

Militant

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20p

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HANDS OFF MILITANT!

LABOUR PARTY
CONFERENCE
REPORTS
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FIGHT THE TORIES!

Despite the attacks on 'Militant', socialist ideas will continue to gain ground inside the Labour Party, because they are rooted in the conditions faced by working people.

For the majority of workers, the Thatcher government has meant a living nightmare.

The industrial heart of the economy has been devastated. Four million are without jobs. Hundreds of thousands of young people have no future except conscription into one of Tebbit's cheap-labour schemes.

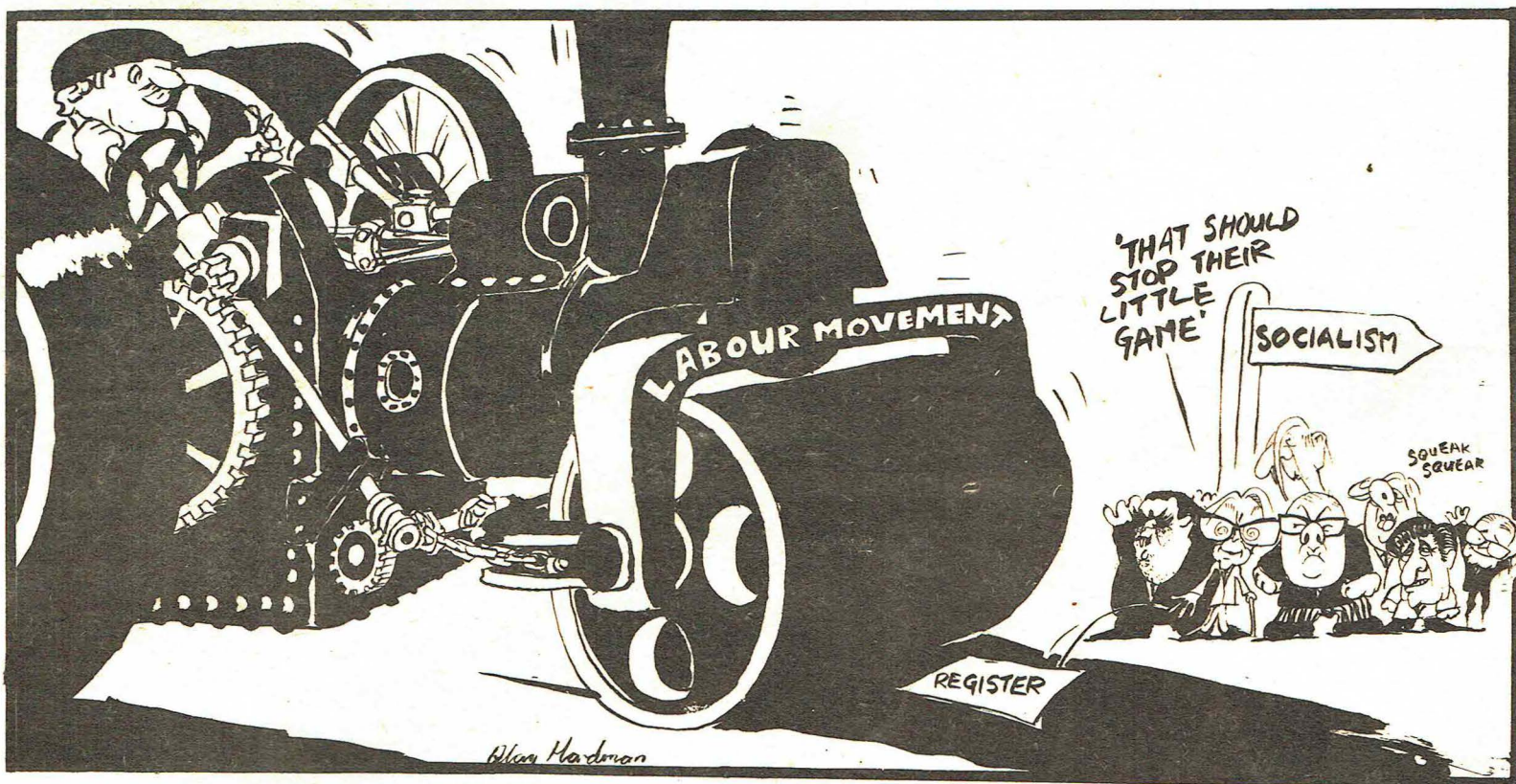
Nurses and ancillary workers in the NHS are angry that they are forced to take strike action—in a campaign now lasting over four months—against the cruel indifference of Tory ministers.

Moreover, the Health Service is threatened with being dismantled in favour of an American-style private insurance service.

Social and economic problems mount up for workers. Problems pile upon problems. The government's own 'blue book' statistics showed recently that there has been a bigger fall in living standards in the last two years than at any time since the war.

But workers who have been looking expectantly at the Labour Party conference to find a way out of the mess that the Tory government has landed them in, will have been dismayed at the spectacle of the leadership of the party, with the right-wing in the majority, launching all its fire and fury, not at the Tories, but at good socialists in their own party.

In the coming months leading up to the next



By
John Pickard

Salford Explosion... Labour Movement Demands Enquiry

By Viv Seal

Full story
Page 6

general election, when all energies should be directed at the Thatcher crew and their shadows in the SDP and Liberal Party, many decent hard-working members will be forced to fight tooth and nail just to stay in the party.

Many Labour Party branches will have to spend time fighting against their disbandment by the Labour Party NEC. If there are internal wrangles and battles in the coming 12 or 18 months the responsibility for it lies squarely on those who have launched the campaign of expulsions.

During the conference debate on the register, Roy Grantham, one of the witch-hunters, made his point clear: "We are determined", he said, "that the editorial

Continued on back page

The responsibility for the circumstances leading up to the Salford warehouse explosion which led to seventy people being treated in hospital and large-scale damage to hundreds of homes is clear.

It is the fault of business, which puts profits above peoples' safety, and the Thatcher government which has cut back on health and safety procedures.

Even before anyone knew there were dangerous chemicals stored in the warehouse, local residents

complained about the depot. Peter Gunn, Secretary of Salford LPYS, lives in Eleanor Cuddesford Court right next to the warehouse.

"It's a scandal", he said, "we've been complaining about the depot since we moved in three years ago". Peter has a copy of a letter sent to the council complaining about the noise and dust and the fact that such a depot could be sited in one of the most densely populated areas of Europe.

The Health and Safety Ex-

ecutive Director has been unable to say when the warehouse was last inspected. In Greater Manchester, which covers Salford, there are fewer than 40 inspectors to monitor over 29,000 premises.

In the country as a whole there are only 850 investigators. 'To save public expenditure', but in reality to endanger public safety, the Tories have axed 150 inspectors jobs.

But prosecutions, when they do take place, have such

little impact, with such small fines, that they do nothing to deter employers from ignoring safety precautions to get a better profit.

And many of the regulations are not up to date. It seems that the Salford depot was not covered by the normal regulations governing the storage of dangerous chemicals eg the Fire Brigade's right to inspect the premises.

A full-scale Labour movement inquiry must uncover the truth behind the Salford explosion, and put forward the remedies for preventing its repetition. The Thatcher business government can't be expected to do it, the labour movement must.

Right wing paper majority will not intimidate Labour's ranks

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

If Labour's right-wing think that the register is the end of the road for Militant then they are seriously mistaken.

We will fight to reverse this anti-democratic, witch-hunting decision. We will fight any attempt at expulsions. We will take the fight to every corner of the Labour movement, and we are confident that we will win the over-whelming support of Labour Party members and active trade unionists.

The not-unexpected majority for the register is, of course, a setback for the Militant, a blow to the Left, and a threat to socialist policies. The enemies of Labour, especially the media who have been pressing for a witch-hunt, are laughing. They are cheering while Michael Foot, supporting the register as "vital to party unity", is splitting the party from top to bottom with a witch-hunt.

Instead of fighting the Tories with bold socialist policies, the right are fighting the most active class fighters within the party. But the majority at Blackpool, stitched up by the right-wing leaders, will be, without a doubt, unstitched by the rank and file. When all the facts are known and the arguments heard, the Labour leaders responsible for this manoeuvre will be brought to book by their members.

Those who are fighting for party democracy and bold socialist policies, far from being driven out of the movement, will be enormously strengthened in the course of this battle.

The Right claim that they have won a crushing majority for this register, which was designed as an instrument to purge Militant and its supporters.

But it was nothing but a paper majority. 80%, perhaps 90% of consistency parties voted against the register. So how will the right carry out their purge? Who will expel the Militants?

The right-wing were cock-a-hoop in the bars of posh hotels on Monday night. But it will be a different story in the coming weeks and months.

Most Constituency Labour Parties will resist ex-

pulsions and they will tenaciously fight any attempt of the right to veto their freedom to select a parliamentary candidate of their choice. If the right wing can veto candidates, it would negate the right of re-selection.

The register was carried by the block votes of the unions. However, a number of unions, notably the TGWU and USDAW, voted against their own conference decisions to oppose bans, expulsions, and proscriptions. Almost every trade union delegation at Blackpool was split, with strong opposition against a witch-hunt. In fact, if a couple of dozen individual union delegates had voted differently in their union caucus meetings the vote in conference could have been very different by millions.

When the arguments are taken to the union branches, the district committees and the shop stewards committees, there will be a storm of opposition to the undemocratic machinations of the leadership.

Mortimer accused Militant of not supporting unilateral disarmament — yet it was moved two years ago by Pat Wall!

The right-wing feel that they are riding high, especially after the NEC elections, which have undoubtedly strengthened their position. Some on the left, it seems, are in despair at these developments. But it would be completely mistaken to think there is a profound swing to the right in the labour movement.

In reality, the leadership has shifted to the right while the ranks of the labour movement, especially the active workers in the trade unions, are moving rapidly to the left. The workers want

action to bring down the Tories. They want to return a Labour government which will implement socialist policies. The register and right-wing gains on the NEC will not restore support for the discredited policies of the right.

The witch-hunt is a desperate attempt to bolster up the position of the right, after they have lost the arguments on policies within the party.

It is former left-wingers, however, who have been doing the Right's dirty work as far as the register is concerned.

Jim Mortimer claims to be a man of the left. But what has he done but put in a more skilful and ruthless form the old arguments of Lord Underhill and John Golding, the right-wing's arch witch-hunters?

The register, Mortimer argued, is defending democracy. But what democracy is there if Labour Party members are not allowed to campaign and win support for their ideas? The register is not a question of ideology, says Mortimer, but half his speech at the conference was a slanderous attack and a gross misrepresentation of our ideas.

He even accused Militant, for example, of not supporting unilateral disarmament. Yet who was it who moved the composite two years ago which established Labour's policy? It was none other than Pat Wall!

Michael Foot also disclaims any witch-hunting intentions. But he has now discovered that the constitution is the Ark of Labour's Covenant. Under the guise of defending this, he has given his support to an attempt to defeat marxist arguments and drive out marxists with bureaucratic organisational measures.

Foot however, made no mention of Militant's real crime—our fight for reselection, and against the divine right of Labour MPs to hold their seats for ever. The real grievance of the Right is our support for working class parliamentary candidates who will go to Parliament as tribunes of their class.

Foot has done the right's dirty work but how much can he rely on their gratitude? Already, there are numerous reports of moves by the right of the Parliamentary Labour Par-



'Peace in our time'

ty to oust Foot and replace him with a more respectable right-wing leader.

Foot, moreover, has been backed by other lefts, like Joan Lestor, who has just lost her seat on the NEC and Neil Kinnock whose vote fell sharply this year.

Kinnock says he supports the expulsion of Militant's inner core, but not the expulsion or the de-endorsement of parliamentary candidates like Pat Wall and Tony Mulhearn. But how does he propose to stop the right going the whole way?

Howell, Hattersley, Healey, and other supporters of Labour Solidarity have made it quite clear that they want all Militant supporters out. In fact Dennis Healey and Golding, within hours were talking of 'hundreds' of expulsions. They want to expunge marxist ideas from the Labour Party. As far as they are concerned, it is the register which now gives them the authority to do it.

The lesson of this conference is that there is no half-way house. The Right have been ruthless. They removed from the NEC opponents of the witch-hunt like Joan Maynard, and Eric Clarke of the National Union of Mineworkers. But even Doug Hoyle who went along with moves towards a witch-hunt has been removed by them.

On the other hand, candidates who clearly stand on the ideas of Militant got a

higher vote than ever before. Pat Wall received 103,000 votes in the Constituency section while Terry Fields (FBU) received 1,305,000 votes in the trade union section.

It is high time that unions which claim to stand on the left packed up the horse-trading in block votes for NEC votes and used their block votes to support left candidates who consistently defend socialist policies and party democracy.

Militant supporters will not be emptied out of the party

There are some on the left, it must also be said, who while opposing the register and expulsion claim that Militant is "irrelevant" or an "insignificant force" within the party. While opposing expulsions they cannot resist having a side-swipe at Militant.

But if Militant was irrelevant, or insignificant, why the register? Why the debate at conference? Why the determination of the right-wing to purge the Militant?

The truth is, the right recognise that Militant has been the pace-maker in the struggle for party democracy and socialist policies. Militant's ideas are being a

catalyst for the working class in the Labour party. And it is Militant which is the main obstacle to the right's counter revolution in the party.

The right-wing have the measure of those of the left who are ready to run for cover at the first signs of a battle.

This is why the right wants the Militant emptied out of the party.

But we are not impressed by the right's paper majority. We will not be intimidated by a register. Militant and its supporters will campaign tenaciously to reverse the decision on the register. We will fight all attempts to expel marxists from the Labour party.

We will defend the right of CLPs to select their own candidates without the veto of the right.

The supporters of Militant will continue to build up the Labour Party and the Labour Party Young Socialists and win workers and youth to the fight for socialism.

We will continue the fight to bring down the Tory government and return a Labour government with socialist policies.

Neither Militant nor the ideas of marxism will be separated from the Labour movement. On the contrary, our support will go from strength to strength, and the success of the right-wing will be short-lived.

The Register - Right lose the argument but win the block vote

The crucial issue of the register was decided in Monday afternoon's angry but extremely brief debate.

The media was there in force, baying for blood. Jim Mortimer and Michael Foot claimed that this was no witch-hunt. But the Right made it clear that they were pushing for a massive purge of marxists.

The anger of a majority of CLP delegates and many trade union delegates was evident, but there was no time to express this in the debate. The trade union block votes had already been stitched up in advance.

Nevertheless, over one million votes went against the register, indicating the strength of rank and file opposition.

Moving the NEC's proposal for a register, **Jim Mortimer**, in his first speech to Conference as general secretary, re-stated the verdict of the Haywood/Hughes "enquiry".

"Militant," he said, "was not just a newspaper, but a party within the Labour Party and was in breach of Clause 2 of the constitution."

"However, a distinction should be drawn," he said, "between Militant's inner organising group and its wider circle of supporters."

This was a distinction which the right-wing, as their speakers made clear, were not going to draw themselves.

Conference reports from Bob Wade and Lynn Walsh

The register was designed to enforce the rules, "it was not about ideology." But Mortimer then went on to attack Militant's "profoundly mistaken views."

Blatantly distorting our views on half-a-dozen issues, he asserted that Militant's ideas made its supporters "the ideological allies of the right-wing of the conservative party!"

Moving composite 48, which called for the action to enforce the constitution, **Roy Grantham** of APEX and **John Speller** (EETPU and prospective Labour candidate for the Northfield by-election) left no doubt that the right want massive expulsions of Militant supporters from the party. Grantham praised "Foot's courage" and in the most vitriolic language demanded the expulsion of the "cuckoos in the nest, a different species."

It was not a witch-hunt, he claimed, but he then made it clear that Militant's editors should go, the paper sellers should go, and the parliamentary candidates

should go.

Alan Sapper, moving composite 49 against the witch-hunt and the register, warned that this undemocratic move would mean expulsions and would be used by the Right to strike at our policies. Seconding, **Ray Apps**, Brighton Kemp-town Labour Party, refuted the idea that Militant supporters were "an electoral liability for the Labour Party" pointing to Labour gains in recent local elections in Brighton and Merseyside where Militant supporters are parliamentary candidates.

"It is a scandal that in the run-up to a general election," he said "people who had invited the SDP renegades to re-join the party are trying to split the party with a purge. Socialist policies are the issue, not the constitution."

Martin Flannery MP received loud applause from delegates when he said that "those who were pushing these resolutions on the register were dividing the party and would inflict a wound on the party which would take years to heal." Referring to the fact that the Transport and General Workers Union delegation had voted against the decision of its executive, Flannery warned that it was the enemies of the Labour movement who were supporting the APEX resolution. "The register would first

be used against Militant," he said, "then other left groups, then Michael Foot himself, and then conference decisions on EEC withdrawal and unilateral nuclear disarmament."

When he gave his name as "Underhill" there were loud shouts of "lord, lord!" The arch-witch-hunter, author of many reports on the Left in the party, rehearsed all the old allegations, repeatedly alluding to "stacks of evidence" which he never went into.

Pat Wall (Shipley Labour Party), and prospective parliamentary candidate for Bradford North, said that the Labour Parties and Trade unions in Bradford were united in their fight against the Tories and the system. "Now this unity was being undermined by the war being waged on us by a section of the Parliamentary Labour Party, backed up by trade union leaders."

He said the "register is a spit in the face for Labour Party members." Pat Wall indignantly refuted the claim that the register was not a witch-hunt.

"How many had to be expelled before it became a witch-hunt?" he asked. "Expelling one socialist from the party for socialist ideas was a witch-hunt."

"But", he warned, "you can't witch-hunt ideas. You will never witch-hunt the marxists out of the Labour Party."



Photo: Militant

Financial sacrifice call touches MP's nerves

Dave Nellist, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Coventry South East, was warmly received by the Constituency delegates when he spoke in the session on Labour's finances. MPs, he suggested, should live on the wages of ordinary workers and they should donate the rest back to the Labour Party itself. When they make money from TV appearances and from publishing their memoirs, he continued, they should give that back also, in which case the Labour Party would clear up its debt in no time.

Not surprisingly, Dave's speech touched on a very raw nerve as far as the MPs were concerned. In the section of the conference hall where the MPs sat, it was red faces and heart flutters all round and furious arguments broke out as they indignantly defended their £550 a week (including ex-

penses) against Dave's modest suggestion that they give up £20 a week.

Unable to answer the arguments put forward, **Eric Varley**, Party Treasurer, made the ritualistic attack upon the finances of Militant, implying, wrongly, that Militant supporters did not raise money for the Party.

Later on, another speaker unconsciously acknowledged the political appeal of Militant when he urged the Party membership to raise, not £8000 (a reference to the sum collected at the Militant meeting of the LPYS conference), but £80,000. — "using the methods of Militant". £80,000, in fact, is small compared to what the Party could raise from working people if it really did adopt the policies and programme of Militant, but that would include the suggestions of Dave Nellist.

Co-op International Fringe Meeting

At the International rally held by the London Co-op political committee, **Tony Benn** attacked the resurgence of militaristic ideas in the press.

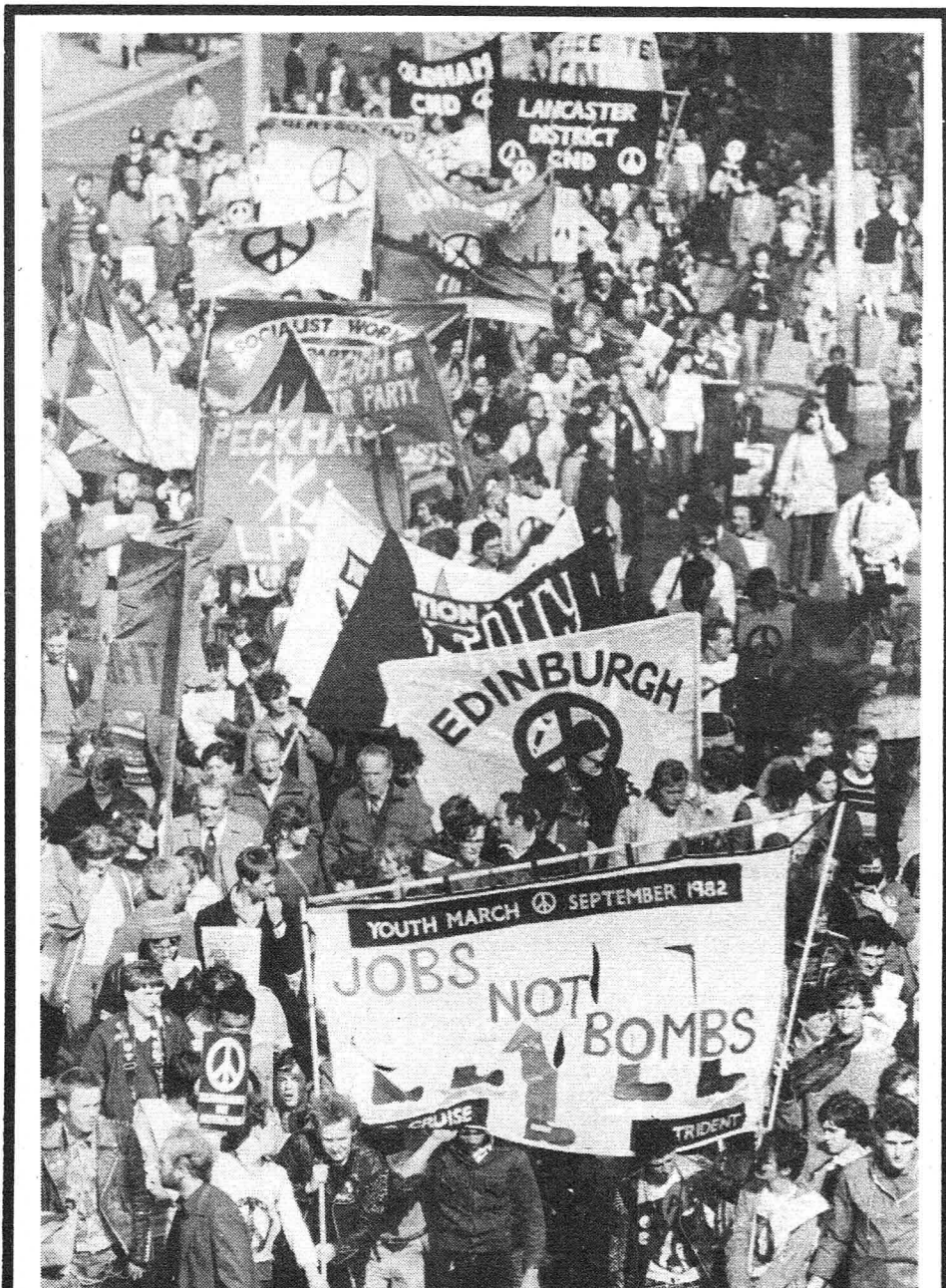
The Labour movement, he said, should be re-analysing the ideas of socialism: "That is why we don't want to expel good socialists at the moment. We want to re-discover our past. What socialism is and what we are fighting against."

International speakers out-lined the repression and struggle of the International working class throughout the world. **Norma Kitson**, the wife of the white trade-unionist imprisoned in South Africa, outlined the campaign in Britain. There had been a continual picket outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, despite intimidation by the police. She

attacked the collaborationist attitude of the Tory foreign office.

There was also sharp criticism for the NEC statement on the Lebanon. **George Galloway**, of the Trade Union Friends of Palestine, said he welcomed the statement as a step forward, but said it had two flaws. The statement, he said, praised the Israeli Labour Party for its stand. **George Galloway** said "this is a travesty. It is absurd because, in the beginning, the Labour Party supported the war."

"Secondly, the statement called on the USA to use its influence to solve the situation," he continued, "It was the White House which gave the green light to Begin to go into the Lebanon and rain down terror on the people."



CND supporters in the Labour Party marched from Manchester to Blackpool to lobby the conference. Unfortunately the new right wing NEC will not only be fighting to kick out Militant, they will also be fighting against Labour's commitment to unilateral disarmament. Photo: John Smith (IFL)



In his reply **Michael Foot** made an impassioned defence of the register. But his speech was notably lacking in argument.

The main argument was that the constitution, handed down to us by our fore-bearers must be defended at all costs. "The constitution would hold the party together. The constitution would be the instrument of victory," he argued.

He ignored the point that the party constitution was being radically changed and the party democracy being undermined by the register, and particularly by the way the right-wing obviously intend to implement the register.

"There had been witch-hunts in the past," he agreed. "There had been allegations of conspiracy against Aneurin Bevan and Stafford Cripps, but there had been no conspiracy. In this case, there is a conspiracy," he asserted. "That's the difference. No one would be expelled for socialist ideas," he said.

But the strong applause for these points from the right-wing on the platform, from within the ranks of the Labour MPs present and from some of the trade union delegations suggested a different story.

LABOUR CONFERENCE REPORTS

Labour Herald meeting

Right-wing are vote losers

"The enemies of the Labour movement will rejoice at today's decision. What Hitler said about the Jews I listened to the same said about the Militant Tendency today."

So Joan Maynard slammed the right-wing who has pushed the witch-hunt register through. She was speaking at the Labour Herald meeting, held on the evening after the Conference agreed on the register. Prominent figures of the Labour left were at the meeting.

Referring to the accusation that Militant was responsible for the low Labour vote in the Gower election victory, Joan Maynard said, "why was there an appalling low vote in 1979? That was nothing to do with the Militant Tendency. Much more it was the policies of Hattersley and the right-wing that crucified us."

Earlier, Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM, lashed into the media and its distortion of events. He said, "I was asked by a reporter would I tell him why 10% of the quarter of a million miners didn't come out on the 22nd. I said no, but I will tell you why 90% did!" He praised the action and the response to the 22nd, but said, "there was one flaw. The General Council of the TUC should have called a strike for that day."

Reports by
Bob Wade and
Lynn Walsh

Tony Benn told how a TV reporter telephoned him last week to ask him if he was "speaking at a Militant meeting in Liverpool", on the Tuesday. He said "no". He was speaking at a Liverpool District Labour Party meeting.

"Was it on the witch-hunt?" they asked.

"No", he replied, "on unemployment. So the cameras didn't come."

He said that was why we have got the register and added, "there should be no expulsions in the Labour Party. Let me make that absolutely clear."

Chairing the meeting, Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Labour Group, gave a graphic example of how a witch-hunt gained its own momentum. He himself had been expelled at the time of the attack on Socialist Outlook in the 1960's and his CLP which did not accept this decision ended up being disbanded 3 times."

LEFT WING IDEAS WIN WORKERS

Anyone who says left-wing policies can't attract working people should have been at Liverpool District Labour Party's pre-conference Rally on 21 September.

Over 3,000 people packed into St. Georges Hall to hear Tony Benn address the District Labour Party's pre-conference rally.

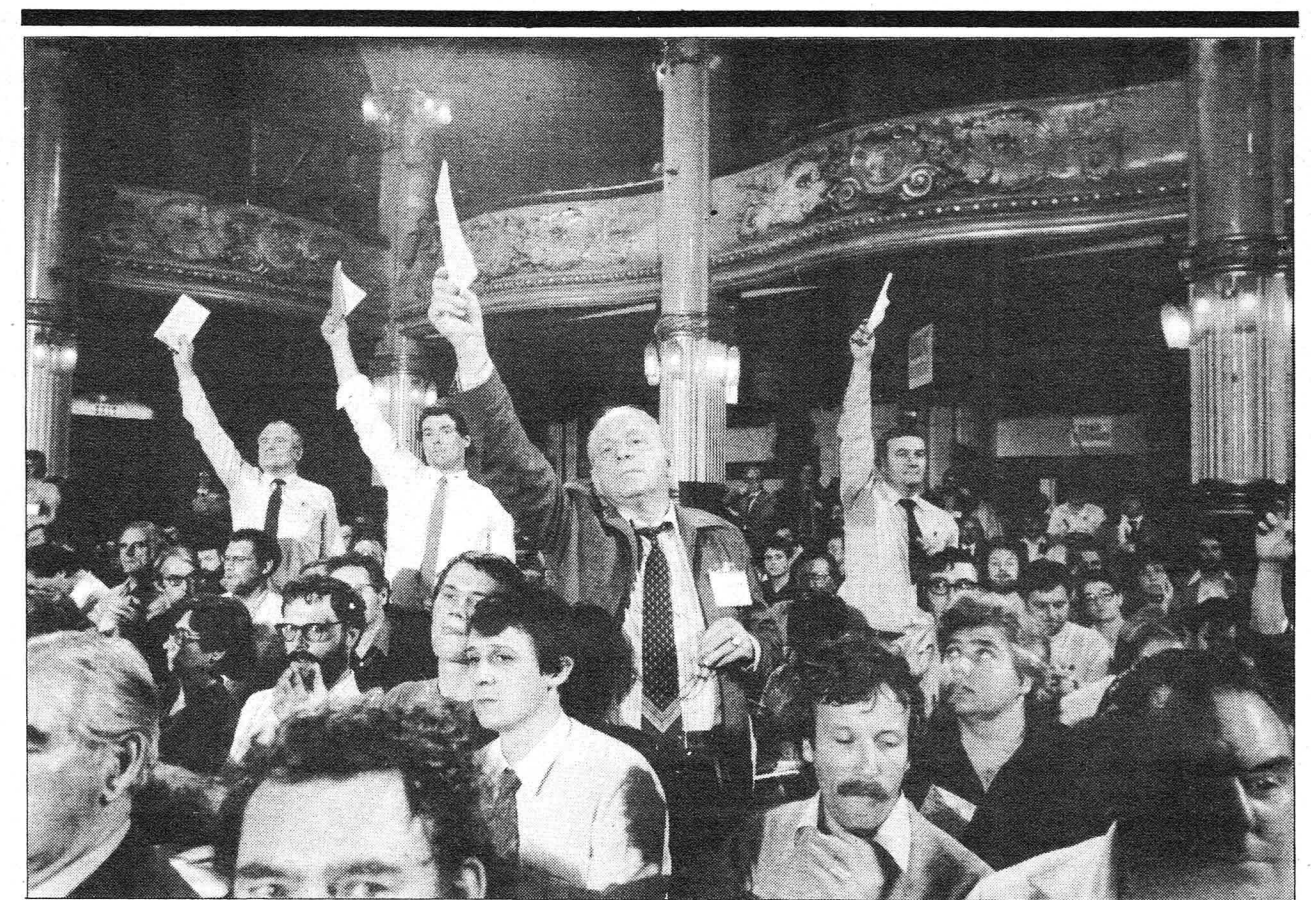
The meeting was firmly in favour of a bold attack on the Tories and not the socialists. Speaker after speaker gave support to the health workers. Eddie Loyden took up the feelings when he said "I didn't join the Labour Party to be a stretcher bearer for capitalism, I joined to be its pall-bearer."

Sylvia Reynoldson represented the Labour Council and women in the Labour Party, and Ray Williams spoke on behalf of the Unemployed centre.

Simon Swinnerton on behalf of Merseyside LPYS asked "What did Tebbit know of the problems of young people on £25 a week, when he got £500 a week? He was pricing himself out of a job and that's why support for the LPYS demonstration on October the 16th was urged." 300 signatures were collected for the YS in response.

Derek Hatton, Wavertree PPC attacked the local Tories, called the Liberals. "Labour councillors" he said "are in business to confront the Tory government alongside the local authority unions. We should be concentrating on the Tories, not the Socialists. Liverpool Labour Party is pledged to get rid of the Liberals and Tories and no-one will stand in our way," he said to enthusiastic applause.

Alan Roberts, MP for Bootle spoke on the need for international solidarity as well as solidarity with the health workers. Tony Mulhearn, PPC for Toxteth chairing the meeting, attack-



Constituency Party Section at this year's Conference Photo: D.Doran

SAVE THE NHS

"In opening this conference, I bring you this message from the Blackpool District Labour Party. We want the extremists out. That the extremists we want out are Fowler, Thatcher and co".

So Donald Neish of Blackpool Labour Party and chairman of the local NUPE branch opened the Labour Party Conference to rapturous applause.

The first conference debate, on the NHS made it clear that the majority of delegates wanted to fight the Tories, not the socialists. Uniformed nurses, COHSE members received a standing ovation.

ed the campaign by the "scribblers of Fleet Street" and the local Echo against the rank and file of the labour movement. When he attacked Wilson for vilifying Tony Benn the very name of Wilson was booed loudly by the audience.

The highlight of the evening was Tony Benn, who praised the PPC's. "What an addition to the Parliamentary Labour Party they would be." He explained that the Labour Party was brought into existence to protect working people.

Those struggles began outside Parliament. The ruling class didn't wake up one day and say "oh, we've forgotten to give male workers the vote, and then woke up decades later to say we've forgotten the women."

"We have to struggle" he said, "and if we're going to we better struggle together. What brings people together is a programme. If that is done no power on earth can stop the Labour movement."

Tom Sawyer, NUPE, praised the response to the September 22nd day of action saying "the Labour movement has re-found its confidence." He called for the first of the regional days of action organised by the TUC in Merseyside in October 4th to be solid, saying "strike for the health workers."

Albert Spanswick (COHSE), said the health workers were not crying "wolf" when they said the NHS was under threat—findings of the Tory "Think Tank" recently had proved that.

But the discussion was not just about offering support to the NHS workers. The composite resolution from Fulham and Braintree CLP pointed to the need to nationalise private medicine and take over the pharmaceutical industry. This could then give a truly socialist NHS and a minimum wage for all health workers of £90.

The Fulham delegate, in a powerful speech, attacked the pharmaceutical multi-

nationals. "They stop their research if it is not profitable, they push ineffective harmful drugs into areas such as the third world."

"We are not talking about nationalising the small high-street chemists, but the big multi-nationals—Boots, ICI, etc."

Dave Smith from Braintree said "we must integrate the posh private hospitals into the NHS. We want workers to be able to get into these wards and not just to clean the floors and to make the beds." He also stated, "we want the reversal of NHS cuts, from 1976 to 1981. £541 million was underspent—we want this put back and with interest and dividends too."

Clive Jenkins (ASTMS) highlighted the pressure being put on the health workers by the Tory government. He told how a group of scientific and technical staff who were occupying their workplace suffered at the hands of the police.

Forty three police officers smashed their way into the building and carried them

off, some handcuffed, to the local police station. They were interrogated and female staff had their bras and tights taken away "in case they committed suicide." All this was done under the Trespass Act designed in the last century to stop poachers!

In summing up the debate, David Williams for the NEC attacked the Liberals at their recent conference for their double standards; Cyril Smith who voted for Tebbit's bill was seen fighting to hug and kiss with nurses on the demonstration.

Unfortunately however, the NEC opposed the Fulham composite saying the call for a minimum wage was a matter for the TUC and raised several other objections. The composite was lost on a card vote.

However, another composite was carried which called for urgent support for the health workers and pledging to re-build the NHS. It also carried a call for the pharmaceutical industry to be taken into public ownership.

Rank and file Reject Expulsions

The vast majority of Constituency Party delegates voted against the register and showed that they want nothing to do with expulsions.

Before the conference Crosby CLP wrote to Jim Mortimer, the Party's General Secretary: "There will be no co-operation from this Constituency with regard to registration or the expulsion of members or supporters of Militant or any other socialist or Marxist group which thinks its rightful place is in the Labour Party." At a meeting on 19 September East Dumbartonshire CLP voted overwhelmingly against the register. "Why is the leadership afraid of socialist ideas?" asked one older member.

Some of the Old Guard in

the party may be afraid of socialism, but a glance at Militant's recent postbag shows that ordinary people are not. One twenty-one year old USDAW member has written asking for more information as 'your reported views seem very akin to mine: sexual and racial equality, nuclear disarmament.'

Another has written offering to make a financial contribution because 'I feel a 'buzz' of political excitement when I read about the aims of Militant. Somehow over the years the need to look after the young, the weak, the sick and the old has been subjugated in favour of some sort of 'Americanisation' of this country. Long live the welfare state, long live the Militant, workers of this country unite.'

No To
Coalition

Applause greeted Birkenhead delegate, Richard Venton, when he called on the Parliamentary Labour Party to make it clear that they do not envisage a future coalition with the SDP.

The debate was on the Tebbit Bill, and Conference voted over-whelmingly to fight it. However, the Birkenhead resolution which called for a 24-hour general strike was defeated.

Bill Keys (SOGAT) called on the Labour leaders to show the same tenacity towards its class as the Tories do to theirs. However, while saying it was right to break Tory laws he was against a 24-hour general strike as it "would be going down the road of no return."

16 OCTOBER YOPS DEMO

GET TORIES OUT! is top priority for LPYS

Youth in Britain face a crisis. A total of 289,054 school leavers are still without work and the Manpower Services Commission has forecast that at least 55% of all those between 16 and 18 years old will be out of work in the next three years.

Thatcher and her crew have youth in the front line of their attacks on the living standards of working people. Unemployment has been cynically and deliberately used to undermine the wages and conditions of those youth lucky enough to still have a job.

As one older NUPE member put it at a meeting in Hayes and Harlington, "Thatcher wants to screw youth into the floor, use them as cheap labour and drag them back to conditions worse than the 1930s."

Last summer saw Britain in flames as youth expressed their frustration and bitterness in blazing riots across

By Nick Toms
(LPYS NC)

the country. Events which offered no way forward or solution to their problems.

This year the ASLEF strikes and now the NHS dispute has seen the anger of youth against the Tories expressed positively on picket lines and in demonstrations. Increasingly youth are turning to the labour movement for an answer to their problems.

The socialist ideas of the LPYS point a clear way forward. As a young miner explained at a weekend school in Northumberland, "I'm amazed at the number of left-wingers here. A lot of my workmates have similar ideas to those of the LPYS."

In other words, the potential for building the LPYS is almost unlimited. The response, to date, throughout the country to the October

16 campaign, gives just a hint at what is possible.

In Swansea, 140 names have been obtained from dole queues and Further Education colleges to go on the march. In Neath, 25 have been signed up for the demonstration from an FE college, in Pontypool after a meeting in an unemployed day centre 30 put their names down for Liverpool. A number of miners' lodges in South Wales are sending delegations, no doubt following the lead of the South Wales NUM area executive who have donated £100 to the campaign.

The TUC day of action also proved a fruitful source of new recruits. In Brentwood alone nine new members, mainly nurses, were signed up on picket lines.

In every area of the country we must ensure that the campaign around October 16 is not seen simply as getting bodies on coaches but instead as a means of building the membership of the LPYS.

Every area must ensure that it has a good supply of application forms as well as literature about the demonstration. The right wing think they can witchunt the socialist ideas of the LPYS out of the Labour Party. Let us answer them in the best way possible by having as one of our slogans for Oct 16, "Double the membership!"



Over 8,000 LPYS members went on the Labour Party march in Liverpool two years ago (above)
Photo: Militant

Trade Unionists give support

In Manchester the campaign to build support for the demo on Oct 16th has already ensured that every Y.S. branch has become known in its area as the only organisation seriously leading working class youth in the fight against Thatcher.

Every branch has committed itself to filling at least one coach, and with 11 coaches already booked, tickets being sold, canvassing, street meetings, leafletting at the dole queue and at colleges, it still looks as though more coaches will be needed.

As we are subsidising the unwaged, all the factories and unions are being approached, not only to send delegations but to sponsor the unemployed, YOPs and F.E. Students.

In Macclesfield, where the Y.S. has played a leading role in the NHS dispute, NUPE and COHSE branches have committed themselves to support for the demo. SOGAT have bought

5 tickets and Macclesfield FBU have donated £30.

The shop stewards at Manor Bakery Wythenshawe are taking football cards round the factory to raise funds for the coach. The Y.S. has also left leaflets in the Job Centre and pinned cards on the YOP notice board saying: "Wanted; Youth to March against the Tories" with the Y.S. Secretary's phone number.

Openshaw Y.S. has just been established with an inaugural meeting of 18. The dole is leafleted every day and there has been a very good response from the factories; the SSC of Metal Box, for example, have committed themselves to sending a delegation and raising money.

Stockport Trades Council has donated £20 and Stockport Y.S. has been leafletting Stockport County Football ground. Already tickets for half the coach have been paid for. Stretford Y.S. has booked a double decker bus and raised £20 from a collection at the GMC.

In Blackely, during the course of building to fill their coach, one Y.S. member still at school brought out St Matthews school on Sept

22nd, and the local priest also withdrew his labour except for an emergency service—last rites.

In Salford the boiler-makers have agreed to circulate all their branches. 20 names were taken for the demo from one street meeting in Eccles.

In Withington where young NHS workers have been united with the Y.S. during the course of the dispute we are confident that the demo will be well supported from Christies and Withington hospital.

Farnworth Y.S. has held lively street meetings where over 30 names of young people have been collected. The Y.S. also held its own disco which raised £19.

The Y.S. is also making its presence felt in Bolton for the first time, where there is no Y.S. branch. Bolton TGWU has agreed to circulate all its branches, Bolton CLP has been approached and Bolton Tech. leafleted.

At Worsley Tech. one Y.S. member asked if she could address a disco. They turned the music off and she announced about a march against Thatcher—at this there was loud cheering and at the end 15 people said they

wanted to go on the march.

In Altrincham and Sale after the Y.S. had spoken at AUEW Broadheath 4 branch, who agreed to sponsor two unwaged people, the comrades took a collection at the Labour Club where the meeting was held and raised £11. We are now approaching other Trades and Labour Clubs.

At a street meeting in Chorlton, one comrade was outlining the ideas and programme of the Militant. After five or six minutes, when a crowd was gathering, the police came up and informed him if he didn't move on they'd arrest him for obstruction and disturbing the peace.

Three old ladies jumped to his defence saying: "What are you taking him away for?"

"It's just because he doesn't like Margaret Thatcher," they went on, "... well we don't like her either so you'll have to take us as well."

They then told him; "We know why you like her—it's because she gives you good wage rises, if you had to live on my pension you'd think differently."

The perplexed policemen then moved on leaving our

comrades selling the paper and calling for trade union rights for the police.

Kath McDonnell
(Altrincham and Sale LPYS)

DERBY

East Midlands Labour Party Young Socialists has one record we're making a real effort to lose! In Derby we've the largest city in the country without an LPYS branch. The October 16th demonstration has, however, provided the ideal opportunity to build for the ideas of socialism and show local youth a real alternative to the Tories.

We picketed the Job Centre last Tuesday to highlight the appalling situation in the town. Over 2,000 young people are registered at the careers office and along with 1,350 on YOPs they make up

a group of young people described as 'yet to find permanent employment'. With only 2 vacancies at the careers office the chances are slim!

The TGWU District Officer has agreed to circulate all branches and raise support for the October demo at the next District Committee. This work will be followed up with visits to workplaces and a factory gate meeting at Rolls Royce.

A 'Day of Action' last Saturday really showed the potential. After a radio interview earlier in the week on Radio Derby, the Derby Evening Telegraph came to cover the event. Armed with banners, placards, leaflets, address sheets and of course the megaphone we made a real impact. A morning at the Eagle Centre precinct was followed by more activity there and outside Derby County in the afternoon. During the week we sold over a 100 'Militant's and 'Socialist Youth', and collected 20 names for the LPYS.

By Alan Strip
(Chairman, E. Midlands LPYS)



A Tory example

At the Tory Party conference we can expect the usual rubbish about the need for a moral revival in this country. William Whitelaw, Tory Home Secretary, will probably speak of declining values. He has certainly shown what values he upholds. Recently he lashed out £5,000 to aid a worthy cause.

To help a YOPs worker, or someone on Social Security? No—Whitelaw had 110 other objects in mind for his generosity. His £5,000 was to lay grey carpeting in the 110 cattle stalls on his Penrith farm.

Speculators' Conference

If you've got £172, to spare then the Conference coming up on 18th November cannot be missed. On the subject of "Investment Strategies for Surviving Volatile and recessionary markets", its advertising spells out the questions to be discussed: 'Will there be a banking collapse? Should I be in cash now? Will exchange controls be brought back? Should I sell property now? Which currency should I be in? Should I buy gold now? Will unemployment reach 5 million? Will this be the era of the Gilt and Bond markets or is the equity market going to make a big come back?'

Not surprisingly this Conference for speculators will be addressed by Enoch Powell, Walter Goldsmith (Director General of the Institute of Directors) stockbrokers etc. But as it will also hear from Denis Healey and Clive Jenkins two questions must be asked. Why are they going at all and will any fees, expenses they receive for addressing this Conference, and others during the coming year, be given straight to the Labour Party funds?

"Hard work, Low Pay, Miserable Conditions"

With unemployment threatening to return to the 10% levels of the 1930's, American Senators are considering returning to the policies they used then. They are considering a proposal to bring back the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), paying youngsters just the minimum wage to work at construction projects. It has already been revived in California (motto, 'Hard Work, Low Pay, Miserable Conditions').

But even this does not find favour with Reaganomics. Yet Reagan does have ample time to contemplate the advantages for the ruling class of the CCC. The Presidential retreat, Camp David, was originally built by CCC youngsters as a low-cost resort for Federal workers.

50 YEARS AGO—Youth unemployment

A survey of youth unemployment published in September 1932 gives an indication of the misery the capitalists wreaked upon that generation. It was a survey of the 140,000 14 to 18 year olds who had registered as unemployed on 16 February 1931, near the start of the depression. At that time most people left school at fourteen and the survey found that 18% of boys and 22% of girls aged 14 were out of work. The figures rose to 25% of boys and 24% of girls aged 16, and 47% of boys and 41% of girls aged 18.

But these figures hid a greater unemployment. If you were under 16 you got no benefit at all, and many did not bother to register. You only got benefit if you had paid over 30 contributions in the two years before your claim. As most youngsters were unable to find a secure job, the survey found that only 32% of boys and 28% of girls had any claim to benefit. And 15% of boys; 21% of girls, had never been able to find any job at all.



All that remains of the warehouse, storing dangerous chemicals, sited next to a large housing estate. Photo: V. Seal.

"I've never been so frightened in all my life"

"I thought it was a nuclear war," said a 12-year old girl. "We've been doing that at school. I was lying in bed when there was an explosion, then another, then another. I thought the world had ended."

Just before midnight on Saturday, a series of explosions in a haulage warehouse in Salford sent fireballs 500 yards into the night sky, visible for 12 miles around, followed by a mushroom cloud of poisonous corrosive chemical gases. The explosion was heard throughout Greater Manchester and in parts of Lancashire and also Cheshire.

A shock wave blew in hundreds of windows and rocked buildings in the Silk Street council estate. Chunks of asbestos roofing hit houses and landed in gardens. Two thousand people were evacuated to three local schools to escape toxic fumes.

Seventy people were treated in hospital. "It was a miracle" everybody said "that no-one was seriously hurt."

Mrs Gunn got back home just as the first explosion happened. "I've never been so frightened in all my life," she said. Her windows were blown in. Jagged pieces of glass cut up her arm-chair. "Ten minutes later and it would have been me."

Two more major explosions and a whole series of smaller ones followed over a

By Vivian Seal (Ardwick CLP)

three hour period; but Mrs Gunn didn't wait for them. She ran out of the flat and down the 16 flights of stairs in her stocking feet. "I left the flat with its windows smashed and the front door broken in. After all, what are possessions compared to your life? I thought the whole building was going up."

The man who lived above Mrs Gunn was on his balcony when the explosion happened. He was thrown to the back of the room by the blast. The baby woke up, her cot covered in sharp pieces of broken glass.

Labour Movement Enquiry

The fire was going all night. It took 200 firemen three hours to get it under control, but was still burning at 7 p.m. the next day. White corrosive ash drifted down on houses, cars and gardens. The wind carried it across the Irwell river and even as far away as Bury and Radcliffe, north of the city. People woke up on Sunday to find paint peeling from their cars.

Frank Allaun, the local MP, who spoke to us over the telephone from Labour Party Conference, said he was planning to ask "some very awkward questions" of William Whitelaw. He is demanding a public enquiry. Salford council who own the land have made it clear that the terms of the lease forbade its use for storage of dangerous or inflammable substances.

They are calling on Home Secretary Whitelaw to initiate an enquiry and if he refuses they may organise one themselves. The Fire Brigades Union is also pressing for an enquiry.

Peter Gunn (Secretary Salford LPYS) says there should be a workers' enquiry organised by the Trades Council, and involving local trade unions and tenants.

It all started with a fire at B and R Haulers warehouse. The explosion happened when fire reached the forty gallon drums of chemicals. "But", says Peter, "there are fires here all the time. The fire brigade is always coming to put them out. The owner must have known what was being stored, how toxic and explosive it was, and that there was always the danger of fire."

Local people had thought only vehicles were kept in the warehouse. Sodium Chlorate is now believed to have been stored on the site. Yet in the last five years, this substance has been the cause of at least two major chemical fires in the country and it is known to be highly unstable under certain conditions.

In fact, the owner, Adrian Bloor, was immediately able to tell the fire brigade what was in his depot. But he refused to comment about the explosion. He was "too upset." In fact, many of the residents thought it poetic justice that he was injured in a car crash as he rushed to the scene on Saturday night

and was later breathalysed.

The warehouse site was scheduled for demolition and clearance. Other old factory buildings in the area have been brought by the council under compulsory purchase and are already being pulled down.

Fined £900 for workers' death

The effect of public expenditure cuts, tenants observed, were evident in the clear-up afterwards. Salford Council's building maintenance department has 90 workers, but the council did not call out their own department to clear up after the fire.

Instead, they hired 26 private contractors. David Cohen, the building maintenance department convenor believes this to be another move in the council's plan to kill off the department.

The present capitalist system is totally unable to guarantee people's safety. Only a workers inquiry into all the background of this latest explosion and what can be done to stop such a re-occurrence offers any answer.

Less than 12 months ago another chemical explosion in nearby Stalybridge killed one man and seriously injured another. The owners at Stalybridge pleaded guilty for "failing to ensure the safety of their employees," earlier this year. The penalty? A fine of £900! They would have had to have spent a lot more than that to ensure safe working conditions.

While Thatcher and her system remains, it's only surprising that major accidents like the one at Salford don't happen more often.

Child-Minding as a full-time job

By Jean Ford

"There's nobody quite like mum," was the theme of a recent article in the Leicester Mercury, by a Dr Barfoot.

The doctor's article was full of contradictions. He accepted the dire lack of nursery provision—"only places for a quarter of the children of full-time working mothers"—yet criticised the use of child minders; "many of whom are unqualified."

But he then said, "however good the child minder may be, or however good the playgroup, nothing quite makes up for the absence of mother".

Jean Ford, a registered child minder, was really incensed by this article and wrote a letter to the 'Mercury' which was printed but not in full. Jean has sent Militant a more complete statement of her views.

On reading a recent article in my local newspaper by a prominent doctor giving a professional opinion that women with children should stay at home: It never ceases to astonish me that working mums are the targets of such glib condemnation and blamed for nearly every evil in this society from male unemployment to juvenile delinquency.

In spite of the passing of

the Equal Opportunities Act we can witness more and more speeches given by prominent citizens in this country stating quite openly that working mothers should sacrifice the little luxuries that their income provides by giving up their jobs and solving all the social ills of this society at a stroke.

When will they realize that in most cases, far from providing pin-money, these jobs, traditionally mundane and lowly paid, are crucial to supplement the family budget?

As so many women need to work, naturally enough the first obstacle is provision of the children's needs. The availability of nursery places in most areas is a joke. Being considered non-essential they fall victim to this government's cuts. If no nursery places are available then working mums must turn to people like me.

I became a registered child minder seven years ago after an interview by the local Social Services, who also checked over my home to make sure it was up to childcare standard. They've never been back to check if I'm doing OK. In fact, they'll only come if I ask them to.

I am allowed to mind up to three children between the ages of 1-5 years, but as I have an under 5 of my own, generally I have minded one other child. I can assure Dr Barfoot that I'm with the children all the time playing, talking, keeping them safe

and secure, so much so that it's my own kids who suffer the mishaps.

Child minding usually starts at 8.30am and finishes 5.30pm, for which I charge 25p per hour per child, so an average 40 hour per week brings in £10.00. But out of this I have to pay for treats, food, heat, etc, so my 'take home pay' is much smaller. I often look after children of one-parent families or of shiftworkers (eg nurses), in which case the child minding can go on as late as 7.00pm.

The Social Services department do not provide much support. When I began in an inner city area, the department at least organised afternoon 'get togethers' of child minders in a church hall or school classroom, but I wasn't able to go because they didn't provide me with a twin buggy. When I moved out into a county area I found the situation was worse. There are no get-togethers organised and the 200 local child minders have to share eight twin buggies! This is due to an ever-decreasing Social Services budget and the low priority given to child care facilities.

So you are left with the 'choice' of paying out £50 to buy a twin buggy or being stuck at home—and the money has to come out of your 'take home pay'. Child minders are allowed a daily third of a pint of milk per child but there's just too much hassle to get it.

It seems to me that our society has to face facts. Firstly, that so many women have to work, out of economic necessity, a shameful testament to the success of our country. Secondly, and just as important, if our society insists on forcing mothers out to work to make ends meet then free provision of nurseries and trained child minders should be given priority. Then, each mother can decide how best the child is minded, based on her judgement and feelings, rather than clinical economic facts.

But clinical economic facts dictate the way this whole system is run. Only when workers are able to democratically run society—on the basis of a planned economy, will the interests of the working people, especially mothers and children, be put first.

In a socialist society, excellent and free child care facilities would be provided for all those who needed them on a 24 hour basis. With a much reduced working week, women would be able to play a full role in the running of society. They would also have time to enjoy raising their children, without feeling harrassed all the time.

Women have everything to gain by linking up with all organised workers to kick out Thatcher and her reactionary crew, and fighting for the socialist transformation of society.

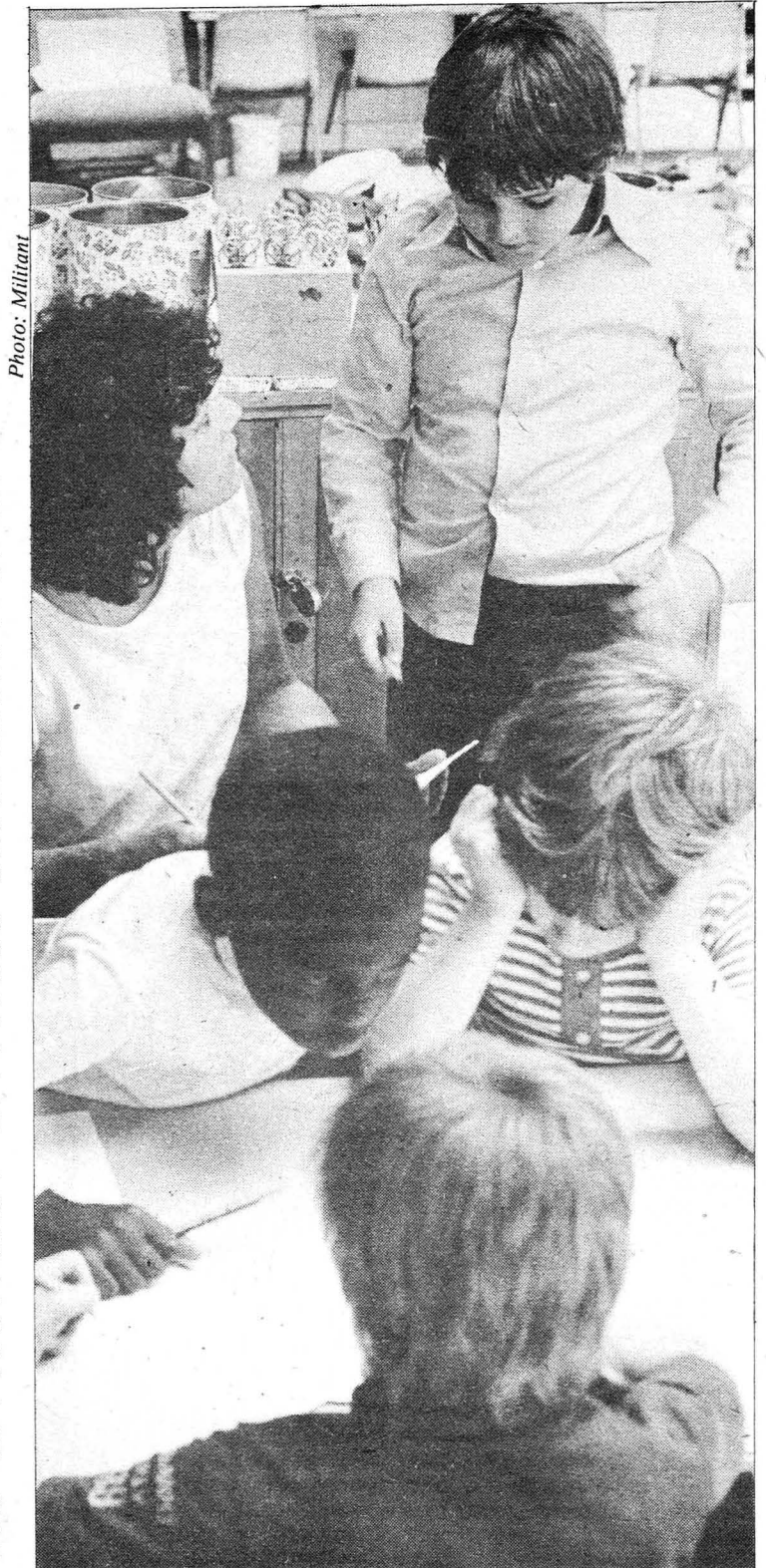


Photo: Militant

Councils have a statutory obligation to provide for over 5's education. Consequently, faced with the vicious cuts of the last few years, they have cut back drastically on the provisions for the under-fives, for nursery and child-care facilities.

Life in 'Styal'

A series of four programmes was shown on ITV recently, called living in Styal. Styal is a womens' prison.

Unfortunately, I was only able to see the first of these programmes, in which the interviews of several new inmates with the assistant governor were screened. Nothing could have revealed more clearly the class system in operation than the tragic case histories of these working class women.

One young woman, whose husband was also in prison after breaking all the windows of their council house, and who had only been out of prison herself for a month, had been sentenced to a further six months inside, for a breach of the peace.

Her crime had been to stand in the street shouting abuse and swearing at passers by, undoubtedly the only way in this society, in which she could release the frustrations and anguish which must be consuming her hopeless life.

Within two days in the prison she was already being disciplined for throwing a teapot. What hope for the

future can she and her husband have? When they come out of prison they will be homeless, and the council unlikely to offer housing after the windows of their last house were broken. And jobless, their slim chances of finding work ruined by their prison records.

Another woman, a mother of five, had given birth to a 1½ lb premature baby only the week before, and had discharged herself early from hospital in order to appear in court. She and her husband had been separated due to the tensions imposed on their marriage by unemployment.

She had to ask him to return home to take care of the children while she was in prison. What sort of appalling crime had this woman committed that she deserved to be separated from her children and her tiny baby? Murder? Armed robbery? Arson? No she was guilty of shoplifting.

So much for justice. Hardly ever has a television programme made me both so angry and so sad.

By R. Metcalfe
(Norwich Labour Party)

Homelessness in Tory 'madhouse'

"We got thrown out of our last guest house for threatening to call in the environmental health department because of the state of the toilet. Before that we lived in a condemned flat with damp, rats and no electricity.

"My family consists of myself, my wife and our eighteen month old child. For just over a year we have been living in guest house accommodation.

We have one room which serves as a bedroom and living room for the three of us and we share a kitchen with the rest of the people staying in the guest house.

We have now been on the council waiting list for eighteen months and need two points to qualify for a council place. But it will take at least two years to get those two points.

I've been unemployed for over two years, so I'm on supplementary benefit. They pay the guest house £80 a week. That's over £4,000 a year, which means they'd spend less if we had a mortgage and they paid for it. Because our rent for the

guest house is so high, I cannot afford to get a job. Even social security recognise this, and have taken me off their job interview lists.

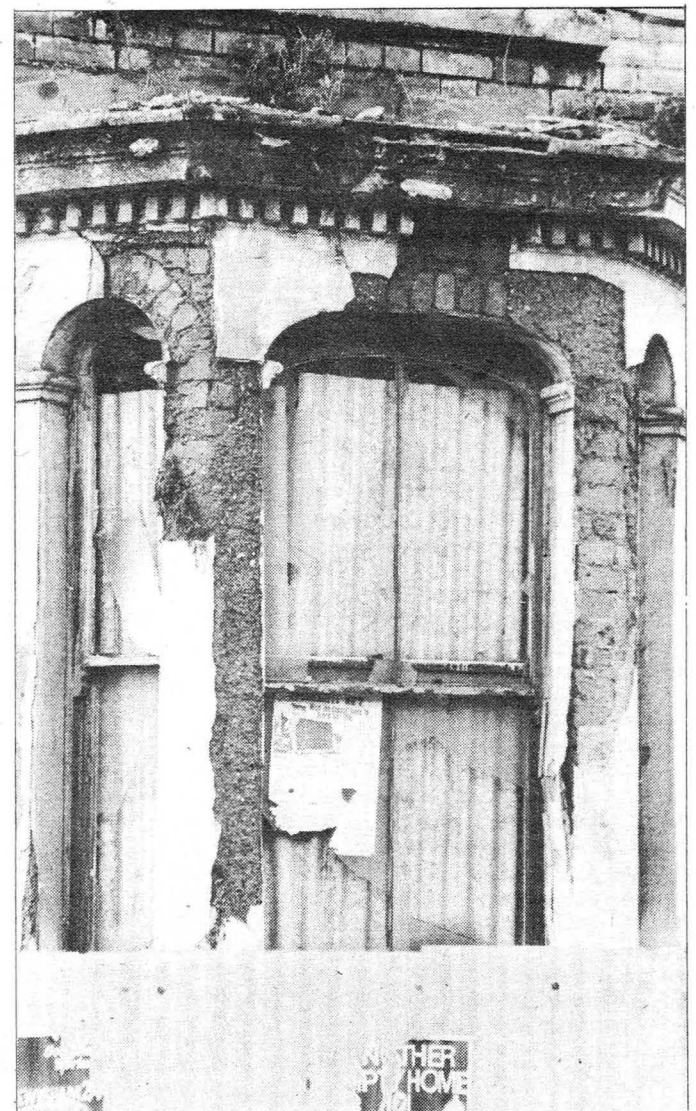
It's a madhouse. It costs a fortune to house me, and I'm condemned to at least two more years of unemployment and guest house accommodation. What employer will look at me then?

Having only the one room has a bad effect on our family, which will only get worse as winter comes on, and we have to stay in more. It means your life is one of continual frustration, with nothing that one individual can do about it.

As this situation is created by the government, only a different government has the power to break this vicious circle. That's why I'm a member of the Labour Party."

Interview by
Nick Brooks

(Southampton CLP)



Tory policies have ensured that houses are being built in fewer numbers than in any year since the 1920's. Slum conditions and bad housing will drive many workers to seek a salvation in the Labour Party. (Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report)

Visitors to Birkenhead Park often notice the missing spokes along the tops of the railings. This is no act of vandalism, but a reminder of bitter struggles against mass unemployment, slums and police brutality.

In September 1932, jobless demonstrators ripped the spokes from the railings, throwing them at policemen's advancing legs, as they were baton-charged down Park Road East.

The conditions which led to Birkenhead's riots 50 years ago are frighteningly familiar today. Unemployment reached 22% nationally then: today it is 22% in Birkenhead.

Poverty and malnutrition fuelled the revolt of the jobless in 1932. Today, the Tories are cutting the dole, and one school in the impoverished North End of the town stocks a cupboard with old shoes for children of the unemployed who can't afford decent winter footwear.

Bulldozers are laying waste land where houses used to be, but mass slums remain. Three years ago, Birkenhead LPYS members canvassed homes where drawing pins held up peeling wallpaper in homes rotting with damp. Chest complaints are the norm.

The Tories and their capitalist friends are driving us back to 1932 conditions. The labour movement must learn the lessons of that period's struggles, and prevent the return of its nightmares.

In 1981, Thatcher declared, "Unemployment was much worse (in the '30s) and no one engaged in riot and disorder." Outbursts of pent-up anger were due to "agitators" and "extremists". This ignorant, stupid explanation is nothing new. Tories gave the same explanation in 1932. What were the real reasons?

In 1931 "moderates" led by Labour MP Ramsay Macdonald split from Labour and formed a "National Government" with the Tories and Liberals to carry out very "immoderate" attacks on workers and the unemployed.

They acted openly for rent, interest and profit, cutting dole and pay by 10%. Workers were faced with the choice: "Struggle or starve."

Unemployment benefit fell from 17 shillings (85p) a week for adult males to 13/3 (76p). And after 26 weeks' unemployment, the jobless had to rely on "transitional payments" from Public Assistance Committees (PAC) operating the infamous Means Test.

This put families through humiliating visits to their homes by Relieving Offices who lectured them on how to "live" with less food and furniture. The unemployed had to spend life savings before getting benefits and answering detailed questionnaires on family circumstances.

One million unemployed were affected. The PACs deprived them of £30m per year through the income slashing Means Test.

In its first year, of 29,562 Means Test cases in Liverpool, 4,643 were completely denied benefit and 20,562 others were cut. The Tory Birkenhead PAC only paid a 12/- maximum to adult males.

This was the final straw for Birkenhead workers. 47% of shipbuilding and shipping workers were jobless. Cammell Lairds who

Richard Venton
(Birkenhead CLP)

had for decades squeezed profits from the pores of local workers now employed young boys as cheap labour. Bailiffs evicted tenants, throwing furniture on the streets.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) had started operating. Its mass demos included one of 100,000 in Newcastle in March 1932. The National Hunger March was fixed for the autumn.

The ruling class more and more used naked violence against protesters. Over 100 demos were baton charged in 1932. After a thousand marched in Birkenhead against the Means Test demanding 15/3d benefits for single males from the local PAC ie. the standard dole rate. Two weeks later the Tory council auctioned off the public works department Labour had introduced.

The crowds sang 'The Red Flag' outside the Tory council offices

On Wednesday 7 September the 'Birkenhead News' showed its Tory sympathies. "The impossible doctrine that the unemployment problem is going to be settled, or even materially lessened by reducing the hours of Labour without reducing wages is still being put forward in trade union circles."

That very day, 3,000 pressed their demands outside Birkenhead Town Hall, with the NUWM branch and local dockers calling for abolition of the Means Test, an end to council 'economies', extension of public work schemes to build houses, schools and road repairs, a 25% cut in Corporation rents and an end to the evictions.

The demonstration "was very orderly in character" (Birkenhead News) despite a two hour wait before Mayor Tweedle agreed to meet a deputation. The Tories were reluctant to even listen. As one councillor pointed out: "When the council saw the crowd outside, many half-clothed and half-starved, he did not think it wise to turn them away without a hearing!"

As the crowd sang 'The Red Flag' the council conceded a special meeting on Tuesday 13th to hear a deputation. A worried councillor confessed: "There is a whole feeling of unrest... caused by the hundreds of hungry bellies."

On 13 September 3,000-5,000 'hungry bellies' stood five hours in the rain whilst their representatives put their case in fiery

The revolt of the



Throughout the 1930's there were many protests against unemployment. All these pictures show events in the Autumn of 1932. Clockwise from above left: Northumberland and Durham marchers; Scottish marchers entering Hyde Park; Police blocking hunger marchers in Trafalgar Square; Police charge outside county hall, London; Baton charge outside Parliament... and Hyde Park.

NO RETURN

speeches to the council meeting, giving glimpses of their poverty and determination.

They condemned the pittance of 12/- benefits, when the cheapest lodgings plus 3 'meals' a day of a cup of tea and cake would cost 8/4d. They pointed to the 4,000 families waiting and willing to pay rent, plus those who lived in 'disgraceful hovels,' whilst building workers rotted in idleness.

Joe Rawlings, the Communist secretary of the Birkenhead NUWM branch declared: "The demo shows the mass determination of the unemployed to fight and struggle in the most bitter fashion, the rapaciousness of the council in the application of the Means Test. Let me warn you, if this goes on, barriers and police will not hold these unemployed back."

Outside, a massive police presence set up barriers and seized banners. Phil May, a local YCL (Young Communist League) leader, was dragged across barriers and arrested. The crowd surged forward, demanding his release, shouting 'We Want

Bread.'

At the end, Joe Rawlings announced a partial victory; a mass pressure had persuaded the Council to send a resolution to the government calling for abolition of the Means Test, with only one Tory voting against. The 'Birkenhead News' explained why: "It was realised that it would be prudent, not to say politic, to let the resolution pass!"

The protest remained peaceful throughout

The Council also agreed a special committee to look at increasing benefits. But the hunger remained; the crowd dispersed peacefully after agreeing to a further demo on the Tory-controlled PAC—the 'Means Test.' On the 15th, a mile-long march of about 8,000 arrived at the PAC office in Conway Street.

"The procession proceeded in more or less orderly fashion, 5 and 6ft

deep...Men in ragged clothes and worn-out shoes; men with faded clothes, yet neatly pressed and shoes brightly polished; here and there an upright professional-looking man; men with washed overalls that had not known the grime of the shipyard for months; old men with white headed hair and bent shoulders; young boys but shortly out of school; each one ready to shout in the chorus of "Struggle or Starve" and "Down with the Means Test." ('Birkenhead News' 17 September 1932)

They received little satisfaction from the worthies of the PAC, so the march set off again. About 2,000 spontaneously broke off and headed for the home of Tory PAC Chairman, Cllr. Baker, in the leafy suburbs starkly contrasting with the hovels endured by the masses.

Although a few missiles were thrown, the hostile 'Birkenhead News' admitted "No material damage was done to the property." This showed great restraint, considering Baker's accusations that the unemployed were

The 'riots' of basically different 1981. Last year spontaneous anger and frustration were in reality directed against unemployed workers

living off ratepayers and 'living it up' on prize money from racing dogs.

When the police arrived all hell broke loose. "The kilted pipers (leading the march—RV) tucked their instruments under their arms and fled for their lives. Batons were wielded to good effect by police, who scattered the flying ranks of the mob in all directions, leaving about 50 lying screaming and shouting on the road." Others injured themselves on railings in desperate flight from police baton charges.

That night saw a massive protest at the traditional spot, the Park Gates. The police, with reinforcements from Liverpool, baton

The empty bellies



ON TO 1932

1932 were not to those of the events were explosions of violence. The 1932 city police riots were the most organised by workers.

charged the defenceless crowd. That was when the railing spikes were used as weapons by the workers. 37 civilians were treated in the General Hospital, mainly with head injuries, including young children and women. Countless more were treated in working class homes to avoid detection and arrest at hospital.

No wonder the unemployed sought revenge by smashing shop windows and looting. One policeman was thrown through a plate glass window.

The NUWM leaders were building for a mass demo on Monday 19th. But police saturation of the North End and their brutality led to a

weekend which was among the bloodiest examples of state violence against the working class. Police had been drafted from as far afield as Birmingham, and marched in military formation seeking to cow the workers.

By Saturday night, tension broke out into sporadic battles in the darkened backstreets around Price St, Victoria St. and Watson St. The police baton-charged and arrested; workers tore up railings and demolished a wall for ammunition.

Women threw wash-basins, flat-irons and full chamber pots from upper-storey windows! The weekend saw police terrorising people at ground-floor level by smashing their windows and conducting 'house-searches.'

After midnight, on 18 September, police-chiefs organised their greatest violence against the neighbourhood. The police station had been under siege to keep them out of the area. In the famous battle of Wood St., fierce resistance was put up.

Street lights were ex-

tinguished, man-hole covers and grids removed and sometimes covered by carpet, and wires stretched across darkened side-streets. Police cursed as they charged at crowds only to fall down man-holes. But they brought in police-vans, trained lights on the area, and charged the crowds with demon ferocity.

The police dragged people from their beds.

The sympathy of local people was shown by the way rioters escaped arrest by running through homes and out the back. But the others tried to escape into a 4-storey tenement block, Morpeth Buildings. The police went berserk, despite spirited defence by men and women—young and old.

Police battered doors, dragged people from beds, and beating them up, working their way up each landing. A participant in the

NUWM Bert Pinguet, recalls his memories of events.

"The police tried to clear out the buildings, working their way towards the top floor. When we saw what was happening, all sorts went down the stairs at them. The furniture wasn't much—they were extremely poor—but nobody seemed to care—even sideboards were thrown down stairs.

"One feller, Paddy Devlin had had a right battering from police, he was covered in blood and trying to get the hell out of it. He got to the top floor, (the fourth). He got out the window and tried to work his way to the next flat.

"A copper went after him, battered Paddy's fingers with his truncheon and Paddy fell to the ground. He died a day or so later in hospital. A few days later there was a demonstration in Liverpool against what the cops had done. We had got hold of Paddy's shirt, covered in blood. The shirt was tied on a pole and held up at the front of the procession."

Another account by a

local woman spells out how the Tories and their police chiefs quelled this revolt of "hungry bellies" before the Tory Mayor's call to use the Army was needed.

Mrs Davin whose husband had been gassed in India and invalided out of the army: "On the Friday the police came at midnight to houses on St Annes St. smashing windows back and front, entering houses and batoning the occupants. The terror lasted till 4am.

"Next night further attacks were made in St Annes Street, Payson St and Victoria St and the screaming of women and children was pitiful. Men fought back against this terror but were overwhelmed, arrested and bundled into waiting Black Marias.

"My eldest daughter aged 19 was batoned"

The worst night of all was Sunday; we were fast asleep at Morpeth Buildings having had no sleep the previous nights and my husband being very ill. My old mother aged 68 was paralysed and could not sleep, she was so terrified. I had five children.

"Suddenly we were all wakened by heavy motor vehicles. Hordes of police came rushing upstairs and commenced smashing in doors. The screams of women and children were terrible, we could hear the thuds of baton blows and terrific struggles in the rooms below, on the landing, and the stairs.

"Presently, our door was forced open with a heavy iron instrument, twelve police rushed into the room and immediately knocked down my husband, commenced to baton me all over the arms and body; as they hit my husband and me the children were screaming and the police shouted 'shut up you parish fed bastards.'

"My eldest daughter aged 19 tried to protect me. She too was batoned...The police then smashed open their door and attacked the other children, flung my husband down the stairs and put him in the Black Maria with other injured workers.

"After taking my husband to the police station and charging him he was taken to the General Hospital where it was found he had 6 open head wounds, one over the eye and injuries to the body."

By 19th the police were back in control and mounted police from Liverpool ensured no demo took place. Signs of resistance remained: such as cardboard notices in broken windows 'visited' by police announced "this house is on rent strike."

The bosses arrested 46 people, sentencing Joe Rawlings to 20 months hard labour for instance. But the battles also forced concessions. On 19 September the Tory PAC raised benefits from 12/- to 15/3d as had been demanded and the Tory council agreed to public works schemes totalling £170,000. At the cost of broken heads and smashed houses, concessions had been won by the working class which were to spur on the mighty movements in Belfast three weeks later.

Fifty years on, we can all gain heart from the tenacity

of our class in 1932. Against all odds, facing provocation and brutality they knew they had to 'struggle or starve.'

We should all be warned by the state brutality. No more than in 1932 are the police today under community control. Unelected chief constables have tremendous power. The labour movement must campaign for democratic control by elected representatives of the community, and couple this with fighting for unionisation of the police to win sections of the police away from the more reactionary officers.

No socialist opposes the detection and prevention of crime but the present day use of police against pickets shows the ruling class still aim to use them as a battering ram to hold down workers' struggles unless the movement prevents it.

We still need to avoid divisions between the unemployed and employed sections of our class, a division ably exploited by the Tories and the bosses. When the TUC right wing refused to organise and mobilise the unemployed in a struggle for work or full pay it led to serious isolation of the unemployed.

Organised within the labour movement, the unemployed will produce some of the best fighters for socialist change, for ending poverty and unemployment, as we saw 50 years ago. But unless today's TUC do more than pay lip service to the fight for jobs, the unemployed could become isolated and even demoralised.

The 'riots' of 1932 were basically different to those of 1981. Last year's events were spontaneous explosions of anger and frustration. The 1932 riots were in reality police riots directed against organised unemployed workers.

Nevertheless the 1932 struggles failed to solve the basic underlying problems. The bosses retained control of the workplaces and clawed back any concessions once things 'quietened down'. By 1939, Birkenhead still suffered 20% unemployment. Now it's 22%.

The shipyards have been decimated with Western Shiprepairers closing completely 4 years ago, and only just over 3,000 in Lairds. The docks closed recently.

Slums remain, with a third of Wirral houses being pre-1914. Harassment of the unemployed? Only adverse publicity forced the DHSS to remove a camera from a dole office in the town recently.

But above all, the demands of 1932 are still relevant...Cut working hours with no loss of pay. Public works schemes on union rates to build and repair homes, schools, hospitals. Work or full pay for the unemployed.

These demands are linked to the need to remove the Tories and their system. We need a genuine socialist Labour government, not a re-run of 1974-79, but one which will stand up to big business pressure by nationalising the wealth of society under workers' control and management.

Our movement is potentially much stronger than in 1932, if we learn from the past. Join the struggle which is being conducted with growing support by the LPYS and Militant supporters to make sure there is no return to 1932. Join the struggle for socialism.

With barely a mention in the pages of the British press, workers in the Australian state of Queensland have taken part in an unprecedented show of strength, shaking the hated State Government of Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson.

A general strike involving 300,000 workers—the first in the state for 70 years—raised the call “Joh must go!”

The spark that lit the tinder was Bjelke-Peterson's frenzied attempts to crush a strike by 60,000 government blue-collar workers fighting for a 38-hour week.

In Queensland, and across Australia, a tremendous movement of the working class has forced the bosses to concede shorter working hours throughout industry.

Now, with Australia's economy facing the worst recession since the 1930s, the ruling class are desperately trying to stem the tide, to hold down wages and derail the juggernaut of the shorter hours campaign.

Predictably, it was Joh Bjelke-Peterson, the most reactionary of all the representatives of Australian capitalism, who volunteered to lead the ‘fight-back’.

In early August, his National Party-Liberal coalition government withdrew from negotiations with its own employees, announcing that the 38-hour week was no longer up for discussion ‘in the present economic climate’.

The state's Trades and Labor Council responded with a 48-hour strike call to all government workers for Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 August.

“Going crazy”, in the words of one union leader, Bjelke-Peterson then threatened to declare a State of Emergency using the Essential Services Act which his government introduced in 1979 (although they had never previously used it).

This legislation provides for fines against union leaders of up to A\$50,000 or imprisonment. Defiant workers can be suspended and even sacked after 48 hours and strike-breakers can be brought in to maintain ‘essential services’.

Bjelke-Peterson threatened: “We will be finding out just who goes out on strike, taking their names and suspending or sacking them. If these men have no value for their jobs, others will turn up to take them.”

He then announced the tearing up of the government's closed shop agreement:

“My cabinet has decided to end a long time provision that all government workers should belong to trade unions.”

The government's declaration of war on the trade union movement clearly shook the union leadership. On the morning of the strike, Monday 16 August, the Trades and Labor Council recommended to mass meetings of its members that the stoppage be halved to 24 hours.

This was accepted at five of the meetings. But in Townsville and Mackay in northern Queensland, and in three other regions, workers rejected the call.

The decision to limit the strike, however, far from placated Bjelke-Peterson. As threatened, a State of Emergency was declared and

By Laurence Coates

the railway workers, who had voted in accordance with the TLC recommendation, were singled out for the brunt of his attack.

They were instructed to return to work at 8 pm. When they defied the deadline, 3,500 of them were given suspension notices. But Joh Bjelke-Peterson obviously hadn't bargained on the shock waves that followed.

Railway workers returning to work immediately walked off the job and all rail services ground to a halt.

The state's other blue-collar workers came out again this time in greater numbers. Maintenance men and operators walked out of the power stations. Industrial action by the remaining workers cut electricity supplies by 50%.

‘Union leaders were amazed to see the fighting reaction’

Throughout the week the strike snowballed as news of the suspensions carried. Waterside workers, miners, metal workers and building workers all downed tools. A reporter for the *Australian* wrote: “Journalists were as hard pressed to keep track of those going on strike as union leaders were amazed to see the fighting reaction.”

Under pressure from below, even right-wing union leaders were forced in to supporting the strike. On Thursday 19 August, Queensland's biggest union, the 50,000 strong Australian Workers Union, pulled out its members in hospitals, oil refineries, and the gas and cement industries.

AWU state secretary, Errol Hodder, explained that his union's officers had been inundated with calls from members to support the suspended workers.

On Friday 20 August, 20,000 teachers closed the state's schools for the day. A meeting of 1,600 teachers in the capital, Brisbane, voted to support further one day strikes if necessary.

As an indication of the support the strikers enjoyed, an opinion poll commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Company showed that a majority of people in Brisbane blamed the government for the dispute and supported the 38-hour week for government employees.

Even the police, it seems, were affected. The *Australian* reported that “Bjelke-Peterson has told them to go in ‘straight away’ and break up any demonstrations.



Workers march on office of Queensland Liberal leader, Llew Edwards

AUSTRALIA

General Strike

in Queensland

“But the State Police Union is seeking a 38-hour week and yesterday its president, senior sergeant Col Chant, said, ‘There will be no cracking of skulls. Police will act only to keep the peace.’”

Faced with a strike that was growing by the hour, splits were emerging in the bosses' camp. Joh's ‘hard-line’ had backfired disastrously. Even his most fervent backers in the capitalist press were slating their Premier.

The Brisbane *Telegraph* called Bjelke-Peterson's actions “unnecessarily provocative and curiously inept.” They urged him to “back down, sit down and start to talk.”

The Queensland State Industrial Commission was called in to give its ‘impartial’ ruling on the dispute. Not surprisingly, with the prospect of a general strike on the horizon, it advised the government to revoke the State of Emergency and lift the suspensions. Bjelke-Peterson's cabinet, now openly divided, forced him to accept the decision.

A warning to British bosses

Already the workers had won a major victory—a warning to British bosses who believe they can shelter behind Tebbit's anti-union Bill! But on the subject of the 38-hour week the government refused to budge and therefore there was no return to work.

In fact more were joining the strike. The workers' deep felt hatred of the government had been aroused.

Meat workers from the abattoirs, printers on

Brisbane's newspapers and others voted to strike. Moreover, the workers were now drawing political conclusions from the struggle.

A resolution adopted unanimously by Brisbane's wharfies called upon “the TLC to initiate and lead a campaign culminating in a general strike to bring down the Bjelke-Peterson government and return a Labor government with socialist policies.”

The railway workers, voting to continue their strike, also called for the bringing down of Bjelke-Peterson.

This was the background to the 25 mass meetings organised by the Trades and Labour Council on the morning of Monday 23rd.

In Brisbane, at the biggest labour movement gathering in 40 years, over 7,000 workers voted 10 to 1 for a general strike.

State Secretary of the Building Workers' Industrial Union, Hugh Hamilton, said to cheers: “The real issue of this dispute is now to get rid of the government of Queensland and to get rid of Joh Bjelke Peterson.”

In the industrial centre of Ipswich, workers voted by 4,000 to 20 for a general strike and in Townsville the vote was 2,500 to 18. The verdict of the other mass meetings was the same.

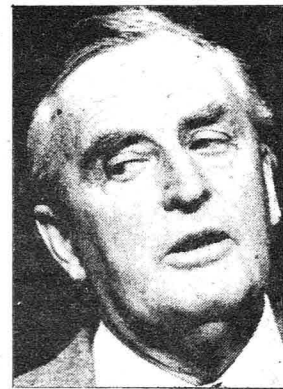
The general strike call drew a tremendous response, with support from virtually every section of the working class. Even prison wardens walked out, leaving police to man the jails.

Without a doubt, the united strength of 300,000 Queensland trade unionists could have swept the National Party and its Liberal partners from office.

Moreover, such a movement could have rapidly developed ‘inter-state’ dimensions. With an appeal to workers across Australia,

initially for a 24-hour General Strike, a campaign could have been launched for the bringing down of Frazer's Federal Government, and prepared the way, in the words of Brisbane's wharfies, for “a Labor Government with socialist policies”.

It was precisely these ramifications, inherent in the situation, which alarmed much of the trade union



Bjelke-Peterson: wants to end closed shop and smash trade unions

leadership. Even as the strike votes were taken, right-wing union leaders were talking of a return to work.

The Trades and Labor Council, with the agreement of Communist Party and left-wing officials, had decided to exempt the power workers—whose intervention in support of the railmen had been so decisive—along with bus-drivers, postal workers and others from the strike. In effect they were told to go back just as the real battle was commencing.

News that power workers were returning to work, in particular, sowed confusion in the ranks.

The Melbourne *Age* reported that “Newspaper, television and radio station switchboards were jammed

last night with workers calling to find out whether they were supposed to be on strike”.

This confusion, coupled with a campaign by sections of the union leadership against the strike becoming a political struggle, meant that some workers were already returning to work by Tuesday 24 August.

As Marxists have always maintained, a general strike is a direct challenge to the ruling class. If the working class can bring society to a halt, the question is posed, why can't they take over the running of society?

The leaders of the Queensland workers were clearly not prepared to mount such a challenge against the capitalists and therefore sought to apply the brakes as soon as possible. On the night of Tuesday 24th, despite the massive vote of the previous day's mass meetings, representatives of the TLC's 52 unions announced that the General Strike was off.

Even then, some workers stayed out, although they clearly couldn't go it alone. The Government, its kept press, and even figures in the Labor movement, wasted no time in saying that the “swing of the campaign into a political offensive had drawn a backlash”; and that union leaders had “misread the militancy of the rank and file”.

On the contrary, the Queensland events are a testimony to the enormous power and the will to struggle of the working class. But such a movement also needs a correct programme and leadership if it is to succeed.

Now, in the aftermath of the general strike, and with the 38-hour week campaign far from abandoned, it is to precisely these issues that activists in the Labour movement will be addressing themselves.

Sri Lanka Presidential Election

As reported in previous issues, Vasudeva Nanayakkara of the Nava Sama Samaja (New Socialist) Party is contesting the coming Presidential election in Sri Lanka.

By Roger Silverman

This election will be a crucial test of the capacity of incumbent President J.R. Jayawardene of the right-wing United National Party to consolidate a presidential bonapartist dictatorship with semi-parliamentary trappings.

Jayawardene became Prime Minister after winning the 1977 General Election, by exploiting the widespread disillusion in the previous "United Left" Government of Mrs Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party, in which the leaders of the two workers' parties (CP and LSSP) collaborated. The odious Jayawardene promptly imposed a new constitution and used his tame packed Parliament to install himself as President with dictatorial powers.

Since then he has amended the Constitution four times, trimming it to the prevailing winds. He has inflicted savage cuts in food subsidies and effectively dismantled the "welfare state" built up by decades of mass struggle; slashed wages and crippled trade union rights; opened up a "Free Trade Zone", a profiteers' paradise; turned a blind eye to the murderous pogroms instigated by the semi-fascist wing of his own Party against the Tamil minority; and blacklisted tens of thousands of workers sacked following the defeated General Strike of 1980.

On 20th October the electors will have their first chance to pass judgement in a national vote. But the wily "J.R." has done his utmost to rig the election in advance, by vindictively stripping his principal opponent Mrs Bandaranaike of her civic rights. She is debarred not only from standing, but even from campaigning for her Party's candidate. J.R. hopes to cash in on the resulting confusion in the SLFP, which recently split. Fearing a constitutional crisis which would follow the probable defeat of the UNP in the impending Parliamentary elections, which would

provoke massive strikes and demonstrations to force him out of power, Jayawardene calculates that he will be better placed to withstand mass pressure if he is armed first with a renewed mandate. That is why he has precipitated this sudden plebiscite over his personal authority, with his most dangerous rival disqualified.

The SLFP has managed to paper over the cracks and present a single candidate, the former Minister Hector Kobbekaduwa who was responsible for the land reforms enacted by the ULF Government. For the time being, the SLFP right wing led by Mrs Bandaranaike is supporting him, on the understanding that he will immediately scrap the Constitution, restore her civic rights and hold fresh parliamentary elections to return her to power. This would be a blow against imperialist designs to turn the island into a police state.

As a capitalist party, however, the SLFP can offer no real alternative to the UNP. The halcyon days of welfare and democracy disappeared along with world economic upswing. Mrs Bandaranaike's government also slashed living standards and ruled for seven years by decree, constant proclamations of emergency, and extra-constitutional repression.

The UNP government fundamentally differs with hers only in that it has formalised and legitimised this regime. Support for the UNP has been eroded in the last five years of rapid decline. On the basis of the calamitous record of the Popular Front ULF Government, however, the UNP still retains a certain momentum. The Tamil minority concentrated in the Northern Jafna peninsula feels bitterly alienated from both major



Vasudeva Nanayakkara addressing mass meeting of workers during 1980 General Strike

NSSP CAMPAIGN CARRIES SOCIALIST IDEAS TO MILLIONS

Sinhala parties, and the unemployed youth of the slum shanty towns could serve as a potential auxiliary to the forces of reaction.

Thus, the respective political exploiters of these strata, the capitalist Tamil nationalist front, the TULF, and the unstable JVP - previously an ultra-left movement responsible for the adventurist insurrection of 1971, shot through with

Sinhala chauvinism, now increasingly a tool of the UNP - have manoeuvred to play into Jayawardene's hands in this contest.

The voters will be asked to record three preferences. The TULF has declined either to stand or so far to recommend support for any other candidate. The JVP is contesting, but has called on its supporters to leave their second and third votes

blank. Jayawardene stands to gain from both these disguised forms of abstention.

The lesson of the 1977 election is clear. Only the workers' parties can offer a real socialist alternative to the misery promised by the UNP. The NSSP is the living embodiment of the finest traditions of the working class, the party of the mass of LSSP workers who were betrayed by the class-

collaborationist leaders.

Nevertheless, in a spirit of workers' unity, the NSSP approached the CP and LSSP leaders for a single common candidate of the Left. Their reply? The CP is supporting the SLFP, while the LSSP leader Colvin R. de Silva is standing, not on even a reformist left programme, but as a candidate of "national reconciliation"! He has moved to the right even of the SLFP, denouncing Kobbekaduwa's pledge to scrap the Constitution as "mad"!

The criminal tragedy of LSSP participation in the ULF government has turned into farce: disinherited, isolated, a leader without a party De Silva dreams of ending his years as a national patriarch! As Trotsky commented: "What contemptible ambition, to sacrifice your place in History for a portfolio!"

The NSSP has announced:—"We made every effort to make Colvin the common opposition candidate based on the working class and left movement. However, the LSSP leader was only interested in coming forward with the support of the SLFP..."

"The NSSP has decided to contest the forthcoming Presidential election, to defeat J.R. by the unity of all opposition forces which includes the united campaign to make everyone cast all three preferences against the Government, and get the maximum attention and support for the revolutionary left programme."

It is left to the NSSP to speak for the starving strikers, the persecuted Jafna Tamils, the disenfranchised plantation workers, and the workers and peasants. The NSSP has embarked on this audacious campaign, not in the delusion that it will win many votes - the masses only take a revolutionary road when they are convinced that nothing short of that can satisfy their needs, and all the more so after the demoralising experience of the ULF - but to reach the millions with their warnings and demands, confident that these will be remembered and heeded in the coming years of struggle, and painstakingly to build a mass party based in every town, suburb, plantation and village. Further reports on the campaign will follow.

LABOUR VICTORY IN SWEDEN

By Eva Jarvis

Sunday 16 September saw the return of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SAP) after six years of right wing government in Sweden.

The SAP gained 166 seats as compared with the three Capitalist Parties' 163 seats. The Communist Party retained their 20 seats giving a majority of 23 seats to the workers' parties.

This follows the elections in France and Greece where we saw a decisive victories for the socialist parties.

During the six years of capitalist government in Sweden the gap between the rich and poor widened. Profits have increased many times over but at the same time the living standards of the workers have decreased.

Sweden's long period of economic growth, based heavily on export trade, has been cut across by the world crisis of capitalism and the basis of its prosperity is being seriously undermined.

Investment in industry decreased by 35% in real terms during 1976-78 and the decline is continuing.

1982 investment will decline by a further 5%. Industry only works at 79% of capacity and unemployment now stands at 194,000, the highest in 50 years.

The workers have seen cuts in all areas of public spending. The living standards of Swedish workers have decreased since 1976 by £100 per month as a result of inflation, cuts in public spending and low wage deals—the greatest decrease in Western Europe.

This has been the background to the elections.

An unprecedented election campaign was mounted by the bosses. SAF, the



SAP leader Palme

employers' federation, spent £10 million on a campaign against the "wage-earner funds".

These funds are supposed to buy up shares in large companies and would gradually become the dominant owners of Swedish industry. Nicolin, leader of SAF put forward the bosses' alternative. He said that the Swedish people should give up one fifth of their income to get Sweden on its feet again!

Also, the old slogans of

"reds under the bed" and the trade union movement being a threat to democracy were dragged out.

But the bosses' own views of democracy have been spelled out in 1975 by the chairman of the biggest bank in Sweden:

"Democracy and inflation can in the end not live together. What is needed is an authoritarian system to manage society being conditioned to inflation. Sooner or later we will come to the point where there must be confrontation between the power that will control inflation and on the other hand the trade union movement. In certain countries in Southern Europe this confrontation has already begun".

The SAP election campaign was concentrated on demands for decreasing unemployment, increasing public spending and the introduction of the "wage-earner funds".

Swedish workers, stunned by the six years of capitalist government, have now come out decisively against that period. They expect the SAP government to bring about a change and see their chance of regaining some of what they have lost in the past.

Leadership has already begun to retreat

The leadership of the SAP, realising this, has already begun to retreat on the question of the "wage-earner funds". Olof Palme, leader of the SAP, said: "We have never wished to replace one concentration of power by another"

This statement clearly shows that the leadership is not prepared to carry out the Swedish equivalent of the British Labour Party's clause 4, part 4 of the Par-

ty's constitution. The leaders of the SAP have also made several statements about having to involve the employers federation in discussion about the "wage-earner funds" and it now looks certain to be put back until after 1985.

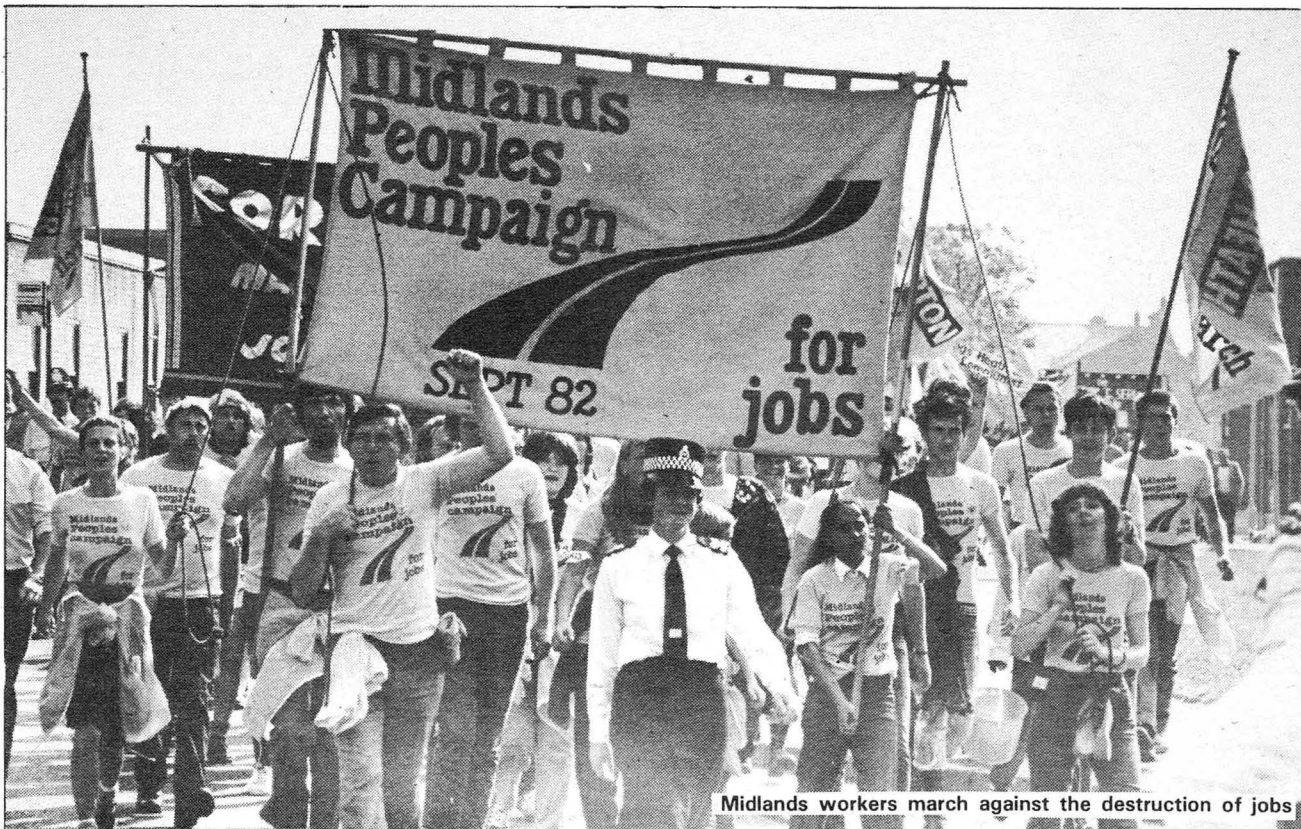
The Swedish election is a clear illustration of the polarisation taking place between left and right even in the most advanced capitalist countries. The right wing Conservative Party, gaining 13 seats in parliament, is now the biggest capitalist party.

With an unprecedented crisis of capitalism and with 100-200 monopolies controlling the Swedish economy, what is needed is a Socialist Government prepared to carry through the nationalisation of the monopolies, banks and insurance companies as a basis for solving the problems of the working class along socialist lines.

Letters

VIEWERS? COMMENTS? EXPERIENCES?
CRITICISM? WRITE ABOUT THEM TO

MILITANT, 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN



Midlands workers march against the destruction of jobs

Reality on the Midlands march for jobs.

Dear Comrades,

On the Stoke-on-Trent leg of the Midlands peoples march for jobs, despite being a "non-political" march with 'Militant' sellers being told to stay away from the 25 official marchers in their yellow coats, local labour and trade union marchers chanted "Tories out—socialism in".

As the march entered the centre of Stoke for the rally, marchers were singing

"We want nationalisation etc. to the tune of "Land of Hope and Glory".

Speakers at the rally again started on the non-political theme with the Labour Lord Mayor complaining about unemployment but offering no solution, and a local vicar singing 'Jerusalem' and saying how God was on the side of the unemployed—he forgot to explain that God had actually done nothing to keep unemployment down!

Ruth Gordon, however, speaker from Stoke South LPYS, made no apologies for her political contribution. She called for a 35-hour week and £90 minimum

wage and a proper lead to be given by the trade union leaders, including industrial action, to bring down the Tories and bring in a Labour government committed to socialist policies. The loudest applause at the rally, however, went to Ruth when she called for a 24-hr general strike on the 22 September to help bring down the Tories.

A Pottery union official explained that almost 50 pot banks had closed down in Stoke-on-Trent in the last three years, and that he himself thought the only way to end unemployment was the return of a Labour government committed to

socialist policies.

Despite the Chairman, who asked Ruth to sum up as soon as she started mentioning specific policies, the rally was clearly political with greatest enthusiasm being shown for those who demanded socialism. Over 30 copies of 'Militant' were sold on the march and nearly 1,000 leaflets from the local YS, distributed along the march.

Yours fraternally,
Dave Campbell,
Stoke.

The Press and the September 11 Conference (1)

Dear Comrades,

Unfortunately, due to illness, I was unable to attend the Labour Movement Conference on September 11. Being at home however, did give me the opportunity to see the media coverage on television.

The BBC's objective reporting admitted that the conference was well attended and showed coaches arriving from Hull and Wales. The reporter observed that support came mainly from 'younger people' and it 'remained to be seen' exactly how many were members of the Labour Party.

Coverage of the conference itself was confined to the reporter stating that the conference Hall was filled 'mostly with Militant Tendency supporters'.

Cameras then focused on a punk in leather and badges. Ted Grant's speech was deliberately cut and taken out of context—to dilute his reasoned argument. In summing up, the reporter highlighted the fact that only one Labour MP had actually attended—ignoring completely the fact that every section of the labour movement was heavily represented.

Of course, no one will be surprised at such biased reporting. The resounding success of the conference shows that despite the continual barrage of hate propaganda from the media, support against the witch-hunt is growing day by day.

However the media chooses to cover our campaign against expulsions, we will win through and our ideas will gain more support than ever.

Yours fraternally,
Robin Causeley,
Torbay LPYS.

The Press and the September 11 Conference (2)

Dear Comrades,

During the break at the September 11 conference some delegates from Barnsley at one stage found themselves in the bar standing alongside the gentlemen of the press. Their opening gambit to one of our number was, 'Did you say you came from Scotland?'

Their conversation seemed to suggest that they were at a loss for something to write about, a straightforward description of the remarkable scene before their eyes appearing to be out of the question. At last an angle was found—'There

aren't many MP's here, are there?' said one, and the theme was taken up.

This obvious yardstick of the political importance of any event must somehow have slipped their minds in the course of listening to so many devastating contributions from the floor by rank and file members of the labour and trade union movement.

Another phrase floated was—'subversive literature'—but this obviously lacked the impact of a dearth of 'dignitaries', and failed to excite their collective imagination, at least on this occasion.

Thanks for a worthwhile and very encouraging conference.

Yours fraternally,
Bleddyn Harris.

Why pensioners don't need a witch-hunt

Dear Comrades

More cuts in social services for council tenants. So says Tory Councillor Eric Pickles, of Bradford city council. It does not matter whether they are young or old, over £1,000 per home must be saved.

Alongside the suggested cuts in local education, it matches up with 'savings' in the pipe line of future Tory government plans which would destroy what is left of the welfare state in Britain. Tory plans also include the sacking of 62,000 teachers, 28,000 social service workers, reducing the fire brigade by 20% and the police by 10%.

No wonder the British Pensioners and Trade Union Action Association are concerned; the loss of 28,000 social service workers envisaged by the Tories could put at risk 11,000 places in old peoples homes, 70,000 cases attended by home helps, and 80,000 meals a week.

The Northern Region of the BPTUAA are supporting a call from Manchester TU pensioners for the national

executive of the BPTUAA to seek an urgent meeting of the National Convention Steering Committee, and that a request be made to the appropriate Labour Party parliamentary committee that they meet a delegation to consider the developing situation.

In the mean time there is a struggle going on in the Labour Party to decide how many Militant supporters they can expel. I suggest that the more 'Militants' expelled, the easier it will be to accept the Tory programme through parliament.

So let us turn down the witch-hunt for our own benefit. There is a call for unity, but it must be based on socialism not the reform of capitalism. Having seen the patching up process going on for more than 50 years now, I certainly have no faith in that system.

As an ex-bricklayer and still a member of the builders union, UCATT, I say let's rebuild from a foundation of socialism. Any other foundation will lead to damp and rot, capitalist crisis and collapse.

Yours fraternally
T.A. Hare
Sec., Bradford BPTUAA
PS. I enclose £1 for the fighting fund.

'Horror without end' in the Lebanon.

Dear Comrades,

"Capitalism," said Lenin, "means horror without end." The news reports from the Lebanon confirm that remark a hundred times over.

Labour workers will have been sickened by the bombing and gunning down of Jewish civilians in Europe, but nothing can justify the sickening massacres by Christian militiamen with the open connivance of the Israeli army.

Old people, women and children—even newborn babies were machine gunned in Sabra and Shatila before the buildings in these camps were bulldozed in an attempt to hide the evidence. Doctors, nurses and wounded patients were among the victims. Even the animals were slaughtered. It is reported that a nurse was raped ten times before they killed her.

Perhaps most horrifying of all is the claim by nearby Israeli forces that they noticed nothing unusual going on. They saw nothing, they heard nothing. More sickening still are the crocodile tears of Begin and Reagan who can safely denounce the massacre after the event.

In no way can Begin avoid responsibility for these killings. The invasion of Lebanon and the shelling of civilian targets in Beirut prepared the way for these events and his open support for the late president Gemayel is a matter of

record. Israeli tanks spearheaded the Phalangist advance into Sabra and Shatila. Is this an accident, Mr Begin?

While the Israelis have utilised the divisions between Christian and Muslim in Lebanon, American imperialism has consistently used the divisions between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East to protect big business interests. Reagan's present opposition is based on the fact that his "client state" Israel has overstepped the mark and become over-ambitious.

It is this, and not humanitarian considerations, which has prompted his condemnation of Israeli action. Reagan's humanitarianism has never been in doubt—any inhabitant of El Salvador can tell you all about it.

Many hoped that with the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut the killing in the Middle East would subside, but this was not to be. As long as American big business and, as it were by proxy, the Israeli ruling class, continue with the profitable game of divide and rule there is no end in sight.

We understand only too well why some Palestinians have been driven to meet terror with terror, but it is no solution.

If the PLO are provoked into individual terrorism again, it will provide further excuses for more mass murders like Sabra and Shatila, and the many Israeli workers who oppose Begin's policies will be alienated.

Harold has them rolling in the aisles

Dear Comrades

I did not really know whether I should bother watching the recent television soap opera, "Harold Wilson remembers." But having nothing else better to do at the time I stayed tuned in, as the saying goes.

I have been provoked into writing because Harold has just graciously warned the party to stop having a "pantomime." That's rich coming in from a comic like him. I can only give two examples of Harold's side-splitting gags, the tears of mirth will prevent further comment.

He was sat comfortably in his favourite chair, smoking his pipe, when the interviewer asked "Why did you lose the 1970 general election?"

The wee man replied, poker faced, "Oh, I think it was the excessive heat." He went on to explain that the Labour vote had not turned out because temperatures on the June polling day were in the eighties. It's the way he

tells them.

In a later programme he was asked about Crosland's book, 'The Future of Socialism,' written in 1956. Crosland was the guru of the right-wing, who explained in 1956 that full employment was guaranteed forever and that the welfare state would end all inequality.

Harold paused, reminded us that he had not read a single page of Marx in his life and delivered one of the one-liners that have made him famous; "I think Crosland's book was thirty years before its time." (He obviously has missed the fact that there are 4 million without work, and this is 1982).

So all the 'Militant' arguments are nonsense. We don't need nationalisation, workers' control and a socialist plan. We can walk together towards a guaranteed wage, a shorter working-week and plenty with copies of Crosland under our arms...provided the elections are held in December.

Fraternally
Bob Wylie
East Kilbride LP

The real struggle is not Jew against Arab but class against class. The British labour movement has a clear responsibility, while denouncing the massacres, to point out that we hold no brief for anti-semitism. Capitalism has no race or religion but uses race and religion to divide the working class.

These events show Zionism and anti-semitism in their true colours—as vicious, depraved enemies of the working class. Only a socialist federation can put a stop to this "horror without end".

Yours fraternally
Derek McMillan,
East Grinstead.

ads

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

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target Oct 9th.
Eastern	1100		2,000
East Midlands	828		1,800
Hants & Dorset	709		1,300
Humberside	666		1,100
London East	1024		2,100
London West	465		1,000
London South	1231		1,500
Manchester & Lancs	1088		2,000
Merseyside	1139		2,100
Northern	1019		2,500
Scotland East	439		1,300
Scotland West	767		2,300
Southern	1005		1,700
South West	330		900
Wales East	270		1,000
Wales West	1562		2,000
West Midlands	825		2,000
Yorkshire	1167		2,500
Others	3016		3,900
Total received	18650		35,000

Target £35,000 By October 9

HALF WAY-AND ONLY TWO WEEKS TO GO

By Clare Doyle

THIS WEEK: £1475

This week's collections and donations to our funds take us over the half-way mark in our funds for this quarter—but there's only two more weeks left at the time of writing!

Nevertheless, all our supporters should be confident of turning the 'exposure' in the media to good effect.

The 'Daily Mirror', for example, had an advert in last week's Tribune showing how it appealed for a Labour vote in almost all election-day issues since the war. But you don't get workers donating money to the proprietors of the 'Mirror'!

That's the difference between Militant which puts forward a viable solution to the problems facing ordinary people as a result of the crisis of the economic system, and the 'Mirror' which merely recognises that it can not ignore its readers' preferences for any Labour Government rather than the detested Tories.

Thanks to Northern LPYS members at their recent week-end school for a magnificent collection of £105, and to those at a recent CPSA Section EC for the collection of £70! Thanks to members of Garforth LP (near Leeds), Vauxhall LP members, Blackbrook (St Helens) Maghull LP (Merseyside), Low Hill LP (Wolverhampton), workers at Wills tobacco (West of Scotland), Parkfield LP (Stockton), Frampton Cotterell LP (Bristol) £10 from NU Seamen members, (Manchester), and a Midlands MP.

Donations from LPYS branches included those from Sunderland, Cardiff

West and Newcastle North this week, and a north-west student sent us £30 from a conference earlier in the year.

After hearing Pat Wall speak Gwent readers donated £128.50, while in Burnley £54 was collected at a Militant meeting, and other cash came in from meetings in Gosport, Melton Mowbray, Bristol, and Middlesbrough to name but a few.

After the September 11th conference, many readers

made donations on the coaches back: thanks to comrades from Stockton, Wolverhampton (cakes), Wirral, Manchester, Stepney (posters), Canvey, Isle of Wight, Kirkby, and others.

Hundreds of individual donations have boosted our funds this week: K Parslow (Walthamstow CLP) is one of the first to donate his day's pay for 22nd September, but there must be a lot of our readers whose union branches decided to work on that day on account

of lack of a clear call by union leaders for a 1-day strike. How about putting the money you earned back into the fight for socialism?

G Lewis (Cardiff SE LPYS) sent us £16.50, Ted Grant put in £13 broadcasting fees, and a similar sum came from M Hosgood (SOGAT 82, Manchester). A subscriber in Corfu sent £7 (see last week's Militant), and amount of between £2 and £6 came from J McGinley (Kirkby), P McGinley (E Kilbride), D McGarr (Wallsend LP), T Carden (UCATT, Glasgow), M Bryant (Nottingham), G Ransford (UCATT, Notts), D Jennings (TGWU, Yate), P Hamer (Huddersfield) R Taylor (Nalco, London), and F&A Cotter (Havant).

£1s came from I Glencross (Fife), J Ross (London), N Tyrell (Guildford), J Kieran (Bradford FBU), T Hare (Sec, Bradford Pensioners & TU Action Assoc.), three Sunderland readers, A Gray (Whitwell NUM), W Motterhead (Rochdale) and S Haring (Gosport).

And fund-raising can be fun and nourishing—witness the Shettleston curry (£10), Nottingham apples, Reading tomatoes, home-made wine (Swansea), Poplar badges (£109), Kidderminster meal £18, East Ham social £52, and Barnsley sponsored swim £12.

We're not asking all our readers to do a swim for us, but we are appealing to every reader to send us a donation to help us combat the attacks on our paper and our supporters by those who literally want to 'rule out' political debate with us!

We need another £16,350 to attain our £35,000 target, and we are sure that all Labour supporters who believe in free speech will be willing to help. It's Militant v the mass media!

Classified

DEBATE
The Future of the Labour Party
Neil Kinnock MP.
Peter Taaffe (Editor Militant)
Wednesday Oct 20th 7.30 pm
Camden Town Hall (opposite St Pancras Station)
Organised by London Labour Party Young Socialists.

OXFORD MILITANT SUPPORTERS TOTE RESULTS:—

Week No 610—No 80
Steve McDonnell, Oxford
Week No 611—No 81
Catherine McDonnell Oxford

Week No 612—No 58 Andrew Glynn, Oxford.

Week No 613—No 2 Paul Brunker, Oxford.

Week No 614—No 42
Unsold

Week No 615—No 47
Unsold

Week No 616—No 12
Phillipa T, Abingdon.

Week No 617—No 46
Unsold

Week No 618—No 10
Hugo Donnelly, Headington, Oxford.

What Militant Stand for meetings sponsored by the LPYS
SALE: Friday 8 October, 7.30pm Sale Moor Community Centre, Norris Rd, Sale.
WYTHENSHAW: Wednesday 6 October, 8 pm, Wythenshawe Labour Club, nr Sharston Baths.

SALFORD: Tuesday Oct 5, 8pm Swinton Labour Club, Station Rd, Swinton.
MACCLESFIELD: Tuesday Oct 5th, 8pm, details Macc 24336.

BLACKLEY LPYS: Tuesday Oct 12, 8 pm, Moston Labour Club, Moston Lane.
MOSS SIDE: Thursday Oct 7th 7.30 Chorlton Labour Room, 454, Barlow Moor Rd.

CROSBY LPYS Social Event, 9 October, 30 Ashlar Road, Liverpool 22, 10.00 pm onwards, drinks half price. All comrades welcome

PIANO for sale. 2' x 4' x 5'. Needs tuning & transport. Sold to highest bidder. Contact Dave Farrar 01-986-3828.

NORTH EAST Readers' Meetings: 'Fight the Tories not the Socialists'.

Sunday 3 October: NEWCASTLE Bridge Hotel. Speaker: John Pickard.

Monday 4 October: TEESSIDE. Columbia Club, 78 Church Road, Stockton. Speaker: John Pickard.

Wednesday 6 October: SUNDERLAND, The Central, 32 Bridge Street. Speaker: John Pickard.

NORTH EAST Marxist Discussion Groups.

FOREST HALL: Sunday 26 September and then fortnightly. Details: Dave Metcalfe, 0632 665277.

NEWCASTLE West: Every Sunday. Contact Rob Lowther, 0632 775636.

NEWCASTLE North: Every Sunday. Contact Karen Walker, 0632 732959.

GOSFORTH: Every Sunday. Contact Rob Dennison, 0632 844918.

SANDIFORD: Every Sunday. Contact Gavin Dudley, 0632 652906.

GATESHEAD: Every Sunday. Contact Tom McGuinness, 18 Lumley Gardens, Gateshead. (Gateshead 783262)

WASHINGTON: Wednesday evenings from 22 September to 13 October. Details Washington 478424.

HAVANT Readers' Meeting: 'Fight the Witch-Hunt'. Speaker: Sue Atkins (Southampton LP). Thursday 30 September, 7.45 pm, Focus 230, Dunsbury Way, Leigh Park, Havant.

READING Readers' Meeting: 'No to witch-hunts'. AUEW Hall DC rooms, 121 Oxford Road, Reading, Friday 8 October, 8.00 pm. Speaker: Terry Pearce (Wokingham Labour Party delegate to LP Conference)

Peter Taaffe speaks in West Midlands. "What we stand for" meetings.

KIDDERMINSTER: Monday 11 October. Bay House, Kidderminster.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Tuesday 12 October, The Posada, Litchfield Road, Wolverhampton.

WALSALL: Wednesday 13 October, St Pauls Hall, Hatherston Road, Walsall.

COVENTRY: readers meeting "Socialism on Trial" at Stoney Stanton Social Club, Stoney Stanton Rd. 1/2 mile from Pool Meadow bus station. Speaker: Tony Saunois, (Labour Party NEC 1978-81)

PORTSMOUTH: 'Fight the Tories, not the socialists'. Thursday 7 October, 7.30 pm, Portsmouth Labour Rooms, 84 Kingston Crescent. For more details phone Howard Benfield, Portsmouth 699430

GLASGOW: Militant Readers Meeting "Expel the Tories not the Socialists" Speakers: P. Taaffe Editor of Militant and D. Hatton Labour PPC for Wavertree. Tuesday 5 October, 7.30pm McLelland Galleries Sauchiehall St.

LEEDS Labour Movement Rally. Speakers: Cllr Neil Taggart, Bob Cryer MP, Pat Wall, PPC. 7.30 pm, Wed 6 October, Grand Theatre (Studio), side entrance.

WEST LONDON "FORWARD FROM LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE" Hear Mike Waddington (Basildon L.P. delegate.) Monday 4th October 1982 at 8 p.m. Hammersmith North Labour Party rooms, 446 Uxbridge Rd, London W12

'Fight the Tories, not the socialists' meetings:

SWANSEA: Thursday 30 September, 7.30 pm, the NE Dynevor School. Speaker: Andy Price (Cardiff SE LP, personal capacity)

YSTRADGLYNAIS: Welfare Hall, 7.30 pm, Thursday 30 September. Speaker: Brian Lewis (USDAW, personal capacity)

LOUGHOR: Tuesday 5 October, Institute Buildings, Lime Street, Gorseinon (Dole Office). Speaker: Alec Thraves (Swansea AUEW, personal capacity)

LLANELLI: Friday 8 October. Speaker: Muriel Browning (Conference Delegate, personal capacity)

What We Stand For Meetings

HANDSWORTH: Sunday October 3, 7.30pm, Smiths Arms, Winson Green Road, Handsworth, Speaker: Jeremy Birch (Selly Oak Labour Party.)

ERDINGTON: Tuesday October 5, 7.30pm, Red Lion Pub, Station Road, Erdington. Speaker: Chris Newis (Conference delegate Perry Barr Labour Party)

FRANKLEY: Monday October 4, 7.30pm, Speaker: Jeremy Birch, at Reaside Community Centre, Ormond Rd, Frankley.

STOCKPORT: Tuesday 5 October 8pm, details (061)477-5006.

EAST LONDON Tuesday 5 October 8 pm. Ted Grant (Political Editor Militant) Main Hall Fellowship House, St Bartholemews Rd London E6 (Behind East Ham Tech)

NORTH LONDON Tuesday 5 October 7.30pm Speaker: Tony Saunois (former LP NEC) + leading trade union speaker Essex Road Library, Islington, N1. (Tube Angel)

HARLOW: Wednesday, 6 October, Bob Wade, Harlow Advice Centre, Town Sq.

COLCHESTER: Tuesday 12 October Labour Party Rooms, 8.00pm

BASILDON: Thursday 14 October, Laindon Community Centre, Aston Rd (near Laindon BR station) 8.00pm.

SOUTHAMPTON: Monday 4 October, 7.45 pm, Conference Room, Civic Centre. Speakers: Ted Grant (Political Editor, 'Militant'), John Kelly (Southampton East CLP)

NOTTINGHAM: Wednesday, 13 October, 7.30, Queens Walk Community Centre, Queens Drive Meadows Speakers Wayne Jones (Industrial Correspondent, Militant) and Dave Hardy (Nottingham NUR personal capacity)

BRISTOL Militant Readers' Meeting. 'Fight Tories—no expulsions'. Wagon and Horses, Stapleton Road, Bristol. Wednesday 6 October, 7.30 pm. Speakers: Brian Ingham (Industrial Correspondent, Militant); Sue Beekingham (Delegate to LP Conf from Bristol SE LP)

BATH Militant Readers' Meeting. Thursday 7 October. Labour Party Rooms, Pierrepoint Street, Bath. Speakers: Steve Smith (Delegate, Westbury CLP); Brian Ingham (Militant Industrial Correspondent)

Industrial Reports

BRITISH TELECOMM-

Wipe the smile off Tory faces

On 14th September the **Guardian** revealed the existence of a confidential Department of Industry paper forecasting the axing of 45,000 jobs in British Telecom over 5 years if it is denationalised after the next general election.

In many ways this comes as no surprise as such authoritative papers as 'Financial Times' have claimed that "BT is 25% overstaffed". Privatisation elsewhere has always resulted in redundancies as the new owners go for maximum profits at the expense of labour costs and the provision of "uneconomic" services.

The surfacing of this paper has helped to make abundantly clear the government's intentions.

It provides an opportunity to point out to both the public and BT workers that despite having a productivity and labour relations record second to none, government plans offer BT nothing but more unemployment and less public service.

Strangely, POEU branches have been circulated with a letter from the General Secretary Bryan Stanley which is contradictory, confused and ill-informed. The letter claims that a press statement has been made from POEU describing the Guardian article as ludicrous.

Bryan Stanley says that it is impossible to forecast that far ahead (5 years) in a rapidly growing business and that the BT chairman has said overall manpower will remain as before.

It also says that the report claims BT will be cutting services to customers when they are committed to improving and extending them.

Oddly after this the letter goes on to say "the article shows the type of damage

Phil Holt
(POEU Branch Secretary, Liverpool internal.)

which the government wants to inflict on BT and our members through privatisation...45,000 jobs lost."

The first thing to point out is that BT has accepted and will cooperate with the government in its plans to denationalise BT. Unlike the Gas Industry's management they are not campaigning against the government plans but for them. Many POEU members suspect that Sir George Jefferson was made BT chairman in order to have it privatised.

To believe that BT nationally will do other than refute suggestions of job cuts at this stage is in itself ludicrous. But the point about "manpower forecasts" is also strange.

POEU members have often accepted change based on assurance of "staff in posts" from 5, 10 and even 15 years forecasts. The union

nationally has traditionally used this type of information and the assumptions drawn.

However the letter gets even more curious by stating that the paper made its forecast on the assumption that BT will cut its services. In fact the paper makes the following assumptions.

*Network 'liberalisation' will not extend beyond Mercury (the alternative private trunk network)

*International services (apart from arrangements already in hand in respect of Mercury) no further liberalisation will be assumed though the threat of liberalisation should continue to be recognised.

*For medium term planning purposes the assumption is that the bulk of BT's activities continue to be undertaken by BT plc itself.

*BT will be permitted by the licence to undertake any telecoms service permitted under the 1981 Act.

So why is the General Secretary playing down the article and getting utterly confused in the attempt? It

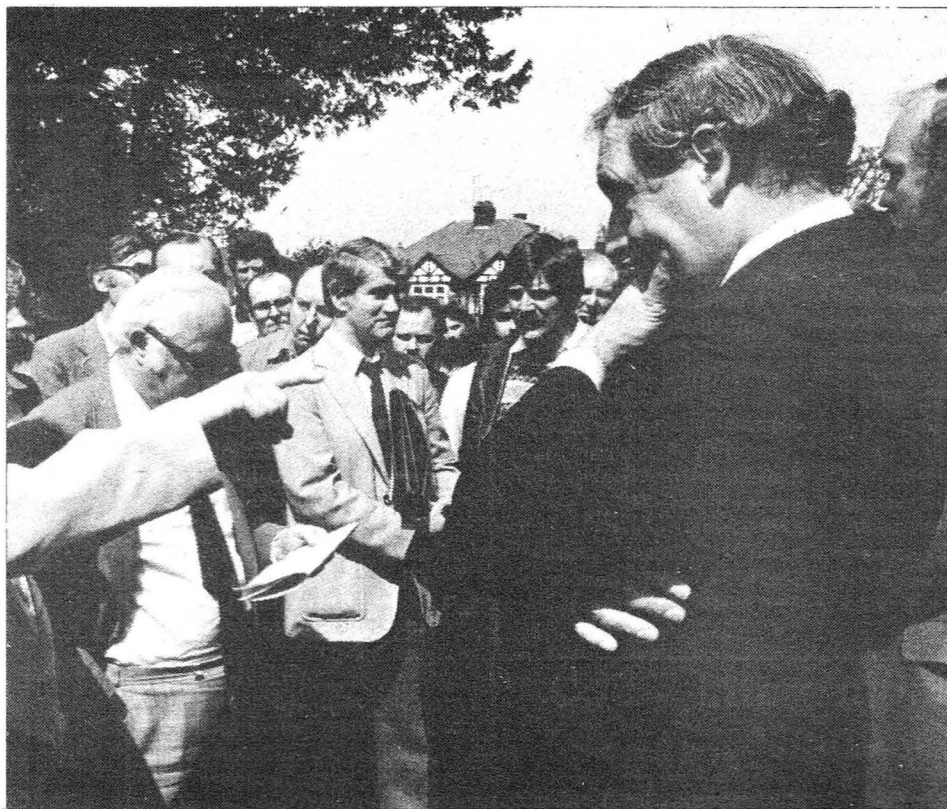
can only be that if the workers in BT are aroused to the dangers ahead they will want a serious fight to defeat the Tory's plans.

This is why they initially resisted even a public campaign and protest strike when the issue was raised on the NEC in May 1981. Much precious time has since been wasted. It was only due to the pressure of branches that this campaign and the 20 October strike is to go ahead.

Because of the fundamental importance of the problems facing us there has literally been a flood of branch circular letters from all shades of opinion within the union calling for a special conference to discuss the way forward. This should be taken up and a plan of action to defeat the Tories can be drawn up.

Kenneth Baker (Industry Minister) has been reported to be "cocky" that opposition to BT privatisation will remain largely "synthetic".

POEU and BT workers are now looking for a chance to wipe the smile off his face.



Bryan Stanley, POEU General Secretary is lobbied by members of his union Photo: Militant

DHSS-WE NEED MORE STAFF

Nearly 6,000 Midlands civil servants stopped work on 24th September in support of 164 union members in Erdington, Birmingham, who had been on strike for two weeks.

The flashpoint at Erdington DHSS came one morning when three receptionists were due to work on reception, but because of sick absences there was only one, with a queue of about 300 or 400 claimants outside.

The girl understandably broke down. Members of the CPSA and SCPS in the office held a quick meeting,

and all 160 of them walked out demanding 15 more permanent staff.

The unions went into negotiations with the DHSS management to ask for the extra staff for this office realising that throughout the country, especially in inner city areas offices are under pressure due to the Tories cuts. DHSS management refused any increase, just offering a few reserves for a limited period.

Members in Birmingham rejected this overwhelmingly and decided to stay out on strike. Solidarity action followed in West Midlands social security offices where

35 officers walked out. Together with four offices in the East Midlands, and Erdington that gave a total of 40 offices involved with nearly 6,000 members.

The local MP is Norman Fowler who is pushing the computerisation of the DHSS involving a further loss of 25,000 jobs in the department. He claims that he's giving a good service to the public but what he is doing is employing more and more special investigators to harass claimants.

At the same time he wants to cut down to the figure of 87,000 people working in DHSS by April 1984. Some

"service"! Some hypocrisy!

The unions have set up an emergency centre to pay emergency payments to claimants. But we know that if claimants are to receive anywhere near decent treatment, and our members are not to join them in the DHSS queues, we have to win battles like this.

By Kevin McHugh

(CPSA, personal capacity)

CAMELOT PRESS

SACKED FOR STRIKING



Photo: Paul Carter (Viewpoint)

On the Camelot picket line, 23 September

Ninety six printworkers at Camelot Press, Southampton were locked out after striking on September 22nd in support of NHS workers.

Printworkers, members of SOGAT and the NGA had come out solidly for the day. That evening they received hand delivered letters saying they had broken their contracts and were backed.

When they turned up for work on the 23rd management refused to let them work.

Camelot was a long established family printing firm taken over seven years ago by a millionaire property dealer, John Shone. He bought it then for a "quick buy and sell deal" which fell through.

Workers immediately suspected that some similar move was being planned now, especially since many workers had had years of service with the firm and would be entitled to large sums of redundancy pay.

Within hours, these suspicions were confirmed. News came out that the firm had been placed in the hands of the receiver. The one day-strike had only been an excuse to try to get rid of the workforce on the cheap.

The response from the local trade union movement in Southampton was excellent. Shop stewards from the docks, Southern Evening Echo and British American Tobacco offered support. Fifty workers from the Royal South Hants hospital marched up to the picket line. Workers from the General Hospital and Ambulancemen came down to the picket. But it quickly became clear that negotiations were getting nowhere.

Promises of alternative buyers were being used as stalling tactics. Therefore on the Friday the workers occupied the plant, and on Monday they commenced a "work-in".

The basic fight now is to save nearly 100 jobs. The workers are looking for an alternative buyer or for a workers co-operative to be set up. But they are determined to save jobs without a worsening of pay or conditions.

Please send donations and messages of support to NGA/SOGAT Camelot Press, Shirley Road, Southampton.

Richard Southwell (Clerical FOC) spoke to Nick Brookes

Railway Workers' lobby

Members of the National Union of Railwaymen will be lobbying the recall AGM of their union at AUEW House in Birmingham on Wednesday 13 October. The conference will be discussing the Railway Staff National Tribunal (RSNT) decision on pay.

Industrial Reports

22nd September

East Ham Hospital Fights on

Workers at East Ham Memorial Hospital in East London have seen the viciousness of Tory health policies. Six weeks ago they were told their hospital is to close.

The ten hospital closures in the area in the last decade have passed with little opposition but this time has seen an action committee set up to save the hospital.

Barbara Lestor (NALGO steward) told a Newham North East Labour Party women's section that although workers were "green" before their campaign started, already petitions and posters have been produced and over 200 letters sent out to councillors, tenants associations, unions etc.

A new hospital is to open in Plaistow next March but workers were told East Ham would give a back up service for geriatrics. Some workers had even been interviewed for jobs at East Ham!

Even before this threatened closure, at least 500 hospital beds have gone in this area but we are told that East Ham is no longer a deprived area so the bed norm can go down from 3 per 1,000 to 2 or 2½ per thousand.

Workers have now discovered that East Ham Memorial deals with more first time casualty cases a day than the big London Hospital. There are no other casualty departments in the Barking Redbridge and Dagenham areas which also have to use East Ham.

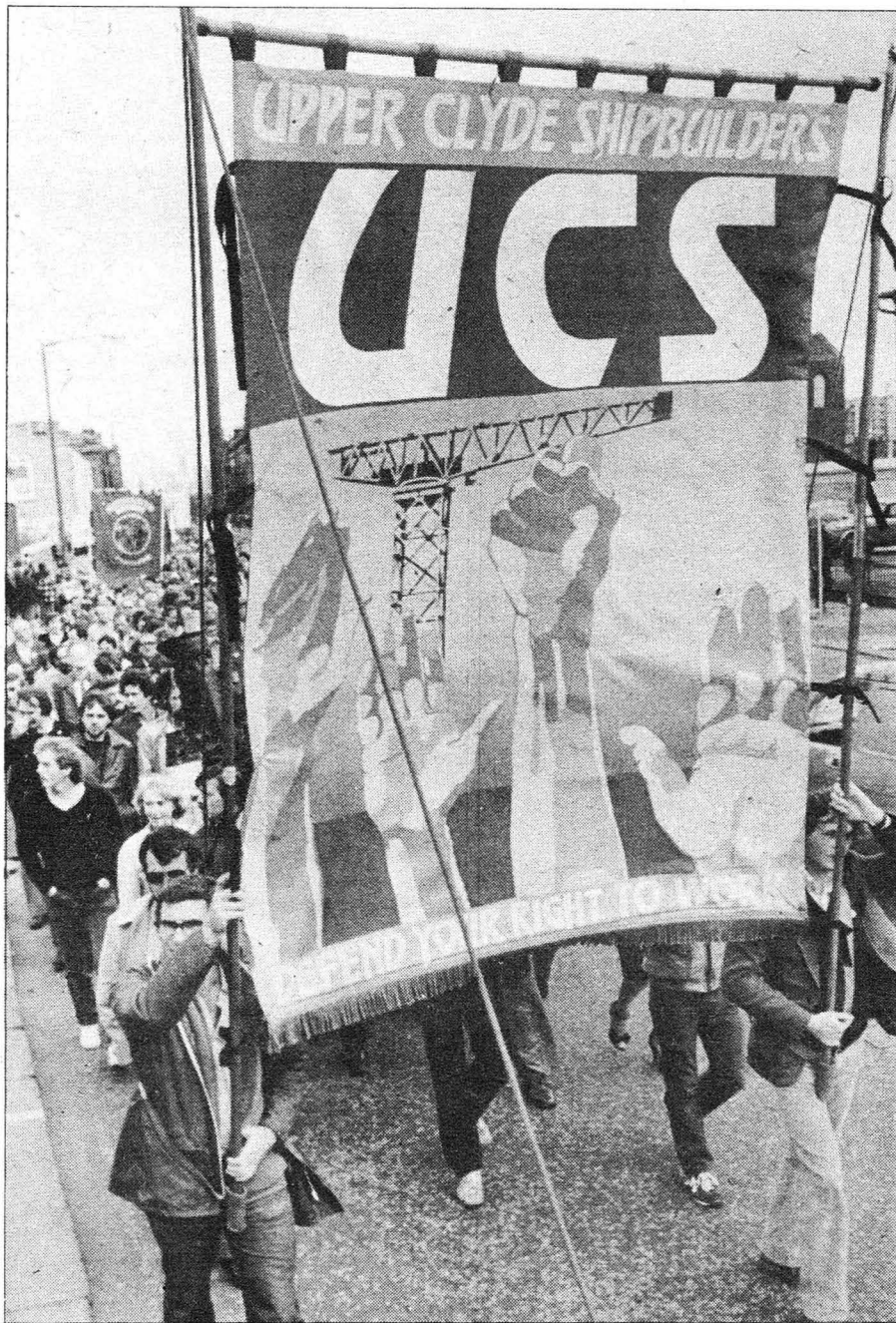
Workers are now not even prepared to accept the proposals of two years ago for closure of the casualty alone.

Undoubtedly now essential treatment will be put off because of cost of transport to and from St. Bart's. But even more cutbacks are promised for those 'lucky' enough to get jobs at the new Plaistow hospital—the medical records department at EHM comprises 13 staff who struggle to meet the workload but there will be only 21 employed in the new hospital to deal with twice as many records.

As Barbara appealed for support from the rest of the movement, she reminded us of the days before the NHS when the bill for Hospital care for a child with Pneumonia took 10 weeks wages to pay for it. Unless these cuts and closures are fought, a return to those days will not be far off.

Please send measures of support and donations to Barbara Lestor, East Ham Memorial Hospital Action Committee, East Ham Hospital, Shrewsbury Rd, London E7

By Jen Pickard.



The class fighters of 1971 support the class fighters of 1982. Solidarity in action in Glasgow

PHOTO: Rick Matthews (IFL)

A GREAT SUCCESS - BUILD ON IT

SWANSEA

"A demonstration against Maggie Thatcher and the Tories, as well as showing support for the health workers" commented one Swansea marcher, summing up the feeling of trade unionists from all sections of the trade union movement, in Swansea.

On the march more than 100 Militants and Socialist Youth were sold. During the march itself a group of health workers approached Swansea YS asking them if they would come and support them on their local picket line. This has been done.

Every day a number of

Young Socialists visited the picket line for a few hours to give support. The result can be best summed up by shop stewards "If there's ever anything we can do for you don't hesitate to ask". Some younger pickets have also agreed to come to the LPYS October 16th demonstration.

Every union speaker stressed the need to escalate the action. Dai John, secretary of the Swansea busmen best summed up the anxiety of trade unionists "my members need leadership. I didn't receive a call from TUC head office to take action until Monday."

Terry Hopkinson, of Swansea Young Socialists, received an excellent response when he stressed that the day of action was

not enough, and called on the TUC leaders to organise a 24-hour general strike to bring down the Tories. Terry asked all trade unionists to join the Labour Party as the only party that could defend the interests of the working class.

The campaign and the rallies can best be summed up by one comment from a young miner. "I'm afraid that if the TUC leadership don't give a lead, then as marvellous as the response is from the rank and file the mass of trade unionists will begin to think that this struggle is unwinnable."

Julian Sharp
(Swansea Labour Party Young Socialists)

GRIMSBY

The Day of Action started at 5 am in Grimsby and Clethorpes. Flying pickets were organised to cover the major factories on the Humber bank, such as Dunlops, Courtaulds and Titans.

Many lorries turned back when they came to picket lines and workers showed their sympathy for the NHS workers by some huge donations—£500 from the lorry drivers and by 1 or 2 hour stoppages.

By 8 am, further picketing was organised for waste dumps to prevent lorries emptying their loads. At 11 am Immingham Labour Party held a rally attended by 160 people. The collection off the floor raised £40. Many activists made their way to Scartho Rd Hospital in Grimsby to join pickets there.

By 2 pm, 300 people were on the picket line. Members of the public donated £5s,

even £10s were given to the strike fund. After a rally we marched through Grimsby, past 2 private schools who soon heard what we thought of them and the rotten system they support. We also passed a private squash club which costs £60 per year to join!—two weeks take home pay for some marchers.

The Tory Club members hid behind the doors when we passed. We spotted two Tories in the street who were complaining about strikers so we let them have a blast of 'Tories Out'. The march ended with a speaker outlining the need for a 24 hr General Strike to bring down the Tories.

10,000 workers took part in some way in the strikes, something which has not been seen here since 1926. NALGO, ASLEF, NUR, NATFHE, NUS and many others donated their wages for the day to the strike fund. It's our health service, we'll fight to save it.

Olwen Davies

Grimsby LPYS

NOTTINGHAM

On a bus from Nottingham Rose Jackson, an orderly at Highbury explained why she was demonstrating in London on September 22nd.

"We are not getting a fair deal. But we've got such good support this time we are going to show the people who are keeping our money back we mean it."

"The wages are too low," joined in Sheila Smith, a domestic. "I take home £43, (£54 with a Saturday and Sunday). My husband was made redundant 3 years ago. He gets £3 a week off the social. Marie (also on the bus) has to bring up 2 children on her money."

Sheila hasn't had a holiday for 4 years. Rose did not have one this year and has had her phone cut off—the price of taking part in strikes and days of action to improve her meagre wages.

But like many other health workers she is as determined as ever. "6% won't pay the rent. Kick the Tories out!" she sang. "And if today isn't enough we must carry on. We need to pull out groups and keep them out."

TAMESIDE

On the 22nd, Tameside saw a demonstration of 2,000. In particular represented were the post office engineers, the FBU, council workers, CPSA and NUT, with banners from the Labour Party and the Young Socialists as well.

Kate McGraw, a sister at Tameside hospital and COHSE member explained how she saw the struggle developing. "It is difficult to say who's the lowest paid in the NHS. But for example, one of the members of our local auxiliary works part time and is the only wage earner in her family. Her two sons and husband are on the dole."

"We also have another member who's divorced and has a young child and who finds life very hard. In fact, with unemployment in our area there are dozens of families where the women workers in the NHS are the only wage earners."

"The NHS unions should continue to pull our key workers out if there are no signs of the government backing down in a few weeks we'll need an all-out general strike."

"This time there should be no question of keeping trains on for a London demonstration but the emphasis should be on the areas—on local action like Ashton-under-Lyme has been hit today so that everyone locally should be aware of the issues involved"

Huddersfield

A picket was injured during the day of action in Huddersfield. The incident happened when the members from the Kirklees Metro busmen branch of the TGWU, out for 24-hours, mounted a mass picket of the main bus station.

At 9 am the driver of a Yorkshire Traction bus attempted to cross the picket line. The pickets approached the bus and attempted to talk to the driver, but he then put his foot down and the pickets had to scatter quickly.

Mr Ali Asghar, an active Labour Party member, failed to get out of the way in time and was hit by the bus. He was taken to Huddersfield Royal Infirmary with head injuries.

The pickets entered the bus when it stopped and the driver threatened them with a piece of wood he was carrying in his cab. The pickets then got off the bus and the police were called. Police are investigating the incident and a court case is likely.

Militant

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The enormous demonstration in London on 22 September showed the massive support for NHS workers. Photo: MILITANT

Militant says

The 22nd September demonstrations were a marvellous example of working class unity and strength. Now as our reports show, workers are asking where do we go from here.

The TUC Health Service Committee meeting after the 22nd decided that there should be no more secret negotiations with government ministers over the dispute. This is to be warmly-welcomed. After the 22nd September they plan a series of one day actions throughout the country.

After the feeling of strength engendered by last week's national action it would be fatal to now break this up into localised action only. The movement must go forward in a united fashion.

The union general secretaries have now agreed a day of action in November involving all transport workers. This must be turned into a clear call for a one day general strike of all workers and coupled with clearly spelt out plans for ongoing action involving trade unionists outside the health service.

NHS workers can not win on their own because of the limits on action imposed by the emergency nature of much of their work, but with the full support of the organised working class, this dispute would be assured of success.

NHS-BUILD ON THE UNITY

"An historic day" is how Roy Rix, chairman of the Leeds Action Committee correctly described the Day of Action in Leeds.

Six thousand marched around the city centre in the best supported trade union demonstration for years.

Whole industries like printing and engineering were involved in industrial action and were joined by workers never before involved in

By Colin Piper
 Leeds COHSE 257 branch.

strike action like NUR members at Queens Hotel, and shopworkers at Lewis's, Leeds biggest department store.

An electric atmosphere filled the Leeds Town Hall, which was packed solid, with hundreds standing outside listening to the procedures over loudspeakers. The platform included Arthur Scargill, NUM President, Kevin Roddy, CPSA President and a number of hospital workers.

One NHS worker, a ward sister, summed up the political nature of the dispute. "Fowler had said the TUC are using the NHS dispute to get at the government. Not so, the government are using the health service to get at the TUC."

This enormous strength of feeling in Leeds and elsewhere on September 22nd can and must be tapped by the TUC to win this dispute. When Kevin Roddy described his disappointment that the TUC General Council had not called for a 24-hour strike it received massive support and many other speakers referred to the same topic.

The only way forward after the 22nd would have

been emergency service only in the hospitals plus a full 24 hour national stoppage to tap the unprecedented support in the movement, which could force the government to concede the health workers claim.

Regional one-day strikes cannot possibly have the same impact as a national stoppage with newspapers television and transport probably remaining unaffected. Also at this short notice it will be very difficult to mobilise workers in other industries who may be reluctant to lose a further days pay in support of a strike they see as less effective.

Because of the need to maintain an emergency service, health workers have

always had to fight with one hand behind their backs. The support of other trade unionists has been vital in fighting this campaign so far and winning the already improved offer.

The Labour and trade union movement have it in their grasp to win this dispute. The government has been increasingly isolated, even from its former supporters in refusing to compromise with the health service workers.

We must now force the government to change its mind. All out on the regional days of action and build for a 24 hour general strike.

HANDS OFF MILITANT

Continued from page one board of Militant, its newspaper sellers and the Militant Parliamentary candidates be removed."

Compare Grantham's views to those of the rabidly anti-Labour Press like the Daily Mail, whose editorial the next day stated: "The editorial board of the Militant newspaper must go. The 60 or 70 hard-core activists too."

"But, most crucial of all, each and every one on the eight militants already selected to stand as parliamentary candidates for the Labour Party at the coming general election must be ditched."

Grass roots members of the Labour Party and Labour voters will note very carefully the remarkable coincidence of views between this anti-trade union Tory rag and the speechwriters of Labour's right wing. But even despite the attacks of the Press and the right wing, Militant supporters in the Labour Party will continue to fight the Tories with socialist ideas.

They will continue to argue that Labour must campaign, not in the interests of the editorial writers of the Mail, but in the interests of workers, housewives and the unemployed.

It is not 'extreme' to call

for a 35-hour week, and a national minimum wage of £90 a week. They are burning necessities for working people. It is not 'extreme' to demand that Labour should champion the cause of the unemployed, with the demand for 'Work or Full Pay'.

The Labour Party must convince workers that the next Labour government will do the job: create 4 million jobs, restore the education and health cuts of the Tories, rebuild the schools, hospitals and homes, scrap the nuclear weapons programme and regenerate industry.

But these policies must be linked to a programme of public ownership of the 'commanding heights of the economy' in order that the Labour government can really plan and control the nation's resources for the good of the majority and not the few.

No witch-hunts will stop Militant supporters from putting these ideas forward in the Labour Party in the future and no purges will stop these ideas getting wider support.

Above all, the screams of the right-wing press and their echoes in the Labour Party will not stop workers from fighting for Parliamentary representatives and leaders who will put themselves on the standpoint of workers and fight in the interests of workers.

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MILITANT READERS MEETING 600 ANSWERS TO WITCH-HUNT

The class backgrounds of the workers present jarred with the crystal splendour of the Royal Suite of a hotel in Blackpool.

This was the setting for the Labour Party conference Militant Readers meeting—local Labour party secretaries, GMC chairmen, trade union delegations, this was the Labour party rank and file.

Around 600 people 3 or 4 times the number of last year packed into the vast hall and applauded Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant when they arrived for the meeting. Both speakers made it clear that the right-wing will fail in their attempt to witch-hunt ideas out of the Labour Party.

As Peter Taaffe said: "they said they would cut off the head and see what

the body does. Well, as any gardener knows, when you cut back at the top it grows all the better and its roots spread."

The press were there en masse, with TV crews from as far as Ireland and Germany. The ideas even spread amongst them; one TV camera man gave £10 to the Fighting Fund during the collection!

Significantly, however, the British TV gave no coverage whatsoever to this magnificent meeting.

The appeal for Militant's fighting fund made by Ray Apps, delegate for Brighton Kempton raised an excellent £1,641.

Despite the set back of the register, there were no gloomy faces at this meeting. On the contrary, the ideas of Militant exude energy, optimism and confidence.

More LP conference reports pages 2-4.