

Militant

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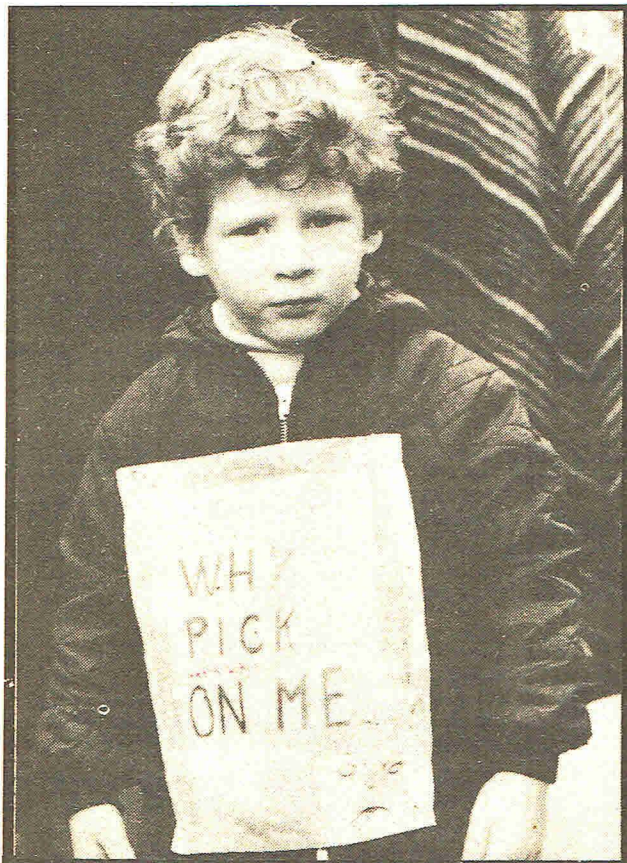


GENERAL STRIKE IN THE 80s?

See pages 7 to 10

NIGHTMARE BUDGET

Photo: MILITANT



Misery and poverty—that is the future for working people if Thatcher's crew have their way. The budget means a further vicious turn of the screw on the living standards of the working class.

The Tory press are claiming that the budget is the "medicine we have got to take"—yet they keep quiet about the fact that the hammer blows of the Tories' budget falls on the poorest sections of

society—the sick, the children, the unemployed and the families of striking workers.

Prescription charges are to increase to a staggering one pound. The education budget is to be cut by six per cent. And sick pay is to be taxed from 1982. Child benefits have increased by a measly 75 pence—a drop in the ocean given the rampant cost of living.

In his budget speech, Howe wheeled out the hackneyed tales of social security 'scroungers' which

could have been lifted from such Tory rags as the 'Sun' or the 'Express'.

He used these as an excuse to put an end to earnings-related payments, and in a vicious move, to start taxing social security payments. For the millions thrown out of work onto the dole, they are to be punished with further poverty.

And in a bid to break down the unions, striking workers' families will be assumed to be receiving £12 a week strike pay—they know full well that in

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CAN'T AFFORD THE TORIES? COME TO YS CONFERENCE

The budget is one more proof that the working class can't afford the Tories any longer. The fight to get rid of the bosses' government has already started.

The steelworkers' strike and the angry trade unionists on the March 9th TUC demonstration gave Thatcher's thugs due notice that we won't tolerate any more attacks on our living standards and our rights.

The Labour Party Young Socialists are in the forefront of this battle to chuck out the Tories and elect a Labour government committed to socialist solutions to our problems.

Join them this Easter for the LPYS Annual Conference at Llandudno. If you can't afford the Tories, you can't afford to miss this conference! See page 3 for details.

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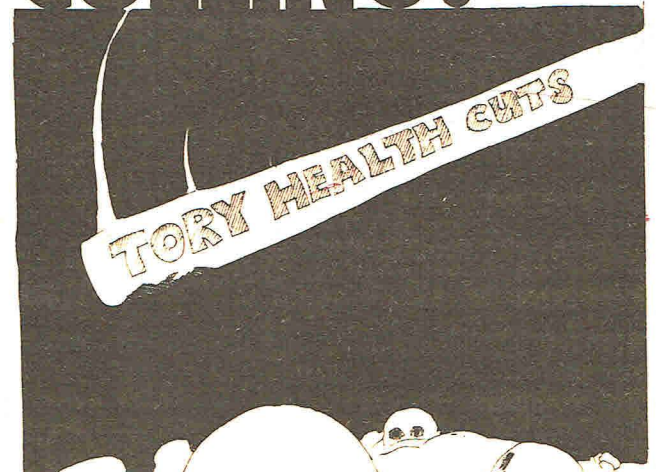
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CULLING!



Stop this profit motivated killing

**TUC LEAD THE FIGHT BACK
MAKE MAY 14th A ONE DAY
GENERAL STRIKE**

Militant

1 Mentmore Terrace,
London E8 3PN

WELL KNOWN CLASS FIGHTER LORD UNDERHILL PUTS HIS CASE TO THE LOCAL BRANCH ...

UNDERHILL REPORT RIGHT CLUTCH AT STRAWS

"The mountain has laboured and produced a mouse." That was the initial reaction of the Militant Editorial Board to the latest instalment in the saga of the Underhill Report.

The report of 522 pages and weighing 5lbs has been produced at a cost of £35 per issue! This is well outside the reach of workers, and has evidently been produced for the benefit of the Tory press. The contents are merely a regurgitation of the fairy tales they have been spreading for the last two months, which have been greeted with derision from Labour Party members.

Militant is not a 'party within a party' as claimed by Underhill. We represent the views of a trend of opinion within the Labour Party, the Marxist wing, in the same way as Tribune represents the reformist left wing, and the Campaign for Labour Victory represents the right wing who have become increasingly discredited in the eyes of Labour members. We have thousands of supporters in the Labour Party and the unions, but we have no membership or structure separate from the Labour Party. Militant disclaims all responsibility for the documents extensively quoted by Lord Underhill.

Some of the press coverage of the Report has presented a mixture of genuine political comment, openly stated in the pages of this paper and of other Militant publications, together with outright fabrications. Sections of the report based on material in our paper, which are detailed in the press have even elicited grudging recognition of the foresight of Marxism.

The 'Daily Mail' political correspondent Anthony Bevins says [21 March] "The Marxist perspective of revolution makes fascinating reading."

"Back in 1977 they predicted 'if the next election is fought with the main parties intact and under their own banner it seems likely the Conservative Party will gain a majority, probably of 30 to 50 seats'."

"The actual Conservative majority last May was 42. At which point, Militant says class conflict would be inevitable: 'Despite the desires of the representatives of both antagonists—union leaders and Tory leaders—their relations will become even more stormy than under Edward Heath in 1970-74.'"

'A gulf would open up between the backwoodsmen right wingers impatient at the failure to come to grips with the trade unions and their leadership. Fissures and even an open split would develop in the Conservative Party.'

"There looms the possibility of a general strike as the culminating point of a series of clashes in various industries—local, regional and national—possibly within one or two years of a Tory government coming to power."

Far from being hidden in secret 'documents' this prediction of the enormous divide which would open up in the event of a Tory government could have been taken from numerous articles in the publications of Militant during the course of the last Labour government. Time after time we predicted regional and national general strikes as being inherent in the situation of polarisation of British society. The predictions were made on the basis of a Marxist analysis of the class forces within society.

The response of the Daily Mail was one of grudging recognition of the correctness of Militant's analysis—a clear indication of the superiority of Marxism over the short-sightedness and the lack of understanding shown by both the capitalist press and by the writings of reformism and left reformism.

For the majority of the press, however the report was merely an excuse to re-launch a witch hunt against Militant. But the reaction of the labour movement has been even swifter and more decisive than previously. As Frank Allaun stressed, any attempt to expel Militant supporters would cause an enormous split to open within the Labour Party and the trade unions. The capitalist press, noticing the failure to re-activate the witch hunt have dropped the issue as rapidly as they took it up.

Without doubt the report would have found favour with the right wing of the party, and has been designed to bolster up their waning support. The right wing are increasingly losing the argument on policy and programme, and hope by organisational methods to prevent the turn to the left by the Labour Party.

They will be totally unsuccessful. The shift to the left has not been caused by a 'conspiracy' but by the failure of the policies of the right when in power to solve workers' problems in a period of capitalist crisis.

The right, like the Tories and the bosses, fear above all that the Labour Party will return to its socialist foundations. The bosses have tried to use the Labour

Party as a second party of capitalism, to defend their system when their main party, the Tories, are discredited. These plans have been increasingly resisted in recent years.

The Times, the semi-official organ of big business in Britain reacted to the publication of the Underhill Report with an editorial which threatened that if there was a serious attempt to implement socialist policies, the Labour Party would cease to be an "acceptable instrument of government."

Acceptable to whom, we would ask? The working class would undoubtedly be calling for bold socialist measures to deal with the crisis. The capitalist class, though, want every government to be acceptable to them. A party which fought for the working class in the same way as the Tories do for their big business paymasters would be unacceptable to the millionaires who control British society.

If the ruling class do not choose the policies and the leaders of the Labour Party, they will shift heaven and earth to prevent a Labour government coming to power.

And how far are the capitalist class prepared to go in their attempts to stop such a government? Are they threatening to destabilise the government, as the CIA did in Chile under Allende? Are their minds even turning to the possibility of a future military coup? In 1974-75 the pages of the Times were full of discussions of such a possibility, which was only abandoned on the basis of its present impracticability, not for ethical reasons.

And it is not just the Times raising these points. Ian Gilmour, a leading member of the Tory Party in his book 'Inside Right' a few years back, said "Conservatives do not worship democracy. For them, majority rule is a device..." "For Conservatives, democracy is a means to an end, not an end in itself. If it is leading to an end that is undesirable or is inconsistent with itself there is a theoretical case for ending it."

Gilmour claims there is no danger of a right wing coup. "Only if the constitution had already been destroyed by the left might the right react and the left be overthrown in its turn by a counter coup of the right." In other words, if the sacred rights of property were under threat, they would consider the violent overthrow of a socialist government.

Yet the bosses' press has the audacity to accuse the Marxists in the Labour Party of totalitarianism.

Militant has consistently made it clear that we are implacably opposed to a one



'I ASK YOU BROTHERS AND SISTERS, DO WE WANT THESE MILITANT TYPES IN OUR RANKS?'

BRISTOL - Labour movement supports 'expelled' councillors

By Brian Beckingham

'Labour Mods and Tories Unite' headlined the local Tory paper as Bristol's budget was passed by the Council last week. The budget cutting revenue by £2.6m was opposed by eight Labour Councillors, who stood by national Labour Party policy.

But instead of standing and fighting against Thatcher's cuts the leadership of the Labour Council has gone one step further—on Friday it withdrew the Labour whip from the eight councillors who resisted the cuts.

Their action has stirred up great opposition within the local labour movement. The District Labour Party executive and 17 out of 28 Party branches, have already supported the 'expelled' councillors.

Bristol Trades Council passed a resolution of support, without dissent, and both local NUPE and EETPU branches have expressed their approval of the 8 councillors' action.

The 'expelled' councillors are appealing to the Party's National Executive for reinstatement into the group.

This demand must be implemented and the present scandalous situation reversed.

But more important than this is that the Bristol labour movement go on to the offensive against the cuts. Pete Hammond, one of the 'expelled' councillors has called for united action by the whole labour movement to 'save our services'.

He has pointed that he was elected last year on a manifesto calling for the reversal of cuts already made and opposition to any proposed further cuts. The Tories have thrown down the gauntlet in attacking working people's living standards—the labour movement must fight back with a clear socialist alternative.

SCHOOLS UNDER TORY ATTACK

The anger of working class school students and families at the Tory attacks on education is reflected in the resolutions for LPYS Conference.

The past few months have seen a series of local protests and strikes against the cuts, and threatened redundancies of teachers.

Our education is being destroyed by the Tories. The Education Bill will cut the number of free school meals by half a million, and result in massive price rises. Local councils are being urged to introduce economies by the government. So, in Cumbria, the Director of Education has said that school students who bring sandwiches to school shouldn't be provided with drinking water or any other facilities!

One Tory Councillor has even called for fees of £30 per year for schools. This would turn the clock back to the nineteenth century, as free state education was won by the working class in the 1880s.

Spending on school books is being badly hit. A National Book League Report recommended in 1979 that the lowest 'reasonable' allowance for books should be £8 per head in primary schools rising to £17 for students over 16. The national average in 1977/78 was £3.69 for primary schools and £6.20 for secondaries!

Costs such as school dinners, uniform etc hit working class parents hard. A recent survey reckoned that for a family with 4 children, two in primary school and two in secondary schools, their expenses were just under £10 per week.

This is before the Tories increase prices. Again, low paid workers and the unemployed will be hardest hit. For example, a school in Birkenhead, with high unemployment, keeps supplies of second-hand coats and shoes for their students.

By
Peter Lush

The resolutions outline fighting socialist policies for the LPYS. As well as opposition to the cuts, a number of branches call for a £20 a week grant for all 16-18 year olds in full time education; and for an education system run by the working class; as the only alternative to domination by big business.

The formation of LPYS School Student sections in towns, as advocated by Bristol South East, would be a real attraction for school students looking for a fight against the 'Tories'. These would also form a solid basis for a real school students' union. The continued stagnation of NUSS, whilst the LPYS has seen a growth of support in the schools, shows that school students can be won to socialist policies.

It is entirely wrong to dismiss teachers as 'reactionary', as the Bexleyheath resolution does. The NUSS cannot win anything alone; it must seek the support of the trade unions. This means patient, consistent work; not stunts and ultra-left frolics as have occurred in the past.

Southampton LPYS call for the LPYS to initiate 'mass popular' local actions against the Tory Education Bill. Whilst the LPYS must mount campaigns against Tory attacks, the Southampton 'Clause IV' comrades are getting carried away. The task of the LPYS remains to win the labour and trade union movement to mobilise their mass support and stop the Tories.

As the resolution from Bristol South East states, there has been a magnificent response of school students all over the country against the cuts. There is a growing anger and militancy in the schools.

We must ensure that it is directed into a political direction by recruiting school students to the LPYS.

LLANDUDNO-MAKE SURE YOU'RE THERE!

Once again the press has renewed its witchhunting attack on the 'Militant' and the Labour Party Young Socialists. A massive attendance at LPYS conference at Easter weekend is the best answer we can give to the attacks and smears of the Tories' friends, the millionaire press barons.

About two thousand young trade unionists, school students, and students will take part in the conference and the rallies, hammering out clear socialist policies for the fight against the Tories.

The attacks of the press give every branch an opportunity to have a last minute drive to get everyone who has been angered by the press attacks, along to the conference.

In the last week a meeting of Port Talbot LPYS (a new branch) at which Andy Bevan spoke was attended by 70 people, several of whom will be attending the conference.

There's still time to raise money as well. Austin Muscattelli of Kirkdale LPYS (Liverpool) took an appeal sheet to school and collected £14 from his teachers and school friends.

Added to a £10 donation from the CLP it means another young school student will be able to go. Collections are being organised at Labour Party and Trade union meetings up and down the country. No one should be prevented from going by cost!

LPYS Conference will play a crucial role in working out a programme and campaigns for the LPYS in the fight against the savage cuts of the Tories. Every area should make sure now that LPYS Conference 1980 is the biggest and best ever!

By
Kevin Ramage
(LPYS National
Chairman)

'Why we're going'

"I'm looking forward to going to the Conference because of the importance of each LPYS branch contributing to the programme, and for my own political education. You find out so much in so short a time."

"Another tremendous aspect of the conference is the chance to meet YS members from different areas for the first time. Superficially, it often appears you have nothing in common."

Yet as you discuss it becomes clearer that you face the same problems and are fighting for the same demands—that you are part of the same struggle. It's then you realise what the word 'comrade' really means.

"I urge every LPYS branch to send a delegate and as many visitors as possible. My experience is that you'll never look back afterwards."

Anne Beales [Hackney South LPYS, and London LPYS Regional Committee].

Photo: MILITANT



Young Socialists march against unemployment in Liverpool last year

"I think the YS is very good. It does a lot more than I expected. I just thought they meet every Monday and discuss things, not go out and give out leaflets and sell papers and have marches."

Caroline Watson, St. Pancras YS.
"The demonstration on

A helping hand from the LPYS

During the present steel strike, a number of LPYS members in the South Yorkshire region who are on strike have been helping out as much as possible.

Apart from going down on the picket lines with flasks of soup and food and collecting money for the strike fund, some LPYS members have been more directly involved.

A few of us have been helping out with office work at the Divisional Strike HQ in Rotherham. We have been taking minutes at meetings on the strike committee, duplicating and other clerical tasks, necessary for the organisation and day to day running of the strike. The LPYS have been given a warm reception by ISTC members, and it has been a great experience for us.

One thing has been obvious in recent weeks—the absence

By
Wendy Mason
(ISTC and Rotherham
LPYS)

of the media. During the first few weeks of the strike it was difficult to get into the building for the press and camera crews hanging about.

Over the last few weeks though, these people have been conspicuous by their absence, and are obviously trying to play the strike down.

One of the worst things about the strike was the burning of the original No 3 Division's strike HQ. The whole of the building was burnt out, and we had to move to some old council offices nearby.

However this action has made the strikers even more determined to bring the dispute to a successful conclusion. The organisation of

the strike was only marginally affected by the fire, although valuable documents were destroyed.

During the strike we have discussed politics many times. I think all ISTC members have been made more politically aware by what has happened in the strike. Many steelworkers are beginning to recognise more and more the politics of the LPYS and 'Militant'.

Our task will not end when the strike is over—we intend to keep up a good working relationship with the ISTC. There is a definite possibility of a joint YS-ISTC day or weekend school after the strike, and young ISTC members are being encouraged to join the Labour Party and the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Come to Llandudno

Come to the 1980 Labour Party Young Socialists' conference. Three days of debates, discussions, discos and social activities. Don't waste your Easter—come to Llandudno from April 4th to 7th. Contact Andy Bevan, National Youth Officer, Labour Party, 144-152 Walworth Road, S.E.17, or your local LPYS branch.

MANCHESTER

"The Manchester area attendance at LPYS Conference will be easily the biggest ever" says Malcolm Clark (North West LPYS Regional Committee).

"Attendance is up 50% on 1978 with over 100 comrades attending. Under the impact of the Tory attacks, dozens of young workers are joining the local branches."

"And, since Thatcher came to power, 5 new branches have been set up. To young people who are ready to fight the bosses we say come to the conference see what the LPYS is like and hear our ideas". Every new branch should make sure that it is represented at the conference—not only by a delegate, but also by as many visitors as possible."

Anti-Cuts Conference

The urgent need for a Divisional organiser and nationally co-ordinated secretary of the N W political campaign to fight against the cuts was emphasised time and time again by the 190 delegates who attended the first National Anti-cuts Conference in Liverpool on Saturday. [Fuller report in later issue]

Colin Barnett, NUPE

DEFEND THE NHS

CAPITALISM KILLS

Of the 1,000 people who received treatment for kidney disorders in 1978 'that figure probably represented just over half of those who required treatment. The rest were left to die.'

So the 'Times' [20/3/80] explained the hideous situation of lack of treatment facing people suffering from kidney disorders.

On one of her recent walkabouts, Thatcher proudly boasted she owned a kidney donor card—yet she and the rest of the Tories remain silent over the fact that Britain, which once pioneered in this field of medicine, is now behind 11 other European countries, including Greece and Cyprus!

As usual with this decaying capitalist system, the

By Bob Wade

bosses class whine that there is not enough money to pay for this. There is no lack of kidney machines—but because of the NHS cutbacks, and the low wages offered in this field, there is not enough staff to administer treatment. Yet there are thousands of unemployed nurses!

And this cold blooded calculation means certain death for people over 45—as the 'Times' pointed out, because of the lack of money, the health service chiefs were 'less inclined' to administer this age group.

Dr Wing exposed to the 'Times' the heart-rending situation for medical staff

faced with this problem; "Some of us have to tell lies to older patients, partly to make the patients more comfortable and partly to make ourselves more comfortable."

"We have to say to them that their hearts are too dodgy to stand the strain of dialysis. But we are fed up with telling lies."

But it is not the medical staff who are to blame for this situation. An actual kidney transplant costs £14,000, and 'dialysis', where the patient receives frequent life-saving treatment, costs £10,000 a year. To read the editorials of the Tory press you would think this was vast sums of money that must be cut in order to 'get the country back on its feet'—the medicine we have got to take! they repeatedly

tell us.

But when they say 'we', they really mean the working people—it is us who have to face the misery of low wages, bad housing and unemployment, and it is us who have to die because kidney operations are not profitable.

In the same issue of the 'Times' it reported that millionaire owner of the multi-national Ford motor company, Henry Ford, is to sell his art collection—expected to fetch over £3 million. This figure alone could save 21 kidney disease sufferers from certain death. In the capitalist world oil and canvass are worth more than human life.

Damnation on the capitalist class that condemn workers to death and inflict unspeakable misery on their families and friends in the name of profit! Forward to the socialist society that saves lives!

SPG-NO CHANGE

By a 'Militant' reporter

"Blair Peach was killed by one of a six-man team from the Number One Unit of the Special Patrol Group." That was how the 'Sunday Times' [16th March] reported the conclusions of a Scotland Yard investigation into the murder of Blair Peach in Southall last April.

The Scotland Yard report named the six policemen involved and gave evidence that lies had been told to the investigators. The report had been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in July, but in October the DPP decided against action.

Next month sees the inquest on Peach's death resumed, and it is certain that the whole question of the SPG thuggery will be raised.

The purpose of the SPG is clear—a highly trained elite squad to be used especially against picket lines (as at Grunwicks) or anti-fascist demonstrations (Southall). They have been in action against steel pickets, as we have reported in 'Militant'.

Both the TUC and Labour Party have called for their disbandment and in the light of the new information on Peach's murder that call must be renewed.

The Tories of course want to retain their elite police vanguard. Last week Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw announced changes in the



The SPG in action against trade unionists at Grunwicks

Photo: Jake Sutton

SPG to "enable the group to perform its necessary role as a mobile reserve more effectively in the future."

A few purely concrete changes have been proposed to try to counter the opposition to the SPG. They will be decentralised in order to

"reinforce links with the local community."

Black youth in inner-city areas such as Hackney in London have had to bear the brunt of the SPG's idea of "reinforced links" in the last few weeks.

And the other 'reforms' of

increased supervision and limiting service in the SPG to four years are just as ineffective. Only the disbandment of the SPG can get rid of this particular threat to the labour movement.

FASCISTS TO MARCH IN BRIGHTON

Over the years various fascist groups have made Brighton their home. This in turn has led to a vigil stand by the local labour movement and Jewish community, whose history of fighting fascism goes back to the early 1930s.

Moseley tried to use Brighton to launch his campaign to 'save the nation' in the thirties. His blackshirts and brownshirts were opposed by the organised labour movement, and driven out of the town to the

tune of the Internationale.

Following the second world war there was an attempt to re-organise the various fascist groups to march through Brighton.

Again, this was resisted by a hostile working class who physically drove the fascists off the streets. With the realignment of various racialist and fascist groups in the early seventies, leading to the birth of the national Front, Brighton has again been in the forefront of fighting this evil

menace.

The fascists are now planning to hold a march through the town on Saturday, March 29th.

The march intends to start in a Jewish area, and to end on an open park in the centre of town which has been in a traditional rallying point for the labour movement since the 1880s.

It also coincides with the Brighton and Hove Albion home game against Nottingham Forest. The fascists are obviously hoping to be able

to push their racialist filth at a time when the maximum number of people are on the streets.

Although this march is organised by a 'new' group calling themselves the Sussex Front, its main spokesman is a previous NF candidate.

A demonstration has been called in protest to the fascists at the Brighton Level, Lewes Road, at 10.15am on Saturday 29th March.

Keep emergencies at Llwynpia

By Anthony Tynan

(South Wales Area NUM)

Nurses at Llwynpia Hospital have accused the consultants of stepping up their action to block admissions to acute medical wards at the hospital.

The consultants there have instructed the Bed Bureau (it assigns patients to beds in the district) that there were to be no admissions to the Rhondda and Llanfair wards of the hospital, although this was denied later by the Deputy District Administrator.

But sister June Abdool-rohumun (secretary of Rhondda NUPE) said, "I telephoned the Bed Bureau on Monday evening and they told me that instructions had been issued to them that there were to be no admissions to these two wards, and there have been none."

Of the 29 beds available in each ward only 19 are occupied in Rhondda, while in the Llanfair ward only 6 are occupied, and these patients are expected to be well enough to leave in a few weeks' time; when that happens the ward will be empty.

The issue does not have the backing of the Mid-Glamorgan Area Health Authority, and they were arranging a meeting with the consultants to discuss the situation.

Last week the ambulance drivers arranged a demonstration outside the hospital at short notice. They were joined by nurses and many other trade unionists, includ-

ing the Secretary and Vice-chairman of the Rhondda CLP plus a number of Labour councillors. Thousands of signatures for a petition were also collected.

The hospital workers are asking the Area Health Authority not just to reject the consultants' proposals to end emergency admissions to the hospital, but to take positive steps to remedy the situation.

June said, "We want concrete action from the Area Health Authority, not just a statement. It is certainly not enough for the Area Management to reject the doctors' proposals, they must be seen to be doing something constructive to provide adequate facilities at the hospital."

A number of people at the demonstration said that this was just the beginning of the campaign to save the intensive care unit. June added, "We are awaiting the decision of the Area Health Authority, but if it is proved to be necessary, then we are going to organise a massive demonstration and a march within a few weeks' time including the whole of the trade union movement."

'You're not wanted, Thatcher!'

Margaret Thatcher was met by demonstrations throughout her tour of North Humberside last Friday.

By Pete Boland

(West Hull LP)

At the new Selby coalfield 300 South Yorkshire miners and other trade unionists were held back by 600 police officers.

At a Holden factory 100 striking steelworkers turned out to let her know their feelings.

Even here, a luncheon date with the local party faithfuls was not free from angry workers. A group of 60 workers from the local British Aerospace factory turned out to tell the 'iron maiden' what to do with her de-nationalisation plans.

From there she was to have gone to Reckitt & Colmans in Hull, but management had seen fit to make 118 white collar staff redundant a few days earlier.

The magnificent response to this was a walk-out of 1,200 ASTMS members. To save her any embarrassment, a tour of Smith & Nephew Ltd was hastily arranged.

It was here that Thatcher

faced the biggest demonstration of the day.

In response to a shop stewards' recommendation 700 USDAW members walked out 15 minutes before she arrived leaving large sections of the factory idle.

Outside over 500 local trade unionists gathered to give vent to their feelings, with dockers, steelworkers, pickets from Reckitt & Colmans, and a group of overseas students taking part. The police arrested 10 people after using provocative tactics, and Thatcher was smuggled in through a back door.

After discussions with leaders of the fishing industry which has totally collapsed in Hull she left Humberside.

But she won't forget her reception very quickly, with hundreds of working people turning out wherever she went to show their disgust at her policies and the capitalist system as a whole.

OUT NOW!

'Common Misery, Common Struggle'

By Peter Hadden

An analysis and fighting programme for the workers of Northern Ireland

Price 30p plus 10p post and packing [postage free with orders of more than 20]. Order from: Labour and Trade Union Group, 18 Donegall Street, Belfast

LEFT and RIGHT

Brighter future for rats

Militant reported [29 February] that the head of BSC's job creation subsidiary was leaving the corporation to form his own consultancy. We seem to have made BSC chief executive "Black Bob" Scholey jealous. Tragically for steelworkers he isn't leaving BSC, but he is keeping an eye open for the future.

He is joining Bridon Limited, a Doncaster steel wire makers, and a major customer of BSC as a member of the board. Bridon and BSC are joint owners of Templeborough Rolling Mills in Rotherham. Bridon's made £17 million profit in 1978-79, nearly 50% up on the previous year.

I'm sure nobody could suggest that Templeborough could be part of BSC sold off to private hands. The steel crisis sees the ugly spectacle of numerous rats leaving what they presume is a sinking ship.

Steelworkers and the rest of the working class will be fighting to save the ship. The rats can look after themselves—as they have done through the ages.

Wannabuyacar?

Wanting a replacement for your old car? Then how about a Hongqi? This product of China's first car factory may be ideal.

Electrically-operated windows, air conditioning, luxury carpeting and designed as a Chinese Mercedes-Benz, the Hongqi is a superior kind of car. Autocar magazine enthusiastically listed its virtues as "all tending to suggest that life can be good in the land of the Red Flag, provided always that you are the right sort of comrade.

"One can appreciate how magnificent it must feel to ride through the streets of Peking in a Hongqi, bearing in mind that the city's population of 7 million includes 2 million cyclists, and that private cars are almost unknown".

So it's not exactly the kind of car for the masses or you. But it does show how the bureaucrats who run the nationalised economy of China are trying to get more and more perks and privileges for themselves.

Despite their differences with the Russian bureaucracy they share a common practice of resting on the workers' achievements for their takings and ruthlessly suppressing independent workers' movements. They have a common hostility to workers' democracy.

And after all the Hongqi was modelled on the Russian luxury car, the Volga.

Case for Prentice

Wondering why your trip to the registry office doesn't get the same press treatment as the marriage of London jet-setter Dai Llewellyn, last week? Perhaps it's because you don't produce 'quotes of the week' like Mrs Llewellyn does:

"I have attempted to work on several occasions. The trouble is, one has to get up far too early. Often I would be expected to be at work by nine. It's just not on...."

Tory trouble-shooter Prentice and his 'scrounger'-hunters will not, of course, be pursuing the matter.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

Ashok Shah, shop steward at CAV Finchley, APEX North London branch secretary, talks to Ed Bober [Hendon North Labour Party]

Photo: Times Newspapers



Two years ago Jack Smith [far right, above] was sacked from his job in a West Yorkshire bus company. Although he was a member of the National Front, his Asian workmates demanded his reinstatement. Because of their class approach, Smith quit the fascists and won his job back.

The minute I walked into this country, around so-called swinging London, everything was pretty cool, and I felt good.

I got here, and found all the things I'd thought were absolutely crazy. When I tried applying for jobs, the response was 'you're too qualified.'

Well this was the first time I had ever heard of such a thing in my life. I'd say 'I've got a few O'levels, about five,' and they'd say 'no, you're far too qualified.' In other places it was 'You're not qualified enough.'

So the first job I tried was Woolworth's, at a miserable £11, working in the stores. I wasn't happy about that. They got me to do all sorts of things that I wasn't supposed to do, because there was no union. I had to put up with a lot of pressures.

Anyway, I applied for a salesman's job, at John Lewis's, and I got the biggest shock of my life. They said I didn't speak English well enough.

So I told a white lie: 'should I produce a certificate in speech and drama? None of your staff here, I'm sure have got a certificate in speech and drama, and I've got an 'O' level,' which wasn't true. The woman was taken aback, and she said, 'OK, we will consider you.'

I started the job, as a store keeper. The boss was pretty good, he would allow me to come and sell in the shop, when the others weren't

around. I thought I had a flair for selling but I never got the job and I got pretty cheesed off, so I left.

Talking to other friends of mine, they were suffering a lot, not getting the right jobs, or if they wanted to get certain jobs, they had to totally destroy their individuality and put themselves down.

Some of my friends still feel they are left behind. They have a supervisor who is European, or white, and he's usually the first to ask questions, pretending that it's parcel and part of his job. In reality one discovers that the man who is your supervisor doesn't know as much as you.

You go to a pub: standing in a queue you ask for a drink, and another guy behind you gets served. Little things like that are very irritating, and one gets to a certain stage which leads to total hatred.

I experienced that sort of thing, my self-confidence was being destroyed, and I felt that I couldn't communicate with white people. I had tried my best, but I was constantly turned down, and I had to take up this job, because one has to survive.

I feel totally below my par, and that is one of the reasons I feel that I want to educate myself. I want to make sure the future generation of so-called immigrants in this country don't suffer.

Within the factory, Asians tend to mix with Asians, blacks with blacks, and whites with whites. There is very little intermixing. Except

around Christmas. You're a shop steward and a trade union branch secretary now?

Yes, I wasn't doing much good on my own, and I felt that within the trade union I could help to improve conditions, and be a greater help. Are there any divisions among the workers in your section on a racial basis?

No there aren't, probably we are very lucky. We have very meaningful conversations and there are no hassles between different workers on the grounds of race.

But there are certain points when one breaks down the barriers into social intercourse, and I think that we haven't broken those barriers down. Within the workplace we are great mates, cheerful and friendly, but outside we don't have that communication, we are different people, we are individuals.

We used to hear theories in Kenya that the workers in this country exploited the labour in our country, which is totally false. But this is the impression one gets, because you produce the raw materials at a very cheap price and the industry in this country get a higher rate. You tend to see it in terms of my labour being exploited by a very highly-paid western worker.

The gross national product per head in Kenya, when I left in 1969 was £45 per annum. Under the British rule it was pretty difficult for a black guy to go out on strike because we are talking in terms of 100

shillings, which is roughly about £7 a month, and if a guy went on strike he wouldn't be able to provide for his family.

The top guys who used to administer the country were the British, the big farm and land-owners were British. The middle shop keepers and the clerical workers were all Asians. Right at the bottom were the Africans, and the wealth was distributed according to that class structure.

The average Indian Asian earned basically the same amount of money as in this country. Yet the gross national product per head was only £45, so it was a very tiny minority ripping off a very huge majority.

Your union, APEX, was involved in the dispute at Grunwicks, and the owner of the factory, George Ward, was an Asian. What were your feelings about that?

He was a westernised oriental gentleman: western imperialism had to create certain middle classes to be sop to the majority, to show that an Asian or whatever can come up to a certain level. I looked at it in that context.

They would create an Asian middle class, as a carrot dangling in front of the Asian workers: 'yes you can make it to the top, if you follow the established system.'

The only important thing is that change must come through a class struggle, and that class and racialism goes together.

'SEIZE OIL PROFITS'—Sunday Mirror

Woodrow Wyatt, ex right wing Labour MP and now Thatcher supporter, is not known for his hostility to big business. Yet even his Sunday Mirror column on March 9 was entitled "seize oil and bank profits".

Wyatt was worried that the recent reports of high bank and oil companies' profits was giving business a bad name.

But what he and other apologists for the system don't realise is that it's all quite logical.

And last week BP announced its profits—up 4 times (after tax) on the 1979 figure to £1,620 million.

Of course the oil companies have an explanation—inflation. But who benefits from it? Not ordinary working people. While consumers have

had to pay more for their use of oil for heating or petrol, the oil companies have made a profits bonanza.

In January last year the average price of oil from the Middle East was \$13 a barrel. Today it is \$30 a barrel.

The oil companies increased profits haven't come from raised productivity, just by reaping the benefits of

higher prices. They operate as an oligopoly controlling the market—the Seven Sisters.

The only way to end their attacks on working people is to take them over and run them as part of an internationally planned socialist society.

1974 - 79 Labour Government

WHAT WENT WRONG?

In a previous issue of Militant [29 February] Andrew Glyn reviewed a Fabian pamphlet on the 1974-79 Labour government. In this article, he looks at the arguments contained in 'What went wrong?' edited by Ken Coates [Spokesman Books £2.95]

The Fabian pamphlet provided a wealth of information on how the Labour government, despite some achievements, failed completely to bring about a fundamental shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families as promised in the 1974 manifesto.

In fact as it showed, living standards for working people fell over this period. The Fabian writers totally failed though to explain why a Labour government should so diligently carry out the dictates of the ruling class.

The Spokesman volume, representing generally a Tribune position, does not really advance the argument that much further.

Francis Cripps and Frances Morrell (Tony Benn's advisers) make the extraordinary statement that if only the Labour government had been prepared to break with the EEC "they would then have been free to implement Labour's re-industrialisation programme, control excess imports by trade agreements and maintain full employment."

The absurdity of this obsession with the EEC should have been clear from Tom Forrester's article on industrial strategy, in which he points out that even the top

civil servant in the Department of Trade admitted that Labour's plans had to be modified "because of intense hostility from industry." (Readers of Forrester's notorious mole-baiting article in 'New Society' will be surprised to learn that he can actually put together an article not composed entirely of gossip.)

Low profitability

Michael Barratt Brown says the decline in British industry can be attributed "directly to the outflow of industrial and finance capital" which meant that "the wealth generated in Britain has been siphoned out to the main centres of capital accumulation, above all inside the EEC." He ignores the fact that private investment overseas, even at its peak of £3 billion in 1978, was actually less than profits earned abroad, so in no sense represented a siphoning off of

wealth created in the UK. As he himself emphasises it was low profitability and lack of a docile labour force which explained low UK investment.

Michael Meacher points out the links between the civil servants and industry (between 1974 and 1977 26 civil servants of Permanent Secretary level were recruited by private firms), and explains how civil servants can obstruct a minister attempting to implement party policy (a theme also taken up by Tony Benn recently).

But what good would more sympathetic civil servants have been to Benn when Wilson, as prime minister, had accepted that "Private industry must have the necessary confidence to maintain and increase investment. And confidence demands that a clear frontier be defined between what is public and what is private industry?"

While the authors accept that it was pressure from the capitalists that forced the government to retreat, the discussion of how a future

Labour government could defeat the pressure is quite inadequate. Of course, control by the party over the PLP is essential (and Geoff Bish gives a graphic description of how the NEC was outmanoeuvred by Callaghan over the 1979 Manifesto).

Labour's programme

But there is very little analysis in the book of whether Labour's programme was adequate in the first place, of whether it is in fact possible for a Labour government to control the economy while leaving the overwhelming majority of the means of production in private hands.

Stuart Holland correctly emphasises that no serious attempt was made to implement Labour's programme but that does not mean that all that is necessary is to repeat the demands of the Alternative Economic Strategy without reassessing if they are feasible in the light of the

Photo: MILITANT

experience of the last Labour government.

It is also indicative of a narrow parliamentary view to say "without the accountability of government to parliament and parliament to the Party, there is little chance of reversing the dominance of capital over labour in class relations."

Holland does not appear to recognise that any attempt to break the power of private capital could only be based on a mass mobilisation of the labour movement, a condition a hundred times more important than the views of civil servants, the integrity of parliamentary leaders, or the rights of backbench MPs.

Whether the Alternative Economic Strategy put forward by the parliamentary left is adequate, how to achieve the active support necessary to carry through a socialist programme, these should be the central questions raised in the minds of the activists by the experience of the 1974-79 government.



Leaving industry in private hands led to the disastrous Tory policies of 1974-79, including the 5% pay policy, resisted by among others, the bakery workers

Wealth service threat to health service

A recent article in Militant gave details of the 'Rugby Plan', proposals whereby General Practitioners would be allowed to charge their National Health Service patients on a sliding scale for a home visit, visit to the Surgery, mileage, etc.

It looks like the Rugby Plan might have been piped to the post in North London, where an organisation called Medi-cover has moved in.

The howl of protest from the GPs and the British Medical Association has been very loud; partly on behalf of the patients who they rightly say will not benefit at all from this scheme and partly because the GPs themselves at present cannot make a similar charge.

Medi-cover is said to offer North Londoners a guaranteed visit from a private doctor at any time for a yearly fee of £50 a household plus £5 a call and such is the state of the NHS now that within days of the announcement enquiries

By Myrna Shaw
(NALGO)

were said to be pouring in.

Medi-cover is "quietly confident" it can attract 25,000 subscribers from six categories of patients whom they say the GP service cannot cope with: overdemanding patients, busy company personnel, harassed housewives, foreign visitors, anxious family groups and the elderly and infirm.

Five of those six categories have a basic right to adequate care under the NHS, however much the profit making organisations intent on milking the misery of sick people (with or without the support of the BMA) deny this.

The origins of Medi-cover are listed in 'Pulse' (23 February 1980). First there was a message-taking firm, Selective Audio Messages Ltd, with 1,500 subscribers including many GPs. From this grew London Locums Ltd, which provides a deputising service for about 200 GPs.

London Locums turns over about £250,000 a year, but

profit margins were said to be slim—less than 10% because with NHS money no doctor will pay more than an average of £5 to a deputy for a visit.

How to increase the profits of Selective Audio Messages Ltd? Bypass the General Practitioner altogether without the expense of setting up in private practice and with out the risks too. Take the call directly from the patient, use any doctor who has registered with you as being available on that day (presumably no shortage of moonlighting or unemployed hospital doctors due to closures) and there you are—Medi-cover is in business.

Medi-cover actually cites the words of the Secretary of State Patrick Jenkin, who called in the private sector to take some pressure off the NHS. A view in accordance with BMA thinking, but not with their own ideas on how to do it!

The BMA in fact sponsors most of the "Air Call" deputising services in Britain, and Air Call (again according to Pulse) is the closest business rival of London Locums Ltd. Work that one out!

What about the patient in

all this? You may well ask. Medicine is a caring profession, and a good proportion of General Practitioners do care, under increasingly difficult conditions.

Their objections to the Medi-cover approach is that the scheme "totally undermines the fabric of General Practice" i.e. the doctor-patient relationship. Also Medi-cover will not provide continuing ongoing care for patients with ulcers, diabetes, for instance. The medical director of Medi-cover denied that patients might suffer from contradictory treatment and medication.

His remarks that he is going to rely on the patient telling the on-call doctor what treatment he is on would surely be taken with a pinch of salt by anyone who has worked in a hospital in whatever capacity—"it's a small tablet doctor—pinkish or nearly red almost".

What will happen too, ask the GPs, when the patient inevitably finds the going too expensive? Will he expect to turn back to his long-suffering GP?

The inadequacies of the NHS are reflected in the support already apparent for

Medi-cover. It was able to begin operations a month ahead of schedule after receiving about £5,000 worth of bankers' orders, even before their promotion campaign had been completed!

GPs must join the struggle of other NHS workers to save the Health Service. If GPs stood up to be counted and involved, rather than twist this way and that to keep their

'professional' status, what a difference they could make to the situation—especially in relation to the present Area Health Authorities who need medical approval and 'blessings' for the cuts they make.

Maybe if the GPs joined the fight, a few more of us would live to see the year 2,000, and a few less GPs would die of coronaries.

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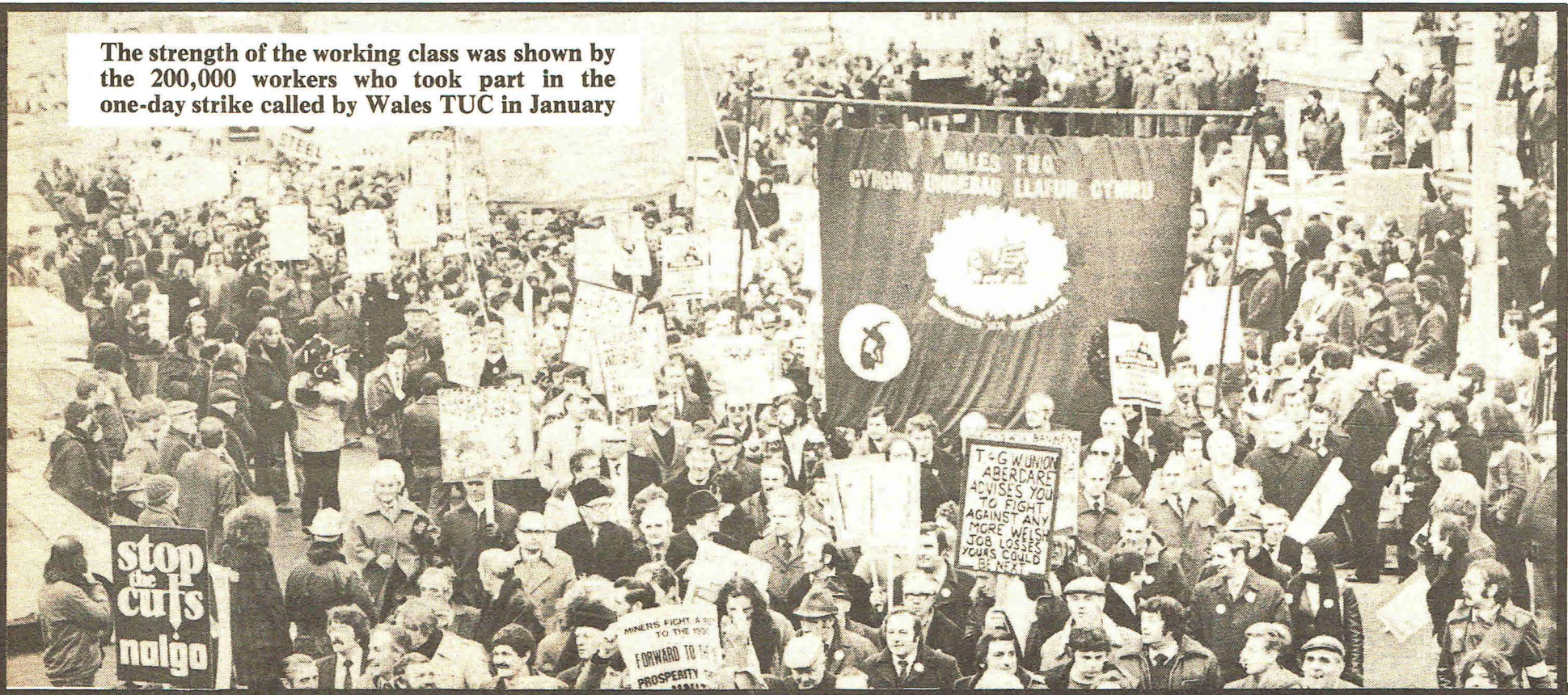
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GENERAL STRIKE IN THE '80s?



Photo: MILITANT

The strength of the working class was shown by the 200,000 workers who took part in the one-day strike called by Wales TUC in January



Peter Taaffe, editor of Militant, analyses the prospects of a general strike against the Thatcher government

enormous pressure exerted on the General Council of the TUC in the course of the last four months.

Despite the prevarication of the TUC leaders, they have been compelled to call for a day of action on May 14th. The call has been couched in the vaguest of terms but the working class will interpret this as a call for a one day General Strike.

Thus within 10 months of the Thatcher government coming to power, the situation is far more explosive at a far earlier stage than between 1970 and 1974. This situation arises from the massive deflationary policies, savage cuts in the living standards of the working class, pursued by this Tory government.

But Thatcher's policies have not dropped from the sky. They are a result of the desperate crisis of British capitalism which has been enormously aggravated in comparison with 1970-74. Fearing the inevitable resistance of the working class

through their organisations, the Tory government is also attempting to hamstring and limit the power of the trade union movement.

Prior to proceeding much more cautiously than either the Heath government or Thatcher and her supporters would like. Nevertheless the intention is the same. While the trade union leaders lull the labour movement with the notion that the conflict between labour and capital can be ameliorated through negotiations, the British capitalists are seriously preparing for the coming battles.

In the pages of 'The Times' their strategists are weighing up the relationship of class forces in British society. They recently carried a series of articles analysing in almost military fashion, the forces at the disposal of the 'enemy', (i.e. the working class), the terrain on which future class battles will be fought and measures which can secure them victory.

They have concluded that

on the one side they are in a weak position. Their social reserves have been completely undermined. Thus recently we have witnessed an occupation by the assaists in Birmingham and the strike for union recognition of workers employed by the Royal Clothiers!

Groups of workers, who, in the past were a loyal prop to the system, have been drawn into the ranks of the trade union and labour movement.

The trade unions are the single strongest force in British society. Approximately 44% of the population of the Labour force were involved in trade unions in 1973. Yet despite an increase of unemployment by a million, trade union membership now exceeds 50% with a total of 13 million workers involved. With their families, trade unionists constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of Britain.

The ruling class at this stage cannot win a head on confrontation with the working class. Indeed, such is the power of groups like the water workers, electricity workers and others that for them alone to strike would have the effect of a general strike itself.

In relation to a water workers strike, 'The Times' concludes "What genuinely

frightens the planners is the unknown territory of an official national water strike".

In 1926 the water workers were considered to be a placid, and docile section of the labour movement: 'The supply and the transport committee wrote off the problem (of a waterworkers strike) believing that the probability of a strike in the water industry was remote' Times 16/11/79.

Capitalism then "had the crucial advantage not necessarily available today. Middle management and white collar workers generally supported the government and stayed at work. Relatively low technology in the electrical industry, docks and railways meant that civilian and service volunteers could easily operate skeleton services".

But as the recent dispute in the industry has shown, the water workers can no longer be taken for granted by the capitalists. Only an increase of 19.2% was sufficient to prevent industrial action.

Such is the desperation of the capitalists that they have pondered the possibility of using the very strength of the workers' organisations as a

CONTINUED ON PAGE TEN

"The General Strike, The Importance For British Workers Today", was first published in the Militant in 1973. We are now republishing it in our centre pages because all the issues dealt with in this article are back on the agenda of the labour movement.

If we substitute Thatcher for Heath and Len Murray and other trade union leaders for Vic Feather, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, the article is a topical analysis of the situation of British society and the mood of the Labour movement today.

The only correction to be added is that the present struggle between the classes in British society far exceeds that under the Heath government between 1970 and 1974. This was shown in the

massive TUC demonstration of more than 140,000 workers on March 9th.

The demonstration was just a glimpse of the stoked up anger and bitterness of the working class, at the Tory government's measures against them. It also showed that the advanced workers in particular are not satisfied with mere denunciations of these measures. There were insistent demands from sections of the rally for 'action' against the Tory government. The meeting also demonstrated the bitter hostility to Len Murray's suggestion that the TUC should open up talks with the hated class enemy.

The demonstration only took place because of the

The General Strike

by Ted Grant

PHOTO: Right: The anger of the working class, shown on March 9th demonstration, will grow. An understanding of the question of the general strike will be vital.

Photo: MILITANT

The importance for British workers today

Britain's social relations are more disturbed than at any time since the 1920s. Unprecedented strikes of new layers of workers never before involved in active struggle have taken place.

The terribly exploited and formerly docile hospital workers have shown a magnificent capacity for battle.

Civil servants and teachers, formerly regarded as a bulwark of Toryism, have come out on mass strikes.

The heavy battalions of miners, railmen, building workers and engineers have all been involved in strikes and struggles with the employers in the last few years. Gas workers have struck for the first time for fifty years.

There has been a movement in action of layers of every section of the working class during the past three or four years involving white collar, industrial, skilled and unskilled. Such a wide range involves practically the entire class. This has not happened in even the biggest struggles of the past, including the General Strike.

This is because the world economic upswing since the war has enormously strengthened at the same time the numbers, power and strength of the working class.

The mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions have reached a new high in organisation—10 million, or 44% of the working population. This is a tremendously high percentage under capitalism.

At the same time the somnolent years of post-war British capitalism have been succeeded by an organic crisis, following on the slow decay of British imperialism.

The Tory government has revealed itself as a weapon of big business, endeavouring to recoup the failing fortunes of British capitalism at the expense of the poor, the weak and the unfortunates living on

social security, by squeezing a bigger share of the wealth, the surplus wealth produced by the labour of the working class.

The crude class policies of the Tory government are not dictated by a desire to stir up the working class but because of dire necessity. Now they are faced with the need, according to Cambridge capitalist economists, to limit the consumption of the working class to present levels for five years at least!

This is a programme of bitter class war that does not leave room for the 'compromise' which was the method of British capitalism in the past. Class conflict is reaching an even more bitter level than in the 1920s which led to the 1926 General Strike.

The working class has fought back bitterly against these attacks. As usual in Britain it has been through the traditional organisations of the working class, the trade unions, that the workers have manifested their resolve to struggle against the impositions of the employers.

The strength and power of the working class organisations in the trade unions has been tested and re-tested in action. This has caused dismay within the ranks of the strategists of capital because in the confrontation with the employers and their state, the enormously accumulated power of the trade unions has been demonstrated.

In this atmosphere, with section after section of the working class moving into action for higher wages and against the attempted shackles of the Industrial Relations Act, the need for generalised action, began to be felt by wide layers of the active militants in the trade unions and in industry.

Under the impact of the arrest of the five dockers, the TUC, 'prudently', when it appeared that the dockers were on the verge of being released, in response to the wave of strikes provoked by their jailing, called for a



The leaders of the trade unions in 1980. As in 1926 they are not prepared to pose the question of power before the working class.

Photo: MILITANT

24-hour general protest strike.

For the period of the Tory government, from time to time at the appropriate moments, 'Militant' put forward the idea of a 24 hour general strike to be called by the TUC.

The reasoning behind this slogan was of a two-fold character. It would rouse echoes among the workers angered by the provocation of the government and it would assist in mobilising in solidarity the entire working class.

A 24-hour general strike can serve at once as a warning to the ruling class as in France in 1934 when the workers struck at the call of the trade union leaders (who issued the call under the pressure of the trade union militants and their fear of fascist reaction—one million were organised but four million came out on strike) and as a means of demonstrating to the working class themselves, their immense power and solidarity. It would fuse the class together, as a class opposed to capitalism.

The TUC Special Conference under pressure of the rank and file delegates adopted the idea of a one day protest action by the trade union movement against the Prices and Incomes policy.

This, after Feather and the General Council, decided to present the Conference with just a general resolution that called for no concrete action.

Feather pooh-poohed the idea of even a 24-hour general strike by saying, "such things happen in Italy and France, but not in Britain." Even the left leaders of the TUC had to be pushed from below before the resolution was adopted.

However no clear guidance has been given by the TUC leadership or attempt to mobilise the entire trade union movement in defence and support of the gas workers, hospital workers and civil servants on strike now.

Belatedly and welcome, an instruction has been given to Trades Councils to hold meetings and organise support for the striking workers, after representations had been made by the unions involved to the General Council.

But there is no strategy by the leaders of the TUC on this question. As far as they are concerned it is a one day protest and then...?

No arrangements have been made to call mass demonstrations, at any rate not at the time of writing, like the magnificent demonstrations against the Industrial Relat-

A twenty-four hour general strike can act as a means of demonstrating to workers their own power. It would fuse the class together as a class opposed to capitalism.

ions Act.

Nor is the day of action to be used as a springboard for a united, consistent campaign against the Prices and Incomes Policy, explaining in an agitational way why the capitalists have embarked on this course at this time.

It is not the aberrations of Heath, Barber and Co., but the crisis of the system. The need for socialist alternative policies in a joint campaign with the National Council of Labour on the basis of the decision of the last full TUC Conference and the last Labour Party Conference has not even been considered.

Starting from the preparations for a mass day of action, a joint campaign demanding a general election and presenting a socialist programme as sketched in 'Militant' continuously for years, would evoke an invincible and irresistible mass

movement which would force a general election and the rout of the Tories.

But that has not been the attitude of the TUC, or of the 'left' minority of the TUC. The 'left' union leaders have in no way adopted a coherent policy, tactics or strategy but have drifted with the tide of the movement.

Vic Feather, Secretary of the TUC, is constantly warning the government and the employers of the immense power of the trade unions. "No one can govern or run industry against the unions," he says. This is true. But Feather points this out not to mobilise the crushing power for the destruction of capitalism, but to plead with the government of the employers ...for some concessions!

But the attitude of the government and the employers is not decided by some whim of Heath, Barber,



Davies or Campbell Adamson of the CBI, but by the crisis of British capitalism, in which they are as helpless as Feather himself.

Thus they can only cajole and fool Feather without offering any real concessions. Meanwhile they are fuming and preparing revenge and a devastating blow against the trade unions at a suitable opportunity.

It was precisely this crisis and the movement of the trade unions to the left with the replacement of right wing collaborators with capital by left wingers in the AUEW, TGWU and other unions which made the employers and the government adopt the Industrial Relations Act as a means of forcing the leadership once again to become the policemen of the state and the employers within the unions, as in the days of right wing supremacy.

Vain delusion! What is written with working class organisation cannot be destroyed by merely passing laws at Westminster.

It merely reveals the limits of parliamentary power. It can hamper or irritate, it can damage, but in its main purpose—because of the mass resistance by the organised workers—it has failed entirely.

The unions are still free and independent of the state. However, Feather and even the left leaders of the TUC are continually trying to compromise with the government and the CBI. Feather is over and over again pleading for 'co-operation' to the employers and the government.

They in turn want the capitulation of the trade union movement. But with a working class aroused by the measures of the Tories, as well as the struggles against the Industrial Relations Act and the sickness of capitalist inflation, while attempts are made to regulate wages with rises which do not compensate for the increase in the cost of living, such agreement becomes impossible even for right wing leaders.

Only the extreme right can even attempt this because of resistance from the rank and file. The leader of NALGO was defeated on his own executive for his suggestion of collaboration with the Prices and Pay Boards.

It cannot be much more than a year since this executive (not necessarily the same people) invited Heath to speak at their annual conference! Such is the shift of

mood even in the formerly backward white collar unions. No wonder Harold Wilson once said "a week is a long time in politics"!

A one day general strike, despite the limitations imposed by the leadership marks an immense step forward for the working class. Britain will never be the same again—nor the working class.

Who runs society?

The TUC leadership may wish to let the workers let off steam—without too much damage—and then leave it at that. That will not be the attitude of the rank and file. They will be demanding action on similar lines to that sketched in the article.

After the strike, they will be taking stock. With the present mood of the working class and with the inevitable soaring prices, with the lower paid sections on wages on which it is impossible to live decently, further strikes and upheavals are inevitable.

The discontent of the working class will increase. Appetite comes with eating. The profound experience of a one day general strike will encourage the workers to demand further action from their organisations. In this atmosphere demands for a complete and unlimited general strike will grow all the time.

At the present time on the fringe of the labour movement there are some sects, strutting and parading as 'Marxists' or 'Trotskyists'. Their whole method of approach has nothing in common with these great teachers.

For months and years now their principal demand at times of movement of the workers has been TUC call a general strike to force a general election.'

In the first place the demand is entirely out of proportion. Within 12 or 18 months there will be a general election. To make the immense sacrifices involved in weeks of a general strike...in order to force a general election is for the mountain to labour and bring forth...a flea! It smacks of the worst form of parliamentary cretinism and parliamentary illusions.

An all-out general strike is a complete confrontation between the classes and between the working class and the capitalist state. The real

motive force of society is revealed in a brilliant light.

Without the labour of the working class the factories are dead, and the docks are paralysed, transport at a standstill, power and gas for consumers only at the agreement of the unions. Food and supplies, meat, milk and all necessities will only move with the agreement of the workers. Britain would undoubtedly be completely paralysed.

An all-out general strike means that there are now two states in the country, that of the capitalists, paralysed and weak and the embryo new state of the workers—as reflected in the unions and their power—greatly extended at such a time.

The problem is posed: who runs society, the workers or their masters? The ruling class cannot govern but is challenged for power.

Consequently the issue, however it starts, inexorably poses the problem of power. It is either/or. The workers take control of society or are defeated. There is no middle way.

A general strike therefore poses the problem of insurrection and overthrow of the old regime. In 1926 the general strike was called by the TUC and immediately councils of action were set up all over the country by the Trades Councils, involving many new layers of workers. These councils of action were embryonic forms of a new government.

'Militant' puts forward the one-day general strike as a means of mobilising the workers. Events have demonstrated the correctness of the slogan. But now the situation will be changed.

The working class will have demonstrated and convinced itself of its own power and far from being satisfied the active workers in the trade unions, wards and shop stewards committees will demand further and more far reaching action.

There may be, within a few months, a call for further action. The TUC may then call a further 'day of action'. It is not excluded that once or twice more this may serve a useful purpose in mobilising and rousing new layers of workers.

But what must be opposed by every active worker is the 'Italian pattern' of general strikes. In order to pacify workers, the Communist and Christian unions, as a virtual safety valve, call one day general strikes of industries,

towns and the whole country at intervals.

This dissipates and frustrates and renders innocuous the movement of the workers without fundamentally destroying the power of the employers and the state which remains intact.

This is the most perfidious policy, which in the long run will allow the employers, their hirelings the fascists and the army officers, to prepare their forces to strike blows against the working class and try to destroy their organisations. 'Militant' would fight against its repetition in Britain.

However, if the mood of the workers develops through new spiteful provocations of the British government and the ruling class, the demand for an all-out general strike may gain wide support. Workers in individual unions engaging in strike action may consider that the efforts of single unions are not enough—even the miners may come to this conclusion.

There will be all sorts of accidental factors, in a situation charged with conflict that may trigger off an explosion and lead to an irresistible pressure on the TUC to call a general strike.

It is this situation which indicates the pathetic approach of the little sect calling on the TUC solemnly to 'prepare the general strike.' This is entirely comical.

The TUC, as events have shown and as explained above, is incapable of 'preparing the general strike,' even a one day general strike. That task in a given period is fulfilled by the Trades Councils, especially under Marxist leadership.

'Militant' takes a Marxist position. We do not play with the 'General Strike' as if this is a solution to all problems automatically. While we have rejected the stupid abuse of left union leaders which merely alienates militant workers, we have always sounded a note of warning in lectures, speeches and in 'Militant' and 'Militant International Review.'

The left union and labour leaders, while sincere and honest in many cases, are nevertheless reformists. Trotsky once wrote that betrayal is inherent in reformism. Power is posed in an all-out general strike. Unless the leaders are prepared to fight for power they must betray the movement.

Like the 'left' leaders in 1926, Scanlon, Jones and Daly have not even considered the problem of taking power—though the last named has already posed the question of a general strike. They are not Marxists.

They do not pose the problems in clear class terms. Consequently even the best of the lefts would quail before the necessary tasks posed by a general strike.

But they are not prepared to call an all-out strike at the present time. 'The Times', the voice of big business consoled itself in a recent editorial that while the TUC had the capacity, far more



than in 1926, to shut down and paralyse Britain completely, they were not prepared to take power.

Smith, member of the General Council, president of UCATT and chairman of the last annual council of the TUC spelled it out in his chairman's address: "We do not consider ourselves an alternative government." he reassured the ruling class.

This very fact would render them powerless. They would try and negotiate terms with the government. From the first hour, they would be terrified by the immense power they wielded in the strike. From the first instant they would be preoccupied with calling off the strike.

That would be the trump card of the government. The generals of the workers would not be prepared to lead the struggle to its logical conclusion.

Thus there was the attempt to conciliate with Heath and the government, as if nothing had happened, a few days after threatening a 24 hour general strike when the dockers were arrested.

They are constantly trying to arrive at agreement with the government in a situation where there can be no agreement, or a very temporary agreement to lull the trade union leaders and the working class. Not because the ruling class would prefer 'compromise' but because of the last desperate situation of British capitalism.

Neither the TUC nor the government now wants conflict. They are propelled towards a collision because of the dialectics of the contradictions of capitalist society at the present time.

The pressure of the active workers in the unions, as of the delegates at the special TUC conference may push the TUC towards a general strike. This is possible but not inevitable.

If the general strike took place now it would be even more effective than 1926. There would be complete paralysis of industry and the government. The government has no social reserves of white collar workers, civil servants and students to rely on, as it had in 1926.

The government would be paralysed...and then? Like the grand old Duke of York, the trade union leaders would lead their troops to the top of the hill and then down

again. The issue would be posed of either taking over industry and the state into the control of the working class—or capitulate to the ruling class.

Many active militants, eager for a show-down with the reactionary and hated Tory government because of their justified confidence in the strength of the working class, have not thought the question through to a conclusion.

Most have not even posed the question to themselves: are they in favour of the overthrow of the Tory government and capitalism by the general strike they are advocating and the setting up of a workers' government? That is the issue posed by a general strike.

If that question has not been thought out by the active trade unionists, even less has it been considered by the 'left leaders'! Not having a thought out theory and conceptions which could prepare them to take power they would inevitably capitulate to the Tory government.

That is the principal preparation for a general strike—to warn of the inevitable betrayal of that event by even the 'leftest' of leaders.

Nevertheless a mood may develop in the coming months as a result of individual strikes, for an all-out general strike. We will go with our class. Under such conditions we would advocate the calling of an all-out general strike by the TUC.

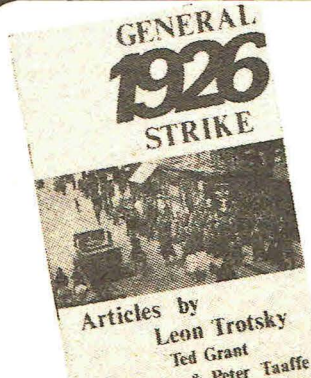
There is nothing more demoralising for the working class than defeat without battle. The working class will learn from experience, especially its active layers.

The ruling class is preparing for big clashes with the workers and then civil war in the coming years.

There is need for the advanced active workers in the labour and trade union movement not to be caught by surprise.

We must understand the role of left wing reformists, sincere and honest as they may be. That is the main preparation for a general strike. That, and explaining the problems of power. Marxists must patiently explain these problems to the active militants in the labour and trade union movement.

Militant 23/3/73



A 'Militant' publication
General Strike 1926
Articles by Leon Trotsky,
Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe

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CONTINUED FROM
PAGE SEVEN

means of preventing action by the most decisive sections of the working class. Thus in relation to the water industry, "One veteran manager of essential public services put it 'because they're so strong they are also so weak'".

One suggestion which has been put forward is the so-called "faeces in the street" alternative. In other words in the event of a strike taking place the authorities should allow sewerage to come up out of sewers and through lavatories. The calculation is that by means of an outraged populace the workers would be forced to return to work.

This indicates the extreme weakness of the ruling class in modern conditions. 'The Times' has seriously weighed up the possibility of a military coup in Britain. However one soldier in answer to the question as to whether he thought an officer led coup was possible in Britain, commented: 'This lot could not even organise a dance' and a military coup would be equivalent to a 'rampaging group of Brownies' taking power!

While an army coup is ruled out at the present time, from a long term point of view, if the working class in Britain fails to carry through the socialist transformation of society, the capitalists in Britain faced with no other alternative, will undoubtedly move in the direction of attempting to install a right wing military regime.

But in the short term the more far sighted representatives of the ruling class in Britain have decided that they have no alternative but to lean on the right wing leaders of the labour and trade union movement, as a means of curbing the movement of the working class.

Events in the past few months, including the demonstration on March 9th, have clearly shown that the trade union leaders, the sincere left wing trade union leaders, as well as the right wing, have no conception of what the crisis of capitalism means for Britain and the working class.

They are not armed with a programme which is capable of both defeating the Thatcher government and carrying through the socialist transformation of Britain.

Many speeches were made in Trafalgar Square, depicting the consequences of the Thatcher government. But practically all the trade union leaders who spoke, put it down either to the wickedness, or the stupidity of Thatcher and "His Insanity", Keith Joseph. While not disputing this characterisation of Thatcher and her cabinet, the measures introduced by Thatcher arise from the organic crisis of British capitalism.

The rate of profit of big business excluding North Sea oil and gas has slumped to 2%. In the final analysis, the only way to restore the capitalists' rate of profit is by ruthless cuts in the living standards of the working class. This is what Thatcher is

trying to do.

In turn, this has provoked the ferocious resistance of the organised working class, which has been typified by the magnificent struggle of the steel workers. Enormous divisions have consequently opened up within the Tory Cabinet, between the so called "hard line Thatcherites", and the "wets" led by Prior, and Gilmour.

However, the only difference between Thatcher and the wets, is over how best to carry through the dictates of big business.

Prior and Co. together with an increasing section of the strategists of capital and sections of the Tory Parliamentary Party object to the sheer brutality, and lack of skill with which these cuts are being implemented at the present time. They differ on means, but the capitalists as a whole agree on the end, the need to slash wages while prices go up.

Thatcher's measures have opened up an unbridgable chasm between the classes. The bitter mood of working class opposition to this government will prevent at this stage the trade union leaders, from having successful talks with Thatcher and Co. The attempt to reconcile the working class with this government is like trying to mix oil and water.

The question of power is posed

The scene is set for an almighty collision between an aroused working class on the one side, and an increasingly desperate ruling class on the other. This has already provoked calls for a one day General Strike. As Militant predicted, a series of regional general strikes would precede a one day General Strike. This has already happened in Wales. It could be followed by similar strikes in Scotland and the North East.

It is in the light of this movement that some ultra left sects are once again raising the slogan of an unlimited General Strike. It must be admitted that there are also some advanced workers who see the demand for a General Strike of an unlimited character as the best means of toppling the Tory government.

The sects are like a quack who mistakes the first month of pregnancy for the ninth month. Such people can only produce an abortion. Fortunately however, they will never be in a position of leadership of the mighty labour movement in Britain.

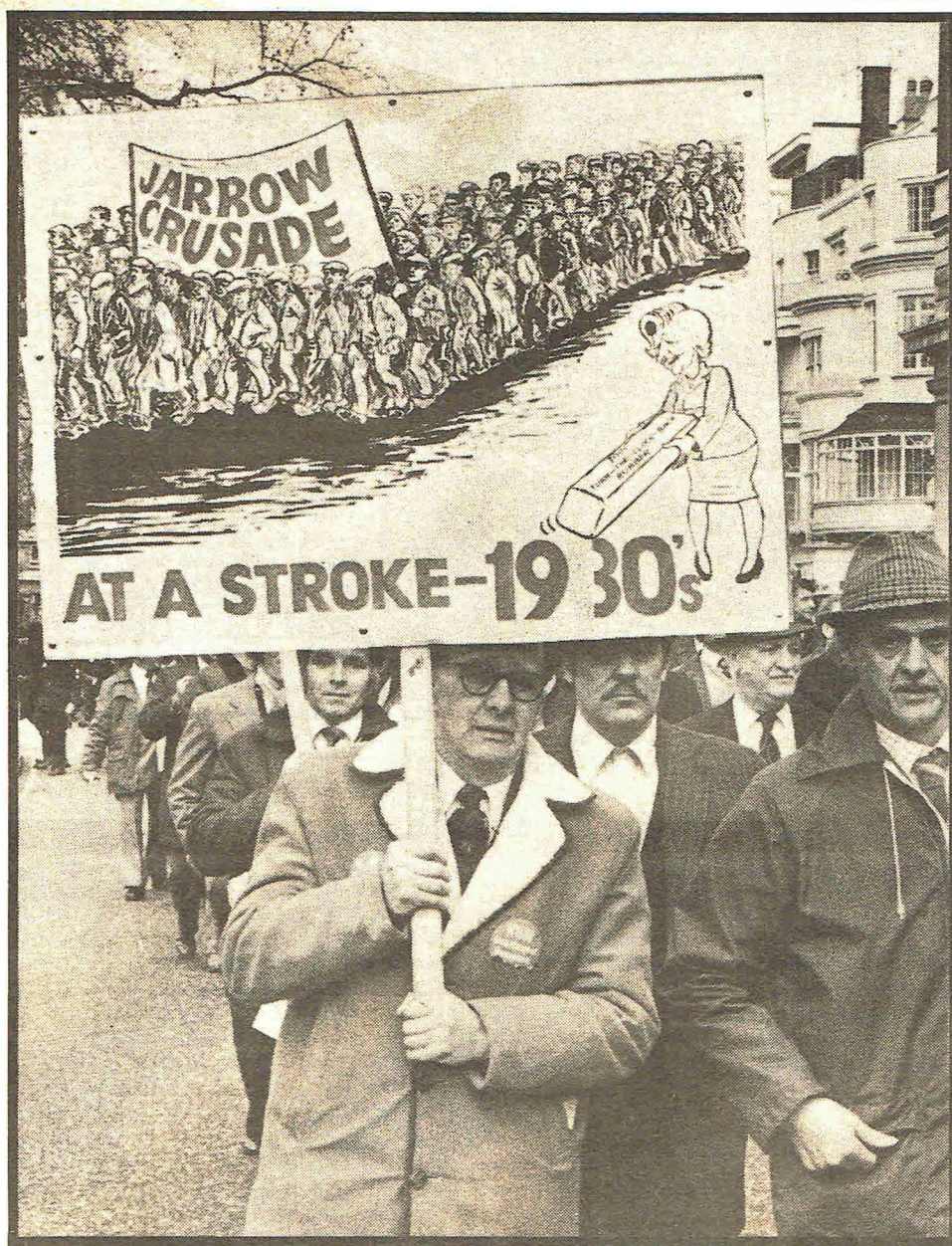
Some advanced workers who support an unlimited General Strike, thirsting for revenge against the Tory government, have not really thought through the implications of this demand: "A General Strike particularly in the old capitalist countries requires a painstaking Marxist accounting of all the concrete circumstances" ('In the Middle of The Road', Trotsky).

The call for an unlimited General Strike at this stage, is really to run ahead of the present development of the labour and trade union movement in Britain. As Ted Grant's article demonstrates, an all out General Strike poses the question of power.

'The Times' on 30th January did not hesitate to point

GENERAL STRIKE IN THE '80s

Photo: MILITANT



On television last week, Len Murray opposed an all-out General Strike on the grounds that if the unions won, they would not know what to do with the power they had!

this out to the trade union leaders: "A General Strike is essentially a revolutionary gesture, and the leaders of the trade unions today, are for the most part as far from being revolutionary as any group in Britain".

Drawing on history, the same journal also pointed out that in a confrontation between the government and the Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers in 1919 Lloyd George (then Prime Minister) commented: "If you carry out your threat and strike you will defeat us, but if you do so have you weighed up the consequences?"

"The strike will be in defiance of the government of this country, and by its very success, will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. Gentlemen, have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?" ('Times', 16/11/79).

With great satisfaction the 'Times' then quotes comments of Robert Smillie the miners leader: "From that moment on we were beaten and we knew we were". In other words the trade union leaders at that time were not prepared to mobilise the working class and the labour movement to take power.

If anything the trade union leaders today are even less prepared to pose the issue of power before the movement than in 1919.

This was underlined on TV by Len Murray last week. He opposed an all out General Strike on the grounds that if the unions won they would not know what to do with the power they had! It is also shown by his denunciation as "Political illiteracy" the widespread feeling of workers to make the May 14th stoppage a means of mobilising the mass of working people behind the call for a General Election and the bringing down of this Tory government.

It is ludicrous, and precisely "politically illiterate", to suggest that any serious

The working class in the '80s will not allow the capitalists and Tories to turn the clock back

struggle of the working class today which comes up against the combined forces of the employers, the government and of the state machine is not political. The steel workers struggle is directly political in the sense that standing behind the steel employers is Joseph and Thatcher.

Therefore in the event of a General Strike in Britain the main concern of the trade union leaders would be to try and have the strike called off. Not just the right wing trade union leaders, but the left wing also do not understand that capitalism in Britain can no longer afford reforms.

To increase living standards and even to safeguard what has been gained in decades of struggle involves the labour movement arming itself with a programme to carry through the socialist transformation of society.

In the event of a General Strike in Britain, which is undoubtedly a possibility and is latent in the situation, the outcome of that strike, given the present leadership of the trade union movement, would not be for the working class to take power.

At the same time it would not have the same consequences as the 1926 General Strike which was a serious defeat for the working class.

The outcome of a General Strike in modern conditions, given the weakness of the capitalists on the one side and the enormous potential power of the trade unions, the labour movement and the working class on the other, would be similar to that in France in 1968. The 1968 General Strike could only be called off by the granting of big concessions to the work-

ing class in the form of wage increases, and cuts in the working week.

The ruling class in France bought time by giving these concessions and then cancelled them out through inflation over a period of time. Similar measures would undoubtedly be attempted in Britain.

So too in Britain a similar development will undoubtedly mean a partial victory for the working class. But the derailment of a General Strike could also result in disillusionment for advanced workers particularly as power would be posed before the working class. For all of these reasons the 'Militant' opposes the slogan of an unlimited General Strike at this stage in Britain.

The task is to "conquer the working class", to win the vast majority of the trade union and labour movement to the programme and the perspective of forcing the resignation of this Tory government, and the coming to power of a Labour Government on a socialist programme. This can best be achieved by the slogan of a 24 hour general strike, as a warning to the Tories.

A national day of action, a preparatory protest strike involving as it would more than 13 million workers could be used to explain, first of all the measures of the Tory government and what it means for working people. Secondly to show the causes of those measures in the irreversible crisis of British capitalism.

At the same time, using the enormous power of the labour movement it would be possible to make every worker conscious of the results of the continuation of this government. It would be possible to drive home the idea of the Labour government taking over the 200 monopolies with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need. This would allow the introduction of a socialist plan of production.

Without doubt, a properly prepared 24 hour general strike in Britain would represent a political earthquake. Things would never be the same again. A 24 hour General Strike or a series of 24 hour General Strikes could prepare the ground for an all out General Strike at a later stage.

One thing is sure, at a certain stage the Marxists would launch the slogan of an unlimited General Strike. But what is involved is serious preparation by the labour movement on the basis of a clear programme and the leadership of the labour movement capable of preparing the working class for power.

Undoubtedly a General Strike on a whole number of issues without the working class being prepared can break out. In that situation, the Marxists will obviously support the strike and would endeavour to develop the organs of working class power, which would inevitably spring up and press forward the programme outlined above.

The issues of a one day General strike and an unlimited General Strike and what this involves for the labour movement are vital questions which must be discussed and pondered by advanced workers in the stormy period ahead.



INDIA

STORMCLOUDS GATHER IN INDIA

Back from the dead, Indira Gandhi is back in power. The Indian masses have again decisively rejected their current rulers. The memories of the nightmare emergency have faded beside the subsequent regimes' fresh crimes.

In vain did the Hindu communalist party Janata camouflage itself under the masquerade of the fake harijan Jagjivan Ram. Its improbable slogan "For democracy, secularism and socialism" met with contempt.

The rich peasants' Lok Dal was also trounced despite its eleventh-hour conversion to the cause of "helping the poor". Both wings of Janata together won 72 seats, compared to over 300 in 1977.

The Indian press, so brave under the previous immobilised government, greeted the result sycophantically, hoping to avoid thereby a new censorship. But there was no "Indira wave".

Even taking the voting figures at face value, well under a quarter of the electors voted for Mrs Gandhi. The polling turnout was only 57%, and even of those, the Congress (Indira) received only 42½%.

She benefitted from mass abstentions as well as from the fragmentation of the formerly united capitalist opposition.

Majority verdicts are rare in any parliamentary election. But this amounted to a plebiscite on the role of Indira Gandhi. It would be a fatal blunder, particularly on Mrs Gandhi's part, to interpret the result as a popular mandate for a new Emergency.

Mrs Gandhi's party succeeded in increasing its vote by only 7% over the catastrophic debacle of 1977, although it contested 12 more seats this time. Only in 1967 and 1977 has the percentage vote for Congress been lower than this.

We must also take into account the widespread ballot rigging. Votes follow caste loyalties in the villages and are sold by "slum dada" gangsters in the towns. Fifty-eight cases were reported of "booth-capturing": hired thugs occupy the polling booths and cast all the votes in favour of their paymasters.

In addition, anything up to one third of the names on the electoral register are bogus. If these phantom voters turned out in force then the real Congress vote was even lower.

Huge numbers of voters find their names omitted from the list. These malpractices do not alter the result, but they distort and exaggerate it.

The real meaning of the election was the drawing together of the ruling class around its traditional party, Congress. Worried at Mrs Gandhi's populist demagogy in 1971, and especially at her irresponsible assumption of bonapartist powers in 1975, the ruling class had become frightened at the consequences of leaving a vacuum at the centre.

The social turmoil eventually affected even the police. More than 40 million man-days were lost in 1979 through strikes and lockouts, as many as in the record year of 1974, when this figure was accounted for by the great railway strike.

There are only 21 million workers in the "organised sector", that is factories and offices employing more than ten workers. It is equal to two days per worker—twice as many as the British workers at their most militant!

And yet the figures are deliberately cooked to exclude solidarity and sympathy strikes, political strikes, gheraos and the raging struggles in the countryside! Not a corner of Indian society was sheltered from the tornado. Four thousand Grindlay's Bank workers stayed out on strike for 92 days, and workers at the Motor Industries Company in Bangalore for 87 days.

There were prolonged strikes at the Tatra Oil Mills (5 months), India Foils (6 months), Calico Mills (83 days); strikes of one million government employees in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, 53,000 Bengal textile workers, 10,000 security workers, of jute, sugar, wool, newspaper workers....

There were "gheraos" (sieges) by workers in the coal, basic metals, alloys, ore, and shipbuilding industries. Forty four thousand man days were lost on the Bombay docks and more than 100,000 at the port of Calcutta.

Even in recent weeks,



Former Janata leader, Jagjivan Ram, weeps at the loss of political power. But for Indian workers none of the capitalist powers offer any solution to their problems.

Bombay hospital doctors, Bombay stockbrokers' clerks, workers at the five-star government-owned hotels, even the workers who print the banknotes at the Mint struck.

After the victory of the police strike, there was open speculation as to how long it would be before the army also came out on strike to catch up.

These are hardly ideal conditions in which to impose a police state!

No stability ahead

Indira Gandhi's two-thirds majority in Parliament means nothing. With inflation raging at nearly 30%, with unemployment at 25 million, and on the eve of a new recession, deeper than that of 1975 which plunged India into the Emergency and the subsequent upheavals, her packed parliament will be impotent.

There were massive majorities following the elections in 1971 and in 1977, but who will suggest that they achieved stability? On the contrary. The 1970s proved a decade of strikes, like the stormy 1890s in Russia on the eve of the 1905 revolution.

And superimposed upon this picture of working-class militancy was the heroic uprising of the dalits (harijans or "untouchables") which can only be compared to the movement of the oppressed black people in Southern Africa in the same period.

The ruling class has temporarily shelved its bickerings in the face of its common enemy.

But it is clutching at a straw which cannot keep it afloat. It paid lavishly to ensure victory for its candidate. Mrs Gandhi spent at least £35 million on her election campaign, to buy

defectors and harangue nearly 100 million people.

But she was not the rabble-rouser of 1971, with her extravagant promises to "end poverty", etc. This time there was an underlying smack of bonapartism in her slogans: "Vote for Those who can Govern".

The traditional victims of political exploitation by Congress, the minorities, Muslims and Untouchables, etc., had nowhere else to turn in the teeth of pogroms in the ghettos and mass murders in the villages.

But the beneficiaries of her victory will be tycoon whizz-kids like her son Sanjay. She has no alternative, but to attempt new attacks on democratic rights.

But if Bonapartism could not be established in 1975, then in the conditions of 1980 these will meet with disaster. It is one thing to dissolve the state governments led by discredited non-Congress capitalist parties.

These can offer no resistance. The capitalists themselves have deserted them. They present a ludicrous picture today. Nothing is left of the bright hope of Indian democracy, the Janata Party of 1977.

Even its leader Jagjivan Ram has quit! These historical curiosities have been ignominiously discarded. Charan Singh, with his programme to take India back 300 years to the age of cottage industries, has been spurned by the capitalists who desire on the contrary a savage rationalisation of industry.

The same has happened with the so-called Congress (Urs), Party of the former Chicago-style city boss of Karnataka. In his own home state practically all his Members of the Legislative Assembly have defected to Mrs Gandhi.

This makes it all the more

ironic that the two Communist Parties (CPI and CPM) refused to present a socialist alternative.

It was only the two CPs which failed to call for "socialism" in their campaign! This time they were not even allied to major capitalist parties as in the past, but to two eccentric regionally-based parties, the Lok Dal and the Congress (U), of which the former stands for de-nationalisation and a ban on trade unions, and the latter was one of the most corrupt appendages of Mrs Gandhi until only last year.

Even tactically the alliance was a disaster. The gains in seats made by the left parties, especially the CPI (M), were entirely due to their mass support in West Bengal and Kerala. In West Bengal, mass pressure forced them to stand independently.

The people responded with a tremendous mandate. The turnout rose by 10% while it fell practically everywhere else. But in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra and other places they lost seats.

The votes of the two CPs actually fell from 10% to 8.7%—a misleading figure, since they willingly surrendered seats to their "allies". Nevertheless, the left bloc has 56 seats, more than any one of the capitalist opposition parties.

One CP (M) West Bengal Minister commented on the election results: "In three months we will all be in jail." This is hardly fighting talk!

One of Mrs Gandhi's Ministers has publicly vowed to "throw the Marxists into the Bay of Bengal." But she has not yet dared to touch the left governments in West Bengal and Kerala. She would meet massive resistance there.

The return of Indira Gandhi marks a setback for

the workers and poor peasants. But setbacks are inevitable within revolutionary periods.

The mighty social forces unleashed in the last few years cannot be bridled simply by an election result. Mrs Gandhi herself has admitted, from experience, that "any attempt to clamp the lid down on small explosions inevitably creates the conditions for a big explosion."

She is clearing the decks to pack the Upper House, in order to introduce a new Constitution providing her with legitimate bonapartist executive powers, rather than gamble with capricious tactics, like the UNP regime in Sri Lanka.

But she does not enjoy conditions of mass disillusion with the left parties and even a certain popular mandate, like Jayawardene. There is a crescendo of class struggle. Even Jayawardene has not found it easy to use his bonapartist powers. If Indira Gandhi moves against the workers their response will overshadow even the events of 1977.

It was not benevolence, but the threat of revolution, which forced her to declare elections then.

The workers and poor peasants remain undefeated. It will take defeats on a scale never seen before, even in the days of British imperialism, to crush them. If the workers' parties persist in false policies, then eventually there will be a bloodthirsty revenge by the ruling class.

But that day has not yet come. There is a groundswell for workers' unity and a revulsion against the capitalist parties.

The genuine Marxists will gain an eager hearing within the working class, in the renewed struggle against bonapartism.

LETTERS

Our hospital is a Nissen hut

Dear Comrades
I had always believed Nottingham was a relatively prosperous area as regards hospitals, with a new university hospital in Nottingham which is one of the most modern in Europe.

I was quite surprised to hear remarks made on 'ATV Today' by a local health administrator. He described Mansfield hospital as 'an affront to humanity' and added 'Charles Dickens would have had a field day if he'd been here today.'

The hospital in question is in fact an old US Army hospital, built during the war. Apart from a few fairly modern operating theatres, the hospital consists of Nissen huts dotted around the place.

Due to the lack of a proper unit, out-patients are required to wait in what was once the de-contamination unit during the war, before seeing the doctor.

The hospital administrator had to admit that when he shows people around he is ashamed of parts of the hospital. It was explained however that this hospital was to become the district general hospital for the Mansfield and Ashfield area, with a quarter of a million population!

A glimmer of hope was offered with the announcement that a new £30 million building 'is planned.' But with the Tory cuts closing existing hospitals, what are the chances of a new building for this out-dated, inadequate army camp which the Area Health Authority have the cheek to call a hospital?

Yours fraternally
Rob Hughes
Rushcliffe IPYS

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

DISAPPEARING JOBS— THE BOSSES' MAGIC WAND

Dear Comrade
Did you know that ... 'the future is bright for Scottish industry'; that business prospects are "exciting"? Or perhaps you're one of the many thousands unemployed or on the receiving end of Thatcher's social or economic policies.

The person predicting this new tomorrow belongs to a diminishing group of optimists in Scotland, the CBI (the bosses' mouthpiece). The little band of profiteers and speculators have decided that there is money to be made in

Scotland in industries "such as computers, new technology and services such as tourism."

This "boomtime" is predicted by someone who has a namesake in the world of show business. No, he is not a comedian, though he would certainly top the bill for sick jokes!

His name in fact is David Nickson. Well he would have to be a magician if he is to pull out the 100,000 jobs lost in manufacturing industry in the last ten years in Scotland, or even produce the 30,000 jobs lost in 1979, from up his

sleeve.

If some comrades think that this gentleman has maybe lost his balance, then you should know that as a director of Collins, the publishing firm, he did his own little bit for the new tomorrow by putting 600 workers on the scrap heap. I'm sure some SOGAT members will tell this magician where to put his magic wand!

Fraternally
David Churchley
Cathcart Labour Party

LABOUR STUDENTS DEMAND INVESTIGATION

Dear Comrades

As officers and ex-officers of a Labour Club we feel that the issue raised by Lewis Matheson and Dougie Miller of Glasgow University Labour Club (Militant 494) must be fully discussed.

In 1977, Newcastle University Labour Club was disaffiliated from NOLS by the National Student Organiser, on the basis of one alleged forged signature in a membership of 137. This was despite a vigorous appeal backed by Harry Cowan, MP for Newcastle Central, and a former

NOLS National Committee member, a supporter of the 'Clause Four' tendency.

Now we hear allegations of forged membership cards at Glasgow University Labour Club. This must be investigated with determination equal to that shown at Newcastle University Labour Club, by the Labour Party's National Executive Committee.

Newcastle University Labour Club and all Labour Clubs must press the constitutional changes voted on at 1979 NOLS national confer-

ence, particularly on the question of part-time students, while NOLS' bureaucracy must be simplified.

If this is done we could concentrate on building active clubs in the Further Education Colleges and Technical Colleges rather than keeping NOLS as an elitist organisation concentrated in the large universities and polytechnics.

Yours fraternally
David T Maples (Secretary 1979-80), Ray Goodspeed (Chairman 1978-79), Jeff Marston (Secretary 1977-79)

PROFITS OF DOOM FOR THE NHS

Dear Comrade

The most important aspect in fighting the cuts in the NHS is preventing the growth of private health care.

These days, the Squire's bunnions and the Dowager's piles take precedence over the plight of the working-class cancer patients who have to wait further and further down the queues for attention. At the same time the government has the crust to sanction the most outrageous extravagances like more golf clubs, new mayoral cars etc. which most right-thinking people find totally unacceptable.

This winter, many of our sick and elderly folk will die because of the inadequate health service.

According to Bourne-mouth's local paper, the cost of dying is to increase a litt'

er than the cost of living. Despite the fact that our local crematorium makes a substantial profit (about £50,000 in the current year), charges are to be increased by 20% this year.

This indicates the mentality of those we are up against. Not content with starving and freezing the sick and elderly to death, they are quite prepared to profit even further by charging more for disposing of them!

This is a people's issue and it is important that everyone who is affected by these cuts should acquaint Dorset County Council with their views in no uncertain terms.

United we stand. Divided they'll pick us off, one by one.

In solidarity
Lomond Handley

Support the steelworkers

Dear Comrades

Jarrow Labour Party agreed to hold a collection for the steelworkers at its January GMC. £23 was raised.

At the February meeting, Brothers Hagan and Egelson of Jarrow ISTC were invited to speak. President Alan Battye asked them to remember after the strike who their friends were.

One delegate expressed the hope that the steel unions

would become active in the Labour Party in the fight to get the Tories out. A further collection raised £16.

Fraternally
Tom Hogan
Jarrow Labour Party

Prentice's 'scroungers'

Dear Comrades

A recent radio programme on social security 'scroungers' highlights the repressive role of government departments against the poor and weak in society.

Tories like Reg Prentice, minister for social security, speak with incredible hypocrisy and double standards about 'scroungers' on the one hand and about how difficult it is to clamp down on tax evasion and crooked businesses on the other. With typical Tory unprincipledness, which he embraces so readily, he conveniently brushes over the estimated £1,000m lost in tax evasion, ten times even the highest estimate of losses on social security payments.

The programme was recorded in the North of England where unemployment is high. One person interviewed was receiving £37 and attempting to look after a family. Even the senior department officials admitted that it was impossible to live on such payments without part-time work.

One ominous excerpt was an interview with 'volunteers' in a work centre, where people are 'persuaded' to work in 'work-house' conditions. This is really a punishment for being unemployed.

We wait in vain for the Tories to introduce a minimum living wage to bring about full employment, but then how can we expect the Tories, the real scroungers and parasites of society, to have any interest in working class peoples' rights and living conditions?

The sooner they are replaced by a socialist government that will make a major transformation of society, the better.

Yours fraternally
Ian Harkness
Glasgow

Sheerness—the wrong war

Dear Comrades

It is the dark days of 1980, and storm clouds gather over a tiny island as its inhabitants prepare to withstand an onslaught from across the water, and overnight turn their homes into a fortress.

Men and women go about their daily business conscious of the constant threat of invasion. Sheerness is at war.

Ever ready to defend their country, brave young men and silly old women don their uniforms and patrol the night vigilantly for signs of the enemy.

Housewives wearing saucers made from torn-down Spitfires, stare defiantly into the barrels of a thousand press cameras. Whole families huddle around the wireless and laugh at the propaganda broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw, or Sir Charles Villiers as he is better known,

THE TORIES LOVE 'EM!



WE LOATHE 'EM!

Workers on the TUC anti-Tory demonstration [9.3.80] spell out what they think of scabs—workers at the private steel plant in Sheerness defied a strike call and mass picketing and were subsequently expelled from the union

Photo: MILITANT

while others lie awake listening for the sound that will send them hurrying from their beds—'The Scargill Warning.'

As Churchill would no doubt have said, 'We shall not serve them in our

sweetshops; we shall not serve them in our public houses; and even if this strike should last a thousand years, we will stand alone, but firm.'

Yes, plucky little Sheerness stand alone, typifying the spirit of Dunkirk—bad

beaches, hostile natives, and forty years out of date: we say 'Goodbye, and good luck Sheerness.'

Fraternally
Michael J Higgins,
Bromsgrove.

THE DARK AGES IN BALLYMENA

Dear Comrades

The letter from James Heath in Issue 494 raises some important questions concerning Darwin and his various theories and personal beliefs.

There is not the space in a letter to try and answer all the points raised as to how a materialist explains where mankind acquired all his powers of reasoning and the philosophical and religious beliefs that grew from these. I

would refer the comrade to such works as 'The Origins of Christianity' by Karl Kautsky, 'Anti-Duhring' by F Engels, along with the works of Lenin, Trotsky and Marx on these subjects.

The main reason why the Ballymena Branch of the Labour and Trade Union Group took up this question, however, was because the town council, which is in the control of Paisley's DUP party, was once again trying

to force its backward Cavlinistic views down the throats of the working class.

This same council has, on religious grounds, already shut the local swimming pool on Sundays, prevented the town taking part in the TV 'It's a Knockout' programme, banned the book 'Of Mice and Men' from the local schools, closed both the local cinemas and a host of other acts too many to mention.

We believe that the only

way forward is under socialism, which would not only provide for our material needs but also give total freedom of thought to all. Our town council and the political religious part they represent seek to take us back beyond the dark ages. Only the working class can stop them.

Fraternally
K Aiken
Chairperson, Ballymena Branch, LTUG

HELP OUR BUDGET!

The budget has been just one more proof of how urgently we need to get rid of this Tory government. The very rich are thanking the day Thatcher's crew were elected, but not the rest of us.

The hostility to the Prime Minister and her party is growing daily. Even traditionally Tory areas like Poole and Bournemouth have seen massive demonstrations against Thatcher when she arrived for the Conservative Central Council conference. It takes no great imagination to work out who is the most unloved politician in the country.

The Tory press have almost totally ignored these demonstrations. Instead they have devoted reams of paper and hours of radio and TV time to lies and distortions about Militant, hoping to encourage a witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

Capitalism is in its worst crisis since the last war, and workers are looking for a real socialist alternative to the horrors of capitalism. Is it any

By
Derrick McClelland

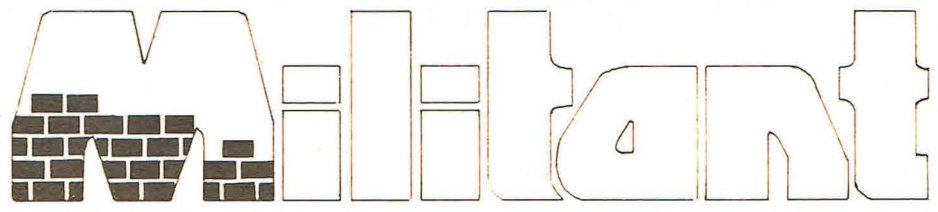
wonder that the Tory press and their backers in the boardrooms of big business are trying to discredit the paper that puts forward a clear socialist programme?

The fact that more and more Labour Party and trade union branches support the ideas of Militant is frightening the Tories and their friends.

But to be able to continue to put over our message we need money. We won't be benefitting from Wednesday's budget, we rely on your donations this week, which improve and expand our coverage.

This week we have received £1,206.21, leaving £5,839 to raise in three weeks, to meet the first quarter target. Make sure you are using the Militant appeal sheets, to get

Build



Area	received	Proportion of first quarter's target	Target 1st Qtr	Target for year
Eastern	833		1,000	5,000
East Midlands	705		760	3,800
Hants & IOW	550		780	3,900
Humberside	179		500	2,500
London East	1,255		1,240	6,200
London West	998		940	4,700
London South	704		800	4,000
Manchester & Lancs	440		1,020	5,100
Merseyside	1,080		1,200	6,000
Northern	1,023		1,460	7,300
Scotland East	471		640	3,200
Scotland West	802		1,000	5,000
Southern	918		1,180	5,900
South West	366		640	3,200
Wales East	229		560	2,800
Wales West	239		620	3,100
West Midlands	1,433		1,800	9,000
Yorkshire	919		1,460	7,300
Others	1,007		2,400	12,000
Total received	14,161		20,000	100,000

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

**THIS WEEK
£1,206**

a donation from every reader and supporter. Although plans should be well advanced for now for the celebration of our 500th issue, don't forget that we still need money now. Give Militant an Easter present now!

Many thanks for all the donations this week, which include Liverpool NGA supporters £13, Bootle IRSF supporters £11.80, Knowsley NALGO supporters £9.20, G Jardine Barhead LPYS £8.20.

£5 donations were received from the following: I Harkness Glasgow LPYS, A Albery Bolsover CLP, D Rawlings Newcastle East CLP, W Kennedy Ruislip LP, C Stone Tower Hamlets, J Krett Handsworth LPYS, R Filer Bristol South LPYS.

R Andrews of Oxford sent us £4, while £3 each came

from S Reed UCATT Rotherham, F&B Kidd Tooting, and J McReady CATU Stoke. Other donations over £1 came from H Minnott Nottingham, J Bennett Nottingham, G Humphries UCATT Rotherham, S Kaplan Rother Valley LPYS, E Carpenter West Yorks NALGO, P Stewart Deptford, J McGregor Kil-

marnock LPYS, M Starr Bristol South LPYS, T Crowe Stoke Councillor, The Wobseys of Hackney, J Stephens Ellesmere Port LPYS, Ada Proctor Leicester, D Lawton COHSE York, and M Kennan Dundee.

£1s are too numerous to mention individually. Thanks to all who have contributed,

but we give a special thanks to Mr and Mrs Hogan of Boldon who are both pensioners, but still manage a weekly donation of 50 pence to Militant.

S Bush of Blackburn raised £8 with a 'Find the Mole' competition. See what you can do! Thanks also to all those who gave donations at meetings organised by Militant supporters, including Strathclyde NALGO, Stoke and Oxford, among others.

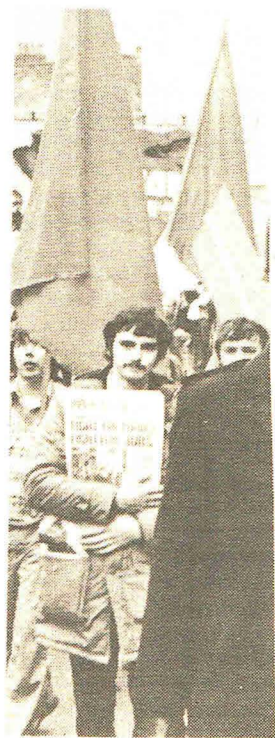
Don't forget the parties and socials for Militant. Canterbury, West Birmingham, Dartford and Hillingdon all proved that fighting for socialism can be enjoyable. Keep the money rolling in, we need just under £2,000 a week to stay on target. And don't forget to give an Easter Egg for Militant!

USE PUBLICITY TO BOOST SALES

Once again, the papers are full of the 'Militant', but unfortunately it is not the socialist programme and ideas that 'Militant' has fought on, for 16 years, just lies and distortions. But the supporters of our paper are fighting back.

Up and down the country sellers are preparing for 'D' day, our 500th issue on April 25th [D is Roman for 500. A bit of culture!]. Sales campaigns are being conducted on 'What Militant Stands For' using our new posters and leaflets. These are available from the circulation department.

One super seller in North London sold 87 in one week, whilst a certain Mrs Thatcher helped sell 25 on a welcome reception in Hull. If she can help sell the Militant why can't you? Give the bosses something to really worry about, a socialist programme that reaches every worker.



By **Dave Farrar**

ads

CLASSIFIED: 5p per word, minimum ten words
SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY

Militant Readers' Meetings

ROCHDALE Militant public meeting "Labour and the trade union movement" Speaker: Peter Watson (Bradford West Labour Party) 8.00pm, Wednesday 2 April, Two Ships Hotel, Hope Street, Rochdale.

ROTHERHAM 'What Militant Stands For' Meeting. Speaker: Rob Jones (Sheffield Heeley Labour Party) 7.30pm Monday 31 March. WEA Rooms, Corporation Street, Rotherham.

BLACKBURN Militant Day School. 3.00pm: Capitalist crisis—socialist alternative. Break 5.30pm: What Future for Ireland? speakers to be confirmed 20th April, Shadsworth Road, Blackburn. Tickets 50p from 'Militant', 35 Westminster Court, Blackburn.

EDINBURGH Militant Film Show. 'Look Back at Grunwick' 7.30pm Wednesday 2 April Trades Council Club, Picardy Place. Admission 50p.

Classified

SWANSEA LPYS Public Debate: 'Which Way for Labour?' Rob Sewell ('Militant supporter') v Frank Evans (Campaign for Labour Victory) 7.30pm Wednesday 16 April. (Venue to be Announced).

JUST RELEASED! 'South Africa—The Workers' Movement, SACTU and the ANC'. —a struggle for Marxist policies (78 pages) Vital reading for the labour movement. Price 50p (reduction for bulk orders). Distribution agent: World Books, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E 3PN.

CIVIL AVIATION NEWS Meeting: John Smith MP, Russell Kerr MP. Dave Wetzel (CAN Editor). Chairman: Gordon Clark. Monday 31st March 7.30pm. Queens Building, Heathrow.

TRAVEL (anywhere) and insure (anything) with us. Special discounts to fellow comrades. Write to Sunflower Agencies, 99 St. Johns Road, Slough, Berks. or ring (0753) 20915, anytime.

BADGES MADE TO ORDER, 1 inch, 1½ inch and 2 inch button badges made to order, no charge for artwork. Fantastic Fund Raising, ideal for local campaigns. Also A3 posters, Tee-shirts, and leaflets designed and printed. Large SAE for details; Dept M, Maprographics, 32 Worple Rd, Mews, London SW19.

NEW 'MILITANT' BADGE 'No to anti-union laws—Socialist policies for Labour' Red and black. 20p each; 5-50 20p each; over 50, 13p each. Order from 77 Atherley road, Shirley, Southampton.

'STUFF THATCHER' badges: 2 for 45p; 5 for £1; 10 for £1.75; 50 for £7.60. Order from D. Kemp (Dept D), 114 Ladybarn Rd. Fallowfield, Manchester 14.

MAY DAY GREETINGS IN MILITANT'S 500th ISSUE

May Day 1980 is a special occasion for Militant. It marks our 500th edition. For over fifteen years Militant has campaigned for socialist policies and supported workers in struggle.

Get your trade union branch, Labour Party and YS to back Militant. Send your greetings to the workers of the world this May Day.

Rates: semi-display 3 column cm (up to 15 words)...£2
6 column cm (up to 25 words)...£4
display one-sixteenth page.....£7
one-eighth page.....£14

Closing date for copy, 15th April. Cheques payable to Militant. Send to Militant, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

ROCKERS' REVIVAL!
Saturday 29th March
Phone John Woulfe 986 3828

MILITANT MARXIST WEEKEND SCHOOL

Courses: Introduction to Marxism; Marxist Economics; Marxism and the trade unions; The Life of Trotsky; China—History and Perspectives.

Film: 'The Battle for Chile' 1970-73.

Debate: The lessons of Chile

Date: Friday 27 June to Sunday 29 June.

Venue: Goldsmith's College Students' Union, Lewisham Way, London SE 14.

Cost: £3 for whole weekend. £1.50 Saturday or Sunday only.

£1 Friday evening only.

To book, or for further information, write to Militant Marxist Weekend School, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

(Cheques payable to 'Militant')

Limited run red and black "Plunder Woman" Posters 50p each (Post Free). Order NOW from Militant, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN. Bulk Orders: ½ price with order [other half to the Fighting Fund].

NALGO fighting for last year's pay

The National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) has embarked upon the most widespread industrial action in its history. We are fighting for settlement of the 1979 (not 1980!) pay claim for white collar council workers.

In July 1979, (with inflation at about 17%) NALGO settled for an increase of only 9.4%. In addition, there was to be a comparability study, with increases payable from 1st January, 1980.

'Militant' supporters and others warned at the time that comparability was a stalling tactic; a promise of "jam tomorrow". On the advice of the union leadership, however, the offer was accepted by a special conference.

Talks finally broke down on 5th March. The joint management/union steering group studied job rates and suggested increases ranging from 10% for the lowest paid to 22% for the highest.

The employers, however would offer only 8%; 6% at the bottom rising to 12% at the top, based on "external factors". This we suspect, means that wage rises are subject to the invidious cash limits and cuts the Tories are imposing on local authorities. In other words, the comparability agreement has been broken by the employers.

Pressure from local government members in branches such as Strathclyde ensured that when the talks did break down, NALGO's leadership were prepared to take action. The speed with which the NEC have moved reflects in part the burning sense of indignation members feel.

NALGO negotiator and chairman of the union's local government committee, Mike Blick, stated that "We

By David Churchley
[Strathclyde branch executive, personal capacity]

entered into the comparability exercise in good faith but now the employers are trying to take us for a ride. What's being attempted is a multi-million pound confidence trick.

"This trade union has been traditionally moderate, but the employers blatant dishonesty has made militants of us all".

As the pace quickens, how in fact are the NEC going to plan and lead the industrial action?

The instructions issued by the NEC have had an immediate effect.

Strathclyde members are refusing to send out rate demands (not a popular job these days). This has put the whole issue of selective industrial action into perspective.

Within a matter of days the Financial department were desperately trying to avert a cash crisis. The prospect of borrowing from the banks and finance houses to tide them over has made regional officials and councillors acutely aware of the interest charges these sharks demand, bleeding local authorities dry.

Rugby Borough Council members voted to refuse to pay councillors' allowances or assist in running the business at committee meetings. This action was supported by the minority Labour group of councillors.

Air Traffic controllers at Teesside and other airports have already been notified about proposed action.

The action already taken has found a resounding echo amongst the rank and file membership. It is vital that

the NEC clearly explain the full facts surrounding the dispute, to all members, to ensure support.

There can be no short cuts on this issue. The whole membership must be fully mobilised, with clear plans put forward by the union's leadership for future action.

Mass meetings, publicity campaigns, demonstrations and selective stoppages in key sectors are essential. Financial levies, to support members on one-day strikes, will ensure full participation.

The NEC should carefully select areas to pull out first, showing the effectiveness of industrial action and giving confidence to other members. Plans must also be laid for a national one-day stoppage.

An excellent move has been taken by members in Knowsley and Liverpool in taking the issue to the Merseyside Anti-Cuts Committee, to build full support from other local trade unionists. Mass meetings have already been called in these and other areas.

This dispute if led properly could be a resounding success. The first steps have been taken—they must now be fully followed through.

★ Maintain national unity—no local deals.

★ Convene a meeting of the Local Government group to monitor developments and plan further action.

★ NEC must issue firm instructions to all branches on industrial action.

★ Mass meetings in every area to endorse industrial action.

★ No suspensions—warn management that half-day stoppages and section by section walk-outs will result; black work in any section where suspensions take place.

NALGO members are enthusiastically adopting both national instructions and authorisations, now that the union's leadership is making a stand.

The familiar cry "We don't have any industrial muscle" is being proved untrue: 'The Sunday Times' Business News (16/3/80) described non-collection of rates as "a new and unforeseen bombshell beneath the forthcoming Budget", and "potentially devastating".

Far more is at stake than a mere comparability deal. The real issue is whether NALGO members are prepared to be pushed around any longer by central government.

Future pay deals—including the one due in July—and the Tories' massive cuts in public expenditure are all involved. Rank and file members have been quick to appreciate this. Their response to the present action adequately answers those who argued that it was impossible to fight for higher wages and against cuts at the same time—the two battles are in fact the same.

Despite everything the cynics have said over the years, NALGO is being transformed into a real trade union as its members become aware of their power. We dare not lose this battle.

By Tom Hogan
(South Tyneside NALGO E.C.—personal capacity)

**SUPPORT
ALAN
SMITH
MASS
PICKET**

All the striking workers at the Alan Smith Group, Nottingham, have now been sacked.

After returning to work (see last week's 'Militant'), management provocation culminated in the sacking of convenor Roy Bennett.

Attempts to mediate got nowhere, so union full-timers instructed the workers to take strike action. Since then we have been informed that all employees are considered dismissed as from that moment.

As the shop stewards' leaflet says, "We believe it to be quite clear from the behaviour of this management during the whole of the stoppage and before it, that this is an attack on the trade union organisation in the factory."

"Our members are out again, as solid as before, and intend to carry on this struggle to defend their trade union."

A picket line is being maintained and workers not on picket duty are leafleting all the factories in the district appealing for support for mass pickets on Monday 31 March and Thursday 3 April.

Already the Chesterfield miners have promised to send a contingent to the pickets and give financial support. This is what we need from every trade unionist in the country to defeat this and every other attack on our hard-won trade union rights.

By David Wilkinson
[AUEW shop steward,
Alan Smith Group,
Nottingham]

STEEL STRIKE WEEK 13:

AROUND THE COUNTRY

CORBY

At the ISTC Str.k. Committee headquarters at the Labour Club in Corby, Louis Gladke and George McEachran [Strike Committee] spoke to Leicester LPYS members.

Fifteen ports and towns are being picketed. At Kings Lynn the port has been picketed continuously since the strike started, and we are sending a bus load to Birmingham each day.

Full picketing is going to be extended to firms that were only picketed sporadically before.

We are getting no help from the state so we have been forced to help ourselves. Food is being bought in bulk by the ISTC for all union members on strike, at wholesale prices. A firm that previously supplied the BSC canteens is now supplying us.

LONDON

The Greater London Association of Trades Councils is organising to "button up all the steel stockholders and stop the movement of steel in London."

After a meeting addressed by an ISTC speaker from Consett, it was agreed that each London Trades Council will be sent a list of steel stockholders in its area and assigned responsibility for them.

To assist the small number of ISTC members based in London, the Trades Councils are being asked to organise tours of workplaces for visiting speakers, systematically

check marshalling yards for wagons carrying steel and provide accommodation and all other help needed to ensure that every stockholder is fully picketed. Meetings are to be organised with Trade Council members in London and the south-east to spread and co-ordinate the campaign.

Trades Councils throughout the country should be taking up this initiative, and putting pressure on the TUC itself to give a firm practical lead nationally.

Trades Councils throughout the country should be taking up this initiative, and putting pressure on the TUC itself to give a firm practical lead nationally.

This town will never be the same again.

TEESSIDE

From the way the press go on, you would think being on strike is fun.

Even without Thatcher's proposals to cut social security to strikers' families, being on strike is financially very hard. Holiday money and savings are spent, the car sits in the garage and the bills and HP aren't paid.

Strikers have to negotiate with the bank and haggle over gas, electricity, rates, telephone, rent or mortgage bills to defer payment and avoid court summonses.

On top of the stress all this can cause in the family there are other worries. Steelworkers are fighting for pay but also for their jobs and a future. In fact they are more genuinely concerned about the future of the steel industry than Thatcher, Joseph, Villiers, Scholey and the rest.

the rest.

Even when they're off duty, the strike dominates for many of the pickets. "I go home and fall asleep in the chair but when I go to bed my mind starts whirring, and I can't sleep" said one.

The strain of the strike has made another picket tense, "I'm easily riled now. At least so far I've only got mad at my mates—what are your mates for! I shouldn't get annoyed but this strike..."

The strike isn't just about steel, as another picket explains: "I go home and rant about the strike and politics; my wife thought I'd gone daft until one day our daughter comes home from school and says "our teacher is leaving and not being replaced. That means we will have to double up with another class." My wife was really annoyed and

'We won't go back without the union'

A few weeks ago, Klein Brothers, of Salford, was an unorganised factory. Today 65 workers, mostly women, are on strike over union recognition.

Trouble flared three weeks ago when the management told workers they could not have sandwiches made in the canteen!

After a brief stoppage most workers joined the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. Now they are on strike because the management refuses to recognise the union.

The workers are prepared

By Peter Gunn
(Salford LPYS)

for a long drawn out battle. On the picket-line they described their wages and conditions: most of the machinists are on piecework and job rates are marked down to decimal percentages of a penny.

Wages can sometimes vary by as much as £20 in a week. A minimum wage for the

whole industry was what one worker described as the answer.

Management's attitude has been "Take it or leave it." The strikers' response is that they won't go back in without the union.

Although around 20 of the workers are scabbing, supplies have been turned back by picketing.

Blacking of all Bendyke goods is essential. Messages of support and financial aid should be sent c/o A Gunn, 84 Eleanor Cuddeford Court, Silk Street, Salford M36HW.

support locally and further afield, there is a public meeting in support of Massey Ferguson on Thursday 3 April at Kirkby Labour Club.

Send messages and offers of help to Hayden Burns, 46 Kempton Park Road, Aintree, Liverpool 10. Donations to William Naylor, 1 Lyndhurst, Maghull L31 6DY—cheques payable to Massey Ferguson Combined Union Appeal.

Correction: There were two errors in last week's article on the Knowsley occupation. 1,500 (not 15,000) jobs have been lost at the Kilmarnock plant and £21.06 (not £26) was collected at the Kirkby LPYS public meeting.

MASSEY FERGUSON

Frank Yates, convenor at the occupied Massey Ferguson plant at Knowsley, spoke to Lesley Holt and members of Merseyside LPYS:

The decision of the workforce at Massey's Manchester factory to accept work transferred from Knowsley is a set-back. The Manchester bosses threatened lay-off without pay if transferred work was not accepted.

If the workers are intimidated by these threats and go ahead, it will divide the combine: the Manchester, Coventry or Peterborough plants could be next in the line of fire.

The shop stewards and shop floor at Coventry are

giving full support to our struggle. Last week sixty pickets brought work to a standstill at the plant. Plans have been made to follow this up with a visit to the Peterborough plant.

The T&GWU have made the dispute official and dockers and other T&GWU sections have pledged support. We are now waiting for the AUEW to give a lead in making our action official on behalf of the 200 members at Knowsley. This would have a decisive effect on the attitude of the 2,000 AUEW members at the Manchester plant.

Meanwhile, the shop stewards are going ahead with plans to organise and build

Victory is won on the picket line - not at the negotiating table

There is widespread anger among steelworkers at union leaders' moves to set up a Committee of Inquiry to arbitrate on their wage claim. At this week's meeting of the ISTC and NUB executives, this was reflected in vociferous demands that the inquiry be rejected and the strike stepped up.

A firm lead from the top, tightening blacking and calling on other unions to follow the magnificent example of the Liverpool dockers (see report, back page) would have made the inquiry irrelevant.

The Iron and Steel Consumers' Council admitted last weekend that many companies are "scraping the bottom of the barrel". The attempts to smuggle in steel through an Essex yacht marina and a Southend pier are a measure of the bosses' desperation.

With the inquiry almost certain to go ahead, however, three months of bitter strug-

gle will not be forgotten lightly.

The British Steel Corporation management and the Tory government are looking for ways to get round the determination of the steelworkers on the picket lines. They hope that the inquiry will undermine the strike and provide them with a cheap settlement. They will be disappointed.

Hardened and determined by their struggle, steelworkers will not go back to work empty-handed. As Bill Sirs was forced to point out, his members are not likely to end the strike until there is more money on the table.

The battle will not be won or lost at the negotiating table. Long and bitter experience has shown that there is no such thing as an 'impartial' investigation or, for that matter, a 'neutral' chairman. The labour movement can only rely on its own strength and organisation.

This was the experience of the miners with the Wilberforce inquiry. If the strike is being won on the picket line, the inquiry will come down on the side of concessions to the unions.

The pressure must be kept up — the action must bite. Then the Tories and their big business paymasters will be forced to use the inquiry to let themselves off the hook, diplomatically of course. Remember the confrontation over the Industrial Relations Act, when Heath was forced to wheel out the official solicitor to end the legal action against the unions?

The initiative taken by the Greater London Association of Trades Councils in organising surveillance of stockholders and assistance with picketing should be taken up by every Trades Council. T&GWU and URTU members must insist that their unions give full practical support to the strike. No

member of a TUC-affiliated union must be allowed to touch steel — any steel.

The inquiry has been limited to the question of wages. There is to be no investigation into closures and redundancies or into mismanagement at BSC.

Yet Bill Sirs claims that "Jobs are more vital than the pay issue." He is wrong — the two are inseparable. All trade unionists must demand that the steel unions, the TUC and the Labour Party conduct a genuine inquiry and draw up a plan of action to reverse the pillaging of the steel industry.

Throughout the strike, the only favourable card BSC has held has been the hesitancy and procrastination of the steel union leaders at national level. They have not shown even a pale reflection of the initiative, determination and skill of the rank and file members, most of whom have never been involved in a national strike before.

Many of the union leaders seem a million miles removed from the real fight: for a wage we can live on, for an industry with a future. After the strike, the lessons will not be forgotten.

Just as a shop steward who fails his members must face re-election, so union members will demand the right to elect their leaders democratically and regularly.

The TUC called a massive demonstration this month as part of their campaign agai-

nst Tory policies. Trade unionists want to see words converted into action. What better challenge to Thatcher's government than a victory for the steelworkers?

Let the union leaders feel the pressure from below. Flood every union office with demands for practical help to win the strike: cash, blacking, clear instructions to members on observing picket lines.

Force the Tories to retreat — show them the power of organised labour.

MILITANT PAMPHLET

'A Socialist Strategy for Steelworkers'

Price 20p [+ 10p p&p]

From World Books

1 Mentmore Terrace

London E8 3PN

WHAT ABOUT CLOSURES?

This week we have been running about to get an operation like that underway! The committee set up to get steel has been coming through a settlement on our pay dispute is not investigating the BSC closures and redundancies. This stinks.

Ipswich dockers have been scabbing on their colleagues at Hull, Immingham, Goole and many other docks where steel is not being moved. Ipswich docks rarely handled steel prior to the strike, but are now loading and unloading it frequently.

While the dockers here are moving steel, other docks are on a three-day week, because they are supporting the steel strike.

The steelworkers thank the Liverpool dockers for blacking the steel. It is a shame that Ipswich dockers haven't been like them—they too will want support from others some day soon.

We also know that secretaries of local T&GWU branches are not giving instructions to their drivers to black steel. Those drivers should be informed that during their lorry drivers strike, steelworkers in Scunthorpe were on short time and being laid off.

It is amazing the lengths bosses will go to to get steel. The tiny dock at Malden in Essex had its yacht marina cleared, so that a tug could bring in one ship with steel. This could only be done on the high spring tide—there must have been a lot of

If the closure plans go through, whole towns will become like ghost towns. It will affect not only BSC workers, but the thousands who work for contract hire firms, which do vast amounts of work for BSC.

Already the takings in shops and pubs in the steel towns are down because of the strike. This will worsen as family incomes drop with the closures. Because of all this, there will be an increase in violence and crime, too.

As we said the first week we were in Ipswich, we wish to thank the trade unionists who have supported us during this strike. The pickets who have been down here will have long memories of what has been done for them and all the striking pickets.

A lot of us feel that the end of the strike could be near. When we do go back, it will not be with our tails between our legs. We will go back a stronger union, and more determined than ever to fight for our rights.

Brian Wright, Roy Markham, Michael Wynne, Peter Stamp, of Scunthorpe ISTC and Roger Mackay, Ipswich Labour Party

I've always been a steelworker, all my working life.

In all that time I've never even spent one day on strike, But now I spend some time each day on the picket line. I don't want to be here, but I'll stay 'till we get a rise in pay.

The government said you've lost too much, so Villiers said OK, 'We'll break even by April '80, I'll stand by what I say, I'll wipe out fifty thousand jobs and desolate whole towns, On top of that come January I'll refuse them a rise in pay.'

The Union put in their yearly claim, to cover living costs, For every thing has gone up, from the rent to the price of toast. The BSC said we've got nowt, so nowt is what you'll get. But it's not our fault there's nothing there, we want a rise in pay.

Why should we pay for their mistakes, they didn't ask our advice. They built new furnaces and mills and can't pay the price. There's Monty's folly at Hunterston and they want to close Llanwern. They've spent too much on the wrong plants and now can't raise our pay.

Paul O'Neill, Teesside picket



PHOTOS

Top: Steel pickets at Southend Loading Pier
Bottom: Scab ship 'Bernisse'—blackened at all T&GWU ports

Photos: Angela Anderson

now sees what we're fighting." In spite of all the problems there is a bitter anger and a grim determination to win. A Ladies Support Group is being set up, which will answer the Tory press' publicity for the 'back to work' women.

The press pick up on the wives, thinking they are softer, but their last attempt to undermine support here failed. Only eight turned up for a back to work march; there were thirty demonstrating in support of the strike. End of story, as far as the press is concerned.

By Bill Hopwood

(Teesside Thornaby CLP)

SOUTHEND

ISTC and T&GWU members from Port Talbot arrived in Southend on 11th to picket 'Southend Loading Pier', a small non-union wharf. The Rotterdam registered 'Bernisse', blacked at other East Coast ports, was unloading 380 tonnes of steel, apparently manufactured in Germany (and possibly Japan).

The 50 pickets, led by ISTC shop steward Tom Fellows, arrived as scab drivers from

Lincolnshire-based haulage firms were taking away rolls of sheet steel. After a brief tussle at the gate the drivers decided not to cross the picket line. They took over 20 unloaded lorries away and out of the town.

Meanwhile, the 'Bernisse', which has a long history of strike-breaking and according to a T&GWU official at Tilbury, is blacked at any T&GWU port, had stuck in

the mud and was in danger of breaking her back. The ship was hurriedly unloaded and the steel was piled up on the pier.

In spite of three months struggle and hardship, all the pickets expressed a determination to see the strike through, come what may.

In particular, they stressed the need to continue the strike to prevent the closures. They pointed to the utter disaster

the closures would cause to their own area of Wales.

Southend Labour Party members were well received, as was the 'Militant'. Pickets were emphatic about the need for local people to vote Labour in our recent by-election!

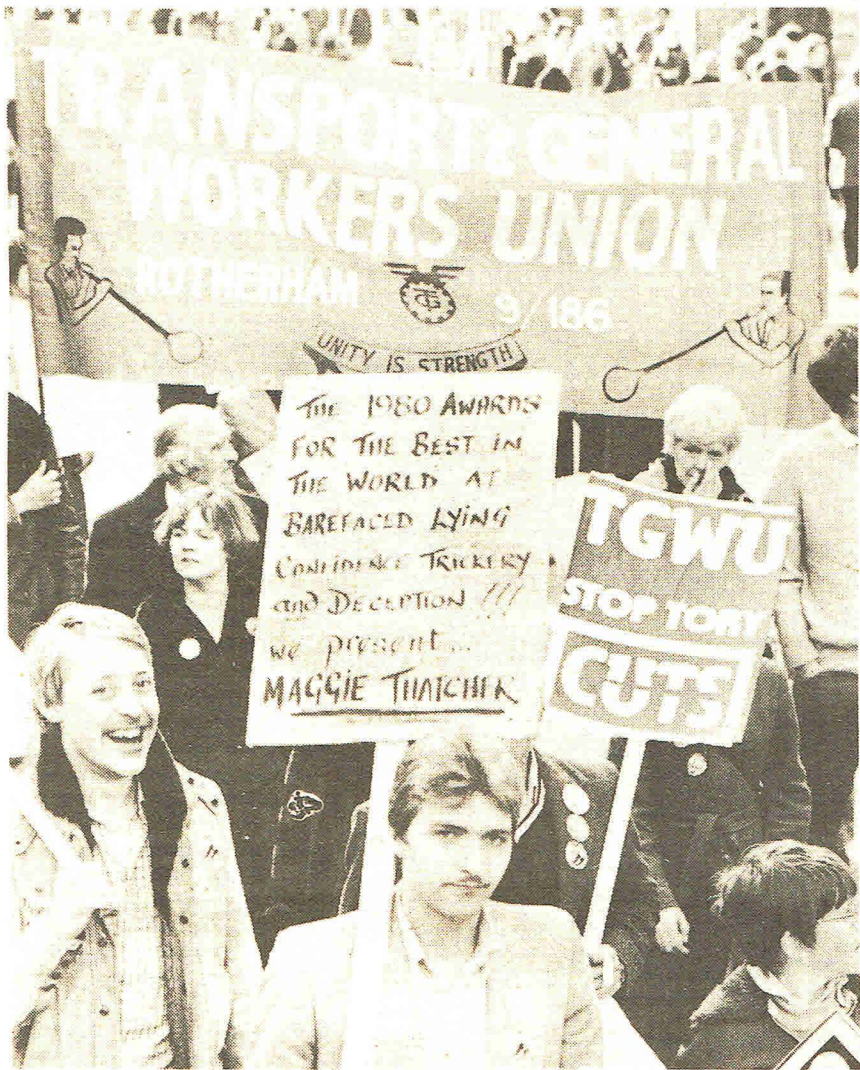
The use of this quite unsuitable pier, without proper dock facilities, to move such small quantities of steel, clearly shows that in spite of

reports to the contrary, the bosses are getting desperate for steel at any price. They won't get it through if the steelworkers have their way. The picket will continue.

By
Angela Anderson
(Southend Labour Party and CPSA)

**STEEL
 STRIKE
 WEEK
 13:**

LIVERPOOL DOCKERS SUPPORT STEELWORKERS



T&GWU members support their fellow workers in the steel industry Photo: MILITANT

The Port of Liverpool was at a standstill last Friday. Management locked out 100 workers who refused to load steel aboard a Russian cargo ship bound for India.

After a series of meetings 6,000 dockers walked out in support. This was quickly followed by the other dock sections, including tugboatmen, dock gatemen, shore gangs, clerical and supervisory workers. As a result, twenty-five ships are now lying idle in the port.

This is the first all-out port strike in Liverpool for two years. The T&GWU is expected to make the strike official quite promptly.

Liverpool dockers' leaders are demanding a recall docks' conference and there is a strong possibility of a national dock strike in support of the Liverpool dockworkers and the striking steelworkers. Every industry is likely to be affected as most raw materials for manufacturing industry pass through Liverpool.

Len McCluskey, T&GWU

official spoke to Ann San about the implications of the strike.

"The port employers have been seeking financial assistance from the government. We believe political pressure has been put on them by the government to take the workers on in an attempt to weaken and break our trade union strength on the docks."

"The T&GWU have 27,000 steelworkers on strike at the present time and therefore have a tremendous affinity with the steelworkers. In fact this strike is probably the most united in my experience on the docks."

"Every single section have responded overwhelmingly to the call for strike action. Locally, we have been having discussions with the steelmen on ways we can assist in their dispute."

"The steelworkers are absolutely delighted with our support and I feel the morale on every steel picket line will be lifted as a result of this action. This is the first industry to come out in support of the steelworkers and it is vital every other section of the movement follow this lead."

"We hope it will not be a long stoppage. The employers have tested the water and found it too hot to handle."

This strike is not simply a confrontation between employers and the unions. It is a political question, with the government pulling the strings behind the scenes.

The Tory government hope to 'discipline' workers so that they can carry through their programme of massive attacks on the living standards of the working class.

It is now vital for the trade union movement to act as a whole to defeat the steel employers and ultimately bring down the Tory government as the only way of protecting our future.

BUDGET

By Bob Wade

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

full-scale national strikes, workers receive very little, if any, money from the unions. And what about workers fighting for union recognition, who have no union, or justified disputes that the leadership fail or take time to recognise? The Tories want to starve strikers back to work.

The so-called 'concessions' on income tax, pensions and payments to one-parent families are minuscule—they will in no way compensate for rising prices.

As usual, the so-called 'luxuries' like beer and tobacco go up—this alongside petrol and car tax increases will mean working people will be staying at home yet another night a week, because they can't afford to go out.

Businessmen face no such attacks. The corporation tax rate on business with profits under £70,000 is to go down to 40%. Not that many businesses pay the tax anyway—but this type of upper-crust scrounger need fear no attacks from Howe and the Tories!

Concessions on capital gains tax and capital transfer tax remove liability from a half to two-thirds of those previously liable.

On top of these reliefs, Howe announced he was looking into the possibility of "free enterprise zones", in effect complete tax havens. Massive allowances on taxation, a 100% capital allowance relief, no development land tax, no rates on industrial development, and a drastic reduction in planning requirements.

All these in a desperate attempt to encourage investment. There is absolutely no

guarantee that free enterprise will invest even after all these gifts.

It is indicative that previously only underdeveloped colonial countries like Sri Lanka and Hong Kong, with very low levels of services, have tried these bribes! And it hasn't worked.

It is clear that the Tories are pressing on with their reactionary policies—no solutions have been offered to the depressed areas of the country. Howe admitted that output in industry would fall by nearly three per cent—this means more factories closing, the decline of the manufacturing industry speeding up putting yet more workers on the dole, with the prospect of long-term unemployment.

And the Tories are going to give tax concessions to firms giving redundancy payments over the statutory minimum—they obviously hope to soften the effect of closures by encouraging high redundancy payments. But with increasing closures and payments being rapidly eaten away by inflation, this will be no answer to workers facing a life on the dole, and with their payments now being taxed.

As David Basnett, General Secretary of the GMWU commented on the Tories' plans, "they are

STOP PRESS

BL Cars Joint Negotiating Committee [Trade Union Side] have called an all-out strike in Leyland.

This strike call comes as a result of the enormous wave of anger that has swept through Leyland factories in response to Michael Edwards' provocative statement that he would impose his 5% wage plan and

creating a banana republic without the sunshine."

Thatcher declared last week at a Tory meeting in Bournemouth that she will not be 'frightened off'—the Tories realise their attempts to viciously curtail working people's living standards will not go unanswered by the labour movement.

However, while Howe's axe slashed in one direction then another, he quickly announced that spending on 'law and order' would increase by two and a half per cent. This, alongside the proposals to shackle the unions, show the Tories realise they are in for a fight.

If the Tories get their way, the crisis of their capitalist system will inflict poverty on the scale of the 'thirties onto the shoulders of the working class. Thatcher must be 'frightened off'—and forced out!

SOGAT has joined the ranks of unions calling on their members to strike on 14 May—the TUC must call a general strike on this day in order to serve notice on the Tories that the labour movement will not tolerate their anti-working class policies.

The Tories must be forced out and replaced by a Labour government committed to socialist policies, which will end the miseries inflicted on the workers by ending the crazy profit system itself, and replacing it with a planned socialist programme.

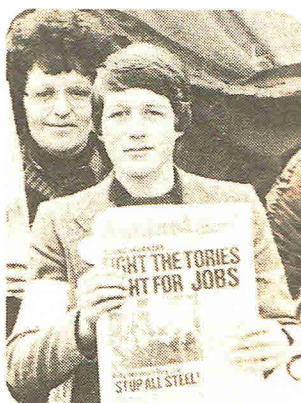
vicious new work practices, despite the 6:4 ballot rejection by the workforce.

Mass meetings must now be held in all Leyland car factories to prepare thoroughly for the strike.

By Bill Mullins

(Senior shop steward, SD1, Rover, Solihull)

MAKE IT A GOOD BUDGET FOR US



Well, you've seen the bosses' budget. More presents for the Tories' buddies in big business, and more attacks on the workers, the unemployed and so on.

Help fight back. Boost our budget. There are only a few weeks left to get to the £20,000 target for April 12th but you can do it! Send us your donations, large and small, for the paper that fights the Tories. Make April 12th the workers' budget day! See page 13.



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