

Militant

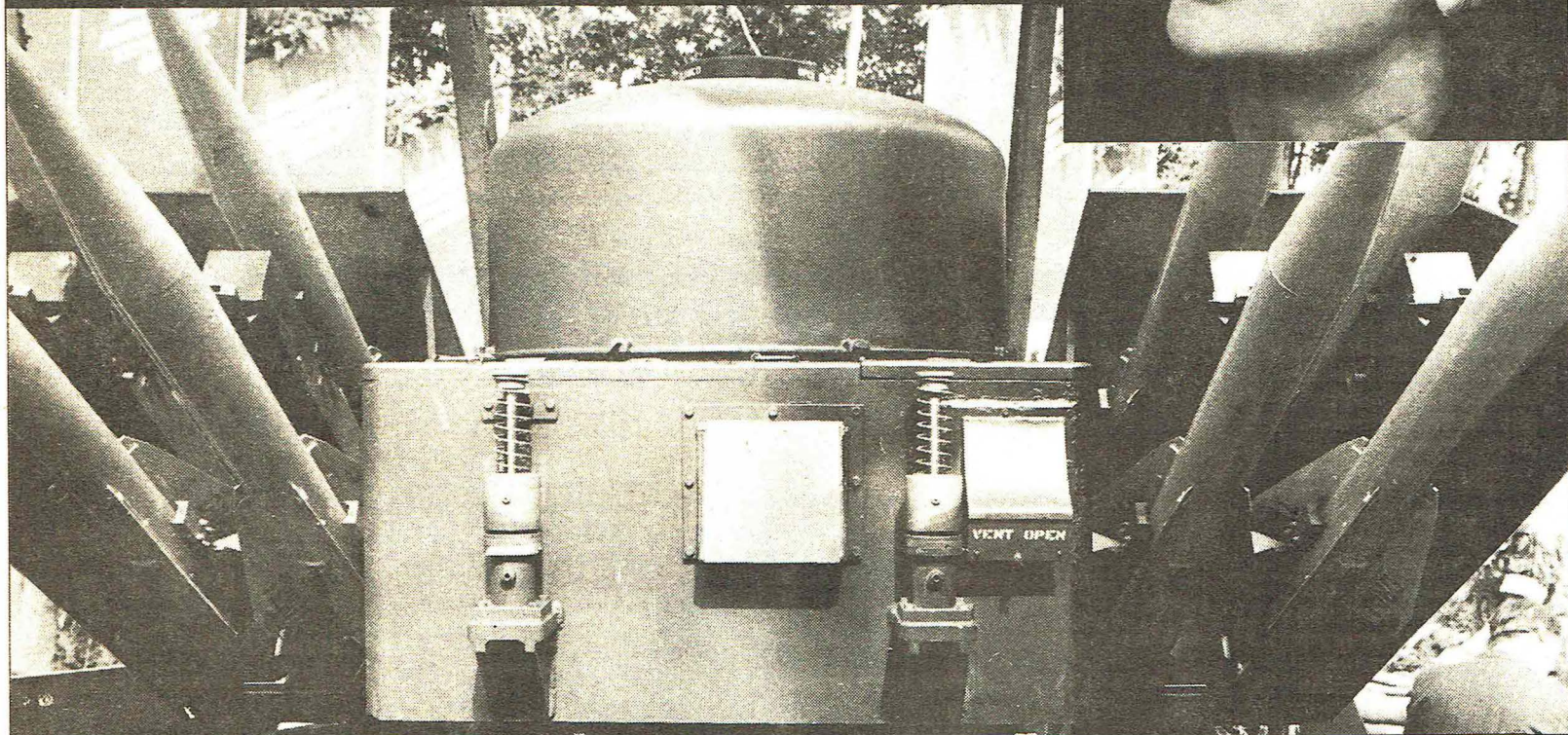
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Labour to
power on a
socialist
programme

Thatcher



the nuclear warmonger

EVEN THOUGH it would still leave enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world many times, the prospect of a limited arms deal between the two super-powers has created panic among the Tories and other right-wing politicians in western Europe and exposed the hypocrisy of their 'defence' policy.

By Pat Craven

Thatcher, like both Reagan and Gorbachev, has always backed nuclear 'defence', but pretended to support the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. This, she has argued, can only be achieved from a posi-

tion of strength, by multilateral disarmament as opposed to the Labour policy of unilateral disarmament.

The American capitalists and the Russian bureaucrats, because it is in their short-term interests, now seem prepared to reach a partial agreement, which would appear to create a 'nuclear free Europe', including the removal of the Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles which Thatcher fought hard to get accepted.

Defence of profits

Now that she is faced with this multilateral agreement to dismantle some weapons, Thatcher is not willing to see them negotiated away at all. She has

"the government I lead will not abandon the security provided for our country by nuclear weapons."
Margaret Thatcher

declared that "the government I lead will not abandon the security provided for our country and for the Nato alliance by nuclear weapons".

She proclaims that of course these 'deterrents' would never actually be used but are there to 'keep the peace'. But a Nato divisional commander told the *Sunday Telegraph* that if the Russians reached the heart of

West Germany within three days, 'battlefield' nuclear weapons would "without any doubt have to be used".

Thatcher exemplifies the cold calculating mentality of the capitalists she represents, prepared to rely on weapons which would plunge mankind into a new dark ages in defence of profits and privilege. She has demonstrated that so long as the capitalist system remains, no comprehensive, permanent disarmament will be possible.

Armed to the teeth

Workers everywhere would welcome a 'nuclear free Europe' and will support the dismantling of any nuclear weapons, though they will not

be taken in by the leaders of the super-powers, who are still armed to the teeth.

Labour must expose the warmongering of the Tories, and reaffirm its commitment to unilateral disarmament. Cruise missiles, which Labour is pledged to remove, might now go anyway.

Polaris, its replacement Trident, and the US F111 bombers must go too, as part of a socialist policy to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction and start to build a world socialist federation, in which war would be impossible.

Why the super-powers are prepared to do a deal—See page two.

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LPYS

national conference 1987

Labour's youth prepare to oust the Tories

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Bradford

Life in Thorpe Edge

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South Africa

Ivin Melaza Memorial Fund. £1,300 collected so far. See page 11 for details of meeting.

Militant

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

Labour must back the teachers

WHILE TEACHERS face the full brunt of the Tories' savage attacks on education, Labour's shadow education secretary, Giles Radice, urges a halt to industrial action by the NUT. Nothing should be done that could damage Labour's election prospects, he says. Apparently Labour can only win when it cannot be accused of guilt by association with strikes. Doubtless the same pressure will be exerted on the civil servants, taking action for decent wages.

But what response do the Labour leaders expect to elicit from teachers who have defiantly kept up industrial action over two years? They are demonstrating again their complete lack of feel for the sensibilities of ordinary labour and trade union members.

The Labour leadership seems to take its cue not from fundamental Party principles (of which supporting all trade unionists in struggle is one) nor from the genuine

response to their policies from the factories and offices. They are obsessed by the latest opinion poll returns.

MORI 'finds' that most people now oppose the teachers' strike. Dutifully Radice, on behalf of Labour, distances the party from these 'unpopular' strikes.

But what does he offer teachers in return? He has not committed a Labour government to the complete scrapping of Baker's new contractual obligations for teachers, nor to a wage rise fully commensurate with the teaching unions' justified claim. He has not called upon all Labour education authorities to jointly refuse to discipline teachers who will not accept Baker's diktat, and who refuse to cover.

Radice warns the NUT not to engage in action that could "distract public attention away from the government's record of failure in education." What better way to expose the Tories' record than to back the teachers' fight, and to demonstrate in action that it is the government which is responsible? Then to make firm pledges to teachers, parents and school students for when Labour is re-elected.

Unfortunately for Radice, teachers read opinion polls too. When Labour is faltering, because of the failure of the leadership to galvanise the electorate, how can they risk postponing a struggle against Baker for their democratic union rights? Some of them are not convinced that there will necessarily be a Labour government to wait for. Others remember Radice "congratulating" the NUT leaders and the employers, for signing the infamous Coventry agreement, which itself signed away conditions for teachers.

The embarrassment of the Labour leaders at the prospect of trade union struggle, is part of their strategy to concentrate on wooing the politically unattached, non-active middle ground. In fact teachers are not traditionally

part of Labour's 'natural constituency'. Many of them must have voted Tory in 1983. With Baker, and with Owen and the SDP talking of no-strike deals, a golden opportunity opened up to win solid backing from the teachers. At the NUT conference even one of the traditionally non-party executive at least urged teachers not to vote Conservative. He was wildly applauded. Giles Radice in contrast was slow hand-clapped.

Another opinion poll, perhaps unnoticed by Radice, indicated that 52 per cent of teachers intended voting Labour. But that was before his speech at the NUT conference. It was before the current wave of strikes by teachers and school students, against the Tory cuts being imposed by the Labour controlled Inner London Education Authority. The leadership of ILEA are firm Kinnock supporters. But the crisis in London's education, that they are presiding over could seriously damage Labour's position in the capital. Perhaps Radice should urge a halt to compulsory teacher redeployment by ILEA.

What the Labour leaders and their advisors fail to grasp, is that for victory, they have to inspire their active supporters and the trade union ranks. They in turn will then pull out their workmates and friends. The leadership's aversion to class battles does not win any extra votes. It merely disillusiones the essential backbone of Labour's support.

The miners' strike had the backing of the majority of the population. By the end of the strike, Labour had reached its highest point in the polls since 1983. The lack of commitment by the Labour leaders to the miners' cause, resulted in the 'wasted year' when they could have established an unassailable lead.

Giving full backing to all workers taking action is not just a basic tenet of a socialist party, it is an essential part of a real strategy for victory.

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Arms deal will not bring peace

AN AGREEMENT between the two super-powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in Europe now seems possible. US Secretary of State Shultz came back from Moscow with firm proposals from the Russian leaders for the removal of all 'intermediate-range' nuclear missiles (those with a range between 1000 and 5000 kilometres).

The Russians have also offered to remove 'short-range' missiles (with a range up to 1000 km). It is not clear whether this would cover nuclear bombs dropped by aircraft, shells and mines, but it would still represent a significant reduction in weapons, even the smallest of which could destroy whole cities.

Underlying reason

But this is not the great step towards world peace that both Reagan and Gorbachev will claim. Even if the agreement goes ahead and covers all intermediate and short range weapons, it will still leave intact the far larger stocks of long-range 'intercontinental ballistic missiles', submarine launched missiles and bombers. The US would still possess 12,846 warheads and the USSR 10,716. The British and French 'independent' nuclear weapons, such as the Polaris missiles, would also remain. There would still be enough warheads to destroy the world many times over.

And the underlying reasons for the arms race would remain—the conflict of interest between the capitalists of the west and the bureaucratic administrators of a planned, nationalised, though undemocratic economy in the Soviet Union.

Neither side is seriously contemplating a nuclear attack, because the outcome could only be the annihilation of both their own country and the one they were attacking. On both sides, there is less fear of attack from their 'enemy' than of revolt from the working class within their own or allied countries.

Yet neither will abandon their nuclear 'deterrent' and allow the other to gain an advantage.

Talks to cut nuclear stockpiles have been taking place over thirty years, yet the number of warheads has continued to grow, at a massive cost to the economies of both sides. The US offered a similar deal to

that now being discussed in 1981, when it was called the 'zero option'. Then it was rejected by the Russians and that was the pretext for the deployment in Western Europe of the Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles which would be removed under the present deal. The present talks have been so successful so quickly only because the cost of the arms race has begun to impose intolerable burdens on both sides.

Inefficiency

The Russian economy has been expanding at a slower and slower rate. Gorbachev has been forced to try to impose 'reforms' to curb the corruption and inefficiency of the bureaucratic elite which feeds off the economy and strangles its development. Diversion of money from the soaring arms bill to modernise industry and agriculture is a vital part of his plan.

Facing such internal problems and the danger of a political revolu-

tion by the workers if it fails, the bureaucracy has no interest in military adventures in Western Europe and can afford to make major cuts in nuclear arms, since it retains a big superiority in conventional forces.

The US economy has a record deficit in both its budget and balance of payments. Although there is a powerful section of the capitalists who make a fortune from the arms industry, the ruling class as a whole needs to impose some restraint on spending which is spiralling out of control.

Hence it has been possible to reach an agreement over weapons which both super-powers regard as secondary and disposable. The Americans have 308 intermediate and short range warheads in Europe and Russia 1973, a fraction of their total. Their deployment in the countries of Europe is a costly complication to powers whose main strategy is based on intercontinental missiles, and in

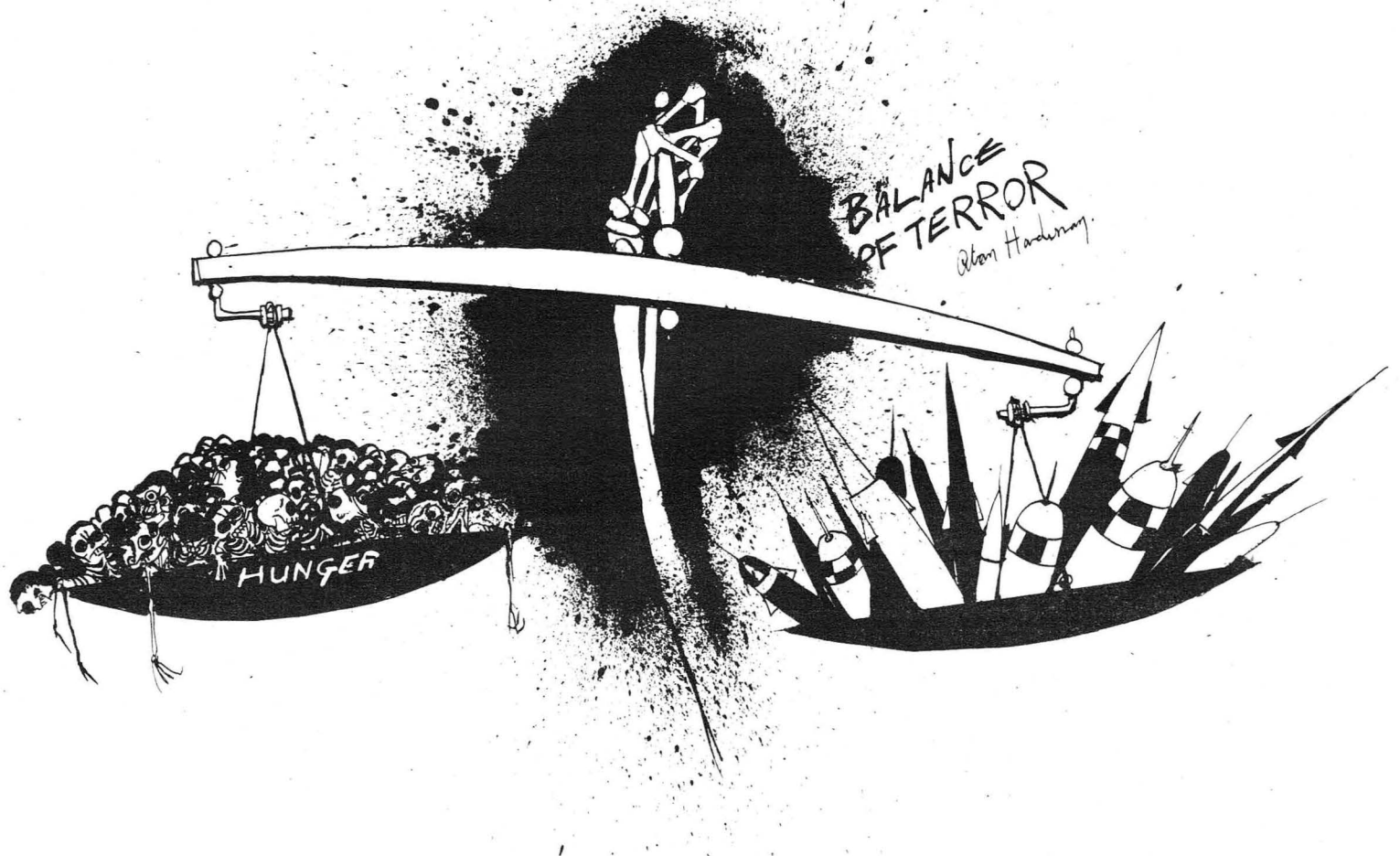
America's case, on the development of an anti ballistic missile defence system, 'star wars'.

Inseparable

Reagan can thus agree to Gorbachev's proposals, and get the bonus of being able to claim the laurels for having made a breakthrough towards 'peace'.

It will however be nothing of the kind. World peace is impossible so long as the present economic and political systems remain. Only when the domination of the monopoly capitalists of the west and totalitarian bureaucrats of the east has been overthrown and democratic workers' states established will it be possible for a world socialist federation to establish permanent peace. The struggle for peace is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.

By Pat Craven



Memorial Meeting

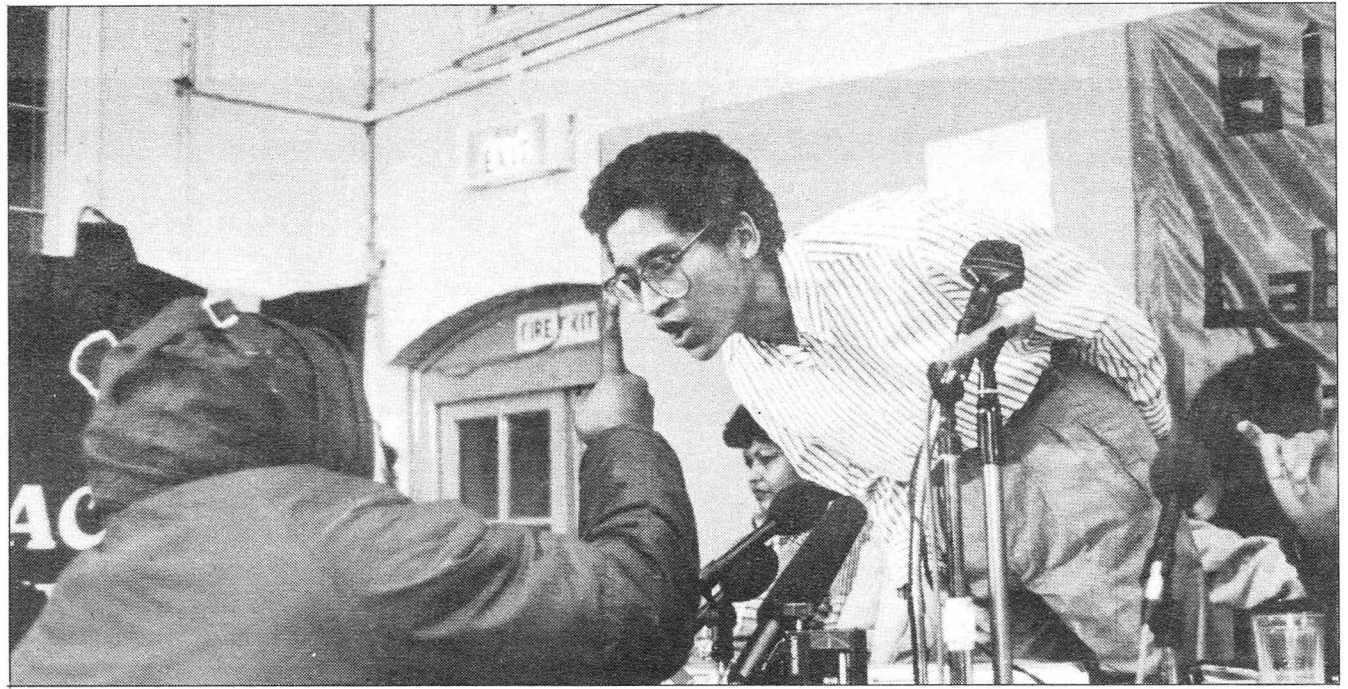
for Geoff Haney;
victim of Zeebrugge.

At Central Hall,
Manchester.
On Friday, May 1st.

Speakers include:

Sue Haney
Terry Fields MP
Ted Grant
Phil Frampton
Ricardo Acuna
Joe Anderson NUS
The Moses Mayekiso
Choir.

Socialism and black sections debate



Linda Bellos being heckled at Birmingham black section meeting.

Photo: Nigel Clapp.

THE CURRENT glare of publicity over black sections in the Labour Party, represents another attempt by the Tory press to create divisions and confusion amongst Labour supporters and Party members, in the run up to the general election.

But the differences aired between black section supporters confirm the mistaken approach they have taken, as *Militant* has consistently explained. Rather than separate black sections and the implication of fundamentally separate interests, *Militant* has always argued for the utmost unity between black and white workers, in the struggle against racialism and for a socialist programme within the Labour Party. But any purge of black sections' supporters must be vigorously opposed.

The right wing Labour leaders, have proved incapable of explaining a class and socialist approach to win black voters and to increase the number of black Party members. Black workers will enthusiastically join a fighting socialist Labour Party that acts decisively for them and for the working class as a whole. But the Labour leaders can only respond to the baiting of the press about black sections and 'loony lefts', by stepping up the witch-hunt again, now against black activists.

It is being rumoured that Sharon Atkin, Labour candidate for the key Tory marginal of Nottingham East, could be removed

as a candidate by the Party's National Executive Committee (NEC). This follows the amendment pushed through last month's NEC by Roy Hattersley, calling for "disciplinary action to be taken against anyone supporting the black sections' manifesto."

The amendment was carried in the wake of press reports of the sparsely attended black sections' conference in Nottingham, where the manifesto was launched. Linda Douglas, the Young Socialists' representative and the only black on the NEC, described the decision as a further attack on the democratic traditions of the labour movement.

Watchful eye

Black workers are keeping a watchful eye on the Labour leaders. They want answers to their immediate problems from Labour. Most of them do not support separate black sections.

A Harris poll discovered that only 31 per cent of Asians and 7 per cent of blacks backed Labour because it supported them, but 64 per cent and 76 per cent because it "supports the working class." Despite this, black workers would be dismayed to see the only clear actions from the Labour leadership on the 'black issue' to be the disciplining of black sections' activists.

However, Sharon Atkin, who was selected as a parliamentary candidate on a black section platform, did reportedly say at a

black section rally in Birmingham, that the election of a Labour government did not matter, and that the central question for her was black representation.

This view was supported by Lambeth Council leader, Linda Bellos. They are taking the policy of separate black sections to its logical conclusion. Black representation is presented as more important than the vital need to replace the Tories, the party of mass unemployment, visas and racist controls, with Labour. Only Labour, if armed with full socialist policies, could defend the interests of black and white workers.

Then other black section supporters and parliamentary candidates, Paul Boateng, Diane Abbot, Bernie Grant and Russell Profit, in an apparent attempt to distance themselves from these remarks, wrote to Neil Kinnock.

Correctly they emphasised their overall wish for a Labour government, and that all energies should be directed towards that goal. Bernie Grant said in a letter to the *Independent* that he now thought "the pursuance of constitutional issues surrounding black sections was not the priority at this time."

All this has only fuelled the suspicions of many that some of the leading campaigners for black sections, were most interested in promoting *themselves* as representatives in parliament.

Militant has always believed that the problem of the lack of participation by blacks in the Labour Party, is political not

organisational. The Labour leaders' failure to repeal all immigration controls or to conduct a serious campaign against racism, as part of a socialist policy to build houses, create jobs and expand the welfare state, is the underlying reason for large numbers of blacks not becoming active in the Party. This will not be solved by organisational short-cuts. It will not be solved by black sections with their concentration on securing reserved places on parliamentary shortlists or on this or that committee.

Class unity

This public dispute has allowed the press the opportunity to claim there are racial divisions within the Party. That is why they have given such publicity to black sections' activists, even though they are well aware that they far from represent the majority of blacks within the Party.

This should serve as a warning. Racial divisions pose the most serious threat to the vital unity of the working class. The task for all labour movement activists is to overcome these divisions in the fight for socialist change. It would be fatal for the labour movement to import these divisions into its own ranks. But unity is not abstract, it can only be forged around a concrete programme of thorough-going social measures, with the fight against racism as its core.

By a Militant reporter

Campaigning to win in Broadgreen

RECENTLY I VISITED a woman who had just moved into Liverpool Broadgreen to see if she wanted to go on to the electoral register, so that she would be able to vote.

"I remember the night me and my mother went out and voted for Maggie," she told me. "We went up the street to get this old age pensioner who we'd been giving milk to, and we got her to come out and vote as well."

"She was wearing two odd shoes because she was crippled with arthritis and the three of us hobbled up the street in the teeming rain. All the women outside the school said they were voting for Maggie as well."

"We told Mrs Quinn she should vote Tory because we knew she didn't have a telly; in fact, she lived on a bottle of milk a day! We'd seen Maggie on the telly, kissing babies and waving a shopping bag around. 'Today this shopping bag costs you £16.00,' she told us, 'but if you put me in, it will only cost you £8.00!' We were all made up with Maggie. She was going to put up the family allowance; she was going to put up everything."

"The other night, me and my mother were watching her on the telly, remembering that night. We were saying that we would never vote for anyone again. She's took off us instead of giving to us. But the rich people are getting more and more all the time."

"I'm fed up with the Royals as well. Have you seen Di's necklace? And 'Little Wills'—he's a multi-millionaire already! Here's my son; he's just asked me for a pound. He wanted to do CSEs, but if he'd gone back to do them, he'd have got no money till September. So he's left school and he's on £16 per week. That doesn't keep him. Who's going to do anything for him?"

Her son, Thomas, wants to join the Young Socialists. I told her about Terry Fields and the kind of policies he stands for. It took a while to convince her, because, as she said:

"I remember voting for Harold Wilson and he put the prescription charges up. I've been feeling fed up with the lot of them. But if you give me one of those forms I'll fill it in, because this Terry Fields, he does sound like a proper Labour man."

By Agnes McLaughlin
(Broadgreen Labour Party)

Bond wins appeal

SAM BOND and Beryl Molyneux have obtained a further injunction from the Court of Appeal to prevent the interim Liberal administration of Liverpool City Council taking any further action to dismiss them from their jobs with the council.

The Appeal Court's decision effectively overturns an earlier ruling to lift an injunction by the High Court in Liverpool. Lawyers were due to appear in court again on Wednesday to argue for a continuation of the injunction, pending a full appeal hearing.



ELECTION COUNTDOWN

THE *SUN* yet again justified its unenviable reputation as the most dishonest of all the British press with this front page (right).

An outfit called *Audience Selection* seems to have lived up to its name and selected 1,000 names from phone books for yet another Tories-poised-for-landslide opinion poll. It does not take a genius to work out that this is not a very exhaustive sample of Britain's population or that people who do not have phones are excluded from it. Even the *Sun's* editor may have guessed that these people are unlikely to be Tory voters. Needless to say, the *Sun* got the results it wanted and was able to rave about a probable Tory majority of 125 seats.

Even the best opinion poll is likely

to be out by a million votes. In 1974, different polls forecast the Tories would beat Labour by between 1 and 7 per cent. The *Daily Express* outdid them all, giving the Tories an eleven per cent lead and the Liberals 25 per cent of the votes.

When the real votes were counted, the Liberals had 14 seats and Labour won the election with five seats more than the Tories.



LAST WEEK Labour leaders said they would win control of ten to twelve councils in the 7 May elections.

The Tories' attacks on local government spending have meant massive cuts in jobs and services. If Labour manifestoes gave concrete commitments on creating jobs and expanding services, the Party would win thousands of extra votes in both local and national elections. In Liverpool,

the Labour Council stood up to the Tories so as to create jobs and maintain services.

This is an example the labour movement should be proud of. Instead the Party leadership persists in its attacks on the Liverpool labour movement and is even prepared to inflict years more Liberal rule on the city's workers for the sake of their witch-hunt against *Militant*!

At the very press conference that was supposed to launch the campaign for the council elections, Party spokesman Jack Cunningham made this abundantly clear. The leadership is "reconstructing" Liverpool Labour Party and "seeing *Militant* off", he bragged, adding: "naturally that makes it difficult to some extent for us electorally!"

Some workers will greet Labour's promises to create jobs through local councils with scepticism, because they have seen Labour local authorities carry through Tory cuts in recent years. So it is doubly criminal to attack those councillors who refused to take this mistaken course.

The right-wing claim that their "moderation" is electorally popular. Yet the real result of their strategy was discovered by party members in Newham South who turned out for a canvass of the Custom House council estate. They were told to go home again by councillors who did not dare face local workers and defend their decision to close a nursery in the area.

THE 1987 LABOUR Party Young Socialists conference attracted around 2,000 young delegates and visitors to Blackpool over Easter weekend.

With a general election now possibly only weeks away, all minds were concentrated on one question, how could Thatcher's eight year reign be brought to an end?

How could the LPYS get the 6.2 million young voters to support Labour? How are the LPYS going to ensure Labour changes the lives of young workers, unemployed, YTS trainees, students and school students, for the better?

UNDER MASSIVE banners saying 'Get the Tories out in '87' and 'Socialism—the only way left' the weekend started with a joint rally between the LPYS and *Trade Unions for Labour*.

There were many young trade union activists in the conference, delegates from their LPYS branches and sponsored visitors from union branches. Strikers from Caterpillar, Moat House, HFW Plastics, Salford Plastics, Ardbride, Keetons, Derby Trader, Hangers, a large delegation from the civil service dispute and many more came to conference.

Ron Todd, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union told the rally that unions should not run away from taking on the Tories. Weakness only encouraged people like Thatcher.

He called on Labour Party members not to bow their heads because of the opinion polls, only one poll counts, and not to apologise for being trade unionists or socialists.

The enthusiasm and fighting spirit of the LPYS came across in every debate and activity over the weekend. The debate on the election showed that LPYS members in many areas have already done a huge amount of work in canvassing the youth vote and making sure young voters are registered.

The LPYS have for long been the most *campaigning* section of the labour movement. They will be the hardest workers for a Labour victory.

They will also fight to ensure that Labour's leaders end the nightmare that Thatcher rule has brought to young people.



Linda Douglas, re-elected by a huge majority as the LPYS rep on Labour's national executive.



Ron Todd, TGWU general secretary.

Labour Party Young Socialists election year conference

Tories out in '87

'I've never seen anything like it'



MICHIO ITOH a visitor from Osaka, Japan told *Militant*: "I've never seen anything like this conference. The Japanese Socialist and Communist Parties don't attract young people to their youth conferences."

"The ruling class smashed a militant trade union movement after the war. But things like privatisation and unemployment in the railways, steel and mines are giving the basis for a new movement."

"We need a militant movement"



BERND RUYTERS from Amsterdam, a representative of the Dutch union federation (FND) youth section: "We heard about the YS's campaign against the YTS. The Lubbers coalition government has been trying to impose a YTS scheme."

"Due to pressure, Holland's four biggest city councils have refused to implement the scheme, so it won't start this year. But the government will try again in 1988, so we need to organise a militant movement. I will be fighting for real secure jobs, and equal pay for equal work for young workers. There has been a 30 per cent cut in benefits for 18-21 year olds in the past few years and young people have got to start fighting."

Marxism—the victory of foresight over astonishment

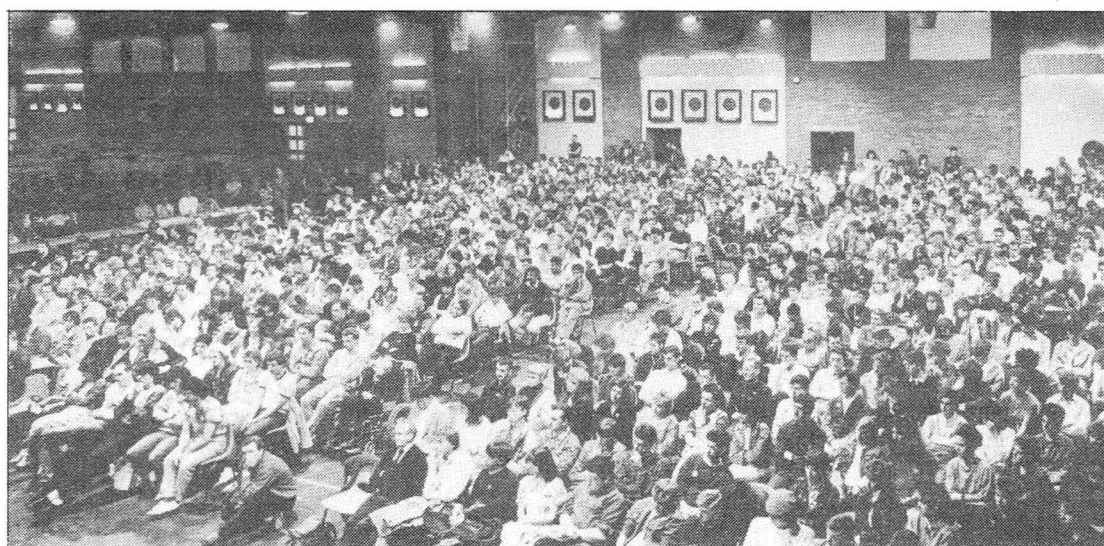
THIS YEAR'S *Militant* meeting was held four miles away from the conference centre as conference halls were barred by the party officials. Around 1600 people had to be bussed in.

Despite this, the meeting was one of the highlights of the weekend. Antonio Rubera, a speaker from *Nuevo Claridad* the Spanish Marxist paper explained why they had not been taken by surprise by the recent mass movements of students and workers.

Nuevo Claridad supporters had been expelled from the Socialist Party (PSOE) by the right wing in 1978 but unlike the right, they had foreseen the development of mass struggles.

Marxists had led the 3 million strong student movement which had given encouragement to the present strike wave. The Spanish working class was going back to its old tradition of struggle.

Kevin O'Shea from the Caterpillar workers' Joint Occupation



Bureaucratic manoeuvres can't stop the *Militant* readers' meeting.

Committee got a standing ovation. In the fourteenth week of their occupation, they had shown not just determination to win but workers' ability to run industry and society. For example, the

Pink Panther tractor had taken only half the time to produce without the management!

Kevin showed the backing from the women's support group and the international support

from French and Belgian workers. They had also seen off management's attempts to use right wing union leaders to end the occupation after the law courts and police had failed.

Ted Grant, *Militant's* political editor asked how could it be that the most reactionary Tory government for a century had even the remotest chance of winning a third term in office. They had presided over mass unemployment and the destruction of industry while investment had been neglected for short term profits from measures like privatisation.

But Labour could only win if it aroused its own activists to bring less politically active workers to the polls.

Labour should explain why the Tories had been attacking the working class. Their system is in crisis as wealth production comes up against the barriers of the nation state and private ownership. Labour could win an enormous majority for a clear socialist programme.

LPYS members showed how much they wanted to fight for these ideas by donating £7,000 to the Fighting Fund.

Teach the Tories a lesson

THE CONFERENCE passed an emergency resolution supporting the School Students' Union day of action, on 14 May, against Tory plans to conscript school leavers on to slave labour schemes like the YTS.

Activists in the SSU explained that the aim was firstly to ensure every school student knew precisely what the Tories had in store for them. The union would use leaflets, meetings and whatever action was appropriate in the local area, and build support amongst the teachers' unions and in groups like YTS trainees.

The LPYS were inspired by the experiences of France and Spain. At a rally on Sunday night, Adrien, a member of a school students coordination committee near Paris explained why millions of students moved into action in December. They were fighting the right wing government's plans to restrict entry to university education, a bitter blow in a country with massive youth unemployment.

Demonstrations involved millions, particularly after the CRS riot police came in with truncheons and water cannon against the students, beating to death a student, Malik Ousseki.

When the students turned towards the working class organisations for support they got it, not only against repression and reactionary legislation but for workers' own demands.

Juan Ignacio Ramos, the leader of the Spanish school students movement showed how their school students movement had fought reactionary proposals by the 'Socialist' government's right wing education minister. He reported on how the protests brought out 3 million students, on how the demonstrations had



Juan Ignacio Ramos.



Adrien, French school student activist.

organised to defend against fascist attacks.

The movement was a great success. For the first time in history, young working class Spaniards get a free education. A movement led by Marxists had forced a PSOE government to concede major reforms.

Neal Cooper, chair of the School Students Union in Britain explained what lessons these movements had for Britain. The quarter of a million school students who took action against YTS in 1985 showed the possibilities. In the last few months, there had been spontaneous strikes against teacher redeployment in London and in other areas.

The Tories' next step was to try to get 18 to 25 year olds on the Job Training Schemes (JTS). The SSU's next step was to use the day of action to ensure that school students and all young workers affected by these plans started to fight back.

LISA WOODS a school student in Neath told *Militant*: "An English teacher asked us to speak to a class on any subject we wanted. I chose the YTS. I didn't think I'd get any response from first or second years. But unemployment and the miners' strike have made them very responsive."

CAROLINE AUSTIN a school student in Bexleyheath told *Militant*: "Under half the students in my school got jobs last year. It's a Tory borough and they've closed down part of our school with the sports, arts and cookery facilities."

"This 14 May day of action will just be the beginning with lobbies, meetings and so on. We have to get the backing of the teachers' unions to make sure there is no victimisation. We are fighting for many of the same things as the teachers."

In brief... In brief

CONFERENCE condemned the attempts to reduce the upper age limit to 21. Joe Owens, a 22 year old miner who is chair of the largest NUM branch in Britain pointed out that he would be too old. "We won't have our rights taken away."

Paul Ursell, LPYS national committee member told conference that despite the right wing's attempts to stifle the LPYS, they welcomed the consultation as it raised the question of how to win 6.2 million votes for Labour and get young trade unionists involved in the party.

The LPYS would be fighting to get their own proposals accepted by Labour Party and trade union branches, and for increased resources. If the LPYS got the Swedish YS budget of £3 million instead of cuts in the already tiny budget, getting the LPYS's ideas to every young voter would be much easier.

CONFERENCE condemned the expulsions of Liverpool councillors and district Labour Party members. Sue Coswell of Liverpool West Derby YS asked how many young voters were won by the enquiry which cost £47,000, equal to six years' LPYS budget.



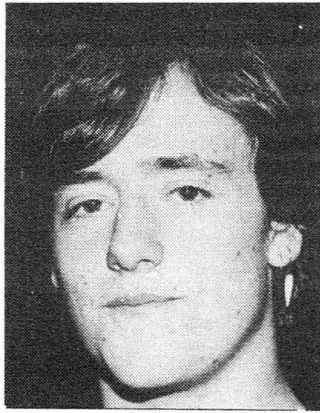
At the international rally.

Photos: Mick Carroll.

Tomorrow's working class leaders

RON LEES, Dudley East LPYS: "I joined the YS six weeks ago and started selling *Militant* the week before last. Since last Thursday I've sold 19."

"I work in an engineering firm. The Black Country has lost thousands of jobs so I'm considered lucky to get £82 for a 42 hour week. My father lost his job in a steel works and got a few thousand pounds compensation for 30 years' work. Now the bosses treat you like dirt and we've got to fight back."



Ron Lees

TREVOR WESTON (NUM Parkmill Colliery Clayton west branch, Yorkshire) is the under 24 junior rep at his pit. He told *Militant*:

"I got a leaflet on the conference and the NUM sponsored me. I'm very impressed and I've joined the LPYS. Our pit has just had a strike in the haulage workers. Three young lads who had been doing work at under rate came out and stuck out for a week and got what they wanted."

"We're still fighting. We've had a number of attacks since the national strike which have led to walk outs, but this was the biggest so far."

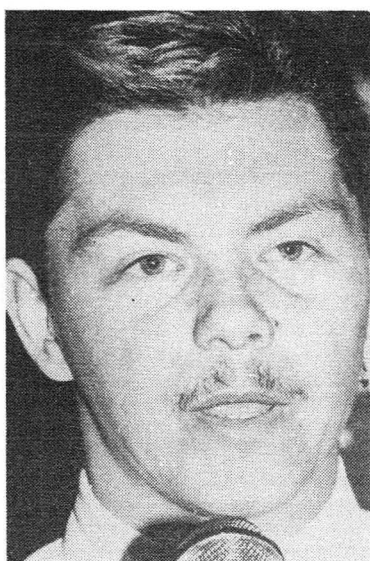
ANDY WILCOCK, 23 year old T&G shop steward at the Moat House Hotel, (workers have been on strike there since 2 April):

"We joined the T&G because our basic rights were being attacked. For instance statutory sick pay was made subject to the discretion of the general manager. Chamber maids, who used to have the choice of turning down cleaning up rooms when people were sick and used to get paid £5 dirt money, all of this has gone, it has to be done for nothing."

"We get paid £62 for 44 hours. Other unionised hotels in the area get £95. We went on strike because the management refused to talk to us. Since then we've been building up support from local workers, such as the fire brigades' union. YTS trainees are being used as scabs, but the students of the college where they go have backed our strike. We've learnt a lot from the Caterpillar workers who spoke at the *Militant* readers' meeting. Hearing him you could never get down-hearted."

MICHAEL BALLANTINE, SOGAT member at HFW Plastics, Gateshead:

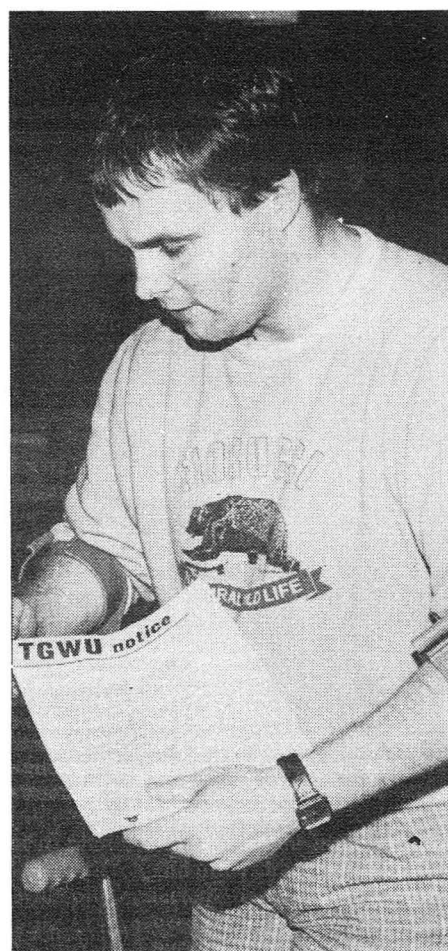
"We were sacked for refusing to put up with our conditions. We'd had no pay rise for four years. Last year we got a pay cut. We organised an overtime ban, so the bosses then sacked us. Now they're getting scabs in who are paid £34 less than we



Michael Ballantine.

were. We're getting support from other unions in the area, who know their bosses would like to do the same. 30 police have been out every day to fight our 47 strikers. The police attacked one German trade unionist who had come along to the picket line.

"Thatcher's tried to take away our union rights, but I've now been given three weeks of political education. I've never before had any interest in politics. We've met lots of people in the same position as us, such as the Caterpillar workers. We're going to win."



Andy Willcock collects money for the Moat House strikers.

Woman's burden

Women in capitalist society are not only a vital part of the workforce, usually the lowest paid and most exploited, but they are also weighed down with most of the responsibility for housework and child-care. Margaret Manning explains how socialism could relieve a woman's burden.

THE EMANCIPATION of women will never be achieved whilst hours and hours still have to be spent on housework.

Modern machines such as hoovers, washing machines and tumble dryers have made housework easier, but it still takes a lot of time, especially for mothers, and most workers cannot afford all the latest equipment anyway.

Housework should be shared out between adults, and not be the responsibility of the women, but we should be campaigning for it to be socialised.

Teams of cleaners could be employed, by local authorities or tenants' organisations for example, on decent wages and short hours, with modern, safe equipment to go round the houses of those who want the service. Cleaning would be less of a chore if done with others, being paid for it as a job with short hours and the best equipment.

Laundries

Washing machines though an advance, still need to be filled, and emptied. Clothes hung up and ironed. It is also an enormous waste of resources for each house to have a machine. For those who want to use them, local authorities should provide, very cheaply or free, a laundry service where dirty washing is collected from your house—washed and ironed at a laundry with the best equipment, staffed by men and women on good wages and short hours. The clean clothes would then be delivered back to your home.

A good cheap eating policy is the other main requirement of a

socialist programme to reduce housework. Cooking at home can be fun but should only be done when you don't want to. Good quality, plentiful cheap eating places of a wide variety should be available to remove the burden of cooking when you don't want to, plus providing nutritious food at a price all can afford and creating increased social opportunities especially for single women.

Eating out

Chip shops, the old cook shops and now the numerous burger and other fast food establishments show the desire for not always having to cook. But these are not usually cheap or nutritious. At one regional Labour Party Conference when we raised the idea of community eating facilities, a male delegate said he did not want to eat off Chinese take aways—entirely missing the point. The upper class has always had the ability to eat out whenever they want. I do not want to eat at the Ritz but would appreciate a range of take away and eat in places.

In Manchester, the Labour Women's Council has taken up a campaign to get the City Council to have a cheap eating policy. We have put forward various ideas on how to use the council's existing facilities, such as improving the quality and opening up school and college canteens to the whole community. Already some of the college canteens are used by local residents, and one or two schools that also have adult classes are trying to make the canteen available to adult students at the cheaper prices.

If senior citizens choose, rather than just their own luncheon clubs,



Single mother living in south London—the problems of looking after a home multiply for single parents.

they could use school canteens, possibly at the same time as the pupils or at slightly different times. Older people appreciate the chance to mix with younger and it would also lead to a more civilised atmosphere in the canteens. Old and young do enjoy each other's company.

Many leisure centres in Manchester have cafes, we demand they be made cheaper as well as better publicised. The Town Hall has a staff canteen which is grossly under-used. This could be opened up to the general public—though with priority if necessary at certain times for staff—with a wide variety of food available.

Maybe Labour Party members in other areas could report on any successes they have had along these lines or other possibilities they have thought of.

Public ownership

New cafes and restaurants could be opened, catering for all tastes, some existing private ones could be taken into public ownership, with wages and conditions for staff vastly improved and the best equip-

ment used. The current eating places are gross exploiters of labour, especially women and youth.

A socialist policy of cheap eating facilities would create thousands of well paid jobs and remove the burden of cooking and washing up when you do not want to—giving time not only for work but education, leisure and being involved on the running of society. It would allow children to grow up well nourished and provide increased opportunities for socialising for single women with families.

These ideas are not really new, ways of socialising housework have been looked at for the last 100 years at least—but neither are they outdated. In fact it is only now really feasible, on the basis of new technology.

In the Second World War British restaurants, of a reasonable standard, were provided in Manchester so women could concentrate on the war effort not cooking. We demand such facilities so we can enjoy life.

Such policies would be bound to inspire women to vote in a Labour government to implement them.

Basildon votes for Militant

"WHAT DO you mean they're selling my house, I've only just moved in." That was the response of one resident on the estates in Basildon targeted to be sold off by the government. He was one of the few that had not heard of the government's plans to sell £500 million worth of public housing to the private sector. But he was one of the many who bought a copy of *Militant* to find out more.

In the referendum on the issue organised by Basildon Council, in a 71 per cent turnout, 98 per cent of tenants in houses owned by the Commission for New Towns, voted against privatisation and for the houses to be transferred to the council.

According to the Electoral Reform Society, 98 per cent is the largest majority they have ever recorded in any referendum. In fact they do not know of any larger in the whole of Western Europe.

Basildon Council's Labour leader, Harry Tinworth, has demanded that Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley accept the wishes of Basildon tenants and transfer the houses to the council. Ridley has not even acknowledged the letter. The Tories' demand for ballots, is obviously only for those that provide the 'right' result.

But the response to *Militant's* campaign and the feature on the referendum in the paper was outstanding. On the threatened estates, an average of one in three bought the paper. The only limit on the number sold, was a physical one—how many doors could we knock on. If we could have called at every house, we would have sold thousands, instead of the excellent 337 we totalled at the end of the week.

The effect on our sellers was electric. At the start of the week we were perhaps a little daunted seeing such a huge pile of papers lying there. But a little later that day, after selling 40 in one hour, we were really tearing into it, with fierce competition between the sellers to see who could sell the most. The campaign touched a nerve amongst the residents. We discovered groups of workers trapped on rundown estates by rent arrears, caused by exorbitant heating costs that had been stuck on to the weekly rent bill.

Having followed up all these sales, we have established over 80 regular buyers. Our local feature gave *Militant* a mass appeal in Basildon. We intend to build on that to develop a mass sale of the paper every week.

Womens' charter

A Charter for Women Workers. Produced by Liverpool, Manchester and Rochdale Labour Women's Councils. Order from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscott Rd, London E9 5HB. 50p each plus 20p p&p.

A Charter for Women Workers



Left and Right

Just an ordinary Baroness

"HERE WE don't believe in being extreme or outrageous, it is our duty to promote equal opportunities and uphold the law," says Baroness Platt of Writtle, chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The Baroness gave up paid employment 25 years ago. "When she started she knew absolutely nothing about the way life is lived. She thought people worked out of choice," says one former EOC employee. "Sexual harrasment was something she thought only happened to women of disreputable character," said another.

But no doubt her good works on various Tory committees admirably suited her for a job championing the rights of ordinary women. Or perhaps working women had better rely on their own strength and the strength of the labour movement to win their battles. Since the Sex Discrimination Act was

passed women's earnings have *declined* from 75.1 per cent of men's to 74 per cent. Seems that Baroness Platt's moderation is not working too well.

Bank on Betty to lead the way

KEITH BEST was not the only MP to take advantage of the Tories' plunder of publicly owned assets, and buy shares in British Telecom. One hundred other MPs voted for the privatisation legislation, and then joined in the scramble for the bargain price profitable shares.

Not surprisingly 91 of these were Tories. But there were three Labour MPs—George Foulkes, Ted Leadbetter and Betty Boothroyd—who bought shares, the value of which has already doubled. Right wing, witch-hunting, National Executive Committee member, Betty Boothroyd, bought £1240 worth of shares, now worth £2000. Her inspiring campaign slogan during the 1983

general election was: "Bank on Betty". Well, Betty's balance in the bank should certainly look healthier since her entry into the world of share dealing. But can we still bank on her to fight for Labour conference policy to renationalise all privatised assets?

Tory auto-propaganda

THE AUTOCUE is a wonderful invention. What nature and years in Hollywood have done to Ronald Reagan's intelligence can be partially overcome by this device. It flashes up a mirror image of your speech, which can be pre-written by your more awake advisers. So you too can appear relaxed, friendly, natural and reasonably bright.

The manufacturers have sent brochures advertising their idiot aid to MPs, apologising for sending an unsolicited letter but explaining "the nature of our service requires us to be discreet."

They shouldn't worry about the government. They are sure to use them already. What they are looking for is a machine with rose coloured glass which will automatically halve unemployment figures and double productivity, a sort of computerised *Daily Express*.

Wheels on fire

Motorbike messengers—bikers' view

I READ THE report in *Militant* about the motorbike messengers supporting the Spanish students' demonstrations with interest.

I did the same job in London and Birmingham a few years ago. I had just been made redundant, I had a nearly new Kawasaki bike and I just couldn't face another round of queueing and bureaucracy down at the dole office. So I thought I'd make my fortune as a motorcycle messenger!

Self-employed

It's not that simple. Firstly you are self-employed, so you only work when there are jobs. You find yourself racing other messengers to finish first to get the next jobs.

By Nigel Wheatley
Walsall

Secondly, as you are self-employed, nobody is responsible for insuring you against accidents or sickness. And who would insure you, out on a bike in all weathers, tempting pneumonia, or worse?

Then there's the accident risks. You're in the city traffic, taking chances to beat the queues and 'fair game' to any driver. It must be one of the most risky jobs in Britain.

But is there any money in it? Well, the adverts do say "£200 guaranteed weekly." But big money only comes from big mileages, and they cause about a year's worth of wear to your bike in about

I had just been made redundant, I had a nearly new Kawasaki bike and I just couldn't face another round of queueing and bureaucracy down at the dole office. So I thought I'd make my fortune as a motorcycle messenger!

six weeks.

I realised that the motorcycle despatch firms were only paying me enough to cover the running costs like tyres and petrol for the bike. I was subsidising them!

Basically I needed to earn enough to pay running costs, buy a replacement bike each year and have at least £100 a week clear to live on and pay insurances. Me and several mates decided we would be better off on the dole.

Trainees

In our last weeks as messengers, we noticed several school leavers on mopeds hanging around. Apparently the despatch firm had advertised for 'trainee' messengers at the



Motorbike messenger in London.

Photo: Ben Eastop.

Job Centre. They were there on 'approval' for two weeks, which meant they weren't getting paid!

After two weeks these hopeful kids were told they weren't good enough and another group of unpaid trainees were taken on (or taken in). So before we left we made sure that the Job Centres knew what was going on, and the advertising cards disappeared off the shelves.

The booming messenger business is undercutting the unionised pay and conditions of the Post Office Parcels Service. The despatch bosses farm out all the risks on to the job hungry youth and rake in the profits.

Limited rights

A few despatch firms have had to supply their "best riders" with bikes, repair

service and cheap insurance but only to stop them setting up on their own with their ex-customers.

The task of unionising the motorcycle messengers must be taken seriously. If the Spanish students' union got the backing of the motorcycle messengers, they must be a hell of a good union and just what we need in Britain. I just wish I had been there to see it.

"No fixed abode"

A MAN HAS lived in a shed on the Petersham estate for eighteen months. One young lad with parents in bed and breakfast and a sister who already takes in lodgers doesn't know where he is stopping from night to night.

Another lad in our town was told to "get pregnant" before he could get somewhere to live. Some council officials have a funny sense of humour.

These are some of the problems we have come across in our "no fixed abode" campaign in Long Eaton, Derbyshire. As we reported in *Militant* 17 May 1985, homelessness, particularly among the young, is not confined to the big cities.

The head of the Tory council's housing department still claims that

homelessness "is being adequately dealt with by council officers." Tory MP Peter Rost told a lobby last October; "I didn't appreciate there was a problem." It's been up to our campaign, the Trades Council and branch Labour Parties to fight for the homeless.

Phone boxes

There probably isn't a permanent crisis for the council. Many of the homeless will soon go and be homeless somewhere else! But people sleep in telephone boxes and on park benches in our town and probably in yours as well.

The council kept no count of how many people are homeless; they didn't even accept it was their duty to house those in "urgent need" cases "for a reasonable period of time" (28 days) pending investiga-



The 'No fixed abode' campaign was formed to oppose Tory board and lodging regulations.

tion of their claim under the 1985 Housing Act.

Their list of accommodation includes places slated by environmental health, fire and fair rent officers. A hostel for about 15 people will shortly be set up in Ilkeston. But will it help Shaun an unemployed punk of 19 who wants to move in with his girlfriend? Will they have to have a kid first? 200,000 are homeless in the country according to a junior minister. Maybe 60,000 face moving on under last year's board and lodging

regulations. Millions more live in sub standard housing.

Every council should have plans now to expand housebuilding like Liverpool did before Labour were disqualified. If the 1945-51 Labour government could rehouse British workers after the blitz and doodlebugs, such homelessness is an indictment of capitalism forty years later.

By Graham Lewis
(Erewash Labour Party for No Fixed Abode campaign)

Langbaugh council's loony right risk election defeat

SEVEN MORE councillors have been expelled from the Labour group on Langbaugh Council, Teesside. The former Labour leader, Arthur Seed, and another right-wing councillor, had already been expelled, after voting with the Tories to remove the Labour Housing Committee chair, Terry Collins (See *Militant* 842).

The seven, supporters of Seed, were kicked out for failing to support a group decision to re-elect Terry Collins. At the Housing Committee, after Collins was moved by the Labour side, two right-wingers immediately moved Arthur Seed, who was elected with the votes of five other right-wingers and the Conservatives!

At this the twelve Labour members walked out in protest, and voted for more expulsions. The new Labour leader, Arthur Taylor, said: "The Housing meeting pushed things to an intolerable level and we disown these people completely".

Labour's majority has now been wiped out and the loony right have made the task of ensuring a Labour majority in May very difficult indeed.

By a Militant reporter

Fighting Fund

This week
£1649
(Up to LPYS
conference)

Area	Received	% of target achieved	Target
1 South East	1318		2250
2 London	3456		9350
3 South West	615		1900
4 Eastern	960		3200
5 Southern	928		3050
6 East Midlands	866		3250
7 Wales	1219		4800
8 Scotland East	534		2800
9 Manchester/Lancs	686		3850
10 Merseyside	1345		7500
11 Yorkshire	1500		8300
12 West Midlands	795		4750
13 Northern	729		4600
14 Scotland West	211		3500
Others	9654		6900
Total	24817		70000

ONCE MORE delegates and visitors to Labour Party Young Socialists national conference in Blackpool demonstrated their support for the Marxist policies of *Militant* with a marvellous collection of £6,700.

Despite being held over three miles away from the conference centre more than 1,600 paid a further £1,450 in bus fares and entry tickets to hear the annual highlight of the conference and follow it up with a brilliant 'Militant disco'. If you were unable to attend the conference why not follow the example set by the conference and send us a donation for our Fighting Fund?

The total is now £28,449 and we have until the first post on 6 May to reach the target of £70,000. How can this be

done? Between now and then we are asking every reader to pay special attention to raising Fighting Fund. Once you have made a donation ask your mates to do the same. John Slatery, West Derby LPYS, was given £21 for his 21st birthday. He has donated it to the Fighting Fund.

Make sure our rattling tins are used on every paper sale along with our new stickers which were snapped up at LPYS conference.

Every area should hold a fund raising event before the end of the quarter. A jumble sale in Sheffield raised £37; a social in Stirling raised £20 and one in Newham, £40. Helping someone to move house in Newham raised £60 and bingo tickets in Walton, £18.40. Organise a party, a meal or a video night for

the May Day weekend. Make the whole of that weekend one massive Fighting Fund collection by using all workplace, street and estate sales to raise extra donations. Use the tins and stickers on the May Day demonstrations.

By the end of the quarter we aim to have broken all previous records. With the help of all readers we can do it.

Donations this week include: Marie Walsh, Meriton, £65 tax rebate; Ian Robertson, Tyneside, £60; TGWU convenor, Letchworth, £3.50; J Glover, Liverpool ASLEF, £5; Sue and Gary Greenwood, Leicester, £2; Terri, Leicester, £1.20; Alan Walker, Edinburgh, £10; Helen Donnelly, Edinburgh, £5; Terry Patterson, £10 EIS expenses.

Coventry MP fights for workers

THE FEVER created by Coventry City's first visit to Wembley is the only thing to relieve the hammering of closures and redundancies that the city has taken. Winning would be much better, but when the dust settles it'll be back to a grim future.

A large proportion of Coventry South-East MP Dave Nellist's time has been spent in dealing with the effect the recession has had on working people's lives.

Ralph Lucas worked for Coventry Climax which was 'bought' from BL but never paid for! "The company was run on a shoe string; people weren't getting paid, and many of us believed the money was going to Switzerland.

"When the receivers came, we were told we couldn't get money from the company. It was only the union and Dave's pressure that got us the money from the company funds.

"I wish that before the receiver went in, the unions had called in people like Dave to see which way to go. They were worried that if they rocked the boat, jobs would go—but the jobs went anyway."

This kind of bitter lesson is being learnt all over the city. Rolls Royce workers' future has now been jeopardised by privatisation, which a propaganda campaign and parliamentary pressure did not stop.

The continuous Tory attack on public sector workers is causing great anger and resentment. Last month, the two major teachers' unions held for the first time in Coventry a joint rally to protest against Baker's proposals. Dave Nellist was well applauded when he said that the Tories were using the teachers as a test case in the hope to extend the same conditions to other public sector unions.



Dave Nellist talks to Coventry trade unionist.

Equally ready to move into action are civil servants. The assistant secretary of the CPSSA DHSS branch said: "Usually we have to do a lot of convincing to persuade our members to take action. This time, they're asking 'When are we going out?'"

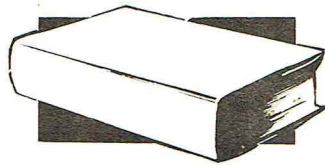
She went on: "It's impossible to run the benefits system properly at the moment. Young girls who have just been promoted, are so swamped with work that they don't know if they're standing on their heads!" In the health authority, three disputes are brewing simultaneously. A union activist explained: "The mood is changing. Members have lost their fear of privatisation; you can only be threatened with dismissal so many times." Another told me: "We've come to the end of the line. If we go on like this, we'll all end up on the sick." Such is the effect of unfilling vacancies and longer hours: "We're just building up for the big blow with the health authority. It's little things, one after the other."

One dispute over regrading involves the medical secretaries, many of whom have only recently joined the union. Domestic staff are balloting at Walsgrave hospital over contract tendering, while the biggest of the three disputes concerns porters, lab technicians and drivers who may take all-out strike action against privatisation.

Workers cannot wait any longer to defend their conditions. GEC workers are still out over pay and miners will be striking for reinstatement of their sacked comrades. Many workers are drawing political conclusions. The Labour Party must show the same spirit and inflict defeat on the Tories.

By Dave Griffiths

Lessons learned in struggle



"FORTY THOUSAND women left their homes, families and roles as housewives to let their sisters know that they too were doing something in their areas about this long, hard fight."

By Tony Cross

"You look at a friend and smile inside: 'My God, she's actually sticking up for herself', or that woman helping in the kitchen thinking 'How the hell do we manage to cook for all these people', or 'Oh look at her and she was always the quiet one, good on you...'. The men were babysitting in many cases for the first time; it was no longer. 'He's got things to do'; it was 'Now so have I'. We were no longer willing or even succumbing to sitting in the back seat, we were going to do things whether they liked it or not."

"It brought out the best in most of us. It was a relief to be in the fight, instead of sitting at home worrying about what the country is coming to. I mean most said it's not political, well I run around saying it bloody well is, with two kids who leave school in five years or so, what's for them; someone's got to fight and my husband being a miner gave me the chance to put my case forward."

These comments from members of the Coventry miners' wives support group are from their book *Mummy, what did you do in the strike?* which had a second run on 17 April.

An awful lot has been written about the miners' strike, and not all of it is worth reading. What's good about this book is that it's by the ones who were there. It's their own experience in their own words.

I've known this book's writers ever since the strike, and I must admit that some passages bring a lump to my throat when I read them. They show how hard workers in struggle are prepared to fight and what tremendous reserves of energy and solidarity the working class has.

Above all, as the writers themselves comment, the book



shows how they changed during the strike. I don't think many of them have read much Lenin (yet), but they prove again and again the truth of his phrase "an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory".

Recently some of the Coventry miners' wives commented that *Militant* supporters stuck with them during the strike and haven't deserted them since. The group themselves are still fighting for the reinstatement of the sacked miners and giving support to workers in struggle from Silentnight to South Africa.

New generation

I think the words of one miner, in a passage from the book called *The lessons of Orgreave*, show that the Tories created a new generation of socialist fighters when they provoked the miners into their historic strike:

"Nothing deterred us, not even the para-military style tactics by the so-called police which

reminded me of a Latin American country in their struggles for socialism. In years to come and when Neil Kinnock is sitting comfortably in Number Ten, Downing Street, I hope he casts a little thought of the heroic NUM lads, who got their limbs broken, their skulls fractured, and their flesh torn apart by Maggie's Army.

"For the sake of the British working class and Socialism, stand up and be counted Kinnock... Throughout our twelve months' struggle, we never lost anything, actually we gained the pleasure of knowing we can hold our heads high, and the knowledge that we gained about socialism, the knowledge that you can only gain from fighting."

Mummy, What did you do in the strike? is available from Coventry Miners' Wives Group, 6 Winster Close, Keresley End, Coventry. Cost: £4.00 (including post package).

Massey Ferguson jobs shock

DEMORALISED BY 10 weeks of short-time working Massey Ferguson tractor workers at Banner Lane, Coventry were struck by news of 1,000 redundancies on 16 April.

By John Marshman
(Coventry South West LPYS)

Massey, the largest tractor plant in western Europe, now owned by the Canadian Varity Corporation employed 6,500 in 1978 but will shortly be cut to just 2,500. The local press were told about redundancies the night before the workforce themselves. As an extra insult the remaining 2,500 will be told that they must stay on short-time working, while management seek an agreement on big pay cuts before full time working can recommence.

Workers were told that the sacrifice of a three-day week would protect 450 jobs which were in jeopardy. Scott Glover, the firm's boss, claims that he

Caterpillar workers' message to Massey Ferguson: From Kevin O'Shea: "The Massey Ferguson problem is all too familiar to our ears as we receive the same kind of treatment from the faceless men who think that by moving a flag on a map, they can wipe out our community and 1200 lives. Our message to them is: fight back for all you are worth, occupy the plant if need be, rouse public sympathy in your area, enlist the help of all the politicians and dignitaries who have condemned the action. You can win the fight as we undoubtedly will.

"We stand with you in support and should you need any help of any kind we'll be only too glad to give you the kind of backing that the Scottish public has given us. Resolve is the key, show the people of Coventry that you will not stand for this abominable decision and they will back you to the hilt. Fight on lads, our best wishes are with you."

Dave Nellist MP has condemned the redundancies. He says he is prepared to give full support to the workers if they decide to occupy the plant as Caterpillar workers have.

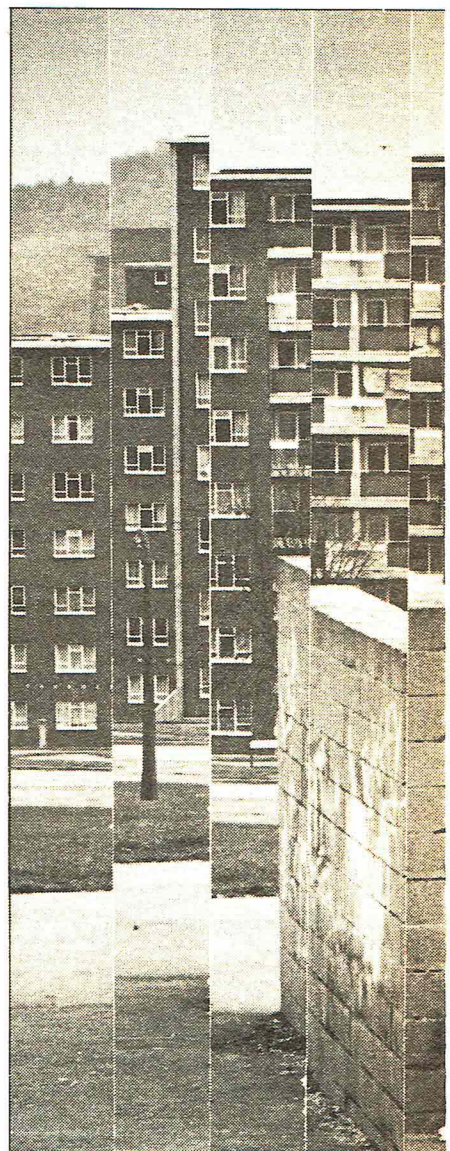
'underestimated' the scale of the crisis.

World tractor demand has slumped disastrously in recent years due to the strangling of the third world by the international monopolies and a stagnation of the American economy.

Coventry Massey Ferguson workers must seek support from the firm's other factories and oppose these redundancies, drawing inspiration from the continuing tenacious struggle of the Caterpillar workers.

Thorpe Ec
Bra

A p



no e

"We've applied for a been turned down. O can't get about very expected to carry him especially when my v pregnant?"

"The flats are a dis workman came to loo put his hammer down off! The wallpaper on peeling off with damp the plaster behind it."

Anthony Murphy, M

Thorpe Edge Estate Bradford

THORPE EDGE estate in the Bradford North constituency was built in the fifties to give a bright future to the postwar generation. Today, Thatcher's government has given the people of Thorpe Edge a grim present of unemployment, poverty and unfit houses. LINDA MCKENZIE and DEBBIE GILL spoke to some of the residents. This is their story of life in Thorpe Edge in the eighties.

Prison with



Escape

transfer, but we've
r 17 month old son
well. How can we be
up and down stairs,
life is six months

pace. A council
at the balcony. He
on it and chunks fell
our son's bedroom is
and it's bringing off

eynell House.

LABOUR COUNCILS have a duty to their tenants to adopt a socialist housing programme. Tenants and householders will look to the Labour Party to defend them against the Tories. They should join it to ensure that the Party fights for:

- ★ A massive programme of council house building, following the example of Liverpool city council who built 4,000 council houses (not flats) in three years;
- ★ Nationalisation of the construction industry under workers' control and management so that new homes can be built by working people for working people;
- ★ No rent or rate increases and no cuts in services. Services to be restored at least to the level they were before the Tories came to power;
- ★ A Labour government committed to the nationalisation of banks and other financial institutions and the wiping out of councils' debts;
- ★ An early general election—Tories out and Labour to power on a socialist programme.

"We live, two adults and a small child, in a one bedroom flat. It costs us £20.24 a week and the bedroom and bathroom both have damp. My five-month old always has a cold. We only have one fire. That's very expensive and we can't afford to have any more heating."
Mrs Swain, Richmond House.

Thirty years of decline decay and isolation

YOU CAME through the war as a child. In the years of rationing you were a young adult, living in the slums of Bradford. Imagine the hope of the 1950s, of a new home for you and your family on the new estate of Thorpe Edge.

Just up the road the old Jowett factory is being taken over by International Harvester. They can't get enough workers. And at the bottom of the hill the new textile firms are taking on plenty of women workers.

OK, it is a bit far from friends and from town, but they'll soon sort out the buses. And when they build shops it will be alright.

Thirty years later it has become obvious how bad the building was. Your kitchen, bathroom and

bedrooms are covered in damp. They never did get round to putting up shops on the estate, although the granddaughter got on a YTS at one of the supermarkets that surround it.

Maybe the other will find work at the new supermarket they are building where International Harvester once stood. If your friends aren't on the estate, the chances of getting to see them more than once a week are pretty slim.

This is Thorpe Edge Estate in Bradford in the 1980s. If you have got a job and live on one of the better roads—well, maybe it's not too bad. For others, Thorpe Edge is a prison where day follows day with no chance of escape.

"IT'S BLOODY AWFUL here. I've been here for five years and I can't get out. It took me two years to get a new ceiling!

"Every time you want a repair you have to chase them, shout at them and bawl at them. Every year the pipes burst in the top floor flat and we on the ground floor get it all. The bills are really high. My heating for a bedsit was £187 for a winter quarter."

Mr Hunt, Rosedale House.

Work? What's that?

SIX OUT of ten of working age living on Thorpe Edge have no job. Of the four who are working, two are on MSC schemes. Those who are working are almost certainly low-paid.

It's all a long way from the hopes of the '50s.

International Harvesters once employed over 2,000 skilled workers. The crash came in 1981 when the American owners decided that they would switch production of tractor parts to Doncaster and close the factory. No-one asked the workforce what they thought.

The site was sold to Morrison's supermarkets. Hutchinson's mill sold part of its premises to Sainsbury's supermarket. Rank Wharfedale sold land to Hillard's supermarkets. GEC sold its site to B and Q furniture superstore. Thousands of jobs in engineering were replaced by hundreds of

jobs stacking shelves.

Bradford has the lowest-paid workers in the country. Bradford Trades Council is campaigning for jobs at a minimum wage of £115, which is the EEC decency threshold.

The real losers in this part of Bradford are the generation of young people who have left school since the slump in local industry in Thatcher's early years. They see the government's schemes for what they really are—a dead end substitute for a real job.

Despair has driven some to glue sniffing and drugs and fascist graffiti have appeared on the estate. But the increasing campaigning activity of the Bradford North Labour Party Young Socialists have been attracting young people to the ideas of socialism.

"We're flooded out with condensation every year. The bedroom is rotten. In the kitchen it's falling off the walls. We have to redecorate every year. You can't leave your clothes out, or they just go grey. It's nothing in the winter for us to find three feet of water in the morning."

Jack Murphy and Shona Dunbar

What do I get for my rent rise?

BAD PLANNING and cowboy builders are to blame for most of Thorpe Edge's problems. Poor materials mean that balconies cannot be used and noise comes in from next door. Damp soaks the walls because of lack of ventilation, poor heating and badly fitting windows.

No-one dares allow the kids out to play. Around the blocks lie broken bottles and rubbish that packs of dogs nose around in, leaving their own dirt behind.

Rent rises of 5.4 per cent were supposed to allow more for building repairs, but there are no plans to spend anything on Thorpe Edge.

Local residents and Labour councillors have forced the coun-

cil to spend money on some blocks. To renovate just twelve flats in Livingstone House, which had stood empty for two years, cost over £100,000.

Even if this much was spent on every block in the estate, it would only paper over the cracks. If the council works within the confines of the Tories' laws, the money would be taken from other needy areas.

In the last seven years, £70million has been stolen from Bradford by cuts in government grants. The council must campaign, as Liverpool has done, to get its money back and to get the money that's needed for decent homes and services for all.

Sri Lanka Japan, Pakistan

Japan's Tories in trouble

ONLY EIGHT months after a landslide victory for the Liberal Democrats, Japan's Tory Party, Nakasone's government is in serious trouble.

Last month a Liberal Democrat stronghold, Iwate-ken, fell to the opposition Socialist Party for the first time since 1962. Then, in last week's local government elections, the Liberal Democrats lost 105 seats, mainly to the Socialist and Communist Parties.

The Socialist Party gained 53 seats, winning 443 in total, while the Communist Party more than doubled its number of seats from 22 to 55.

The immediate reason for this dramatic drop in support has been the government's introduction of Value Added Tax, despite their July election promises that they would not introduce "any large increase in indirect taxation."

As the *Wall Street Journal* commented on 15 April: "Some of the anti-tax sentiment even took shape recently as rioting on the streets. When Mr Nakasone refused to budge the voters hit him at the ballot box."

Opinion polls now give Nakasone only 25 per cent approval, compared to 50 per cent only six months ago. The Liberal Democrats would have lost even more heavily if many of their candidates had not distanced themselves from the government's policies.

The government intends to press on with VAT, but the price it will pay will be increasing splits inside the ruling party, with the possibility that Nakasone could be forced to stand down.

Now the Liberals have resorted to physical violence in parliament, to prevent opposition MPs from challenging the budget it was railroading through!

The government's problems will strengthen the fight for a Socialist and Communist Party government pledged to break the power of capital in the strongest capitalist economy in the world.

By Simon Cole

Carnage in Sri Lanka

THE SCENES of appalling carnage from a bomb blast in Colombo, Sri Lanka will have shocked workers everywhere. 150 were killed by the blast, deliberately timed for the city centre evening rush hour, to exact the maximum death toll.

This comes just days after the shooting of 126 Sinhalese (majority community) bus travellers, near the eastern town of Trincomalee.

The right wing UNP government has blamed the main Tamil (minority community, comprising one sixth of the population) guerrilla group, the Tamil Tigers. They have vehemently denied responsibility for either outrage, as have the Tamil splinter group, Eros.

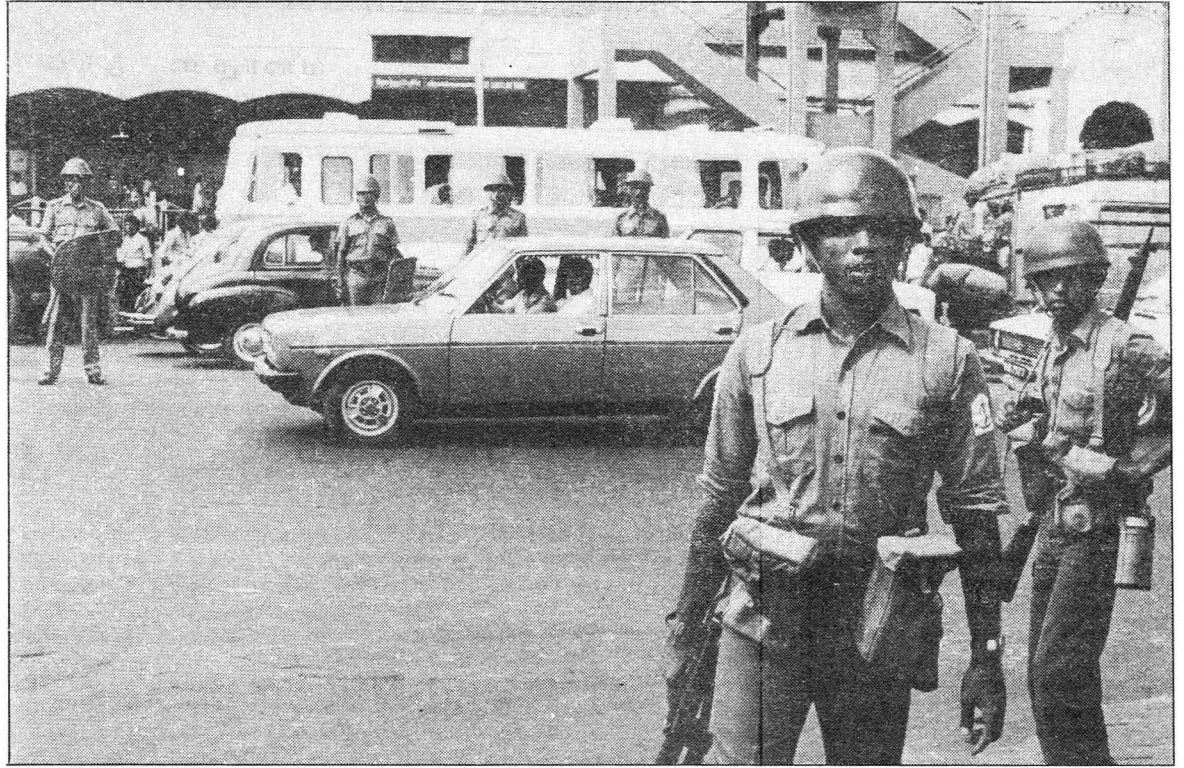
Brutality

The brutality of the Sri Lankan army, goaded by extreme Sinhalese chauvinists, including some within the UNP government, has fuelled support for the Tigers. Last month alone 29 Tamils were slaughtered by army bombardment of Jaffna.

In particular the Tigers built their strength following the horrific anti-Tamil pogroms in the capital, Colombo, in 1983. Hundreds were killed. Tamils were set upon by Sinhalese thugs, beaten and burnt to death, while armed police stood by. 53 Tamil prisoners were murdered in jail, with the collaboration of the warders. 50,000 Tamils fled their homes for the 'safe' haven of the north, the youth bitter and vengeful.

Today in the northern Jaffna peninsula the Sri Lankan army has been virtually tied down in its barracks. The Tigers represent the main armed force around Jaffna, where education, health and justice are being taken out of the hands of the national state.

Now there are fears of fresh attacks on Tamils. A curfew has been imposed in Colombo in an attempt to prevent more killings. Already there are reports of violent in-



The brutality of the Sri Lankan armed forces has fuelled support for the Tamil armed groups.

The Sri Lankan workers' parties must stand firm for unity between Tamil and Sinhalese workers and peasants, and struggle to oust the right wing UNP government.

cidents in that very same prison against Tamils.

The hideous bomb attack will have the effect of enraging the Sinhalese masses and provoking a backlash against the Tamils.

By Wednesday, the Sri Lankan air force was bombing Tamil guerrillas and civilians in the north with 250 reported killed. The government has threatened to continue the bombing until the guerrillas cease their activities in the south.

Right-wing Sinhalese have been

pressing the government to embark on a 'final' military solution in the north, although it is questionable whether the state forces have the capability to crush Tamil resistance. And any full scale incursion into the north could compel the Indian government, under the pressure of its own Tamil population, to intervene.

Sinhalese chauvinists will play on the hostility of the Sinhalese workers and peasants, to the false tactics of terrorism that the Tigers have followed in their campaign.

The Sri Lankan workers' parties have a burning responsibility to act, before there is any danger of new and worse communal savagery. They must stand firm for unity between Tamil and Sinhalese workers and peasants, against communalism and capitalism. They must stand for a unified socialist Sri Lanka, with autonomy for the north and east, but offering the right to self determination for the majority Tamil areas up to and including separation, if the Tamils so desire, with guarantees of full rights for Sinhalese who may live in these areas.

But they must step up the struggle to oust the right wing UNP government, and for a socialist Sri Lanka, linked to the struggle for socialism in India, which can guarantee decent living standards, peace and harmony for all nationalities.

By Jeremy Birch

Pakistan workers call for Labour Party's support

WORKERS AND political activists in Pakistan have been shocked by a statement from the British Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, after his meeting with Pakistani prime minister, Mohamed Khan Jonejo, during his recent visit to Britain.

From a Pakistani correspondent

Mr Kinnock told the London correspondent of the biggest Pakistani daily, *Jang*, that he was "very much impressed by the personality of Mr Jonejo. He talks openheartedly."

This contradicts his previous expressions of solidarity with the struggle of the Pakistani masses led by the Pakistan People's Party.

Neil Kinnock's statement has been given widespread publicity in the Pakistani media. The aim is obvious. The present so-called 'civilian' regime in Pakistan

wants to give the impression that it has the support of all the political parties in Britain.

Jonejo's regular meetings with Tory leaders did not surprise the activists here. They understand that both governments are of the ruling class.

But the Kinnock-Jonejo meeting has been widely condemned by the activists. They are shocked that a Labour leader can be "impressed" by a feudal landowner whose government is responsible for unprecedented attacks on the living standards of the poor masses.

It is the duty of Pakistani socialists to expose the crimes of the present regime and to inform the working class internationally. Free trade union activity is not allowed. Political prisoners are still held. The regime is responsible for the over 1,000 killings during the sectarian clashes in Karachi last year.

Political exiles are not

allowed to return as they still face long prison sentences in terms of the previous martial law regime.

Under Jonejo's government, bomb attacks on opponents have become part of normal life. In March, ten people were killed by a bomb explosion in an anti-government religious rally in Lahore. Among those killed was the mullah Ihsan Ilahi Zaheer, a leading opponent of the regime.

General strike

There was widespread reaction against the killings and a spontaneous one-day general strike in most of the cities in Punjab, including Lahore.

The Jonejo government, in reality the civilian face of General Zia's military dictatorship, has failed to gain a social base. It is completely isolated from the masses by its pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist policies. To gain time it is promoting sectarian



Demonstration against the Lahore bombing in a remote town in Punjab.

riots, so that it can divide the opposition on sectarian lines.

Jonejo, in particular, is becoming the target of the masses because he is seen, correctly, as a stooge of the military. His nickname has become "Jo-na-joo", meaning a person who knows nothing.

Yet Neil Kinnock is impressed by his personality. Labour Party members in

Britain should condemn and oppose Neil Kinnock's relationship with the most hated, anti-worker government of Pakistan.

The working class of Pakistan is faced with the struggle to overthrow the Jonejo-Zia regime and establish democracy and socialism. This struggle will mainly be fought through the traditional mass party,

the Pakistan People's Party, and the campaign to commit it to a fighting socialist programme.

Jonejo's Muslim League and Thatcher's Tories represent the interests of the ruling class. The Labour Party and the PPP must represent the interests of the working people. Links should be built between the workers in both countries.

Spain, Argentina, South Africa

Ayala general strike is a huge success

THE GENERAL STRIKE in the Ayala valley in the Basque country on 14 April was a 100 per cent success. Entrances to the valley were blocked off by barricades and in one of the main towns, Llodio, with a population of 12,000, there was a demonstration of 5,000 people.

The strike had been called by the UST union (led by Marxist supporters of *Nuevo Claridad*). With just one shop steward in a factory of 96 workers putting the demand, it soon spread to the whole of the valley.

The LAB union, controlled by the Basque nationalists, has the majority in the valley. But in spite of being against the strike, they

From correspondents in Spain

were unable to openly oppose it because of the tremendous pressure from their members. Once having decided to join in, they recommended to the workers that anybody going into work should be beaten up!

Instead of following this advice the UST organised a picket of 300 workers, going from factory to factory, convincing the workers with patient, political discussion to come out. The union has also organised a committee representing all workers in the valley.

The success of the strike shows the effect of a correct marxist programme combined with the right conditions. The UST, representing a minority of workers in the valley, was able to successfully lead and organise the strike.

Leaders of the UST and

the SE (the Marxist-led students' union) in Alava were interviewed on national radio.

7 May

Last week a one day general strike took place amongst the engineering workers in Vizcaya province. It was organised by the UGT (Socialist unions), Workers' Commissions and the ELA-STV (union of a populist Basque nationalist party). Another strike has been called for 7 May.

The Marxists are raising the call for a general strike

in the whole of the Basque country that day to coincide with this strike.

As a result of the onslaught of strikes which the Socialist government is facing at the moment, the Prime Minister, Gonzalez, wants to introduce anti-strike laws. With the general mood in the country at the moment it does not seem that these laws would have much effect—at the moment even the workers on the fascist paper *El Alcazar* are on strike as they haven't been paid for weeks!

The battle of Reinosa

REINOSA HAS become a symbol of the country-wide wave of struggle against the right-wing policies of the PSOE (Socialist) government. The fight against redundancies in the local steel plant has escalated into a semi-insurrection against the forces of the state.

After a series of defeats inflicted on the para-military Civil Guard by the workers and youth of the town, the government, incredibly, sent in 700 Civil Guards and 16 armoured cars to enforce a ban on demonstrations.

Tear gas and rubber bullets were fired, injuring dozens, as blazing barricades were thrown up to repel the invasion.

The implacable struggle of Reinosa highlights the growing radicalisation of workers throughout Spain. More detailed reports will be published in forthcoming issues of *Militant*.



Junta chiefs in court—now right-wing officers demand an end to trials.

Argentine coup foiled

400,000 PEOPLE packed Buenos Aires' Plaza del Mayo on Sunday, determined to prevent the return of military dictatorship to Argentina.

Thousands of workers, our correspondents on the spot report, surrounded the country's largest barracks, isolating the officers inside. This was the decisive factor in forcing their surrender.

They had been demanding the end of trials of fellow officers implicated in the previous military regime's "dirty war" against the left.

These dramatic events have temporarily strengthened Radical Party president Raul Alfonsin. His government had been facing mounting opposition to its austerity programme.

But, despite his heroic pose, Alfonsin has merely acted as an arbiter between two forces which cannot be reconciled in the long term: the reactionary butchers at the top of the armed forces, and the working class.

It was not democratic principles that restrained the generals from launching a coup last week. They knew that in today's conditions a coup attempt would lead to civil war and threaten the existence of capitalism itself.

Alfonsin wants to treat the mutineers with kid gloves. After finishing negotiations with them, he hot-footed it back to the Plaza del Mayo to assure the crowds that "some of the rebels are heroes of the Malvinas war" who had taken the "wrong path".

For the first time that day he was booed. The left Peronist youth, whom Alfonsin has been attacking recently, were most vociferous on the Plaza del Mayo.

Even the right-wing trade union leaders were forced to call a limited general strike.

A fuller analysis of the situation in Argentina, one of the key countries in the Latin American revolution, will appear in next week's *Militant*.

By Tony Cross

South Africa : railworkers show the way

THE SOUTH AFRICAN railworkers' strike, now in its seventh week, has been a magnificent confirmation of the undefeated militancy of the black working class.

By George Collins

Despite the State of Emergency, industrial struggles have continued. The railway strike is doubly important because it has broken new ground in the struggle.

The railway workers' employer is the state itself - the mighty South African Transport Services (SATS), which refuses to recognise their union, the South African Railway and Harbour Workers' Union (SARHWU).

Soldiers and police have been drafted to occupy key rail depots. Now management has issued an ultimatum, threatening to replace strikers with white scab labour.

The strike was sparked off by the arbitrary dismissal of a single worker, Andrew Nendzana. The spontaneous walk-out by workmates at his depot has escalated into the biggest strike ever in South Africa's public sector, involving 22,000 railway workers. It is costing the state at least R500,000 per day.

Behind the strike lie months of rising anger among railway workers in the Southern Transvaal. A rally of 2,000 SARHWU members in March made clear their fighting mood, declaring support for the Freedom Charter, programme of the banned African National Congress, demanding the release of all detainees, and resolving to set up workers' defence committees.

A speaker from the South African Youth Congress called on the workers to take control of the railways, harbours and airports. After the rally hundreds of chanting workers marched down Johannesburg's main street.

The struggle has enormously built up the workers' organisation and confidence. The bosses offered Andrew Nendzana reinstatement on condition he paid a fine, and half pay to the workers for the period of the strike. These concessions were rejected.

A meeting of 450 delegates from 12 depots, after more than two weeks on strike, restated the demands:

- ★ unconditional reinstatement of Andrew Nendzana;
- ★ elimination of racism "anywhere and everywhere in Sats";
- ★ no victimisation of strikers;
- ★ full pay while on strike.

The strike has become a focal point for growing sections of workers. Solidarity action has been taken by 6,000 postal workers. Support exists among municipal workers, among dockworkers in Durban and many other sections.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the United Democratic Front have expressed full support for the strike. In a letter to SATS, COSATU urged them to "negotiate in good faith" with the workers, and warned that mass dismissals would increase industrial and political tension.

But more than verbal warnings to the SATS bosses will be needed to ensure victory. Class support, building on the example of the postal workers and the general mood of solidarity, needs to be mobilised with urgency.

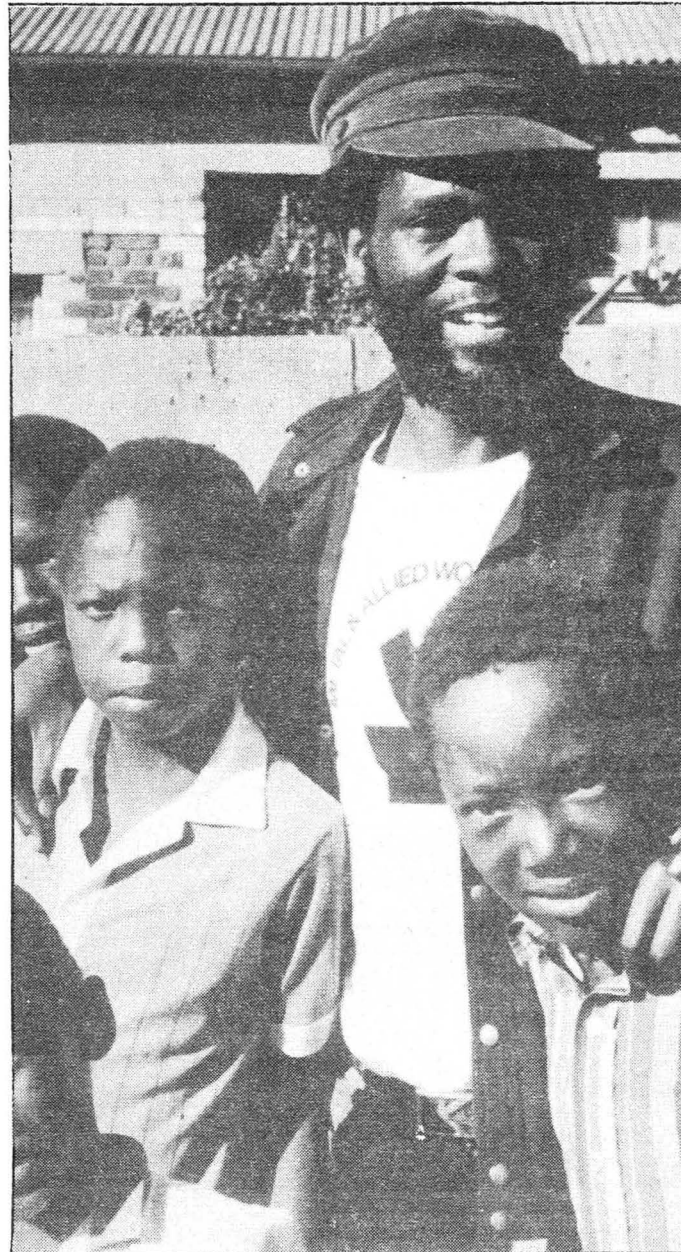
The wave of arson attacks on trains and railway lines shows the anger among workers and youth. The trade union and ANC leadership need to mobilise this energy, to organise black railway workers nation-wide in strike action, and to convince black worker-commuters to support the strike.

Class support needs to be organised, linked to COSATU's national minimum wage campaign.

Explained in clear class terms, the railway strike could begin to have an impact on white workers also. On the railways, where 105,000 out of 206,000 employees are white (and used as strikebreakers by management) this is of particular importance.

Following the victory of the OK Bazaar strike, the rail strike is further evidence of the recovery of the organised workers from the blows inflicted by the state. With metal workers, mineworkers and other sections now about to put forward their wage demands, there is an enormous opportunity for the COSATU leadership to unite all these struggles under the banner of the national minimum wage campaign.

Organised around a definite demand, such a campaign could unite massive numbers in action, infuse the movement with fresh awareness of its decisive strength, and lay the basis for a new period of political struggle on an even higher level than in 1984-1986.



MOSES MAYEKISO (above), leader of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union in South Africa, is on trial for his life. He has been in prison since last July. Now, together with four others, he has been charged with high treason for his exemplary role as chairman of the Alexandra Action Committee, uniting the street committees formed by youth and workers during the struggles of 1985-86.

The AAC, the state alleges, threatened to "overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state". If found guilty on this charge, the maximum penalty is death.

Moses Mayekiso is one of the first shop-floor workers to be elected general secretary of a major union in South Africa. To many he has come to symbolise the unity of the organised workers and youth in their joint struggle against apartheid and capitalism. This is the real reason why he is on trial.

Trade unionists and socialists in South Africa and internationally must rally to their defence. Messages to: MAWU, PO Box 9451, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa.

Meeting in memory of IVIN MALAZA, murdered South African worker militant:

7.30pm on 5 May at North Peckham Civic Centre, Old Kent Road, London SE 15. Organised by *Militant/Inqaba*. Donations to Ivin Malaza Memorial Fund, c/o Cllr L. Faulkes, 143b Amhurst Rd, London E8.

Sterilisation the answer?

Dear Comrades,
I agree that mentally handicapped people should have a right in what they do and say, but, having said that, there are many of them who are unable to make decisions for themselves. I am referring to the mentally handicapped woman who has a mental age of five.

I suppose she could be prevented from getting pregnant, but being on the pill may interfere with her medication. If she did become pregnant what future would that child have? If the woman is unable to look after herself, how could she cope with a child and, if she had a child,

it may be taken away from her and adopted. She could have an abortion, but she would need an anaesthetic, which could be detrimental to her health.

Why put her through all that? In this case, then, I think it would be in Genette's own interests to be sterilised, but there is no easy solution and the subject will always be debatable. I think the decision should be made by her parents, doctors, social workers etc, and not by the courts as this will set a precedent for other similar cases.

Yours fraternally
Debbie Spall
Hucknall LPYS

Strictly for the birds

Dear Comrades,
This is "strictly for the birds"! The residents of Hackenthorpe, Sheffield, of the deformed workers' state of South Yorkshire, were treated to the bizarre coincidence of the following three circulars arriving on their doormat last week (apparently together).

Item 1: A Sheffield City Council leaflet explaining the budget crisis and the need to cut services and lose up to 300 jobs.

Item 2: Sheffield City

Council's civic newspaper, with its front page boasting their intention of spending £30,000 on scaring the birds from the city centre - high tech fashion.

Item 3: *The Watchtower* organ of the Jehovah's Witness Tendency, explaining that Armageddon was getting close now, but don't worry, as it will bring forth "Paradise" for the righteous.

Yours fraternally
Alan Hartley
Sheffield

'Savings' cost lives

Dear Comrades,
Tragedy on tragedy is piling up for working people because of the actions of Thatcher's government and the offensive against workers' living standards waged by big business.

Militant reported on the brutal closure of Manchester's Ancoats Hospital Casualty Unit and how local residents had occupied the casualty to keep it open. Well, last week a 13 year old boy was killed in a road accident 100 yards from Ancoats Hospital. The dying boy had to be taken to a hospital two miles away across the city centre.

But the only answer is the determination to fight back. Just a week later 500 health workers occupied the Regional Health Authority to stop them carrying out any further cuts.

Yours fraternally
Phil Frampton
Manchester



Photo: Alison Dixon

Letters

Send us your views, comments or criticism.

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

US nuclear nightmare

Dear Comrades,
When I read the *Militant's* article *No to Nuclear Nightmare* I was immediately reminded of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation which is no more than 150 miles from my home city Seattle.

Hanford was originally created in the 1940s to produce weapons grade plutonium, which was used to decimate Japan in 1945. Today Hanford is a constant danger to us all.

There have been many dumpings of radioactive toxic waste at Hanford, many releases of radioactive elements into both the water and air. Recent media exposure has revealed cruel testing of radioactivity upon prison inmates' genitals, supposedly in order

to study the effects upon humans. The Department of Energy now wants to make Hanford the sole nuclear waste dump of America and now possibly Taiwan. Hanford also has a number of nuclear reactors which are very similar to those at Chernobyl. Hanford has become one of the most radioactive sites in the world and there are over 4,000,000 people living within close proximity!

Yours fraternally
William Bubelis
Member of Youth
Defense Campaign
Seattle USA

Oscar for Militant?

Dear Comrades,
I started at Acting College last September and was finding it really difficult to push the paper to the other students, who seemed too wrapped up in their own haircuts to pay any attention to the real world.

This all ended last month. We were doing an acting exercise which involved each member reading a newspaper. I thrust forward my *Militant* expecting the usual response, but to my surprise, I've now got five regular sales!

Yours fraternally
Jason Fleming
Putney LPYS

Come in number 7!

Dear Comrades,
I was recently talking to a nurse, who buys our paper and she gave me two more great examples of the lunacy of the NHS senior management.

Firstly, at her hospital, the Fleming in Newcastle, they are gutting the two kitchens and updating them at a cost of thousands of pounds. This despite the fact that they are intending to close the hospital in February!

Secondly, and even more unbelievable, they have decided to rename the matron in an attempt to lower her prestige as head of the nursing staff. The matron is now to be called No 7! So nurses now have to tell their patients to see No 7 if they have any problems.

Yours fraternally
Ged Grebby
Benton and District
LPYS

Compliments to the editor

Dear Comrades,
I would like to congratulate you on the quality of issue 841. The articles on youth show a great improvement even if headlines still lack imagination.

The back page about maternity benefits helped sell the paper like hot cakes on one of our estates where the council appears to dump all the young families. We sold

25 copies in next to no time. I generally like the changes in layout, particularly the back page for selling, the verity of the articles and more youthful approach. I miss the Gordon Bennett column and again the headlines could be more hard hitting.

Yours fraternally
J Rathbone

Stolen benefits

Dear Comrades,
In issue 841, we are asked to fight for child benefits. Please don't forget those of us who have our family allowances stolen from us—our sin—to claim supplementary benefit.

Child benefit is classed as income so any we receive is taken away from our supplementary.

I hope the next Labour government will not neglect us and will restore our right to child benefit. I also want to see adequate child-care facilities—I demand my right to work!

Why should my children and others like them be subjected to poverty simply because they have only one parent?

Yours fraternally
Barbara Elliott
An angry unemployed
single parent

Unsatisfactory

Dear Comrades,
Someone writing to *Militant* did not think that child benefit was to pay women to bring up children, as Margaret Manning alleges in her letter (3 April). It was a statement of fact. The Labour government, which introduced it, definitely stated that this was a mother's wage, not payment for housework. Your heading *Abolish Housework* was irrelevant, as also was Mara Cortesi's reference to housework in her letter.

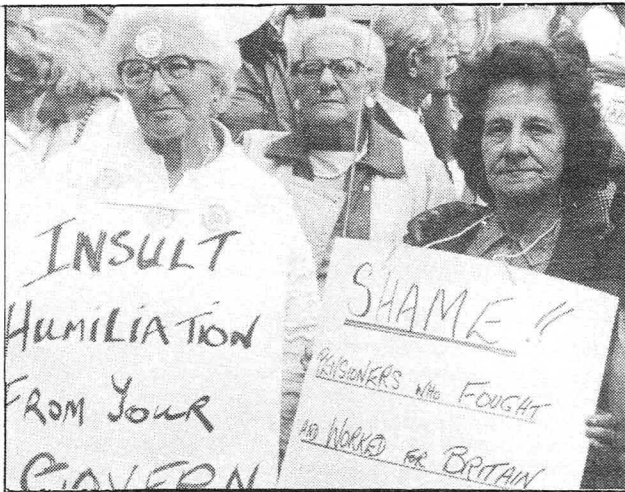
I have no idea whom she is accusing of blaming the whole male sex for the present social system, but I certainly have done no such thing. In the socialist movement, anyway, *Militant* women are as much to blame as men for their unsatisfactory attitude to feminism.

Yours in comradeship,
Kathleen Jones
Shropshire

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.

- Socialist Summer Camp workers' education group. Saturday 8—Saturday 15 August, 1987. Bracelands campside, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. Courses on: Marxist Economics, youth and the struggle for socialism, the Russian Revolution, USA, third world. Plus rallies, debates, discos, sports, crêche. Book your holiday now. Cost £40 (£75 for family booking). Brochure available from the end of Easter. Orders to: Workers Education Group, PO Box 332, London E15 3BY.
- Cassette tapes with two issues of *Militant* (one each side). Available fortnightly. Tapes £3.50 per quarter, £13 per year. To be returned or send blank C-90 tapes. Contact Dave: 14 Harrowby Road, West Park, Leeds 16. Tel: 0532 624917.
- *The Burden is Heavy*: video on the growth of the workers' movement in Zimbabwe, with important conclusions for all socialists. Cost of hire: £20 (£10 for YS branches/women's sections). Order from Zimbabwe Trade Unionists' Defence Campaign, PO Box 77, London E8 4TB.
- Elaine and Roger Bannister are pleased to announce the birth of Sian Catherine on 2 April 1987. Another pressing reason to fight for a socialist future.



Pensioners hit by cuts

Dear Comrades,
My father is a pensioner. He recently went to the dentist and was recommended a course of treatment which would cost £47 on the NHS. My father naturally thought he would get free treatment, being a pensioner.

Imagine his disgust when he was told he would have to find the first £46.98 himself. The NHS which has been so safe in the hands of our caring, sharing Tory government will contribute the princely sum of 2p!

My father is one of the lucky ones with some money saved and a son and daughter working. Many pensioners go without necessary medical treatment due to lack of money.

Yours fraternally
Clive Walder Brighton Kempton Labour Party

Fight for Vosper shipyard jobs

In four years the Vosper Thornycroft workforce has dropped from 5,500 to 1,800. The future looks bleak for shipbuilding in the Southampton area. PAT BLATCH looks at the problems facing the yard which symbolises British

shipbuilding—lack of investment under private ownership, coupled with management inefficiency. Yet the skills and facilities at Vospers could be utilised for useful alternative work.

UNLESS A new order arrives at Vospers in the near future the yard will have to close by the end of 1987. The nearby Porchester yard is trying to diversify into the luxury yacht market so that it too can remain in business.

Management and the workforce are depending on an order for two to five single-role mine-hunters to keep them in jobs.

If an early election is called the men feel they will lose the order as a new government will not be in a hurry to place an order that early in its term of office.

Recent news is that the EEC is providing a 30 per cent subsidy to shipyards which other EEC countries are passing on to state as well as private yards.

The Tories knew about this subsidy when they cynically rushed through the privatisation of British Shipbuilders.

All-out strike action

In September 1986 Vospers had its first all out strike, caused by management breaking all the agreements on redundancies.

They sacked 300 men including five shop stewards, the AEU convenor and one worker who was seriously ill with liver cancer.

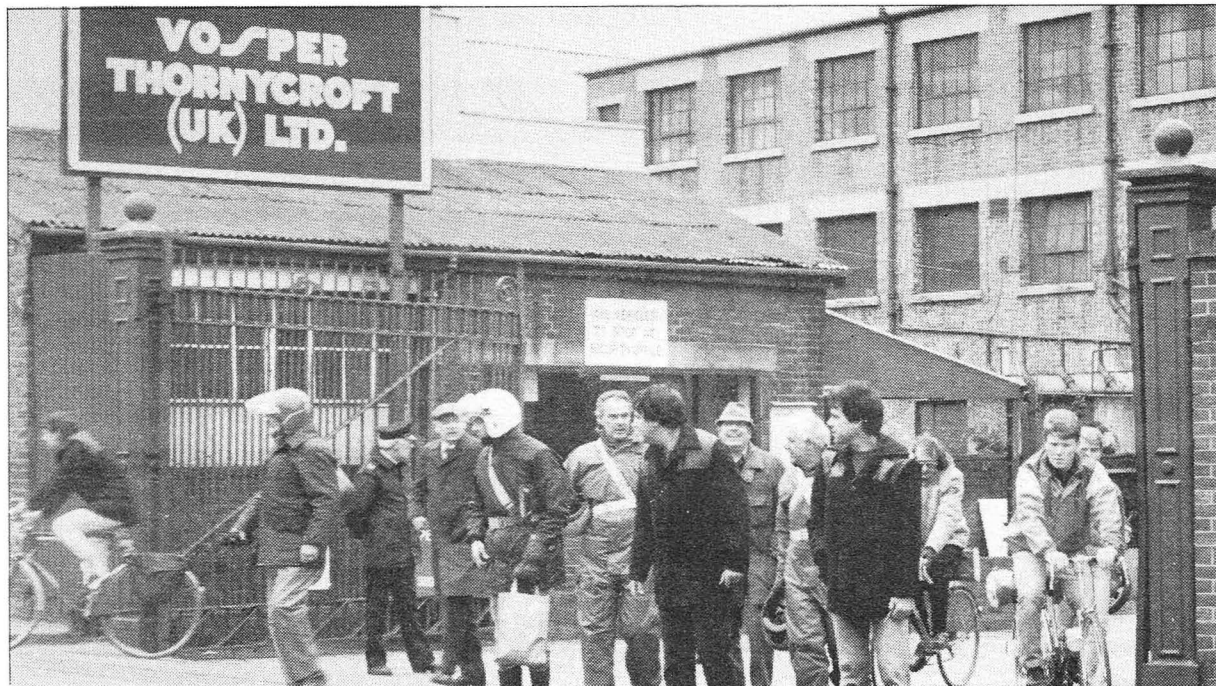
The four week strike forced them to back down. The convenor was kept on, although after the dispute he left the company. They also withdrew the redundancy notices to the stewards and the sick worker.

In January an industrial tribunal found the company guilty of not complying with redundancy regulations.

Always been viable

The yard has always made a profit although some years the break even point has only just been reached. When Vosper was nationalised by the Labour government, which paid £4 million to shareholders, £100 million was in reserves in the bank. This helped British Shipbuilders to keep the ailing northern yards afloat.

During the period of nationalisation the yards made profits of over £60 million. When privatised the management consortium who purchased it for £18 million took out loans from different finance houses, one



Vosper workers outside the shipyard gates.

Photo: Steven Blatch.

being Standard Chartered Bank.

Within a 13 month period Vosper has repaid the whole of the £10.1m loan from this source. During this period new equipment has been introduced.

Secret plans for marina

Secret architects' models have been seen accidentally by Vosper's workers showing the company's 37 acres of land as a massive marina, with hotels, leisure facilities and vast mooring spaces.

All this, combined with Southampton city council's up market Waterside town housing development, makes the idea very plausible. The council, however, say there is no such large scale development anticipated.

Luckily for Vosper workers the land cannot be used for anything but shipbuilding for the next three years under the terms of privatisation. But it would make a mouthwatering site for developers.

Sited on the River Itchen where it joins Southampton Water, the river has four tides a day, making it ideal for shipping. Land on the Isle of Dogs in London's dockland is selling for £3.5m an acre now. Southampton could become the biggest marina in Europe.

Affect on community

Vosper workers are well aware of the effect on their

community if the yard closes.

Woolston would become a ghost town. Only chandlers and wine bars would be necessary to service the yuppie yachting types who already congregate in Southampton's Ocean Village.

Everyday items such as yachting books, handmade clothing, antique furniture and imported Indian and oriental jewellery are easier to find here than household necessities.

In the last three years no apprentices have been taken on at Vospers. On Merryoak Estate where I live, one and a half miles from the yard, Vosper is the main employer.

In the twelve houses immediately surrounding mine live three Vosper workers, one shop worker and unemployed in the other eight houses.

Six young people are on the dole. Only one youth has work. His wage (from a shop) is £57 per week take home.

Lack of investment

The lowest point in the history of the yard was in 1962 when all the tradesmen were laid off and only the apprentices kept on.

This was the culmination of circumstances dating back to the second world war. The post-war period saw a boom in shipbuilding, in all of the British yards order books were full.

Countries around the world wanted British-built ships, given the prestige of

the British navy and the experience of its shipbuilders. British yards could not cope with the demand.

There was no investment in equipment. The result was that other countries developed their own shipbuilding industries and by 1962 British order books were empty.

Divide and rule tactics

Management fostered demarcation as an issue during the post-war period, causing inter-union disputes which suited their purposes. Some disputes went on for six years.

By 1966 the 'Blue Book' was introduced. The trade unions accepted the agreement. But still management refused to implement it in its entirety, preferring their 'divide and conquer' tactics.

One Vosper worker who has been in the yard since 1959 when he signed on as an apprentice explained how he has seen the yard change:

"When I joined there were five ships berthed along the quay, with all the sheds in full production, most of the equipment we used was dated in the 1930s.

"The tradesmen were highly skilled and had a pride in their work and the yard. Yet even then management bumbled along leaving the men to get on with the work. Management lacks proper organisation."

The present AEU convenor Richard Blatch explained that: "In the past it was not uncommon for a five minute job to take all

day. Parts required from stores were either not available or had been booked in under the incorrect part number.

"The stores were in different locations and many hours were spent wandering from store to store in a vain attempt to get a part or a special tool."

The company have now introduced a package for each ship. After building eleven of one type of ship they realised they would save time if they got all the parts and equipment required together prior to the start of building.

They built ships by the closed method with the boiler-makers building the outer shell and the other trades fit out. This caused many delays. Men had to work in confined spaces in the bilges and so on.

HMS Gloucester was open built, which means that all the trades built the ship at the same time. Unfortunately management worked out the figures for the boiler-makers based on the closed ship method.

The result was overmanning and frustration as men hung around all day, whilst other vessels were behind launch dates.

Alternative useful work

Vosper's is renowned for building the best warships in the world. It has a highly skilled workforce with modern equipment. Its highly skilled staff, good facilities, with amenity blocks, canteen and a plea-

- ★ Yard to be returned to full public ownership immediately
- ★ Workers' control and management of the yard to ensure best production of methods and most efficient use of resources
- ★ Use of the skills and technology for production of alternative products to supplement shipbuilding
- ★ Scrap and build policy to modernise and expand Britain's inadequate merchant fleet
- ★ Recruitment of apprentices at TU rates and standards to maintain skilled workforce

sant social club and sports ground—and technical equipment could be utilised for alternative work.

The yard has a pipe bending machine which has the capacity to do all the pipe bending for the UK shipbuilding yards. It could easily do this sort of work for engineering companies in the south of England.

The engineering department has the ability and the capacity to make any engineered item.

The glass-reinforced plastic shop could manufacture modular shelters for use in disasters such as the Mexican earthquake.

The metal shop could build moveable containerised building equipment containing in-built radar or medical equipment. Emergency operating theatres would be one such use for this type of building.

It is not in the realms of fiction to suppose that the yard has the experience the skills to build prefabricated houses for the many homeless families living in bed and breakfast accommodation and at half the cost.

It is Thatcherism and the crazy logic of capitalism which stand in the way of such socially useful developments and the preservation of jobs.

Southampton
Militant
public meeting

30 April, 7.30pm.
St Matthews Hall
St Mary's Road

AEU National Committee

Engineers need fighting leadership

THE 69th National Committee, (the equivalent of most unions' annual conference) of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the first under new right wing President Bill Jordan, took place in Eastbourne between the 6 and 15 April.

It was followed by a Rules Revision meeting, which was of greater importance than ever this year as it was held in order to discuss a number of changes proposed by the union's Executive Council to tackle the union's serious financial crisis.

The political bankruptcy of the right wing AEU leadership has in fact led to the financial bankruptcy of the union as a whole. Whilst some encouraging decisions were made at the National Committee the right wing's in-built majority of seventy to forty six meant it failed to tackle the very serious questions now facing engineering workers.

Besides the union's internal finances and structure, the biggest issue facing engineers is the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) and Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) working party discussing a small cut in the working week in return for a massive attack on working conditions and shop floor rights.

The employers' attacks and the leaderships apparent

By Martin Elvin

We would like to thank all delegates who helped compile this report in spite of the right wing's refusal to admit our journalist.

willingness to accept them has begun to bring the union back to life in many areas. Resolutions to head office on the issue could be weighed, not counted, and petitions several inches thick have been collected at some factories.

No fewer than two dozen resolutions on this issue appeared on the agenda. Not one of these is supportive or complimentary of the proposals which have been under discussion. One very positive aspect of this whole issue is that it has put the shorter working week on the agenda.

This was originally raised by the AEU and Confed leadership as a sweetener in order to sell the bitter pill of worse conditions. Whilst members reject the conditions package the 35 hour week has eagerly been seized upon.

Many of the resolutions

therefore called for present talks on flexibility etc to be ended and instead for the AEU, through the CSEU to pursue a claim for a 35 hour week, without conditions, strings etc.

One such resolution from North Wales and Merseyside area went on to instruct the EC to recall National Committee to determine how to further pursue this claim "If the EEF fail to negotiate meaningfully." Unfortunately that resolution was lost by 55 votes to 67.

Also lost, by 68 votes to 52, was another good resolution from the North East of Scotland, which was severely critical of the EC in their approach to the negotiations, and "criticises the EC for not providing information and reports of these discussions. We were better informed by the press."

This resolution also called on the EC to launch a vigorous campaign on the shorter working week like IG Metall, and to return the issue to the National Committee if a satisfactory offer is not forthcoming.

The resolution finally



AEU's right wing president and general secretary, Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird.

agreed unanimously, also from North East Scotland, is much weaker. However, this resolution does instruct the EC: "that before any radical and far reaching changes of conditions and working practices to out members... are agreed upon, National Committee be recalled to discuss the proposals agreement with a view to giving the members a ballot on this issue."

Ballot?

This motion at least commits the union to a full meeting of the National Committee before any deal is signed and the possibility of the issue being put before the membership in a ballot.

However, that resolution says nothing about pursuing a shorter working week, but

still supposes some sort of deal will be done, though admittedly for rejection or acceptance by the membership.

During the discussion, Youth delegate John Killen condemned the proposals as an attempt to strengthen British manufacturing industry by savagely attacking conditions and turning British engineering workers into even cheaper labour.

Bill Jordan, however, claimed that many of the conditions had now been dropped by the employers and there was a further meeting in May.

If that is so, then it is entirely a result of the enormous pressure of the campaign by the left and the membership for the last year.

That pressure must be redoubled, all the conditions

must be rejected. The Broad Left have a responsibility to prepare for any recalled National Committee and to ensure that a campaign to get the real message across takes place in case of a ballot.

Pay

ENGINEERING workers in Britain are now some of the worst paid in the world. The recent national wage settlement sets the national minimum time rate for skilled men at the pathetic level of just over £106 per week.

Once again the National Committee agreed to instruct the EC to pursue a substantial rise. Regrettably once again an attempt to set a realistic and worthwhile target for engineering workers to aim at, of £125 per week was defeated.

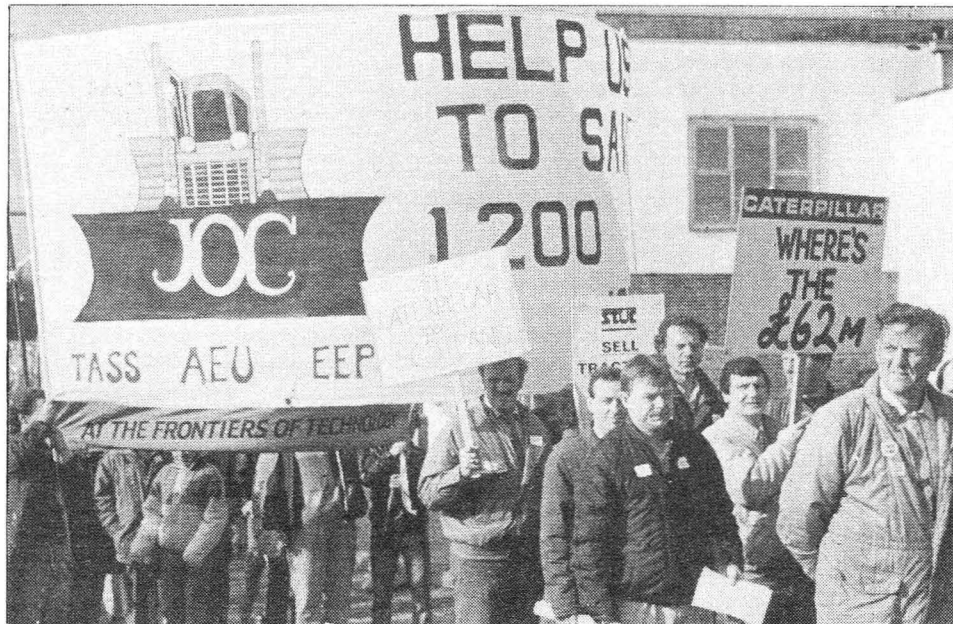
Caterpillar conference lobby a gust of reality

THE ARRIVAL at the National Committee on Thursday of a coach load of workers from the occupied Caterpillar tractor plant at Uddingston near Glasgow, wasn't so much like opening the door to a stuffy, stale room, it was more akin to a 90 mph gale blowing all the windows in.

After the first three days only the voices of the left delegates cut across the climate of compromise, defeatism and unreality created by the leadership and the right-wing. But the Caterpillar workers also brought enthusiasm, determination and confidence that victory is possible.

The peace and tranquility was shattered as dozens of them packed into listen to the debate, bringing to a maximum the pressure upon the leadership who had told them to call off the occupation and upon the right wing whose support is in doubt.

There were a total of four resolutions, but it was the weakest one that was selected for debate. Nevertheless, even this stated: "this National Committee pledge their full support to the workers at Caterpillar in their fight...and instructs the Executive Council to give



March in support of Caterpillar.

their full backing to our members in struggle at this plant..."

This resolution was moved by Ken Tynan from the West of Scotland and generally on the right wing, seconded by a right winger.

It was during this debate that the EC members for Scotland and the sole left winger on that body announced that he understood that following meetings between the Caterpillar convenor and junior Tory government minister, the

government were prepared to instruct the Scottish Development Agency to take over the plant until a new buyer could be found.

Determination

The resolution was carried unanimously. The mood was one of euphoria, though edged with a certain caution on the part of many of the Caterpillar lobbyists.

Delegates and visitors just poured out of the meeting to discuss the National Com-

mittee decision and the latest news about the SDA.

One worker, Derek Stephen expressed his feelings, "I still don't believe what has been said. I've got a brother in Aberdeen in the Royal Navy. He and others have said we are Bolsheviks etc and we should not be involved in such a struggle. Others have said we couldn't win."

"But they have no idea what we are involved in and the mass support we have been getting. I have a good

mind to travel to Aberdeen and tell him what has happened. You get highs and lows in the struggle. You get mentally kicked, but then you go out collecting money and people tell you to keep fighting. It is circumstances that make you what you are."

As others said, "We will go down to Prestwick Airport and wave the bosses off back to the United States."

But there was caution too. John Gillen, shop steward, pulled everyone together and explained, "We have been proved right all along. The vast majority of credit must go to John Brennan and the JOC because they said carry on when others said come out of occupation."

"However, the situation has not changed totally. We carry on the struggle although it appears to have changed in complexion. We will make our decisions when we know exactly what this all means."

This struggle has already raised serious questions for the left. The role of EC member Jimmy Airlie came in for criticism. Several Caterpillar workers felt that his advice to end the occupation and picket the plant was tantamount to committing harikari. "If he meant throw in the towel, he should have

said so," said one.

Once the SDA's involvement was reported then even the right wing delegates were more prepared to vote in support of the occupation, as victory appeared to be in the offing. The left were considering moving an amendment to the resolution to strengthen it, but were doubtful of getting it carried.

The question of anti-union laws was another major debate, especially as it followed the Caterpillar discussion.

Despite the example the Caterpillar workers have set, once again the right wing and the leadership, forgetting the lessons of the past and the way the trade union movement has been built.

Perhaps the worst comment of the debate came from the President Bill Jordan, who stated that the AEU Rule Book was above everything except the law of the land. As Brother Boyce from Sheffield asked, "If the Tories introduced a law to shoot one person in three, to cut unemployment, would we be expected to accept that?"

Unfortunately the motion calling for rejection of this anti-union law and for the mobilisation of the membership and power of the union was lost.

Industrial Reports

ICI attack on trade unions threatens chemical disaster

SCOTTISH Agricultural Industries at Leith Docks Edinburgh, a wholly owned subsidiary of ICI which manufactures acids and fertilisers announced recently that they would in effect no longer recognise the JSSC, shop stewards or trade union nominated safety reps.

This is a major attack on both trade union rights and safety within the plant. But this development and the recent withdrawal of recognition from the GMBATU by big hotel group Rio Stakis also shows the way industrial relations will move if the Tories are re-elected.

These measures follow an exercise by SIA management called The Way Ahead. In one form or another it has

been pushed by big business to destroy traditional collective bargaining processes and demarcation between craft and process workers. Management consultancies selling packages such as The Way Ahead are springing up faster than hamburger joints.

Concern has been expressed by Bobby Smith GMBATU national officer responsible for the chemical industry. The GMBATU points to a 35 per cent increase in fatal and serious accidents in the industry since 1981.

In an article in the *Guardian*, using the example of SIA's attempted withdrawal of recognition of TU nominated safety reps and the national reduction of health and safety inspectors by 20 per cent in the last ten years, Smith argues that it is on-

ly a matter of time before there are more fires and explosions like the two recent incidents at BP Grangemouth.

Another Bhopal or Flixborough could be round the corner if big business is allowed to attack safety standards and force men to do work they are not trained for in order to increase profits by cutting corners.

Campaign

Leith MP Ron Brown has tabled a motion in the House of Commons condemning SAI's moves. He had been given assurances by the company that they would continue to recognise the trade unions and he intends to take the issue up with ICI. The JSSC has organised a well at-

tended mass meeting outside the factory gates addressed by convenor Gordon McKinley and full time officers from the AEU and EETPU.

The meeting was totally behind the union reps. One worker said that it was absolutely ridiculous for management to say that individuals had the right to be in a union but not have shop stewards to represent them. It gave full support to the demand for recognition of the JSSC, shop stewards and TU nominated safety reps.

It wanted a meeting of all ICI shop stewards nationally because of the implications for the whole of the company and further mass meetings to get feed-back.

By Peter Luke

Nupe attack on left

HANDING OUT leaflets to fellow members of Nupe may soon be a disciplinary offence in 'Britain's caring union', if Yorkshire full time official, Malcolm Reid, gets his way. Leeds shop steward, Lionel Wright has been referred to the divisional council for 'bringing the union into disrepute' after publicising a Nupe Broad Left meeting in the city in March.

During the last six months, the right wing labour council in Leeds has been pushing through a massive 'restructuring' programme to cut the workforce of key services, under the guise of 'fighting privatisation'. The latest is education catering, where management plan to shed labour by introducing productivity measures, such as the cheap 'cook-freeze' system.

Council leaders are claiming that fresh vacancies will be created in other departments to match the number of workers who leave the authority under a voluntary retirement scheme. However, supporters of the Nupe Broad Left have argued that the real intention is net job losses, and have published a secret council document which supports this. The council held six mass meetings of school dinner ladies last month, and Nupe full timers, including brother Reid, sat on the platform to help management to sell the cuts to their members. This at a time when Nupe has the slogan "Save our school meals service"!

The mood amongst many of the women was angry, and Nupe Broad Left leaflets handed out at the door, attracted a great deal of interest.

With disquiet amongst rank and file Nupe members growing, the right wing leaders of the district seem to think they can deflect criticisms of their policies by a purge against a leading left winger, using trumped-up 'evidence'.

Teachers fight on

THE CONTINUATION of the unprecedented two year teachers' dispute shows the revolution which has taken place in a traditionally conservative section of society.

That an ex-president of the supposedly 'non-political' NUT can tell conference delegates, to general approval, that: "This government does not deserve the support of the teachers of this country" reveals the extent of the Tories' achievements in education.

Unfortunately, the NUT leadership, constantly backed into corners by the government, have proved unable to give decisive expression to this changed mood. Delegates to conference who were looking forward to debating the Baker imposition and developing a strategy to fight the government have been disappointed.

The executive did not even circulate before the debate, the 'guidelines' of their 'strategy' agreed by an unac-

countable joint committee of three senior members both of the NAS/UWT and the NUT.

Far from consulting and discussing the issues with the members the NUT leadership had already hoped to have the whole issue sewn up in advance in negotiations with a few NAS/UWT senior leaders. This is all justified in the interests of unity without recognising that real unity is based on unity in action, built from the grass roots upwards.

Anger

The executive has been hard pressed by infuriated delegates, but it has succeeded in holding its own on the Baker strategy, by playing on this claim, that delegates must maintain unity and not rock the boat. Meanwhile the executive—under the spurious excuse of sub judice have not made it possible for us to discuss the ILTA suspensions and expulsions,

or even to discuss the rule changes to prevent such abuses of procedure by the national officers taking place in the future.

The joint action policy now agreed, involves compliance with Baker, and thus in effect cooperation with the introduction of his imposed rules. This makes it even more urgent than ever for activists to redouble efforts to build resistance to the Baker imposition at local level.

The tone of the debates, however, with *Militant* supporters and the left generally very prominent, the 88,500 vote to defy the Tory law (despite the arguments of so-called lefts like executive member Jim Ferguson) and the continuation of industrial action show the coming of age of the NUT and the potential for the left given the continuing crisis in education.

By a conference delegate



Tass conference

THE OVERRIDING issue at this year's Tass conference, as with all other trade union conferences which meet prior to the general election must be the campaign to elect Labour.

The Tories have already spelt out in a Green Paper their intentions to go for further attacks on the trade unions if they are returned.

That alone is reason for all union members to get out and work for a Labour victory. But we must also spell out to the Labour Party leadership that our members aren't looking for Labour to out-moderate the Alliance.

They need radical change and demand unequivocal commitments from Labour, particularly that they will not again go down the disastrous road of wage restraint and incomes policy, which lost Labour massive support, particularly amongst skilled workers.

On Saturday prior to conference, along with represen-

tatives from Astms, Tass will also be discussing another issue crucial to its future—amalgamation.

This offers the chance of creating a massive union with members in a wide variety of industries, but above all, representing every grade in engineering. Such a step would be envy of the trade union movement and send shock waves through the Engineering Employers Federation, especially given the present state of the AEU under its right wing leadership.

By Mick Cotter

(London District Metal Mechanics Vice-president, personal capacity)

Conference *Militant* meeting, Wednesday 29th, lunchtime, at the Mon-Ami Hotel, St Michaels Rd, off Priory Rd. All welcome.

Shopworkers need action on low pay

RETAIL AND distributive union, Usdaw holds its Annual Delegate Meeting in Blackpool from 26 to 29 April in what will be a key conference for the union.

There will be a strong mood for unity amongst the delegates and the conference will be dominated by the pre-election mood which currently permeates the labour movement.

There are however, a number of important issues to be discussed. The most important will be the issue of wages and conditions, particularly low pay.

The wrecking of the Wages Council and the repeal of the Truck Acts has left hundreds of thousands of young workers without any statutory protection, and millions more with little or no protection.

Wages Councils were originally envisaged to provide a 'safety net' for those

workers who had no other means of ensuring a minimum wage. One exception, a motion from Grattans 'minimum' rates set by the Wages Councils have become the norm for the whole industry—they have been setting the pace—their removal will have a corresponding effect throughout the industry.

Poor agenda

The agenda is rather short of motions which give any kind of lead. The Standing Orders Committee has seen to that. One exception, a motion from Grattans Warehouses, Bradford, calls for a minimum wage of £120 for a 35-hour week.

It also states: "Conference congratulates David Nellist MP and the eleven Labour members of parliament who supported him on his Bill to establish a statutory

minimum wage as a basis for negotiation with the trade unions.

It is not enough to study low pay, as the leadership are doing by setting up 'Low Pay Committees'. Neither is it enough to merely publicise the problem through glossy leaflets and posters. The members know they are low paid, they do not need to be told so.

This problem will continue until the leadership are prepared to take the bull by the horns and begin a campaign involving industrial action in conjunction with other unions who organise in retail distribution to force the employers to pay a living wage.

This year is also a rules revision conference and a number of excellent proposals have been submitted. One in particular deserves full support. Proposition 85 from Scotland Fine Fare branch wants the two senior

full time positions, general and deputy-general secretary elected every five years instead of once as at present.

An amendment from Blackpool Retail seeks to make the rule operable from 1st January 1988. This means that the present general secretary, elected in 1985 would have to re-submit himself for election five years from next year.

This is a far more democratic arrangement since at present there would not be another general secretary election this century. No other other Usdaw member has this guarantee of employment.

By George Williamson
(Chair, Eastern Divisional Council, personal capacity)

Militant

Sri Lanka bomb blast—
Page 10

Vosper workers fight for jobs—
Page 15

Civil Servants: build for all-out strike

National action now

CIVIL SERVANTS in Scotland, Yorkshire, the North East and the North West have been involved in strikes against the government's pay offer.

They have shown their determination and anger against low pay and appalling working conditions. In every area 85 to 95 per cent of the members have come out.

The rolling programme of selective strikes has hit the government harder than they are admitting. Tax offices and Customs and Excise have been particularly hard hit.

The strategy is for DHSS, Department of Employment and key Customs and Excise depots to be closed sporadically until 15 May. A ballot on all-out strike will then be held.

At mass rallies around the country the members' willingness to take on the Tories has been evident. The mood exists for a dramatic escalation of the action.

The question being asked by the activists is how to make the step now to the all-out strike which is the only way to defeat the Tories.

Confidence

The members have shown they will fight. They are uncertain, however, if the right-wing leadership have the same determination and ability to take on the government.

The Broad Left and local branches must show them how to take the step to an all-out strike. By providing the arguments and information they can create the confidence necessary.

Detailed information on issues such as deferring financial commitments like mortgages and other bills and raising support from the rest of the labour movement to collect the cash and solidarity must be provided.

Local meetings, rallies, leaflets and liaison with



John Macreadie and Terry Fields MP on civil servants' picket line in Liverpool

Photo: Tina Carroll

other trade unions can be immediately organised.

Recruitment of non-union members must be a priority. Already there are instances of non-union members joining during the strikes. 300 have joined at Newcastle Central DHSS office.

In Liverpool one non-union member in Customs and Excise who at first crossed the picket line joined the strike as a result of discussions with TGWU members working in the docks.

The right wing leadership, who gave no recommendation on the pay ballot, are unfortunately only going through the motions of leading the dispute. The last thing they want is an all-out strike.

The only reason there is a pay campaign at all is the work of the Broad Lefts in

CPSA, SCPS, NIPSA and IRSF. Their interventions at the union conferences and on the executive committees got the need for industrial action accepted.

The ballot in CPSA on an all-out strike has been set for the Monday after the national conference. It means all the local activists will be pulled out of their areas at the time when they should be giving a lead to the members.

Key area

Despite the role of the right wing, the ballot can still be won if the work is done in the areas during the run-up to national conference.

One of the key areas is London, where selective strikes start on 4 May. If the leadership call some form of national action prior to the

ballot to demonstrate the union's unity, solidarity and power, the ballot can easily be won. This will help ensure a Yes vote.

The Tories have forced civil servants on to the picket lines. Low pay is rife in the civil service. A record number of our members claim family income supplement and other benefits.

The pressure in DHSS and Department of Employment as a result of the Tories' policies, which have created mass unemployment and poverty and immense strain on these services, is enormous.

At the same time they have cut jobs and allowed working conditions to deteriorate to an appalling level. Last week civil servants at the Health and Safety Ex-

ecutive in London took industrial action and almost walked out because of bad working conditions.

As a result of these pressures, civil servants are angry and bitter. Many of the local rallies have been enormous, with thousands turning out in Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool and the North East so far.

Given even half a lead the members can be organised to win a decisive victory.

By Terry Martin
(CPSA Branch Secretary,
Newcastle Central DHSS)

- ★ For national action
- ★ Build for all-out strike

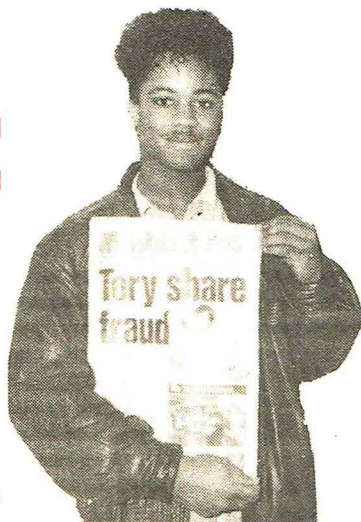
What We Stand for

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

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