

Thatcher's war on poor

THE TORIES are declaring all out war on the poor. All those who have been driven into poverty by their policies, and have to claim benefits, will come under attack.

The new Social Security Bill, based on the Fowler review and likely to come into force next year, could mean some young unemployed losing over £6 a week, and disabled pensioners could lose over £5 heating allowance.

The review was not intended to 'reform' the benefits system, but to save the Tories money. Then they can pay more out in tax relief in an attempt to buy votes, and save themselves at the next election.

What else could be expected—out of the 17 on the review, six were Tory MPs, two were general managers of insurance companies, and also there were the chairmen of London Brick and Nabisco. Even the Citizens' Advice Bureau representative was an ex-Tory councillor.

The cold-hearted Fowler justified his review, gauging poverty by an increase in the number of homes with fridges. He should have opened the fridge doors, and looked at how little millions can afford.

Young people hit

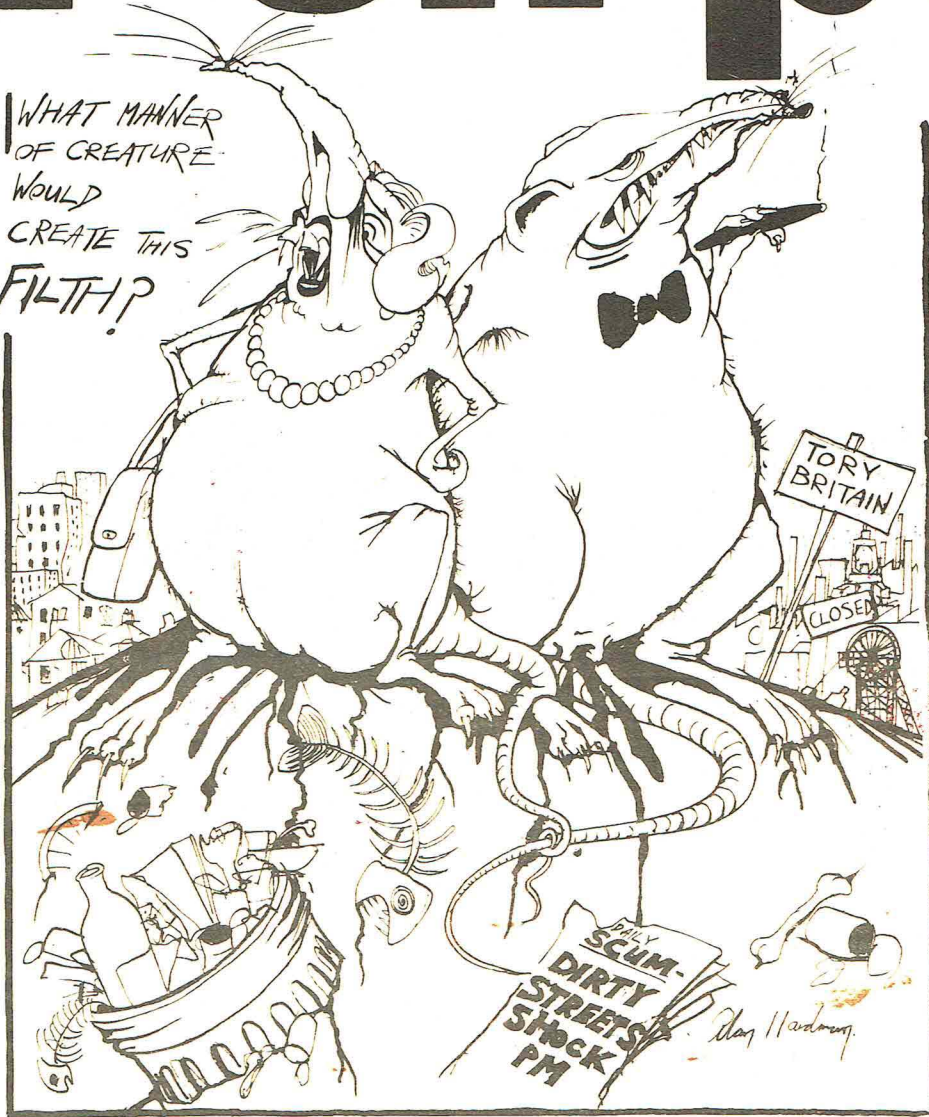
Young people especially will be hammered. All single unemployed under 25 will lose their right to the adult rate of benefit. That means a cut of £6.60 per week. Under 18s will receive a further £5.80 less than the under-25 rate. A young unemployed would then be getting £10 a week less than the miserable YTS allowance. It would be virtually impossible to escape YTS conscription.

Those under 26 will only be able to claim board and lodging allowance for between two and eight weeks, thanks to Fowler. Then they will have to move on. They will become Fowler's lost tribe of unemployed nomads. But if they stay at home, their parents will lose up to £10.40 in rent and rate rebates. Pensioners will also suffer. The DHSS own figures indicated that 56 per cent of pensioners will be worse off under these 'reforms'. In an act of extreme spite, disabled pensioners on supplementary pension will lose their £5.45 heating addition, and £3.70 for laundry costs and special diets.

All claimants including pensioners and families will now have to pay the first 20 per cent of their rate rebates, and will lose out on rent rebates too.

Unemployed families will lose their legal right to DHSS help for essentials—new baby clothes, bedding, cookers or even funeral

WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE WOULD CREATE THIS FILTH?



YOUTH AID, the pressure group fighting against youth unemployment, has launched a campaign to tell school leavers how to claim £18.20 a week in benefits from the DHSS.

Following a recent ruling by the social security commissioners, school leavers who left school at Easter and Whitsun,

costs. These payments will be at the discretion of the DHSS office manager, who will be set an annual cash limit. Once that has been used up, the whole area will be left without basic help. This must be what Thatcher meant by the return to Victorian values.

Of course, Fowler knows a lot about unemployment and deprivation. He is Tory MP for Sutton Coldfield, the richest and most exclusive suburb of Birmingham, while in areas of the city like Ladywood and Sparkbrook, unemployment is over 40 per cent and rising.

On 7 June at 10.30 am, the West Midlands

returning only to take exams, are able to claim benefits.

This overturns a previous decision, which meant that school leavers couldn't claim until September. But Norman Fowler has said that he will not be publicising the new decision because it would cost the government too much.

Campaign Against Social Security Cuts and the local Labour Party Young Socialists are marching the seven miles from Sutton Park (Town Gate) into the city centre to protest against the Fowler proposals. Already the CPSA DHSS Section Executive are committed to campaign for non-implementation of the Fowler plans. The LPYS are demanding the Labour leaders place themselves at the front of a campaign to stop the Fowler cuts.

By Mark Meredith (LPYS NC)

Expulsions condemned

THE LABOUR Party's Greater London Regional Executive Committee on 2 June voted by 17 votes to five, with six absentions to condemn the right-wing witch-hunt.

The resolution "condemns the current witch-hunt and the expulsions and calls for:

A) Open political debate on different strategies for Labour.

B) Immediate reinstatement of those expelled.

C) An end to the witch-hunt and expulsion proceedings against the Liverpool, Birmingham and Exeter comrades."

ST. MARY'S ward labour Party, where Tony Mulhearn is the councillor, voted unanimously not to accept his expulsion, and to continue recognising him as their councillor.

Lobby Labour NEC

No expulsions
Defend socialist policies
General election now

Thursday and Friday
12-13 June 8pm onwards
—all day
150 Walworth Road
London SE17



Militant

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Socialism can give Labour majority

LABOUR'S CONTINUING rise in the opinion polls will bring heart to those growing millions desperate to see the back of the Thatcher government.

The 40 per cent support recorded for Labour would give a 40 seat overall majority. Of course the polls will encourage the Tories to postpone their election plans for 18 months to two years, while they try to refurbish their image.

Much could happen meantime to alter popular opinion, not least Labour's internal climate. Labour is gaining currently, albeit at a snail's pace, despite the witch-hunt against *Militant* and Liverpool. Unemployment, now at 3.8 million on the pre-Thatcher method of counting, is the key issue mentioned by voters.

Neil Kinnock has staked his personal credibility on expulsions, appearing on every news programme in one evening to justify them. And his standing continues to trail behind that of the party. More of those polled declare themselves 'dissatisfied' with his performance than those 'satisfied', a markedly worse result than for Owen and Steel. While they have nothing to offer, they do at least spend their time attacking the Tories, not their own party members.

But what is of more concern than the polls is the fall in party membership, of 10,000 last year. As Labour struggles to hold its members, over 30,000 people have attended the recent round of *Militant* public rallies. When capitalism is patently failing the majority, the Labour leaders should themselves be able to inspire workers to join up in droves. Despite opinion polls and local election victories, morale in the party is still low.

The failure to back the miners, the attacks on embattled Labour councillors, the symbolic dropping of the Red Flag and the purge of the left by the party leaders are responsible. They could still sufficiently disillusion Labour activists to put a majority government in jeopardy.

Assault on policy

This is all linked to the leadership's assault on party policy and socialist commitments. In his recent book *SDP traitor Owen* commends Kinnock: "All post-war leaders of the Labour Party have attempted to evade the true meaning of the Clause (Clause 4). Another attempt is underway in 1986, to bury it in a new statement of democratic socialist principles. Neil Kinnock is trying to shift Labour's language towards efficiency, with increased production coming from the redistribution of wealth. This change is to be welcomed if it goes deeper than mere rhetoric".

Party members' attachment to the red flag, Clause 4 and socialism is not mere sentiment. Many understand that even more than the ill-fated 1974-79 government, a new Labour administration will face a stark choice. Either it uses the 'irreversible decline' of capitalist Britain as the reason for full socialist change, or it will again be compelled to impose the burdens of economic crisis on to ordinary people.

Manufacturing output is six per cent below the three-day week level. Every day more industrial redundancies are announced—tin mines and more to go at Swan Hunter. CBI President Sir Terence Beckett has spoken of the economy hurtling downwards on a 'cresta run'. How can Labour even redeem its pledge of a million new jobs within two years of office, with a new international economic downturn expected by the late eighties.

The socialist governments in Spain, Greece, Australia and now Norway have all tried to manage capitalism in crisis. Increased unemployment, austerity and growing trade union discontent have been the inevitable results. In France, one-third wealthier than Britain, the Mitterrand government, after an initial period of reforms, was forced into counter-reforms. As a consequence a new right government was returned.

Labour in Britain could well succeed at the next election, by default. But growing numbers of workers are already dubious that it can succeed in defending their interests.

The socialist alternative within the party as represented by *Militant* will grow before and after the general election. Rather than the leadership's programme of an investment bank and co-operatives, which leave the laws of capitalist economics intact, the demand for the implementation of Clause 4 will increase.

This would mean replacing private enterprise chaos with a socialist plan of production, based upon the public ownership of the banks, financial institutions and 200 largest companies.

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.
Published by Militant.
Printed by Militant Publications, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. ISSN 0144-9275



No World Cup fiesta for poor

NEVER CAN a head of state have been so publicly humiliated as when President de la Madrid of Mexico was booed and jeered as he declared open the 1986 World Cup.

500 million viewers heard the 114,000 crowd vent their anger on the man who has presided over the country's economic crisis.

That reception is all the more remarkable in that only wealthy Mexicans can afford the tickets. In a country where millions live on £3 a day, a set of tickets for 13 matches costs £500. The majority will have to make do with the giant screens erected in parks or black and white sets in bars.

The World Cup has highlighted the inequalities of capitalist Mexico. The four million residents of Neza, a rat-infested shanty town near Scotland's stadium, have been screened from public view by a seven foot high wall which they even had to pay for!

In Monterrey, 20,000 steel workers have marched in protest, after losing their jobs. They will not receive a penny of redundancy or unemployment pay.

Meanwhile Televisa, the company which has a monopoly of the World Cup TV coverage is set to make a fortune. Known locally as the Octopus, this company is the biggest TV network in Latin America with interests also in industry, tourism and

newspapers. They are charging exorbitant fees to other TV networks to use their monopoly coverage, and the fees have been paid into a US bank account, so the profits will not even reach Mexico. And so far the quality of the TV coverage has been abysmal.

While the Octopus is making a fortune, thousands of starving street traders have been hustled off the streets by Mexico's notorious police. Small wonder that there have been protests around the slogan: "We want frijoles (beans) not goles (goals)".

By Pat Craven

Rats thrive in Mexico City
—See page 11

McCluskie's offensive

NATIONAL UNION of Seamen General Secretary Sam McCluskie has launched a frenzied attack on *Militant* and on Liverpool councillors in his speech to the NUS conference.

He didn't have time to speak about the threat to seamen's jobs and to the shipping industry.

This was not only an abuse of his position, but also a gross abuse of the hospitality of Liverpool City Council in whose council chamber the conference met. Aware of the significance of the venue it was clearly pre-arranged that the press and TV should be ready for his tirade. As soon as he'd finished, the cameras left.

Yet he had the nerve to



talk of the need for Labour unity. What reassurance can be had from McCluskie's commitment that the NEC would deal with the Liverpool party expulsions democratically and fairly. If those under threat had not gone to the courts they would have been expelled on the basis of "inadmissible" gossip taken in confidence.

"It sticks in my throat", he said, of the money *Mili-*

tant raises. As Party treasurer he is responsible for allowing the misuse of Party funds on inquiries and expulsions.

As for Liverpool Council's courageous fight last year: "You do not achieve democratic socialism in Britain by defying the law of the land." NUS members caught in future strikes and facing legal wrangles will bear this advice in mind.

Twenty years ago when they did strike NUS leaders were subjected to slanderous attacks about 'conspiracies' and under-hand methods. McCluskie has stooped even lower.

NUS members must protest immediately about their deputy general secretary's behaviour.

Tory student courts fascists

IN A letter to Ian Walker, a British National Party organiser in Hull, Paul Delaire-Staines, a member of the Federation of Conservative Students has proposed joint "direct action" to disrupt meetings of left wing students.

He said he did not share the BNP view on immigration, ie. repatriation. As a member of the "Libertarian" faction of the FCS, he advocated the free movement of labour, but qualified by the message: "You come here to work—or starve".

The letter continued: "I share a lot of your objectives", including "a return to leadership and statesmanship, the abolition of the welfare state and the elimination of Communism in Britain—the mass media, the

trade unions and the schoolroom".

Delaire Staines gives examples of FCS activities: "Anti-Communist slogans on bridges, disrupting the leftist meetings by posing as leftists and then causing trouble... perhaps members of the BNP would care to join us in our anti-leftist activities".

This letter reveals the true nature of FCS supporters and show which way the Conservative party is heading. The attitude of John Barrow, FCS national chairman to Delaire Staines was simply that he was "a bit silly. I wouldn't hold it against him. I'm sure he'll grow out of it".

By Neelam de Freitas

Another Chernobyl?

WEST GERMAN anti-nuclear protestors could not understand why the westerly town of Essen appeared near the head of the country's radiation league table. How could the Ruhr record more radio-activity than areas nearer the eastern borders more in line for fall-out from Chernobyl?

Now the truth has been revealed. It was nothing to do with the Russian accident. At its Hamm reactor on 4 May, West Germany had its very own nuclear accident, which was not even reported to the local state government. So much for the openness of the Western nuclear industry, much vaunted by the Tories in the wake of Chernobyl.

Thousands of protestors braving police truncheons and watercannon outside the country's first nuclear reprocessing plant under construction at Wackersdorf, will now be even more determined.

(Nuclear feature see page 5)

Thatcher's clean-up gimmick

THE TORIES have appointed Richard Branson, the millionaire boss of Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic to head a £3 million national 'clean-up' campaign, employing 5,000 youth at £67 a week.

Thatcher has not suddenly developed an interest in the health of the general public—she has just discovered that street litter is an eyesore and wants a cheap gimmicky publicity campaign to win her back some support.

Her real campaign over the past seven years has been to cut back public spending, with 'superfluous' jobs like street cleaning the first in the firing line.

Since the Tories came to power, local government finance as a whole has been cut by £17 billion. All areas of cleaning have been cut back through privatisation in schools and hospitals. The Department of Transport introduced new codes of practice to restrict the cleaning of motorway verges and replace litter bins in lay-bys with signs asking motorists to take their litter home with them.

The local government manual workers' union, the GMBATU has calculated that between September 1984 and September 1985, 331 jobs were lost in environmental health, 778 lost in refuse services and 644 in transport. Council manual workers as a whole have been cut back by 15 per cent over the last six years; many of these jobs will have affected cleaning and refuse services.

The next Labour government should put an end to this cheap-labour scheme and give councils back the money to pay trade union wages to their workers to do the job.

By Anne McKay

Labour ranks turn against expulsions

THE LABOUR Party's new trouble-shooter in Liverpool, Peter Kilfoyle, is having great difficulty in convincing party members to accept the NEC's expulsions.

Having failed to convince members in Garston to toe the line (they voted 46 to 2 against), the Liverpool City Council Labour Group have now voted 26 to 7 to condemn the expulsion of Tony Mulhearn and to continue to recognise him as a Labour councillor. Such was the feeling of opposition to this expulsion that a vote was taken to ask Kilfoyle to leave the meeting.

When he did attend Walton Constituency Party meeting, members voted 30 to 8 to follow Garston and refuse to recognise the expulsions of Labour councillors.

In Broadgreen constituency, Childwall ward party has voted 13 to 5 to follow Garston and Walton in defying the NEC and Old Swan ward voted *unanimously* to do the same.

These decisions are a tremendous fillip to those expelled and the others still awaiting their inquisition.

Anti purge conference

THREE CONSTITUENCY Labour Parties—Hackney North, Hackney South and Vauxhall—are calling a national conference against the witch-hunt on Saturday 21 June at Regents College, Inner Circle, Regents Park, London NW1.

The conference will hear from Tony Mulhearn, Frances Curran and Pat Wall about the witch-hunt of *Militant* supporters because of their political views. It will also have a speaker from Sparkbrook Labour Party, where Amir Khan and Kevin Scally have been expelled because they tried to organise a black section and win support in the Asian community and one of the three *Briefing* supporters in Exeter will also address the conference.

Delegates are invited from all bodies affiliated to the Labour Party. Two per organisation and £3 per delegate.

When is a caucus not a caucus?

IAN WILLIAM'S weekly diatribe against *Militant* and its supporters switched from the *New Statesman* to *Tribune* last week. But it was as rabid and muddled as ever, with such gems as: "By hypnotic chanting of political mantras at innumerable meetings, by the certainty of faith and revelation, they have overcome the agnosticism of experience."

One of his arguments is that *Militant* shares with the right wing the weapon of "cliques and caucuses". But Ian Williams is the secretary of the 'Liverpool Labour Left'. This group's latest in-

ternal circular, under a headline "CLP caucuses" alerts its members that "the delayed AGMs will have to take place soon, so it is very important that Liverpool Labour Left members in the CLPs get together".

"No pale Toryism"

JOY JONES of Chatham has written to Neil Kinnock to express her disgust at the "dreadful treatment" of *Militant* supporters in Liverpool.

She said: "To continue with this disastrous course, you are damaging yourself and the Labour Party irrevocably".

"What the people of this country want" she adds, "is a return to fundamental socialist principles and this time you have got to mean them."

Poole

POOLE CONSTITUENCY Labour Party has voted

heavily for resolutions calling on Labour's NEC to drop its inquiry into Liverpool Labour Party and strive for party unity. Most delegates were disgusted with the inquiry report and appalled that people should be threatened with disciplinary action on the basis of 'evidence' that, as one delegate stated "would be torn to shreds by the youngest and greenest lawyer in any court".

By J Hayes
(Poole Labour Party and UCATT)

Arundel

ARUNDEL LABOUR Party have voted to "congratulate those councillors who have put their houses, livelihoods and possessions on the line whilst defending jobs and services". The meeting resolved to "call upon the NEC to end the witch-hunt against Liverpool party members and to fight the Tory and Liberal Parties whose disastrous policies

have devastated Liverpool and to stop attacking the socialists who have implemented party policy".

By Stan Natrass
(Arundel Labour Party)

Cardiff

AT THE Cardiff South Labour Party General Management Committee (GMC), local MP and former PM James Callaghan said that Labour was likely to win the next election, but would run into trouble within 18 months: "Heaven help you if by then *Militant* are still on the GMC".

The right wing know only too well that under their leadership, unpopular measures will have to be taken to attack working class living standards and that they will provoke opposition within the labour movement. They are daft enough to believe that a few expulsions will pave the way for the movement to accept such a retreat over policies.

By Andrew Price
(Cardiff South Labour Party)



Lobby of Labour's NEC on 21 May

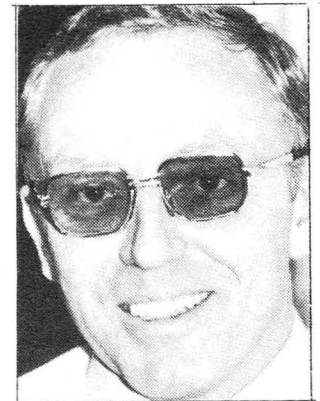
News in Brief

Southampton debate

SOUTHAMPTON University Debating Society has passed the motion: "This house believes *Militant* has a legitimate role to play within the Labour Party."

Speaking for, Terry Fields, MP for Liverpool Broadgreen, pointed to the irony that the two speakers against were supporters of the Tories and the SDP. The witch-hunt, he explained, was nothing to do with organisation, and everything to do with ideas: "*Militant* is necessary to remind us of the socialist traditions and the aspirations of the rank and file Labour Party members."

He got a tremendous reception. The Tory did not do nearly so well, being repeatedly heckled by members of the Federation of Conservative Students



Terry Fields MP

who described him as a 'wimp'.

Despite the fact that the majority of the audience were members of no party, the motion was carried by 64 votes to 6.

By Mike Ingram
(Southampton Labour Party)

Portsmouth meeting

"IN 1932 before a lot of you in this room were born, I was earning £1 17s 6d. I took a pay cut of 3/9 to stay off the dole. The only thing that happened was that the boss got richer. A few years ago the same thing happened. In one factory the workers took a £60 cut. The boss got a holiday in the Bahamas and they got the sack. We can't go on like this any more, it's up to you younger people to change it."

That was part of the speech made by a long-standing Labour Party member at a recent *Mili-*

tant meeting in Portsmouth.

Some comrades, from the Isle of Wight, who have been expelled from the Labour Party, had just arrived from the Magistrate's Court, after being given a conditional discharge for selling the *Militant* in Ryde. Obviously the witch-hunt on the Isle of Wight isn't confined to the Labour Party.

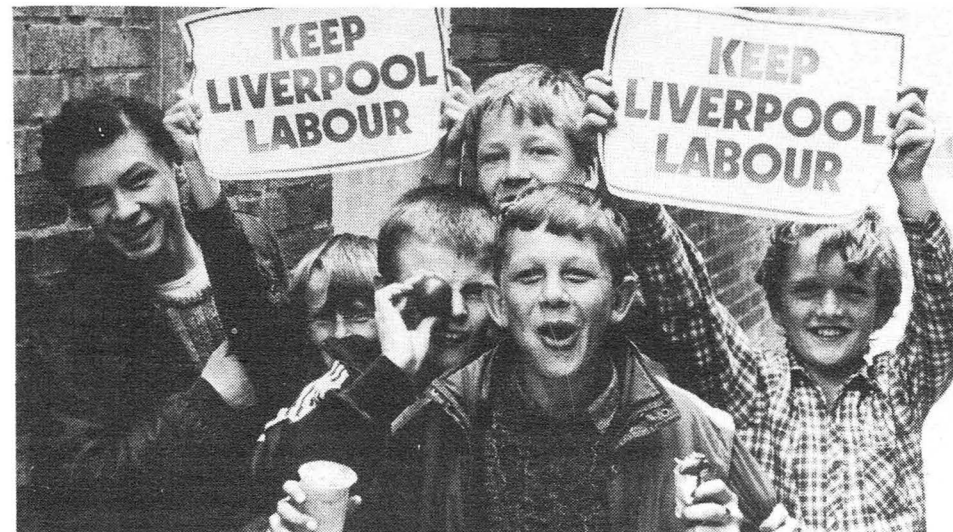
Over £150 was raised from the 60 people present and several people agreed to sell the *Militant* regularly.

By Peter Serjent
(Portsmouth LPYS)

Correction

IN *MILITANT* no 798, in reporting the victory of Keith Simpson in the Lothian Regional Council elections, we said he won

"despite an attack from his own Constituency Labour Party". Members of East Lothian CLP have asked us to state that this is not the case. We apologise for the mistake and are pleased to report that the CLP is backing Keith.



Youthful support for Liverpool Labour Party

Young Socialist confronts party leader

AFTER THE gruelling 21 May meeting of Labour's NEC, Neil Kinnock emerged to find two young party members, to whom he tried to justify the expulsions. One was Steve Nally of Vauxhall LPYS:

"He approached us and told us that the *Militant* was ruining our lives. So I told him that the Tories were ruining people's lives and that he better stop witch-

hunting socialists and use the recent election results as a stepping stone to a Labour victory.

Obsessed

"Then like a man obsessed he said that he was sincerely fighting for socialism. I told him that he couldn't be that sincere if he was wasting the movement's time witch-hunting. This

reply seemed to cause him some confusion because he looked at me blankly and then walked off to his waiting car.

"Needless to say he didn't buy a copy of the paper and I and the other *Militant* supporter present, made sure that 'our Neil' was made aware of what would happen to him if he continued down the path of expulsions, as he drove off."

cillors be removed by the High Court "that non-*Militant* candidates be put forward for the panel".

Unfortunately, financial difficulties have necessitated that "all memberships should be renewed from 1 April. £1, £3 or £5 according to circumstances".

But at least they have what the newsletter believes is "our man in Hardman Street", in the form of Labour's new Merseyside organiser Peter Kilfoyle. It is not surprising therefore that "many may be unhappy to either invite or hear him, so LLL member are urged to

get their branches to get him along".

Michael Meacher will be addressing them in June. Perhaps since Meacher has supported expulsions, Ian Williams could explain to him why members of the LLL should not be expelled as members of an organisation "having their own principles and policy...or possessing branches in the constituencies"—or using the weapon of "cliques and caucuses".

By Jeremy Birch

Labour Steering Committee Against Witch-hunts

Public meeting
Reinstate Tony Mulhearn! Stop expulsions!
Tuesday 10 June, 7.30pm

Hear: Tony Mulhearn, expelled Labour councillor
Ian Lowes, expelled GMBATU branch 5 convenor
Blue Star Club, Window Lane, Garston, Liverpool



THE North West Labour Women's Organisation attracted 5,000 to its march against low pay on 31 May. They have shown not only the Women's Organisation, but the party as a whole how to campaign. The Labour Party is committed to a minimum wage policy but so far its campaign has amounted to a press conference and information pack circulated to the constituencies. Let the party return to demonstrations and mass involvement of the whole membership in the fight against the Tories.

Fight Tories' sweat-shop charter

LORD YOUNG, minister for mass unemployment has unveiled new plans to attack the rights of workers on poverty wages.

A new white paper helps sweatshop owners to deepen the exploitation of their workers. If you've been sacked or want to claim unfair dismissal then in the future you'll have to pay a £25 fee before you get access to a tribunal.

At present, if you work under eight hours a week you can't claim unfair dismissal or get redundancy payments. This qualification for rights is to go up to 12 hours a week. If you work 12 to 20 hours a week you won't get these rights until you've been with the same employer for five years.

This will hit women workers hardest, as will plans to exclude firms with fewer than ten employees having to take back women workers within 29 weeks of the birth of a child.

All workers will have to work two years rather than six months before needing to be given detailed reasons for

sacking. To make these new impositions easier to enforce, the government want to formally restrict the functions a union official can carry out in work time to those officially recognised by the employer!

The Tories claim this will save jobs, particularly in small businesses, but the Tory government has bankrupted more small firms than any in recent history. It is a sweatshop charter for all of British capitalism, promising the bosses a low paid, easy come, easy go, workforce.

They say it will cut red tape, and complain about the inconvenience of filling in forms on legislation like "outmoded health and safety laws. But it is the "inconvenience" of paying workers and treating employees like humans which brings tears to the bosses' eyes.

These plans must be resisted. Join the fight to make the sweatshop owners sweat for the crisis of their system, not their already super-exploited workers.

Young: 'ideal Tory'

YOUNG became a government minister without the little bother of getting himself elected—and probably chucked out next time round.

But he's not one of your born aristocrats. David Young is a self made millionaire who started at the bottom. He had to wait until he was all of 24 before he got on the executive of Great Universal Stores, a multinational which includes Times Furnishing, Scotch House and the American Burberry store.

He has been a director of Town and City property developers which is a subsidiary of the P & O company. His Lordship does quite nicely in his own property with his two large elegant houses.

Later he became a director of Manufacturers Hanover Property Services, part of a huge multinational based in the USA, one of whose directors was Evelyn de Rothschild.

If there's another fight in the Cabinet between the backers of British capitalism and the US variety, Lord Young would be a good referee; he's had his fingers in both pies.

His family are ordinary

people, too. Brother Stuart is chairman of the BBC, he makes sure TV and radio coverage of strikes is impartial, and stops nasty documentaries about Ireland upsetting your enjoyment of wholesome entertainment like Dynasty or snooker. Brother Stu got this job for being a director of Caledonian Airways, Tesco and being on the board of a number of banks.

Baron

So David Young was the ideal man to become Baron Young of Graffham, and to become chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, where he tried to overcome the dole queues by paying employers £20 a week to take on workers at under £80 a week.

He's just the kind of man who would tell people near his Sussex home that social security of £17 a week was corrupting the youth.

He's the kind of person who would tell us we've never had it so good. He's an ideal Tory minister and yet another good reason for fighting for a socialist alternative to those low pay mongers, the Tories.



Young Socialists on demonstration.

Manchester demonstration

THE SKY in Manchester last Saturday was as grey as the Labour Party's new Freedom and Fairness Campaign.

But for a couple of hours the city's centre was brought to life by the demonstration against low pay, called by the North West Labour Women's Organisation. As the 5,000-strong line stretched out along Mancunian Way it was red from end to end.

The demonstration, calling for a £120 national minimum wage and a fight against the threat to jobs and conditions through privatisation, was headed by the NW Labour Women's banner and the Labour Party's campaign bus. The sides and pavement were filled out with Militant sellers.

The march was joined by branches of TGWU, USDAW, COHSE members from Yorkshire; NUPE from Lancashire, Staffordshire miners' wives, women's sections from all over the North West and Labour Parties and Young Socialist

branches from as far away as Glasgow, London and Southampton. There were representatives from the strikers at Addenbrookes Hospital, on strike for 18 months over privatisation, Silentnight Bedding, on strike for one year over pay cuts and redundancies, and Abbey Furnishings, in occupation for five weeks.

Margaret Crear of the NW Women's Organisation, urged bystanders to join the march. "The Tories say we price ourselves out of jobs. But it's them who price us out of jobs and we want to price them out of office," she said.

Shop assistants

Many people stopped their shopping and stood to watch the march and bought copies of Militant and Socialist Youth. Shop assistants and other workers came out to see what was going on.

Teresa Bond, also from the NW Women's Organisation, said that they were very pleased with the turnout. There had been a good

response from the NW for financial help towards the costs of transport to the demonstration, including £40 from British Leyland workers, £15 from South Ribble Labour Party, and £30 from Preston Trades Council. Many women and young people had already joined the Labour Party to get active in the campaign.

"The Labour Party should be giving a lead" she said, "by calling for the renationalisation of all privatised firms."

The march ended in a rally addressed by MPs, Labour women, strikers, trade unionists and Young Socialist speakers.

Particularly memorable was the speech from Addenbrookes hospital striker Sylvia Burton, who pointedly asked where the leaders of her union, NUPE, were on the day. "I came out on strike, also, for my union—but what has the union done for me. Where is this man Bickerstaffe. You've got to change the leadership of your union if they are not doing what they should be doing for you", she said.

END LOW PAY

Reports by Roger Shrives and Ben Eastop.
Photos: Mick Carrol, Dave Pearson, and Dave Sinclair.

'Keep fighting' says striker



SYLVIA BURTON, striker at Addenbrookes hospital said to *Militant*: "We've been on strike since 10 October 1984. I heard about this demonstration at the Broad Left Organising Committee conference, it looks very good."

"We've had a fantastic response wherever we've been over Addenbrookes. I've been to Liverpool, Newcastle, Ipswich, Kings Lynn, Doncaster—they all showed the devastation of the country—there were so many factories boarded up."

"NHS workers are already amongst the lowest paid in the country, but some workers have had pay cuts of £20 negotiated and loss of jobs. I think NUPE and other unions have ignored our plight."

Sylvia Burton also spoke on the platform at the demo. She told the demonstrators that Thatcher's comments about dirty Britain were hypocrisy. "She's the one who's made Britain dirty."

"Why is it that our hospital is in such a filthy state?"

"At Addenbrookes an £85,000 contract was sold out for £75,000. Then they gave us a Sainsbury's manager on £45,000 a year and two assistants on £28,000 each. Where's the saving for the loss of my job?"

"Before we had three domestics on each ward working 22½ hours a week for £1.68 an hour. After privatisation they took away two domestics, cut their hours to 10½ a week, but they have to do the same volume of work."

"With 31 sick people often, with bowel problems, they had 20 minutes to clean nine lavatories, 26 hand basins, three baths and a shower unit. They have 13½ seconds to clean each bath."

"I've been on the picket line for two years... I'm tired, but I'm still going. This Health Service is ours. How dare Maggie go to the memorial for dead soldiers and cry when she's taking away all that they died for."

"We fought at Barking, Chesterfield and Newcastle, but the hospital unions have negotiated many workers a cut in wages to £20. Would Rodney Bickerstaff live on that? We've got to stand up, change the leadership. Keep smiling and keep fighting."

AUDREY WHITE, who led a battle against sexual harassment at Lady and Lord John in Liverpool a few years ago, told the audience that her mother started off cleaning other people's homes and ended up cleaning other people's factories. She had wanted

something better for her children.

"But what future is there now? When we went organising for this demonstration, we called on numerous factories, hospitals, shops. There was hardly one not threatened with privatisation, unemployment or fear of wage cuts."

"We built our unions through struggles, out of the coppers from our wages. Other members of the TGWU, like me, pay for Transport House through our 85p subs. We have got a hell of a job to do—to make our unions fighting organisations."

"I was the only union member in my shop, but when I was sacked the rank and file picketed the shop for five weeks and got me my job back. The word defeat is not in our vocabulary. We want leaders as determined for us as Thatcher is for them."

DAVE OSSELTON, Silentnight striker told *Militant*: "The unions should pay for buses to get to demonstrations like this. Low paid workers need all the backing they can get."

"Silentnight management were talking to the unions last week, they have offered us our jobs back but not at the places we were sacked from. It's a Murdoch-type offer."

NANCY DUXBURY, Silentnight striker speaking from the platform called for full backing for their strike. They had been on strike for a year. She called for action to black Silentnight and shops like the Co-op which are still stocking them.

MARGARET CREAR, NW Women's Organisation, told the rally: "The Tories tell us that if we accept low pay, there will be less unemployment, but the low pay in the textile mills didn't stop the axe falling there. Four out of five women workers are low paid, but the top hundred directors pay has gone up 100 per cent. We are fighting for the next Labour government to implement a national minimum wage. But we can't wait. Many workers are fighting low pay already and we must organise solidarity with all workers in struggle now."

"The national minimum wage of £120 a week needs to be policed by the labour movement and a strong Labour Women's organisation. At present employers who evade minimum wage laws get fined less than people who don't pay their TV licences. We want what is on our Labour Party cards—but we won't get the full fruits of our labour while industry is in the hands of unelected people."

"The campaign doesn't end here. Low paid workers, women and youth must be organised."

"They should get active in their trades unions, the Young Socialists and women's sections. We must fight for our class."



TRICIA, from Garston LPYS (above centre), said she thought that the demonstration was important because: "We have to show Thatcher what we are prepared to fight and not just sit around and be exploited in low paid jobs."

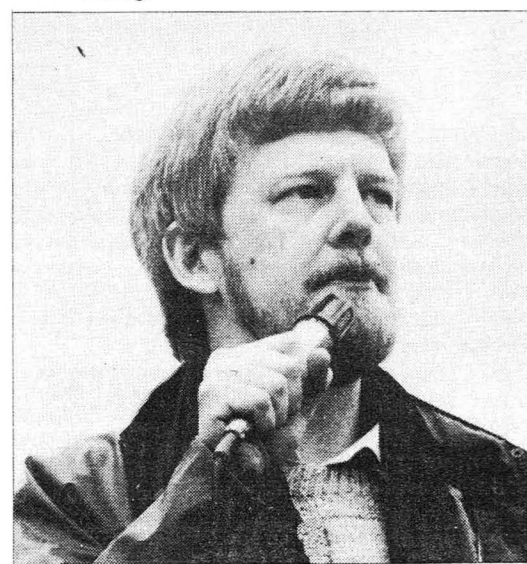
JANET, also from Garston YS: "I work in a leather factory and earn £62 a week for 42 hours... if there are thousands of us then they must start to listen".

LESLIE (who works in the same factory): "We tried to set up a union, but no-one would join because of the fear of losing their jobs. But if everyone stood together then nobody would lose their jobs. The unions should make the effort to come to the factories to join people up but they only seem to want to help the workers in the big companies. Getting rid of the wages councils could make it even worse... one of the bosses at our firm told us we should be grateful for having a job and getting what we do for wages because, he said, 'we don't have to pay you so much now'."

WARREN, from Leeds LPYS (right) told us: "I am employed by Leeds City Council on a community programme and get £46 to spend at the end of the week. I can't live on that... it lasts from Thursday, when I get paid, until the weekend. For the rest of the week I have nothing."

BRIAN, also from Leeds YS (below right) said: "I am a low-paid auditor and get £43.60. I had to join the union on the quiet so that I could join the Labour Party. The bosses come out at the end of the week with £500-£600. At the prices they charge we only get about a third of the money that comes in. I believe everyone should be equal. At the moment the pay reflects the class levels, but the classes should be

done away with under socialism. "Under a socialist society you would be rewarded by the job you do and the satisfaction that you get out of it. Managers of firms would be swapped around so that everyone has a chance in running the company and gets to know how it works. This would make the firm much more efficient and everyone would get satisfaction".



Dave Nellist (above) Teresa Bond (right) with NW Labour Women's banner.

DAVE NELLIST, MP for Coventry SE and presently promoting a bill on low pay told the rally:

"The proportion of men in low pay has risen to 20 per cent and that of women to 75 per cent. The Tories talk about success—what kind of success is this?"

"If the Tories' bill to abolish the wages' councils becomes law then Britain will be the only country in

Europe where there is no minimum for young workers."

"Now there are so few wages' inspectors in the Manchester area due to cuts that, on average, each factory would get a visit every 19 years."

"They say that there isn't enough money to pay for better wages and conditions. But there's £18,000 million paid out each year to keep

the unemployed at home. There's enough to pay for the Trident missiles that nobody wants, and there's enough to pay for these nuclear time bombs that they laughingly call power stations."

"The sooner we get a general election so that Thatcher can use her new £400,000 house the better."

LINDA DOUGLAS, the LPYS delegate-elect for

Labour's NEC said: "The Tories have deliberately forced the youth into low-paid jobs, or onto YTS schemes. They want to get young people used to low wages."

"Low wages for young workers means undercutting the wages of older workers."

"But the Labour Party is sitting back, while thousands of workers are being made redundant."

Blunkett excuses NEC show-trial

HOT ON the heels of the NEC hearings on 21-22 May, David Blunkett rushed into print in *Tribune* and *Labour Weekly* to justify his support for the right wing's purge of *Militant* supporters. But despite all the attempts of the Sheffield City Council leader to polish his tarnished left-wing image, he has only succeeded in showing that he—like the right wing—made up his mind beforehand.

Writing in *Labour Weekly* (May 23), he made it clear that "membership of *Militant*" was an expulsion of offence. Then he clearly refers to expulsions in the plural: "Given the clear commitment to *Militant* of some individuals it was extremely difficult not to conclude that they were members of that organisation."

As if with a sigh and a tear, he described the onerous responsibility of expelling life-long socialists "... evidence is inevitably so subjective as to be difficult to handle... difficult decisions... judgement had to be made based on the material available and the known activities..."

Who, then, were these "some individuals" he expelled with such a heavy heart? In fact, when he went to press, there had only been one expulsion—that of Tony Mulhearn.

In the same *Labour Weekly*, an article on the outside back page—normally the last page typed and set—referred only to the expulsion of the Liverpool DLP President and said: "The executive was meeting again yesterday (Thursday 22—Ed) after *Labour Weekly* went to press to consider up to six more cases."

By John Pickard

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that David Blunkett made the same miscalculation as Kinnock. He expected a number of quick, simple expulsions and did not anticipate the long, 16-hour marathon NEC hearing to expel one person, Tony Mulhearn. In any event it is clear he wrote his article, justifying "some" expulsions, before they happened.

What makes this exposure all the more ironic, is the fact that Blunkett goes through tortuous twists of logic to try to distance himself from unnamed witch-hunters on the party right wing. Some of these, he says, feel "some fanatical driving mission to rid the party of all their opponents" (*Tribune*, 23 May).

Inquiry

"The handling of the Liverpool inquiry," he describes as "unfortunate" (*Tribune*) and makes it clear that "for some" the DLP procedures and practices were not enough. The target he says, "was, in fact, the *Militant* tendency". (*Labour Weekly*)

David Blunkett's belated

tut-tutting cannot disguise the facts: no-one on the left had the remotest misconception at the time about the inquiry—it was a pretext for a political attack on Liverpool DLP and *Militant* supporters. He skips over the fact that it was his motion on the NEC that brought the inquiry into being and his continued voting with the "fanatics" which guaranteed it would become a purge.

Having complained about the "unfortunate" outcome of the "mishandled" inquiry, he wishes to appear even-handed. To balance his mild rebukes of the unnamed witch-hunters on the right, he blames the victims as much as the perpetrators of the purge: "the far Right of the Party, ably abetted by the *Militant* Tendency, have managed to split the Left." (*Tribune*) "*Militant* Tendency have got what they wanted... notoriety, martyrdom..." (*Labour Weekly*).

Finished with blaming everyone else, and apparently unprepared to rake over his own responsibility for the whole shameful episode of charges, hearings and expulsions, he finally comes to the conclusion *Militant* reached long ago—that the purge is damaging the Party.

The right, he lectures, must be told to "stop pursuing every newspaper seller or troublesome youngster who gets in their way." (*Labour Weekly*) "The internecine warfare in the NEC and some parts of the country is more than enough." (*Tribune*)

David Blunkett, you see, is against purges. "It is amazing," he writes, "how



Protestors outside the 21 May NEC make their points to David Blunkett.

many people find it incomprehensible that you can be against 'purges' and in favour of defending individuals under threat because of their views, and yet at the same time still be willing to try to make some sense out of the muddle arising out of the handling of the Liverpool inquiry."

Expulsions

What most party members do find "amazing" and "incomprehensible" is how David Blunkett can "make sense" out of the inquiry by

justifying expulsions before they take place and how he can justify his own role on the NEC and in the expulsion, for example, of Councillor Paul Green from Sheffield.

What is clear to Party members is that none of the expulsions could have taken place, and the wholesale shift to the right in party policy would have been impossible, without the former lefts on the NEC—including David Blunkett—providing a 'left' cover for Neil Kinnock and the Right Wing.

Sell Militant

ONE HUNDRED and fifty-nine *Militants* were sold at UCV conference. These workers are moving into action to defend their working conditions, and can see that *Militant* supports their struggle.

Merseyside sellers have been pushing the paper outside the Giro for some time. Sales have slowly crept to 17 regular sales. Consistent selling outside workplaces works.

Money is still coming in from the mammoth sales drive in Fife, East Scotland last week. Over 500 were sold in the campaign which centred on our special two-page feature. The sales were the result of serious and detailed planning.

The aim now is for some of the new readers to take on sales rounds on their own estates to consolidate a regular readership.

On the Manchester demo against low pay (see pages 4-5) we estimate that 350 papers were sold to passers by.

A much larger regular readership is ours for the taking. It is just a matter of locating and tapping that potential. The special witch-hunting NEC meetings in the next few weeks will again provide new opportunities to take the paper on to the estates. Make sure your workplace and your local area get *Militant*!

YS Leeds the way

OVER 500 people attended the biggest Labour Party Young Socialists' rally ever in Yorkshire, on 25 May in the Leeds Town Hall, to hear Derek Hatton.

Margaret Thatcher made a guest appearance, complete with hairy legs and a beer gut, but she was shouted off for Silentnight striker Alan Pennington to take the floor. He told the Tories: "If it takes another 12 months we'll stick it out. We're not going back".

Youth anger

Sharon Heal, a school student and a member of the LPYS regional committee expressed the anger of young people at the appalling housing situation, the exploitation of youth on YTS and the terror of nuclear weapons. She appealed to those present: "Don't get mad, get organised. Join the LPYS".

Linda Douglas, YS delegate-elect to Labour's National Executive Committee, told the meeting of the need for Labour to lead workers' battles and pledge to nationalise the big monopolies, and plan production for need.



Derek Hatton addressing the rally.

Derek Hatton condemned the "disgraceful decision" of Labour's NEC to expel Tony Mulhearn after 23 years' party membership and after the magnificent results in Liverpool in the local elections. Derek asked why Kinnock and Hattersley weren't lending their support to workers in struggle like the shipbuilding workers who were demonstrating against closures on the day of the NEC.

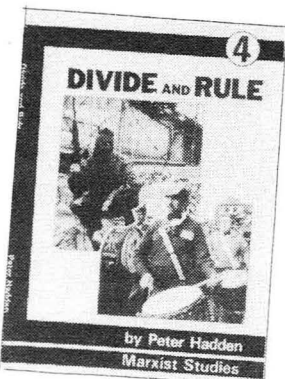
The meeting's chairman, Steve Marsden, said afterwards: "this is the most successful event ever organised by the YS in Leeds. We got 138 names for the YS and 60 people signed-up to go on the low-pay demonstration in Manchester".

By Darrell Kavanagh (Leeds NE LPYS)

Special offer

World Socialist Books

○ *Militant* pamphlet on the general strike—articles by Trotsky, Grant and Taaffe. Special anniversary offer. Single copies £1 post free. Five for £4. From: World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.



○ *Divide and Rule: Labour and the partition of Ireland*. New issue. £1.40 plus 20p post and packing from: World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

Left and Right

Taxing time for Tony

TONY CHRISTOPHER, right wing leader of the tax union IRSF who sits alongside Eric Hammond on the TUC, decided that the closure of valuation offices being debated at his union's conference had to play second fiddle to furthering his TUC career.

During the conference he spent over £100 in taxi fares from Blackpool to Manchester airport, plus the cost of an air fare to London and back in an attempt to be elected chairman of the TUC economic committee. Tragic Tony lost by one vote—the EETPU didn't turn up to vote for him.

Contributor: Steve Whittle.

Tory in the House?

LABOUR RENEGADE and TV presenter Brian Walden has now admitted what we all knew—he is a Tory.

He told the Tory Carlton Club that he had been a Conservative supporter for the last ten years. He even claimed that he was "light years" to the right of former wet Conservative MP Matthew Parris, who is replacing him on 'Weekend World'.

But hang on a minute, wasn't Walden a Labour MP up until nine years ago? Perhaps no-one noticed he was a Tory when the Parliamentary Labour Party included Prentice, Owen, Shirely Williams, Jenkins, Rodgers, Mellish, Wrigglesworth, Ben Ford, etc. etc. Surely there cannot still be any left?

Commodity oddity

SOTHEBY'S IN London is a glorified 'Trivial Pursuit' game for the rich. It is the place you go if you've got a few thousand to spare and you want a little trinket as a hedge against inflation.

On 28 May they sold a first edition of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* for no less than £26,400. This explosive classic would tell any capitalist collector that their beloved system was doomed; there is no hedge against revolution.

But what would Marx and Engels have said about their work being sold at Sotheby's? A free (50p) copy of the *Communist Manifesto* for the most appropriate quote from Marx and Engels.

Will Baker spread dough?

KENNETH BAKER, the slightly moist Tory Education minister is doing his best to appear more caring than Dracula Keith Joseph was. But don't rely on him spending more on state schools. He's already sent his two daughters to private secondary schools while his son is following Daddy to St Pauls, one of the elite private educational establishments.

Thatcher's cabinet are overwhelmingly ex-"public school" and only one senior minister, Paymaster General Clarke, has entrusted his offspring to state education. The Tories put their faith in the old school tie and tell the rest of us to get knotted.

Chernobyl -facts obscured

Conflicting reports are still coming out of Russia about the Chernobyl disaster. *Militant* believes that the secrecy of the Russian authorities only plays into the hands of the West. However a reader has criticised our coverage (Issue 796) in a letter which is published below, together with a reply from the Editor.

Dear Comrades,

In the first article dealing with the Chernobyl disaster, I thought the headline was wrong. It said, "Thousands die in nuclear disaster". Even at that time I think it was over-reacting to the anti-Russian bias of the Western press. We also pride ourselves on telling the truth and I think it was a mistake.

Also in the article itself I think the main emphasis should have been on British Nuclear Fuels and their own secrecy. The Russian authorities have been shown in many senses to have been right; if they had been alarmist many would have been killed in a stampede out of Kiev.

Comradely, Jane Hartley, Sheffield.

AS THE news was filtering out of Russia about the Chernobyl accident, one of the main issues being dealt with in the press, and therefore a main talking point among workers, was the secrecy surrounding the nuclear plant explosion and the failure of the Moscow authorities to explain what was going on.

This unnecessary secrecy was the main cause of exaggerated estimates of casualties.

It is true that the headline of the article in *Militant* 796—"Thousands dead in nuclear disaster"—may have been misleading, but in the text of the article the position was made clear: "The precise scale of the accident in the Ukraine has yet to be properly assessed, but it may possibly lead to hundreds, if not thousands of premature deaths from cancers".

"Western reports", the article went on, "suggest up to 2,000 were killed and that the nuclear reactor core was still burning and emitted radioactive material".

Western press

At that time workers around the world were asking what was going on. The excessive secrecy of the Kremlin played into the hands of the capitalist press but that is all the more reason for Marxists, from the standpoint of the labour movement, to address themselves to this.

It has now been admitted that the initial announcements of the Russian government were misleading: the reactor fire was not out, as they said, nor was the situation "stabilised". The Ukrainian Prime Minister has admitted that immediately after the accident only a six-mile zone had been evacuated, the delays increasing the radiation risks to thousands of Ukrainians. There was even a delay of 48 hours before Moscow itself was informed about the seriousness of the disaster.

Even now confusion still abounds. On 21 May the Novosti Press Agency reported a thousand casualties, then the following day repeated the figure of 300 given by Gorbachev.

Far from being "proved right" the subsequent admissions have only emphasised the secrecy and lack of information at the beginning. As we explained, these errors and delays are not acciden-

tal, but are a direct product of the political system in Russia.

Instead of an immediate and open admission of the accident followed by an orderly evacuation—which would have taken place in a democratic, healthy workers' state—there was a dirth of real news, official playing-down of the scale of the disaster and, as a result, growing panic among Ukrainian parents eager to send their children away from the region.

As was explained in our original article, "the Stalinist bureaucracy relies upon a state apparatus of police repression, coupled with a blanket of lies and disinformation fed to the working class...the state cannot tolerate open dissension and criticism because that would publicly raise...its own responsibility for blunders, waste of resources and mismanagement".

Even today, more than a month after the event, the dangers and results are being underplayed—assisted, for the sake of their own nuclear power industries, by governments in the West.

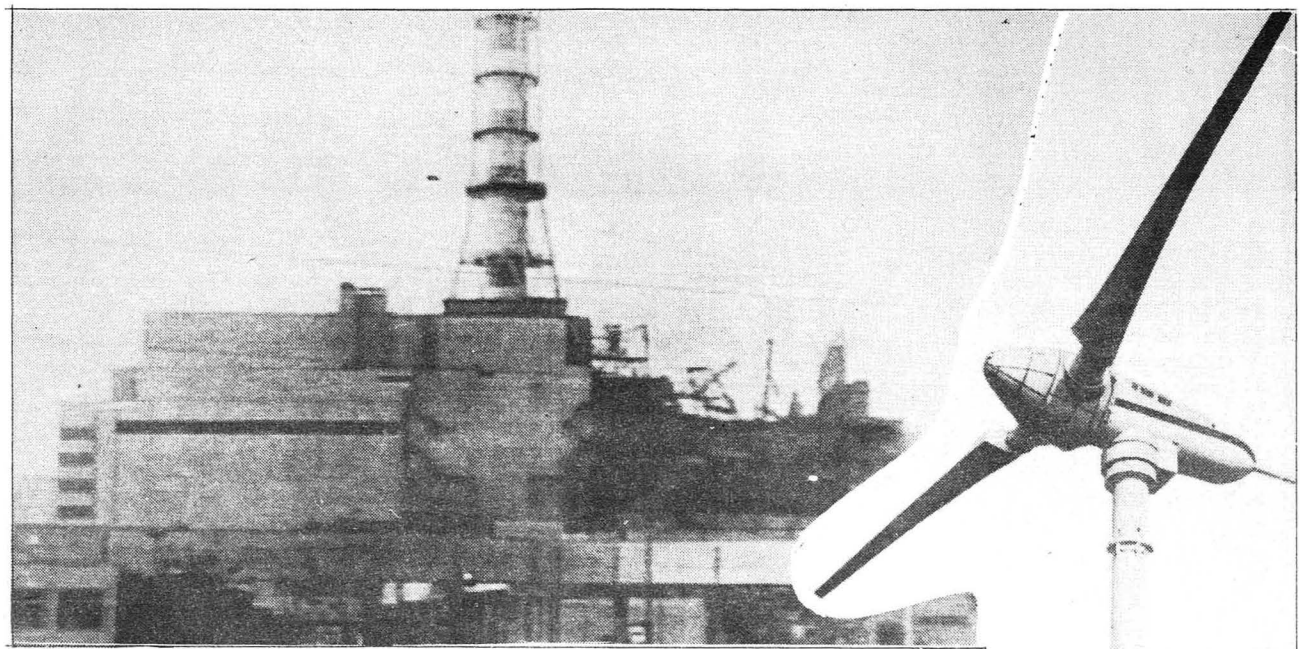
The immediate casualty figures were overstated, but the long-term effects are nonetheless horrifying.

The official death toll is now 23, all but two from radiation burns. Around 30 are critically ill, a large number of these being heroic physicians and technicians drafted in, and the firefighters who fought the fire with much the same equipment as they would have had for an ordinary fire. Another 300 are radiated enough to be in hospital care.

But none of these take account of the long term effects on health. An American specialist who visited the Ukraine estimated that about 100,000 people exposed to radiation are at long-term risk of developing cancer.

Far from 'over-reacting' we believe our comments, two days after the Russian bureaucracy was forced to admit the accident, were substantially correct.

Neither did we avoid, in that and later issues of the paper, the hypocrisy and secrecy of the Western nuclear industry authorities, including British Nuclear Fuels Limited. But we feel it was correct, in the first week of May to concentrate some comment on the Russian accident itself.



Above: Chernobyl reactor after the explosion.

Labour must have non-nuclear commitment

THE LABOUR Shadow Cabinet's latest paper on nuclear power clearly deviates from the 1985 conference policy of phasing out all nuclear installations.

The document commits a future Labour government to ordering no "additions to nuclear generating capacity", but only calls for the decommissioning of "those Magnox stations that have reached the end of their life".

Even for these original Magnox reactors this is hardly rapid phasing out, but no mention is made of the six newer Advanced Gas-Cooled reactors. Nor about the two AGRs under construction at Torness and Heysham 2, which should be coming on-stream by the late 'eighties.

As for the reprocessing plants, extra investment is called for at Sellfield. The statement says that there should merely be an "economic reappraisal" of the Thorp reprocessing plant and, similarly, the planned Dounreay reprocessing plant "should not be built without a full public inquiry".

This at least is a step forward from Neil Kinnock's statement on TV-AM earlier this month that Labour would continue with Thorp and Dounreay. But with the falling price of uranium the economic argument for reprocessing to recover unburnt nuclear fuel, is lost. It is cheaper to buy fresh uranium. And with Labour's opposition to nuclear weapons, the recovery of weapons grade plutonium is not required.

The only remaining economic argument for reprocessing is for British Nuclear Fuels to carry out its contracts to reprocess the nuclear waste of other countries.

The Labour leaders should be demanding the abandonment of Thorp and Dounreay. Party members and the Labour voters they speak to want reassurance from an unequivocal anti-nuclear stance from the leadership. This will be the demand at October's party conference.

By Jeremy Birch

Resolution passed by Kings Park LP for consideration for annual conference.

IN THE wake of the Chernobyl disaster this conference strongly reiterates the decision of last year's annual conference which called for "a halt to the nuclear power programme and a phasing-out of all existing plants".

Conference notes:

1. Nuclear power, apart from being a highly profitable industry to big business, is central to the nuclear weapons programme because it produces weapons grade plutonium as a side product.

2. There is clear evidence to show that there is an abnormally high incidence of leukaemia in children in areas surrounding nuclear power stations. Levels of radiation within so-called safety limits have produced disturbingly high incidences of cancer.

3. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1976) the trade union safety representatives have a legal obligation to examine the workplace for potential hazards. Management in the nuclear power industry have consistently refused to comply with the Act on the grounds of protecting national security.

Conference calls for a socialist energy plan where energy production is considered on the basis of safety, efficiency and environmental concern based on a fully nationalised energy industry under democratic workers' control ensuring suitable alternative employment for workers in the nuclear industry.

Conference calls for:

1. A massive increase in investment to researching alternative methods of energy production.

2. A massive public works programme to eliminate waste through insulation of every home and workplace.

3. Research into combined heat and power stations which can supply heat in the form of hot water to whole communities.

4. Re-equipping the coal-fired power stations to make them more efficient. This could be done by using fluidised bed combustion. A Department of Energy paper estimated that such a programme could create half a million new jobs by the year 2000.

Finally, conference believes that under capitalism, science has developed in a distorted and irrational manner which has resulted in many disasters, and now has created the possibility of the nuclear destruction of the planet. A planned socialist economy could harness all technological and scientific development for the benefit of society as a whole.

Above: renewable forms of energy could provide two-thirds of Britain's energy requirements, such as this wind turbine generator.

Fighting Fund

This week £3210

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 East Midlands	536		3050
2 London South West	232		1500
3 Humberside	253		2300
4 Merseyside	710		7000
5 London East	279		3550
6 London West	177		2900
7 Scotland West	240		3850
8 South East	151		2400
9 West Midlands	288		4500
10 Eastern	183		3450
11 Scotland East	173		3200
12 Southern	166		3100
13 Northern	203		4550
14 Manchester	125		4150
15 London South East	51		2250
16 South West	39		2150
17 Wales West	75		3350
18 Wales East	21		2150
19 Yorkshire	82		5600
Others	3846		5000
Total	7830		70000

ALTHOUGH A witch-hunting resolution was passed at NUPE conference, the union's rank and file want to fight for socialism. Heading our donations this week is £250 from a psychiatric nurse, a NUPE member who only takes home £250 a month!

Another NUPE member from Nottingham University Hospital paid £5 for a paper.

With *Militant* supporters leading the way in the battle against low pay, we must approach every hospital and local authority where there are NUPE and GMBATU members, using the petition

to fight expulsions and build our paper.

Low paid workers on Saturday's demo in Manchester gave an estimated £300 raised in extras and by selling stickers outlining *Militant's* demand for a £120 minimum wage. Another £400 was raised at the *Militant* readers' meeting.

A school student gave his £3 dinner money, then went around to the other fourth year students at Colton Hills School, Wolverhampton and collected another £3 using the petition. If all our readers followed this example our target of a million signatures would be met in no time!

A number of new readers

in Ringland near Newport have asked for a special mention, sending £6.10 with the message: "This will help us in helping you to oxidise the Iron Lady and D Steel!"

OTHER DONATIONS:

G Ford, MEP £1; Ivan Molsan, Borrowash £2.25; C McElhone, Student £2; Southall school student 65p; Branch Secretary GMBATU £5—bet on Fulham by-election; L Jones £1 Leicester; V Simms who works on a Community Programme in Leicester 70p; A Creear, teacher £50 back pay; £46 Stirling readers' meeting; £29 railway workers' what we stand for meeting; £150 from a meeting in Portsmouth; UCW conference delegates raised £565.

When workers moved towards power

French Popular Front government 1936

TO COMMEMORATE the 50th anniversary of the French Popular Front government, we are republishing two articles written in 1978 by PETER TAAFFE, editor of *Militant*.

In this week's article, he describes the events of 1936 and takes up the arguments of those Communist Party theoreticians who, in order to defend their present-day policy of 'broad alliances', seek to justify the role of the pre-war French CP leaders.

IN THE coming period, new popular fronts will come to power. In times of economic upswing and relative stability, the capitalists prefer to rule through their traditional parties. But faced with economic or social crisis and the resultant mass discontent, and with the weakening and discrediting of these traditional parties, the capitalists invariably resort to the coalition tactic. They seek to break the movement of the masses by pushing the leaders of the workers' parties into an alliance with the capitalist parties.

In Britain in the 1930s the ruling class pressurised the renegade Ramsay MacDonald to form a "National government" with the Tories and Liberals. The same conditions as pre-war are now re-appearing in Western Europe.

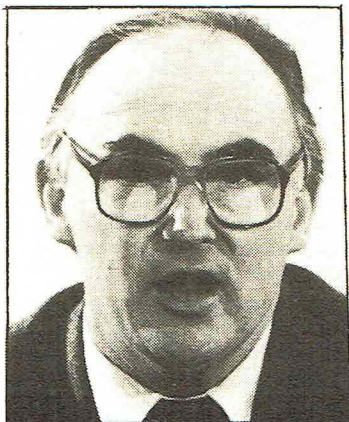
Communist Party theoreticians invariably appeal to the writings of Lenin to justify this tactic. Yet running like a red thread throughout Lenin's writings is an explicit denunciation of the policy of alliances with the liberal capitalists.

Clear position

On 6 March, 1917, from Switzerland, just after the February Revolution, Lenin wrote to the Bolsheviks in Russia: "Our tactic: absolute lack of confidence: no support to the new government; no support of Kerensky especially." The Provisional Government was the equivalent of the latter-day Popular Front—an alliance of the leaders of one of the workers' and peasants' parties, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, with the liberal capitalists.

Some of Lenin's erstwhile followers, such as Stalin and Kamenev, through the Bolshevik paper *Pravda*, were prepared to give support to this government "in so far as it struggled against reaction or counter-revolution." Lenin compared this to preaching against sin to a brothel keeper!

In his famous 'Letters from afar' he pitilessly condemns the policy of Stalin and Kamenev—and by implication the present leaders of the CPs in Western Europe. He wrote: "He who says that the workers



Peter Taaffe

must support the new government in the struggle against Tsarist reaction is a traitor to the workers, a traitor to the cause of the working class, to the cause of peace. For actually, precisely this new government is already bound hand and foot by imperialist capital, by the imperialist policy of war and plunder."

Lenin never at any time justified a programmatic bloc with the leaders of middle class parties as a means of winning the little men and women of town and country to the side of the working class. On the contrary, the history of Bolshevism is a history of a war against such notions, not just in Russia either.

When Millerand, the French Socialist Party leader, formed a bloc with the leaders of the Radical Socialist Party at the turn of the century, he was condemned by Lenin. The Radical Socialist Party was characterised by Lenin as "the most vicious and consummate representative of finance capital, the political exploiter of the peasants and the middle class". The way to win the middle class, said Lenin, was not in a coalition with these "political exploiters" but unmasking them before their followers, and by demonstrating in action that only the working class was capable of solving their problems.

In Russia in 1917 this policy—implacably opposed to the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary versions of the Popular Front—succeeded in winning the peasantry to the side of the working class. In Spain in 1936 the "strike breaking conspiracy" of the Popular Front succeeded only in pushing



Women strikers giving the Marxist clenched fist salute at a meeting

the peasantry and the middle class into indifference and opposition.

Lenin was sometimes prepared to co-operate with Liberals on practical or technical matters such as the transport of revolutionary literature, joint action against the fascist Black Hundreds, etc. He was prepared under certain conditions to have common voting lists on the second ballot with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. But at no time did the Bolsheviks form a programmatic bloc, have common organisations, or subordinate themselves to the Russian "Republicans" or "Radicals".

Lenin revised

In a shamefaced way, Eric Hobsbawm is prepared to concede that the idea of the Popular Front flies in the face of all of Lenin's teaching: "... coalitions of communists with Social Democrats and certain middle-class parties which were not seen as the immediate preliminary to revolution and working class power. Such governments had always been condemned by the revolutionary left" (*Marxism Today*, July 1977). But, argues our sage, it was entirely justified by the "new situation" which had developed in France and Spain pre-war. Elsewhere, *Militant* has detailed the catastrophic role of the Popular Front in Spain. But in the light of recent events, Eric Hobsbawm and Monty Johnstone have attempted to refurbish the image of the French Popular Front of 1936.

In reality, the titanic sit-down strikes of May-June 1936 stand as a crushing condemnation of the

policy of Popular Frontism. Between 1931 and 1936 the French working class had seen their meagre wages reduced by an average of 30 per cent. Their growing radicalisation was reflected in the elections of 1936. The Popular Front received over 5½ million votes compared to the 4½ million for the right wing National Front. The revolutionary ferment was reflected in the Radical Party's loss of half a million votes, its reduction to third place in votes, while at the same time the Communist Party doubled its vote to 1½ million.

This dramatic collapse of the Radicals is airily dismissed by Monty Johnstone. Seeking to justify the CP leaders' alliance with the Radicals he writes: "Whilst the Radicals were to lose one and a half million votes... the one and a half million votes that they received showed that they were still a force to be reckoned with... whereas between them the Socialists and Communists obtained only 218 out of 618 seats, the Popular Front as a whole won an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies with 378 seats".

He does not mention, of course, the gross bias towards the Radicals in the allocation of seats within the Popular Front. Thus on the first ballot they got 25 seats, yet on the Second Ballot, entirely due to the concessions given by the CP and SP leaders, they got 116 seats. Throughout the election campaign, moreover, the CP leaders covered the Radicals with a revolutionary aura—in complete contradistinction to Lenin, who used elections to unmask liberal capitalists before their middle class supporters.

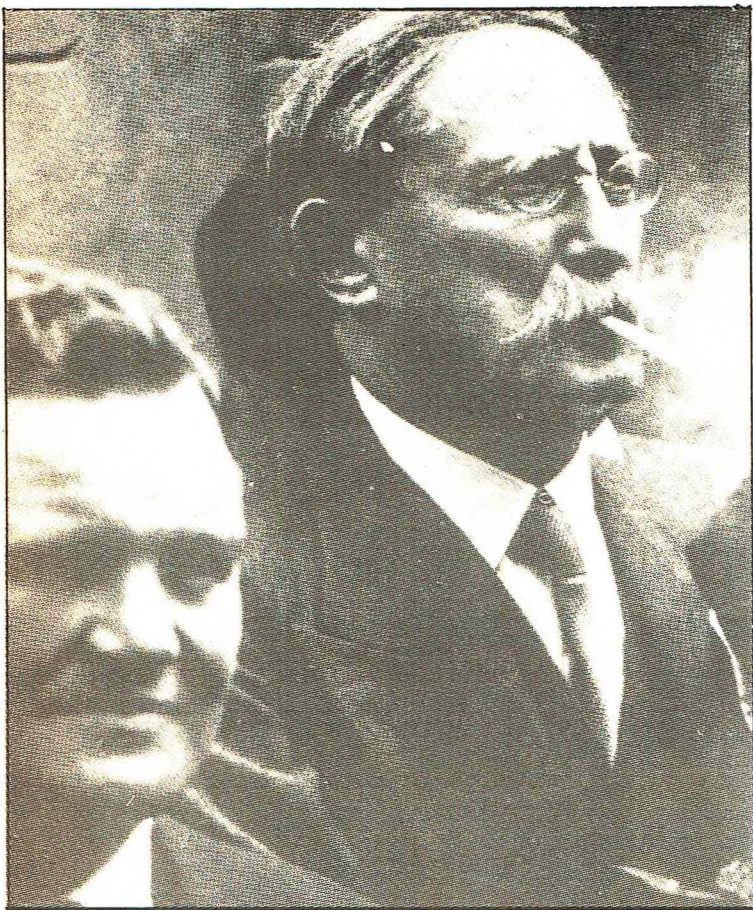
The Radicals openly boasted that

they would be a brake on the "excesses" of the socialist ministers. Thus the Radical leader Daladier declared: "Whatever may be said to the contrary, the Front Populaire programme is really impregnated with the true Radical spirit" (*Manchester Guardian* 23 May 1936). This programme promised important reforms such as the 40-hour week but came out only for the nationalisation of war industries and the banks.

Sit-down strikes

But the suspicion of the masses—and their doubts about the willingness of their own leaders to implement the Popular Front programme—was shown in the events which followed the election. Thus on 25 May 1936, half a million workers marched past the spot where the Communards were shot "carrying red banners and wearing red flowers, and including many women and children many of them in perambulators..." (*Manchester Guardian*). The procession was nearly two miles long and lasted from early afternoon till late evening.

Then in the last week of May and the first two weeks of June, a mighty wave of sit-in strikes was begun by the French working class. Beginning with the metal workers in Paris, all corners of France and all layers of the working class joined in. On the eve of the strike trade union membership stood at 1,200,000, just 20 per cent of the labour force. Yet upwards of 3 million joined the strike. For the first time in French history the trade unions ran out of membership cards! All those workers, the



Maurice Thorez and Leon Blum, leaders of Communist and Socialist Parties

most exploited and sceptical, were roused to their feet by the sit-in strikes. The horror of international capitalism is reflected in the reports of the British press at the time. The *Manchester Guardian* reporting on the strike in the department stores and the pleasure-spots of the rich said: "Paris Coty's perfumery work-shops; the Galerie Lafayette; all the chocolate factories... the drivers of the 'black Marias' in Paris struck today and prison vans had to be driven by police inspectors... the Trois Quartiers and other departmental stores were declared 'occupied' by the employees this morning... six thousand persons, including 3,500 women, are employed by Galerie Lafayette" (4 June, 1936).

On 11 June the same newspaper reported: "Coachwork factories in Paris, several cinemas and two or three dress-making firms which were 'occupied' by the 'midinettes' went on strike today... the stable lads have 'occupied' the racing stables and several hundred undertaker societies and tombstone manufacturers have joined in the movement... The syndicate of concierges has asked for holiday with pay and automatic buttons for opening front doors at night!"

The loss of production was bad enough, but the occupations and strikes began to affect the rich: "The rather abrupt manner in which the waiters' strike began in some of the restaurants while some of the customers were in the middle of lunch was rather unpleasant" (*Manchester Guardian*, 12 June 1936).

The *Times* reported on 11 June that: "The lifeboat men on the Seine have put up a notice to say that they are on strike and forbidding passers-by to throw themselves into the water. Another warns that so long as the strike continues only mothers-in-law will be saved"! Nor did religion escape: to the consternation of the local priest, workmen engaged on redecoration at the Church of St Vessaine went on strike, occupied the church and slept in confessional boxes for the duration.

At the same time, "even the rural areas are now infected by the strike virus and in the Seine-et-Oise Department 3,500 agricultural workers joined in" (*The Times*, 11 June, 1936). In the ports, sailors marched through the towns with arms singing the 'Internationale', and the police fraternised with the workers.

Here was a unique opportunity for the French working class to have taken power peacefully! The forces of French capitalism were completely paralysed. 'Not so!' declare the latter-day attorneys for the pre-war CP leaders—Monty Johnstone and Co. The sit-in strikes, they assert, were not concerned with "politics" but merely

with wages and conditions. **On the contrary, in May/June 1936, the French working class was groping in the direction of power.** All the serious capitalist commentators at the time show this. The *Manchester Guardian* reporter wrote on 30 May 1936, at a time when the sit-in strikes were beginning to spread: "The Conservative press is greatly disturbed. The 'Intransigent' declared: 'In short the Ministry of the Masses is trying to take the place of the Front Populaire'"

Even more striking are the comments of a reporter: "Our boss", he said, "has taken been treating us as dictators. Well I told him that we preferred this sort of dictatorship within the framework of a democratic regime to the dictatorship of Hitler and Mussolini." How much wisdom there is in the simple words of this French worker.

But the leaders of the French workers' parties were terrified by these developments, which had taken them by surprise and were threatening to get out of control: "Several Communist deputies to whom I spoke were visibly embarrassed and alarmed. They declared the strike to be 'untimely', described it as an uncontrollable mass movement, and declined all responsibility for it." (*Manchester Guardian*, 3 June 1936).

Attempt to frighten

But, objects Monty Johnstone, any attempt of the French working class to take power would have led to "Colonel de la Rocque of the fascist Croix de Feu with his 300,000 supporters trained for civil war by 60,000 officers of the reserve" (*Marxism Today*, November 1975). This is the usual trick of the Labour and Communist Party leaders who attempt to frighten the working class with 'Civil War' should they attempt to take power. Exactly the same tactics were used by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries prior to the October Revolution.

Lenin answered them as follows: "To fear the resistance of the capitalists and yet to call oneself a revolutionary, to wish to be regarded as a revolutionary—isn't that disgraceful?... it (the capitalist class) will repeat the Kornilov (the Russian equivalent of de la Rocque) revolt... No gentlemen, you will not fool the workers. It will not be a civil war but a hopeless revolt of a handful of Kornilovites... But when every labourer, every unemployed worker, every cook, every ruined peasant, sees, not from newspapers, but with his own eyes that the workers' state is not cringing to wealth but is helping the poor... that the land is being transferred to the working people and the factories and banks are being placed under the control of the



Women workers dancing as they occupy the Huntley and Palmer biscuit factory at La Courneuve



Children demonstrating in support of the Popular Front

workers, no capitalist forces, no forces of world finance capital will vanquish the people's revolution: on the contrary, *the socialist revolution will triumph all over the world.*" (*Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power?*—Lenin's emphasis).

In reality, the relationship of forces in France in 1936 was a thousand times more favourable than in Russia in 1917. The fascists were completely impotent, as were the police and the army. The workers openly ridiculed the Croix de Feu during the occupations. At the massive Renault works, for instance, the *Manchester Guardian* reported the comments of a young worker:

"One of the best shows we put on (during the occupation) was the magnificent trial of Colonel de la Rocque. If you could have only seen de la Rocque (an effigy) locked up in a big cage resting on two drum sticks with heavy chains round his wrists and crying "Pity me, Pity me" as he was condemned to death. A dummy of de la Rocque with the swastika and Croix de Feu armlets was then hung and burnt".

Monty Johnstone may speculate on the possible use of the fascists and police against the workers, but the capitalists were quite clear on the futility of such methods. Thus *The Times* remarked on the 28 May: "Police were called out in large numbers but when the management looked over the situation and particularly the extent of the support of the men in the whole locality of the factories they were forced to request that the police be not sent into action".

Nor could the army be used against the workers. The French ar-

my was a conscript army, as it is today. Demonstrations and upheavals were sweeping through the barracks precisely at this time, with the conscripts demanding amongst other things the reduction of army service to one year. At the Socialist Party Conference which took place in the midst of the sit-ins for instance, the leader of the left Marcel Pivert, "demanded the immediate restoration of one year service... and read telegrams of support from the rank and file of provincial garrisons". (*The Times*, 1 June 1936).

Workers in uniform

Any attempt by the French ruling class to use the army against the working class would have resulted in it splitting in their hands. Like their Spanish brothers one month later, the French workers and peasants in uniform would have paralysed the attempt of the officers to use the army against their fathers, brothers and sisters.

But, argues Monty Johnstone: "Across the Rhine stood Nazi Germany allied to Fascist Italy in the South-East, both getting ready to help France smash Republican Spain, whilst the British bankers used every form of pressure to give them a free hand to do so". In a much less favourable situation than France in 1936, with the actual armed intervention of imperialism, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were not deterred from taking power. The Russian Revolution detonated revolutions throughout Europe.

The reports in the British Communist Party's *Daily Worker* perhaps inadvertently give the lie to Johnstone's arguments. Speaking

of the effects of French events in Germany, it reported on 16 June: "The Nazi press at first 'played up' the strikes saying that they were an example of the chaos from 'Bolshevik' influence in France. After a few days it became noticeable that workers were beginning to say they saw the huge gains won by the strikers as an example it might be a good one to follow".

If the German workers were inspired just by wage increases gained by their French brothers and sisters, imagine the effect on them of the Socialist Revolution.

Both Hitler and Mussolini would have been overthrown. The Spanish workers, who rose and were initially victorious in four fifths of Spain just one month later would have joined, as would the working class throughout Europe. On 8 June the *Daily Worker* itself had a banner headline: "Huge strikes sweep over Western Europe". The Belgian workers under the direct influence of the French strikes came out in a huge strike wave, with street battles between workers and police in all the main cities of Belgium.

There is no doubt that if the French working class would have succeeded in carrying through the socialist revolution—which was entirely possible in 1936, the workers and peasants throughout Europe would have followed suit. The May/June sit-in strikes in 1936 could have become the overture to the Socialist United States of the Continent.

NEXT WEEK, Peter Taaffe analyses the balance of forces in 1936, examines the danger of reaction and shows how the Popular Front government derailed the revolutionary movement.

South Africa No basis for settlement

THE CRISIS in South Africa continues to deepen.

The total of political killings has risen to over 1,400 since September 1984. The state forces continue their war of attrition against the mass movement. More black townships have been turned into battlegrounds between right-wing gangs of 'vigilantes', backed by the police, and revolutionary youth.

Crossroads, outside Cape Town, was once a symbol of black resistance to attacks by the regime. Now much of it has been destroyed in fighting between the 'Fathers' and the youth, with 42 known deaths, 4,000 homes burnt down, and up to 30,000 homeless.

Among the whites, the neo-Nazi AWB has emerged as a serious pressure group to the right of the regime.

These conflicts are symptomatic of the present, complex stage of the unfolding revolution in South Africa.

State power

The tremendous movement of black workers and youth during 1984-85 has not been defeated, but it has increasingly ground up against the formidable power of the state.

But the regime can no longer crush the movement without a full-scale civil war. The capitalists shrink from the chaos and the dangers this would open up, and hope to regain control in the longer term through new exercises in divide-and-rule.

In particular, they hope to involve the leaders of the African National Congress in negotiations with the regime in an effort to bring the movement to a halt.

For the time being, such negotiations have been torpedoed by South Africa's attacks on neighbouring

By George Collins

countries. But even if they took place, they could achieve nothing and resolve nothing.

The black people's minimum demand of one person one vote in an undivided South Africa is non-negotiable to the capitalist class. It could only bring to power a black government under huge pressure to carry through revolutionary change, which could not coexist with the white state.

In fact the capitalists have no alternative to the existing state as an instrument of rule.

Growing numbers of activists understand that apartheid and capitalism are one; that national liberation must involve the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of democratic workers' rule.

The workers and youth overwhelmingly look to the ANC for a revolutionary lead. The organised workers, now united in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), are prepared to use their industrial muscle in the struggle to defeat the regime.

But the ANC leadership in exile remains tied to the 'Communist' Party's 'two stage' approach to the struggle—first 'national democracy' without upsetting capitalism, then 'later



Inkatha gangs are backed by the police in their attacks on workers and youth.

Photos: Morris Zwi (Reflex)

the struggle for socialism.

In practice, this boils down to the illusion that a settlement could be negotiated to 'remove apartheid'. The ANC leaders combine calls for sanctions with calls for guerrilla actions—even calls for 'insurrection' at high points in the movement, without any preparation.

All this amounts to efforts at putting pressure on the ruling class to negotiate the transfer of power to themselves. Instead, the main effect is to infuriate white reaction and strengthen the regime.

The real task now is to build up, patiently and systematically, the mass

movement around the organisations of the workers. It is to develop the programme and leadership that can prepare the way for the armed seizure of power.

But the present policies of the ANC leaders prevent the movement from advancing to mobilise its full power. The result is a bloody stalemate between the classes, which cannot be quickly resolved.

Caught up in these contradictions, the revolution in South Africa will be prolonged and explosive. On a capitalist basis, the future is one of disintegration into devastating civil war.

Frustration

Without a concrete and convincing perspective of social transformation, whites will increasingly lose patience with 'reform' and rally in defence of their privileges. Frustration will deepen among blacks, and open up worse divisions.

The regime and its agents will exploit the mass unemployment and desperate poverty among blacks wherever possible to turn lumpen gangs against the organised workers and youth.

'Vigilante' gangs have been organised in dozens of black townships, equipped by the police with firearms and grenade launchers. Buthelezi's reactionary In-

katha movement forms a deadly danger to trade unionists and youth activists in Natal.

The Botha regime is caught in an impossible dilemma, manoeuvring under pressure of the capitalist class internationally, while trying to keep the support of its fearful and suspicious rank and file.

The AWB at present has between 50,000 and 100,000 members, with obvious support among the ranks of the police and armed forces. The fascists cannot take state power, but they can add to the pressures forcing the regime to the right.

The more Botha fumbles in the face of the mass movement, the more he shows 'weakness' and promises reform (i.e. the erosion of white privilege) the more the white backlash will emerge as a mass force out of the capitalists' control. This could prepare the way for a government of the reactionary Conservative Party or, possibly, the military chiefs.

As the situation lurches from crisis to deeper crisis, the capitalists will become more frantic in their search for a settlement. But in reality, less and less room will remain for negotiations and prevarication. More and more starkly the real alter-

natives of revolution and counter-revolution will be posed.

Only a conscious working-class leadership will be able to unite the black masses through the critical battles ahead by firmly pointing the way to workers' rule, democracy and economic transformation.

Class alternative

A socialist movement of the black workers alone could undercut racist reaction by offering a class alternative to white workers and youth, and dispelling their present fears of being ground under by a black capitalist regime.

Within COSATU, within the undefeated workers' fortresses in the townships of the Eastern Cape, within the black schools and universities, there is growing understanding of the tasks and enormous determination to defeat the regime.

The movement is poised for major struggles in the next period, around the 16 June general strike and the black mineworkers' pay negotiations in particular. More and more workers and youth will turn to the ideas of socialism and build the forces of Marxism in the ANC as a result of the experience they gain.



Photo: Reflex

Workers demonstrate at the funeral of a shop steward murdered in detention.

When 'reform' is no reform

MOST OF US in Britain spend part of our day in crowded trains or buses, or in traffic jams, travelling to work.

But what would we think of boarding a bus at 3 am each morning, and changing buses twice more on the way to work? Getting home at 8.30 in the evening, or later if we work overtime? Getting four hours sleep at home, and two in the bus? Barely managing to stay awake at work, and facing the sack if caught asleep?

This real-life example of a 53-year-old worker is given in Joseph Lelyveld's new book, *Move your shadow: South Africa black and*

white. In it he vividly describes the conditions faced by hundreds of thousands of black workers forced to commute from the black 'homelands' to work in the 'white' areas—up to 200 miles per day.

These real-life experiences help to put in perspective the white regime's much-vaunted 'reforms', in particular their abolition of the 'pass laws' which have controlled the movement of black people.

In reality, millions of black workers will have no greater freedom than before.

An estimated two million 'illegal migrants' in the cities do not have approved

housing, and face deportation in terms of anti-squatter laws. Five and a half million black South Africans, who have been declared 'citizens' of 'independent homelands', are not allowed to live in the 'white' areas where the jobs are.

Lelyveld describes the scene in a bus leaving the depot in a township near Pretoria at 2.40 am:

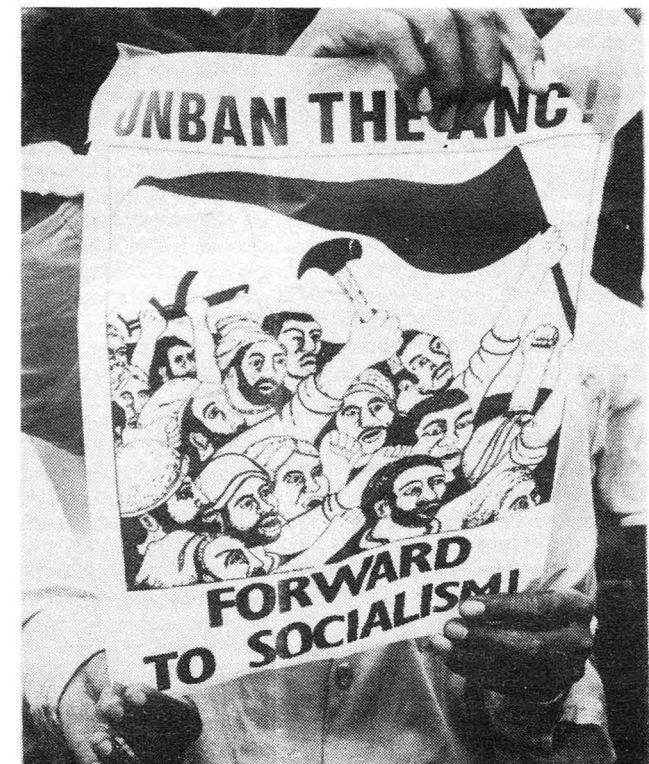
"The centre aisle was packed with bodies wound around themselves like anchovies in a can... (One man) removed a folded piece of newspaper he had been carrying under his jacket and spread it neatly on the floor between his feet. Next, with

the suppleness of a yogi, he collapsed himself into a seated position on the paper with his knees drawn up to his chin, and dropped his head."

Some workers spend 12 hours per week standing in the bus. One woman, travelling to work as a part-time domestic for a white family, has to be there at 7 am to make breakfast for her employers. She gets up nearly five hours before they do.

This is the nightmare of white rule in South Africa—reforms or no reforms.

By Peter Lush



Poster carried at funeral demonstration of 30,000 people in the Western Cape, April 1986.

Mexico, Paraguay, Chile, Brazil

Rats thrive in Mexico City



ON SATURDAY the most popular sporting event in the world, the World Cup, kicked off in Mexico City.

By Alejandro Rojas

But as millions throughout the world tuned in for a month of spectacular football, workers in Mexico itself were angered by the lavish extravagance of the authorities in promoting the event.

Millions of dollars have been spent on improving the stadiums, while next to nothing has been done for the 200,000 inhabitants of Mexico City made homeless by last year's earthquake.

In the shanty towns, far away from the stadiums, entire families have to share shacks and tents, without water or sanitary facilities.

The number of people living on the streets has actually risen since the earthquake. Only 200 dwellings have been built since September. At this rate it will take 100 years to rehouse all the families displaced by the earthquake.

Over half of Mexico's 76 million people suffer from malnutrition, and 50 per cent are unemployed or underemployed.

But there is little hope of reform on the basis of the capitalist system. The collapse in the price of oil, Mexico's main export, has decimated foreign earnings. The country's foreign debt is almost \$100 billion; interest

payments alone swallow up all the money that could have been spent on development.

Yet millions were found for the World Cup. In protest against the government's callousness, a pressure group of earthquake victims in the working-class district of Morelos were planning to occupy the Aztec Stadium on the eve of the tournament.

One victim described how she had filled in endless forms seeking financial help, and been turned out of countless municipal offices. For seven months she had been spending each night with her husband and family on the floor of a beauty salon owned by a relative, and each day in a hut on the rubble of their home.

"We would stay and sleep

"WHEN YOU read the stuff that's been coming out of the agency, you would say that's bad, that's scary", said a senior US official last week. He was talking about CIA reports on Mexico.

If present trends continue, say the CIA, there will be "chaos on our southern border".



Mexico City after the earthquake.

here, but the rats come in and bite the children", she explained. (*Guardian*, 28 April)

Even before the earthquake, Mexico City was

With Mexico facing "perpetual economic crisis", corruption is rife in official circles. Illegal migration of desperate jobseekers into the US has jumped 50 per cent since last year, and drug traffic over the border has turned into a flood.

Mexico's insoluble debt crisis poses a serious threat

to US bankers. In the next period, the capitalists admit, "the possibility of a default is real because, basically, the numbers do not add up."

Mexico, in the path of the advancing Latin American revolution, has become a gigantic time bomb on the doorstep of US imperialism.

With demonstrations and other actions planned by community groups, government-backed gangs are going round working-class areas issuing threats to anyone who dares to "embarrass" the government during the tournament.

These threats are real. When students held anti-government demos on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, as many as 5,000 youths were killed by army and police in a single day.

Hell for poor in Brazil

The last dictators Paraguay

THE WRITING is on the wall for the two last surviving military dictators in South America.

In Chile, Pinochet is reeling. In Paraguay, an opposition political meeting on 16 March proved the beginning of a major movement of workers and youth, involving the first strikes in 32 years of military dictatorship.

The Paraguayan economy is in crisis. Production is expected to drop by 10 per cent in 1986. Wages have been held back far behind inflation. Peasants' crops have been ravaged by drought.

The spark that set this tinder-box alight has been a split in dictator Stroessner's Colorado Party over the approaching presidential 'elections' of 1988.

Stroessner, now aged 74, is determined to stand again. But some of his cohorts, fearing that the days of their dictatorship are numbered, have undergone a conversion to 'democracy', and want to stand a civilian candidate.

The US administration, long Stroessner's patron, decided to drop him with even less ceremony than they dropped Marcos in the heat of the Philippines revolution.

Reforms

They understand that the dictatorship cannot survive indefinitely and are now looking for reforms to try to limit the growth of the mass movement.

Aid to the regime has been cut off and Seifart, leader of a 'democratic' faction in the Colorado Party, is favoured against Stroessner.

As one diplomat explained: "The Reagan administration has Nicaragua as its objective, but to

be able to move against the Sandinistas they have to support democratisation in Chile, and Paraguay too".

Stroessner will not go quietly. He has sent the police in force against the demonstrations, and an armed gang to smash up an independent radio station which broadcast news of the struggles taking place.

But Stroessner will not be able to hold out against the pressures building up among the masses.

The working class in Paraguay, linked to the youth and peasants, will have many opportunities to carry through the struggle for socialist transformation. They will have the inspiration and support of the powerful workers' movements building up in the key countries of the continent—Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

Chile

FOLLOWING a spate of guerilla attacks and bomb blasts the Pinochet regime rounded up about 15,000 people from the shanty towns of Santiago during the past month.

This clampdown led to a demonstration against the regime on 14 May, which was dispersed by the army before it properly gathered.

The demonstration was called by the recently-formed Civil Assembly Coalition, a multi-class organisation which calls for democracy and an end to human rights violations.

Apart from the army tops, some businessmen and sections of the civil service, virtually all of Chilean society now opposes Pinochet.

During the recent army raids on the shantytowns, the *carabineros* (police) and Air Force kept themselves at arm's length. Support for Pinochet is crumbling as



Santiago, May Day 1986

a direct result of the build-up of pressure among the working class for an end to the regime.

The leaders of the workers' parties are unfortunately putting forward few independent initiatives, and are hanging onto the coat tails of the Christian Democrat leaders (who supported Pinochet's coup in 1973, but have now dropped him for tactical reasons). But the potential is there for a massive explosion of working-class struggle.

Bosses' fear

This is what the bosses fear, and hope to avoid by persuading Pinochet to ease himself out. Unfortunately for them, the dictator is clinging to power and accelerating the build-up of a revolutionary crisis.

In Britain, the Chile Socialist Defence Campaign is supporting

the Chilean workers in the struggle to get rid of Pinochet and end the bosses' rule.

Money is vital to the work of the CSDC and we urge all comrades to help. Make sure your LPYS branch has organised a street collection for the Chilean workers, and aim to raise at least £25. If you don't get that in one week, do another collection the week after!

Or how about organising a social or concert for the CSDC? A recent gig by Half Man, Half Biscuit in Birkenhead, organised by Roy and other comrades, raised over £200 for us!

□ Islington Labour Party Young Socialists public meeting. Fight Pinochet! Fight Thatcher! 7.30pm 10 June, Red Rose Labour Club, 129 Seven Sisters Club. Nearest tube: Finsbury Park.

CIVIL WAR is building up between landowners and peasants in Brazil. A radical priest, murdered by the landowners in May, was the 86th person to die in violent land disputes.

Millions of peasants have been squeezed off the land by the spread of mechanised farming and beef ranching.

One per cent of landowners now own 48 per cent of arable land, while smallholders own only 2.4 per cent. Over seven million families are completely without land.

Many landlords use hired gunmen to keep landless families from settling on estates. Squatters are being murdered at the rate of four per week across Brazil.

Survive

The land allocated to peasants for resettlement is of such poor quality that people cannot survive there. One liberal landowner commented:

"These people will die more painlessly if you put them against a wall and shoot them now, rather than die of hunger and malaria in five years' time."

Millions of families swarm to the cities to try and escape this hell, only to find themselves in an even more desperate situation.

With no hope of jobs, many turn to crime, and end up in prison.

Prisons in the main cities of South America hold on average four times the number of inmates meant to be inside them.

Last year, prisoners in one packed jail in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, drew lots to decide which of them would submit to killing by fellow-inmates so as to reduce the crush and draw attention to their plight.

Two bodies were brought out before the authorities intervened.

How many more lives will be wasted on the land and in the slums of this potentially wealthy country before the working class ends the barbaric rule of the capitalist elite?

By Steve Poole

Impartial police

Dear Comrades,
 The threat of fascists alleged to be taking part in a local Orange Parade march should be taken extremely seriously.
 Disillusioned youth in Southampton with its 25,000 unemployed may turn to these sects—their anger must be redirected.
 It is interesting to note the words of our unbiased Chief Constable John Duke. Speaking about a counter-demonstration he said: "If there are others who are ill-disposed towards these people they will be dealt with".
 Yours fraternally
 Mike King
 Southampton

CP clear-out

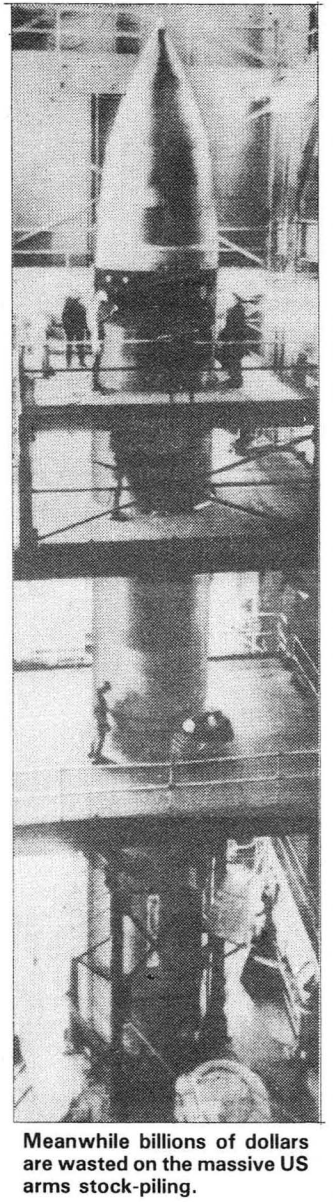
Dear Comrades,
 I recently went into a local second-hand shop and came across a whole stock of Marxist books, selling for 50p each or less.
 Myself and another comrade bought up the vast majority of them including classic works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov and Luxemburg.
 The question then arose 'Where did they all come from?' On opening many of them we found the imprint 'Folkestone Communist Party Library'—they'd cleared out the whole lot. It seems that not only have the CP renounced Marxism in practice, but also now in theory.
 Yours fraternally
 Martin Cock
 Folkestone LPYS

Reagan's tax bias



34 million people Americans living in poverty

Dear Comrades,
 Our Republican-controlled Senate finance committee has just produced a sweeping tax bill which continues the Reagan propaganda of tax giveaways for the rich and the corporations under the guise of 'tax simplification'.
 As of now the current number of tax brackets are 14. This bill reduces it to two, with the present top rate of 50 per cent reduced to 27 per cent!
 Besides cutting taxes for the wealthy, the bill will also continue most of the massive Reagan tax cuts for big business. During the five years since the 1981 Reagan tax bill, corporate taxes have been cut by \$170 billion, with nearly 90,000 corporations paying no taxes at all.
 The Senate claims that their new tax bill will raise taxes on corporations.
 This partial recouping of some corporate tax will amount to \$20 billion per year, or only two per cent of the federal budget. It is a pitifully small amount given our continuing \$200 billion deficit.
 It is a certainty that the workers and the rest of the population will be called on to reduce the rest of the \$180 billion deficit by way of excise taxes, VATs and other forms of taxation.
 Yours fraternally
 Betty Traun
 New York



Meanwhile billions of dollars are wasted on the massive US arms stock-piling.

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.
 Militant, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB

Divided they stand and fall

Dear Comrades,
 Tories in Coventry and the surrounding area are becoming increasingly split in the wake of their party's disastrous showing in the local elections. Tory councillor Terry Price has declared that he will not sit on Coventry City Council as an 'Independent', after failing to become leader of the Tory group.
 Rugby Tory councillor Ron Ravenhall has gone the whole hog and joined the Liberals. He said in a radio interview that he had not changed. In other words the Liberals are just like the Tories. Ravenhall had been thrown out of the Tory group but had still managed to be the official Tory candidate.
 Yours fraternally
 Pete McNally
 Coventry South East
 Labour Party

Classified ads

15p per word, minimum 10 words. Semi-Display £2 per column centimetre. Three weeks for the price of two. Militant meeting ads free. All advertisement copy should reach this office by first post on Friday, the week before publication.

- Address Books 60p, Bookmarks 40p, Plastic sleeves 20p, Sew on badge 40p, plus post to Militant, 8 Woodside Court, Woodside Rd, Portswood, Southampton.
- For a national minimum wage. New sticker out soon. Order now for low pay demo in Manchester and low pay rallies. Cost £1 per 100 + 50p p&p from fighting fund department, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.

- Annual Report of the Zimbabwe Trade Union Defence Campaign is available now. Price 25p (plus 20p p&p). From ZTUDC, 28 Martello Street, London E8 3PE.
- Littleton NUM strike plates. Price £10 each. All proceeds to sacked and victimised miners. Contact WE Jones, NUM Office, Littleton Colliery, Cannock, Staffordshire.
- Perspectives for the United States of America by Rob O'Neil and Tom Williams. £1 each or 10 for £8 (plus 20p p&p per copy). Available from LM Publications, 3-13 Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB.
- The Silentnight Strikers would like to take this opportunity to extend fraternal greetings on the anniversary of their dispute, to all those who have given their help and support up til, at the present time, and hopefully continuance for the future. Warmest fraternal greetings. Silentnight Shop Stewards Committee.

Disabled children—victims of Tory cuts

Dear Comrades,
 I was interested to read the article on Dave Nellist's proposals for government funding for conductive education (Militant 797).
 I am the parent of a five year old Spastic Quadraplegic son who is benefitting very little from the services presently available in this country. For instance there is no provision for speech therapy in his 'special school' and a part-time physiotherapist has to divide her time between two special schools and an orthopaedic clinic. So Lee has physiotherapy for approximately one hour a week, and some children, who need intensive physiotherapy, are not being seen at all.
 When I recently complained about these gross inadequacies to a representative of the local education authority, I was told that in order to supply full time speech therapists

and physiotherapists to Lee's school, they would have to shed the services of five nursery nurses!
 Dave Nellist is only asking for £250,000 to fund a project in Birmingham which ultimately, could make all the difference to the lives of children like Lee. Some people would say that the country can't afford it, but the day after the BBC screened the programme *Standing up for Joe* the government couldn't wait to dig into its pockets and assure the nation that the damaged apartments and paintings of Hampton Court would be replaced.
 It's quite clear where the priorities of the ruling class lie.
 Yours fraternally
 Denyse Thomas
 Swansea



Eric Heffer and Frances Curran walk out in response to Kinnock's speech at 1985 Labour Party conference.

Militant Meetings

- Oldham "No witch-hunt—Expel the Tories". Mon 9 June 8pm. Holy Trinity New Parish Hall, Waterhead, Oldham. Speakers: Brian Beckingham, Neil Filton.
- COHSE conference: 24 June, Winter Gardens, Blackpool.
- Walthamstow "No Expulsions—Fight the Tories not the Socialists". Speakers: Gearoid O'Lee (Tottenham CLP) and Neil Allen (Chingford LPYS). Mon 9 June 7.30pm. Wood Street Library, Forest Rd, Walthamstow.

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Marxist Weekend Schools

NORTHERN leads 7-8 June 1986
 Courses on Russian Revolution, Popular Frontism, Marxism and the trade unions, The theory of Marxism, Ireland. Speakers include: Lynn Walsh, Brian Beckingham, Phil Frampton. Film: To die in Madrid (Spain 1936), International rally, disco, bar crèche. Cost £5 (£3 unwaged) weekend or £2.50 (£1.50) for one day. Swathmore Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds. Starts 10am Saturday, ends 4.30pm Sunday.

MIDLANDS/SOUTH WEST Birmingham 14-15 June 1986
 Courses on: Marxism and the trade unions, Theory of Marxism, Russian Revolution, Colonial Revolution and Imperialism, Women and the struggle for socialism, Ireland. Speakers include: Ted Grant and Jeremy Birch. Film: To Die in Madrid (Spain 1936), rally, disco, bar, crèche. Cost £6 (£4 unwaged), weekend, £3 (£2 unwaged) one day. Summerfield Community Centre, Dudley Rd/Winson Green Rd, Winson Green, Birmingham. Starts 10am Sat, ends 4.30pm Sunday.

Stop Press: Please note that confirmation of bookings may be held up because of post strike in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Events going ahead as advertised.
 Contact: MWES, c/o 12c Samuel Vale House, St Nicholas St, Coventry CV1 4LS

A letter by Peter Taaffe about the expulsion of Militant supporters from the Labour Party, published in the Guardian (5/5/86) provoked a number of its readers to reply. Many have agreed to have their letters published in Militant, here are a few of them:

Leaderships' hazy approach

In your letter to the *Guardian* you have hit the nail on the head. I am not a member of the Labour Party and have always regarded myself as 'middle of the road'.
 As a socialist, I assume the Labour Party exists to transform the existing system to a socialist society. If it is not that, it is nothing.
 It is obvious to me that as a first step, it is necessary to go back to the pre-Thatcher position and bring back into public ownership all the great public enterprises that have been stolen from us and then move on to the real business of moving towards a socialist society.
 It is the rather hazy approach of the present party leadership to even the first part of this programme which has got me worried already!
 Yours sincerely
 RL Clifford
 Suffolk

Message to Kinnock—Stop the witch-hunt

There must be hundreds like myself who would like a truly socialist government. But in spite of temporary public willingness just after the war to support radical reforms, nothing really radical took place, except perhaps the NHS, now being run down.
 Many years ago I left the Fabians because they would

not agree that public ownership of land must be a major part of any socialist reform.
 How optimistic you are! I can see no hope in any advance under a Labour government. With all the services, most of the media, run by or controlled by Conservatives and America, What hope?

However, good luck to you. Can I subscribe to your paper? How?
 Yours sincerely
 J B Philips
 London

I would like to take this opportunity in thanking you for your informative and thought-provoking letter in

the *Guardian* (5/5/86) headlined "On the Militant road to a Socialist Britain".
 It is high time for the Labour Party to stop witch-hunting and get rid of the leader of the present party in power.
 With Best Wishes
 Harish Shah
 London

Build AEU Broad Left

THE VOTE of nearly 100,000 for Broad Left candidate John Tocher in the recent Amalgamated Engineering Union presidential election shows the enormous potential which exists in the AEU for building a campaigning and open Broad Left.

The election campaign rejuvenated the existing Broad Left bodies and supporters of the Broad Left journal *Engineering Gazette* in a number of areas.

Two national *Engineering Gazette* rallies were held. Speaking tours and visits by John Tocher were organised by the Broad Left in several localities. In the latter stages of the election, leaflets, posters and stickers were produced. The print run of the *Gazette* was increased.

However, it is vital that the momentum created by the presidential campaign is built upon quickly. There has to be a full discussion amongst all AEU members to draw on the experience of the last eighteen months' campaign and its lessons.

Given the terrible role played by the AEU's right wing leadership over the past seven years and the massive discontent and disillusionment of the membership, a left victory could have been won.

An open, campaigning and democratic Broad Left operating nationally and in every area of the union, in the same way the CPSA Broad Left does for instance, could have acted more effectively as the vehicle for channelling the members' anger and getting Tocher elected.

Given the election of Bill Jordan to the presidency and the right wing's almost complete hold on the executive committee, the Broad Left's first task must be to launch the fight back amongst the membership in the face of inevitable future attacks on all fronts.

Despite the right wing's belief in the virtues of industrial pacifism—EETPU-style agreements, no-strike deals, etc — engineering workers will be forced into industrial action to defend their livelihoods. The Broad Left has an invaluable role to play in supporting such struggles and exerting pressure upon the leadership.

The Broad Left must also

By Martin Elvin

organise the membership within the union to make it clear to Jordan and the rest that this election, particularly given Tocher's big vote, does not give them carte blanche to do as they please.

In any talks about amalgamation with the EETPU for example, or in any rule changes, the Broad Left will defend the AEU's democratic structure and traditions.

However, for the Broad Left to play that role means doing far more than confining activities simply to elections, important as that work remains. It means adopting a clear programme on all the issues affecting the members and showing how those struggles fit into the wider social and political struggles.

That means opening up the Broad Left to all activists in the union who want to fight the right wing, involving them in drawing up such a programme and then campaigning in every factory, branch and district.

Every area

It requires a fundamental change from the past attitude of the Broad Left. Its direction has too often been determined by the left wing national officials at headquarters and one or two executive committee members.

Indeed, in the past, with left-winger Hugh Scanlon as president and the left a significant force on the executive committee, many of those same leaders were less than keen to build the Broad Left once they were in office. This had disastrous consequences for the membership. A Broad Left is an important weapon in the battle to defeat the right wing. But once having got lefts elected it has an equally important role in keeping them under the check and control of the members.

The failure of the AEU

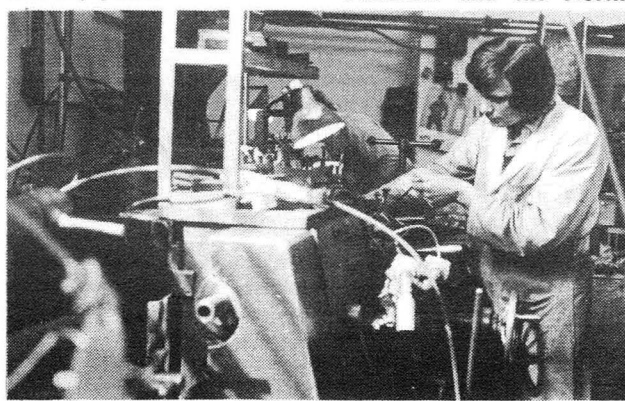


AEU members protesting at the closure of Shildon BREL works in 1982.

Broad Left to do this in the 1970s, and its lack of clear ideas and programme, led to Scanlon giving total support to the 1974 Labour government's disastrous social contract.

Those kind of policies produced a rank and file revolt, particularly against wage curbs. Disputes such as the Leyland tool room strike over differentials reflected confusion and anger amongst the membership which the right wing cynically used to regain control in the late '70s.

Most of those leaders of the Broad Left have now retired or are about to. Tocher's campaign has given new impetus to many activists and opened better opportunities for change than in many years.



Young steward fights for his members

INDUSTRIAL DECLINE, mass unemployment and Thatcherite attitudes in management are producing a new breed of trade union activists. The more comfortable co-existence with management of the boom years has gone. And in engineering it often involves fighting your own leaders as well. NICK WORTH talked to a young AEU shop steward in the blighted West Midlands.

How did you get involved in the union?

There was no shop steward in my section and the shopfloor asked me to stand.

So why did you experience problems?

Well, I had already got a bad name for myself by organising support for the miners. Then during the 1984 pay negotiations the union recommended a very poor deal which was rejected at one mass meeting but was eventually forced through after a big row. Anyway, there was a lot of anger on the shopfloor against both management and the union leadership and I think I was seen as a leader of it.

When I went to see the convenor about the shop steward's position I was told I hadn't been in the union long enough. Then the harassment from management started. I was accused of vandalising the toilets—a charge they had to withdraw, accused of not working hard enough and of spending too much time talking about the miners' strike. They even dropped me from the works football team!

In the end I was hauled up for an "interview" by management. They threatened me with the sack, and told me that "we've got a good union here".

What was the response to this?
It increased my support. Also,

discontent was still growing. The straw that broke the camel's back was when management changed our heating allowance agreement with the consent of the regional organiser, but without the workforce. Two shop stewards resigned, leaving the convenor as the only recognised union representative.

When I'd been in the union long enough I went to see the convenor about a shop steward's position. She told me that I couldn't be a steward because I was only a labourer! But pressure began to build-up on her from the shopfloor. She then said that management wouldn't accept me.

There was uproar at this! A mass meeting was called at which the convenor "explained" that management would accept anyone but me. In the end a vote was taken and I was elected by a two to one majority.

Was that the end of it?

No! The convenor called another meeting, saying she couldn't accept

the vote because the procedure was wrong. According to her it had to be a secret ballot, involving the whole of the workforce, not just those on my section. I was sure this was not true, but agreed to it rather than end up in an argument about the rule book.

But even then the ballot kept getting put off. Eventually people were getting so angry about it they were stopping the convenor and having a go at her about it. So the ballot was finally held and I was elected by 166 votes for with only 24 against. I suppose the workforce reckoned that if the management were so opposed to me I must be the right man for the job!

What do you hope to achieve in your new position?

Well, obviously to win back some of the things we have lost recently in terms of pay and conditions. But that can only be done by putting the union back on the shopfloor—consulting the workforce and making sure union representatives are accountable to the membership.

Also the union has got to be politicised. These days you are not only up against the employer but the Tory government as well.

Have you got any advice for other young trade unionists?

Yes, it's important to have confidence in the workforce. Workers will respond to fighting socialist views and if you prove that you're struggling for their interests then they'll support you. But it's very easy to become demoralised. There have been times when I've been so disgusted with the obstruction I've faced from the union leadership that I've felt like jacking the whole thing in.

All in all, from being asked to stand to actually getting credentials, it took 18 months. That's a long time, and the only thing that kept me going was the perspective for the future which being a Marxist gives me. So the best advice I can offer to any young worker is—become a Militant supporter!

Industrial Reports

Doncaster workers prepare for action

LAST YEAR, management at the Doncaster works of BREL showed the workforce videos saying that the 50 jobs to go during 1986 could be covered by natural wastage.

The plant had a "rosy future" with plans for new machinery.

But that was 1985. BREL's priority then was to close Swindon with as little fuss as possible. Doncaster was promised extra work through Swindon and Shildon's closure.

Video nasty

Having tried to lull everyone at Doncaster, management now administer the knock-out blow. Last week's video show was a horror film. Between 1,500 and 1,700 jobs out of 3,000 are to go and the single main works is to be carved up into three parts.

The carve-up will see heavy repair loco shops taken over by BR and downgraded to light repair work. The diesel multiple unit will become a BR stores. Only the wagon shops will remain for BREL heavy repair and new build; this is considered a prime candidate for privatisation.

Over 1,500 attended Monday's mass meeting at the works. The union reps called for full support in the forthcoming ballot for action.

The local reps have contacted the local council and plan a lobby of Parliament. Such activities can form only part of an energetic local and national campaign including the use of industrial action and involving the wider labour movement.

By a Militant reporter

Casuals reject Murdoch offer

ON 27 May almost 700 casual printworkers gathered in London to discuss the latest offer of £50 million and the old *Sunday Times*' office and printworks on Grays Inn Road.

All the printers in the hall were angry and urged the 6,000 News International employees sacked by Murdoch to reject the deal.

Guest speaker, Michael Hicks Imperial FoC at John Menzies Wholesale Distribution in London whose chapel has been on strike since the start of the dispute said: "Murdoch is feeling the pinch. Above all, the flying picketing has hit his pocket, why do you think he has now trebled his offer when a few weeks ago he was saying that £15 million was his final offer?"

"Now we must keep him on the run, we must step up

BREL-fight for every job

THE THREATENED major job losses in British Rail Engineering (BREL) main works and in BR regional workshops together with widespread workshop closures are another sickening blow to the industry.

In 1979 the total workforce of BREL stood at over 35,000. Before these latest announcements it was proposed that the workforce by March 1987 would be 21,108.

Management have never made their true intentions clear. Every fresh announcement of job losses, the closure of Ashford, then Shildon, Horwich, Temple Mills and Swindon has been accompanied by the same refrain.

"All these sacrifices are necessary to secure the future of BREL. One works' closure will help secure a bright future for the rest." They now claim that modern rolling stock requires less maintenance. Meanwhile trains are cancelled for lack of wagons, whilst the number of repairs mounts

By a railworker

up! Or else those available for traffic are hammered in service until they are worn out.

British Rail now put their heavy maintenance and new building work out to contract, and BREL (a wholly owned subsidiary) have to tender for it, alongside other firms!

Clear strategy

These present proposals are the worst yet. The total workforce of BREL is to fall to 16,900 at the most. BREL is also to be split into two operations. One section is to go directly under BR control and will be responsible for regular repair work. This will mean the downgrading of their operations and of

course job losses.

Coupled with this is the proposed closure of sixteen BR regional loco or carriage and wagon shops, reduction in status of a further ten, and the reduction of loco or rolling stock allocation to a further seven depots, with further large-scale job losses there too.

Those workshops remaining under BREL management are to concentrate on building new rolling stock and heavy repairs, but if they want any of that work from British Rail they'll have to tender for it! It is that section which is being earmarked for privatisation, with consequent drastic results for the workforce that are left.

These are steps towards total decimation of the industry. Reading between the lines the total job losses as a result of present proposals could be in the region of 9,000 to 11,000 workers!

A clear strategy by the NUR and the engineering unions must be put forward to involve the entire



BREL depots have been under threat for years. A national fight is needed.

workforce of BR and BREL.

There is talk of balloting workshop staff. Such a ballot must clearly raise the question of industrial action. A full scale campaign must now be waged, through mass meetings, leaflets, demonstrations to prepare the membership for a national fight. Those places directly affected must not be left to take up the cudgels

alone, as has been the case on previous occasions.

Speaking tours by BREL workers to the wider rail industry must be arranged as a prerequisite to involving them too.

- ★ No job losses, voluntary or compulsory
- ★ No further closures
- ★ No privatisation
- ★ For a fully integrated nationalised railway industry.

ASLEF—say no to 'single-manning' plans

THIS YEAR'S Annual Assembly of delegates from ASLEF takes place just as the tribunal's report on the easing of single-manning has appeared.

This is the most important issue facing footplate staff since flexible rosters. A clear stand has to be made against the report. PETER GRANT, the chair of Willesden ASLEF explains the background.

ON 31 May the ASLEF EC reported back to a mass meeting in London. The McCarthy report proposes major changes in working methods that fill all drivers and assistants with dread.

Assistant General Secretary Neil Milligan outlined what British Rail proposed and what the report had agreed. It was hard to tell them apart.

All light locomotive movements are to be single-manned. The time actually spent driving is to be increased from six hours to 7½. Distance covered in any one shift is up to 450 miles. The Board wanted no limit!

At the tribunal, the Board argued entirely on cost, the union completely on safety, citing the increased stress of modern railway operation and increased accidents in recent years. The Board told the chairman Lord McCarthy that he and the tribunal were not "competent" to look into safety, it was nothing to do with them or ASLEF! McCar-

thy has referred the question to that truly independent body, the Ministry of Transport railway inspectorate.

The tribunal has allowed seven months for negotiations, after which the Board can impose change. LDCs, local depot stewards will have no right to time off to study local implementation, this must be done in working time.

The immediate effect will be the loss of 200 driving assistants' jobs and an unspecified number of drivers. Long-term effects are less predictable, but it certainly won't be a safer industry. As a reward for accepting all this the Tribunal has suggested £1.50 per shift.

The EC has decided to 'fight' these proposals by recommending the report

to conference as the basis for negotiation. Neil Milligan and Lew Adams made it clear that the EC considered negotiations a waste of time and that no trust would be placed in the MOT inspectorate over safety. But the EC have no confidence in the membership's willingness to fight and rejected all calls for a ballot on industrial action.

They seem to want to roll over while the Board decimate working conditions and jobs. The government and the BRB will not listen to arguments about health and safety, only to industrial action. The conference delegates must reject this report and make serious preparations for industrial action.



SOGAT members vote no to Murdoch's 'final' offer on 30 May.

Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

THE CENTRAL discussion at this year's SOGAT BDC (conference) will be the events at Wapping, especially the handling of the dispute by the officers and the NEC.

The ballot result, now taking place for Murdoch's 'final' offer, will be known by the start of conference. It is hoped that it will be rejected. Whatever the outcome, the manner in which the national officers have acted must be condemned.

The purging of the contempt and the manner in which the secret negotiations led to this offer could have

By a SOGAT member

had an effect and helped undermine support for the strike.

The leaders' actions raise the question of accountability. Motion 276 must therefore be supported from London Central. "Any general officer elected after the BDC 1986 shall be

elected by a ballot vote of the whole membership for a period not exceeding five years".

The meeting must push for amalgamation with other print unions, especially the NGA. The employers have launched an offensive against us. A united, militant workforce are essential to stop the bosses.

A number of witch-hunting motions appear on the agenda. One supports Kinnock's "condemnation of extremism". Most

workers would think this was a reference to one SOGAT official who used the same tactics as Murdoch to sack his office secretaries, but they are referring to *Militant*. This action must be challenged.

The motion from Glasgow and West of Scotland uphold the best traditions of the labour movement when it states it "totally disagrees with the expulsion of members of the Labour Party because of their political views".

Postal workers resist threats

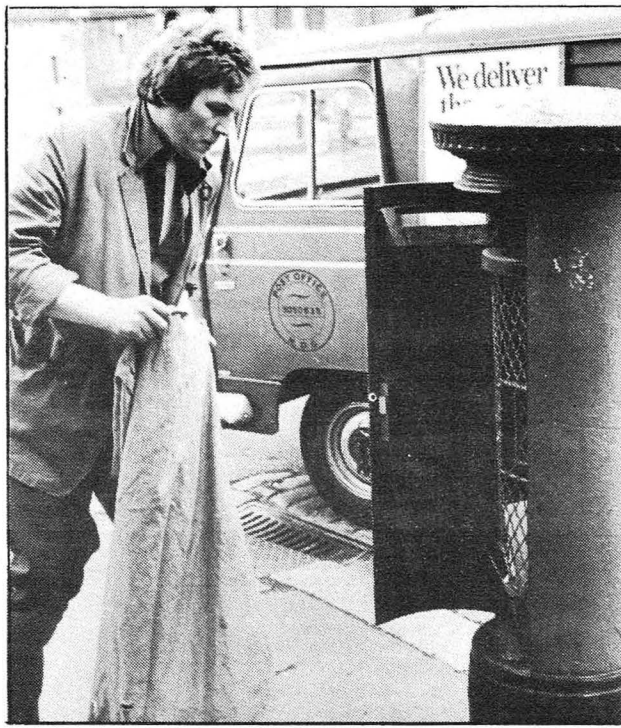


Photo: Chris Davies (Report) III

POSTAL WORKERS have had a raw deal from the Post Office for many years. Our last general reduction in hours was in 1965.

Both postal delivery staff and indoor grades work the same 43 hour, six-day week they did then. Wages are low, with the basic gross wage a mere £107.05. To take home a decent wage a postal worker has to work a lot of overtime (always assuming this is offered).

Post Office management consistently refuse to consider reducing hours, or increasing basic pay to its value twenty years ago, despite Post Office profits of £497 million over the last five years.

On top of this management has over the last two years introduced measures

nationwide to add job losses to low wages and long hours. The 'improved working methods' scheme—disgracefully agreed to by the national leaders of the UCW—gave workers one-off lump sum and bonus payments for cuts in permanent full-time staff through increasing remaining workers' workloads and introducing more part time and temporary duties.

Management wants to stop militancy against these measures by 'divide and rule', splitting the Post Office into four separate businesses. This split will also make it easier to privatise the Post Office when 'the time is ripe'.

Apart from the strike in Yorkshire, other areas have taken action, showing

that a national dispute would gain backing.

Last Christmas, postal workers in Dundee refused to work overtime to handle the seasonal increase in mail traffic. (The Post Office insists on overtime during plague, famine and Christmas). This action ensured Dundee postal workers did not have to work the usual 12-hour shifts!

Such local actions show the potential for national action in the disputes which are likely in the near future.

By Andy Lovie

(Chair, Outdoor Section, Aberdeen UCW)

company of Wakefield to try to break the strike and deal with the huge backlog of post.

The Post Office tried to divide postal workers and the unemployed by recruiting casual labour from the dole. But many casuals refused to cross picket lines even though they stood to lose six weeks benefits for refusing a job.

Even those casuals who crossed the picket have had little effect as virtually no post was delivered in the city. When it was, there were many complaints of post being opened and money and other contents going

missing.

When one home owner found a casual postman drinking his milk, he left the dog to guard the casual whilst he phoned the police. When he came back, his milk, his dog and the casual had disappeared.

The UCW say they will organise a children's party to compensate for cards and presents held up because of the strike.

Needless to say, this has not been reported in the press. What the media could not ignore was UCW members' support for the action. They will fight to maintain their living standards.

OVER TWO thousand postal workers in Leeds were suspended for fighting new working practices.

The dispute later spread to a number of other areas like Sheffield where post workers there refused to cross picket lines.

Friday's night shift were the first to be suspended *en masse* when the UCW's appeal was knocked back in the courts. The postmen refused to abide by restrictions placed on them by Post Office management when they attempted to sign on for their shift.

The mood of younger pickets especially was very

By Dave Worrall

(Leeds Central Labour Party)

determined, despite many postal workers being threatened if they refused to cross picket lines.

A 60-year old driver from Brighouse was threatened with the sack if he did not take his van through the Leeds picket line, meaning the loss of pension rights as well as his job. Post Office management used Salford Van-hire and Trans Fleet

FTAT—back workers in struggle!



FTAT members on a Silentnight strikers' rally in Keighley.

Photo: Dale Cunningham

THE STRIKES at Silentnight and Morris in Glasgow will be the main issues facing the Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT) conference in Blackpool.

Silentnight strikers have been out for a year after dismissal for taking strike action. 35 workers at Morris were also sacked for striking. The National Executive must present a clear strategy for victory for the strikers and for rebuilding and strengthening the union after

the attacks of the last year. Since Silentnight strikers were recently prevented from taking their case to an industrial tribunal, delegates from Cravendale branch ask conference to accept an emergency resolution for continuation of full official backing until a satisfactory conclusion of the dispute.

Cowcaddens branch pay tribute to the inspiring struggle at Silentnight and Morris and call for the General Executive to "do all in its power to achieve a just settlement".

Stockton members pro-

pose the union set up a dispute fund from a levy of members. "In lengthy disputes our members must have sufficient financial assistance to resist economic pressures". They call for this to be organised on a national basis and not left to individuals or groups of members.

Silentnight strikers will be lobbying every day in Blackpool and will also be discussing plans to set up a Broad Left within FTAT.

By Linden Stafford

Industrial Reports

NCU conference

THE FIGHT against job losses, and the problems caused by new technology have dominated the discussions for both clerical and engineering groups of the National Communication Union (NCU).

However, the NCU has become saddled with a right-wing NEC under the 'leadership' of John Golding after elections returned 23 right-wingers to one Broad Left candidate for the engineering group executive.

Tory laws on union balloting forced the NCU to a full individual ballot for the first time. This gave the right wing their result but

theirs is only a temporary victory.

The election result in the CPSA (reflected in the mood in the NCU clerical group) shows that the ground lost to the right can rapidly be recovered.

Faced with a common management, members are looking for one strong industrial union. Both sections have now swung behind a ten per cent pay demand. Such a demand will be resisted by management despite BT's massive profits. But if it is taken to the members it could weld the union together through action.

By Jon Ingham

Engineering section

A MAJOR achievement of the outgoing left EC was the Broad Strategy. Engineering Section wanted to put new life in the struggle for a shorter working week.

They carried a resolution for: "A reduction in hours without loss of pay, conditions or posts... introduced by 1 April 1987.

"This to be achieved by embarking on a vigorous campaign, including the withdrawal of all co-operation on the introduction of new technology." However, the platform said the question of immediate implementation of the Broad Strategy was damaging to negotiations with BT. But earlier reports explained management were refusing to move at all on the shorter working week.

Now that policy has been decided the battle lines need to be drawn. Anything else will be interpreted by management as a retreat on policy. One right wing delegate even argued that a four-day week would lead to problems for the members—heating bills would go up in winter as you had an extra day to spend at home. By

that logic we should all argue for working week-ends in order to cut out fuel bills completely.

By Steve Jones

(Engineering Group NCU)

Clerical

THE BROAD strategy for a 32 hour, four day week received unanimous support from clerical group conference.

A determination to defend jobs was demonstrated by the call for time off in lieu for any overtime worked and the defence of flexi-time. Delegates wanted a shorter working week to provide new jobs, not to be eaten up by overtime working.

Conference overturned group EC in demanding a campaigning policy document on the Broad Strategy and won a one-day conference in November as a start to mobilising the whole membership.

By Alan Benyon

(NCU, Clerical Group)

Yorkshire pits threat

FOUR THOUSAND jobs are to be lost in the Yorkshire coalfield in the next year.

Listening to management you'd think the pits were heavily over-manned, but there has been a large increase in private contractors in the coalfield. In many cases management are bringing them in because they haven't sufficient trained workers on their books—Treeton colliery is one example of this.

At Houghton Main the union is attempting to resist a similar development and at Denby Grange the manager has backed off at least temporarily from bringing in contractors because of union opposition. But at the new Selby coalface for example contractors are engaged in engineering, concreting, pit bottom and electrical work in all pits.

British Coal's Barnsley training centre, soon to be shut now has approximately 70 per cent of its students from AMCO, the firm of private contractors.

Many activists see this as the beginning of privatisation of the pits. Private con-

tractors have worked in many pits for years, and made rich pickings from our nationalised industry, they must be nationalised and incorporated into British Coal by the next Labour government.

We need a co-ordinated fightback against the spread of these profiteers. All branches which refuse to accept them must be fully supported. Kinsley Drift's battle against closure is also continuing and their appeal to the Review Procedure taking place on 10/11 June. Kinsley has only been open six years and made huge profits initially. It was the 'Baby' of North Yorkshire director Albert Tuke, now he wants to close it.

The pit still has 12.5 million tonnes of reserves but is going through a review procedure. No coal has been produced for ages and most men are now engaged in salvage work—a task which is done when a pit shuts. The workforce are demonstrating outside Hobart House on 10 June. Be there (details left).

By a Yorkshire miner

Broad Left Organising Committee

Fight privatisation

Saturday, 12 July
Digbeth Civic Hall
Birmingham
Speakers include
Dave Nellist MP

Only bona fide trade union delegates accepted. £3 per delegate. Apply to BLOC, PO Box 464, London E5 8PT. Coaches from London: advance booking only. Fare £6 return. Contact: J Griekitas, 25 Stirling House, Simmonds Roads, London SE18 6UP.

Save Kinsley Drift. No pit closures. Lobby British Coal HQ, Hobart House, Grosvenor Park, near Victoria Station, London SW1, Tuesday 10 June, 9am.

Militant

Liverpool Mass anti-fascist rally. Saturday 7 June. Assemble St. George's Plateau, Lime St, Liverpool, 12.30

Truce in post dispute

A LAST-MINUTE truce between the Post Office management and union leaders has led to the threatened national strike of postal workers being called off.

Some concessions were wrung from the management. Suspension notices issued to workers on strike in Leeds have been withdrawn, and further negotiations are to be held before the introduction of new rotas there. The workers have won the right to an extra 1½ hours of rest periods a week, but it will be at the expense of 35 per cent of their bonus pay. Each worker will be forced to choose between extra time off or more money.

There have been no guarantees that there will be no job losses and the management say they still hope to introduce their new working practices in Leeds by mid-June. This means that the battle has been postponed rather than resolved. The PO are still determined to pursue their policy of 'more flexible' work patterns, more part-time staff and more use of new technology.

Under political and financial pressure from the government, the management will be pressing on with

its strategy to create 'profitable' sections for future privatisation. Union activists will need to remain on guard to fight off any threat to their jobs, wages and working conditions.

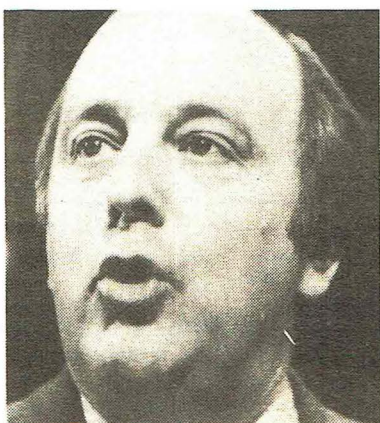
By Chris Whale
(N London District, C and CS branch, personal capacity)

BEFORE THE settlement, all 1,200 Post Office workers in Sheffield came out on indefinite strike, following the suspension of a UCW member who had driven a Post Office van to Leeds, but refused to cross the picket line.

Dave Stent, UCW branch secretary, told *Militant*:

"Management want to see the casualisation of our industry. We started off on a one-day strike in support of Leeds, but the management has deliberately provoked an escalation.

"We apologise to the public for inconvenience, but the blame lies squarely with management and the government. We had an excellent postal service a few years ago, but government dictat means that money not service counts in their view. We want the



Alan Tuffin, UCW leader.

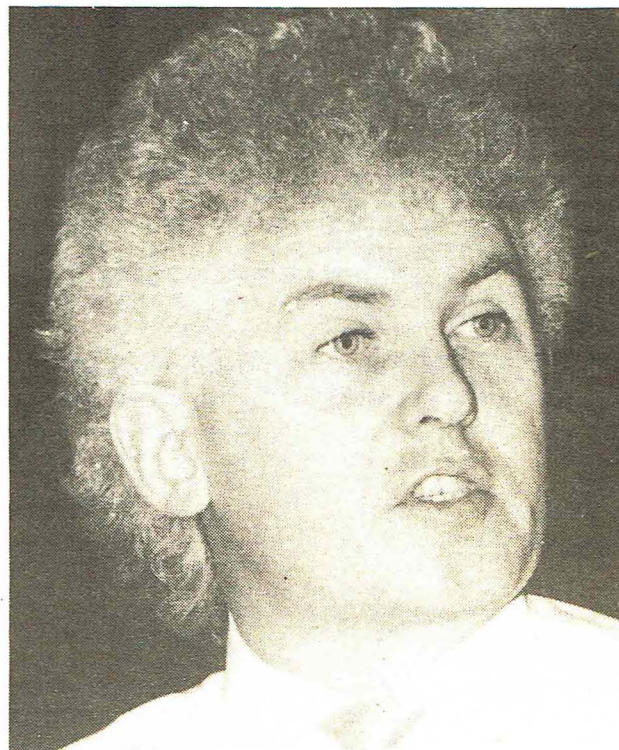
public to know what they are trying to do".

Sheffield bosses plan court action against the union to 'compensate for any losses' due to the dispute, and the Chamber of Commerce was planning a scab service to take company mail around the country. All trade unionists take note!

By Alan Anderton

See also page 15

CPSA election Campaign for Broad Left victory



John Macreadie

THE ELECTION for General Secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) has begun.

The Broad Left candidate, John Macreadie is a class fighter. He is campaigning for a decent living wage, a 35-hour week, the abolition of incremental (age) scales for young members and the use of new technology in workers' interests, not to cut jobs.

Worker's wage

He has pledged to live on a worker's wage, not the huge salaries which normally accompany the job.

CPSA members, used to the contemptuous attitude of

people like the former incumbent Alistair Graham, have given a very favourable reception to John's campaign. "At last someone who'll stand up for us" many workers have commented on receiving the Broad Left leaflets.

If you want to help in the campaign, you will be very welcome. A win for John Macreadie is a definite possibility. That would be a victory for every working class fighter.

Contact any of the following: Martyn Jenkins work (01) 305 0565 home (01) 291 6229; John Ship work (0908) 662626 home (0908) 318859 or Steve Dunk work (01) 438 7031/6258 home (01) 690 6415.

GMBATU—defend expelled convenor

MEMBERS OF Liverpool GMBATU are rallying to the defence of Branch 5 convenor Ian Lowes, expelled by Labour's NEC just two weeks ago.

Over 60 GMBATU members at an angry founding conference of the Liverpool region Broad Left voted unanimously to campaign against the expulsion.

The success of this meeting was shown by the representation from a wide spectrum of membership in the private sector, NHS and local authorities.

Congress lobbied

The first achievement of the new Broad Left was the lobby of 70 GMBATU members at the union's Congress last Monday to protest at the GMB leadership's role in Ian Lowes' expulsion. They explained to delegates the real record of Liverpool GMB branches, now under threat from the union's own



Ian Lowes (centre) with Derek Hatton (left) at meeting of Liverpool council workers.

'investigation'.

Many senior GMBATU officials were surprised by the lobbyists at a normally quiet conference. 50 copies of the BL pamphlet, *Defend Liverpool Branch Five* were sold, a warning to the union leadership as to the difficulties of a witch-hunt in the GMB.

The congress has always stood well to the right in the trade union movement. Yet

nonetheless, over 80 delegates signed the Liverpool petition calling on the union's delegation to Labour Party conference to vote against the Liverpool expulsions.

The campaign against Ian Lowes' expulsion has just begun. The Liverpool GMB regional council's decision to establish an 'inquiry' into Liverpool Branch 5 inviting evidence in confidence,

despite a court decision preventing the Labour Party from using such disgraceful methods, has further angered GMB members in the region.

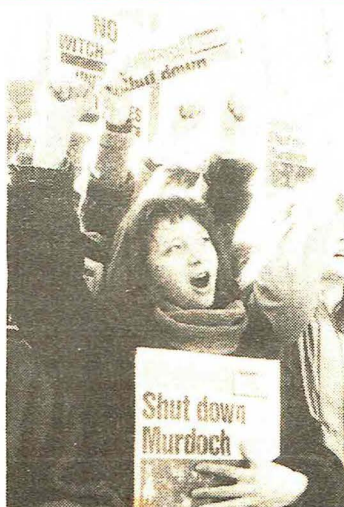
Resolutions are expected from branches from all over the country to compel the GMBATU leadership to back off.

By Laurence Coates

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