

Waterworkers occupy plants

Water workers, angry at the fact that highly paid management are doing their jobs and prolonging the strike, have begun a series of occupations of water plants up and down the country.

Plants have been occupied in Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Barnsley, in East Anglia and in many parts of South Wales.

A report from Stoke Bar-dolph works in Nottingham says 20 strikers occupied the screen section for two hours after two engineers tried unsuccessfully to force their way in a vehicle through picket lines. Police arrived shortly afterwards to ask questions and take car numbers of the pickets.

The occupation was to find out what work was going on and the effect of the strike. A longer occupation is being considered.

The workers are determined to make sure that while private households continue to get their supplies, industrial users will feel the effects of the strike. The occupations are now expected to spread to all other water plants.

The determination of the workers to win this fight has not been dented in the slightest by the new 'revelation' by management that they 'miscalculated' their offer. The 'corrected' offer has

By Steve Feely

(AUEW Beckton sewage works, personal capacity)

been met with general derision and disbelief. No amount of juggling with figures can hide the fact that the offers made so far are well below what the water workers deserve.

Waterworkers have shown their strength and are confident they can win. The battle lines are drawn. The Tory government have quite blatantly made this a political strike by cutting the original offer down to 4% and later by attempting a pathetic compromise offer when water workers started to fight.

Parity with gas and electricity is essential and there should be no negotiations until the principle is assured. The Tories say 'no'. They must be made to say 'yes'.

Union members want to keep national negotiations to give all water workers the strength of unity. The Tories want localised bargaining to beat down the wages and conditions of one group of workers—then another and another. They must be made to give up their schemes.

Productivity deals are out
CONTINUED ON
BACK PAGE

TORIES MUST BE DEFEATED



Waterworkers picketing the Macclesfield depot.

Photo: Militant.

More waterworkers reports

See pages 8, 9, 14.

DEDUCTIONS	AMOUNT	NORTH WEST WATER AUTHORITY	
NATIONAL INSURANCE	6.3	CENTRAL	DIVISION
SUPERANNUATION	4.74	EMPLOYEE NAME	
INCOME TAX	15.0	EMPLOYEE No.	TAX PERIOD
ROUND UP R/F	0.29	42	13/01/83
GIBATU CHEADLE	0.70	DATE	
GIBATU WELFARE	0.11	PAY POINT/DEPARTMENT	
		DEPOT	
		TAX CODE	GRADE
		C1581	3
		N.I. NUM/EF	
		PAY METHOD	
		CASH	
TOTAL	26.??	NET PAY £ 58.50	

Media lies about wages

THIS PAY slip speaks volumes. £58.50 take home pay for a 39 hour week in a Warrington waterworks. All around the country water workers have been paid poverty wages like these for keeping Britain supplied with pure water. To make matters worse, since the strike began the Tory press, obedient as ever to the Thatcher government, have been flooding us out with stories of wages of £130 or £140 a week. If only that were true! Overtime has become rarer and rarer in the industry, and only in a small minority of plants, working all the hours there are, could any worker earn such a sum. These wage rates exist only in the mind of the Fleet Street propaganda machine. The employers can afford nearly £100,000 a day in advertising against the strike and they can afford to pay scabs £800 a week, but they "can't afford" to give their employees 15 per cent and comparability with gas and electricity workers. What would they say if water workers asked for comparability with Sir William Dugdale, chairman of the National Water Council? He gets his £125 for one day's duty, plus nearly £500 a week for his four days at Severn Trent water authority.

Militant

The Bermondsey by-election, coming perhaps only two or three months before a general election, is extremely important for the Labour Party.

The leadership, the NEC and the rank and file should all be throwing their full weight into ensuring that Peter Tatchell is elected, in rehearsal for the main campaign in the summer.

The past record of the Labour leadership on the Bermondsey issue, however, has not helped the campaign one bit. Indeed, it has been deplorable.

After Michael Foot's "over my dead body" speech in the House of Commons, the right wing of the Party conducted a determined and sustained campaign against the endorsement of the candidate and even as recently as Monday, Betty Boothroyd at the NEC organisation sub-committee suggested that Peter Tatchell be dropped—two weeks before the by-election!

The right wing of the Party do not want the Labour candidate to win this by-election: they will have been an obstacle to a victory from start to finish.

It is no less a scandal that the NEC has invited the Editorial Board of *Militant* to the February NEC

meeting—the day before the poll—in order to expel them. The five members of the Editorial Board have each received a letter inviting them, but without stating any specific charges or citing any evidence related to them.

The letter merely asserts that as members of the Editorial Board of *Militant*, the five "may, therefore, fairly and reasonably be regarded as a member of the Regulated Tendency". No charges, no evidence, no indication of the procedure of the 'hearing'...no natural justice, in other words. Only repeated references to the ineligibility of the "Militant Tendency" to affiliate.

The right wing, having decided the sentence in advance are now going to go through a form of *show trial*, which, although it will not fool the rank and file of the Party, will, they hope,

Bermondsey and the witch-hunt

give a respectable gloss to their frantic witch-hunt.

But nothing illustrates the narrow-mindedness and stupidity of the right wing officialdom more than the affair of the Bermondsey election leaflets. Cambridge Heath Press Ltd, which prints the *Militant*, has in the past printed many leaflets, newsletters and election broadsheets for Labour Parties, as well as other material for trade union bodies—all on a commercial basis.

Over 50 Labour Party bodies use our press

Altogether, some 50 or 60 Labour Party bodies have used the press. The contents of the Bermondsey by-election leaflets were deter-

mined by the candidate and agent and indeed the new leaflets, when they do come out, will have exactly the same contents and lay-out.

Witch-hunts were always associated in the past with book-burning. We now have the sad spectacle of Labour Party officers destroying leaflets because of a tiny printer's imprint, one-sixteenth of an inch high, at the bottom of the page!

The whole business has injected an element of high farce into the by-election with the national officials first 'impounding' the original leaflets, then debating whether to burn them or shred them. It has been claimed that the Ecology Party have called for them to be re-cycled, although it's not clear whether this is a reference to the leaflets or the right wing officials.

Russell Tuck's silly comment, however, beats the lot. "As far as I'm concerned," he said, the leaflets "don't exist." There is now a rumour that framed copies of the leaflets that "don't exist" are circulating in the Labour Party as historic collectors' items!

Labour's officials, despite their claimed intentions, have succeeded in putting the issue in the headlines. They certainly cannot complain after the by-election about adverse publicity, since they will have been responsible for creating it themselves. The only achievements they have to their credit are the delay of the election campaign by 5 or 6 days and the throwing away of nearly £500 of the Labour Party's desperately needed election expenses.

If someone had deliberately wanted to damage the campaign of the Party, then they could not have done a better job.

Print ban part of witch-hunt

At the NEC organisation sub-committee the right wing, predictably, were foaming at the mouth over the issue. Denis Howell, it was reported, has given notice of a motion to the effect that the NEC instruct all

Labour Party bodies or affiliates not to use Cambridge Heath Press for their printing.

This is clearly part and parcel of the witch-hunt against Marxist ideas in the Party. Unable to answer the political arguments of *Militant*, the right wing have resorted to expulsions and, now, to attempts to cripple the paper financially. Presumably, they would prefer that Labour Parties should go to a more expensive capitalist printing firm who perhaps donate a part of their profits to the Tory Party.

Fortunately, neither the conscious damage inflicted by the Party right wing, nor the stupidities of the national officials, will deflect ordinary Labour members from working in the by-election.

But the Party grass roots are becoming increasingly impatient with the way the NEC and the leadership are campaigning against socialists in the Party rather than against the Tories outside. The membership want an election machine rather than an internal witch-hunting machine.

It is time the witch-hunt was dropped, and the party leaders came into line with the feelings of the membership. The job at hand is to kick the Tories out and to bring Labour to power on a socialist programme!

SOUTH LONDON'S CABLE ST

Amongst the many candidates standing in the Bermondsey by-election, a number represent fascist groups.

This is not the first time that fascism has raised its ugly head in Bermondsey.

In 1932 the British Union of Fascists, led by Oswald Mosley, set up their headquarters in Walworth Road.

He was given enthusiastic support by the *Daily Mail* and businessmen in his attempt to divide the working class.

But when he tried to march through Bermondsey, on the anniversary of his failure to march down Cable Street, in East London, he was greeted once again with barricades.

Today's fascists still draw on the worst prejudices of capitalist society.

Just as Hitler used the Jews as a scapegoat for the failure of the bosses' system, the New National Front and the rest blame the blacks and Asians for poor housing, mass unemployment and rising crime.

The aims of the fascists have not changed. Their task is to destroy the labour movement and replace it with a right-wing dictatorship.

Our task is to stop them.

By Andrea Stark and Amanda Brennan

(Bermondsey LPYS)

NUM lodge oppose witch-hunt

This message was recently sent by Tower Lodge, National Union of Mineworkers to the Labour Party NEC and their South Wales area executive.

Dear Sir,
We the members of the above lodge who contribute around £300 each year to the Labour Party feel great concern at the continuing witch-hunting in the party and we moved the following resolution at the lodge meeting last night reaffirming our previous stand on witch-hunts, only this time perhaps some interest will be taken:
"This lodge believes that

1983 could present us with the opportunity to be rid of Thatcher and the Tories. Unity in Labour's ranks is now therefore essential. This unity can only be achieved through a commitment to conference decisions and Clause IV part IV of the constitution. We believe that the attempted expulsions and proscriptions by the NEC have done nothing but damage to the prospects for defeating the Tories.

We therefore demand that the NEC drop this attempted witch-hunt and instead launch a determined campaign of explanation of Labour's policies to secure the election of a Labour government."

'Real Labour' renegade

By a Militant reporter

Normally Bermondsey is a rock solid Labour seat, one the safest in London.

The only serious challenger to the Labour candidate, Peter Tatchell, is former Southwark Council Leader John O'Grady.

He is standing under the laughable title of 'Real Bermondsey Labour' with the backing of former Labour MP Bob Mellish.

The Tories, Liberals and SDP stand no chance. Only by posing as being 'Labour' do the right wing opponents of socialism hope to slide in.

The main plank of O'Grady's campaign is that he has lived most of his life in the area. That may be so, but it doesn't wipe out his past record as leader of Southwark Council. It tamely accepted the dictates of the Tory government, and imposed slashing cuts in local services.

In his first election leaflet O'Grady claims that if elected he will support and accept Labour's programme in the House of Commons. If he is such a 'local man of principle' why did he spend years openly defying the expressed wishes of local Labour Parties in Southwark as council leader?

It is scandalous that O'Grady, who supported independent candidates against Labour in the last local elections, and is now standing against Labour, still holds a Labour Party card.

Yet the NEC of the Labour Party, at its February 23 meeting, will be

taking the next steps to expel five life-long socialists of the *Militant* Editorial Board—on the eve of polling day!

According to the right wing, publishing a socialist newspaper is a worse crime than standing against Labour in elections!

O'Grady claims to be 'Real Labour', yet no trade unions are supporting him. Many remember his role as Southwark council leader.

Perhaps one of the biggest give aways about O'Grady's 'support' was in the *South London Press* (1 Feb 1983), a paper that has frequently given full airing to his views against Bermondsey Labour Party.

It suggested that "he will probably finance the campaign himself and has rented old shop premises in Bermondsey Street for £500."

How many 'Real Bermondsey' workers could afford to spend thousands of pounds on an election campaign Mr O'Grady?

In his fight against the shift to the left in Bermondsey Labour Party, he has at least found one supporter. In the February *Bermondsey Blue Sheet*, Robert Hughes, the Tory candidate, says: "The march of the far left can be stopped. Help us fight the extremists who have infiltrated the local Labour Party."

By your friends shall you be known Mr O'Grady!



Despite Bermondsey's solid support for Labour, years of neglect and acceptance of Tory dictates by the former right-wing of the Labour Party means slums still remain. Photo: Militant.

London Labour condemns Bermondsey affair

The following resolution was passed unanimously on Tuesday, February 8, by the Greater London Labour Party Organisational Committee:

This committee deplores the actions of some Party officers and the NEC organisation sub-committee in seriously damaging the Party's campaign in the Bermondsey by-election by seizing 25,000 copies of the first leaflet produced for the campaign.

This action further confirms that the Party's leaders are now more concerned with expelling socialists from the Labour Party rather than fighting the Tories. This committee calls upon the NEC and all Party officers to stop using organisational methods against their political opponents within the Party and concentrate their energies instead on preparing for the coming general election.

ads

NEW RATE
 CLASSIFIED: 10p per word, minimum 10 words.
 SEMI-DISPLAY: £2 per 2 column centimetres.
 All advertisement copy should reach this office by SATURDAY.

Militant readers meetings

BLACKWOOD Marxist Discussion Group held regularly. If interested telephone Bargoed 834131.

Militant Discussion Group "Which way forward for Labour". Friday 11 February, 8.00 pm at Middleton Labour Club, Long Street Middleton.

Militant Trade Union School Sunday 13 February, 10.00 am-4 pm at AUEW Buildings, Margaret Street South, Aston-Under-Lyme.

Speakers: Jon Ingham (AUEW) on 'Which way forward for the trade unions'. Gerry Lerner (TASS) on 'Workers control and management'.

BRISTOL: 'The Way Forward for Labour and Trade Unions' on Wednesday 23 February at 7.30 pm. Speaker Bryan Beckingham. At the Swan, Stokes Cross, Bristol.

LEEDS 'How to win a socialist government' on Tuesday 15 February at 7.30 pm at Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds. All Labour supporters welcome.

CLEVELAND: "Socialism and the Bomb", Thursday 17 February, 7.30 pm. Labour Club, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough.

CLASSIFIED

CAMBRIDGESHIRE labour and trade union youth day school. Saturday 19 March, 10.30 am, at Gladstone Community Centre, Cromwell Road, Peterborough.

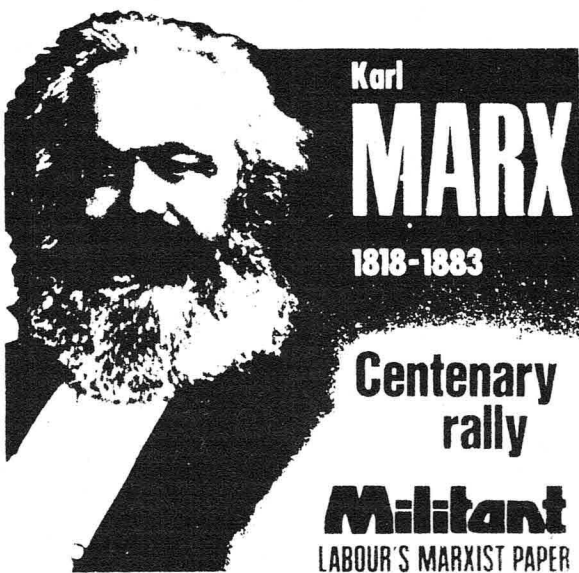
Speakers: Kevin Ramage (LPYS National Chairman), Dave Nellist (Labour PPC Coventry SE), Brian Richman (Peterborough TGWU), Bob Childs (Cambridge ASLEF). (All speakers in a personal capacity). For further information contact Chris Ballard, 0223 211229.

HACKNEY Youth Rally: '£20 weekly grant for all students over 16'. Thursday 24 February, 7.30 pm, Assembly Room, Hackney Town Hall. Speakers to be announced.

NEW MILITANT leaflet out now! It's an election year special! Advertise your local readers meeting with this new leaflet. Free, from 1 Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN.

NORTH EAST Marxist Discussion Groups:
FOREST HALL: Details Dave Metcalfe, 0632 665277
NEWCASTLE WEST: Every Sunday. Contact Rob Lowther, 0632 775636.
NEWCASTLE NORTH: Every Sunday. Contact Karen Walker, 0632 732959.
SANDIFORD: Every Sunday. Contact Gavin Dudley, 0632 652906.
GATESHEAD: Every Sunday. Contact Tom McGuinness, 18 Lumley Gardens, Gateshead (Gateshead 783262).
WASHINGTON: Details, Washington 478424.

EASTERN REGION LPYS CONFERENCE
 Militant readers meeting Saturday, 12 February 7.00 pm at Labour Halls, Chapel Street North, Colchester, Essex.
SPEAKER: Ted Grant (Political Editor, Militant)



MARX CENTENARY RALLIES

This year is the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, who died on March 14 1883. Throughout his life, Marx provided the labour movement with an analysis of capitalist society as a preparation for the emancipation of the working class.

Militant - Labour's Marxist paper - has organised a series of regional rallies to commemorate the event, and explain the relevance of Marxism today.

- ★ LEEDS - Saturday 12 March
- ★ NOTTINGHAM - Sunday 13 March
- ★ SWANSEA - Monday 14 March
- ★ BRISTOL - Monday 14 March
- ★ CARDIFF - Tuesday 15 March
- ★ MANCHESTER - Wednesday 16 March
- ★ EDINBURGH - Saturday 19 March
- ★ HUMBERSIDE - Saturday 19 March
- ★ BIRMINGHAM - Saturday 19 March
- ★ LONDON - Sunday 20 March
- ★ LIVERPOOL - Sunday 20 March
- ★ NORTHERN REGION - Saturday 26 March
- ★ GLASGOW - (to be announced)

£50,000 needed by April 9

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target 9th April
Eastern	329		2700
East Midlands	466		2850
Humberside	99		1500
London East	469		3300
London West	188		1650
London South	418		2500
Manchester & Lancs	378		3000
Merseyside	399		3100
Northern	108		3750
Scotland East	137		1850
Scotland West	109		2800
Southern	485		4000
South West	234		2000
Wales East	177		1500
Wales West	138		2000
West Midlands	390		2800
Yorkshire	207		3700
Others	637		5000
Total received	5377		50000

Secure your future - Back Militant

Last week a one-time passport clerk was in danger of becoming the world's most bankrupt bankrupt.

A certain "Jassim" of Kuwait, had been trying to amass fortunes through the country's unofficial stock market. He and others had been buying shares with post-dated cheques and selling them for cash! Now the bubble has burst and Jassim owes a total of £7 billion!

No worker can feel secure for their own future. They are entirely dependent on an employer or the state to provide the necessities of life. Nowadays, there is difficulty even getting hire purchase facilities, let alone paying for anything with a post-dated cheque!

Militant cannot get credit, either, from the big banks to finance premises or machinery and we cannot pay staff with promises or post-dated cheques. That is why we appeal to every worker who buys Militant (or even reads someone else's) to give a donation above the price of the paper itself.

It is one of the cheapest papers in the labour movement but the one with least likelihood of receiving help from any rich backer. More workers recognise this.

A water worker in Derby, buying Militant for the first time on the picket line, gave £1 for his copy. Others who did the same last week included: D Hussy (Wolverhampton), D McKittrick (Dudley), I Hepple (Sunderland GMBATU), G Fergus (Hackney), B Walters (Birmingham TASS), George Young (Notts), and Corby Labour Party Young Socialist P O'Neill. J Balshaw, LP candidate for Park Ward, Preston, was among those who paid 50p for theirs.

If you sell Militant regularly, never forget to ask for donations. Even the few pences mount up! Sellers outside a Joint Shop Stewards' Committee meeting on the Isle of Wight collected just 36p but it's a start and it all adds up. 100 times

36p equals £36! Sally Barnett of Shanklin who is unemployed gave 10p. Just 1000 readers giving that amount makes £100 a week.

Every donation we receive shows growing support for our ideas—the 50p from school student J Neal every week as much as the £12 regular donation from C Gwynne (Poole); the 50p from T Sweek as much as the £50 from S Score (Leicester West LPYS member) or the excellent £85 from Noni Kanaris of Reading North.

We value the first donations of 41p from A Dodson from Tunbridge Wells and 35p from J Warner of Sevenoaks as much as the £50 from long-standing supporters M and F Sheaff of Plymouth, given in memory

and L James (Bristol) £7.50.

Examples of donations from the trade union movement are given on p14. But the following contributions are a further indication of how Militant manages to receive magnificent sums like the £2,185 of this week:

Tenners came from P Kordun, J Marsden, S Crookes, and a Bermondsey Labour Party member amongst others. Fivers came from K Kempton, S Anderson, J Naulls, D Kannagara, and N Puhalo. £1 contributors included K Watmough, A Robson, T Penny, D Morris (UCW), J Muirhead, C Austin (TGWU), 'Christine' (West London), C Walkins, B Moody (NUM), a Gravesend PO worker, V Fernandez and

**TOTAL THIS WEEK:
£2185.89**

of their fellow socialist fighter Sue Beckingham. We value the £2.80 from a discussion group in Shipley as much as the £36 from a Hackney Militant Readers' meeting.

An excellent £124.50 was collected at the Southern Region LPYS Conference Militant meeting, including £25 from P Westmore (IOW). But just as important is the £9.65 collected on an appeal sheet by Leicester Sotuh LPYS members and the £7.50 from Stoke S YS, £5.40 from Sunderland S YS, £2.95 collected in a tin at Bexley YS, £1.50 from West Hull and £1.11 collected at Newcastle N LPYS.

Special thanks to Labour Party members in Broughton, Southampton, West Leeds GMS and Bowling Branch of Bradford North Labour Party who all contributed to appeals for Militant. It is not easy fighting for socialism and those with the least have to make the biggest sacrifices. Students on meagre grants who have donated this week include: D Osler (Poplar) £10, R Miller (Craigton) £15

S Andrews.

'In between' amounts came from: R Cawsley, J Shanahan, N Ingram (unemployed), Mr Chang, C Wilcox, T&A Walker (Wigan LP), T Smith and 'ET' from Blackburn! Many thanks to every contributor, however far away.

Other ways money has come to us include a collection of pennies in a jar by Cleethorpes readers, a sponsored walk in Newcastle, socials in Barking, Bradford and Wandsworth, 'jobs and selling things' in Dagenham, 'typing' in Hackney and running a tuck shop in Sheffield! A record was sold in Plymouth, a curtain in Barnsley, and second hand pamphlets in Saddleworth.

What can you do to help Militant get on target? Assuming playing the stock market is closed to you, secure your future by backing Militant! We need your help and you need ours!

By Clare Doyle

Boost sales!

By Dave Farrar

REGULAR readers of the Militant may find it difficult to imagine the difference it would make to them if Militant did not exist; if they had to argue for socialist policies in the Labour Party and trade unions without the facts and analysis that Militant alone provides. Yet for many workers Militant does not exist!

Despite the enormous growth of the influence of Militant many of the best class fighters are trying to fight the Tories without the benefit of a Marxist analysis. Militant readers can help those comrades enormously—sell them a copy of the Militant.

Many of our newer readers may think that selling the Militant is difficult or should be left to experienced labour movement activists. Reports from the areas show this is not true—it has never been easier to sell the paper and the newer sellers are often the best and most enthusiastic.

In Hackney in East London, three sellers sold 12 papers in ten minutes outside the local shops. When Denis Healey spoke at a meeting in Southampton, sellers sold right out of papers! In Sutton-in-Ashfield sales have gone from none to over fifty in a few months.

If you have read the Militant for years, or if this is the first issue you have seen, you can help us fight the witch-hunt and build the influence of Marxism, by taking out a bulk order of the Militant.

Fill in the form on the back of this paper and return it to Militant. Remember, by selling a worker a copy of the Militant, you are not taking 20p from them, you are giving them something that they really need.

Workers support student occupation

THREE HUNDRED Bristol Poly students, joined by water workers, demonstrated outside Avon Council offices and marched to the local court on 4 February.

As a result of an occupation of Poly buildings in protest against proposed cuts an injunction was served and the Union President landed in court.

Good support has been won from local trade unions, Labour Clubs and Young Socialists. One county councillor remarked, "Civil war has broken out over this." Another, a student at the Poly, has resigned all his committee chairmanships in protest at the council's behaviour.

ASTMS 461 branch passed a motion in our support

and recognising it as an 'industrial action'. Both ASTMS and TGWU district offices have given us support.

After nine days' occupation, 'A' block has been handed over to TGWU porters rather than the bailiffs. Sites and Buildings Officers complimented students on the condition of the premises.

It looks likely that the authorities will be forced to the negotiating table, but 80 students have occupied the Bower Ashton site and the pressure must be kept up.

By Ian Campbell
(Bristol Poly Labour Club)

Young Socialists go to market

THE YOUNG socialists went to market in Derbyshire recently! Two days of action were held in the market towns of **Affreton** and **Ripley**. A dozen YS members took part, from the **South Normanton, Sutton-in-Ashfield** and **Nottingham** LPYS branches, to build

support for a public meeting we're planning to hold in **Ripley Leisure Centre**. We handed out leaflets and with the use of a megaphone ensured the two Day of Actions were a great success. Over 30 copies of *Socialist Youth* and *Militant* were sold.

Labour's youth get ready for election

200 PEOPLE took part in the Southern Region LPYS demonstration held before the regional LPYS conference in Brighton recently.

The lively and impressive demonstration made a real impact and got a good response from people on the route. The demonstration marked the climax of weeks of campaigning work in Brighton. Some 30 people attended a public meeting in the previous week, many at their first LPYS meeting. 30 people were signed up to the LPYS during the week's work.

Rod Fitch (PPC Brighton Kemp Town) addressed the rally at the end of the march together with **Steve Morgan** (LPYS NC) and **Helen Gasking** (USDW shop steward).

Rod spoke of the importance of the LPYS to Labour winning the general election, and read out a thank-you given to the LPYS when Brighton Kemp Town was won for Labour in the 1960's, showing the long traditions of the LPYS in fighting the Tories and working to elect Labour governments.

The demo and rally really started the regional conference brilliantly. All the debates of the conference



Members from Reading LPYS branch on the 200 strong Southern Region demonstration.

showed the confidence and determination of the LPYS members in the South to see Labour MPs returned in the crucial marginal seats in the region. It was a record breaking conference. It was reported that while during the year 12 successful inaugural branch meetings had been held, in 1978 only 12 visitors went to the regional conference! Now the con-

ference was attended by 66 delegates from 37 branches, and 115 visitors to discuss 27 resolutions—all of which are records.

Dennis Skinner addressed the conference on Saturday afternoon talking of the importance of the waterworks strike and the attacks being made on the LPYS and supporters of the *Militant* by the right wing and their friends.

On Sunday **Ken Cameron** (Gen. Sec. FBU) spoke to conference. The collection for the LPYS campaign fund raised £209, showing how important comrades see the need to boost the resources of the LPYS if we are to build a mass campaigning socialist youth movement.

LPYS CONFERENCE

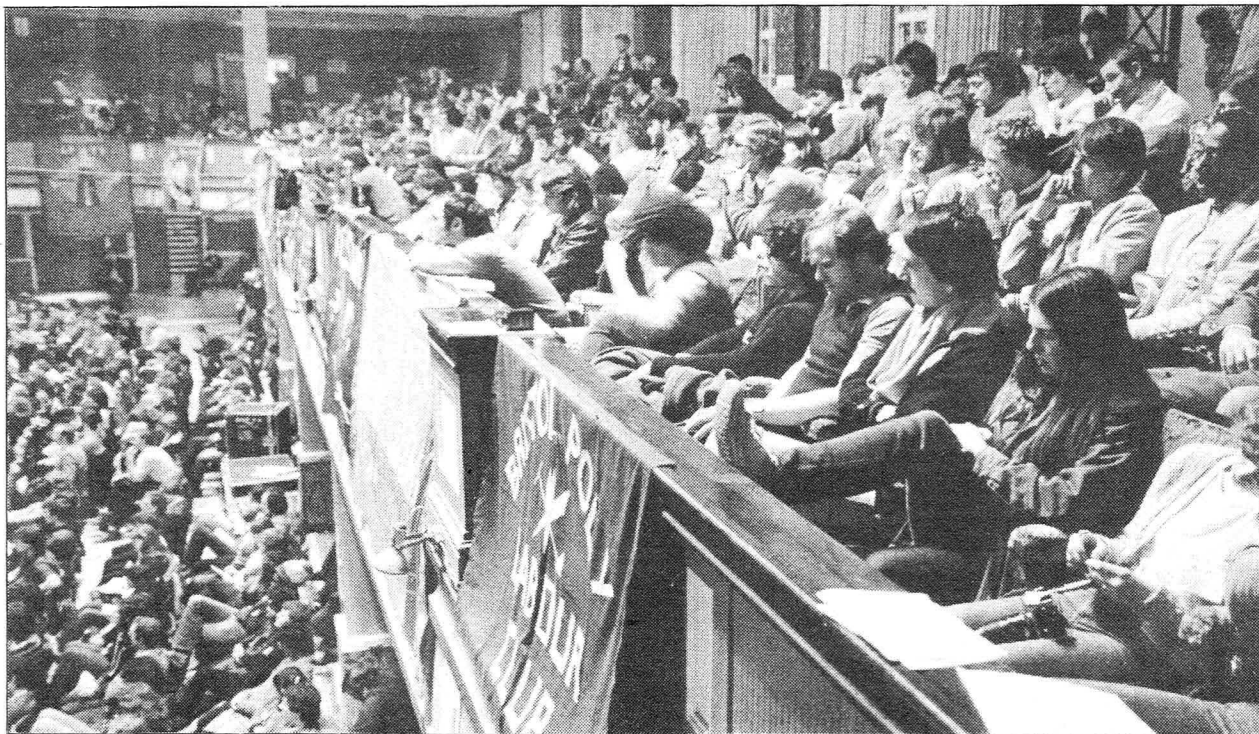
What won't be discussed!

ARE YOU fed up with CND? Do you think that the trade unions run the country? Then why not attend the Young Conservatives conference in Bournemouth on 12-13 of February? On these two days the YCs will hammer out the policies which will give youth a "future".

We're joking of course. Glancing through the resolution booklet one discovers that there are only 52 resolutions from 27 branches to be discussed. But after all, one can have a jolly good political discussion over a champagne cocktail or two in the bar!

It is obvious that the YCs need plenty of time to socialise at their conferences and other events. In fact *Over 21* magazine recently stated, in an article on political youth groups that, "The Young Conservative Programme calls for social skills more than social views, with two social events to every political one."

The resolutions to be discussed range from the ridiculous to the reactionary! A resolution from Dulwich YCs calls for more prisons, asks for prisoners to serve the whole of their sentence and finally denounces the sentences for mugging and armed robbery as being, "far too lenient".



Two thousand Young Socialists attended last year's national conference — at this year's Young Conservatives' conference there are only 52 resolutions from 27 branches to be discussed! Photo: Militant

Ilford North YCs propose to take voting rights away from Irish citizens living in Britain, and Sheffield Hallam YCs call upon the Tory government to re-introduce National Service as a, "means of giving young people pride in themselves and a concept of discipline."

Another resolution from Horsham branch of the YCs condemns the sale of arms to Argentina by France and calls for a boycott of French cars. However, now that the Tory government has given financial aid to Argentina will they call for the boycott of British cars?

Finally, there is one resolution from Erdington YCs which is aimed specifically at water workers. It quite simply states, "This conference notes the cost of water." Perhaps a suitable amendment would be, "and the low level of wages paid to water workers?"

In contrast to this charade, LPYS conference has 215 resolutions on its agenda and will be held over Easter week-end in Bridlington. At our conference we will explain that there is only one way forward for youth to have a decent future and that is, by joining the

fight to boot out the Tories and to end the rotten bosses system. It is only the bold socialist policies of the LPYS that can offer youth a future. If you hate the Tories and aren't interested in joining the YCs, then come to LPYS conference and join in the struggle.

Send off for your visitors credentials now! If you are a young trade unionist, then your union may sponsor you. In a campaign to bring people to the conference, LPYS branches should use the 100,000 free leaflets and 30,000 free posters which have been produced na-

tionally. In an effort to attract trade union youth, branches should visit workplaces and approach the unions locally with the national letter about the conference.

By Leo McDaid

To order leaflets, posters and the letters and to find out more about the conference contact:
Andy Bevan,
150 Walworth Road,
London SE17.

Ashington LPYS

OUR REBORN and revitalised Labour Party Young Socialists' branch in Ashington is a great success.

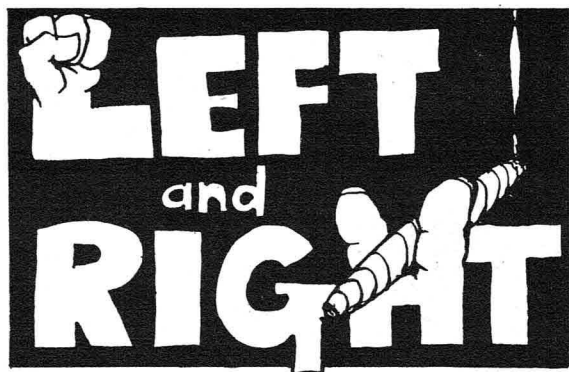
Initially restarted by one comrade after a small paper sale and leaflet distribution, he recruited a couple of leather and stud covered unemployed youngsters. Due to their eagerness and enthusiasm within the branch, they sparked off an amazing response from about thirty young punks. Four months later, we have a membership of twenty-five and regular attendance of 14-20.

As I am sure that fund raising is a major headache for most branches, I think that we can breathe slightly easier after receiving our replies from all of the affiliated branches within the Morpeth constituency.

Although we now have a sizeable sum of money we still do not have the required amount to enable us to take four or five of our young members to the LPYS national conference at Bridlington at Easter. So in order to boost our funds we have organised a jumble sale. With an excellent advertising campaign it is showing great promise.

Since my leaving the Army in July last year my knowledge of socialism has grown from just being an ordinary supporter of the Labour Party, to a politically aware, gut feeling socialist. This to me was so fantastic it totally changed my life.

By
Stephen Brown
(Ashington LPYS)



The splinter class

Remember when those renegades were preparing to split from the Labour Party and form the SDP? Remember how they kept going on about how the SDP would be the *real* Labour Party, the 'traditional' Labour Party? Well the social backgrounds of the 155 parliamentary candidates selected for the SDP so far proves otherwise.

The vast majority are male, middle class and white—only 15% are women and 2.5% from ethnic groups. 71% of them went to university, and a third of that figure was either at Oxford or Cambridge. Only 13 of them claim to have come from a "working class background", no doubt somewhere in their distant past. Of the 155, only one is a blue collar worker. So much for the proletarian credentials of that SDP splinter from the Labour Party.

In the clouds

Great night out! Get along to the CPG (or Conservative Philosophy Group to spell it out for you ignorant lot.) Rub shoulders with the rich and famous intellectuals. There will be speeches from Enoch Powell on "How can values be defended? Surely they are eternal verities which can be neither created or destroyed."

Now can you pass up the chance? It's a real snip too. Only a fiver, three course buffet lunch included. Just give old Hughie Fraser (Sir) a bell and say we sent you.

Poorly maintained

After all this sappy stuff over Andy and Koo, Charles and Di, the *Sunday Mirror*, (6 February,) reported another side to the aristocracy. Di's dad (Earl Spencer to you) is it seems trying to kick a 53 year old woman off one of his farms.

Mrs Kathleen Spencer's father took over the 120 acre farm on the Earl's 10,000 acre estate in 1922. After her father died, the good Earl told her to leave. The case is now going before the Agricultural Lands Tribunal claiming that the land has been inadequately maintained.

If the Earl wins, perhaps we could try the same thing with her Royal Highness.

The best of British

"A basic reason for the backwardness of British industry in recent years has been the anti-British policies of the giant monopolies and British based multi-national companies. Rather than invest in Britain, they moved their capital abroad in search of maximum profits and led the fight to take Britain into the Common Market, with the aim of trying to make Europe and the world safe for big business. From their seats of power at home and abroad, helped by the Common Market and its restrictive practices, they join every day with foreign monopolies in flooding British markets, and so accelerate the decimation of British industry." Who said this. Enoch Powell? Colonel Blimp? No, it's taken from a pamphlet titled 'Take Britain on a different course', produced by the Communist Party, and written by their General Secretary Gordon McLennan.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Tebbit's infamous advice to 'get on your bike and find work' never stated what actually resulted. The following report from the London Evening Standard, 3 January 1933, gives a glimpse of the world Tebbit so admires:

"According to one authority the number of tramps has risen from a few thousand before the war to more than 200,000 in 1932. The old professional class of tramp is steadily disappearing. His place is being taken by the member of a working class family who sets out to walk to a big town, is disappointed at not finding work and falls into a life of vagrancy. Three-quarters of the present number of tramps, it is stated, is made up of boys between 15 and 16 years of age."

Policing the inner cities

in the past

Provocative behaviour by the police may seem a recent development in inner cities and is often associated with tensions caused by a large immigrant population.

However at the turn of the century in Islington, North London, the local press recorded 146 incidents of rioting by the local working class community. As only those incidents leading to arrests were recorded, these were probably only a fraction of the real number of cases.

One Islington resident has recalled (in *Policing the working class* by Phil Cohen) how in his youth, before the 1st World War, the local community would follow the police, who had just arrested a local man, to the police station. Once there, if the crowd heard screams, they would think the police were beating up the man. Often they would retaliate by showering the station with stones.

He also recalled how during this period, in the tenements where he lived, the arrival of the police, on what was regarded as the residents' own territory, would be greeted by a hail of flower pots.

The story sounds only too familiar in the inner cities of Britain today. The modern police force grew out of the crisis of administration in the Victorian city. Its basic role has not been to combat crime. It has been to protect the institutions of private ownership and keep a working-class community under control.

By
Hashida Davé



Police return to the St. Pauls area of Bristol, after being driven out in the St Pauls riot of 1980. Photo: Mike Leggett (IFL)

Bristol today....

The St Paul's area of Bristol has been out of the news since Easter 1980, after riots which preceded developments in Brixton and Toxteth. But all the crocodile tears and earnest talk about social deprivation and inner-city decay has done nothing to remove the fundamental causes of those events.

Life goes on in much the same old way. For black and Asians police harassment is an everyday experience. GARY KANDINSKY, secretary of Bristol SE Labour Party Young Socialists reports:

Joe Royale will remember the beginning of 1983 for a long time. About midnight on Saturday 15 January he was chased by police as he drove home from the nearby chip shop. Having past experience of police behaviour he decided to keep his head down and avoid further trouble.

But when he got home, his wife tells me, police smashed the front door off its hinges, proceeded to break up furniture and punch and kick members of the Royale family. Mr Royale's crime, police say, was jumping a red light.

As a result of these events local people have set up the Argyle Road Defence Committee, which elected two YS

members, myself and Ranjeet Singh, onto the steering committee.

Another campaign taking place locally is in defence of Muhammad Idrish, a young Bengali social worker and NALGO activist. He is threatened with deportation following the break up of his marriage. On Sunday 23 January a meeting of 50 Asian and white workers launched a campaign on his behalf.

The local community has shown its willingness to fight back. The labour movement must match this spirit with a vigorous campaign to show black and Asian workers that socialism has the answers.



Police charge along the streets of Brixton during the riots of 1981. Photo: J. Woulfe (Militant.)

The shape of things to come

Last year Londoners paid £323 million for 'their' police force, yet they had no say in how the money was spent, nor in how the city was policed.

The police maintain a tight circle of control over their activities. Last month Colin Roach died in a police station. But not only are the police the only people who will investigate the death, they will be the only authority that will investigate the numerous complaints about their behaviour over Colin's death.

The labour movement and local black community must mount their own campaign into Colin Roach's death and policing in the inner cities. It is the only way to find out what really happened.

The Coroner's inquiry into the death of Blair Peach, at the hands of the police showed what a farce those type of inquiries are. It was disclosed that rubber coshes and hoses were an everyday part of today's policing, but nothing was done.

Marxists do not support crime. But they call for an end to a system which breeds crime. The bosses' only

response is to step up the powers and weaponry of the police.

At a time when virtually all other public spending is being viciously reduced police expenditure seems to know no limits. The British police now have 20,000 riot helmets, 8,000 protective shields, 6,000 flameproof overalls, fleets of vans, CS gas projectiles, etc. The *Sunday Times*, 30 January reported that nearly every police officer now attends a special two-day riot training course.

John Alderson, former Devon and Cornwall police chief has remarked that "the

car, radio and computer dominate the police scene. The area of preventative policing is phasing out in favour of a responsive or reactive policing."

The labour movement must mobilise a campaign to dismantle this repressive side to policing. All aspects of policing must be put under democratic control. The police should no longer be a law unto themselves. Elected local authorities should ensure that the police's activities are accountable to the public.

By Dave Farrar

HOUSING CRISIS

Private profits

Barratt's are the leading private housebuilder in the country, for those who can afford it. Last year saw their pre-tax profits rise by 32%, from £30m to £40m.

Over the last ten years, anyone with £100 worth of shares would have received £840 in dividends alone and seen the asset value of their shares increase ten times.

Tory record

- Since the Tories came to office, expenditure on housing has fallen from £4,514m in 1979, to an estimated £2,579m for 1982-83.

- Since 1979 the number of council flats or houses being built in England has fallen from 76,000 to 42,300 in the first nine months of 1982.

- Since 1979 defence expenditure has risen from £9,227m to an estimated £14,411m for 1982-83.

'We won't go near the shops'

"Have you seen the rat-infested, closed shops? It's like a graveyard isn't it? It's all boarded up with graffiti all over the walls.

"Some youth have turned to racialism because of the frustration caused by living here. The chemists was wrecked and the words 'Get back to where you come from Pakis' scrawled across the front. The whole shopping area is covered in dog muck. I won't take my kids anywhere near it

"All the schools are under threat. They closed down St. Clements school because they said there wasn't enough kids. Now they want to close Nine Trees school. There won't be a local infant and primary school left then.

"There's nowhere to go at night. Glue sniffing is a growing problem. You see the bags all over the floor. You see kids playing on the motorway bridge. There's nothing for them on this estate."

Karen Dempsey, who lives on Cantril Farm estate with husband and two children, was interviewed by Ellen Coady (Huyton LP)

Council estate sold off

Cantril Farm estate looks like it was planned by someone in the middle of a nervous breakdown.

There is a massive confusion of blocks. The maisonettes look like a prison camp. Others, called OXO blocks, resemble the famous gravy cubes. Mixed in together are terraced houses, 21 storey tower blocks and derelict areas.

For years the estate has been neglected by right-wing controlled Labour Knowsley Council. But now they have come up with a 'solution'. Cantril Farm will become the first estate to be sold off to private enterprise.

The main people behind the £40m scheme are the property developers, Barratt's. The plan is to establish an independent trust, supposedly

non-profit making, to take over the estate, renovate some of the properties, demolish others and build 100 more for sale or rent. The council have forced the scheme on to local residents: accept the plan and get your home fixed, or go on living in squalor. At tenants' meetings they have not given satisfactory answers to a number of points.

No indication of what the 'trust' would charge in new rents has been given. No-one has said which houses would be affected or which areas renovated. 200 homes will disappear under the new scheme, but Councillors have refused to give written guarantees that displaced tenants will be allowed to return to the estate.

Residents of Cantril Farm deserve a decent environment, better services and good cheap housing. But will they get them from Barratt's? It was private enterprise which

built the estate in the first place and private banks which have bled the tenants dry by taking most of the rent to pay off the Council's interest charges.

Barratt's interest is hardly philanthropic. Next to Cantril Farm they are building one of the largest private housebuilding developments in the country and want to keep its values high.

They have dangled the carrot that they will be using local labour and youth apprenticeships on the scheme. But at the local meetings, Councillors advocating the scheme, admitted that the number of apprentices had not been decided, and any taken on would only work while the scheme lasted; there would be no permanent jobs.

It is a scandal that the right-wing Labour controlled Knowsley Council have run down services in the area. The Direct Labour

By Mick Bagan
(Huyton L.P.)

Department can only boast one plasterer and one plumber!

But it is no solution to turn to private industry for salvation. The bosses have ruined the country and their system has bred the problems faced by Cantril Farm residents. And now the bosses are planning to cash in further on the misery.

"Cannibal Farm" is one name that locals have used to describe the estate. Knowsley Council seem determined to give that a new twist. "What the Tories do tomorrow, Knowsley does today" is no way forward for a Labour controlled Council.

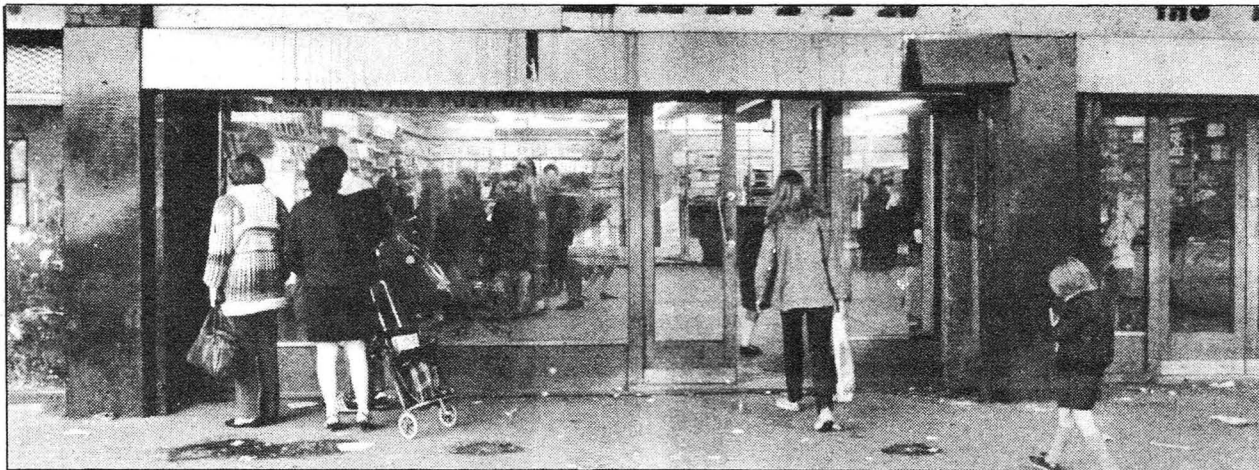
Supermarket closed down

The latest blow to the people of Cantril Farm is that the last supermarket, Finefare, has decided to close down. The old and disabled will now have to rely on the limited service of the mobile shops or take a bus ride into Huyton town centre. In an effort to save their jobs the staff staged a sit-in protest and occupied the supermarket for eleven hours until the management gave them the guarantee of work in Huyton.

Barratt's have already decided to convert the supermarket and the vacant next door shop into offices for themselves. Perhaps Barratt's helicopter will be offered to the old and disabled on shopping expeditions to Huyton town centre!

By John Quilliam
Huyton Labour Party
(personal capacity)

Photos: Above, the Cantril Farm Estate. Below, a view from the estate's shopping centre.



Tower blocks are not for children

Tenants in Barton Hill high-rise blocks in Bristol have formed an action committee to fight for better conditions.

Julia Padfield told me what it's like trying to bring up a young family on the 13th floor of a Tower Block.

The lifts are always breaking down and it's no joke when you have to lug child pushchair and shopping up 13 floors every other day. Two women on this estate have had miscarriages as a result of the lifts breaking down.

It got so bad at one time without the lifts, that the tenants telephoned the maintenance and told them

there was a coffin that needed to be taken down, so they came and fixed the lift quickly.

We moved in when my daughter Sacha was 7 months old. If we hadn't taken this place we wouldn't have got anywhere. We were led to believe it wouldn't be too difficult to exchange flats later on. But we soon found out that this wasn't the case.

I used to be so patient until I moved in here but living in these conditions has changed all that. My 3½ year old daughter has nowhere to play. One day I found her sitting astride the balcony happily watching the traffic far below.

A friend helped me to

rescue her and then I was violently sick with fright. Now she has nowhere to run about. The balcony used to be her only little bit of freedom, but that is now banned.

At one point I was bringing home bottles—always cider because it was cheapest—and suddenly I realised what was happening to me. I thought 'I'm young and that is not how I want it to be,' so I stopped straightway.

But until I got involved in this campaign I was walking round like a zombie, not noticing anyone else's problems, just thinking about my own. Now that a lot of us have got together to try to get some action at last, I feel

much better and more hopeful.

The Action Committee have drawn up a list of precise demands for rehousing families in low-rise accommodation, for improvement in play facilities. They are putting these demands to local councillors and are determined, if necessary to link up with other estates in Bristol.

By Damhait Kelly
(Chairperson, Bristol NE Labour Party Women's Section, personal capacity)

A socialist plan for housing would tackle the causes of Britain's housing crisis. It would:

- ★ **Cancel crippling interest charges that force local Councils to pay most of their housing budget to the money lenders.**

- ★ **Take over the banks and insurance companies to provide interest-free loans to local authorities.**

- ★ **Put 500,000 unemployed building workers back to work by taking over the construction industry and running it in ordinary people's interests, not the shareholders.**

- ★ **Involve tenants and workers in drawing up housing plans**

- ★ **Ensure special sheltered accommodation is built for the disabled and old.**

- ★ **Re-house families, so that none have to live in tower blocks.**

- ★ **Build 1 million new, decent homes a year, modernise and repair existing homes.**



Pickets at the Beckton sewage works in East London.

Photo: Militant

WATER All out for

THE COLLAPSE of negotiations between the National Water Council and the unions has destroyed the chance of a cobbled formula being produced to give waterworkers a justified pay increase while keeping intact Thatcher's fictitious "resolute" image.

Battle lines are now drawn in the most important dispute since the Tories came to power. It is a fight the Tories have always feared. They are only too aware of the enormous strength of the waterworkers which means that if the workers stand firm they will win.

The Tories have stumbled into this dispute. Some Tory leaders had undoubtedly been blinded by their contempt for the working class into believing that waterworkers would not fight. The Tories had been emboldened by last year's settlements for civil servants and health workers, and by the way TUC leaders refused to aid ASLEF in their vital dispute over flexible rostering.

If the Tories gave extra to the waterworkers, they knew this would set a precedent that would be seized on by public sector unions. The government therefore made it a political dispute from day one when the Tory Environment Minister, Tom King, intervened to enforce a 4% limit, and later, faced with enormous pressure from waterworkers, stepped in once more to let the Water Authorities go back to their original offer.

But that offer is far short of the claim: parity with workers in gas and electricity, doing what is in essence often the same work. To bring the strike to an early end on their own terms, the Tories have tried to wear down union leaders in sham negotiations. The Tories have completely miscalculated, leaving out of account the tremendous anger and sense of grievance amongst waterworkers.

The lies spread by government and Water Authorities about wages, and their cynical manoeuvrings during the sham talks have only intensified these feelings. Now the government hopes to intimidate water workers into arbitration by allegations of broken agreements.

The unions should resist service strike where a local unilateral strike was flatly refused. The dispute (though they were in a vice strike so complacent) anticipated a serious struggle. The unions should weaken. The unions should no negotiation until the

Water workers have welfare of other workers cover, even though this by Water Authorities to industry and power stations to withdraw co-operation. The possibility lies fully with the

The strike shows the through national unity. return to work settlement to continue unite

This dispute is of enormous working class and victory industries. Water workers solidarity. Power workers operate to monitor water stop any strike breaking collar workers in NAL to take action alongside

Locally trades councils organise rallies, leaflets. ty and put across the propaganda. Finally the a one day strike of the support.

The water workers can win!

Bosses plan to undermine workers

Guess who's to blame for the water strike and its effectiveness.

The government? Management? The determination of water workers to fight for a decent wage?

No! The bosses are blaming it all on the 1974 removal of responsibility for water supply from the local authorities to ten new regional water authorities. Especially with industrial relations being centralised under the National Water Council, water workers began to realise their strong bargaining position.

The 1974 local government re-organisation has been blamed for a lot of things but this takes the biscuit.

In an article in the *Financial Times* last week there is an international comparison with four countries in Europe. It's partly to soothe international confidence about the state of British industrial relations, but it also raises issues which will be discussed by ruling class strategists looking for ways to undermine the water workers—now and in the future.

The most attractive point for the Tories is that both France and Holland have a predominantly private water service. That should be a warning to trade unionists everywhere. As we show in

the article on page 9, is still a significant private sector in the British water industry. No doubt the Tories would love to try their favourite economic cure-all—so beware any kite-flying about privatisation.

Even in the predominantly state or 'community'-owned industries of Italy, Belgium and West Germany the article points out the 'advantages' (to the bosses) of a de-centralised industry where workers either negotiate through different unions, as part of different industrial sectors, or with local-based municipal authorities.

In all of these countries water workers have the right to strike. They have seen action recently in Paris, and in Belgium back in 1975 for three days. That strike was met with the declaration of

a state of emergency requiring them to return to work in 24 hours, but also by a hefty wage settlement.

The problems of working in an undemocratic nationalised industry which operates merely as a service for a privately owned economy at large can be overcome by the unions concerned in joint action with the whole labour movement. It's an insult that workers in the private sector in France can be on £10,000 a year whilst their British equivalent are on half that and less.

The bosses are right in one sense. A bit of reorganisation is needed. Let's make sure we have our plans worked out before they do. With democratic workers' control and management a decent living wage can be guaranteed—as a just reward to workers in a vital service.

Interview with Willie Whitfield, shop steward, GMBATU, Sunderland.

"We will take 7% of management's wages! What sort of offer is 7% for our basic? The lads are not very happy with all the government and press propaganda.

"As for Tebbit, he accuses us of not understanding our own union rules, saying we need a two thirds majority to go on strike.

"Well for your informa-

tion, Mr Tebbit, 90% of the lads in the Northern area have voted not to have the offer. Our claim has been in negotiations for three years. We really had no choice but to go on strike this time.

"The management say we are not skilled enough to warrant the other rise. We'll give them another few weeks then they'll see whether we're skilled enough or not. This is new ground for us but we are determined to win. What is more we can do it."

LLANELLI

THE MOOD on the waterworkers' picket line in Llanelli was militant—a flat refusal of the Board's 7.5% offer. "That was the last straw", said one picket.

The workers have been forced into struggle. The mood had changed clearly since 1976 saw the first cohesive threat of national action. Waterworkers have fallen even more behind average wage rates for outside workers, £16 on average behind comparable workers in gas and electricity.

"Press claims of £135 a week plus are bunkum," said one picket. "Since the comparability study in 1976 was chucked out of the window, overtime has been stopped. £78 is the lowest flat rate and the maximum £52 bonus has proved unachievable. £27 is the average and falling in an area like Aberystwyth as low as £5.

"Before Christmas, workers on the picket received two weeks' holiday pay amounting to less than £120. No overtime had been worked for three years, only stand-by bonus which on rota would arrive only twice

a year. Overtime to cover burst mains etc, with a night call-out has been stopped not by the union, but by the Water Board, unless more than 40 consumers are affected."

Twelve months of 'study' by the board had resulted in next to nothing of the £10 comparability demand. A meeting of consultation fixed for 10 am saw the board's representatives arrive late—4 pm. When asked about the delay, they excused themselves by saying they were discussing the case. They arrived late from a six-week discussion to offer nothing: "Not now, not ever would the comparability deal be granted."

'We have no option but to strike'

The offer was an insult. "We are always wet in our job," he said. "On ground work, water mains are always on the bottom, electricity and gas on the top, this highlights the skill of pick and shovel excavations. It's all right talking of 1 cubic metres specifications, but just try digging to them.

"More and more I've seen diggers being held by the legs

because ditches are too deep. But its in the sewage beds that the bite will come and management will try it on' (that's what the picket rotas are for).

"They employ the lowest grade workers, wading often up to their waist in untreated sewage. With a Tory-packed National Water Board, a Tory-picked ACAS, we have no option. Next the government want to dispose of the National Water Council for negotiations.

"They want a return to regional negotiations to split the workforce. It's going back to the old colliery days of you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

The fight he outlined was for a waterworkers national section of GMBATU—to lead the fight for decent pay and conditions. Finally, he summed up the attitude of many workers to the Tory government. "I find it hard to understand the government, leading workers down this alley, they're completely underestimating our intelligence. They talk of it being a dangerous strike. We know."

A GMBATU member spoke to Neil Williams

WORKERS for victory

**100%
support
for
strike**

and the government of the civil standing pay agreement was the Tories and where arbitration... thought they could win that... could not view a future civil ser- (y) while from the start they an- gle if the waterworkers did not... could make it clear there will be... principle of parity is conceded... shown concern for health and... ers by maintaining emergency... co-operation has been exploited... keep near-normal supplies to in-... If this situation forces strikers... from emergency cover, respon-... e Tories and employers.

ower waterworkers have gained... they should ensure that when the... is drawn up it includes an agree-... national negotiations.

omous significance for the entire... ry will boost morale in all in-... s should be given maximum... ers have already agreed to co-... supplies to power stations and... This must be matched by white... O who should now be called on... manual workers.

ills and other unions should... demonstrations to show solidar-... erworkers' case to counter media... TUC should prepare for at least... whole labour movement in their

n win! The water workers must

"YOU'D HAVE to be Batman and Robin to earn what the Tories say we earn," a member of Macclesfield water workers' strike committee told Macclesfield LPYS members.

Water workers here are 100% behind the strike. Their determination was hardened after recent false statements by Tory spokesmen, and by local management provocation.

"We were committed to cover emergency work in hospitals, old folks' homes, etc. But after a recent meeting we were forced to withdraw emergency cover due to reports of management going back on agreements to stick to their own jobs. Instead, they are doing waterworkers' work to make the strike less effective and make a fast buck."

The strike committee expressed concern about the lack of communication and co-operation shown by union leaders, especially of NALGO where in the Macclesfield area there have been no branch meetings and no directive from the leadership.

Electricians, fitters, plumbers, joiners etc are not officially on strike but will not cross picket lines. They are receiving no money, so a fund is being organised for them. Their message is 'stick at it lads', and don't trust management.



Pickets at Beckton collect firewood for the picket braziers, donated by sympathetic workers.

Photo: Militant

IT WAS snowing outside Severn Trent's Hucknall Road depot in Nottingham but the pickets are used to working in such conditions. That is one reason why they think their 15% claim is justified.

Bill Johnson, secretary of GMBATU Notts No 3 branch explained the National Water Council's final offer: "It means £5.71 a week on basic rate for a Grade 4 man and £6.21 for a Grade 1.

"That knocks on the head the council's talk of £10 per week. But the main issue is that our men do an essential service, comparable to gas and electric but are £20 a week worse off, the gap has got wider over the years.

"This government claimed they 'believed in free collective bargaining', but have intervened in every dispute so far, we know the NWC wanted to offer 6%, but the government forced them down to 4%.

"That alienated the men. There are quite a few here who voted Tory in 1979 but they will be thinking twice about it next time.

"There is 100% support for the strike here—not one manual worker or craftsman working and everyone taking his turn on the picket line."

Emergency cover has reluctantly been withdrawn in Nottinghamshire and the Mansfield area. Bill explained why. "Management insist on doing other men's jobs, putting on overalls and repairing plants at reclamation stations, working double shifts. It is contrary to instructions from their union NALGO and can only make the situation worse by prolonging the dispute."

He believes it could easily be settled for 3.5 pence per household per week, "peanuts, less than £2 per year."

"If troops are called in, it will cost the Water Council £2m per week more than it would cost to settle this dispute!"

The pickets would rather be working. Some have 20 or even 30 years' service in the industry, rather more than Sir William Dugdale and a lot more loyalty. On standby they are often called out in the middle of the night to deal with emergencies.

They are not "greedy men holding the country to ransom" just ordinary workers fighting for a reasonable increase in their wages who deserve the support of the rest of the labour movement.

THE WATER PARASITES

Most people think of the water and sewerage industry as being a public utility, controlled by the local authorities, or, since 1974, the Regional Water Authorities.

In fact, however, there are 28 private water companies in England and Wales, owned and controlled by private shareholders, enjoying the benefits of monopolies making profits from essential resources (i.e. water).

None of these companies are involved in the unprofitable side of sewage disposal.

Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, for instance supplies water to Tyneside and much of Northumbria, a population of about 781,000. The ex-chairman, Michael Ian Bowstead-Straker, is a farmer, educated at Eton, served in the Coldstream Guards, he keeps himself busy being also chairman of Newcastle Area Health Authority (Teaching), and a member of Newcastle University Court of Council. He is a former chairman of Northern Area Conservative Association (1969-72) and High Sheriff of Northumberland (1977). The new chairman is Sir

By Gavin Dudley (NALGO Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, personal capacity)

William Elliot, Conservative MP for Newcastle North, former vice-chairman of the Conservative Party organisation ('70-'74), he describes himself as a 'farmer' and is President of the Water Companies Association.

THE WHOLE Tory strategy is viewed with hatred by Basildon waterworkers. The pay offer suggested for sixteen months is an obvious attempt to prevent a decent increase in 1984.

For the waterworkers, public opinion is an important factor and morale was boosted by a phone-in on Essex Radio where all but one caller supported the strike. There was one stupid question from the interviewer who asked the GMBATU rep "how would you feel if an old lady died?"

The natural response is that they don't want to see anybody die but as one worker asked, "Since

Another board member is industrialist Sir John Hunter (chairman of the Swan Hunter Group 1957-79, chairman of the North East Broadcasting Company Ltd., director of Common Bros Ltd., Midland Bank, formerly on the British Employers Confederation etc.).

On a turnover of about £9m (all figures based on 1979/80) they managed to pay dividends of £954,085. The total spent on dividends, corporation tax and interest was over £2,365,000—more than the year's wage and salary bill!

The Bristol Waterworks Company board boasts Lord Darling (2nd Baron), a retired major from the Somerset Light Infantry, educated at Wellington College and Sandhurst.

Essex Water Company is the largest of the 28, supply-

ing 1,349,000 people, with assets of over £60m. The chairman is the Hon Peter Brassey, a Lt Col, Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire since 1975, educated at Eton and Magdalene College, Cambridge.

A study of the 1979/80 accounts of 26 of these companies showed total assets of nearly £400m. Total income (nearly all from domestic and commercial water rates) is about £160m. Total dividends paid out was about £16m.

Mid Southern paid out £1,394,477 in dividends compared to £1,869,223 paid to employees. Dividends were equivalent to nearly £5,000 per employee—anyone for a pay rise?

Lee Valley had a particularly hard year. They ended up with a deficit of nearly £800,000. This unfortunately meant increases in rents for their tenants (some of their properties were previously let free). A standing charge was introduced on the water rates, pushing up water bills for the poorer off. Of course the shareholders mustn't be discouraged—they received dividends of £872,491, more than the deficit on the year!

The labour movement must demand the nationalisation of these 28 companies and their integration into the regional water authorities. The jobs of the employees should be guaranteed in a reorganisation of the water industry which would release resources for expansion of such areas as water quality, pollution control, sewer repairs and modernisation.

when has anyone died of thirst in Britain?

"Public opinion is very sympathetic especially when we show our wage slips. In one incident in Chelmsford there has been free beer for the water workers."

Workers pointed out that the money for their claim is there. £7.5 million is apparently being spent on building new offices and one Regional Officer for Essex Sewage Works had apparently received an £80,000 golden handshake and has been taken back as a two day a week consultant for £19,000 a year!



Mexico

“The country is about to explode, soon the army will have to take to the streets. Working class people look at you with hate in their eyes.”

The correspondent of *The Times* in a recent article on Mexico, the keg of dynamite at the bottom end of the USA, is quoting one of the country's wealthy men.

In the 1970s, oil was held up by the ruling class as a way out of the impasse of Mexican capitalism. But the Mexican bosses find their blessing rapidly turning into a curse. With the glut of oil, oil prices are dropping everyday.

The ruling class in the 60s and early 70s hoped that the increasing use of oil by the West would provide them with abundant profits. With this prospect in mind, the Mexican ruling class ran up huge debts with home and foreign banks to finance investment programmes for various huge prestige projects. They then hoped to use oil profits to pay off their debts.

The net result with the onset of world crisis, has been to make the situation far worse. The latest talks of the oil producing countries (OPEC) have sealed off the last line of retreat for an economy already in the throes of crisis.

Mexico's foreign debt now amounts to \$83,000 million. Inflation now stands at 100% and prices are soaring way above any wage increases. Recently Mexico's banks, faced with such crushing debts collapsed and were nationalised to prevent the economy collapsing completely. The spectre haunting the world's bankers is a country the size of Mexico defaulting and bringing down the world banking system.

So the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and leading world banks, in order to stop their nightmares becoming reality, stepped in to reschedule Mexico's debts and advance further loans exceeding \$10,000 million.

Alongside this the government of President Miguel de la Madrid will implement a savage monetarist programme of cuts and attacks on the already meagre living standards of the working class, as a part of the IMF's package. Such a programme would send wages plummeting and unemployment rising.

Mexico has a large public sector and a severe monetarist policy would entail devastating cuts, which would push up the unemployment rate even higher than the present incredible 45%.

The mass unemployment and wage rises which fall way below the 100% inflation rate ensure that the situation is already one of sheer misery for workers. For an ever larger layer of the population, hunger is

By Tim White

(Braintree LPYS)

becoming an everyday reality.

In the countryside, agriculture remains on almost the same primitive level as before the 1911 revolution, with the worst land divided amongst the numerous poor peasants while the best land, gobbled up by the big ranchers and capitalists is used for highly capitalised production for exports.

Starvation rife in the countryside

The land question remains a major headache 72 years after the capitalist revolution which in this century of domination of the world economy by the rich capitalist powers has left many problems unsolved. Many landless peasants, driven off the land by poverty and the rapaciousness of the landlords have moved into the cities and added to the millions of slum dwellers.

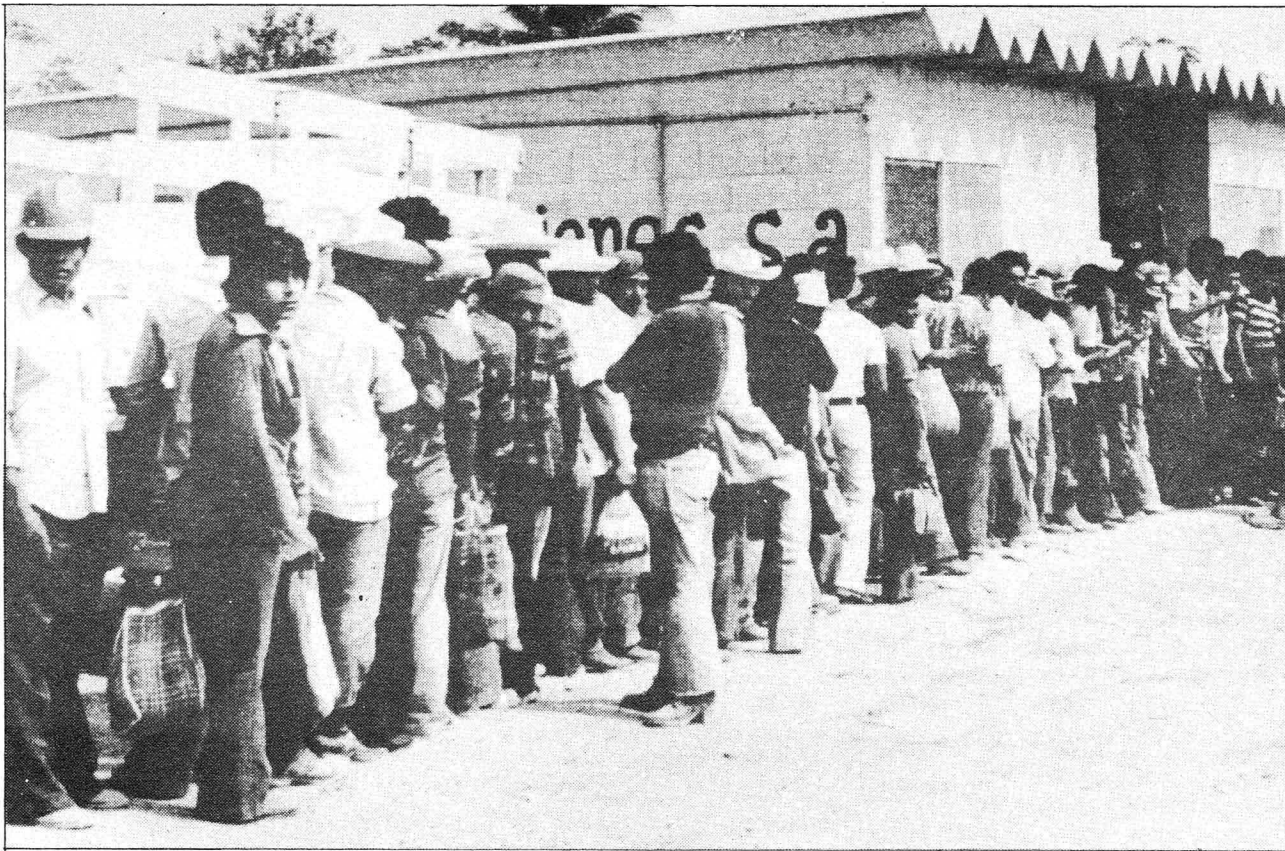
Others try to escape and cross illegally into the USA where instead of finding the better life they seek, they are ripped off by the sharks and crooks of the illegal immigration racket.

During the economic boom of the '60s, industry was expanded considerably—particularly in steel construction and the oil sectors, as in Iran. This gives the industrial workers an even more decisive role in Mexico.

With the accumulation of these problems the working class are already starting to flex their muscles. Under mass pressure the leaders of the trade unions, who for the most part are corrupt and solidly pro-government, have been voicing workers' rage at their betrayed expectations of rising living standards. Union leaders say they will fight parts of President de la Madrid's "austerity" programme.

A sign of increasing tension has been the wave of demonstrations and strikes. May Day's march in 1981 attracted 1.2 million in the capital, Mexico City.

"I'm placid by nature," said a worker/student at the National University to the *Times* reporter, "I'm patient and will suffer a lot of pain, even humiliation. But the point comes when I forget



Photos: Above, unemployed queue for benefits. Below, a Mexican worker makes a bid for 'freedom'—crossing the heavily secured US/Mexican border, only to become a victim of crooks in the illegal immigrant racket, and Reaganomics.

debt, despair and US dollars

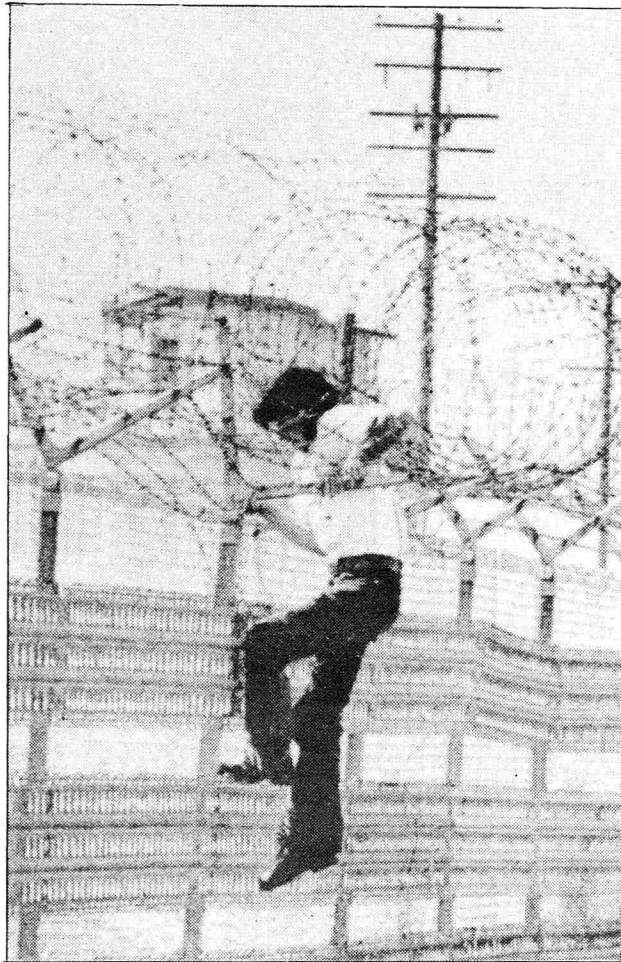
everything, get into a terrible rage and lose control. You should see me then."

The ruling class live in fear that they will see the entire working class "in a terrible rage". The solitary crumb of comfort the *Times* could find for the capitalist class was the lack of a Marxist workers party capable of articulating the growing demands for social change.

Large sections of the Mexican ruling class are hoping that this lack of organised socialist opposition will allow the army to "take to the streets" and carry through a military coup.

The more historically conscious of them, though, may remember that the 1911 revolution in fact began when a previous military dictatorship, that of Porfirio Diaz, collapsed. The events which blazed a trail across Mexican history.

But the open talk of military rule means that the development of a genuine Marxist opposition in Mexico is more than ever essential to cut across the horrific plans the capitalist class have for the whole of Central America and its economically most important country, Mexico.



US trucker shootings

US economic crisis has brought film cowboy Ronald Reagan into battle with America's last 'real cowboys'.

Drivers ignoring the Independent Truckers' Association (ITA) strike call have been shot at.

In North Carolina one man was shot dead at the wheel of his lorry and there have been serious woundings in Michigan and Maine.

The ITA, representing 100,000 mainly self-employed drivers, is protesting against the government decision to increase petrol and diesel fuel taxes, excise taxes on trucking equipment and registration fees on large trucks.

Whilst the ITA represents

By Ian Ilett

only about 15% of US truck drivers (the rest are mainly in the Teamsters Union), they claim to move 90% of all fresh products transported in the US, and a big proportion of household goods, steel products and refrigerated produce.

The strike so far is reported to have had a limited effect. Government promises to the big hauliers to allow longer and heavier

trucks seem to have temporarily reassured the Teamsters about their future.

But such novel events as an eight-week football players' strike and this strike of the country music heroes show the increasingly unstable position of President Reagan.

Despite celebrations over a drop in the unemployment figures from 10.8% in December to 10.4% in January and what is heralded as a new 'realism' in recent budget proposals, things are not looking good for Reagan.

The so-called 'realism' of the budget is merely the abandonment of previous impossible commitments to 'balance the books' whilst

cutting taxes and increasing defence spending.

The 'Standby taxes' included in the package are an implicit acceptance that the budget deficit cannot be controlled. They are supposed to be triggered if the deficit is over 2½% of Gross National Product. At present it is over 6%.

Though there are slight indications of an up-turn in the pipeline, which ever way the government turns, the fundamental weakness of the American economy internationally blocks any long term recovery.

Newly announced attacks on health and social benefits, including education and Federal pay levels, will fuel the growing opposition to this government.

JAPAN: Why America dropped the bomb

Japan is usually described as a wealthy and harmonious society where the workers love work and sing company anthems every morning.

In reality Japan is a country with deep running contradictions. It's exceptional economic growth, which had helped to paper over those contradictions, has now ended.

The economic gloss hides the fact that half the population of Tokyo do not have access to flush toilets; that a third of Tokyo housing averages a tiny 11ft by 11ft; that Tokyo people enjoy open space per person that is in area only one twentieth that of London!

Japan's present position can best be understood if the shattering events which occurred after the war are taken into account.

The atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the most well known event marking the end of Japan's war involvement. The 'justification' for dropping atom bombs on Japan was the need to end the bloodshed quickly. Had they not been dropped, it was argued, many more lives would have been lost because the war would have been prolonged.

The fact remains, however, militarily there was absolutely no need to use the bombs. General MacArthur (Supreme Allied Commander) admitted this after the war. United States Strategic Bombing Survey Number 4, for example, said, "Japan would have surrendered even if the Atom Bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war (against Japan) and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

By this stage Japan no longer had any naval or air force capabilities to deploy. Prior to dropping the atom bombs, Japanese cities had been subjected to three months of "saturation bombing", producing no resistance whatsoever. For example, on 7 July 1945, six hundred US bombers dropped 4,000 tons of bombs on the main cities and not one plane was lost. By August,

forty per cent of the 66 main cities had been levelled. This is why the two lesser towns were chosen for the atomic targets. Most other cities had already been destroyed.

The reason for dropping the bombs was not strategic, it was political. Earlier in 1945, whilst the bombs were being tested, a special US government "Interim Committee" had been appointed to advise on possible uses of such bombs. Its report suggested that "workers' houses" should be the target in order to have the "maximum psychological effect".

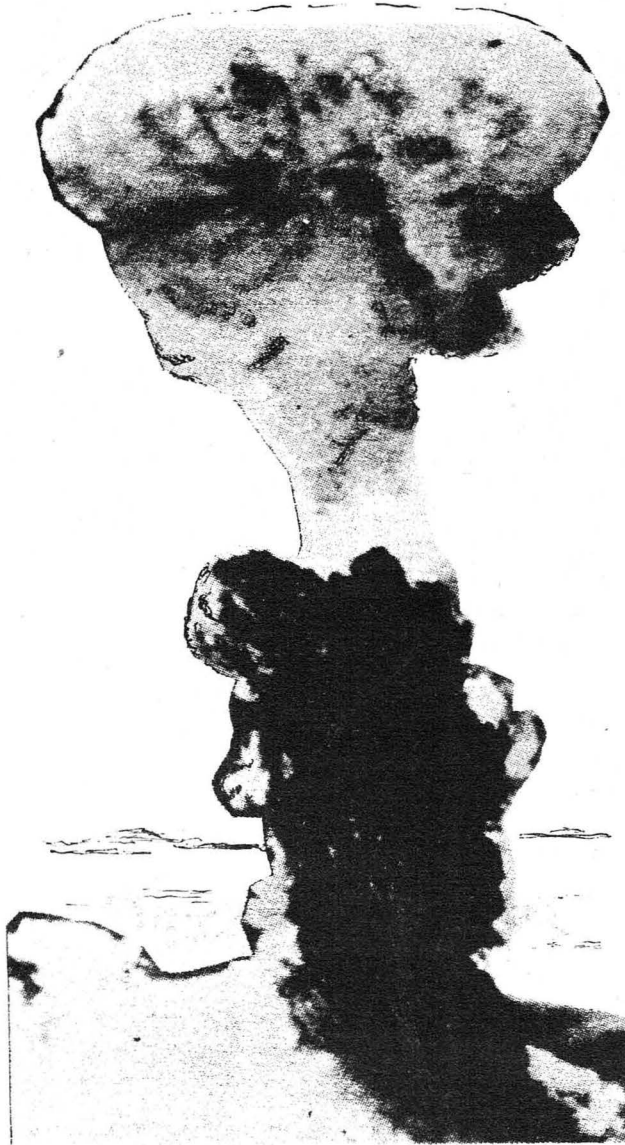
Threat of Revolution

There was growing social unrest as the war drew to a close. It was hoped that the sheer horror of the atomic explosions would serve as a warning to the Japanese masses and also to Soviet Russia.

As the end approached, Japan's Prince Konoe (the ex-prime minister) had warned that, "Japan's defeat in itself was not a matter of grave concern (to the ruling classes). What was far more dangerous than defeat was the revolution that might accompany defeat."

Japan's surrender was ratified in September 1945. General Douglas MacArthur became effective dictator of Japan. MacArthur set about to model the country along democratic capitalist lines. A 'liberal' constitution was drafted, based on the American model. "The people" were declared sovereign. A purge was also set in motion to rid society of the militaristic leaders and functionaries who had led Japan to war.

But the authorities were sitting on a volcano about to erupt. The end of the hostilities brought widespread social upheaval. The hitherto underground socialist and communist parties immediately began rebuilding their organisations. Within two years, five million people had joined



trade unions.

Most industries were quickly hit by strikes and occupations. The workers carried out their own purge of fascist officials and bosses and also began to run the factories themselves.

Nearly every group of workers wished to demonstrate their new authority and freedom. The telephone operators went on strike during the winter of 1945. They stayed at their switchboards, however, and greeted callers with "Moshi moshi (hello) we are on strike, long live democracy! Number please?"

The USA and the Allies wanted to dismantle the militaristic society of pre-war Japan, but they were even more concerned to ensure that capitalism was not overthrown and that the main

levers of the economy stayed in private ownership. The 'liberal' constitution itself was an effort to satiate the desire for radical change from below. Wataru Narahashi (secretary of the Cabinet) admitted that, "We're in a very dangerous situation and in order to avoid a bloody revolution we must take revolutionary steps, such as this constitution."

The constitution did not, though, feed the hungry and a general strike was called for February 1947. This was the turning point. One of the main slogans was for a "people's government". General MacArthur issued a declaration that the strike would be suppressed if it went ahead. Instead of grasping the nettle the labour leaders backed off and

cancelled the strike even though MacArthur had no real or reliable forces on which he could rely.

23,000 "Leftists" sacked

This retreat was a setback for the Japanese workers. Japanese big business, and American, whilst being encouraged by the retreat, were also warned by this near uprising. Even MacArthur's liberal facade had to go. His policies for trying to break up the big economic cartels began to be denounced as "socialistic" by American Republicans!

The purge of old officials ran distinctly out of steam. Instead 23,000 "Leftists" were purged and sacked. Many of these people had been heroic underground opponents of the wartime regime.

To further press home their advantage, the Occupation Authorities appointed a Detroit banker, Joseph Dodge, to formulate an economic plan for the government. This led to a devastating programme of deflation, mass unemployment and poverty. By June 1950 production had dropped to one third of its 1931 level!

So how did Japan rise from this position to become the "economic miracle" of

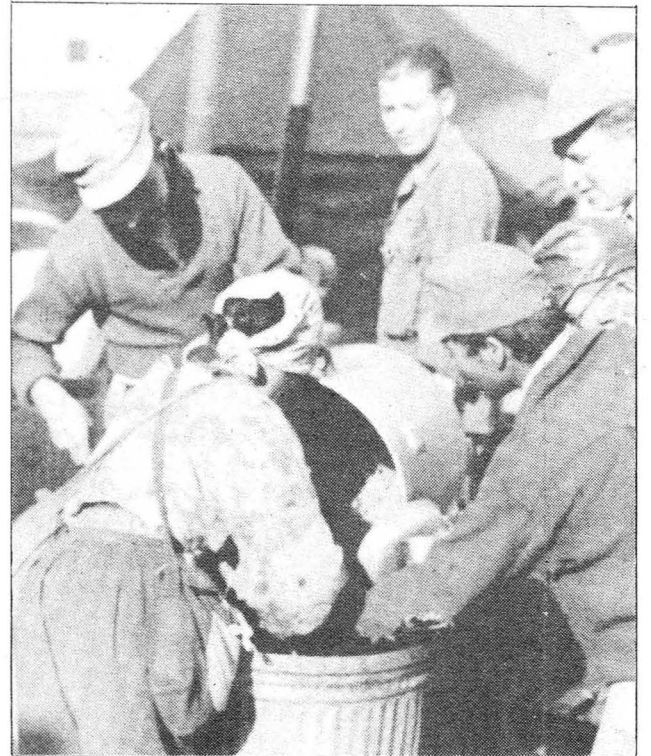
today? The country's strategic geographical position has meant that America has had to finance a substantial part of Japan's post-war growth. The US has, for instance, been responsible for Japan's defence. Japan's defence expenditure has consequently been extremely low—less than one per cent of gross national product as compared with Britain's 7 per cent.

However it has been productivity that has led to Japan's economic growth. This has nothing to do with the psychology of Japanese workers. Over the past thirty years Japan has invested on average 15 to 20 per cent of its gross national product in manufacturing, compared with Britain's 8 per cent. On this basis Japanese capitalism has been able to generate enough surplus to contribute to general improvements in living standards and thereby defuse a political crisis.

That breakneck growth has now ended and the unresolved contradictions are coming to the surface once more.

Even in Japan the workers will once again challenge the power of the capitalist class.

By Steve Appleton
(Leeds)



Starving Japanese workers scavenge US Army dustbins in Yokohama in 1946.

Poland - A visitor's account

The following article contains extracts from an account of a visit to Poland in October 1982, that first appeared in the German Marxist newspaper *Voran*.

The empty train and the heavy border controls were the first evidence of the military control

We noticed the bare walls at the station in Lodz. Posters and slogans, seen everywhere last year, were missing. Everything was painted over or ripped down. But otherwise things seemed the same: congestion in the

streets, many cars, overflowing buses and trains. Queues outside the shops, if shorter and rarer.

There were more goods in the shops. Supermarkets which we'd seen with almost empty shelves last year, were now selling vegetables, soup, fruit and household goods. Even greater was the difference in the restaurants. You could choose between different meat dishes, sometimes even between tea and coffee.

One pair of shoes each

The people, however, hardly notice the change. After the seizure of power, ration cards were introduc-

ed. Most goods are now only on ticket. And the rations are paltry—only 1½kg of sugar and 1kg of meat a month each. Prices have risen sharply. 1kg of meat costs about 5% of the average skilled wage of 8,000 zloties monthly. But you still have to queue for goods on ration.

The most recent rationing earns the greatest indignation—one pair of shoes each a year. But even if the expression of this fury, the nearly 10 million strong union Solidarnosc, has all but disappeared, people cannot be silenced. On buses, in streets, everywhere people discuss 'Jaruzelski's war', as the martial law is called. Except when a militia man stands nearby. Even so, they

are called 'Gestapo' or 'fascists'.

Labour movement beheaded

Just amongst the older people, Jaruzelski could reckon with a tolerant acceptance. There had been so many strikes and demonstrations, let alone the massive pressure of poor supplies. People became tired of struggle.

On the other hand, the leadership felt too strong against the government. They didn't notice the quietening down and unreadiness to fight amongst the masses. The bureaucracy used the time better and prepared quietly the

systematic destruction of the union. Not once were the many hints by the army and militia taken seriously by the Solidarnosc leadership. The labour movement was 'beheaded' by the military take-over.

New movement will be built

The main aim of the bureaucracy will be to prevent the creation of a new leadership of the working class. A leadership with clear aims and programme could shake the working class out of despair again and lead to a preparedness for a struggle, which would finish the bureaucracy once and for all. From the latter, the

workers expect nothing any more.

The developments of the last two years has led to a strong politicisation of the workers. Our arguments, that only a political revolution can bring real changes, hit on much interest. The 'military takeover, as a result of the half-hearted policies of the Solidarnosc leadership has led many people to doubt, whether a solution in co-operation with the government is ever possible. Because only with the dismantling of the bureaucratic clique and the introduction of workers' control can the planned economy be used to the benefit of all.

Letters

**IEWS? COMMENTS? EXPERIENCES?
 CRITICISM? WRITE ABOUT THEM TO**
MILITANT, Mentmore Terrace, London E8 3PN

Sir Winston Thatcher OUT!

Dear Comrades,

I have sent off a cheque for £2.00 to the fighting fund from an old lady and here is the story behind it.

My mother-in-law—Mrs Ethel Thornton who is 90 years old—and now living in a hostel has courage which all young comrades should take note of. She was widowed early in life with two young sons to support on a weekly pension of 10 shillings. How did she manage?

She went out in all

weathers cleaning for 6d an hour (old money), did knitting and needlework for the so-called "upper class", working on garments well into the night, when she ought to have been sleeping.

Went very short of food herself, so as to feed her two boys.

In consequence her health suffered, so she applied for help. The town offered her 3 shillings—I ask you! So being the courageous and wonderful woman she was, she refused, saying "I'm not

begging".

Then she found work in the cotton mill, as a warper, and did this for many years. As always she supported the Labour Party and now *Militant*.

On the first day of the nurses' strike my husband and I were on our way to the picket line, and stopped by to visit mum, and believe me, there she was at the door—stick in hand—saying: "No one enters this hostel whilst the staff are on strike, and if Sir Winston

Thatcher comes I'll crown her".

We must all take heart from this little story, and never let the side down. Mum sends her love and good wishes and support to *Militant* and hopes to see a real socialist state in her lifetime.

Sincerely,
Micky Thornton.
Blackburn,
Lancs.

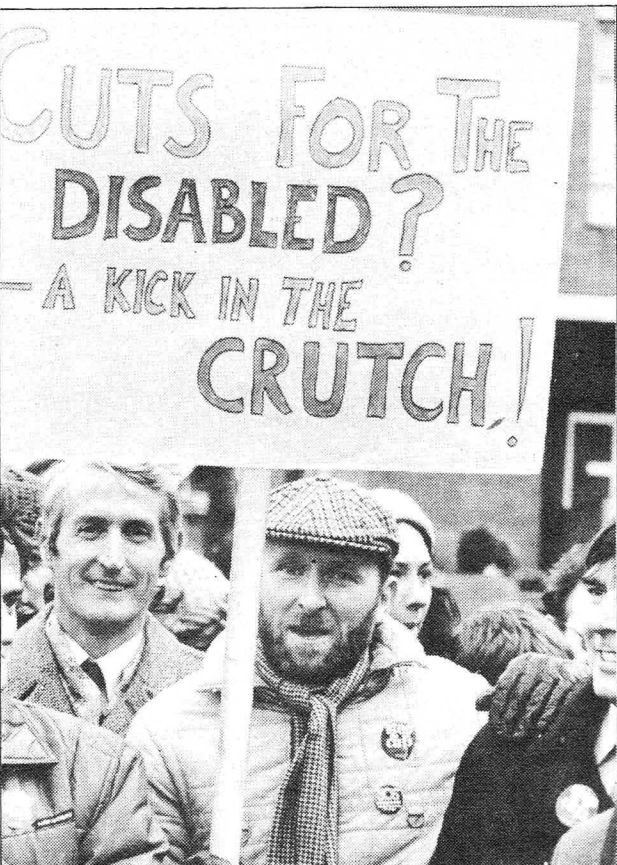


Photo: Militant

'Handicapped' and the vote

Dear Comrade,

The article by Cathy Wilson on the need for disabled people to get organised in the Labour Party reminded me about the large numbers of people in hospitals for the mentally ill or mentally handicapped, who have not even had the right to vote.

A couple of years ago a TV programme showed the struggle of a group of patients at Colderstane Hospital, Whalley, Lancs to gain the right to register as electors.

They were helped by MIND and persuaded the authorities they had the right to be on the register. Local Tories opposed this—not surprisingly in a ward they control. The votes of possibly hundreds of patients suffering the effects of Tory cuts in the NHS could easily alter their traditional majority.

As far as I understand it the new Mental Health Act has had to concede the right

to vote to most of these patients. The majority of these hospitals were built outside main towns and therefore often in Conservative areas. Thatcher and many of her cabinet ministers have one in their constituencies.

This may explain why this government has come round to the idea of moving people out of institutions and into the community! No doubt they are unlikely to provide cash to councils to provide the necessary facilities.

Labour Parties in areas with large hospitals of mentally ill or handicapped should ensure we convince the patients to use their vote and show that only socialist policies will provide them with the resources and facilities they have a right to expect.

Yours fraternally,
Margaret Manning,
Moss Side CLP and
NALGO rep at Day
Centre for ex-mentally ill.

Will Militant abolish wage labour?

Dear Militant

I was interested to see the article "Permanent Revolution" (*Militant*, Jan 21) point out that socialism will "dispense with...the rule of money, the coercive apparatus of the state etc," and, "will dismantle the artificial barriers of national frontiers".

Further, as the first part of the article summarised, the basis of the capitalist mode of production is wage (or salary) labour and capital. And also, of course, production for sale and profit.

These capitalist fundamentals can be identified in states such as Poland; as the Polish Marxist, Jacek Kuron (Open letter to the Party 1965) observed: "...the central political bureaucracy is the ruling class...it buys the labour power of the

working class; it takes away from the workers by force and economic coercion the surplus product..."

Marxian socialism will mean a society of social rather than state ownership, having abolished wage (or salary) labour, money, buying and selling and dismantled the state, and replaced them with democratic administration, free access to the abundance of social wealth only socialism can make possible etc.

Socialism is a possibility now, the material means to produce an abundance of wealth for use exists already.

If *Militant* really means by socialism such a society, why is this so rarely mentioned in its pages, while it supports reforms to the capitalist system, so perpetuating it and its ideological fundamentals, i.e. the system of wage-labour?

Yours,
John M. Gardiner,
University College,
Durham.

A spark in the waterworks

Dear Comrades,

I was selling *Militant* outside my trade union branch and a worker stopped me on seeing the headline "Support the waterworkers".

He said: "I lost my job a while back and I got myself a job on the Water Board as an electrician and have now been told by the leaders of

the EETPU to carry on working".

In the middle of a national strike!

What a terrible indictment of the right-wing leaders who profess to represent the real interests of the 'ordinary members'.

In all the areas the craftsmen have come out in support of their claim—despite the attempt of their leaders to undermine the claim.

Yours fraternally,
Bob Faulkes,
EETPU.

Last week *Militant* published a letter which we took to have been sent for us for publication by a Labour Councillor in Salisbury, Ms Celia Lamberth. The letter appeared to be typed on her headed notepaper and was accompanied by a £5 donation.

We have since been told that she did not write this letter and believes that it was forged in an attempt to embarrass her. Councillor Lamberth accepts that we published the letter in good faith and had no reason, at

the time, to doubt its authenticity.

Militant receives scores of letters every week, and we attempt to publish as many as possible, including some which are critical or put a different point of view. It would clearly be impossible for us to check the authenticity of every letter.

We are sorry if Celia Lamberth was in any way embarrassed by this letter and *Militant* has made it clear we would be prepared to publish a genuine letter from her.

The GLC and Sinn Fein

Dear Militant,

The invitation sent out by the GLC for Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison of the Sinn Fein to come to London and put their sectarian views across unchallenged at a public meeting was bound to provoke some controversy.

In workers' eyes this step was puzzling, and although Mr Foot spoke out asking for the invitations to be withdrawn, some damage may still have been caused to the Labour Party. For however good Ken Livingstone's intentions were, no solution could come from talks between just Sinn Fein and the GLC. Its only effect was to give the Tory media a field day in attacking the Labour Party.

The Tory government is devoid of any answer to the problem, as can be seen by

Northern Ireland secretary James Prior's latest plan. The Stormont Assembly idea seems in the Catholics' eyes to offer them nothing. Indeed Catholics voted for the Social Democratic Labour Party and Sinn Fein in the clear knowledge that they would boycott the assembly if elected.

The labour movement moreover, is determined to build unity between Catholics and Protestants by uniting them in working class struggles where the goals are the same.

Indeed great unity has already been shown. The NHS dispute has seen workers from both religions march together in the fight for a decent living wage.

So it would seem that the labour movement is the only answer to the Northern Ireland problem. A mass labour and trade union party must be built up, armed with a socialist solution to the problem.

Yours fraternally,
C Wilcox,
AUEW,
(personal capacity).



Photo: Militant

Privatisation is a political issue

Dear Comrades,

The battle lines are being drawn up in Liverpool between the local authority unions and the Liberal/Tory controlled City Council over council proposals to hive off refuse collection and street sweeping to private contractors.

At a meeting of the joint shop stewards committee, on 22 January the following resolution was carried with only one vote against: "This joint shop stewards committee re-affirms its total opposition to the use of private contractors by Liverpool City Council in whatever form it may take."

"We recognise that privatisation cannot be successfully fought by economic measures, such as the col-

laborationist tactic of agreeing cuts in staffing level, and/or wages in order to avert privatisation. Experiences of other workers who have agreed to such measures and are still privatised clearly shows that privatisation is a political issue.

"This Joint Shop Stewards Committee resolves to issue leaflets to all council workers explaining the threat of privatisation and the need for all council workers to take action to defeat it, and to give full support to any sections who take strike action against privatisation by calling on all council workers to take supportive action including strike action."

The lead given in this area should be taken up by other workers menaced by privatisation, and taken up on a national level by the leadership of the trade union movement.

Yours fraternally
A GMBATU steward
Liverpool City Council



workers' viewpoint

WHAT PRICE REDUNDANCY?

Redundancy payments—are they a useful reform won by the trade union movement or a bribe the employers use to get rid of a surplus workforce, shut up shop and move out?

It is a question that many shop stewards must have asked themselves since the devastating destruction of jobs that has taken place since this Tory government took office. It was also the theme of an article that appeared in the *Listener* recently, entitled 'Union leaders have been selling jobs for the highest price'.

In the space of a few years the manufacturing base of Britain has been reduced by 20%. Some trade unionists argue the system of redundancy payments, introduced by the Labour government in 1965 to encourage workers to become 'industrially mobile', has allowed this Tory government to throw 3¼ million on the scrap heap.

Some shop stewards have complained that redundancy payments thwarted attempts to save jobs. The employers, they say, have offered attractive sums of money and at the same time have threatened to withdraw ex gratia payments (payments above the legal amount of redundancy pay) if the workforce resisted redundancies.

Jimmy Reid, the former leader of the workers at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, has recently argued that redundancy payments are so high that they are impossible to resist. They have even, he says, become more destructive than any of Norman Tebbit's legal curbs on the trade unions!

According to the ISTC, 80,000 workers have been made redundant in the British Steel Corporation since the Tories won the election in 1979 and £600 million has been paid out in redundancy payments. No official figures are yet available, but it looks like the national total redundancy payout for 1982 will be well over a billion pounds. The average statutory payment is currently £1,300—not even a year's wages. In general only two out of every five workers get more than the basic state payment, but in the British Steel Corporation, redundancy payments are currently averaging £9,000 per worker. When a steel works closes for good, the total redundancy payment can be five or six times what the state lays down.

By the time redundancy payments, social security, rent and rate rebates and other benefits are taken into account, coupled with the loss of revenue to the public purse of tax and national insurance contributions, the

By Heather Rawling

social and economic costs of closing down a factory can be far greater than any 'loss' keeping it open.

Is it the case as Bill Sirs, leader of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) has argued, that his members have been all too ready to take their 'handful of silver'? Why is it for example that the workers at Lee Jeans managed to save their factory and the workers at Consett and Corby lost the fight to save their steel works?

Fighting redundancies

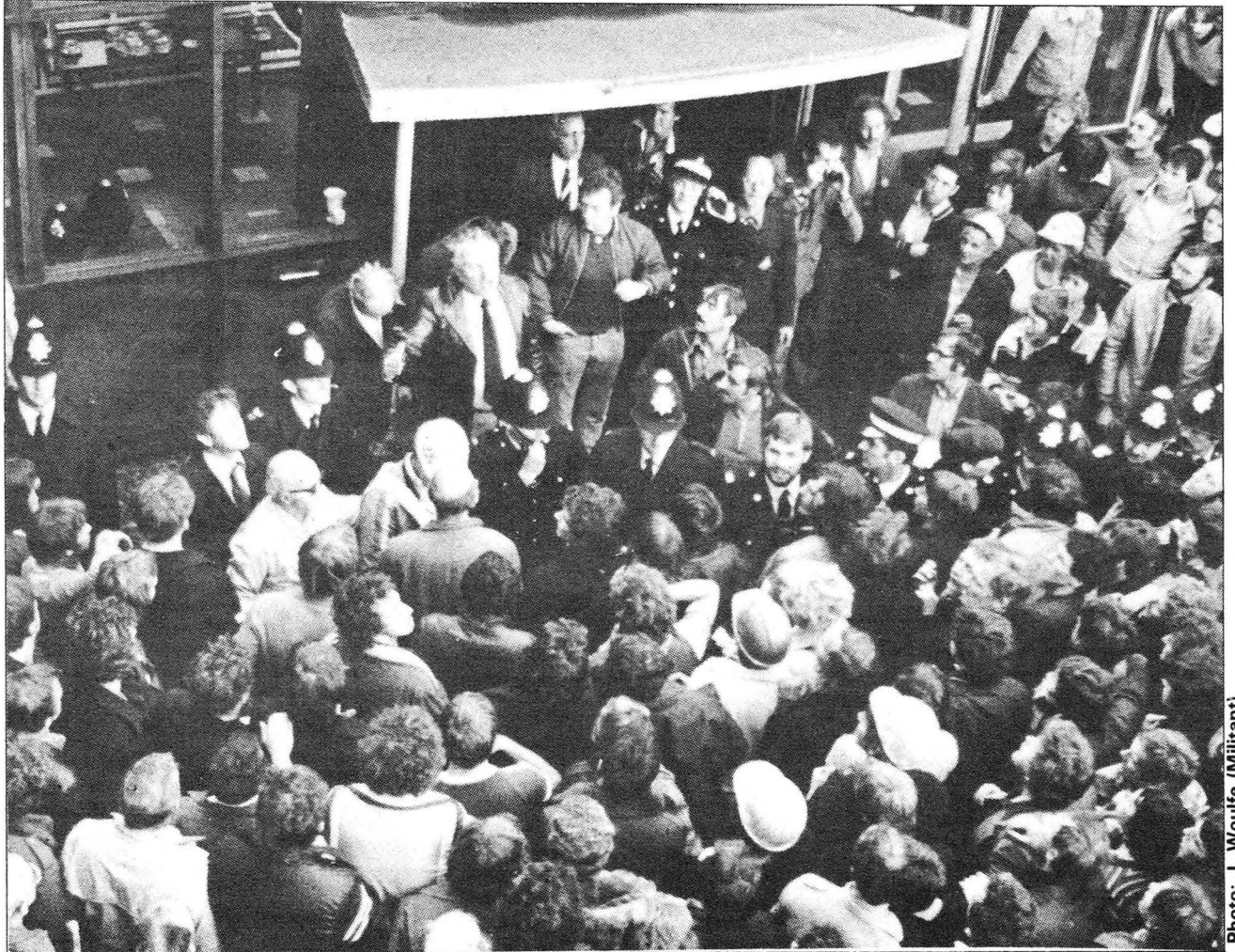
Fighting closures or redundancies is different to any struggle over wages or conditions. A wage struggle presupposes a factory or business continues in operation. Closures and redundancies present the opposite dilemma. The management want to close, the workers want to continue. There is always the implied threat of a cut off of funds and materials. But this does not rule out a struggle. It simply means that the redundancy or closure fights are necessarily wider struggles.

Success must depend on the willingness of the workforce to fight (and in almost every group of workers faced with redundancy, a willingness to fight is expressed). But also on the determination of the trade union leadership to conduct a broad campaign taking the issue to all sections of the trade union movement, without being afraid to 'politicise' the struggle. The Triple Alliance of steel workers, miners and railwaymen is potentially an extremely powerful combination that could resist redundancies.

The workers must be instilled with the utmost confidence in the capacity and determination of their trade union leaders to wage such a fight. Weak or vacillating leadership, looking for ways and means to conduct a 'low key' campaign will not inspire any workers to struggle. On the contrary, they will think on the basis of this campaign, "we will lose anyway, so I'll take the money."

No right to sell jobs

But with a bold campaign from the top down, workers can be convinced. One worker from Consett commented immediately after



Angry steel workers and their families mass outside the local steel headquarters in Corby in 1980. Inside ISTC leader Bill Sirs was in negotiations with BSC bosses—the workers wanted to ensure that their union leadership did not let them down. Unfortunately, despite the energetic campaigning of the Corby steelmen, the Corby steelworks was closed.

Photo: J. Woulfe (Militant)

the 'Consett Crusade' (march in London) that he and the other workers involved in fighting the redundancies, were proud of the fight and could hold their heads high at the steel works. Those that were arguing for redundancies, he said, were ashamed of their position and kept their heads down. The climate of opinion swung against workers having the right to sell jobs and the campaign seemed to be having a powerful moral effect.

If after the success of the 'Consett Crusade', the leadership had broadened and sustained the campaign, combining demonstrations with industrial action, such as an occupation, the fight could have been won.

In many cases there have been long campaigns by the workforce before a steel works has finally closed. Workers at Corby captured the imagination of people up and down the country, by their energetic and innovative campaign to save Corby steelworks—they even produced their own record.

One day general strikes in the Corby area gained massive support. On one day, nearly half the population of the town

demonstrated their opposition to closure.

Workers at Shotton, Ebbw Vale and numerous other places also fought and subsequently lost their fight to save their jobs.

In September 1980, the BSC closed its Consett works with 3,400 redundancies—devastating for a town the size of Consett.

To get immediate agreement, BSC offered additional ex-gratia payments of £6,900 to every worker on condition there was no union opposition to closure. We will look at the experience of Consett in a later issue, but some general lessons can be drawn.

The campaign committee, based its struggle on reasoned and moral arguments, using economic 'experts' from Durham University to assist in giving economic arguments to keep the steel works open. Appeals were made to new BSC chairman, and the EEC. Documents were produced showing the social effects closure would have on the town. All this was a necessary part of the campaign but it should not have been the main thrust. The arguments were directed to the employers and their organisations when they

should have been directed to the workers in Consett and the labour movement nationally. It is naive to think that the bosses will listen to reasoned and moral arguments. The propaganda should be used to convince broad layers of workers to fight to save jobs.

The campaign in Consett, apart from near the end, was 'non political'. But how could that be when it was a political decision to close the steel works? It should have explained what would happen if the works had been saved. What is the point of producing steel in an economic recession when there is already a surplus of steel? Only a socialist planned economy could make use of the steel, by producing goods that society needs and not basing production on economic dictates.

An occupation would have played an essential role in defending the steel works. That way, the mass of workers would have been involved in the campaign. Demonstrations are useful in initially mobilising support and drawing attention to a cause but on their own they cannot save jobs. They have to be backed up with industrial muscle. An occupation would have got tremendous support from workers nationally and also internationally. Lee Jeans workers who occupied their factory were able to continue their struggle because of the massive support and solidarity they received from other workers.

Recent experiences over

redundancy payments show that reforms won in boom times can never be taken for granted, especially in an economic recession. Redundancy payments were introduced in 1965 by the Labour government for a different purpose to their use today. Then, with unemployment at around ¼ million, they were used to help workers moving from one job to another.

Some workers see redundancy payments as the only cushion of the hardship of unemployment when no other jobs are available, but the money does not last and the community suffers. However, the lump sum is more than any workers have ever seen before. Older workers near to retirement are understandably tempted to take the money.

The trade union movement, nevertheless, must fight redundancy deals which destroy jobs. It would be far better if the trade unions fought for earlier retirement with a pension that reflected a living wage. The trade unions must certainly oppose any further increase in redundancy payments which will be used to further undermine jobs.

The real fight for jobs, however, does not depend on redundancy payments or the lack of them. It depends on the trade union leadership organising a broad labour movement campaign which is both industrial and political. In that sense, more than any other, the lessons of the past have to be learned.

What should the attitude of active trade unionists be to redundancy payments? We invite anyone with experience of redundancies either directly or through anyone in their family being made redundant to write to Militant stating their views.

Industrial Reports



WATERWORKERS STAND FIRM

SWANSEA

"IN THE beginning, the old-timers thought we had no right to strike and the employers had the upper hand. It's not the case now. The old timers are the best.

We see the employers holding out the olive-branch. The balance of forces has changed. Our attitude is 'all or nothing'.

"As for bonus, if the work is not there or the weather is bad there is none. On the rates, that's what we want."

"The supervisors just scab. But it's sickening that electricians and fitters are walking through picket lines, wearing 'exemption tickets'. They forget we have to work together in the future.

"The average rate for us is between £78 and £85, top line. a number of our lads have to claim Family Income Supplement. Two weeks' holiday abroad, a nice car—they're only things you dream about.

"We're getting no hostility from the public. All our lads have got sympathy, not only for kidney patients, but for all the sick and infirm affected by the strike.

"We agreed to move kidney patients to hospitals. We don't like to see this happening, but in a strike, someone is always affected, otherwise the strike would be ineffective. But the real answer to the Tory lies came from a NUPE branch meeting I was invited to attend. One nurse told us that through Tory cutbacks in the NHS, the British Medical Journal recently pointed out that 1,500 people will die with kidney diseases this year alone.

"It sickens me to pick up a local paper or turn on a TV and hear Tory councillors and MPs slagging us. And virtually no response from the Labour leaders. If they can't argue against the Tories now, you wonder what chance we have when they get into power.

"I'm not political. Or I wasn't until this dispute. You mention joining the Labour Party. I will think about it. If I join it won't be to support the leaders. They are not defending us. On the contrary, I'll be fighting for new leaders who will."

Roy Davis, EETPU, personal capacity, spoke to Jim Walsh, GMBATU

LEA BRIDGE ROAD

AT LEA BRIDGE Road depot where essential supplies are stored, pickets are manning the gate on a 24-hour shift.

Alf Butlin, security man. "If I do a 3-shift nights, my average take home is £103." Pay is usually higher in London. "Seven days right through, I take home £121, no overtime and all Bank



Waterworkers vote to reject the pay offer at Copper Mill Lane, East London

Photo: Militant

WARRINGTON

GMBATU pickets Jack Jones and Ian Doorbar, and shop steward E Rapson spoke to Militant at Howley depot, Warrington.

"THE WATER Authority is conning the public that our work isn't necessary, and about the effect the strike is having. The water people are getting in Warrington now is rubbish but they're not admitting it and will hold out for as long as possible to try and prevent support and publicity for the strike."

An academic in Manchester claimed lead content in tap water was way over acceptable limits. He was reportedly advising people to run off a couple of gallons from the tap before using water.

The Water Authority have now installed a standpipe in this person's street. "This means they're admitting the lead levels are too high but they're doing nothing to minimise the risks for people in the lead-supplied areas."

Bewsey sewage works has broken down several times and there is now a permanent blockage. The area around the plant stinks but management have been content to let the by-pass system overflow. Sewage finds its own way out, most probably back into the mains system. There are burst mains all over Warrington but the Water Authority, by "val-

ing back", are merely storing up the problems in the antiquated system for a later date.

Jack Jones has only a few years to go to retirement. "I've worked all over, in gas and electricity supply as well as water. Everyone in the utilities knows the case for waterworkers' parity. I'm fighting this out for the younger members. Who knows whether they'll have a job in five or ten years' time?"

"It's good to see the young ones in the union and the Labour Party not giving in without a fight. We're fighting the government and the managers. We'll win with the support of ordinary NALGO members and the rest of the trade union movement." At that moment two school students passed the picket line asking when their school was going to be shut off.

Picketing has a humorous side. The manager's secretary has had a new task—cleaning the office windows. "If this dispute goes on much longer there won't be any windows left to clean."

NALGO members have had a great deal of blackmail during this dispute. What's needed is a firm stand from the leaders to urge full support for the manual workers and an end to management's intimidation of lower paid white collar staff.

Holidays on a single rate. No days in lieu, it just adds to our annual holiday."

"I saw Thatcher on the Money Programme. Victorian times! They want us bathing in front of the fire in tin baths! What does she know about hardship? Nuclear weapons? Spend the money giving workers a decent wage. I spent six years

By Bob Faulkes

Donate to Militant

ATTACKS ON the socialists in the Labour Party focused on Militant are leading to more and more support for our paper in the trade unions. Burnley 6/93 branch of the TGWU has returned our appeal letter with a £10 donation to help us fight the witch-hunt and an East London POEU members' Marxist Discussion Group contributed £6! £1 was collected at a Leeds AUEW meeting.

A number of activists donated expenses that they received: the President of Brighton Trades Council £15 ('Honoraria'), Craigton ASLEF member £10, Toxteth CPSA delegate £10,

health workers' stewards in Hull and Plymouth £5, Wavertree NALGO rep. £3.50, TGWU LDC member (Hackney) £1.67 and a Lewisham Trades Council delegate £1. If YOU receive anything from the movement, give it back!...via the Militant.

Thanks also to other trade unionists donating their own money including Swansea engineer Charlie Brady (£3), London Hospital worker M Farquson (also £3), J Stanley (NUPE) £3.60, Mineworker P Beasley of Selston Notts. (£2) and AUEW (Construction) Gravesend Branch Secretary, B Thompson £1.

WANDSWORTH district hospital management team are closing the South London hospital for women. The hospital provides a unique service catering for 185 patients, in maternity, mid-wifery, ante-natal clinic, gynaecology, out-patients clinics, cancer tests and abortion clinics as well as general medical and surgery wards.

A fund has already collected £15,000 to provide a laser beam for cancer treatment. This now looks like being cancelled. Two years ago we saw the closure of St Benedicts, and patients were transferred to the South London hospital for women.

The last move saw the death of approximately 36

NALGO Water Workers

AT A NALGO water workers' meeting last weekend, 200 delegates passed without opposition a resolution moved by Militant supporter Gavin Dudley in opposition to the strike breaking activities of some management in the union.

BRITISH AEROSPACE STEVENAGE

AT THE British Aerospace Dynamics plant in Stevenage last year, workers were given a 'pat on the back' and a 'thanks, chaps' from the Tory government for the part they played in the Falklands crisis, building Rapier missiles etc.

They are now on strike as from 3 February in protest about their 'reward'. An offer of 5 1/4% wage rise, from the company that made £37.3 million profit on the first half of 1982 alone, an increase of £6.7 million on 1981.

This action brought to a head the pay dispute simmering since last November. A work-to-rule and overtime ban began a few weeks ago. Before the official strike went ahead letters were sent to employees warning them if they did not work to "custom and practice" they would be sent home and lose pay.

On 31 January management told workers that they had 30 minutes to start work on blacked jobs—including work on 'Exocet' missiles—or pay would be stopped. At a mass meeting the following Wednesday workers voted by an overwhelming majority to go on strike.

It seems the capitalist class is not content with the enormous profits that they cream from death and destruction. They are determined to increase their profits even further, in an industry that is still profitable, by cutting the living conditions of the workers employed in it.

By Martin Slade (Stevenage AUEW)

Save South London hospital

Mike Suter spoke to Frank Thorne, NUPE secretary of South London hospital and Bolingbroke hospital.

patients. The health authority are now moving the remaining patients after promising no more transfers would take place. "It's disgusting the way these patients are being treated", commented Frank Thorne.

The health authority propose to transfer all patients to St Georges and St James's hospital in Tooting, which are already over-crowded with long waiting lists for beds and operations. Recently, two patients were turned away from South London hospital and had to go to

Dulwich because no beds were available in the Wandsworth district.

This closure will mean the overall loss of 20 maternity beds, and the loss of the only sexually transmitted disease unit in the area. Also, the authority would not guarantee any transfer of jobs for the present workforce. All the management are prepared to give is threats. Either South London hospital goes or another one, probably Bolingbroke hospital in Tooting.

The authority are trying divide and rule tactics to cut their budget. Frank explains: "We are determined to fight all the way." The Bolingbroke and South-London hospital will be putting on a united front to defend jobs and the NHS.



Industrial Reports

NO CO OPERATION WITH PRIVATISATION

WIRRAL BOROUGH Council's insistence that privatisation of the Borough's various cleansing departments could save £1.6 million a year and provide a more efficient service are, as recent experiences confirm, somewhat misleading.

Efficiency is measured solely in terms of the quality of service to the consumer rather than for example, the conditions of service offered to employees.

Private companies employ fewer people, resulting in an overall increased workload. It is further understood that they pay on average £12 per week less, tend to have shorter holidays, operate a greatly reduced sickness scheme and are often non-unionised.

The London Borough of Wandsworth embarked on an extensive programme of privatisation beginning with street sweeping. In the first six months under the private contract the council issued almost 1,500 default notices for work not carried out or carried out improperly. Eventually the council had to suspend certain clauses in the cleansing contract to give the contractors breathing space to overcome their obvious difficulties.

In Southend the council's Direct Labour Force were prepared to make cuts totalling £200,000 less than the tender forwarded by the successful contractor. The council decision to privatise was obviously a political rather than economic one.

Two years ago I was interviewed by an electrical contracting company who had secured a six month contract for work usually performed by direct labour. The company were to employ four teams. Each team consisting of an electrician, electrician's mate and a YOP trainee to re-wire a 3-bedroomed, occupied council house.

Apart from having to supply our own tools, do our own plastering, receive no travelling allowance and have to pay our own fares we



A mass meeting of Wandsworth council manual workers voted to oppose the Tory council's privatisation scheme last year. Photo: Militant.

were expected to complete the work in 11 hours paid at the flat union rate. Further, it was an unwritten condition that, if despite all the skimping and slaving, we failed to finish in the time allowed, we were expected to remain and complete the re-wire for no further payment.

Any moves towards privatisation by local authorities immediately met with firm resistance. Unions must carry out a policy of

non-co-operation including refusal to tender for their own jobs, boycotting the placing of advertisements or processing tenders from private companies. If the council introduces contractors then down tools, walk off the job until they have been removed and direct labour guaranteed all work.

If in certain departments this results in a lock-out then a call for indefinite strike by all local authority workers

must be the reply. If, as expected, 1983 is general election year then we have the opportunity to stem the flow of privatisation and all its evil manifestations by campaigning for the election of a socialist government, dedicated to implementing an alternative programme of radical socialist policies.

By Mark Best
(TGWU, Birkenhead)

ROUQUINET-DEROY

OVER 100 workers at the Rouquinet-Deroy textile factories in Nottingham are picketing the gates after being sacked by a really vicious Thatcherite management.

The mood is at boiling point because of management tactics. "We don't want any more money. We're opposed to these continental shifts they are trying to introduce. Your family life would go to pieces if you worked nights."

"Seven nights on, two days off. If you've got a wife and kids you'd never see them. We used to work Saturdays and Sundays anyway but he wasn't happy with that. Then you had a choice, now you haven't got any. If Christmas Day falls

on your shift then that's it. If you don't turn in you've broken your contract and you're down the road."

The real reason management want to introduce continental shifts is because they wouldn't have to pay time and a half and double time at weekends. "As far as I'm concerned it's him (Fry, the managing director) or us."

"We won't go back in until he goes out. He must be answerable to somebody such as the shareholders. I mean, he's losing money having us out here. This is the second strike in two years."

As well as trying to introduce continental shifts, and sacking everybody who wouldn't work them,

management sacked a worker who was off with a sick note; two part-time cleaners—one aged 72 years—and 3 lab technicians who wouldn't work the strikers' machines.

Incredibly, 1 in 10 of the workforce are YOPsters but they are out on the gates as well as the other workers. The union has signed them all up. They are all on 62p per hour and are all sacked when they are 18. The company won't pay the adult rate until 21 years of age!

They are using every scab tactic in the book. Advertising for scabs in the evening paper (which itself uses scab labour), using scab trucks—which the police let through

even though one driver threatened workers with a crow-bar and his tanker had no hazard warnings on it—and getting management to run the machines.

The dispute has the full backing of the hosiery workers union, NUHKW and it is very important that this group of workers win because it would show workers in similar firms that they can stand up and fight against vicious bosses and win. Donations to NUHKW, Union House, Church Street, Basford, Nottingham.

By John Fahey and Joanna Slattery

SERPELL REPORT Railworkers action is the key

CREWE IS the biggest railway town in the country. The Serpell Report which recommends the destruction of up to 85% of the railways in Britain would have terrible consequences.

Over 400 people, mainly railway workers attended a Crewe Trades Council meeting on 4 February hoping for a fight back against the Report. Although the suggestions are in the sidings at the moment, an election win for Thatcher would see them reactivated.

The works manager of Crewe BR Engineering works and the Deputy Divisional Manager of BR were invited. It goes without saying that they offered no improvement in their pitiful lack of investment that has caused so many of BR's problems.

The local Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody explained the effects of the Report very well and said she would do all she could to oppose implementation. But she said nothing about how to involve local unions and people in the fight.

The only speaker to give any inspiration was Jack Lanwerne, divisional organiser of the NUR, who showed the need to campaign for the return of a Labour government while warning that past Labour governments had carried on the rundown of the rail system.

The lessons of Horwich show that only determined and independent action by railworkers themselves, involving the local community, (i.e. the rest of the working class) can stop privatisation or closure.

Mrs Dunwoody's unfortunate effort to involve the Chamber of Commerce and the invitation by the Trades Council to Nantwich's Tory MP Nicholas Bonsor are misguided. Even if short term electoral considerations make Bonner amenable, when the chips are down he will support the Tories in a Commons division. Many of the Chamber of Commerce members would hover like upper class vultures if Crewe were privatised or freight put onto the road.

Although many came away disheartened from the meeting the fight is only just starting and local Militant supporters are holding a meeting in Crewe to discuss Serpell on Wednesday 16 February at 7.30 pm in the Oakley Centre.

By Dave Campbell

BROAD LEFT FOR RAILWAY WORKERS RALLY

Speakers: Tony Benn, Derek Fullick (President ASLEF). Saturday 5 March, 1 pm at County Hall, London.

USDAW: Fight the bosses' offensive

OVER the last few weeks a series of USDAW Broad left meetings have been held up and down the country culminating in a major rally at London's County Hall.

Tony Benn, Audrey Wise, Ken Livingstone, Michael Meacher MP and Presidential candidate, Jeff Price spoke to over a hundred enthusiastic USDAW members from all over the country.

The Liverpool meeting heard Jeff Price, Executive Council candidate John Hannett and Executive and Divisional Council candidate Mick Wainwright, who is currently a member of the Woolworth's national negotiating committee and a leading fighter against threatened redundancies.

The feeling from the floor was that a victory for the Broad Left was a victory for the rank and file.

The recent defeat of Whitney's Sunday Trading Bill will be welcomed by USDAW members. The con-

cessions offered on this by the USDAW leadership, however, do not bode well for future attacks.

We require a determined leadership to fight the bosses offensive against all workers in retail distribution. Join the Broad Left campaign. To contact Broad Left speakers for your meeting, phone (0632) 730861.

By Rick Grogan
(London CRS, USDAW)

BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

Broad Left Conference: 'The fight for the extension of trade union democracy'. Speakers include Tony Benn. Saturday 19 February, County Hall, London. Delegate can be elected from Broad Left organisations and bona fide trade unions. Credentials can be obtained from: Phil Holt, 108 Princes Boulevard, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside.

BUS WORKERS FIGHT FOR LIVING WAGE

Next Wednesday, municipal bus workers will begin a series of one-day strikes after a union delegate conference rejected the miserable 3 per cent offer of their management, the Federation of Public Transport Employers.

The national strike on the 16th will be followed by a campaign of local one-day strikes and all the indications are that the TGWU members involved will give the campaign their whole-hearted backing.

The basic weekly rate of a driver at present is only £60 a week, and less still for a conductor. The Transport and General Workers Union have put in a claim for 13 per cent. The poor offer of management is bad enough, but it is made even worse by the strings they want to attach. They want to end the standard working day which would mean:

- Overtime no longer being paid on a daily basis
- Those on a four day week only receiving overtime after completing 9 hours 45 minutes
- Spread-over penalties will not start at 9hrs 30mins but at 11hrs 30mins

By a
 Lancashire
 Bus Worker

- No limit on schedule duties.

Overtime is now paid daily after 7hrs 48mins on the basis of a 39 hour week. Under the first proposal a driver could be scheduled on 11 or 12 hours duty and be paid flat rate for the entire duty.

Although bus workers are supposed to have a 39 hour week they could actually end up working a 50 hour week paid at flat time throughout.

People on a four-day week would come out of the situation somewhat better off. But most bus workers believe that these proposals are a crude attempt to implement the four-day week to the detriment of their health.

Most depots have found that when they accepted a

four-day week, after a few months management have tried to implement longer working days.

The third proposal means that a worker can be starting a shift at 5.30 am, not finishing until 7.00 pm and could lose 1 hour or more pay on present earnings. At my garage people on a spread-over can be leaving home at 4.30 am and not arriving home until 8.00 pm. They are actually away from home for 15½ hours but paid for about 8 hours of it.

As Bill Morris, national TGWU passenger group secretary says in the latest issue of *TGWU Record*, "The employers are coordinating amongst themselves with one objective—to run public transport at whatever price workers in the industry are prepared to pay."

The members are determined to fight for the full claim and defend the standard day and if the TGWU gives a strong and positive lead, the membership will certainly stand firm.

**National
 action
 vital**

The fight of the municipal bus workers on behalf of their present claim, is, of course, directly related to the fight against Tory proposals to cut back on local subsidies to public transport. Many local branches of the TGWU are beginning to campaign on this issue.

Kenny Poeney, secretary Walton Garage, Transport and General Workers Union, writes that the proposals would affect Merseyside public transport drastically: "Creating a 50 per cent increase in fares, 1500 redundancies and a run down in services as private companies tender for the profitable routes while leaving the unprofitable (but no less socially-useful) routes for the public sector."

Some of the bus workers at his garage have been actively involved, along with members of the ruling Labour Group of the Merseyside County Council, in leafletting the public about the effects of the new Transport Bill and in mobilising a campaign among the mass of bus workers. "It is essential", Kenny writes, "that local and national action is taken now."

Photo: Militant.



London bus workers demonstrate in defence of public transport during the 'Fares Fair' campaign.

Water Workers Occupy

Continued from front page

of the question. A worker in Basildon told a *Militant* reporter. "How can we have extra productivity at a sewage plant? That means redundancies. Fewer workers doing more work for lower wages. We're not in the business of selling jobs."

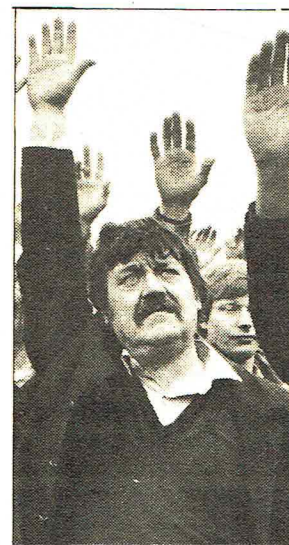
For all the employers' frantic efforts to hide the fact, the strike is having an effect. Reports on page 14 show the results in some areas but the consequences for industry will be felt more and more.

Power stations need 17 million gallons of very pure water a day just to drive their turbines and about 450 million gallons for general use. Some are already reduced to half capacity. The promised support from power workers to stop scabbing could by itself paralyse much of industry. The Tories are prepared to see industry at a standstill to try to break the strength of the unions.

But the water workers have the power to win this strike if they stand firm. They should get the support of the rest of the movement.

Craft workers have now also rejected the offer of 7.3% over 16 months and are expected to join others on the picket lines.

Craft workers and white collar staff in many areas have already given their



Water workers reject the latest pay offer.

backing to the workers on strike but now NALGO and the craft unions must put an end to any of their members crossing picket lines, to ensure 100 per cent support for this vital national struggle.

The strikers are finding ways of combatting media attempts to sow divisions and doubts in workers' minds. One depot in Mansfield has banned the *Sun* even for their Bingo numbers and crosswords. Mass meetings are being held in many areas to explain developments in the strike.

An excellent initiative has been the Kent water workers' strike bulletin produced by NUPE.

It shows the progress of

the strike in the area and gives news of local solidarity action and financial help, details of strike pay, useful information to combat the flood of propaganda, and details of strike meetings. This kind of material is needed in all areas.

The bulletin shows collections from Kent county council NALGO members, school meals staff who have recently faced a fight against their employers worsening their wages and conditions of service, and support on the picket lines from hospital workers.

These trade unionists have seen from their own experience the importance of solidarity. Locally, trade unions, trades councils, Labour Parties etc should give their support through rallies, demonstrations, pickets and so on.

Most of all, the TUC should put its full weight behind the strike. A victory would give new confidence to the entire working class movement. Preparations should be made now for at least a 24 hour general strike in support of the water workers if the government do not budge.

It is a fight against low pay. It is a fight for justice. It is for maintaining trade union bargaining strength. It is a fight for all of us. Full support for the water workers!

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