

Militant

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The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth 30p

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GUILTY of defending jobs and services

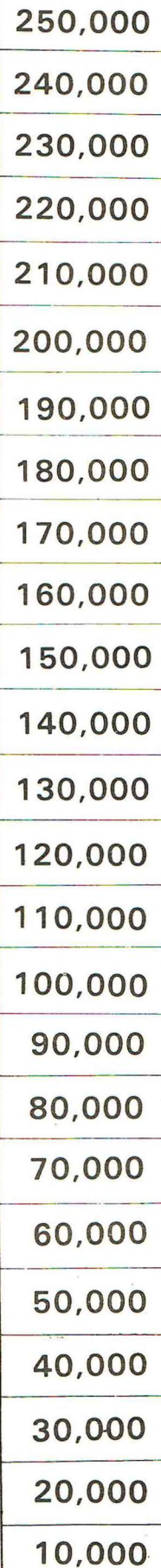
Liverpool council

Socialism in Action.
1983—7

- ★ 4,300 new homes built or started.
- ★ 6 new nurseries opened and education provided for all rising fives.
- ★ 4,500 homes improved or being improved.
- ★ 16,000 building jobs created.
- ★ 1,000 jobs created by taking on YTS trainees at union rates of pay.
- ★ Rents frozen since 1983.

Militant Fighting Fund

£250,000



THE 47 Liverpool Labour councillors have been debarred from office, surcharged and possibly personally bankrupted, by the highest court in the land—the Tory Law Lords.

By Jeremy Birch

Their crime—having the temerity to fight Thatcherism and to defend the jobs and services of the Liverpool working class, who elected them to office on those very commitments.

The Tories declared all out war on local spending. Since 1979 they have robbed Liverpool of £285 million in rate support grant.

But Liverpool's councillors fought back. They organised a mass public campaign of demonstrations and meetings to ensure the fullest involvement. As a result Liverpool is the most politicised city in Britain.

In action, the Liverpool councillors gave an example to the whole labour movement—of how to organise a struggle, how to inspire support and how to win elections.

Labour's vote in council elections was boosted from 43,000 in 1978 to over 90,000 by 1984, the highest post war Labour vote in the city. Even in 1986 the council secured the third highest Labour vote recorded in Liverpool.

This was after the setback of November 1985, when the city council had been deserted by the national Labour leadership, and by the other Labour councils which had pledged to stand firm against Thatcher. And



Liverpool councillors marching to the High Court.

after the shameful public attack on the councillors by Neil Kinnock at the Party conference.

Yet now it is the Labour Party nationally that is languishing in the doldrums in the opinion polls. Let the Labour leaders follow the Liverpool road—a socialist programme for the election, convincing Labour voters that, like the council, they mean to implement their promises.

Expulsions

Instead the national Party leaders have disowned the councillors—they left them to fight alone and they expelled some of their most determined leaders from Party membership. And the Tories have seized on this opportunity to wreak their

vengeance on the courageous Liverpool councillors.

Now the labour and trade union leaders must come to Liverpool's aid. The councillors have been removed. The Liberal and Tory enemy will take over, and fresh council elections loom. Before Labour won Liverpool in 1983 5,000 council jobs had been cut. If the bosses' parties get back again they will launch a vendetta against Labour's achievements. The housebuilding programme will go, jobs will be slashed and the Direct Labour Organisation could be privatised.

Already NALGO members in the city council have declared they will not co-operate with any imposed Liberal/Tory administration. There must be a major

election drive on Merseyside to 'Keep Liverpool Labour'.

The national Labour leaders must be compelled to commit a new Labour government to remove the ban on office, and to reimburse the councillors for the surcharge. Nicholas Ridley, the Tory minister in charge

of local government, has just retrospectively legalised the Tories' previously 'illegal' method of distributing grants to councils. The Labour leaders must act unhesitatingly with the same class conviction to defend their own in Liverpool.

Finance victory for Marxism

LESS THAN six months after our appeal for a quarter of a million was launched we have raised the marvellous total of £223,532. No other paper in the labour movement could boast such an achievement. This cash shows the loyal support for Marxist ideas in Britain—support that no witch-hunt will be able to destroy.

From the largest amount to the smallest, every penny and every pound is vital for our fight against the Tories and their rotting system. Our readers have shown their determination to see the victory of socialism.

This week Gill Harris, Bermondsey donated £500 and another £500 came from Martin Cock

and Rachel North, Kent. Annette White from Glasgow sent £80 as a week's wage. Hundreds of others continue to send donations and we appeal to all our readers to join in our campaign.

Next week's chart inside will have new targets for the next two months. So let us work to reach them with the same enthusiasm.

Militant

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Tax cuts now—pay later

THIS TUESDAY Nigel Lawson, the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, presents what will almost certainly be the last Budget before the general election.

All the political pundits and economic commentators are agreed that Lawson will announce a cut of up to 2p in the pound on the standard rate of income tax, higher mortgage tax relief, an increase in tax thresholds and more incentives for small investors. At the same time he will probably reduce the amount the government plans to borrow to pay for government spending by £1 billion to around £6 billion.

Last November the government announced increased spending on education and other social services. Then most commentators thought that consequently it would be unlikely that the government could hold its proposed borrowing at their £7 billion target. Now they plan to reduce it and make more handouts.

Thatcher and Lawson would have the electorate believe the Tories have begun to solve the problems of the economy and this is the start of a new era of economic

prosperity. But the truth is very much the opposite and what working people receive (which will be much less than the gains to higher income earners) will be wrenched back, once the election is over and the real state of the economy is brutally revealed to voters.

There are three reasons why the government is flush with money. Firstly oil revenues have partially revived in the last few months as prices have moved up (temporarily) from \$15 a barrel to \$18. Secondly there has been a consumer spending boom as people buy foreign imports, financing their spending from loans and in some cases from bogus mortgages. VAT receipts have consequently rocketed up by 10 per cent over the year. And thirdly, company profits have continued to rise, particularly in the service and finance sectors, and the government has reaped extra revenue from profits tax (up 5 per cent). Companies are no longer receiving allowances for new investments so their effective tax rate has risen from 17.5 per cent to nearly 22 per cent in the last two years.

So while money incomes as a whole have risen by about six per cent on average in the last year, receipts to the Chancellor have bulged by an extra 10.5 per cent, more than compensating for a rise in government spending of four per cent. This means that the Chancellor has already got tax payers to pay £4 billion more than expected. Now he will tell us how generous the government is by handing it back in the form of tax cuts, mainly to the rich.

Yet hardly anybody thinks that Lawson should make tax cuts. The CBI and even the right wing London Business School economists think that it would be better to spend the extra revenue on subsidies to industry and improved transport facilities, sewers and communications to help production and create jobs. Even the City and the dominant finance wing of the capitalists are not keen

on tax cuts. They are worried that it will fuel the consumer boom and drive up inflation, threatening the sterling exchange rate. They would prefer a further cut in government borrowing.

Only Thatcher and the loony right are in favour of cuts in taxation because they see it as an election winner. They believe that further cuts in the 'burden' of taxation for the higher income groups can boost the economy and create employment. Under Thatcher, the real earnings of the top 10 per cent of income earners have increased 10 times faster than those of the bottom 10 per cent. As a result the bottom 10 per cent now receive only 60 per cent of average earnings, compared to 65 per cent in 1979. Conversely the top 10 per cent now earn 73 per cent more than the average, compared to 57 per cent in 1979.

Further tax cuts will largely benefit the rich. But they obviously help the poor a little as well. That is why it is the height of stupidity for the Labour leaders to say that they will restore the taxes cut by the Tories in Tuesday's Budget. Taxes are already too high for the average working person and any cut is welcome.

Obviously the Tories hope to fool the electorate into believing that this Budget heralds a turnaround in Britain's economic fortunes. And they may temporarily succeed. A recent poll showed nearly 30 per cent of those asked thought things were getting better, a jump of 20 points since August.

But the horrible truth will be revealed after the election, as we show on pages 8 and 9.

The electorate will be compelled to hand back the 'gifts' they receive in this Budget and more. And that will just be the first instalment in attacks on the workers' living standards as the world economy moves into a new deep recession in production and trade in the next year or so.

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- ★ For a labour movement inquiry into the disaster.
- ★ Suspensions of sailings or blacking of similar ferries, until safety checks are complete.
- ★ A one-day European seamen's and lorry drivers' strike, to honour the bereaved, and for safety at sea.

SHOCK AT the loss of 134 lives in the Herald of Free Enterprise is giving way to anger, as evidence mounts that these lives were lost because a capitalist company put profit before safety. In both the design and operation of these new ferries, the first priority has been to maximise the payload and the turn-round time in order to boost profits. The labour movement must launch its own inquiry into the

disaster to get the real facts and campaign for the public ownership of the ferry companies under workers' control and management. The safety of the millions who cross the Channel cannot be entrusted to private monopolies in a cut-throat competition for profits. Safe transport can only be achieved on a socialist basis.

Greed for profit sinks Free Enterprise

THE SINKING of the Herald of Free Enterprise is a tragedy which has shocked workers internationally.

Locally around the ports of Folkestone and Dover, where the crew mainly came from, nearly everyone knows someone who worked on the ship.

Stories of those crews who missed the watch or turned down overtime made available due to the increase in passengers that the Sun offer generated all add to the sense of disaster.

This is made worse by the rumours that there had been faults with the ferry doors for seven to nine days before the disaster.

Some local seamen have said that "it was a matter of 'when?' not 'why?'" and that "the boat was top-heavy for profit".

The danger of water in the car deck is well known. Why else would notices "not to be opened at sea", relating to tank covers, be welded to the car deck floor in full view of all employees?

Roland Vanderbeka from Ostend, a Chief Engineer with RMT, the Belgian sister company of Townsend Thoresen told *Militant*:

"Ten year ago a report declared that ships of this type were 'floating coffins'. It said they have good basic stability but bad dynamic stability, as they are top-heavy and the car decks have no compartments, so water

can flow back and forward. In the event of a collision, capsizing could also happen.

"In cases of such accidents to an aircraft, all similar planes would be grounded. All these ferries should be stopped from sailing.

"The ferry crews are always under pressure to get the ships out on time. It should be standard procedure for the doors to be closed before starting, but the company puts pressure on the crew to put the boat out quickly."

New ferries

Economic and competitive pressures are building up between the rival ferry companies for the lucrative cross-Channel traffic, with the Channel Tunnel an added factor. As a result, Townsend Thoresen, have commissioned two super-ferries to be in service in June and December. They will have twice the capacity of the Herald and will be five times the size of ferries introduc-

ed in the sixties, capable of carrying 2,400 passengers each.

John Prescott, NUS sponsored MP has correctly said that "safety must be put before commercial considerations". There must be a labour movement inquiry into this disaster. Whatever the outcome, people's lives cannot now be trusted to the hands of employers like Townsend Thoresen.

The control of cross-Channel ferries must be in the hands of those seamen who know best how to run them. In the operation and design of the ferries, the first consideration must be the safety of the passengers and crew. This is something that only a port and ferry service nationalised under workers' control and management can deliver.

Neil Kinnock and the next Labour government bear a heavy responsibility to see that this pledge is included in the election manifesto.

By Eric Segal



Geoff Haney—Marxist fighter

TRAGICALLY *Militant* supporter, Geoff Haney was one of the 42 crew members pronounced missing presumed dead in the Zeebrugge ferry disaster.

The young life of a personal friend, a courageous fighter for his fellow mariners and a convinced socialist has been cut short by the callous calculations for profit of the shipowners. We should be in no doubt that the real tragedy lies in the fact that those business magnates of P&O lines who Geoff fought against were responsible for his and over 130 other deaths.

Geoff was a second chef on the 'Herald of Free Enterprise'. He had been at sea since he was 15.

Geoff was first introduced to Marxism by his sister Sue and the two of them went on to recruit four other brothers and sisters to the socialist movement. Geoff firmly took the message of Marxism onto his next ship, building up a regular sale of *Militant* and collecting funds for his paper.

Armed with these ideas he became an NUS representative on the ship. For this he was victimised by the shipping company and forced onto the register and the dole.

When the miners' strike came, Geoff was one of a group of dedicated *Militant* supporters who packed their bags and went off to help a handful of striking miners to bring out the rest of the pit in Golborne, near Wigan. They succeeded and the pit became the most solid and confident pit in the coalfield.

Risked job

Later, when Geoff got back onto the deep sea ships, he went to Chile where he witnessed the horrific conditions facing the Chilean workers. This experience strengthened Geoff in his resolve. Once again he risked his job to protect three Chilean Socialist Party stowaways who were caught on board ship and locked in the hold. His exclusive article in the *Militant* vividly exposed the harsh barbaric tortures of these youth and the cruelty of the shipping company.

Whenever Geoff came home from the sea he would seek me out for a drink and discussion. He would always insist on politics first. Geoff had been reading Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. He lost his life almost 70 years to the day

that the revolution began, in which the sailors played such a heroic part.

Geoff survived disasters at sea and earthquakes but was cheated by the penny-pinching ferry owners. The only consolation is that his courage will serve to inspire others. Every *Militant* supporter will wish condolences to Geoff's mother, sisters and brothers. It is a measure of his courage and selflessness that we all feared for the worst when we heard the news of the disaster because we knew that Geoff would be happier saving other lives than his own.

Geoff's death is a personal loss. He was not just a friend, he had some of the finest qualities of a class fighter—humility and kindness, courage and a love for children—the innocent generation—a calm sense of proportion and a readiness to perform any task he could to improve the lot of his family and friends.

Geoff's striving for a better world will not have been in vain if his death serves as an example for this generation. We salute a mariner, a Marxist and a fighter for the workers of the world.

By Phil Frampton

Four years of struggle

THE MAGNIFICENT struggle over four years by the socialist Liverpool council, along with the strike of the miners, represents the centre of resistance to the Thatcher government. The militant example of Liverpool represented a real threat to the Tories and their system.

By Dave Cotterill

That is why the most formidable resources were mobilised against Liverpool. The media played their usual role; the courts have been utilized against the councillors; the church leaders were ushered in to attack the council and then shuffled away to sanctimoniously protest against the injustice of unemployment; attempts have been made to mobilise the middle class against the council, only to result in gatherings a few thousand strong which rapidly melted away.

Every shade of opposition temporarily shelved differences, to unite against the council. Lurking behind the scenes pulling the strings, have been the Liberals acting on behalf of the Tories and bosses.

But these attacks had little effect. What did damage the council's campaign was the action of the labour and trade union leadership. They refused national assistance to Labour Group, in the District moved to openly undermine and subvert the movement.

It was their actions, not the Tories', that destroyed the unity which was cemented from 1983 to November 1985 within the Labour Group and the District Labour Party, among the ranks of the council workforce. It was they who sowed confusion among voters, thus raising the possibility of a Liberal revival.

By the actions of Labour's national leadership Liverpool was isolated. The badly rattled Tories were then able to stand firm, refusing to give the city additional resources.

Liverpool's defeat meant the Tories have confidently turned the screw still further



Liverpool MPs, councillors and their families in the House of Lords at the start of the appeal.

on local government finances. They have now pushed Sheffield, Manchester and many London boroughs into a position of potential bankruptcy or of making massive cuts.

The Labour leaders were themselves terrified of a victory in Liverpool because it would have signalled that militant struggle can defeat the Tories. But their own short sightedness has led to some of their own supporters being the worst affected.

Yet when Labour won control of Liverpool in 1983 many believed it would be a one or two year wonder. The Tories controlled the council for over 100 years up until 1955. A Liberal/Tory alliance ruled the city for 13 years. Right wing Labour councils had only enjoyed sporadic years of office - often doing damage to Labour's cause.

Liverpool Labour's programme in 1983 was to build houses, create jobs, not to increase rents nor implement Tory cuts, but to increase rates only in line with inflation and to campaign for additional resources.

And with the backing of the Labour movement this was unhesitatingly implemented. Through thousands of meetings, held

at all times of the day and night, in workshops, canteens and colleges, in open air venues, workers have been informed and consulted.

Tens of thousands were swept into a human flood of activity. Nowhere in Britain was there anything like it.

The defeat of November 1985 did mark a turning point - a form of mild reaction has set in since. But only through the courts could the Tories have removed this council. They would never have been successful on the electoral plane.

Achievements

But no-one can destroy either the achievements of the council or the support that exists for the Labour Party. Indeed the attacks, the expulsions, the suspension of the District Labour Party have reinforced support for the councillors and for the ideas of Marxism.

The consciousness of tens of thousands of workers and their families has been fundamentally changed. This has been reflected in the electoral victories in each successive set of local elections, in the decimation of the Tories who no longer hold one parliamentary seat in

Liverpool and in the overwhelming shift to the left in the labour movement.

In fear the Labour leaders have tried to draw the veil of silence over Liverpool's achievements. They draw up plans for house building and the creation of jobs, and make no mention of Liverpool. They launch a campaign against low pay in the North West and make no mention of Liverpool. They start a campaign on nursery schools and make no mention of Liverpool's achievements.

But new council elections will once again raise the real issues. A general election will force activity upon the labour movement. New sections educated during the struggles of the last four years will enter the movement. They will be far more radical than previous generations.

Any damning up of the anger, frustration and resentment will only result in a bigger shift to the left later.

The struggle of the Liverpool councillors will go down in history.

Their determination to defend jobs and services has been undaunted—not only during the good days but also in the times of setback and reversal.

They have not run away, but have fought every inch to defend every job and the people who elected them.

The councillors were forced to probe every avenue to avoid introducing the cuts that the Tories were so anxious to achieve, and which shamefully were advocated by many Labour and trade union leaders, over the Stonefrost Report.

Challenge

This has meant resorting to finance devices—creative accounting in order to gain some time.

How sickened the Tories must have been—thinking they had the victim on its knees and about to rub its nose in the dirt—only to see the council outmanoeuvre their water-tight legislation.

But this was only possible because a challenge had been mounted against capitalism and a socialist alternative argued and fought for.

Militant pays tribute to these councillors and to their families. Workers in Liverpool and throughout the country will not forget the councillors' struggle and in the years to come they will find their rightful places—in the leadership of the labour movement.

NALGO says no to Liberals

A RECENT ballot of Liverpool Branch NALGO members has returned a resounding vote (about 3 to 1) in favour of non-cooperation with a non-elected Liberal/Tory administration after the House of Lords appeal.

This gives the branch a mandate for action over any decision taken by a non-elected administration which is against the interests of the council workforce. The action would cease once by-elections had been held, whoever wins.

The vote is a tremendous victory in view of the total lack of any campaign by the branch leadership for a yes vote.

The vote should warn the Liberals that NALGO members are prepared to fight any attacks they may be

considering. The result lays the basis for renewed unity amongst the council workforce—a unity which was sabotaged by branch leadership's decision to pull out of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee.

NALGO members in Liverpool must prepare the branch to put this decision into action. All Liverpool City Council workers must unite in the fight to defend their jobs and conditions from Tory/ Liberal attack.

At the same time the branch must rebuild bridges with the other council unions and the Labour Party in Liverpool to ensure that we have complete unity in future battles.

By a Liverpool NALGO member

Loony right

SOME LEADING Labour figures are threatening the party's chances of election victory.

In a letter to Frank Dobson, chairman of the London Labour MPs, Neil Kinnock's press secretary Patricia Hewitt blamed the 'loony left' for the Greenwich defeat.

Former Prime Minister James Callaghan, whose statement against party policy in the 1983 election contributed to Labour's defeat, has again treacherously attacked party policy on nuclear weapons in the House of Commons. Other right-wingers are pressing for Labour's manifesto to be curbed.

Labour is seen to be shooting itself in the foot. Attacking the left and diluting the manifesto will have disastrous results.

Local services are an important issue, which Labour could turn to its advantage, but Patricia Hewitt's complaint that the "gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear and that the fear of higher rates is particularly prominent in the GLC area" will not impress Labour's enemies, nor reassure its supporters.

Ironically, the Labour councils in London which have been dubbed 'loony left' are run by the very section of the party on which Kinnock rose to the leadership. They have been the victims of a disgusting campaign in the Tory press, most of whose stories are outright lies. It is scandalous that right-wing Labour MPs like Joe Ashton have used these fabrications to attack the left.

Nevertheless, there are some genuine criticisms of these councils. Having failed effectively to stem Tory attacks and cuts in grants, some councils have turned to massive rate rises to balance their budgets. Others, when rate-capping has closed that option, have tried to maintain a radical image with single-issue crusades on issues such as gay and lesbian rights.

It is their high-profile campaigns on these questions while implementing Tory cuts in jobs and services which has disturbed some traditional Labour voters. *Militant* fully supports the rights of all oppressed minorities, but these groups will be the first to suffer as the Tory attacks bite deeper. The need for a campaign to defend all local services, especially housing and jobs, has never been greater.

Liverpool City Council, influenced by Marxist ideas, has shown how minorities can be protected while jobs and services for all are being defended.

The media try to include *Militant* in the 'loony left' club, but more and more socialists and council workers are recognising the Marxist as the most consistent left section in the party to provide answers for fighting the cuts.

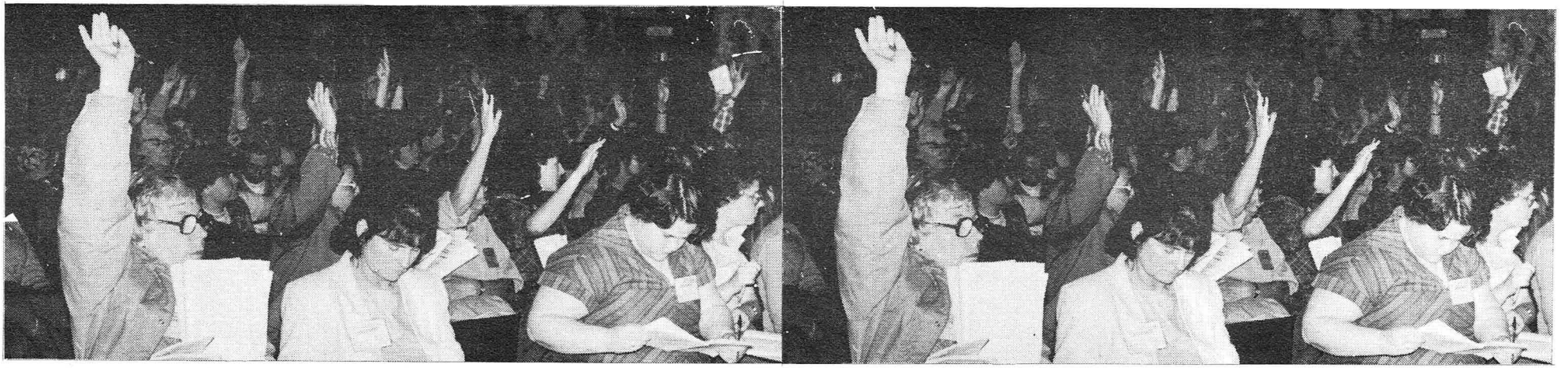
By Ben Eastop

Wolverhampton protest



Photo: Nigel Clapp

On 7 March, over 3,000 people marched through a blizzard in Wolverhampton to protest at the killing of Clinton McCurbin at the hands of the police. Labour's leaders should demand a labour movement inquiry into the death, and call for democratic control over the police.



- ★ One year maternity leave on full pay.
- ★ Free daycare and educational provision to be available for all under-fives.
- ★ Equal pay for work of equal value.
- ★ Minimum wage of £120 a week with pro-rata payments for part-time workers.

Building a mass working class women's movement

THE LABOUR Party is circulating to all constituency parties, women's sections and councils and trade unions a consultation paper proposing changes in the structure of the Labour Women's organisation. Despite the imminence of a general election the Labour leaders want to waste campaigning time.

Many Labour parties will be reluctant to give time to discussing organisational questions in a pre-election period.

But the building of an active women's organisation is the business of the whole movement and therefore every effort should be made by constituencies, women's sections, councils and trade union branches to respond to the consultation.

The article below is based on a document produced by the National Labour Women's Committee members representing the North West Region and supported by the North West Regional Women's Committee.

Over the last few years working class women have felt the full brunt of Tory attacks. Women workers have lost many of the rights and benefits they had won in the past and had their low pay driven down even further.

Declining social services, health service, housing etc have increased the double burden women bear at home and at work.

Onslaught on women

In the middle of the biggest onslaught on working class women since the war, the Labour Women's conference has been dominated by organisational questions.

No campaigns have been launched to mobilise or build the membership. Even during the miners' strike, when miners' wives and women all over the country were mobilised, no special efforts were made nationally to recruit these women although several good local initiatives were taken. A golden opportunity to build the LWO on solid working class foundations was lost.

Supporters of the Women's Action Committee (WAC) must bear the major responsibility for the conference being bogged down in organisational debate and for the frustration felt by trade union delegates as well as many women's section delegates.

They presented a stream of organisational proposals year after year, whilst putting forward no clear policies to fight the Tories or to recruit and organise working class women.

The lack of effective leadership has left the women's organisation vulnerable to attack from the right who have abandoned any idea of winning political debates. Instead they are abusing the mood for unity in the Party to try to institute a variety of organisational proposals which they hope will allow them to recoup their previous dominant position.

In particular they have seen the growing support for the policies advanced by *Militant* supporters and the consistent support for Liverpool Council and opposition to witch-hunts.

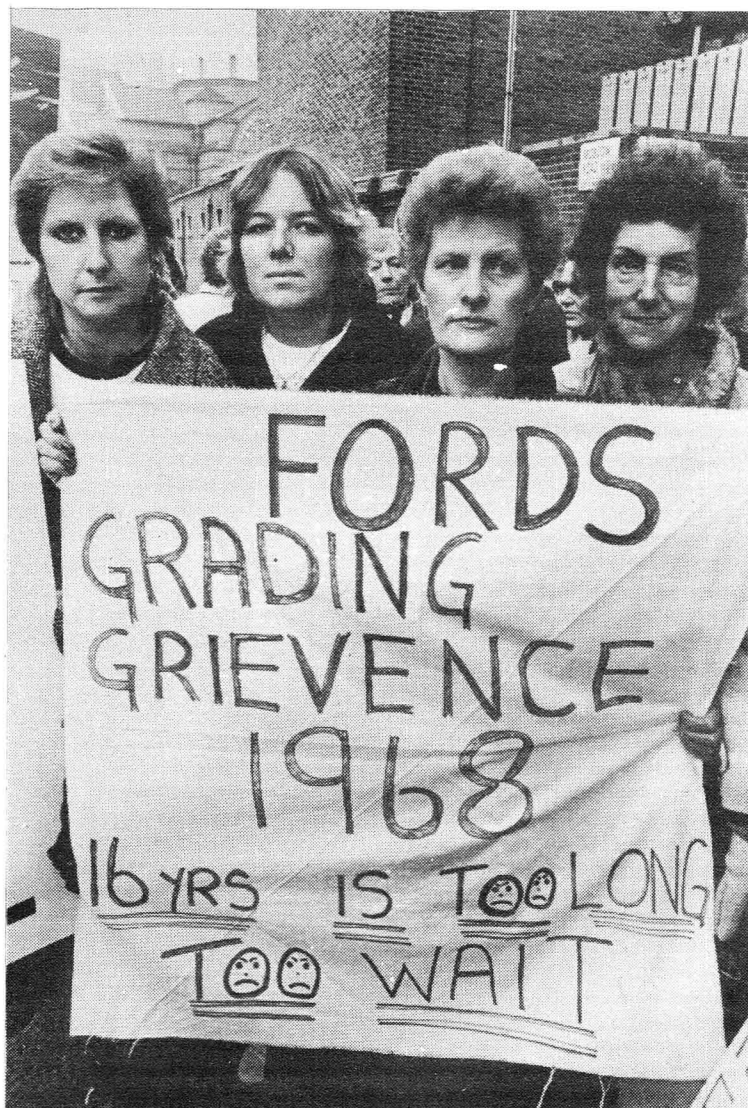
However, many trade union and women's organisation delegates to women's conference genuinely want to see reforms to strengthen the LWO. There are anomalies in its structure which have become more apparent as the women's organisation has begun to develop.

The present consultation therefore is to be welcomed and will make a positive contribution to rebuilding the women's organisation but only if it is widespread and involves the rank and file of the labour movement in a discussion to find an organisational structure which will encourage not obstruct growth.

National committee elections

In the past the Labour Women's organisation was a mass organisation which, in the early days of the movement, grew faster than the Labour Party itself. In 1919 there were 271 women's sections, by 1921 there were 650.

Labour women



Ford's women machinists who spent years fighting for, and eventually won, regrading for their jobs.

Photo: Carlos Guarita (Reflex) II

Some had 800 members. The total membership was 70,000. The women's organisation was very active in the '26 general strike. This led to further growth. In April 1926 there were 1,642 sections. By April 1927 this had risen to 1728. The estimated membership was 300,000. The women's organisation today is a shadow of its former self!

The Labour Women's Organisation is still suffering the decline in activity in the post war years. Its rebuilding is being held up by the lack of campaigning work. There is still a long way to go before the organisation is represented in all the areas and by women's sections with membership large enough to

sections and to ensure the national committee reflects political change which can be very rapid in the present period, national committee members should be elected every year.

It is vital that the regions, who should have most contact with the national committee members and should be most aware of their political and work record, should retain the right to elect the committee members.

This system of election has proved very popular. Although the national conference voted to change the system to election at National conference, only London, out of the regions, came out in favour. In fact the regional conferences for a number of reasons are much more accessible to working class women and involve many more members of the women's organisation.

In 1986 the total number of delegates notified for the national conference was 427. The number in the regions was 1,227. (not including London and Southern region conferences which hadn't taken place when the statistics were compiled).

Trade union representation

Most trade unions have or are developing women's structures in an attempt to recruit more women members and encourage their active participation. To improve liaison between unions and the women's organisation, to organise more joint campaigns and schools to ensure the concerns of women workers are fully reflected in the women's organisation, we propose that an extra national committee seat should be allocated in each region to be elected by trade union delegates.

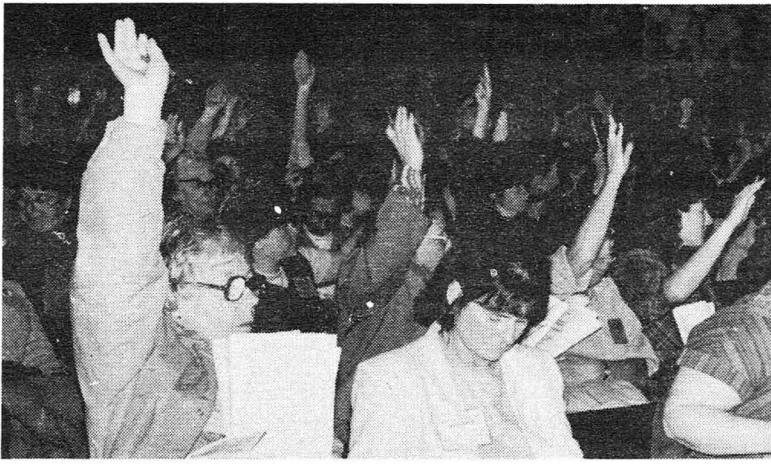
Voting at Women's Conference

Currently the voting system is based on one vote per delegate. Womens sections, councils and

sustain consistent campaigning activity. The recent 5,000-strong demonstration of the North West Women's Organisation against low pay and privatisation still ranks as the largest public event called by the Labour Women's Organisation in decades.

Unless the national committee pays serious attention to the need to build in the regions it will find itself leading phantom armies. It is this weak position which primarily determines the lack of power and influence of the women's organisation.

At present the national committee members are elected every two years. To bring the women's organisation into line with other



Defend NW region Women's Committee

THE NORTH West Regional Women's Committee has been effectively suspended possibly until after the General Election, by the Regional Executive of the Labour Party.

Accused of acting outside the constitution in 90 per cent of its actions, the North West Regional Women's Officer's report gives a taste of some of the achievements of the region's Women's Committee:

"The Women's Councils and sections continue to expand and we now have 97 women's organisations... 2,000 copies of the childcare document have been sold and distributed, the Regional Women's Conference was attended by 292 delegates and

visitors... thousands attended the Low Pay demonstration in May".

The Regional Women's Committee has worked hard to rebuild the women's organisation in this region. We have a record of activity we are proud to set against that of the Regional Executive Committee itself.

The NW region Labour Party conference this weekend must overturn the regional executive's decision and support our right to a democratic, mass socialist women's organisation.

Vote for REC women's seats: T Bond, K Harvey, L Holt. Send resolutions to the regional executive committee and copies to Regional Women's Committee members.

Labour Parties are entitled to two delegates each, trade unions up to 20 each.

The Women's Action Committee have proposed an abstract formula of 50/50 parity in voting between unions and women's organisation delegates in an electoral college system.

Whilst this might work for a one off election its use to take votes on amendments, resolutions etc at a national conference would be unworkable. Hardly any votes could be taken on a show of hands since different voting strengths would be represented.

Our main objection is that the women's organisation relies for its existence on active participation and this must be reflected in its national conference.

We welcome the strengthening of trade union involvement, but it would be wrong to allocate a fixed number of votes to be wielded in the absence of a commitment to participate and build the women's organisation.

Outgoing attitude

Voting must be linked to active participation by linking it to delegate strength. The present allocation of delegates is arbitrary and doesn't sufficiently encourage an outgoing attitude to building the Labour Women's Organisation.

We therefore propose the following system: Women's sections and Labour Parties with no women's organisation—two delegates.

Women's councils, which take delegates from women's sections, youth sections, Labour clubs and trade union branches etc—four delegates plus one extra delegate for every 500 affiliated members.

This would encourage links between women's sections and trade union branches at local level.

Trade unions—one delegate for every 1,000 up to 10,000 (in order to encourage those trade unions with only a small number of women to send several delegates) and then one delegate for every subsequent 2,000 women members.

To assist smaller unions it may be necessary to have a minimum delegation of five.

The present system of election is that each region has two national committee members. They are elected on alternate years at the

regional women's conference.

This system was established in 1981 as a result of a resolution put forward by *Militant* supporters (it is proposed that national conference elects the NC in future).

A strong national leadership to give direction is important but it can only be as strong as the organisation it leads. The basis of electing the NC must reflect the needs of the women's organisation. We would argue that the most urgent task of the NC members, in co-operation with the regional women's committees is to rebuild a healthy campaigning women's organisation in the localities.

In the past, whilst we recognised that the Labour Women's Organisation was in need of reform, we warned that any transfer of the election of the five seats on the NEC to women's conference would either lead to a reorganisation of the NEC or of the women's organisation under control of the right wing.

This would be necessitated by the fact that in effect the trade unions would be losing control over the five seats and would try to recoup it in other ways. The right is quite prepared to trample on democracy in the party.

They would certainly not be averse to implementing constitutional changes to stifle debate and obstruct the growth of a mass campaigning women's organisation based on socialist principles.

Now that major change is inevitable, albeit under unfavourable circumstances we propose that the five seats on the NEC be elected at women's conference, three by the trade unions and two by the women's organisation.

The constitutional changes now being discussed will be the biggest in post war years and will lay the foundation for its development in the coming period.

If the consultation is democratic and is taken in the context of building the Labour women's organisation, the whole movement will emerge strengthened and the women's organisation could become a strong weapon in the struggle to bring about the socialist transformation of society.

By Margaret Crear

A campaigning charter for activists

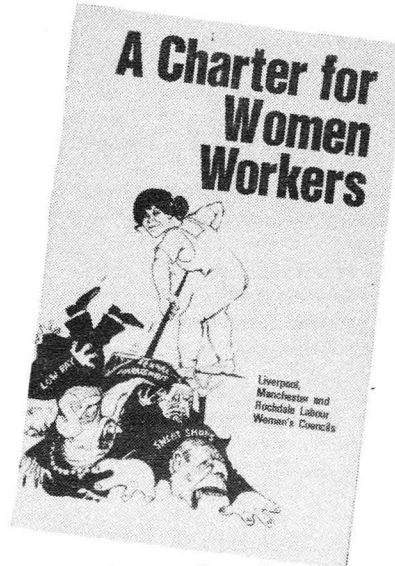
THE RESOLUTION carried at 1986 Labour Party conference committing the next Labour government to a statutory minimum wage also declared 1987 to be the "year of the low paid"! One of the best weapons in the fight to convince the Labour and Trade Union movement of the need to support low paid workers and at the same time bring them into membership and activity is the Charter for Women Workers.

Unique within the movement, unlike the multiplicity of "charters" at present produced, this comes from the bitter experience of women workers organised in the North West Labour Women's Organisation.

Out of a discussion among delegates to the 1984 North West Regional Women's Conference, the Liverpool, Manchester and Rochdale Women's Councils sponsored the first edition of the Charter.

Three years later, it has sold over 5,000 copies and is now into its second edition and third printing, showing the need for a pamphlet that not only gives all the up to date facts and figures on low pay, but also deals with the urgent issues of unemployment and new technology, sexual harassment, privatisation, health and safety, childcare, maternity and paternity rights, training and apprenticeships, etc.

Again unlike most pamphlets, this is a campaigning Charter to be used in discussion at any meeting. It is invaluable for en-



couraging trade union branches who are experiencing difficulty in involving their women members to give practical support, by reading and selling this Charter, but, most importantly by fighting for the demands which the Charter proposes.

The present Tory government has made it clear that profits must come before people. They have, for instance, removed the meagre protection provided by the wages councils to women and young people. Trade Unions are being hampered by state interference through anti-trade union laws, and the green light has been given to employers so that they can take advantage of cheap labour. 1987 will bring a general election—there would be no doubt about the outcome of this for Labour if the ideas in this pamphlet were combined with support for the "year of the low paid". This rotten system that can

only survive now on low pay, poverty benefits and worsening conditions would be shown up.

At 50p, it is ideal for selling door to door as part of our campaign to elect a socialist Labour government, which will put the low paid at the forefront from the start.

Sponsors are welcome, as are the opinions, criticisms and congratulations that are an essential part of making the Charter for Women Workers so relevant in the struggle to end low pay. Sponsorship is increasing, and covers women's sections/councils, trade union committees/branches, Labour MPs and councillors, Young Socialist branches, Constituency Labour Parties and trade councils. This campaigning Charter should be the basis for work amongst women in broad lefts in the trade unions. The future battles on pay and conditions will involve fighting for a new and committed leadership. As the introduction of the Charter says: "Many more women will be drawn into the struggle to transform the trade unions into democratic, fighting organisations, which will base themselves on the socialist aspirations of the Labour movement and unite male and female workers in a common struggle against the bosses and their system".

By Cathy Wilson

(Secretary Liverpool Labour Women's Council, NW Regional Labour Women's Committee member)

Hackney's positive action must be more than a show

WOMEN TRAINEE building workers employed by Hackney Council have found that the council's policy of "open access" to women does not extend to providing adequate childcare.

Hackney Council is proud of its policy of "positive action". They now have the largest number of women trainee building workers in Britain. Yet some of these women, including a mother of seven, are so desperate as a result of difficulties of childcare they are threatening to leave. Just before Xmas they sent a deputation asking for urgent action to be taken to provide adequate facilities, including a nursery promised for September '86, but which has yet to open.

The nursery is already equipped, but no attempts have been made to recruit staff. Social Services has so far refused to release necessary funds, though they will be using half the places. As a result of the deputation, moves were made to ensure the money was found, and they agreed to consider immediate extra finance to cover childcare for those who had expected the nursery to open in January and had therefore cancelled existing arrangements. Currently the women receive £12 per week, towards childcare, but after tax they end up

with only £8. On average, childminders charge £32.

The council also agreed to review the present system of stopping childcare allowance when the trainee was off sick or on holiday, as the childminder still has to be paid to reserve the place. (Childminders also rely on a regular income). The women also asked for an end to penalties (either financial or on their attendance record/timekeeping) if they were late or had to take time off due to childcare problems.

This situation shows that positive action means much more than simply recruiting women.

There were also problems of children being sent home from school either because of asbestos or teacher shortage. Hackney currently allows five days off for "family care" (which was news to these women) but even this is not enough, especially if they have more than one child.

A further demand was for provision to be made for improvers (advanced trainees) who at present don't get any help towards

childcare. Management said this was impossible as improvers are on different contracts from trainees and if childcare was granted to them, they would also have to offer it to all other employees!

The women also felt that childcare provision should not be restricted to women. Male workers should also be entitled to childcare as it should not be presumed that their partners would be at home looking after the children. The women also asked for the current arrangements with ILEA (Hackney College) to be altered, as they at present have to attend evening classes, which leave them with even bigger childcare problems. They asked either for a creche to be provided or, preferably (as classes do not end till 9pm) for day release to be arranged. Finally, they asked for provision to be made on site for pregnant women, to include moving to lighter work, time-off to attend hospital etc, maternity leave and posts to be kept open.

This situation shows that positive action means much more than simply recruiting more women. To pay more than lip service to equal opportunities for women Hackney council must make ample childcare provision to meet the needs of employees.

Refugees victims of Tory racism



Sales boost

WHEREVER YOU are, whatever you are doing, there are opportunities to sell *Militant*. The smaller sales are at least as important as the hundreds sold on big demonstrations.

Perhaps the best sale this week was the 20 sold by one supporter in an hour outside his local dole office in Crewe. If you have spare time during the day you can be sure of meeting people there with a vested interest in changing society.

Supporters from the West Midlands are visiting factories to raise support for the campaign to defend Labour's youth. At the Lucas plant the convenor agreed to support the campaign and also agreed to take 6 copies of *Militant* every week. Use the paper that supports the YS when you are out building its support.

Regular Saturday sales are steadily growing. 15 were sold in Telford, their best for a while. North Shields sold 18 in an hour then followed it up with a door to door sale which sold another 14.

Remember our report of the comrade who sold 5 papers in his street after 'Bobby Grant' gave us a plug on Brookside. When these were followed up four took the paper again and three passers-by took papers. Now if only Dirty Den could organise a readers meeting in the Queen Vic...

WHO IS most at risk of deportation or criminal charges in the Tories' 'democratic' Britain? Ex nazis believed to be guilty of war crimes? No, there are reputedly dozens who have found sanctuary in this country since 1945.

What about mercenaries such as the London security firm alleged to have been linked with atrocities against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. No, this firm, KMS, named in papers belonging to the disgraced US Colonel North as also being involved with the Nicaraguan far right contras, are still at large.

The first victims of new proposed legislation on asylum rights are people like the Tamils, victims of murderous attacks by government troops in Sri Lanka. A few weeks ago David Waddington, the Tory minister responsible for immigration issues tried to deport 64 Tamil refugees fleeing from cold blooded assassins (see *Militant* 27 February).

Now the Home Secretary, facing an embarrassing judicial review, has announced he would reconsider the cases. But at the same time the government announced draconian new measures which are a major departure from previous

policy.

The Tories' excuse to cover up their inhuman policies has been that the refugees are coming in through the use of racketeers. This is tragically often true, the refugees are desperate to escape; if there were any better way to get political asylum they would use it rather than be ripped off by such connen.

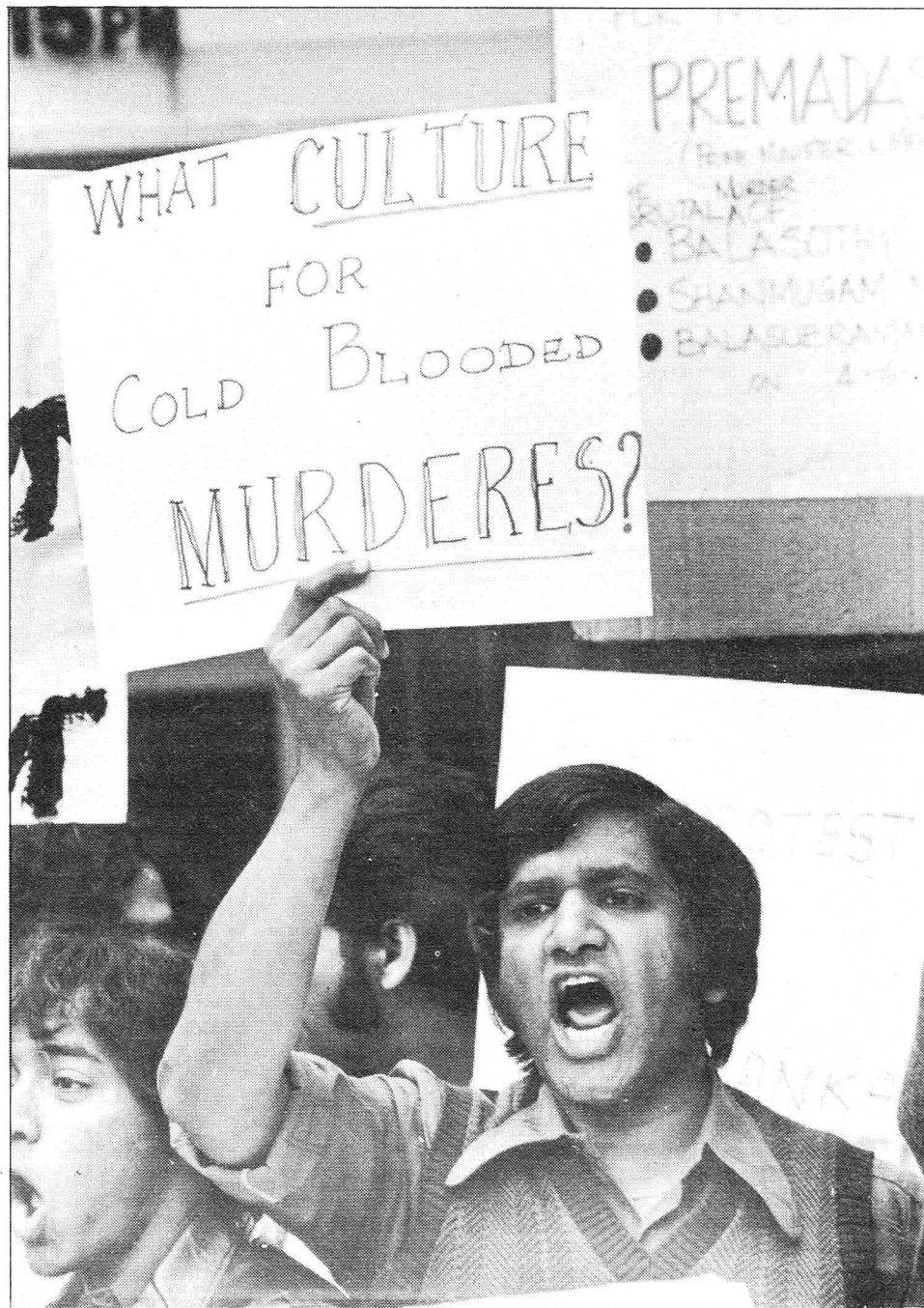
The Tories are to introduce fines of up to £1,000 for airlines and shipping companies which transport people seeking asylum without visas or proper passports.

Police states

This is an attempt to stop people entering Britain where a campaign can be launched to let them stay. The Tories are hypocrites. How could a black refugee from South Africa get a visa? How many Tamils will be able to get hold of visas?

Police states rarely go out of their way to help their victims. Such a ruling would make Britain's laws on refugees about the worst in Western Europe

The Labour leadership must campaign to stop these proposals going through. Britain's problems are not caused by a handful of refugees as the yellow press imply; they are caused by the failures of the capitalist system. Labour must act to cut across the racist lies and defend the Tamil refugees.



Tamil protesters in London. Victims of Jayawardene's cold blooded murderers will find asylum harder if these new measures come into operation.

Left and Right

Fiddle lessons

CREATIVE ACCOUNTING. That's a sure sign of the 'loony left' isn't it? Well that's Fleet Street's story. But the Wyvern Business Library, which specialises in business books, could disabuse them.

One of their recent choices, called *Creative Accounting*, says: "Every company in the country is fiddling its profits." The author says that phrases like "cooking the books, fiddling the accounts, and corporate con trick" might make people think there is something illegal about this pastime. Not so, it's all "in perfectly good taste" and legitimate creative accounting.

So firms can make their profits look as big as possible to attract shareholders, or small enough to dodge tax. The book will tell you "how to pilfer the pension fund" in fact how to hide practically everything from prying eyes.

Just what Reagan needed for his creative account of the Irangate scandal. Can you imagine the headlines if someone produced such dubious material about claiming benefits?

New royalism

WHAT DO you think is the main concern of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the run up to the election? Exposing the Tories' record on jobs, housing, education, health? Wrong first time.

The Labour whips office has told MPs the exciting news that any MP who wishes to attend one of Her Majesty's garden parties this July will be sent an invitation. You can take along

your spouse and any unmarried daughter born during or before 1969! (Presumably they're looking for some unfortunate woman to marry Edward the warrior prince.)

All of this, free cucumber sandwiches, champers and a chance to get the blood royal in your family can be arranged through the Labour whips' office. So that's why they call them Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

A touch of class

REMEMBER THOSE city technology colleges which were going to give a great educational boost to the inner cities. The down payment on the first one has been received. It is planned for the safe Tory seat of Solihull, hardly inner city. The money comes from the Hanson Trust, big donors to Tory funds, who presumably, like their adverts, wanted a 'touch of class' for their venue.

Wrong number

NORMAN TEBBIT seems to be worried that his election campaign may run short of money. The £479,000 that came in from City firms in a non election year 1985-6, and the good favours the Tories have done for the big bangers and insider dealers would suggest not.

But why else would he be writing to the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard asking for a donation? But as they addressed the letter to Mr G Switchboard they probably thought they were one of those nice yuppie married couples. They're probably getting them mixed up with Giles and Lavina Switchboard of Chelsea.

Labour MPs accuse Tories of fuelling the flames of oppression

IN PARLIAMENT Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn protested that these new proposals were a "further massive stride away from civilised behaviour by this government."

Arms sales

He pointed out that the Tories should be questioning the sense of selling arms to the Jayawardene government to fuel the flames of oppression.

Dave Nellist who initiated the debate in the Commons in February attacked the

minister for not finding out about the real situation in Jaffna and the north and east of Sri Lanka. "Does he realise that one of the families of economic refugees fled because their three year old daughter was shot dead? Other families fled because their homes were bombed."

"If the Home Secretary had occupied the same post in the 1930s or 1940s he would have sent thousands of people back to Germany, Italy and Spain and to their deaths".

OVER 60 people, mainly young Asians attended a Newham LPYS meeting on the problems faced by the Tamil population. Among the speakers were Labour MP Dave Nellist and socialists from Sri Lanka.

One of the best received speeches was from a Sinhalese worker who stressed to loud applause that Sinhalese and Tamil workers had a common enemy, the Tories and Jayawardene regime. Many in the audience signed up to join the LPYS.



Dave Nellist

Equal pay

AFTER THREE weeks of strike action, 900 textile workers recently won a pay rise and equal pay for work for equal value for the women employees who make up two thirds of the workforce.

The employees of 14 factories in the Scottish Lace and Window Furnishings Association were taking home a basic wage of only £68 per week, the maximum was £114, including bonus.

With round-the-clock picketing the GMBATU members finally won an increase of £7.50 across the board backdated to 1 December, with a further £6 from December 1987.

They also won improved overtime rates and regrading for the women employees on the basis of 'equal pay for work of equal value', implementing Equal Pay legislation by ending discrimination between the way men's and women's jobs are categorised.

As one of the women employees pointed out: "the Equal Pay act didn't exist for the bosses round here, they paid us according to the category we worked in and women were always employed in the low category, low wage jobs."

The dispute won the sympathy of the local communities, pubs organised soup handouts and local people 'adopted' pickets.

The High Court decision against women at Cammell Laird for equal pay shows there is still a long fight ahead, industrially and politically.

But the victory of these workers in what is not a traditionally militant industry (the last strike in the industry was in 1926), will be an inspiration for low-paid and particularly women workers to struggle for decent pay.

Unionise young workers

A COMMON thread runs through all recent Tory legislation affecting young workers. They are all a conscious attempt by the capitalist class to use young workers to undercut the pay and conditions of older workers.

The bosses want to lower young workers' expectations; they are trying to drive down their wages and then use them as a temporary labour force who can be called upon when needed, but with no security of employment.

Since 1979 the number of teenagers in full time work has fallen by a third; last year only one in three 16 year olds found a job. Access to skilled jobs has almost disappeared.

British industry can offer only 40,000 apprenticeships, (compared with 700,000 in Germany) for the 950,000 school leavers. This forces half a million on to the dead end YTS schemes.

The Tories and their friends who own industry would like to see the YTS rate of £27.30 a week become the accepted wage rate for young workers. The abolition of the wages councils, which set minimum wage rates for a large number of under 21s is just one step in that direction.

The minimum rate set by the councils averaged £45-£65 a week, going as low as £33 for hairdressing, but the Tories thought this was too high. So now young workers receive no protection, encouraging a further twist to the downward spiral of young workers' pay.

Meanwhile the number of young people in part time work has increased by 250 per cent since Thatcher entered No 10. The Tories are mapping out a future of



The 1985 school students strike in Liverpool. A whole generation of school leavers need a strong trade union.

low pay and bad conditions for young people.

Low pay is the largest single cause of poverty; four million people live on the margin of poverty because of inadequate wages. The labour movement has a duty to end the bosses' conscious use of youth as a battering ram to drive down wages. The next Labour government must cut across this by implementing conference decisions for a £120 a week minimum wage.

But young workers also need to get organised. Several of the larger unions have, to their credit, organised recruitment drives amongst some of the most exploited sections. They realise that the Tories must be stopped from transforming young workers into a scab workforce aimed at breaking workers' rights and conditions.

In particular the 1.2 million strong TGWU has opened its doors to all young

people under 21. Membership costs 10p a week. The union has also launched a campaign to unionise the fast food industry which has a young workforce.

Enthusiastic

Unfortunately these campaigns have so far been left at the level of full time union officers. The TGWU does not have thousands of young people who will enthusiastically carry the campaign into the shops and factories. This should be the role of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Every LPYS branch should approach their local branch or office of the TGWU and offer to become involved. But this must be tied in with the campaign to get a socialist Labour government elected. Every young person should be asked to join the LPYS and help ditch the Tories as well as joining the union.

To win the allegiance of youth, Labour must give young people a vision of a better future, of something worth fighting for. A campaign around the demand for a £120 a week minimum wage to lift young workers out of the poverty trap would not only deliver the vital youth vote to Labour.

As Bill Morris TGWU deputy general secretary says: "Young people are the lifeblood of the unions, our future shop stewards, officials, activists and ordinary members. We cannot afford to become divorced from the needs and aspirations of young people."

A crusade across the country to unionise young workers and guarantee a £120 minimum wage under a Labour government would also bring an injection of new blood into the trade union and labour movement. The LPYS will be demanding that the unions take up such a campaign.

6.2 MILLION YOUTH FOR LABOUR
Labour Party Young Socialists

THE RANKS of the Labour Party are backing the LPYS proposals for democratic representation of trade union youth and Labour Party students within the Young Socialists.

Labour Party members are angry that the NEC are plunging the party into such a constitutional debate in an election year, particularly after the Greenwch by election result.

Benwell and Bensham ward branches in Tynebridge Labour Party have called for the consultation to be postponed until after the general election. The Benwell ward meeting also agreed that if the process does carry on, they would back the LPYS demands.

Among constituencies backing the LPYS in London are Eltham, Croydon South and Erith and Crayford. Reading East Labour Party have elected an LPYS member as their annual conference delegate. Leeds North East have sent a pro YS resolution to Yorkshire regional conference of the party.

The saga of Labour's na-

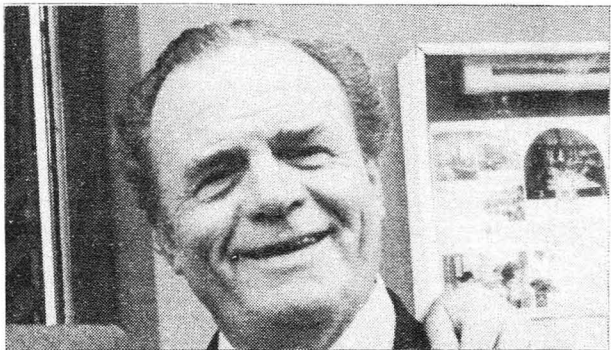
tional women's committee continues! They voted to circulate all womens' sections with the LPYS letter at their previous meeting only to be denied the right to send them by Labour's HQ. The last national committee passed a resolution asking who had made this undemocratic decision.

Invitations

They agreed to write to every womens' section and council, urging them to invite an LPYS speaker to their meeting to discuss the proposals before making their submission to Walworth Road. Every LPYS branch should approach their local womens' section and council to arrange speakers.

Southend LPYS show what can be done. They have had no fewer than 11 invitations to put across the YS's arguments before organisations reply to the consultation. Whenever we speak we get the support of Labour party members; turn that latent backing into a flood of resolutions that the NEC can not ignore.

"The LPYS— an organisation to change things"



Ron Todd, TGWU general secretary will speak at LPYS conference.

KEVIN O'SHEA, one of the most active participants in the occupation of the Caterpillar plant told Scottish LPYS conference why he had become active.

"I am fed up with being paid off, it's happened four times in the last two years; it's the second time Caterpillar have tried it."

He thinks young workers have been prime motivators in the fight, and would like to see workers

in all industries attend YS national conference. "I was impressed by the depth of knowledge and enthusiasm at the Scottish conference, and the friendliness.

"You can find out what is happening in Britain and throughout the world, but, more importantly, it gives an avenue to fight back. The LPYS is an organisation young workers can join to change things."



YS conference '87

Come to LPYS National Conference Blackpool 17-20 April.

Friday 17 April 7pm: "Young workers for Labour" Rally. Speakers include: Ron Todd (General Secretary TGWU) Diana Jeuda (USDAW) Linda Douglas (LPYS).

Cash for a mass Marxist daily

ONCE AGAIN our readers have responded marvellously to our appeal to build *Militant*. Our final total of £223,532 shows how much ordinary workers and young people are prepared to sacrifice to see our paper, which tells the truth, unlike the capitalist press, grow.

Compare this figure with our first press appeal. The target then was £1,000 and it took three years to reach it, slow, patient but vital work along the road to a mass Marxist daily. That is our target- and not in the dim and distant future. We need a more frequent *Militant* now.

So after slapping ourselves on the back—for just a

moment—let's get organised to get the rest of the cash we need.

First of all, the sales campaign. There seems to be a bit of socialist competition as to which readers can sell the most papers. Well, let's extend that to the fighting fund. See if you can raise the most cash in your area by asking everybody you sell a paper, whether regulars or new, for a donation or for the £1 solidarity price.

We are now approaching the conference season, LPYS, trade unions, Labour Party. Why don't you draw up petitions, get out your papers and tins and show us the support which exists for *Militant's* ideas by raising

cash within the labour movement. And not just at conferences either—do a workplace or union branch collection, you will be surprised how much you will raise.

Finally, thanks to all our readers once again for donating or raising money for our appeal. Thanks this week to Gwyneth Lloyd student nurse from Leicester £50, Don Irwin SCPS Leicester £50; Phil Scott Newcastle £50; Phil Manley Coventry £25; N Ferguson Denny £10; Littleborough, Saddleworth LPYS members £10; Frank Bues, Wolverhampton £10.

£250 000 Fighting Fund

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'Booming Britain'

the great lie

AS CHANCELLOR Lawson prepares for a once off tax giving budget on 17 March, in an attempt to bribe voters, the Tory press will continue peddling the lie about 'booming Britain'. *Militant* editor, PETER TAAFFE, looks behind the myth, at the terminal decay of British capitalism.

There is therefore a great deal of consolation for the opposition and the Alliance in the fact that they are going to lose the next election. There will be a nasty crisis in the next Parliament and the opposition parties can count themselves lucky that not they but my right honourable friends (the Tory cabinet—ed) will be dealing with it.

WITH THESE few but quite devastating words, Tory grandee, Sir Ian Gilmour, shattered the attempt of Lawson and Thatcher to give a rosy hue to the future prospects for the British economy. Aside from his doubtful predictions for the election, Gilmour, speaking in the House of Commons on 18 November 1986, correctly foreshadowed a serious economic crisis in late 1987 or 1988.

In the same debate, and in another important one in the Commons on 18 January 1987, both Labour and Tory spokesmen presented a picture of decay and collapse of the economy quite frightening in its implications for the capitalists and their political representatives.

In the course of the Commons debates, all the ammunition was provided to show that British capitalism is in a state of terminal decay. Thatcher's supporters in the debates were those allied to the City and finance capital. Indeed, as the Marxists have pointed out since Thatcher came to power, this government, unlike previous Tory governments, represents the section of the capitalists based in finance, the banks, insurance companies, the services and the City of London.

The long-term crisis of British capitalism has been enormously aggravated by the measures of the Thatcher government. 20 per cent of manufacturing industry has disappeared since 1979. Manufacturing trade in Britain has moved from a £4.5 billion surplus in 1981 to a government estimated deficit of £7.5 billion this year. Lloyds Bank predicts that by 1990 Britain will have a balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods of over £13 billion.

During the same period there has been a massive drop of 24 per cent in Britain's share of world manufactured trade. Manufacturing output in Britain almost six years into an alleged 'boom', is

four per cent less in 1987 than it was in 1979.

When Tories began to barrack Roy Hattersley in the House of Commons, with the charge that he was underestimating "Britain's performance" in manufacturing. He silenced them by pointing out: "To be fair and honest, I must admit that four other countries have a worse record than ours for manufactured output since 1979. Those countries are Fiji, Argentina, Senegal and Barbados."

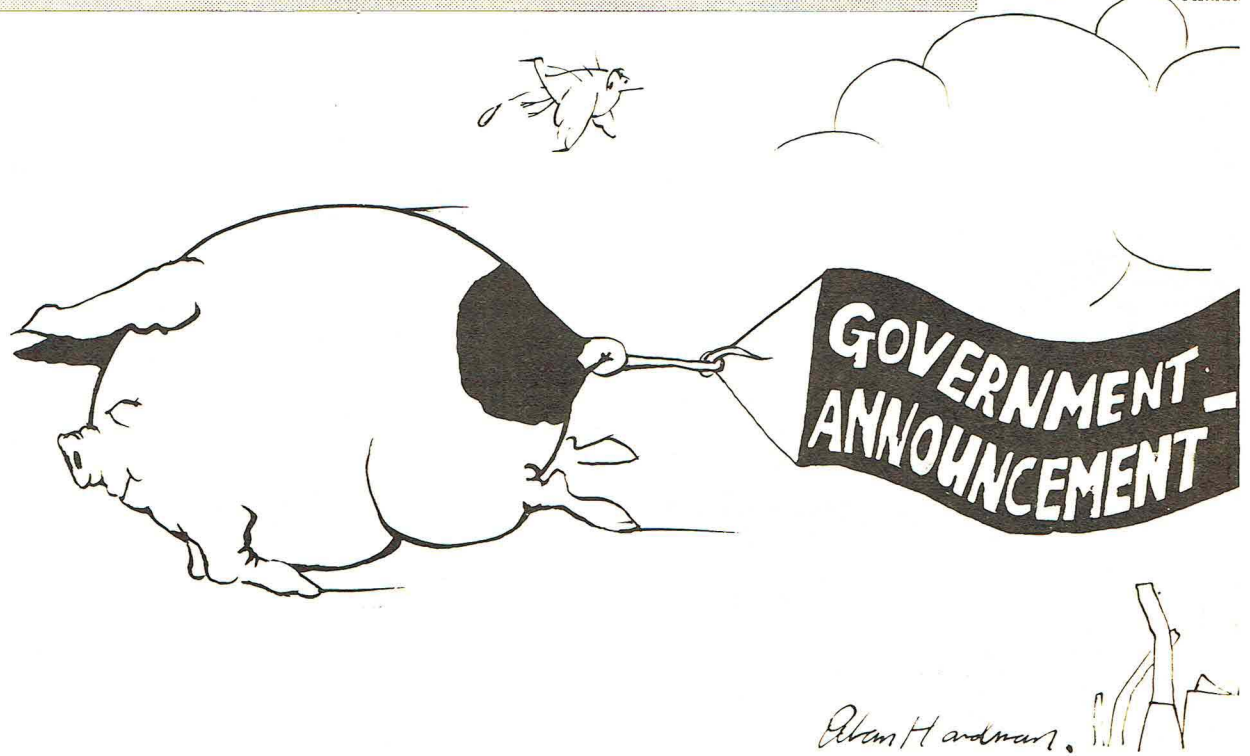
Investment back into industry of the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class is the engine of capitalism. Yet even when the leasing of machinery to industry is taken into account, there has been a drop of 18 per cent in manufacturing investment since 1979. The collapse is reflected in almost every industry without exception from motor cars to shipping, to machine tools etc.

Fleet sinking

The shipbuilding industry and the merchant fleet, on present trends threaten to go the way of the motor bike industry which has been gobbled up by the Japanese. At the moment, the number of workers in the merchant shipbuilding industry is down to 5,000.

One Labour MP pointed out that on the basis of the present trends: "Britain faces the prospect of conducting our trade and protecting our defences in ships built in Japan or Taiwan, repaired in Korea, crewed in Panama and flying the flag of Liberia." And this for an island nation like Britain!

Nor is it just the 'smokestack' industries of coal, steel etc which have faced collapse. Labour's spokesman, John Smith, referring to the information technology industry, stated: "A substantial part of our deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods comes from that so-called 'sunrise' industry. The figures for recent years show a pathetic record. In



1979 the deficit in office and data processing trade was £227 million. Last year it had risen to £670 million. In electronics engineering, the deficit in 1979 was £164 million and in 1985 it was over £1 billion."

He quoted an authoritative report on the industry which stated: "A sunrise industry is being eclipsed even before it has arisen...it is failing to the point where we cannot maintain key technologies...on the present trends we will not have an independent, broad-based IT industry by the end of the decade."

Wrigglesworth, the SDP spokesman, pointed out: "We are now the 19th country in the world in terms of GDP per head of population. We are being overtaken by Italy and we shall soon be overtaken by Spain in the early 1990s."

The Government views this collapse with equanimity. Reflecting the pressure of finance capital, it naively expects that the so-called service industries will arise to replace the destruction of the manufacturing base. In the long run, this spells absolute disaster for British capitalism and the working class.

Thatcher, in common with a big section of the capitalists, has forgotten that the production of real wealth is manufacturing. Services are ultimately reliant on manufacturing industry. For an economy to become absolutely dependent on 'services', 'candy floss industries', is, as ex-Tory

premier, Heath, argued: "like taking in other people's washing."

The only reason why Thatcher's policies have not resulted in an even greater collapse, with colossal worsening in the living standards of the working people of Britain, is North Sea oil. In effect, the British economy is being converted from an economy based on manufacturing industry, with cheap industrial goods which once conquered the world, into one which is now more 'a rentier economy'. *The Economist* recently signified this conversion with a very significant article entitled 'a rentier nation once more'. It pointed out: "At the end of this year, Britain's net foreign assets (that is, what foreigners owe Britain, less what Britain owes them), will stand at more than £80 billion. That makes the country the world's second biggest international creditor, after Japan. Just ten years ago, Britain's net foreign assets were worth a piffling £3 billion."

Foreign investment

The British capitalists have been prepared to invest abroad a massive £73 billion in the period between 1979 and 1985. This in turn means that Britain has now built up the world's biggest invisible surplus - income from investment in industries abroad, from banking and insurance, etc. This has benefited the balance of payments to the tune of £8.5 billion yearly. This in turn

has allowed Britain to cover the massive and growing £8.5 billion deficit on the visible trade account, that is the balance between goods exported and imported into Britain.

But this income from abroad will not forever plug the gap in the deteriorating trading position of the British economy. In 1987 there will be a £10.5 billion deficit on 'visible trade', with only a £9 billion surplus on invisibles. Therefore there will be a gap of £1.5 billion in what the capitalist economists call the 'current account'. Many capitalist experts expect that the 'current account' deficit will be much higher, possibly £3 billion this year. The balance of payments deficit resulting from this will mean a rise in interest rates with its knock-on effect on mortgages, etc.

But the idea of Britain being dependent on extracting profits, dividends etc. from its investments abroad forever is a very dangerous and tenuous perspective, as many capitalist experts have argued.

When Britain possessed its empire, a protected market existed, which allowed it to extract enormous tribute from its colonies. In a very unstable world, with a new world crisis looming, such a perspective does not offer a lifeline to British capitalism. Nor does the scenario mapped out by Lawson and Thatcher that somehow the British economy can rely on 'invisible exports' to compensate for a

largest... were sent to the IBA

Forget
Lawson

CHANCELLOR N...
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A tax-cutting E...
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Glen Davies from

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DAILY EXPRESS

Monday February 2 1987

EVERY DAY THE BIG EXCLUSIVES IN YOUR BIG VALUE EXPRESS

TODAY: THE GRIM TRUTH INSIDE GORBACHEV'S 'NEW' RUSSIA



TOMORROW: MY DARLING DAUGHTER, BY FERGIE'S FATHER

tax cuts, on urged

el Lawson is today advised to March Budget. Budget is the last thing the British economists Andrew Smith and stockbroker Alexanders Laing and Cruickshank. Consumer spending rose strongly last year. That rise will continue they say in the broker's Economic and Monetary Review. "British industry failed to take advantage of the growth in spending last year and there is little reason to believe it will do so this year. Tax cuts, therefore, will simply serve to raise imports."

The Government is trying to dampen hopes of

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Britain is booming



The sweet smell of success for Fergie yesterday

Outlook rosy as the economy picks up

By PAUL WILENIUS Industrial Reporter
The engine room of Britain's economy is rapidly picking up speed pointing to a boom year ahead. Glowing forecasts today from the building industry and the Chambers of Commerce give impressive backing to Confederation of British Industry predictions of a big leap forward.

A feather in Fergie's cap

THE Duchess of York has a feather in her cap in more ways than one. People were a little feisty in her brown velvet hat in the church yesterday when she collected an array of flowers from the Duke of York.

THE BLATANT hypocrisy of Fleet Street knows no bounds. In the very same issue of the *Daily Express*, the front page trumpets Thatcher's lie of a thriving economy well able to afford much deserved tax cuts. While buried on the City page, hidden so they hope from the eyes of the average reader, a glimpse is given of the economic disaster looming, and an acknowledgement that whatever government is in office by next year, will be compelled to take the tax cuts straight back. Any government that is that remains within the bounds of capitalism.

The victims of Thatcherism

BOB HAS been unemployed for two years. He and his wife Carol have four children between 10 years and three months. They spoke to Lorraine Williams, Stafford LP Women's Section.

To make things worse, the cold weather burst their pipes and the gas and electric had to be cut off. "We rang the council asking if they could give us somewhere to live while it got sorted out but there were so many people with burst pipes," Carol explained, "I rang the social worker because the babies suffer with colds and chest infections but all she could do was harass the council."

Bob feels so uptight that on New Year's Eve he put his fist through the front door window. He doesn't know why but he felt better. "It's better than having a go at Carol or the kids because I'm feeling increasingly violent. I don't want to but I can't help it. "We've talked about splitting up but we do love each other. Carol worries she won't be able to cope. When I told my doctor I felt depressed and violent he just gave me anti-depressants. I threw them down the toilet."

"I've had enough. I'm the one who has to cope with all of this. Sometimes I want to die but I can't leave the kids to the mercy of the social services department." Bob goes out to the dump to see what has been dumped. Carol tells me: "Do you know I never used to vote. Bob used to tell me off but I used to say what's the point. But I tell you this. I'm voting Labour this year. We all know it's Maggie's fault we're living like this. Even the kids moan when she comes on telly."

"The kids come first. David needs new shoes, Kerry needs a new coat. They ain't cheap. The council turned down a clothing grant for David at school because we got £2 too much from the social."

"I just want all of us to be happy again—I want Bob to get a job, and I want to get out of this shithole. It's not much to ask, is it?"

Not living, just existing

KAREN AND Martin Malocco are members of Stevenage Labour Party. They have three children under the age of 3. They talked to *Militant* about the reality of life under the Thatcher 'boom'.

doesn't have the free toys and novelties. The kids go for these and the companies know it.

KAREN: "We've just had a gas bill for £118 so we're going to have a slot meter. That way we'll be able to extend paying the bill we've got now even though the next one will be even higher. It will cost £14 to install but we won't have to pay it all at once."

MARTIN: "You exist on nothing on the dole. We've got one carpet in the whole house and one pair of curtains. We asked for extra but the DHSS just told us you live on what they give us."

MARTIN: "We only get by on borrowing from the family. That's what it boils down to. The kids wear what the family has bought them. But what if you haven't a family who can help?"

Redecoration

"I was on the dole for 15 months but I have just started working at a skill centre on lathe training. I bring home £65 a week. I'm supposed to be allowed £5.60 a week travel allowance but I'm £5 a week worse off than on the dole because travel costs £10 a week!"

"This place badly needs decorating but when I was on the dole my heart wasn't in it because we could never have afforded to do anything with it in the first place."

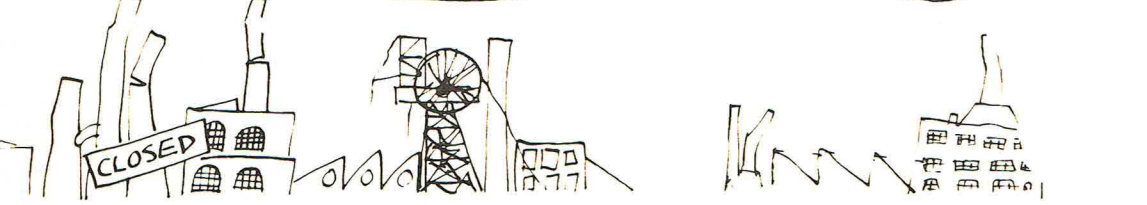
"Now I'm going to court for pushing a shopping trolley through the glass doors of the DHSS offices. It's totally out of character for me, it was just frustration. I went down to the social for the money they owed me from the previous week."

KAREN: "I've got to pay £3 a week to send my son to playgroup, the social won't pay and kids need outside stimulation. One thing which gets me is when all the mums come up with packets of sweets for their kids after playgroup. It's not fair on the other two if I give him a packet. When Martin was working I could afford to get them crisps or chocolate but now it's a 5p mix! The Labour women's section has made me more political. I first started going to have a break from the kids but I started to realise the only way we'll get anywhere is through socialism."

"But I waited and waited and then I was told the officers had gone home. Then I saw this trolley up against the wall..."

"I agree with *Militant* because I don't want my kids to grow up with this kind of life, scraping pennies together. We're not living just existing."

BRITAIN IS BOOMING



drop in Britain's share of world trade in manufactured goods. Experts have now worked out that it takes a 2.7 per cent increase in 'invisible exports' to compensate for a one per cent drop in visible exports, that is manufacturing exports. Therefore, as North Sea oil income begins to level and eventually peter out, the real economic catastrophe which faces Britain is laid bare.

More than the entire rise since 1979 and British demand for manufactured goods has come from imports, which have risen by nearly 40 per cent." Alarmed at the pre-election credit explosion, Gilmour comments: "In the year to June 1986, net lending to the personal sector reached a staggering total of £29.3 billion, a sum equal to some 12 per cent of total personal disposable income, and 26 per cent up on the previous year."

tions? I'll be damned if I know; that's why I don't want to be President."

Recession

The total household debt now stands at a colossal £150 billion. In a masterly understatement, Gilmour says: "It is structural deteriorations of that sort that should now be a cause of very serious concern. I am afraid I do not think that the government's attitude to this situation is defensible."

World capitalism is heading for another recession. But British capitalism, now the sickest of the sick amongst capitalist nations, will face a worse situation than its competitors. This is the situation that will confront any government which wins the next election.

The atmosphere of economic well-being, carefully nurtured by Lawson and Thatcher, will be shattered by a new economic recession. In a much cruder fashion, as is their wont, American capitalist politicians have come to the same conclusion as Gilmour. Thus Mr Lee Iacocca, who was touted as a democratic presidential prospect for 1980, is ruling out a presidential bid because of his fears for the US economy.

Labour's spokesmen in the House of Commons have given a devastating indictment of the stewardship of the Thatcher government. They have furnished all the necessary facts and figures to show the catastrophe which faces the working people on the basis of capitalism. This is reinforced by the spokesmen of capitalism themselves.

He quite frankly gave his reasons: "If we have an economic downer coming... what are the op-

However, neither Smith, Hattersley nor the rest of the front bench have drawn the necessary conclusions from their analysis. The measures which they propose for the next Labour government will not solve the problems of the British economy. This crisis will compel a Labour government at a certain stage to carry through vicious counter-reforms against the living standards of the working people.

Only a nationalised economy and a democratic socialist plan of production can avoid the nightmare of massively increased unemployment and a sharp reduction in the living standards of the working class of Britain.

Students feature

Marxist for student leader

THE NATIONAL Union of Students conference will be held on 16-19 March in Blackpool. In the run up to a general election, it is vital that a Labour leadership of NUS is elected to mobilise students to kick the Tories out.

At the December NUS conference Further Education Labour Students' candidate Cheryl Varley was elected to the Further Education National Committee of NUS with the highest number of recorded first preference votes ever cast for one candidate.

Since then FELS have built on their support mobilising thousands of students during the recent NUS week of action.

This year FELS are standing Collette Williams for a part time position on the NUS executive which represents 1.25 million students. *Militant* asked Collette why she was standing:

Although a FELS candidate, the problems faced by FE students cannot be separated from those facing all students. If elected, I will argue for unity across the sectors; for a fighting democratic union with socialist policies linked to the organised Labour movement.

Majority

However, there are specific problems facing FE students. They make up the majority of NUS's membership. Yet NUS has consistently failed to defend the sector or win major reforms. Despite NUS's demand for a grant for FE students over a whole period, this has not been achieved.

I will fight to integrate the specific demands of FE

students into the work of the union, such as the proposal by Cheryl Varley on the FE National Committee for a lobby against YTS to be held on 1st April in Manchester.

Most importantly I believe I can outline a programme to win the demands of all the union's members. One of the main issues is the call for parity for part time students in representation at NUS conference.

Since most of these students are from the FE sector, it is they who are discriminated against. Parity would strengthen the national union and make it more representative and accountable.

The whole future of the FE sector is at stake. The reason for the hiving off of 25 per cent of non advanced courses to the Manpower Services Commission is to turn the colleges into training centres for local industry.

Colleges face huge cuts as a result of rate capping of local councils. The biggest issue is that 500,000 FE students don't receive a grant. The Tories use this to force FE students onto YTS cheap labour schemes.

NUS must abandon its present approach as an education pressure group and link with low paid workers for a joint campaign of action to increase wages and win the £35 a week grant claim. This would completely undermine YTS.

Faced with a genuine choice most young people



November 1985: students demonstrate for jobs. Now a mass campaign is needed, linked to the labour movement.

would choose education and a £35 grant instead of a YTS scheme.

Campaign

NUS must openly campaign alongside public sector workers for the return of a Labour government at the next election. They must also pressurise the Labour Party to commit itself fully to a non-means tested £35 a week grant for all FE students.

But NUS must also be committed to a socialist education system, opening up all sectors to those who require it. This means fighting for a living grant equal to two thirds of the average wage for 52 weeks a year.

This would allow all work-

ing class women and men a genuine choice between work and education. Such a demand would not only necessitate the reversal of all education cuts but a vast increase in education provision.

Such a programme would mean breaking the link between capitalism and education. Overall control of education must be transferred from the bosses to workers and students.

As an individual I cannot transform NUS. By building FELS into a mass campaigning organisation we can pressure the NUS leadership to link up their demands with the labour and trade union movement to fight for a socialist education system.

Right's vindictive antics

FOLLOWING NOLS conference Labour's right wing are continuing their vindictive antics to try and silence socialists:

- The Youth Committee of Labour's NEC has started disciplinary action against Julie Frost and Sue Ayton for allegedly "disrupting" NOLS conference. No details were provided.

No wonder: Julie (a National Committee member) and Sue (Standing Orders Committee member) were opposing the undemocratic manoeuvres described in the report.

- FELS supporter Lesleigh Woodburn was accused, totally falsely, of making "racist comments" to a black member of NOLS staff. Her accusers 'forgot' to mention that Lesleigh is black herself! Without being allowed to reply, Lesleigh was banned from attending future NOLS conferences.

- The Youth Committee is to put out a leaflet 'warning' students that a vote for Collette Williams is a vote for *Militant* not Labour. (See article below)

Democracy-NOLS style

"I WILL tell you what is democratic", said Joyce Gould, national Labour Party official, at delegate registration of the 1987 National Organisation of Labour Students conference.

This year's NOLS conference marked a further degeneration in this organisation. It was even more rigged, with less debate and more open endorsement by right wing NEC members than ever before.

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of NOLS, its leadership of NUS and ability to win the student vote for Labour is open to question.

It also makes the long term task of winning the majority of students over to the struggle for socialism much more difficult. In these circumstances it is vital for all Labour students to understand the reasons for the increase in bureaucracy in NOLS.

In the period of consultation on the proposals to reorganise Labour's youth movement the developments within NOLS are a dire warning to LPYS members of what the right wing are prepared to do to sabotage the LPYS.

The history of NOLS and the LPYS have always been linked, especially in the eyes of the right wing.

For them the youth and student sections of the Party are there to be used as cheerleaders, a stage managed army to back up the actions of the leadership.

More importantly, in periods of government, their role is to act as a brake on the aspirations of young people, and through this process be trained up as a new layer of careerists for the Party.

These trends were frustrated by *Militant* supporters winning a majority of the LPYS national committee in 1970.

Ever since its inception NOLS has been a battleground between the ideas of Marxism and reformism. With the increase in support for Marxist ideas, the right wing increasingly saw NOLS as an alternative 'safe' youth wing.

Stifle opposition

Unlike the LPYS which has a proud record of encouraging democracy and debate NOLS has historically used bureaucracy to stifle any opposition. The basis for this is the material conditions which affect not only different sections of society but also the political organisations that represent them.

The crisis in the economy means that public spending has to be cut. This means vicious education cuts. All those, including the NOLS leadership, who think that these cuts can be defeated or reversed over the long term within the confines of capitalism will lead students to further defeat and counter reforms.

The reality of the everyday ex-

perience of ordinary students shows this strategy to be fundamentally false. The reaction of the NOLS leaders is to try to obliterate criticism by bureaucratic manoeuvre.

Their attacks have concentrated on *Militant* supporters because we have the clearest alternative for students and therefore pose the biggest threat. As the attacks on education have grown and support for Marxism has increased, the level of bureaucracy in NOLS has increased.

The NOLS leaders, masquerading under the name of the Democratic Left (neither democratic nor left) have now got the full support of the right wing NEC to legitimise their Tammany Hall style of politics.

Many readers will have seen how this was reflected in the run up to the NOLS conference. In one case Sussex University delegates were ruled out on three separate counts. Each one proved incorrect at different stages of their appeal. They were told that they would be allowed into the conference.

Then, with 24 hours to go, they ruled out on a completely different count. This farce continued at the conference. Joyce Gould refused to release a list of accredited delegates to elected members of the NOLS NC. She even went as far as to threaten to close down registration if it was monitored.

In a conference where the margin

of votes between the two main tendencies was 20, over 30 delegates were ruled out.

As a result of the bureaucracy there were 38 less delegates than last year.

So frightened of their inability to hold a majority together for one and a half days, the NOLS NC moved to elections twenty minutes after the conference started, half way through a debate on women in which only Democratic Left speakers had been heard.

Suspicious

Suspicious were raised as to whether the new chair of NOLS was actually a student. When challenged, the candidate Neil Usher refused to provide any evidence either way.

Despite our suspicions being put before Joyce Gould and the student organiser they sanctioned his candidature.

An amendment to the Scottish Labour Students constitution was unconstitutionally placed on the agenda by the NEC. This was to change the delegate entitlement to SLS conference to stop *Militant* supporters winning control of this section of NOLS.

During the conference there was no provision for a count of close votes and was therefore at the mercy of the chair. NOLS is dying, root and branch. It is only kept alive by the activity of its genuine



Collette Williams is a working class woman with 2 children. She became active during a campaign in Liverpool for free creche facilities in the colleges. At the moment she is a full time sabbatical officer for City College, Liverpool.

rank and file.

All students must ensure that they discuss the youth consultation and oppose the neutering of the LPYS, in order to stop the LPYS being sabotaged in the same way. Part of this campaign should be to democratise NOLS.

In the long run the objective situation will test out all the different ideas that exist in the Labour movement. Only those which can meet the needs of the working class will survive. *Militant* supporters in the student movement are confident that their ideas will pass that test, whatever the momentary wishes and dictates of right wing bureaucrats happen to be!

Spanish miners' strike

5,000 Asturian miners, armed with cudgels, demonstrated in Madrid last Thursday against plans by the Socialist government to slash at least 6,000 jobs in their industry. The miners voted on 2 March to stay on strike another week, and may extend their action further. The union leaders are lagging far behind. *Separate* demonstrations have been called by the Socialist-led UGT and the Communist-led CCOO, in addition to a half-hearted call for a one-day general strike in Asturias on 12 March. South Wales miner IAN ISAAC was there.

THE LAST week in February began with unofficial strikes in the whole of the government-owned coal mining industry in Asturias.

On the Monday, 17 out of the Nalon and Codal areas' 24 pits were idle after unofficial walkouts against the advice of the union leadership in the UGT/Workers' Commissions (CCOO). On Tuesday, 23 of the 24 mines were at a standstill.

72-hour strike

Miners' pickets stopped traffic entering the town of Sama de Langreo for over two hours in the early evening. Roadblocks were left unattended as no-one attempted to remove them un-

til the national police arrived.

By Tuesday evening the news was out that the union, had called for a 72-hour strike in the mines for 25, 26 and 27 February, and in addition a general strike of the mining area was called by the Workers Commissions for Thursday 26 and by the UGT for Friday 27 February.

At 6.30 am on Wednesday all 24 pits were at a standstill. Instinctively, the men knew the company's plans to run down the industry would mean the destruction of over



Rank-and-file miners are demanding joint action by the leaders of the UGT and CCOO union federations.

7,000 jobs in at least eight to ten mines over the next few years.

In a mass meeting of about 200 men of the day shift, I was impressed by the disciplined, serious way they arrived at their decisions. After union officials reported that the company had offered nothing new and that they should act together, the meeting lasted 45 minutes.

Passion

Every rank and file member spoke with passion about "the need for joint action, for unity, and to take their case to Madrid."

They called for a general strike throughout the whole of Spain. There was an instinctive desire for unity that cut across any division that might exist formally between the UGT and the CCOO, who between them organise

50 per cent each of the mining union.

The call for a general strike spread like an earthquake throughout the area.

On the Tuesday morning I visited the town of Sama de Langreo to speak on the radio station, Cadena Espanola, about my message of solidarity to the Asturian miners in their struggle for jobs, and also thanking them for their support during the British miners' strike.

Also, I drew out the lessons of unity and leadership, linked with a socialist programme for miners

A meeting took place in the Town Hall square where over 2,000 people had gathered. All the bars, shops and factories were closed. As we walked through the town it was like a typical Sunday morning—that is, until we got to the town square.

It was disappointing, though, that the meeting was

only addressed for a few minutes by local union leaders. On the day of a general strike the opportunity would have been there to explain the lessons and necessary preparations for the future campaign.

The mood in the mining area of Asturias is determined. In the mass UGT demonstration in Oviedo on the Friday, school students—fresh from the school strike—sold papers and distributed leaflets.

The scene is set for a struggle in the Spanish

mines. The events in the valleys of Asturias show that it will be both industrial and political in character

That is why Spanish television on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday made little mention of the general strike in the mining areas. They fear the potential and strength of the organised working class.

For the moment the situation is one of rapid change which could well lead in the next few weeks to new explosions.

Marxist demands:

SUPPORTERS OF *Nuevo Claridad*, Marxist paper in the Spanish labour movement, are campaigning on the following programme in the miners' struggle:

- Strike committees in every pit
- Delegates elected to a central strike committee
- Indefinite general strike in Asturias
- Indefinite national miners' strike
- A national delegate conference of industries in crisis; for a 24-hour all-Spain general strike.

Australia: Labour hits workers

AUSTRALIA'S LABOR government is planning cuts of A\$2,000 million (£870 million) for its mini-budget in May. This will mean attacks on welfare benefits, Medicare (national health) and higher education. LAURENCE COATES in Sydney explains the background.

BOB HAWKE'S Labor government is treading a political minefield.

After four years of Labor's wage "accord" with the unions, company profits have hit their highest level since the sixties. Last year, in contrast, pay was increased by 2.3 per cent while prices hiked nine per cent.

Discontent

Recognising massive rank-and-file discontent, Hawke has come forward with a 'two-tier' wage offer in the hope of avoiding an industrial explosion. Under the scheme, workers with industrial clout could pursue a second pay rise—but no more than three per cent, and only if they can convince the Labour Court that their employer can afford to pay!

But, with employers insisting on no increase, and unions pressing for double the government's offer, Hawke's celebrated "con-

ensus" may well be at an end.

Last winter Australia was rocked by strikes. Waterside workers, public servants, metal workers and countless others struck against wage restraint.

But, under government pressure, the right-wing Australian Congress of Trade Unions (ACTU) leaders marched their members back to work without concessions.

The ruling class could hardly believe their luck. The *Financial Review* singled out the "Communist" Party for particular praise:

"We have a situation very similar to that which prevailed at the height of World War II, after the Communist Party decreed that the war was no longer an imperialist one. But this time there is no Comintern (Communist International), which imposed Stalin's policies on Communist parties until it was dissolved in 1943—*Editor*). How long can this unholy consensus last? When will rank and file revolt emerge on a significant scale? Surely continuing falls in real wages will not be accepted indefinitely?"

This concern is well founded. As reported in *Militant* 835, Victorian nurses, after an historic 50-day strike, have already squeezed big concessions



Right-wing Liberal leader Howard has promised support for the cuts programme announced by Labor leader Hawke (right).



stand for wage cuts and a more aggressive stand against unions.

Liberal leader Howard is identified with the New Right. Consequently the Liberals have fared disastrously in two recent by-elections. Despite a huge drop in Labor's vote, the Liberals lost up to 30 per cent and this enabled Labour to hold on.

Miners

Workers' fear of a Liberal victory will be a powerful factor in the next general election. It is possible, therefore, that Labor may win an unprecedented third term in office.

This does not, however, detract from the mounting opposition among trade unionists and Labor Party members to Hawke's pro-capitalist policies. With the future of the accord hanging in the balance, Hawke is not out of the minefield yet.

In another display of the magnificent fighting capacity of Australian workers, 900 miners at Robe River in Western Australia's outback struck before Christmas against the bosses' union-busting attempts.

Seventy miles from the nearest town, pickets braved the blistering heat to force a climbdown by the company.

'Amerika'—the hidden message

AMERICAN Broadcasting Company (ABC) claims that its sole motive in putting on the controversial mini-series *Amerika* was to boost its sagging TV ratings. It was not intended, ABC insists, as a conservative response to *The Day After*, the film depicting the aftermath of a nuclear war.

But let us take a look at the Board of Directors of Capital Cities/ABC, and we will see interlocking directorates spelling out more than an interest in boosting TV ratings:

- Robert P. Bauman, who sits on the Board, is also chairman and executive director of Textron, one of the top twenty "Star Wars" contractors. In 1985 Textron was awarded \$1.9 billion in Pentagon business.

- William J. Spencer is also on the Board of United Technologies, who in 1985 received \$3.9 billion in military contracts.

- M. Cabell Woodward is also vice-chairman, chief financial officer and director of ITT, which took \$1.5 billion in Pentagon contracts in 1985.

- Frank T. Cary is also on the Board of IBM and Morgan Guarantee Trust. The 1985 Pentagon figure for IBM contracts was \$1.8

billion. Morgan Guarantee Trust is the primary bank for the Martin Marietta Corporation, another top Star Wars contractor which got \$2.7 billion from the Pentagon in 1985.

Without the next generation of weapons technology that Star Wars promises, the pork-barrel days are fading for the military-industrial complex.

Billions at stake

Soviet proposals to dismantle nuclear arsenals are seen as a mortal threat by the defence contractors. The estimated military budget for 1987 is \$468 billion. With all those billions at stake, weapons producers will use everything in their power to maintain their position.

Since truth is not on their side, they must rely on distortions and the appearance of "patriotism" to persuade the US people to let them continue developing weapons systems. Enter *Amerika*, with its theme that American "peaceniks" permit the takeover of the US by the Russians.

From Betty Traun in New York

The pinstriped gangsters

Dear Comrades,

It's Thursday night and on BBC1 *Crimewatch* takes the air with the police seeking help from the public into a range of burglaries and violent crimes.

However this Thursday night they will not be enlisting the help of the public in relation to solving the death of Clinton McCurbin who died while in police hands 20 February in Wolverhampton.

This will be left to the Police Complaints Board. In other words the police will assume the roles of accused, prosecutor, defence and of

course, judge.

Neither will your help be requested in investigating a highly successful group of robbers and fraudsters still 'at large' in the City of London.

One upmarket Sunday newspaper estimated that in 1985 the gang got away with £700 million in fraud and computer theft alone. This is twice as big a haul as every theft, burglary and armed robbery put together for the same year!

The pinstriped gangsters of the stock exchange like the police also investigate themselves. Not surprisingly

convictions are very rare.

Even when one of these gents goes overboard and gets caught such as Ivan Boesky or the 'Guinness gang', he or she can expect to be dealt with more leniently for stealing £5million from a computer or through tax evasion than a shop worker who takes a couple of quid from the till!

A Labour government must open the books of the monopolies and finance institutions so workers can expose and bring under control the real criminals in society.

Kieran Maguire
Selly Oak LPYS



Local community 'bobby' prepares to help some Wapping pickets cross the road. Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Caring Cops

Dear Comrades,

Remember how the press—especially the *Sun*—headlined the spectacular and gruesome details of the 'confessions' of defendants in the trial of those accused of killing a police officer called Blakelock?

Tucked away on the inside pages of those same papers you may have read details of how two of those 'confessions'—now thrown out by the court—were obtained by the caring boys in blue.

A thirteen year old boy was taken away from his parents and kept in a police cell for three days during which time he was deprived of his clothes and repeatedly 'questioned' by police officers. A social worker who wanted to inform him of his rights was ordered out of the station. He had no contact with parents or solicitors. At the end of three days he signed the police 'confession'.

The popular press has had no room for this story because they are too busy protesting about the refusal of London teachers to allow the police into schools—where there is a plentiful supply of thirteen year olds for them.

The police video warning children about talking—or making confessions?—to strangers is giving sensible advice. The teachers are only carrying it out!

Yours fraternally
Derek McMillan
East Grinstead

Re-writing the Highway Code

Dear Comrades,

I am a miner's wife and a mother to a miner too. During the year long strike I was an active member of a women's support group. One of the functions of this group was to picket coalmines which were not on strike.

It was while the group was picketing different pits I learnt what police harassment really was. The police, I realised were not the compassionate people I had been brought up to respect. From that point my feelings towards them would never be the same.

The strike has ended and we have to live with them but things will never get back to normal.

My son who is a miner in the Selby coalfield was travelling to work with some of his workmates. They overtook a slow-moving Panda car and a few hundred yards

along the road they were pulled up by the same Panda car.

The driver of my son's car was questioned about his activities during the strike, "Were you a picket at Orgreave?" Once he had determined that they were actually strikers he said "You're a bit cheeky overtaking a bobby." Is it an offence to overtake a slow-moving police car?

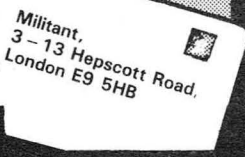
He also asked the driver to produce his documents at the nearest police station later in the day.

Just as the blacks in South Africa are oppressed by the police in a police state the English miner has to live with the British police. One has to ask oneself 'When will the strike finish!' Britain is called a free country but I believe differently.

Yours fraternally
A miner's wife.

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.



Gothic monstrosity

Dear Comrades,

My seven year old daughter Beverly recently paid a visit to London's famous waxwork museum, Madame Tussaud's.

Commenting on the statue of Thatcher she said, "We saw 'fattie Thatcher' in the

Grand Hall but I don't know why she was there. She should have been in the Chamber of Horrors!"

Quite agreed!
Yours fraternally
Jackie Mulholland
Stevenage

Captain Bob opposes Labour Party policy

Dear Comrades,

On a recent edition of the *Day to Day* television programme Robert Maxwell said that he would not allow any of his newspapers to support a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. This even included the new *London Daily News* which a moment earlier he had boasted to be truly independent and free from his editorial interference. Apparently Captain Bob has met Russian leaders and concludes that nuclear weapons are necessary to maintain peace never mind what the rest of the Labour Party thinks.

Consequently, Maxwell through his *Mirror* newspapers which are meant to be pro-Labour and appeal to Labour supporters will be opposing Labour's non-nuclear defence policy during the General Election campaign. Since defence is



likely to be a sensitive election issue Maxwell's stance is bound to damage Labour's electoral chances.

But don't worry, Captain Bob is not a socialist so there is no danger of him being expelled from the party.

Yours fraternally
Chris Peace
Cardiff Central
Labour Party

Labour leaders' own goals

Dear Comrades,

I stayed up the other night to watch the report of the Greenwich by-election result. Several points emerged in the review of the campaign which were of interest.

The claim was made that most of the smears on the Labour candidate emanated from prominent Labour Party sources prior to her selection as candidate. The daily Labour Party press conferences seemed to consist of many attempts by the minders to stop Deirdre

Wood from answering questions. This seemed to be in contrast to the way the Alliance minders allowed their candidate to develop her presence and confidence during the campaign.

The final rally of the Labour Party seemed to give more time to a comic and to Neil Kinnock speaking than to the candidate. Again this was in contrast to the Alliance rally where the candidate spoke and David Owen didn't.

Trying to keep the Labour

Party candidate as some anonymous background figure—just a symbol of the Neil, Glenys and Roy party machine is no way to win a by-election. The Alliance candidate kept saying that the issue of the voters was 'We need a change'. Low-key anonymity will not answer that issue. The mood for change would best be met by radical socialist campaigning.

Yours fraternally
Ronnie Stevenson
Glasgow

Great Sales

Dear Comrades,

Issue 835 was a great paper for selling in Stafford. I was walking through the town centre, past scab McDonalds, when I saw two people I knew from school. I went inside to talk to them.

A bloke sitting behind me said "Hey son, are you selling them?" I said I was so he bought one on the spot. I had never seen him before.

Next morning at my regular factory sale at GEC three men went rushing by. One said he wanted to buy a paper, but another said they'd be late. "That doesn't matter," he said, "it's worth it."

Every comrade should carry at least one copy with them everywhere they go.

Yours fraternally
Steve Revins
Stafford LPYS

Warning: Cuts can damage your health

Dear Comrades,

I had to write to tell you about the disgusting thing I learnt today at work.

I was chatting to an ambulanceman and he was explaining about his training. Apparently after a basic six week training course they work on the non-emergency service as basic grades and after 10 months or so they have further training in handling emergency situations.

On completion they are 'qualified' and gain an extra £40 a week. It seems that the NHS are now 'freezing' the second training course in some areas so they don't have to pay them any extra money. But these 'basic' ambulance people still have to cope with emergency cases even though they aren't supposed to.

The bloke I was talking to was worried that as this continues standards are falling and some serious mistakes may occur.

Yet another example of the Tories destroying our Health Service and our health.

Yours fraternally
Gwyneth Lloyd
Leicester East LPYS

TV Review

'Paperclip conspiracy'

A recent documentary on BBC1 showed once again the hypocrisy of the 'Allied' leaders' struggle against fascism in the Second World War.

It showed how after the war, in spite of the fact that Truman, the US president, had banned Nazis from entering the USA, US military officials altered the records of Nazi scientists by attaching a paperclip to the tops of their files. They allowed them to take up American citizenship in return for helping with the US space programme.

These scientists included Werner von Braun, the designer of the V-2 rocket (built with slave labour) and Hubertus Strughold who had supervised high altitude pressure experiments on prisoners at Dachau concentration camp.

There is also evidence that the British Labour government, as well as Russia and Japan, took part in various cover-ups to try and get Nazi scientists to help with research after the war.

The film contrasted the eagerness to recruit the scientists with the lack of effort devoted to tracking down war criminals. It showed how much of the profit accumulated by the Nazis during the war ended up in Swiss banks, with the connivance of the 'neutral' Swiss government.

The film demonstrated quite clearly that the capitalist governments of the West and the Stalinists in the East, while proclaiming their desire to destroy Fascism, were only too willing to make use of its representatives to serve their own interests.

By Alan Crear

Money floods in

Dear Comrades,

Recently we have started a paper sale at our local dole office, which has been very successful right from the start.

What has been even more successful however, is the amount of Fighting Fund we collect. Even if they don't want a paper, it's amazing how much unemployed peo-

ple are prepared to give us. Last week I collected 90p in the first three minutes!

Raising Fighting Fund is dead easy if you try—just make sure you never go anywhere without your rattling tin! (And your papers of course).

Yours fraternally
Vincent Black
Hackney North

Union breakaways stay and fight

Two episodes from British trade union history illustrate the truth of the saying that 'unity is strength'

'How can we change our union?' is a question workers often ask when faced with the opposition and even outright sabotage of the trade union bureaucracy.

This discontent is sometimes articulated in the demand to break away from the union. *Militant*, however, has always argued that the task is to transform the unions—not to leave them. An examination of the history of breakaway unions confirms this strategy.

The main experience of breakaway unions came in the period after the general strike. The trade union bureaucracy swung sharply towards class collaboration.

The Mond-Turner talks were held to try and convince the employers of the moderation of the trade union leaders, meanwhile thousands of militants were being victimised.

Minority

The Communist Party before the General Strike had built the Minority Movement into a powerful opposition force fighting within the unions. At its peak it enjoyed the support of one million workers—one quarter of the TUC.

But the influence of the Stalinised Communist International paralysed the CP during the General Strike. Participation in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee constrained the CP from criticising the left leaders of the TUC and fatally weakened its development.

In 1928 the Communist International made a 180 degree turn. In what became known as the Third Period, denounced the labour leaders as 'social fascist'. The reformists were designated as the real enemy.

In the trade unions this policy was expressed in the creation of 'red unions' in opposition to the reformist unions. In Germany this resulted in the isolation of 250,000 workers in the RGO from the millions in the Social Democratic DGB.

In Britain a disastrous split emerged from the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers called the United Clothing Workers Union.

In the 1920s the NUTGW had been one of the bases for the Minority Movement. The CP won the support of the London area committee, and the full time organiser was one of the founders of the CP—Sam Elsbury.

After the General Strike the leadership of the NUTGW moved to the right. In 1928 during a strike at Simpsons in London they intervened over the heads of the members to impose a settlement.

A few months after this the London area initiated a campaign to enforce the closed shop. A strike ensued at the Rego clothing factory and support poured in from the London labour movement.

However, because the strike had begun one day

By Richard Knight

before the meeting which was due to ratify the strike, the bureaucracy used this as an excuse to withhold support.

In an act of strike-breaking the national officials wrote to every branch calling on them to refuse assistance. The strike lasted seven weeks, ending in victory for the Rego strikers. They marched back into work on Christmas eve 1928.

The NUTGW general secretary launched an inquiry into the conduct of the Rego strike. Sam Elsbury was hauled before the NEC and dismissed as London Organiser. The CP then took the decision to split the union.

On 7 March a mass meeting was called in London which voted to form the United Clothing Workers Union. At the start it claimed 10,000 members—5,000 in London, 3,000 in Leeds and 2,000 in Glasgow.

The clothing bosses and the bureaucracy of the NUTGW set out to crush the UCWU.

The Polikoff factory in the East End of London was a UCWU stronghold and they won recognition from the management. When an NUTGW member was refused work at Polikoff the management were pressured by the Clothing Manufacturers Association into withdrawing recognition from the UCWU.

In response the UCWU called a strike. Sam Elsbury opposed it but was persuaded to give support after the CP leaders promised money for strike pay.

After a week no money was forthcoming. The strike collapsed. The Polikoff workers were forced to sign a document repudiating the UCWU. Most workers dropped out of both unions and it took seven years before Polikoff was organised again.

'Social Fascism'

Sam Elsbury paid for opposition to the strike call with his expulsion from the CP and removal as secretary of the UCWU.

The 'social fascist' line continued with attacks on the NUTGW. A rally called in London to organise non-union factories was broken up by UCWU members.

The *Daily Worker* of 22 January 1930 wrote: "Let the workers all over the country follow the example of the London clothing workers and hound the leaders of the Labour Party and the reactionary trade unions off the platform."

The UCWU declined into insignificance. By 1935 only 200 members were left and with a reversal of line by the Communist International towards opportunist alliance



An East End garment factory (slightly earlier than the Polikoff strike referred to)

with reformist leaders through 'Popular Fronts' the UCWU members rejoined the NUTGW.

Trotsky summarised the disastrous policy of 'red unions' by commenting that: "If the party buys its influence in the trade unions only at the price of a narrowing down and factionalising of the latter—converting them into auxiliaries of the Party for momentary aims and preventing them from becoming genuine mass organisations—then the relations between the party and the class are wrong."

Tragically many of the mistakes described above were repeated, in a different form and different historical situation, on the docks during the 1950s.

The dockers had a history of discontent with the regime inside the TGWU. This was particularly so for the old National Union of Dock Labourers which had its system of electing officials replaced by appointment of officials when it amalgamated into the TGWU in 1922.

After 1945 the dockers' opposition to the TGWU bureaucracy reached a new pitch. Between 1945 and 1955 there were 37 unofficial strikes. No shop stewards system was allowed and the dockers were forced to establish unofficial Port Workers Committees.

In the ten years after the war 77 dockers were disciplined, with three of them being expelled from the union. In 1950 Communist Party members were banned from holding office in the union.

The full-time officials were universally hated and the general secretary Arthur Deakin complained to the 1951 TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference that: "They shout them down, immediately there is a stoppage they regard the officers

as being their deadly enemies because they have the responsibility to get them back to work."

A series of unofficial strikes were viciously attacked by Deakin using red-baiting smears against the dockers. In 1945 a national unofficial strike over pay lasted six weeks and was only broken by the imposition of a postal ballot.

'Blue Union'

In 1951 a 26-day strike took place over pay. In 1954 a strike was called against compulsory overtime by the 'National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union, known as the 'Blue Union' by the colour of its membership card. This strike won the support of 32,000 TGWU members.

The TGWU dominated the docks with its 83,000 members whereas the 'Blues' had only 7,000 members on the London docks.

But in 1954 a local dispute broke out in Hull. A move began to leave the TGWU and join the 'Blue Union'. This movement quickly spread to Liverpool, Birkenhead and Manchester. Within a few weeks 10,000 dockers left the TGWU.

The theory was that the TGWU could not be reformed and that the 'Blue Union' would be a 'pure' union.

The TUC intervened immediately, invoking the 1939 Bridlington Agreement which outlawed poaching between affiliated unions. The 'Blue Union' was suspended from the TUC and ultimately expelled when it refused to hand the members back.

The 'Blue Union' was forced to call a strike in 1955 to stop management withdrawing their Record Books which would have excluded its members from working on the docks. With

the support of TGWU members this attack was beaten off. But months later a 40-day strike for recognition on negotiating committees ended in defeat.

What was the impact of the 'Blue Union'? Thousands of the best activists were lost from the TGWU and the right wing officials reinforced their grip on the Docks Section.

The main result of the split was non-unionism due to the warfare between the two unions. The 1965 Devlin Report estimated that 30 per cent of the dockers in Liverpool and Hull were not

members of any union.

Ironically the Devlin Report which recommended rationalisation was rejected by the right wing 'TGWU' but accepted by the 'Blue Union' because it offered them limited recognition.

The TGWU was changed by the rank and file who stayed within it and fought the bureaucracy. Three years ago the 'Blue Union' amalgamated with the TGWU, putting an end to a legacy of disunity inherited from the mistaken tactics of the breakaway.

(to be continued)

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.

○ **TRIBUTE** to Liverpool Labour Councillors and their families. Social at Woolton Labour Club, 8pm, Friday 27 March. Tickets £3.50. Guest appearances: Ricky Tomlinson (Bobby Grant) and Tony Scoggo (Matty) from Brookside, Peter Taaffe *Militant*.

○ **The Burden is Heavy**: video on the growth of the workers' movement in Zimbabwe, with important conclusions for all socialists. Cost of hire: £20 (£10 for YS branches/women's sections). Order from Zimbabwe Trade Unionists' Defence Campaign, PO Box 77, London E8 4TB.

○ **LABOUR Theory of Value** (Paul Storey). Set of three tapes. Why Marxism opposes feminism (Margaret Crear). £1.50, plus 25p postage, each order from World Socialist Books.

○ **BOW Militant** supporters present the "Rocky Horror Video Night" on Friday the 13th March. Ring Rose on 515 8978 for venue. All proceeds to Fighting Fund.

○ **MILITANT enamel Red Flag badges**. £1 each with SAE. Send to Mick Griffiths, 20 Trilby St, Wakefield, W Yorks. Tel. Wakefield, 375 022.

○ **CASSETTE tapes** with two issues of *Militant* (one each side). Available fortnightly. Tapes £3.50 per quarter, £13 per year. To be returned or send blank C-90 tapes. Contact Dave: 14 Harrowby Rd, West Park, Leeds 16. Tel: 0532 624917.

□ **LPYS PUBLIC meeting** "save jobs, fight for your future!" Wed 18 March 7.30pm. Broxburn Academy. Speakers include Dave Mackay (Golden Wonder Shop Steward), Caterpillar occupation speaker, Cllr Tony Kinder, LPYS speaker.

Industrial Reports

Talbot car workers reject pay offer

A WAR of attrition is being fought at the Ryton Talbot car factory over the pay claim. Paul Sharry from Coventry South East LPYS interviewed a track worker at Ryton Talbot who had been suspended in the last overtime ban.

"Every year when the pay claim comes around the management complain they can't sell the cars and point to the big stocks outside the factory...then after the settlement the stocks disappear...some coincidence."

A mass meeting last Wednesday (25th) rejected the latest offers: "Four per cent is peanuts in exchange for holidays taken at a more expensive time of the year and the threat of losing the September break...morale in the factory is right down with about 20 lads leaving each week."

"Management are offering us staff status that we get paid if we're sick but they'll discipline us if we take too much time off."

"Part of the offer is for lay off pay to be brought up to 100 per cent but we haven't had any lay off pay for three years. Bonuses are promised and we work our rocks off for the first three weeks of the month and then there is always a break down to ruin."

"At the mass meeting all the proposals were rejected virtually unanimously. However, the union leadership actually argued on the platform over which report on negotiations with management should be read out, the JNC's or the stewards' committee. If nothing concrete comes from the negotiations soon then the mood is "...out through the door."



Derby Trader print sackings

JUST THREE weeks before Christmas Lionel Pickering, owner of Trade Group Newspapers, sacked over eighty NGA members from his printing plant in Heanor, Derbyshire.

They suddenly received 'sackograms' through their doors, without prior warning or discussion. One worker was waiting for an operation and the wife of another was reduced to tears on get-

ting such news first thing in the morning.

They have in the past been self confessed 'moderates'. As one put it: 'I've worked for Pickering for ten years. I liked it. All I want is my job back.' But they have been forced into struggle and now are determined to fight.

In a recent campaign against the Trader, Emlyn Hughes, loyal Thatcherite was picketed whilst attempting

to promote one of the local car shops.

Support for the strikers is extensive, with a support group set up by local trade unionists and Labour Party members. A successful march and rally was held last Saturday in Derby.

Messages of support and donations to: 114 Stonehill Road, Derby.

By Ian Thirkill, Derby North YS

NUS Broad Left defends democracy

THE ARTICLE in issue 836 on alleged ballot rigging in the National Union of Seamen shows the role an active Broad Left can play in helping to democratise the trade unions.

However, it was the comment about the right wing national executive member from Holyhead, North Wales, who has called for the expulsion of those members demanding an investigation which caught my attention the most.

Almost everyone accepts that this is going to be general election year and the preliminary agenda for the Wales Labour Party conference is full of pre-election resolutions and apparent unity - even from arch witch-hunters in the leadership of the Welsh TGWU and GMBATU.

There is one exception, however. One resolution from, yes you've got it, the NUS, does not deal with the devastation of the Merchant

Navy but the so-called 'Militant' scourge inside the Labour Party.

After urging endorsement of the LP national executive's witch-hunting antics and calling for a stepping up of the attacks the NUS conclude their eloquent resolution with a novel suggestion: 'The Labour Party in a gesture of magnanimity should offer the Militant, free advice and expertise on how to set themselves up as a separate party, openly iden-

tifiable, even if it means Leon Trotsky turning in his grave.'

The only conclusion to be drawn from this resolution is either the salt air has rusted some right wing bolts or the Broad Left has touched a few raw nerves with their demands for an investigation into the alleged ballot rigging. It looks to me as though the Broad Left are doing a great job.

By Alec Thraves

Sheffield struggles

Star journalists go back under protest

THE SHEFFIELD Star journalists lock-out is over after more than 100 journalists voted to return to work without a satisfactory settlement.

The surprise decision followed a proposal from union officials to seek a return to work on the terms offered by Sheffield Newspaper management four weeks ago.

Acting on the advice of NUJ national officers Jake Ecclestone and Harry Conroy; local officials recommended ending the dispute because they no longer believed it could be won.

The dispute flared up when bosses at the *Sheffield Star* tried to force new technology training on the NUJ without a negotiated agreement.

Union members were locked out when they stopped work in support of three colleagues suspended for refusing training.

Attempts to invoke the recognised dispute procedure or to call in Acas were ignored by the management.

But other unions in the building failed to provide any practical help and the paper continued to come

out, written by scab journalists from the Institute of Journalists and a number of unqualified people.

The final return to work vote, by 50 to 31, stunned many union activists who suspect it was designed to preserve the national NUJ/NGA joint accord.

Union officers argue that a prolonged dispute would have split the union. Nobody returned to work during the dispute.

The NUJ also passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in the paper's editor, Michael Corner, for his censoring of two articles by regular columnist Tony Benn, and for his failure to give the journalists' case in news stories.

The union returned without having to set scab copy written during the dispute and with a management recognition that NUJ members had the right to discipline four members who did not join the lock-out at the start.

Initially management had insisted on these clauses when the union tried to negotiate a return to work.

By Alan Hartley

Keeton strikers stand firm

KEETON STRIKERS in Sheffield have been on strike for 36 weeks. During that time there have been several totally unacceptable offers by management which have been unanimously rejected.

Several mass pickets have taken place. There is a stall in Sheffield City centre to raise money. The pickets' caravan has been burnt down and replaced.

Seven newsletters have been produced plus an LPYS bulletin. Deputy convenor Mark Simpson spoke at an LPYS rally at which the Housemartins donated £500 to the strike funds.

Strikers have been harassed by the police and abused by scabs and management. Despite all this and the length of the dispute the strikers are determined to win their fight for reinstatement and acceptable conditions.

The last 'offer' from managing director Doyle would mean: forfeit of

washing up time; staff working on any machinery; no union recognition; no shop stewards; acceptance of a no-strike agreement; no lay-off payments; no annual pay review; an immediate redundancy exercise with management making all selection.

Neil Earnshaw, convenor, and Ken Harris, head of pickets, spoke to *Militant*.

Neil: In a secret ballot we voted 2 to 1 for strike action should management not back off and allow us to work under normal negotiated agreements. Then five minutes after the vote being counted they sacked us all.

The dispute has run from 2 July 1986 to the present day, roughly eight months. It has had ups and downs obviously. But overall the morale has been very good. People such as the Trades Council, Nupe, Astms, they've all donated generously.

Ken'll be able to tell you exactly how the pickets have taken it. I'm away from the picket most of the day chasing scabs and so on.

Ken: We've now gone on to a 24-hour picket. Obviously it's hard because there's only a few of us (38 - Ed) but the harder this chap gets, the more determined we are to our job on the picket line.

Neil: The present stage is that we've located a majority of his customers and put them under extreme pressure to stop trading with Keetons. Keetons are lying, covering up etc in order to get smaller companies to supply work.

The company have an annual turnover of £2.2

million. We know that this year's turnover has fallen well below £1m. So we're having a tremendous impact.

But I still believe that there is a central fund to sponsor companies who wish to attack unions and this is how the company has maintained this dispute.

The overall profit has only been £124,000 - which would easily be swallowed up in overheads after eight months' strike.

Ken: We still think that there are a lot of transport union members delivering goods to S&H, that is affecting Keetons but we're doing all we can to stop it.

Neil: By no means will they lose us this dispute but they can prolong it. What management try to do in any dispute is to bring hardship upon the membership.

The members are under tremendous pressure to concede. However, Sheffield and surrounding cities have been so tremendous that we've been able to keep going and as the dispute lengthens, support grows.

Ken on the AEU leadership: They are not following the trend the membership want to go. What they are agreeing to with this government is not what workers in Sheffield want.

Knowsley Nalgo say no cuts

THE RIGHT wing Labour council in Knowsley are imposing cuts totalling four and a half million pounds as well as putting up charges.

The local Nalgo Branch called a Special General Meeting on 25 February and overwhelmingly carried a resolution calling for all vacant posts to be boycotted from the first day of absence, strikes, lobbies of council meetings and a ban on all changes in established work practices designed to cover for cuts.

Proposals so far coming from the council involve the ripping up of agreements on staffing in Family Centres, Social Work Area Offices, Emergency Duty Team and administration sections.

The most vulnerable sections of this deprived area are to suffer. Proposals are in hand to reduce Home Help hours by 3 per cent and to abolish holidays for some children in care.

So far the borough's two right wing MPs, Sean Hughes and George Howarth have been strangely silent. But socialists in the local Labour Party, including some left wing councillors, are supporting a public anti-cuts meeting organised by Knowsley North Labour Party.

Gateway to the Dee dole queue

THE ANNOUNCEMENT on the 20 February that the retailing giant Gateway is to sell off around two hundred outlets has shattered the myth of job security in the supposedly prosperous retail sector.

In June of last year, Gateway, part of the Dee Corporation, bought over 439 Fine Fare and Shoppers Paradise stores in a £680m deal which made them the third largest supermarket chain in Britain, with 11 per cent of the grocery trade.

At that time the shopworkers' trade union, Usdaw, was assured there would be no job losses. However, for anything up to 4,000 workers the lesson that takeovers mean unemployment may soon become all too clear.

According to the company the stores are being sold because they 'do not fit comfortably into our trading policy'.

The majority of these are profitable businesses and although the company has stated its hope that the shops will be bought as going concerns, in the fierce competition of the High street the prospects for this seem modest at best.

The Dee Corporation are carrying out an exercise in asset-stripping without any concern for the effects of store closures on unemployment black spots like Scotland or the North-East.

Although Usdaw is recognised by Gateway it is becoming clear that this is an anti-union employer. There have been reports of an 'unofficial' company policy of harassing shop stewards and union activists.

Udaw national officials are currently arranging to meet with Gateway. However, mass meetings have already been organised in some areas, notably Scotland, and the feelings of anger and betrayal amongst workers may lead to industrial action.

By an Usdaw member

Industrial Reports

Tory cuts create council conflicts

THE capitulation of Sheffield Nalگو branch officers to the proposed council cuts budget (see issue 836) was starkly revealed at the branch executive meeting on 5 March.

Paul Hudson, Sheffield Nalگو Education Officer and leading member of the local 'Euro' Communist Party led a vicious personal attack on Maggie Sutton, the branch's publicity officer.

Supporting a resolution calling for the destruction of all 8,000 copies of the February edition of the branch magazine *Root and Branch*, he accused her of deceit.

Her 'crime' was to write a lead article headlined 'Branch set to negotiate cuts', which describes exactly what is happening in Sheffield.

Although the magazine is supposed to be a members' magazine, not necessarily an organ of branch policy, the resolution was passed by 24 votes to 14.

At the same meeting the Family and Community Ser-

vices (F&CS) shop stewards committee was also attacked because they opposed discussions with management on 'Income Generation' and attacks on services.

'Income Generation' in F&CS means introducing charges on the old, the sick, the disabled and mentally ill, for services presently provided free.

A resolution was passed to the effect that if the F&CS shop stewards committee opposes cuts in services, the Nalگو branch officers will go in over their heads to negotiate them with management!

These attacks by the Labour council and so-called left wingers in Nalگو are creating the conditions for building a genuine, democratic Broad Left, rooted in the rank and file, prepared to defend jobs, conditions and services against Tory cuts.

By Dave Milsom
(Sheffield Nalگو, personal capacity)



Caterpillar occupation threatened

A writ has been served on the workers occupying the Caterpillar factory just outside Glasgow. Police could move against them at any time. But they have voted by a four to one majority to continue the occupation and have issued appeals for solidarity action should the police move against them. Locally and internationally support is growing for their struggle. International links have been made with Belgian and French workers. 8,000 marched through Uddingston just a fortnight ago in their support. If the state attempts to intervene on behalf of the Caterpillar bosses it could ingite a mass movement in the West of Scotland reminiscent of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in the early '70s.

Teacher strikes against Baker's Bill

TORY Education minister Kenneth Baker announced in parliament on 2 March that he was proceeding to impose his pay and conditions deal to 'settle' the two year long teachers' dispute.

The overwhelming votes for strike action programmes proposed by the teacher unions NUT and NAS/UWT indicate that far from 'settling' the dispute Baker's intervention has only fanned the flames.

Worse conditions

The Baker imposition has been made possible by his scrapping of the existing Burnham negotiating machinery. He offers a limited pay rise attached to worse conditions of service—ie. the sort of pro-

ductivity arrangements the government had demanded all along.

By and large however the conditions of service arrangements have already been conceded in principle, in the now defunct Coventry/ACAS deal—and it rings hollow for the NUT leadership to declare their opposition to Baker for imposing what they were prepared to give away only six months ago.

The strikes, rallies and demonstrations do however represent an important step forward. Although many teachers rightly view the action as too little too late, the fact that they are jointly organised by the NUT and NAS does provide the basis for future united campaigning.

Half-day action, however, is not enough. The executive must draw up plans for a wider campaign involving the return to sanctions, escalating the strike programme and preparation of the membership for all out action in any area a Local Education Authority attempts to implement Baker's deal by force. As a first step the NUT and NAS must call a joint one-day national strike.

ILTA disciplinary

It is amazing that the day after Baker's announcement the national officers of the NUT have responded by reopening the disciplinary proceedings against the 50 ILTA Divisional Council members.

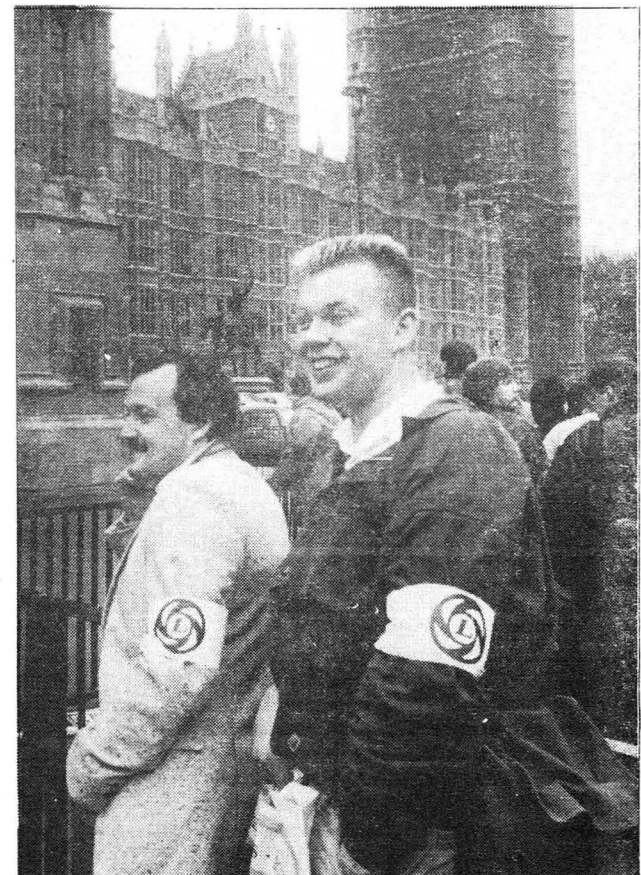
This is despite a full two-

day hearing which having heard all the evidence and found the members guilty had not imposed the sort of penalty the national officers were seeking.

Such undemocratic and time consuming action against members whose only crime is to have recognised the necessity of fighting Baker, shows the priorities of the national officers of the NUT at present.

All school groups, local Associations and Divisions must pass emergency resolutions calling on the executive to drop the appeal by the national officers against the decision of the Disciplinary Committee.

By Bob Sulatycki
(ILTA Divisional Council, personal capacity)



On Wednesday 4 March over 400 workers from Leyland Vehicles travelled the 200 miles from Lancashire to London. Joined by a small delegation from Leyland Scammell at Watford they lobbied MPs at Westminster over the planned deal with the Daf and the threatened closure of the Leyland engine plant and foundry and the Watford factory plus 2,000 jobs.

Left swing in Usdaw election

THE USDAW Presidential and Executive Council election results announced this week produced some of the biggest upsets the union has ever seen and showed a significant swing to the left.

These elections were the first ever conducted by means of the Tory-imposed secret postal ballot. The union changed its rules last year to conform to the 1984 Trade Union Act—which was designed to moderate the unions, but it has produced a swing to the left.

The votes cast in the Presidential election were as follows:-

Syd Tierney	(right wing)	27,531	48.3%
Jeff Price	(Broad Left)	17,188	30.2%
John Toogood	(extreme right wing)	12,248	22.5%

This result compares favourably with the last election under a system of branch block voting, in 1985, when Syd Tierney received 80.7% of the vote to Jeff Price's 19.3%.

During the election it appeared that the right wing had everything going for it. Syd Tierney capitalised on the fact that he was the current Chairman of the Labour Party.

John Toogood (the union's Midlands Divisional Officer, the biggest division in the union)

was supported by a number of newspaper columnists, including Woodrow Wyatt and Frank Chapple. He was lauded by them as a 'moderate' and as the only candidate who supported multilateral disarmament.

Jeff Price was the only rank and file candidate, being the secretary of the USDAW Newcastle branch. He stood on the Broad Left programme, including the demand for a £120 minimum wage for 35 hours for all USDAW members.

Jeff is well known throughout the union as a *Militant* supporter, and this result in such ap-

parently adverse conditions is a boost for the whole left in a union which hitherto has been a bulwark of the right wing of the movement.

The Broad Left will take satisfaction from the 11% increase in the left's share of the vote, and will undoubtedly redouble their efforts for the next election in two years, when Syd Tierney will retire.

In the Executive Council elections, the Broad Left scored a number of spectacular gains, in

the North-Eastern, Eastern, and Midlands divisions. One near gain was in the Eastern Division where George Williamson, a *Militant* supporter, standing for the first time only missed being elected by 290 votes out of a total vote of nearly 9,000.

By a Militant reporter

Welsh water cost cuts

THE WELSH water authority is bringing the results of a cost-cutting pilot scheme into operation this year. It is an erosion of working practices and conditions, preparing the way for privatisation in the future.

As a sop to the water workers, management are offering to consolidate their bonus into their pay.

One of the proposals states that craftsmen need not travel back and forth to sewage plants to carry out basic maintenance which can be carried out by operatives based at the plant. They want to buy out call-out

and stand-by allowances, do away with workers having vans to travel to work and get rid of the agreement on contractual and conditional overtime.

Water workers work in dirty, wet and unhealthy conditions with obvious effects on health. The report states that absenteeism is running at 8.4 per cent and that they want to bring this down to under 6 per cent. They do not offer to improve working conditions.

If implemented in Wales these pilot schemes will be the shape of things to come nationally, preparing the way for privatisation.

The trade union leaders should immediately start a campaign opposing the proposals. Management can be stopped in its tracks if a nationally co-ordinated joint campaign by all the unions in the water industry is conducted.

As part of increased flexibility of working practices sewage workers could be turned into shepherds. Management propose having flocks of sheep in the sewage works to eat the grass—a serious proposal considering there might only be one man and his dog left working for the Welsh water authority.

By a Welsh water worker

Gateshead highway robbery

GATESHEAD HIGHWAY workers were on strike on Friday 6 March.

They are fighting against large wage cuts which they have been told they must take to avoid more job losses.

These men work in stinking conditions, lay the pavements, repair roads, dig trenches. They are also opposing privatisation and defending jobs. The council want men to take these pay cuts and work harder.

With the scrapping of the old bonus system, many of these low paid workers would be better off on the dole. A group of *Militant* supporters joined the picket line last Friday at Gateshead Civic Centre.

In the afternoon we were joined by Nalگو men from the parks, Gateshead leisure centre, and even school dinner ladies. Our ranks were filled even more when some of the staff from the

civic centre joined up.

There was a great feeling of solidarity amongst the different unions. This is the first time this has happened in Gateshead.

The unions are fighting back against the cuts, by banning overtime, emergency work and and refusing to submit bonus sheets (blues) thus making it very difficult for Gateshead council to charge their customers for work which has been done.

They also mounted pickets at all council rubbish dumps, forcing the rubbish vans to use private tips, costing the council more money.

They are saying no to pay cuts, no to cowboy contractors, stand together against privatisation.

By Stephen Manuel
(Tyne Bridge LPYS)

Militant

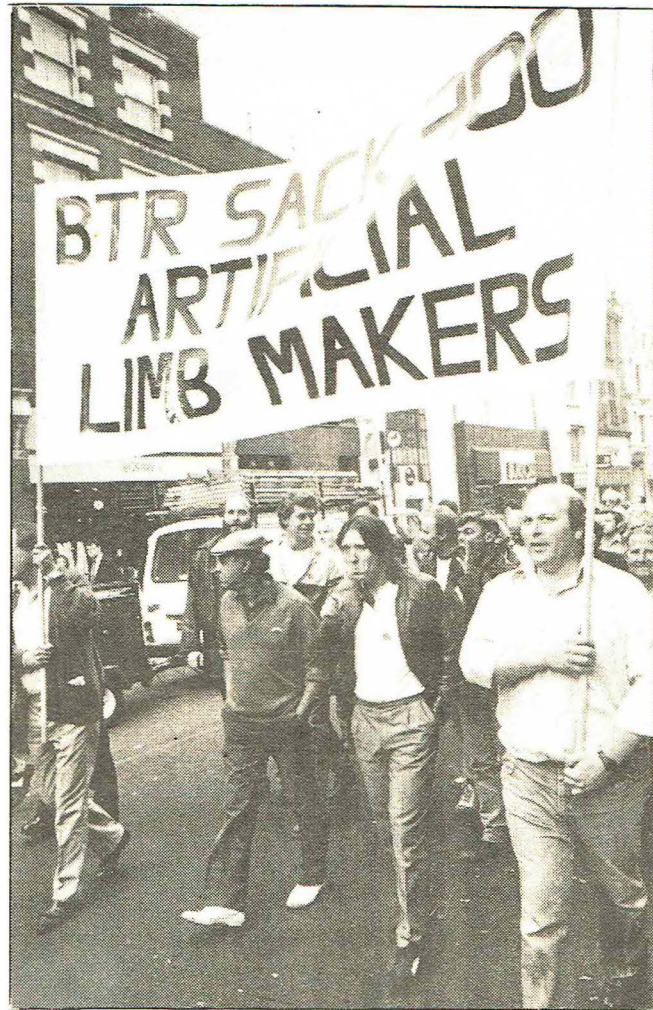
Caterpillar occupation

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Labour women

Pages 4-5

Support Hangers' workers



WORKERS AT the J E Hangers factory in Roehampton, which makes artificial limbs, were sacked six months ago after walking out in support of four sacked shop stewards.

They have been victims of the new style of management in Thatcher's Britain.

In December Hangers workers were made a new 'offer'; compulsory overtime, reductions of wages of up to £50 a week, less trade union representation and the tearing up of existing agreements.

Hangers is part of the giant BTR group which has interests in South Africa. BTR bosses want the same in Britain as their South African subsidiaries want—a workforce that will accept whatever wages and conditions are thrown at them.

Some workers who were thrown out of their jobs had 20 or 30 years loyal service behind them. For many

older workers this is a bitter end to a lifetime of skilled work.

The patients who depend on these products were not even told about the dispute and arrived in ambulances, only to be turned away because their limbs were not ready.

The press and TV have tried to put the blame for the patients' suffering on the strikers. But there has been a massive cover up by the media about the extent of the suffering and about the real causes of the dispute.

Ruthless bosses

BTR bosses typify the ruthless approach adopted by the employers. From the time they took over Hangers four years ago, they were out to whittle away trade union rights and conditions. They only want to increase their massive profits still further.

The Hangers unions, FTAT and

the technical workers' union TASS, are demanding a job on acceptable terms for those who want to stay at the firm, and for decent severance pay for those who want to leave. The unions are also demanding that no 'blacklist' of activists is operated. All Hangers products should be boycotted.

The welfare of disabled people should not be at the mercy of BTR bosses who only want to maximise profits. The Labour Party leaders should be committed to nationalise BTR and all the firms supplying the NHS, but under the democratic control of the workers in the industry.

Workers are being attacked now. They need a general strategy from the labour movement leaders to defend them now. At the moment individual groups of workers are under attack but are being left to fight alone.

Active mass broad left organisa-

tions must be built in the unions, to turn them and the Labour Party into organisations capable of defending workers and transforming society.

Make sure that the Hangers strikers get the support they deserve by organising collections at workplaces, Labour Party branches and trade union meetings.

Send messages or donations to: STEVE BLEASE (treasurer), Hangers dispute, Wessex House, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

What Militant says

★ Black all Hangers' products

★ Nationalise BTR and all firms supplying the NHS under workers' control and management

MILITANT public meeting. Support Hangers' workers. Dryburgh Hall, Putney Baths, Dryburgh Road, Putney, London, SW15. Wednesday 18 March 730pm.

Nationalise this vital part of the NHS

CATHY WILSON, secretary of Liverpool Labour womens council is a Hangers' consumer who will be speaking at the *Militant* meeting on the dispute next week.

She told *Militant*: "When I had my leg amputated, I had a 3 month old son. He is now 19. In the meantime I have been able to get involved in politics, even to be a Labour parliamentary can-

didate thanks to having an artificial limb. These workers have let 63,000 people live a full life.

"With cuts in transport and social services in many areas, these limbs are a lifesaver. But it's the workers to thank for that. The company BTR are only concerned for profit. The unions and Labour Party must make sure that the workers here are not abandoned like,

shamefully, the Silentnight workers were.

"We also need to fight for nationalisation of this vital part of the health service under workers' control and management. Workers and consumers should get the benefit of their skill, it should not just boost the profits of a multinational."

Further Education Labour Students (FELS) meeting. Hear Juan Ignacio Ramos, leader Spanish students' union explain the significance of their recent victory.

Monday 16th March, 11.00pm, Opera House Stage, Winter Gardens, Blackpool.

No retreat on FE grants

LABOUR PARTY leaders seem to be trying to ditch the commitment to pay all further education students a £27 a week grant (see article page 10).

At a meeting of one of the party's national executive sub committees, a new paragraph was inserted into a party document on education, speaking of the need for education allowances "to help many more young people..." but suggesting that payment should be related to parental incomes, in other words be means tested.

When a concrete figure was discussed, Neil Kinnock spoke against £27 saying the Tories would accuse Labour of spending too much. He suggested "something like £11." Six members of the committee voted to retain the £27 commitment.

Members of the party's youth sub committee agree with Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) members that the £27 must be in the party manifesto and will be meeting party leaders. LPYS branches, college Labour clubs and Labour branches must keep up pressure for a decent living grant through a barrage of resolutions.

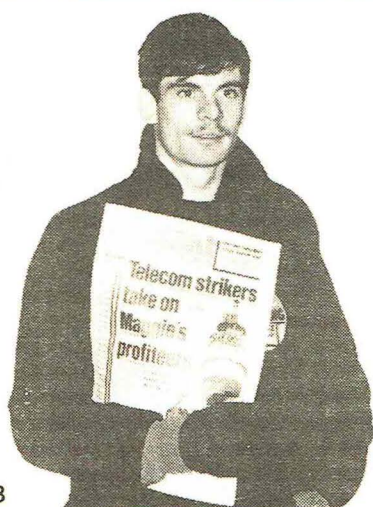
Gold Fields

THE LABOUR Party Young Socialists have organised a lobby of Consolidated Gold Fields' head office in the City of London to demand their withdrawal from South Africa.

The violent system of apartheid was built on the needs for cheap labour of bosses like Consolidated who own 48 per cent of Gold Fields of South Africa (GFS).

The LPYS lobby is on Friday 20 March assembling at Temple station at 11.30 am marching to Gold Fields offices in Moorgate.

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