER-LE-STREET Marxist Discussion Group. Mondays starting at 8 pm. For further details contact: Eddie Lowerson, Chester-Le-Street 88146
CLASSIFIED
SCOTTISH Labour Party Conference LPYS Meeting: 'Socialist Policies Now!'. Speakers: Willie McKelvie (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Kilmaronock); Tony Sauniois (LPYS rep, Labour Party NEC). Co-op Lesser Hall, Canal Street, Perth. Friday 9th March, 6 pm
MILITANT Northern Camp May 25-28 (Bank Holiday). Programme of discussion: Marxist Economics; Historical Materialism; Marxism and the trade unions; Perspectives for Britain; an international topic. Cost: £7; cheques payable to 'Militant Northern Camp'. For further details contact: Richard Knights, 3 Olive Mount Villas, Liverpool 15. Tel: 051-722 0928
HARINGEY Militant Supporters: Disco/dance to 'Hammer Sounds'. Tottenham Trades Hall, 7 Bruce Grove, London N.17. Friday 9th March, 8-11 pm. Admission 35p

NEW MILITANT INDEX. Comprehensive, covers issues 300-436. 20p per copy plus 10p p&p. Cheques payable to 'Militant'. Orders from Simon Heather, 30 Mayfield Road, Mosely, Birmingham B13 9HJ

Socialist Organiser, paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. March issue out on Saturday 3rd March, 12 pages for 15p; 10 copies for £1, from SCLV, 5 Stamford Hill, London N.16.

LONDON LPYS Darts Match Saturday 10th March. 'White Swan', New Row Street, Leicester Square, W.C.2. 7.30 pm, 10p. All welcome.



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8 months on the picket line

WESTERN'S WORKERS NEED ACTION NOW

By Richard Venton
(Birkenhead Labour Party)

The attempt by the management of Western's ship-repairers, Birkenhead, to get an injunction against eight leading pickets has been defeated. The men have given an undertaking to obey the law—which they did all along anyhow!

A delegation of pickets travelled down to the High Court hearing in London on Friday 16th. As we searched through the maze of corridors in the Queen's Bench division, black gowns and silly wigs looked down their noses as if to say, 'how dare these people come in to our hallowed buildings to hear their own case!'

The atmosphere brought home the fact that the courts are a bosses' institution.

Eventually we found the place. People there to support the pickets included Tony Samois, LPYS representative on the Labour Party NEC, and Eric Heffer MP.

The pickets' barrister—employed by the G&MWU—objected on their behalf to a key clause in the injunction: the reference to "threatening, molesting, assaults or otherwise interfering with servants



Western's workers outside High Court after the case was dropped

of the plaintiffs". The last phrase could have been used by management to use the law courts against picketing.

The Laird group bosses were hoping to defeat the

fight for jobs by legal tricks. They have been defeated—at least for the time being.

Many pickets feel there is still a fight to come, and are preparing for it by a renewed

End this uncertainty

Another indication that the Laird group management have plans up their sleeve came in a letter received by the Action Committee last weekend from Lord ('Rab') Butler.

As well as being a member of the board of the nationalised British Shipbuilders, this ex-leader of the Tory Party owns a couple of private shipyards. He has been hovering in the wings at Western's since the dispute began.

He has a reputation for buying closed yards and opening them with fewer jobs, 'no strike' clauses and no job demarcation. But as a potential buyer offering the glimmer of a prospect of keeping work at the yard, the Action Committee wrote to him.

He replied that he is interested in buying the yard, and promises to employ initially "well in excess of 200 people". But he claims that the Laird group management refuse to meet him or allow him to see the company's books. They don't seem interested in selling, he concludes.

The Labour government, in a letter from Gerald Kauffman, has already refused to nationalise Western's, at the same time saying that if there was a viable offer, they would subsidise a private buyer. They offer to hand out money to encourage other profit hunters, in an attempt to keep the yard open, but refuse to take it over as part of British Shipbuilders and let the working class run it democratically!

Some Western's workers, desperate for an end to the uncertainty, feel that the government must be forced to take some positive action on this. They are demanding that, whatever happens, the Laird group must be forced to open their books and bring their plans out into the open, and that the yard should, if necessary, be compulsorily purchased.

The workers are unsure how genuine Butler's promises are. It is high time action was taken to end the uncertainty and guarantee their jobs and their future.

appeal to the labour movement. Why should the bosses have sought the help of High Court judges at this stage?

The costs are peanuts to a firm making £4.83 million profits in January to June 1978. But if they aim to remove plant from the yard, or use a tiny handful of scab labour in a section of the yard, the bosses would have to break the Western's picket line.

Whatever management's detailed plans are, the trade union and Labour Party leadership must immediately rally round the pickets.

The fight for Western's jobs has lasted 8 months. Numerous trade union branches, shop stewards' bodies

and Labour Parties have given support; shipyard workers throughout Britain have sent donations.

Confed union leaders have given official backing and promised support for the fight. Labour Party conference passed a resolution instructing the government to nationalise Western's. Yet what has been done?

Emergency

We should remind our leadership of their duties towards the Western's men. Move resolutions demanding immediate action from the Confed trade unions and Labour Party NEC in a campaign to ensure the full

re-opening of Western's. Move emergency motions to trade union and regional Labour Party conferences.

Send messages of support and cash to Western's Action Committee. Commit your organisation to immediate action if any new moves are made to use the courts or scab labour against pickets.

Workers in other shipyards, or shipyard areas, have a special interest in the fight to save Western's. This struggle is vital to the chances of saving any of the threatened shipyards.

Contact: Western's Action Committee, 29 Gaywood Close, Ford Estate, Birkenhead.

BRITISH LEYLAND Canley management tear up agreement

Workers at the Triumph, Canley plant in Coventry are taking strike action in protest at management's decision to ignore a negotiated agreement on mobility of labour.

Last week, contrary to a prior agreement, management, without consulting the unions involved, decided to introduce flexibility of labour between fitters and machine-room workers. Forty workers who refused to be shifted from fitting to the machine-shop were taken off the clock.

This prompted a walk-out by 325 AUEW, T&GWU and NSMM members. Management have now reinstated the men concerned but are insisting that they have the right to demand flexibility between the two areas in the future.

A mass meeting on March 1st decided to continue strike action and a 24-hour picket of the plant until discussions with management took a more favourable turn.

This is the first time for many years that this particular group of workers at the Canley plant have taken strike action. The mood is one of absolute determination not to let management get away with this latest assault on working conditions and agreements which they made in the past but now choose to ignore.

Phil Luker spoke to Jack Bolton [NSMM Senior Steward]

STOP PIT CLOSURES

The National Coal Board are planning to smash the South Wales coalfield. Since 1960, 77 pits have been closed. Now the

remaining 37 are threatened.

Plans are now being drawn up to fight these threatened redundancies.

SOUTH WALES— A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

This week, Rob Sewell spoke to Peter Evans, the Lodge Chairman of Deep Duffryn, one pit on the closure list. He explained:

"For many years the colliery has made enormous profits, not only for private industry in the past, but since nationalisation. Now the estimated life-expectancy is about four or five years in the present seam.

"Beyond the major fault there are extensive reserves that could take us well into the 21st century, in my opinion. The pit is not exhausted, but it is a major geological fault and capital investment is required.

"There is some difference between our estimates and the NCB's but the initial project would cost around £3 million. We feel this is nothing compared to the contribution that the community and the colliery have made over the years."

What effect would closure have?

"A catastrophic effect! A study done by the Mid-Glamorgan county council recently indicated that we have double the average unemployment. In the last ten years 3,000 jobs have been lost in the mining industry. The Mountain Ash town itself would be obliterated by the closure because we are totally dependent on mining as an occupation."

What action has the Lodge decided upon?

"The feeling of the Lodge Committee is that we will go through all the procedure along with the NUM Inspectorate. We have drawn up plans and it is our job to convince the politicians that the policies they adopted in the 1960s were wrong and it is time to have a rethink. **There must be no more closures!**"

NUJ, NOTTINGHAM

Ten trade unionists were arrested last Saturday at a mass picket in support of sacked journalists at the 'Nottingham Evening Post'.

Among them were an NUI national official and AUEW branch secretary and 'Militant' supporter Roy Bennet. Full report to follow.

NATIONAL ACTION NEEDED

NOTTS VOTE ON STRIKE ACTION

"Who's colliery next" is the question Nottingham miners have to ask next Wednesday.

They are balloting that day on whether to take industrial action to prevent the closure of Teversal colliery in north Notts.

Teversal makes a profit, and has done every year except one since nationalisation. But the NCB refuses to invest £4 million in the Clowne seam, which could keep the pit open for another decade.

Many of the miners at Teversal have moved once already because of pit closures, and are bitter at the NCB's threat. What guarantee is there that Silverhill, where the NCB wants most of them to move, will not be closing down?

So far the NCB has been able to pick pits off one by



one, as at nearby Langwith in north Derbyshire. If Nottingham miners vote to strike, a national ballot will be held over national action.

Just the threat of a national steel strike brought at least a 'stay of execution' for Bilston steel workers.

NUM leaders on an area and national basis should be campaigning for the necessary industrial action to keep Teversal and other threatened pits open.

Tony Cross [E Nottingham LPYS]

'MILITANT'
TRADE UNION PAMPHLET
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price 15p (plus 10p P&P) from World Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

CIVIL SERVICE PAY -

The civil service pay strike has entered a critical phase. About 2,000 CPSA and SCPS members are now on indefinite strike as part of the unions' selective action.

Among the areas hit by the action are the VAT computer at Southend, the Scottish courts, the Environment Department computer at Hastings and the Royal Ordnance factory of the MOD. The strikers are receiving full support from members and causing serious disruption of government business.

The selective strikes follow the successful one-day strike on Friday 23rd February by 200,000 members of the CPSA and SCPS. Airports, DHSS and Employment offices were among the most badly-hit by the strike. Pickets were posted at every civil service office up and down the country.

With the full brunt of the strike now being taken by the 2,000 members in the selective action areas, the general mood has been tempered as members have returned to work. Concern is being widely raised about the strike strategy and the failure of the leadership to deal with the government and media attacks on the strike.

Thousands of members wanted to stay out after the

23rd. The media and the Labour leaders have charged the two unions with 'premature' action. Even the TUC general secretary has waved the 'Concordat' against the two unions in an attempt to get the strike called off.

Yet the NEC have failed to counter these attacks. The government has offered the public sector manual workers' unions a 'comparability' exer-

letter to all civil servants calling on them not to strike, show how our action has rattled our employers. Our leadership must answer these attacks.

Callaghan conveniently ignores the agreements on London Weighting and arbitration that have been broken in the past few months. The Pay Research comparability exercise agreement itself was

servants.

Some of our union leaders have all along played up the staging deal and their strategy has been designed to achieve one. So a staged offer is on the cards.

However, civil servants must be aware of the dangers. If union leaders obtain staging by 1st April 1980, members must ask what happens to the 1980 Pay Research claim? What effect will a general election and a possible new government have? Will they honour any staging agreement?

STEP UP PRESSURE FOR A SPEEDY VICTORY

cise with immediate and full implementation. Yet they refuse to give such an assurance to the civil servants, their own employees, who have an independent comparability exercise agreed to by the government in 1978.

And the government has the cheek to lecture us for taking strike action and breaking the pay agreement before the end of the twelve months!

The government's attack and Callaghan's personal

broken when the government intervened, before the negotiating stage, to try to impose a staging deal.

The action to date has been magnificent. We have now been offered full implementation of Pay Research, but on a staged basis. **This is mainly because the government is anxious to reach a settlement with NUPE and the public sector workers, which would be unlikely while they are openly seen to be breaking similar settlements with civil**

Staging

What money would be on the table now? 10% could mean as little as £3 a week for many CPSA members. That is not good enough.

The Pay research is staging: the present negotiations are based on 1977-8 pay settlements in outside industry. **Any further staging will mean that once again our wages are hopelessly behind.**

The NEC must reject the advice of the senior officials not to escalate the industrial action and must resist any attempt to suspend the action, until our demands are met.

We must support the decision of the SCPS to escalate. 'Militant' has all along opposed the idea of a handful of members bearing



Joint civil service picket at Downing Street on 23rd February

the brunt of a battle which involves all civil servants.

The strike is at a crossroads. The action must be strengthened by allowing members in the DHSS and employment offices to get fully involved.

In addition, co-ordinated action by Civil Aviation Authority, Customs and Excise and Immigration CPSA/SCPS members at airports must be introduced

quickly. This would have an enormous impact, as the one-day strike action showed.

We must end the isolation of members in the selective strike areas. Resolute action can secure speedy and full victory. This is the task of the NEC.

By Pat Byrne

(CPSA DHSS section)

Bilston must not close

Bilston steel works should not be closed. This is the main conclusion of a study by the University of Aston in Birmingham.

The report, commissioned by the Wolverhampton District and West Mid-

land County Councils concludes that financially, over a five-year period, the difference between the cost of closure and that of new investment needed to keep the works open, are negligible.

From a social viewpoint, closure is totally unviable.

The sponsors of the report are recommending to BSC that the "12-month notice of closure should not be issued".

BAA AIRPORT WORKERS PUT IN CLAIM

Unions representing 6,000 workers employed by the British Airports Authority at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stanstead, Glasgow, Prestwick, Edinburgh and Aberdeen have submitted their 1979 pay claim.

The claim, operative from 1st January 1979, follows a pay policy-busting pay and grading agreement reached in November last year, after a three-year job evaluation exercise. New gradings and pay scales were introduced with government agreement, against the background of the threat from the unions involved to close all BAA airports by co-ordinated action.

However the unions and their members are determined to recapture what they have

lost and bring their pay position up to the levels of other airline workers.

The claim drawn up by the union officials includes consolidation of an existing productivity bonus of 7½% of basic pay; a 20% increase in basic pay with an underpinning minimum of £10 per week to protect the position of the lower paid workers; a reduction in hours and a minimum 5 weeks' paid leave for all workers, plus a number of other demands.

Negotiations will once again show the need for reforms to the trade union and negotiating machinery. Although, as a result of pressure from unions like the CPSA, the collective trade union side has been enlarged to allow for shop stewards' participation,

the actual negotiating committee, the Joint Standing Committee, is still restricted to national union officials.

Pressure to allow for shop stewards' participation at the highest levels has stepped up following the introduction in November of a combined delegate conference covering industrial and non-industrial workers. Hitherto they had met separately.

The recall delegate conference must ensure that the union negotiating committee includes shop stewards and that an effective campaign is organised to win the 1979 pay claim.

By an airport worker

Avonmouth docks strike

A docker at the Port of Bristol Authority Avonmouth docks explains the background to the recent strikes:

The most important facet of our 14-point claim is for a basic rate increase of 15%, with consolidation of supplements. This would mean £65 per week basic, for 35 hours.

There have already been a number of wildcat strikes;

Interview by Martin Smidman (Bristol North-East LPYS)

these are constantly being stepped up.

There is action on other docks but all docks negotiate regionally. Bristol has called for co-ordinated action. We have been told, however, that this would require a change in the constitution of the TGWU

docks' section.

The lorry drivers' strike in particular affected the dockers, because of the physical presence of pickets. It made the men determined to achieve at least the level of the drivers' claim—£65 per week.

The Labour government is not very popular. It is felt that it is a political decision not to allow the claim, because it is a municipally-owned port.

working in the union

By Tim Higgins [AUEW]

This week Tim Higgins, Shepherds Bush AUEW, in the first of two articles, replies to questions raised in 'Militant' about the problems of AUEW amalgamation. If you want to take up the issues raised here, or other questions arising from your own trade union work, write to 'Militant', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

Brother Draper's letter (Issue 441) raised the crux of the AUEW amalgamation issue when he stated that members in different sections, particularly if they are higher-paid, do not see the benefits that amalgamation would bring.

He provides part of the answer himself with the statement that "even though the AUEW has the muscle, their members do not receive as much as they could".

The AUEW Engineering section is the biggest union within the CEU. In effect the industrial and political leadership of the CEU is provided by this union.

The election of the 'left' leadership in the late 60s and early 70s was a step forward, but the industrial tactics of this same leadership were disastrous. The legacy of guerrilla action during the 1972 pay claim is still with us. Average wage settlements were £2-£2.40; the claim was for £10.

Hugh Scanlon, together with the Engineering Executive, have already sabotaged the 1978 pay claim. With the present right-wing leadership in power, the danger is that 'selective action' will again be used "in order

to let off steam" (Terry Duffy's own words). This is at a time when the employers' Federation have established massive funds in order to fight this type of action.

Our position must be for the claim to be met in full by national action, with a programme of explanation to be pursued through every factory, branch and district. District Committees could take the lead here.

Because members' wages and conditions have not kept pace with the cost of living, dissatisfaction with the 'leadership' of the CEU arises. Then the members of the Construction, Foundry, TASS and other sections begin to regard the stance of their individual unions as more militant.

Under the circumstances, tactical problems such as a common rule book, postal ballots, and even the principle of all full-time officers being elected directly by the members, are used as an excuse not to have full amalgamation.

This does not alter the basic principle of trade unionism, that 'unity is strength'.

continued next week

DUNLOP WORKERS PLAN INTERNATIONAL FIGHT

Another factory in Speke to close. Over 3,000 jobs are to be chopped across the country. The story is the same; only the names are different. This time it's the tyre industry. Dunlop—Britain's largest tyre manufacturer—aims to get rid of a quarter of its workforce.

Wednesday 7th March has been set by the Dunlop Joint Combine Committee and the union officials as a company-wide 24-hour strike and day of action.

Bill Mullins explains: "The rationalisation programme within Dunlop is causing a loss of jobs of 2,400 in Speke, 200 at Inchinnin (Scotland), 350 at Ford Dunlop (Birmingham), and the shut down of the Waltham Abbey sports factory, costing 400 jobs.

"At Fort Dunlop, initially 150 redundancies are threatened in the engineering section, and 200 staff. But there has been a loss of jobs on the production side of about 200 since September, because of an embargo on employment. Really we are

in are also threatening redundancies. Employment has slumped dramatically in the industry over the last few years, falling from 47,000 to 37,000 between 1973 and '77. Many tyre factories are working at only two-thirds capacity. The cut-back in British car production is having a serious effect. And the large tyre manufacturers, particularly Dunlop, are build-

action by Dunlop workers in 15 countries.

West German workers, who report that three of their plants are threatened with 20% redundancies, have sent a message of support.

Dunlop stewards are determined that in their industry, redundancies and closures will be stopped.

'no redundancies' says Fort Dunlop steward

Bill Mullins [senior], Senior Steward, Fort Dunlop, spoke to Jeremy Birch

Bill Mullins explains: "The rationalisation programme within Dunlop is causing a loss of jobs of 2,400 in Speke, 200 at Inchinnin (Scotland), 350 at Ford Dunlop (Birmingham), and the shut down of the Waltham Abbey sports factory, costing 400 jobs.

"The day of action is to protest at the closure of Speke and to demand central negotiations on the company's rationalisation programme, including the demand of 'no redundancies', and to allow talks on alternative policies to save jobs."

The whole of the tyre industry is facing a shake-down. Goodyear and Michel-

ling up their operations abroad.

Already agreement has been reached that the other factories in the group will not accept work or plant and equipment from Speke.

A meeting was held in Liverpool last month between British, French and Italian Dunlop Pirelli trade union representatives, and the one-day strike is being supported by the International Federation of Chemical and Energy Workers, which is proposing

Arthur Todd, Engineers convenor, Dunlop Speke, adds: "when the delegations of Dunlop Pirelli workers from France and Italy came to Speke and pledged their support for us, we were very pleased. It really lifted the lads' spirits.

"They agreed to hold mass meetings to coincide with our one-day strike: whatever action they take will be decided then. They said they would not accept any transfer of work from our plant."

SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

overwhelming No (79.9% of voters against). Not even the Welsh-speaking and Nationalist areas returned simple majorities in favour of an Assembly in Wales.

This result reflects a rejection by working-class voters of the poison peddled by Plaid Cymru and other middle-class nationalists. The class issues of jobs, wages, houses, and economic policies are uppermost in the minds of workers.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that devolution is buried once and for all, even as far as Wales is concerned. If, with the exacerbation of the crisis in British capitalism, future Labour governments fail to carry through fundamental socialist measures, it cannot at all be ruled out that there would be a resurgence of national sentiments—which would have to be recognised by the labour movement.

As far as the referendum in Scotland is concerned, the most striking feature of the result is the polarisation on class lines. By and large, the biggest Yes vote was in the Labour strongholds, notably the industrial areas like Strathclyde.

In the traditionally Tory areas, and also the areas where the SNP formerly gained support from the Tories, many who previously expressed support for an Assembly clearly voted No with the Tories.

This result was in no small measure due to the massive press and publicity campaign mounted by the bosses through the Scottish CBI and

the Tory Party itself (with some freelance assistance from Labour MPs who campaigned for a No vote).

Since 1974, the Tories have cynically changed their position. Then Heath, and even for a time Mrs Thatcher, supported the idea of devolution, even promising an Assembly with more powers than those now proposed by the Labour government.

Under the Heath government, big business was only too pleased to build up the SNP to act as a safety net for disenfranchised Tory voters. Through the press they even fanned the flames of nationalism—aiming to undermine the support for the Labour Party.

However, the SNP's demands, not simply for devolution but for separation, alarmed the Tories and big business. They began to fear for their hold on Scotland with its important industries and new oil resources.

By Lynn Walsh

In the referendum campaign, therefore, they deliberately set out to scare the voters with the prospect of separation, painting a lurid picture of the dire economic consequences for the people of Scotland.

At the same time, recent industrial struggles against the government's 5% pay limit have brought the social and economic issues to the fore as far as the majority of workers are concerned. Many workers who are lukewarm to



Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

the present limited Assembly plans voted Yes out of loyalty to Labour.

The class polarisation of the referendum vote is clearly a confirmation of the trend which resulted in three devastating by-election defeats for the SNP last year.

Given this development, it is a biting condemnation of Labour's campaign—that the Yes vote achieved only such a narrow margin. There can be little doubt that bitter disillusionment with the Labour government's economic policies led to many workers simply staying at home.

Had Labour conducted a bold campaign for a Yes vote, had it demanded real powers of autonomy to make the Assembly viable, and tied this to a socialist programme for a Labour-dominated Assembly, there could nevertheless have been an overwhelming Yes vote.

Because no such campaign was conducted, the very position of the Labour government is now in the balance. The SNP has threatened to bring down the government within weeks unless it rapidly

produces proposals to set up the Assembly. With no clear majority in parliament, there is now the possibility of a general election being forced on this issue in the coming period.

However, if the SNP, together with the other nationalists and the Liberals, combine with the Tories to bring down the Labour government, the ensuing general election would not be fought simply on the question of a Scottish Assembly.

The Tories would seize on a parliamentary crisis, regardless of the immediate issue, as an opportunity to open an offensive against the whole labour and trade union movement in an effort to return a government carrying out anti-working class policies in the interest of big business.

In a general election Labour should fight for an Assembly in Scotland. But above all, to guarantee a Labour victory, it would have to campaign on the basis of socialist policies capable of solving the burning problems of workers throughout Britain.

STOP SABOTAGE

Continued from page 1

that seven of the government's job-saving schemes could incur losses of up to £800 million.

"Either we must accept the unsatisfactory economic performance that goes with the acceptance of the projects quoted," wrote Wass, "or we must try to find some means of influencing the decision-taking process so as to ensure a higher rejection rate in the future."

As if the British workers, the lowest paid in the advanced industrial world, were really responsible for the "unsatisfactory economic performance" of this diseased capitalist economy!

By what right do these Whitehall mandarins decide to step up the "rejection rate" of Labour's proposals?

Clearly, the left Labour MPs and ex-Labour ministers who recently denounced the obstructive role of the civil service chiefs were not exaggerating.

In a minority contribution to a parliamentary report on the civil service in 1977, Brian Sedgemore denounced the methods used by the department heads "to relegate ministers to the Second Division through a variety of devices. These include delay... a potent one when governments are in a minority or coming to the end of their political life; barring options through official committees; interpreting minutes; slanting statistics; giving insufficient time to take decisions; taking advantage of Cabinet splits and politically divided ministerial teams; and even going behind ministers' backs to other ministers and the prime minister."

Especially under a Labour government, the senior civil

servants seek, "in conjunction with the City, Bank of England, industry, established church and monarchy to maintain the status quo."

The 'status quo' means the wealth and power of the ruling class—the small handful of rich exploiters who think they have a divine right to run the whole of society for their own profit.


If any of the promises of Labour's 1974 Manifesto are ever to be implemented, the obstruction and sabotage of the civil service tops must be decisively cut through.

But to do this, the enormous pressure of big business on the Labour government must be countered by even greater pressure from the ranks of the labour movement.

This requires socialist policies. Only if Labour breaks out of the narrow confines of the rotten profit system could there be a real transfer of wealth and power from the wealthy minority to the working class.

Mass unemployment must be fought, not by feeble palliatives which have no lasting effect, but with bold measures that would win mass support from workers and guarantee jobs.

- ★ A 35-hour week without loss of pay!
- ★ £70 a week minimum wage for all workers
- ★ Work sharing without loss of pay!
- ★ Nationalise, with minimum compensation on the basis of need, all firms threatening redundancies!
- ★ A massive programme of useful public works, to create new jobs and provide much needed houses, schools, hospitals, and other facilities.



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