

Militant

Solidarity price £1

The Marxist Paper for Labour and Youth 30p

ISSUE 839 20 March 1987

Labour to power
on a socialist
programme

Budget - the rich cash in again



ONCE AGAIN those who have already reaped a rich harvest under the Tories will come off best from Lawson's 'give-away' budget.

Millions of low-paid who earn too little to pay income tax, the unemployed, the pensioners and those on social security, will get absolutely nothing. Their future is as bleak as ever.

A worker on £4,000 a year will welcome the extra 86p a week, but that will not go far, given Lawson's prediction of inflation rising again. Even better-off workers on £10,000 will only be £3.44 better-off—so long as they are lucky enough to keep their jobs.

All but the top tenth richest households are paying more tax than they did before this Tory government came to power. That top tenth meanwhile has seen its taxes cut by nearly a fifth, making them on average £2000 better off.

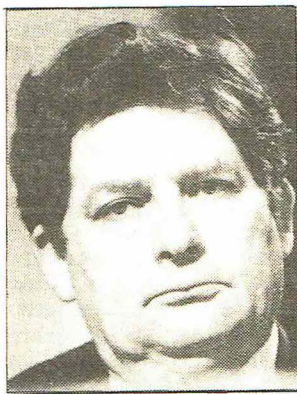
Big business profits have scaled new heights. NatWest bank have just topped a billion pounds. But these profits have not been used to reinvest in manufacturing industry on which any future prosperity depends.

By Pat Craven

Output is still below the level of 1979. A £10.5 billion deficit in trade in manufactured goods is forecast for 1987. Lawson was forced to concede that even the surplus in 'invisible' earnings on services like banking will not prevent an overall balance of payments deficit of £2.5 billion.

This budget has done nothing to cure the deep crisis of the British capitalist economy. All the small benefits to workers will be clawed back if the Tories are allowed to win another term of office.

The Labour leaders can capitalise on the reaction revealed by Channel 4 News just after the budget. A majority said they were less



Nigel Lawson—
"The current account is likely to remain in deficit by some £2.5 billion."

rather than more likely to vote for the Tories as a result of the budget.

Opportunities

But Labour will fail to reap the political opportunities if its leaders continue to pledge to take back the tax cuts conceded in this budget to pay for their job creation programme.

To them that have shall be given

Weekly rise in income after budget:

The unemployed
£4,000 a year worker
£40,000 a year worker
The Duke of York

Nil
86p
£8.71
£327.00

Workers want to see more jobs created, services improved and more schools, houses and hospitals built. But they do not see why they should have to bear the burden of the cost. They welcome even Lawson's puny tax cuts and will resent any move to reverse them.

On a socialist basis, it would be entirely possible both to raise living standards and carry through a programme of public work to

create jobs and provide the goods and services that people need.

Chaotic

What stands in the way is the chaotic capitalist system, which pours more and more millions into the pockets of the super-rich and yet cannot get unemployment below three million and leaves 16 million in poverty.

Labour must now urgent-

ly campaign for an end to this madness and explain the need for the public ownership of the big monopolies which control the economy, under the democratic control and management of the workers.

Only then could a budget plan the use of the country's resources of labour and materials to produce what people need and guarantee a decent standard of living for all.

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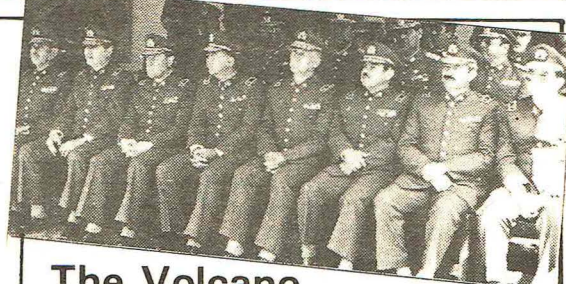


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Militant

Editor: Peter Taaffe
Militant, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.
Phone: (01) 533-3311

Labour's jobs budget

AFTER THE tax-cutting budget Labour has a clear opportunity to expose the Tories' cynical electioneering, and to offer a real programme for full employment. At least the Labour leaders are promising that if elected, they will reduce unemployment by one million in two years. Yet when every opinion poll in the last five years has recorded that most people consider unemployment the most important issue. Labour was 6 per cent behind in the polls even before the budget.

Labour's employment strategy—'New Jobs for Britain'—(launched last week) confirms the commitment to an expenditure of £6 billion. Employment spokesman, John Prescott, told the *Tribune*: "We have already committed ourselves to extend borrowing so that resources will be made available to pay for such a package. It costs money to provide jobs."

But £6 billion, after all the Tories savage cuts, is tiny. Lawson in his last Autumn Statement on public expenditure, on the rebound from the full rigours of monetarism, provided a £4 billion boost to spending. Yet in the tight embrace of Labour's right wing—Roy Hattersley and Bryan Gould—even this has been watered down to a mere £2 billion worth of extra resources. The rest will be made up by clawing back the full value of Lawson's new tax cuts, which they estimate at about £4 billion.

The right wing are so besotted with capitalist book-keeping they have lost all sense of political reality. Hattersley really is determined to fight the election on the promise to working class voters (whose overall tax, rates and national insurance burden has increased substantially under Thatcher) that their taxes must be raised again to create jobs.

Hattersley concedes completely to the pressure of the Tories and the press—that anything more than the most minimal public spending increase will lead to hyper-inflation.

Labour's dominant right are incapable of seeing beyond the options available under capitalism. Within the present economic order, the increased state spending necessary can only be funded by extra taxation, or by an inflationary expansion of the exchequer's budget deficit and recourse to the Bank of England's printing presses.

A socialist plan of production, however, utilising fully the productive potential available and dramatically raising production of industrial wealth, could allow a massive boost in public spending guaranteeing jobs for all and increased living standards. And without making workers foot the bill through taxation.

But Hattersley and the economically blinkered right, have also edged to one side the original jobs proposals in respect of where extra work would be created. Initially Labour local authorities were urged to draw up detailed plans of how, with the extra resources to be made available, they could increase employment.

Prescott in that *Tribune* interview explained: "Private manufacturing industry is not going to be a net contributor to jobs... so we have to look to the public sector." For even this commitment Prescott was shunted aside, and Gould drew up 'New Jobs for Britain.' Under this, half the jobs needed to cut unemployment by a million, will be created in the private sector.

So Hattersley announced during the Greenwich campaign that job creation "won't simply be schemes, special measures or local authority generated work. We have worked out ways of stimulating jobs in manufacturing industry." And what are these ways—the old regional grants, employment grants, cutting of employers' national insurance contribution, especially in the depressed areas.

Labour's right are completely blind to the deep-rooted crisis of capitalism, especially of British capitalism. Investment is lower than the pre-1979 level. But the lack of manufacturing investment is not for want of government grants, but rather the lack of a profitable market. Why should private industrialists invest in more capacity and labour, when they cannot fully use the capacity they have already accumulated?

This approach of inducements to big business to invest, amounts to the same failed policies of the last two Labour governments. It was under this approach that Ford was bribed to go to Bridgend, and that Chrysler was bled out by the last Labour administration. But under that government unemployment still doubled.

What hope now for this programme of right reformism, when the gathering economic storm clouds are far more threatening. Labour can only appear convincing with a full socialist programme for the economy and for jobs.

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

North West regional Labour Party conference

Conference backs Liverpool's banned councillors

DESPITE OPPOSITION from Regional Executive, Liverpool's 47 banned councillors received wholehearted support from a majority of delegates at the Party's North West conference in Blackpool last weekend. A resolution from Mossley Hill Labour Party, moved by *Militant* supporter Pete Tyson was carried by 275 votes to 229.

The resolution called on the next Labour government to: "Lift any sur-

charge imposed on councillors and any ban from office and to pledge that the rate support grant be fully restored to all councils to ensure that they can carry out their programme."

Unions such as the TGWU, AUEW, TASS, National Union of Railwaymen and the National Union of Seamen voted solidly in favour of the councillors, an encouraging sign that funds will be forthcoming to pay the coun-

cillors' massive fines and legal costs.

Embarrassed at the success of the resolution, Peter Kilfoyle the party policeman in Liverpool told Pete Tyson who had moved the resolution "that he would now be on his way" which witnesses took as a veiled threat of disciplinary action.

By Martin Lee

(Garston Constituency Labour Party, personal capacity)



North West region womens committee members organised a highly successful demonstration against low pay in Manchester last May. Now they have been effectively suspended until after the election.

No discussion on suspended womens committee

THE RIGHT wing used every organisational measure possible to stop discussion on their recent attacks on the north west regional Labour women's committee (see *Militant* 13 March).

The womens committee were accused of the following 'crimes'. A) The circulation of a leaflet advertising the *Charter for Women Workers*, produced by local womens councils, adopted 12 months ago, passed in the regional executive minutes and even reviewed in *Labour Weekly* recently!

B) Calling a consultative conference on reorganisation for 11 April. As the national executive are behind schedule we would have been prepared to postpone the meeting.

C) Preparing a document on the disabled.

D) Proposing a meeting of womens officers to prepare for a general election. (That's illegal?)

Other complaints were that we suggested weekend schools with the Young Socialists on how to attract young women to politics; we sent resolutions of support for strikes, and we decide our

own agendas.

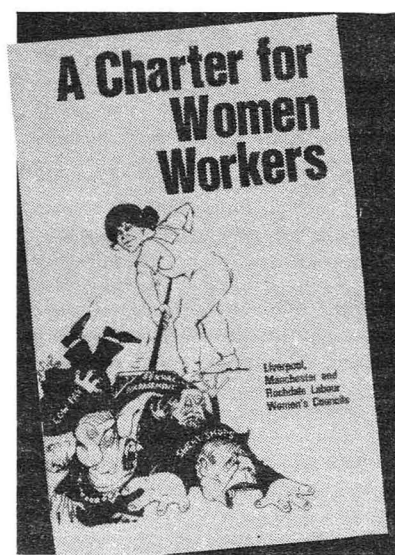
The standing orders committee at conference refused to take resolutions calling on the regional executive to let the women's committee carry on with normal meetings. The regional official was allowed to attack the regional womens committee while women's committee members had their microphones switched off.

Two AEU delegates came to the rostrum to support the regional womens committee but 'reference back' was lost.

However there was a groundswell of support from delegates, particularly from women trade union delegates as shown by a very successful fringe meeting.

At least two Marxists should have won women's seats on the regional executive, after a three way tie between three Marxists and one right winger. But instead of a postal vote between these four, (the normal procedure), the scrutineers pushed through a complete re-run of the election to give the defeated right wingers a second chance.

By a correspondent



Charter for Women Workers. Produced by Liverpool, Manchester and Rochdale Labour Women's Councils. Price 40p (plus 20p post and package) from Ann Bannister, 55 Lunt Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 5E2.

Sterilisation case threatens handicapped rights

THE APPEAL court decision to allow a sterilisation of a 17 year old mentally handicapped girl is an abominable withdrawal of human rights and a setback for both mentally and physically handicapped people.

The case brought forward by Sunderland council has enforced sterilisation as necessary, as the girl may be sexually active, but is unable to understand the conception of pregnancy.

This excuse, apart from attempting to justify taking basic human rights away from this young woman neglects to take several additional factors into account.

Gennette stays with her parents at weekends and at a hostel in the week. The aim of such hostels is to integrate mentally handicapped people into society, and encourage them to develop as people capable of living a

normal life.

If she is sexually active, her mother or a social worker could administer contraceptives or arrange for a contraceptive device and begin to educate her about their use. In the very last resort abortion would be available. The girl has a mental age of five and education will probably be a long process.

However the girl's mental age will improve. With pro-

per counselling and full sex education; then it may not be beyond possibility for this individual to understand the implications of parenting.

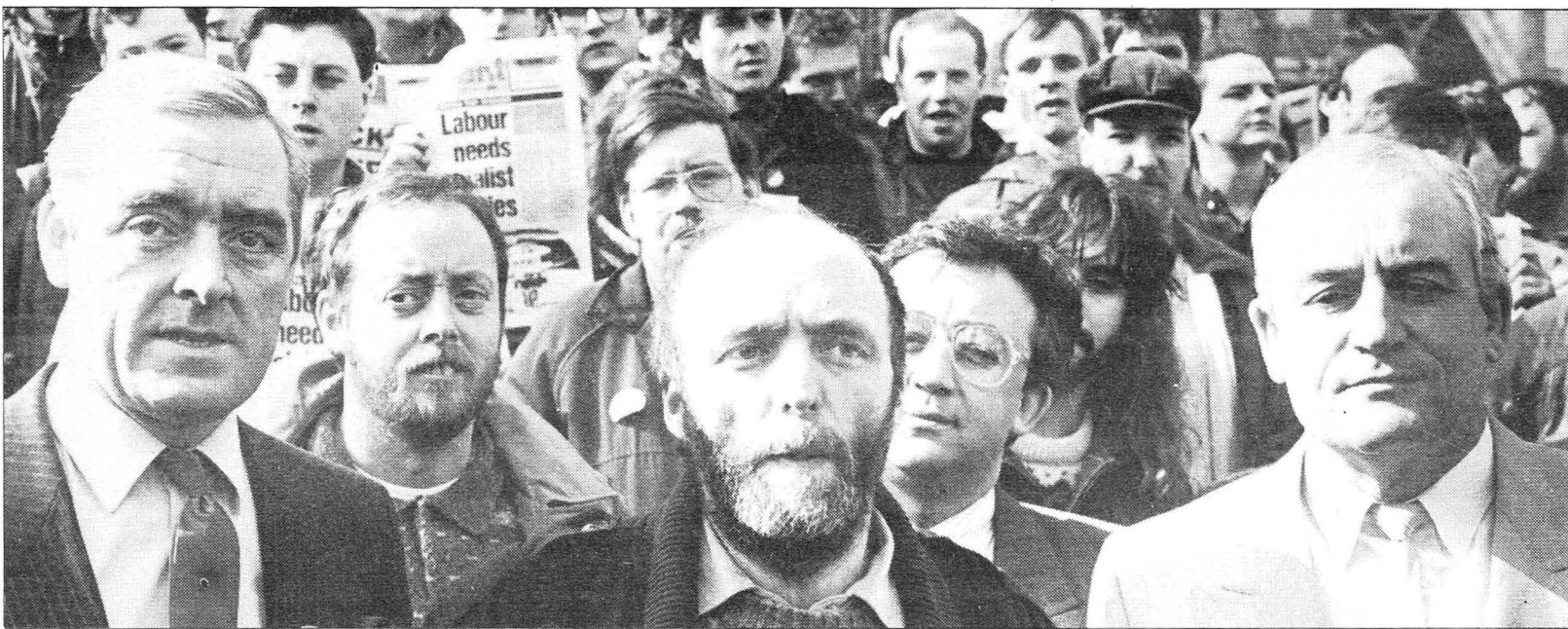
Extra financial resources and new technology are major factors in making parenthood an option, for severely physically handicapped or sight-impaired people as well. Or will the courts impose sterilisation on them too?

Prejudices

Sterilisation will not only deny her the right to bear children now but also lose her right to make her decision in future years when she has a full understanding of the issues. The precedent given by the court could open the flood gates for many more cases.

Treating mentally handicapped people like animals in this way as in Nazi Germany, will reinforce all the old prejudices against mentally handicapped people. Confusion as to the rights of the mentally handicapped will be rife. Prejudices will rub off and be extended to all disabled people indiscriminately.

We call on a future Labour government to reverse the legislation which allows the law courts to cancel the basic human rights of disabled people. It must also guarantee extra resources and full support services so that people with disabilities are not restricted and can make their own decisions, with help and advice, about how they want to run their lives.



Labour councillors and some of the hundred angry supporters who protested at the House of Lords appeal.

Photo: Militant

FIVE LAW Lords have delivered their final 'Guilty' verdict on 47 Liverpool councillors.

For leading the fight to defend jobs and services, the councillors face a crippling fine of about £½ million. This consists of the District Auditor's surcharge of £106,103 for alleged losses caused by the 47 and an estimated £400,000 legal costs claimed by the DA for pursuing them through the courts.

The councillors, who were democratically elected in successive local elections since 1983 have also been debarred from office for five years—by unelected judges.

The legality or otherwise of the council's budget of 14 June 1985 was not the issue claimed Lord Keith of Kinkel. "The point is that delay in setting the rate led to receiving various items of income, including government contributions in respect of... rates on Crown properties and... rate rebates."

The losses were caused by the council losing interest on these amounts. But until they were handed over, the government collected the interest! In real terms, there was no loss to the public purse whatsoever!

"Impartiality"

The council, said Lord Keith, was deliberately using the non-making of the rate as "a lever to prise additional money from central government." But wasn't the government using the deliberate withholding of payments as a lever to force Liverpool into a cuts budget?

Lord Templeman accepted that Liverpool had delayed in 1984 and got more cash as a result. The Auditor had taken no action then but 1985 circumstances were different.

Sacked by unelected judges

The Lords brushed aside councillors' arguments that the DA had acted unfairly by not offering them an oral hearing. Councillors will be delighted to know that according to Lord Templeman: "The judicial and impartial qualities of the auditor are not in question."

Only Templeman referred to the councillors' political justification. He quoted the council's December 1984 resolution endorsing "the policies upon which the people of Liverpool elected Labour to power, viz. to refuse to impose increases in rates, rents and charges to compensate for government cuts in grants.

But neither this mandate nor their sincere belief they were acting in the best interests of ratepayers was a defence said the judges. Lord Templeman then added a peculiar

historical aside. "Political leaders from Robespierre to Gandhi have acted in the sincere belief that it was necessary to break the law in the interests of the nation's citizens."

Justified stand

Templeman said that after breaking the salt laws (imposed by Britain's colonial government in India), Gandhi "acknowledged... the correctness of his conviction and the appropriate sentence." But even he had to admit that Gandhi's illegal campaign had "hastened the repeal of the salt tax and the dawn of independence for India."

Perhaps there is a flicker of real understanding beneath his Lordship's wig of the real justification for the councillors.

The sickness of the capitalist system has condemned a great and once wealthy city to decline and decay. The cost to its people is incalculable. This item does not appear on the DA's balance sheet. But the councillors' socialist campaign has allowed no-one to forget it.

The campaign exposed the injustice of the government's financial straitjacket and the new legal powers which backed it up. And most of all it showed that given a bold lead, organised workers will fight back to defend the working class.

The Lords' judgment is one thing; the judgment of history will be different. After the appeal failed even the city's Bishops, who joined in to denounce the council last year, have been forced by local people's anger to call the £500,000 bill "without parallel in our system of government."

At present, the Bishops are in advance of Labour's right wing leaders who have thrown stones at Liverpool rather than opposing penal fines on councillors and the ousting of democratically elected councillors by unelected judges.

The labour movement must condemn this iniquitous judgment. The next Labour government must be committed to a repeal of the law and the lifting of the surcharges, costs and disqualifications imposed on the 47 as well as on the Lambeth councillors previously surcharged.

These men and women put jobs, homes and their families' well-being on the line in the struggle for socialist policies. The labour movement must ensure they are fully compensated for any personal losses imposed by the Tories and their courts.

By Lynn Walsh

"This won't stop us fighting"

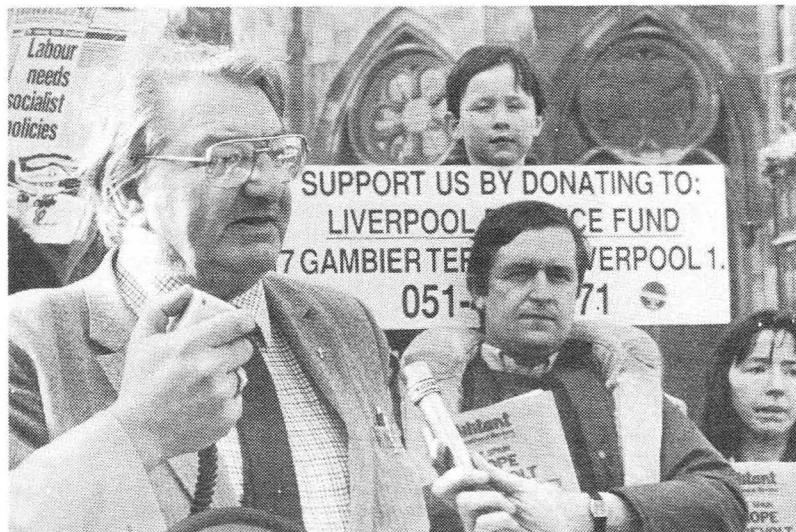
PETER FERGUSON, one of the banned councillors commented: "One of the biggest disgraces is that the media learned the result of the appeal well before we did. This result is quite predictable and it won't stop us fighting."

Another barred councillor Willie Harper said: "This is the only way the Tories could get us off their backs. They could never do so through elections. We are not going to walk away from the working class of Liverpool, we're still going to give the leadership such great people deserve."

Tony Byrne leader of the city council told a rally opposite the

House of Lords that a judge had described Liverpool's actions as the "pinnacle of political perversity." He commented "to me the pinnacle of perversity is the statement by Labour spokesman Cunningham that Liverpool councillors deserved what they got."

Eric Heffer MP for Walton told the rally that Tory minister Ridley had broken the law in his decisions on numerous occasions but had never been surcharged or disqualified. Liverpool's policy had been laid down by national party conference, he was sure they would carry on fighting for it and beat the Liberals and Tories in May.



Eric Heffer speaking at the rally opposite the House of Lords.

Liverpool workers angry at Liberals' hi-jack

THE DISQUALIFICATION of Liverpool's Labour councillors has brought an immediate and angry response from thousands of workers.

Many have woken up to find that the enemy is no longer at the door, but is now in the council chamber, with the Liberals assuming control of the city council.

True to form, the Liberals, without any democratic mandate, have rushed in and seized the fruits of office for themselves. Their first act on Tuesday was to restore the of-

face of Mayor and install Lady Doreen Jones. Talk about 'jobs for the girls', or should it be 'jobs for the Lords and Ladies'?

Their second act is likely to be the sacking of Sam Bond, and probably then to install a Black Caucus supporter.

But the depth of support for the Labour councillors is reflected in the cautious approach of the Liberals and the reaction of the church leaders. The Liberals' main propaganda has been to deplore the

possibility of bankruptcy but to blame it on a small group of hard-line councillors. Unfortunately, this is also the line of the front-bench spokesman of the Labour Party.

Moreover the Labour leaders have completely echoed the idea of the Liberals and the bishops that an 'all party' solution is needed to solve Liverpool's cash crisis. Disgracefully, it seems from local press reports that Neil Kinnock actually suggested that the Alliance should assume temporary control until the elections.

Hypocritically the bishops and church leaders have condemned the scale of the surcharge but workers recall the attacks that these same leaders launched on the city council last year.

Their calls for an 'all party solution' will be interpreted for what they are, an end to Labour rule, and an end to standing up and defending the rights of Liverpool's working class.

By Dave Cotterill

LIVERPOOL
a Socialist Council



In their Lordship's house

ONLY A HANDFUL of Liverpool lobbyists were allowed into the sacred gallery of the House of Lords.

Everybody had to wait outside while their lordships prayed for the resurrection of the dead. By the time we got in, it seemed to have already happened.

Having been only allowed to watch the proceedings from the gallery because we were wrongly dressed, (no ties), it was a shock to see these fossils with their wigs straight from an 18th century jumble sale.

There were no Labour peers present, just four of the five law lords, a few ageing waifs and strays getting their attendance allowance and a bishop to administer the last rites.

The feudal relics looked alarmed as these northern roughnecks who had had to be elected came in. They hadn't been so frightened since the days of Wat Tyler. Would they riot?

"Contented"

Then the man in charge, the Lord High Executioner, got down to business. "The question is, whether the councillors are a load of lefties who should be barred from office." He shifted across the floor and asked more or less the same question.

This happened four of five times, helping to give an olde worlde air to a very quick and brutal class decision. At the end of each question their lordships said they were "content" with the judgement. You bet they were, they're pretty content with everything in Thatcher's new Britain.

The real question is, why have Labour governments been content to let these unelected people keep the final say on the law and on legislation?

Defend Liverpool

LAST WEEKEND Militant sellers in Liverpool were approached by a woman and her son, who gave them a moneybag full of pennies and twopences. "Can you give this to the councillors? It's not much, it's just the kid's pocket money. We want it to help the councillors; we won't forget they fought for us."

As they walked away, the young lad said: "We'll be collecting every week and we'll bring it along for you to give to them."

Send donations to Liverpool Defence Fund, 7 Gambier Terrace, Liverpool 1.

○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.

Labour must combat racism

IN THE West Midlands Euro by-election, Labour narrowly held on to the seat with its majority in this overwhelmingly industrial area in the Black Country reduced from 30,000 to 4,000 on a 28 per cent turn-out.

As is usual in Euro elections, the bulk of Labour voters were not sufficiently interested to vote. But also the Wolverhampton area over the past two weeks has seen a rise in racism following the death of young black worker Clinton McCurbin at the hands of the police.

The initial response of the Labour council was to offer to cover the McCurbin family's legal and travel costs and also to call for an independent public inquiry. The media then whipped up a racist campaign linking "the council's readiness to give aid to minority groups" whilst at the same time increasing rates by 14 per cent. The candidate was the leader of Wolverhampton council.

Instead of going out with public meetings, particularly in the inner city, explaining its aid to the family (though it would have been better to have launched a defence fund) and at the same time campaigning on policies to build houses and schools, etc, the Labour leaders went to ground. The deputy leader of Wolverhampton council refused to appear on the radio in a debate with the editor of the local paper.

The council then voted to restrict its payment to the McCurbin family to £2,000.

Workers in rundown areas such as Heathtown were prey to the media campaign. *Militant* supporters canvassing this area were told by Labour supporters they would never vote Labour again. In a local council by-election at the same time as the Euro election in the solid Labour seat of Heathtown, Labour, with an Asian candidate, lost to the Alliance.

In contrast to this heads-down policy of the Labour leaders, the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign organised a public meeting demanding democratic control over the police and a labour movement inquiry into the death of Clinton McCurbin. Over 40 people attended and £180 was collected for the McCurbin Defence Fund.

By Bill Mullins

MI5 book exposes state's double-dealing

THE PETER Wright case has ended in a humiliating defeat for the British government. Subject to appeal, they have failed to stop publication of Wright's book on MI5.

The case has exposed the double standards and manipulation of the state and legal system by the Tory government. It has also shown that the state is far from impartial, but operates, sometimes in a clandestine way, to protect the interests of capitalism.

The most startling example of this is the allegation in Wright's book that MI5 agents plotted to destabilise the 1974 Labour government by leaking unproven allegations about Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Wright also alleges that MI5 illegally committed burglaries and buggings, details of which have been published in the *Australian Sun Herald*. So far the government has successfully prevented the British press from publishing the same material.

The government is unlikely to win its appeal because, in the words of the defence, "it went to court with dirty hands". Judge Powell said Wright was fully justified in exposing MI5's activities because they were "illegal and improper".

Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney General, had previously ruled that other books also containing confidential inside information on MI5 could be published - yet his advice now was against publication of Wright's book. It left Britain's emissary Sir Robert Armstrong to carry the can - forced to be "economical with the truth" in court.

Unlike previous books, Wright's version of MI5's activities is clearly unacceptable as its revelations could be damaging to the Tories in the run-up to a general election. The government hopes that the appeal will delay publication until after the election.

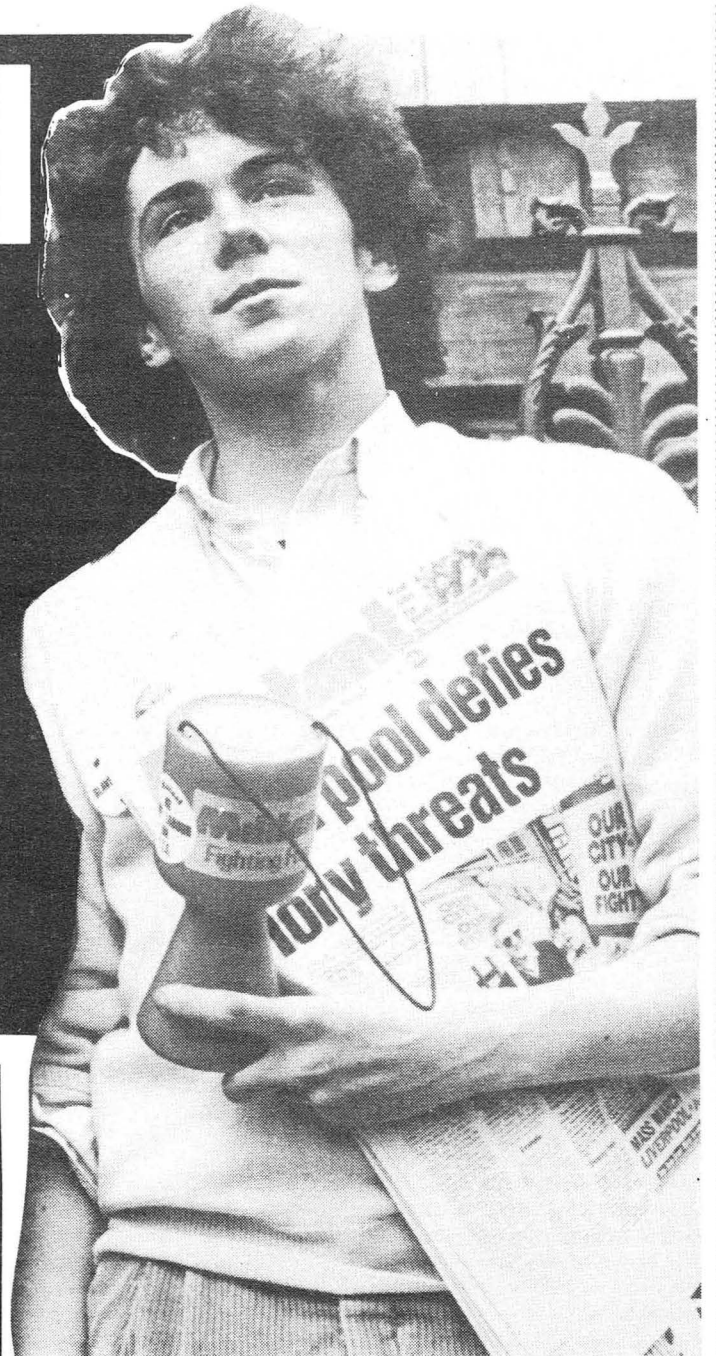
The episode is also a warning to the labour movement, which must demand a full disclosure of all these activities. Any future left-wing Labour government would be a target for subversion by the secret service.

A democratically elected socialist government would have to act swiftly and decisively to avert this danger by dismantling the secret services.

By Ben Eastop

An appeal to all our readers

Forward to a twice weekly



THE RULING class and their press propagandists are terrified by the growth in support for *Militant*. Indeed it would be time to worry if this were not the case. *Militant* has a proud history of exposing the lies and slanders of the bosses. Our aim is to uncover those lies, to expose the bare truth to working class men and women.

Since its inception in 1964 *Militant* has grown from a 4 page monthly to an eight page and now sixteen page weekly. Back in April, 1974 in our 200th issue we stated: "It is our contention that *Militant* is more a journal of the working people, written in their language and by them, than any other paper in the labour movement." Our enemies fear the role our paper plays, yet the poison pens of Fleet Street never attempt political criticism of our ideas, thriving on the slurs, innuendos and distortions of their gutter journalism.

Never before has there been a greater need for a more frequent *Militant*. As the prospect of a general election looms closer the vile machinations of the daily press will pour out. Any mask of impartiality will be snatched away as the millionaire press rally around Thatcher and the Tories. Only the very rich will be sorry to see this government go. Whilst a tiny minority of the population have made huge killings on share deals and tax cuts, during the Thatcher years the vast majority of us have suffered swinging cuts in living standards, job losses, cuts in health, education. The Tories in office mean only misery and poverty for working class people who bear the brunt of attempts to save the decrepit and dying capitalist system.

Militant supporters will be the most energetic workers for a Labour victory at the polls and the most energetic in ensuring that the Labour leaders keep their promises and fight as hard for workers as Thatcher has fought for her class.

However, a weekly *Militant* is no longer sufficient to answer the daily attacks on working people. Financially independent from rich backers and built on the pennies and pounds of our readers and supporters, *Militant* is answerable to its readership. *Militant* is unique in that respect and unique in its argument for a complete transformation of society and the overthrowing of the capitalist system. A weekly paper is inadequate for the task of pitching the workers' case against the horrors of the bosses' system. That is why we are making this special appeal to each of our readers to expand the circulation of our paper as the essential preparation for a twice-weekly then a daily *Militant*.

The first steps towards a twice weekly were taken with our move to bigger premises to give us the office space re-

quired. With the huge sacrifices made by you, our readers, towards the Fighting Fund, we are now in a position to start purchasing the necessary equipment essential for a twice-weekly. However we still need to keep that cash rolling in to pay for the extra staff required.

Micheal Crick in his book *March of Militant* throws out a challenge: "... it is a sixteen-page weekly, a substantial read and since 1983 *Militant* has been talking of making the paper twice-weekly... the plans for a more frequent paper seem to have fallen well behind schedule (1987 is the latest target for a twice-weekly paper)."

Crick expresses a grudging admiration for our paper and hopes in vain that our plans will fail. We must take up the challenge and prepare now for the more frequent *Militant*.

The most important step is therefore, to rapidly increase our circulation at the workplaces, in the schools, colleges, on the streets, on the housing estates. There are still thousands of people who have not yet read or even seen the paper. We appeal to all our readers to sell *Militant* at your factory, to your friends, relatives, neighbours, at your union and Labour Party branch; in your college, or at the LPYS branch and Labour club. *It is not enough to read the paper or just support the ideas. The most urgent task now is to build the regular readership of Militant and to expand the influence of Marxism.* If you read *Militant* every week why not sell *Militant* too? join in the regular street and estate sales held in your area. Fill in the form on the back page and pledge your commitment to build a twice-weekly *Militant*.

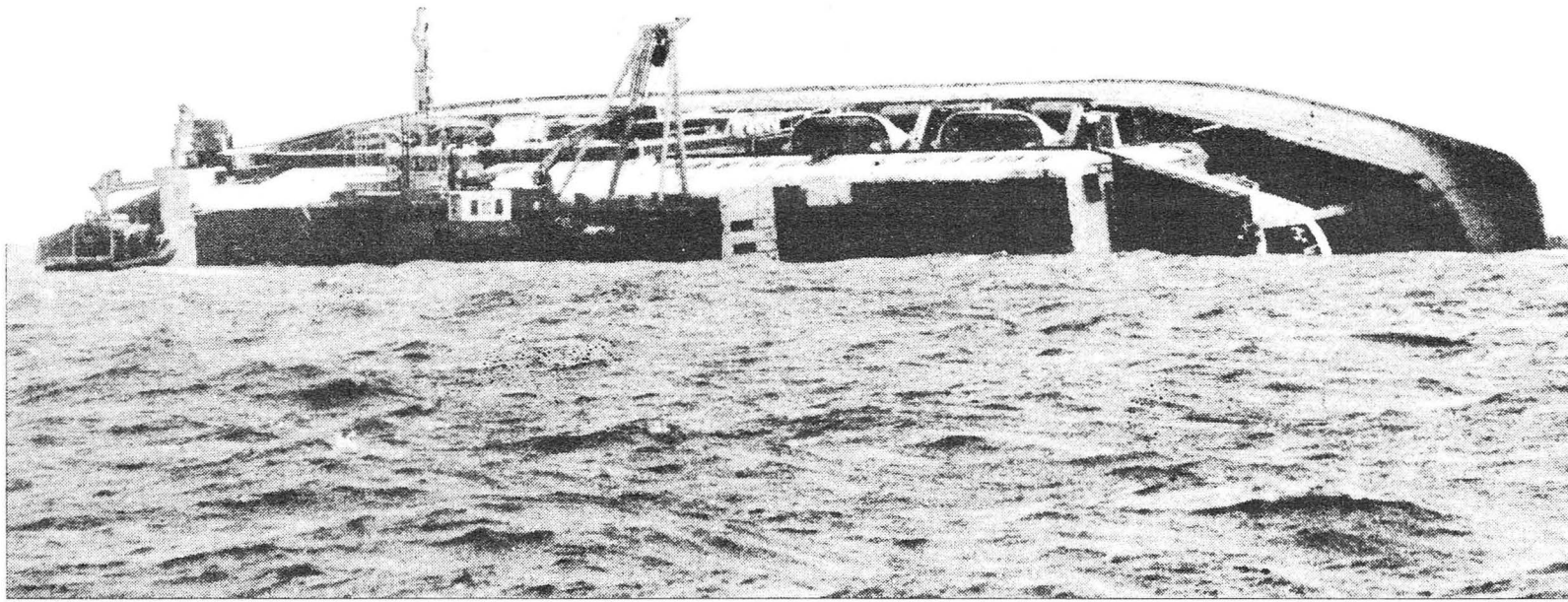
The twice-weekly and then daily Marxist paper will be an almighty blow to Thatcher and the bosses, equally terrified by the strength of the workers' movement. The forward march of *Militant* is firmly on its way. We have the determined will to achieve what will be the most magnificent step in the history of our paper.

Yours comradely,
Peter Taaffe, Editor
Ted Grant, Political Editor



Workers demand 'never again'

Militant
says



Friday 6 March 6.46 p.m.—the cross Channel ferry, *Herald of Free Enterprise*, capsizes just out of Zeebrugge harbour. 135 are killed. Who is to blame?

The huge roll-on, roll-off ferries like the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, are designed for maximum speed, rapid turn rounds, ease of loading and unloading vehicles and for boosting the profits of their owners. With the denationalisation of Sealink, private enterprise stalks the seas, threatening the helpless victims—passengers and crews.

Filling up with a different load (of lorries, cars and people) of a different weight each time, the stability of the boat, and its attitude in the water (the trim) should be meticulously checked before leaving port. Any merchant ship would

"The financial pressure to run on time irrespective of safety factors is always there. In fog for example, where visibility is lower than two miles, ships reduce to half speed. All apart from ferries that is. The pressure is also on for a quick turn round. In bad weather the ferry ships often run. Our boat ran in a force 10 gale recently. We were the only ship crossing the Irish Sea.

"The pressure was so great that one of our captains cracked up on the bridge and one of the mates had to takeover. When we got to the quayside there was an am-

balance waiting to take him away. "The lack of ferry safety was highlighted when the *European Gateway* sank after a collision. It went down in only 15 minutes, yet its design was 'safer' than the *Herald of Free Enterprise*."—Joe Anderson, chairman suspended NUS National Ferry Port Committee.

"Quite often you hear reports from blokes of the ship doors being left open all the way across. Undoubtedly the ferry companies' profits will have to be channelled into better safety."—Dave Warner, TGWU lorry driver, Portsmouth.

can drive on. But it would 'waste' precious time to pump the ballast out. The ferries put to sea low in the water, emptying the ballast on the way back.

So leaving Zeebrugge with bows low in the water, without precise knowledge of the stability of its load, with none of the vehicles lash-

ed down (for the ferry bosses that would mean unacceptable delay in unloading) and clearly with the bow doors still open, the *Herald of Free Enterprise* made a sharp turn for Dover. Listing with the turn, water began to flow in through the open doors.

Then the full danger of these fer-

ries' design was exposed. Two doors, and running the whole length of the ship so near to the water line—an undivided car deck, like a giant aircraft hangar.

There was nothing to prevent the flood of water slopping from one side of the ship to another. And with an increasing list, nothing to prevent the unsecured vehicles crashing over to one side of the deck, and making the horrific capsize unstoppable.

Yet no ocean going passenger ship would be allowed to sail without bulkheads subdividing the hull, preventing any inrush of sea water reaching further than one section. But of course partitioning these car decks would mean less vehicle space, slower turn rounds and reduced profits for the companies.

Yet the profits of Townsend Thoresen soared from £22million in 1981 to £48 million in 1985.

There must be a full international labour movement inquiry into the disaster. The National Union of Seamen is uniquely placed to establish this inquiry—its members have the intimate knowledge of the industry and the safety necessary. The TGWU lorrydrivers also have wide experience of ferry travel. No trust can be placed in an industry or government inquiry. Only the workers will guarantee no cover up.

All roll-on, roll-off ferries should be suspended from sailing until full safety checks on their design and operating procedures have been completed, to the satisfaction of the unions.

A boycott of these vessels by the NUS and international maritime unions to enforce the suspension of sailings, pending proper investigations.

A one day European strike by seamen and lorry drivers on the issue of safety at sea, with demonstrations in Dover and Zeebrugge.

A commitment from the Labour Party leaders to a fully nationalised port and ferry service, as part of publicly owned, planned transport industry. The lives of seafarers and passengers can no longer be entrusted to the shipping profiteers.

At first even Thatcher, visiting the scene the day after, blurted out: "It is the fundamental design of the ferry that I understand is the problem. That is a factor that will have to be looked into very quickly." But two days later in the Commons, Tory transport secretary, John Moore, was repeating the Townsend Thoresen position: "I have no evidence to support the view that this (the accident) was due to any fault in the design of the ship."

35 roll-on, roll-off ships have been lost in the last twenty years. In December 1982 Townsend Thoresen's own ferry, the *European Gateway*, sank after a collision off Felixtowe. Six lives were lost. A private research company, British Maritime Technology, conducted an inquiry for the Department of Transport. Its report warned of serious design limitations in these ships. It concluded that just eight inches of water flooding the car

deck, had been sufficient to make capsize inevitable. The company agreed to a study into how to slow down a capsize. The study has still not been commissioned.

British Maritime Technology has a new uniquely equipped testing centre, that could look into the dangers of steeply turning these huge ferries. But under the Tories' war on public spending, the centre has been refused government funding and stands idle.

Two of the lorries aboard the *Herald of Free Enterprise* were loaded with 196 barrels of toxic chemicals, including 11 tonnes of cyanide. Divers searching for survivors were forced to stop for a vital hour, when it became known that hazardous chemicals were present. Ferry companies regularly allow on trucks carrying dangerous chemicals, unbeknown to the passengers.



The chairman of P&O (owners of Townsend Thoresen), Sir Jeffery Sterling, is an advisor to the Tory government. What advice has he given regarding safety legislation for cross channel ferries, that might hit the profits of the ferry bosses? Is he recommending the government take any action over his company's plans to build even bigger roll-on, roll-off ferries, with capacity for 2,400 passengers, double that of the *Herald of Free Enterprise*?

Press hound the bereaved

SUE AND Gary Haney, sister and brother of missing crew member Geoff Haney, spoke to a *Militant* reporter.

Sue: "The behaviour of the press after the disaster was disgusting. Two of them were beaten up. One reporter with *Sun* credentials even invaded the relatives private sanctuary. But they never showed the real anger and bitterness, nor the opposition to Prince Charles' visit—no-one to a single person wanted him or the press there. The press reported that the captain had said he was to blame but none of the relatives blame him. He could have said anything in shock—with the press hounding relatives and survivors. No amount of press sensationalism will cover the fact that the company was responsible."

Gary, himself an Able Bodied Seaman for Townsend Thoresen till being laid off last year, wanted to make it clear that he would only talk to *Militant*. He said he would refuse to speak to any of the capitalist press because he didn't want his brother's name used for profit. Gary explained about the risks taken by the shipping companies, Townsend Thoresen in particular: "In order to dock at high-tide, they will flood the fore-peak ballast tank. But for the ship to be correctly balanced when it leaves the harbour, the trim should be correct with the water by the time the ship reaches the mole (the outer harbour light). It takes 30 minutes to get the trim correct, but the pressure is on because of competition to get past the mole in 15 minutes. So the ship can be left in a dangerous condi-

tion when difficult waters are encountered beyond the mole. The fact that the doors may have been open wouldn't have been by itself decisive. One of the last three survivors said 'seamen were hammering the doors with spanners and cursing and swearing to get them shut.' A friend of mine works on the sister ship, 'Pride of Free Enterprise'. He said that the day after the *Herald* sank, the lights indicating that the *Pride's* doors were shut were working for the first time in a month!

Protect seafarers

"What is sickening is that our occupation as merchant seamen is classified as civilian, but we don't get the same protection as in workplaces. Merchant shipping regulations are only guidelines. They should be written into agreements by the NUS and made legally binding. As a first step to avoid such action in the future the Chief Officer should be made to stay on the car deck until the doors are shut and pinned. The trim must be correct before leaving harbour. The roll-on, roll-off ferries should be suspended with full compensation to all seafarers, until comprehensive checks are made. The NUS should have no truck with a Townsend Thoresen inquiry. I fully agree that what we need is an international labour and trade union inquiry, and especially a one day European strike to honour the dead, and to warn the ship owners that they cannot get away with these things in the future."

Defend abortion rights

25 FEBRUARY saw the defeat of a court case brought by an Oxford University student, a member of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), to force his former girlfriend to continue with a pregnancy she had decided to terminate.

The "rights of fathers" supposedly being campaigned for, could only have been upheld by denying the rights of the pregnant woman, reducing her to the role of an incubator.

The £40,000 court case, supported by SPUC, had wider implications. It intended to establish that an 18-21 week old foetus was "capable of being born alive". If SPUC had won, the limit for abortions would have been reduced to 16 weeks. (Doctors tend to operate two weeks before the limit to allow for mistakes in assessing the pregnancy).

The court case followed quickly on an unsuccessful attempt by the Bishop of Birmingham to reduce the limit for abortions. There have now been eight parliamentary campaigns to limit or repeal the Abortion Act which was passed 20 years ago.

The first proposals to legalise abortion when pregnancy would endanger health, not just life, were made in 1933, when there were an estimated 60,000 illegal abortions. These weren't acted on until after the war, when the Bourne case came to court.

The court ruled in favour of a doctor, who had performed an abortion on a 14 year old girl who had been raped by two soldiers, to prevent her becoming a "physical and mental wreck".

The '67 Abortion Act resulted from pressure, especially amongst working class women, who were becoming more confident in fighting for their own interests. The same mood also resulted some years later in the Equal Pay Act.

Although there are many shortcomings in the law and especially its implementation, it represented a real advance. Death from termination of pregnancy has declined and is no longer the commonest cause of maternal death. The horrors of back-street abortions should never be forgotten.

One of the major shortcomings is that two doctors' signatures are still needed for an abortion, they have the final decision not the woman. The labour movement



Militant stands for:

- ★ Abortion on demand
- ★ A massive injection of funds into the NHS along with the ending of private practice to put an end to late abortions and stop profiteering.
- ★ Improved sex education in schools and setting up of sympathetic youth advisory centres under NHS.
- ★ Nationalisation of pharmaceutical industry under workers' control and management.
- ★ Good quality, flexible childcare available for all.
- ★ Adequate child and maternity benefits.
- ★ Maternity and paternity leave for 6 months on full pay with jobs held open for 2 years.
- ★ Minimum wage of £120.

must campaign for the right of women to decide.

Availability of abortion varies. The act never covered Northern Ireland and should be extended by the next Labour government without delay.

Only a minority of abortions 33,000 out of 73,000 are carried out by the NHS. There are enormous regional variations, eg 85 per cent of abortions in the Northern Region are on the NHS but only 20 per cent in the West Midlands.

Consultants

One of the factors in this is the personal opinions of consultants who have a powerful position which the lack of democracy in the NHS allows them.

But the NHS has never had enough funds to provide a proper service. This can cause delays of six weeks and is a major contribution to late abortions.

A massive injection of funds in the NHS along with ending private practise is essential to cut the number of late abortions and stop-

ping profiteering.

Whilst the Abortion Act is an advance, nobody really welcomes an abortion. This is especially the case with the youth. (1,800 legal abortions are carried out on 15 year olds and 4,000 on 16 year olds).

Young women are one of the groups most affected by late abortion as fear of parents, doctors etc, or uncertainty about their symptoms leads to delays.

In '84 40 per cent of abortions carried out after 12 week were on teenagers and 50 per cent of those after 20 weeks.

Very little is being done to improve contraceptive advice and availability to youth. Sympathetic youth advisory centres under the NHS must be developed along with improved sex education in schools.

Labour local authorities shouldn't be intimidated by the attacks of the 'moral majority'. When *Woman* magazine, (reflecting the real concerns of its readership for once,) did a survey on sex education only one in ten said sex education was too explicit. Four out of ten said there was too little

sex education and half said their own lack of sex education had caused them problems.

Although birth control devices are often free to the person using them, they are not free to the NHS. Private companies make massive profits, increased recently by the publicity on AIDS.

The supply and pharmaceutical industry must be nationalised under working class control and management, not just to stop the drain of finances from the NHS but to ensure thorough research and development is carried out.

Two sudden increases in the numbers of abortions took place in 1978 and 1984 linked to scares about the Pill causing heart disease and cancers.

There are many women who 'chose' abortions because they can't face bringing up a child or an extra child under their present circumstances. If women are really to be free to choose they must be able to choose to keep a child.

This will mean a fight by the labour movement for a crash house building programme so that everyone has good quality accommodation which meets their needs.

Good quality, flexible childcare must be available to every one who wants to use it along with child and maternity benefits which reflect the real material costs incurred, maternity and paternity leave for six months on full pay with jobs being held open for two years and a minimum wage of £120 as a first step towards ending poverty.

If these demands were implemented, completely possible on the basis of a socialist plan of production, the circumstances which force many women into abortion would be removed. But this must be voluntary, not based on legal restrictions. The right to abortion must be defended by the labour movement.



Build sales

REGULAR SALES rounds must be the bedrock of a more frequent *Militant*—at your workplace or in your own street. They guarantee the income for a twice weekly and get our socialist ideas widely known.

One worker for Hull council sells 16 copies at one single depot. Also in Humberside a supporter in Grimsby takes 5 to NALGO members. Up the coast in Scarborough a sale of 5 was started at Paxtons after a seller's father gave his son a hand.

Sellers in Hackney and Roehampton show how to use *Militant* to build support in the local areas. Two months ago we featured the campaign led by Marxists in Hackney Labour Party to force the council to provide plumbers on the flooded Kingsmead estate. The immediate battle was won; so was the longer term one as we now have regular sales rounds on the Kingsmead.

Last week's feature on the Hangers' dispute encouraged sellers in Roehampton to organise an estate sales drive. In an hour and a half they collected £50 for the dispute and sold over 20 papers; these will be followed up next week.

The Silentnight dispute may be over but the fight is going on. A former striker sold 11 copies of *Militant* at his FTAT branch last week. Building up regular sales builds a strong base for future battles.

Correction

PLEASE NOTE that there was a mistake in last week's *Militant* in the article *Labour Women*. On page 5 column 1, the paragraph beginning "The present system of election" to "healthy campaigning women's organisation in the localities" should have been included under the section *National Committee Elections*. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

Left and Right

QUOTE FROM Kenneth Baker on why there should be computers in schools: "These days many graduates have to submit typewritten theses. This can be a problem, unless of course their girlfriends can type." Mr Baker is on the liberal wing of the Conservative Party.

MARGARET THATCHER commenting on her luxury house in Dulwich: "I

chose a pine kitchen. I've had plastic kitchens, but now I've gone for pine because it's so restful." No doubt many working class women would agree with her—if they had the chance!

Did you hear the one about the Russian bureaucrat who ordered a haircut for a statue of the Russian novelist Gorky? He said the hair was too long and it was "unproletarian"!

Memory man strikes again

"I DON'T want to appear as though I am trying deliberately to be vague...I am sure if I sat down with someone and started in, I could then recall the details....I don't honestly recall....I have tried to make plain why my memory could be so hazy on a great many things....To tell you of my own memory, in my mind I can't tell you whether we did or not."

Yes, you're right it's Ronald Reagan testifying to a public investigation. But this was back in 1962 when the future president of the USA was a mere ex-president of the Screen Actors' Guild and a spring chicken of 51. A very convenient memory the man has.

New pamphlet just out

Trotsky—*In defence of October*. Price 50p plus 20p for single copies post and packing. Order a bulk supply for your Marxist discussion group. £2 for 6 including postage!

This and many other books and pamphlets which are essential for socialists are available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

South African youth defiant

Lobby Gold Fields

JUST AS in Britain the youth are in the fore in the fight against Thatcherism, they also form the front line of the fight against the bosses and apartheid in South Africa.

For over two years now black school-students have been boycotting classes in protest at the racist 'Bantu education' system.

Bongani, a 20 year old from Tumahole township explained: "sitting (exams) under this Bantu education is really a waste of time. Many students, even kids of nine and ten years old are in detention. We want them to be released. Also some of our parents..."

"This is not our own education. It has been designed by the capitalists to make us perpetual slaves of industry. Bantu education... is totally wrong. We would like to have people's education... I prefer Socialism, because the working class will control production."

Building links

Some of the worst state repression has been inflicted on the youth. Since then thousands of school students have been detained and hundreds shot by the police. Yet this has not weakened the resolve of the youth.

Last year 2,000 young people who attended the LPYS national conference were inspired by Moses Mayekiso, leader of South Africa's Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU).

The LPYS have been to the fore in building links with workers and youth inside South Africa, collecting over £3,000 which was sent to striking BTR workers.

We are inspired by the recent reports that a new national Youth Congress is to be founded, to replace the banned Congress of South African Students.

The South Africa debate at this year's conference will give all LPYS members the discuss the important questions facing the South African revolution.

The LPYS has and will continue to take up the campaign to release the detainees, we must also try to set up links with the Youth Congresses, not an easy task, given the levels of repression used against youth activists, as the accounts right demonstrate.



Photo: Morris Zwi: Reflex II.

The heroic struggles of South Africa's black youth against the military has inspired young people worldwide.

Unsigned statement of ZM, male aged 17:

"On 19 December 1985 I was going to the butchery. When we were at London on the Fifth Avenue a truck was stoned... then it was burnt. Then a group of SAP (riot squad) on foot started chasing us. They got hold of me and started to beat us.

"I was beaten with the gun butt on the mouth by a white policeman. Two of my front teeth were broken. They then took me into a hippo and started beating me... They took out two bricks and said that those bricks are ours. We said yes it was ours because there was nothing we could do, they were beating us left and right. I was bleeding on my left eye..."

PN, male aged 15:

"I was sleeping in a chair... suddenly I saw SN entering the house running.

I did not know what was happening. I was afraid so I hid myself in a wardrobe. I was still in the wardrobe and the police put a dog in to make me come out. I was afraid and began to run.

"The dog brought me and bit me. Another soldier tied a belt around my neck and began to pull it. Then they took me inside the casspir (armoured car) and took me away... They were kicking us, hitting with fists and with the backs of their guns. We were bitten by dogs... kicked, they even stood on top of us, and threw their rifles at us.

"There were five of us. There were six casspirs and more than fifty police... I was badly hurt... When I came home... my cheek was badly swollen... I was seriously hurt on my leg where the dogs tore off my flesh... I was scratched on my back by dogs..."

16, of the shooting of PJX, male, on 3 March 1986:

"I was on my way to Tembisa when I saw J. I know him because we belonged to the... Alexandra Students' Congress.

"I greeted him and we spoke a little. He wanted to go to the butchery where he bought cheese. On his way out another friend who was standing with some youth... called to him. But then a truck appeared and as it came towards Entokozweni a black traffic officer ran towards the group, who ran away.

"J tried to run around the truck but when he was about 10m from the traffic officer he stopped running. He put up his hands and said 'Don't shoot me!' The (police) officer said nothing. I heard the shot and saw J fall."

Eye-witness account by KZ, male aged

6.2 MILLION YOUTH FOR LABOUR

Labour Party Young Socialists

SUPPORT FOR the Labour Party Young Socialists in the Party's youth consultation continues to flood in with important trade union backing predominant in the last week.

The TGWU in Southampton have circulated the YS letter to 120 local branches. YS members are following these letters up to ensure a discussion takes place at every meeting and to ask for donations.

Other trade union support has come from the TASS London Youth Committee, Liverpool COHSE (who

donated £25) and North Beds NUPE who agreed to send a copy of their decision to Tom Sawyer and donated £50 to send a visitor to LPYS conference.

Donations

Other YS branches which have already discussed the proposals and passed resolutions backing the YS letter include Vauxhall, Brent East, Manchester Withington and Hastings and Rye.

YS members must ensure that copies of resolutions and decisions agreed at LPYS, ward Labour Party,

CLP and union branches are sent to Joyce Gould at 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT by 22 May.

Copies should also be sent to Linda Douglas at 1 Whiteness House, Cowley Estate, Gosling Way, London SW9.

The question of finance is absolutely essential to this campaign. The demand for the LPYS letter of reply threatens to overwhelm supply. Cash is urgently needed to continue our fight. Ask for a donation at every meeting where the proposals are discussed.



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 (USDWU) Linda Douglas (LPYS).

Fighting Fund

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South East	840		2250
2 London	2020		9350
3 South West	423		1900
4 Southern	622		3050
5 Eastern	392		3200
6 Wales	419		4800
7 East Midlands	239		3250
8 Merseyside	497		7500
9 Yorkshire	622		8300
10 Manchester	231		3850
11 West Midlands	280		4750
12 Northern	186		4600
13 Scotland East	79		2800
14 Scotland West	39		3500
Others	4053		6900
Total	10942		70000

MR ROBERT Maxwell member of the Millionaire Tendency infiltrating the Labour Party has recently started a new venture costing £1 million a week.

For the last three weeks Maxwell has been fighting an all-out trade war against Associated Newspapers over the market for a London evening paper. At stake is several millions of pounds profit for the winner.

Maxwell has been accused of lying over circulation figures to attract advertising, and his distributors are reported to have intimidated and harassed newsgagents to stop the sale of rival papers.

Unfortunately for workers in London, neither rival paper in any way defends their interests or puts the workers' case.

What's needed is a real mass workers' paper—a Daily Militant.

With the success of our £¼ million appeal, the Daily Militant is one step nearer. The next task is to raise £70,000 by 1 May. We aim to celebrate this workers' day by reaching our fighting fund target in full.

Any "handout" from the budget should be rushed in so it can be turned to good use in kicking out the Tories.

Thanks to Richard Sidbot who sent £10, Rachel North and Martin Cock who sent £500 proceeds from a house sale and June Reid a local authority worker who donated £40 to our fund.

Opportunities for fund raising can be found both in the workplaces and on the estates, as part of the drive

for new sales of Militant.

Hull AEU No. 12 Branch donated £4 while £3 was collected from Six Bells miners in Gwent last week. Readers on the Wirral raised £95 in extras for the paper, which shows that you should always ask for the solidarity price.

Supporters in South Humberside raised £25 by a 'French Evening' and Chris Stephens and family have been collecting pennies.

Thanks to: Pete Dodd, Manchester £50. Colin Jones, Gwent £20. Yorkshire Region LP conference £365. B Nelson, Leicester South LPYS £1.20. D. Wildman, Northamptonshire £9.10. Dave and Maddy Jennings, Shetlands £5.

Not north/south but rich/ The class divi

BRITAIN IS a divided society. But the chasm which splits the country lies not between the North and South. It is between the rich and the poor, the bosses and the workers. This week *Militant* turns the spotlight on two areas at opposite ends of England, Killingworth near Newcastle and Brighton in Sussex.

Horrendous problems of unemployment, low pay and bad housing are common to both.

Unemployment remains the social problem which is most unevenly spread. At 15.9 per cent, the unemployment rate in the Northern Region is nearly double the rate of 8.2 per cent in the South East.

Differences in average earnings are not so wide - £9,308 in the Northern Region against £11,128 in the South East, excluding London.

Hidden within these average figures, however, are huge inequalities within both North and South. The poorest half of the country own only seven per cent of the country's wealth; the richest tenth own 52 per cent. Four members of the Sainsbury family own shares worth more than a billion pounds!

While more than 16 million people are living in poverty, and three million live below the supplementary benefit level, the top five per cent have increased their share of national income from

12.9 per cent in 1979 to 15.

There is desperate poverty and plenty of wealth for the lucky. The situation of British Chambers of Commerce and business confidence amongst it is average in Yorkshire and Humberside, Manchester and Merseyside.

The great divide is one of class. We have a common interest in a society free of all the social evils which have flourished since Thatcher's rule.

Dream becomes nightmare

KILLINGWORTH NEW Town, five miles north of Newcastle, was built in the post-war boom in the 1960s. Designed as a 'growth point for the Northern region', like all new towns it was to be a focus for growth and new employment. Councillor Dave McGarr, of Holystone Labour Party, tells its story: "The township handbook stated that 'Killingworth township does not aim at the standard of other new towns but higher. It is a practical recognition in our day that 'people matter more than things'."

It was to be an architect's dream. It would offer the workers of Newcastle new and decent homes with indoor toilets, fitted kitchens, little gardens and pedestrian access only. There would be plenty of green spaces between the blocks of houses and the promise of a shopping centre attracting all the main shops.

Devastated

Twenty years later the dream has turned into a nightmare. Since the Tories came to power, the industrial base of the North has been devastated. Unemployment has soared. In Killingworth, with a population of 9,450, youth unemployment has hit 28 per cent, while unemployment for 25-39 year olds is a staggering 36 per cent.

The promise of a bowling alley/cinema, hotel, restaurants and major shops never materialised. Instead we have a half-built shopping complex with most units boarded up since they were built.

The intended link-up with the Newcastle Metro system, vital to stop Killingworth be-

ing isolated, was frozen when the government refused to grant funds. Now the Tories want to sell off the only land that could accommodate the Metro to private builders.

By far the worst aspect of Killingworth has been the building of the 'Towers', known locally as 'Colditz'. These multi-storey flats, which form the new town's centrepiece, actually won a design award! They were built when the idea of walkways in the sky for pedestrians and roadways below for cars became trendy in the late 60s.

The towers cost £4,102,000 to build in 1968. Even if they were knocked down tomorrow, debt charges currently standing at £4 million would have to be paid back to the banks over the next 40 years, like a millstone round the necks of working people.

Out of 740 flats, 690 are now empty. The 50 flats still occupied have been taken by people desperate for a roof over their heads.

Nearly 3,000 people will be officially homeless in North Tyneside this year. Homelessness is rising by 10-15 per cent a year, because of the break-up of families and the rise in people defaulting on mortgages and having their houses repossessed.

Former 'towers' resident Barry Crouchman told me: "The people who designed and built these things should be forced to live in them. When I got married there was a six-month waiting list to get into the towers; now there's a life sentence to get out. The council should blow them up or knock them down."



Killingworth Towers—an urban nightmare.

Photo: Dave Pearson.

Loneliness, fear and danger

ED WAUGH visited Killingworth Towers to look at the day-to-day conditions of tenants:

The first thing that strikes you is the coldness of the flats. Being concrete they are hard to heat. People on social security and low incomes cannot afford to keep electric fires on long for fear of running up bills.

There is desperate loneliness, especially among single parents who increasingly fall prey to the drug pushers. Tranquillisers have been by-passed as addicts turn to cheap heroin and speed.

Suicide has been attempted, as a desperate plea for help. One woman set fire to her house a number of times and broke her leg twice.

Broken windows are common, as is the nightly knocking on windows and doors. It is not uncommon for wardrobes to be stood up against windows and doors for protection against flying glass. The sound of vacant flats being vandalised is common.

Most crimes are not reported to the police for fear of reprisals. So much for Thatcher's community policemen! Residents have little faith in the police anyway.

For the remaining residents, burglaries are a way of life. Many have been burgled several times. Nothing is spared; electric points and even toilets are lifted, causing the flats below to get flooded.

The most disturbing aspect of this is that burglars are leeching off those with nothing. Residents face increasing difficulties in finding insurance companies that will cover them. Some have no furniture except a bed and cooker.

The walkways linking the blocks bring added problems. It is not unknown for motor bikes to be used on them. The smell, especially in summer, is obnoxious. Some of them have been blocked off. Children climb the barriers, putting their lives at risk. One man fell to his death trying to take a short cut over a barrier.

The lifts and stairs are frightening, especially at night. The smell of glue and urine is tolerable; the child molesters and flashers are not. There are few telephones in the towers. Social security does not stretch that far. The nearest public phone is in the desolate shopping centre and is nearly always vandalised and out of order. This adds to the feeling of fear and insecurity.

Brighton housing

JULIAN AMERY, Tory MP for Brighton Pavilion owns five houses in South London in addition to his own homes in Eaton Square SW1 and the Forest Farm House, Chelwood Gate. Not for him the conditions endured by many of his constituents in council or private rented accommodation.

The Brighton Borough plan for 1986 gives a startling picture of the town's housing crisis:

"... In April 1985 there was a need for ... a further 2,400 homes to be built ... to accommodate those ... in need of a home and who either do not have one at all or are sharing a home unwillingly with someone else."

"This is a minimum figure which does not overcome all the problems of inadequate housing in the borough."

Yet despite these needs and the high levels of unemployment (employment in the construction industry has fallen by more than a quarter), only 789 council houses were started between 1979 and 1984.

This rate of building (probably higher than at present) is totally inadequate for Brighton's needs. As the borough plan pointed out:

"Even if all these homes went directly to reducing the housing deficit, which ... they do not, it would take some fifteen years ... to overcome the existing shortfall."

Successive Tory councils since 1952 have sold off thousands of council houses. Double the national average therefore live in privately rented accommodation, often at the mercy of ruthless landlords charging exorbitant rents for decrepit rooms.

Over three quarters of this housing was built before the first world war. Even basic amenities are lacking. A quarter don't have exclusive use of a bath or toilet. A tenth have no bath and/or no toilet.

The plight of residents in Portland Gate flats in Hove has recently been featured in the local press. The owners are refusing to carry out renovations until they

poor de

per cent in 1985. The majority in the South and West in the North. The Association of Commerce has reported that the number of members is above the national average. On the other side, the North East, Greater London, Workers North and South have a specialist programme to eliminate unemployment which flourished in the eight years of

on's g crisis

receive planning permission to build a roof-top extension of ten luxury flats which will make them worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. Residents say the flats have extensive damp, crumbling walls and badly decaying window frames. One woman went without hot water for four months. Two pensioners went five weeks without water in their bathroom.

One widow, who has been flooded out three times by burst pipes said: "I've been here 14 years and the place hasn't been touched in that time."

Brighton is a town of contrasts, the stinking rich next to poverty. The local papers carry ads for dozens of hotels offering bed and breakfast to DHSS claimants, next to estate agents' notices for £100,000 and £200,000 houses in Rottingdean on the posh fringes of the town.

Living in a tent

The *Evening Argus* reported a housing and leisure development at Brighton marina, a playground for the rich which would include a landing pad for two helicopters!

In the same week, another article drew attention to the plight of students desperately trying to find somewhere to live. Jane Goodall, Brighton Polytechnic's student union president, said the problem was worse than ever this year. She knew of one student who was living in a tent at a nearby camp site and many more had been sleeping rough on the floors of friends' homes.

People in Brighton are crying out for solutions to the problems of homelessness, overcrowding and unfit accommodation. Over 3,700 homes are 'unfit' to live in, yet such is the pressure on housing that most of these properties continue to be occupied.

The only solution is for Brighton's Labour council to embark on a 'Liverpool style' housebuilding programme. People in Brighton cannot wait fifteen years to get a house. They want answers now.



Poor Brighton—on the Whitehawk estate.

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

Low wage town

BRIGHTON IS a low-wage town, based on service industries, shops, catering, hotels, etc. These workers' comments reveal some of the conditions they face:

"THE WEEK after the repeal of the Truck Acts, which means that an employer can deduct up to a tenth from your wages if money or stock is missing from your shop. I heard of a girl who works on the Palace Pier who had £30 docked from her pay packet of £54.40 with no warning because her till was short.

"I also know of a hairdresser who gets £50 a week and a free flat from his employer. One day his employer took £12 from his pay packet, saying 'I've seen you going out; you've obviously got a lot of money'. It's Catch 22; if he gives up the job, he's got nowhere to live.

"Brighton Low Pay Group has found dozens of examples in the local paper and the job centre of employers illegally paying below the Wages Council minimum, which is pathetic anyway.

"My boss is a small employer with one shop who can only afford to employ two people, but a lot of pubs, restaurants, bingo halls and discos are owned by big companies like Grand Metropolitan who are making super profits whilst exploiting their workers. They have just given their bar staff a rise to £1.72 an hour."

Ann Howard, Secretary USDAW Sussex Holding, in a personal capacity

"I TAKE home £56 a week for 39 hours, including work on a Saturday.

"Often I am asked to work overtime. You have no choice. One Saturday I worked from 9am to 6pm then was asked to work overtime. I finished at 12.30am on Sunday. For six and a half hours overtime I was paid £10.

"I am supposed to have four weeks holidays, but I can't take them when I want. They say when.

"I am meant to clear tables and wash up, yet they ask me to Hoover the restaurants and clean the toilets for no extra money.

Support for minimum wage

EVERYWHERE YOU go in Brighton, low paid workers are struggling to make ends meet.

A recent report by NALGO and NUPE has brought to light scandalous levels of pay amongst non-teaching staff at Sussex University.

The report found that 75 per cent of Sussex's clerical workers and 84 per cent of manual workers earn gross pay below the TUC low pay mark of £120.

75 per cent of clerical workers and 67 per cent of manual workers said their pay was not adequate for household requirements.

Vi Taylor is a cleaner at Sussex University and a NUPE shop steward. She works 40 hours a week 8 to 12 in the mornings then 5 to 9 in the evenings. She gets in at 12.30pm and is out again at 4.30pm. For all this her gross wage is £87.66, £65.84 take home. This includes extra payment for unsociable hours! Her hourly rate is £2.13.

"The pay is poor," she told *Militant*. "I'm lucky as my husband works. If I was on my own it would be entirely different.

"The private cleaners are even worse off. They get no sick pay."

Asked about Dave Nellist's minimum wage bill for £120 a week, she said: "People would thoroughly enjoy it. They would be over the moon. A minimum wage of £120 is not much, compared to what the Vice-Chancellor gets at Sussex University. People like that are very rich compared to the people who work at Sussex."

Footnote: A new Vice-Chancellor, Mr Leslie Fielding, has been recently appointed to the University. He has been retired on a 70 per cent salary from Brussels, so he has an income of £40,000 per annum already. The Vice-Chancellorship will add another £35,000 to his annual income.

Poverty behind the facade

WITHIN TWO months of Brighton voting for its first ever Labour council after 134 years, and my election as councillor for Moulsecomb, we had been rate-capped. This was a blatant political attack to try and take socialism off the agenda.

Away from the facade of the Royal Pavilion and the seaside and the candyfloss, Brighton is now classified as a deprived area. While I am told that Brighton is in great demand for some people to acquire second homes, in my ward it is officially recognised that council tenants are having to live in overcrowded accommodation.

Contrary to the image of the prosperous South East, unemployment has ravaged manufacturing industry. Between 1971 and 1985, 74 per cent of jobs have been lost on Brighton's industrial estates, because of closures.

The letters and problems I get as a ward councillor cannot be divorced from the economic and social conditions that Thatcher and her class have inflicted. One resident aptly described the ward I represent as an 'urban desert'. In response the Tories nationally will continue and extend their efforts to starve Labour councils of funds, as they did in Liverpool. I salute those brave councillors who were prepared to sacrifice their homes and their futures in the fight against Thatcher's onslaught against local government.

These councillors have been expelled for fighting for the same basic reforms that every Labour councillor should be, and that is decent homes, decent jobs and a decent future for all.

By Gordon Wingate

(Brighton Labour councillor, in personal capacity)



Rich Brighton—Rottingdean

Photo: Dave Sinclair.

"Most people hate it at work. If people complain no-one listens. The bosses don't want a union. When the chef said he wanted to join one, the manageress had a real go at him, saying they didn't want unions.

"I think the minimum wage is a great idea. Casual staff (usually school and college students) who work on Saturdays get £10 for 9am to 6pm, £9.50 for 9am to 5pm.

"I get one day off a week. You don't know when; it varies from week to week. Sometimes you only get two half-days."

June Keays (22) general assistant in a cafe

I TAKE home £85 a week for 37 hours. House prices in the South East are so inflated that what you can buy here is much less than in the rest of the country. A one-bedroom flat costs at least £25,000, with repayments of £200 a month.

"It is impossible to get a flat off the council.

Rented accommodation is exorbitant prices for holes. People are paying £35 a week for one room, without bills.

"I like work. Ours compares favourably with offices in London, but we are still under-staffed.

"Attacks on staff are increasing. A few months ago a big majority of staff voted against having screens. In the past few weeks, attacks seem to be more frequent and violent. The staff have now voted for screens because new Tory regulations covering unemployment will increase attacks. Unfortunately claimants think we are fiddling their benefits.

"Some staff are now very nervous about signing people on. I've noticed how many people go to the pub at lunch-time to escape from the office."

Helen (21), Civil Servant in the Department of Employment

Chile

The volcano under Pinochet

CHILE, UNDER the heel of Pinochet's military dictatorship, is charged with volcanic tensions. Hardly any support remains for the regime, even among the capitalists, who can see the writing on the wall. A Chilean socialist from the interior describes the conditions which are driving the masses towards revolution, and the obstacles to their struggle which are prolonging the life of the regime.

The Chilean working class is living under intolerable conditions.

Among the country's 11.5 million people there is a shortage of one million houses. This became worse with the earthquake in 1985. Entire areas of cities such as Santiago, San Antonio and Valparaiso were destroyed.

The church collected money for the victims and used it to rebuild the churches!

Then, only months later, came the floods, and more areas were wrecked. The regime is rotten from top to bottom. It sent a so-called "Train of Solidarity" through the country to collect clothes and food for the victims. All this was taken to army barracks in San Antonio, and never got further than that.

But an army officer was filmed sorting through the clothes and taking the best things for himself.

The regime has built few houses. So-called family houses are only 36 square metres in size and made of chalk, without proper floors. Now even those houses are no longer being built.

Rent

Rents shot up after the earthquake, to the equivalent of £28 per month. How can people afford that, when 60 per cent earn less than £32 per month, and even well-paid workers get £50 or £60?

The generals, on the other hand, pay themselves £2,500 per month tax-free, and that's only what they admit to.

The average working day is at least 12 hours. There are no national factory regulations or safety conditions - each factory has its own. Safety equipment like overalls, helmets, boots, earplugs and goggles are not provided. Workers who want these things must pay for them.

Unemployment is 18 per cent according to the regime, and 30 per cent according to the opposition. Another 20 per cent of working people have seasonal work only.

At least 30 per cent of people don't earn enough to eat properly. A healthy diet would cost the equivalent of £120 per month for a family of five. But in one workers' district in Santiago the average family income is just

£29 per month. In that area only 24 per cent of the people have jobs.

Some workers' districts manage to organise a communal meal for themselves once a day, but not at weekends. Then the people must survive on bread and tea.

As a result of this diet permanent damage is done to the development of young children and they suffer from all sorts of physical disabilities. One in every three children is anaemic.

Over the last few years we saw the beginnings of huge movements among the working class and youth. Union elections have shown a shift to the left. Serious splits began to open up within the regime itself.

For example, the officers of the Southern as well as the Northern divisions of the army asked for the crimes of the CNI (the secret police) to be exposed.

The middle class has become radicalised under the pressure of events. Many of them use the workers' own methods in the struggle: forming unions, strikes, defying the police.

The working class has yet to fight in a cohesive way, as a class. But the workers have shown their willingness to struggle on hundreds of occasions in the last three years.

Above all, the youth have played an outstanding role at the forefront of the struggle.

In other words, all the objective conditions are extremely favourable for the development of the revolution in Chile. Only the subjective factor is not yet developed: a revolutionary leadership armed with an adequate programme.

During the last three years it would have been possible to overthrow the dictatorship on many occasions. But the existing leaders of the labour movement have done nothing to lead the masses forward.

The PC (Communist Party) has overwhelming influence among the workers in many areas and factories, in the universities, etc. It receives \$1 million from Moscow every year. Yet the Young Communists have to write out leaflets *by hand* if they want to say anything more than "Pinochet out"!

The PC leaders claim to struggle for "democracy", but insist that the workers'



Above: Pinochet and his cohorts—the real face of state power in Chile. Below: Students involved in running street battles with the police in Santiago, 1986.

The average working day is at least 12 hours. There are no national factory regulations or safety conditions—each factory has its own. Safety equipment like overalls, helmets, boots, earplugs and goggles are not provided. Workers who want these things must pay for them.

socialist demands must not be raised because it will frighten off the so-called democratic allies.

'Unity'

Behind this 'theory', the fact of the matter is that the PC leaders are consciously trying to hand leadership of the movement to the DC (Christian Democrats, the main capitalist party, which supported Pinochet until it became clear that his dictatorship was doomed to fail) in the interests of so-called 'unity'.

But the DC have made it clear that they intend to use the strength of the working class only to negotiate a "peaceful" compromise with the regime, and leave the capitalist system intact.

Last year the PC leaders even declared that they were prepared to form a government with the *junta*—provided Pinochet was left out. What kind of democracy is that?

As a result of these bankrupt policies, the movement of the workers has ebbed and flowed. One day the leaders call a strike in the north of Santiago, the next day in the south. This does



not unite the movement, it gives it no cohesion.

Workers cannot be expected to support these pointless protests indefinitely. They face the sack when they take action and, with 25 per cent of all manufacturing jobs already lost in Santiago, this is no joke. Worse still, they face the death squads.

What is the purpose of risking everything for a limited protest action that will leave the regime intact?

In reality the workers' leaders only intend to let off steam and put pressure on the DC to form a coalition

but not the workers' parties. Legal parties are required to hand the regime a list of their members' names. He talks of ending the state of siege. What fundamental difference does this make as long as the dictatorship continues?

Even the Christian-Democrat leaders admit that these measures are intended only to buy time for the dictatorship. They are intended to impress the Pope on his visit next month, in the hope that he will appeal to the Chilean workers to be patient. But among the workers they have no credibility

The middle class has become radicalised under the pressure of events. Many of them use the workers' own methods in the struggle: forming unions, strikes, defying the police.

with them. These leaders have learned nothing from the disaster of 1973, when these self-same policies paralysed the workers' movement and allowed reaction to strike.

Pinochet is now "legalising" certain political parties,

whatsoever.

Marxists are in the forefront of the struggle for real democracy, starting with real free elections. To achieve this we need to overthrow the present regime, as it will not go of its own accord.

Our organisations need to mobilise the mass of working people from the ground up. We need to unite the organised workers and youth in area committees, *cordones*, like the soviets of the Russian revolution, with representatives democratically elected and subject to instant recall.

Free elections must be under the control of the working people to prevent any sort of fraud. We can trust only our own class.

The capitalist politicians are trying to split the workers by making deals with right-wing Socialist leaders and isolating the left. In fact they have nothing to offer to the masses. The workers' parties should reply with the formation of a workers' front.

This can be done by strengthening the MDP (an alliance of the PC, the left of the Socialist Party and some small groupings such as the MIR), on the basis of a revolutionary programme to end the dictatorship through mass struggle, to conquer power and carry through socialist policies to transform the working people's lives.

Chile Socialist Defence Campaign

Video:

Chile on the brink

20 minutes long analysis of recent struggles in Chile

Order from: CSDC, PO Box 448, Emma Street, London E2. £10 including postage. Cheques payable to: "CSDC"

Police disarmed by workers

REINOSA IS a small town in Northern Spain where 1,800 steel workers have been on strike for eighteen months against the threat to destroy one-third of their jobs. The strike had been ignored in the media. Then, last week, Reinosa leaped into national and international prominence.

Eight thousand of the town's 13,000 people turned out on a demonstration. A special unit of police and the brutal para-military Civil Guard was sent against them. Despite warning shots and rubber bullets, the workers were unafraid.

Workers 'kidnapped' the managing director to save him from being lynched! Police stormed the factory, occupied by 3,000 people.

Then, in an unprecedented incident, fifty or sixty Civil Guardsmen were surrounded by workers and disarmed.

A Civil Guard afterwards commented: "They could have killed us if they'd felt like it."

This incident shows the militancy that is now

From correspondents in Spain

spreading among the working class of Spain. Section after section is being driven into struggle by the monetarist attacks of the PSOE (Socialist) government, and inspired by the brilliant example of the school students' movement which, under Marxist leadership, forced the government to retreat.

Miners' strike

Now the tide is turning on a massive scale.

In Asturias the miners' strike against closures is still solid after more than a month. Building workers

called a two-day general strike in 26 of Spain's provinces on Tuesday and Wednesday. Tuesday also saw the beginning of a campaign by hospital doctors demanding a wage increase and better public health care.

Small farmers have been on strike since last week, blockading motorways and threatening to invade Madrid with their tractors. Railway workers called stoppages on Wednesday in a struggle for more jobs.

University students, clearly following the example of the school students, have called a campaign of strikes and demonstrations from 23 to 27 March against so-called university reform.

Even workers at the international conference centre in Madrid, Palace of Conferences, are on strike against the government's threat to privatise their centre.

With the government



Spanish miners demonstrate outside Ministry of Industry.

engaged in negotiations over the reduction of US forces in Spain, 100,000 marched on the US Air Force base outside Madrid to show their opposition to NATO. Again there were clashes with the police.

The greatest weakness of the movement, however, remains the absence of any definite lead from the workers' organisations. In Asturias, the Workers'

Commissions even called for a return to work, supposedly to concentrate on preparing for a general strike on 24 March!

Example

The Executive of PSOE, meeting on Monday, made clear the government's intention to persist in its present course. Significantly, it warned that the working

class should not see the victory of the school students' movement as an example in winning their demands through strikes and demonstrations.

It is too late; the workers are already learning the lessons of the youth struggle and the class policies of its Marxist leadership. Spain is entering a period of turmoil unprecedented since the revolution of the 1930s.

Brazil: troops against strikers



Sarney: faced with mass movement.

JUST TWO years after the end of military rule in Brazil, the tanks were back on the streets last week. In a desperate bid to prevent a strike by 55,000 oil workers, President Sarney's embattled government called out the army to occupy oil refineries.

Earlier, marines had been sent in to besiege striking seamen and unload ships.

Anti-strike laws, inherited from the military regime, were used to declare the strike illegal and threaten the organisers with imprisonment.

With inflation once again spiralling towards an annual rate of 600 per cent, following the collapse of Sarney's price and wage freeze, the oil workers as well as the seamen are demanding higher wages.

Public protests have broken out against bus fare increases of 233 per cent over the past two months. Hundreds of thousands of farmers, protesting against high interest rates, have blockaded roads and besieged banks.

This has been followed by a vote for an indefinite strike by 5,000 bank employees in Sao Paulo on Sunday, demanding a 100 per cent

pay rise.

At the root of the turmoil is Brazil's worsening economic crisis. With import earnings declining, repayments on the foreign debt of \$108 billion have been draining the country of the means to buy much-needed imports.

The growing demand for an end to the crippling debt repayments led Sarney into last month's gamble of suspending payments on commercial bank debts for 90 days (see *Militant* 836).

But it is backfiring. The masses are unimpressed, and instead they are forced into struggle by escalating prices. The international money-lenders seem equally unimpressed by the Brazilian government's pleas that the question is "political" rather than "economic", and have so far extended no concessions.

Squeezed between the might of international finance on the one hand, and the growing anger of Brazil's powerful working class on the other, there is no way out for this government of the 'democratic' capitalists.

By George Collins

Czech regime stamps on youth

"THIS IS just like Soweto. They practise white apartheid here", angrily exclaimed a member of the Jazz Section of the Czechoslovak Musicians' Union as five of its leaders stood trial in Prague last week.

Defiance and anger greeted the sentence of Karel Srp to 16 months in prison and Vladimir Kouril to ten months on trumped-up charges of "economic crimes".

Three other committee members received suspended sentences.

Significantly, the regime had planned to punish the musicians even more vin-

dictively. But Moscow intervened: Soviet leader Gorbachev, intent on protecting his 'reformist' image, did not want the spectacle of an old-fashioned Stalinist show trial in Prague at this time.

The Czech regime duly made a U-turn. The effects on the Czech masses should not be underestimated. Striking has been the boldness of the protests against the trial and the confidence of the accused, sensing general support.

CLIVE WILSON explains the background to this remarkable trial.

Yugoslavia

THE JAZZ Section became very popular among Czech youth since it started organising the annual Jazz Days music festival in the 1970s.

The authorities, fearing the disaffection of the youth with the Stalinist system, became concerned about the music festival as a means of expressing young people's frustration. In 1982 Jazz Days was cancelled for "security reasons".

In 1983 the Communist Party launched a wholesale attack on the Czech punk movement, claiming that it was a CIA and MI5 plot to

seduce Eastern youth to decadence. Groups were disbanded, fans and musicians beaten up and imprisoned, and young workers sacked from their jobs. The Jazz Section did all in its power to defend them. In retaliation, the Ministry of Culture closed down the entire Musicians' Union and arrested its leaders.

The persecution of the Jazz Section leadership has just been the latest in a long history of attacks by the regime on Czech youth.

In March 1974, for example, hundreds of police and

to be 'socialist'. Last week alone, basic foodstuffs shot up by 25 to 60 per cent.

The strikes form part of a growing wave of opposition to the Stalinist regime, ranging from the movements among national minorities to radical ferment among intellectuals.

Waiters have even refused to serve the Prime Minister! Workers and youth are giving notice of revolutionary struggles to come for democracy on the basis of the planned economy.

soldiers with dogs broke up a concert where an unlicensed group, The Plastic People, were due to play. Two hundred were arrested and six received sentences ranging from three to 14 months.

In 1976 hundreds were arrested, including The Plastic People and DG307, another group whose license was cancelled because its music was too critical. The regime then started a propaganda barrage on TV and in the press, describing the accused as long-haired, anti-social

alcoholics, drug addicts, criminal and psychiatric cases.

The musicians didn't stand a chance and were sentenced to imprisonment ranging from three months to two years, 'psychiatric' treatment, etc.

There will be no real freedom for youth and workers in the Eastern bloc until they break the chains of bureaucratic rule. It is this which the regime is afraid of, and why Czech youth are being persecuted in this way.



The "Prague Spring", 1968 before Dubcek's reformism was crushed by Soviet tanks. Now the new reformist line in Moscow is forcing another U-turn on the Czech bureaucracy.

per cent of new flats in the capital for their own use;

● building private race-courses;

● diverting funds from children's homes to private hunting lodges;

● diverting electricity from the national grid to their country villas.

Kunayev, needless to say, is Gorbachev's latest scapegoat in his efforts to impress the Russian workers with his regime's commitment to 'reform'.

● taking a third of the province's food supplies and 80

per cent of new flats in the capital for their own use;

● building private race-courses;

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● taking a third of the province's food supplies and 80

Riveting

Dear Comrades,
I thought that you'd like to be 'reassured' by the knowledge that our PPCs have real faith in Labour's policies.

According to a letter from my PPC, Chris Greene, sent to all constituency members, he will come and speak at any meeting "however small" encouraging, you may think, but just a line or two later his true feelings are revealed.

He is quick to tell us that although he will come to speak to our "neighbours, friends or knitting circle" it will not be about Labour's policies as this "can put off many non-political groups". Instead he can talk about when he "lived in Japan and Poland...climbed Kilimanjaro...lectured in the history of English"!

Yours fraternally
Jo Garrod
Bury St Edmunds LPYS

The Paperclip Conspiracy

Dear Comrades,
The review of *The Paperclip Conspiracy* TV programme recently published in *Militant* reminded me of first hearing the allegations nearly twenty years ago from an old shop steward.

It had taken the form of a joke—the story concerning two scientists, one Russian, the other American, boasting to one another the achievements of their respective countries.

It ends up with the American petulantly stating "Our Germans are better than your Germans"! How did the German scientists get split between going to either the USSR or the USA? The Yalta Conference in 1945: Stalin and Truman carved them up between them—as for Churchill, he was still looking for 'Peter the Painter'.

Yours fraternally
Bob Stothard
Hackney (TGWU)

Unconvinced

Dear Comrades,
As a school student who is about to leave school, the Careers Officer for my school has been telling us all about YTS.

She says things like "You shouldn't look on it as cheap labour or exploitation" and "most schemes are quite good". Fairly disgusting, but she is also a member of Stafford Labour Party—she's one of the right wing LCC. What an analysis!

Yours fraternally
Steve Revins
Stafford LPYS

Press bias

Dear Comrades,
If confirmation was ever needed of the biased nature of the press, one only needed to read an article in the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* on 3 March. The writer of a regular feature, commenting on recent TV programmes on 'blacklists' wrote:

"So frankly, if...anyone did make use of this list...if it exists at all...I for one would not only not mind but be positively delighted..."

Yours fraternally
Alan Hornby
Cleethorpes

Militant's misunderstanding of feminism?

Dear Militant,
Militant 837 is the best yet. But it is still marred by your misunderstanding of feminism.

The double page spread has the encouraging title of "Women's struggle...a struggle for socialism" and contains a mainly favourable review by Heather Rawling of "Women, a world report".

Heather thinks we should approach women's problems from a man's standpoint, society as a whole being male-dominated.

Feminists do not approach women's problems as 'somehow

separate from' but as basic to society as a whole. Heather has got her solution the wrong way round. It should read: "Without a programme to unite and mobilise women on this basis there can be no solution to the problems of working people—men and women. That is the central message of International Women's Day."

When poor Indian women are asked what is their most pressing need, of course they will say it is the necessities of life. But are the marriage system, lack of birth control and poverty nothing to do with In-

dian "society as a whole"?

The serious flaws in Heather's argument, which result from a *Militant* woman's dutiful and over-zealous anti-feminism, spoil what would otherwise be a good article.

Yours in the fight
Kathleen Jones
Shropshire

Dear Comrades,
Why does the paper attack feminism as if it's in competition with socialism?

What unites all feminists is the belief that women suffer certain

kinds of oppression at the hands of men.

Feminism has always been systematically discredited by giving massive publicity to the views of a small minority of anti-men hardliners calling themselves feminists.

The capitalist class was eager to smear feminism because it analysed in detail one of its major 'divide and rule' strategies.

What we must realise is that in many ways this strategy has worked. Only by seeing how well it has worked do we stand a chance of reversing it.

Yours Sincerely
Penny Iveson
Brighton Kemptown
Labour Party

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.



Phoney concern for Youth

Dear Comrades,
I have just finished watching the BBC's highly informative programme about the AIDS threat. I never realised before that the Tories cared so much about youth. We had a procession of very trendy TV stars and Tory ministers weeping about the fact that thousands of young people will die of this dreadful disease.

Being a natural cynic, I need some further proof of their good intentions. I need some reassurance that it was not just another attempt for Tory moralists to spout off about permissiveness and how evil young people are. So to help them out I have some modest proposals:

First a massive advertising campaign of gory posters on roadsides with "Unemployment, don't die of poverty" highlighting the massive amount of suicides amongst the young unemployed. Then television advertising on the number of young people who have been killed or maimed by YTS.

I think that AIDS is frightening, but I also find frightening the fact that thousands of top chemists and biologists are working frantically to find new and more devastating ways to kill ordinary workers across the world.

So until Norman Fowler does something to alter this I can suggest somewhere for



Norman Fowler reveals the government's latest measures to combat AIDS—a blank sheet of paper. Photo: Dave Sinclair

him to stick his pathetic leaflets.

Yours fraternally
Richard Hamilton
Keighley LPYS

Dear Comrades,
In the light of the recent AIDS hysteria and how imperative the use of condoms is, when a comrade went into a chemist's shop—the only chemist shop in the Mar-

ton area of Middlesbrough, and asked for a condom, he was told that the shop didn't stock condoms and had only recently begun to stock the contraceptive Pill because the owner was a Roman Catholic!

Yours fraternally
Jon Driscoll
Middlesbrough District
Labour Party

Useful barometer

Dear Comrades,
I have often wondered, since the introduction of the front page fighting fund barometer, how useful politically it was.

I had my eyes opened last week when I called round at one of my regular paper sales who is a single parent with a large family.

When I went in and handed over the paper one of her

sons grabbed it and said "Great let's see where they've got to this week".

Even the dog seems to be having a change of heart as it normally savages me each week but last week managed to wag its tail!

Yours fraternally
Judith Wood
Aire Valley

Cartoon congrats.

Dear Comrades,
I feel obliged to comment on the brilliant standard of Alan Hardman's cartoons. A political message put over in pictorial form can sometimes be more valuable than a lengthy article.

Yours fraternally
Trevor Grewar
Hull

Hattersley remembers his roots

Dear Comrades,
Roy Hattersley in a recent interview in *Woman* magazine was reminiscing about his 'beloved' Birmingham Sparkbrook constituency. "Sparkbrook is very important in my life...it's an appallingly depressed area and that's what politicians ought to do something about...it's Sparkbrook which reminds me which side I'm on".

But then it's easy to be a socialist on £100,000 a year, paying 'lip service' to the fight for socialism. It's another matter to be prepared to face prosecution and financial ruin in the cause for socialism as the Liverpool councillors have done.

Yours fraternally
Dave Pollock
Scarborough

Opposed to abortion

Dear Comrades,
Not only right-wingers oppose abortion, as implied by your article on women's struggle this week. Socialists oppose it because it involves the taking of a defenceless human life.

Similarly abortion is supported by powerful right-wing interests. These people support abortion because it is far cheaper than giving working women the income, proper housing, and decent

health and social care they would otherwise need.

You should take great care in printing figures given out by the pro-abortion movement. You quote 50 million abortions a year in the world. If this were true, every single woman in the world would have to have between three and four abortions in her lifetime!

Yours fraternally
Alex Abiola
Scarborough

Answers in the Militant

The following letter was received by a reader in Plymouth from a friend in Bristol:

"I have been talking about politics a lot with friends at work but I can't convince them to vote Labour. Very often I lose arguments because I don't know a lot of the answers. This is why I need to read *Militant* regularly to understand Marxist ideas... Some-

thing must be wrong if ordinary working class people think that the Tories offer them a better future... How can I convince them to vote for a party that is headed by Kinnoch and Healey and is not really offering a socialist alternative?"

"Obviously I need to read more, that is why I need to read *Militant* every week..."

Now there's a funny thing

Dear Comrades,
A funny thing happened at my Labour Party AGM recently. An amendment to standing orders had been received from a trade union branch stating that "notices of motions will only be received from Labour Party branches and affiliated organisations in Bristol South".

We were informed that this amendment and three

others had subsequently been withdrawn by the union branch secretary because the would-be mover had not been able to put them through his branch!

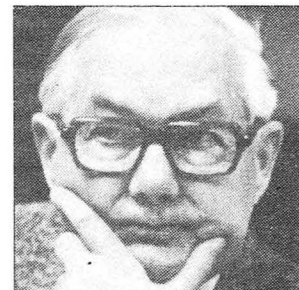
How then had they appeared on the order paper in the first place?

Yours fraternally
Robin Clapp
Bristol South Labour
Party (personal capacity)

Punctual

Dear Militant
May I through the columns of your paper, congratulate James Callaghan, one time leader of the Party, and former Prime Minister, on his impeccable timing.

Not only did he in one speech in April 1983 torpedo the Labour Party's policy in the middle of the General Election campaign; but now with one speech in the House of Commons has succeeded



in torpedoing the Party's policy before the next General Election campaign has even got under way!

Yours fraternally
Cyril Whitelock
Hornchurch Essex

Giving the game away

Dear Comrades,
Recently I was talking to a friend who plays golf. He told me that one Sunday he played in Morpeth, a predominantly middle class commuter belt twelve miles north of Newcastle. He was invited to join a group of three club members who included a doctor and a businessman. The first question he was asked was "what

do you do for a living?" A week later he was playing golf in Birtley, a working class area five miles south of Newcastle. Once again he teamed up in a group of four, only this time the first question was "are you working?"

Yours fraternally
Ed Waugh
Newcastle upon Tyne

Tactics to fight Fowler

ON 17 February the CPSA DHSS executive took the decision to back off from a direct confrontation at this stage with the Tories over their Social Security laws. This move, criticised by some activists on the left, was led by *Militant* supporters. Bill Boyle interviewed Tony Church who proposed the successful motion at the DHSS meeting asked why this decision had been made.

Tony Church: *Militant* supporters originally moved for direct action against Norman Fowler's proposals at our conference last year. We have continually been in favour of consulting the membership regarding a policy of non co-operation with these proposals which are now part of the 1986 Social Security Act.

Bill Boyle: So why did the executive decide not to proceed with the policy, given that you had consulted the membership and achieved a majority in favour of action.

TC: It is true that we achieved a majority in the consultative exercise, but the members who voted represented less than 20 per cent of our membership.

Low turn-out

BB: What was the second factor?

TC: Management obviously wouldn't give us facilities to allow members to be consulted during working time. Unfortunately, this had a bad effect on the turnout.

BB: But surely you could have extended the consultation period and worked to build on the positive result you had achieved?

TC: We could have in different circumstances, but time was not on our side.

The policy of non-cooperation was due to begin with asking our members to reduce training on the Social Fund provisions which come into operation in April. The training is to begin almost immediately. Then we were faced with the threat of a writ.

The Tories used laws passed by the last Labour government to threaten our members with a breach of their contracts

BB: What laws were they?

TC: Obscure laws which state that Civil Servants cannot refuse to carry-out government decisions. They are contained in the 1974 Trade Union Act.

BB: Could you not have made a stand now against such obviously anti-working class laws?

TC: My gut reaction and those of other comrades was without question to do just that. But we had to look at the situation from a standpoint of tactics if we were to protect our members and to maintain any kind of campaign.

BB: What do you mean?

TC: To take on the Tories on this kind of issue requires an all-out onslaught. We are not in a position to mount such an onslaught at the moment.

I have already mentioned

the low poll in the consultative exercise. Although nearly 2:1 in the poll, however, voted to endorse the non-cooperation strategy, it has to be said that many of these may not have understood fully the implications of the strategy, given the bland nature of the motion which was put to the consultation meetings.

BB: Why was the motion so bland?

TC: It cannot be side-stepped—a mistake was made with the wording when the executive was seeking a mandate to take on the Tories directly.

Disunity

BB: So you believe even those members who voted for a confrontation may not have realised they were voting to take on the full force of this government?

TC: In a word, yes.

BB: Any other factors?

TC: We had to also recognise that only our section has a policy of direct opposition to Fowler. Our colleagues in the SCPS within the DHSS have said they would not support us. We had to accept that for the moment we have not secured the support of the wider movement which is necessary for success.

BB: But the writ was the



Tony Church speaking at CPSA conference.

deciding factor?

TC: It was a factor, most certainly. But it was the attitude taken by our national leadership to the writ that was more important.

BB: Were they not prepared to support you?

TC: Even before the DHSS executive meeting, John Ellis, the general secretary elect, had authorised a circular to members making it clear that the union would not support political action against the Tories.

BB: You were stabbed in the back?

TC: Yes. However, Ellis did agree that we could continue to oppose the introduction of the Social Fund on traditional trade union grounds such as maybe staffing or poor accommodation to allow training to take place.

BB: So was this the decision you took?

TC: Yes, my motion which was carried by 14 to 10 at the meeting removed the blanket proposal that members refused to train on the Social Fund, but gave support to any office which could not undertake training because of a lack of staff or inadequate premises.

BB: The decision has been criticised by some on the DHSS executive and others outside. How do you answer this?

TC: These comrades believed we should ignore all the factors—the low poll, the poorly worded motion, the writ, the lack of external support and the right-wing's control of the union—and continue regardless. In my opinion they transposed the will of the activists to struggle on this issue to the membership at large.

Unofficial action

BB: What do you think would have happened if their alternative had been carried instead?

TC: Ellis would have made sure any campaign to continue action was stopped. Funds to the DHSS from the national union would have ceased and the union's official communications apparatus would have been barred to the section. Some left comrades have said that in these circumstances we would have had to continue the action unofficially. Unfortunately, they have not explained specifically how we could do this when the right-wing would have at their disposal all the apparatus to sabotage our efforts.

BB: So you reject the charge that this decision had wrecked the campaign against Fowler?



John Ellis, CPSA General Secretary.

TC: Most certainly, yes. I believe any other decision would have led the campaign to inglorious defeat. Whilst we have taken a definite step back in our campaign, the decision we have agreed keeps it alive. The motion instructs the executive to begin the work to draw in wider layers of the movement and allows for a ballot of the membership when that support is achieved.

BB: So you remain confident?

TC: As long as the necessary work is done, I believe our one step back now will allow us to take two steps forward in the future.

Witch hunt spreads to TGWU

TRANSPORT AND General Workers Union General Executive Committee member, Alan Quinn, has been banned from holding any office in the TGWU—for life! Alan is the Merseyside representative on the General Executive Committee of the TGWU. He was banned by a vote of 17 to 14 at last Friday's GEC meeting.

This represents the most serious attack on the left in the TGWU. A massive campaign is needed to reverse this scandalous sentence.

The ban resulted from a fracas in the early hours of the morning during the course of the GEC's Christmas Social. Alan was provoked by offensive remarks.

The next morning he apologised to the individual concerned and this was confirmed by Ron Todd. However, the issue was resurrected by the right-wing who seized the chance to witch-hunt him.

At last week's GEC, five and a half hours' evidence was heard and the recommendation of Ron Todd was that no action should be taken. This advice was ignored by the right-wing, who steamrollered the vote

By Richard Knights

through, banning Alan for life.

As *Militant* warned, the witch-hunt has extended to the rest of the left, and into the trade union movement. This represents a crushing reply to those 'lefts' who through their silence acquiesced in the expulsion of *Militant* supporters.

Smear campaign

Alan's sentence is the culmination of an orchestrated press campaign against him over the last two years. Two journalists, Tom Condon, of *Today* and Richard Littlejohn, of the *Standard* are currently working full-time on muck-raking stories about the left in the

TGWU. A recent article in *Today* called for an inquiry into the Merseyside division of the TGWU.

Alan has been singled out for his fearless defence of the policies of the union and of Region 6. He was instrumental in 1983 in winning a vote at the GEC against witch-hunts which temporarily stayed the hand of the right-wing at the Labour Party Conference. The right-wing have never forgiven him for that.

The right-wing in the TGWU are extending their grip on the apparatus. Against the wishes of the Regional Committees right-wingers have been installed as Regional Secretaries in Scotland and the South West.

The right-wing have no compunction in banning a left-winger, but at a recent GEC a recommendation to vote for the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC for their strike breaking role at Wapping was voted out by the right-wing.

Welsh Regional Secretary, George Wright, who led the

allegations about ballot rigging in the general secretary election even threatened to put unemployed TGWU open cast members into the new Margam pit if the NUM had rejected British Coal six day working deal. But no action will be taken over such blatant attacks on trade union unity.

In response to these attacks an open democratic Broad Left must be built to launch a real campaign within the union. The spectre of a return to the 'Deakinism' of the 1950s looms.

Build the left

Delay and inaction will only strengthen the hand of the right wing. The successful Broad Lefts in CPSA, the NCU, USDAW and other unions must be used as a model for the TGWU.

Alan has put in an appeal which will come before the six strong Appeals Committee on March 23. Branches and individuals are being urged to send in protests to



Alan Quinn.

Ron Todd, the General Secretary.

The Biennial Delegate Conference in July will be crucial. Already the right-wing have resolutions tabled calling for a return to bans and proscriptions within the

union.

The right are aiming for an ETU mark II. A determined campaign must be organised to stop the right and overturn Alan Quinn's sentence.

Industrial Reports

**Scottish
lead to
save jobs**

THE PLANS by the Dee corporation to sell off many of their smaller Gateway and Shopper's Paradise stores has provoked an angry reaction among the workers concerned.

On 16 March a mass meeting of representatives in Usdaw Scotland Fine Fare branch voted to conduct a ballot for industrial action throughout the stores.

This ballot will be conducted on a rolling basis, starting with the stores affected, bringing in the distribution depot workforce and then moving onto the large Fine Fare superstores.

The staff are angry that their livelihoods are being discussed over their heads. The company have not been forthcoming with any concrete information about their futures.

The workforce have now decided to take matters into their own hands and are now preparing for all out industrial action.

The plan is to build momentum for a strike by holding a series of one-day stoppages. If management do not start discussing their plans with the workers, this will escalate.

The demand of the Fine Fare staff is clear: no job losses. If any store must be closed or sold off, the staff affected must be absorbed by the company into other stores. They point out that the company is large enough to do this easily.

The Usdaw leadership must meet this determined stand with similar resolve. The National Officer concerned must raise the workers' demands with the company direct. There must be no question of the negotiations merely consisting of some better redundancy arrangements.

The members want action to defend their jobs. It is essential that any industrial action undertaken by those members who want to fight for their jobs, is made official by the Usdaw Executive Council.

By a Fine Fare employee

Bakers bite back

Coventry

"HE WAS just pointing his finger and saying 'I'll do what I want here.' It's just like a dictatorship, where if you open your mouth they shoot you."

This is how Mahmood Sadiq describes negotiations with management. He is union branch secretary at Sutton's bakery in Coventry where the two hundred workers on production, sacking and despatch are on strike.

They walked out because management had suspended five workers and taken the whole night shift off the

Stop Royal Ordnance sell-out

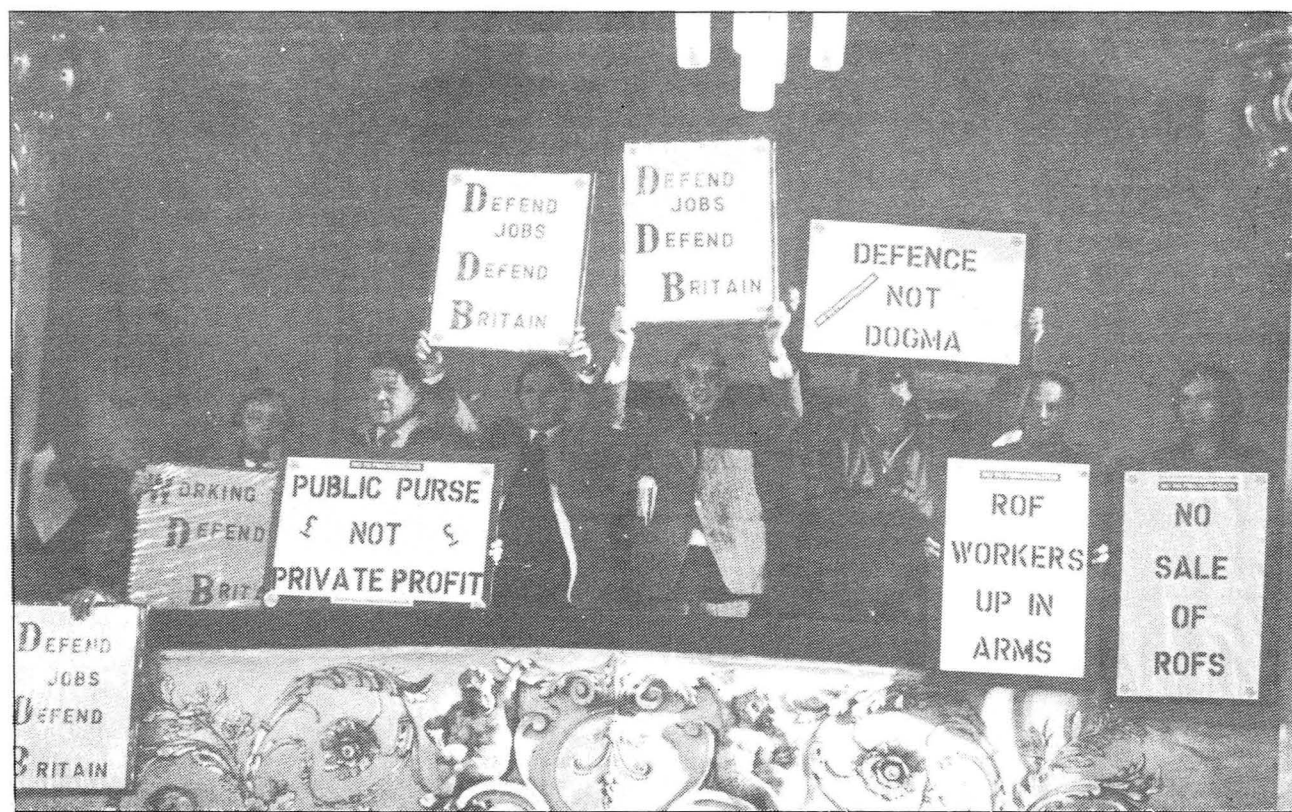
ROYAL ORDNANCE Factories (ROF) workers are holding a national day of action, including a 24 hour strike and national lobby of parliament on Tuesday 24 March to defend their jobs, conditions, and industry from big business predators interested in the arms manufacturer's proposed privatisation.

Meanwhile, the privatisation plans are running into difficulties on management's own side of the battle lines. Two interested companies, Trafalgar House, believed to be interested in an asset-stripping property development operation, and Ferranti, rumoured to have offered to take over ROF for free, have apparently dropped out.

'Golden share'

Although the government had been expected to retain a 51 per cent "Golden Share" this idea all but disappeared with the aborted flotation last year, and the subsequent attempt to sell wholesale. The "Golden Share" idea, however unlikely, has been resurrected.

But it's clear that the two remaining bidders for ROF would be unlikely to accept a restrictive veto over their future intentions to rationalise ROF further, to make the profits that will make it worth buying in the first place. British Aerospace, privatised in



ROF workers lobby Labour Party conference.

1981 with 52 per cent shares sold, had its remaining Golden Share sold in 1985.

Recent developments have already sent a warning as to what privatisation means. Management's announcement last week of 140 jobs to go at Enfield only confirmed shop stewards' fears, which local and national managers have been hotly denying since last year. They even advertised for jobs last year and encouraged workers from the North to move down, only to dis-

point them bitterly.

The Enfield layoffs follow similar redundancies at Blackburn and Nottingham.

Jobs

At Patricroft, redundancies in the order of two hundred are believed to be in the offing. After a short honeymoon following the sale of ROF Leeds to Vickers, the workforce were given an ultimatum, accept job losses, wage cuts and attacks upon

conditions or else no new factory.

The latest "Message to employees" talks about flexibility, changes in work practices etc and even compulsory redundancies.

Opposition is now beginning to mount up against management's onslaught. Some national trade unions officials have proposed that the campaign should involve sympathetic Tories and Alliance MPs and even the churches for "divine intervention". But shop

stewards reject such arguments and point to the failure of such a strategy at Gartcosh steel mills.

Instead they are looking to follow the example of activists at Rosyth Naval Dockyard where some of the local union representatives formed a Broad Left to map out a strategy, inform and involve the rank and file and keep pressure on the leadership to fight privatisation.

By Martin Elvin

Call for ROF union action

Militant has received the following open letter from a ROF worker.

Following Enfield management's decision to make 140 workers redundant, which includes a quarter of the skilled workforce, it is even more important that we gain full support for the day of action on 24 March.

Although it's clear that at this stage just this warning shot will not prevent the sale, this day must be a springboard to transform the unions in Royal Ordnance for the inevitable fights over jobs, conditions and pay.

There is growing discontent within every site over management's heavy-handedness. At Radway GRN the AEU membership had a two-day stoppage over management's breach of a national agreement.

The caretaker RO management are attempting to prepare the ground for the take over. These local grievances are linked and must be recognised as such. We are not just fighting a government that represents the interests of big business but also an unnamed employer and an acquiescent management.

Give jobs to the unemployed", the workers said. "We can't afford it" was the answer. Even though Sunblest is part of the Allied Bakeries monopoly.

Sunblest bakery doesn't sound like a great place to work at the best of times. "The work is fast and furious" pickets said. "Winter in that place is like winter out here. All they put in for heating is calor gas. We walk round with flak-jackets on to stay warm."

Management are continually playing around with the grading system, giving a rise for extra work one week, then taking it back the next, claiming they're bound by national agreements.

The strikers are enraged at the sums local paper says they are paid. "Workers can get paid that much if they

work double shifts, which means they're in this place sixteen hours at a time. We work a compulsory six-day week on three shifts.

"But our top line for the basic 39-hour week is about £95. From that, take home pay for a married man with kids would be less than he'd get on the dole."

Thirty or forty workers are usually on the picket line, which is there twenty four hours a day. The strikers are determined and confident that the drivers, who are not in the Bakers' Union, will join them when the strike is made official.

Messages of support and donations to: Mahmood Sadiq, 25 Matterson Road, Radford, Coventry.

By Tony Cross

AUF WIEDERSEHEN, ENFIELD?

"Many of us 'got on our bikes' as the Tories patronise. We left homes, families, dole and redundancies with promises of at least five years' work and thousands for relocation. This bombshell makes us feel bitter and betrayed." Skilled production worker from the north.

"Feelings were running high last week after the arbitrary sacking of an operator. He had domestic problems and was prepared to use annual leave to cover time off. The personnel department after granting it reneged and claimed he was AWOL. After keeping the bloke on tenterhooks a week he was told he was to be sacked. The union should have stood by him, it could happen to any of us." TGWU member

union to negotiate to the detriment of the others, selling the conditions of the skilled and the jobs of the semi-skilled.

We've all got a right to a job here and we've all got the

same commitments of family, rents or mortgages.

Yours fraternally
Bob Simmons
AEU shop steward
Enfield district
personal capacity

Edinburgh

WOODS BAKERS in Edinburgh employed just over 100 people and was taken over by a bigger company four weeks ago.

The non-union workforce was not informed at the time. The first many of them heard about it was when they were sacked.

Other workers were immediately taken on in their places so the workforce held two mass meetings—one for each shift—and decided to stage a sit-in, which started on Sunday 15 March.

They also towed away all the company lorries and locked them in a car park so that no-one could get to them.

London Transport builders

A majority of London Transport's 500 building workers downed tools on Tuesday after two workers were suspended for sticking to union policy and refusing to comply with plans for closing further sections of the department.

Management then announced redundancy notices were in the pipeline. Stewards have been visiting the many jobs around London to ensure solidarity. They intend to stay out until the suspensions and redundancy threats are dropped. Solidarity action from other LT workers is vital.

By Jim McGuinness, Chair of the Joint Convenors Committee

Support Sale engineers

SENIOR COLMAN management in Sale, Manchester this week withdrew from the Engineering Employers Federation, under pressure to resolve this dispute. It seems obvious that they are out to break the union at Senior's.

This dispute has become a test case for all of the Manchester engineering unions. And it is recognised as such by the unions involved.

Unanimous support was given to the strikers by an emergency meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding Engineering Unions number 29 district shop stewards' meeting. The meeting on 9 March of hundreds of shop stewards representing thousands of Manchester engineering workers carried the following resolution:

1) That all convenors and shop stewards will approach their own management to put pressure on the Senior Colman management to settle the dispute because they have broken the methods of negotiation.

2) That the confederation will organise a demonstration in works time on Friday 27 March at 10am at Sale to show their support for Senior Coleman strikers.

3) All factories will carry out collections for financial support for the strikers.

4) They will seek a meeting with the Engineering Employers' Federation to discuss the breaking of procedures.

This means that the Confed unions will have a mass demonstration on Friday 27 March at 10am. Speakers who have been invited including Dennis Skinner, Arthur Scargill, Ron Todd, Gavin Laird or Bill Jordan, Tony Benn.

There will undoubtedly be spontaneous strikes to enable workers to attend the demonstration. The Strike Committee secretary, Tony Lowe, told me they are expecting a massive turnout for the demonstration. The

By Brian Beckingham

other major development is the formation of the Senior Women's Action Group in support of the strike.

Convenor Graham Whyatt said it was clear from his experience in the strike that the AEU needed more not less full time officials and he expressed total opposition to the recently announced intention of the AEU national leadership to merge the Manchester South and North districts.

The strikers are now organising visits throughout the country, both to factories owned by the Senior Engineering group and other factories and workplaces to get more support. The main road to a victory in the dispute is: to extend and make 100 per cent, the blacking of all Senior Colman products; to mobilise mass demonstrations and spontaneous walkouts in support of the strikers; a conference of all Manchester trade union and labour movement organisations to work out further solidarity action.

The noticeable developments of this strike as with others in the recent period is that workers start off where the miners left off. The automatic response for any strike that lasts more than a few weeks is to call mass demonstrations, spread the action and the setting up of family support groups.

Financial support and resolutions of support etc should be sent to: Tony Lowe, secretary, 48 Dunbar lane, Sale, Cheshire, M33 5QX tel. 061 969 9486, or the AEU headquarters, 43 Crescent, Salford, M5 4PE.

Ealing Nalgo out

AT A recent mass meeting, Nalgo members in Ealing voted three to one in favour of all out action in support of their claim for increased London Waiting in line with members in Hammersmith and Brent. Originally, a meeting held in Acton Park of 1,300, there was no hall big enough, voted by a show of hands for action after 200 were locked out by the council, 600 came out in support.

The NEC insisted on a ballot, so a later mass meeting was held at Ealing Common where the turnout was higher and the 'yes' vote larger. This destroyed the arguments of some councillors that Nalgo members would not take action.

In the beginning the Labour council said no money would be forthcoming as this would put another 20 per cent on top of the 65 per cent rates rise just set, the highest in London, a clear attempt to put the blame on to the Nalgo strikers who have worked hard to carry out the policies the council introduced after being

elected in May '86.

Now the council has offered to give the increase to the lower paid. This was rejected by members who overwhelmingly decided to stay out for the full claim for all grades. The campaign to explain the dispute to people and other workers in Ealing has just been started to undercut the council's attempt to isolate the strikers.

Over the years the Tories have taken £100 million back from Ealing through cuts in Rate Support Grant etc. The council, instead of passing the burden onto the workers and rate payers, should follow the example of Liverpool City Council and fight for the return of the money stolen by the government and link up with other Labour local authorities to fight against all Tory cuts and for the return of a Labour government on a socialist programme.

By Pat Lacey
(workplace rep Ealing Nalgo personal capacity)

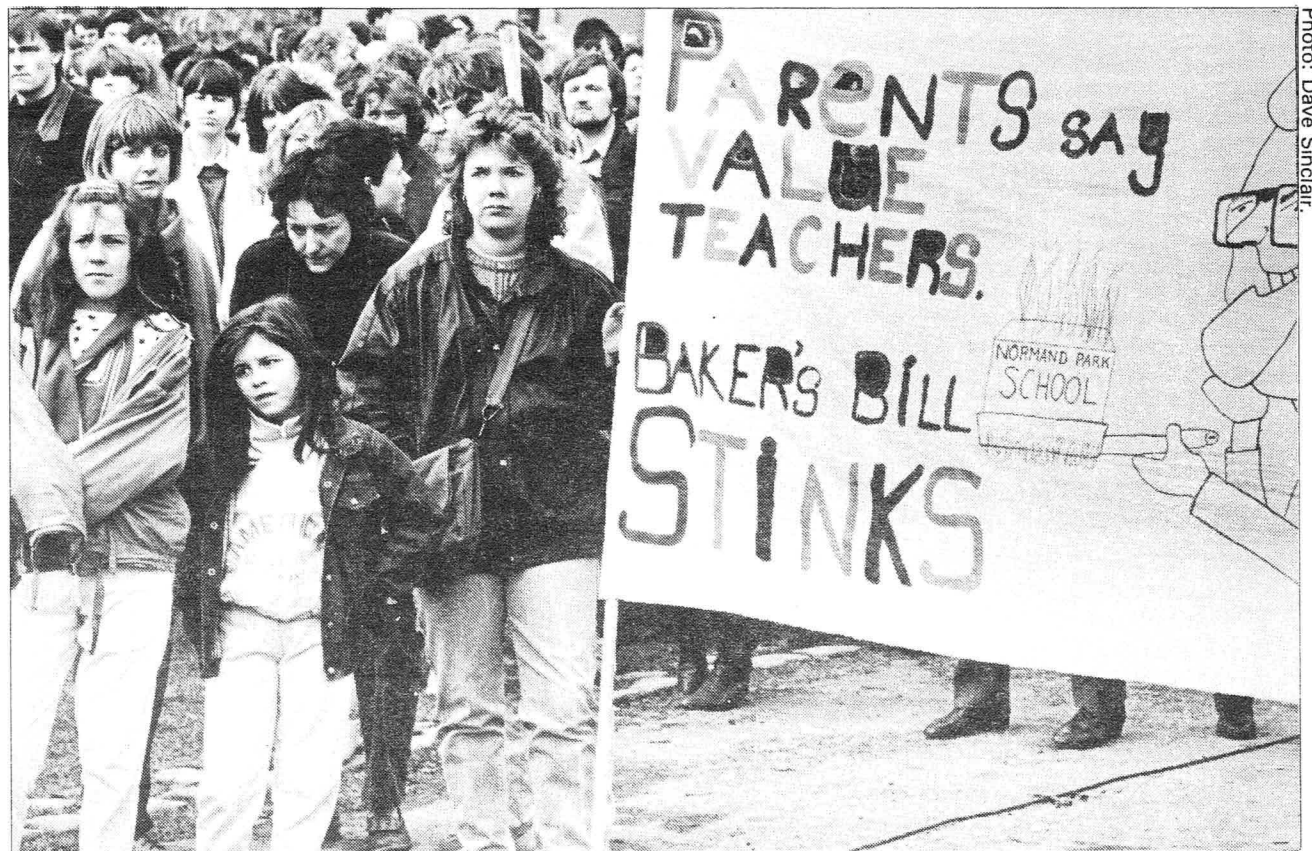


Photo: Dave Sinclair

More national teachers' strikes

WIDESPREAD STRIKES took place last week by teachers. Over 13,000 teachers in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire staged a half day strike in protest at Kenneth Baker's infamous bill attacking conditions, pay and negotiating rights of teachers.

In Nottingham, 3,500 teachers marched to show

their anger at Baker's threat of an undemocratically-imposed set of rules for teachers.

Undoubtedly the most significant factor of the demonstration was that it was an historic first-ever joint event, organised by the two largest teachers' unions, the NUT and the NAS/UWT.

This unity, which forced the initial closure of many schools, as it involves the majority of teachers, is the key to winning the dispute. The marchers were keenly aware of this, and of the need to build on it with more action in the coming weeks.

A rank and file member of the NAS/UWT summed up the prevailing mood in

answer to my question: "What does your branch think of the unity between the two unions?"—"It should have happened three years ago; but now we've got it at last, let's use it!"

By Kevin Slattery
(South Notts NUT)

Caterpillar letters cancel workers' employment contracts

THE 800 Caterpillar workers in occupation of their Uddington factory last week received a letter from plant manager Ken Robinson saying that unless they return to work by Monday 23 March they could consider their employment contracts terminated.

Caterpillar bosses are now attempting to dangle redundancy 'carrots' in front of the eyes of the workers, whilst at the same time moving away from any threatened 'action'. The Caterpillar bosses had previously threatened to obtain a court order to end the occupation but it now seems clear that they have drawn back at the last minute from what would be a serious blunder on their behalf and decided to try and break up the occupation by other means ie. these new threats contained in the letters to all employees.

Cash crisis

Significantly though, the letter contains no specific mention of any cash handouts and this is seen by the Joint Occupation Committee (JOC) as a sign that the sums involved would indeed be paltry.

Neil Kinnock has suggested pressurising Caterpillar management into selling Uddington to a consortium of interested parties which could then produce parts and sell to Caterpillar itself as well as other manufacturers.

The JOC are of course, willing to examine any avenues which would

safeguard the 1,220 jobs but it has to be pointed out that Caterpillar's previous record has been to buy-out suppliers rather than to set up independent suppliers. The most recent example of this was last year when they bought over Metrax of Italy. At that time their leading supplier of tractor tracks worldwide.

Another question mark raised over this 'agency' idea of Kinnock's is the issue that nowhere near 1,220 jobs would be involved.

The blacking campaign is also being given more and more support from container bases, docks and other factories, even though the organising of it has now been put into the hands of the Scottish TUC.

'Caterpillar Promotions' the name now being given to the fund raising and entertainments committee, have organised a series of charity events for the next few weeks.

The mood of the 800 men remains high and as a response to Caterpillar management's threat of sacking, a mass meeting has been called for Monday 23 March inside the factory and it is expected that calls for continuing the occupation will be solidly supported.

- ★ Support the occupation.
- ★ Black Caterpillar goods.
- ★ Nationalise the Cat under democratic workers' control and management.

By Colin Fox

NUS ballot inquiry

SAM MC CLUSKIE, NUS General Secretary, has rejected out of hand, the demand for an independent inquiry into ballot-rigging allegations and the call for a Special General Meeting to review the charges.

The TUC inquiry is now proceeding, led by and accountant and a solicitor! The Rank and File Committee have no confidence in this form of inquiry.

The campaign for democracy is gathering pace. But of the 24 branches all the major seafaring centres have passed resolutions demanding an inquiry. They are Liverpool, Cardiff, Dover, Harwich, Plymouth, Holyhead, Hull, Southampton and South Shields.

The latest to add their names are Manchester and

Aberdeen. At the Aberdeen meeting right wing officials accused last year's conference in Liverpool, of being dominated by *Militant!*

The members of the National Ferry Committee (NFC) are outraged at its continued suspension. In particular in the light of the Zeebrugge disaster.

Only the NFC has the particular expertise to outline the necessary changes to stop any repeat of the tragedy.

At the last Executive Committee a fresh smear was laid at the door of the Rank and File Committee that they had each received £600 from the Mail on Sunday.

They are waiting for the allegation to be repeated in public so that legal action can be taken.

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.

○ **MATERNITY EMERGENCY** "No cuts in maternity benefits". National lobby of Parliament and mass rally, Monday 6 April. Central Hall, Westminster, London SW1.

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

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

□ **Militant Readers meeting** for London YS conference. "General Election—Labour can win". Saturday 28 March, Hands and Flower Hotel, 1 Hammersmith Rd, W14. 6.30pm. (near Commonwealth Institute).

□ **AFTER THE** defeat of the print unions at Wapping the London Broad Left NGA are launching a series of monthly meetings to discuss the major issues facing print workers today.

This month's meeting will discuss amalgamation and a panel from various unions involved in the industry will answer questions. It will be held on Tuesday 24 March, starting at 6.30pm, Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell Green. All Welcome.

Militant

Ferry disaster—Page 5
 Abortion rights—Page 6
 Spanish strike wave
 —Page 11

Town for sale

'Rents will go up'

THE TORIES' 'get richer' policy of privatisation is now extending into public housing. 15,000 rented homes in Basildon, Essex, are under threat of being sold off by the New Town Development Corporation.

The privateers stand to make a fortune. The estimated market value of the homes is £532 million, excluding the value of green spaces and va-

cant land on the estates. Reaping the benefits could be housing associations, housing trusts or private developers. It could mean rents going up by £10 a week, to the maximum set by the rent officer.

400 jobs are also under threat, half of them amongst the maintenance staff, as private landlords turn more to private contractors.

At present 200 homes a year are offered to the

homeless and those on the waiting list. This would stop; many office jobs would then also be at risk.

Vacant houses would be sold off and the private landlords would cut down on general maintenance by not cutting grass, repairing paths nor dealing with parking and street lighting. They could sell off open spaces to property developers for building luxury detached houses.

DIANE, a single parent on the Somercotes estate spoke to *Militant* about Basildon's housing problems:

"Young people shouldn't wait years for a flat. There are no second generation homes. Some people have to lie about their situation. I know of a single parent who got her mum to say that she had been slung out. They have now put her in bed and breakfast in Southend until something turns up. By moving her to Southend they can forget about her."

"The government create a shortage of housing, force people to buy and put the prices up. I went to Liverpool once; it's good to see what they are doing. I could see the same happening down here. People are becoming aware of what is going on."

"Privatisation is bad, because if the houses go private rents will go up and maintenance won't be done. Non house owners and people on housing benefit could be discriminated against."

"The government want to go private because someone can make money out of it."

Dream turns sour

NEW TOWNS were developed in the post-war boom. For many working-class families, they were attractive, an escape from slums to open spaces, new houses, little pollution and plenty of work. In the boom years of the 50s and 60s there was plenty of building work and large modern factories opened.

For many of the second generation of workers, however, the dream of the post-war boom has turned into a nightmare. Even in the relative prosperity of new towns in the South East, problems of unemployment and bad housing are growing in the working-class areas.

Basildon is the 'promised land' no longer. Unemployment is 8621 (13.5 per cent), the average time out of work being 67 weeks and rising. There are 1032 on community programmes and YTS schemes. Altogether the DHSS deals with 25,000 claimants, making it one of the busiest offices in the country.

The crisis of capitalism has seen the closure of many factories, such as Carreras (2000 jobs lost), Kodak, Pembroke Cartons, Lacrinoids and Barton's bakery. This drastic fall in industrial employment has to a degree been offset by jobs in services. The development of a major shopping centre has stabilised the unemployment figures, but these jobs are low paid, non-unionised and mainly part-time.



Basildon's shopping centre—low-paid jobs.

Photo: Bob Pearce.

Rents more than doubled

IN LOCAL elections, the Labour Party has retained control of the council, but in the last two general elections the Tories have won. The main reason has been council house sales. Between 1979 and 1985, rents rose on average from £8.30 to £17.30 (a 108 per cent increase). Over the same period mortgage repayments rose by 73 per cent and the retail price index by 53 per

cent. Council tenants were penalised and the Tories lured them into home ownership with sales at knock-down prices. Labour's confused policy on the issue—'we oppose, we support, we are not sure'—was an electoral disaster.

The main reason for the escalation of rents is cuts in government grants. For 1987 Basildon Council appealed to the government for £29.8 million for housing and got £2 million. And millions have to be paid out in interest to the banks, who make big profits from local authorities.

Lack of cash has led to no new building. This and the sales mean that there is a desperate shortage of second generation housing. In 1985 the waiting list was 6575.

Referendum

A CAMPAIGN, for a 'Safe and Secure Transfer', has been launched by Basildon District Labour Party to keep the houses public. There has been a series of public meetings organised by the council, and a video and

leaflets have been produced. The council is also organising a referendum so that tenants can vote on the issue. Party members will be canvassing to convince tenants to stay with the council.

The referendum is not being backed by the government, so even if the result is in favour of the council they could still press on with their privatisation plans.

This attack on public housing is another example of Tory attacks on workers' democratic rights. Privatisation is a short-sighted policy to further increase the bank balances of the super-rich. It is symptomatic of a diseased capitalist system which only takes into account of the bosses' short-term profits rather than the workers' long-term interests.

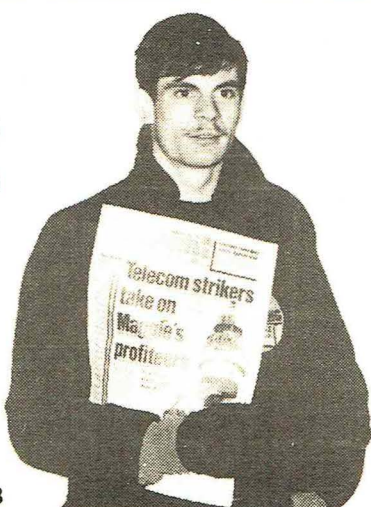
The Labour leaders must not only declare that they will bail out local authorities robbed by the Tories, but must campaign on a socialist programme for housing:

- ★ Total opposition to all privatisation
- ★ All debts and interest payments paid by councils to financial institutions to be wiped out and the cash used for public spending and to freeze or cut rents and rates
- ★ Nationalisation of the construction industry, the banks and other financial institutions under democratic workers' control and management
- ★ A massive programme of council house building
- ★ Tories out at an early general election—Labour to power on a socialist programme.

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