

# Militant

Solidarity price £1

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth 30p

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# Cold hearted Tories let the old freeze

ONE HUNDRED old people are dying each day, unable to keep themselves warm in this severe weather. Last year the number of over 75s who died rose by 22,000, mainly because of the especially cold temperatures.

Tory callousness means the death rate in Britain in February is 24 per cent above the average for the year. It is only 6 per cent in France and in much colder Sweden.

But the government's £5 heating allowance to the two million pensioners on supplementary benefit and to other claimants like the chronically sick, and families with children under 2, is an insult. It is only paid when the temperature for a whole week falls below -1.5 degrees Celsius. In London under these regulations, the £5

would only have been triggered once in the last seven years.

Mass outrage has now forced the Tories to pay the £5 for at least one week, before the final thermometer readings were taken. But it is a public relations gesture. How long does a pitiful £5 keep an electric fire or oil heater burning?

Winter in Tory Britain is

terrifying for millions of pensioners. On Thatcher's miserly pension they have to choose—buy food or keep warm. Huddled up in their living rooms many old people are frightened when they hear the weather forecast of extreme cold. They go to bed in the early evening. It is the only way to keep out the cold without burning precious pounds.

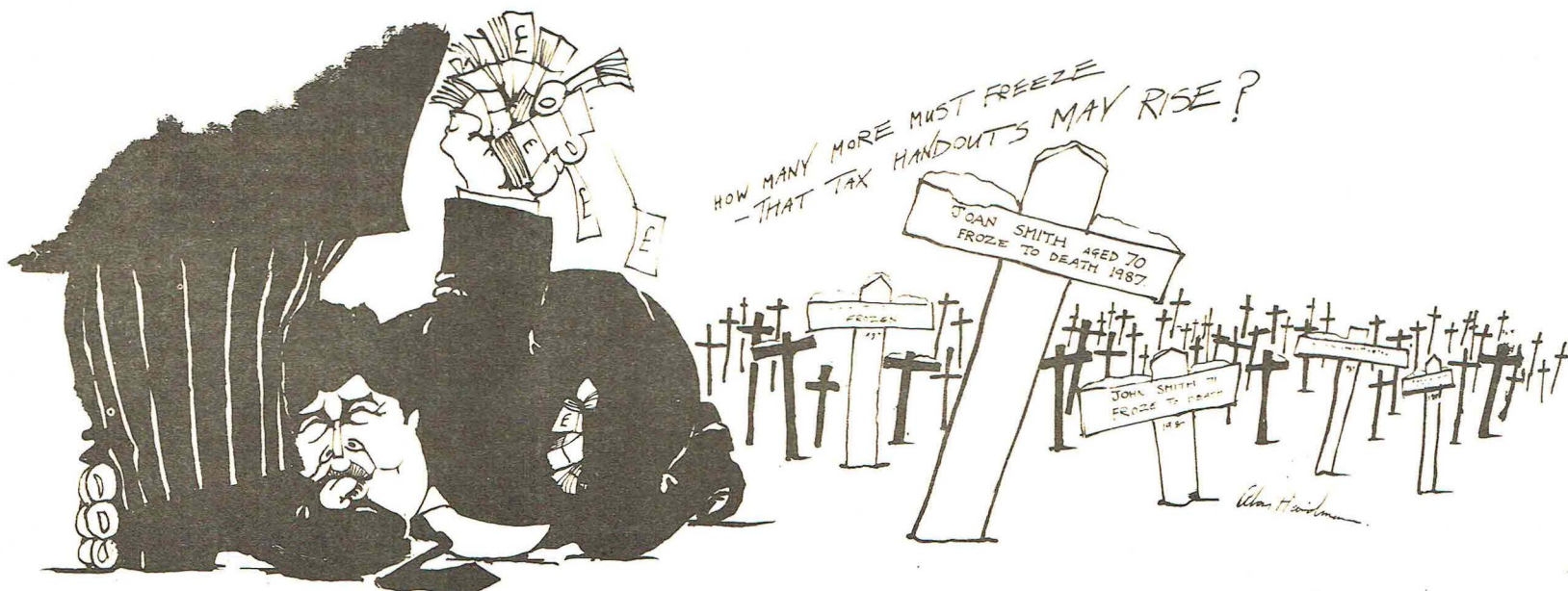
Old people and their families have the right to expect that a Labour government will save them this fear and misery every winter. Labour is offering the £5 payment to all pensioners on supplementary benefit weekly throughout the winter months, and a £5-£8 a week increase in pensions.

But why should old people with a lifetime's work and

struggle behind them, have to apply for supplementary benefit and extra allowances to top up a miserable pension. Labour must guarantee them a decent living pension where they need not worry about how they can afford the food and warmth to stay alive, where they are allowed their dignity and enough money to continue to be active in the community.

Militant Fighting Fund

£250,000



ARTHUR HARE, a National Executive Member of the British Pensioners' Trade Union Action Association, explains the fears of pensioners.

"I hope this winter will be kinder to people caught in the poverty trap, not certain what to do, some unable to claim benefits they are entitled to because of their inability to move about in icy conditions, or because of their lack of knowledge of the benefit system, which is now so complicated. I know how difficult it was last year to get help

with heating costs. You had to be on supplementary benefit and have no more than £500 in the bank. Then you had to prove how much gas and electricity you used and paid for during the winter months the previous year.

I was fortunate; my wife had kept our bills, but still they lost them and there was a delay in sorting out our claim. This caused weeks of worry for us.

This is the reward for people who have done their share, and are now no longer able to work. The new £5 fixed payment is only available when

the average temperature is -1.5 degrees for a full week. If there is a break in the low temperature, the money is not paid.

For my area it will be based on readings from Leeds Meteorological office. But it is in the centre of the city and readings will be affected by the surrounding buildings. During the severe weather in February 1986, the temperature there never dropped to the level needed for the new payments. Anyway £5 does not buy much extra warmth these days."

MORE MONEY has started to pour in now after the Christmas break including £101 from supporters in Swansea.

A reader in Southampton sent in an anonymous donation of £250. Remember, only two weeks left to go to the deadline, so rush your donations in now!

# Militant

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## Labour's prospects

THE ERRATIC fluctuations of recent opinion polls point to a highly volatile electorate. There is no evidence of a swing from Labour to the Tories. The latest MORI poll gave the Tories five per cent less support than in 1983 and Labour ten per cent more.

There is widespread hatred for the Tories, especially in Scotland, Wales and the North, but also, as the Greenwich poll showed, in the South. The problem which the Shadow Cabinet should have been confronting at their Bishop's Stortford meeting is how to extend their support amongst those yet to be convinced that Labour will really solve the problems they face after nearly eight years of Thatcher.

Their message to Labour's leaders is that no votes can be taken for granted. In one poll, only 25 per cent thought the economy would be better managed under Labour and only 28 per cent thought they would be better off. Their support will depend on what the Party does between now and the election to assure them that a Labour government can transform their prospects.

The policies to emerge from Bishop's Stortford will not achieve this. There will be wide support for the plan to raise taxes for the richest five per cent "in order to relieve the poverty of the poorest pensioners and families" but not for the idea that apart from that five per cent "the present levels of taxation are about right". The danger is that slightly better-off workers, while keen to relieve poverty, will suspect that Roy Hattersley's promised 'emergency budget' will mean impoverishing them.

The same problem arises with the leaders' bid to tackle the 'North/South divide.' By announcing that the £65 billion programme to cut unemployment by a million within two years will be directed at the North, they have suggested to unemployed and low-paid workers in the South that there will be nothing for them. There is poverty and high unemployment in parts of the South. Homelessness is a major problem in southern cities, as the jobless try to move to where there is work but find housing out of their reach.

Class, not geographical divisions, and the bankrupt capitalist system, are the basic problem. Labour has to base itself on the common interest of the vast majority of the population, North and South, against the monopoly capitalists represented by the Tories. The party has to unite that majority with a socialist programme seen to be in all workers' interests.

If Labour operates within the same capitalist system as the Tories, the best they will be able to do, for a temporary period, is redistribute the poverty and unemployment, with small improvements for the very poor, paid for by 'restraint' by those in work, and some more jobs in the North at the expense of fewer in the South. After a short period, like socialist governments in France, Spain and Greece, even those reforms will be reversed. The Labour government will be forced, by the logic of a system which depends on providing bigger profits for businessmen with money to invest, to cut its spending for those in need.

If it is to make genuine advances there is no choice for Labour but to adopt a socialist programme and convince the uncommitted voters of the need for it. In the *New Statesman* (9 January 1987), Peter Kellner says "there is something inherently implausible about the notion that more left-wing policies would increase support for Labour... there is not a scrap of evidence to support it." Every general election since the war proves him wrong, as do socialist victories in Europe. When Labour has stood, in words at least, as in 1945 and 1974, for a radical change in society, the voters have responded. When, as in 1970 and 1979, they have stood on a cautious programme of minimal change, they have been beaten.

But it is deeds not words which matter most. Labour lost in '70 and '79 mainly because Labour governments had not delivered what they promised. That experience still accounts for many workers' doubts about voting Labour. They are still not sure that Labour is capable of delivering the goods. They will not re-assured by Labour promising to do even less. If Labour wins, as is still likely in 1987, on the basis of workers' determination to ditch the Tories, and then fails to satisfy the demands of those who voted for it, it will be no good to plead that not much had actually been promised. As in France, the price will be a reactionary right-wing government.

A campaign for a Marxist programme, on the other hand, taking up the issues of the day—like pensioners dying of cold and the Guinness scandal—with specific pledges such as a 35 hour week with no loss of pay and a minimum wage of £120 a week, explained on the doorsteps and workplaces, will inspire confidence in Labour and pave the way for a victory which would transform the lives of millions.

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# Guinness good for racketeers

**GUINNESS WILL soon be appearing in its own Book of Records as the company involved in the most scandals. Every day sees new revelations and allegations of illegal activities.**

Workers facing another year of unemployment, insecurity and low pay will have been sickened by the greed and ruthlessness of these City spivs who have been making fortunes by criminal and devious means.

Financial director Olivier Roux, chief executive Ernest Saunders and merchant bank director Roger Seelig are alleged to have been involved in illegal buying of 2.15 million of the company's own shares during their takeover bid for Distillers, to raise the price of Guinness shares and give them an advantage over rival bidders, Argyll. They have all resigned.

Europe's 39th biggest company is also under investigation for allegedly paying the convicted American share dealer Ivan Boesky

\$100 million, which he has told US investigations he used to buy shares in both Guinness and Argyll, selling the latter at a crucial stage in order to help strengthen the Guinness bid.

An investigation is being carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry, headed by... Paul Channon, heir to a share of the Guinness family fortune.

The company was facing a slow decline, so in 1981 they recruited a team of financial wizards headed by Saunders to reorganise the company.

This they did, not by increasing production or employment, but by selling off less profitable parts of the company and taking over other companies, notably whisky firms like Arthur Bell and Distillers, by legal or illegal means.

In the past, the ruling class hypocritically pretended to maintain standards of morality in business. Now they no longer even pretend. During their battle for

Distillers, in order to reassure that firm's Scottish investors, Guinness pledged that they would open a new HQ in Edinburgh and appoint Scottish banker Sir Thomas Risk as Chairman. After they had won, Guinness simply said that these pledges were now inoperative.

But Guinness is not just a rotten apple in a healthy capitalist barrel. It typifies the system—greed by the rich, for the rich, at the expense of the workers who create the wealth. While these city slickers speculate, the unemployed and poor starve because the country's resources are used in Stock Exchange gambling rather than invested to provide jobs and produce what people need.

For the Labour Party, Guinness provides the opportunity to attack the foundations of the society which the Tories defend. Instead Robin Cook has meekly called for an immediate interim report on the Department of

Trade and Industry inquiry into Guinness. John Smith has deplored the fact that "the old boy network in the City has been smashed by international capital. Thanks to the Government's Big Bang" he said, "the market has encouraged in harder players from overseas."

## Labour

But Labour has no interest in sustaining the dying breed of 'softer' British capitalists who use the old boy network. Guinness exemplifies capitalism in the eighties. It illustrates why the next Labour government must do more than stage inquiries. It must take it and other such monopolies into public ownership, under democratic workers' control and management, so that it can be planned for the benefit of the many not exploited for the greed of the few.

By Pat Craven

## In memory of Jack Collins

**JACK COLLINS, General Secretary of Kent NUM, died this week aged 57, after a long battle against Leukemia. The *Militant* editorial board has sent a letter of condolence to his wife and family.**

Jack held many positions in the Kent NUM, from branch delegate at Chislet colliery to his election in 1971 as Kent Area delegate to the NEC and then as General Secretary of Kent NUM in February 1980.

Between 1971 and his death he was seen nationally as the essence of the struggle of the miners against pit closures and job losses. In the 1972 strike his evidence to the Wilberforce inquiry and his unyielding stand against the coal bosses played no small role in winning opinion to the side of the miners and in defeating the Tory government's plans.

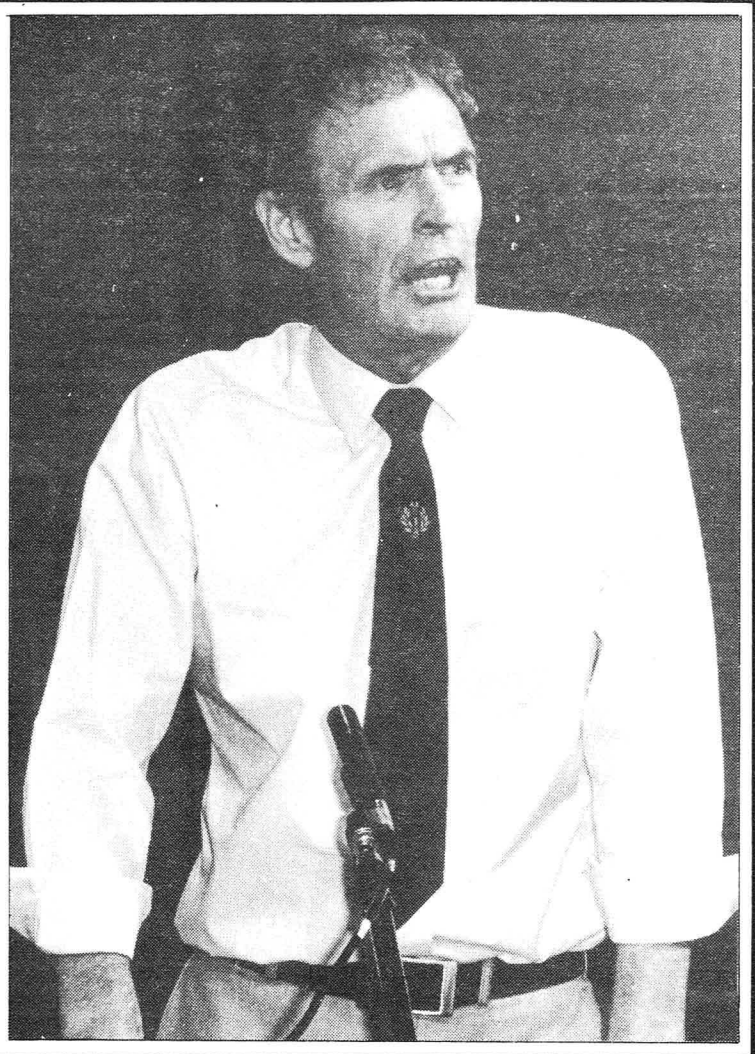
In the years leading up to the 1984/5 strike and during the year long strike, Jack will be remembered for his uncompromising stand against the coal board and the Tories. Laurence Knight, president of Kent NUM said: "Jack was a staunch communist all his life until he died. He believed implicitly in the socialist revolution and never wavered from the belief that it could only be achieved through the class struggle. He never believed in compromise, that was his way. Jack was a leading inspiration in the strike. His hard work and diligence to the Kent miners and his leadership drew a response from the membership that resulted in the solidarity that we saw. Because of leaders like Jack the Kent miners are second to none and that is the greatest tribute I can pay."

He left the Communist Party a few years ago. This did not represent a move away from his revolutionary stand-point but rather a look for a clearer and more correct perspective. He spoke at many LPYS public meetings including the first Canterbury LPYS public meeting in 1975. He also spoke at the *Militant* Rally at the end of the miners' strike in 1985.

My lasting memory will be of Jack standing at Tilmanstone colliery, megaphone in hand, rallying the mass pickets. He had the utmost confidence in the capacity of the working class to struggle whilst he had a deep mistrust of the role of the leadership of the TUC and many other unions.

In February 1972 the national executive committee of the NUM recommended to the membership the ending of the strike. Jack as Kent delegate knew this to be incorrect. The next morning he was asked by a reporter for a photograph. He replied "If you're going to take a photo, it's not going to be a picture of a miner looking defeated, because if we don't get our way, we're coming back again!" That is how he should be remembered.

By Eric Segal



## Conference postponed

**THE LONDON Labour Party Young Socialists' annual conference has been postponed, after a decision by officers of the Greater London Labour Party. The London Labour Women's conference has also been postponed.**

The reason given is that because of the impending Greenwich by-election, "tremendous effort is needed by all Party members." London Young Socialists couldn't agree more—but this decision seems to be more of the same medicine which isn't reviving the patient—Labour's vote. In other words hard hitting socialist campaigning will lose votes, says the voice of reason. Far from it—London Young Socialists would be discussing the issues, and pressing the demands, which would make the youth of Greenwich go and vote for something worth voting for.

**THE LABOUR Party Young Socialists' campaign to prevent**

**Labour's right wing from railroading through changes to the Party's youth structure was given a boost this week.**

The Executive Committee of the Greater London Labour Party voted to oppose the proposal put by Tom Sawyer.

The executive of the largest Labour Party region in the country voted by 16-14 to oppose the proposed reduction in the LPYS maximum age from 26 to 21 and any change in the method of electing the LPYS representatives on Labour's national executive.

The motion moved by the Chair of the Greater London LPYS Paul Hannick, was carried despite a strong challenge from the right wing Labour Co-ordinating Committee grouping who made vitriolic attacks on the LPYS during the debate.

This issue will be the subject of debate at London Labour Party conference. The LPYS will be trying to ensure that this victory is consolidated there. It is vital though that the argument is won in the trade unions if victory is to be realised.

# Campaigns mount to stop deportations

A CAMPAIGN has been launched in Liverpool against the threatened deportation of Akhtar Khalil, who came to Britain from Pakistan in 1983 as a student.

Whilst here he met Margaret Bertie and they were married in June 1985. In September 1985 he returned to Pakistan to visit his sick father. While there he was pressurised into an arranged marriage with a distant relative. Upon arriving back in Britain in December he freely volunteered this information when being interviewed by the Immigration Office in Liverpool. He was granted leave to remain in this country until August 1986.

Mr Khalil was again called back to Pakistan in March 1986 because of his father's continuing illness, but his family wanted him to stay and refused to give him the return air fare. Eventually his wife Margaret raised the money for his ticket and he returned here in August.

At Heathrow, he was detained by immigration officials

who said they did not believe that he was genuinely married to Margaret and he would have to leave the country in September. It has since emerged that they may have been acting in part on malicious and anonymous information that the Khalil's marriage was only one of convenience, in the words of the Home Office "entered into primarily to obtain admission to the United Kingdom".

Following the intervention of Terry Fields, the Khalil's MP, the Home Office is now reviewing the case, but a campaign needs to be waged to prevent Akhtar Khalil's deportation under the Government's racist immigration laws.

A Defence Campaign has been set up, involving representatives of the Pakistani community, the City Council and the labour movement.

If you are interested in joining the campaign then contact the Akhtar Khalil Defence Campaign, c/o Terry Fields, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool L1 9AX. Tel: (051) 709 4878.



Elderly women crossing road in freeze-up. Thatcher has relented under pressure to allow £5 heating allowance to be claimed this week—but pensioners need a big increase in pensions to meet costs all year round.

# Barlinnie protest: Jails full with 'economic' prisoners

THE CRISIS in the Scottish Prison System erupted for the third time in a few months with the take over of "B" wing of Barlinnie Prison by 24 prisoners. The siege, longer than any other, followed earlier direct action by prisoners at Saughton (Edinburgh) and Peterhead.

The "Big Hoose" or "Barl" as Barlinnie is known stands on a hill, dark and grey, as a symbolic warning to the poor and dispossessed which dominate its population. It was built last century to hold 900—now it holds 1300. The specific incident which sparked off the occupation was the alleged assault on one inmate by prison officers.

Despite their usual "no comment" the authorities were forced to produce the prisoners' publicity when this inmate attended a separate court case. His face was reportedly covered in dried blood and cuts so they

couldn't deny he'd been assaulted. None of the prisoners involved in the protest have yet been charged.

Initially the prisoners took over one floor and only took hostages when the 'mufti' squad—a gang of officers with riot gear—were sent in to take the floor back. They were physically beaten back by the prisoners. Some of the prison officers locked themselves in a cell and were taken hostage from there.

The siege ended with guarantees about immediate access to lawyers and doctors without anyone else being hurt.

The real origins of the revolt by prisoners in Scotland, arises not from any individual incident but from a series of incidents caused by the oppressive atmosphere created by the prison system and by the harsh measures of the Tories. Barlinnie is full of 'economic prisoners' of Thatcherism—four out of five are in for non-violent offences. Many were never

given prison sentences but are there for non-payment of fines. The drug and alcohol abusers and the mentally ill are dumped in prison because of the cuts in local authority spending. Adequate resources to deal with drug and alcohol abuse or mental illness are no longer available.

Conditions in the prisons are a disgrace: overcrowding and understaffing pile on pressure. The lack of privacy for all activities—even the toilet—and lack of frequent visits by relatives of a decent length of time in comfortable surroundings and the lack of access to the telephone dehumanise the prisoners. Boring work and inadequate leisure facilities compound the problem. They all come together to create hellholes where 'cons' and 'screws' are thrown at each others' throats. The deprivation of freedom is punishment enough.

The bosses condemn vast sections of the working class to poverty and young people have been forced into drug

addiction and thieving. The bosses' answer is longer prison sentences and harsher regimes. Scotland jails more than twice as many people as England and Wales per head of population and even more than Turkey—a country notorious for its high prison population.

Reforming the police, judicial and prison systems is necessary—no judiciary should be composed of unelected upper class reactionaries. But these reforms are no long term answer. The feeling of hopelessness which affects youth must be challenged by the programme and campaigning of the LPYS—to fight for decent jobs with good wages and training. A Labour government determined to bring real change in the quality of working class life could create a society able to tackle the issues of a large prison population and change the harsh nature of the police, judicial and prison system.

By Ronnie Stevenson



Terry Fields MP, speaking to Walter Yao and backing his right to stay.

SUPPORTERS OF Walter Yao, a Ghanaian living in Liverpool who has been threatened with deportation, are now confident that he will be allowed to stay in Britain.

The Home Office case is wafer thin and rests on the fact that during an amnesty of 'illegal' immigrants in the 1970s Walter wasn't aware that he needed to declare himself and register.

He later disqualified himself, according to the Home Office, when he returned to Ghana for a short period.

The deportation order has been suspended, but supporters are working hard to get it cancelled. Terry Fields,

MP for Liverpool Broadgreen, took part in a well attended protest demonstration outside the Liverpool office of the immigration department on 6 January. Workmates, Labour Party members and community organisations also took part.

But due to this callous treatment by the Home Office Walter's wife Elizabeth has suffered a nervous breakdown from the emotional strain and is still in hospital.

We are sure *Militant* readers will wish her a speedy return to good health.

By Graham Smillie

# Left Labour students must unite for democracy

THE KINNOCKITE and misnamed Democratic Left in the Labour Students' organisation NOLS have once again succeeded in securing the candidates for the National Union of Students (UK) executive, but only after a bureaucratic manoeuvre by the Party's student organiser, Sally Morgan.

Morgan ruled, at the important NOLS student council which selects the candidates, that NOLS area executive members were not allowed to vote in the council.

This ruling, against all past precedents, undoubtedly affected the result of the council in favour of the Democratic Left.

When a request was made for a vote to overturn the student organiser's decision, the chair of council ruled that the ruling could not be challenged.

The chair then moved to a vote for next business effectively seen as a vote on the right to challenge the ruling. The move to next business was carried by only six votes. At least 12 area executive members, all opposed to the Democratic Left, were ruled out along with Cheryl Varley and two delegates from Labour Clubs.

Earlier Morgan refused to give a credentials report, requested to allay fears of malpractice in the voting, and she threatened to leave the council if anybody was

suggesting ballot rigging. She only reported that 226 credentials had been issued after the first vote was taken, and refused to say how many delegates were ruled out.

## Walked out

The outcome of the council has major repercussions for Labour students, but will have little validity in the eyes of the rank and file in NOLS. Supporters of the left grouping Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) walked out of the council protesting at its undemocratic nature after their candidate for the presidency was narrowly defeated. But this has left SSIN open to the allegation that their prime

intent is to secure support for their own candidates.

The undemocratic practices of the 'Democratic' Left have caused another damaging confrontation in NOLS undermining attempts to build Labour's influence among students in what will probably be a general election year.

However the council shows how close the left are to winning a majority in NOLS and removing the right wing leadership. A united left slate at the forthcoming NOLS conference around the demands for democracy in NOLS initiated by *Militant* supporters, would lead to such a victory.

In the meantime there

# FE change

LOUISE JAMES, organising secretary of Further Education Labour Students (FELS) has been told by the principal of Brixton FE college that the organisation cannot use the college for its conference, over-ruling a booking made with the support of the union NATFHE.

FELS sees this as a deliberate attempt at sabotage. Lambeth labour movement activists will be taking this up locally. Due to the lack of time FELS has had to change the venue at short notice to Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, London NW1 nearest tube Kings Cross. The date remains 31 January.

Credentials cost £5 which includes entrance to FELS conference, social, accommodation and food.

# Sinn Fein's old nationalism in new clothes

KEN LIVINGSTONE'S column in *Tribune* (9 January) came to the defence of the policies of Sinn Fein.

Livingstone has moved rapidly to the right on a number of issues. His latest change of position to a 'left' form of zionism was reported in *Militant* on 12 December.

But he seems to want to maintain his 'left' credentials with sections of the Labour Party. He quite correctly takes the Catholic middle class Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) to task for their timid pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist policies. They have been incapable of building a real opposition to Northern Ireland's sectarianism and repression.

Livingstone's defence of Sinn Fein, though, is totally misguided. He glorifies Sinn Fein, claiming that it "is now in the body of its theory a firmly socialist party" and a "genuinely progressive working class party."

## False policies

Sinn Fein has certainly won a degree of support in Northern Ireland, especially from youth in the Catholic areas. This is largely in response to army and police repression and the poverty in Catholic areas, but it also reflects the vacuum on the left. Without a mass working class based opposition, the hatred for Thatcher and the bosses finds an outlet in Sinn Fein.

But the policies, tactics and orientation of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA are false.

Marxists have always explained that the individual terrorism methods espoused by the Provisionals can never defeat capitalism or im-

perialism. Mass action by the working class, strikes, demonstrations, general strikes and ultimately insurrection, is the force to change society.

In Ireland socialism can only be achieved by a mass movement of the working class, Protestant and Catholic, North and South. No group of individuals can act as the workers' 'avengers' or 'liberators'. In Northern Ireland the Provos' campaign has had the added effect of further exacerbating the already disastrous sectarian divisions.

Last August the IRA showed their distance from the working class when they threatened ordinary workers like building workers and BT staff who serviced "British Army, UDR and RUC barracks or any military installation" that they were the "enemies" and "legitimate targets" for attacks.

They warned unions of the "dangers their members face by being employed in military installations." The IRA said the unions should advise members to seek alternative employment. But with 130,000 workers on the dole, in Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, where are they supposed to go?

With policies like that, even if Sinn Fein were able to gain support from a majority of Catholic workers, which is still unlikely, they

could never draw Protestant workers into united action against capitalism, Irish and British. This will be true even if Sinn Fein were to renounce individual terrorism, because of the party's history.

The military campaign of the IRA can take one of two roads. Most likely it will continue and end up isolated, or the campaign will be stepped up leading to an open confrontation and provoking civil war. When loyalist MP Robert Bradford was assassinated in 1981, Paisley mobilised his 'Third Force' and speculation was raised of civil war.

An IRA spokesman at the time said: "If a civil war is to be the consequence of the execution of a British MP, then it must be the inevitable consequence of any struggle for a united Ireland. We are not intent on provoking a civil war, but we will not abandon our struggle because of the threat of it. British Imperialism and one of its symptoms loyalism must be stood up to".

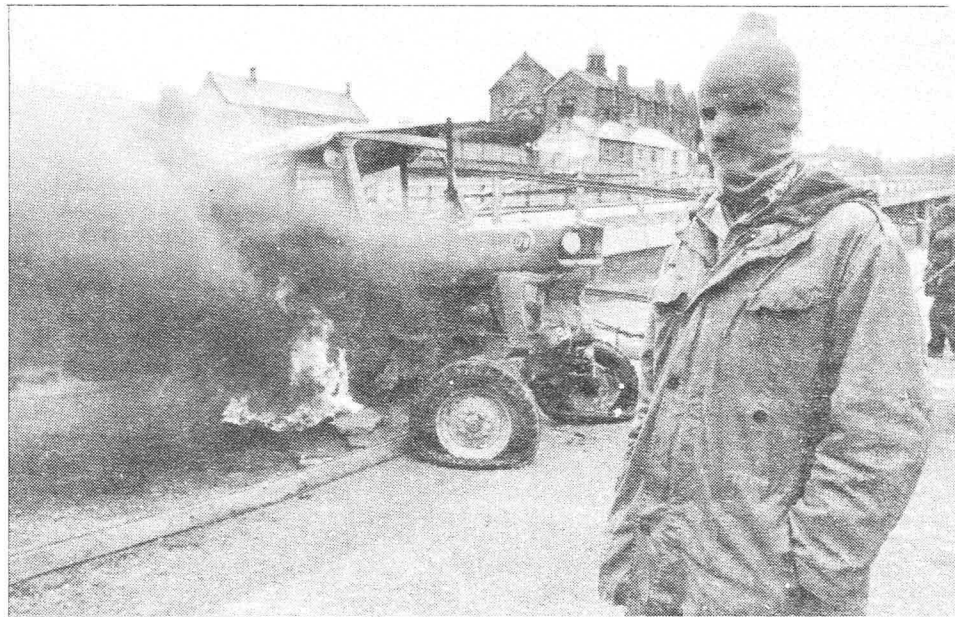
## Social issues

But a civil war would not lead to a Provisional victory and a united Ireland as they imagine. On the contrary, it would unleash a bloody carnage, hundreds of thousands of refugees and the re-partition of Ireland, an ultra-loyalist military state in the North and a reactionary police state in the South. It would be a huge set back for the working class.

The new Adams/Mc Guinness/Morrison leadership of Sinn Fein have mixed some social and economic issues with nationalism. To attract the youth in the ur-



Sinn Fein's 1986 Ard Fheis (conference).



Individual terrorism has been a response to the repression and sectarianism of Northern Ireland, but it has proved incapable of ending the problem.

ban Catholic areas, Sinn Fein's leaders have to dress up their republicanism in semi-socialist and radical clothes. But stripped of the rhetoric, all that remains is the right-wing nationalist ideas of O'Brady and the old leaders who split away to form the so-called Republican Sinn Fein last autumn.

Sinn Fein remains a nationalist, not a socialist organisation. At the recent Ard Fheis (conference) Gerry Adams' presidential address made no mention of socialism and re-stated the traditional nationalist ideas. For Sinn Fein's leaders the objective is "the struggle for national self-determination, committed to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland". This means a capitalist united Ireland.

If socialism is raised inside the Provisionals it always remains subservient to nationalism.

*Militant* has always explained that there can be no capitalist solutions. A capitalist united Ireland would lead to armed Protestant resistance, bloody civil war and re-partition.

The departure of O'Brady's supporters does not mean Sinn Fein is developing as a socialist movement.

At the Ard Fheis Vice-President Martin McGuinness underlined that the current leadership was strongly committed to the Provos military campaign. "The reality is" he said, "that the former leadership of this movement has never been able to come to terms with this leadership's criticism of the disgraceful attitude adopted by them during the disastrous 18 month cease-



Above sectarian loyalist protest in Portadown.

fire in the mid-seventies".

The political role of Sinn Fein will always be to play second fiddle to the IRA's military struggle. The Provisionals are a military organisation first and foremost. Any attempt to reverse this or to end the military campaign would further split the IRA with a bloody feud and a section of the movement continuing the struggle.

## Class battles

Under the leadership of the Adams wing, Sinn Fein has been able to point to successes. But these have been achieved because of the lack of a genuine socialist alter-

native. The class battles which will arise in the coming years will make the political expression of class unity a burning necessity.

*Militant's* demands for a mass party of labour based on the unions, and for a socialist alternative will cut across any long term hopes for Sinn Fein as its policies fail to live up to the needs of the situation.

The left in the Labour Party should seriously re-examine the policies they back in Northern Ireland and join the fight for class unity and socialism.

By Militant reporters

## Dunnes workers victimised

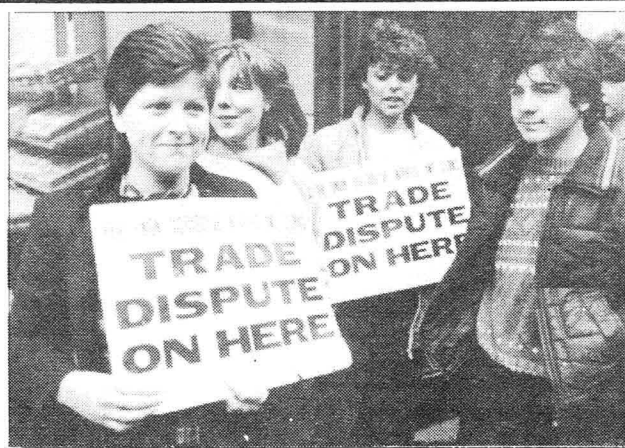
ELEVEN WORKERS in Dunnes stores supermarket in Dublin have been on strike since 19 July 1984 because they refused to handle South African goods. This helped to force the Irish government to ban imports of South African fruit and vegetables from 1 January 1987.

Having achieved this, the workers decided to return to work on 5 January. But Dunnes, who have attacked trade unions consistently in the past, were not prepared to let the workers back. *Militant* spoke to shop steward Karen Gearon:

"Most of us hadn't slept for two or three days before going back. Many times before, we had thought the strike was settled then had our hopes dashed. This time we really thought it was over. The manager was all smiles when we walked in.

"He shook our union leader's hand warmly and asked us to follow him to the canteen where he said there were some things to be sorted out before we could clock in.

"He then handed each of us a letter saying we would



Dunnes' strikers.

Photo: Derek Speirs (Report) III

handle any and all goods on sale at the store. This was an attempt to change our terms of contract and a serious attack on our union rights.

"Had we signed, not only would we have had to handle any South Africa stocks they had hidden away, we could not refuse to handle scab deliveries from any factories on strike.

"For two hours we argued with the local manager. He was really pathetic. He kept having to leave to ring head office to see what to do next; they want to stop us coming back at all costs. None of us were going to sign that letter so we left.

"The dispute is now going to the rights commissioner, an informal non-binding arbitration scheme; the union is claiming we have effectively been sacked.

"Our strike goes on. We want our jobs back. It's hard to see what will happen now, especially if the union is not prepared to spread the strike now on the issue of victimisation of union members. None of us will sign that letter. We will give up our jobs rather than give in".

Messages of support to K Gearon, IDATU, 9 Cavendish Row, Dublin 1.

Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

# Right seek expulsion of miners' leader

**IAN ISAAC, the former Secretary of St John's Lodge NUM and ex-member of the South Wales NUM executive committee, faces a new threat of expulsion by Ogmere Labour Party.**

Ian's record during the miners' strike and the campaign to keep St John's colliery open was rewarded by the NCB by a transfer to a methane plant where only three men work, in an attempt to isolate him from the rank and file and demoralise him.

This has failed, with Ian only recently playing a leading role in the founding of the National Miners' Broad Left.

Ogmere's MP Ray Powell and his lackeys are attempting what the NCB failed to do—isolate Ian from the movement—by starting proceedings which could lead to him being expelled by Labour's new National Constitutional Committee.

The St. John's Lodge and the Llynfi and Upper Afan Miners' Support Group were models of how to run the strike. St John's miners were among the first to take the miners' case to workers in other countries, resulting in £1,000 worth of food being sent to Maesteg and other South Wales towns.

## Closure fight

Ian Isaac became well known to workers up and down the country at the hundreds of meetings he spoke at. He successfully moved the resolution at the South Wales NUM EC calling for a 24 hour general strike to defend the NUM area funds when they were sequestered.

By a Militant reporter

Almost as soon as the strike was over, the NCB announced the closure of St John's. In the most difficult conditions, the miners fought hard to save the pit. Unfortunately the resolve of the St John's men was not matched by the area leadership, and the pit became one of a dozen to shut.

When he stood for area President, Ian received a quarter of the votes, despite the EC censuring him and withdrawing his election leaflets which explained he was standing as "a miners' president on a miner's wage". The current President's wage is £385 per week plus expenses.

The campaigning record of the Ogmere Labour Party, by contrast, is disgraceful. Nantyllyon branch, in the middle of Maesteg, has only ten members and is rumoured to meet once a year. A young would-be member has applied to join five times to no avail.

Despite extremely poor membership in many other branches, a party officer recently announced at his branch that there was now "a selective freeze on youth recruitment", consistent with the constituency's continuous refusal to allow Young Socialist branches to be set up.

Ray Powell's record is no better. After the victory for trade unionists in the defeat of the Shop's Bill,



Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Ian Isaac addresses a youth rally in Blackpool during the miners' strike.

Powell, an MP sponsored by the shop workers' union supported the idea of a bill to relax the 1950 Shops Act. He was only stopped after USDAW's executive put pressure on him.

## Fine tradition

Ian Isaac and party members in Ogmere are preparing to go on the streets to defend their ideas. They are confident of winning the support of thousands of working people in Ogmere, which has a fine tradition of left wing militancy. Idris Cox (a local miners' leader and editor of the *Daily Worker* in the 1930s) led the fight against Maesteg's right wing in the 1920s.

The local newspaper, *The Glamorgan Gazette*, recently had a banner headline warning that 'the Militants won't go quietly'. Ray Powell and Ogmere's right-wing are about to find out exactly how

loudly socialists will be prepared to defend a rank and file workers' leader.

Resolutions and letters of protest to: Muriel Williams, 6 Ogwy St., Nantymoel, Mid Glamorgan.

Copies to: Ian Isaac, 41 Neath Road, Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan.

## Expulsion move

AN ATTEMPT to initiate expulsion proceedings in Granby ward, Liverpool, was defeated on 6 January by ten votes to nine. At the ward AGM Councillor Dave Leech moved a resolution calling for an investigation into the action of *Militant* 'members' who leafleted the Granby area in connection with the *Black Caucus*' book. Leech stated that he wanted the expulsion of four named *Militant* supporters.

## Trade unionist under attack

THE WITCH-HUNT in Liverpool has now infected the trade unions. Mick Hogan, member of the GMBATU Education branch 80 has now been threatened with expulsion.

The branch committee has recommended that the Regional Committee expel Mick from the union for writing an article in *Mersey Militant*, despite the fact that the article was written in a personal capacity and is entirely accurate.

The article was written when the branch 80 shop stewards decided to split from the Liverpool Joint Shop Stewards Committee without consulting the members of the branch. This action and the present witch-hunt are just two examples of the lack of democracy within the branch where shop stewards are appointed by the branch committee, not elected by the members.

Mick was not given time to construct a case against the expulsion before it went to the branch committee. Only now have the branch committee put in writing the rules Mick had allegedly broken.

Mick has been denied an opportunity to take his case before his fellow branch members, in clear violation of the union's rules.

GMBATU members will be angry that the branch committee are squashing free speech in the union and will want to know what the branch committee are frightened of.

It is significant that this expulsion is the first action of the branch 80 leadership in 1987. Over the past year the leadership, together with the full-time officials, have been more interested in witch-hunting socialists and supporting the investigations of the Labour Party NEC than preparing the membership for the attacks that will inevitably come if our councillors lose their case in the House of Lords.

## Redcar

THREE REPRESENTATIVES of Labour's National Executive Committee, plus the National officer, David Hughes, visited Redcar before Christmas to inquire into the differences between the local party and its MP, James Tinn.

They heard 'witnesses' called on behalf of the MP, who made allegations of malpractice in the constituency and *Militant* infiltration of local wards.

Councillor Arthur Seed (leader of Langbaurgh council) gave evidence for over five hours and accused David Hughes of frustrating his attempts to expel 'militants'.

Because of the time taken hearing evidence the inquiry was adjourned until 23/24 January when the NEC will visit Redcar again, this time for two days.

By a Militant reporter



Photo: John Woulfe.

Young Socialists march on the South Wales miners' HQ in Pontypridd to protest against the sequestration of the NUM's funds.

## North and South support Militant

THERE'S BEEN a lot in the news this week about the so-called 'North/South Divide'. If we believed everything the Tories and their press say you'd think life was rosy for workers in the South.

But what kind of jobs are available? According to an article in the *Guardian* there are plenty of openings for 'live-in domestics' or 'Friday-persons', or there's always McDonald's. We would agree with the *Guardian's* next comment: "There must be something wrong with these jobs; they are forever being advertised."

It is clear from these reports that we desperately need a Labour government

now, committed to socialism. *Militant* leads the way in that fight, that's why our supporters in the North and South are still sending in donations that represent a huge sacrifice, to our £250,000 Appeal.

An excellent example is Toni Whatmough a single parent from Barking and a low paid civil servant, who sent us £80. Special thanks also to Leslie Ann Barrett (London) who sent us a late Christmas present of £200. We've also received over £100 from Christmas socials that were organised in Edinburgh, Hackney and Gwent.

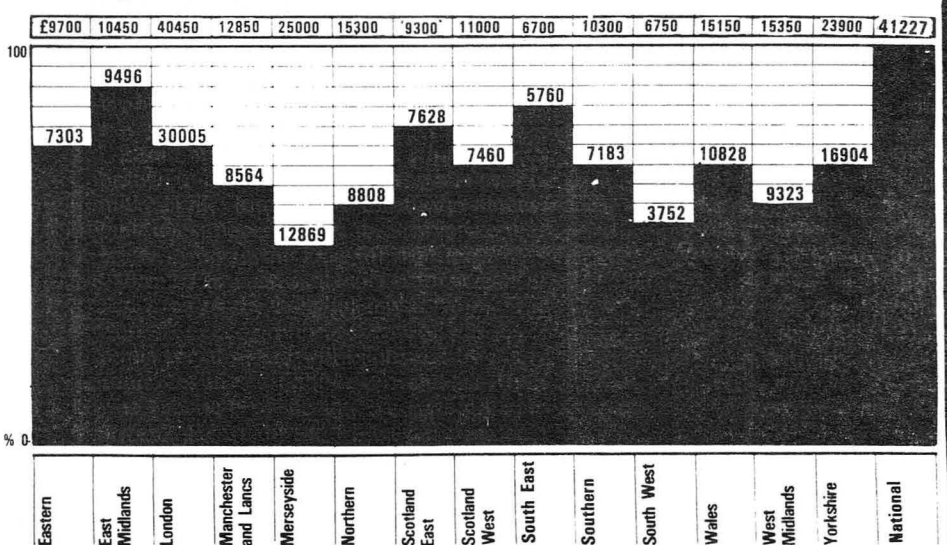
Raffle ticket money has continued to pour in. A NALGO member from

South Humberside has sold nearly 20 books in work. Can you match that? Remember there's only two weeks left until the draw. Make sure you don't have any spare books lying in your back pocket or at the bottom of your bag. We don't want any of our supporters to miss out on our fantastic first prize.

With our special paper-sales drive now underway make sure you use your rattling tin to raise FF.

Thanks to: £20 from a reader in London, £24.30 from supporters in Milton Keynes, £10 from Mark Gilkes (Westminster), £10 reader in Stockport, £10 raised on petition in Bridgend, £2 Madelaine Sheene (Gwent).

## £250 000 Fighting Fund



# Printers' leaders ignored warnings on Murdoch plans

'WAPPING INSIGHT reveals why the Street went under', was the headline over the UK Press Gazette's, review of Linda Melvern's book, "The End of the Street" (see Militant 12 December).

Three editions later, in a long letter, Sogat General Secretary, Brenda Dean launched into an oration of praise: "She (Linda Melvern) has pieced together much of the story and certainly unearthed material which even those of us in the midst of Rupert Murdoch's web of deceit could not see clearly at the time."

But she says, "there are flaws and factual error which one could challenge."

"For example Linda Melvern makes much of the fact that one of Sogat's members, Tony Cappi, and Terry Ellis of the AUEW assembled a remarkable amount of proof that those inside Wapping were clearly up to no good. What those two colleagues did not tell Ms Melvern was that their absolute assessment was that Rupert Murdoch could not produce all his titles in Wapping and that action taken against all his national newspapers would result in chaos in Wapping."

Later Ms Melvern delivered her riposte: "Dozens of documents were smuggled to them (Cappi and Ellis—eds) by inside contacts during the year.

By AW Shute  
(Retired member, London NGA)

Atex (electronics company) personnel working in the plant, knew how many terminals were installed, had seen coachloads of recruits, and found out some of the presses had been converted from tabloid to broadsheet size.

"With their own network of spies they built up a dossier and by September 1985 had enough information to lead them to the conclusion that not only was Rupert Murdoch planning to print the four titles in the new plant but was capable of doing so.

## Exhibition

"They tried for months to warn senior officials with increasing desperation. They even mounted an exhibition of their evidence in the Strand Palace Hotel—only one senior Sogat official turned up."

Linda Melvern refuted Dean's assertion that Cappi and Ellis thought Murdoch's



Printworkers have fought for a year for their jobs.

attempt to produce all four newspapers at Wapping would result in chaos: "At no time was such a conclusion reached.

"Quite the reverse. I have spoken with Terry Ellis since reading Brenda Dean's letter and he is surprised about her claim. 'We even did a graph to show it was possible to print all four titles,' he said."

This year long struggle needs firm leadership in the interests of every trade unionist. Not a month passes without articles in the "Production Journal"—technical mouthpiece of provincial and small-time newspaper proprietors announcing large scale introduction of direct-input editorial and advertising systems, that almost annihilate the traditional composing room's work.

It is not only here that the management labour saving drive is rife: plate making, the machine room and the despatching room and office



Brenda Dean, general secretary of SOGAT, the biggest print union.

are all subject to the same pressure.

The annihilation of journalists' jobs stands out in bold capitals upon the not too distant horizon. In the electronic pipe-line are systems for micro-chip sub-editing, semi-automatic full page-fit make-up on screen with spelling and grammatical correction, and the setting of type by on-the-spot reporters.

The Wapping impasse has been the anguish of trade union activists since the two outstanding Wapping demonstration marches of

May 1 and 3. The trade union leadership has abdicated its responsibility to the Wapping strikers, instead of organising the willing demonstrators, country wide, for action comparable to that of the Paris students and workers in December.

These actions defeated not merely a single employer but an entire government.

The rank and file must demand that the TUC General Council uses its strength in a campaign of action for victory at Wapping.

## Left and Right

### Yes, comrade minister

ONE OF the main bureaucrats responsible for education in Stalinist China has been explaining the recent student demonstrations. Mr He Dongchang explained that they had arrested an unemployed man for stirring up the marches, and anyway, China was not ready for democracy because so many Chinese were illiterate. However these "illiterate" citizens were free to express their opinion—by writing letters to the government.

### Our royal correspondent writes

EX-MARINE Prince Edward has joined other brave Princes Philip, Charles and Andrew fighting the most dangerous enemy this realm has ever faced—pheasants. The brave lads, military men all, had already potted 5,000 of them by 5 January and there's still a month left of the shooting season. The Duchess of York, alias Fergy, has been helping by collecting the dead birds.

The season ends with a Grand Slam cock shoot (which sounds like bad news for Randy Andy) when they hope to kill 1,000 male birds. These will be sold for a good cause, Sandringham estate funds. The most proficient at winging these birds, far more than anyone can eat, is Prince Philip who has probably sent 25,000 to an

early grave in twenty years. His Royal Highness is of course President of the World Wildlife Fund.

### The old red tie?

LABOUR PARTY policy is against private schools, they give a passport into jobs in the City, the professions and as trainee archbishops etc to the offspring of the rich. It is the Tories who defend the Old School Tie network by talking about "freedom of choice" and the "opportunity to be unequal" and suchlike hypocrisy.

But the Daily Telegraph carried an article recently about fee paying schools Latymer Upper and Dulwich. They are day schools rather than boarding establishments but fees are believed to be in the £3000 per year range. They are unashamedly schools of the old Grammar school type but only for people with money.

The Telegraph claims that Alan Sapper (general secretary ACTT) Vanessa Redgrave (Equity and one of the Workers Revolutionary Parties) Larry Whitty (Labour Party general secretary) and Lady Falkender (formerly Marcia Williams, chief clairvoyant to Harold Wilson) send their children to such establishments.

How many Labour Party and union leaders get round the attacks on education by buying smaller classes and better equipment rather than fighting for a socialist education policy?

## Bad start for Restart

THE GOVERNMENT'S Restart programme for the long term unemployed, has only one role—to frighten people off the unemployment figures.

A confidential memo to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) shows that less than one per cent of people referred to it actually got jobs. 120 successes out of 18,216 clients was the dismal record in nine pilot schemes.

Since June all people unemployed for more than 12 months have had "invitations" to attend their local job centre for a Restart interview. Claimants who don't attend after the second letter have their benefit suspended. Between June and October 27,533 had their money stopped.

The whole project is designed to con the electorate that the Tories are beating unemployment. In reality they are beating the unemployed.

If you go to a centre you are given an eight point

"menu" of ways out of unemployment. This menu is a joke. A job, even a low paid job which attracts the £20 Jobstart allowance is almost utopian in most areas.

Training is a non starter after cuts in skill centres and local colleges. For most people, the need for £1,000 puts the Enterprise Allowance scheme out. Voluntary work won't pay your bills and not everybody can become self employed.

### Under pressure

So what is left? The job clubs coach unemployed people in job hunting skills, all very worth while—if there are any jobs available and that's a big if. There's the Community Programme which takes you out of long term figures for up to a year on low paid work, then back to the dole.

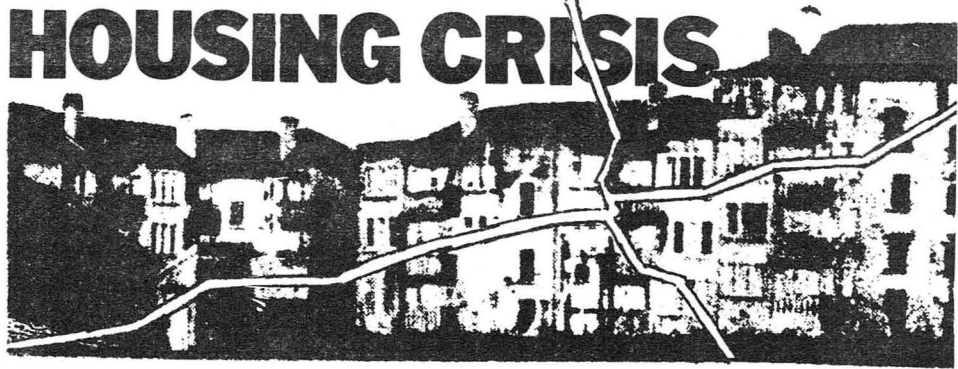
In reality the staff have little to offer the unemployed and are under pressure from the MSC management to speed up interviews, which

have been cut from about 40 minutes to about 20 minutes. Management take it as read that counsellors will "burn out" due to the pressures after 6 to 12 months.

There is pressure to produce a "positive outcome". MSC figures to October claimed that 277,534 (75 per cent) of the 366,451 interviews have had a "positive outcome". But what does this mean?

Over 50,000 were recorded as "other referrals" such as being sent to a benefits advisor or literacy course. Any application forms issued or interviews arranged for jobs or community programme all count positive, whether you get a job or not.

Staffing has been cut in job centres making civil servants' jobs even more frustrating. The Tories are just trying to fool people they've got unemployment on the run. We should make sure it is the Tories who are on the run with their nasty schemes which police the unemployed, like Restart.



# HOUSING CRISIS

## A million new homes a year

**SHANTY TOWNS on the edge of every city by the end of the century, with Crossroads-style squatter camps is a realistic scenario for Britain, if the predictions of the housing charity Shelter are borne out.**

Shelter estimate that over one million homes are now unfit for habitation and that the number of homeless is increasing by 100,000 a year. This means that at the present rate of house building and the expected rate of disrepair for existing houses between one and two million families could be homeless by the end of the century.

Lord Scarman has said that Britain is in danger of becoming a slum society and London a new Fagin's city, if nothing is done to elevate the housing crisis. Scarman and liberal minded capitalists like him are concerned that the decay of Britain's inner cities could lead to uncontrollable social eruptions with tracts of urban areas becoming no-go areas. He has mildly rebuked the government for cutting back on housing investment, but has no real solution to offer.

### Spending cuts

Spending on housing has been cut by 60 per cent since 1979, and now over half the government support for housing goes towards home owners.

This is the situation which would be inherited by a future Labour government, but the provision for housing outlined by shadow chancellor Roy Hattersley is hopelessly inadequate. The Labour Party has issued guide-lines to Party activists which "emphasise the need to listen and persuade people that Labour will improve housing for everyone whether they rent or buy." But how will this be done?

By Ben Eastop and Ken Smith

The amount of money needed to bring all housing up to a basic standard is estimated by the National House Improvement Council to be £46 billion. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimates that £20 bn is needed for council housing alone. If council housing benefits were restored to their 1979 levels then another £2 to £3 bn would have to be found.

Abolishing mortgage tax relief, suggested by some Labour leaders, would provide only a small proportion of the amount needed, and in any case would risk alienating middle class (and many working class) home owners. (See *Militant* 827).

For Labour to fulfill a fairly modest housing programme, without one extra new house being built, it would have to find an extra £40 to £45 bn. Labour's new Freedom and Fairness campaign has been costed by Roy Hattersley at £3.7bn, and this includes many commitments to the health service, education as well as housing. The total amount available from the sale of council houses is only £6bn, of which over half is being retained by the government at the moment. But even if this was released it amounts to only a tiny proportion of the investment needed.

Labour's proposed job creation programme is costed at £6 billion, of which most would go on construction, but not all on housing.

In total, spending by Labour on housing would be under £10 billion.

But this only considers the cost of *keeping still*—the real need is far greater.

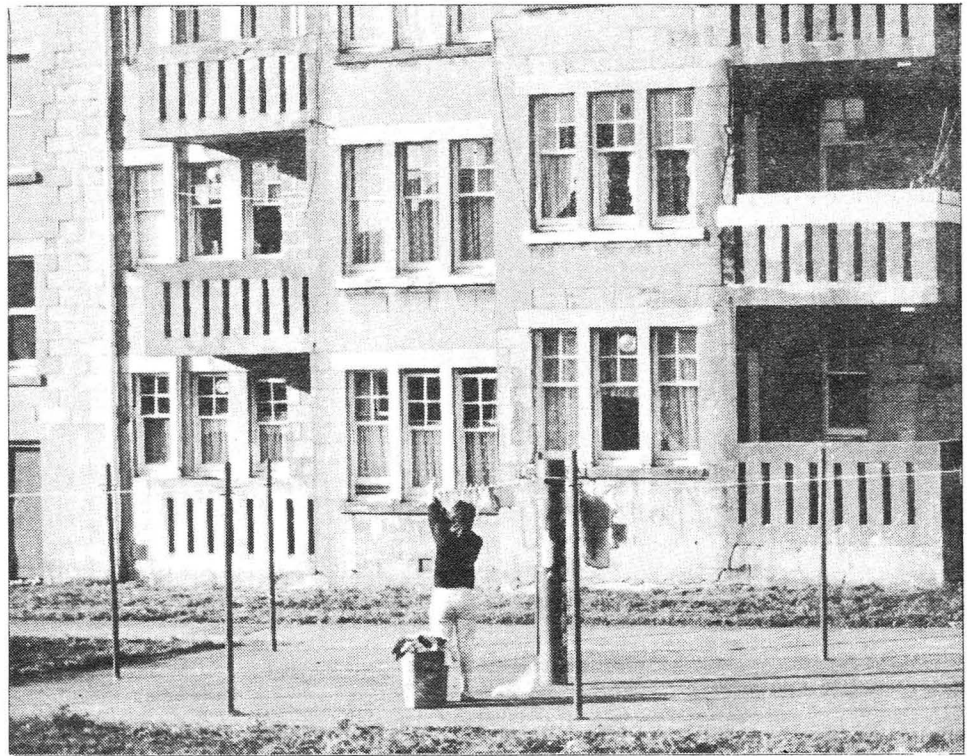
At the end of 1985, 150,000 families were officially accepted as homeless by local authorities in Britain. By the end of 1986 double that number registered as homeless and between five to ten times that number wanted to move to better accommodation. Taking the country as a whole there is likely to be half a million homeless families by the end of the decade. On top of this there are 800,000 'concealed' homeless - households sharing a home, or couples living with their parents, and 800,000 living in overcrowded homes. Over a million homes are unfit to live in.

### Demand

At the very least to satisfy this demand 2.5 million new houses need to be built, a figure which a spokesperson at Shelter agreed with. But in addition more homes would have to be built to replace decaying stock and to allow for a permanent excess to ensure mobility of households. A Labour government should also be committed to providing proper accommodation for the elderly, single parents, battered wives, and all those over the age of sixteen who want a place of their own to live.

*Militant* calls for the building of a million new homes a year for the lifetime of the next Labour government—the TUC's recently announced demand for just a million new homes is clearly insufficient.

Building a million new homes was recently costed by a conference of architects



Flats in Glasgow



Homeless man in Euston Station, London.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

and builders in Aylesbury at £28.5bn. Assuming a Labour government lasts five years then the total cost of a necessary house building programme, including repairs and renovation of existing stock, would leave little change out of £200bn—roughly equivalent to one year's public expenditure at present treasury levels.

It is clear that such a programme could not be sustained by crisis-ridden British capitalism, even though there would be spin-offs in other sections of the economy. According to an article in the *Observer*, "Shelter estimates that for every £100 million pumped into new building, the net cost to the treasury could be as little as £20 million when 350,000 building workers are taken off the dole and the additional income tax is paid to the exchequer."

There are 750,000 building workers on the dole—about one-in-four of the unemployed have building

skills which could be put to use through an expanded housing programme. Even modest changes such as special decoration and small repairs services to the elderly, which Labour has committed itself to, would provide thousands of new jobs.

### Investment

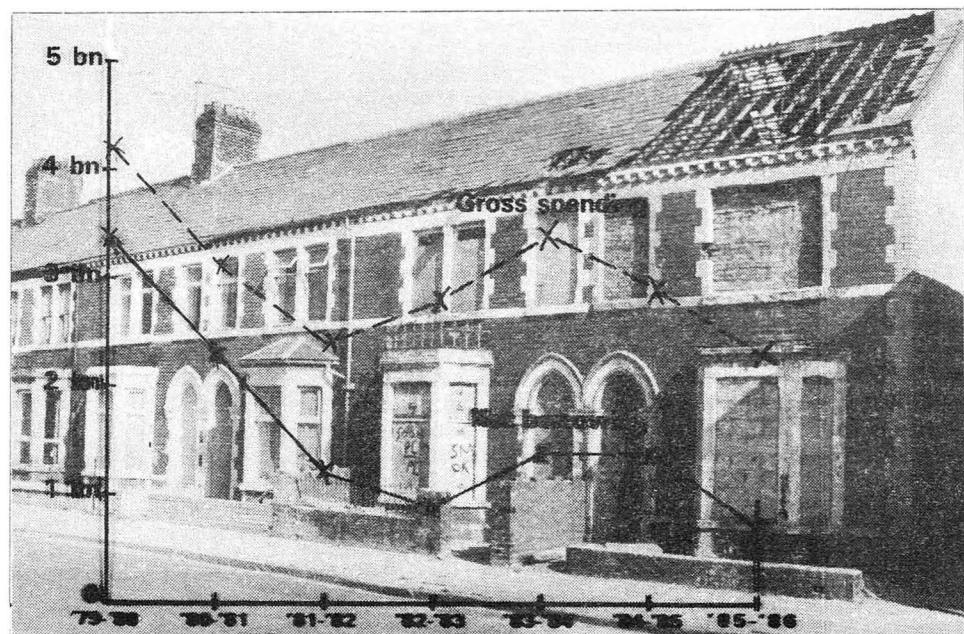
But a massive housing programme, even with these benefits to the economy, would be hotly resisted by big business, the City, and the estate agents and property speculators. Such a large scale programme would inevitably force down the over-inflated value of property and reduce the super profits that they are making while millions suffer.

The huge investment needed for housing cannot be supplied by an ailing capitalist system. Apart from the fierce resistance from big business, a Labour government attempting to finance this programme

through public spending alone would quickly lead to economic disaster. It could only be provided by taking all the construction industries, building suppliers, the banks and insurance companies into public ownership.

The building industry itself admits that if there was a tightening up on the quality of homes being built then more money would be available. The Surrey based firm Crest Homes said at a recent conference: "£10,000 million, which would pay for 250,000 new homes; could be found immediately if the building industry were doing its job properly." This is evidence that both private and public homes are being built to poor standards in the drive for extra profits.

If nationalisation of the building industry was linked to a socialist plan of production, and through the democratic control of the working class the building of a million new homes a year would be a reality.



**SINCE 1980 the number of homeless has been increasing by 15 per cent a year.**

In 1986 according to Shelter 150,000 families will be accepted as homeless by local authorities in Britain (400,000 people). Twice that number will register with local authorities as homeless and between five to ten times that number will be in desperate need of new and better housing.

203,480 households registered as homeless with local authorities in England in 1985. 93,980 were found some form of accommodation by local authorities.

In Scotland 26,000 households registered as homeless with Scottish local authorities in 1984—5 of which 12,058 were found some form of accommodation and there are now

200,000 on the council house waiting lists—almost ten times the number registered as homeless.

In Wales there are 15,000 homeless families and 90,000 households living in sub-standard housing who want a decent home—six times the number of homeless families.

There are no figures for homelessness available in Northern Ireland as there is no "Homeless Persons Act".

Shelter states that these figures are likely to be vast under estimates of the true level of homelessness in Britain today. Many people who approach Shelter for advice on their condition of homelessness are not aware of the statutory duty of local authorities to find accommodation for homeless people.

# The end of the

# American dream

THE GRINDING poverty in the wealthiest nation in the world, was eloquently depicted in a letter, recently published in the New York paper *Village Voice*, sent in by a policeman.

"An assignment in the (mainly black Bedford-Stuyvesant area of New York City) is like no other in the world.

When you enter these semi-abandoned buildings you come face-to-face with total poverty, despair and hopelessness. You walk into a building that is totally dilapidated, half burned out; the odour of urine, human waste and garbage totally overwhelms you.

Then you walk into one of the apartments and your sense of humanity is assaulted by the sight of tiny infants and aged grandparents living in filth and squalor. No one, but no one should be allowed to live in this way.

Tell me why the greatest and richest nation on the face of this earth cannot or will not solve this problem. I can't believe—I won't believe—we

couldn't solve these problems if we wanted to.

So the obvious answer must be that someone doesn't want them to go away. Isn't it ironic that while we the people are concerned with poverty, drugs and crime, we don't take the time to scrutinise our elected officials?

Have you ever wondered why a man spends \$6 million to get elected to a position that pays but \$60,000 or so per year. When was the last time you saw or heard of a less than wealthy politician?

I only know that we cannot let this continue. The price we will have to pay in the future will be intolerable. It has to erupt someday, people, the human spirit that is so eloquently described in poetry will someday rise and exact a horrible vengeance for all our shortcomings."

Below Sean Heron from New York examines the crisis besetting US capitalism and the workers' fightback.

1986 WAS a disaster for American big business and the Reagan administration. It started with the disaster of the space shuttle explosion and it ended with the debacle of Reykjavik, the insider trading swindle on Wall Street, and the Iran arms deal scandal. Along the way, Reagan and his Republican Party lost control of the Senate to the Democrats.

American big business faces two more years to the 1988 elections with the seriously weakened Reagan administration. It could not have been a worse time, as they face rising revolts from the Philippines to South Africa to Latin America, while at home they face increased labour struggles and the likelihood of a new recession.

It is the weakness of capitalism and landlordism which is at the heart of the ongoing crisis of the Reagan administration.

In the neo-colonial countries capitalism and landlordism cannot feed, clothe or house the workers and peasants, therefore revolt follows revolt.

In the face of this, the US administration successively gets embroiled in one crisis after another in vain efforts to maintain its influence on a world scale. For Nixon it was Vietnam and Watergate, for Carter it was the Iran hostages, and for Reagan it is the Iran/Nicaragua arms scandal. Each crisis abroad interacts with, complicates and deepens the developing crisis in the US.

At home too it is the capitalist economic crisis that is draining the strength from the American colossus. Campaigning for election in 1979 Reagan promised to deal with the economy. The recessions of 1980 and 1982 gave way to the upswing which began in 1983 and continues up to the present. But even Reagan's most ardent supporters are careful about claiming that he has solved the economic

problem.

The truth is that Reagan has presided over a severe weakening of the economy. He has purchased his upswing by putting the US into the worst debt in its history.

At the same time, in their lust for profit, Reagan and the employers stepped up the offensive against US labour which had been started by Jimmy Carter. 11,000 members of the Air Traffic Controllers' Union were sacked and their leaders jailed for striking in 1981.

The bosses have demanded concessions from the workers. The yearly cost of living adjustment and the yearly wage increase, which had been won by the great strike movements of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, came under attack. Work rules were a particular target. The bosses demanded more work from less workers and for lower hourly pay and benefits.

The workers wanted to fight. Half a million demonstrated in Washington in 1982 against the attacks. In 1983 a wave of strikes swept the country.

## Union leaders

However, the union leaders were unprepared for the new situation. Over the years of the post war boom they had tied themselves to business unionism, and the bosses' party, the Democrats. They had lost any idea of an alternative economic system to capitalism, or any political alternative to the Democrats.

So when the employers said "our businesses are in crisis, we are not making enough profits and we are losing our markets to our rivals, we need your help", the union leaders saw no alternative but to accept this plea and echo the demands of the employers for concessions.

With no nationally coordinated alternative leadership on the shop

floor, and with rising unemployment between 1980 and 1982, the working class was forced along the concession road. The promise was, that with concessions for a few years, the good old days would return.

Four years into the upturn the employers are still asking for more concessions. As 1985 drew to a close the ranks of US labour increasingly saw that concessions only led to more concessions. The number of strikes in the last five months of 1985 doubled over the previous seven months. And in 1986 strikes were up 53 per cent over 1985.

Manufacturing workers, communications workers, transport workers, white collar workers and municipal workers have struck in all parts of the country. USX—formerly US steel—workers have been out on the picket line now for over 120 days. 116 days was the previous record for a steel strike in the post war period.

In auto, where the concessions began, the shape of things to come can be seen. General Motors, which received billions of dollars extra profit from these concessions, has announced 29,000 jobs to go. 100,000 auto jobs are threatened overall. Strikes at GM plants at Detroit and Kokomo, Indiana against outsourcing of jobs and subcontracting of union work to non-union firms, have taken place and have been victorious.

What was significant in both strikes was that the United Auto Workers (UAW) leadership gave full support.

The pressure of the rank and file and the continued offensive by the bosses in spite of five years of cooperation by the union leaders, is forcing some of these leaders to rethink their approach. They are still prepared to talk wage and benefit concessions but are digging in on outsourcing and sub contrac-

ting. They are unfortunately prepared to accept plant closures on "economic grounds". *Business Week*, the magazine of the employers, states: "the difference between workers and leaders hasn't been so great since the 1920s".

The strike wave shows that workers in the US are prepared to fight back. Votes of over 90 per cent for strike action have been recorded in many workplaces across the country, as living standards have been hit harder than at any time since the 1930s.

Real living standards have fallen 10 per cent since 1979. The minimum wage has fallen in value from 51 per cent of the average production worker's wage thirty years ago, to 35 per cent today.

Fourteen per cent of all Americans live in poverty—31 per cent of blacks, 29 per cent of Latinos, and one in every five children. Even the Roman Catholic Church has felt compelled to state that it is a "social and moral scandal" that there are "so many poor in a nation so rich as ours".

But at the other end of the scale in 1985-86 the number of billionaires rose from 14 to 26 and their total wealth from \$22 billion to \$156 billion. The number of millionaires now exceeds one million!

Inequality in the US is more

stark than almost anywhere. The richest 5 per cent have more income than the bottom 40 per cent. The richest one per cent own more assets than the bottom 90 per cent. Between 1963 and 1983 the income of the top 0.5 per cent rose by 38 per cent, while that of the bottom 90 per cent fell by 20 per cent.

In no other advanced capitalist country are there 37 million people without health care, a million living on the streets, and an infant mortality rate among the 27 million black Americans higher than that of Cuba or Jamaica. Reagan's answer has been to take free school lunches from 3 million children since 1980.

US workers do want to oppose the deepening poverty of the majority and the obscene wealth of the few. What is necessary is a clear programme and strategy put forward by the leaders of US labour.

The starting point must be *no more concessions*. The closures threatened at GM should be met with occupation of the plants linked to the struggle for a 32-hour work week for all, with no loss of pay—share out the work!

The books of the companies must be opened. The swindles and the squandered surplus must be exposed. The speculation which is earning the dealers in bonds hundreds of millions in profits must be





# ne eam



## USA—the biggest debtor in the world

**THE DEBT** crisis in the US economy has now reached phenomenal proportions. The total budget deficit for 1981 through to 1986 grew to \$1130 billion. In 1981 the budget deficit was \$79 billion and by 1986 it had reached \$220 billion. The national debt in 1975 was \$514 billion, by 1980 it was \$914 billion and by 1986 it had reached \$2,000 billion.

*It took 200 years to accumulate a national debt of \$914 billion. Reagan doubled this in six years.*

By 1986 the US had changed from being a net creditor nation (that is being owed more than it owes) to being a net debtor nation for the first time since 1914. The US is now the number one debtor nation in the world.

Did this massive debt result in large scale growth in the US economy? In 1984 the growth rate was 6.8 per cent. But in 1985 it was just over 2 per cent, and in 1986 2 to 2.5 per cent. Due to the weakened competitiveness of much of American industry this debt has resulted in a massive sucking in of imports.

The trade deficit was \$42 billion in 1982, in 1985 it was \$149 billion

and close to \$170 billion in 1986. *In the most powerful industrial nation ever known, trade in manufacturing goods went from a surplus of \$13 billion in 1980 to a deficit of \$113 billion in 1985.*

In the land of the automobile, between 20 and 25 per cent are now imported. Toyota city in Japan now turns out more units than Detroit. And in the land of high technology, the US ran a \$12 billion trade deficit in electronic products in 1986.

The American prairies are the most fertile agricultural lands in the world. Yet 35 per cent of agricultural land in the US is at present out of production and the US share of the world fruit market has slumped from 48 per cent in 1981-82 to 29 per cent in 1986.

The US produced 52 per cent of the world's goods and services in 1950. Today it produces 20-25 per cent. US big business, while still the biggest capitalist power, has lost its absolute world dominance.

Reagan, the Republicans, and his colleagues in the Democratic Party and big business blame this on too high US wages. Yet in the 1950s and 1960s the gap between

US wages and the wages in Japan and Western Europe was much greater. If the cause of the crisis was high wages, it would have surfaced at that time.

The reason for the crisis is not high wages but rather that big business has invested insufficiently in its manufacturing base, and so it is losing its markets to its rivals. During the post war boom, Japan invested 30 per cent of its gross national product back into the economy. The US invested only 14 per cent. Japan invested less than one per cent on arms—scrap metal—whereas US arms spending reached a peak of 10 per cent during the Vietnam war, and has remained at a constant 6 per cent since.

US big business squandered the surplus produced by US workers on arms and speculation. And more goes into the service sector at the expense of manufacture.

In 1986 alone 4,000 companies will spend \$200 billion on restructuring ie selling off parts of their operations and/or merging with other companies. Capitalism has nothing more to offer the American people.

ended, and the wealth invested for the needs of the majority.

Along with the full utilisation of the 21 per cent of unused productive capacity in the economy, the living standards of the American working class and poor could be transformed.

The unorganised and the low-paid should be drawn into the ranks of the unions with a campaign for a national minimum wage of \$10 per hour, up from \$3.50 at present, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Unemployment must be tackled by campaigning for a programme of useful public works to build roads, bridges, sewers, hospitals, schools, etc. A crash house-building programme must be fought for to end the scandal of 20 per cent of housing below the level fit for habitation.

The union leaders must break from the logic of capitalism that puts profit above all else, and is preparing a new collapse on the scale of 1929-33 in the next three, five or ten years.

In a recent opinion poll, 58 per cent said they are in favour of unions. In California, total union membership rose by 3.6 per cent (76,000 members) in the two years to July 1985. Of these new members, 63,000 are women.

The youth, the women workers,

the black workers, the oppressed minorities, the working class as a whole will move into the unions in their tens of millions if the leaders take up a programme of action as outlined above.

But its implementation demands political action. That means severing once and for all the link with the Democrats. There is no point in fighting the bosses on the picket line and then voting for them in elections.

The Democrats are just as much a party of big business as the Republicans. The Democrats supported the employers in the demand for concessions, and leading Democrats rallied to support Reagan in the Iran crisis. Leading Democratic senator, Sam Nunn said: "The President has been hurt; we have to set about repairing the damage."

### Tied to big business

In the land where the division of labour was taken to new heights in industry, it was developed also in politics. The Democrats have the task of keeping labour tied to the system of big business. Unfortunately the labour leaders continue to hang onto the Democrats, even though Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO union federation admits: "It is getting harder and

harder to tell our friends from our enemies."

Organised labour in the US has 18-19 million members. It is the largest union movement in the capitalist world. In the 1984 elections it donated \$11.5 million to the Democrats and in 1986 it donated \$15 million. This gigantic force, with locals in every town and city, must break from the Democrats and build a Labour Party.

The opportunity is there to be grasped as never before in the past forty years. A recent poll said that 51 per cent of Americans would vote for anti-big business candidates if they had the chance.

The parties of big business are in crisis. In the recent elections 112 million eligible voters (63 per cent) did not vote. The ranks of the bosses' parties do not exist. They have been replaced by tens of millions of dollars, TV advertisements and political consultants.

Confidence in big business has been shaken. As a *Wall Street Journal* editorial on 26 November put it: "an air of unease hangs everywhere". Most Americans can see the corruption and swindles that reach from the White House to Wall Street, to the Pentagon and the police force.

The majority can feel the "American dream" is slipping away from them. In this dream,

every worker would own a home. Those who were 20-30 years old in 1950 could buy a house with 14 per cent of their gross wage. Today it takes 44 per cent.

The next recession, which will most likely strike this year or next, will deliver that dream a death blow among the majority of workers and youth.

Labour must offer an alternative. The economy is controlled by 500 monopolies. Their directors, five to ten thousand people, constitute a dictatorship over US society. They control the economy, the political parties, the media and the legislature.

### Nationalise top 500

American workers must build a Labour Party and fight for a Labour administration which would nationalise these 500 companies under workers' control and management. This would allow a socialist plan of production and would transform the US into a genuine democracy, a workers' democracy, where the majority control the economy and therefore society as a whole.

Illusions in capitalism and the Democrats will be broken down as employers try to drive living standards back to the levels of the 1930s. Such attacks will force

workers also to revert to the methods of the 1930s—sit-down strikes and mass pickets. Black and Latino workers will play a leading part in these battles.

Even if big business manages to enter a war in Central America and turn around the mood of the majority, this will merely postpone the process for a time—only to ensure that it takes place with greater speed, in a more radical political climate, at a later date.

In Britain the working class broke from the Liberals and set up the Labour Party around the turn of the century. Central to this was Britain's economic decline as it lost its dominant role in the world and its super profits. It was no longer able to give enough privileges and security to an upper layer of skilled and organised workers. Now it is the fate of US capitalism to see its power and super-profits slipping away.

A strengthened union movement and a mass US Labour Party, fighting on a socialist programme, will shake the entire world to its foundations. It will place the overthrow of capitalism on the agenda in every capitalist country, and prepare the way for massive struggles to establish genuine workers' democracy in the Stalinist countries. It will be a key factor in the entire future of mankind.

## Third World aid

# Running faster to go backwards

*For Richer, For Poorer* is a recent report by Oxfam, showing how the multinationals and capitalist moneylenders are systematically bleeding the Third World dry. In this review JEREMY BIRCH explains the socialist approach—not only sympathy with the victims, not just charity, but clear understanding of the causes and implacable struggle to end the rotten capitalist system.

**ESPECIALLY AROUND the turn of the year, the plight of the starving and impoverished of the world is pushed back into prominence.**

But the recent Oxfam report *For Richer, For Poorer* demonstrates the hopeless inadequacy of charitable gestures: "No matter how successful are the projects supported by organisations such as Oxfam, the overall war against poverty is being lost."

For every £1 put into a charity tin, it calculates, Western financial institutions take out £9, through debt repayments on the phenomenal \$1,010 billion which third-world countries owe to banks and governments in the industrialised countries.

While 700 million (one sixth of humanity) are condemned to malnutrition; while one third world child dies every second as a result of poverty, since 1983 there has been a net transfer of finances out of the underdeveloped world each year.

In 1985 the net transfer to the West reached \$25 billion. This completely dwarfs the voluntary aid pumped in by Western organisations like Oxfam, which totalled \$2.8 billion that year. How can well-meaning charities hope to atone for the economic crimes being committed by capitalism and imperialism against the impoverished of the world?

The net transfer from Latin America, where the burden of debt and debt servicing is heaviest, totalled \$33 billion in 1985. So clearly other areas are still net beneficiaries of Western finance, but the Oxfam report comments: "Reverse aid is spreading."

Third world debt repayments, which cost \$102 billion in 1985, have now completely eclipsed the inflow of new loans and aid combined. Total official aid to the third world was only \$27.5 billion in 1984.

Third world countries are being savaged by the collapse in commodity prices (due to the reduced

level of international economic activity), while the price of Western manufactured goods continues to shoot up, and by the record interest rates making their debt repayments crippling. World commodity (raw material) prices fell 20 per cent in 1985, saving the Western economies \$65 billion over the twelve months. That's twice what they gave in aid.

Yet just as they look to the charities, many on the left in Britain seem to believe pressure for increased government aid is still the best assistance they can give to the oppressed of the third world.

Under the Tories British aid has been cut 20 per cent in real terms since 1979. Even for African famine most of Britain's emergency relief was not new money, but was taken out of existing aid funds at the expense of development elsewhere. The Indian subcontinent is the largest recipient of British aid, but this was cut from £237 million in 1984 to £123 million in 1985.

## Sentimentality

British aid is still well below the UN's modest target of 0.7 per cent of donor countries' gross national product. Britain gives 0.34 per cent, USA 0.45 per cent and the EEC 0.58 per cent.

But the Oxfam report wipes away the gloss of humanitarianism and sentimentality with which capitalism attempts to hide the true nature of aid.

Political considerations decide how much aid goes to which country. In 1985 the Falklands received £5,500 per person in British aid, while the people of India only got 15p per person. Commercial interests determine in what form aid is given, and the nature of the projects supported.

"For political and commercial reasons," reports Oxfam "more British aid has gone to wealthier (!) countries, such as Turkey, Mexico and the Philippines during the 1980s than to a number of obvious-

ly needy countries." Aid to the least developed, like Bangladesh and Tanzania, actually fell from 0.14 per cent of Britain's GNP in 1981 to 0.08 per cent in 1984.

But it is the 'tying' of aid money to the purchase of British manufactured goods which really exposes the profit-seeking that lies behind most aid decisions. A UNCTAD report criticised Britain for tying more of its aid than other donors. A typical deal in March 1986 involved the supply of 21 Westland W-30 helicopters to India. The cost of each machine was more than total British aid that year to famished Ethiopia.

Sir William Ryrle, former head of the Overseas Development Agency, commented: "The borderline between aid to the developing countries and aid to British industry is sometimes hard to find."

The most blatant use of development aid funds to enhance the profits of British capitalism is through the Aid and Trade Provision. This amounts to using aid as a subsidy to a British firm, allowing it to make its tender for a project in the third world more competitive in the face of Japanese or perhaps American rivals.

In no way could this be portrayed as aid to alleviate poverty, yet ATP is making up a growing proportion of Britain's total aid budget. In 1984 through ATP £33 million of British 'aid' helped GEC build a power station in India.

How far does any of this aid benefit the most downtrodden and pauperised of the third world?

The overwhelming majority in the developing countries eke out an existence in the rural areas. Yet only 16 per cent of British bilateral aid is directed towards agriculture.

The all-party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development complained that, of British aid for African agricultural and rural development, two thirds goes on roads, paper and rubber schemes, 10 per cent on sugar, coffee, cocoa, and tea production (all cash crops



Baying for profits on the Paris Stock Exchange—and condemning tens of millions in the Third World to slow and painful death.

grown for export to the West), only 1.5 per cent on the livestock sector and just 1 per cent on rural water supplies.

Aid helps to maintain the developing countries' enforced concentration on cash crop production, at the expense of food production to fill the empty bellies of their own people.

To repay their enormous foreign debt, to purchase the equipment and manufactured goods and frequently even the food they need to import, the third world has an insatiable hunger for foreign exchange. Especially with the collapse in the price of their own commodity exports, they are having to give over even greater acreage to cash crop production.

## Glutted markets

So while Sudan contended with the horror of famine, it had 550,000 bales stored in a cotton 'mountain'. Worth \$550 million, they had been grown for export to bring in precious foreign exchange. But now it faced a world market glutted with surplus cotton.

Suffering Ethiopia also has to concentrate on cash crop production, and has a stockpile of surplus coffee. Yet most EEC agricultural aid to Ethiopia is for coffee production.

If anything, the continued commercially-oriented aid to increase production of export crops, with the present state of the world economy, is only building bigger international surpluses and thereby depressing prices still further. The third world is having to run faster to stand still, or rather go backwards.

The World Bank, the world's largest source of funds for agriculture development, also has a record of supporting large-scale prestige projects, which hardly benefit the impoverished. In Brazil, Oxfam recounts, the World Bank is funding a roadbuilding and land development scheme, opening up the Amazon region to large ranch and estate owners. But the poor, in particular the forest dwellers, will see little gain.

Aid is in fact another mechanism by which Western capitalism and imperialism locks the third world

into its financial embrace. Aid increases their dependence on the developed countries. It further distorts their economies, as suppliers of raw material for the West on the West's terms, while the masses go underfed.

So much for the 'trickle down' theory fashionable in the sixties and seventies. Even if aid does not get to the most needy, ran the argument, they benefit in the end by the economic growth generated in the developing countries.

With the debt crisis, the recession in the developed world, protectionism against many third world goods, etc, there is nothing left to trickle down. Oxfam quotes the Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil: "Every time the United States raises its interest rates thousands die in the third world, because money that would be used for health care and food is sent outside these countries to pay the debt."

Unfortunately, having produced the most damning evidence of the aid scandal, Oxfam only puts forward the most modest and idealistic solutions. It suggests "ethical controls" on multinationals and commodity speculators; less "commercial emphasis" on aid by capitalist governments; a reduction in "the barriers to imports from the third world"; efforts to "stabilise the prices of commodities."

In reality the precarious, temporary economic 'boomlet' and reduced inflation in the developed world have been based on the exploitation of the third world. There is no way Thatcher or Reagan, or even Labour governments operating within the constraints of capitalism, will make any meaningful changes just in the interests of human need.

The desperate position of the many millions in third world is directly the responsibility of the capitalist world order. Only with full socialist change in the developed and developing worlds, the ending of a relationship based on exploitation, of which aid is a part, and its replacement by genuine mutual co-operation, can the abundant resources and expertise at mankind's disposal be utilised to allow a proper human existence for all.



Aiding the oppressor: riot police in Guatemala armed and equipped with assistance from Kohl's Christian Democrat government in West Germany.

# France: end of round one

PARIS, 13 January:

**MONDAY'S DEMONSTRATION** by the right-wing RPR, intended to show mass opposition to the railway workers' strike, was a flop.

Every hour, radio bulletins announced the time and place of the demonstration. But only two or three thousand turned out, compared with the hundreds of thousands who marched against the Chirac government in December.

The simultaneous demonstration by the racist National Front attracted less than a thousand.

At the time of writing the strike is winding down, but the mood among the workers is not one of defeat. At the Gare du Nord and Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris, where the struggle began, the workers voted not to end but to suspend the strike.

To underline the message of continuing anger and defiance, the workers at Gare d'Austerlitz marched out of their meeting to present management with their demands: no victimisations, strike pay, etc.

## No perspective

Workers were going back not out of weakness but because their leaders offered them no perspective of achieving the victory that was in their grip.

Another factor has been the caution displayed by the Chirac government to avoid provoking the workers any further. A major pro-government demonstration, planned for next week, has been called off.

But over the last week the government and the media intensified their "back-to-work" campaign. Each day reports appeared on radio and TV of strikers going back to work, of trains running "normally", etc.

In reality, many lines were completely without trains, others with delays of many hours. In Paris, many metro lines are still out of action. Packed vehicles arriving at work just in time for lunch, and getting home as late as ten o'clock at night, became a way of life.

Many main line trains have been driven by retired drivers, trainee drivers and

## From a correspondent in Paris

management, including people who have never driven a train before.

Attitudes have become embittered during the strike. The railworkers at first thought it would last only a few days. Now, after more than three weeks and no settlement in sight, the majority of strikers have no wish to return to work empty-handed.

The problem, however, has been the absence of a determined and united campaign by the union leaders.

The strikers have been aware of the need to inform passengers of their demands. Other workers could see that the railway workers were fighting not only for their own demands, but on behalf of all workers threatened by the Chirac government.

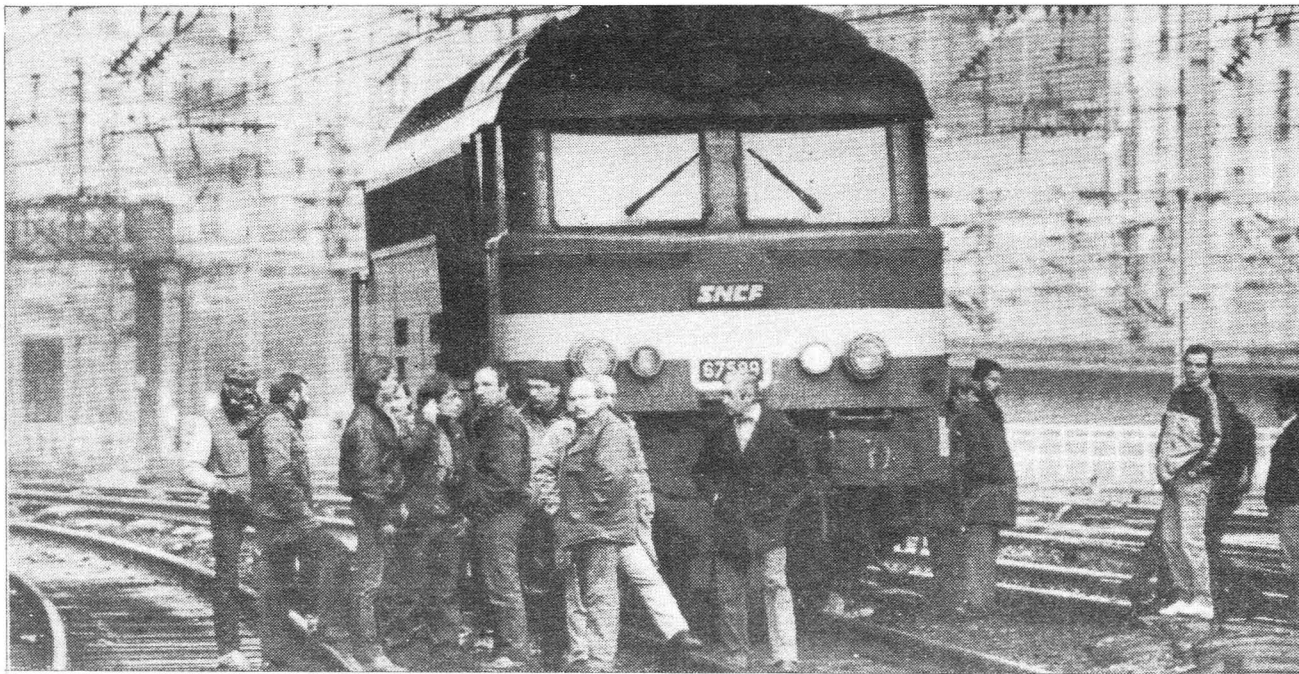
In fact, at the Gare du Nord and other major stations, passengers have set up their own support groups to help the strikers.

Solidarity has come from many sources. At a mass meeting at the Gare St Lazare last Saturday, a manager presented the strikers with a petition of support signed by 530 out of 1,000 managerial staff at the SNCF (railways) headquarters.

Each day, students' support groups met in the universities and secondary schools to discuss how they could help.

A visit by British railworkers had an enormous impact, lifting the morale of the strikers and strengthening their determination.

There has been at least one parallel with the British miners' strike. Chirac was determined to defeat the railway workers, whatever the cost. Already the strike has cost an estimated ten times more than if the workers' demands had been conceded.



The rank-and-file railway workers started the strike, and developed new forms of action: stopping trains, occupying the tracks, etc. (Below) Keen interest has been shown in the French Marxist paper, *L'Avance Socialiste* among many layers of activists during the student movement and the rail strike.



Chirac understood the implications of the strike becoming generalised. Gas, electricity, post and telecommunications and metro workers have all been on strike. The mood is such among public sector workers in particular that this strike could soon have spread to other groups of workers.

Just as Thatcher made concessions to the railway workers in Britain and to Liverpool City Council during 1984, in order to isolate the miners, Chirac has made temporary concessions to

merchant seamen, and now to electricity and gas workers, in order to prevent the development of a generalised action.

## Clear call

A clear call from the leaders of the trade union federations for a 24-hour general strike of all workers would have had an enormous echo.

The leaders of the CGT (Communist-led trade union federation) declared their support for an extension of

the strike, but made no attempt to call out all workers on the same day. They have been more interested in gaining control of the strike than in spreading it to other workers.

The leaders of the other main federation, the Socialist-led CFDT, have played a miserable role. In certain areas they have called on workers to go back to work. At some stations in the provinces they have even set up "work pickets" as opposed to "strike pickets", to encourage railworkers to end

*L'Avance Socialiste* can be ordered from: World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

the strike.

Faced with these obstacles, and with the disillusioning experience of Mitterand's Socialist government still fresh in their memories, workers have begun to drift back to work because they cannot see a clear way forward. But, at Gare St Lazare, for example, drivers said that if there was any victimisation or provocation, or if the strike picked up again, they would be straight out again.

## Unity needed

Above all, the workers want unity between the various trade union federations.

At the time of writing the situation is still very volatile, and pressure from the rank and file could again force the leaders to take action. As the students' movement has conclusively shown, a determined and generalised movement could result in the defeat of the Chirac government, and place on the agenda the struggle for a Socialist/Communist government, this time committed to fight for the interests of working people.

GEOFF BRIGHT and Billy Laing (NUR) and Stewart Hammond (ASLEF) visited the striking French railway workers in Paris. They addressed meetings at Gare du Nord, Gare d'Austerlitz and Gare St Lazare, and spoke at a meeting of the students' *comite de vigilance* which was formed in support of the strike.

Their addresses were well received, particularly the idea of forming lasting links with French railwaymen. Geoff Bright, whose visit was officially backed by the branch committee of Rother Valley NUR, received the following letter:

Comrades,

The drivers of the La Chapelle depot (Paris Nord) warmly thank the delegation of British railwaymen who came to show support for our struggle.

Our struggle did not end in victory, because of the intransigence of the government and the SNCF management.

But the most positive aspect of the strike lies in the completely new forms of democratic organisation that we developed during the strike.

It was the rank-and-file railwaymen who started the strike, forcing the union organisations to support their action—then set up their own organisational structures and adopted new forms of action: stopping trains, occupying the tracks and signal boxes.

The main concern of the railwaymen is to preserve the unity and cohesiveness which have been the main gains of the strike.

Nothing will be the same again!

The drivers of Paris Nord.

"WE WANT a career structure based on seniority which gives all drivers the chance to reach the top grades. Management wanted one based on merit. In other words, strikers would always be bottom of the scale.

"Some of the hostels where we stay when we are away from home were built in the steam age. At Bobitny some of the rooms are about five metres from the tracks, and you have to take your own food and bedding.

"We have lost at least 6,000 francs on strike but we have received donations from individuals including unemployed. On the first day we received a message of support from one of the Paris lycées (high schools). Since then we have received messages from railmen all over Europe, and from Uruguay."

—Driver on strike at Gare du Nord, Paris.

## Spanish workers warn bosses

REPORTING ON the two million strong school students' strike in Spain, *Militant* last week wrote:

"The movement in the schools is the beginning of the groundswell of opposition, not only amongst the youth ... but also in the working class, the trade unions, and ultimately in the Socialist Party itself."

This conclusion has been underlined by the workers' committee elections which ended on 31 December, in which the Communist Party-led CCOO (Workers' Commissions) made big gains at the expense of the Socialist-led UGT trade union federation.

The real significance of the vote is political. The UGT has supported the PSOE (Socialist) government in its monetarist onslaught on workers' rights in defence of profits, which has pushed up unemployment to 22 per cent—the worst in Europe.

Now the workers' verdict has

been given.

Although the UGT still has 65,000 delegates countrywide compared with 55,000 CCOO delegates, UGT support is now concentrated in small companies. The CCOO has swept the board in the big companies (employing over 750 people), including nearly all key industries.

This cannot be seen as a vote of confidence in the CP, which is in complete disarray and has split in several directions. It is a vote of no-confidence in the PSOE leaders and their support for capitalism, a demand for fighting socialist policies.

Confronted with the evidence, commentators like the *Guardian's* Madrid correspondent are now forced to join *Militant* in anticipating "a wave of industrial conflict this year".

By George Collins

# Counting on fingers

Dear Comrades,  
Following your article about worsening conditions in British Telecom since privatisation (*Militant* 827) I thought comrades might be interested to hear of an incident which happened at British Telecom in Brighton in December.

One of the accounts group supervisors put in a requisition for an electronic calculator.

The following reply was received: "Due to severe financial constraints we cannot supply the calculator you requested. Please re-apply in the new financial year. Alternatively you could purchase one from your own departmental budget from Her Majesty's Stationery Office in

Norwich. It costs £2.52 + VAT!"  
This, from a company which made £1,828 million. If it is so difficult for BT to buy pocket calculators, perhaps we can't even be sure of how much profit they actually made.

Yours fraternally  
Clive Walder  
NCU Brighton Clerical Branch (personal capacity)

WATCH OUT for Channel 4 documentary *Witness to apartheid* 11.20pm Thursday 15 January. Made in South Africa late in 1985 but updated for this version it presents the testimony of witnesses of the violence and repression in the South African townships and highlights the brutal treatment of young black children involved in the revolutionary struggle.

# Make a date with Channel 4

Yours fraternally  
Clive Walder  
NCU Brighton Clerical Branch (personal capacity)

# Results of industrialisation

Dear Comrades,

The third of five programmes called *Domesday* was about the death of the small town and the growth of the great industrial cities. Half of the programme concentrated on the once-great industrial city, Manchester.

The presenter said: "Marx and Engels saw hope here of man's eternal dreams that through industrialisation, for the first time in history, poverty and suffering need not be the inevitable lot of the masses, that after capitalism would come the inevitable triumph of socialism".

He said that many were "shocked and fascinated" by what they saw in Manchester including Dickens and Disraeli "but Engels was the first to argue that it was an inevitable consequence of this industrialisation that there would be class struggle".

Although he looked at the growth of the industrial cities and the 'deathknell' of the feudal towns in a slightly romantic light, I still thought it was better than the dozens of hours per week of soap opera we are subjected to.

Yours fraternally

Mark Murphy

Holme Valley Labour Party Young Socialists

# Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

Militant,  
3-13 Hepscoot Road,  
London E9 5HB

# Britain on poverty wages

Dear Comrades,

For many workers wages today are worse than they were a century ago. That is the conclusion of a new report from the Low Pay Unit based on Department of Employment figures. The Tories seek a return to Victorian values, but for many it means a return to the poverty of Victorian wages.

In 1886 the lowest paid earned 69 per cent of the average wage for manual workers. The corresponding figure for 1986 was 65 per cent.

In Britain not only are millions on the dole, but also one in six working men and half of all women workers earn less than the EEC poverty wage level of £126 a week. The report states: "... It is the high-paid who have enjoyed generous pay rises while many of the low-paid are consistently suffering from cuts in real, and sometimes even actual wage levels".

Lawyers in Britain now earn £615 per week and company directors £808 per week, whilst the average full time Welsh barmaid's earnings are £47.50 per week.

In 1886 the highest paid group earned 43 per cent above the average wage. Today they earn 55 per cent more than the average.

Clearly the Tories are looking after the rich at the expense of the worst off.

Yours fraternally  
Chris Peace  
Cardiff Central  
Labour Party

Dear Comrades,

Government claims that women are finding more part-time jobs with flexible hours have been completely refuted in a new report.

Published by the charity 'Youthaid', it shows that since 1979 casual employment among teenagers has grown 100 times faster than it has for adult women workers.

The number of young people doing part-time work has risen by 291,000, 250 per cent since 1979, but there are only 87,000 more adult women casual workers than in 1979—an increase of just 2.5 per cent.

By 1985 one in four teenagers in work could only find a part time job.

Since 1979 the number of teenagers in full-time employment has fallen by a third from 1.8 million to 1.2 million. At the same time the number in part-time work has grown from 116,000 to 407,000.

The report describes young people as the "day labourers" of the eighties. Nearly half the teenagers in part-time work have jobs that are only temporary.

Yours fraternally  
Richard Knights  
Liverpool



Monotonous production-line jobs like these are notoriously low-paid.

Dear Comrades,

The undersigned members of the East Berkshire Constituency Labour Party were shocked to read in *Militant* recently that Muriel Browning is threatened with expulsion by the Llanelli Labour Party.

Our constituency Party worked closely with the Cynheidre Miners Support

Group for the duration of the strike. This brought us into regular contact with Muriel in her capacity as Chairwoman of this body. We forged links with the miners and women involved in the support group during this historic struggle that will never be forgotten by us.

We oppose the expulsion of good socialists like Muriel

Browning who have spent a lifetime defending the interests of the working class.

Yours fraternally  
Dave Bayle  
Pat Bayle  
Jacqui Mendoza  
Paul Mendoza  
Val Pearce  
Terry Pearce



Sweat shops like these offer slave wages to thousands of women.

# Labour Party pamphlet — a cure for insomnia

Dear Comrades,

I was bored recently, so I had a read of the Labour Party's *Charter for Pupils and Parents*. This didn't make things much better. It goes on about the right to classes that aren't too big, and a lot of other things, basically what the Liverpool socialists have been persecuted for.

Guess what word did not appear at all in this Labour Party pamphlet—'socialism'. I never expected it to really, 'partnership', 'democracy', 'consensus' were there plenty of times.

Yours fraternally

Steve Rebins

Stafford Labour Party Young Socialists

# 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.

○ *Militant* poster blanks (A2 size). Available from Box 5, 3/13 Hepscoot Rd, London E9 5HB.

○ Chile Socialist Defence Campaign slide video: *Chile on the brink*. 20 minutes long. Analysis of recent struggles in Chile. Order from CSDC, PO Box 448, Emma St, London E2. £10 including postage. Cheques payable to "CSDC".

○ Comrade from Manchester looking for flatshare in London. Phone Steve Fisher, London 251 8814.

○ Funk against Racism. Saturday 24 January 8pm to 12. Florence Nightingale pub, Waterloo. £2 waged, £1 unwaged. Organised by Lambeth *Militant* supporters.

□ Leeds *Militant* Womens Day School 24 January. 11am to 4pm. The Swarthmore Centre, Wood House Square, Leeds 1. Professional crèche provided. Details from Dianne 0532 780568. Speakers include Doreen Purvice (Vice-chair CPSA).

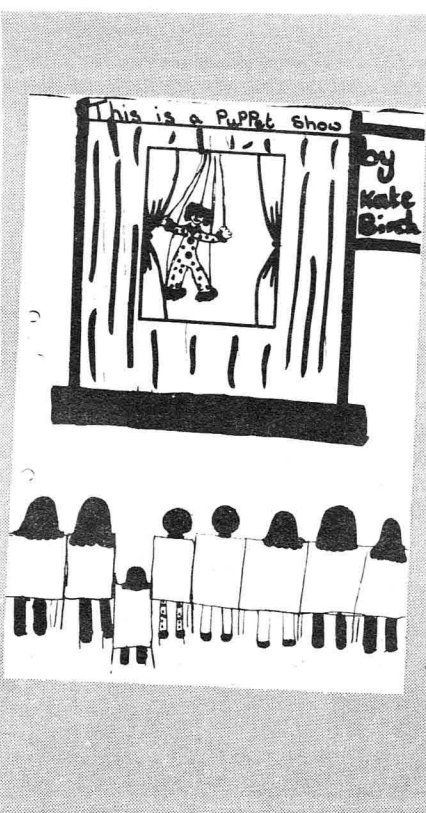
□ Hull "Reinstate Alan Shadforth—For a socialist Labour council". Thursday 22 Jan 7.30pm, Trades and Labour Club, Beverley Rd, Hull. Speakers: Tony Mulhearn and Alan Shadforth (sacked sec. Hull City Council JSSC).

# Children's party

Dear Comrades,

I went to the *Militant* children's party, on Saturday 3 January. Twenty children came. We had games, food and a puppet show came. Lots of adults came as well as children.

There was lots of food. There was sandwiches, sausage rolls, cakes, biscuits, sweets and crisps. The puppets were very good. We saw a show of the puppets.  
Emily Craven  
(Aged 8)



# In memory of Brian Croucher

ON TUESDAY 6 January Brian Croucher died of cancer in Doncaster Royal Infirmary. He had been an active member of the Labour Party for many years.

Brian was also very active in Hatfield branch of the NUM and it was while he was in the Hull, Grimsby and Cleethorpes areas, building support for the miners' strike that he was won to the ideas of *Militant*.

Brian was a constant worker for socialism and even in the hospital had a "Sun Free Zone" sticker on his locker. He was a genuine socialist and will be missed by many comrades in the Labour movement. Brian was the type of person who would help anyone. He will be sadly missed by our local community. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

By Allan Peterson

# Defend teachers' trade union rights

**THE GOVERNMENT** have turned education into a lottery, and schools in the Midlands and other parts of the country have to hold raffles and collections for the most elementary necessities, such as books, before they can begin to think about transport and out-of-school activities, which some Tory members describe as luxuries.

The hon Member for Leicester East said that he believed in free collective bargaining, yet tonight he is opposing amendments and supporting a clause which is designed to remove the very essence of free collective bargaining from the relationship between the teachers' unions and the employers...

The clause specifically attacks workers in some of the most arduous and demanding occupations in Britain today. A friend of mine who is a teacher once described teaching a class of 25 or so as education. He described teaching a class of 35 to 40 as crowd control because there is no time to develop the potential of each and every child in a class of that size.

Those are the problems that should have been addressed by the Bill, the Bill removes the control of negotiations on conditions and wages from the hands of the joint negotiating machinery and puts it into the hands of the Secretary of State. The Bill will do nothing to motivate children in Coventry or elsewhere, who face a difficult enough position already. Although it is the teachers' job to motivate the youngsters, they know that a good proportion of them are being motivated for the dole queue...

Instead of addressing the problem of cynical youth, unfortunately we have to deal with the attempt by the Secretary of State to remove the right to negotiate pay

## Dave Nellist MP attacks Baker's Bill in House of Commons Speech

and conditions. That right has been guaranteed, as hon Members have said, for 67 years by previous legislation. The clause will remove that right and allow the Secretary of State to appoint an advisory committee...

The Secretary of State, unable to convince the majority of teachers of his arguments, intends through this clause, to abolish their rights of negotiations, just as he did with the GLC and metropolitan authorities. When the Secretary of State was an Environment Minister, he restricted the democratic right of elections to those local government bodies.

Clause 1 abolishes the existing machinery contained in the remuneration of Teachers Act 1965. It gives powers to the Secretary of State to impose any pay structure and conditions of service he likes on teachers in England and Wales. Later amendments and clauses will deal with the advisory body. This clause is the response of the Secretary of State to this inability to force agreement from teachers...

The Secretary of State will not succeed. He is already not succeeding and the Bill is only days old. The Bill is drawing the



London teachers' demonstration on Wednesday and Dave Nellist (inset), who addressed the mass rally.

teaching unions together again, when during the past three or four weeks they were perhaps divided on tactics and on which form of deal to accept. It is escalating the radicalisation of the rank and file in ordinary teachers' associations throughout the country. If during the next two weeks, there was a political fund ballot in the teaching unions, as there has been in 40 unions under the Trade Union Act 1984, I would not put money on which way that ballot would go.

It is worth making one small point about the radicalisation and the effect of such draconian measure on the entire profession and on the youths and students in education. Twenty-two miles is not that great a distance for youth in Britain not to be aware of the struggle that has been going on... against a Tory government

across the water who attempted to introduce parallel draconian measures against the university sector in France.

## Disaffection

I do not discount the fact that many lessons may be learnt by people in the profession and by the youths and children who are studying or being taught. Lessons will be rubbing off from the experiences of the... action of the ranked mass of students in France against the French Tory government and their attempt to introduce new laws. The government should be aware that if they continue down the road of attacking education, the health service and the welfare state in general, they run the risk of similar disaffection spreading amongst working class people and youth in

Britain...

I am not that fussed that the right hon Gentleman is trying to get the Bill through in two days of parliamentary time, because I can envisage occasions under the next Labour government when we can use the precedent of the speed at which the Secretary of State wishes to proceed today with this anti-working class legislation to enact socialist legislation, for example, on a national minimum wage, on shorter working hours, on lower retirement age or other measures to reduce unemployment or increase the living standards of working people.

I and many others believe that this clause paves the way for us to adopt the same sort of attitude to Conservative policies as the government have towards the people whom we represent.

## Defend London education democracy

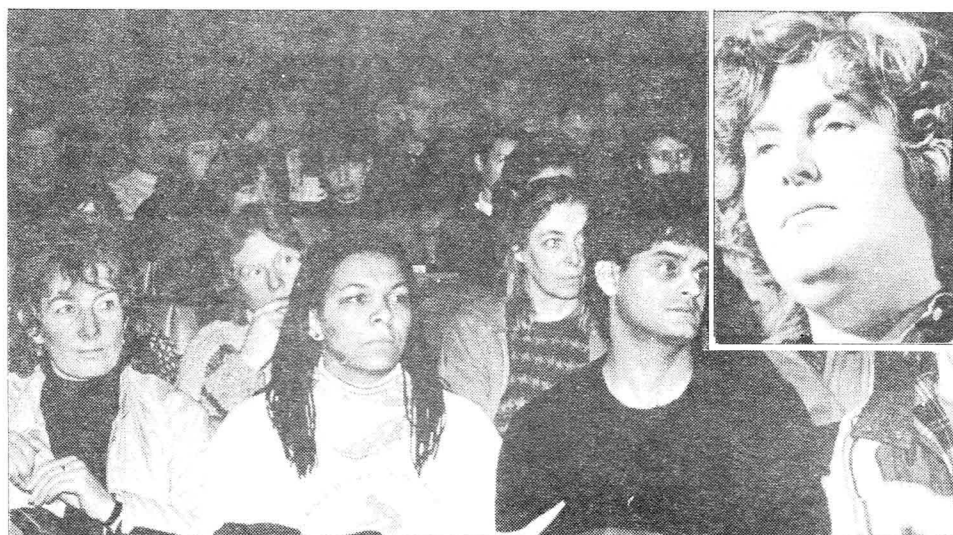
**THE BIGGEST** Education Authority in the country is the Inner London Education Authority. When the government attempted to abolish the Greater London Council and the ILEA two years ago, such was the level of opposition to the plans to abolish ILEA, that the Tories decided quietly to retreat. They set up a free-standing education authority with direct elections to it.

In May 1986, on the same day as the London Borough elections, the first ever ILEA elections were held in the constituencies to elect fifty-eight ILEA members. The result was a landslide victory for Labour, winning forty seats with only eleven Tories and two Liberals.

The Inner London Education Authority is now the largest strategic authority in Europe with a £1 billion budget. It is therefore of key importance to the labour movement, especially in Greater London.

## Accountability

The question of democracy and accountability of the ILEA Labour Group to the rank and file Labour Party members and to the trade unions has been debated with increasing intensity in London over the past year. The Executive Committee of the Greater London Labour Party embarked on a consultation process with all the Inner London CLP's and the affiliates to find out if the creation of an ILEA Labour Party was desired by the rank and file to ensure ac-



ILTA rally at Central Hall and Frances Morrell (inset) leader of ILEA, who wasn't there and actually tried to sabotage the demo.

countability and if so what kind of structure it should have.

There was a clear demand from the London Labour Party that the ILEA Labour Group should be fully accountable through an ILEA Labour Party. The question of what kind of structure there should be was more controversial.

After lengthy debate the argument has crystallised around two main proposals. One is to set up a "Local Government Committee" type structure with two representatives elected through the CLP's. This would mean that the rank and file members taking part in the discussions on the authority would also be the people taking the important decisions.

Some of the large trade union affiliates are not happy with this proposal, and are pushing to have a

Greater London Labour Party type set-up with a governing body elected at a conference with block votes etc. NUPE and GMBATU officials are pushing this. It is in the interests of the trade union bureaucracies to have this since NUPE and the GMBATU together would command nearly half the votes. The right-wing of the Labour Group (mainly ex-leads around the LCC) would also prefer this since the rank and file would have a smaller say on the governing body in relation to the strength of the trade union officials.

## Cash crisis

This question will be argued out at the forthcoming Greater London Labour Party annual conference.

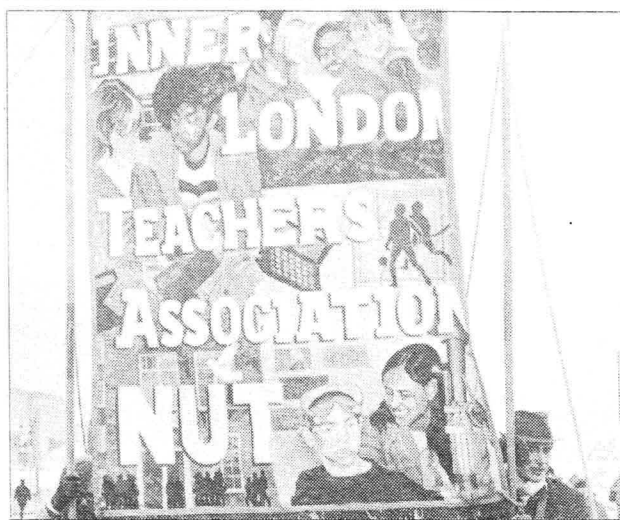
The ILEA is facing an unprecedented financial crisis in 1987. A shortfall of up to £100 million has been

reported. This could mean compulsory redundancies for the first time. The crisis is being dealt with by the leadership with little or no rank and file involvement.

There are too many jobs at stake. There are too many working class children's futures at stake. It is essential that the ILEA Labour Group are made to see that the future of education in Inner London is not their sole preserve. They must be made to organise a fight back against the government's financial constraints. And that must be based on defence of democracy and accountability within the labour movement.

**By George Williamson**  
(Executive Committee and Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Greater London Labour Party, personal capacity)

## Successful ILTA protest



**UP TO 5,000** London teachers struck on Wednesday to protest against Baker's Bill. 3,000 joined the march, most of whom stayed for the rally in Central Hall, Westminster.

MPs Harry Cohen and Dave Nellist brought greetings from the Campaign Group. Dave Nellist told the rally that the people who should have been there were Norman Willis, Giles Radice and Frances Morrell (of ILEA).

He condemned the suspension of the ILTA divisional council and argued that considering the seriousness of the Baker Bill's attack on trade union rights and the Tories' large majority it would not be stopped in parliament without industrial action outside.

The rally passed a motion calling for: a one-day na-

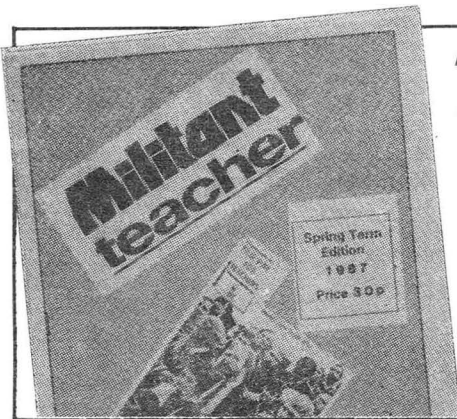
tional strike on 19 February; the full resources of the union to be used in campaigning for NUT conference policy; it deplored the decision to suspend the members of the ILTA divisional council.

Given the bad weather and that the strike was organised in just a week this action was a great success and shows the depth of feeling amongst rank and file teachers.

The ILEA leadership did not help by sending out a circular to all heads saying their staff should be working normally on Wednesday—despite Frances Morrell's public protestations of opposition to the Bill.

The next month must be used to mobilise a mass national protest to halt the Tories' attack on trade union rights in the schools.

# Industrial Reports



**Militant Teacher**  
pamphlet  
—available from  
World Socialist  
Books, 3/13  
Hepscott Road,  
London E9 5HB.

## Scottish teachers' ballot— contracts not for sale

SCOTTISH TEACHERS returned to work after Xmas to be faced with a ballot on a package deal which is little different from the 'Rifkind package', recently rejected by an 84 per cent vote.

The major difference is that this time the executive of the Educational Institute of Scotland, the largest teaching union, is recommending acceptance.

However, the only concession made by management is an offer of a further seven days holiday. But given that Scottish teachers already work ten days longer than their colleagues in England and Wales, this fails to bring Scottish teachers even into line.

### Extra hours

In addition, the deal "commits teachers to an additional 80 hours per year over and above the national 35-hour week (currently 32.5), 30 hours set aside for parent evenings."

The EIS special general meeting held in November specifically rejected any package based on, or arising out of, the Main Report.

The list of teachers' duties, including curriculum development and exam in-

volvement, had been lifted straight from the pages of Main. Implementation has removed from teachers some of the strongest areas of the current industrial action.

In return for this surrender on conditions teachers are offered a rehash of the Main/Rifkind salary proposals, with the greatest pay increases going to senior management in schools rather than classroom teachers.

The EIS executive have included annual increments in their tables in a quite dishonest way to dress up the deal. Teachers beware—the acceptance of this package is a surrender not an honourable settlement. It will weaken the position of classroom teachers for years to come.

Throughout the campaign we have said our contract is not for sale—now is the time to prove it. Vote no in the ballot and force our leadership to continue the campaign for a straight salary increase without stings. Make education an issue in the run up to the next general election.

By **Larry Flanagan**  
(Lanarkshire County  
Committee, EIS)

## Hanger's fights on

A MASS picket of the Hanger artificial limb factory in Roehampton early on 5 January confirmed the determination of the workers to fight on.

By **Dave Gartrell**  
(Battersea Labour Party)

BTR's attempt to destroy the unions at Hangers, smash existing agreements and slash wages at the expense of the workers and the long-suffering patients is still being fought after 16 weeks.

Management had created the impression in the media that the dispute was over and had sent letters to 90 workers inviting them to return on management terms. This included their right to black list certain workers—obviously the best fighters would be targeted.

Also basic gains such as the canteen and social club would be taken back as well as the reduced wages and conditions. Such is the disgusting attitude of this management to workers with up to 30 years loyal service.

A mass meeting had totally rejected management's terms and a mass picket was organised for the day that management were inviting workers to return. This was 100 per cent successful and

there was no-one willing to even consider going in on such terms.

BTR's attempt to treat workers here in the same way that they do in South Africa will never be accepted. The Hanger unions demand a job on acceptable terms for everyone who still wants to work there and proper terms for those who leave voluntarily or through early retirement.

It is outrageous that the welfare of disabled people being treated by the DHSS, should be jeopardised by people like the BTR bosses who are only motivated by their lust for profits.

### Nationalisation

BTR and all firms supplying the NHS should be nationalised by the next Labour government and placed under the control and management of the workers in the industry.

Labour can only gain support if it gives full backing to workers who are fighting so hard for their basic rights. Please give maximum financial and moral support to these workers. Send to Steve Bleas (treasurer), Hanger's Dispute, TASS, Wessex House, 520 London Rd., Mitcham, Surrey.

# London schools strike

FOLLOWING A meeting which called for strike action on 13 January to oppose Baker's bill, 70 members of the Inner London Teachers Association Divisional Council have been suspended by the NUT.

By a **ILTA member**

The Bill (see issue 828) includes clauses which would facilitate differential local pay levels and abolish the existing negotiating machinery replacing it by an 'Advisory Committee' chosen by the Secretary of State.

This would remove the right of TU s to negotiate on pay and conditions of service and more immediately, allow Baker to impose the settlement he chooses.

The Bill represents a threat to all public sector workers, setting a precedent for similar attacks on their rights and further centralising power away from local authorities.

The response of the NUT leadership has been to adopt a similar strategy in lobbying MPs, use of the ILO etc which failed miserably over GCHQ. Members in London on the other hand, have been prepared to challenge Baker by taking action and are being victimised by the leadership for defending basic union rights!

The suspended members



London teachers march in protest on Tuesday 13 January.

face a disciplinary hearing within the next couple of weeks. Meanwhile, ILTA, representing over 13,000 members, cannot function and this is during a crucial period of negotiations with ILEA on staffing and 16-19 reorganisation.

Two full-time officials are supposedly carrying out the functions of all the ILTA officers, including the secretary, who was on full facility time and has been told to return to his school.

Following the suspensions, a school reps' meeting

of 400, voted, with only five against, to proceed with the action despite the bludgeoning of Hamilton House.

### Public sector

Labour controlled ILEA quickly withdrew recognition from the London teachers' leadership. It also sent out letters to teachers before, not as usual after, the strike warning they were in breach of contract. It could only be to deter them from striking, against the Tories.

NUT members and other public sector workers should be moving motions demanding action against the Bill and supporting those members suspended from the union. A lobby will be organised to coincide with the disciplinary hearings for which a national mobilisation is necessary.

The Executive of the NUT should be launching a campaign of action against Tory attacks, not attacking sections of its membership who are willing to campaign.

## London tube workers prepared to strike

**BOB LAW** of East Ham NUR explained the background to Wednesday's planned London tube strike, which was suspended.

London Underground workers have been battered by the Tory government. Now privatisation is threatening every grade. In an attempt to divide and rule, London Regional Transport Board have gone for the weakest sections first.

The canteen staff have been told to give up their wages and conditions so they can compete with cowboy outfits. Once this is done the LRT will come after the other sections. All station cleaning is now up for

privatisation.

This is dangerous as all LT staff have a basic understanding of how to discharge traction current (cut-off electricity) in an emergency. What help would someone dragged off the street that day for a days cleaning be in an emergency?

### Cutbacks

This is at a time when cutbacks in station staff could lead to whole sections of line being unmanned. This in an area where trains would be one person operation. (OPO).

It is also likely contractors will be allowed onto the

track maintenance. This is already a dangerous job where the most simple of tasks requires training. The way corners are cut on building sites is a warning of an extremely dangerous situation that could arise.

Privatisation of the operating department (the running of the trains) is further off, but it is coming. Already the disciplinary procedure is being tightened up. This means people who in the past would have been warned because of various instances, find themselves sacked.

It is with this background that the NUR won its recent ballot for strike action by

five to one and called a strike for Wednesday 14.

Tube workers must still consider themselves on standby for the strike call. It was only postponed. If management do not meet our demands, we must take up the option of strike action, and show them the strength of feeling of tube workers.

This will need to be the start of a campaign to defend and improve the wages and conditions of all underground workers.

By **Bob Law**  
East Ham branch (personal capacity)

## Rail workers determined to stop bosses' vandalism

**BRITISH RAIL** are planning to close eight Freightliner depots from 2 April this year.

There has been a steady decline in the movement of freight by rail since the 1950s from 285m tons in 1953 to 145m in 1983. At the time of the Beeching closures in the 1960s the great hope held out for rail freight was the movement of containers by Freightliner trains.

In fact it was hived off from BR to the National Freight Corporation in 1968 and then returned in 1978 and has never grown as originally planned. The failure to develop a much more flexible Freightliner service with simple container handling facilities has meant Freightliner relying on the deep sea container trade from the ports while internal movement of containers in Britain has declined.

Freightliner trains from being the star performers in the 1960s have become very unreliable, in many cases through locomotive and wagon failures, themselves a result of the lack of investment. Recently Freightliners have started to close depots where they can concentrate business. In September 1986 in Birmingham they closed Dudley depot and concentrated on Lawley Street.

But from 2 April this year Freightliners intend to close: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Hull, Nottingham, Manchester (Longsight) and Swansea. Unlike the closure of a passenger station BR need only give one month notice for the closure of a freight depot.

During the industrial action of the early 1980s railworkers were accused of driving freight away from

the railways, but strike action has not brought about closures, only profit and loss considerations.

Scotland would only be left with two Freightliner depots, Glasgow and Coatbridge, the service would disappear from the North East of Scotland. The decision is based purely on short term financial criteria with no regard for jobs, regions, the future Channel Tunnel. If it makes a loss in the present financial year then get

rid of it.

This time rail workers through their unions the NUR/Aslef and the Labour Party must say they shall not close. Even if local authorities were to step in and buy the depots, which could happen in Aberdeen/Dundee/Edinburgh, a campaign backed by industrial action must be launched to prevent this vandalism.

By a **BR worker**

**MINERS PLEASE NOTE**  
The National Mineworkers Broad Left conference has been cancelled due to bad weather

# Industrial Reports

## CPSA election manoeuvres

**CPSA MEMBERS will have expected the newly-elected general secretary and general treasurer to take up their posts immediately and begin to implement the policies of the union.**

**By Steve Dunk**

(Inland Revenue Section Chair in personal capacity)

However, at a special NEC meeting on 12 January, the right wing NEC showed once again its contempt for the union's democracy and membership.

The right wing general treasurer, John Raywood, defeated in the recent general treasurer election has been appointed acting-general treasurer until 1 April 1987. His service is to be further extended and a short term contract awarded until at least mid-May.

This is despite the fact that

Raywood was defeated in the election and the new general treasurer was due to take up the post on 1 January 1987.

Furthermore, under the union's rules (rule 12.2) senior full-time officials "shall serve a term of five years in office maximum". Raywood's five year term expired on 31 December 1986.

Constitutionally, and probably legally therefore, the right wing executive has no power whatsoever to extend Raywood's contract beyond the 31 December 1986.

The winner in the general treasurer election, Ms Chris Kirk, has been told that while she is general treasurer elect, she will have to wait until 1 April and effectively mid-May before she can assume her full duties.

The speculation behind these manoeuvres is that Raywood has been kept in post either in order to

improve his chances should he run for the deputy general secretary post (the ballot for which will be run at the same time as the executive committee elections between 13 April and 8 May 1987) or to improve his financial compensation terms.

### Financial Advantage

It is estimated that the extension of his service will entitle him to a further £25,000 compensation, making £75,000 in all, for losing an election.

In order to provide a smoke-screen for this abuse of the union's democracy the new general secretary, John Ellis, will also take the 1 April as his date of appointment, on the argument that in five years' time all senior officers could stand for re-election at the same time.

So strictly speaking, Ellis will remain as deputy general secretary but will carry out the general secretary's

job.

This absurd situation however, did not stop Ellis temporarily promoting full-time official Terry Ainsworth to acting deputy general secretary from the 1 February.

So in the CPSA today there are now two general treasurers and two deputy general secretaries.

These stunts and manoeuvres at the top of the union will thoroughly sicken many CPSA members already angered by the successful overthrow of democracy in the general secretary elections in 1986.

It further shows why John Macreadie should have been general secretary in order to help stamp out these corrupt practices and why a new leadership is required from the Presidential and NEC elections in April of this year. The Broad Left must now begin the task of preparing for that successful election.

## London Transport building workers

**THE BUILDING workers within London Transport have noted by a large majority to take industrial action to defend their jobs and conditions. In a workplace ballot of 75 per cent of the members, 81.4 per cent voted for industrial action.**

As reported in a recent issue of *Militant*, LT management is supporting the Transport Minister in trying to decimate not only the building department but every other section within London Transport. The building workers will be coming out on 14 January for a 24 hour stoppage.

LT management have announced in a recent press release with some satisfaction that since 1983 13,000 jobs have been lost within London Transport up to 1987.

The building workers have been told they will be the first to be made compulsorily redundant, in other words sacked. This is a clear indication of the future intentions of the London Transport Board.

The joint convenors committee of the Building department have already mounted a campaign throughout London Transport for support and you can be sure that the 24 hour stoppage is just the beginning of our battle to save jobs and defend the present conditions of our members.

We would therefore appeal, especially to those workers in other sections of London Transport, to put pressure on their own works committees and union branches for their respective unions to mount a serious campaign to defend jobs and conditions within London Transport and reverse the present policies and attitude of this management.

Messages of support should be sent to: The Senior Convenor, Parsons Green, London Transport, SW6.

**By Jim McGuinness**

(Chair of Joint Convenors Committee, London Transport building department)

## Shipyard strike ends

WORKERS AT Austin and Pickerskill shipyard on the Wear have voted to end their strike.

British Shipbuilders have dropped their plans to impose selective overtime working and have agreed that the allocation of overtime should be monitored by the shop stewards committee.

Management are to produce a quarterly programme of overtime which they have said will demonstrate that there will be a fair and equitable share of overtime between grades over any 12 month period.

### Sub-contractors

The company wanted to reduce manning levels to 17 per cent below the level required to cover the workload and to make up the 17 per cent by subcontracting and temporary contracts.

Now they have agreed to review their whole policy in regard to subcontracting with a view to staving off any compulsory redundancies.

The company has been forced to retreat from their original plans but now maximum pressure will have to be exerted at local level to implement the national understanding to the fullest extent.

The men see it as an 85 per cent victory. There was an initial reluctance among

A&P stewards to accept the company's refusal to pay holiday pay for the Christmas period while they were on strike, accepted by the SNC.

But after discussion there was a majority decision to recommend endorsement of the SNC recommendations which was subsequently accepted by the mass meeting on Tuesday morning.

The men undoubtedly felt if they rejected the deal negotiated by the SNC then the dispute would not be made official by the national union leadership and the A&P men would be left isolated. The underlying feeling among the workforce is that they are regrouping for bigger disputes to come.

Tony Carty, chairman of the A&P Joint Shop Stewards Committee told *Militant*: "I believe that this dispute was provoked in an attempt to break the trade union organisation in A&P. Management deliberately caused a confrontation on the question of overtime with a view to defeating us."

"But our organisation remains as strong and as resolute as ever. If British Shipbuilders have any intention of implementing compulsory redundancies the members here will respond immediately."

**By Billy Richings**

(GMB, Austin and Pickerskill, personal capacity)

ON SATURDAY night a scab juggernaut from Murdoch's Wapping print plant ran down and killed a youth.

The pickets had continuously complained to the police about the speed and the reckless driving of the TNT lorries whose responsibility it is to take the papers from Fortress Wapping to the distribution depots.

The police never even stopped the lorry which was allowed to leave the scene of the accident. It is clear that the police are more concerned with paper distribution than the life of a local resident.

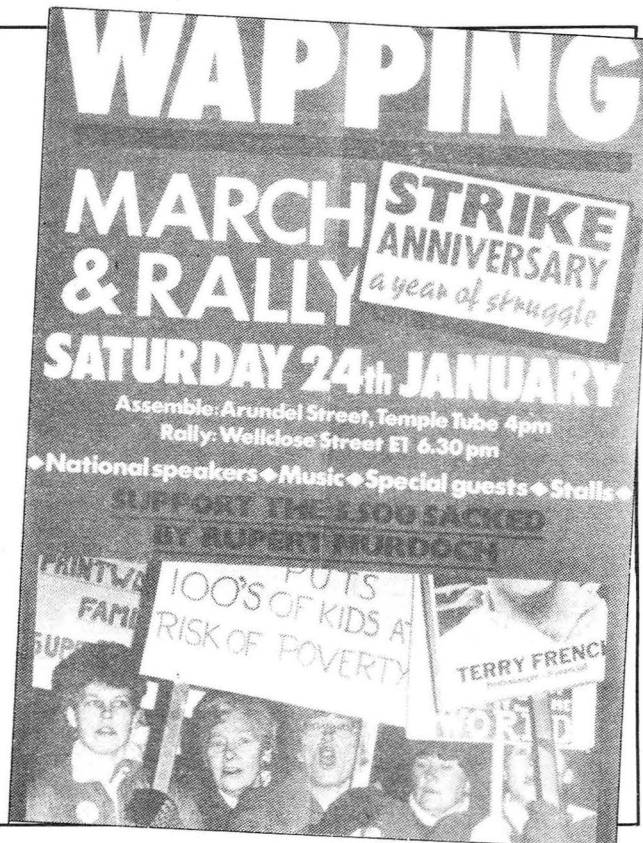
This is just one more reason why you should attend the march on the first anniversary of the strike against Murdoch.

In the course of the year, the police, courts and government have been thrown at the strikers but today the strike is still solid.

The message from the strikers is let make Saturday 24 January a night Murdoch and his scabs will never forget.

**By Mick Carroll**

(NGA, personal capacity)



## Industrial action in British Telecom

PHIL HOLT, Liverpool Internal NCU and chair of the Broad Left explained the background to the union's current industrial action to *Militant*.

The members have understood that the strings attached to the pay offer will affect hours of attendance, promotion prospects, and the number of jobs in the future. It would mean a massive slashing of jobs.

The members have voted on two occasions for industrial action. There is a clear majority in favour of action. We believe, however, that up till the last moment the national leadership of the NCU were attempting to do a deal for worse terms than we want.

British Telecom, sensing the weakness of the national executive have now gone in for the kill. The executive must realise that the members will stand

firm provided they do as well.

There has to be a national stand now that the members have started to make sacrifices. The full ten per cent claim must be pursued.

Management have prioritised business subscribers in the work to rule, at the expense of ordinary subscribers, for example old age pensioner who could be left in the cold.

Here in Liverpool the district council remains firm, as do all the members and the Broad Left will be producing a leaflet on the strike, showing the way forward.

**By Phil Holt**

National Chair NCU Broad Left

## Keighley Lifts

AFTER LESS than a week on strike in temperatures of minus 15c 150 shopfloor members of the AEU at Keighley Lifts in West Yorkshire have won a victory.

Management have agreed to meet their claim for a 7 per cent wage increase put in before Xmas. A work to rule was implemented after the Xmas holiday.

Three men in the loading bay were suspended for refusing to collect materials from other parts of the factory despite management demands. Though the men normally did this work they insisted that under the work to rule it should be done by the labourers.

In protest at the suspension there was a walk-out, with some men occupying. Management brought in security guards with dogs and sticks and the occupiers joined the other strikers outside. But with well organised, round the clock picketing every day of the week and a determined mood management soon caved in.

**By Ralph Quigley**

## Drybrough brewery

WORKERS AT Drybrough brewery in Edinburgh were angered to learn of the takeover of the company, Allied Lyons, the giant food and drink multinational, amid wide speculation that the 450 jobs at the Craigmillar plant would go—in one of the most depressed areas in Edinburgh.

Union leaders held a meeting of the workforce at a local hotel. Transport and General Workers Convenor Raymond Wilson is continuing negotiations over the future of the plant.

### Craigmillar

The Craigmillar area of Edinburgh used to have 12 breweries employing over 2,000 workers from the locality. Drybrough is the only one left now and its closure would be a massive blow to the local community where 80 per cent of the workforce live.

There is 30 per cent adult unemployment, and up to 90 per cent youth unemployment at the moment. The closure would increase adult unemployment to 34 per cent.

Allied Lyons, the new owner, bought the brewery from the giant Grant Metropolitan group and was part of the Watney Mann section of that multinational. Gavin Strang the local Labour MP is organising a meeting between the Office of Fair Trading and the two multinationals to gain security for the plant.

Allied Lyons has one other brewery in Scotland, at Alloa, which is running at reduced capacity. The immediate plan it is feared, is that as Allied Lyons have done in the past with the Lorimars brewery a mile from Drybrough, to shut the brewery and supply the 250 pubs and hotels in Scotland and the North of England with Alloa brewery products.

Workers at Drybrough must organise an effective campaign amongst the staff of Drybrough's all over Scotland, amongst the local community and develop links with Alloa brewery workers in an effort to maintain brewery production at Craigmillar.

**By Russel Taylor**

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# Militant

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## Workers

- ★ Telecom engineers
- ★ Teachers
- ★ Shipyard workers
- ★ Printers

# fighting back

**LAST WEEK** thousands of workers took industrial action, giving a decisive answer to Thatcher's delusion as she expressed on TV, that her most important achievement was to have "tamed the unions." The deep resentment at the employers' attacks and utter hatred of the Tories has been brewing up beneath the surface. Now among several groups of workers it is breaking out into the open.

Trade unions are not being marginalised as the Tories and their press like to dream. As workers' patience reaches breaking point, they look to their union organisations to defend them.

Yet among the TUC leaders and many union officials the prevailing views are still: "workers are not prepared to struggle... the Tories and the bosses cannot be beaten... wait for a Labour government." But given a determined leadership they could feel confidence in, many more workers would be willing to fight now. For those already taking action, it has invariably been despite the pessimism and downright opposition of their union leadership.

Thatcher and the right wing in the unions believed that Tory union laws and imposed pre-strike ballots would curb industrial action. Union militants would be swamped by the vote of the silent majority. But when the

issues are clear workers are voting to fight back. In the face of an employers' offensive, the silent majority is beginning to speak up and vote for action.

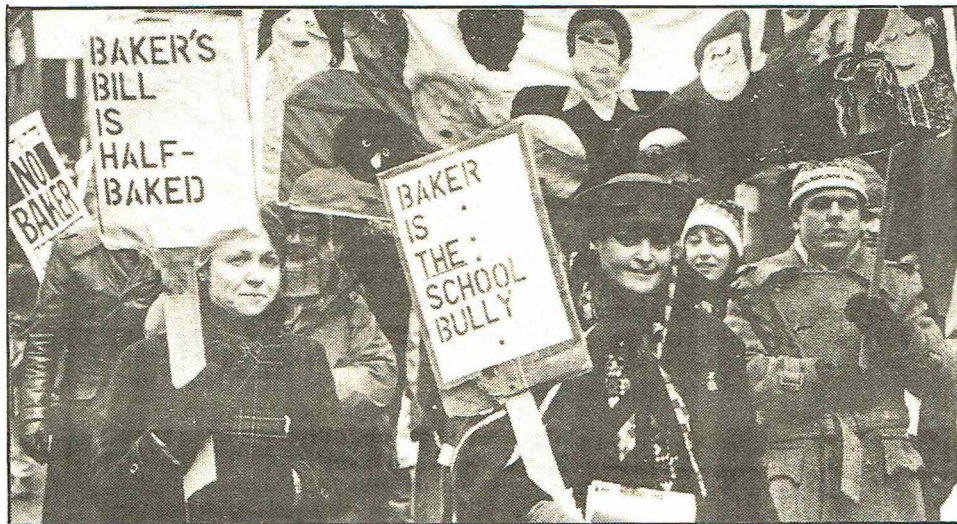
On 13 December Inner London teachers struck for a day against Tory Education Minister, Baker's, plot to abolish their collective bargaining rights, and drastically worsen their conditions of work. For two years the teachers' action has continued. The ideas of being professionals, something separate from the working class are being broken down. Teachers are learning the lessons of real trade unionism.

But incredibly the national leaders of the NUT suspended the Inner London Teachers' Association council for organising the strike. But in one school common room after another the London teachers voted to walk out, to defend their conditions and now their local leaders as well. At their rally on the day of the strike they unanimously voted for another strike on 19 February.

### Tube strike

Last week the National Communications Union began its industrial action, at least of an overtime ban, against British Telecom's paltry wage offer and the insidious strings attached. NCU workers had voted by an overwhelming four to one in a ballot for action.

BT thought with the elec-



London teachers march to parliament on 13 January.

tion of right winger John Golding as NCU General Secretary, industrial action was a thing of the past. But the boiling anger of the union's members has forced Golding to back the overtime action.

A twenty four hour shut down of the London underground was only postponed at the last minute, while the NUR leaders continued negotiating over the threat to contract out tube workers' jobs. The London tube workers had voted by five to one to strike. They are still on standby, ready to come out if no significant concessions are offered in the new talks. But a year ago when these same workers voted down an NUR recommendation to strike, the Tory press was writing them off. They had learnt the futility of striking!

Workers at Austin and

Pickersgill shipyard have just returned to work undefeated after over a month out. They originally voted 19 to 1 in a secret ballot, to strike. The British Shipbuilders' management picked out this yard for a battle over working conditions and jobs. It was reckoned for the strength of union organisation built up by the stewards over years.

At the same time the picket lines at Hangars, at Silentsnight and several other disputes still stay firm. Workers at the Caterpillar factory in Glasgow have barricaded themselves in against closure.

Print workers at Wapping approach the anniversary of a whole year of struggle. What a testament to the undoubted will to win of organised workers. Twice they have turned down Murdoch's rotten offers in ballots. Despite the SOGAT

leadership making no recommendations to keep the strike going.

Of course trade unionists are looking towards a general election and the chance to drive Thatcher out. But they are not just willing passive bystanders. If Thatcher should delay an election, she might not only face developing economic crisis, but her own Winter or Summer of discontent. The anger beginning to break out now, could still really explode.

But as different sections of workers take action, what is lacking is any willingness by the TUC leaders to draw these battles together, or to give them firm backing. The fight back against the bosses has to run alongside an urgent campaign for an accountable, fighting leadership in the trade union and labour movement.

## What We Stand for

- The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss in pay as a step towards the elimination of unemployment.
- Reversal of all Tory cuts and a massive programme of public works on housing, education, the health service, etc.
- A minimum wage of £120 a week for all, including pensioners, sick and disabled people.
- A socialist plan of production democratically drawn up and implemented by committees involving the trade unions, shop stewards, housewives and small businessmen.
- Opposition to the capitalist Common Market, the EEC. For a socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation.
- Workers' management of the nationalised industries. These should be run on the basis of one-third of the places on the management board coming from the unions in the industry, one-third from the TUC representing the working class as a whole, and one-third from the government.
- Opposition to the Tory government's anti-union laws and the reversal of attacks on the trade unions.
- Massive cuts in arms spending. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, but with the recognition that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust.
- Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the economy. This should be through an Enabling Bill in Parliament with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need.

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