

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

ISSUE 492
29 February 1980

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TUC must lead a campaign to ...

FORCE THE TORIES OUT

Call 24hr General Strike Against Tory Attacks

PLUNDER

How much longer must we put up with the Tories? The latest unemployment figures show the devastation being wrought by Thatcher, Joseph and co.

By
Eileen Short

In areas like Scotland, Wales and Northern England, the hard core of long term unemployment is growing rapidly. Tory plans to annihilate ailing industries like steel and shipbuilding—will now add millions to the dole queues—if they are allowed to get away with it.

Like a mad Dalek, Joseph rants about exterminating any industry which doesn't raise its productivity. Workers can see, though, that with the abysmal levels of investment in industry, greater productivity will not mean more goods produced but a standstill in production with a savage decrease in manning levels.

The bosses are taking no risks with their profits. Only the working class are asked to take risks—with their jobs.

The Tories have refused to pay the steelworkers' modest demand for better pay even though prices have gone up by 18%. Thatcher described members of her own government who, frightened by the strength and unity of the steelworkers, are trying to compromise with the steelmen, as 'wets'.

Thatcher wants all out

war with the working class in a desperate effort to revitalise capitalism. If this means millions on the dole queue, what do the Tories care?

In their attempts to resolve the capitalist crisis, the Tories are prepared to threaten every gain that the working class have won. Michael Heseltine has now announced vicious cut-backs in housing. Workers in council housing have been able to escape from some of the worst aspects of the housing problem.

Even though the banks and finance houses have councils in an iron grip, and extort massive sums in debt repayment, at least the private landlords don't go for their pound of flesh as well. Heseltine has knocked a

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SPARE NUTS AT BL

By
Bill Mullins
Senior Steward, SD1,
Rover, Solihull

The workings of the car industry and capitalism in general seem more and more like scenes from a French farce.

Sir Michael Edwardes recently announced mass lay-offs in Leyland because of lack of demand for BL's outdated and under-capitalised cars. We at Rover were called in by our plant management to be told the details of lay-offs for Rover car workers.

After being given details of the proposed 5 week lay-off the discussion became more informal and went something like this:

Trade Union: "You mention that there were financial reasons for this lay-off besides lack of demand, what were they?"

Plant Director: "The high interest rates are causing a cash flow problem"

TU: "How do you mean?"

PD: "I'll ask my finance manager to explain".

Finance Manager: "It's cheaper for us NOT to produce cars and lay-off the workers on 80% pay."

TU: "Pardon?"

FM: "Well, the capital tied up in stocks of Rover cars is being serviced at interest rates of 20% per annum, this is costing over £200,000 per week, and each extra car that is produced adds to this cost".

TU: "Em, I see, so now it's better not to produce anything because you lose less that way".

FM: [eagerly] "Yes, that's it, we only lose £50 per week per worker when he's not producing anything, rather than £200 per week per worker when he's producing cars".

TU: "We used to be told by management when production was lost through disputes, 'A car lost through strikes is wealth lost forever and can never be recovered'. Now you're standing that on its head doesn't this strike you as barmy?"

Plant Director: [sheepishly] "Well it's not like that all the time".

TU: "Oh I see, under this system insanity only comes in bouts."

Plant Director: "Can we move on".

LABOUR TO POWER ON A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME!

Militant

1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

ORGANISE A 24HR GENERAL STRIKE

TUC general secretary Len Murray's call this week, for workers "to take the day off from work to demonstrate their protest" on 14th May marks an enormous step forward in the fight against the Tory government.

This appeal is a welcome change from the TUC offer last November to work with the government if only it changed its monetarist policies. The change at the top is due to the immense mounting pressure on the trade union leaders to give a lead against the Tories. After warning less than a month ago that the situation could "get out of hand" Len Murray has now been pushed, in effect, into calling for a one-day general strike against the govern-

ment. The widespread discontent with the first eight months of Thatcher's rule has already been reflected in open Cabinet splits and press attacks on the government's policies by Tory backbenchers. Julian Critchley, a Tory MP, wrote an article castigating Mrs Thatcher's "A-Level economics" as leading the Tories to disaster. This is a pale reflection of the widespread dismay among the middle class at the results of

"Thatcherism" and a fear of confrontation with the working class.

Council by-elections in London last week revealed an average 10% swing to Labour from the Tories. Labour's long-running lead in the opinion polls clearly reflects the real balance of feeling in the country.

Len Murray's call at a meeting of Dover Trades Council, will be warmly welcomed by the labour movement. But a speech to one trades council can only mean anything if it is the beginning of an all-out campaign to build support for the stoppage and day of protest on 14 May.

There is indisputably, a growing groundswell among organised workers for action against redundancies, the Tories' attack on living standards and the new anti-union laws. The South Wales miners' vote against an area strike cannot be interpreted as a victory for management. As many miners have explained, it was a vote in favour of national action.

The campaign to build backing for the 14 May protest must begin with an energetic drive to explain the effects and the reasons for the Tories' confrontation policies. The stark realities of the crisis in Britain must be clearly explained to the millions mobilised on 14

May.

Thatcher and Joseph are not lunatics. Their policies reflect the dire straits of British capitalism. Prior and the so-called Tory moderates differ with the Tory 'monetarists' only on the tactical issue of how to time the offensive to cut living standards. The Labour leaders must make clear that only socialist policies can offer a way forward for society.

Such a campaign, while beginning nationally, must be spread to every locality. Trades councils and Labour Parties should organise emergency conferences of union branches, shop stewards' committees and Labour Parties to discuss the campaign in their area. Every Labour local council must give its workers the day off so that they can join the day of action.

Local demonstrations should be arranged—particularly on May Day—along with mass flyposting and leafletting campaigns. The Labour Party should use one of its party political broadcasts to appeal for support for the one-day protest.

Above all, it is vitally necessary that mass meetings are organised in every workplace to explain the issues, allow workers to ask questions and make suggestions, countering the lies of the Tory press and convin-

cing the majority of workers to join the one-day strike.

There can be no doubt that the press will unleash a ferocious campaign against the day of action. Relying on the workers' loyalty to their organisations will not be enough in the face of a propaganda onslaught. A drive will have to be launched to involve every worker in backing the strike.

If thirteen million trade unionists, who along with their children and retired parents make up the vast majority of the population, come out on strike on 14 May, Tory confidence will be shattered. Thatcher would be confronted by the power of the labour movement.

Workers themselves would become conscious of the power which they hold, the power both to run and to stop society. The understanding of millions of workers would leap forward in that one day.

A general strike would centralise the diverse struggles of the working class and draw behind the labour movement other dissatisfied layers of society.

The leaders of the labour movement must use this as an opportunity to explain the socialist alternative which is the only answer to capitalism's onslaught on working people.

But 14 May must not just be a token gesture. It must not be used as a safety valve, allowing the working class to let off steam by venting its anger in big marches. It must be used as the starting point of a campaign, inside and outside parliament, to force the Tories to call a general election.

The mass of those who were tricked into voting Tory last May now wish they hadn't. There has been an enormous shift of opinion against the Tories; just as with the Canadian Tories, who were defeated last week, after only eight months in office.

Len Murray says that the TUC do not wish to bring the Tory government down, but merely to emphasise that "we don't like your policies, they must be replaced." The Tories and their anti-working class policies go hand-in-hand. It is perfectly correct for the labour movement to begin to campaign for an immediate general election, to end Tory rule.

The Labour leaders must respond to the crisis situation, leading a fight for a new election and replacing Thatcher with a government committed, this time, to carrying out a full socialist programme.

WELSH MINERS WANT NATIONAL ACTION

The rejection of the February 25th strike call by South Wales miners was a disappointment for those fighting the run down of the steel industry and the threat that this represents to the collieries and the rest of industry in South Wales.

But in no way is that decision a major defeat.

The vote is only a temporary set-back. The issue of the closures has not vanished. There will be a fight against these closures and the Welsh miners will play their full part in that fight.

A recall conference has been held to review the decision. The delegates were not down-hearted or interested in recriminations. A sober re-appraisal took place in a comradesly and confident spirit.

It was clear from reports at the conference that the rank and file felt the Welsh miners could have been isolated by taking action alone from the 25th February. They were willing to fight but they wanted a more careful build up and a firm national lead.

A feeling of isolation grew as a result of the Wales TUC calling off its planned strike of all the major industrial unions in South Wales from 10th March. The Secretary of

By Ian Isaacs

Secretary, St John's Lodge, NUM MAESTEG (Personal capacity)

the Wales TUC, George Wright even condemned the strike call of the South Wales NUM.

Also, though the local strike committees of Llanwern and Port Talbot have said they will stay on strike until the threat to jobs has been removed, as yet, there has been no clear indication from the steel unions nationally that they support a continuation of the strike on a national scale until the closures are cancelled.

Again, there had been no pledge from the national leaders of the NUM that they would organise national action once the South Wales miners took the initiative.

The National Coal Board (NCB) did all it could to play on any doubts and hesitation by unprecedented interference in the voting. Where traditionally they have kept quiet when NUM voting was underway, this time they stepped in with an unrelenting campaign against the strike.

Telephone calls were made as soon as management heard of a vote against the strike. In some cases this was done before the lodge as a whole had been able to vote!

Encouragement was given to petitions against the demo-

cratic method of consulting the men through mass meetings.

The NCB wanted individual ballots where the press has more influence. Also, in some pits where they were confident that the vote would be against action, the NCB tried to persuade the lodge leadership to call early mass meetings.

However, after Michael Edwards' recent anti-union activities in British Leyland, we should have been ready for such a campaign from our management. Both the NCB and BL managements have the same Tory paymasters!

The propaganda of the press, the Tories and the NCB could have been made ineffective. The main lesson of this 'no' vote is that action of an indefinite character should not be undertaken without thorough preparation.

The South Wales NUM has a good tradition of communicating with branches, by publishing EC minutes etc, but this material only reaches the active miners. To prepare for a major battle all miners must thoroughly understand the issues.

Every lodge should have had bulk supplies of leaflets and poster. And mass meetings, addressed by EC members, should have been held as part of the build up to the strike call, where any hesitation could have been ironed out, the case for action explained and any distortions rebuffed.

This kind of campaign is now to be set in motion after the recall conference. For instance, Emlyn Williams has promised to address local lodges in the Maesteg area.

The fight therefore goes on! But the emphasis must now be for national action.

In my contribution to the conference, I explained how South Wales miners could have acted as a lever for national action, but that now we should press, if possible, for firm commitments in advance.

We should draw the lesson that the very best way for miners to defend the jobs of



Steelworkers lobbying TUC for support

Photo: MILITANT

SELLING 'MILITANT' ON MARCH 9 DEMO

The demonstration called by the TUC on March 9th

against the vicious Tory onslaught against the working class is likely to be the biggest anti-government protest since 1971 and the Tories Industrial Relations Act. Hundreds and thousands of workers will be showing their determination to defend the trade unions and fight the cuts.

Labour Party Young Socialists and Militant supporters everywhere will be giving enthusiastic support to this demonstration. As in previous years energetic sales of the

Militant will be a central feature.

When supporters reach Hyde Park they can obtain further supplies from 9.30 am onwards from the main distribution point, inside Hyde Park to the right of the main entrance at speakers corner, along the railings.

Contingents will be assembling at 11 am and be ready to move off to Trafalgar Square at 12.30 pm where a meeting will be held, addressed by Len Murray and other TUC speakers.

What are the links of Labour's right-wing?

New information published last week by State Research, links Labour's right wing with extreme hawks on America's right wing who advocate a "strong line" by American imperialism.

It shows that the links made with American government and business by Labour's right in the 1940s, 50s and 60s continue to the present day. And that associated with these activities are the intelligence networks of the USA, Britain and even South Africa.

The American 'hawks' are grouped in the appropriately named "Committee on the Present Danger" (CPD). Formed in 1976 its aim has been to push the Carter government towards greater arms spending and more nuclear weapons to resist the 'Soviet menace'. Linked to the CPD is the National Strategy Information Centre (NSIC), many of whose members belong to the CPD.

Since its foundation in 1962 NSIC has provided funds for extreme right-wing activity in Britain. In June 1978 it helped sponsor a conference at Brighton on 'NATO and the global threat'.

The list of conference's delegates read like a 'who's who' of right-wing intelligence circles, including prominent British and South African military personnel, members of the CBI and military officers from Italy, Japan and the USA.

The conference declared: "The destruction of the CIA and other assaults on Western intelligence sources make it imperative that the US and its allies should again take the initiative on intelligence, information and counter-intelligence".

NSIC has another face, one that turns towards the labour movement, the Advisory Committee on European Democracy and Security (ACEDAS). Called on its notepaper, a project of the NSIC, State Research reports that this committee has published a book on 'Eurocommunism' by Stephen Haseler, (a leading member of the Social Democratic Alliance) and Roy Godson.

But more important than NSIC's connections with the extreme right in the Labour party are the links built with the leading right-wingers in the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding.

This is the labour section of the British Atlantic Committee, a semi-official NATO support and lobbying group.

Its president is Michael Stewart, its chairman Roy Mason MP, secretary Terry Duffy, treasurer Frank Chapple and its vice chairmen include David Owen MP, Roy Hattersley MP, William Rogers MP and Tom Bradley MP.

But all three of its American Vice-Chairmen (right wing TU leaders L Kirkland, S. Chaikin, A. Chankar) are also members of NSIC's European Advisory Committee and the Committee on the Present Danger.

The links with American imperialism do not stop there. The Labour Committee for Trans-Atlantic Understanding publish the 'Labour and Trade Union Press Service'.

According to State Research, LTUPS was set up by Joseph Godson the former labour attaché at the US Embassy in London. Godson told State Research that it was financed purely by 'trade unions and foundations' and that no American money was involved.

But on 17 February the Sunday Times revealed that NATO has been giving LTUPS a £5,000 a year grant.

LTUPS propagates the arguments of western imperialism, increased defence spending and virulent anti-Marxism. State Research lists its articles attacking official Labour Party policy on defence spending, which included articles by Sir John Killick, Britain's permanent representative to NATO.

The aims of all the pro-capitalist organisations mentioned above are clear. To defend big business against the socialist aspirations of the labour movement. But what are representatives of the labour movement doing participating in them?

If the Labour MPs and trade union leaders who participated in these groupings were duped as to who and what the real backers, motives and connections behind these organisations were, surely they would be the first to repudiate the secrecy and demand a full exposure of the facts?

Short of waiting for the American government to disclose its operations, the labour movement must make sure that the NEC of the Labour Party goes ahead with its inquiry to establish what has been going on.

ing them as the Greater London Council elections, due to be held in May 1981, draw near.

This can be the only explanation for the pathetic tactics used by the Campaign for Labour Victory in the London Regional Executive Committee Elections due to take place at the Annual Meeting on 1 and 2 March.

CLV'S LONDON TACTICS

Dear Comrades

It may interest 'Militant' readers to hear about the tactics employed by the Right wing regarding the London Regional Council Executive Committee Elections due to take place at the Annual Meeting on 1 and 2 March.

For some years now support for the Right in London has been virtually non-existent, a fact which is evidently worry-

In order to gain votes the

ANTI-CUTS CONFERENCE TO CO-ORDINATE FIGHTBACK

The main aim of the conference will be to achieve a national co-ordination in the various campaigns in the country. It also hopes to see the TUC and Labour Party nationally giving a decisive lead to such a campaign.

Convened by the Merseyside anti-cuts committee, the conference will be held in Liverpool on Saturday March 22; speakers will include Eric Hefner MP, Joan Maynard MP, Colin Barnett Divisional Officer NUPE.

The fight against the cuts is a struggle to defend past gains of the Labour movement. In the frontline of battle are the workers in the civil service, local authority and health service. In their campaign they demonstrate a concern, not just for jobs but also the services that will be lost.

They are fighting for all working people in this country. They cannot win in isolation.

If the Tories are to be stopped, victory can only be achieved through a mobilisation of the entire labour movement. The formation of the Merseyside anti-cuts committee demonstrates the links that can be achieved.

Formed by the Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party, it has delegates from civil service, local authority and industrial trade unions,



Part of the 40,000 strong Labour Party anti-cuts demonstration last November Photo: MILITANT

The main aims of the support for the programme of the anti-cuts committee.

- a) Complete opposition to all cuts in local authority services and jobs.
- b) Restoration and expansion of all local authority services to include a programme of useful public works and the expansion of direct works and the municipal enterprises.
- c) City-wide campaign for factory gate and public meetings to explain and gain
- d) Seek links with other campaigns nationally to the extent of organising a national conference, in particular to aim to get joint action through the TUC and Labour Party nationally.
- e) Opposition to any rise in domestic rates that is due to Tory cuts in public expenditure.

Labour Party organisations including the Labour Group, tenants and community groups.

Last year it organised a highly successful conference and organised one of the largest demonstrations and lobbies of the City Council, that Liverpool

has seen in years.

The Liverpool District Labour Party feels that it is not just a question of opposition to Tory cuts. We must be armed with an alternative programme. There must be no return to the disastrous policies of the last Labour govern-

ment which implemented a billion pounds in cuts!

To restore cuts made and expand services a future Labour government must nationalise the banks and insurance companies, under democratic workers control.

Only through this means can the burden of interest payments be lifted from the shoulders of local authorities by their cancellation of debts, and projects and services be financed through low interest charges. Then the necessary finance can be provided for the restoration of education, health, housing and other services.

STOP THE FASCISTS

Last week the London Labour Party called on its members to demonstrate against the Fascist National front march through Southwark this Sunday.

The Fascists plan to march from Wyndham Road, Camberwell to the

Elephant and Castle via Walworth road, where the Labour Party has its new HQ.

At its Regional Conference last weekend the LPYS called on all sections of the movement to:

Assemble Sunday March 2nd 10.30 am Junction of East Street, Walworth Road, London SE17.

Conference March 22nd 11.00am—4.00pm, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials from joint secretaries T. Harrison/A. Dodswell, 70 Victoria Street, Liverpool 1, Tel. 051-236-2015 or 051-236-1778 Delegation Fee 50p.

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CLV has run a slate, but because of their failure to win support they have been forced to include on their list members of the Left who have never had any connexions with them and who are opposed to most of their aims. Moreover, they have included names on their list without consulting those so involved.

This has, in fact, happened to me. I now wish to take this

opportunity of exposing the CLV's cynical manipulation for what it really is, and also to reassure comrades that I stand—as always—firmly on the Left.

Yours fraternally
Mary Honeyball
Hendon South CLP

King's Lynn Trades Council- 'We have nothing to lose'

"If necessary we will picket Boots the chemist to stop delivery of Iron Pills!" (Secretary, King's Lynn and District Trades Council)

By Tim Webb

This was how ISTC secretary [Corby] Mick Skelton summed up the determination of the steelworkers to win their present struggle, when he spoke at a special meeting on the steel strike called by Kings Lynn Trades Council.

Bro Skelton went on, "At the beginning of the dispute I was a moderate but now it is totally impossible to have moderate opinions." He added many of the people actively picketing did not have jobs to go back to because they have already been made redundant. Similar Corby steel workers would now fight just as hard

on behalf of other workers, such as Welsh steel workers, as they would on their own behalf.

Other speakers at the meeting were Roger Ward (T&GWU District Secretary), Roger Duckham (Road Transport Commercials Committee T&GWU) and Jeremy Birch for the 'Militant'. Both Roger Duckham and the writer are lorry drivers who usually transport steel and are presently laid off for the duration of the dispute.

Roger Ward said that West Norfolk people had been faced with a serious decision when they pledged support for the steelmen. Referring to the lay off of 550 workers at

Metal Box, Wisbech, where there is 100% union membership, he said that the workers did not blame the steelmen, they blamed the government.

Roger Duckham, a shop steward at a large local Haulier's said that only a very tiny number of lorry drivers were continuing to pull steel in the area.

In a really excellent contribution in which he gave a more general background to the crisis, Jeremy Birch said that the Tory government now realised that they had miscalculated when they provoked this dispute with ISTC.

Jeremy pointed out that even members of the Tory cabinet had doubts about

Keith Joseph's sanity!

Jeremy said that the Tory Bill to restrict 'secondary picketing' was taking us back 70 years to the Taff Vale case.

He spelt out in detail the effects of the Tory plans for the British steel industry:—miners laid off, shops around the steel works and around the mines closing down, this in turn having an effect on manufacturing industry which supplies shops. One hundred thousand jobs in South Wales alone threatened as an immediate consequence of the Tories' plans.

In concluding, Jeremy pointed to the need for a Labour government committed to nationalisation of the



Photo: MILITANT

Mick Skelton, secretary of Corby ISTC: "Now it is totally impossible to have moderate opinions".

commanding heights of the economy, socialist policies, including the cancellation of interest payments which account for £12 per ton of coal.

A lively and interesting debate followed about the

steel strike and British capitalism in general, including a discussion on whether import controls provided any solution.

At the end of the meeting, over £22 was collected for the striking Corby steelworkers.

MARXISTS PROVED RIGHT!

Photo: MILITANT



Over 150 people attended the London Region LPYS conference. During the debates the conference majority re-affirmed its support of the policies of Militant.

"Before I joined the LPYS I knew hardly anything. I was dead raw. But the way the LPYS explains its ideas, it all becomes very clear. It's easy to understand the LPYS."

That was how a member of the newly formed Ellesmere Port LPYS described the youth section of the Labour Party. Activity

and political discussion based on a bold programme can continue the growth of the Young Socialists—and that was the message from two recent regional LPYS conferences.

In the South-West delegates unanimously supported the LPYS programme, with not one delegate speaking against. Some delegates regretted the lack of an opposition, but as one speak-

er put it "in the 50s and 60s Marxism was irrelevant, so we were told, but who can now doubt that the Marxists have been proved a hundred times right."

One highlight of the conference was the discussion on the document 'Low Pay and the Hotel and Catering Industry' written by Andy Rosser (Poole LPYS). It showed how disgraceful were the conditions facing most hotel workers and showed how the struggle for decent wages and conditions was linked to the socialist transformation of society.

The Conference was also addressed by Andy Bevan, the Party's Youth Officer, and Joan Maynard MP, from the National Executive Committee. Joan stressed the importance of the steel strike and a collection for the steelworkers raised £25. "The best yet" was the opinion of delegates and visitors to this excellent conference.

The London LPYS also held its annual conference (see photo above).

By Mick Whale
(Exeter LPYS)

LABOUR PARTIES SAY—

'NO TO THE WITCH-HUNT'

BRIGHTON

"My General Secretary and our members were blamed for the defeat of Labour at the General Election. I would like some of those who made that claim to live on the money we have to."

That quote from a NUPE delegate summed up the mood of the majority of trade union delegates at the biggest AGM of Brighton Labour Party ever held.

Bakers, dustmen, road sweepers, engineers, electricians, lorry drivers, clerical workers, etc, seeing those who gave assistance to them in the so-called 'winter of discontent' under attack rallied to their defence, and repelled the campaign against the Marxists and the left, orchestrated by the local Tory press.

There would be no need for an inquiry into trade union involvement in the Labour Party, if all CLPs took the stand made by Brighton Labour Party over the past few years. 'Your struggle is our struggle' has been our approach to every group of workers involved in struggle.

The membership of Brighton Labour Party is growing; at least 150 new members have joined since the start of the year. So much for the faint-hearts who thought £3 a year would put workers off from joining!

The AGM behind us and support for the left increased will see Brighton Labour Party launch an anti-Tory campaign that will dwarf anything seen in the past.

By Ray Apps

DEVONPORT

However in comparison with this AGM, a mixed reception met remarks by David Owen MP when he took Devonport's AGM as an opportunity to attack the left.

David Owen laid the blame for arguments within the Party wholly upon the NEC. He displayed no confidence in this elected leadership, which he claimed contained "a small majority acting as a very disruptive force."

Although David Owen maintained he wanted greater democracy in the Party, he showed contempt for its elected bodies. In particular he referred to the NEC's commitment to maintaining a majority on the committee of inquiry as "rigging", adding that he for one "would not be bound by a rigged enquiry."

Having dealt with the NEC, David Owen turned his attention to supporters of 'Militant'. Referring to the LPYS delegates on the GMC, he warned them that they had "better watch out!"

He said they were stretching the tolerance of the Party too far. In this he included the threat that they should cease selling the 'Militant' at all Labour Party and LPYS meetings in the constituency. So much for 'greater democracy'!

He went on to allege that 'Militant' supporters could be responsible for denying discussion of alternative ideas in LPYS meetings.

But at the same time as he attacked local 'Militant' supporters, even he recognised the valuable role they had played in the local Labour Party.

The points made by Owen were taken up in discussion by a YS delegate, who received support when he stated that he was more concerned with the behaviour of many right-wing MPs, such as those who had been discussing the formation of a 'Centre Party' with Roy Jenkins.

Although many delegates seemed to be influenced by the 'red scare' press campaign, there was support for the call for freedom of all tendencies in the Party to be free to put forward their ideas, and for there to be no return to a period of bans and proscriptions.

LPYS NATIONAL CONFERENCE COME TO LLANDUDNO

The Tories have declared war!—war on the working class, and particularly on working class youth.

£400 million cut from education spending [unless you go to Eton, Harrow, or one of the other so called 'public' schools].

Youth clubs in almost every town being cut.

Nearly 250,000 under 19s out of work.

The Tories answer? More cuts and "short sharp shock" detention centres designed to

cover working class youth into accepting their lot of unemployment, housing problems, and dead-end jobs.

The Labour Party Young Socialists aren't prepared to accept that kind of future. Our national conference, to be held in Llandudno, North Wales, from April 4th-7th (Easter weekend) gives working class youth the opportunity to hammer out the kind of fighting socialist programme that is needed to fight this government of big business and the bankers.

We are expecting about 2,000 at the conference, which is one of the biggest in the country. Excellent political debates, leading speakers from the labour movement and international socialist youth organisations, and a full programme of discos, the film FIST and the 7:84 socialist theatre group all add up to four days that no socialist, young or not so young, can afford to miss.

Every LPYS branch should make sure it sends its delegate to make this the biggest and

most representative LPYS conference ever. But don't just send a delegate! Every LPYS member, everyone who came on the National 'Youth Against the Tories' demonstration should attend what promises to be the best LPYS conference ever!

By Kevin Ramage
(LPYS National Chairman)

LEFT and RIGHT

Red sails in the sunset

If you're one of the unemployed and feeling depressed, someone has some good news for you. Old Moore's Almanac predicts good things for the Spring. In June, the Almanac foresees luxury cruising liners having their business boosted by the unemployed "who take advantage of their enforced leisure by cruising to fairer climes."

Of course they could be wrong. This bundle of superstitious rubbish is notorious for its bilious attacks on trade unions, the Labour Party, communism and most foreigners. They like the Tory government and big business though, who they acclaim for "keeping industry turning through the turmoil"! It's probably their friends the shareholders who are the "unemployed" people they predict cruising to "fairer climes". For the working class, such pleasant uses of leisure will have to wait for socialism.

Edwardes steps on the cracks

It's easy to see how some people can become superstitious. Take Sir Michael Edwardes, for example. He probably believes he's fated to have bad luck. The bosses were delighted when the workers at Longbridge voted not to strike over Derek Robinson's dismissal. So delighted in fact that the dealings of the City parasites strengthened the position of the pound relative to other currencies.

Unfortunately Sir Michael and BL didn't want that, as it decreases the attractiveness of British goods on the foreign markets they hope to penetrate. What was that theory that Edwardes shared with Thatcher and Co.—that market forces would solve all problems?

Steel pickings

The private steel firms aren't the only vultures hovering around the British Steel Corporation ready to make money if mass redundancies come. The closure of East Moors steel works in Cardiff put thousands out of work. But the scrap iron from the dismemberment of the works is to be purchased by a firm called Bird Gorup, who have a profitable two-year contract. So far they have received 70,000 tons from Cardiff and Ebbw Vale, and there is another 100,000 tons waiting to be recycled.

Someone even intends making a pile out of finding jobs for redundant steelmen. Paddy Naylor, chief executive of the BSC's job creation subsidiary, is leaving BSC to form his own consultancy, Job Creation, which will sell itself to companies or communities facing large-scale unemployment. It's an ill wind that blows no vulture any good.

SELLING OUR YOUTH ON THE CAR TRACK

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Leyland workers demonstrate against the Edwardes plan, London, October '79
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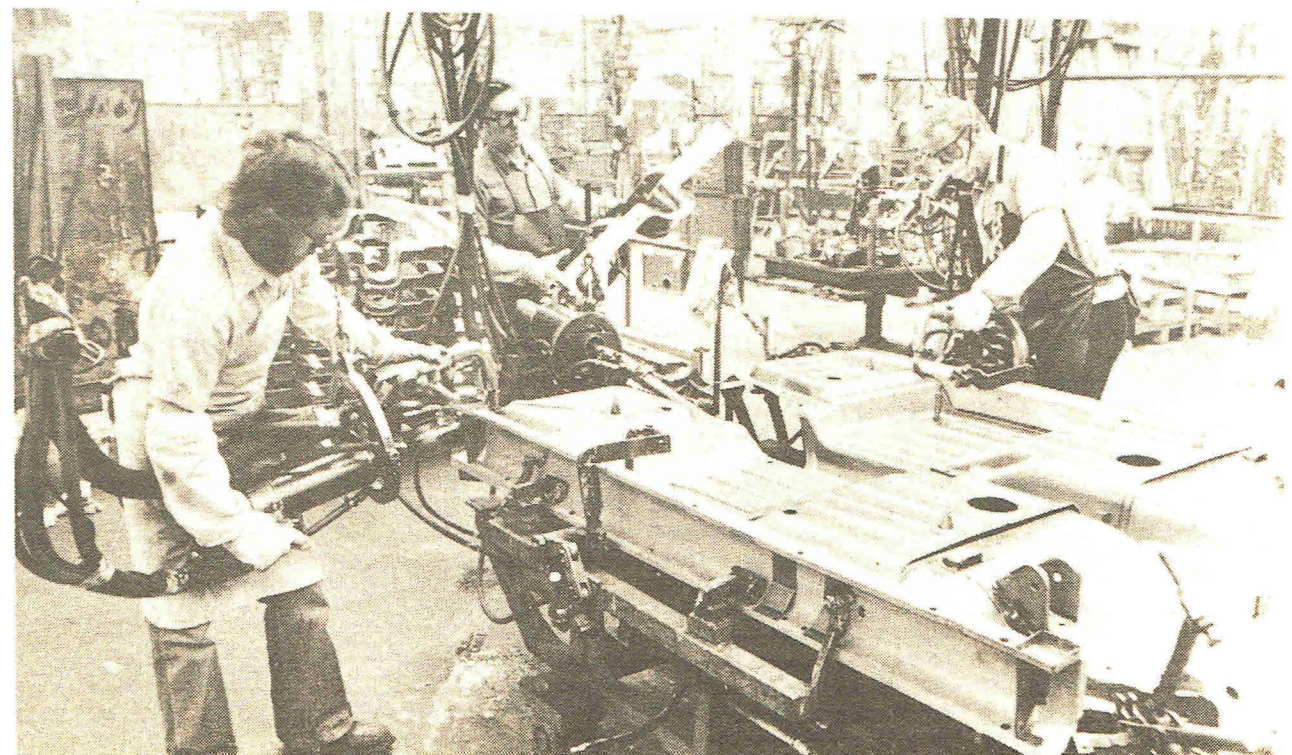
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UNION RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK

It is vital to mobilise the labour movement to defeat the Thatcher government's attack on trade union rights, which the bosses see as the key to driving down workers' living standards.

A new Labour Research Department booklet explains and attacks the Tories' industrial law proposals: "Despite the defeat and subsequent repeal of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, the Tories remain committed to reducing the bargaining power of workers and the rights of unions through legislation. The Employment Bill is a major part of the Tory campaign against workers and unions."

The LRD guide examines each clause of the Employment Bill and gives a brief explanation of how legal changes proposed by the Tories will affect workers and unions. It shows that the Employment Bill would:

- ★ Provide new exemptions to undermine existing closed shop agreements and make it more difficult to establish new ones
- ★ deprive workers of their existing rights on unfair dismissal and maternity leave
- ★ give the courts wide scope to interfere with union rules

on admissions and exclusions of members.

Most relevant at the moment though, is the booklet's explanation of the law on picketing, and the Tories' proposed changes.

Employment Bill

Peaceful picketing has been lawful since the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, even under the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act. Now the Tories are proposing to outlaw a wide range of normal picketing activity.

Clause 14 of the Employment Bill proposes a new definition of "lawful" picketing which would mean that workers would only be allowed to picket at their own place of work; and existing legal immunities would be removed so that any other kind of picketing could result in pickets facing legal actions for injunctions and damages.

Now, S15 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 (TULRA) allows any person to "attend" (i.e. picket) any place, except someone's home, in order to peacefully communicate information or persuade people to work or not to work provided that the picketing is "in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute."

Moreover, the law also



Effective picketing was as essential to the lorry drivers' strike last year as to the steelworkers now

Photo: MILITANT

provides important immunities for such pickets. Under S13 of TULRA, pickets who induce other workers to break a contract of employment (e.g. persuade workers to take industrial action in support of the dispute) or a commercial contract (e.g. persuade drivers not to deliver supplies to the employer) cannot be sued. This means that neither the employer involved in the dispute nor any other party can get the courts to issue an injunction to stop the picketing, nor can the pickets be sued for damages.

But Clause 14 of the Employment Bill defines "lawful" picketing as: a person picketing his or her own place of work; a trade union official accompanying union members who are picketing their own place of work; an unemployed person picketing his or own place of work if the dispute is connected with his or her dismissal, redundancy or resignation; a person picketing the premises of his or her employer from

which he or she works, or from which his or her work is managed, if that person does not have one fixed place of work, or if it is not practicable for them to picket at their actual place of work.

All other picketing would be illegal. This "unlawful" picketing would not be a criminal offence, but it would not have legal immunity under S13 of TULRA, i.e. pickets would have no legal protection against civil proceedings; they could be sued if they persuaded other workers to breach a contract. Not only employers involved in disputes, but other parties would be able to seek injunctions and damages against "unlawful" pickets.

Individual workers could be faced with imprisonment for contempt of court if they did not comply with an injunction, and payment of legal costs and damages to someone's business.

The proposed Tory amendments would make a wide range of picketing illegal. For

example, workers would not be able to "lawfully": show solidarity with workers in dispute with a different employer by joining their picket line; picket the head office of their employer, unless they actually worked there or had no fixed place of work; picket another plant owned by the same employer, even if he was diverting work to that plant; picket the plants of customers and suppliers of their employer.

Freedom to picket

But the proposed changes to the law are only part of the Tories' attack on the freedom to picket. The Employment Secretary has already announced that he intends to issue a Code of Practice on picketing with the powers he would be given under Clause 2 of the Employment Bill. This Code would almost certainly place further restric-

tions on picketing by specifying guidelines to be followed, such as the maximum number of pickets allowed, etc.

Through the removal of immunities and additional legal controls on picketing the Tories hope to weaken workers' ability to put industrial pressure on employers and to prevent the effective use of trade union solidarity.

"LRD Guide to the Tory Employment Bill" is obtainable from Labour Research Department, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF. Price 45p post free.

Militant pamphlet "The 35-hour week and the fight against unemployment" By Brian Ingham Price 40p (+ 10p p&p) from World Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

LONDON HOUSING- From bad to worse

Even before Heseltine announced his barbaric cuts in housing expenditure, London's housing problems have dramatically worsened. The waiting list for council houses increased in the past year from 117,000 to 214,000.

At the same time, the number of new houses started in the capital fell catastrophically by over 8,000. The GLC itself only started work on 500 houses.

Nationally the combination of tight control of council finances and unwillingness of the private builders to build unprofitable housing has slashed the housing programme to the lowest since just after the war.

Tory control of the government, the GLC and a number of London boroughs has served to aggravate the situation. Tremlett, the vicious and arrogant GLC Housing boss, has threatened to pull the GLC out of council housing altogether.

They needed no prompting from Tory pin-up Heseltine to increase their rents. The GLC plan to double rents in three

Eddie McParland
(Greenwich LP)

years, despite the fact that tenants have faced rent rises of 25% over the last ten months, together with increases in heating and other charges. Rents will go up immediately by as much as £7 per week in some cases.

It is not as if the market forces serenaded by the Tory whizz-kids are providing ample good cheap accommodation.

Capitalism doesn't let you win that easily. If you live in London you may escape the worst problems of mass unemployment (though even here there are areas where unemployment exceeds 10%—particularly round the derelict docklands).

But just try to get any cheap housing! You have only to look at the people who become homeless in London sleeping rough, or queuing for a night's kip at a cheap 'doss-house'—there are an increasing number of young workers—and young unemployed.

Rents are sky high in the private sector. One-bedroom flats are going in the Lewisham area (one of the worst



London housing comes a poor second to hotels for profit-seeking private builders

London boroughs for jobs) for £37 a week.

Hillingdon on the other hand still has an industrial base, and there are jobs going. But precious little accommodation. People are sometimes reduced to sleeping in fields and gutters (see 'Militant' December 14 on Brook House).

Tory councils like Hillingdon are selling council houses—with the blessing of Thatcher. Further pressure is put on council housing schemes by Heseltine's latest restrictions.

Massive sums are extorted

from borough councils by moneylenders, whose interest charges are now astronomical, since interest rates spiralled up. Many authorities in London pay out more in interest repayments than they receive in rent.

Housing in London mirrors the chaos of capitalism. It is the responsibility of the labour movement in London and nationally to thrash out a socialist alternative where control over housing is taken out of the hands of private builders, contractors and moneylenders, and given to the working class.

WORLD BOOKS
The book service for the labour movement
Send now for a free comprehensive booklist to
World Books,
1 Mentmore Terrace,
London E8 3PN

APOCALYPSE NOW

Costing \$30m Coppola's film 'Apocalypse Now' has been packaged as the definitive movie on Vietnam.

It is nothing of the sort. It is empty of explanation and strong on technical effects. Its message is that the war was crazy and illogical.

It tells of a CIA assassin sent up river to kill an American officer who is operating independently in Cambodia. The journey up river consists of bizarre events.

A helicopter attack on a Vietnamese village, with Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' played at full blast; bunnygirls coming to dance for sex-starved GIs stuck halfway up the river; attacks by tigers and unseen enemies.

They are all meant to add to the creation of an incomprehensible world, where the

violent brutality is just one aspect.

It ends with the American officer, who has only come to terms with the horror by embracing a cult of death, offering himself up to be sacrificed like an ox.

And as the final credits roll with his settlement being razed to the ground in an air strike, we are presumably meant to marvel at the spectacle, muttering "awful", "crazy".

But the American war in Vietnam was logical, not crazy. It had as its motives the strategic defence of imperialism. Coppola though has gone for the surface, not the core. A very unsatisfactory film. But then big business would have been very reluctant to back this film with their millions if it had taken such an unequivocal stand.

Review by Jim Chrystie

LEFT and RIGHT

Red sails in the sunset

If you're one of the unemployed and feeling depressed, someone has some good news for you. Old Moore's Almanac predicts good things for the Spring. In June, the Almanac foresees luxury cruising liners having their business boosted by the unemployed "who take advantage of their enforced leisure by cruising to fairer climes."

Of course they could be wrong. This bundle of superstitious rubbish is notorious for its bilious attacks on trade unions, the Labour Party, communism and most foreigners. They like the Tory government and big business though, who they acclaim for "keeping industry turning through the turmoil"! It's probably their friends the shareholders who are the "unemployed" people they predict cruising to "fairer climes". For the working class, such pleasant uses of leisure will have to wait for socialism.

Edwardes steps on the cracks

It's easy to see how some people can become superstitious. Take Sir Michael Edwardes, for example. He probably believes he's fated to have bad luck. The bosses were delighted when the workers at Longbridge voted not to strike over Derek Robinson's dismissal. So delighted in fact that the dealings of the City parasites strengthened the position of the pound relative to other currencies.

Unfortunately Sir Michael and BL didn't want that, as it decreases the attractiveness of British goods on the foreign markets they hope to penetrate. What was that theory that Edwardes shared with Thatcher and Co.—that market forces would solve all problems?

Steel pickings

The private steel firms aren't the only vultures hovering around the British Steel Corporation ready to make money if mass redundancies come. The closure of East Moors steel works in Cardiff put thousands out of work. But the scrap iron from the dismemberment of the works is to be purchased by a firm called Bird Gorup, who have a profitable two-year contract. So far they have received 70,000 tons from Cardiff and Ebbw Vale, and there is another 100,000 tons waiting to be recycled.

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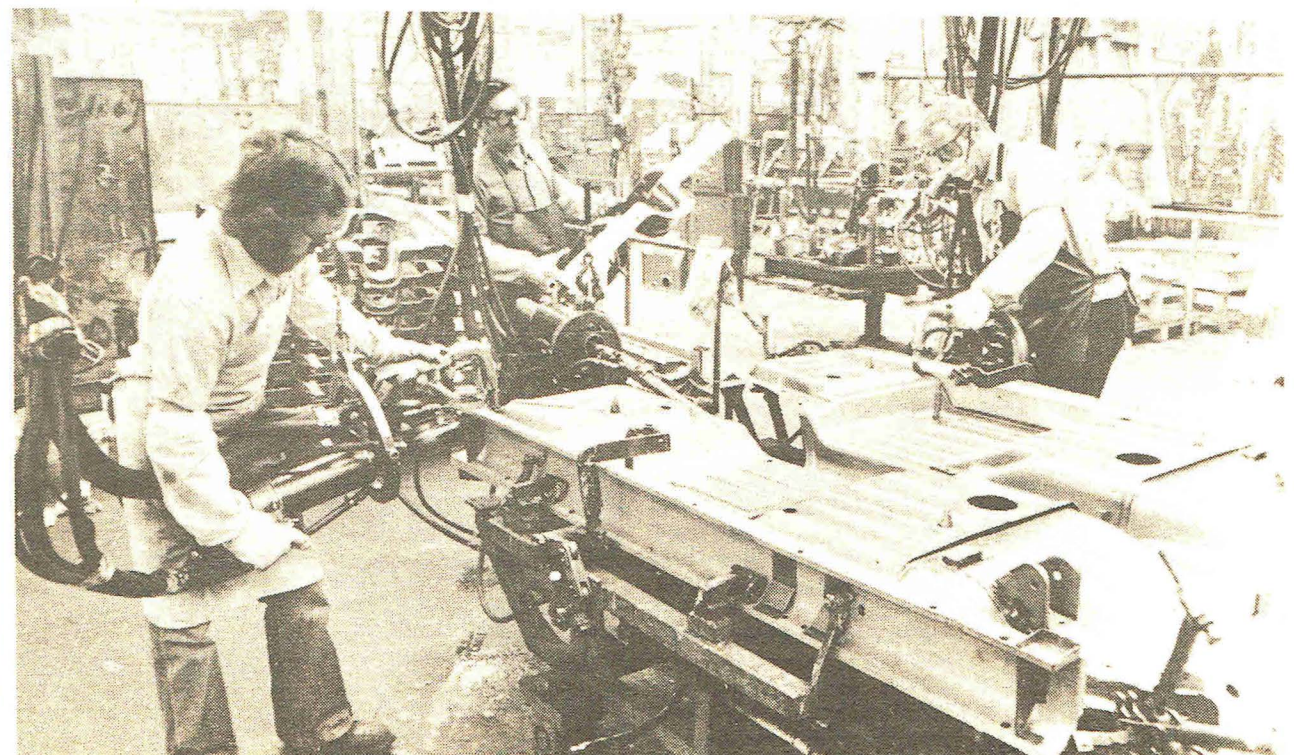
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Labour and equality - WHY DID LABOUR FAIL?

Post-mortems are a gruesome business. But they are necessary.

There is a tendency among some Labour Party activists to argue that with the battle against the Thatcher government under way it would only be divisive to rake over the experiences of the last Labour government.

This is mistaken, however, as there are vital lessons to be learnt and this book brings to the discussion a lot of information about different aspects of what happened under Labour, and a certain amount of analysis of why it happened.

A vital part of the "fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families" promised by Labour's 1974 Manifesto was to "eliminate poverty wherever it exists in Britain", to "achieve far greater equality—in income, wealth and living standards" and to "increase social equality by giving far greater importance to full employment, housing, education and social benefits."

These are the issues which this Fabian volume discusses in great detail. Pretty depressing it is too, of course, with about the best that can be said being that the Labour government spread out the misery more equally (while presiding over an increase in the total amount).

Take the question of low pay. Between 1975 and 1977, the first two years of the Social Contract, the lowest paid did increase their pay a per cent or two in comparison

Andrew Glyn reviews 'Labour and Equality' edited by Nick Bosanquet and Peter Townsend

with the average, but this was in the context of cuts in the average of 7-8%; so all the lower paid gained was a smaller cut! At the same time, the spending cuts reduced by one half the number of visits by wages inspectors checking on employers paying less than wages council minimums!

To its credit, the Labour government did increase the real value of pensions by 20%. This helped to reduce the number of pensioners on supplementary benefit. But nothing was done about improving the dole (which stayed at around 50% of average earnings) and the rise in unemployment helped to increase the number of people living below the official poverty line from 1.4 million to 2.3 million between 1974 and 1976 (later figures are not yet available).

Although estate duty was replaced by a supposedly more effective capital transfer tax, it was still possible, as Michael Meacher shows, for parents to leave up to £150,000 to each child free of tax! In 1976 taxes on wealth contributed the princely sum of 3% of total tax revenue.

Nearly one thousand comprehensive schools were established between 1974 and 1979; but school building was cut by one half and current spending rose less than 10% in real terms so that many of these schools had inadequate facilities and staffing. The

rent of the average council house fell in real terms by one quarter (in relation to average earnings); but the number of houses started by councils and housing associations fell by one third between 1975 and 1979 to a level below that achieved under the Tories.

And so it goes on. But post-mortems should explain as well as dissect. The Fabian book is particularly feeble in this respect. Peter Townsend says: "In 1974 there was an unprecedented opportunity to develop the 'social contract' into a reasoned socialist manifesto. It really did seem that previous policies of wage restraint, masquerading as incomes policies, were going to be replaced by a plan to reconstruct wealth and incomes...The collapse of the social contract...remains one of the mysteries of recent Labour history."

It is only a mystery, however, if you do not appreciate the depth of the economic crisis facing British capitalism, and the enormous pressure which this brought on the Labour government to abandon its policies (profits are not mentioned in the index to the book at all). Townsend's favourite target is the Treasury, which he says bears an "enormous responsibility for the failure of the Labour government."

He goes on: "It has adopted economic policies which have created more unemployment than was necessary. In particular its crabbed and irrational [our emphasis—AG] attitude to public expenditure has prevented the employment of thousands of people and stunted the services for the most vulnerable in society. In reducing real standards of living it failed even to confine them to those who could bear them easily..."

But no tinkering with the machinery of government—



By the beginning of 1979 the low paid workers in the public services were forced to strike for a decent wage

for example his suggestion of importing more Labour supporters as advisers to ministers—will make any real difference while economic power stays in private hands. From the capitalists' point of view, cuts in public spending are not irrational.

Paul Ormerod points out that the City and business had forced the Labour government to plan for cuts in the

share of government spending in the national income well before the IMF negotiations, and he calls these policies "politically motivated and misguided."

"Misguided" they are from the point of view of the working class, of course, but that is hardly the point. At the LPYS Rally this February Tony Benn said that the 1976 spending cuts marked the end

of the idea that public spending was a substitute for socialist policies. Unfortunately this traditional Fabian view obviously dies slowly in some circles.

In a future issue Andrew Glyn will review a Tribune analysis of the '74-'79 government.

NORTHERN IRELAND - The grim routine

For many thousands of people, to be old in Belfast is to be below the poverty line. And poverty kills.

By Peter Hadden
(Belfast Labour and TU Group)

At the end of January the Northern Ireland early morning radio reported a case of an 82-year-old woman burnt to death when her home was gutted. Killed it seemed by fire. More accurately this woman, who lived alone in a small side street off the city's Ormeau Road, was killed by poverty.

With no money to pay for electricity, she had neither electric heat or light. For years she lived by candlelight—this in industrial Belfast in the 1980s, not the 1880s! Candles burning in the house, an 82-year-old woman living there alone—it takes no great imagination to work out the cause of the fire.

One day later, again on early morning radio, it was reported that another old woman, this time in a different part of Belfast, had found dead in her home. The cause of death was announced as hypothermia.

Neighbours later explained that this woman had not been able to afford either to heat her home or to use a cooker to prepare hot meals. Hypothermia is merely the polite name for the disease of the poor—undernourishment and cold.

Not only in Belfast are poverty and old age virtually synonymous. But it is only in Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland that the miseries of the poor are spiced with the added affliction of army repression. And the old are not spared.

When the radio announced the death of the 82-year-old in the Ormeau Road, Mrs Brigid Maguire, a 69-year-old woman from West Belfast, was preparing to go to Belfast's City hospital for a check on a heart complaint.

Mrs Maguire's husband died in 1968 leaving her with a family of five. Two of her daughters, Dorothy and Maura, were shot dead in the early 1970s. They were sitting

in a car which was travelling through the Lower Falls area. The army opened fire on the car, killing them both.

Another daughter and a son died of cancer. The sole member of the family, Ned Maguire, is now imprisoned in Long Kesh. After leaving the City hospital Mrs Maguire travelled to Long Kesh to visit him.

As she was leaving the prison she was arrested, served with a three-day detention order and taken to the infamous Castlereagh detention centre. According to police she was held in connection with documents she had been carrying.

Mrs Maguire lives alone. No one was told initially of her arrest or her whereabouts. It was eventually confirmed that she was being held in Castlereagh when the police had to send out for her heart tablets!

This is the grim routine of life—poverty and repression—for the old, as for the young in the ghettos of Northern Ireland. It is time the labour movement acted to change this.

WORKERS NOTEBOOK

● Latest figures show the tax system is now working even more decisively against the lowest paid. The annual analysis of the effects of taxes and benefits on household income [Economic Trends No 315, HMSO £5.40] shows that income tax took 22% of the income of the top 20% of households, little more than the average of 19%.

But 20% of the gross income of the bottom fifth of households went in indirect taxes, compared with only 14% from the richest fifth. This only accounts for income—these particular figures do not mention wealth, where the disparities are greater yet and where taxation hardly touches the giant fortunes made yearly by the leading British companies.

● Government propaganda frequently claims that workers could be better off

on the dole than at work. The Child Poverty Action Group shows that to be better off on the dole, a family with one or two children would need to be earning a mere £35 a week and a family with four children £45. There are only about 100,000 men [out of an employed population of 22 million] with such low earnings and the majority of these are unlikely to have children.

Official figures also show that for most families unemployment means a big drop in living standards. For instance, during the first six months of unemployment when benefit is highest, a family who had average earnings on work, "could find that they had lost as much as a third of their net earnings in work [after paying their rent and rates] when they become unemployed."

And, unemployment in-

creasingly means poverty. "The numbers of people in families with incomes below the poverty line because of unemployment more than trebled between 1974 and 1977 from 90,000 to 290,000."

Contrary to popular belief, the living standards of the unemployed have been falling behind those of working families in recent years. "The amount of supplementary benefit families receive, including an allowance for rent, has fallen sharply recently as a proportion of the average net earnings of all men." Just between November 1977 and 1978, supplementary benefit for a two child unemployed family fell from just over 50 per cent of average net earnings to just over 47%. For a four child family, the proportion fell from 70.5 per cent to 63.5 per cent.

GREATER LONDON LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

HOW TO FIGHT THE C

The fight against the cuts in local authorities' spending is the major issue facing the London Labour Party Conference this year.

During the current financial year, to April 1980, the Tories have already cut spending by £1,500 million. For the next financial year, 1980/81, they plan to cut a further £4,000 million. But even this is not the whole story.

The Tories are planning to bring out a new White Paper this month detailing yet more blows of the axe. The Tories' present plans will cut the number of jobs by between 100,000 and 135,000, half of which will be actual redundancies.

The Tories are busy removing local authorities' obligations on safety, education, etc. The renegade Prentice even told the blind that they must make their share of sacrifices!

Cuts have already claimed lives. Before last Christmas, the National Water Council warned that the danger from flooding had dramatically increased due to a 42% cut in its budget since the mid-1970s. After Christmas we saw the results, the massive floods and drownings in South Wales!

In London, there has been since March last year a loss of 1,815 hospital beds. Londoners have just suffered their third fare increase in 10 months! Fares in London are rising at an annual rate of 58%!

The Tory-controlled Greater London Council has just increased its rents by 17%, an

By Bob Labi
(Greater London Labour Party Executive)

average of £1.53 a week. Yet only last April rents went up by an average £1.20. We have also seen a dramatic drop in the number of new homes built. The GLC is now starting building a mere 500 homes a year throughout the capital. This has contributed to the dramatic drop in home-building by the GLC, local London boroughs and private firms (see table).

HOUSING DECLINES IN LONDON

	Council homes built	Private homes built	Total
1971	24,200	9,300	33,500
1976	24,200	5,400	29,600
1978	14,800	4,800	19,600
1979	7,560	3,500	11,060

SEE ARTICLE PAGE 6

The house-building figures clearly show the devastating effect which both successive Labour and Tory cuts have had on home building. Yet even the Tory GLC admits that 138,000 households in London are forced to share with another family, while other researches believe the true figure to be nearer 342,000 households!

This is why the Tories' cuts

have already met such widespread opposition. Working people simply cannot afford a further drop in their living standards.

Through their new Local Government Bill, however, the Tories are trying to tighten the central government's control over local councils, adding new powers to force cut-backs in spending and increases in rents, fares and charges.

The central idea of the Bill is to replace the existing Rate Support Grant (RSG) with a new block grant. The RSG is the main central government grant to councils, meeting about 60% of local council spending.

The exact amount is set in November, and its distribution to individual councils worked out according to complex formulae designed to give more of the money to the areas most in need. But the actual level of the RSG is set nationally.

The Tories plan to replace this national grant with a

block grant to each individual council. This will enable the government to take action against individual local authorities which spend more than the government's limits. Under the new Bill the Minister will be able to set a notional national rate and then at his discretion, penalise councils if they exceed the set level. This year, for a trial run, Heseltine set a

notional figure of 119p, at which level 20 London boroughs were over the top, and could possibly face sanctions from the central government!

Even the Tories' local authorities have opposed this plan as it effectively ends the autonomous powers of local government. However, while the protests of the Tory-controlled local authority associations—now backed by 'The Times'—may produce some changes in Heseltine's plans, this new Bill must be seen as part and parcel of the Tories' assault on public spending.

The fight against both the Tories' cuts and the new Bill are therefore one and the same battle. Unfortunately, some Labour council leaders are basing their strategy on winning Tory allies in the fight against the new Bill, rather than putting forward a perspective of mobilising the entire labour movement to defeat both the cuts and the new Bill. What then should be the policy of the Labour Party in resisting the Tories' plans?

Firstly, the position of the right wing of merely protesting at the cuts or pursuing the Tories through the courts must be rejected. We cannot rely on the courts to defend workers' living standards.

The cuts will inevitably mean hardship, both to those losing or paying more for services, and to the public-sector workers themselves. That is why the cuts must be stopped! At the same time, the right wing's point that rates cannot be continuously raised in an attempt to avoid the cuts must be answered.

Acceptance of massive rate increases is the major weakness of the position put forward by many on the left inside the party seeking a way



Lambeth on the march. The cuts must be stopped

to fight the Tories. Quite apart from the fact that the Tory government is arming itself with new powers to penalise councils which have high rates—through blocking this way out—it must be understood that rate increases also mean a cut in living standards.

Some councils are able to gather a large amount of their rate income from the commercial sector. Nevertheless, a big burden falls on domestic ratepayers. For the average worker and middle class ratepayer, a rise is an extra burden for them personally.

Lambeth Council, for example, which is committed to making no cuts, will from April finance this policy by an average £1.50 a week rate rise and an average £1.50 council rent rise. This will mean that the effective take-home pay of a worker living in a council house will drop by an average of £3 a week.

Indirectly, then, the Tories will still succeed in cutting the working class's share of the wealth produced in society.

Tories can be beaten

The central issue facing the labour movement is how to defend and improve living standards. The question is, how can this be done?

The Tories have made it clear that they will plug any loop-holes which may appear. There will be no way in which it will be possible to outmanoeuvre the government. Some of those Labour councillors who see raising the rates as the only way out reveal a marked lack of confidence in the possibility of building a mass movement against the Tories, or else they have no backbone for a stand-up fight with the Tories.

'Militant' supporters stand for Executive:
CLPs Group 2:
Bob Labi [Hampstead CLP], sitting member.

CLPs Group 4:
Nick Bradley [Deptford CLP], sitting member

Eddie McParland [Greenwich CLP]

David White [Croydon Central CLP], sitting member

The Clay Cross councillors in the early 1970s set an example for the entire movement. This small town was determined to stand up to the Tories, as many workers have equally shown in other struggles. In the end, Clay Cross was defeated. But they were only narrowly defeated, and mainly through isolation, because the right-wing leadership of the Party manoeuvred to avoid having to act in their support.

Today the situation is different. The labour movement has learnt the lessons of the Clay Cross struggle. The movement has become more radical and the class struggle sharper. A single council today standing up to openly defy the Tories would arouse tremendous support, and get backing from many areas.

A united front of all Labour Councils against the Tories would be invincible. In the meanwhile, however, we have to recognise the actual stage of development. Given the policies of most Labour council leaderships, united action will only occur when the mass movement outside the councils forces the councillors either to fight or be replaced by those who will.

The tactics have to be quite clear. It must be firmly understood, as the steelworkers have learnt, that only

Lambeth workers protest against the cuts. The labour movement must be mobilised to protect jobs and services Photo: Mark Rusher (IFL)



Greater London Labour Party Conference
MILITANT READERS' MEETING
'The Fight Against the Cuts'
Speaker: Bob Labi [GLRC Executive]
Chairman: Nick Bradley [GLRC Executive]
Committee Room 1, Camden Town Hall
Saturday 1st March, 12.45 pm-1.45 pm
Sandwiches available

See letter on Campaign for Labour Victory manoeuvres —Page 3

CUTS

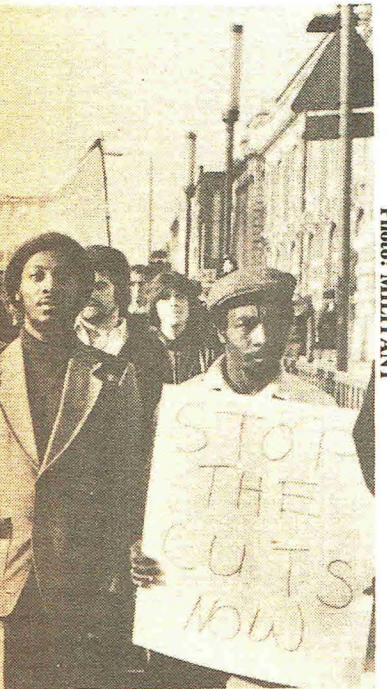


Photo: MILITANT

Poplar struggle.

The first steps must be that the local Labour Councils, trade unions and Labour Parties begin a bold campaign of building the widest possible support for a policy of no cuts and no raising of rates, rents, fares, demanding instead that the government provides councils with enough to fund their spending.

Already some councils, like Lambeth, have been able to mobilise wide support for opposing the government, and this shows that it can be done. This would have to be intensified with meetings in all residential areas and workplaces within a council's district to rally support for the council in any confrontation with the Tories. Only a mass movement can defeat the Tories, not a few dozen councillors on their own.

Obviously, it cannot be laid down in advance precisely how the struggle will unfold. It is possible that the Tories' friends in the City of London would try to put the squeeze on a defiant council by refusing to lend it money and calling in the loans which already have been made. On the other hand, the Tories might try to disqualify the Labour councillors and put in commissioners to run the authority.

Moves of this sort will only be defeated if there is a mass wave of protest against them. A key question will be preparing for industrial action in the event of a council's money being stopped or councillors removed, action involving both public and private workers. Some have been arguing that councillors cannot ask others to fight for them and therefore we cannot ask workers to strike in the

council's defence.

This is an absolutely false argument. Firstly, all workers will be affected by the Tories' cuts, either directly or indirectly. Secondly, there is no contradiction with workers striking to defend their jobs.

Finally, one of the best traditions of the working class is solidarity, and again in recent weeks we have seen many workers with no immediate link with British Steel being prepared to take solidarity action, despite the sacrifices which that entailed.

It is not just a question of the local authority cuts; all nationalised industries are facing strict cash limits imposed by the Tories. Heseltine has called for local authority workers to get a pay increase less than the inflation rate.

With a seriously prepared campaign, it will be possible to give the anti-cuts movement such a head of steam that the Tories will be forced to retreat. Leaders of the labour movement at all levels now have a responsibility to set an example.

It is not enough just to have a fine policy: there must be a determined willingness to fight for that policy. Any leader who feels unable to give such a commitment should get out of the firing line and hand over to someone who is prepared to fight the Tories.

Unfortunately, today the battle over the 1980/81 budget is nearly over, and it seems that working people will inevitably face cuts in their living standards. The labour movement must learn the lesson of the past few months and begin building up support now for the next round which will begin to hot



Restrictions on spending meant low standards—as in these flats in Southwark—now council house starts have collapsed

Photo: MILITANT

up next November when the government will announce the level of support it will give councils in the 1981/2 financial year.

While preparing for the coming confrontation, it must be clearly remembered that the problems of local councils did not begin on 4 May last year when the Tories got in.

Ever since the late 1960s, under both Labour and Tory governments, there have been

periodic cuts in public spending as a result of crises in the capitalist economy. A solution to these problems will not be found merely in the election of a Labour government, as we found out during 1974-79. What is required is a Labour government committed to socialist measures which will remove the heavy burden of debt interest from local authorities and allow the planning of the economy to

thereby provide adequate resources to solve the problems we face.

That is why the battle against the Tory cuts is linked to the struggle within the Labour Party to build a mass membership Party with a leadership prepared to lead a struggle against the Tories, and for the implementation of socialist policies as outlined in Clause IV, part 4, of the Labour Party's constitution.



Steelworkers picket a private stockholder in Rotherham. The Labour Party must support workers' struggles

Photo: MILITANT

YORKSHIRE

For a mass socialist Labour Party

A conference of the Yorkshire Labour Party has the proud traditions of the regional miners, the engineers and now the steelmen on which to stand.

These workers, along with many other sections, have been drawn into battles over living standards or jobs and have been radicalised by their struggles.

The Yorkshire Regional Labour Party needs to find a path to these workers, drawing them into the Party to link the struggle industrially with the socialist alternative so urgently

By Jon Ingham

(National LPYS Vice-Chairman)

needed to throw the Tory government out.

To increase the rent or rates again would be a direct attack on the working class families already hit with inflation of 18.4%, spiralling heating costs and for owner occupiers a nightmare of mortgage repayments.

Pressure must be brought to bear on the Tories for full restoration of the rate support grant linked to inflation. Labour councils all over the region and nationally must be prepared to fight together ensuring that councils are not isolated like Clay Cross. Already workers have shown in mass numbers their willingness to support a fight

against the cuts. Only a mass movement led by the Labour councils can stop the cuts by a refusal to pay the interest charges on council debts.

We must expose the crippling burdens imposed on local authorities by massive debt repayments to the money-lenders. These parasites live off the backs of the ratepayers, pushing up the price of a council house to £100,000 over 60 years.

Mass pressure from the labour movement must be used to force a U-turn under the Tories with the incoming Labour government nationalising the banks and all finance as its first act, to free councils from crippling interest charges.

The Tories are pushing more and more workers to the brink over redundancies, and it is entirely possible for the

region to see a fight over jobs. Such a struggle could only succeed if the whole of the movement rallied support.

Debates on the economy and public expenditure will give delegates from all sections of the movement a chance to describe the effects of the cuts and work out a policy to defeat them.

During the past few months the Party organised some magnificent demonstrations in Sheffield and one of 2,000 in Leeds. Every one of the region's services is under attack from education to home helps. The Health service cuts will affect Yorkshire most severely, because as an industrial area, a larger percentage of accidents comes from work, accidents which are on the increase.

Already the cuts have provided large desertions

from the Tories. Their old supporters see their jobs, services and livelihood threatened, and some are now beginning to look to the labour movement for a solution. Only resolute action will win these layers from the Tories and stop the cuts.

Support for resolutions calling for "No cuts" together with "No rate or rent increases" is vital. White-collar workers in the public services will not differentiate between Labour or Tory efficiency cuts, if it means their jobs.

The Labour Party must build on its past programme of a 35-hour week with no loss of pay and nationalisation of firms refusing to implement this policy. Positive demands, coupled with the strength of the movement, can mobilise to end unemployment.

An amendment from Leeds NE to a resolution on unemployment points to a fighting socialist alternative which needs to be offered based on a planning of the industries and integration through public ownership of subsidiary industries.

The fight the Labour Party must take on is a fight to defeat the Tories politically, but also to wrest power from the industrialists and capitalists who run Britain today.

The class struggles which have been fought out in Yorkshire and nationally have brought millions into activity for the first time.

These workers can be won to the Labour Party around the struggle for socialism with the building of a mass Labour Party being seen as a weapon in the socialist transformation of society.



ARGENTINA

SOUTH AFRICA

STRIKE WAVE SHAKES

ARGENTINIAN MILITARY

Last month's appointment of a new Argentinian ambassador in London was part of a move for closer relations between the Argentinian and British governments. But whilst the bosses are huddling closer together, workers internationally should see the new militancy displayed by Argentinian workers.

And what a regime they have to fight. In the nearly five years since the Videla military regime came to power, about 20,000 people have been imprisoned, killed or have "disappeared".

Inflation has been "reduced" to 170%; all trade union and democratic rights have been suppressed; newspapers, secondary schools, state industries, universities, have been invaded by the armed forces.

Bonapartist regimes such as the Argentinian one do not exist simply because the military are greedy for power. The repression, torture and excesses we see today in Latin America, come into existence when capitalism is in crisis. Their sole purpose is to put down the organised working class and put capitalism on its feet.

Military rule is the symptom more than the cause of the problem, and that cause is to be found in the crisis of the economy and the policies the strategists of capital adopt to solve it.

Soon after the 1975 coup, Martinez de Hoz, Minister of the Economy (who, incidentally, is one of the richest landowners of the country, educated at Eton and Oxford)

By Juan Perez

began to implement the most dogmatic monetarist policies of the kind Keith Joseph would like to implement in Britain.

These have included: public expenditure cuts, rationalisation of the public sector, privatisation of the profitable parts of state industry and closure of the unprofitable ones, incomes policy, etc, all of which will sound extremely familiar to British workers.

However, as Marxists always explain, these measures have done very little to solve the country's problems. While inflation still runs at 170%, the government is only allowing pay settlements of no more than 4%! And this has meant a sharp fall in the standard of living of the majority of Argentinians. But this has hit back at the capitalists, since now people have less money and can buy less.

In 1979 General Motors closed down, and Citroen has announced it will do so presently. Many firms are going bankrupt and others rationalising or simply laying off their workforce, because they can no longer sell their products.

It is these policies which have made military rule necessary for capitalism. The working class would never accept such attacks without a fightback. It is no accident



Since the military came to power in March 1975, they have murdered over 20,000 people

that as soon as Videla took power he declared all strikes illegal, and his men, under the pretext of dealing with terrorism, tortured and murdered thousands of trade union activists.

However, the Argentinian workers have now begun to fight back. Strikes are springing up everywhere, although strikers know they are risking their lives. In September the Peugeot workers went on strike over a pay claim. The bosses' answer was a lockout, but when the 5,500 employees threatened to march to the House of Government with their families, all their demands were met.

Government response

Over the last few months the number of strikes has rocketed to a level not seen since the last days of Isabel Peron. 4,300 engineering workers went on strike in the Dalmine Siderca factory; 1,500 telephone workers have been on a work to rule; another 1,500 metal workers

were on strike at the firm Camea; public transport in the city of Rosario was at a standstill as a result of industrial action.

The underground workers of Buenos Aires showed an incredible degree of solidarity and organisation when, unexpectedly, they completely paralysed whole sections of the network. Up and down the country there has been a series of smaller strikes.

Videla's government has been trying to deal with the organised workers through legislation and open violence. The government disbanded the CGT (Confederation of all unions), and the answer was CUTA, a new federation and workers are refusing to negotiate with the government unless they are represented by CUTA.

The military have now come up with a new piece of legislation: the Law on Professional Associations, and its purpose is—according to them—"to democratise and depoliticise" the unions. Its main points are:

1) National unions and federations are to be abolished;

unions can only exist a factory and regional level;

2) The closed shop is to be abolished;

3) Union officials cannot be re-selected more than once;

4) All social services which were controlled by the unions shall be in the hands of the state, resulting in an important loss of revenue.

5) Unions are to be banned from all political activities, and will not be allowed to affiliate to any political party.

Clearly, far from 'democratising and depoliticising' the union, the intention behind this law is to destroy the organisations of the working class, so that big business can make bigger profits. However, the military have not been able to shatter the labour movement, because of workers opposition and the fact that unemployment is still fairly low so vast numbers of unemployed cannot be used to weaken union power.

The government has taken a long time to implement this law (it was first announced over a year ago). Even the most right-wing union leaders have warned that the answer

to implementation will most certainly be a general strike.

There is a growing mood of anger and discontent in the country. All the old parties, including the capitalists, are calling for a 'broad front' to campaign for a return to democracy. Their profits are obviously being hit by the strikes and the general discontent.

However, getting rid of the military government, and of the system that created it are class issues, and as such they must be fought by the working class, and not by compromising with other classes.

As the struggle becomes greater, workers will come to realise that their problems cannot be solved by going back to the bosses' democracy, but that they need to take control of the economy and produce for need and not for profit. If armed with a clear Marxist leadership, they will be able to transform society and all the Videlas will have gone for good.

Black capitalist laments 'no future'

Sam Motsuenyane is one of the wealthiest of the small number of black capitalists in South Africa. He is the long-time president of the National African Federated Chambers of Commerce, chairman of the African Bank, and one of the very few blacks to serve as a director of the monopolies which dominate the South African economy.

How does he view the future for the South African boss class?

"If we had a one-man,

By Richard Morgan

one-vote election tomorrow", he said recently to business executives at a university business school course, "there would be a strong inclination to nationalise the wealth of the whites in order to share it. "That's what worries me, I am not sure that people like me who preach capitalism are going to survive. We may be thrown overboard."

Motsuenyane is quite right. For the black majority of working people in South Africa capitalism offers no future but continuing poverty-level wages, rising prices, huge unemployment levels, pass laws, migrant labour, homelessness, disease, poor education.

It is no wonder that the bosses' regime in South Africa has not been able to concede the demands of the masses for democratic rights, and has restricted the right to vote to a privileged minority of the white middle-class and white workers!

Now the world crisis of capitalism, causing the bosses to attack living standards in South Africa, has brought a strong black working class into militant struggles. (See 'Militant' 8 February) Motsuenyane sees the writing on the wall for the white capitalists, and knows that his future is linked to theirs.

Pathetically, he pleads with the big businessmen to give "black people a stake in the country". The black man is "basically a capitalist", he argues, and only wants to own a bit of land!

But it is far too late in the day for the bosses to hold back the workers' struggle by strengthening the black middle class. In fact, attempts by the regime to "deracialise" the situation often only add to the burdens of the black middle class.

The so-called "desegregation" of rights to trade and establish businesses is resulting in the bankrupting of petty black traders in the townships by white-owned supermarkets and hypermarkets. Motsuenyane's own NAFCO has protested to the government about this!

Motsuenyane's assessment is confirmed by an "attitude survey" conducted by the same business school at which he lectured. Blacks, the survey concluded, "appeared to reject capitalism simply because it was identified with

whites and the present system, which they believed was designed to oppress them.

They therefore tended to say they favoured communism, although they could not define the system other than to say everyone was equal." Even the patronising arrogance of these academic "experts" cannot conceal the defiant spirit and level of consciousness among blacks, underpinned by the forward movement of the black workers.

Organise young workers

The task for Marxists is to strengthen this forward movement by building conscious organisation among the workers. In this work it will be

the fresh young workers, and the youth in general, who will take the lead, drawing in the older workers.

For real democracy, and secure improvements in the standard of life of the working people can be achieved only by overthrowing the state controlled by the bosses. It is only on the basis of a new state of workers' democracy that the wealth of 'South Africa, nationalised under workers' control, can be redistributed for the benefit of all.

And this is the only answer, too, to the problems of the middle classes. Along with smashing the power of the capitalist monopolies, that will bring an end to the bleating apologies for capitalism by Motsuenyane and his kind.

TURKEY

CANADA POLAND

GENERAL STRIKE IN IZMIR DEFIES 10,000 SOLDIERS

Just imagine if the Tories had purged the state machine and the nationalised industries of all Labour supporters when they came into office last year, filling all posts with their own party supporters. Suppose they tried to set up a small, right-wing stooge union in a cotton mill and threatened its 10,000 workforce with the sack if they didn't join.

Envisage the scene of these workers holding a sit-in to prevent that threat being carried out against 790 workers active in the biggest trade union—and being surrounded by 10,000 soldiers armed to the teeth and backed up by tanks all round the factory and armed helicopters flying above!

Now you have a picture of what is happening in Turkey.

By Brent Kennedy

Just such an incident took place last week in the Mediterranean town of Izmir. The trade unionists were forced out of their place of work under a hail of bullets and imprisoned in a sports stadium-cum-concentration camp reminiscent of Pinochet's treatment of Chilean workers. (So far neither President Carter nor Thatcher has called a boycott of sporting competitions with Turkey.)

But immediately the workers and poor of Izmir rose up in anger. Facing the most severe austerity measures in memory, with a recent doubling of the price of basic necessities, shortages of food and fuel, 70% inflation and 20% unemployment, the Turkish workers and peasants are simmering with a hatred of the rich and their state which threatens to boil over into civil war.

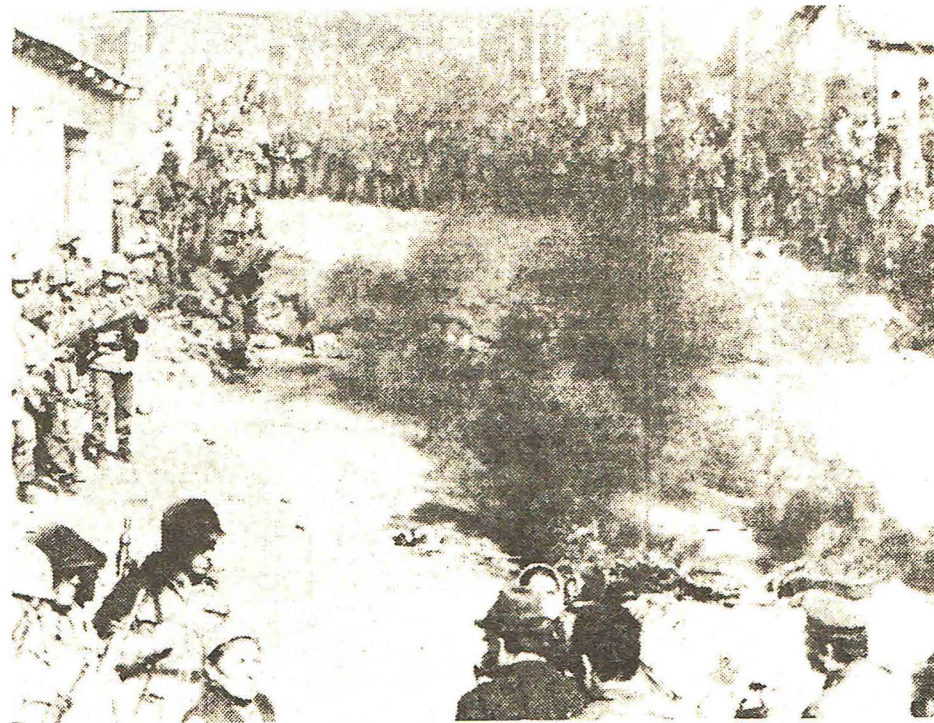
A general strike was called in Izmir, barricades went up and street battles broke out with the army. The wretched poor of the shanty towns were provoked by the invasion of troops running riot among

their miserable hovels, 'searching for arms', and when the troops chased after a group of left wingers hundreds poured out of the slums to pelt them with stones.

Meanwhile riots broke out in the Eastern town of Tunceli and in Kars. Thousands of shops in Istanbul closed down in a boycott of price rises and the arrest of 300 socialists, including school students, could not stem the tide of protest.

It is against this background of economic disaster, political murders now running at 50 a week and mass confrontations with the state forces that the generals are increasingly intervening. The danger of a military coup to crush the growing left wing trade unions is now very real. Indeed the chaotic economic and political situation today is very similar to—but worse than—1960 and 1971 when the army decided that Prime Minister Demirel couldn't handle the crisis and took over itself.

Those military regimes led to vicious repression of workers' democratic rights, mass arrests and widespread torture. But when the reins of power were handed back to the politicians none of the fundamental problems of



Determined action by working people in Izmir, but lack of national leadership led to the strike being called off.

Turkish society were a step nearer to any solution.

Panicked by the collapse of former allies in the "crescent of crisis" along the border of the Soviet Union, the imperialist powers have done a U-turn in Turkey and are rushing economic aid to prevent instability leading to revolution. Perhaps this will persuade the Generals to give Demirel a breathing spell and see if he can make any impact on the economy with his foreign loans.

But if this fails then his government will soon collapse—either by the withdrawal of parliamentary support by Erbakan's Islamic fanatics, defections by his own opportunist MPs or by a frustrated officer caste.

The labour movement must act now to prevent a bloody defeat. Armed workers' defence groups must immediately be formed by the DISK trade union federation and the Republican People's Party to protect the lives of the

workers and defend their democratic rights.

Linked to a socialist programme to provide jobs, houses and guaranteed prices for fuel, fertiliser and farm produce, with a class appeal to workers and peasants in uniform, this could mobilise the unemployed, slum-dwellers, peasants and soldiers behind the working class to defeat bloody reaction, break the economic catastrophe and march forward to a socialist Turkey.

POLAND - OFFERING UP A SACRIFICE

By Jim Chrystie

Delivering blows to opponents on either side of him, Gierek tried to re-establish his authority as leader of the Polish Communist Party at last week's Party Conference.

Prime Minister Jaroszewicz was sacked as the leadership made him a scapegoat for the political and economic crisis gripping Poland. Poland's economy declined by 2% last year the conference was told. The expansion of the economy during the 1970s had been on the basis of trade with and loans from Western capitalism.

Now through the crushing hand of Stalinist bureaucratic rule, which stifles proper socialist planning, coupled with the recession affecting Western capitalism, the Polish economy faces crisis. Its foreign debt to Western financiers totals \$18,000m, a near trebling of the \$7,000m debt of only five years ago.

To try to lessen this debt, the Polish leadership cut back on investment from \$3,000m to \$1,000m last year. This is beginning to affect export potential and capacity. Yet it seems that imports of capital goods will have to continue to be cut.

It would be almost impossible for the Polish Stalinist leadership to cut the importation of cereals—\$8,000m since 1970. In 1976 there was an explosion of anger from

Polish workers when Gierek tried to put up prices, and the rises were withdrawn. Now 25% of the national budget is devoted to subsidising food prices. But such is the inefficiency and waste of bureaucratic rule, that lengthy food queues are commonplace in Poland.

The growth and manufacturing expansion of the early 1970s has meant that the old form of Stalinist bureaucratic rule cannot cope with a sophisticated modern economy. Such an economy can only be efficiently run if it has the feedback, day to day knowledge of the workers involved in its planning. Workers' democracy is an economic and political necessity if Polish society is to be taken forward.

And as 'Militant' reported (4th and 11th January) groups of Polish workers are now organising openly against the dead hand of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is this growing opposition flowing from the impasse facing Polish society, which resulted in this month's sacking of Prime Minister Jaroszewicz.

As the leading French capitalist paper 'Le Monde' stated, 17 February:

"Poland is living in a difficult contradiction between the reality of its social life and its political structure. Modernisation of the economy, which in many ways is remarkable, has caused an outdated management to break wide open. It has now been seen that even the party's life cannot manage to avoid the pressures around it, for however controlled and tactically desirable it may have been, Jaroszewicz's expulsion from office and the Politburo is more than anything else the result and

expression of popular discontent."

At the same time Gierek attacked "reformers" in the Party who established links with opposition groups. Three "reformers", Olszowski, Kepa and Tejchma were not re-elected to the Politburo.

Party leader Gierek is clearly trying to re-establish his authority. But nothing fundamental has changed. As 'Le Monde' commented:

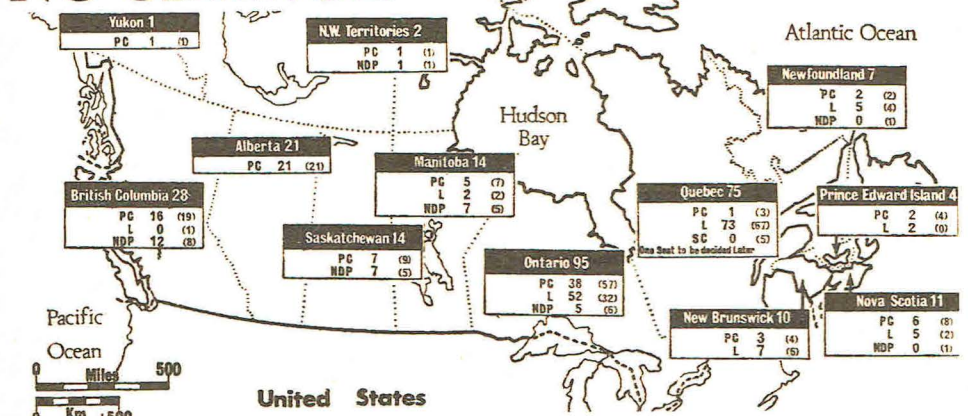
"The crisis in Poland is serious enough to make the government hesitate before making changes. Nevertheless the solutions that have been suggested, advocated, proposed and championed successfully from one congress to another today appear to be pretty flimsy considering the extent of the rot..."

"Will sacrificing a top official enable the government to ward off the occasional outburst of discontent and, above all, which is even more difficult and important, to soothe the people's frustrations and give them new hope?"

The Roman Catholic Church and capitalists in the West want stability in Poland. But the decisions of the recent Party congress will not bring that about. Whichever way the leadership tries, reforms or increased repression, unrest will grow.

One Polish dissident described his country as "walking on a volcano." It is only a matter of time before the mountain explodes.

Canada: ALL CHANGE, NO CHANGE



Such is the restlessness of Canadian people experiencing the impact of economic recession, that only 9 months after electing a Conservative government, last week they turned the tables and the Liberals came back into office.

It was not a positive vote for the Liberals, more an expression of 'no confidence' in the Tories. And the election result saw a further increase in support for the mildly left wing New Democratic Party, which is built around the trade unions.

Major problems face Canadian workers in the coming period. Growth slowed to 2.7% last year and it is estimated that it will decline to between 0.5% and 1.5% this year. Unemployment is now at about 8%, inflation nearly 10% [and rising] and there are plans to cut

government spending to solve the budget deficit.

And over all these economic problems looms the national question. The world's second largest country faces a double strain. In Quebec there will be a referendum on the demand for separate sovereignty, and in the Western Provinces mining and agricultural interests resent control from Ottawa.

Neither of the two capitalist parties can solve these problems. As the election results showed, neither of them is a national party.

As the accompanying map shows the Liberals won nearly half their seats in Quebec [73 Liberals, 1 Conservative] and yet they got no seats at all in the three Western provinces. A similar pattern in reverse can be seen for the Tories.

Only the NDP offers the possibility of becoming a party which can solve the economic and national prob-

lems. But for this they would need to take a much clearer socialist line, to combat the multi-nationals' hold on the Canadian economy and to recognise the right of self-determination for the French speaking people in Quebec.

Only a class line can bring real unity. Already they have support from workers throughout the country [see map]. Even in Quebec where they did not win a seat, they doubled their share of the vote and in a number of constituencies pushed the Tories into third place. Overall they obtained 18% of the vote and won 32 seats.

The 'Financial Times' [20 February] described the NDP as "equivalent roughly to British Labour, though lacking a powerful, militant left wing." In the coming period that deficiency could well be filled as workers, battered by economic recession, look for a socialist alternative.

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LETTERS

Send your views and comments on the issues that affect you to 'Militant', 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

The choice: Socialism or the 1830s

Dear Comrades

The Low Pay Unit's latest bulletin reveals the staggering extent to which living standards have declined in Britain. The bulletin, based on official government figures, estimated that there are six million adults whose earnings put them below the poverty line determined by the Supplementary Benefits Commission.

Another half million avoid poverty only by working overtime. These people earn less in relation to the national

wage than they would have done 100 years ago. What an incredible indictment of diseased British capitalism!

Perhaps the TUC should alter its "No return to the 'thirties" slogan to read: "No return to the 1830s."

At the same time that these appalling figures were released, that arch-renegade from the labour movement, Reg Prentice, was announcing his "crack-down" on social security "scroungers".

In the context of such a sick

contradiction, who can possibly doubt the need for a bold and totally uncompromising socialist programme? As a Health Service worker I am confronted every minute of my working (and non-working) day by the inescapable correctness of the Marxist programme consistently put forward by 'Militant'.

Only a few days ago I watched from the window of one of our hospital wards as two nurses struggled to push a patient on a trolley from one

of the operating theatres across rough open ground, trying to shield the patient from the rain.

I felt the anger welling up inside me, anger which fuels my determination to help 'Militant' throw this rotten system into the dustbin of history, and replace it with a genuinely socialist society—a socialist Europe and a socialist world.

Yours fraternally
Clive Gravell
COHSE Kidderminster

Insult the Tories
—not the tenants

Dear Comrades

"Bad news for council house tenants" was the announcement on a recent BBC TV's 'Midlands Tonight'. The local council in Tewkesbury have decided that all council tenants who have allowed their rents to go into arrears will have their names published in the local press!

With increases in rents and rates and jobless figures soaring (the same programme announced two factory closures in the Midlands), working class families need no added insults. Life under the Tories is insult enough!

As socialists we may ask, where are the lists of landlords failing to do repairs, councils failing to provide homes through cuts and big businessmen in arrears to the Inland Revenue? The Tories seek to protect their own—those who already have more than they know what to do with—at the expense of workers and their families.

Now more than ever, the demands put forward in the pages of the 'Militant' regarding planned public works, a million houses a year, to provide a home for all on low rents, are essential, especially for the workers of Tewkesbury!

Fraternally
Pat Bloye
Handsworth CLP

Only
fit use

Dear Comrades

The King's Lynn office of the Transport and General Workers' Union has a copy of the latest internal bulletin of the National Front: hanging on the toilet roll holder in the gents! Across it is written in biro "For the use of all good trade unionists!"

Yours fraternally
Tim Webb
10/28A branch T&GWU

Bosses' closed shop

Dear Comrades

I had been meaning for several weeks to put pen to paper and denounce the closed shop.

Don't worry, I'm not a Tory. What I would call a closed shop is where the bosses refuse to allow a union, and threaten to sack anyone liable to start one.

My boss hysterically threatened to "sell up" rather than allow a union to "interfere" in her business. That to me is a closed shop.

To my dismay I was summarily dismissed without notice, on the spot today, thrown back on the dole as being "surplus to the company's staff requirements." As I made my way to the exit I had, I'm certain, the sympathy of the majority of workers on the shop floor, but they were powerless to assist me or further my protest.

Why weren't we organised? If there had been a union everyone would have been out the door with me. As it was the petty tyrant was able to get away with this scandalous behaviour,

and I am now jobless. Her particular closed shop is the sort the press seem prepared to ignore.

So my advice to the thousands of comrades in works without a union behind them is get organised! For heaven's sake don't wait until you are poled out.

While workers are individuals the bosses can do as they please, and will do; victimising, sacking, overworking. If four or five get together and stand firm before their threats, you can fight back. It's too late for me—don't make the same mistake.

Canvass support, put forward the case for a union and get it started. It is our ability to fight back that sets us apart from the bosses' goods and supplies. Without a union we are not better than all the other commodities they deal with.

Take heed of this note of warning comrades, and get organised!

Yours
Simon M Clark
North Nottingham LPYS

Was
Darwin
right?

Dear Comrades

I get 'Militant' about a week late yet it is worth waiting for real socialist views. Usually, that is, but in issue No 489 a report for Northern Ireland worried me. It was the one about a borough council rejecting Darwin's theory of evolution.

Now on the whole I expect that the majority of 'Militant' readers support most of Karl Marx's views. Do they also support most of Charles Darwin's ideas?

He believed in capitalism, he was a racist, he was against abortion and in no way was he a socialist, not even a social democrat. So if you do not support most of Darwin's views, why support evolution? If you believe that man evolved from apes (and taken a step further, from a micro-organism), how do you explain the human's conscience, powers of reasoning, philosophical and religious beliefs, great feats of workmanship and many complicated languages?

Of course you could say that Christianity is right wing. Well we have a reactionary right-wing government at the moment and Thatcher on a recent television interview said that we would never have heard of the Good Samaritan if he had had no money. In this way she was implying that the rich were best suited to looking after our affairs.

How much money did Jesus Christ have? None. Christianity and socialism have much in common and it's just the established church which gives a bad impression.

Yours fraternally
James Heath
Havant and Waterloo LPYS

RECOMMENDING
THE SYSTEM

Dear Comrades

Over the past few weeks, whilst I was still searching for a job after being made redundant late last year, and the steel workers were standing around braziers, fighting for jobs and a decent standard of living, what was Ted Heath doing, we might ask?

Mr Heath, along with 450 other "captains of industry" was spending a pleasant week at the picturesque ski-resort of Davos in Switzerland, the venue for probably the most profitable of Europe's business conferences.

With costs running at over £1,700 a head plus fares and hotel on top, who could be surprised? No doubt the organisers, who run up a tidy profit of £360,000 from this venture alone, wouldn't be.

What sort of society is it

that allows one man to spend more in one week than some people earn in a whole year? Time and time again the need for a socialist society becomes clear, where the wealth created by workers' toil is distributed fairly; where the chaotic nature of free enterprise is replaced by a planned economy run on the basis of need not profit.

When you are queuing for your next unemployment giro, have a think about the following extract from the 'Economist' in relation to this conference: "After all, any economic system that gives you a tax-deductible week in Davos at the height of the ski season must have something to recommend it, mustn't it."

Yours fraternally
Peter D Marsden
Newcastle North LPYS

Journalists who
don't need bribes

Dear Comrades

The exposure of the 'Tote' scandal must be most embarrassing to the members of the Horserace Totalisator Board on which Frank Chapple of the EETPU sits.

The Chairman of this Board, Mr Woodrow Wyatt, pontificates (in the 'Sunday Mirror') about trade unionists' irresponsibility and selfishness. How about his responsibility as chairman of the Tote?

He surely cannot be influenced by the salary (don't know about expenses) of

£11,000 per annum, as he is a pretty wealthy man. So he must be staying on from a sense of duty which imbues most Fleet Street scribes. But I wonder who the writer had in mind when he penned these lines:

You cannot hope to buy or twist, Thank God, the British journalist, Considering what the man will do, Unbribed, there's no occasion to.

Fraternally
W J Lovett

CLV's Party apartheid?

Dear Editor

On Monday 11th February I attended a public debate held in Liverpool between Terry Harrison (for 'Militant') and Dave Mitchell (for the Campaign for Labour Victory).

In the course of Mitchell's speech he said that the people of Merseyside would not vote for Labour candidates who were a "bunch of nig-nogs"... meaning those who are supporters of 'Militant'.

I would publicly like to ask

Mr Mitchell whether he would like to see apartheid practised within the Labour Party and if so will he advocate his organisation's (CLV's) policy of removing "the privilege of Party membership from those whose aims and objectives are inconsistent with those of the Labour Party"?

Yours comradely
James Patterson

AFGHANISTAN:
Marxist
analysis?

Dear Comrades

Like most Marxists, I have been intensely interested in recent developments in Afghanistan. I have carefully read the articles on Afghanistan in 'Militant' (486 and 490) and, to be honest, I find them superficial and in some respects, emphatically non-Marxist.

Ted Grant and Lynn Walsh both quite rightly point out that Russia intervened 'to preserve its own power and bureaucratic interests', and they show how this action is damaging to the socialist movement. However, such an explanation of the Russian intervention is by no means comprehensive, nor can it be, for the simple fact that no-one yet (outside the Russian and US government hierarchies) has an adequate volume of information to formulate a comprehensive explanation.

To pretend otherwise is to be as naive as the bourgeois press, who account for the invasion by saying that the Russian bear is gobbling up yet another small state.

Ted and Lynn fail to discuss American involvement in the affair, except to mention that the intervention is a propaganda coup for the bourgeoisie. Perhaps they should consider the fact that prior to the Russian invasion, America was arming the Afghan rebels and equipping Pakistan's army with sophisticated hardware.

Could it be that the CIA were gaining a grip on Afghanistan through the rebels and even, dare I say it, egging the Pakistan army on to intervene 'to restore stability on their borders'? If this is true, the Russian invasion was in part self-defence.

Furthermore, Ted and Lynn fail to say that the depression in the Russian economy may be leading the government there to take the historically precedented move of diverting public attention from internal problems by expansionism. To me, despite their use of trendy Marxist jargon, these articles look only at the immediate 'facts', ignoring overall dialectical movements.

One other point is that the Russians have nothing to fear from their 'native' Moslems. These Moslems are part of the Russian state, dominated by their hegemony and armed forces of repression. They are no more a threat than are the blacks in America.

The bourgeoisie loves to dwell on individuals and minority groups as if they are outside society — Marxists do not consider the superstructure to have an independent existence from the economic base and thus such groups cannot be analysed outside the context of the society in which they exist.

Yours fraternally
Russell Emery
Colchester LPYS

OUR BUSINESS IS YOUR BUSINESS

Events in the labour movement both in Britain and internationally seem to be moving faster, but there's no simple "straight line" about developments.

'Militant' is in business to keep you informed, and to help you analyse the present state of the battle between the working class and the ruling class, at home and abroad.

For instance, Lloyds Bank profits are up 50% on last year: did you know the 'City' expects bank profits to go over £1,500 million this year? This has done wonders for bank shares of course, but it doesn't help the rest of the population who have had to pay for it.

In fact the lowest paid section of society receive no more of the national cake than they did 100 years ago!

On the other hand, more than any capitalist firm, we can confidently say our business is your business. We're half way through the first quarter of the fighting fund year and we've reached £8,403, with the £1,374 that came in this week.

By Steve Cawley

This means we are £11,600 short of the April 12th target of £20,000. We need £1,650 every week from now on. However, when we open our post-bag each week, we're very confident of passing our target.

"Enclosed find £10 towards this year's fighting fund sent by Labour Party members to strengthen the fight against the right wing," writes a Littlehampton supporter along with the cheque from her Party Branch.

Bridlington LPYS donated £25 "to forward the fight for a socialist Britain and a socialist world." The Scotland East line on the chart includes £149 from a Militant Readers' Meeting in Edinburgh and £55 from one in Stirling; keep up the enthusiasm, comrades! Steel workers in Teesside

put together £5 at a Militant Meeting for us, quite a large sum if you take into account their present (lack of) means, while YS members raised another £7 on the streets in Scunthorpe. Eastern Region LPYS members collected over £68 at their recent conference, and supporters such as S Graham and B Hull (Tyneside) donated their fares to the February 2nd demonstration.

Print union (NGA and SOGAT) members at Duttons Ltd collected £10.20, while other NGA supporters on Merseyside raised £15, and another £5.50 came from NUPE and POEU branch meeting collections. Bradford and Leeds readers (both anon.) gave us £50 and £40 respectively, and £20 came from B Pottinger (Lothian

Build Militant

Area	received	Proportion of first quarter's target	Target 1st Qtr	Target for year
Eastern	551		1,000	5,000
East Midlands	415		760	3,800
Hants & IOW	282		780	3,900
Humberside	148		500	2,500
London East	989		1,240	6,200
London West	700		940	4,700
London South	404		800	4,000
Manchester & Lancs	192		1,020	5,100
Merseyside	593		1,200	6,000
Northern	694		1,460	7,300
Scotland East	252		640	3,200
Scotland West	312		1,000	5,000
Southern	554		1,180	5,900
South West	129		640	3,200
Wales East	163		560	2,800
Wales West	143		620	3,100
West Midlands	827		1,800	9,000
Yorkshire	549		1,460	7,300
Others	506		2,400	12,000
Total received	8403		20,000	100,000

TARGET FOR APRIL 12th - £20,000 TARGET FOR YEAR - £100,000

THIS WEEK
£1,374

Trades Council Youth Committee).

Various sources such as "Hackney pancakes" (£5), "Eastbourne holiday job" (£7.32), Reading anti-cuts demo badges (£9) and Spennymoor appeal sheet (£6.55)

illustrate the different ways of helping Militant. Have you been round the local Militant readers with one of our official appeal sheets?

Finally, thanks also to all those who gave us money this week: we hope you all didn't

expect a mention here but please don't stop giving us the means to expand the coverage and scope of our paper. All contributions are welcomed, letters and articles, and donations. Set aside something for Militant each week and make sure your Militant salesman notes down your donation on a collector's card.

From the hundreds of contributors we've been asked to mention this week, an especial thank you to J Moffit and K Allen, J Hall (Manchester), J Stainthorpe (Middlesbrough), Mr and Mrs Thompson, P and S Woodhurst (Bradford), J Clegg (Coventry), R Duncan (N Scotland) and J Abbot (Sec. Litherland LP, Bootle).

Make Militant's fortunes your business. Send us what you can now.

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

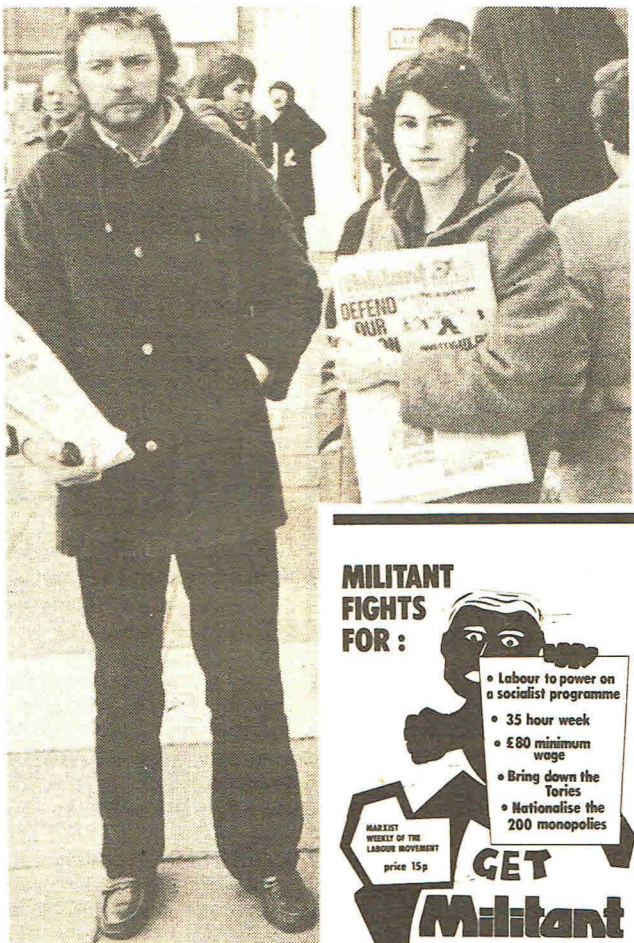
"A popular method always used by the bourgeois press in every country with unerring effect is to lie, scream, raise a hullabaloo, and keep on reiterating lies on the off-chance that "something may stick"..."

"It is the capitalists and the capitalist press who are making a great noise, who are trying to shout down the truth, to prevent it from being heard, to drown it in a torrent of invective and shouts to prevent an earnest elucidation of the facts."

No this is not the 'Militant' writing about the British press a few weeks ago—it is Lenin writing in 'Pravda' in April 1917. The lies and distortions of the press don't change and neither does the task of Marxists to build a mass workers' paper to counter the lies of the bosses.

Order the 'Militant' sales leaflets and posters and boost the sales of the paper that tells the truth. Supporters in Manchester lead the way this week having sold 200 on a demonstration. Sellers in Scotland broke new ground in Motherwell and sold 100 papers.

Which is going to be the first area to sell 500 papers



By Dave Farrar

on a demonstration and really celebrate the 500th issue of the 'Militant'?

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MILITANT PUBLIC MEETINGS
'What Militant Stands For'

HARLOW
Speaker: Ted Grant, Chairman: Danny Purton (Secretary, Harlow TUC), Harlow Town Hall, 7.30 pm, Friday 29 February.

MAIDSTONE: Speaker: Ray Apps (Brighton Labour Party), Bricklayers Arms, Perryfields Street, Maidstone, Kent. Friday, February 29th, 7.30.

MILITANT MEETINGS

TEESSIDE Militant Public Meeting
'Defend Trade Union Rights'
Speaker: Pat Wall (President, Bradford Trades Council). 7.30 pm, Thursday, 6th March. Cleveland Hotel, Linthorpe Rd, (south end), Middlesbrough

NORTH-EAST Militant discussion groups: Chester-le-Street: Contact Wally Scott, Chester-le-Street 887603. Sunderland: Contact Diane English Sunderland 44365. Durham & Area: Contact Ray Physick Ferryhill (0740) 52533

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL LABOUR PARTY MILITANT READERS MEETING: 'A Socialist Programme for Labour'. Dressing Room, St Georges Hall, Market Street, Exeter. Saturday March 15th 1 pm. Speakers: Councillor Pete Hammond, Robin Clapp.

CLASSIFIED

MILITANT MARXIST WEEKEND SCHOOL. Book the date now: June 27th to June 29th. At Goldsmiths College Students Union, New Cross, London SE14. Leading Marxist speakers. Further details to follow.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Labour Club and St Pancros North LPYS 'Fight the Cuts' Public Meeting. Speakers: Joan Maynard MP, Andy Bevan (Labour Party National Youth Officer). 7.45 pm, Wednesday 5 March, University College Theatre, Gordon Street, WCI.

DARTFORD Militant Party. Free food, drinks available. Saturday 8 March, 6 Byron Road, Dartford, Kent. Entrance 50p. All Welcome.

MANCHESTER: Blackley Socialists Against the Cuts—Protest Meeting. 'Life Under Mrs Thatcher—hear the alternative!'. Speakers: Ken Eastham MP (Labour, Blackley); Stan Coles (President, Manchester AUEW); Paula Sadler (housewife); Dave Morgan (LP YS). Chairman: Councillor Eddie Newman (Labour, Blackley). 7.30 pm, Friday 7 March. Plant Hill School, Plant Hill Road, Blackley, Manchester 9.

SOCIALIST SONGBOOK (New printing). Only 40p. Single copies post paid 50p. Bulk orders for 30p each plus postage. From Brian Beckingham, 62 Haverstock Road, Bristol.

ads

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STRATHCLYDE Militant supporters' draw results 16 Feb. 1st Prize: 1+5, 1+19. 2nd Prize: Any two of 6, 24, 35, 37, 43. 23 Feb. 1st Prize: Any two of 11, 26, 29 2nd Prize: 7+28.

New pamphlet out—
'A Socialist Strategy for Steelworkers'
Price 20p + 10p P&P
From World Books,
1 Mentmore Terrace,
London E8 3PN

NOTTS MINERS WARN TORIES

Overcast skies and driving sleet and snow provided a bleak background to the recent Nottingham Area NUM conference. Inside, however, the temperature soared.

The three hundred delegates representing 30,000 miners, delivered their message loud and clear to Maggie Thatcher and the rest of the rogues' gallery, masquerading as the government—the living standards, conditions and democratic rights that the British working class has won over decades of struggle will not be taken away by this reactionary big business government.

An emergency resolution, pledging support for any TUC policy and action to oppose the Tories' vicious anti-union legislation was passed unanimously.

This anti-Tory theme ran throughout the two-day conference.

Most of the resolutions registered miners' concern with the present state and the future of the coal industry

and the effect this is having on wages and conditions at the pit.

Although no resolution dealt directly with wages, the two which received the highest votes (the three resolutions with the highest votes go forward to the national conference) called for a fourth week's holiday at average earnings and not less than grade rate and for a service bonus scheme to be introduced whereby 'the workforce get an annual increment of not less than 3% of basic grade rate for each year of service.'

"A clock and a certificate after forty years is not good enough. We need the money now."

The whole future of the coal industry, and the present destructive policies of the Tories were dealt with in a fraternal address by Mick McGahey, president of the Scottish miners. "Our interests are bound up with the rest of industry and the trade union movement. We cannot have an oasis of coal in an industrial wasteland." Both

Wayne Jones reports on the
Notts area NUM Conference

Mick McGahey and the other fraternal speaker, Neil Kincock, stressed that the fight against the Tories was a political fight and that the TUC and the Labour Party must join together to return a Labour government pledged to implement socialist policies.

The question of planning arose in the important debate on nuclear energy. Mick McGahey pointed to the Tory government's indecent haste to introduce further nuclear power stations without 'copper-bottom guarantees' on health and safety. We would add that such guarantees would not be worth the paper they were written on unless all developments were under workers' control and carried out only after exhaustive tests and safeguards supervised and directed by the trade union movement.

"There is no struggle between coal, oil or nuclear power," Bro McGahey pointed out. "There can be no struggle between inanimate objects. It is between the

forces behind them that the struggles take place—multinationals like Westinghouse." This is the company which make the gas-cooled reactors favoured by the Tories, the type used at Three Mile Island in America.

As Bob Moody, a delegate from Wellbeck, pointed out to me, the other motivation behind the Tory plans is an attempt to break the power of the miners.

The conference was conducted in a serious mood as delegates grappled with the problems thrown up by the decline in the economy and the Tory government. But let the Tories be warned: the loudest applause of the conference was registered when Joe Whelan, the area secretary, called on the TUC to organise a one-day general strike against the Tories.

STEEL STRIKE WEEK 9:

AROUND THE COUNTRY

ROTHERHAM

South Yorkshire steelworkers are horrified but not demoralised by the burning down of the Rotherham strike HQ.

As far as they are concerned, the maniac who got in during the evening and doused the building with petrol from a five-gallon can, left empty outside, was also a would-be murderer. The office was known to be manned 24 hours a day. The building was part of a terrace, with families and children living next door.

The ISTC member in the building at the time managed to break through a first-floor window and jump out. He escaped with a broken ankle. The building is completely gutted; it is still impossible to get upstairs.

The union also apportion the Tories a share of the blame: "by leading people to

believe that we are evil people," but members refuse to let this horrific attack weaken their struggle. Joe Pickles, ISTC divisional organiser, who is organising a move to temporary headquarters, echoed the general mood: "the incident will not interfere with the strike."

This reaction, it seems, has not been confined to steelworkers alone. Denis Norton, manager of the private Hadfield plant, announced that he was absolutely horrified by the fire, and between press statements denouncing the trade unions for wrecking his company, is rumoured to have offered a section of Hadfield's offices for use as new strike headquarters.

By Rob Jones
(Sheffield Heeley
Labour Party)

POOLE

"Even if we're on bread and water, we won't give in" declared one of the pickets who arrived in Poole this week from South Wales. About 50 ISTC, NUB, and T&GWU members were picketing Poole docks, where at least £1 million worth of steel is now being stored, with more ship loads expected to arrive from the continent next week.

So far the dockers are co-operating fully, but as the steel shortage becomes more acute, pressure may be brought to bear to get the steel released.

"We are here to see no steel moves and we shall stay as long as needed! It's not just a question of 20% any more—

we're fighting for our jobs. 20% of nothing is nothing!" "Maggie thought she had an easy task when she took us on. We've proved her wrong—she'll break before we do."

At a Poole LPYS public meeting addressed by Andy Bevan and one of the steel pickets, and attended by approximately sixty people, an appeal raised over £30 for the steelworkers' strike fund. The following night at a Poole CLP General Management Committee meeting about £44 was raised.

Morale is high and the determination to win unshakeable.

By Pauline
Wardlesworth
(Poole Labour Party)

JARROW

On Tuesday afternoon pickets were assembled outside Robert Frasers, a stockholders at Hebburn on Tyne.

The picket had been strengthened recently to prevent the movement of steel which was still coming out of the works. Four policemen were also on duty.

Two lorries came out of the gates and pickets moved over to discuss with the drivers. Before any conversation could take place, the police swooped. Pickets reported that they were simply grabbed at random, punched and kicked by the police. One man had his lip split open.

Two pickets were arrested and charged with obstruction. Others went down to the local

police station to make sure that no more violence was done to their fellow workers: police had been overheard telling one of those arrested that they would be 'sorted out' down at the station.

This is the first trouble between police and strikers from Jarrow leading to arrests. The police seem to have taken their 'get tough' lead from the government.

The only effect will be to harden the steelworkers' determination to make their picketing more effective. Strikers' leaders said that this means every picket will be a mass picket from now on.

Steelworkers intend to bring counter charges against the police, after independent

Assay office occupied

In the heart of the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter stands the Assay Office, where hallmarks are stamped.

Governed by an antiquated Board of Guardians, with Mr. Hilary Eccles-Williams at its head, it may not seem the most likely venue for an industrial dispute. But a major battle for jobs is in process.

The National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades is fighting to save 60 jobs declared redundant by management. Pickets are station-

ed outside the office every day, while 12 workers have occupied the building in support of the union's alternative of work-sharing.

The management rejected work-sharing out of hand. The trade faces a recession, so naturally it is the workers who have to pay.

If there is a recession then it's because the artificially inflated price of gold has encouraged the jewellers to horde their stocks, rather than produce anything. That's the logic of capitalism.

If the job losses are not fought at the Assay office, there could be a wave of redundancies throughout the trade. The union has to demonstrate its strength and solidarity, and it has to win.

The 400 NUGSAT members who marched round the Jewellery Quarter last week showed that they don't lack determination. The 170 workers fighting for their jobs at the Assay office feel the same.

The union has now ballooned, in line with its rule-book, all the 1,000 members in

Birmingham, for an all-out strike. By putting pressure on the jewellery employers, they hope that in turn pressure will be turned on the Assay office management.

One placard proudly displayed on the picket line reads, "panic redundancies are the hallmark of bad management." Gold and silver workers are now making it clear—they won't be polished off easily.

NALGO- What happened to comparability?

Local government workers have once again been left wondering just what is going on with their delayed comparability study.

As part of the 1979 NALGO pay award, comparability was to be implemented on 1 January this year. So far, the membership have been told of delays and disagreements and, predictably, no money whatsoever has been forthcoming.

Comparability inevitably

means that the workers get what the bosses decided they are worth. There is little doubt about what our employers think we are worth: large numbers of NALGO members earn less than the average national industrial wage, with many well below £70 per week.

It is a slap in the face for those workers who genuinely believed that something might come out of the comparability exercise. Rum-

ours are flying high; inevitably the result will be a derisory offer. It is clear that the employers are now not prepared to put the money where their mouths are.

The local government leadership in NALGO should immediately initiate a campaign of meetings, demonstrations and selective industrial action so that we get this comparability deal (for what it's worth) fully implemented.

With inflation now going

through the roof and the Tory government on the rampage, the scene is now set for the formulation of our 1980 pay claim. After this carry-on the membership will not be talking about any more comparability studies.

By David Churchley
(Strathclyde NALGO,
personal capacity)

INCO BLACKING SPREADS

Cowboy lorry drivers recently took out lorries from the INCO refinery, where manual workers are in the nineteenth week of their pay dispute. The lorries, loaded by ASTMS members, went to the transport firm Shepherds, in Hereford, where the load is transferred to union firms who take it to the customer.

This depot is also being used by other blacklegging firms such as Wards, Hepworths, Chamber and Hillingworth and Robinsons. Many of these firms are also blacklegging in the steel dispute.

INCO have also been importing nickel pellets and powder from Canada and supplying INCO Clydach's customers.

Strikers are hitting back by travelling all over Britain to visit docks and rank and file

union officials. They also went to Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp, where they got an excellent reception, and workers agreed to black INCO goods. The same response came from dockers in Liverpool, Southampton, Tilbury and other docks.

Financial help and support has been received from the dockers and from local trade unionists including: BP Baglan Bay; BP Llandaray, Fords Swansea, 3 'M's Gorseinon, miners and Morganite Carbon (Morrison) manual workers, who donated an hour's pay each.

At the moment there is a high court injunction against pickets trespassing on INCO property. 'Plain clothes' police dressed in working clothes have been on the picket line and on another occasion a picket was bitten by a

policeman (not dog) in an attempt to intimidate him. Lavish police escorts from Swansea to Hereford have accompanied the blacklegging drivers.

Despite this, strikers are
Interview with Lyn Davies (T&GWU shop steward at
INCO Refinery, Clydach)

MECCANO

The spirit of Meccano workers remains solid after nine weeks occupying their factory.

Airfix's ultimatum to vacate the factory expires on February 28th. The workers are determined to continue the fight for jobs.

A Canadian firm is interested in buying the Meccano factory, but much will depend on the attitude of Airfix, who have not co-operated with other potential buyers.

Redundancy money has now been paid out to the

workforce, apart from the shop stewards. Possibly Airfix are trying to blackmail them and force them out of the plant.

The workforce were advised by the shop stewards to take the redundancy money. The stewards' view is that jobs have not been sold whilst the occupation continues.

Messages of support c/o 99 Edge Lane, Liverpool or phone 051-228 1088/4333/2171.

'The Battle of Sheerness'

Eyewitness accounts

From Sarah Harman (Sheffield Hallam LPYS)
&
Joe North (NUM & Thanet East Labour Party)

Our mini-bus load of ten, including four girls, approached the Sheerness steel works just before 5.00am on Wednesday 20th. At the vast building and surrounding complex, hundreds of pickets were gathered, already surrounded by lines of police. The pickets had come from South Yorkshire and South Wales, plus a contingent of 300 Kent miners.

We could here the hum of the crowd as we got near, chanting and singing. The atmosphere was electric with hostility towards the police, and with frustration—the scabs had gone in at 4 am, three hours early.

They had taken in blankets and a supply of food, and there were rumours that the doors had been welded up

behind them. They worked a 12-hour shift, with management offering to put them up overnight to avoid 'confrontation'!

The crowd swarmed forward in welcome each time a fresh bus load of pickets arrived. The eighty women from Sheffield got a great reception, as they shouted slogans and boosted everyone's spirits. There should be no doubt about women on the picket line—they are essential and the more the better.

The press screamed about the anarchy and violence of the picket-line—but the first clash with the police occurred without provocation, when they surged in on the crowd as we linked arms to sing. The pickets had sufficient control in the ensuing scrum to let

me, shorter than everyone else and panicking, out through a gap—it was a policeman who tried to push me back in!

The police tried intimidating tactics like marching in ranks, and lining a bridge to the town to harass any pickets walking that way. This was merely greeted with laughter and jeers of 'Maggie Thatcher's boot boys!'

The picket was a great show of solidarity and strength. No lorries entered the mill—later we heard that the police had been doing our job for us; stopping all lorries and 'advising' them to turn back.

Pickets wondered, however, what had become of the steel union leaders. Without clear direction, left with nothing to do but jeer at the police, people began to drift

away into the town.

Who is intimidating whom? The previous day, Willie Whitelaw met with police chief representatives. Was it any coincidence then, that on Wednesday there were thirty arrests in Lanarkshire and several at Sheerness?

The SPG were present in large numbers at Sheerness; shall we now see an increase in the use of these thugs and their provocative heavy-arm tactics, in a greater effort by the terrified Tories to immobilize workers?

The resources and enthusiasm of angry trade unionists was clearly evident that day. All the potential was there. The question is how to co-ordinate it, to bring a clear victory for the steelworkers.

The miners set off from their respective pits at 6am for the Isle of Sheppey, arriving at 7.30 am.

The front page of the Tory 'Express' screamed "Send Them Back". The bus from Tilmanstone—my pit—wasn't stopped, but the buses from Snowdon were. According to one miner, the police asked to see the driver's licence, checked to see that there was a spare wheel, and even asked if there was a first-aid box!

When we pulled in to Sheerness, the town was full of police, marching up and down outside the bus depot, just like an army parade!

Outside the plant, the chanting was broken off by shouts of "scab" when workers emerged from the plant. When we moved towards the fence to get the message across, the police

charged and started to push us back.

The picket started to move back towards the main entrance, however the police keep on pushing and shoving. Two NUM pickets were arrested and one steelman taken to hospital with an injured leg.

The secretary of Scunthorpe Labour Party, Penny Jackson, was dragged by the hair and kicked by the police. One male picket who tried to stop this vicious attack received a bloody eye; both were taken to hospital.

The press representatives were thick on the ground. One camera-man had to be 'rescued' when surrounded by angry pickets, asking why he did not film the blatant acts of police violence.

A police sergeant asked him to "get out of it"; the film

man replied "I am only trying to get over your point of view." This "point" was not lost on the pickets who heard it!

At four pm, the NUM pickets started to group up ready to return to our buses. The police were pushing and shoving us as we set off. When some miners reacted to this provocation they were arrested and bundled off to a "special" court.

Some of us went back to see what the "trouble" was, only to be charged by a number of police, who jumped into "Kung Fu" stances! Hardly the honest, hardpressed, tolerant 'bobbie' of folklore.

One picket was walking along saying "I would never have believed that the police could act like animals." The Tory press paint the British police as a non-political body,

who fairly administer the law to everyone in the community. The events at Sheerness have shattered that illusion for hundreds of young steelworkers.

As more layers of society take action against this Tory government they—like the steelworkers and miners before them—will see the real role of a police force in capitalist society. Far from "the friend of the people", the police are used to defend private property and profits and to keep the working class 'in their place.'

As one older picket shouted at a police bus—"you don't produce anything, you had better watch it". Let's hope the individuals who make up the police take heed!

Two comments sum up the importance of the 'Battle of Sheerness':

Jack Collins, secretary of Kent area NUM called for a general strike "...not only in defence of the steel workers, but also to show that we are not going to allow the standards of the working class to be reduced...."

A picket from Rotherham told me: "If they break the

strike here, it will encourage other employers to get away with it...they are breaking the fundamental laws of trade unionism. If it is not based on solidarity it is based on nothing."

The mass picketing must be stepped up. All Sheerness steel products must be blacked by all trade unionists. Other unions and workers must be actively drawn into the fight.



This picture of an 'anti-strike' campaigner at Sheerness provoked the following poem:

"Unhappy Warrior"
[With apologies to William Wordsworth]

Who, the unhappy warrior, who is she
that shouts and raves, so manfully?
and with ungenerous spirit makes loud cry
against the brothers at the gate, who try
To win a decent wage for all, and say,
That industry must not be washed away
Because it does not make sufficient money
To keep our bosses fed on milk and honey.
But what cares she, the warrior with a raised-up cooking
pot,
That our forefathers fought for what she's got;
That children in the factory still would work day long,
Had not united action made the workers strong?
Even you, my noisy sister, this lesson yet may learn
and to the brothers at the gates in friendship turn.
Dudley Edwards, AUEW Brighton

Photo: MILITANT



Strikers from the GKN steel works, Cardiff, picketing the works—they will not be breaking the strike!

'MAGGIE WILL BREAK BEFORE WE DO'

witnesses have come forward whose evidence confirms the strikers' version of the incident.

On a happier note, on Tuesday evening the steelworkers enjoyed themselves at a local social club, with free entertainment and free beer for them and their families. It was so long since he had a pint, one said, that after only two he felt quite drunk.

If the police believe they can break the spirits of these men by crude violence they are mistaken, and if Maggie thinks she can break their solidarity, the magnificent attitude of this local club proves that she is wrong.

On Wednesday, after discussion with the management of Robert Frasers, their steel stock section is closed and

since then no more steel has moved out. Now the men have turned their attentions to another large stockholder and a mass picket has been called for Tuesday.

By Jeff Price
(Newcastle)

SCOTLAND

Pat Shevlin, the Scottish Area Secretary of the ISTC spoke to Bob Wylie, East Kilbride Labour Party, about the steel strike in Scotland:

"At first the support we got from the rest of the labour movement was less than 100%, but now it is rock solid"

Pickets are being sent from the Scottish headquarters, near Glasgow, all over Scot-

land. Teams of thirty men have been sent to Aberdeen to block the movement of steel to the oil industry, and a team of twelve is working in Dundee. "The dockers in Dundee are losing £80.00 a week bonus because of their support for us" Pat explained.

At the Chevron oil terminal in Aberdeen, one lorry driver insisted on breaking the picket to deliver his load. He came out of the terminal fully loaded; the dockers there had explained politely where he could put it.

This support is making the men determined to win the claim. "As far as we are concerned now the going rate will be 17-18%. We'll stick it out now" stated Pat.

He mentioned that press

coverage of the dispute had been very one-sided. As usual workers can only rely on the socialist press to state their case. "I haven't read the 'Militant' much before" he said, "but it's a good socialist paper".

His parting comment was on the current 'red plot' scare: "I don't believe all this stuff about infiltration. Marxism has been part of the Labour Party since it was founded. People are entitled to their own views and to argue for them in the party".

IPSWICH

John Kennington, co-ordinator of the Scunthorpe pickets based in the Ipswich area, reports:

Dockers at Ipswich have opened up their canteen facilities for our pickets. We have been taken round the docks at Harwich and Felixstowe to inspect the stocks of steel which have piled up on the quay since dockers have refused to load it on lorries.

We have token pickets at these three major ports. Only the scab port at Mistley has given us real problems.

Tension has been mounting over the past three weeks while the police—the Essex Special Support Unit based at Chelmsford—have openly jeered at us on the picket line. Things came to a head this week when BRS drivers defied T&G instructions and crossed our lines.

After repeated efforts to contact local T&G officials, we have at last managed to persuade the local full-time official to instruct dockers at Mistley not to handle steel.

To us, the contrast between the lethargy of the full-time officials and the solidarity of the local rank and file could not be greater. We would like to take the opportunity, through your paper, to thank once again the many socialists and trade unionists in Ipswich who have taken us into their homes for the last month or so, and provided us with useful contacts in the local labour movement.

After the experience of the last month we know what real solidarity in the trade unions is, and what it can do.

STEEL STRIKE WEEK 9:

KEEP UP THE PRESSURE

TORIES OUT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

If BSC workers stand firm they can force the government to make major concessions.

One Tory after another has begged Thatcher and Joseph to give in to the demands of the steel workers, before the price of a settlement increases.

By Brian Ingham
 (Industrial Correspondent)

Backbench MP, Julian Critchley, lashed out at the Tory leadership with a demand for relaxation of "the borrowing limits, the cash limits on the steel industry, because that strike has to be settled very quickly indeed, and it is a strike that should never have been allowed to happen."

Those sentiments are rife throughout the Tory Party, up to and including a sizeable section of the cabinet itself.

The Tories have seriously miscalculated. They assumed that steelworkers would be an easy victim. They have been shaken by the marvellous flair and initiative shown by the steelworkers in this battle.

As a result, the mask of benign complacency has been ripped from the face of Thatcher's cabinet to reveal a body of frightened panicking and divided individuals openly in disagreement with one another.

In an unprecedented slanging match, Tory ministers have shown their contempt for Villiers, and Villiers has cursed the Tories. These are the symptoms of desperation on the part of the Tories and BSC. If steelworkers remain solid they will win.

All the impetus for this battle has developed from below. The leaders have been pushed, prodded and pulled along by the rank and file

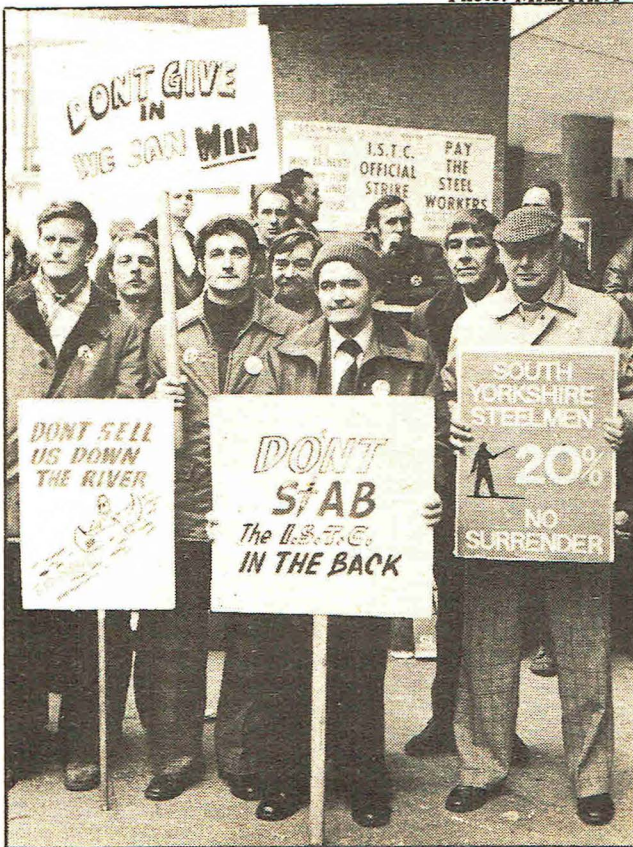
activists. This pressure must be maintained.

The decision to expel the Sheerness steelworkers from the ISTC would not have been made without the resolute picketing all over Britain carried out by ISTC and other steel union members. Steel workers must now ensure that the blacking of Sheerness continues not only during the strike, but also after a settlement has been reached.

Had Sheerness workers been threatened with expulsion earlier they may have acted otherwise, and certainly such a show of determination by the executive would have had a big effect in strengthening the fighting spirits of those workers in the few (well-publicised) private steel firms where a return to work has taken place.

The doubts and unease of those steelworkers who returned to work were allowed to gather momentum because union leaders did not organise regular mass meetings for these workers, to involve them in the activity and thrash out all the issues.

At mass meetings a full explanation could have been given of how the conditions of private steelworkers are directly dependent upon those in BSC. The point could also have been driven home that



Steelworkers are still determined to resist Tory attacks

this battle is to reverse the trend of decline throughout the entire industry.

Nevertheless, those private steelworkers who have returned to work have given a commitment that no steel will leave their companies' premises. Any exceptions to this should be met by an immediate resumption of picketing.

Despite press distortions, the picketing and solidarity is in fact strengthening. The T&GWU have pledged and are giving increasingly effective support.

The Tories and BSC, unable to produce any significant cracks in the ranks of steelworkers, have resorted to the ploy of a sham ballot.

Correctly, ISTC leaders have called for a boycott.

There must now be a counter-offensive in the form of mass rallies in every area to explain in detail why the boycott must be applied and to demonstrate the unyielding will of steelworkers to win this critical struggle.

After this strike the steel unions will never be the same again. They will never revert to their former semi-company union position.

Sooner, rather than later, they will be pushed to the very front ranks of the labour and trade union movement. This will be a gain, not just for steelworkers, but for the entire working class.

STONE PLATT. OLDHAM

'We're defending our jobs'

A thousand redundancies a month—that's the disastrous score in Greater Manchester since Thatcher's regime began. The workers at Stone Platt, Oldham, are showing how to fight.

"We have a right to defend our jobs" was their defiant attitude when management announced, out of the blue, that they are planning to close the plant and write off 850 jobs. Now the workers are in occupation.

"Multi-nationals like Stone Platt didn't come to Oldham because they liked the rainy weather—they came for cheap skilled labour", says works committee chairman Harold

John Hunt
 (Moss Side LPYS)

Robinson. "We managed to improve our living standards through years of hard struggle and now they want to sack us all!"

Inside the plant, picketing is made easier with the help of the closed circuit TV cameras management considerably left scanning the back gates.

The bosses have retreated to a hotel in residential Hale, tight lipped and out of sight. "They don't want bad publicity," one picket explained. Closure was planned for the end of the year: "they've got important orders to meet and they'd like us to work like slaves for ten months before they sack us".

The works committee has organised mass meetings to keep all the workers informed and involved. Elected sub-committees will tackle the key issues of publicity and finance.

"It's a question of getting as much support as possible, as in any dispute," Harold Robinson points out, "In particular, of escalating the action to the firm's other plants. A meeting has already been organised with Stone Platt shop stewards from Accrington and Bolton."

The AUEW district committee has pledged full backing, and workers in local factories are rallying with offers of help. They recognise this is a fight that affects all of us. The Stone Platt workers are standing firm against

what they call "a part of the de-industrialisation of Britain as a whole."

The Tories can pay the boys in blue as much and introduce as many laws as they like; the bosses can scream in the columns of their puppet press till they're red in the face—for every one they mislead and intimidate, ten more workers will take their place.

The fight to preserve and extend what we have won, against cuts, sackings and poverty conditions, cannot be halted. These workers deserve your support!

Send messages of support and financial aid c/o convenor Eddie Holland, 70 Lord Street, Oldham, Lancs.

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